"Only the two of you, together, can choose what to name this connection, and so its name is yours and yours alone":
a critical discourse analysis of the queer representation in *The Penumbra Podcast*

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Tiivistelmä — Abstract

Tämä tutkielma tarkastelee queer-representaatiota fiktiopodcastissa *The Penumbra Podcast* (2016–). Tarkastelun kohteena on salapoliisi- ja science fiction genrejä yhdistelevän Juno Steel -sarjan kolme ensimmäistä tuotantokautta. Analyysin tarkoitus on selvittää, miten *The Penumbra Podcast* tuo ilmi hahmojensa queer-identiteettejä ja kuinka sarja tuottaa monimuotoista queer-representaatiota. Lisäksi analyysi tarkastelee, kuinka *The Penumbra Podcast* tekee näkyväksi ja kyseenalaistaa heteronormatiivisia diskursseja.

Tutkielman viitekehyksenä toimii kriittinen diskurssianalyysi sekä queer-teorian käsitteistö. Menetelmältään analyysi on laadullinen ja tarkastelee *The Penumbra Podcast*in käsikirjoituksen intertekstuaalisia elementtejä. Käsikirjoituksesta valikoituivat tarkemman analyysin kohteeksi sellaiset kohtaukset ja otteet, joissa hahmojen queer-identiteetit tai ihmissuhteet tulivat erityisesti esille.

Analyysistä käy ilmi, että *The Penumbra Podcast*in hahmokaarti sisältää monenlaisia queer-identiteettejä niin sukupuoli- kuin seksuaalivähemmistöistä. Sarja tekee hahmojen queer-identiteetit ja -suhteet ilmeiseksi dialogin, kerronnan, sekä podcastin äänimaailman kautta. Lisäksi analyysi osoittaa, kuinka *The Penumbra Podcast* kyseenalaistaa heteronormatiivisia diskursseja paitsi esittämällä fiktiivisen todellisuuden, jossa queer-identiteetit muodostavat enemmistön ja normin, mutta myös hienovaraisemmin huumorin keinoin. Sarja hyödyntää interteksuaalisuutta ja yleisön ennakko-oletuksia, jotka kumoamalla se tekee näkyväksi sukupuoleen ja seksuaalisuuteen liittyviä diskursseja ja tarjoaa niille queer-teorian näkökulmasta voimaannuttavia vaihtoehtoja.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Though inclusion in media has come a long way, what kind of and whose stories get to be told is still not matter of course to all people; as Talbot aptly puts it: "Fiction production is highly professionalized […] the type of fiction text produced for mass circulation is determined by creators' access to the key resources of financing and distribution" (1995: 163). Who she calls little people—often those with marginalised voices even outside published fiction— have limited access to resources and venues to create major productions. She also adds that in attempts to gain said access, the price is "extreme conservatism; the constrains on what they can write, and how they can write it, are rigid" (ibid). This has also been noted regarding queer representation specifically: queer representation in fictional media has a relatively short history, initially depicting negative and harmful portrayals, and later, when attitudes towards (certain) gay people shifted towards more accepting, the more positive portrayals remained and remain limited and often stereotypical (Peters 2011). Furthermore, though there has been an increasing trend in representation, LGBTQ+ characters still make up less than 12% of regular and recurring characters on television and streaming series today (GLAAD 2022). If prevailing norms dictate what is deemed acceptable and desirable to portray in media, the opportunities to write about marginalised experiences that do not conform to mainstream discourses can be limited. This means that marginalised creators must seek other, more accessible venues for publishing their stories—such as podcasting.

According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2022), the term podcast was first used in 2004 and is a portmanteau of the words iPod (Apple Inc.'s portable media device commonly used for listening music) and broadcast, defining it as "a program (as of music or talk) made available in digital format for automatic download over the Internet". Berry (2006: 144), likewise, describes podcasting as a medium that "[brings] together audio, the web and portable media devices". Podcast listeners can seek content tailored specifically to their interests and listen to it whenever, wherever. This freedom is not limited to just the podcasting audiences; as Berry (2006: 146) points out, for podcasting "the means to create are as accessible as the means to consume": anyone with an audio recording device—such as a smartphone—and an internet connection can create and upload content online. Berry (2016: 15) calls this the "de-professionalization of the production process" and argues that this makes podcasting distinct from traditional, mainstream, and professionalized media such as radio.

Podcasts and podcasting have only grown in popularity since 2004, and have thus inspired various research across disciplines. However, as Bainbridge (2019) notes in her examination of gothic horror themes and queer representation in the fiction podcast *Welcome to Night Vale*, little to no academic attention has been given to fiction podcasts as of yet. This thesis aims to address this gap by analysing the queer representation in the fiction podcast *The Penumbra Podcast*, hopefully inspiring more academics to take up an interest in studying self-published fiction and media, and bringing more attention to the opportunities that mediums for independent publishing such as podcasting can offer to queer and other marginalised creators.

In this thesis, I will utilise concepts from feminist critical discourse analysis and queer theory to analyse portrayals of various queer identities in *The Penumbra Podcast*, as well as examine how these queer narratives and characters subvert or challenge heteronormative discourses. The analysis follows Talbot's (1995) method of doing discourse analysis on fiction by examining the text population of a given text.

The following chapter will first introduce *The Penumbra Podcast* in more detail in order to introduce the series to the unfamiliar and to give fuller context for this study. Following that, in Chapter 3 I will introduce critical discourse analysis and concepts from queer theory as the theoretical framework of this thesis. In Chapter 4, I will discuss some previous research done on queer representation in fictional media; as was mentioned previously, there is little academic research on fiction podcasts, so this chapter will focus largely on findings based on other types of media, such as television dramas. I will return to my research questions in Chapter 5, where I will also introduce my method of analysis and selected data in more detail. The analysis itself will follow in Chapter 6, and Chapter 7 will close the thesis with a discussion of my findings, considerations for the limitations of my study, as well as suggestions for future research.

2 CONTEXT OF PRESENT STUDY

The Penumbra Podcast, first published in March 18, 2016, is—as described by the co-creators Harley Takagi Kaner and Kevin Vibert—a "bi-weekly audio drama" (The Penumbra Podcast Press Kit 2021) consisting of two separate stories: Juno Steel, a sci-fi detective story set in a future, long-since colonized outer space which follows the eponymous private eye from case to case, and Second Citadel, a fantasy story about knights, monsters, and magic. Given the different settings, themes, and styles of the two stories and due to the limitations of a master's

thesis, as well as for the sake of keeping the analysis cohesive, I have chosen to focus only on the Juno Steel storyline. Here, I will first explain the structure of *The Penumbra Podcast*, then introduce the Juno Steel setting and story in more detail, as well as provide some further reasoning for why I chose it over Second Citadel. I will finish the chapter with some discussion of what the creators have stated they hope to achieve with *The Penumbra Podcast* to illustrate how it ties to my approach and aims for this thesis.

As mentioned previously, *The Penumbra Podcast* features two separate stories. The stories are further divided into seasons; since the third season concluding in March 2021, at the time of writing this thesis the podcast consists of three full seasons with some additional special episodes and between-seasons shorts, as well as the ongoing season four. Each season has their own smaller overarching plot that ties into the larger, ongoing storyline, and each season consists of several somewhat self-contained titled stories which are published as episodes usually in two or more parts; for example, the first Juno Steel story is told in two episodes, *Juno Steel and the Case of the Murderous Mask (Part 1)* and *Juno Steel and the Case of the Murderous Mask (Part 2)*. The storytelling in the episodes alternates between narration and dialogue with music and sound effects adding to what is verbally stated.

Juno Steel, the storyline that this thesis focuses on, is a sci-fi detective story set far into a future where humanity has colonised space as far as our solar system and beyond. The story is set initially on Hyperion City, Mars, where the audience follows the eponymous main character Juno Steel from one detective case to another. The Penumbra Podcast Press Kit (2021) describes the first season of the Juno Steel story thus:

> At the Penumbra, you might follow Juno Steel, a brooding, sharp-witted private eye on Mars, as he tangles with an elusive homme fatale, tracks dangerous artifacts of an ancient alien civilization, and faces his three greatest fears: heights, blood, and relationships.

The introduction immediately establishes the podcast as an explicitly queer story: the audience is promised not only action and adventure in the form of Juno facing his fears and tracking down dangerous artifacts, but it also makes a point of mentioning relationships and Juno getting involved with the male counterpart of the femme fatale archetype. As the story progresses from season one to seasons two and three, Juno moves on from ancient alien artifacts to facing his past as he gets hired to protect a Hyperion City mayoral candidate, to eventually leaving Mars behind in order to join a small crime family with the intent to steal a hidden-away cure to all diseases from a collection of medical mega corporations. All the while, the story also explores Juno's growth as a person as well as his tumultuous and

evolving relationship with the aforementioned homme fatale. The series is initially narrated by Juno from his perspective, but the stories in season three are also narrated by different characters, offering the audience new points of view on the story and the world it is set in and expanding on the main cast of characters beyond just Juno.

Aside from the obvious difference between Juno Steel and Second Citadel being a sci-fi and fantasy story respectively, what sets the two apart is the presence of discrimination and bigotry that shapes the world the characters live in and the struggles that they face. In Second Citadel, the characters are met with problems when their gender or the forms that their relationships take go against the norm. In Juno Steel, however, this is not the case: the range of gender identities, sexualities, and relationships is multiple, varied, and even changing, but that is treated and presented as the norm; in fact, characters that fit the heteronormative understanding of gender and sexuality can hardly be found within the cast of major or minor characters. Instead of the struggles of living as queer people in a heteronormative society, the Juno Steel stories are heavily focused on economic inequality and the challenges people face because of it. That the authors choose to portray a society where diverse sexual and gender identities are so prevalent that they are the norm and queerphobia is a nonissue is precisely what led me to choose Juno Steel over Second Citadel for my analysis.

Mary Talbot posits that "some kinds of fiction deliberately set out to denaturalize, contest or in some ways put up a resistance to dominant discourses" (1995: 145) and names feminist utopian fiction as a particular genre of fiction that does this. According to Talbot, feminist utopian fiction does not attempt to predict the future in a realistic manner or present people with instructions of how to act, but rather what it does, is "foreground the possibility, and desirability, of social change" (1995: 182) by offering fictional futures or alternative universes that are, in some ways at least, ideal in comparison to the contemporary realities in which they are created. Whilst the universe of Juno Steel, in which mega corporations and the hyper wealthy elite hold all the power, is certainly reminiscent of or even dystopian compared to the capitalist society of the present day, for queer people it also presents a utopian alternative to a reality where belonging to a sexual or gender minority makes one part of a marginalized group within society. Talbot argues that fiction has the role and ability to 'solve'—at least for the moment we engage with the fictional work—sociopolitical and economic problems we face and lack the power to change in the real world; but rather than treat it as a wholly escapist endeavour, she states that feminist utopian fiction has a more purposeful goal: "Writing and reading [about utopias] is no substitute for action, but an

emancipatory preliminary, along with other forms of consciousness-raising" (1995: 189). Indeed, while *The Penumbra Podcast* is an audio drama to be consumed as entertainment, the explicit goal of the authors has, from the beginning, been to write stories with characters they find typically underrepresented in mainstream media, their tagline being "you deserve to see yourself in stories" (The Penumbra Podcast About 2021).

The Penumbra Podcast's goal is to add queer representation to the array of fantasy and sci-fi productions featured across media, telling stories about characters that are not as visible or centred within the mainstream; it can thus be argued that *The Penumbra Podcast* belongs to the wider sphere of feminist science fiction, which as a genre is concerned with criticizing contemporary social realities and discourses by denaturalizing and challenging them as well as offering alternatives, thus hoping to prompt social change (for the better for the marginalized). In the next chapter, I will introduce and discuss (queer feminist) critical discourse analysis—a theoretical framework likewise interested in empowering marginalized groups by examining and critiquing how social realities are maintained in dominant discourses—which I have chosen as the theoretical frame of this thesis.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter is divided into two sections: in the first section, I will focus on the main theoretical framework of this thesis, as well as discuss the political positioning of the analyst that is key in critical discourse analysis, making my stance on the topic of this thesis explicit as well. In the second section, I will define and discuss key terms that appear in this thesis regarding the concepts of queerness and heteronormativity.

3.1 Critical discourse analysis

In this section, I will introduce critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the main theoretical framework of this thesis. First, I will define the term discourse as it is understood in the context of CDA and, subsequently, this study; then, I will follow with a discussion of what makes CDA a critical form of analysis and what it means to approach a text from the perspective of CDA. In the section that follows, I will discuss taking an explicitly feminist approach to critical discourse analysis. Finally, I will discuss the concept of intertextuality and how it can be utilised in critical discourse analysis, thus connecting my theoretical framework with my method of analysis introduced in Chapter 5.

3.1.1 Discourse and the aims of CDA

Within discourse analysis, the term discourse has varying meanings on different levels. First, Fairclough (1995: 54) defines discourse simply as a product of semiotic activity: creating meanings via means such as written or spoken language use, non-verbal communication such as facial expressions, as well as images and other visual means. He then defines discourse as a social practise, as action that is "socially and historically situated" (ibid.), taking discourse beyond (products of) meaning making and into intentional, social activity that is always embedded in and surrounded by context. Finally, he offers a third definition that further emphasises the social aspect of discourses and situates them in the realm of "knowledge and knowledge construction", defining discourses as "language used in representing a given social practice from a particular point of view" (1995: 56), which he later puts thusly: "[discourses are] semiotic ways of construing aspects of the world […] that can generally be identified with different positions or perspectives of different groups of social actors" (Fairclough 2012: 12). van Leeuwen (2006: 290) also defines discourses in a way that aligns with the latter, calling them "ideologically specific representations of some aspect of the world". In other words, discourses mean constructing, reconstructing, as well as deconstructing different ways of thinking and talking about things.

The premise of critical discourse analysis is "the insight that text and talk play a key role in maintaining and legitimating inequality, injustice, and oppression in society" (van Leeuwen 2006: 290), which distinguishes it from other forms of discourse and linguistic analyses. The aim of CDA is social change, achieved via bringing forth a critical understanding of (current) social realities as well as how they come to be and are maintained (van Dijk 1993, Fairclough 2012). In CDA, (social) realities are understood as socially constructed rather than naturally occurring, and what CDA does is examine the ways said social constructs are realised. The way CDA approaches these issues is by focusing on language use, and the role of discourses in establishing and maintaining power structures; "more specifically, critical discourse analysts want to know what structures, strategies or other properties of text, talk, verbal interaction or communicative events play a role" (van Dijk 1993: 250) in (re)producing social issues. However, although linguistic and textual analysis are key, as van Leeuwen (2006: 292) points out, "[CDA] has moved towards more explicit dialogue between social theory and practice, richer contextualization, greater interdisciplinarity and greater attention to the multimodality of discourse".

Fairclough (2012) describes CDA as explanatory and normative critique, because it not only describes existing realities but also attempts to explain the reasons behind them as well as evaluates them. As such, a critical discourse analyst does not attempt to remain neutral in their analysis: van Dijk states that "critical discourse analysts (should) take an explicit sociopolitical stance" (1993: 252) with their work and make transparent their point of view and goals. According to van Dijk, CDA is interested in social power; that is, the power members of privileged groups hold over marginalised people, such as groups that face social inequality based on characteristics like class, ethnic background, culture, gender, or sexual orientation. He defines social power as "*access* to socially valued resources, such as wealth, income, position, status, force, group membership, education or knowledge" (1993: 254); he argues that it follows that this access also extends to (mainstream) discourses and is thus often based and enacted on an institutional level: supported by law and reproduced in media and education, for example. Such power is often so normalised in society at large that it is produced and reproduced in discourse as the 'natural way of things' and may often go largely unchallenged. As such, the usual targets of critique that CDA focuses on are "the power elites that enact, sustain, legitimate, condone or ignore social inequality and injustice" (van Dijk 1993: 252); however, the power relations between privileged and marginalised groups are not only exerted over the latter by the former, but as Lazar (2005: 9) notes, also "resisted through a variety of modalities, extents and degrees of explicitness". I will return to the topic of CDA from the point of view of empowerment and resistance in the next section of this chapter.

The subjects of analysis in CDA are both material as well as semiotic and social, but the analysis is always grounded in a specific text or collection of texts—'text' understood here as 'a (specific) product of semiotic activity', much like Fairclough's (1995) most general definition of discourse, taking it beyond just written texts. As Talbot (1995: 61) states, "a text is the product of the social activity of discourse"; though discourse analysis is also interested in what goes on beyond the text itself, the text is the material site through which the analysis can be conducted. According to Talbot (ibid.), the act of reading—or viewing, or listening, and so on— "places subjects in a 'textual dialogue'" in which they not only engage with the text at hand, but by drawing upon a wide variety of resources, they infer meanings from textual cues to interact with "the text, the text's producers and the social world", including other texts and wider discourses and discourse conventions. This relationship between the particular and the general—the text and the social world respectively—is noted by Fairclough (1995: 56) as well, who states that critical discourse analysis is done by alternating between

two complementary focuses: the communicative event and the order of discourse. According to Fairclough (1995: 56-63), analysis of the communicative event focuses on a particular text—such as a newspaper article—whereas shifting focus to the order of discourse situates the text in a larger domain, for example the news industry. Analysing communicative events, he explains, involves *linguistic analysis of the text*—both features such as textual organization as well as vocabulary and grammar and so on—*analysis of discourse practises*, meaning practises surrounding the production and consumption of the text, and *analysis of the sociocultural practises* surrounding the text from its immediate context to its wider sociocultural circumstances. Analysing the order of discourse, in turn, is interested in "how it is structured in terms of configurations of genres and discourses, and shifts within the order of discourse and in its relationship to other socially adjacent orders of discourse" (Fairclough 1995: 62-63). Genre in Fairclough (1995) refers to language-use and conventions typical to a given social practise. In other words, in analysing the order of discourse the analyst is interested in how the text compares to other texts that share its social domain; how creative or conforming it is, how, and why.

To summarise, in this section I introduced critical discourse analysis as a theoretical framework; I defined the concept of discourse as understood in the field, and explained the aims and approach of CDA as a form of language-focused societal critique. I also noted the inherently political nature of CDA, and the way a critical discourse analyst is expected to move back and forth between the particular and the general—the textual and the social—in their analysis. In the next section, I will return to the idea of doing CDA from a perspective empowerment and resistance, which I briefly alluded to earlier in this section: (queer) feminist critical discourse analysis. Afterwards, in the section that follows, I will introduce the concept of intertextuality as a particular way of approaching texts from a critical discourse analysis point of view, tying CDA as a theoretical framework to the method of analysis used in the study of this thesis.

3.1.2 (Queer) Feminist critical discourse analysis

Given that, as discussed above, CDA is interested in making the discourses that uphold attitudes that maintain power structures which keep some social groups in more powerful positions than others in society explicit, an argument could be made that a specifically feminist approach to critical discourse analysis is redundant. However, feminism and CDA can also be viewed as compatible and complementary, as Lazar does, pointing out that the

two share "social emancipatory goals" (2005: 4). In fact, she argues that a feminist approach to CDA is useful when the goal is to address specifically feminist topics, as issues that relate to gender, gender relations, and the ways that they are linked with power and various ideologies in society "have become increasingly complex and subtle" (2005: 1). It follows then that an approach that explicitly theorizes the notion of gender and how it intersects with other aspects of identity and social power is needed. Thus, according to Lazar (2005: 3), "studies in CDA with a gender focus mostly adopt a critical feminist view of gender relations", and so what distinguishes feminist CDA from other forms of critical discourse analysis, whether stated explicitly or not, is how it borrows from feminist (and queer) theory and aims to address similar issues from the perspective of discourse analysis.

Feminist CDA is "concerned with demystifying the interrelationships of gender, power and ideology in discourse" (Lazar 2005: 5). If CDA is concerned with how social realities and the issues therein are (re)produced in language, and how to denaturalize power structures which are presented in discourse as given rather than constructed, then feminist CDA is concerned with the same but with discourses pertaining to gender at the centre. For Lazar (ibid.), feminist CDA's focus should be on the "discourses which sustain a patriarchal social order: that is, relations of power that systematically privilege men as a social group and disadvantage, exclude and disempower women as a social group". She maintains that social practises at large are gendered and hierarchical in this sense—meaning that there are gender roles assigned to various if not all social practises—and that one of the key issues in feminist CDA is to make explicit and critique the discourses that present this as natural rather than socially constructed.

In feminist CDA, the notion of gender itself is understood as something that is constructed socially: traditionally, in modern Western societies at the very least, gender is treated as "an ideological structure that divides people into two classes, men and women, based on a hierarchical relation of domination and subordination, respectively" (Lazar 2005: 7). Additionally, as Lazar (ibid.) notes, "one of the persuasive and enduring commonsensical assumptions has been the 'naturalness' of the 'two sex only' idea, and that of necessity the two, also in social terms, must be inherently contrasting". Under this traditional assumption the two genders—man and woman, male and female—are viewed as opposite with different, often contrasting and/or complementary attributes classified as masculine and feminine, respectively, and it is expected that people naturally fall into either class. However, as with other social constructs, feminist critical discourse analysts have noted that the understanding

of which attributes and gendered social practices are viewed as feminine or masculine and assigned to whom are not fixed; rather, they are "social constructions of individuals and relations between individuals that are interwoven with processes of cultural and historical reproduction" (Gouveia 2005: 232), changing over time and place.

To summarise, feminist CDA is an approach to critical discourse analysis that is particularly concerned with normative gendered discourses. Its aim is to make explicit and critique the ways in which sexist and problematic assumptions and attitudes regarding gender and gendered social practises are (re)produced and naturalised within language use and social interaction. Here, I have discussed Lazar's (2005) arguments for feminist CDA in particular; however, her approach, although it problematises the notion of gender as a strict oppositional binary, focuses largely on oppression that (heterosexual) women face due to the power that (heterosexual) men hold over them as a more privileged group. Thus, since my goal is to address specifically queer issues, as Lazar argues that a particularly feminist approach is useful when addressing feminist issues, I will adopt an explicitly *queer* feminist approach to critical discourse analysis in this thesis. I will discuss in more detail how my approach is informed by queer theory in section 3.2.

3.1.3 Intertextuality

As was discussed earlier, critical discourse analysis is interested in how discourses are created and situated in contexts. A particular way of doing critical discourse analysis—in other words, contextualizing the meanings created within discourses—is introduced in Talbot (1995), where discourses in a text are identified by looking at its intertextuality. For Fairclough (1995: 61), intertextual analysis "focuses on the borderline between text and discourse practice". Accordingly, Talbot interprets intertextuality as the "fragmentation of unities or blurring of boundaries" (1995: 45). It refers to the complex relationship a text has with other texts as well as the society in which it is produced (and consumed and understood), and how these connections affect the meanings created by and inferred from the text.

Talbot (1995) defines and expands on three forms of intertextuality: interaction, prior text, and discourse type intertextuality. As an example of interaction as a form of intertextuality, Talbot refers to spoken conversation as "two or more interweaving texts" (1995: 46) where previous utterances serve as context for the proceeding conversation. Interaction can also be found in texts where there are no multiple actively contributing participants, such as written texts. They can simulate interaction by using "response-demanding utterances, such as

commands and questions addressed to the reader" (1995: 48) and, in including such features of two-way discourse, the author of a one-way text can assign roles and presuppose reactions and positions on the recipient of the text. Prior text sense of intertextuality, in turn, "relates to interactional history, real or otherwise" (1995:52): it refers to texts that are connected to other, separately existing texts. They can be real, specific texts connected to the current text via quotes or allusions, for example, or imaginary, presupposed texts—Talbot uses poems parodying entire literary traditions, or conventions, rather than specific poems that came before, as an example of presupposed prior texts as a form of intertextuality; in order to understand that the author is parodying a literary convention, the reader has to know or assume that such a convention exists in the first place. Finally, whereas interaction and prior text forms of intertextuality refer to other texts, discourse type intertextuality refers to the multiple other resources that are needed in order to produce and interpret texts; knowledge of relevant conventions and the (social) context beyond the text that "everyone involved needs to know about in order to make any sense of what is going on" (1995: 53).

The concept of intertextuality points to an understanding where no one text exists alone: all texts and the discourses therein exist in relation to other texts, and the contexts in which they are produced and interpreted. In short, as Talbot puts it, "from an intertextual perspective, a text is a 'textual dialogue'. It consists of a mesh of intersecting 'voices'" (1995: 59). In the context of CDA, it is identifying these voices and what sort of discourses they bring to a text and how that is of interest. I will return to Talbot's method of doing (critical) discourse analysis, and how she applies the concept of intertextuality in practise when looking at texts, in the data and methods chapter (Chapter 5) of this thesis.

3.2 Gender and sexuality

As the topic of this thesis deals with queer representations of gender and sexuality, it is necessary to define both as key terms of the thesis. In this section, I will first discuss the heteronormative definition and understanding of gender, followed by a discussion of gender informed by queer theory; after that, I will do the same with the concept of sexuality.

3.2.1 Gender

It was discussed previously that within mainstream discourses regarding gender, it is understood that there are two distinct, separate categories of gender that are defined based on contrasting attributes: men and women. This understanding is connected to the concept of

biological sex, where people are divided into two categories, male and female, based on physical features that have largely to do with reproduction. Gender, then, is viewed as "the social elaboration of biological sex" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003: 10) where these "biological differences between males and females determine gender by causing enduring differences in capabilities and dispositions" (ibid., 12). These differences are labelled as masculine or feminine.

The differential positions of male and female and masculine and feminine carry over to domains beyond biology, to all aspects of everyday life; gender is intertwined with every level of society and the lives which individuals lead (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003). In mainstream discourse, "gender is the mechanism by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized" (Butler 2004: 42): physical features, behaviours, properties, and so on, become viewed and treated as intrinsically masculine or feminine. Though individuals differ and it is understood that one person may not possess exclusively masculine or feminine qualities and positions based on their sex and gender, the mainstream, traditional assumption is that for the most part women possess attributes that are labelled feminine whereas men mostly possess attributes that are labelled masculine, and that this is the appropriate way of things. In other words, gender is ruled by norms consisting of "ideal dimorphism, heterosexual complementarity of bodies, [and] ideals and rule of proper and improper masculinity and femininity" (Butler 1999: xxiii) which are (re)constructed in mainstream discourses. Individuals who adhere to these norms are viewed as acceptable and intelligible in terms of their gender, whereas those that go against or do not fit within the normative frame are deemed deviant, illegitimate, or impossible (Butler 1999, 2004; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003).

Queer theory seeks to challenge the way of thinking described above and to offer alternative discourses to gender. It aims to problematize the assumption that gender is the natural extension of sex, and that masculinity and femininity are inherent attributes created by biological difference (Butler 1999, 2004; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003). Instead, gender is understood in terms of social activity. Butler (1999: 33) describes gender as something that is "performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence"; it is not something that people simply are or have, but rather what they do, and the doing is not up to individuals alone but dependent on norms that make the doing of a gender(ed identity) understandable to others. As Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003: 30) put it: "learning to be male or female involves learning to look and act in particular ways, learning to

participate in particular ways in relationships and communities, and learning to see the world from a particular perspective".

The first definition given to the word "queer" in the Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2022) is "differing in some way from what is usual or normal: odd, strange, weird". What follows are several definitions relating to sexuality or gender, or—as in the example given here—both: "of, relating to, or being a person whose sexual orientation is not heterosexual and/or whose gender identity is not cisgender" (cisgender meaning a gender identity that 'matches' the sex assigned to a person at birth, as opposed to transgender). Following the discussion here, it is evident that these two definitions are not unrelated: to do gender (or sexuality) in a way that is queer—or, in other words, to be queer—*is* to differ from what is usual or considered 'normal'. Although the existence of 'normal' necessitates that those who are 'not' still define themselves in relation and opposition to the norms they are exposed to (Butler 2004; Rajunov and Duane 2019) and thus cannot be removed or exempt from the norms and discourses that define how gender is largely understood, people in the margins nevertheless use language and other modes of expression to perform their gendered identities in ways that challenge that 'normal': Wilchins (2019: xi), for example, describes using words such as "genderqueer" and "gendertrash" in the 90s to describe their gendered identity that not only went against the major gender norms of the time but also the understanding of what being transgender meant then.

To summarise, the traditional, mainstream understanding of gender is that it is the natural extension of biological sex, and that masculine and feminine attributes are inherent traits created by biological difference, which divides people into a binary of two separate and distinct categories called men and women. Queer theory, however, argues that gender is a social phenomenon that is dependent on its sociocultural context and the norms therein; it is (re)constructed within discourses and performed by individuals in social interaction. Norms dictate what sort of gendered performances are viewed as acceptable and intelligible, and in doing so, push people who do not fit the normative frame into the margins. As such, one of queer theory's emancipatory goals is to expand the scope of what is possible and 'normal', both in terms of gender as well as sexuality, which I shall discuss in more detail in the following section.

3.2.2 Sexuality

Baker (2008: 6) states that "*sexuality* refers to the ways that people conduct themselves as sexual beings" and lists phenomena such as sexual behaviour, desire, identity and sexual orientation or preference as aspects of sexuality. Here, sexual orientation/preference refers to a person's attraction to other people in a more general sense—whether they are attracted exclusively to the opposite sex or not, for example—whereas sexual desire refers to more specific likes and dislikes both in terms of people and sexual behaviour. Identity Baker describes as the way "people express and view themselves as sexual beings" (ibid.). According to Cameron and Kulick (2003), in common modern use, sexuality tends to refer to sexual orientation specifically and is linked with identity labels such as lesbian, gay, or straight; however, they also argue—in the context of studies pertaining to sexuality—for a definition that accounts for a broader understanding of desire: "not only whom one desires but also what one desires to do" (ibid: 8). Sexuality, then, is a broad concept that covers matters of identity, desires, and acting (or choosing not to act) on said desires. Furthermore, although I have separated sexuality and gender into different sections here, they are not two wholly separate phenomena; rather, they are intertwined, and connected particularly under heteronormative discourses, which I shall discuss further next.

Much like gender, sexuality and how it is understood and expressed is ruled by norms which are (re)constructed in discourses. Individuals use language and other modes of expression to communicate and act out their own sexual identities, but beyond the individual, matters regarding sexuality and sexual identity are regulated by institutions—how sexuality is presented in education, legislation, and mass entertainment media, for example—as well as the everyday 'commonsensical' discourses that both influence and are influenced by what people view as possible, acceptable, or desirable in society (Baker 2008). The way Baker (ibid: 109) explains it, heteronormativity operates under the gender normative assumption that people fall into two opposing categories, and that the normal way for sexual attraction and relations to form, then, is between these opposites. The naturalness of heterosexuality is thus explained by biological difference and its role in procreation. What further connects the norms regarding gender and sexuality are discourses regarding desirability, and how those are connected to ideas of (traditional) masculinity and femininity (Baker 2008: 7–9) and what is perceived as gender-appropriate behaviour (Cameron and Kulick 2003: 47–51). In simplified terms, in heteronormative discourse, traditionally masculine men are attracted to traditionally feminine women and vice versa and they engage in sexual relations accordingly—or, at the

very least, this is what is appropriate and desirable. Furthermore, heteronormativity privileges romantic and sexual relationships over being single—as well as other types of relationships such as friendship—and presumes that all people are monogamous or desire monogamous relationships, as well as assumes that the ultimate goal of all romantic and sexual relationships is marriage and children (Heras Gómez 2019; Vares 2022).

As is clear from the discussion above, heteronormative discourses can present a rigid normative frame for (proper and desirable) heterosexuality, relationships, and related gendered behaviour even for people who would identify as heterosexual and cisgender. As such, some queer theorists have also included non-normative heterosexuality under the definition of queer, which, however, has been met with some criticism (see for example Kitzinger and Wilkinson 1994). This thesis, likewise, defines queer sexuality (following Baker's definition of sexuality and what it encompasses as well as the definitions of queer discussed in the previous section) as *sexuality that is non-heterosexual.*

To briefly summarise, sexuality is a wide notion that concerns not only sexual orientation and desire, but also preferences and behaviour as well as matters of identity. Heteronormative discourses privilege heterosexuality over other sexual orientations as natural and appropriate, and links sexuality to gender discourses via notions of femininity and masculinity and their relationship with what is considered attractive and desirable. In addition, heteronormativity influences norms and expectations regarding relationships. Queer sexuality, then, can be defined as sexuality that does not fit the heteronormative frame, particularly when it does not reflect heterosexuality; although I acknowledge non-normative heterosexuality, as well cisgender people challenging gender roles, and their role in challenging heteronormative discourses in the wider context, in this thesis the concept of queerness is focused on sexual and gender minorities. Queer theory challenges heteronormativity by contesting the notion that heterosexuality alone is natural, and examines how it is "vigorously demanded and actively produced in specific sociocultural contexts and situated interactions" (Cameron and Kulick 2003: 55). Much like critical discourse analysis, which was introduced earlier in this chapter, queer theory is a normative critique interested in social power; it aims to expose and challenge the social structures that uphold the hegemonic status of heteronormative discourses, and to empower those that have been marginalised as a result. As such, the framework that this thesis uses to approach queer representation in fiction is feminist critical discourse analysis informed by queer theory.

4 PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON QUEER REPRESENTATION IN FICTION

In this chapter, I will introduce some previous research done on queer representation in fictional media. I will examine and discuss what sort of topics and media have been of interest to other researchers and what their findings have been, and whether different media, research methods, and research questions have yielded any common insights and what sort of different conclusions different researchers have drawn in their analyses.

As was mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, prevailing norms and attitudes have affected queer representation in fiction from whether it exists at all to how queerness, when present, is portrayed to audiences. As such, research has, for example, been interested in what sort of queer representation exists: what kinds of queer people are portrayed, in what kind of roles? How is queerness portrayed? What aspects of being queer are deemed acceptable to show? Queer representation needs to be recognised as such: as Moore (2007: 6) notes, "queer difference is not immediately visually verifiable". The queerness of characters is made apparent to audiences by being "articulated through the bodies, actions and expressions of the queer characters" (Dhaenens and Van Bauwel 2012: 708). This is done, for example, by showing the characters engaging in romantic and sexual relationships or announcing their attraction to characters of the same gender, thus explicitly proving that they are not heterosexual. Once a character has been established as queer, everything they do can be viewed via a 'queered' lens and examined in terms of representation.

4.1 Queer representation and the straight gaze

Mainstream fictional media, even media that feature or even centre queer representation, are unavoidably concerned with non-queer consumers who often make up the majority of their audiences. Furthermore, in cases where the creators of queer representation are not queer themselves, the representation may remain somewhat heteronormative despite the subject matter (Bainbridge 2019). Here, I will first introduce some previous research on straight audiences engaging with queer media before then moving on to discussing the effect that heteronormativity and other, related discourses have on what types of queer characters and stories get to be represented.

In their analyses of the American television shows *Queer as Folk* and *The L Word*, Manuel (2009) and Moore (2007), respectively, examine the role of straight audiences viewing queer

media as onlookers looking in from the outside; whereas Moore calls the straight viewer of *The L Word* a tourist, Manuel uses the term 'homovoyeur' to describe the straight viewer observing the sexualised representations of homosexuality at the forefront of *Queer as Folk.* Manuel argues that the television viewer is a voyeur, observing the lives on the screen without being observed in return, and that this lack of interpersonal interaction allows the viewer to consume the Other from behind a safe barrier; in particular, within the context of queer representation, she means that the largely heterosexual audiences can observe the sexual Other without risking "cross-boundary identification between sexualities" (2009: 278). According to Manuel, *Queer as Folk* portrays queer sexuality as desirable, challenging the hegemony of heterosexuality as the only (or the only appropriate) way of being presented within fiction. This visibility not only empowers queer people, but the effect extends to the straight audiences as well: the safe one-way barrier enables the straight audience to relate or compare themselves to the queer portrayals, and, depending on their prior attitudes, allows them to become either positively influenced (by becoming more aware and accepting of the Other) or to maintain their previous positions (2009: 280-283).

Though similarly deeming them onlookers and outsiders, Moore's (2007) tourist metaphor (as opposed to the "locals-as-consumers" (2007: 7) she calls the lesbian and other queer viewers) gives the heterosexual audience a more active position than a voyeur who safely observes and makes their conclusions from behind a barrier. She argues that the main character of *The L Word* is the stand-in for the audience, and that it is through her observations and interactions with the show's lesbian community that the straight viewer 'tours' the queer experience. Moore claims that the show "presents representations that undercut heteronormative convictions and models, and suggest new perspectives and directives, tacitly, without preaching" via the main character and her experiences, and that by having the audience relate to her "the show thereby coaches touristic viewers to problematize their own positionalities, and perhaps "remold" them" (2007: 16). In the viewpoint of queer media taken up by Moore, the straight viewer does not avoid crossing boundaries with the Other entirely as they experience the queer portrayals of *The L Word* through the main character, but her examination of the series reveals that it does take the sensibilities of the heterosexual audience into account in those portrayals. According to Moore (2007: 17), "the show positions lesbianism as a sensibility, not a sexuality" and because *The L Word* leaves its main character's sexual identity ambiguous, this type of lesbianism "can potentially be co-opted by straight viewers". The heterosexual audience can observe and relate to its stand-in character

without identifying with the sexual Other because the show itself refuses to label her as strictly such, and makes lesbianism about not only about desire but rather turns it into an aesthetic as well (Moore 2007: 16).

Whilst the two previous analyses examined how both straight audiences and queer media employ distance and ambiguity to account for heterosexual comfort, the following research focuses on the queer portrayals themselves and how queer representation in mainstream media is often limited, and why that is.

White, gay male characters make up the vast majority of queer representation in media (Shugart 2003; Avila-Saavedra 2009; Peters 2011; Jiménez 2015). This is no coincidence: in her analysis of three different mainstream romantic comedy films featuring the lead character configuration of a heterosexual female and gay male character, Shugart (2003) notes that though the films ostensibly feature gay men in main character roles, the ways they are represented and paired with their heterosexual female best friends enforces and naturalises heteronormative discourses; likewise, Avila-Saavedra's analysis of three US television shows featuring gay leads concludes that queer representation in media is narrow and mainly shows "white, affluent, gay males who hold traditional family values" (2009: 18). Both analyses illustrate that queer representation in mainstream media is acceptable as long as it does not stray too far from the norm: in many ways it still privileges heterosexuality and heteronormative masculinity, and when queerness is portrayed in positive light, as something desirable, it is connected to other forms of social privilege such as whiteness and wealth.

Shugart (2003) identifies elements of romance or romantic subtext in each film's gay male and heterosexual female pairing: in each film the man assumes a role typically reserved for a romantic partner, such as her date to a wedding or a father-figure to her child, for example. In addition, each pair is depicted as emotionally and physically intimate, ostensibly because they are best friends, but Shugart also identifies examples with clear romantic overtones, such as instances where the gay male character "frequently caresses [the female co-lead's] face and neck, he tells her that he doesn't miss men when he's with her, and he comments on her beauty in a sexual context as he discusses his first lover, a woman" (2003: 75). In fact, in two of the three films she analyses, the gay male characters have had sex with a woman. Shugart demonstrates how the films present the gay male characters' sexuality as fluid—notably, against the heterosexual female characters who only show romantic interest in men and whose sexuality is thus presented as constant—as they are depicted as potentially able and willing to

engage in romantic and sexual relations with women and take up stereotypical roles in heteronormative family units. The queer characters' queerness becomes secondary to their potential to conform to heteronormative relationships.

In addition, Shugart notes how the gay leads in the films reaffirm heteronormative masculinity; they are shown "[juxtaposed] with outrageously flamboyant, stereotypical gay male characters" (2003: 76) and even express explicit discomfort with such gay lifestyles and more effeminate gay identities, in doing so effectively "[distinguishing themselves] from "other" gay men and their trappings" (2003: 78). Likewise, Avila-Saavedra notes how the titular gay male character Will in the popular television show *Will & Grace* is portrayed as "masculine, successful, straight-acting, [and] normalized-through-his-heterosexual-friendship" (2009: 12) and how in the show he is presented as likeable and desirable in contrast with his more effeminate and stereotypical friend Jack who instead is subjected to ridicule. He also points out similar reaffirming strategies in the other shows he analyses, demonstrating how they portray gay men exerting themselves so they can relate to and be accepted by straight men, but a similar effort is not shown the other way around.

As was previously noted, research has shown that queer representation is not only predominantly male, but also focuses on portraying gay men who are white—as well as affluent and stylish. Peters (2011) calls this phenomenon *pink dollars*; she argues that visibility in media comes at the cost of commodification, and thus representation tends to be aimed at those who are more likely to be willing and able to pay for it, stating that "the quest for 'valuable' demographics privileges viewers with access to race, class, and male privilege, and leads to whitewashed images of middle-class, primarily gender normative, gays and lesbians" (2011: 194). This lack of diversity leads to not just narrow, stereotypical perceptions of gay men but also the exclusion of other types of queer experiences.

Narrow representations are not limited to film and television. In their comparative analysis of a traditional library vendor hosting mostly mainstream publishers and an electronic book platform for self-published literature, Sandy, Brendler and Kohn (2016) found that across both platforms, white gay male characters were the overwhelming majority within written LGBT fiction. Likewise, in her analysis of award-winning LGBT literature marketed towards young adults, Jiménez (2015) found white gay male protagonists to be the most represented group by far: out of the 21 protagonists in her data overall, there were 15 white protagonists and 13 gay male protagonists. She also notes that none of the 14 awarded titles featured a

bisexual protagonist and only one of the protagonists was transgender. In Sandy, Brendler and Kohn (2016), transgender or bisexual characters made up two percent or less out of all the LGBT characters across their data. Furthermore, although lesbian characters have more representation than other queer minorities besides gay male characters, in comparison to their male counterparts, queer female characters tend to feature in narratives that end up superseding their queer identities in favour of returning to a heteronormative status quo, or otherwise fail to depict relationships that are healthy or do not end in tragedy or unrequited feelings (Jiménez 2015; Green-Barteet and Coste 2019).

Not all representation can be considered good representation; the inclusion of queer elements can also be used to promote harmful stereotypes. In their analysis, Santos, Mancio and Maranho (2019) focus on Him, one of the major antagonists in *The Powerpuff Girls*, a popular children's cartoon series from the early 2000's. Him is a stereotypical queer-coded villain: they demonstrate how he is depicted as queer via his androgynous yet feminine-leaning design—Him has a goatee but also wears makeup and feminine clothing, including a puffy pink mini-skirt and heeled thigh-high boots—and his body language, which is effeminate and exaggerated. They also note how his other design elements, particularly his red skin, invoke imagery of the Devil, and how he is depicted as particularly villainous and Other even in comparison to the show's other antagonists. They argue that such a portrayal is problematic, as it "[incorporates] a Queer identity into the figure of a villain with a devil body" which, in a cartoon aimed at children, can potentially be used to communicate the idea that "Queer is something to be feared or confront[ed]" (Santos, Mancio and Maranho 2019: 20). Although the analysis of Him is a single example, Dhaenens (2013) and Bainbridge (2019) note the existence of the queer-coded villain stereotype and its potential harmfulness as well. Furthermore, the inclusion of a queer-coded villain—especially if other types of queer-coded characters are absent—in media aimed for children is particularly problematic, since such a character may be amongst their first impressions of queer minorities; if associations of queer characteristics with evil are not contested, it may influence children's attitudes towards queer minorities growing up. Fortunately, however, positive and diverse representations of queer characters are becoming increasingly common in modern day cartoons (Necessary, Ermac and Stillman 2023).

To summarise, research seems to largely agree that although queer representation has entered the mainstream, efforts still need to be made for more diverse portrayals of queer characters and narratives. Portrayals of affluent, white gay men dominate LGBTQ-inclusive media, thus

failing to represent the diversity of actual queer realities; not only are other queer minorities largely excluded, but representations of gay men may potentially remain reductive and stereotypical. Queer representation in media continues to be concerned with the sensibilities of the largely heterosexual mainstream audiences: portrayals may remain ambiguous to account for heterosexual comfort, or maintain heteronormative discourses via strategies such as affirming heteronormative masculinities, or even utilise negative portrayals in order to enforce queerphobic attitudes. Thus, as queer portrayals and the inclusion of queer elements are becoming increasingly prominent in media, it remains essential to examine them critically.

4.2 Queer representation and queer resistance

The previous section was concerned with the constraints that heteronormative discourses and heterosexual audiences have on queer representation in fictional media. However, media also has the ability to challenge the status quo; queer representation in media can expose and question dominant heteronormative discourses regarding gender, sexuality, and relationships, and instead offer "counter-discourses that transgress societal assumptions" (Dhaenens and Van Bauwel 2012: 704). In other words, media can offer queer alternatives to heteronormative discourses and, in doing so, empower queer audiences. In this section, I will discuss research that focuses on how queer portrayals and narratives can contribute to the emancipatory goals of queer theory.

As was discussed in the previous section, queer representation in itself does not always challenge or subvert the status quo; it may even enforce heteronormative discourses and focus on portraying queer experiences with access to privilege that assimilate into heteronormative values. As a result, queer portrayals that do expose heteronormative discourses and challenge their hegemonic status have also become a subject of interest for research. In his analysis of the British sci-fi television show *Torchwood* and the American supernatural drama series *True Blood*, Dhaenens (2013) examines the effect explicit queer representation has on the fantasy convention of representing the Other via metaphor, and the ways the shows use queer portrayals to resist heteronormative discourses. Similarly, Dhaenens and Van Bauwel (2012) analyse the American crime drama *The Wire* to examine the ways the show's queer portrayals deconstruct heteronormative discourses and articulate positions of queer resistance.

The Wire, according to Dhaenens and Van Bauwel (2012), deconstructs heteronormative discourses and, in doing so, critiques real-world instances where such discourses are in effect; they, for example, examine how the relationship of one of the show's main characters, a

lesbian, is paralleled with the marriage of her co-worker, a straight male character. This not only makes the heteronormative discourses regarding marriage explicit—in the context of the show the lesbian couple could not marry due to legislation—but also reconstructs typical heteronormative discourses regarding committed relationships (such as balancing work and home life) into queer discourses by having both the straight and queer relationship mirror each other (Dhaenens and Van Bauwel 2012: 711). The show also makes use of gendered discourses and portrays its characters taking advantage of heteronormative conventions; for example, usually masculine queer female characters performing femininity to trick male characters, or queer male characters masking their queerness to advance their careers in their heteronormatively masculine workplaces. Dhaenens and Van Bauwel (2012: 709–710) argue that by making masculinity and femininity explicitly performative, *The Wire* exposes the normative nature of gendered discourses and shows how queer people are made to navigate realities governed by heteronormative assumptions. One way to navigate such realities is directly opposing said assumptions. Dhaenens and Van Bauwel (2012), as well as Dhaenens (2013), argue that in these texts—*The Wire*, and *True Blood* as well as *Torchwood*, respectively—the characters resist heteronormative discourses that demand queer minorities to 'come out of the closet': though they may be labelled from the outside, the queer characters themselves refuse to label their sexualities or to explain their queerness for the heterosexual majority's benefit; instead, they may articulate their queerness by defining themselves by what they are not—such as a man who sleeps with women, or someone whose sexual orientation or relationships can be placed within a clear binary.

Additionally, both articles note how each of the series feature representation that departs from the affluent, white gay male character discussed in the previous section, and makes explicit the ways other aspects of one's identity, such as race, gender, or class, intersect with one's sexuality: in Dhaenens and Van Bauwel (2012), for example, they examine how *The Wire* portrays a black gay man whose queer sexuality and relationships are at odds with stereotypical black masculinity, and in Dhaenens (2013: 113), it is noted how "the working-class, black, or vampire characters in both series experience their sexual identity in close relation to other forms of oppression governed by the discursive practices of heteronormativity"—particularly in contrast with more privileged queer characters in the series who face no such struggles. However, while both series make explicit and thus critique forms of oppression that queer people—particularly queer people who also belong in other minority groups—face, they also deconstruct heteronormative discourses via creating worlds

where such oppression is notably absent. As Dhaenens puts it: "Particularly, both series reimagine historical and contemporary sociocultural spaces that are generally assumed heteronormative, heterosexist, and homophobic" (2013: 107); for example, in *Torchwood* the protagonist kisses another man in public in the 1940s, and in *True Blood*, the effeminate, black gay male character flirts with a sizeable, straight and white male character in a bar, and both are able to do so without fear of homophobic retaliation or reaction from others around them.

According to Dhaenens, *Torchwood* and *True Blood* not only challenge heteronormativity by portraying explicitly queer characters, but that they specifically challenge "the heteronormative convention of fantasy to represent gayness as desexualized and heroism as explicitly heterosexual" (2013: 110). They bring queer representation from the realm of subtext and metaphor to the explicit, and by making their protagonists queer the series depart from the gay villain and victim tropes (ibid: 108). However, both series also feature iterations of both victimised and villainised queer characters; Dhaenens argues that such portrayals "illustrate both how ambivalence remains a key characteristic of the fantastic and how the inclusion of gay characters and themes alters the signification of ambivalence" (ibid: 112): instead of queerness itself being subtextual, he argues that ambivalence is used to examine how queerness is posited in a heteronormative society. Instead of reading queer victims and villains as depictions of queerness being dangerous and degenerate, they can be read as portrayals of resistance towards conforming to heteronormativity.

Similar to Dhaenens (2013), Bainbridge (2019) also examines the queer representation in a modern text belonging to a genre where queer representation has traditionally been in the subtext: Gothic horror. Specifically, she analyses the main character and narrator of the comedy-horror podcast *Welcome to Night Vale*, and how his queer masculinity as well as his relationship with his romantic interest are portrayed in the text. In her analysis, she points out how the podcast utilises and parodies horror genre conventions in its storytelling, including characterisation: according to Bainbridge (2019: 183), the main character's "masculinity is coded in a manner greatly reminiscent of a traditional Gothic villain, albeit with some exceptions". She examines how, initially, *Welcome to Night Vale* establishes its narrator as at times sinister being, obsessed with the object of his affection, and how "having used his fixation with Carlos to establish himself as queer, Cecil almost immediately joins a worrying continuum of monstrous queers" (Bainbridge 2019: 186). However, she notes that after *Welcome to Night Vale* has established Cecil as an explicitly queer, villain-coded, character,

the show then subverts the Gothic horror tradition of associating queerness with monstrosity—that often ends in punishment as the queer-coded villains are defeated—by instead making Cecil's queer attraction and his eventual relationship with Carlos a positive influence on his character as well as a "stabilising aspect of the show" (ibid). Bainbridge (2019: 187–188) argues that by initially establishing its narrator as reminiscent of a Gothic horror villain and utilising that characterisation to establish him as explicitly queer, *Welcome to Night Vale* reiterates problematic stereotypes and only becomes positive representation once the portrayed relationship evolves past its initial set up. However, as she points out previously, *Welcome to Night Vale* uses horror genre conventions to parody them in order to transform the podcast from a horror show into a horror-comedy; in other words, it deconstructs traditional horror discourses and reconstructs them into comedic discourses. Similarly, Cecil can be read as an intentional critique of the queer-coded Gothic horror monster where *Welcome to Night Vale* makes explicit the heteronormative and queerphobic discourses present in the fantasy and horror genres, and reconstructs them into positive queer representation.

Although I have divided this chapter into sections that focus on queer representation filtered through heteronormative constraints and queer representation that opposes heteronormative discourses, representation is rarely either or but rather is a mixture of both. A queer piece of media can simultaneously be a commodity for heterosexual audiences and a "sex-positive, feminist, queer phenomenon" (Moore 2007: 20); though representation may be limited and even alienate many diverse queer experiences, for queer audiences seeing marginalised identities being portrayed can be very meaningful, and a way for queer people to connect with wider queer culture as well as explore their own identities (Peters 2011). Furthermore, queer representation in media is in a unique position to challenge its heterosexual audiences, making them question their own reactions towards the Other, as well as their personal motives for engaging with queer media—are they supportive of marginalised identities and diversity in media, or do they engage with it for other reasons (Manuel 2009)?

In this section, I examined research that focuses on queer representations that deconstruct and challenge heteronormative discourses and empower queer audiences. As the subject of this thesis is a science fiction detective story, I looked at previous research which analysed texts in the science fiction and fantasy genres in particular. The inclusion of explicit queer representation in genres that have traditionally employed monsters and the fantastical as a metaphor for the Other is a subversive act; by reconstructing the heteronormative and

queerphobic discourses found in fantasy and science fiction into queer discourses, queer creators and audiences can reclaim the stories and tropes that have previously left them in subtext and negative stereotypes.

5 METHOD OF ANALYSIS

In this chapter I will first restate the aim of this thesis and introduce my research questions. Then, I will follow with an explanation of the research method I have chosen for my analysis, and finally conclude the chapter with a section where I will go over my data selection in more detail.

5.1 Research aim and questions

The subject of this thesis is the representation of marginalised identities in fictional media; more specifically, the construction and portrayal of diverse queer sexualities and queer gender identities in the Juno Steel storyline of the fictional audio drama *The Penumbra Podcast*. The aim of the thesis is to analyse the queer characters and narratives present in *The Penumbra Podcast* in order to see how heteronormativity is challenged and how discourses related to heteronormativity and queerness can be subverted in queer media.

The research questions I aim to answer in this thesis are:

1. How are queer identities and queer diversity constructed in *The Penumbra Podcast*?

2. What heteronormative discourses are challenged or subverted in the portrayal of queer characters and narratives in *The Penumbra Podcast*, and how?

5.2 Method of analysis

To analyse my data, I will follow Talbot's (1995) method of seeking out the explicit and implicit discourses present in a text by examining a text's *text population*. Text population is how Talbot approaches the intertextuality of a text: all the different voices that make up the text, from the implied author and narrator to the characters and the various roles they take in the narrative, as well as the different discourses—including allusions to other texts—found within the text (Talbot 1995: 60). In order to analyse the text population of a text, Talbot suggests using the following three categories, which she describes as "textual cues as resources for the reader" (Talbot 1995: 61): the *interactants*, *characters*, and *subject positions*, which she relates directly to interaction, prior text, and discourse type—the three

forms of intertextuality discussed in section 3.1.3—respectively. Below, I will briefly introduce each of the categories and then conclude this section with an explanation of how I will utilise the concept of text population in my analysis.

The category of *interactants* functions on two levels: when looking at the interaction and the various interactants posited by a text, the researcher attempts to "distinguish between interaction between producer and audience and representations of dialogue between characters within the narrative" (Talbot 1995: 62). It means identifying the characters interacting within the text, but also moments in the text where the implied author or narrator interacts with the implied audience. This category also includes looking at the interactions themselves, the speech functions and their expressive value in the utterances—whether something is a question, an apology, or a threat for instance—within the text more closely, in order to see what they do and what sort of roles this gives to the interactants (Talbot 1995: 61).

The category of *characters* delves deeper into the voices present in the text and how they are represented; it refers to "looking for antecedent texts, actual or supposed, including speech representation" (Talbot 1995: 172). Talbot (1995: 62) suggests focusing on points such as whether the characters' words are quoted or reported, and how the feelings and thoughts of the characters as well as the narrator's viewpoint are embedded in the text via word choices. Presuppositions—what sort of information and assumptions are presented as given—also belong to this category. This includes the idea of prior text type of intertextuality both in the sense of presupposed knowledge "carried forward from earlier in the story" and "smuggled in as common knowledge" (Talbot 1995: 72).

Finally, *subject positions* means looking at "discourses, genres and the identities they set up" (Talbot 1995: 173). To analyse the discourse types and social positions found within a text, the social reality in which the text has been created and is consumed needs to be considered; furthermore, authors make use of genre conventions and discourse-types such as character types, topics, scripts and schemas, and typical grammar or vocabulary choices to guide the reader's interpretation of the text, which needs to be considered (Talbot 1995: 65).

The three categories, though presented as distinct here, all exist simultaneously as overlapping parts of a whole and create meanings together. The three categories are not always equally relevant and will not take an equal amount of analysis: for example, identifying the interactants will often be more straightforward than identifying the presuppositions and

discourses present in a selected text. However, as stated previously, the categories support each other and thus are each relevant to include when going through a text.

Looking at the text population of a given text requires a detailed and in-depth approach and is thus a qualitative method of analysis. The method can be applied to a text of any length; however, for practicality's sake, in this study I am going to apply the method to short extracts for a detailed analysis of examples that have been specifically chosen from the data for their relevance. I will present the examples with enough information about the selected extracts and the characters in question for the reader to understand their context in the series. After an example or a selection of examples have been explained, I will analyse them using the three categories introduced in this section. By focusing on analysing scenes where a character's sexuality or gender is made relevant, I will make explicit the ways in which *The Penumbra Podcast* constructs its cast of characters as queer and which heteronormative discourses it opposes or subverts by doing so.

5.3 The data

My data consists of all the available Juno Steel episodes through seasons one to three, excluding bonus episodes as they have been officially stated to be non-canonical. The choice to not include the—at the time—ongoing season four was to limit the data to 'complete' material only. In total the three full seasons consist of 48 episodes: 13 episodes in season one, 22 in season two, and 13 in season three. The episodes make up seven, ten, and six titled stories per season, respectively. From the episodes, I selected scenes that made the characters' queer identities explicit either through the use of dialogue, narration, or action described verbally in the scripts in places where sound effects were used in the episodes themselves. I used the episode transcripts as my material due to them being publicly available, and the same to everyone who chooses to access them; in this way, my analysis would not be affected by my interpretation of auditory features such as the characters' tone of voice or sound effects.

6 ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I will present examples of my data and analyse the queer representation and relevant discourses therein by going through the text population of the presented scenes and extracts. In the first half, I will focus on the first research question presented in this thesis: How are queer identities and queer diversity constructed in *The Penumbra Podcast*? I will do this by first examining various references to gender and gender expression, and then by

examining references to characters' attraction to other characters or scenes featuring romantic or sexually charged relationships or encounters. The second half of the chapter discusses the second research question this thesis is interested in: What heteronormative discourses are challenged or subverted in the portrayal of queer characters and narratives in *The Penumbra Podcast*, and how?

6.1 The construction of queer identities and queer diversity in *The Penumbra Podcast*

In the following sections, I will analyse how *The Penumbra Podcast* constructs and presents its queer cast of characters, first by focusing on gender and then moving onto sexuality and relationships. As it is with other media, *The Penumbra Podcast* too articulates its characters' queerness to the audience "through the bodies, actions and expressions of the queer characters" (Dhaenens and Van Bauwel 2012: 708); thus, I will be identifying moments of dialogue, narration, and described sound effects in the text that mark the characters as queer. Something of note is that not once in the Juno Steel storyline do they use a label that would mark a character's gender identity or sexuality, queer or otherwise; characters that the audience would infer as transgender, for example, they identify as such by using other, less explicit cues offered by the text, as I shall demonstrate in the examples below.

6.1.1 Gender

In this section, I will analyse representations of non-normative gender identities and expressions, as well as relevant gendered behaviour, in *The Penumbra Podcast*. I will start the analysis with the series' main character, whose gender identity gets the most focus in the show, and then move on to analysing scenes featuring more minor characters.

Juno Steel, the eponymous main character of the detective storyline, is introduced as presumably male at the beginning of the series: the concierge—a narrator-like character who welcomes the listener at the beginning of each episode—uses the personal pronoun *he* exclusively when first introducing Detective Steel in the premise of episode one, and Rita— Juno's friend and secretary—breaks into the first opening narration monologue of Juno's and calls him "[Mister] Steel". However, soon and throughout the series, Juno's gender expression and identity are portrayed in ways that make him decidedly not traditionally or exclusively male or masculine:

Example 1

CECIL:

(CACKLING)

No, no, no. I'm filming it just in case one of you isn't hurt. There. All done, Junebug. Here, take a look at yourself.

JUNO:

Damn it, Cecil, I said you're not gonna get away with—nope, you know what, you're right, that color looks pretty good on me.

Example 2

NUREYEV:

Look at my wife, will you? That sharp eye of his. That jewel-studded eyepatch. That *gown*.

NOVA:

That *gown*!

In Example 1, the character Cecil is applying makeup on the other characters featured in the scene, specifically Juno in the chosen excerpt here, to prepare them for the cameras for his— extremely dangerous and on the participants' part involuntary—television show. He has just finished putting lip stain on Juno and is presumably giving him a mirror so he can see the result for himself. In Example 2, the characters Nureyev and Nova are discussing Juno who is some distance away. In the episode, Juno and Nureyev are disguised as a wealthy married couple attending Nova's party with the intent to rob her; Nova has previously expressed admiration for the dress Juno is wearing as well as become quite infatuated with Nureyev, both of which Nureyev is exploiting in the scene. The first example is from the first story of season one ('The Case of the Murderous Mask'), whereas the second example is from the first story of season three ('The Man in Glass'), showing that Juno's from-time-to-time feminine presentation has been a constant throughout the series.

The interactants and interactions in the examples above are straightforward: in Example 1 the interactants are Cecil and Juno who are interacting with each other, and in Example 2 the interactants are Nureyev and Nova who likewise are interacting with each other, with the addition of Juno who is the subject of their conversation but not directly involved in the interaction itself. Prior texts involved in the examples are the surrounding textual context: preceding dialogue in the scenes themselves as well as previous scenes in the episodes—and previous episodes, especially given that both examples are from part twos of the stories. For Example 1, previous scenes have established Cecil and his family as a powerful group who have gathered considerable wealth and influence via their entertainment network famous for

violent reality television; it has also been implied that Juno knows the family personally from a previous case and that the relationship is for the most part antagonistic. Thus, although the lip stain is a part of the joke, the humour in the scene is derived not from Juno wearing makeup itself but the way it changes Juno's attitude towards Cecil from angry to friendly. Example 2 is from much later in the show and expects much more presupposed knowledge of the series from the audience. As was mentioned earlier, the prior episode has established that Juno is wearing an impressive dress that has caught Nova's attention. However, the mention of the eyepatch is much more conspicuous, as it is the first time it gets mentioned here. It briefly reminds the audience of Juno's disability; he loses his eye towards the end of season one and the highly advanced prosthetic he acquires and eventually gets rid of is a major plot point of season two.

Both examples take up a subject position that has to do with discourses regarding gendered or (what is considered) gender appropriate clothing and cosmetics. Whilst any cosmetic product is typically considered feminine, applying makeup for television cameras could be argued to be relatively gender neutral; however, the makeup product in question is a lip stain, which is decidedly feminine. Furthermore, Juno's remark over the colour is reminiscent of 'girl-talk' regarding makeup. Similarly, a gown is a typically feminine formal garment, and Juno has paired it with a jewelled accessory—if an atypical one—in Example 2; he is dressed in a beautiful outfit one would typically assume a woman would wear. Although the makeup is applied on him without his consent in the first example, his casual yet pleased reaction to the result is sincere. In the second example, he has chosen to wear his outfit willingly. Despite both examples featuring comedic elements, and the joke in both instances involving Juno's appearance, the humour in the text is not derived from his femininity. Instead, what makes the scenes funny is the unexpected contrast: Juno dropping his animosity towards Cecil to comment on his makeup, and Nova and Nureyev exclaiming over Juno's gown rather than his eyepatch and intimidating sharp eye.

Example 2 also takes up another subject position; one on gendered language. Although Juno is dressed in a gown and is pretending to be Nureyev's wife, Nureyev is still calling attention to *his* sharp eye. This is no accident on his part; he consistently uses the personal pronoun he when he refers to Juno, and Juno does not try to correct him, nor does anyone remark on this as unusual. Juno can be a he and wear a dress—as well as enjoy feminine makeup—and be Nureyev's wife simultaneously and it is treated as given.

Another way the series consistently marks Juno's gender as queer is by calling him a lady, even when he is not being particularly feminine otherwise, as illustrated by the following examples:

Example 3

> MICK:
>
> Aaaall right. How do you like your whiskey, Jay?
>
> JUNO:
>
> With an active desire to do me harm.
>
> MICK:
>
> I asked about your whiskey, not your men, but fine. I'll have what the lady's having.

Example 4

> JUNO:
>
> Wow, you sure do know how to make a lady feel special.
>
> BUDDY:
>
> I know how to make a special lady feel special. Maybe if you're very good that'll be you.

In Example 3, an extract from the third story of season one ('The Day That Wouldn't Die'), Juno is meeting his old friend Mick Mercury in a bar they used to frequent in the past. Mick was the one to invite Juno and has offered to buy him a drink. In Example 4, from the sixth story of the second season ('The Time Gone By'), the character Buddy is hiring Juno for a job, but she has just made it clear that there are others who would be just as capable and that he was not even her first choice. This again illustrates that Juno being referred to as a lady occasionally is a constant in the series rather than a one-off joke; additionally, as can be seen from the examples, a lady is something other people call him but also Juno himself identifies as one.

The interactants in Example 3 are Mick and Juno, as well as the bartender who Mick orders their drinks from. In Example 4, the interactants are Juno and Buddy. Here, like in the previous examples, the interactions happen in dialogue between the characters within the scene. Both interactions illustrate Juno's personality: he is sarcastic and surly, something that the other characters in the scenes take in stride. Earlier in the episode, prior to the interaction in Example 3, Juno has established that he and Mick have known each other since they were children. This, and the nickname Mick uses for Juno, affect the way the audience interprets their interaction: the audience understands that they are familiar with each other and that their

back and forth is friendly banter. The text also presupposes some knowledge of alcohol on the audience's part: Juno's response to Mick's question about how he likes his whiskey makes little sense otherwise. Whiskey is not sentient and cannot actively desire anything; it is also common knowledge that alcohol is not healthy and strong alcoholic drinks or being heavily inebriated can lead to damage. Thus, the audience can infer that what Juno means is that he prefers his drinks strong. It evokes the image of the hardened private investigator and characterises Juno as a typical protagonist of the detective fiction genre—at least until Mick's response. Mick's words establish Juno as queer, first by referencing his attraction to men— although implying that his taste is dangerous—and then by calling him a lady, a moniker seemingly at odds with the otherwise masculine image established within the interaction.

In Example 4 the interactive dynamic is different. Instead of childhood friends, Buddy and Juno are essentially strangers—a potential employer and employee. Juno makes a sarcastic remark regarding Buddy's evaluation of his skills earlier in the scene; she responds in a way that implies he will need to prove himself. At this point in the series, Juno being a lady has come up several times and by this time, the audience is familiar with him being called that by himself and others. However, it is the first time Juno and Buddy meet. The subject position set up by the text is one where queer gender identities are normalised: Buddy does not bat an eye at the expression or the use of the word 'lady', but rather adopts it in regard to Juno immediately and with ease. Buddy's line establishes her as queer as well: her phrasing regarding knowing "how to make a special lady feel special" can be read as suggestive and even flirtatious, implying she engages in romantic and sexual relations with women—or, as is the case with Juno, people whose gender identities include being a lady from time to time.

Juno is not the only character who does not conform to normative gender presentation and roles in the series. Several minor characters throughout the series also present, talk, and behave in ways that signal their queer gender identities. The two following examples introduce Valles Vicky, Juno's client from the fourth story of season one ('The Midnight Fox'):

Example 5

> VICKY:
> You better know what you're doing, Steel. I don't want a big goddamn mess, you hear me?
> (CAR HORN)
> The wife <u>cannot</u> know about this.

JUNO:

Your wife won't find out, Vick. I promise.

Example 6

JUNO:

Wha…Someone changed my clothes! What the hell is this?

VICKY:

It's a tuxedo, moron.

JUNO:

Seriously? Well, you're wearin' one too, you know.

Vicky is very masculine in the way she speaks and dresses, and as the owner of a "Ladies'
and Gentlemen's Club" that also acts as a front for a black-market operation, she presents
herself not only as a commanding presence as the crime boss that she is, but also as the
breadwinner of her family who wants to keep her wife away from the shadier parts of her
business. In the two examples, Vicky and Juno—the interactants in both extracts—are
tracking down some of Vicky's merchandise which has been stolen, with the two of them
ending up kidnapped and dressed for a mysterious party. In Example 5, Vicky and Juno have
taken Juno's car and are putting together a plan to catch the merchandise thief in the act.
Vicky has imposed herself on Juno, who usually does not want his clients involved in the
work, and she has rather aggressively taken command of the situation. In Example 6, Juno
and Vicky are coming to and realising that they have been taken to an unknown location by
an unknown assailant and that their outfits have been changed. Here, Juno is wearing
traditionally masculine formal wear as opposed to the gown in Example 2, but notably, so is
Vicky.

As she brings up her wife in Example 5, Vicky references a prior scene in 'The Midnight Fox'
where the text establishes that she has a wife and child back home; furthermore, her line "The
wife cannot know about this" is one that repeats a few times throughout the story. As she
expresses her anxiety over the possibility that her wife might find out that not all is going
great for Vicky at work again and again, the text establishes her queer relationship as a
significant part of her character. It is also used to portray her as a masculine, queer woman.
The text plays on the traditional discourse where the husband provides for his family whist his
wife stays home and takes care of the children by having Vicky embody the role of the
husband. Examining her language use and implied body language in the interaction also
illustrates how her dominant, even aggressive personality is used to communicate her

masculinity to the audience in the text. She threatens Juno implicitly—he *better* know what he is doing—and emphasises her point by honking the car horn, as is communicated to the audience via using the "(CAR HORN)" sound effect descriptor. Using a car horn to further illustrate Vicky as an aggressive character relies on the audience drawing from common knowledge that this common behaviour for angry drivers.

As *The Penumbra Podcast* is a script and audio based medium, the audience requires non-visual cues to interpret how the characters may appear. Although sound effects are occasionally used, more often character descriptions are offered via narration or dialogue, as is the case with Example 6. Prior to this scene, the text has not specified what Juno and Vicky are wearing; Juno's exclamation lets the audience know that their outfits have changed—an occurrence that is strange in itself, which recontextualises the kidnapping into something particularly unusual—and brings the attention to their outfits. Vicky's response and Juno's following line explicitly identify the outfits as tuxedos, which both characters are now wearing. The interaction again makes Vicky's queer masculinity explicit as she, as a woman, wears clothing that is traditionally gendered masculine.

Season two introduces one of the series' antagonists, Hyperion City's Mayor, Pilot Pereyra. Pereyra is one of the several characters in the series who is referred to by gender neutral pronouns and honorifics, as illustrated by the examples below:

Example 7

> JUNO (NARRATION):
> Pilot Pereyra, Mayor of Hyperion City for four years running, was famous for their stiletto heels. They had a new pair in a new hideous color every week, and Pilot made killings off of them. Both in the literal sense – just ask Sal Barone, found floating in Mars's orbit with two of Pilot's heels jammed into his throat – and in the financial sense – like how for a year after, every crime boss in Hyperion paid Pilot hand over fist for a pair like the one that killed Barone.
>
> Because Pilot Pereyra didn't just organize crime: as Mayor, they defined it. And if this was the whale the Piranha was gonna bring in... hell, maybe her getting away had been a good thing after all.

Example 8

> PIRANHA:
> Take it, Mx. Mayor.

The reason Pilot Pereyra is used as an example here is that most of the other characters from the first three seasons that use gender neutral pronouns are featured in a single episode or

story alone, whereas Pereyra is a reoccurring character in season two. Example 7 is from the fourth story of season two ('The Stolen City'), and the first scene in which Mayor Pereyra is properly introduced beyond brief references prior to this moment. In the scene, Juno is doing a stake-out on a rooftop, hoping to catch the person attempting to sabotage his client's— another mayoral candidate—campaign for office. He is following a suspect he calls the Piranha, only to discover her doing business with the current mayor themself. Other episodes also frequently reference the stiletto heels Juno talks about in Example 7, sometimes via direct comment by one of the characters, but more often by using sound effects of high-heeled footsteps to signify Pereyra's presence in scenes they feature in. Example 8 is from an episode much later in season 2 ('The Promised Land' Part 1), again featuring the Piranha as well as Mayor Pereyra, in one of the scenes where they are spoken to directly; she is referring to a gun that another character in the scene—an ally to Juno, and now together with him Pereyra and the Piranha's captive—was forced to drop and kick towards the mayor.

The interactants in Example 7 are Juno who is both a character and the narrator, as well as the implied audience who his narration—framed in the text as internal monologue—is aimed at. His description signals Mayor Pereyra's queer gender identity to the audience; stiletto heels are a typically feminine type of footwear, which contrasts with Juno's use of the gender-neutral personal pronouns for Pereyra. The description also establishes Pereyra as a villain, stating them to be a killer and a criminal, and informs the audience of Juno's opinion of them; describing the stilettos as 'hideous' is a particular word choice that communicates a subjective, negative opinion. However, Juno states this as though it is a fact rather than an opinion; he as the narrator expects the implied audience to take his description at face value.

In the scene Example 8 is extracted from there are several interactants: Juno and his previously mentioned ally, the Piranha, and Mayor Pereyra; however, the scene itself is not relevant to the analysis beyond illustrating one of the instances where another character refers to them with an honorific. "Mx." is a gender-neutral honorific, not altogether uncommon but much less well known than its gendered equivalents, "Ms.", Mrs.", and "Mr."; the text presupposes the audience is familiar with the latter at the very least, and thus able to infer the meaning of the former within the context. Both Juno and Pereyra's characters are genderqueer representation that defy discourses where gender is defined as a binary, but the show approaches them from different directions. Whereas Juno's gender identity is described mixing both feminine and masculine features, the language used in reference to Pereyra is notably neither.

In establishing Pereyra—as well as other antagonists in the series—as both explicitly queer and a villain, *The Penumbra Podcast* can be argued to be reiterating the queer-coded villain trope (Dhaenens and Van Bauwel 2013; Santos, Mancio and Maranho 2019; Bainbridge 2019). However, whereas traditionally the queer-coded villain has been used to Other queer people and to portray queerness itself as dangerous and degenerate, it cannot be said to be the case here when not only the antagonists, but also the protagonists and supporting cast alike are portrayed as explicitly queer. Furthermore, although Juno describes their 'hideous' stiletto heels as a literal murder weapon, thus connecting Pereyra's effeminate gender representation with their villainy directly, examining the text shows how it is not their queer identity, but rather their wealth and political power, that *The Penumbra Podcast* uses to position Pereyra as a villain. Whilst the shoes are a device the text uses to mark Pereyra as queer, they are also used to establish them as wealthy, and murder as their means to become even wealthier; it is also their position as Mayor that allows them to do business with and actively take part in organised crime without facing consequences.

Example 9 below is from the first story of season three ('The Man in Glass'), and it is the most overt reference in the series to a transgender character coming out as such and alluding to their transition:

Example 9

> DOORMAN:
> Rejoining us after a year in solitude... the one... the only...
>
> SOUND: CYMBAL CRASH.
>
> NOVA:
> Nova Zolotovna! Charmed, you're sure.
> (LONG AND LOVELY LAUGH)
>
> SOUND: THE CROWD GOES WILD.
>
> NUREYEV:
> She... that woman you were talking to... is...
>
> JUNO:
> Yep. Our mark. Like I was trying to tell you.
>
> NOVA:
> (AMPLIFIED)
> That's right, my friends, that's right. I've spent the last year hiding away, thinking about me, about who I am, about what I want, about the man I'm gonna marry any day now, just as soon as

I find whatever nebula he's hiding in and drag him away from it. And now I've been drifting out and among you all night, secret as the smile on a star, just to see how you all liked my little shindig. But now I'm ready, after a whole year in the cocoon, to show you the beautiful butterfly I've become!

NUREYEV:

She doesn't look anything like the person in the photos Buddy gave us.

JUNO:

That's probably cuz she—

NOVA:

My great transformation... the metamorphosis that nobody expected, the change that shows the real me, as I always was... I got a haircut, y'all!

SOUND: ROUND OF APPLAUSE.

NUREYEV:

Oh, yes, a haircut! I see it now. That is good.

JUNO:

Way better, right?

The example is from the same story as Example 2, from the episode prior. Before this scene, Nureyev and Juno have entered Nova Zolotov's—now revealed to be Nova Zolotov*na*— party, posing as newlyweds, and have cased the place in search of their host and the item they are meant to steal. Only, because they have been working separately, their *hostess's* grand reveal comes as a surprise to Nureyev. This is also true for the audience, as the episode is narrated from Nureyev's point of view; prior to this scene, the text has referred to Zolotovna as a man, and, in an earlier scene, described her as 'the man with a terrible haircut', which is now revealed to have been foreshadowing.

There are two overlapping interactions with several interactants in this scene: the Doorman who is addressing the crowd at large when introducing Nova as well as Nova herself, who is also speaking to all the guests gathered at her party; the crowd itself can be counted as an interactant as it responds to Nova, although the text only represents these people as sound effects rather than actual characters; and finally, Nureyev and Juno who are interacting with one another. The scene subverts the traditional coming out narrative as well as discourses regarding gender—and gender transition in particular—via comedy. The word choices in Nova's lines identify this as a coming out and transgender narrative: she describes herself as a butterfly who has undergone metamorphosis, which can be interpreted as a metaphor for a

notable physical change; she even calls it a 'great transformation'. Furthermore, the audience now knows she is a woman as opposed to a man, as had been previously established—and supposedly looks very different from how she appeared in the past—which leads the audience to presume her year-long gender transition would have been significant. The text, then, however, subverts this expectation as she claims her transition, the change she has undergone, was a haircut. The contrast between audience expectations and the dramatic build-up to what ends up being a mundane and simple alteration to one's appearance makes the scene humorous; it also challenges discourses where gender is viewed as immutable and intrinsically tied to sex, and where transgender individuals are expected to undergo intensive and drastic changes in order to be viewed and accepted as their genders, as Juno and Nureyev as well as the crowd of guests immediately accept that she is a woman and adapt to this new information with no issues.

Although the narrative presented in this scene challenges the idea that gender is the natural extension of sex which denies transgender people's legitimacy, it does simultaneously reiterate other discourses that present gender as intrinsic—only independent of physiological attributes. Nova takes up a subject position as a transgender individual: her phrase "the change that shows the real me, as I always was" implies that her gender identity was that of a woman all along, even if she has presented otherwise until now; her haircut and name change from Zolotov to Zolotovna simply 'show the real her' to the rest of the world. At the same time, however, the text also challenges the narrative that queer people always know that they are queer from a young age. Although Nova now appears as her real self 'as she always was', she, according to her own words: "spent the last year hiding away, thinking about me, about who I am, about what I want". Using select words and phrases, as well as by utilising comedy and presuppositions, the text invokes several complex discourses regarding gender and queer identities in order to make its transgender representation explicit without expressly labelling her as such.

Later in the season, another character—this time a member of the main cast—is also revealed to be what the audience would interpret as a transgender woman. However, whereas Nova 'comes out' explicitly, the way the text indicates the following character's queer gender identity is more understated:

Example 10

       <u>SOUND: AMBIENCE FADES IN.</u>

FATHER:

I know you're sick of it, but it's what we have. Now eat, Victor.

SOUND: AMBIENCE FADES OUT.

VESPA (NARRATOR):

But that isn't me, and never was, even when I answered to that name. <u>My</u> name is Vespa Ilkay. And what those voices say is fake — it's all fake. It's gone.

Example 10 is from the third story of season three ('Shadows on the Ship'), in which the character Vespa is the narrator as well as the focus of the story. In the scene, Vespa, who suffers from visual and auditory hallucinations due to years of radiation damage, is hallucinating a moment from her childhood; something she knows to be a memory and not happening for real, but is experiencing in the moment, nonetheless. The interactants are Vespa's father within her memory, Vespa herself as the narrator and as an implied character within the memory as well, and the audience for whom Vespa is narrating. The difference in interactants in comparison to Example 9 is significant; as opposed to Nova, who was coming out to other characters in the text, Vespa is narrating to an implied audience, thus making the actual audience of the text privy to her private thoughts. Her queer gender identity is made explicit for the audience's benefit as they are given more information about her backstory: her relationship with her father, her background in poverty, and, importantly, her former name. Victor is typically a male name, and by telling the audience that she used to answer to it in the past Vespa cues them in to her transgender identity without explicitly labelling herself as such.

The text uses other means in its portrayal of Vespa as a genderqueer character as well. There is a parallel to Nova from Example 9 in Vespa's narration in Example 10: in Example 9, Nova refers to her current self as "the real me, as I always was"; here, Vespa states that the Victor in the past "isn't me, and never was". The Victor her father refers to is fake and gone, according to her, implying that the Vespa in the present is her true self. Using similar wording to a previous episode, the text utilises repetition as a means to reiterate its position on transgender identities as inherent and authentic. Furthermore, in the scene, Vespa resists an outside attempt to identity her as male: she denounces the validity of her father's words by calling them fake, and insists that her name is Vespa Ilkay. The emphasis in her voice is indicated in the transcript by underlining the possessive personal pronoun my, which can be interpreted as her taking ownership of her name and identity.

Above, I have introduced some of the genderqueer characters in *The Penumbra Podcast* and examined how the text makes explicit that they are intended as genderqueer representation. The show does not label its characters as transgender or genderqueer outright; instead, it utilises different means to inform the audience that its characters have queer gender identities. For example, transgender characters are marked as such by alluding to their pre-transitioned identities, as is the case with Vespa, or their gender transition, as illustrated by Nova Zolotovna's coming out scene. The show also features characters that do not fit within the traditional gender binary; Juno Steel is portrayed as both feminine and masculine, and some characters, such as Mayor Pereyra, are referred to by language that is explicitly neither. In addition, characters signal their queer identities by assuming oppositional subject positions to traditional gender roles; Valles Vicky, for example, is shown to perform her identity as a masculine queer woman by queering the heteronormative discourse where a marriage consists of a providing husband and a housewife.

6.1.2 Sexuality and relationships

In this section, I will analyse representations of non-heteronormative sexualities and relationships in *The Penumbra Podcast*. As with the previous section, I will start the analysis by focusing on Juno, as his relationships as the main character receive the most attention in the show, and then follow with analysis of scenes featuring other characters and relationships.

Although the show references or features Juno having other romantic or sexual relationships as well, his main love interest throughout the seasons is a character the show describes as a 'homme fatale'; a master thief to Juno's private detective called Peter Nureyev. Nureyev first appears in the very first Juno Steel story, nearly at the beginning of episode one ('The Case of the Murderous Mask', part one), posing as a special agent under the alias Rex Glass:

Example 11

> REX:
> Ah, Detective Steel. How lovely to meet you at... last...
>
> Detective, are you trying to crawl out that window?
>
> JUNO:
> *I'd* say I was succeeding.
>
> REX:
> Well, I heard they do things differently on Mars, but I must admit this is a surprise!

> (LAUGH)
>
> You'll have to show me your customs, Detective. Is there room in that window for two?
>
> MUSIC: STARTS.
>
> JUNO (NARRATOR):
>
> His face was lean, but soft, with a cherub's smile and a fox's teeth. He looked like he was happy to see me and like he'd be just as happy to kill me, if push came to shove. It wasn't unpleasant, all things considered.

Nureyev, or 'Agent Rex Glass', is pretending to be looking into the same case that Juno gets hired to investigate at the beginning of the episode; Juno is reluctant to work with him at first, and has in the scene gone as far as attempting to escape his new investigative partner through a window. The show immediately introduces a potential queer relationship; examining the word choices and utterances used in this interaction illustrates how the characters are implied to be mutually attracted to one another from the very beginning. 'Rex' takes the opportunity to flirt right away. The way he brushes off Juno's strange behaviour could simply be a friendly joke, but his offer to join Juno at the window reads as flirtatious; the window is not implied to be large as Juno has to crawl through it, which would put the two very close to each other. In turn, Juno as the narrator establishes Rex as both attractive and dangerous, implying he finds the combination appealing.

Throughout the first story, the romantic tension between Juno and Rex is implied in scenes similar to Example 11, through dialogue where Rex flirts and narration where Juno reveals his interest in Rex to the audience in turn. However, towards the end of episode two, the show actualises the two as a romantic pair, if only for a moment:

Example 12

> REX:
>
> (LAUGHING)
>
> So that's how it is, is it? You know… You're very handsome when you're like this.
>
> JUNO:
>
> Getting drunker by the second?
>
> REX:
>
> Morally outraged.
>
> Look at him… standing up against the big, mean world… It's so… futile, and foolish, and…
> Sexy.
>
> […]

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Lips like silk. Strong hands, pulling on my coat. It was the kind of kiss that feels like it's going to last the rest of your life… until it's over, and you know you got as much as you deserved.

In Example 12, after the case has been solved, Juno and Rex have returned to Juno's apartment for a drink. The two have flirted and bantered throughout the Murderous Mask story, leading up to Rex finally becoming bolder in his advances until the pair kisses for the first time. Juno, shifting into his role as narrator for a moment, is enjoying the kiss until he himself brings it to a close in an attempt to catch Rex off-guard and arrest him, as he has deduced that the man is actually a thief and not the special agent he claims to be. The episode ends with 'Rex' managing to escape and leaving Juno with a note that he signs with his real name.

In this scene, the show brings the romantic tension between Rex and Juno from the implied and the subtext fully into the realm of explicit. Whereas in Example 11 Rex's flirting could be read as friendliness, here he calls Juno handsome and sexy outright: using dialogue, the text expressly states that Rex is physically attracted to the qualities that define Juno. It also illustrates how the show utilises point of view; whereas Rex's use of adjectives informs the audience of his attraction to Juno, Juno as the narrator describes Rex using similes and metaphors, which gives the audience a much more intimate look into his impression of Rex. Earlier, in Example 11, Juno describes Rex as having a cherub's smile and a fox's teeth, using the contrasting imagery of innocence and a predator to create an interesting picture as well as establish the complicated way he feels about him to the audience. Here, he compares Rex's lips to silk—a smooth, soft, and luxurious material—and describes the kiss as one "that feels like it's going to last the rest of your life"; as *The Penumbra Podcast* is a non-visual piece of media, revealing the inner thoughts of the main character is used to articulate the queer romance happening 'on-screen' by relying on audience imagination to fill in the gaps. However, as a drama podcast, *The Penumbra Podcast* does not rely on written text alone to make its queer relationships explicit: as illustrated by the script extract in Example 12, they also utilise soundscaping, in this case audio of kissing sounds, to signify the action taking place in the story.

The pair's relationship develops throughout season one, and much of the drama results from Juno's complicated feelings for Nureyev, who is a criminal but who Juno finds himself allied with on more than one occasion. As the story progresses, there is a major shift in their

relationship as Juno grows from distrusting the man to accepting both his own feelings and that they are returned.

Example 13 below is from the final story and episode of the first season ('The Final Resting Place'), towards the end of the episode. The scene is set some time after the dramatic season climax where Juno is severely injured and loses an eye, but is now recovered enough that the two are staying together in a hotel, celebrating both their victory and that they have chosen to leave Mars to start a future of adventuring across the galaxy together:

Example 13

> NUREYEV:
> (PAUSES)
> What do you say you and I begin that beautiful future right now?
>
> JUNO:
> That sounds exciting, too.
>
> SOUND: FABRIC RUSTLING, KISSING.
>
> SOUND: ALL SOUNDS FADE.
>
> JUNO (NARRATOR):
> We spent the night together. It was...
> (BREATHY LAUGH)
> Nice.
>
> It was like nothing else. Just like Peter Nureyev.
>
> SOUND: RUSTLE, HONKING HORN, HEAVY RAIN.
>
> NUREYEV
> You know, Juno... call me a fool if you like, but I think-
> (YAWNING)
> I may have fallen in love with you.
>
> JUNO:
> (PAUSES)
> I...
> (LAUGHS)
> If you're a fool, that makes two of us.
>
> NUREYEV:
> (CHUCKLES)
>
> SOUND: SOUNDS FADE.

The interactants in this extract are Juno and Nureyev, as well as the implied audience for whom Juno narrates what is a transition between scenes. Other than Juno's narration, the scenes consist of dialogue between Juno and Nureyev as well as sound effects. There are two types of sound scaping used in the text here: environmental sounds used to create ambience and situate the characters within a physical world—the sound of rain and the honking car horn outside—as well as sounds that signify physical actions that the characters take—sounds of kissing and fabric rustling. The extract illustrates how *The Penumbra Podcast* utilises sound to embody its characters before it can then articulate their queerness through physical actions. Juno and Nureyev's first kiss in Example 12 is clarified to be a kiss in the narration that follows; by the kiss in Example 13, the audience is already familiar with the sound effect and can infer what is happening in the scene. In doing this, the show does not merely imply but actively portrays queer intimacy. However, the text utilises narration here as well: the sounds fade away and the story switches to narration to mark that time has passed, and Juno tells the (implied) audience what happened during the time not depicted 'on-screen'. Although no sex scene occurs in the text, it is made explicit that Juno and Nureyev "spent the night together" which the audience can infer to mean the two had sex. Thus, by allowing its queer characters to be blatantly sexual, the representation in *The Penumbra Podcast* opposes the heteronormative convention of desexualizing queerness (see: Avila-Saavedra 2009; Dhaenens and Van Bauwel 2012; Dhaenens 2013).

The scene nearly ends in what the relationship between Juno and Nureyev has been building towards throughout the first season: a mutual love confession. The 'will-they-will-they-not' dynamic of the thief and detective continues to be present even after the pair has ended up together. Nureyev "may" have fallen in love with Juno, who does not say it back outright but rather admits to being "a fool" as well; both Nureyev and the audience have to read in-between the lines and interpret Juno's line as a returned love confession. Here, the series relies on the audience's knowledge of typical story conventions and sets up the expectation for a happy ending: the hero has saved the day and gotten the love interest. However, the episode does not end here; instead, Juno leaves the sleeping Nureyev behind and returns home alone, choosing to stay on Mars as a private investigator instead of the future with Nureyev after all.

The second season of the Juno Steel story is much less focused on romance, and Nureyev does not return in person until the very last line of season two. Juno does, however, remember him throughout the season and it remains clear to the audience that Nureyev is his main love

interest in the show. Their relationship becomes a point of focus again in season three: although initially they are not on good terms due to the way Juno left at the end of season one, they grow closer again and become romantically involved as the third season progresses, as is illustrated by the following example:

Example 14

> JUNO:
> Fine, I'll take your stupid computer-journal. Happy?
>
> NUREYEV:
> Much more often than usual, these days.
>
> JUNO AND NUREYEV:
> (KISS)

Example 14 is from the sixth and last story of season three ('What Lies Beyond'). Juno and Nureyev are no longer on the opposing sides of the law as Juno no longer works as a detective, and so the tension from the first season no longer applies; as such, there has been a significant shift in their dynamic. In this scene, the interactants are Juno and Nureyev. The rest of the main cast are all busy preparing for the wedding of two other characters (discussed further below) but for Juno who has been given no task to help with, which has made him upset. Nureyev, knowing his lover, has gifted him with a mystery to solve to keep him occupied and has just managed to persuade Juno to accept it.

The third season of the Juno Steel story is unique in the sense that unlike the previous two seasons, which are told from Juno's perspective, all the stories season three are told from a new character's point of view; the last story, however, returns to Juno's perspective. As such, although the Juno and Nureyev romance has been re-introduced as a central element of the show, it is not in the foreground for much of the season. Instead, several scenes across the episodes have established that after getting back together, Juno and Nureyev are working on healthy and open communication in their relationship. This is a direct continuation of Juno's character arc in season two, where the story focuses on Juno overcoming his past traumas and growing into a healthier version of the broody private investigator archetype from season one. It is this knowledge carried forward from earlier in the series and season three in particular that contextualises the interaction in Example 14 for the audience: Juno's "Happy?" references the preceding conversation between Juno and Nureyev—he has just conceded an argument—but Nureyev's response, although given as a direct answer to the question, is a

much more general statement. He is happy, not just in the moment because he has won the argument, but overall; the "these days", and the kiss that follows, imply that his happiness is related to Juno and the present state of their relationship.

As illustrated by the examples above, *The Penumbra Podcast* adds queer representation to the detective fiction genre by establishing its protagonist as queer and setting up and developing a queer romance at its centre. The text utilises and queers genre conventions typical of detective fiction in its portrayal of its main love story; initially both seductive and dangerous, Peter Nureyev is a male love interest that fits the femme fatale archetype, and much of the tension in the first season relies on the complicated dynamic between the two characters. However, as the series progresses the relationship evolves as well, and by the end of the third season the queer romantic relationship is no longer a source of conflict in the story. Instead, it is used to illustrate character growth and reflects how both characters are in a better place mentally than they were at the start of the series. In doing so, *The Penumbra Podcast* portrays queer love as a positive, stabilising element within the show.

As the main character of the Juno Steel story, it is Juno's relationships—romantic and otherwise—that receive the most development. Furthermore, as was the case with Valles Vicky from Examples 5 and 6, due to the somewhat self-contained nature of the stories that make up the seasons, the minor characters tend to only appear in the stories they are introduced in, and thus their queer identities are not explored in detail. However, *The Penumbra Podcast* does also establish the sexualities of the other reoccurring characters as queer, as can be seen from Examples 15 and 16 below:

Example 15

> TOD:
> And Miss Rita, what are you partial to? Vixens? Reynards?
>
> RITA:
> I don't really go in for French food.
>
> JUNO:
> He's asking whether you want a man or a woman, Rita.
>
> RITA:
> Oh, I couldn't. I can't. No way. I just couldn't. No. Nuh-uh.
>
> JUNO:
> Alright, well, if you're not interested, then…

Example 15 is from 'The Midnight Fox', the fourth story from season one, which was introduced previously in Examples 5 and 6. In the scene, Juno and his secretary Rita have entered Valles Vicky's "Ladies' and Gentlemen's Club" called the Vixen Valley and Juno means to go meet the owner herself whilst leaving Rita to wait and be entertained in the meanwhile.

The interactants in the excerpt are Tod, who is an employee at the club, Juno, and Rita. Tod is treating Rita like a client, asking after her preferences, which Rita does not understand until Juno clarifies it for her. The text here utilises multiple levels of intertextuality. It builds on a prior scene set outside where Rita expressed her horror at coming to the club, insisting that she is not the type of person to frequent such places; it presupposes audience knowledge of strip clubs and similar establishments in order to understand why coming to a 'Ladies' and Gentlemen's Club' would fluster her in the first place; and it uses particular word choices to evoke certain associations as well as employ humour in the text. 'Vixen' is the word for a female fox as well as a colloquialism for a sexually attractive woman; 'Reynard', in turn, is a reference to the French word 'renard', meaning fox, as well as a European fable featuring a fox with said name. Whilst Reynard by itself has no sexual connotations similar to vixen, the text here gives it an equal meaning: within the context, the audience can infer that 'Reynard' refers to a sexually attractive man. Tod uses the words as a euphemism for the male and female employees of the club; Rita, however, does not understand—although she makes the French connection—and so Juno has to state explicitly what Tod means. The lexical play is the first part of the joke; the rest of the humour comes from Rita's over-enthusiastic reaction after her initial hesitation. The text indicates the volume of her voice in the audio by writing her dialogue in all capitals: she speaks loudly and quickly in order to not lose her chance to spend time with a Vixen or a Reynard. Here, the text establishes Rita as queer, as her line makes it clear she has no preference of one over the other; it is clear from here on out that Rita finds both women and men attractive.

Example 16

M'TENDERE:

No; it explains you two. Jet Siquliak was always a solo act. Thought you two must be together. Hard to imagine "the Unnatural Disaster" falling in love and starting a little criminal family.

> JET:
>
> I do not experience romantic or sexual attraction for Rita.
>
> RITA:
>
> Ow.
>
> JET:
>
> Or anybody else. And I never have.
>
> But there are much greater bonds than blood that create a family, and we are that. Family.

Example 16 is from the second story of the third season ('The Tools of Rust'), narrated by and focusing on Jet Siquliak, a character introduced in season two who becomes part of the main cast in season three when Juno—along with Rita—joins a crime family in which Jet also belongs. In the scene, Jet and Rita are meeting with M'Tendere, a character from Jet's past. M'Tendere implies that being together with someone else is uncharacteristic for Jet and thus assumes the two must be in a romantic relationship, stating that romantic feelings would explain the change in Jet's behaviour. Jet, however, immediately denies their assumption. Jet, as a character, is typically very deadpan and straightforward; as such, the text sets up the expectation that when Jet specifies that he feels no attraction towards Rita, he means her specifically. Her reaction of hurt feelings or ego enforces the interpretation. However, it immediately becomes clear that this is another instance of the humour typical of *The Penumbra Podcast* where the text sets up an expectation only to subvert it in the following instance. Jet is not rejecting Rita in particular; rather, he does not feel attraction towards anybody to begin with, and, with this revelation, the text establishes him as a queer character. He not only challenges the heteronormative expectation that all men are or should be attracted to women, but also discourses that define attraction as a heterosexual-homosexual binary that ignore other queer sexualities as valid possibilities (see: Avila-Saavedra 2009: 12) as well as discourses that presume that experiencing romantic feelings and sexual attraction are inherent to human sexuality.

The final example I will discuss in this section is the other romantic relationship that the series focuses on throughout multiple seasons besides the main romance between Juno Steel and Peter Nureyev. Buddy Aurinko and Vespa Ilkay are a couple established in late season two where the characters are introduced, and developed further in season three where the two women become part of the main cast as members of the crime family that Juno and Rita join. Example 17 is from the end of the fifth and penultimate story of season three, 'The Heart of It All':

Example 17

> BUDDY:
>
> Vespa, it would be the greatest honor of my long and extremely impressive life to marry you in three days' time. I have the love, the venue, the extremely captive audience ready to go; now I only need your permission.
>
> Well?
>
> VESPA:
> Yes. Of course, yes!
> (LAUGHS)
>
> SOUND: THEY KISS.
>
> Three days!
>
> BUDDY:
> And the entire lifetime that follows, love. Every beat of my heart will be yours.
>
> SOUND: AMBIENCE FADES.
>
> MUSIC: FADES.

This final story before the season finale is narrated from Buddy's perspective, telling the story of the final heist the crime family has been preparing for all season; Buddy herself does not participate in the heist, but rather commands the rest of the team from a distance. Despite this, Buddy ends up having a near-death experience due to sudden heart failure, which leads her to re-evaluate her life and to choose to expedite she and Vespa's wedding, which they had in previous episodes decided would happen later in the future. She proposes again as shown in Example 17, ending the episode on a happy note.

The interaction in Example 17 consists of dialogue between Vespa and Buddy, as well as music and sound. The queer representation happens both in the dialogue and within an on-screen kiss as portrayed by a kissing sound effect, which, as has been evidenced by several examples, is a consistent way for the show to embody its queer characters engaging in queer relationships. In the interaction, Buddy proposes to Vespa; although by the end of the third season the series has introduced multiple different queer relationships, and the show has featured mentions of married queer couples amongst its minor characters in previous seasons, by having two of the main characters marry *The Penumbra Podcast* represents queer marriage on-screen; furthermore, it portrays a queer romance between two female characters having a happy ending. In the scene, the text not only queers the traditionally heterosexual institution

of marriage, but it also uses particular word choices to expose the heteropatriarchal discourses embedded within and takes up a subject position that challenges them: in regard to marriage, traditionally it is the father or the family of the bride who is asked for permission, but here Buddy asks permission to marry Vespa from Vespa herself.

From the story title to the final line of dialogue, 'The Heart of It All' utilises heart-related symbolism and story elements, which are central to not only Buddy's character but to the portrayal of the Buddy and Vespa romance as well. Earlier in the series, it has been established that Buddy has suffered severe physical damage from years of radiation, and as a result her face is partially disfigured and she has had most of her internal organs replaced with machinery; in this story, it is revealed that her heart in particular is so damaged that it may fail at any moment. "Every beat of my heart will be yours" is an overtly romantic declaration; however, given Buddy's heart failure earlier in the story and the reveal that each heartbeat could be her last, her line takes on a very literal meaning as well. The text presupposes that the audience is familiar with the heart being used as a symbol for romantic love, and as such are capable of drawing the symbolic connection between the literal heart and the queer romantic relationship that are central to the story.

To summarise, here I have examined some of the queer sexualities and relationships portrayed in *The Penumbra Podcast*. First, I demonstrated how the series creates queer representation by establishing its protagonist as queer and placing a queer romance at the centre of a detective fiction story. Then, I provided examples and analysed some of the other explicitly queer characters portrayed in the show: Rita, a main character from the very beginning of the series, is shown to be attracted to multiple genders; Jet, another main character from later on, who is attracted to no one at all; and Buddy and Vespa, two women who are portrayed in a committed relationship.

In this section, I have focused on the question of how queer identities and queer diversity are constructed in *The Penumbra Podcast*. Using various examples from scenes throughout seasons one to three, I have demonstrated that not only does the show feature a large cast of queer characters, but that *The Penumbra Podcast* also portrays queer diversity by including multiple characters who are queer in different ways: in terms of gender and gender expression as well as sexuality and relationships, or their lack thereof. The characters' queer identities are constructed and made explicit using different strategies, both in dialogue and narration as well as by utilising the soundscape. The characters can be heard engaging in queer relationships as

they flirt, confess their love, and kiss; they talk about their own and comment on other characters' relationships and experiences relating to their identities; and the audience is made privy to the private thoughts and memories of the characters that reveal aspects of their queer identities.

As is apparent from the analysis presented here, gender and sexuality often go hand in hand, and examining them as wholly separate phenomena is difficult, if not impossible. In Example 3, Mick brings up Juno's attraction to men as well as his queer relationship with gender in the same instance; in Example 5, Vicky bringing up her wife is part of her performing masculinity; and, in Example 9, we see that a part of Nova's journey towards self-discovery is finding herself a man to marry. Thus, *The Penumbra Podcast* does not only portray queer diversity by featuring several differently queer characters, but also by showing how the different aspects of individual characters' queer identities overlap in their characterisations and stories.

6.2 Challenging and subverting heteronormative discourses in *The Penumbra Podcast*

The previous section focused on examining how different queer identities are made explicit in *The Penumbra Podcast*; here, I will discuss in more detail how those characters and narratives challenge heteronormative discourses. First, I will focus on gender and sexuality and how the show resists heteronormative expectations. Then, I will discuss how the show challenges heteronormative discourses regarding relationships, particularly the notions of family and privileging romantic relationships over other types of connections. Finally, I will briefly return to the concept of queer diversity to examine the other ways that the representations in *The Penumbra Podcast* compare to previous research discussed in Chapter 4.

6.2.1 Resisting heteronormative expectations of gender and sexuality

Heteronormative discourses posit that heterosexuality is the only natural form of sexuality, and is connected to a normative view on gender, which is seen as the social extension of biological sex and divided into a binary of two distinct but complementary categories. The categories of men and women are governed by norms of appropriate and desirable masculinity and femininity, and romantic and sexual relationships between men and women are privileged whereas relationships and identities that depart from the norm are marked as deviant and marginalised. As such, historically, depictions of queer people in media—when present—have been negative and even harmful (Peters 2011). Thus, the inclusion of queer

characters and narratives can be viewed as a form of queer resistance, as they challenge the hegemonic position of heteronormative depictions of gender and sexuality. However, although representation in media has become more prevalent, it has been noted that representation often remains limited (Peters 2011; Jiménez 2015; Sandy, Brendler and Kohn 2016). Furthermore, queer minorities are often depicted as such; queer characters are typically few in comparison to the largely heterosexual and cisgender cast surrounding them in any given piece of media; thus, even positive queer representation tends to enforce the heteronormative assumption that being queer is a deviation from the norm. *The Penumbra Podcast*, however, subverts this by making its entire cast of characters queer in some form or the other. In doing so, it creates a fictional alternative where queerness is the norm and offers counter discourses to heteronormativity that marginalises queerness and queer experiences.

Gender, in heteronormative discourse, is understood to be a result of biological difference; beyond physiology, it is presumed that masculinity and femininity are innate attributes caused by said biological difference and thus gender, and what is presumed to be gendered behaviour, are treated as the natural extension of one's sex (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003). Thus, gender is seen as a strict binary, and men and women are treated as distinct categories regulated by the prevalent norms within the given sociocultural context (Butler 1999, 2004). *The Penumbra Podcast* constructs counter discourses by portraying gender identities and gendered behaviour that do not fit within the heteronormative frame; the characters take up subject positions with queer gender identities, but within the text it does not mark them as deviant. As illustrated by Example 9 and how Nova Zolotovna's coming out is received by the other characters, an apparent change in gender is not treated as shocking or abnormal in the text. Likewise, Juno's gendered identity and its queer aspects are treated with acceptance throughout the show, as evidenced by Example 2, Example 3, and Example 4. Juno's gender identity is often depicted as shifting, as further illustrated by Example 18:

Example 18:

> VOICE 3:
> Who are you?
>
> JUNO:
> A lady's got to have her secrets.
>
> VOICE 3:
> Well, a lady wandered into a restricted area after hours, and now a lady's gonna go home.

The example above is from 'The Prince of Mars', the second story of the first season. It is the first time that the text refers to Juno as a lady, although as previous examples have shown, it is not the last; however, what makes the excerpt particularly notable is the possessive personal pronoun 'her' that Juno uses here. Typically, both prior to and after this scene, Juno is referred to by masculine pronouns, by himself and by other characters. In this instance, however, as she identifies herself as a lady, she also switches to feminine pronouns. Juno's character offers a direct counter discourse to the heteronormative assumption that gendered behaviour is innate rather than performed, and that people belong—or should belong—to one of two contrary categories. Therefore, it can be argued that *The Penumbra Podcast* features discourses that resist heteronormative expectations of gender and gendered behaviour; by portraying queer gender identities as not only acceptable but the norm, the series presents its audience with an alternative to the sociocultural context in which it is created and consumed.

Similarly, *The Penumbra Podcast* presents counter discourses to heteronormative discourses regarding sexuality. Heteronormativity privileges heterosexuality, and by portraying non-heterosexual characters and relationships as common and desirable, *The Penumbra Podcast* challenges the hegemonic position of heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships as 'normal'. Sexuality and gender are connected within heteronormative discourse; its definition of heterosexuality relies on the assumption that gender is a binary of two opposing categories created by biological difference, and it presumes that sexual attraction naturally forms between the two (Baker 2008). Furthermore, attraction is connected to desirability, and heteronormative discourses (re)construct norms on attractive femininity and attractive masculinity (ibid). Already, *The Penumbra Podcast*'s queer approach to gender contests heteronormative assumptions on sexuality and desirability. Within heteronormative discourse, women and men who embody traditionally feminine and masculine traits respectively are portrayed as attractive: Juno, who is portrayed in a way that is both and neither, is depicted as very attractive to his queer love interest as shown in Example 12.

Heteronormative discourses presuppose heterosexual intimacy as natural and appropriate; portrayals of heterosexual romance, and even overtly sexual references, are viewed as neutral in comparison to their queer counterparts, and as such representations of queer identities are much more likely to become desexualised to account for heteronormative sensibilities (Avila-Saavedra 2009; Dhaenens and Van Bauwel 2012; Dhaenens 2013). *The Penumbra Podcast* is not an explicitly sexual show, but it does counter discourses that deem queer intimacy as inappropriate to show 'on-screen'. As illustrated by Example 12 and Example 13, the show

does not avoid showing or discussing its queer characters engaging in physical intimacy, both romantic and sexual in nature.

Here, I have discussed the ways in which *The Penumbra Podcast* challenges heteronormative discourses on gender and sexuality. However, the series is not always consistent. Although heteronormative gender discourses and the idea that gender is a binary are resisted already in the first episode—for instance, in one scene the text plays on the common form of address 'ladies and gentlemen' by replacing it with explicitly non-gendered forms of address: "esteemed visitors", "elders and gentlechildren", and "human beings from across the span of age and space"—in Example 15, an extract from the fourth story, the gender options presented to Rita are limited to men and women. This inconsistency can be understood by situating *The Penumbra Podcast* in the sociocultural reality in which it is created: although the heteronormative frame is presented as absent within the series, it nevertheless informs the text; by portraying Rita as finding both men and women attractive she can be identified in queer terms that both the text's creators and its audience are familiar with—such as bisexual.

6.2.2 Resisting heteronormative expectations of relationships

Within heteronormative discourses, queer identities and relationships are marked as deviant, and in more extreme cases, failing to conform to the norm may even result in punishment; in fiction, a lack of stories where queer characters are given happy and healthy narratives can be interpreted as a reflection of such heteronormative attitudes. Relationships and narratives featuring queer women, in particular, have been noted to commonly end in tragedy (Jiménez 2015; Green-Barteet and Coste 2019). *The Penumbra Podcast* makes use of this trope in the portrayal of Vespa and Buddy: initially, when the pair is introduced, they have spent years apart after a tragic separation and Buddy has been under the assumption that Vespa is dead; additionally, in the third season of the show, one or both of the women are put in situations where their lives are threatened and the potential for a tragic ending is present in the text. Ultimately, however, *The Penumbra Podcast* subverts the trope by giving their romance a happy ending, as illustrated by Example 17. As such, *The Penumbra Podcast* not only resists heteronormative expectations by featuring queer relationships, but its portrayals can also be interpreted as articulations of queer resistance as the text refuses to punish its queer characters for engaging in queer relationships.

Furthermore, heteronormative discourses not only privilege heterosexual relationships, but they also privilege romantic relationships over platonic relationships and being single,

presuming that romantic relations are something everyone desires and pursues in order to lead happy and fulfilling lives (Heras Gómez 2019; Vares 2022). Although *The Penumbra Podcast* features several romantic relationships at its forefront and portrays queer characters as happier for their significant others, as shown in Example 14 for instance, it does also explicitly question the privileged status romance holds in heteronormative discourse. In Example 16, Jet rejects the assumption that he and Rita have formed a traditional family unit on the basis of romantic or sexual attraction. He takes up a subject position where he defends the validity and importance of the platonic relationships he holds with the other characters, claiming that they are family to each other despite not being in love or related by blood.

The series approaches different relationships from Jet's perspective again when he is the person chosen to officiate Vespa and Buddy's wedding. Example 19 is an extract from the speech he holds before their vows, from the final story and penultimate episode of season three, the second part of the three-part story 'What Lies Beyond':

Example 19

> The ways I know and interact with each one of you are truly unique, because they are a product of us both: two human beings who should never have met, constructing a single connection together. All of you have constructed such connections between each other, as well, a spider's web that stretches out to touch every one of us. And no matter how far we drift apart in space, those silken threads will always stretch far enough to connect.

> We are gathered here today in celebration of just one of those threads. This ceremony will not create that silk; it will not reinforce it, nor change it in any significant way. But today we have chosen to stop and meditate on the miracle of just one connection, between a woman born in a Solar prison and a woman born in a swamp on the furthest arms of the Outer Rim. Today we admire the line of silk they have woven together, and we treat it as perhaps we always would, if we were wiser: with awe at its beauty and its impossibility.

> […]

> JET:
> Only the two of you, together, can choose what to name this connection, and so its name is yours and yours alone. We who witness this only ask to know one thing: will you treasure this bond forever, no matter your distance in days or miles?

Here, the text can be understood to be constructing a counter discourse to normative relationships. The audience is expected to be familiar with the conventions and procedures of a western wedding to understand that Jet is performing the act of officiating. He is performing a particular speech act—holding a speech—in a specific context and role, and thus his

rumination on the nature of relationships takes on a particular meaning. Although it celebrates the relationship between the two people about to become married, the speech also challenges normative relationship hierarchies that privilege romantic relationships and marriage in particular. First, it establishes that relationship as "just one" of all the relationships amongst the characters, which Jet states are all unique in their own right, effectively treating them all as equals. Jet then continues to challenge the privileged status of marriage as well as the presupposed transformative power of a wedding ceremony by claiming that it does not create, change, or reinforce the existing relationship which Buddy and Vespa already share. The text can also be argued to be queering relationships in its refusal to situate Vespa and Buddy's marriage and romantic relationship within a traditional and normative frame; instead of deciding what their relationship ought to be based on presuppositions or outside expectations, Jet argues that only Vespa and Buddy, as the two participants in their relationship, can name the connection they share.

As the mere presence of queer representation does not necessarily challenge heteronormative discourses, it is necessary to examine the portrayals of queer identities and relationships in media in more depth. In this section, I have examined how *The Penumbra Podcast* challenges heteronormative discourses and expectations regarding gender and sexuality as well as relationships, and determined that the series does question and subvert heteronormative expectations as well as offers queer alternatives to heteronormative discourses. For one, *The Penumbra Podcast* creates a fictional reality where queerness is the norm as opposed to heterosexuality and resists rigid gender norms by featuring a protagonist whose gender identity and expression is shifting. Beyond featuring queer relationships, it also challenges normative relationship discourses that privilege romance over platonic connections; additionally, in its depictions of queer experiences that are not focused on romance but nevertheless include queer elements, the show resists discourses that reduce queer identities and relationships to matters related to sex and sexuality and offers a more well-rounded portrayal.

6.2.3 Diversifying queer representation

Finally, I will discuss how *The Penumbra Podcast* adds diversity to existing queer media beyond featuring multiple different queer identities. Queer representation, although more prevalent in mainstream media today, remains limited and even stereotypical: it is largely dominated by portrayals of gay male characters that are socially privileged, for example in

terms of social class and race (Shugart 2003; Avila-Saavedra 2009; Peters 2011; Jiménez 2015). Thus, other kinds of queer experiences remain underrepresented.

The representation in *The Penumbra Podcast* does, in part, address this gap. As has been discussed throughout this thesis, the queer representation in *The Penumbra Podcast* is not limited to portrayals of gay male characters, but includes queer female characters and characters with gender identities that do not fit within the gender binary, as well as sexualities other than homosexual. Other queer sexualities are not ignored or dismissed (see: Avila-Saavedra 2009). Nor are the main characters of the Juno Steel story portrayed as socially privileged. In fact, the story establishes Juno in particular as not affluent; the series references Juno's childhood in poverty (*Juno Steel and the Day That Wouldn't Die Part 1*) as well as financial struggles in his adulthood such as a decade spent in debt (*Juno Steel and the Midnight Fox Part 1*). Example 10 also illustrates that Vespa comes from a similar background, as her memory indicates she grew up on limited food. Furthermore, the series actively portrays the hyper wealthy as antagonistic and villainous, and institutions such as the police and government as tools that uphold socioeconomic inequality, as was briefly alluded to in Example 7.

There are other ways that the characters in *The Penumbra Podcast* represent socially marginalised and underprivileged groups beyond their queer identities. Towards the end of season one, Juno loses an eye and becomes disabled; other characters are also depicted as chronically ill or disabled, such as Buddy and Vespa who both have suffered different injuries from being subjected to radiation: whereas Buddy is depicted as physically disfigured, Vespa is portrayed as suffering from severe symptoms of mental illness, such as hallucinations as illustrated by Example 10. The series acknowledges and touches on the ways in which the characters are affected by their physical and mental health at several points throughout the seasons. Example 20 from 'The Shadows on the Ship (Part 1)' is one such instance:

Example 20

> VESPA (NARRATOR):
> […]
>
> She looks back at me only once. Her hair's out of place and her fake eye's clicking like a camera lens, and knowing how much she hates showing that feels like I have a knife scraping the inside of my ribs. I want to hold her and tell her she's beautiful no matter which way her hair falls. And if she still wants to hide her scars, I want to help her pin her hair back in place.

The narration mentions Buddy's fake eye and the scarring on her face, both of which were introduced in late season two but did not receive much attention afterwards until this point in the series. The text utilises information carried on from earlier in the show to create meaning and evoke emotions in the audience: the series rarely describes the characters' appearances in detail, but Buddy's red hair, which the narration is bringing attention to repeatedly, is one of her defining features; similarly, Buddy is always portrayed as confident and very striking in appearance, which makes Vespa's mention of her insecurities particularly salient—as well as allows the audience an intimate look into their romantic relationship, revealing that the two are emotionally vulnerable with each other. *The Penumbra Podcast* challenges mainstream media, where queerness is allowed to be portrayed as long as it is connected to social privilege and conventional attractiveness, by featuring and focusing on its disabled, disfigured, as well as mentally and chronically ill queer characters. Example 20 illustrates how the show exposes the aforementioned discourse with Buddy's characterisation: her attractive, confident persona is stated explicitly to be a performance connected to a carefully constructed appearance, while in reality she is a complex character struggling with her own disadvantages whilst also being queer.

Whereas mainstream media may remain concerned with pink dollars (Peters 2011) and aim to keep its representation palatable to privileged, well-off audiences, *The Penumbra Podcast* demonstrates that independent productions have the ability to create niche stories and include underrepresented identities and narratives in their portrayals. However, whether *The Penumbra Podcast* addresses the dominant presence of white representation or not is, arguably, a more complex issue. As an audio drama, *The Penumbra Podcast* does not present its characters visually; additionally, the show does not describe characters' outward appearances in ways that would mark them as white or non-white. This, arguably, leaves the characters' ethnicities and race to the audience's imagination and allows for different interpretations, though it has also been argued that if not explicitly identified as non-white, characters are understood as white by default (Jiménez 2015: 418) in which case, leaving the matter ambiguous is not sufficient for diverse representation.

7 DISCUSSION

In this thesis, I have examined the queer representation in *The Penumbra Podcast*, specifically the sci-fi detective storyline Juno Steel, as well as the ways the show challenges, questions, and counters heteronormative discourses in its portrayal of queer characters and

narratives. The theoretical framework that was used in this thesis is critical discourse analysis, and I utilise queer theory in how I approach the concepts of gender and sexuality in my analysis. My data consists of the first three seasons of the show, and I focus my analysis on scenes where the characters' queer identities are relevant; scenes where the characters' gendered identities were made especially salient, or scenes where relationships were the focus. Using Talbot's (1995) method of looking at the text population of any given fictional text, I examined the intertextual elements in *The Penumbra Podcast* in order to analyse the discourses related to heteronormativity and queer identity present in the show.

Initially, I focused on the first research question of this thesis: How are queer identities and queer diversity constructed in *The Penumbra Podcast*? I examined various characters introduced in the podcast and analysed the strategies the show employs to make their queer identities explicit. The show utilises the various modalities of an audio drama production in how it embodies its queer cast of characters: the audience hears the characters reveal aspects of their or others' queer identities in scripted elements such as dialogue or narration, and engage in queer relationships through the soundscape, via sounds that signify touch. Queer diversity in the show is constructed two different ways: both by portraying multiple characters with different queer sexualities and gender identities, and by portraying queer characters that deviate from mainstream representation. In the following section, I focused on the second research question of this thesis: What heteronormative discourses are challenged or subverted in the portrayal of queer characters and narratives in *The Penumbra Podcast*, and how? The series makes explicit heteronormative discourses by creating a fictional alternative society where queerness is the norm; even if heterosexuality exists in the Juno Steel universe, it does not get featured 'on-screen'. The series likewise offers counter discourses to mainstream discourses regarding gender, sexuality, and relationships by portraying characters who take up subject positions that question and challenge traditional norms.

Although *The Penumbra Podcast* is not always consistent in the subject positions it takes within the complex discourses regarding queer identities and does not address all issues of underrepresentation pointed out by previous research—such as the inclusion of predominantly white queer characters—it can be argued that it does, nevertheless, introduce diversity into queer media. Previous research (see for example Shugart 2003; Moore 2007; Manuel 2009) has been concerned with how heteronormativity and largely heterosexual audiences affects queer representation in media, noting that mainstream representation tends to account for heteronormative sensibilities and produce portrayals that conform to traditional values, or

connect desirable queerness with types of social privilege such as wealth or heteronormative masculinity. This has been attributed to the need to appeal to valuable demographics in order to remain profitable (Peters 2011). As podcasting is an accessible medium for independent, self-published works (Berry 2006; 2016), *The Penumbra Podcast* can be argued to be less beholden to such concerns, thus being able to produce content for a niche audience.

The Penumbra Podcast utilises humour in how it engages with heteronormative discourses. As heterosexual characters are absent from the story, the text uses subtler means to make said discourses explicit, and relies on the audience's familiarity with norms that privilege heterosexual and cisgender identities and heterosexual relationships to set up expectations which it then subverts often using humorous means. In doing this, the series queers heteronormative discourses without explicitly invoking heteronormative identities and relationships; furthermore, in situating itself in the typically heteronormative and heteronormatively masculine genre of detective fiction, *The Penumbra Podcast* offers a queer alternative and challenges the hegemonic status of heteronormativity within the genre. However, whereas as a detective story the *Juno Steel* storyline is queer and transgressive, its futuristic space setting also situates it within the genre of science fiction, and into a continuum of (queer) feminist texts, which have utilised the "ideal framework for the denaturalization of contemporary social identities and relationships, and for imagining alternatives" that science fiction offers (Talbot 1995: 197). The queer representation in *The Penumbra Podcast* is not a realistic depiction of the future, nor does it intend to be. Instead, it presents a fictional alternative that empowers its queer audience, allowing them to imagine a society where queer identities are not marginalised. As such, elements that can be read as articulations of queer resistance in more mainstream media, for example queer characters refusing to label their identities for heterosexual characters or audiences' sakes (see: Dhaenens and van Bauwel 2012; Dhaenens 2013), can in *The Penumbra Podcast* read as articulations of queer empowerment; the characters in the series do not use labels, as such language, which in a heteronormative society would mark them as Other, has become redundant.

While portrayals of queer identities remain a minority within mainstream media (GLAAD 2022), independent productions such as *The Penumbra Podcast* can address the desire for more robust and diverse queer representation. However, independently produced and published media will inevitably reach niche audiences compared to mainstream media, which has access to much wider demographics. As such, in terms of queer representation and otherwise, audio drama podcasts are likely to receive relatively little attention both as

entertainment and as a subject of research. This thesis attempts to address this gap in academic research into audio drama podcasting as well as independently published queer media, and hopefully illustrates their potential for future study.

Finally, the subjective nature of this thesis should be reiterated and further acknowledged. Although I have provided examples and arguments for my analysis, it should be noted that any analysis of a text, particularly a fictional one, is not exempt from subjective interpretation, which will inevitably have affected my reading of the queer elements in the podcast. Furthermore, as this thesis utilises both queer theory and critical discourse analysis as its theoretical framework, it relies not only on the presuppositions that our society is largely heteronormative in a way that marginalises queer identities and thus queer representation in media can be viewed via the lens of queer resistance and empowerment, but also that heteronormativity should be questioned and challenged. It also presupposes that heteronormative and queer discourses that are present in social realities are reflected in fiction, whether they are reiterated or opposed, and it was this that was of interest to this thesis and thus the focus of the analysis. As such, *The Penumbra Podcast* ought to be analysed using different theories and methods of analysis as well. For example, while this thesis provided an overview of the queer representation in *The Penumbra Podcast*, it was nevertheless a qualitative analysis; a quantitative analysis could, for instance, better illuminate whether the podcast truly represents underrepresented queer identities over demonstrably gay male characters or not. In addition, this analysis focuses on just one fiction podcast and its conclusions cannot be generalised towards all fiction podcasting; more fiction podcasts should be examined for their queer representation, particularly if comparisons between de-professionalised and mainstream media are to be made.

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> *Juno Steel and The Case of the Murderous Mask (Part 1)*
>
> *Juno Steel and The Case of the Murderous Mask (Part 2)*
>
> *Juno Steel and The Prince of Mars (Part 1)*
>
> *Juno Steel and The Day That Wouldn't Die (Part 1)*

Juno Steel and The Midnight Fox (Part 1)

Juno Steel and The Final Resting Place

Juno Steel and The Stolen City (Part 1)

Juno Steel and The Promised Land (Part 1)

Juno Steel and The Time Gone By (Part 1)

Juno Steel and The Man in Glass (Part 1)

Juno Steel and The Man in Glass (Part 2)

Juno Steel and The Tools of Rust (Part 2)

Juno Steel and The Shadows on the Ship (Part 1)

Juno Steel and The Heart of It All (Part 2)

Juno Steel and What Lies Beyond (Part 1)

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