VICTIM-NAMING IN THE MURDER MYSTERY TV SERIES *TWIN PEAKS*: A CORPUS-STYLISTIC STUDY.

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ABSTRACT
Corpus linguistics is advancing rapidly in the study of a wide variety of genres but is still in its infancy in the study of TV series, a genre consumed daily by millions of viewers. Murder mystery series are one of the most popular and proliferous, but no studies, to date, have used corpus-stylistics methodologies in the analysis of the pivotal character of the victim in the whole narrative. This paper applies said methodology in the hope of shedding some light on the quantitative and qualitative relationship between the participation roles of the characters, and the frequency and distribution of victim-naming choices in the dialogue of the first two seasons of the acclaimed TV series *Twin Peaks*. The analysis proves that textual reference to the victim is a central genre-cohesive device which may serve as a waymark to guide the audience throughout the many subplots of the series.

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1. INTRODUCTION

For centuries, true and fictional crime have been a matter of study in a wide array of disciplines both outside and within criminology (e.g., psychology, economics, biology, medicine, sociology, literature), although modern crime fiction as we know it today started in the 19th century. Crime has been ascertained as one of the most recurrent topics featuring in practically all commercial genres, thanks to its easy adaptation to any media: print, radio, television, film, graphic novel, computer games, virtual reality and new technologies (Alexander 2010). In the past few years, fictional television murder mysteries have thrived. *Murder mysteries* is here used as an umbrella term for drama and comedy crime, detective and procedural genres whose plot revolves around solving the mystery of a murder rather than other types of crime (e.g., mugging, blackmail, rape, etc.). To date, only Netflix, one of the leading streaming platforms, has published on its Mystery Tribune webpage (2019) a report on a selection of the best 57 murder mystery series on crime. While most are fairly short-lived, some others like *Twin Peaks* (ABC 1990-1991), the object of study in this paper, have long pervaded our culture.

For a text to be culturally recognised as belonging to a particular genre or text-type, say Murder Mystery Series (henceforth MMS), it must fulfil certain criteria. *Genre* and *text-type* are often interchangeably used in the literature (McEnery et al. 2006). Similarly, the concept of television genre (Mittell 2004) is still fuzzy, although it is widely used to identify different types of programmes for audience and production purposes. Biber (1989) distinguished between 'external' and 'internal' criteria (cf. Atkins et al. 1992; Lee 2001) when classifying texts to construct a corpus for linguistic analysis. External criteria are essentially non-linguistic, such as purpose, audience and activity type, while internal criteria are defined linguistically. Once the text is captured and subject to analysis, there will be a range of linguistic features that can contribute to its characterisation in terms of internal evidence, such as the distribution of words, and the lexical or grammatical features throughout the corpus. Unfortunately, as Lee (2001) argues, there are "as yet, no widely-accepted or established text-type categories consisting of texts which cut across traditionally recognised genres on the basis of internal linguistic features". Atkins et al. (1992) already highlighted that internal criteria are not independent of the external ones and that the interrelation between them is of primary value for corpus studies.

The present paper is an attempt to contribute to this line of research by exploring the linguistic choices for 'victim-naming' (Tabbert 2015) that characters use to refer to the victim of murder, *Laura Palmer*, in a corpus that contains the dialogues of the first two seasons of the MMS *Twin Peaks*. The analysis set out to explore internal as well as external criteria. I looked at the distribution and relationship between the linguistic choices (internal criteria) that characters used for naming the victim, such as: *name, name + surname, noun phrase* and to their participation role (Dynel 2011; Brock 2015; Messerli 2017) as 'investigators, perpetrators, victims, the community' and 'others' (external criteria). The present article contributes to fill a niche in the field of linguistics and TV studies (Jenner 2016) by analysing the function of certain linguistic features, such as the choice of naming (Gregori-Signes 2020), in the dialogues of television series. Ultimately, the article seeks to propose a tentative but replicable analytical framework that uses *victim-naming* as a benchmark to study character relationships in MMS.

During the Golden Age of Detective Fiction (1920s and 1930s), plots became more complex, usually involving more than one crime - one of them a murder - and a large number of characters, many of whom were suspects. The place and the community in which the crimes occurred were also given more prominence. There is quite general agreement among scholars that there are three basic participation roles (Todorov 1977; Gregoriou 2007) in modern crime fiction: the *investigator/s*, the *perpetrator/s* and the *victim/s*. According to Messerli (2017: 26), the participation framework (Goffman 1981; Schiffrin 1987) of a murder mystery captures both the relations between speakers and the relation of those speakers to their own discourse and that of other characters (Gregori-Signes 2005), as well as to the relevant participants outside the fictional artefact (Kozloff 2000). Thus, the characters' choices to refer to the victim (e.g., *my daughter, my best friend*) in *Twin Peaks* will possibly reveal how they relate to the victim of murder *Laura Palmer.*

In the real world, victims are a fundamental object of study in a wide array of disciplines, such as victimology, social justice, criminology, psychology and education, among others (cf. Davies et al. 2007; Petherick and Sinnamon 2017), whereas in fiction, the victim of murder has often been disregarded as the least important role (Wright 1946: 40 in Gregoriou 2007: 58). The difference between reality and fiction is that in MMS, as its name suggests, the victim is (potentially) dead and the audience will (most probably) know how and why s/he has been murdered when the narrative closes. In real life,

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this is not always the case, as the large number of unsolved murders proves.

Previous studies on the victim in mystery fiction come from fields other than linguistic-oriented disciplines (e.g., literary studies, media and cultural studies). Mills's (2020), study of young women's victimhood in Hughes' novel *In a Lonely Place,* in line with previous works, claims that the victim is one piece of a puzzle, a necessary point of contact between the victim and the detective (cf. Pyrhönen 1999). Lloyd (2013) discusses how insistent the voices of the dead can be in the solving of a fictional crime, while Bolin (2018: 21) asserts that the victim's memory is in itself a character. Along the same lines, Knight (2004: 87-8) claims that, in the context of post-war fiction:

> The victim has some wealth and authority [...]. Most of the real suspects will be relatives or close associates of the important dead person, and they will almost all have something to hide that makes them become what Wells (1913) recommended as a series of suspects.

Knight's (2004) description would probably fit not only *Laura Palmer*, the victim in *Twin Peaks*, but many other fictional victims in murder mysteries. In the case of *Twin Peaks*, when the world saw the image of LP wrapped in a white plastic bag, billions of viewers became concerned, week after week, about her fate, her problems and her true identity (Susca 2018). Finding out "Who killed Laura Palmer" became material for newspapers, magazines, TV chat shows and radio programmes (Alexander 1993: 128). These circumstances turned LP into, possibly, the most famous victim of murder in the history of TV. In this regard, *Twin Peaks* could probably be held partly responsible for the "American obsession" with "the dead girl on the show" (Bolin 2018) a tendency still present in many television series nowadays (e.g., *True Detective*, *Shetland*, *Sharp Objects*, *The Killing*, *Dublin Murders*).Corpus stylistic and corpus discourse analysis on the dialogue of television series (Gregori-Signes 2017) is a growing field of interest, as the many publications available indicate (cf. Bednarek and Zago 2019 for an updated bibliography). Linguistic studies on MMS and, in particular, those that focus on the role of the victim are, however, still scarce. Outside of fiction, Tabbert's (2015) critical linguistic and computational corpus study compares UK and German press *victim-naming* as well as the referring terms for crime, victims and offenders. A recent publication by Menti (2019) applies corpus linguistics methodologies (frequency lists, keywords and concordancing) to study media representations of crime, criminals and victims in two TV series, BBC's *Sherlock* and American CBS's *Elementary.* Menti concludes that the most frequent victims are men, although the crimes fall on a broader range of criminal activity rather than just murder.

In this article, the analysis of *victim-naming* in *Twin Peaks* made use of critical corpus stylistic techniques (Stubbs 2005; Mahlberg and Wiegand 2018; McIntyre and Walker 2019), thus relying on computational methods to uncover patterns that would have been difficult to obtain without the use of computers. The decision to analyse victim-naming was corpus-driven (Tognini-Bonelli 2001), after a first quantitative exploration which indicated the convenience to explore further the co-text of the forms *Laura/ Laura Palmer.* The main assumption preceding the analysis was that the victim was central to the narrative, since there is no MMS without a (potential) victim. If this were the case, this should somehow be reflected in the dialogue. The results confirmed that the frequency and distribution of victim-naming among characters acts as a key cohesive feature and a pivotal structuring element in the corpus.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 justifies the choice of the TV series *Twin Peaks* as an object of study. Section 3 briefly delves into the levels of communication and the participation roles of characters in MMS. Section 4 places victim-naming analysis within the realm of corpus stylistics, describes the corpus and outlines the methodology. Section 5 illustrates the analysis, while section 6 draws the conclusions and final considerations.

2. WHY *TWIN PEAKS*? WHY LAURA PALMER?

Twin Peaks, the object of study in this article, revolutionised and opened up the 'golden age of television'. It is considered a cult ground-breaking TV serial, a forerunner of high-quality television and a necessary referent for anyone interested in television series. As claimed by many critics, very few series can be said to have influenced the genre as much as *Twin Peaks* did. Furthermore, the interest in *Twin Peaks* was recently revived with the broadcast of its third season, *The Return* (2017), which increased the already large number of publications dedicated to *Twin Peaks* as a whole (Innocenti et al. 2016).

The storyline in *Twin Peaks* circles around the murder of seventeen-year-old homecoming queen Laura Palmer,

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with Special Agent Dale Cooper heading the investigation into the murder. *Twin Peaks* has been described as a hybrid TV series where we can find soap opera, murder mystery, horror, (melo)drama, comedy, and high school romance with heavy tinges of surrealism and fantasy**.** However, the centrality of the murder plot, the focus of this article, is recognised by many publications as the main plotline for the whole series.

Several reasons support the choice of *Twin Peaks* to explore the role of the victim of murder. First, I firmly believe that the study of newer products becomes more comprehensible when compared to the classics. At the time when it was premiered, *Twin Peaks* was the first to break the generic mould of television MMS (Hartwig 2013) by carrying out the investigation of a crime over two seasons. Until then, most series featured a different crime every week. Secondly, *Twin Peaks* is the only case in the history of television which has effectively "tested" the consequences that "the disappearance of the victim" had for the plot and the audience. When the two producers, Mark Frost and David Lynch, were forced by ABC to reveal the *whodunnit*, the series began its downward spiral and the narrative derived in a series of unsuccessful, unrelated-to-the-murder subplots (Hoffman and Grace 2017). Thirdly, because, as argued in the introduction, no other victim in the history of TV has surpassed the boundaries of fiction in the way Laura Palmer did.

We should mention that, as is the case with other MMS, there are other victims of murder, both potential (for example, Andrew, Josie's husband, who had allegedly been murdered, turns out to be alive in episode 2.11), and actual victims. Very briefly, murder victims in season 1 are the following: Bernie Renault is murdered by Leo Johnson, and Jacques Renault by Leland. In season 2, Emory Battis is shot by Jean Renault and Blackie O'Reilly is stabbed by Jean Renault; a bodyguard is stabbed by Hawk; Maddy, LP's cousin, is murdered by Leland; Cooper shoots Jean Renault; Erik Powell is stabbed by Windom Earle; Jonathan Kumagai is shot by Josie Packard; Malcom Sloan shot by Evelyn Marsh; Rusty Tomasky shot with a crossbow by Windom Earle; Leo Johnson shot dead by Earle; Hank Jennings was stabbed by inmates in his prison. Additionally, several other characters die by intentional accidents. Despite the high number of victims, the main one around whom the murder plot develops is undoubtedly Laura Palmer.

The confluence of the factors mentioned in this section makes *Twin Peaks* an ideal candidate to explore the relationship between victim-naming and the participation roles of the different characters in the narrative. The present research, however, is based on extensive viewing of both contemporary and less recent crime fiction serials, and, in particular those series that feature women as victims.

3. PARTICIPATION FRAMEWORK AND PARTICIPATION ROLES IN MURDER MYSTERY SERIES

Goffman (1981) introduced the terms participation status/role and participation framework (Clark 1992) as a means to analyse the various interactional roles played by the different people involved in an interactional setting (Schiffrin 1987). Drawing on Goffman's (1981) categories, studies on television discourse point out the existence of two basic levels of communication (Burger 1984, Richardson 2010, Dynel 2011, Brock 2015, Messerli 2017), the fictional and the real one. Level (1) or the *external circle* (Burger 1984) is the communication level between the *collective sender* (i.e., writers, directors, producers etc.) and the audience. Level (2) is the *inter-character* (Dynel 2011), or the fictional level, in which characters communicate with each other. This research analyses the dialogue at the fictional level, although it recurs to external sources in order to contextualise certain twists in the narrative, which may have been caused by external facts,

	Participation role	Realisations	Twin-Peaks' characters
Compulsory	Victim/s	people	Laura Palmer
		(other)	
	Investigator/s	law-enforcement	Cooper
		representatives	Sheriff Truman
		amateurs	Donna
		casual	
	Perpetrators	people	Bob/Leland
		(other)	
Optional	The Community	suspects	Leo
		accomplices	Jacques Renault
		family relations	Maddy, Sarah
		social relations	Donna, James
	Other	animals	Waldo, a parrot
		fantastic beings	Bob

TABLE 1. PARTICIPATION ROLES IN MURDER MYSTERY SERIES.

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such as the early revelation of *whodunnit* in episode 2.07. Following Bednarek (2018: 7), I use the term *dialogue* to refer to speech by one, two or more characters as well as between several characters. This would include monologues, dialogues as well as voice-over narration and asides.

As reported in the literature on MMS, there are three compulsory participation roles (Cawelti 1976, Todorov 1977, Gregoriou 2007) in the inter-character level in MMS: the *investigator/s*, the *victim/s* and the *perpetrator*/s. To this I would add two more categories: *The community* and *Other*. Table 1 illustrates with examples each of these categories by resorting to characters that appear in *Twin Peaks*.

In its simplest version, MMS plots involve at least one victim murdered by a perpetrator who will be pursued by the investigators. The family and the social relations will resent the death of the victim and acclaim or regret the actions of the investigators. However, participation roles are dynamic, can have multiple realisations (e.g., more than one victim) and may be enacted by different social categories (police, strangers, thieves, neighbours, women, wives etc.), that is, the same character may embrace more than one role (e.g., in *Twin Peaks*, Dr. Hayman is a friend of LP but also the doctor in charge of the forensic report). Participation roles can also fluctuate within the same episode, or from season to season (a suspect stops being so), according to plot development and denouement. Besides, all categories are susceptible of becoming optional, as in those series in which the plot revolves around alleged murder cases. That is, the alleged victim and perpetrator stop being so when the victim is known to be alive.

The *investigators* are characters that get involved in the criminal investigation either as law enforcement representatives (detectives, policemen), amateurs (e.g., Agatha Christie's Miss Marple, Kerry Greenwood's Miss Fisher) or laypeople (other characters who get involved in the crime investigation). At the same time, the degree to which they may get involved in the murder investigation may vary (a journalist in *Sharp Objects* vs. Cooper, an FBI agent in *Twin Peaks). The community* is here used as a broad term to refer to the participation role of characters that are related either to the victim (e.g., people in the same village, friends, even the killer him/herself etc.) or to the crime (Todorov 1977). Finally, *Other* characters are those that are not human (e.g., animals or fantastic beings). For example, an alpaca is decapitated in *The Stranger* (Netflix, 2020).

As for the victim, a MMS must have at least a (potential) victim. Very often, as the series progresses, victims will add up. For instance, in the first and second season of *The Killing* (AMC, 2011-2014), two members of the Police Force (Sarah Linden and Stephen Holder) investigate the death of a teenager, Rosie (the only victim), while, in the third season, the same investigation leads to discover the crimes of a serial killer, who happens to be Linden's former partner, James Skinner, the leader of the Seattle Police Department's Special Investigations Unit.

An example of innovation and plurality in the manipulation of participation roles can be seen in the acclaimed series *How to Get Away with Murder* (ABC, 2014-2020). The first season of the series features Annalise Keating, a law professor at the prestigious Middleton University and a prominent criminal law attorney who becomes entwined in a murder plot with four of her five interns-students (multiple killers) and her two employees (Frank and Bonnie). There are multiple victims (Liza, Rebecca Stutter, Sam) and multiple suspects, which are presented through an abundance of *in medias res*, flashbacks and flashforwards, which will only eventually be solved for the audience. In turn, a whole community can also be guilty of complicity (*The Gloaming*, ABC, 2014-2020). The heterogeneity and multiple realisation of participation roles should therefore be conceived as fluid and dynamic (Clark 1992, Brock 2015: 31) since possible combinations are innumerable. Although, as is generally admitted, the genre still remains true to its origins and aims.

4. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

4.1. The study corpus

The study corpus contains the first two seasons of *Twin Peaks,* as illustrated in Table 2 below. The third season was discarded, since it was broadcast 25 years later (*Twin Peaks:*

Season	Episodes	Originally aired		
		First aired	Last aired	Network
1	8 (100-107)	April 8, 1990	May 23, 1990	ABC
2	22 (201-222)	September 30, 1990	June 10, 1991	ABC
3	18	May 21, 2017	September 3, 2017	Showtime

TABLE 2. *TWIN PEAKS* SEASONS

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The Return), and the plot had moved away from the murder of Laura Palmer, already solved in episode 7.02.

For the purposes of the study, a main corpus (Corpus A) and a subcorpus (Corpus B) were built. The transcripts were retrieved from different online sources and the texts were manually checked, cleaned and annotated. It was necessary to format the corpus so that it could be processed with the software toolkit AntConc (2019).

The main corpus contains 117,919 tokens and 7,903 word types. *Twin Peaks* has more than 175 characters[1] (16 main, 6 secondary, 34 recurring casts- according to Wikipedia and others), so Corpus B includes only those characters that use *Laura/Palmer* (henceforth stands for both Laura and Laura Palmer) more than 5 times, a subjective threshold that was set after checking the total number of times *Laura/Palmer* was used in the dialogues.

Corpus A. Twin Peaks. Seasons 1 and 2
Corpus B. Individual files for selected characters

TABLE 3. STUDY CORPORA

4.2. Corpus Stylistics and Victim-naming

Corpus Stylistics (Mahlberg and Wiegand 2018; McIntyre and Walker 2019), the methodology applied for the analysis of the victim-naming in *Twin Peaks*, resorts to a combination of methodologies associated with corpus linguistics (CL) and stylistics in order to study the nature of texts. Stylistics (Carter and Simpson 1989; Malhberg 2013; Mahlberg and Wiegand 2018) is often described as the study of the language of literary texts. CL can be defined as the study of language based on examples of 'real life' language use, supported by software that "acts as an aid to the researcher by allowing the linguistic data to be quickly surveyed" (McEnery and Baker 2015: 2). As argued by Tabbert (2015), CL follows the principles of rigour, transparency and replicability by relying on statistics and computational methods that help uncover linguistic patterns, which are difficult to obtain when we try to process large quantities of data without using computers.

Among the 10 textual-conceptual categories that Jeffries (2010:15) describes as useful for the critical analyst to find out "what a text is doing" are *naming* and *describing.* Jeffries (2010) claims that *naming* is a broad descriptive term covering a number of linguistic practices: a) the choice of a noun to indicate a referent; b) the construction of a noun phrase with modifiers to further determine the nature of the referent; c) the decision to use a 'name' rather than, for example, express as a (verbal) process. The study of *naming* is related to that of *forms of address* (Jefferson 1973; Leech 1999; Wood and Kroger 1991; Bednarek 2011; Formentelli 2019; Gregori-Signes 2020). Biber et al. (1999: 1108) expound that vocatives (cf. McCarthy and O'Keeffe 2003) can take many forms: endearments (*darling*), family terms (*Mummy*), familiarisers (*mate, bro*), familiarised first names (*Paulie*), full first names (*Dianne*), title and surname (*Miss Johns*), honorifics (*Sir*); and others, such as nicknames (*you reds*), and even elaborated nominal structures such as: *those of you who want to bring your pets along.* Tabbert (2015: 103-4) argues that:

> the nominal reference for a victim is one of the major constructive devices because it can foreground certain aspects of the victim's personality (Clark 1992: 211). The lexical choice of one word over another creates a map (Fowler 1991: 82) which attributes values (Mayr and Machin 2012: 28) [...] By foregrounding the victim's relations to other people as in the categories 'social role' and 'family relations', these naming choices construct the victim as being part of a social system.

This research, however, differs from Tabbert's in that here the interest is stylistic rather than social, and the victim is fictional rather than real. The objective is to find out what the function of victim-naming is, as a narrative device, for the genre MMS. The analysis set out to answer the following questions:

> i) Is the victim quantitatively salient, verbally?
> ii) What does the distribution and the frequency of victim-naming in the dialogues reveal about the whole murder mystery narrative?
> iii) Does the choice of victim-naming by different characters reveal their relationship with the victim as well as their participation roles in the genre MMS?

1 Complete cast at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0098936/fullcredits (last accessed 11-07-19).

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The decision to analyse victim-naming was corpus-driven and proceeded as follows. First, the frequency wordlist indicated the presence of various victim-naming items. However, frequency alone, as claimed in CL, is not an accurate indicator (Stubbs 2005:12) of the centrality of the victim, unless we check its relevance in the whole corpus. A scrutiny of the concordance (Mahlberg and Wiegand 2018) plot for the terms *Laura/Palmer* tested their distribution. A qualitative interpretation of the concordances determined its role in the structure of the narrative. Apart from proper names (*Laura/Palmer)* and noun phrases (*the body of the dead girl*), the concordance lines of the pronoun *she* were manually examined through the *fileview tool* in AntConc to discern those cases that referred to the victim. Additionally, a semi-manual exploration of concordances and collocations allowed me to extract a list of less frequent significant terms for victim-referring, such as terms of endearment (*my baby, my child)*, social relations (*my friend*) and other terms which referred to the victim (*the body of the victim*). As illustrated in Table 4 below, all those cases of victim-naming amounted to the quantitative presence of the victim in the narrative.

The second step was to assign each of those terms to the characters who uttered them, which were grouped according to their participation framework, i.e., *investigator, perpetrator, victim, the community/social relations*, *other* (cf. Table 1). This provided a clear picture of the linguistic patterns used for victim-naming across episodes, individual characters, and the whole narrative. Finally, the occurrences of *Laura/ Laura Palmer*, the two most frequent victim-naming items, were explored in depth.

5. ANALYSING THE PRESENCE OF THE VICTIM

5.1. Quantitative saliency and distribution of victim-naming

The frequency wordlist partly illustrated in Fig. 1 signposted the quantitative relevance of the victim Laura Palmer (henceforth LP[2]) in the corpus. Sometimes the name *Laura* appeared on its own, while others it was followed by her surname *Palmer. Laura* (first name) was, in fact, the first most

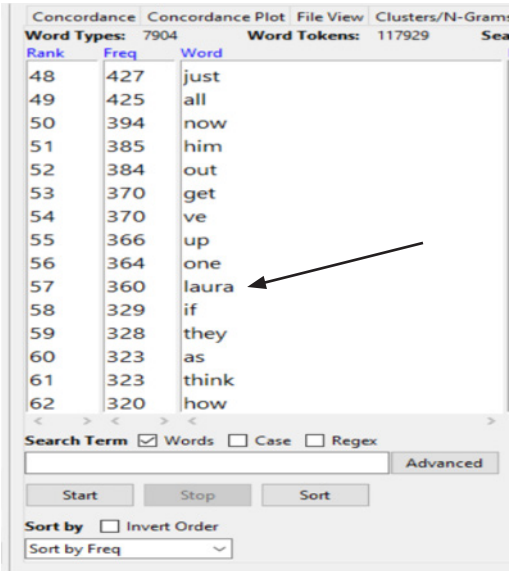

FIG. 1. FREQUENCY WORD LIST OF *TWIN PEAKS*

frequent lexical word (rank 57,360 instances, 2,489.06 per million) in the corpus, and occupied the 2nd position after applying a stoplist which excluded common function words such as prepositions and articles. The exploration of the concordances showed *Laura Palmer* (name+ surname) as the second most common victim-naming form.

Previous studies in fiction point out the tendency of characters relevant to the plot to be among the most frequent words in the corpus (Culpeper 2001, Bednarek 2010,). However, as it is commonly claimed by CL, the total frequency should be further analysed by looking at the dispersion plot which will allow us to assess the relevance of a character (Gregori-Signes 2020) throughout the entire series

As observed in Fig. 2, the two most frequent forms for victim-naming are distributed throughout the whole two seasons, although they are accumulated in the first 27 episodes.

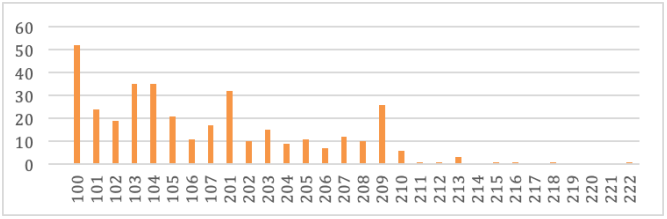

FIG. 2. CONCORDANCE PLOT FOR LAURA/LAURA PALMER

2 The abbreviation LP is used to talk about the character and *Laura/Palmer* in italics is used to refer to the terms themselves (*Laura vs. Laura Palmer).*

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In episode 2.07, the truth about LP's murder is disclosed: how it happened, why, who and what was behind her murder. In the subsequent episodes up to episode 2.11, the details of her murder are brought up and explained (a total of 57 occurrences). It was Leland (possessed by Bob, the interdimensional entity), Laura's father, who raped and murdered his own daughter, possibly influenced by Bob (Hoffman and Grace 2017). In example 1 below, Agent Cooper describes Leland's involvement in the crime.

> (1)
> COOPER: Laura was writing about Bob in her diary. Leland found it, ripped out the pages. She knew he was on to her. It was Leland who placed that call from Ben Horne's office to Laura the night she died. He was the third man outside Jacques' cabin window. He took the girls to the train car. It was his blood we found not Ben Horne's [2.09].

Lynch himself explains (in Hoffman and Grace 2017: 59) how the decisions of the ABC network put pressure on them:

> The way we pitched this thing was a murder mystery but that murder mystery was eventually to become the background story. [....] We were not going to solve the murder for a long time. They didn't like that. And they forced us to, you know, bet to Laura's Killer (in Hoffman and Grace 2017: 59).

Frequency	Victim-naming term	Character
71	Laura Palmer	many characters
289	Laura	many characters
194	she (LP)	many characters
9	my baby	Father, mother
3	my daughter	Leland
2	my best friend	Donna
1	your best friend	Cooper
3	my friend	Audrey
2	his daughter	Judge Lodwick
2	my girlfriend	Bobby
1	your girlfriend	Mike to Bobby
1	your girlfriend	Truman to Bobby
2	my little girl	Leland
2	the dead girl	Cooper
1	Miss Laura Palmer	Josie
1	her daughter	Cooper (to Sarah)
1	Leland's daughter	Jerry
1	your best friend	Cooper (to Donna)
1	my only child	Sarah
1	Palmer	Albert FBI Agent
1	this child	Priest
1	The body of the victim	Cooper
1	our friend	Gersten (Donna's Sister)
1	The little lady	Albert FBI Agent
Total	**592 cases**	

TABLE 4. VICTIM-NAMING NOUNS AND PHRASES

After these revelations, there is a drastic drop of victim-naming in the dialogues (only 4 mentions of Laura from episode 2.13 till the final episode, 2.22), and the narrative derives in a series of subplots unrelated to the murder mystery. As Lynch himself declared, they found it difficult to continue with the narrative flow in a way that would be equally interesting for the audience. These results point towards considering the victim as a key cohesive element in the narrative in the murder mysteries.

5.2. Victim-naming and participation roles

As can be observed in Table 4 below, the first name *Laura* (289), without any enhancement, is the most frequent referring form for the victim, followed by her full name *Laura Palmer* (71). To this we should add the pronoun *she,* which registers 194 occurrences while the rest of forms used to refer to LP are scarce.

Differently from the tendency in conversation, where "pronouns tend to be slightly more common than nouns" (Biber 1999), in *Twin Peaks* there is a prevalence of proper nouns (Laura/Palmer) over pronouns for victim-naming. Following in frequency is the pronoun *she* (194 cases), which was checked manually to discard cases which did not refer to LP. Far less frequent victim-naming noun phrases included *my daughter, my baby, my girlfriend*, *my only child*, which reveal family and social relations with the victim. These forms are pragmatically relevant (Ridley 2016), since they disclose the relationship between the victim and the characters. The concordances and collocations for these terms were then individually analysed, including their dispersion patterns across the whole narrative and across characters (Culpeper 2001).

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My baby (7 Leland, 2 Sarah) and *my little girl* (2 Leland) appear in highly emotional moments when LP's parents lament the death of their daughter (*my daughter,* Leland 3). Equally, the last hit of *my baby* emerges once more in episode 2.07, while Leland/Bob is dancing with agonising Maddy - LP's cousin and doppelgänger. This scene reveals how LP was murdered. Leland's face alternates between Leland and Bob, revealing to the audience that he is possessed by this surreal character. This scene was at the time described by Alexander (1993), as "possibly the most brutal sequence ever made for American prime-television" and still today has not lost any of its power.

Other terms of endearment and kinship introduce Laura's social relations (*my/our friend*), *my best friend* (Donna), *your/ my girlfriend* (Bobby); *her/his daughter; my daughter; my only child* (Laura's parents, Sarah and Leland). The priest refers to Laura as *this child*, a child of his parish he has known since birth. LP also tutored a disabled child and gave English lessons to Josie, who refers to her as *Miss Palmer*, a term of admiration and respect (cf. Murray 2002). However, and essential to the genre itself, LP is also identified as the victim of murder, no longer alive with NPs such as *the dead girl* or *the body of the victim*, and ironically referred to by Albert, the FBI agent, as *the little lady* when he found out that LP used cocaine.

> (2)
> ALBERT: Okay, first of all, contents of envelope found in Palmer diary, cocaine. Toxicology results also positive. News flash, the little lady had a habit. Next we got fibers of twine embedded in her wrists and upper arms [1.03].

The analysis then turned to examine the distribution of the two most frequent victim-naming terms among characters: first name (*Laura*) followed by first name+ surname (*Laura Palmer*). The first name (*Laura*) indicates closeness and identifies the victim both for the characters and for the audience, while her name + surname (Laura Palmer) identifies her as a unique member of their community. Table 5 below shows the number of times each character used *Laura/ Palmer* (columns 1 and 2), the number of words uttered by each one in the whole two seasons (column 3), their role (column 4) in the series as well as their category within the genre MMS (column 5).

Two patterns emerged from the analysis. First, the participation roles with a frequency higher than 5 (with the exception of Waldo, 4 cases) coincide with those characters listed in outside sources as primary or secondary. All of them name the victim more than five times. Secondly, as expected, her family and close social relations prefer the use of first name. Her parents, for example, never use the formal *Laura Palmer*, and are the only ones that use forms of endearment (*my baby*), as observed in Table 4 above. Her cousin only uses *Laura*, and so do Bobby and James, her boyfriend and lover respectively, as well as Harold, a friend, to whom she told her secrets. The same applies for Audrey (2 *Laura Palmer*) and Donna (1 *Laura Palmer*), who only use the more formal *Laura Palmer* when talking to the police or to strangers. At the same time, both Donna and Audrey act not so much as a friends, but as an amateur investigators.

The *investigators* proper are Cooper, Sheriff Truman and Albert (occasional support). In quantitative terms, both policemen, Cooper and Truman, alternate almost symmetri-

	Laura	Laura Palmer	Word tokens	Participation roles	MMS genre´-categories
Cooper	41	42	19018	police/FBI	investigator
Sheriff Truman	13	10	7575	police/sheriff	investigator/ community
Albert	6	1		police	investigator
Dr. Jacoby	19	1	4629	Psychiatrist	investigator/ community
Dr. Hayward	7	3	4034	doctor	investigator/ community
Donna	44	1	1611	best friend	community/ social relations
Audrey	24	2	2594	schoolmate	community/ social relations
Leland	18	0	2399	father	community/ family relations
Sarah	18	0	622	mother	community/ family relations
Maddy	16	0	1028	cousin	community/ social relations
James	14	0	2827	mover	community/ social relations
Bobby	12	0	3862	Boyfriend	community/ social relations
Harold	8	0	794	friend/ acquaintance	community/ social relations
Waldo	4	0		other-animal	parrot

TABLE 5. INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERS' USE OF LAURA VS. LAURA PALMER

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cally between the use of *Laura* and *Laura Palmer* (Cooper: *Laura Palmer* 42 times and 41 *Laura;* Truman: *Laura* 13 times, and 10 *Laura Palmer*). On the other hand, Cooper, the main detective and the protagonist of the series, outnumbers almost three times the total frequency of the use of the terms *Laura* and *Laura Palmer*. Agent Cooper mentions Laura/Palmer 83 times while Truman only 23. Truman's duality is suggestive of his mixed feelings towards the victim: LP is not only a victim of murder, but a teenager from his hometown, someone he has known probably since she was a child. As for Cooper, he is an outsider who soon gets fascinated with the town and its inhabitants. As early as in episode 1.03, he tells his secretary Diane that he may well end up living in *Twin Peaks* (*I may look into purchasing a piece of property at what I assume will be a very reasonable price* 1.03) as it happens at the end of the series. When he first arrived, he referred to *Laura Palmer* as *the dead girl* on two occasions (e.g., *Can someone give me a copy of the coroner's report on the dead girl?* 1.00), then moves on to alternate between *Laura* and *Laura Palmer* indicating his involvement with the case and the community of *Twin Peaks*. In the end, he falls in love with Annie and becomes Bob, the evil member of the community and killer of LP. The conflict between his feelings towards the victim are reflected in his alternation between the familiar first name *Laura,* and the more distant, respectful and formal *Laura Palmer* (Biber et al. 1999: 1132). Moreover, in his role as the main detective, he is the character with the highest frequency of victim-naming.

Dr. Jacoby (*Laura* 19; *Laura Palmer* 1) and Dr. Hayward (*Laura* 10; *Laura Palmer* 3) also have a dual relationship with the victim. They are citizens, thus part of the community, friends of LP and the doctors of the community. Dr. Hayward is Laura's doctor and as such, he helped deliver her into the world. But he is also the father of her best friend, Donna. As such, he only uses the more formal *Laura Palmer* when talking to the police early in the series, while discussing the details of the autopsy. The same pattern is reproduced with Dr. Jacoby who was her psychiatrist and lover at the same time. He only uses her full name once, as illustrated in example 3.

> (3)
> DR. JACOBY: Look the-the fact that-that Laura Palmer sought medication, no matter how dubious, was actually a positive sign. My own personal investigation, I suspect, will be ongoing for the rest of my life [2.03].

Regarding *the community/ social relations*, Donna is Laura's best friend and Audrey is one of her schoolmates and the sister of the boy Laura tutored. Both of them prefer *Laura.* Donna, Laura's best friend, mentions her almost double the amount of times Audrey does (Donna 44 times and Audrey 24 times). Both of them use the more formal *Laura Palmer* only once. Audrey does so when in conversation with Agent Cooper, the FBI agent (*Can I sit here? Thank you. You're here investigating the murder of Laura Palmer* 1.03), and Donna, while talking to the people to whom Laura delivered food (*I- I'm taking over Laura Palmer's place on the Meals on Wheels* 2.02).

As for the men in Laura Palmer's life, her boyfriend Bobby and her secret lover James, both use *Laura* almost the same amount of times, 12 and 14 respectively. Finally, Harold's participation role as a friend is more tangential. Harold is a lonely character whom Laura met through her job at *Meals on Wheels*. She delivered food to Harold and she confided him her secret diary. The distribution of the cases of victim-naming by Harold prove his tangency to the plot: they are concentrated in two episodes: 6 of the 8 cases are in 2.03, the remaining in 2.04. Finally, Albert is an FBI agent who occasionally assists Cooper in the investigation, and he is only present in a few episodes; that is why he mentions the victim only 6 times.

There are some other characters who name *Laura/Palmer* 4 times. These characters are proved to be marginally related to the crime itself. First, Jacques (4), Jerry (2), Emory (4), Leo (1) and Ben (4). All of them took advantage of Laura's sexual services when she was working as a prostitute in the *Black Lodge*. Waldo (4) is the parrot that was in the cabin when she got murdered, and Ronette (4) is the girl who was with Laura when she was murdered but managed to escape. The name of Laura appears also in the tapes she left for Dr. Jacoby and as part of the cluster *the night Laura Palmer died*, which is used as a time referent for other story lines, a common device to relate to the ongoing plot in MMS.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this article was to find out whether there was a quantitative relationship between the frequency and distribution of victim-naming choices and the participation roles of the characters in the series *Twin Peaks*. This relationship was confirmed by applying quantitative text-based analysis using corpus techniques and always making qualitative, functional interpretations of quantitative patterns (Biber 1989).

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The exploration of the victim-naming terms revealed a series of patterns present across the whole narrative. The first-name (*Laura*) of the victim was the first most frequent form; followed by *name + surname* (*Laura Palmer*). Others included noun phrases with or without modifier (*my best friend, your girlfriend*), which coincided with some of the patterns identified by Tabbert (2015), although in quantitative terms there is a clear prevalence of the first name over the other referring forms. As for participation roles, the community hardly ever used the formal *Laura Palmer*, while the investigators seem to alternate between that and the more intimate *Laura*, which indicates their internal conflict regarding the victim.

These results proved the validity of applying corpus-stylistics methodologies to the analysis of TV discourse when looking for possible linguistic patterns and their functions. Accordingly, the verbal presence of the victim has been proved to be an essential genre-cohesive device that gives coherence and *reason d'etre* to the genre itself, acting as a waymark in the narrative progression, an element which the audience relies upon in order to make sense of the many possible subplots immersed in fictional murder series.

Admittedly, the results on *Twin Peaks* may or may not apply entirely to victims in other murder mystery series. However, the results obtained may help sustain that, to a certain degree, this analysis can be useful to discern the function of victims in other MMS. In this sense, this study contributes to fill in a niche neglected in the study of the television series genre: the analysis of the structure of narrative plots (Bednarek 2018) which are developed in the form of dialogue. Since creativity and innovation is cultivated by television series in their strive to gain a greater audience share, studies like this open a field of research still vastly unexplored, in which each series leaves a stone that is waiting to be unturned.

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The Stranger (2020)
True Detective (2014-)
Twin Peaks (1990-1991)
Twin Peaks: The Return (2017)

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