

Glee essay



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Topic 2. ' There is nothing ironic about show choir! ' - Rachel Cohen Is Rachel's assessment of the musical performances on Glee correct? Discuss the interplay of melodrama, irony and intertextuality in Glee. Your essay should contain detailed analysis of at least two scenes from Glee's 1st season. Your essay should also make reference to your core course readings on television and postmodernism. Due 14 September heir true voice; and this one was, to me, ultimately about the series demonstrating its own voice and its space within the world of contemporary musicals. I don't know what exactly I expected when I heard Joss Whedon would be directing, although it did send me diving for my Buffy The Vampire Slayer sing-along DVD. What I didn't expect was an episode that didn't feel like Whedon at all but felt intensely like Glee, more specifically the Glee that endeared itself to me in the first half of the season.

What has always appealed to me about Glee, and apparently to Joss Whedon based on this episode and his interview on Fox's website , was the show's delicate balance of tongue-in-cheek bitter cynicism, which keeps Glee blessedly away from High School Musical territory, and a sometimes heartbreakingly authentic sentimentality that draws me into a deeply emotional engagement with the characters and a desire to see them triumph.

As others on this blog have mentioned, the stunt shows, focusing around a musical theme or dance conceit, are fun but can bring the show away from its narrative engagement and this mix of sincerity and cynicism that musical numbers have often been harnessed in service of. " Dream On" brought back this dynamic and foregrounded it in contrast to some of the more music-

themed recent episodes. Neil Patrick Harris is the king of bitter(sweet) cynicism, and his performance as Bryan Ryan maintained the comedy in what otherwise was in danger of becoming a maudlin episode.

Rachel and Artie's storylines gave both characters an opportunity for growth. Artie's triumphantly joyful flash mob scene (fangirl moment - thank you Glee, for a flash mob!) in particular made his final moments of aching vulnerability that much more poignant. There has been reflection on this blog about the way that Glee sometimes uses, one might even say exploits, disabled characters for emotional endings and to humanize its more difficult characters (Sue and Rachel), and Artie's storyline comes dangerously close to becoming part of this trend.

There are certainly issues with how Artie's storyline is presented in this episode, and I leave those issues for other commentators more knowledgeable in these areas. Problematic though this is, it is consistent with the series' ethos from the beginning. The show has always undermined its own after-school special themes, or at least made them less saccharine, by unabashedly drawing on stereotypes and refusing after-school special endings: Artie cannot dance, Tina doesn't do the "right" thing. All is not well in McKinley High.

If it were, it wouldn't be Glee. That this episode spoke most clearly with what I feel is Glee's unique voice is made even more important through its intertextuality, which evoked a self-awareness on the part of the series about its place amongst contemporary musicals. Here again we return to Joss Whedon and Neil Patrick Harris. Both figures have had important roles in

bringing contemporary uses of the musical to television and the web. They worked together on the web series Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog.

Neil Patrick Harris has performed in musical episodes of How I Met Your Mother and Batman: The Brave and the Bold, and Whedon's musical episode of Buffy often makes lists of the best musical television episodes of all time. In this same episode that the guest director and guest star positioned Glee within the contemporary use of the musical on television, we discover that Shelby Corcoran is Rachel's mother. Shelby is played by Idina Menzel, who originated Maureen in Rent and Elphaba in Wicked on Broadway, with Glee guest star Kristin Chenoweth.

Menzel and Chenoweth further link Glee to the tradition of the contemporary musical that may be a much more appropriate reference here than for the more obvious, but deceptive, High School Musical. Contemporary musicals have become increasingly mature, cynical, parodic and subversive, trends that Glee falls squarely within. In an episode so drenched in references to the contemporary musical context, it was all the more important that Glee followed the examples of its characters in the last episode and emphasized its own unique voice.

Whedon showed himself to be a true Gleek by emphasizing the voice of the show over his own. Regardless of whether you are a Gleek (if you don't know this term, read on), you may have noticed the buzz surrounding FOX's musical comedy, which returned Tuesday to the second-best ratings of the night after a "Gleek Week" of promotional appearances and news coverage. Created by Ian Brennan, Brad Falchuk, and Ryan Murphy, Glee focuses on a

diverse group of teenagers participating in a high school show choir, treating the participants in “ New Directions” with alternating doses of warmth and snark.

It also is one of the first series in the last few decades to successfully incorporate musical numbers; its music has become a lucrative cross-promotional element of the Glee phenomenon. The series has garnered ardent fans, or Gleeks, around the world — evident in the many websites dedicated to it, such as Gleeks United, Glee Club Online, Forum Francais de Glee, Glee Brazil, and my favorite, What Would Emma Pillsbury Wear? , inspired by the fashions worn by the eponymous guidance counselor with a penchant for all things sterile and for sexy-librarian sweaters.

Just as notable, it appears to have been embraced as particularly American. The cast was invited by First Lady Michelle Obama to sing at the White House’s annual Easter egg roll last weekend, and they followed that up with a Glee-themed episode of The Oprah Winfrey Show (she praised them as the “ hardest working cast on television”). News coverage on the return of Glee and spoilers have followed in most major news outlets—including two dueling reviews in The New York Times—and in scholarly forums (a shout out to In Media Res, which recently hosted a Glee-themed week).

What is it about Glee that has inspired this phenomenon? Based on my own experience, as a Gleek and as a scholar focusing on the series in my research, I find the show’s play with diversity equally satisfying and frustrating, and always compelling (arguably, it is “ post-racial” and reinforcing of traditional racial stereotypes). And it seems that for many fans,

the show's focus on underdogs overcoming challenge, sly satire, and feel-good musical numbers are clear pulls.

With respect to these and other appeals, Glee is a prime illustration of what Valerie Wee has described as hyper-postmodern media culture. A mash-up of generic influences, intertextual references, music, and ideological content that is both eerily nostalgic and forward-thinking, the series can be read and enjoyed by fans in multiple and diverging ways. This week's episode, "Hello," provided a full helping of these and other pleasures.

We witnessed cheerleading coach Sue Sylvester (Jane Lynch)'s return to the high school and renewed mission of obliterating the glee club and the long-awaited blossoming of two romantic relationships, Mr. Shuester and Emma and Rachel and Finn, although difficulties naturally arise for both couples. In these and other entanglements as New Directions looks toward regionals, the timing and humor are spot on, not the least of which was the limiting of the musical numbers to songs with the word "hell" in the title.

The hilarious mix that ensues includes "Hello, I Love You," "Highway to Hell," and "Hello, Goodbye." And the narrative may not be important as the sum of Glee's parts; they include the hyper-postmodern mash-up described above, exciting and talented performers, upbeat music that can be enjoyed in other arenas, sweetly geeky fandom, and the overall ethos of embracing the loveable loser in all of us. Are you a Gleek, and if so, what do you think encourages its appeal? What do you make of the series as a contemporary television, music, or theatrical text?

In response to this complicated series we plan to follow Glee, its paratexts, and its fandom on a weekly basis as it continues to air this season. We hope you'll take part in the discussion Reprinted with permission from our good friends at InsideCatholic.com, the leading online journal of Catholic faith, culture, and politics. The musical comedy-drama Glee debuted on Fox just over a year ago. The story of a high school Spanish teacher's attempts to resurrect the Lima, Ohio, high school glee club surprised critics by ending its first season ranked at 33 in the Nielsen ratings.

Now in its second season, the show's ratings have only gone up, as it climbed to the #15 spot last week. On May 23, the plans for a third season of Glee were announced. While there's no reason its popularity won't continue to climb, the challenge of producing a primetime musical series to appeal to a generation not brought up on the traditional musicals like Camelot, West Side Story, and The Sound of Music is obvious: How do you combine a contemporary story and characters with music and dance in a way that does not send viewers, especially younger ones, groaning in the direction of their PS3s and iPhones?

The producers of Glee found their solution in the example of Chicago, the Broadway show where the musical numbers were always performed in the context of a cabaret. The characters of Glee don't burst into song in the manner of, say, Rodgers and Hammerstein; rather, the strongly choreographed musical numbers - five to eight each episode - are usually staged as the glee club's performances or rehearsals. Thus, Glee retains enough of a realistic feel to appeal to a younger audience. The music, a combination of pop and Broadway standards newly rrranged by Adam Anders, <https://assignbuster.com/glee-essay/>

appeals to all ages and has been a phenomenal success on CD and downloads, with over \$2 million in digital sales. The cast of Glee had 25 singles on the Billboard Hot 100 in 2009, more than any artist since the Beatles in 1964. Their performance of "Don't Stop Believin'" went gold last November, with over half a million dollars in sales. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Glee's achievement is its ability to keep three generations of viewers - children, parents, and grandparents - in front of the TV together.

The choreography of Zachary Woodlee, sexy without being sleazy, evokes Broadway's Jerome Robbins rather than Bob Fosse, much less the crotch-grabbing antics of tuneless rappers. Viewers with memories of Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire, or even the June Taylor Dancers on The Jackie Gleason Show, find themselves smiling once again. The producers and cast members also maintain tasteful control over material chosen - from older classics like "Over the Rainbow," "One Less Bell to Answer," "Smile," and "I Could Have Danced All Night," with newer ones such as "Proud Mary," "Piano Man," "Jump," "Boodylicious," and Josh Groban's "You Raise Me Up. When a Rolling Stone critic snidely chides Glee's leading actor, Matthew Morrison, saying he "couldn't rap his way out of 98° rehearsal," he seems oblivious to the fact that more than an occasional nod to rap would immediately begin thinning its audience (starting with me). The choice to offset the Disney-like innocence of Will Schuester, played by Morrison, with the cynical cheerleading coach, Sue Sylvester (Jane Lynch), works perfectly. The conflict between Schuester and Sylvester becomes nothing less than the perennial clash of *ars gratia artis* (arts for arts sake) with the cultural philistines.

The writing for Sylvester's character is so good it has spawned its own wiki thread. Take, for example, her attitude toward intimacy in marriage: "I, for one, think intimacy has no place in a marriage. Walked in on my parents once, and it was like seeing two walruses wrestling." But beyond the Schuester and Sylvester rivalry, Glee fails to achieve the generational integration of taste in its characters and storyline that it has attained with its music and dancing. Will's wife, Terri (Jessalyn Gilsig), seems like a refugee from John Sayles' *Serial Mom*, where the entirety of middle-class family life is cynically, and hilariously, parodied.

The viewer is left constantly questioning how Will, whose fundamental decency and kindness are repeatedly evoked, could have married such a demented twit as Terri. Such jarring contrasts of character abound in Glee. Finn Hudson (Cory Monteith), the lead singer of the glee club and quarterback of the football team, doesn't seem to know a hot tub cannot serve as a medium for impregnating his cheerleader girlfriend, Quinn Fabray; meanwhile, his best friend, Puck Puckerman (Mark Salling), who did get Quinn pregnant, is rampaging through the neighborhood sleeping with the "cougar" mothers of his classmates.

There are also politically correct touches. Kurt Hummel (Chris Kolfer), the member of the glee club who likes to dress in black lace, not only "comes out" in the course of the first season but also leads the winless football team to their first victory by teaching them all how to dance. Yet Kurt's character is not made into a complete caricature: While his achievement on the gridiron is simply silly, the scene where he admits to his blue-collar father his same-sex attraction is quite affecting - and, I might add, realistic.

Not to be outdone, Rachel Berry (Lea Michele), who has the best voice in the cast, is also the most neurotic, having been raised by two homosexual fathers. Rachel eventually discovers that her birth mother is the coach of the rival glee club. Such is the search for postmodern innocence in Glee – there is too much water under the cultural bridge to directly revive the musical idiom and heritage of the 1940s and 1950s that became second nature to so many baby-boomers.

Before Glee, of course, there was Stephen Sondheim, who throughout his career as a composer and lyricist struggled with the same question of how to extend the musical to an audience that no longer believed in the univocal meaning of “ I love you. ” We can be grateful to the creators of Glee for making an effort to bring us a popular entertainment with such a high level of singing and dancing. The temptation will be to lose sight of the initial choices that have led to its success and, particularly, the generational breadth of its audience.

Just as American Idol has found out the hard way from its plunging ratings, once you start trying to please only the teenagers, the whole enterprise will quickly collapse. Mid-April, with its tax deadline, is a time that many people dread; this year, however, millions looked forward to it with great eagerness, because April 13th brought the first episode of “ Glee” after a four-month hiatus. The Fox show, set in the fictional William McKinley High School, in Lima, Ohio, is part satirical comedy, part musical, and—since its setting is high school—a bit of a drama. It’s not exactly a high-school musical, and it’s not exactly “ High School Musical,” the Disney song-and-dance franchise,

although, like that TV movie and its brand extensions, it has a long tail of tie-in merchandise and live performances. It also has over-the-moon fans—“gleeks,” they happily call themselves—which is a notable thing for a mainstream, non-niche network show that began only last fall.

The first post-hiatus episode had more than thirteen million viewers; the second, which featured the songs of Madonna, was close behind. Of course, it doesn't hurt that the show follows “American Idol” on Tuesday nights—though the pairing did pain many people a couple of weeks ago, when a live edition of “Idol” ran long, causing DVRs across the land to cut off the last minutes of “Glee.” And “Glee,” although a work of fiction, is “Idol”'s spawn, part of the current craze for watching star-making (and dream-crushing) machinery at work. “Glee” was created and is written by Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk, and Ian Brennan. Of the three, Murphy is the best known, having created the just ended FX psychomelodrama “Nip/Tuck” (for which Falchuk was a writer and a producer) and the 1999 WB comedy “Popular,” which was also a sendup of teen-age archetypes—as in “Glee,” there was a star football player who was torn between sports and the stage—but involved much more extracurricular activity among parents and families.

Except for the teachers and the administrators at McKinley High, few adults appear in “Glee,” which gives the series a cartoonish feel that's reinforced by the fact that the grownups we do see, well meaning though they may be, are as cluelessly wrapped up in themselves as the young people are. (Oddly, or not, of the group of about ten students we hang out with two have lost a parent.

It seems like a lot.) The success of “ Glee” depends on the energy and the obvious talent of its young (but way beyond high-school age) performers, and on Jane Lynch, who plays Sue Sylvester, the acid-tongued, sneaky, and completely loony cheerleading coach, whose every line of dialogue is quotable (and is duly quoted, minutes after being delivered, on Facebook pages and in Twitter feeds).

Sue’s counterbalance, and nemesis, is Will Schuester (Matthew Morrison, who has a solid Broadway background and Leyendecker good looks, including thick, wavy hair that Sue mocks, in elegant variations, pretty much every time she sees Will), a youngish Spanish teacher and a graduate of McKinley High in the days when it had a top-notch show choir. Will makes it his project to bring back that glory, and he starts by tricking the captain of the football team (Cory Monteith), whom he hears singing in the shower after practice one day, into joining his ragtag crew.

If Will gets funding for his group, the economy being tough—Sue’s cheerleading crew will lose theirs. Will also wants some of Sue’s girls—the Cheerios—for his group. She tells him that he doesn’t get it—that he can’t blur the lines in the rigid caste system that is high school: “ Your jocks and your popular kids—up in the penthouse. Your invisibles and the kids playing live-action druids and trolls out in the forest—bottom floor. ” What about the Glee kids? Will asks. What category are they in? “ Sub-basement,” she says. from the issue * cartoon bank * e-mail this The real engine of the show isn’t the machinations of its characters or its unfolding plot but its basic structure. Because “ Glee” is actually about a group of singers, it doesn’t seem artificial when the cast breaks into song; the music fits into the proceedings

organically. The songs—which Murphy chooses—range from oldies to newies, so that there is, theoretically, something for everybody, from “ Sing Sing Sing” and “ Sweet Caroline” to “ Gives You Hell” and “ Single Ladies. Still, it must be said, even people who love these songs may find something to hate in the style of singing sometimes showcased in “ Glee”—the earsplitting, maniacally melismatic car-alarm whine that Whitney Houston popularized—but, thankfully, there are quiet ballads to balance things out. Rachel, one of the choir members, has a bit of that pleading quality in her voice, but it suits her desperate ambition. She’s played by Lea Michele, who, at twenty-three, is a fifteen-year Broadway veteran.

Yet her large talent doesn’t extend to the non-singing parts of her performance. I give it up for her gifts, but I don’t feel soul there. Rachel takes herself very seriously, and things very literally; one of the other kids, Artie (Kevin McHale), is wheelchair-bound, and Rachel complains to Will that Artie shouldn’t be singing “ Sit Down You’re Rockin’ the Boat” because he’s already sitting down. Artie’s take is that Will’s choice was meant to be ironic, and Rachel responds, “ There’s nothing ironic about show choir! Of course there is, but there’s more, too—there’s also real glee, when things come together and when the characters get as much fleshing out as the stereotyping and the time constraints allow. With several production numbers per episode, almost all of which have remarkably weak choreography and poorly synched lip-synching, the writers haven’t been able to go very deep into anyone’s life. Read more http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/television/2010/05/10/100510crite_television_franklin#ixzz25UpjRdrc And then there’s Glee.

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Because there are no original songs, they've got to reference other works multiple times in every episode. When the show is at its best it takes cultural referents such as the video for Beyonce's "Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)" and turns it into something else by putting it in the context of trying to win a football game. It's an utterly ridiculous and goofy scene that belies the reality of the way football works, but it's also enormously satisfying and pretty funny to boot.

The show's musical numbers are to me more successful when they transport their sources to locales away from the stage or the classroom. And even when a musical number starts within the walls of William McKinley High School, if there are sequences that take us to other places and/or elsewhere in time, such as when Kurt recently sang "I Want to Hold Your Hand" for his classmates, that can also work incredibly well.

But when their numbers are stagebound things often become stagnant, sucking the life out of the song and leaving a strong distaste in the mouths of many viewers, or at least those who know the original. Kurt poses for photos when he's not transporting us through time via the power of song. The apotheoses of these occurrences take place in the episode titled "The Substitute," which features renditions of classic numbers from *Singin' in the Rain* (Donen/Kelly 1952), which were themselves new takes on old songs.

I'm not saying some texts are untouchable, but if you're going to cover something so culturally iconic, you might want to do something totally new with it. So Gus Van Sant's shot for shot remake of *Psycho* (1998)? Probably not a good idea. Conversely, Martin Scorsese's reimagining of Ford's *The*

Searchers (1956) as an urban western in Taxi Driver (1976)? That works. If you don't approach homage in this way it becomes nothing more than imitation, which might be the highest form of flattery but doesn't make for good TV or cinema.

So Glee's rendition of Singin' in the Rain's title song incorporates a mash-up with Rihanna's "Umbrella" and takes place on a stage full of water featuring the cast re-enacting moves from Gene Kelly's classic sequence while also incorporating new moves into their set-piece number. There's revision, and there's imitation, and then there's shitting on sanctity. I'm no purist and I'm not saying they shouldn't have done it, but I would argue that despite the attempt at innovation, it doesn't go far enough in its departure from either original.

And the one thing that it's missing that makes the movie's original so great is passion you can feel. Kelly's rendition takes place within the context of his falling in love with Kathy (Debbie Reynolds) and it results in Dionysian abandon, bringing to Technicolor life the giddy exhilaration that comes with new love, whereas Glee's version is akin to watching craftsmen make shoes: there's artistry in their production and the finished product is expertly made, but it lacks the soul that still makes Kelly's sequence so resonant.

Worse still is their take on "Make 'Em Laugh," which features Will Schuester (Matthew Morrison) and Mike Chang (Harry Shum, Jr.) in a duet that is at times a near step for step imitation of Donald O'Connor's version. Again, failing to revise the setting and context in an interesting way leaves their rendition flat. It lacks the visceral joy of O'Connor's sequence, the best part

of which is that it makes the audience do what the title suggests, which is laugh.

Will and Chang are great dancers, but as there's no real reason for the scene other than to show that they can do a rote imitation of the steps, their version is totally devoid of life and spontaneity, making it seem as though it's performed by technically proficient but non-sentient automatons. There's no reason you can't do a scene that's almost identical to the original, so long as you update it in such a way so as to give the audience a new way to interpret it. Take Spike Lee's incorporation of the Love/Hate tattoo sequence from *Night of the Hunter* (Laughton 1955) into *Do the Right Thing* (1989).

Robert Mitchum's iconic scene is as seemingly inviolable as anything from *Singin' in the Rain*, but by transposing it from a depression era white psychopathic murdering preacher in the deep south to Radio Raheem (Bill Nunn), a socially aware young African-American male living in what was at the time contemporary Bedford-Stuyvesant, Lee both pays homage and avoids pastiche, creating something new in the process, a model of artistic quotation that I'm afraid might be falling out of favor in our current media landscape, as evidenced on *Glee* and elsewhere * Why a blog and not a website? TUESDAY, 30 AUGUST 2011 Project: Art History. " Evolution of musical film genre". " Williams and Hall both have argued that culture is not so much a set of things (television shows or paintings, for example) as a set of processes or practices through which individuals and groups come to make sense of things, including their own identities within and even against or outside the group" Stunken ; Cartwright (2009) The intention of the essay

is to link evolution in cinema genres with the changes in the structure of popular culture.

The quotation expresses the approach to culture as a process in which individuals interact, and this is the way the essay would like culture to be seen. Cinema is the perfect method to analyse popular culture from this point of view. Since its invention, it has given human beings a new and different opportunity of enjoying simulated worlds. Musical genre is particularly interesting because it has been present since the beginnings of cinema as one of the main Hollywood genres, and it has needed to introduce new strategies to survive. There are periods when it nearly disappeared before coming back in a new form (Hayward 2000).

This essay is structured in such a way that it describes the periods of the genre and how its codes and conventions have been applied in each, and then analyses the main ideas from a social and theoretical point of view. But first, it may prove useful to discuss genre theory. Genre can be considered a strategy created by the cinema industry to identify a category of film. But it also can be described as a cognitive mechanism to help the viewer and filmmaker to know the expectations and hypothesis of the viewers when sitting in front of a screen to watch a film.

Any genre is formed by a set of codes and conventions that the spectator has learned and can decode automatically and unconsciously. He or she feels pleasure in identification. This last point of view agrees with the one of the essay, as its aim is to connect the research on genre with what spectators experience when watching a film (Nelmes 2007) (Hayward 2000).

It is also interesting to analyse what makes the spectator enjoy watching a film. Hayward (2000) identifies three stages in spectatorship theory. The first stage in the 70's treats the spectator as a passive subject.

It is inspired on Freud's idea of the Oedipal complex and on Lacan's idea of the " mirror stage" that says that our identity is not coming from within, but from the way we see ourselves for the first time from the outside. In our adulthood we are in a constant state of desire that cannot be fulfilled because our unconscious mind cannot be influenced by the world around us. Freud's ideas associate the mirror stage with the relationship between the child and his mother. The male character sees his mother as an object and identifies with the father to try to meet the child's feeling of " castration" of not having access to the mother (Ward 2003).

The spectator identifies the cinema screen with this " mirror". The second stage, from the middle of the 70's, is influenced by Laura Mulvey. She introduces the idea of sexual difference in identification with personalities and criticises the masculine point of view in cinema narrative that fetishizes women. The option for the female spectator is to identify with the passive female or with a masculine third character. In the third stage, from the 80's, we find investigations derived from the debate started by Mulvey. Some ideas talk about the bisexual position of the female child after her mirror stage.

She first has the mother as her object of desire and then she has to change to the father as her object of desire. And the male spectator can also position himself bisexually, when identifying with the active and passive modes of the

male character. The spectator is treated as an active subject, he or she does not occupy just one position in relation to the characters. Dyer considers that there are three periods in a genre: primitive, mature and decadent (Hayward 2000). On the experimental primitive period, before the 30's, musical is generated as a hybrid from European operetta and American vaudeville and music hall (Hayward 2000).

On the mature period, from the 30's to the 60's, first we find a director such as Busby Berkeley. His films do not pay attention to the plot, but rather, are vehicles for song and dance that are introduced in an artificial way. It is pure spectacle and sensuality. Sex is offered through the gaze (Hayward 2000). Later, songs and dances move with the narrative and are introduced on a more natural way. Fred Astaire develops an elegant, stylised style and Gene Kelly develops a more energetic one. The music was often composed by talented authors brought from Broadway.

In the 50's, it is the first time the studio system pay special attention to the youth audience, linked to the rise in the music record industry. Singers as Elvis Presley and Cliff Richard became actors (Hayward 2000). For Altman musicals of the mature period are an "ode to marriage". The narrative is based on the principle of pairing and mirroring. Male and female are paired, maturity is paired to immaturity. The main characters are mirrored in other couples; settings are mirrored in other settings (Hayward 2000). This conclusion was made following a synchronic analysis, i. . , just focusing in a moment in the film, specifically in the final scene. Recently, this same author has reflected about that approach and has analysed musical films diachronically. He proposes two hypotheses. Following the first one, in

musicals main characters are first paired with a “ wrong” partner to be finally paired to the “ right” one. Films such as “ An American in Paris” (Minnelli, 1951) follow this structure. The second hypothesis is more speculative. It is based in the idea that the relationships of the characters turn from homosocial to heterosexual.

This structure is found in many films, from “ An American in Paris” (Minnelli, 1951), to “ Grease” (Kleiser, 1978). In “ Grease”, the main actress and actor belong to a group where all members are women or all men, respectively, and eventually left these groups to become a couple. This can be seen as an evolution from childhood to adulthood. The author also speculates on whether this structure tries to avoid the character moving from a homosocial relationship to a homosexual relationship (Altman 2010). Cohan (2010) considers that the dual register between narrative and performance is one of the distinctive conventions of the genre.

It breaks the dominant codes of realism in cinema, whose aim is to guide the audience through the story, so the codes and conventions become “ transparent” to avoid distracting them (Nelmes 2007). The concept of diegesis refers to the fictional world described inside the story. In musicals, filmmakers can add extra-diegetic shots that have no logical reason for being there. And they can add a diegetic to call public attention to the star, to show that they are amazed when they see and hear the main characters dancing or singing, and to create the illusion that the real non-diegetic audience is part of that public (Hayward 2000).

Dyer (2002) distinguishes three tendencies of musicals: one that keeps narrative and number separate, another that identifies narrative with problems and numbers with scape, but trying to integrate the number through signals, and a last one that dissolves this distinction between narrative and number, which makes this narrative also utopian. Richard Dyer writes that the strategy of the genre is to “ provide the spectator with an utopia through the form of entertainment”.

Any film reflects these categories: abundance, energy, intensity, transparency and community in opposition to the real society, where we can find: scarcity, exhaustion, dreariness, manipulation and fragmentation. Abundance is shown through the luxurious costumes and huge settings. Energy is shown through the dance and also the camera work. Intensity refers to experiencing emotions directly. Transparency refers to spontaneity. Community refers to the sense of belonging. This utopia is associated with the specific mainstream ideology of this period: capitalism, economic and social stability (Hayward 2000), (Stacey 1994).

Of the decadent period, from the 60's, codes and conventions are questioned. Musicals are more realistic; subjects such as racism and delinquency are treated. Examples are “ West Side Story” (Wise, 1961), “ Saturday Night Fever” (Badham, 1977) and “ Grease” (Kleiser, 1978). We also find Julie Andrew's films such as “ The Sound of Music” (Wise, 1965). This is identified as a family film that follows traditional conventions. But its structure differs from the classical one. There is no more a duality, instead, there is a female main character and the male character has a secondary role.

She represents liberated femininity. In Barbra Streisand's films - "The Way We Were" (Pollack, 1973) - the girl needs a partner but does not always achieve it. When she fails to do it, the film shows her drive for freedom and female independence (Farmer 2010), (Robertsib Wojcik 2010). This reflects how conventions in cinema have changed with changes in society; in the 70's women rebelled against the traditional patriarchal society. It has been almost 50 years since the period of decline of the musical genre begun. It looked as if it was going to disappear. But lately, we are seeing a revival of the genre.

Sometimes it is successful, such as "Moulin Rouge!" (Luhman, 2001), "Chicago" (Marshall, 2002) and "Mamma Mia" (Lloyd, 2008), sometimes it is not, such as "Nine" (Marshall, 2009). At this point, we can ask ourselves about the reasons for bringing back musicals. Cohan (2010) mentions David Rooney and Jonathan Bing describing them. They mention how development of new technology can help with the task of shooting and editing, and reducing costs. Also, the after-market of the fans of musical can be economically attractive, as they are repeating viewers, so DVDs and soundtracks would sell well - as well as merchandising would do.

Another interesting fact is that the youth audience has grown up watching music videos and Disney's animated films. Finally, another reason can be that the golden period of musicals happened during the 30's Big Depression. Maybe it is not a coincidence that in the actual moment of economic recession, the public is going back to watch films that supply escapism (Burgess-Allen 2010). Feuer (2010) argues that in the decline period, there are reconstructive musicals and deconstructive musicals. Reconstructive

musicals can be “Moulin Rouge” (Luhman, 2001), “Chicago” (Marshall, 2002), “Nine” (Marshall, 2009). “Cabaret” (Fosse) in 1972 already has influences of art cinema (Hayward 2000). They are targeted at art-house audiences, while keep the classical conventions, and show an interest in aesthetic and nostalgia for the past. Following these, “Moulin Rouge” (Luhman, 2001) mixes cinematic references, historical intertexts and cultural allusions, this makes it difficult to define which genre it belongs to as it can be considered a musical, a melodrama, and author film, or even a music video (Nelmes 2007).

Deconstructive Musicals are oriented towards the teenage public and create new conventions, they do not represent lead performers but amateurs that love singing and dancing, they “take up the position of spectators of Old Hollywood musicals in a world where it is no longer possible to be Fred Astaire” (Daldry, 2000). Following these, there are productions for TV, such as “High School Musical” (Ortega, 2006) and, more recently, “Glee” (Murphy, 2009). Conventions in “High School Musical” (Ortega, 2006) follow the traditional ones. It follows the principle of duality with two main characters.

What it adds new to the genre is a contrast between authenticity, represented by the main couple, and manipulated artistry, represented by another couple. It also adds a reflection of a rigidly hierarchical world, where the characters move between conformism and rebellion. The characters are stereotypes: jocks, cheerleaders, and brainiacs. “Glee” (Murphy, 2009) takes the idea of “High School Musical” and exaggerates it. We again find the same stereotypes but they are taken to the extreme of satire. All the

characters know that to be someone at the school they have to belong to a group: cheerleaders, football team...

Wearing a distinctive uniform is important for them. "Glee" also adds being playful with reality. It highlights being a simulation of reality and reminds us often about it, advising us not to take it too seriously. The narrative is an utopia in the same way as the performances. And this utopia again follows a specific ideology. Subjects that affect teenagers are treated: pregnancy, alcohol, sexuality, family relationships, ... (Cohan 2010), (Payne 2010).

Another thing these films have changed from classic films is that musical soundtracks are not created specifically for the film, now it appropriates pop music or music from other films.

The concept of film genre is directly related to the concept of intertextuality. The film is always going to be framed by the genre as each film belonging to it uses conventions previously used by other members of it (Nelmes 2007). But this can be a contradiction, because intertextuality is also associated with taking the text beyond the boundaries of the genre. This semiotic term was first used by Julia Kristeva, who understands that the text connects in two ways, first the author to the reader and then the text to other texts (Chandler 2009). The growing preponderance of visuals in ads has enhanced the ambiguity of meaning embedded in message structures. Earlier advertising usually states its message quite explicitly through the medium of written text... , but starting in the mid-1920s visual representation became more common, and the relationship between text and visual image became complementary - that is, the text explained the visual. In the post-war period, and especially since the early 1960s, the function of text moved

away from explaining the visual and towards a more cryptic form, in which text appeared as a kind of 'key' to the visual.

In all, the effect was to make the commercial message more ambiguous; a 'reading' of it depended on relating elements in the ad's internal structure to each other, as well as drawing in references from the external world." Leiss (1997) This paragraph talks specifically about the use of intertextuality in advertising, which is not the subject of the essay, but it is included here because it expresses that the way creatives communicate messages has evolved from being explicit to being ambiguous. Leiss talks about how the "receiver's brain is an indispensable component of the total communication system".

Explaining it clearly, the spectator is no longer considered stupid. Viewers have a wider visual knowledge that make them able to understand messages transmitted on ambiguous ways. We have grown with the rapid association of images in film, TV, and advertisement (Kolker 2002). The visual knowledge of the spectator has helped to make it more sophisticated. The basis of the plot remains simple but the filmmaker can and must introduce mechanisms to appeal a target audience that has become highly media literate.

As a result of the the research can be taken the most interesting ideas about the way contemporaneous filmmakers apply the codes and conventions of the genre. They follow some of the conventions of films from the classical era: keeping a simple plot, selling an ideology. And they add to the genre: using soundtracks from pop music or other films instead of creating it

specifically for the film, the creation of fictional worlds that make reference to another fictional world, playing with reality and stereotypes, playing with the dual register between narrative and performance.

It can be found in several essays and articles that talk about contemporaneous musical films being postmodern, as the following one written by Edwards (Cohan 2010): “ The charm and artistic merit of the original High School Musical movie lies in its ability to consider a sophisticated theatrical and musical heritage and consequently revise it for a modern audience ... it simultaneously conforms to genre expectations and pays homage to its textual influences while taking a postmodern delight in exposing its own limitations and playing with some gentle pastiche of literary and cinematic predecessors”.

Flanagan (2002) wrote about the features of a film that can be identified as postmodern. The first ones are playfulness and self reference. It reminds us that it is a construction, that is not real, and that we must not take it seriously. The musical film’s creators play with the way they integrate the performances in the narrative, with the stereotypes. It follows the tendency of dissolving the distinction between narrative and number, meaning that this narrative is also utopian. The second ones are generic blurring and intertextuality.

The use of references to other texts is very usual in musicals. The third ones are popular and commercial media mixed with high culture. Current musical films do not have a soundtrack created for them, but they appropriate music. The fourth ones are fragmentation and death of representation. This refers to

the way audience make sense of things through representations of reality instead of doing it through the reality itself. And finally uncertainty and the loss of context as consequence of the previous ones. According to this, films such as " Glee" (Murphy, 2009) can be considered postmodern.

But probably to label a film as postmodern is not going to influence the audience as to whether to be interested on it or not, what probably can be considered more important is the " sophisticated hyperconsciousness" in contemporaneous popular entertainment, i. e. , the high degree of media literacy in the audience that allows playing with the conventions (Collins 1993), (Nelmes 2007). Why is Glee Postmodern In this blog and our discussion of postmodern television, the TV show Glee has come up as an example.. One of the theories we've learned about postmodernism is that it rejects the idea of metanarratives (stories about stories).

In postmodernism there is not black and white, good vs. evil, etc. In the show Glee there is the character Puck, a football player who seems to be your typical tough-guy bully. However, even though Puck is a bully and even shoves around some of the other characters that we like, we still do not dislike him. We don't see him as the villain even though typically the jock/bully is seen as the " bad guy. " Plurality is another term we learned regarding postmodernism, and this is when there are multiple stories and multiple identities.

This show has so many characters, each with their own personal story and all of their stories get told in one way or another. Within Season 2 episode 8 the character ' David' is focused on and he is being questioned about whether he

is gay or not. The glee club is a dance singing club but within this is another story. This gives the program room to expand and here for example the program deals with modern day issues that are publicised in the media. Grand narratives are clearly contradicted in this episode as homosexuality is put in the limelight and is praised.

One of the male characters shows very feminine attributes and in their rehearsal wears a top which says " Likes Boys. " This is done to try to numb the shock of homosexuals coming out and normalise it so that the program can move forward. There are different races, different personalities, different handicaps; different cliques, all represented in this show and all of their stories are being told. Nostalgia is another postmodern term represented in Glee. Many of the songs performed on this show are songs from the past for example Les Miserables - Kareoke and Born this Way.

The teacher in charge of Glee Club, Mr. Schuester, loves doing songs from when he was younger and this really brings nostalgia to the show.

Convergence, the flow of media content across a range of different platforms is also part of this show. You can download the songs performed on the show, many viewers discuss the show online, and many people attempt to win parts on the show by creating videos of themselves singing and performing and posting them online. There are many forms of media involved with this show other than simply watching the show.

Not to mention the fact that you can also watch the show online, just one more form of media regarding this show Glee draws people in by creating stereotypical situations and characters, each with their own flaws that the

audience can easily identify with. This identification process allows viewers to become more intimate with the show, especially when the actors begin to sing songs that modern viewers already know and love. Fox originally took a chance on the new musical project, but hedged their bets with innovative marketing strategies and with a huge lead in audience from American Idol.

The use of cultural classics and songs that recently premiered on the top 40, drew in the American Idol audience members specifically, and music lovers generally. This target audience was strong in the 18-49 demographic, and particularly strong with women. The strength in these demographics enabled Glee to become the 3rd most expensive show to buy advertisements on. This advertising revenue is supplemented with a steady stream of money made from selling singles on iTunes. This model has been so successful that Glee has now become a tent-pole of its own and anchors the entire comedy lineup on Tuesdays. contrast, in recent years American television has brought us Scrubs, Ugly Betty and now Glee, shows that combine boldly imaginative approaches to narrative with a humour and humanity that is often exhilarating to behold. While we seem to be mired in an endless debate about platforms, content, news values and the multimedia revolution, the Americans have managed to retain an enthusiasm for the dramatic possibilities of television. And what's clear is that those possibilities are founded upon an enduring belief in sharp, savvy writing and deeply committed performances.

At first sight, Glee (C4) follows a stupefyingly familiar path. It's set in a midwest high school, amid the over-fictionalised world of geeks and jocks. And in a nod to the High School Musical fad, it focuses on a glee club, or <https://assignbuster.com/glee-essay/>

singing society. However, Glee takes these tropes and cliches and stretches them in surprising directions to create a whole new form, as different to its original source as a butterfly is to a caterpillar. Last week, teen pregnancy, the difficulty of coming out in high school, and sexual attraction between teacher and pupil were plot themes but, unlike many American shows, not moral “ issues”.

Glee is possessed of a liberal heart but its balls, as well as some of its most memorable lines, belong to the politically incorrect coach, Sue Sylvester (played by Jane Lynch). Like two opposing grammarians, kitsch sentiment and killer sarcasm wrestle over every line. Yet, at the point where conventional drama plunges into pathos, Glee slips into song. At one moment the school quarterback was singing “ I’ll Stand by You” to the ultrasound of his unwanted child (which isn’t his), the next his friends were rallying round in a stirring rendition of “ Lean on Me”.

A lot of the humour stems from snappy social observation, but the show also boasts the kind of verbal extravagance that, in the wrong hands, can sound written rather than said. Typical was the scene in which a former schoolgirl stalker, who once responded to rejection by eating a lethally hot pepper, advised her equally deluded successor: “ Let me tell you a few things I learned from two years of intense psychotherapy and an oesophagus transplant. The reason that line worked is the same reason the songs and outrageous storylines work: because the characters are immersed in their own reality. They never act as if they’ve said something funny. There’s no pause for laughter, no nods or winks, as Glee shows the same faith in its audience as it does in its characterisations. Laughter isn’t forced, so isn’t

false. In common with *Ugly Betty* and *Scrubs*, there is plenty of cultural commentary and knowing asides but failure to spot the reference doesn't undermine the scene. The action just moves swiftly on.

If *Glee* is postmodern, it doesn't bother knocking twice. The show has attracted a lot of plaudits, particularly in America, so it's probably soon due for a backlash. This might be an opportune moment, then, to say that the hype is deserved. It's a rare and heartening pleasure to watch so much energy and emotion expended in the unfashionable cause of family entertainment. Some of its fans might say *Doctor Who* performs a similar feat, though really the nearest British television comes, or attempts to come, to *Glee* is in shows like *Strictly Come Dancing*.

Where US networks can be persuaded to invest in good writing and acting, our TV executives prefer to back the all-dancing duo of celebrity and reality. Only in an atmosphere in which originality is viewed as marginal or suspect could a series like *Life of Riley* (BBC1) be produced. It may seem unfair to pick out this harmless sitcom as an illustration of the failings of British comedy drama, but perhaps not quite as unfair as the decision to recommission another series. Why is *Glee* Postmodern?

Glee is an American musical-comedy drama series. It started in 2009 and is produced by Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk and Ian Brennan, who originally wanted *Glee* to be a film, but decided to make it more interesting as a series. The episode I have chosen to focus on is the 'Britney/Brittany' episode, which pays tribute to Britney Spears when a member of the club Brittany

Pierce experiences an anesthesia-induced hallucination in which she recreates iconic Spears moments, and comes to self-realization.

I believe that this episode shows examples of being postmodern, as for a start the songs are in the past, and therefore have been created from an idea that's already happened, Postmodernism postulates that many, if not all, apparent realities are only social constructs and are therefore subject to change so Glee supports this view, it highlights that it is taking the original idea (song) that we all know from Britney Spears, and constructing it into their own, like the ' Toxic' version they performed on stage, straight away it's obvious that this episode is showing pastiche, as the whole episode is making tributes to classic pop culture, and it gives us as audience (or those who are old enough) a nostalgic feeling. One of the theories learned about postmodernism is that it rejects the idea of metanarratives (stories about stories). In postmodernism there is not black and white, good vs. evil, etc. There is the character Puck, a football player who seems to be your typical tough-guy bully.

However, even though Puck is a bully and even shoves around some of the other characters that we like, we still do not dislike him. We don't see him as the villain even though typically the jock/bully is seen as the " bad guy," and in this episode, he shows examples of this by fitting in with the rest of the club and wanting to perform the Britney songs, when typically you'd expect the ' jock' to go against this idea as it wasn't ' cool enough'.

Plurality is another term regarding postmodernism, and this is when there are multiple stories and multiple identities, and this is shown in this

particular episode when although the focus is on Britney, there are several storylines going ahead with each individual character like with Will coming to terms that the girl he loves is with someone else, and then the high school problems the glee club members are all facing.

The characters are also known for having multiple identities, this episode especially shows the members like Brittany and Rachel dressed up mimicking Britney Spears, and Santana also comes across as being tough, but in this episode she performs with Brittany in 'Me Against the Music' and we find out she is also in love with Brittany. Many of the songs performed on this show are songs from the past. The teacher in charge of Glee Club, Mr.

Schuster, loves doing songs from when he was younger and this really brings nostalgia to the show, but in this episode he rejects the idea of doing Britney week, as he believes she gives out the wrong messages, but eventually he comes around and performs with them, which causes outrage to the school, which is also very postmodern, although Glee is a fun, light-hearted comedy series, it can also have many adult references in, especially in this episode, which I believe to be very postmodern as it ignores the typical conventions of a 'high school drama' and actually takes the stereotypes to an extreme but twists them.

Glee has also been quoted to be described as hyper-postmodern media culture. A mash-up of generic influences, intertextual references, music, and ideological content that is both eerily nostalgic and forward-thinking, and this episode is a prime example showing all these things, the fact that the students go to the dentist to get their teeth fixed which is an 'underlying'

important message, influencing the audience to take care of their selves, its then twisted when they get put under an anesthesia, and hallucinate Britney Spears fantasies, Glee is known for taking simple, conventional ideas and turning them to almost inappropriate. Like two opposing grammarians, kitsch sentiment and killer sarcasm wrestle over every line. Yet, at the point where conventional drama plunges into pathos, Glee slips into song” was quoted by a news article, showing how Glee takes a completely different take on high school drama. Convergence, the flow of media content across a range of different platforms is also part of this show.

You can download the songs performed on the show, many viewers discuss the show online, and many people attempt to win parts on the show by creating videos of themselves singing and performing and posting them online. There are many forms of media involved with this show other than simply watching the show. Not to mention the fact that you can also watch the show online, just one more form of media regarding this show. In conclusion, I believe that Glee is postmodern because it uses examples of hyperreality, pastiche, intertextuality and is not your ordinary high school drama.