RESEARCH

THE DUAL HERO IN LATE CAPITALISM. MYTH' NEW LANGUAGES IN V FOR VENDETTA AND MR. ROBOT

El héroe dual en el capitalismo tardío. Nuevos lenguajes del mito en V de Vendetta y Mr. Robot

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How to cite the article:

ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the presence and characteristics of the so-called dual or ambivalent hero in two critical dystopias that open and close late capitalism: the comic V for Vendetta (1982-1990) and the Mr. Robot series (2015-2019). The dual hero is already present in archaic myths. However, it was blurred to give way to more defined archetypes. The narratives of late capitalism, in which critical dystopia and science fiction have proliferated, recover this duplicitous hero. Using a complete bibliographic review that allows us to connect the theories of different scholars specialized in myth study and through the detailed analysis of these two critical dystopias influenced by science fiction, we verify how myths adapt to the dysfunctions and complications of current life. Through a critique of the social and economic incongruities of neoliberalism and the digital society, the duplicitous heroes of *V for Vendetta* and Mr. Robot point to a liberating sense concerning the

current context. Both texts offer a kind of revenge or compensation and reflect the confusion in values in late capitalism.

KEYWORDS: Science fiction - Critical dystopia - Late capitalism – Neoliberalism - Digital society – Myth - Dual hero.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación analiza la presencia y características del denominado héroe dúplice o ambivalente en dos distopías críticas que abren y cierran el capitalismo tardío: el cómic *V de Vendetta* (1982-1988) y la serie Mr Robot (2015-2019). El héroe dúplice ya está presente en los mitos arcaicos. Sin embargo, se desdibujó para dar paso a arquetipos más delimitados. Las narraciones del capitalismo tardío, en el que han proliferado la distopía crítica y la ciencia ficción, recuperan a este héroe dúplice. Sirviéndonos de una profunda revisión bibliográfica que nos permite conectar las teorías de distintos estudiosos del mito y del análisis detallado de estas dos distopías críticas influidas por la ciencia ficción, comprobamos cómo los mitos se adaptan a las disfunciones y complicaciones de la vida actual. Mediante una crítica a las incongruencias sociales y económicas del neoliberalismo y la sociedad digital los héroes dúplices de *V de Vendetta* (1982-1988) y la serie Mr Robot (2015-2019) apuntan un sentido liberador en relación con el contexto actual. Ambos textos ofrecen una especie de venganza o compensación además de reflejar la confusión en los valores en el capitalismo tardío.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Ciencia ficción - Distopía crítica - Capitalismo tardío – Neoliberalismo - Sociedad digital – Mito - Héroe dúplice.

O DUPLO HERÓI NO CAPITALISMO TARDIO. NOVAS LÍNGUAS DO V-MITO DE VENDETTA e MR ROBOT

RESUMO

Esta pesquisa analisa a presença e as características do chamado herói dúbio ou ambivalente em duas distopias críticas que abrem e fecham o capitalismo tardio: a história em quadrinhos V de Vingança (1982-1988) e a série Mr Robot (2015-2019). O duplo herói já está presente nos mitos arcaicos. No entanto, foi desfocado para dar lugar a arquétipos mais delimitados. As narrativas do capitalismo tardio, em que proliferaram a distopia crítica e a ficção científica, recuperam esse duplo herói. Por meio de uma profunda revisão bibliográfica que nos permite conectar as teorias de diferentes estudiosos do mito e uma análise detalhada dessas duas distopias críticas influenciadas pela ficção científica, verificamos como os mitos se adaptam às disfunções e complicações da vida atual. Por meio de uma crítica às incongruências sociais e econômicas do neoliberalismo e da sociedade digital, os heróis dúbios de V for Vendetta (1982-1988) e da série Mr Robot (2015-2019) apontam para um sentido libertador em relação ao contexto atual. Ambos os textos oferecem uma espécie de vingança ou compensação, além de refletir a confusão de valores no capitalismo tardio.

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PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ficção científica - Distopia crítica - Capitalismo tardio - Neoliberalismo - Sociedade digital - Mito - Duplo herói.

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1.   INTRODUCTION

Science fiction and utopia in their various forms are different genres but have several common characteristics. One of the most prominent is that they act as a mirror of "our hopes and fears about the future" regarding "science and technology" (Fitting, 2010, p. 3), seeking to make the public question certain aspects of the current or upcoming reality. They present us with spaces and times that do not seem to correspond to ours but that refer us to them to ask us what could happen if we evolved in a certain sense or how the use we make of technology would socially impact. This aspect is so important in both genres that there are authors who consider that it is impossible to study the utopias and dystopias of the last half-century without paying attention to science fiction (Fitting, 2010).

Another common point between science fiction and dystopia is the influence that socio-historical events exert on both. In fact, dystopia has its time of maximum production in the 20th century due to the events that defined it: world wars, genocides, ecocides, economic crises, and the commodification of all dimensions of the individual (Moylan, 2018). As a consequence, the average citizen and numerous intellectuals lost confidence in progress (López Keller, 1991).

Utopia resurfaced in the 1970s with the second wave of feminism and counterculture, but from the 1980s until now, we are in a period of clear triumph for dystopia (Moylan, 2018). The reason lies in the global implementation of the neoliberal economic model that has led to the dismantling of the Welfare State and the reduction of workers' wages (Hermida, 2000). The deep economic, political, institutional, and value crisis in which we have been plunged since 2008 shows that this Welfare State is an entelechy or beautiful dream.

Late capitalism, characterized by this global neoliberalism and by mass society and hyper-consumption, is represented by a genre: critical dystopia (Moylan, 2018). A critical dystopia that emphasizes the failures and problems of the present, concerned about their repercussions in the near future, and that demands a structure that better serves us as a species. This is also collected by science fiction works that question the use of science and technology within the system.

In this context, what happens to the protagonists of critical dystopias and contemporary science fiction stories? The starting hypothesis of this research, which analyzes two case studies, the science fiction graphic novel and critical dystopia *V for Vendetta* and the critical dystopia Mr. Robot, is that they present heroes with an ambiguous dual identity, which implies the union of opposites.

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These duplicitous figures are already present in archaic and ancient mythological forms. They respond to what Jung (1951) called "the shadow" and are related to our own nature. However, the permanent crisis that characterizes late capitalism has made these types of figures proliferate alongside that of the villain. They are part of "a perverse model of reception" in which the public projects and identifies with protagonists who oppose the traditional values of the hero or embody models of explicit evil (Fernández Pichel, 2013, p. 105). As we will see in the next sections, our two case studies correspond to the first type of character.

We could think that the myths present in these critical dystopias and science fiction stories starring "shadow" heroes or villains are obscurantist, confusing. However, the two case studies analyzed, respond to illuminating myths that clarify the current social complexity. They propose a critical reading and point to a liberating sense regarding a global, interconnected, and profoundly unequal social structure.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Postmodernism and late capitalism

We understand by postmodernism, following Lyotard, a "state of thought" characterized by the lack of trust in the "great stories": "they are no longer credible nor are they enough to ensure how they intended a political, social, and cultural commitment" (1992, p. two). So, what do postmodern individuals believe in and what are they committed to? With consumption. It's not just about products and services. The concepts of merchandise, productivity, and efficiency apply to human beings themselves and their relationships that become objects[1].

This occurs by a process of "mental training" to exercise control since "consumption disarms social virulence" (Baudrillard, 2007, p. 85). Democracies after World War II were founded and legitimized on equal rights and duties of citizens. However, the experience of individuals shows them daily that it is a chimera:

> The system relies much more effectively on an unconscious device of integration and regulation. And this consists, unlike equality, in involving individuals in a system of differences, in a code of signs. That is culture, that is language, and that is consumption in the deepest sense of the term (Baudrillard, 2007, p. 103).

Hence, Jameson baptized postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism: "the new social formation no longer obeys the laws of classical capitalism, that is, the

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[1] The concept of merchandise and its logic apply even to friendships. In this sense, the authors are particularly struck by the emergence of companies to "rent friends" such as AlquiFriend https://www.alquifriend.com/ or Alquila un amigo https://www.alquilaunamigo.one/. On the first web page, you can see the photo along with a brief description of the person who is "rented as a friend". For approximately 20 euros an hour, they accompany whoever pays for their services to the cinema, to a party, or to eat.

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primacy of industrial production and the omnipresence of class struggle" (1991, p. 17). The citizen here is a mere consumer who is permanently desiring to desire. They seek immediate pleasure, instant satisfaction, obtaining, instead, a permanent dissatisfaction of their needs.

In the last twelve years, the crisis, the heart of postmodernism, has materialized in an action: that of collapse. The economy, politics, and institutions have collapsed. The already little extended Welfare State has collapsed and, with it, the social elevator and the values and aspirations of several generations. The identity that corresponds to the individual in this socioeconomic structure is what Bauman (2001) metaphorized as a liquid due to its permanent instability and precariousness. The core of it is, logically, anxiety, anguish, and fear.

2.2. The dual or ambivalent hero: from past to present
2.2.1. Archaic mythology background

The ambivalence of the hero in mythical form is a trait of archaism and psychological depth at the same time. Campbell and Jung studied archetypes and myths in which the "shadow" and the dual were very present. The two authors showed how in the archaic forms of the hero, this dual aspect, dystopian/utopian, was central. At the root of the myths that make up the Hero's monomyths (Campbell, 1959), an idea of identity appears that in many cases is not self-affirming but tragic, dual, ambiguous, or oxymoronic (of united opposites).

We can trace this duplicitous and ambivalent, contradictory, and supra-moral trait of the identity forms of myths to very old manifestations, such as those of the animal/human dual nature heroes and the enantiodromic heroes (good and bad at the same time, alive and dead at the same time). Some examples are found in Neolithic androgynous forms, anthropozoans, and deadly/creator dual myths (Demeter, Dionysus).

Much older is the double identity representation in the forms of the goddesses and gods that Marija Gimbitas studied in her arche-mythology of human symbolic representations (Gimbutas 2014; 2019). Coinciding with Jungian archetypes that express mysteries of conjunction and union of opposites, the most archaic gods and mythological forms of the world present syntheses in which the human/non-human, living/non-living aspects, transcend the representation of the living being, and the god or hero, such as the very archaic bird-goddess, or the forms of dual divinity such as the Aztec goddess Coatlicue.

We can also trace in mythical manifestations the expression of the identity shadow, in its double aspect, channeling the rejected and dark forms of the self but also, in its aspect of idealistic, creative, world-shaping impulses. The strength of myths surely comes from their connection with the "shadow" of our own consciousness (Jung, 2002, p. 112). As a totality, the being of each individual is an irreconcilable complexity, a "*coincidentia oppositionum*". Myths express human psychic identity, whether they are channeled in alchemy, religions, creative works of art, or social

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movements, putting us in connection with the deep-self (Jung, 2002, p. 445). The shadow of the individual personality is the conformation of all those aspects of the deep-self that the person does not recognize as their own.

In Aión (2011), Jung raises how, with the advance of time, the antagonistic forms of the individual shadow were splitting, becoming personified in much more delimited images and beings of evil, as occurs in Christian symbolism. The contrast between the bright and the good, on the one hand, and the dark and the bad, on the other, which often in the mythical vision of the god or the hero were inextricably linked, was openly abandoned and its complex character put aside. For example: Christ represents the good, and the opponent of Christ, the Devil, represents evil.

The concept of shadow in Jung is important for its complementarity with the affirmative forms of the self. We all have a dual aspect of self that manifests itself in dual archetypes- heroes/antiheroes, gods/demons. The Swiss psychologist relates this to the nature of our bicameral consciousness, as well as to the recognition of the incognito and mysterious aspect of the Self. For Campbell, the hero also represents contradictory aspects, and even with them, the double character, material/immaterial, of the human being and its relationship with life and death, is better expressed.

2.2.2. Myths and mass media

In modernity, the projection of the hero not only does not lose this dual character but is accentuated. We channel low energy (Jung, 2008; Aladro, 2013) when we figure in the heroes of our creation and creative fiction the ancient complex and mysterious forms of the dual hero. Modern heroes are duplicitous, tragic heroes, heroes despite themselves, heroes of dark aspects, or an equivocal nature. Duality also manifests itself in a double nature: inhuman/human heroes, living/dead heroes, or named/anonymous heroes. And one of the most persistent forms in the most modern creations is the heroes with a double moral or double moral face. These forms can also be interpreted as archetypes of the soul or psyche -which is also somewhat duplicitous- and, of course, as archetypes of current existence, marked by contradictions and indestructible polarities -nature and technology, love and selfishness, reason and feeling, etc.

What myths try at all times, with more or less root energy, is to put our existence in communication with our deepest spirit (Campbell, 2016) to integrate into it what can hardly be reconciled. This process, psychologically, is the union of opposites that interested Mircea Eliade so much in his studies on symbolism (Eliade, 1999; 2005). The union in a human axis, in a hero of opposite aspects, is a source of expressiveness in all cultures.

Mass communication and its projective systems introduce an important factor in revitalizing the bipolar aspects of heroes in their fictional stories and myths. This is so because this culture allows the materialization and reprojection of deep contents of the human psyche through its cultural industries: cinema, comics, radio, television,

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etc... As Morin analyzes, the world of imaginary projection that the technology of mass media generated in the twentieth century represents an important extension of the forms of heroes and myths (Morin, 2001).

This French author studies the "double" in the imaginary man of creative media communication. This "double" performs identification functions. In the "century of the Self", as the twentieth century has been baptized, the forms of heroes in cinema, novels, or comics present duality as a key factor in their origin, development, and identification capacity. The representation of the modern soul, thus, takes the form of duplicity that fits in with the double nature, material and imaginary, of mass culture.

There is a paradigmatic case when it comes to representing the functions of myth symbology in mass culture that responds to the archetype of the mystery of conjunction or "enantiodromia": Frankenstein's "cinemyth" (Picart, 2003). It is a hybrid, dual, human-inhuman being that expresses the reality of the impossible or irreconcilable in technology and science (Jung, 2002). It materializes, identifies, and naturalizes the human fear of a scientific or technological creation that can control and supplant the person. The expression of fears but also the expression of the discontinuities between technology and our bodies are calling out the myth of the Frankenstein.

Hence, the latest technological form of Frankenstein, the cyborg, stars in numerous current texts (films, series, novels, etc...) that function as dystopian shadows (Picart, 2003). It is also present in artificial intelligence, vigilante drones, or bots.

This myth has also ramified into sociopolitical physiognomies. Consider movements where the representation of group identity appears as a hybrid being, a mask or a "shadow": from the Anonymous group to the artist Banksy, from the Cyborg movement to the leaderless rebels of the yellow umbrellas in Hong Kong. These social change initiatives, using the language of creation, give strength to their collective action (Aladro, Jivkova, and Bailey, 2018).

Therefore, Frankenstein, the golem, the cyborg, or the artificial man in its digital forms integrate a symbolic chain with recidivism of mythology with a long cultural history that returns to the conformation of the current technological world. Through this connection, myths can exert the function of prompting evolutionary action. They can "encapsulate" (Miller and McHoul, 1998) vital contents of human existence, articulating irreconcilable dimensions in a new language and, thus, make social innovations and advances present, factual, and central.

2.2.3. Science fiction in the digital age

The heroes and villains of science fiction, a contemporary genre like few others, are very marked by these features of complementarity with the shadow and moral or natural ambiguity. It is in the modern world, both in mass culture and in high literary culture, where we find heroes like Frankenstein, Nosferatu, the magician Tiresias, or the Terminator.

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The double material nature but above all, the double moral nature, is an increasingly frequent trait. The audiovisual production of recent times has generated narratives for the villains of the series or movies (jokers, zombies, or serial killers) and many of the digital heroes have a dark (Anonymous) or unknown (Banksy) face. The precedents are very isolated and it is now when a greater frequency of this type of creations takes place.

How can we interpret this trend? We consider that, besides connecting with the dissociations and disjunctions of the contemporary world or with the imaginary development of mass culture, these ambivalent heroes, of double nature, are reconnecting with the deep modes of symbolic representation of the self that we find in ancient myths.

It is no coincidence that in the heroic modes of contemporary culture, whether fictional or real, dystopian identities make their way, with their full hybrid complexity. Thus, for example, as a case of cultural/social hybridization marked by features of modern heroes, we have the figure of Anonymous, the transgressive identity that leads a large youth movement.

The image of Anonymous is an interesting symbolization of contemporary identity, associated with an archetypal chain of great antiquity, which we have already mentioned. The anonymous hero is an important archetype of the personality, contradictory (enantiodromia) -he unites identification and anonymity in his idea- and responds to a long chain of representations of the hero -we remembered Campbell's monomyth-. But Anonymous anchors itself in the mass culture of the 20th century with the image of V, the protagonist of the science fiction comic *V for Vendetta* which, in turn, refers us much further back: to the mask of the English conspirator Guy Fawkes who tried to blow the British Parliament in the so-called "gunpowder conspiracy" (1605). In turn, the Mr. Robot series is directly inspired by the actions that Anonymous has developed.

Anonymous also links to channelings of a figure that reminds us of the Grim Reaper, the ghost, or the same symbolization of the rebellious Musketeer, along with the aforementioned seventeenth-century British hero. V, even endowed with a sign symbol such as this letter, currently translates an indefinite figure, whose valuation we cannot clearly associate with a hero or a villain. It is the reader of the comic, or whoever views the later 2005 film, who decides whether his actions are saving or vengeful, as the members of this community indicate. Identity and moral ambiguity are profound mythical traits.

In current cultural developments, dystopian heroes proliferate in science fiction, with aspects that are key in today's digital culture. As we have seen, there is indeed a connection between society and heroic formalizations, and in science fiction, it is possible to more clearly represent the connection, often contradictory, complex, and mysterious, between society and human imagination, on the one hand, and society

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and individual, on the other. At the root of those interactions is where the richness of the modern hero developments we are describing lies.

3.   METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research comprises a series of correlative methodological steps. The first of them has consisted of an in-depth bibliographic review of relevant authors regarding the categories of science fiction, dystopia, late capitalism, myths, and dual hero. The second step focused on reading the graphic novel *V for Vendetta* (1982-1990) and viewing the four seasons of the Mr. Robot series (2015-2019). The third step corresponds to the analysis of these two texts from the categories defined in the first step to determine their weight, especially that of the dual hero, in the narratives.

We have selected *V for Vendetta* and Mr. Robot because we believe that they summarize the response of science fiction and critical dystopia to the last 40 years of postmodernism dominated by neoliberalism. *V for Vendetta* covers the decade that reinforced the foundations of neoliberalism: it began to be published in 1982 and ended in 1990. It was directly inspired by the actions of the Government of Margaret Thatcher. As we know, both her and Reagan's political-economic-social vision reinforce this ideology-system that was used by Pinochet's Chile (1974-1981) and Videla's Argentina (1976-1981) as laboratories. Mr. Robot begins airing in 2015 and ends in 2019. It is directly inspired by the 2008 crisis and its subsequent consequences, to the point of including images of the news and real-life leaders.

We believe that this temporal amplitude is necessary since our object of study is the double hero in two critical dystopias framed in science fiction that try to respond to the contradictions of the global, interconnected, and profoundly unequal society.

4.   DISCUSSION
4.1.   Science fiction and critical dystopia in late capitalism in *V for Vendetta*

Novell proposes a classification that determines to what degree science fiction dominates a narrative through three concepts: genre, mode, and formula. In this sense, we can say that in *V for Vendetta* science fiction is a genre because "without the science fiction content the story decays and is, in fact, impossible" (2008, p. 267).

The chronotope of *V for Vendetta*, written in the 80s, is the England of 1997 in which totalitarianism dominates after the destruction and chaos of a nuclear World War that has made Africa and Europe disappear. The hero, V, was interned in the Larkhill concentration camp where Dr. Delia Surridge conducted a biological experiment. V was the only one who survived and his capabilities skyrocketed. He blew up the field and planned solo revenge for which these triggered capabilities are critical.

The objective of this revenge, above his own satisfaction, is to end an unjust system founded on fear, violence, and control. The latter is achieved, fundamentally, through a series of departments controlled by the leader of the governing fascist party, Nordic Fire. These departments correspond to parts of the body and the

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senses: the head, the finger (anti-vice), the eye (video surveillance), the ear (telephone surveillance), the nose, and the mouth (media).

V for Vendetta is part of the so-called social science fiction since it focuses "on the future of humanity based on certain premises, such as a natural or man-made catastrophe" (López Keller, 1991, p. 21). Man has caused a nuclear world war that has made Nordic Fire implant a dictatorial system for which the latest technology is essential.

The real inspiration for this dystopia, according to its screenwriter, Alan Moore, is Thatcherist England characterized by promoting free markets and privatizations (including education), reducing taxes, and weakening unions. From a social point of view, Thatcher supported the so-called "nuclear family" or "natural family" over other types (Thomas, 1993) and opposed HIV awareness campaigns, which she considered "in bad taste" and that "they could harm adolescents" (Bowcott, 2015).

4.2. V as a dual hero

V's experience in Larkhill caused him terrible suffering but it also made him reflect on the importance of being true to oneself as well as fighting to overthrow the system that oppressed, harassed, tortured, and even experimented with him. The elite that concentrates power abuses it by humiliating, raping, and killing individuals who lack any type of autonomy and live under anesthesia, and are controlled by the media and technologies.

In the comic, we see how V, who believed in democracy, is deeply disappointed in it when it gives way to totalitarianism. Symbolically, it is represented in the subjectivity that he develops with the statue of justice in chapter 5 of book 1:

> V: I've been admiring you for a long time... although only from a distance. I used to look at you from down the street when I was a kid. I used to say to my father: who is that lady? And he told me: she is the madam justice. And I said, isn't she precious? Please don't think it was just a physical thing. I know you're not that kind of girl. No. I loved you as a person, as an ideal. That was a long time ago. I'm afraid that now there is another (…) Honestly, I was not surprised when I found out. You always had a soft spot for men in uniform (…) It's called anarchy and it has taught me more as a lover than you have in your whole life. She has taught me that justice is meaningless without freedom. It is honest. It makes no promises. And it doesn't break them. Not like you, Jezabel (Moore and Lloyd, 2015, 40-41).

V's inner journey as a hero is a transition from democracy to anarchy. In an interview, Moore explained that:

> Anarchy means there are no leaders, and that seems to imply that if you are not going to follow a leader, then that would require you to become your own leader, which to me seems to involve taking responsibility for yourself, your

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thoughts, and your actions. What I think is the first step to get seriously at something. Fascism, at the other extreme, is a complete abdication of responsibility. It's putting all the responsibility on the State so that in war crimes trials you can say: I was just obeying orders. These, to me, seem to be the two poles of politics, fascism and anarchy. Everything else almost seems like a scale between them (Richards, 2011).

V's objective, therefore, is to overthrow totalitarianism to make people free and, from this freedom and with responsibility, decide what system they want to build.

Anarchy has two faces, the creator and the destroyer: destroyers overthrow empires; they create a canvas of rubble where creators can build a better world. The rubble, once collected, makes the means of obtaining it irrelevant. So, off with the explosives! (Moore and Lloyd, 2015, p. 222).

For the sake of this goal, he will sacrifice his own life because as he says: "There is no flesh or blood left to kill under this cloak. There is only one idea. Ideas are bulletproof" (Moore and Lloyd, 2015, p. 236).

So far, we see the part of V that corresponds to the values of the classic hero. He will help the young woman who is going to be raped by Bishop Lilliman, a pedophile, and Evey Hammond, a 16-year-old orphan girl when she is about to suffer the same fate at the hands of anti-vice officers (fingers). He gets rid of the leader of the party, members of its main organizations, and all those who murdered, tortured, and experimented with prisoners in Larkhill. He uses violence against a violent regime and its criminals.

However, the duality of this hero is clearly seen in his treatment of Evey. He takes her to the place where he lives and teaches her different things. Until one day, without notifying her, he throws her out. Evey manages to survive thanks to a party member who takes her into his home. A few months later, she begins a romantic relationship with him but he is murdered.

V comes back for her but, this time, he imprisons her, making her believe that those responsible are the anti-vice agents. He beats, threatens, and tortures her trying to get her to confess that she is V's accomplice and sign a written statement. Finally, when Evey shows that she won't sign it and doesn't mind being killed, V frees her. He does it because he believes that she has come to understand the essence of human existence: being true to oneself, to one's own convictions, comes before anything.

Because I love you. Because I want you to be free (…) You were already in jail. You have been in jail your whole life (…) I have not imprisoned you, Evey. I have only shown you the bars (…) You were in a cell, Evey. They offered you a choice between the death of your principles and the death of your body. You said you'd rather die (Moore and Lloyd, 2015, p. 167-171).

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Evey goes from being a disciple to a teacher: after her transformation, she becomes V's substitute, and, like him, at the end of the comic we understand that she will train someone else to replace her.

The shadow of V, therefore, is in believing that for someone to get rid of all the training to which the regime has subjected them, it is necessary that they suffer in the extreme, that they go through a traumatic experience such as confinement, beatings, and torture. He is cruel and extremely violent with an innocent person, a victim of the same totalitarianism as him because he believes that if they do not go through the same experience as him, they will never transform.

4.3. Critical dystopia in late capitalism in Mr. Robot

At the genre level, Mr. Robot fits the psychological thriller and the technothriller. We believe that it is not framed within science fiction either as a genre or as a mode although it reflects on the use we give to technology and the unfair, false, and lacking intimacy society to which it has given rise. However, there are two aspects of the series that can be linked to science fiction as a formula. When speaking of formula, following Novell again, we refer to "the most iconic or representative elements" of the macro-genre without "their significance as an innovative science fiction idea and they become gadgets, environments, or characters (...) It is not structural or content, and it is revealed rather as an aggregate without which the text can function perfectly" (Novell, 2008, p. 272 and 273). These two aspects are the project of the leader of the Dark Army, White Rose, to build a machine that allows reviving people and the fact that Tyrell Wellick, with the support of the Dark Army, manages to hack the E Corp networks and blow up 71 of its buildings at the same time.

The dystopia that Mr. Robot describes is similar to the reality of today's society. The global society of 2015 that the series represents synecdochically throughout New York City is sustained by a savage and dehumanized capitalism that has generated profound differences between the classes. It is also a digital society in which the daily life of individuals and their actions are governed by the use of new technologies and apps: mobile phones, computers, social networks, etc... Internet and its derivatives, technologies configured to leave traces of the slightest search or movement are the basis of social control. In fact, the series understands the Internet as a tool specifically designed to "control citizens" (4x02) who are continuously offering information to the system.

It is, moreover, a false society in the sense of feigned or simulated. Most of the people Elliot hacks simulate a life on social media that doesn't correspond to reality. In some cases, they also carry out illegal activities.

Finally, it is an alienated society where individuals allow themselves to be distracted and deceived by different cultural products that prevent them from reflecting on the system in which they live.

> Elliot: Shitty society (…)!

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> Krista: What is it about society that disappoints you so much?
>
> Elliot: I don't know. Can it be that we all think that Steve Jobs was a great man even when we learned that he made millions at the expense of children? Or maybe because all of our heroes are a fraud? The world itself is a great deception. We boycott each other with shitty comments by disguising ourselves for it. Our social network pretends to be privacy. Or do we vote for that? Not in fraudulent elections but with things and belongings. With our money. I'm not saying anything new. We all know why *The Hunger Games* makes us happy. Because we want to be sedated. Because it's painful not to pretend. Because we are cowards. Shitty society! (1x 01).

In it, there is an elite that concentrates all the material and financial resources.

> Elliot: What I'm about to tell you is top secret. A conspiracy bigger than all of us. A powerful group of people secretly run the world. I'm talking about the guys that nobody knows and are invisible. 1% of 1%. The guys who play God without permission. And now I think they are following me (1x01).

The super corporation E Corp (Evil Corp), inspired by Enron (Hernández Santaolalla and Hermida, 2016), behind which is the Deus group, similar to the Bildelberg Club, represents in a synecdochical way that 1%, the political-business elite who wears black business suits and has a direct influence on world events: from wars to economic crises. This elite controls the destiny of society through money and technologies.

The two cases that function as a paradigm of the victims of the system are the beggar who lets Tyrell Wellyck beat him up in exchange for 300 dollars and Elliot's girlfriend in the first season, Shayla, who does not want to denounce Fernando Vera, the man that raped her, because he is the one who provides her with the drugs that she later sells to survive. Elliott Alderson wants to transform this dystopia into a utopia through his computer skills.

> Elliot: Sometimes I dream of saving the world. Saving everyone from the invisible hand. The one that gives us the employee card. The one that forces us to work for them. The one that controls us every day without us knowing it. But I can't stop it. I am not that special. I'm just an anonymous. And I'm alone (1x01).

Núñez Ladevéze (1985, p. 50) explains when reflecting on Orwell's *1984* that it is "a dystopia in the etymological and testimonial sense of the term, in the sense in which it can be said that at its origin there was a utopia, a place of nowhere that when finding its *topos*, its earthly place, becomes a bad place". This can be applied to today's society in which the Mr. Robot narrative is inspired. Since ancient times it was believed that technology would liberate man (Prometheus myth). However, in the globalized society of 2015 that is synecdochically represented through the

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adventures of the group of New York hackers, technology is the main ally of the savage and dehumanized capitalism that E Corp embodies.

On the other hand, technology is also Elliot's main ally, which will help him strike a blow at the system with the aim that citizens can build a fairer one, where there is dignity and freedom. However, as will be seen as the series progresses, Elliot's utopia turns into a dystopia again.

4.4. Elliot Alderson as a dual hero

During the first two seasons of the series, Elliot is shown as a hero driven by his desire for social justice that leads him to risk his life and put his wisdom at the service of the cause he leads. The objective of the May 9th Revolution is to overthrow an unjust system, in which an elite acts in a tyrannical way, by exploiting, alienating, and making a majority of citizens unhappy.

Elliot wants to end E Corp to avenge the death of his father, victim of a toxic spill from the company but, above all, as we have already indicated, to free the citizens from their chains. However, as the plot thickens as the results of the revolution are opposite to those expected, we will see some haughty, reckless, and violent behavior in him.

Duality is a fundamental component of Elliot. It is clearly reflected in the dissociative identity disorder that he suffers and is materialized in the struggle between two of his personalities: Mastermind and Mr. Robot. Although most of the time he adopts a behavior based on introversion, doubt, and shyness, there are occasions when, as we have just indicated, arrogance, recklessness, and violence dominate him.

Arrogance and violence are reflected, above all, in several episodes of the third season. For example, when Mr. Robot addresses Krista, Elliot's psychiatrist, as "sweetheart," "beautiful," "lady," "sexy," and "foxy."

> Mr. Robot: Elliot never told me how attractive you were. For being a psychiatrist, you are quite sexy (…) Come on! Have you ever thought of hooking up with one of your patients? (…) Wow! Pretty and smart (…) You don't understand shit! You're just another fake woman who pretends to be a friend" (3x02).

> Mr. Robot: I'm glad to see you again, beautiful (…) Look around you, beautiful! (…) Put the news on, babe! (3x07).

Mr. Robot behaves arrogant and violent again as he points a gun at Wellick and hits him.

> Mr. Robot: Never appeal to the goodness of a man. He may not have any (…) Don't forget whose plan it is.

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Tyrell Wellick: I used to think you were a god. I adored you. Now I see how stupid I was and how inferior you are. You are a cockroach! It's the last time you screw up. I take command. So, this is no longer your plan, it's mine.

M.R: (hits him against the wall). Listen to me, you fucking Swedish! This is my revolution. I am its creator, understood? If you are here, it is because I allow it. Remember I could have pulled that trigger twice (3x04).

With Krista, he boasts of being the creator of the May 9th Revolution.

Krista: So, you're a May 9th collaborator.

Mr. Robot: A collaborator? None of that! I am the creator! (…)

K: To be honest with you, Mr. Robot, it seems like delusions of grandeur (…)

M.R.: Wellick? No. He worked for me. But neither you nor the rest of the world will ever know because you will continue to swallow with delight those pearls of sugary semen that they put in your mouth (3x07).

As Mastermind, he prides himself before the White Army on being the best in his field.

Mastermind: While you were sitting idly by, missing deadlines and doing nothing, I designed a program that would solve all your problems (…)

White Rose's Helper: You're just a hacker. Why do you think you are better than an entire army of people just like you?

Mastermind: Because I am. I did something in one day that you guys couldn't do in months (3x10).

However, there will be times when Mastermind and Mr. Robot strike a balance, that is, the two cooperate. It is seen in the fourth season and at the end of the sixth episode of the third season (3x06) when Mastermind explains to Mr. Robot that Wellick and the Dark Army are risking it. They manage to stop the explosion at the E Corp building in New York but do not know that 71 other buildings are exploding throughout the United States.

There is a key moment in the series from the point of view of Elliot's duality on the ethical-moral ground. In the sixth chapter of the fourth season (4x06) he uses a person as a means to achieve his end. He will extort Olivia, a worker at the National Bank of Cyprus, an entity in which the Dark Army and the Deus Group have all their accounts. He asks her to call her boss so that he can enter the Bank system so that he can learn its passwords. She refuses and Mastermind threatens her that she will lose custody of her son.

Elliot: What will happen if you don't pass the drug test?

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Olivia: What did you say?

E: I know about your custody fight. If you test positive for Oxycodone...

O: What the hell are you talking about? I've been clean for eight years.

E: No, you're not. (Then Olivia realizes that the coffee Elliot brought her contained drugs.)

O: Did you drug me?

E: I had to make sure that you would listen to me (…) If you don't do what I say, you lose your son.

O: Why are you doing this?

E: Time was running out. It was the easiest way to convince you (4x06).

Under pressure, Olivia breaks down and attempts suicide. Mastermind insists that she make the call.

Elliot: I was able to stop the bleeding. You'll be fine. Sorry.

Olivia: I don't believe you.

Elliot: (Elliot hands her the cell phone to call her boss). I will erase all traces of your participation and that of your boss. Nothing will be linked to you.

Olivia: You know? I may work for monsters but you are one. And you're the worst kind because you don't even know it (4x06)

Previously, Elliot dominated by Mastermind had earned Olivia's trust by making her believe that they were meeting by chance in a bar. He sleeps with her, listens to her problems, and shares his own.

5.   CONCLUSIONS

Both texts present two political-social systems in which citizens are totally dominated. Although *V for Vendetta* is framed in totalitarianism similar to Nazism and Mr. Robot in a society like today's, technologies are the key to control in both. They are used to disseminate discourses that contain a series of ideas and values without which the system would be impossible.

As we have exposed, in archetypal forms and myths, the hero appears marked by dualities, symbolisms of confrontation, and contradictory aspects. In its deepest aspect, the hero, who represents the projection of identity, is always marked by his "shadow", by mysterious, dark, or uncontrolled aspects of the self. The evolution of science fiction and critical dystopia is undoubtedly related to the expression of this dual-nature hero but elements must be added in this evolution that explain why an

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important part of the protagonists and heroes of modern and postmodernist texts have traits of moral ambivalence, logical contradiction, or straddle between unreconcilable universes from other points of view.

In this sense, in the two analyzed texts, science fiction and critical dystopia function as a social mirror for a civilization that is unable to think about a utopian future. Hence, its protagonists are heroes with a double moral nature or an ambiguity in their values. Thus, late capitalism appears as a time in which contradictions, frustrations, and civilizational decadence are channeled into the forms of ambivalent, amoral, or criminal heroes at times.

This aspect connects with dystopian social criticism and can be a way of satisfying or profiting from the frustration, resentment, or impotence of the audience. *V for Vendetta* and Mr. Robot are examples of critical dystopias that offer a kind of revenge or compensation. They also reflect the confusion in values in late capitalism. V and Elliot Alderson are not villains or evildoers. Their behavior and adventure highlight a difficult life career, on the edge of normality and morality.

They exemplify the transition towards a science fiction genre in which there are more and more heroes of a gloomy, anomalous, or abnormal nature who are the projection of human identity in the current ecosystem characterized by the loss of value of the great stories of the past.

It remains to be argued whether these traits are really new or a simple modulation of the timeless forms of the dual hero archetype, transplanted into a particularly dark era, which will finally pass.

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