

Different perspectives on addictions in the antiheroic narrative of *Peaky Blinders* characters

Diferentes perspectivas ante las adicciones en la narrativa antiheroica de los personajes de *Peaky Blinders*

Montserrat Vidal-Mestre¹, Alfonso Freire-Sánchez², Carla Gracia-Mercadé¹

¹ Universidad Internacional de Cataluña

² Universidad Abat Oliba CEU

ORCID Montserrat Vidal-Mestre: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6144-5386>

ORCID Alfonso Freire-Sánchez: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2082-1212>

ORCID Carla Gracia-Mercadé: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1947-8595>

Received: 10/01/2023 · Accepted: 24/03/2023

Cómo citar este artículo/citation: Vidal-Mestre, M., Freire-Sánchez, A., & Gracia-Mercadé, C. (2023). Different perspectives on addictions in the antiheroic narrative of *Peaky Blinders* characters. *Revista Española de Drogodependencias*, 48(2), 46-59. <https://doi.org/10.54108/10045>

Abstract

Introduction: This research analyzes the narrative and the construction of the characters in the *Peaky Blinders* series (Knight, BBC, 2013-2022), inspired by the real events that the criminal gang of the same name starred in at the beginning of the 20th century in Birmingham. The study aims to determine the different perspectives of its protagonists regarding addictions and drug abuse in the context of their time. Method: Through a methodological design based on the conceptual integration (Ruíz de Mendoza, 2009) of the theories on audiovisual narrative (Canet and Prósper, 2009), film criticism (Orellana, Almacellas and Watt, 2019), the mythical structure and creation of characters (Vogler, 2020) and the film and documentary analysis (Brisset, 2011), we analyze the characters of *Peaky Blinders*, their plots, narrative arcs and their role in the different seasons of the series. This study's purpose is to examine how drugs are represented in fiction and how they reflect the social imaginaries and the success and fall of characters and their time. Results and discussion: This analysis provides an interesting discussion on the representation of different types of drugs in the series. While opium is treated as part of the anti-heroic construction of the main character, cocaine serves as an activator for the violence and brutality of one of the secondary characters.

Keywords

Drug addicts; addictions; *Peaky Blinders*; character construction; social imaginaries; audiovisual narrative.

— Correspondence: _____
Montserrat Vidal-Mestre
Email: mvidalm@uic.es



Resumen

Introducción: La presente investigación analiza la narrativa y la construcción de los personajes en la serie *Peaky Blinders* (Knight, BBC, 2013-2022), inspirada en los acontecimientos reales que protagonizó la banda criminal de homónimo nombre a principios del siglo XX en Birmingham. El estudio tiene como objetivo determinar las diferentes perspectivas de sus protagonistas ante las adicciones y el consumo de drogas en el contexto de su época. **Método:** Mediante un diseño metodológico basado en la integración conceptual (Ruíz de Mendoza, 2009) de las teorías sobre narrativa audiovisual (Canet y Prósper, 2009), la crítica cinematográfica (Orellana, Almacellas y Watt, 2019), la estructura mítica y creación de personajes (Vogler, 2020) y el análisis fílmico y documental (Brisset, 2011), se analizan los personajes de *Peaky Blinders*, sus tramas, arcos narrativos y su papel en las diferentes temporadas de la serie con el propósito de estudiar el tratamiento de este tipo de adicciones en la ficción y reflexionar acerca de los imaginarios sociales que representan como reflejo del éxito y la decadencia de su tiempo. **Resultados y discusión:** El resultado de este análisis arroja una interesante reflexión sobre la representación de diferentes tipologías de drogas en la serie. Mientras el opio es tratado como parte de la construcción antihéroica del personaje principal, la cocaína sirve como activador de la violencia y la brutalidad de uno de los personajes secundarios.

Palabras clave

Drogodependientes; Adicciones; *Peaky Blinders*; construcción personajes; imaginarios sociales; narrativa audiovisual.

INTRODUCTION: REPRESENTATION AND SYMBOLISM OF ADDICTION AND DRUG DEPENDENCE IN CINEMATOGRAPHY

According to Lipovetsky and Serroy, cinema has the ability to reorganise the human dimension and people's perception, and reconfigure their expectations (2009). Likewise, Morín (2011), in his work *El cine o el hombre imaginario*, defines the seventh art as social imagery reproducing society's behaviour. This comparison is in line with Imbert, an author who compares the big screen with a kind of echo chamber of the collective imagination that acts as a support and transmission pulley for social representations (2010). In a certain way, cinematography is a door to interculturality since it

allows us to know other traditions, cultures and artistic representations that may be inaccessible in another way: "Cinema establishes referential frameworks of societies, times and theories, giving us information that from other parameters it would be expensive to recreate" (García, 2007, p. 123). In this sense, Esteban Ortega's statement allows us to summarise the nature of cinema as a social imaginary: "cinema reflects, and at the same time modifies, contemporary reality through the symbolic and social imaginaries that it projects and produces in the context of hypervisibility and total consumption" (2013, p. 11). Along the same lines, Palomares-Sánchez et al. claim, "These audiovisual products offer a symbolic transcription of reality capable of complementing, enhancing or nullifying the influence of other social agents" (2022, p. 233).



Consequently, and in the matter at hand, when addictions and consumption of addictive substances are staged and reproduced in cinematography, a social and symbolic imaginary is created, and it can also affect the perception and reconfiguration of reality by the spectators, therefore, as Alonso and Fernández Rodríguez point out: “The analysis and interpretation of our symbolic products have become an essential obligation if we want to know in which society we live and with what patterns of interaction we communicate” (2013, p.13). In this way, cinema and series can contribute to re-education: “it is often used as a treatment and solution to various behavioural problems” (CineLIT, 2020). However, the parasocial attachment that viewers feel towards the protagonists of the series and movies (Martí, 2010), can also stimulate negative behaviours when these characters reinforce drug use and certain addictive behaviours.

Regarding the social imaginaries about drug consumption, both legal and illegal, and the agents involved, it is possible to affirm that the representation of addictions and drug dependencies in the cinema and series is not a new phenomenon. Specifically, it goes back to the first half of the 20th century and to films like the award-winning thriller *The Lost Weekend* (Wilder, 1945), which reflects the problems of alcoholism and how a person can become financially ruined and lose consciousness of who they are. If said film emphasises the loneliness of the alcoholic person, the film *Days of Wine and Roses* (Edwards, 1962) was one of the first to show how a person suffering from alcoholism can drag others, even teetotalers, into the addictive consumption of alcohol. Previously, *Pinocchio* (Disney, 1940), despite being aimed mainly at children, already showed a social imaginary about how

the consumption of addictive substances such as tobacco or alcohol was related to criminal behaviour or gambling. It took the child from wood to stray from the path of righteousness Gepetto had instilled in him. However, since the sixties, the consumption of tobacco and, above all, alcohol has been almost indissolubly related to leading male characters: James Bond and the vermouth Martini, the cowboys and sheriffs of the western and the spaghetti western with the consumption of whiskey, the pirate Jack Sparrow from the *Pirates of the Caribbean* saga and his passion for rum, even the so-called buffoonish anti-heroes (Freire, 2022), such as Homer J. Simpson (*The Simpsons*) or Peter Griffin (*American Guy*) and his compulsive beer intake.

As regards the social imaginary around the consumption of illegal drugs such as cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine or opium, movies and series tend to take paths opposed to the representation of alcohol and tobacco. However, they are also dissimilar from each other. For these purposes, we propose a new classification of the different representations of the consumption of illegal drugs and the corresponding addictive behaviours in the cinema. This classification may allow a new approach to innumerable cinematographic works that have directly or indirectly dealt with the subject from different perspectives. The study of these cinematographic representations has let us establish an original proposal in seven types of classification according to the symbolism represented by drugs.

First, we find a representation of drug use in the villains. They are drug-dependent characters linked to negativity or evil. Usually, these characters' behaviour reflects a great anthropological pessimism, a ubiq-



uitous trend in postmodern cinema that “tends to be characterised by a disruptive narrative, a black and pessimistic vision of the human condition, a representation massive and unjustified violence, the death of the hero” (Aguirre, 2014, p. 657). In this category is, for example, the famous *A Clockwork Orange* (Kubrick, 1971), which tells the story of a violent gang that consumes hallucinogenic drugs such as LSD and commits criminal acts under its effects.

Secondly, we find those films that reproduce drug use as a response to the existential void caused by the tragedy, as in *Against the Wall* (Akin, 2004) in which the protagonist falls into drug addiction due to his wife’s death. It would also be the case of *Apocalypse Now* (Coppola, 1979), where the protagonist consumes drugs due to fear of death and misunderstanding the ravages of war.

In a third block, we place those films that show addictions derived from determinism, the fragility of life and the transient nature of happiness and relationships. In this block would be the stories that some authors, such as Sevilla (2020), have considered tragic existentialism and abyssal. It would be the case of *21 Grams* (Iñárritu, 2003), or of *Réquiem por un sueño* (Aranofsky, 2000) a more abrupt and extreme film with the four tragic stories edited in parallel.

In a fourth block, it is possible to classify the representations of drug addicts as caricatured characters, as is the case of *Torrente 2: Misión en Marbella* (Segura, 2001) and the comic character of El Cuco, played by Gabino Diego, who declared that he had inspired by a drug addict to play the role. In this sense, *The Wolf of Wall Street* (Scorsese, 2013) also includes the consumption of drugs and alcohol as a satirical and comic element in the plot.

In fifth place are those film productions based on actual events and, therefore, try to reproduce the effects of drugs more faithfully. For instance, the film *Yo, Cristina F.* (Edel, 1981), in which the life of an adolescent who falls into drugs and has to become a prostitute to continue consuming, is fictionalized. In this same category, we find *Diary of a Rebel* (Kalvert, 1995), an autobiographical work about the life of the poet and musician Jim Carroll and his drug experience.

In a sixth category, we place those films that have focused more on a metaphorical, symbolic and even psychedelic or poetic representation of drug addiction’s effects during consumption, emphasising the consequences after it. As an example, we have *Climax* (Gaspar, 2018), or *Trainspotting* (Boyle, 2005) which narrates the life of an asocial young man whose sole purpose is to consume heroin (Sanz-Pérez et al., 2018).

Finally, in the seventh and last category are the works that show the struggle of drug addicts to overcome their addiction, such as *The Believer* (Kahn, 2018). Also, the ones from the drug-addicted family or friends’ point of view who wants to help him overcome said addiction, as happens in the Spanish *Heroína* (Herrero, 2005), in which the love of the mother will be the plot seed of the plot.

This conceptual framework justifies the interest in analysing and interpreting the *Peaky Blinders* series under different theories and dimensions (Knight, BBC, 2013-2022). This series includes the representation of drugs in several categories established in the various plots of its characters. However, unlike other productions, it does not deal directly with the consumption of addictive substances but uses them as a means of (re) constructing the characters. In many cases, it



symbolises what Vogler defines as shadows in the characters: “the energy of the dark side, of the unexpressed, the unrealised. It is often the abode of drastically suppressed or ignored monsters from our inner world” (2020, p. 107).

The series narrates the creation and rise of the criminal empire of the gypsy (Romani) Shelby family. This family is led by Tommy (Cillian Murphy), an anti-hero (Smith, 2017; Freire & Vidal-Mestre, 2022) who, after participating in the Great War suffers the effects of shell shock (PTSD), and he will work along with his brothers and friends, especially with Arthur Shelby (Paul Anderson), his older brother. As interpreted by Mueller (2022), the series narratively unfolds a cinematic trope based on war-torn soldiers redirecting their toxic masculinity to become successful and violent gangsters. Although the series is based on a real gang called the Peaky Blinders, according to Chinn (2019), the real story of the band was radically different, being more of a group of thugs than an organisation that ruled the city. However, Knight’s work unfolds a scenario from the thirties in which the law of the strongest, in this case, criminal gangs, prevails in Birmingham with the consent of a corrupt police force. In this way, a habitual space is recreated in which crime, drugs, and machismo coexist (Seal, 2022). In such a setting, for Long (2017), *Peaky Blinders* endows its characters with deep psychological complexity and humanity as they face the aftermath of war and the constraints and opportunities of their environment.

Although it is true that the representation of drug use and its social imaginaries in movies and series, related or not to mental health problems (Martínez & Cambra-Badii, 2020), is extensive, and some authors

have even studied the subject based on the filmography of a specific director, such as Almodóbar (Renau & Carbonell, 2011) or in the effects that they can cause in young people who watch these series (Palomares-Sánchez et al., 2022), the idiosyncrasy and narrative richness of the series *Peaky Blinders* allows new approaches and results that can enrich the field of study. In this way, the study of the series is of particular interest to determine the symbology of the use of certain drugs or the representation of the characters linked to consumption in the context of their time. Although these characters can be considered drug addicts, exploring the narrative elements used for their representation is interesting, sometimes with a diametrically different treatment between them. Likewise, it is also interesting to investigate what approaches these characters show, despite being part of the same family and organised group, in the face of the different ways of facing and fighting drug addiction or surrendering to it.

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

Table I summarises the audiovisual material that has been analysed regarding the series and its main characters.

As can be seen, all the episodes of each season are analysed, as well as the four main characters of the Shelby family, all of them with clear addictions and consumption of addictive substances: (1) Tommy Shelby, the main character who is the undisputed leader of the gang and family; (2) Arthur Shelby, older brother and one of the main protagonists of the series; (3) John Shelby, protagonist and third-age brother, only older than Finn, who has been ruled out for having an



Table 1. Audiovisual material analysed from the *Peaky Blinders* series

Season	First issue year	Chapters	Characters analysed
1	2013	1-6	Tommy, John, Arthur y Polly
2	2014	1-6	Tommy, John, Arthur y Polly
3	2016	1-6	Tommy, John, Arthur y Polly
4	2017	1-6	Tommy, John, Arthur y Polly
5	2019	1-6	Tommy, Arthur y Polly
6	2022	1-6	Tommy y Arthur

Source: self made.

irrelevant role in the plot; (4) Polly Shelby, the aunt of the Shelby brothers and one of the most important characters in the plot. It is necessary to clarify that, due to John's murder, he appears only in the first four seasons, while Polly appears in all except the sixth due to the actress's death from illness in 2020.

In order to explore and analyse these characters, a research design is proposed based on the conceptual integration (Ruíz de Mendoza, 2009) of audiovisual narrative theories (Canet & Prósper, 2009), film criticism (Orellana, Almacellas & Watt, 2019), the mythical structure and the creation of characters (Vogler, 2020) and film and documentary analysis (Aumont & Marie, 1993; Brisset, 2011). This methodology makes it possible to analyse the characters, their narrative arcs and their role in the different seasons of the *Peaky Blinders* series, to compare the treatment of this type of addiction in fiction and reality, and how it reflects the social imaginaries and their representation focused on characters that symbolise both the

success and the decline of their time. This method, a posteriori, allows the analysis to be broken down into different variables to build analytical-synthetic knowledge about the subject. According to Sierra Bravo, the analytical-synthetic scientific method:

He studies reality by distinguishing and separating its simpler elements from each other, but he does not stop here but rather tries to later unite and recombine the separated elements, obtaining a global vision of the whole and the structural relationships of its parts. (2007, p. 458)

Table 2 shows the dimensions in which the analysis is framed, the primary variable that is extracted from the conceptual integration and the referents that have been used:

The four dimensions of the narratological and audiovisual analysis mentioned in Table 2 are combined with the representation of the consumption of addictive substances and drug dependence according to the variables presented in Table 3. These variables have been adapted from the article *The consump-*



Table 2. Methodological design of the relational matrix between dimension, concept, variables and referents

Dimension	Concept	Variables	Referents
Audiovisual narrative	Story content	Events (actions and events) and Existing (characters and settings)	Canet & Prósper, 2009
Film review	Blueprints language	Framing & Movement	Orellana, Almacellas y Watt, 2019
Mythical structure and character creation	Hero's journey	Does or does not fulfill the stages of the monomyth	Campbell, 2020; Vogler, 2020
Film and documentary analysis	Analytical model	Story, art direction, sound, intertextual and contextual	Aumont & Marie, 1993; Brisset, 2011

Source: self made.

Table 3. General analysis variables of the characters based on their addictions and the consumption of addictive substances

Variable	Consumption	Confrontation with addiction	Consequences in its evolutionary arc and alternatives
Cocaine (Tokyo)	The character takes drugs in a social environment; is a regular user or does not use drugs.	The character is aware of his addiction and, if he is, if he feels regret after using it and if he struggles to stop using it.	The character suffers consequences for consumption and what alternatives does the narrative propose to said consumption?
Opium	The character takes drugs in a social environment; is a regular user or does not use drugs.	The character is aware of his addiction and, if he is, if he feels regret after using it and if he struggles to stop using it.	The character suffers consequences for consumption and what alternatives does the narrative propose to said consumption?
Alcohol	The character takes drugs in a social environment; is a regular user or does not use drugs.	The character is aware of his addiction and, if he is, if he feels regret after using it and if he struggles to stop using it.	The character suffers consequences for consumption and what alternatives does the narrative propose to said consumption?

Source: adapted from Palomares-Sánchez et al. (2022, p. 238)



tion of alcohol, tobacco and drugs in young people: a study on recent Spanish teen series (2015-2021) by Palomares-Sánchez et al. (2022); however, it has been decided to modify some variables to adapt them to the context of the series and the treatment of the different drugs. In the first place, we propose a differentiation between cocaine (called Tokio in the series) and opium within the 'drugs' category since the treatment of both substances in the series is opposite; therefore, it is essential to differentiate and contextualise them according to the study *General History of Drugs* by Escohotado (2007). Secondly, tobacco has been eliminated since, in some episodes of the series, it is unclear whether the characters smoke tobacco. Finally, two new variables have been added that allow for a deeper and more detailed analysis of each character: 'confrontation with addiction' and 'consequences in their evolutionary arc and alternatives'.

As Sierra affirms: "The tables need to be analysed, that is, studied in their different elements and aspects, in order to establish the consequences that can be deduced from them concerning the purpose of the investigation" (2007, p. 458). For this reason, once the methodological criteria and the tables that will allow the study's results to be presented and grouped according to the previously mentioned research objectives have been exposed, the research process will culminate with the analysis, interpretation and explanation of these.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Next, the results of the analytical-synthetic method are presented according to the previously mentioned dimensions: audiovisual narrative, film criticism, mythical

structure and character creation and, finally, film and documentary analysis.

The analysis of the results reflects that, according to the dimension that concerns the audiovisual narrative, the construction of the four characters carries alcohol consumption intrinsically. However, unlike the drugs considered hard and illegal in the series, such as opium or cocaine, alcohol treatment is not approached as a problem or even as an addiction. The characters consume alcohol alone and socially, regardless of gender or social class. It is interesting to note that one of the few characters who condemns the use of alcohol is Chief Inspector Campbell (Sam Neill), the villain of the first two seasons, a man capable of mistreating, raping or murdering women. In this sense, the series does not send a negative message about alcohol addiction, except in the last season, in which Tommy Shelby decides to spend time away from all his addictions, mainly opium and alcohol, after the death of his daughter and the inability to feed his thirsty soul (Freire, 2022). Shelby blames the addictive use of these substances. Regarding opium use, this is directly related to shell shock, currently known as PTSD. Although it is present in both Arthur Shelby and other secondary characters, this post-traumatic symptom is only related to opium in the main protagonist, Tommy. For the gang leader, consuming opium at the end of each day is much more than an attempt to sleep or calm his regrets; it is also a way of finding himself, fleeing or hiding from his past. Even though Tommy is headed for doom and everything he grows up around him ends up dying irretrievably, he is still on his feet, fighting to survive and trying to do what is best for his family. In this sense, the series evokes a confusing and dual message towards opium: it is a scaping tool that lets



him move on for another day while avoiding and dehumanising himself.

Cocaine (Tokyo) does have a highly negative connotation in the construction of the characters, especially in Arthur. While opium is a way to get on to Tommy, cocaine is the driver of internal rage that translates into violence and self-destruction to Arthur. In the same direction, Tommy embodies intelligence, strategy and the ability to see what others do not see (Freire, 2022), while Arthur personifies the adult who continues to be a helpless child due to parental abandonment, the ravages of war and the lack of affection from a wife (except in the third and fourth seasons). Arthur does not try to be better every day, growing as a character or making amends for yesterday's mistakes. Instead, he takes refuge in cocaine, which incites violence, so as not to look to the past and cover up his problems while inflicting pain on others and himself. In John's case, his addictions to alcohol and cocaine are less than Arthur's, although violence is inherent in him. However, in this case, the violence is not an explosion, but rather a *modus operandi* by trade or tradition to instill fear in their rivals, or even as a result of a lack of understanding, as the plot shows on numerous occasions. Finally, the construction of Polly, the female character with the most prominence in the series and, surely, the most daring and intelligent after Tommy, is related to the consumption of addictive substances, but as a social celebration or, when excessive, as a way to show rebellion and protest against Tommy's plans or before the harshness of fate. This female character is narratively related to cocaine as an inhibitor of reality rather than as an exaltation of violence, as is Arthur's case and, to a lesser extent, with John.

Regarding the critical dimension concerning the shots' language, technique, and meaning, the series proposes well-differentiated dramatic and rhythmic elements depending on the substance. Opium use increases drama thanks, in part, to time dilation through the use of filmic time and leisurely pacing in flashback scenes of Tommy in the war or recurring dreams. The shots are combined between full shots and subjective ones, sometimes out of focus to project a specific psychedelic tone to make the viewer feel the gaze of the drug addict and the effects of opium in the first person. However, the shots referring to cocaine use, although some have a high rhythm since they are linked to scenes of fights, shootings or confrontations between characters, do not follow a pattern as marked as those of opium use. Finally, the language of the shots referring to the addictive consumption of alcohol, being present in practically all the sequences of the series, are more typical of the subjugation of the narrative language of each scene to the active or passive presence of alcohol on screen.

Concerning the mythical structure and the construction of the characters, it has been verified that none of the four characters analysed follows the narrative model of the monomyth or hero's journey. Although Tommy Shelby is considered a romantic antihero by Smith (2017) and a contemporary antihero (Freire & Vidal-Mestre, 2022), it is possible to affirm that he does not follow the heroic stages (Campbell, 2020; Vogler, 2020). Concerning his addictions, opium is linked to the fight with the past that torments him and his inner conflict, while abandoning alcohol and any substance represents the moment in which every antihero must decide to head towards good or evil. Tommy chooses the good, and his abstinence is the symbol of change, although he will have to make deci-



sions that his family and friends will not share. The rest of the characters, Arthur, Polly and John, cannot be considered heroes or antiheroes since they are closer to villainy, which is why they all break the monomyth.

Referring to the film analysis, the series maintains a relatively homogeneous art direction and aesthetics both in the main plot and in the different subplots developed by the secondary characters. However, we found three differentiating points in the three addictions analysed. The consumption of alcohol shows scenes generally related to celebration, moments as a couple, family reunions or work meetings in which new business possibilities are explored, for which warmer chromatic tones and joint, medium or close-up shots are used. The rhythm is more natural, and the sound is ambient or accompanied by the soundtrack that always precedes the climax moments of each episode. However, opium consumption yields darker scenes with more neutral tones, without music, with overlapping or extradiegetic voices of deceased characters or memories of the past. Finally, we observe a substantial change regarding representing Tommy's evolution. On the one hand, there is a change in the art direction, with broader and more relaxed landscapes, scenes with a day effect and less dark compositions. On the other hand, we find significant differences in sound with the incorporation of female voices in the soundtrack, giving hopeful and sharp tones than in previous seasons.

Once the results have been analysed, the main findings are summarised in a table where the analysis variables of the characters are evaluated based on their addictions and the consumption of addictive substances. Table 4 is adapted from Palomares-Sánchez et al. (2022, p. 238).

CONCLUSIONS

After the analysis, it is possible to conclude that the reproduction and audiovisual treatment of the consumption of addictive substances in the *Peaky Blinders* series is characterised by projecting different treatments according to the type of drug and, secondly, the character that consumes it. We believe that the treatment of opium as a possible remedy to overcome PTSD is due more to an effort by the writers to contextualise the drug to its use at the time (the interwar period) than to an aesthetic resource. However, the message about this type of mitigation is largely interpretive and dubious. This is because, although the drug seems not to affect the character, which leads him to abandon its use, it is also the engine that, in the first seasons, moves him to continue forward.

It is also shown that the representation of cocaine, by context, builds bridges with what would be a more contemporary treatment of the effects. At the same time, it is shown from a more distant and accusatory view, personifying its use and consequences in the most violent character and, sometimes, in the weak of the main characters.

Regarding alcoholism, we believe that the inherent treatment of constant consumption and in large doses by most of the characters, as well as the fact that the villain of the first seasons is a teetotaler, projects a biased message towards the social imaginary, since relates the consumption of alcohol to the forging of successful characters who achieve everything they set out to do, as is the case with Tommy Shelby.

Considering the original category of classification of films and series that deal with the subject of drugs and, mainly, drug addiction,



Table 4. General analysis variables of the characters based on their addictions and the consumption of addictive substances

Variable	Consumption	Confrontation with addiction	Consequences in its evolutionary arc and alternatives
Cocaine	The cocaine addicted character is Arthur. John consumes more sporadically, especially in moments of celebration while Polly does so in a few times of the story, especially after suffering a misfortune or when she wants to show the most irreverent side of her before Tommy's authority.	Arthur is aware of his addiction and, although he feels regret, he shows self-destructive tendencies and resorts to using whenever he feels sadness or is faced with a physical or moral conflict. John, Polly and Tommy are not addicted or remorseful when they have used drugs occasionally, however, they do show rejection of Arthur's addiction.	Arthur suffers serious consequences both in his mental and physical health and, above all, in his relationship with other characters, such as his wife. Arthur's alternative to cocaine is the faith promoted by his wife. However, Arthur will succumb to cocaine and drag his wife, who was against consumption.
Opium	The only character who addictively consumes opium is Tommy.	The character is aware of his addiction, however, he links it to the war traumas caused by his participation in the Great War.	Opium dependence generates reality disturbances in Tommy. It is the alternative to accepting the loss and overcoming the pain, but also to overcome his addiction he will have to leave behind his stormy past.
Alcohol	Everyone, to a greater or lesser extent, is addicted to alcohol and consumes it socially and individually. It is part of the construction of the characters and accompanies them during a large part of their evolutionary arc.	The only character who faces his alcoholism is Tommy, while the rest do not see it as an addiction.	Unlike opium or cocaine, the series does not show serious consequences of alcoholism, neither in terms of mental nor physical health.

Source: adapted from Palomares-Sánchez et al. (2022, p. 238)

it is confirmed that *Peaky Blinders* could have a place in different ones. For instance: it deals with the consumption of these substances from the perspective of those who fight to overcome; from the character's idiosyncrasy; from particular biofictional snippets when dealing with the shell shock of soldiers after the war; and even from the subjective perspective of the effects of the drug when consuming and the consequences after doing so.

Finally, the proposed analysis methodology can be extrapolated to other audiovisual studies based on the conceptual integration in different dimensions that allow subsequent syntactic analysis. It can allow further research on the interpretation of drug addiction in movies and series combining different perspectives and fields.



REFERENCES

- Aguirre, K. (2014). El nuevo Hollywood y la posmodernidad: entre la subversión y el neoconservadurismo. *Palabra Clave*, 17 (3), 645-671. <https://doi.org/10.5294/pacla.2014.17.3.4>
- Akin, F. [director]. (2004). *Against the wall*. [Film]. Bavaria Film.
- Alonso, L. E., & Fernández Rodríguez, C. (2013). *Los discursos del presente. Un análisis de los imaginarios sociales contemporáneos*. Siglo XXI.
- Aronofsky, D. [director]. (2000). *Requiem for a dream*. [Film]. Artisan Entertainment.
- Aumont, J., & Marie, M. (1993). *Análisis del film*. Paidós.
- Boyle, D. [director]. (2005). *Trainspotting*. [Film]. Film4 Productions.
- Brisset, D. (2011). *Análisis filmico y audiovisual*. Editorial UOC.
- Canet, F., & Prósper, J. (2009). *Narrativa audiovisual. Estrategia y recursos*. Síntesis.
- Campbell, J. (2020). *El héroe de las mil caras*. Ediciones Atalanta.
- Chinn, C. (2019). *Peaky Blinders: The Real Story of Birmingham's most notorious gangs: The No. 1 Sunday Times Bestseller*. Kings Road Publishing.
- CineLIT. (december, 2020). *Películas sobre adicciones que debes ver*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EdoTdFw-V-A>
- Coppola, F.F. [director]. (1979). *Apocalypse now*. [Film]. Zoetrope Studios.
- Disney, W. [director]. (1940). *Pinocchio*. [Film]. Walt Disney Productions.
- Esteban Ortega, J. (ed.). (2013). *El imaginario cinematográfico y la sociedad hipermoderna*. Universidad Europea Miguel de Cervantes.
- Edel, U. [director]. (1981). *Yo, Cristina F.* [Film]. Solaris Film.
- Edwards, B. [director]. (1962). *Days of wine and roses*. [Film]. Jalem Productions.
- Escohotado, A. (2005). *Historia General de las Drogas*. Espasa.
- Freire, A. (2022). *Los antihéroes no nacen, se forjan. Arco argumental y storytelling en el relato antiheroico*. Editorial UOC.
- Freire, A., & Vidal-Mestre, M. (2022). El concepto de antihéroe o antiheroína en las narrativas audiovisuales transmedia. *Cuadernos.Info*, (52), 246-265. <https://doi.org/10.7764/cdi.52.34771>
- García, R. (2007). El cine como recurso didáctico. *Eikasía, Revista de Filosofía*, (13), 121-127.
- Gaspar, N. [director]. (2018). *Clímax*. [Film]. Arte France Cinéma.
- Groening, M., Jean, A., Maxtone-Graham, I., Frink, J., et al. (1989-present). *The Simpsons* [TV series]. Gracie Films; 20th Television.
- Herrero, G. [director]. (2005). *Heroína*. [Film]. Tornasol Films.
- Imbert, G. (2010). *Cine e imaginarios sociales. El cine posmoderno como experiencia de los límites (1990-2010)*. Cátedra.
- Iñarritu, A. [director]. (2003). *21 grams*. [Film]. This is That, Y Productions.
- Kalvert, S. [director]. (1995). *Diary of a rebel*. [Film]. New Line Cinema.
- Kahn, C. [director]. (2018). *The Believer*. [Film]. Les Films du Worso.



- Knight, S. [creador y codirector]. (2013-2022). *Peaky Blinders*. [TV series]. BBC.
- Kubrick, S. [director]. (1971). *A clockwork orange*. [Film]. Warner Bros.
- Lipovetsky, G., & Serroy, J. (2009). *La pantalla global. Cultura mediática y cine en la era hipermoderna*. Anagrama.
- Long, P. (2017). Class, Place and History in the Imaginative Landscapes of *Peaky Blinders*. En D. Forrest y B. Johnson (eds), *Social Class and Television Drama in Contemporary Britain* (pp. 165-179). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-55506-9_12
- MacFarlane, S., Goodman, D., Sheridan, C., Smith, D., et al. (1999-present). *Padre de familia* [TV series]. 20th Television; Disney-ABC-Domestic Television.
- Martí, J. (2010). *Funny Marketing: consumidores, entretenimiento y comunicaciones de marketing en la era del branded entertainment*. Wolters Kluwer.
- Martínez Lucena, J. M., & Cambra-Badii, I. (2020). *Imaginario de los trastornos mentales en las series*. Editorial UOC.
- Mueller, T. (2022). Masculinity and PTSD: Violence among Veterans in the BBC Series *Peaky Blinders*. *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric*, 12,(1), 33-44.
- Morín, E. (2011). *El cine o el hombre imaginario*. Paidós.
- Navarrete, L. (2013). ¿Qué es la crítica de cine? Síntesis.
- Orellana, J., Almacellas, M^a A., & Watt, N. (2019). *Manual de crítica de cine*. CEU Ediciones.
- Palomares-Sánchez, P., Hidalgo-Marí, T., & Segarra-Saavedra, J. (2022). El consumo de alcohol, tabaco y drogas en los jóvenes: un estudio sobre las teen series españolas recientes (2015-2021). *Dígitos. Revista de Comunicación Digital*, 8, 231-250. <https://doi.org/10.7203/rd.v1i8.227>
- Renau Ruiz, V., & Carbonell Sánchez, X. (2011) Análisis de la presencia de drogas en la filmografía de Pedro Almodóvar (2002-2009). *Revista Española de Drogodependencias*, 36, (1), 49-63.
- Ruíz de Mendoza, J. F.(2009). Integración conceptual y modos de inferencia. *Quaderns de Filologia. Estudis lingüístics*, 14, 193-219.
- Sanz-Pérez, L., Barlés-Sauras, A., Salillas-Guillén, R., Peralta-Campo, M., Peralta-Nueno, C., & Pla-Martínez, MR. (2018). *Trainspotting* (1996): el problema de las adicciones en los jóvenes. *Revista Med Cine*, 14(3), 159-164.
- Scorsese, M. [director]. (2013). *The Wolf of Wall Street*. [Film]. Paramount Pictures.
- Seal, L. (2022). *Street Crime, Gangs and Drugs*. En *Gender, Crime and Justice*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-87488-9_5
- Segura, S. [director]. (2001). *Torrente 2: Misión en Marbella*. [Film]. Amiguetes Entertainment.
- Sevilla, J. M. (2020). Abisalidad y nihilismo. Una aproximación en perspectiva ontológica al existencialismo trágico en series negras televisivas. *Fedro, Revista De Estética Y Teoría De Las Artes*, (17), 1-42.
- Sierra Bravo, R. (2007). *Técnicas de investigación social. Teoría y ejercicios*. Thomson.
- Smith, E. (2017). 'Brutalised' veterans and tragic anti-heroes: Masculinity, crime and



post-war trauma in Boardwalk empire and Peaky Blinders. En M. J. K. Walsh y A. Varnava (Eds.), *The Great War and the British Empire: Culture and Society* (pp. 279-289). Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315557502>

Vogler, C. (2002). *El viaje del escritor*. Ma Non Troppo.

Wilder, B. [director]. (1945). *The Lost Weekend*. [Film]. Paramount Pictures.