A Study of Gender Representation in Californication

En studie av genusrepresentation i Californication

Daniel Molin

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Examinator: Bo Lundahl
Handledare: Malin Glimäng
After all, for my father
Abstract

By analysing contemporary media texts we can achieve a greater understanding for our specific culture and time. The ambition of this text is to discuss some messages that the media convey about gender and the possible effects of this representation. I have therefore chosen to analyse the Showtime production Californication. This study uses critical discourse analysis to examine Californication from a gender perspective to answer the following questions: How is the world in Californication represented? What identities and relationships are constructed for those involved in the text Californication? How is gender representation presented in the text? The analysis shows that while Californication is in many ways a series based on liberal and experimental representations of masculinity and femininity, a closer study reveals that the production at the same time actually promotes traditional ideals and a return to conventional family values.

Keywords: English, gender, ideology, identity, media, representation, Californication.
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1. Introduction

“Massmedier som institution [...] har en enorm inverkan på vår kultur, våra sätt att se, att tänka och kommunicera. (Dahlgren, 2004:417)

Background

I recently overheard a conversation between two women in their 30s, and it was impossible to stop listening. They were deeply engaged in a discussion concerning the developments in the relationship between two characters in a famous sitcom. It was not the discussion as such that initially captured my attention; rather, it was the notion of the women sitting behind me discussing fictional characters as if they were authentic individuals existing in the physical world.

For me the question is not whether the media influence our beliefs and values. The adequate question is rather to what extent we are influenced by the media. The media both enhance and reproduce preconceptions and understandings about our identity and present time. The shear amount of images and messages present in the media today suggests that it is highly unlikely that there is no detectable effect present. However, there is certainly a great variation in terms of what effects these messages have on audiences (Gauntlett, 2002).

It was therefore with great expectations that I started this investigation, an investigation which focuses on the Showtime production Californication. Our world is a world in which circumstances, from real life as well as constructed situations in a media created semi-reality, greatly affect our daily lives and the way in which we construct our identities. It is this line of thought that makes it highly interesting to study the ideologies that are presented in the media landscape of our time, more precisely in this case gender representation in Californication. Moreover I will discuss how these ideologies are portrayed, defined and represented and finally how these aspects may affect my students and the reality that we share.
Purpose and research questions

As the medialisation of society shows no tendency of losing its furious pace, educators must gather the knowledge available in order to explain this tendency and the effects of the same on pupils. Language teachers of English have to be up to date in their knowledge of media productions concerning the English language. Skolverket has already realized the importance of this aspect when including the term “det vidgade textbegreppet” in the syllabus for Swedish (http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/561/a/1917 2008-05-22). Furthermore it is interesting to gain understanding of what students are regarding as useful and representative media texts for them and their development.

Furthermore it is beneficial to gain extended knowledge regarding media productions and the values and ideologies presented in these productions. Most people are frequently affected by the media, and thus the prominent role that various media play in our society can not and should not be disregarded (Nord & Strömbäck, 2004). Many of my students perform choices based upon impressions gathered from the media, and in order to address their preconceptions, questions and concerns it is crucial for me to have sufficient information.

*Californication* is part of an enormous production industry which is concerned with aspects such as profit, commercialism, creativity and general innovations. These ambitions provide a foundation for the manifestation of values and ideas which are constructed on the present society in order to optimize the profit, profit is in this case clearly related to audience. This since the number of viewers affects the general production and profit. The choices made by the production company will therefore affect a great number of people as they receive manufactured messages. Having said this one must also comment upon features such as artistic creativity and the overall innovations since these are aspects which clearly affects modern media productions as well. A creative force also has the capacity to capture audiences and promote various ideas and believes. There is a great number of such productions, two prominent examples might then be *The Simpsons* and *Dexter*.

I will use critical discourse analysis to examine the Showtime production *Californication* from a gender perspective. During this process it is my ambition to answer the following questions:
• How is the world in *Californication* represented?
• What identities and relationships are constructed for those involved in the text *Californication*?
• How is gender representation presented in the text?

**Background**

Today a great number of people are frequent media users. The effect of various media upon the world is best described as substantial. To neglect the vast impact that the media have upon the present society is nothing but ignorance. In the western world our social identities are constructed to a great extent by our media consumption. Previously in history, the production role that an individual had within a society created identity. Back then a person’s identity was linked to his or her specific function in the society, for example as baker, doctor, and farmer etcetera. In the modern world the objects that we consume are also the foundation for the construction of our identity rather than what we produce (Storey, 1999). Being a doctor today does not exclude you from being a techno enthusiast, nor does it prevent you from being a practitioner of knock down karate. The identities of today are therefore to be considered as more fluid then earlier (Storey, 1999).

At present a great number of individuals are members of many communities and therefore participating in various domains. Which identity and what lifestyle choice presented in each respective domain is highly dependent upon which domain we are in at that specific situation. Thus, today identities are best described as fluid.

The clothes we wear, the store we bought them in and how we chose to wear them, what we read and listen to, what TV programs we favour signal something regarding our identity. Namely, how we want to be regarded, or more precisely how we imagine that society regards us (Storey, 1999). The greater number of lifestyle choices that one can manage to perform during a lifetime, the larger becomes the chances for participating in the social life. Social life is highly affected by the media, since it is often through media that we come in contact with various lifestyles (Gauntlett, 2002). It is therefore a necessity to be aware of how realistic as well as how frequent the representation of a lifestyle is in the media.
Simple mathematics would most likely tell us that the probability for success is much higher for an individual searching for knowledge about a lifestyle alternative such as a nurse or a police in various media, then the probability for the same individual to find information about agricultural life in Ulan Bator. This tendency is directly connected to a desire from the media to create context to which the audience can relate or understand. Stereotypes are often used in this context, since stereotypical character use is an easy and rather competent enhancer of impressions (Lewis, 2001). According to Gillespie and Toynbee all that is needed is just a few seconds of watching before a reasonably competent viewer of television have established what type of production they are watching (Gillespie and Toynbee, 2006). This understanding aided by the use of stereotypes and setting.

The ideas represented and created in televised media often have a direct impact on the surrounding society. For examples there was an increase in the sales of Dalmatians after the Walt Disney production, *101 Dalmatians*, had featured the same breed. When Paris Hilton entered the media, it had a direct impact on the surrounding society, all over replicas emerged wearing the same clothing and carrying a small dog of similar breed (Storey, 1999). This impact from the media is as stated above increasing and shows no tendency to decrease. On the contrary, therefore it is of great importance to gain knowledge about the media and the effects that are forced upon the society.
2. Theory

This section describes the theoretical approaches used in this upcoming investigation. The overarching theoretical approach is critical discourse analysis. However, particular emphasis is also placed upon representation and gender theories.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis is of great importance for my study, much since it is an approach which enables an in-depth study of the text in focus. Furthermore, critical discourse analysis aids me in detecting meaning and ideologies that would not be visible in a study of a more quantitative approach. In their book How to Study Television Shelby and Cowdery (1995) state that all media productions are constructions, and as a researcher of television you need to have knowledge about the codes used in this construction in order to perform an in-depth study of the chosen text. These codes and the construction of the text would not be visible without adequate tools. My tool will therefore be critical discourse analysis.

In order to clearly describe this approach I first need to explain what discourse is. There are two possible ways of regarding discourse. The first is more prominent in language studies and sees discourse as “social action and interaction, people interacting together in real social situations” (Fairclough, 1995:18). The second considers discourse as a “[...]social construction of reality, a form of knowledge” (ibid.) and is more concerned with what to say, do and know about this knowledge in a historical context (Gillespie and Toynbee, 2006).

Fairclough’s approach is to combine the two described approaches above thus, analysing language in use with regards to social and cultural processes. There is a great degree of variation in how to use discourse analysis as an analytical tool, however I have chosen to depend on Fairclough’s method since it is concerned with the use of language in relation to the use of social power.
In order to examine the use of social power and language within the text there are certain other components to take into consideration.

The text is examined in detail and analysed from various aspects in order to reach a deeper understanding. Gillespie & Toynbee (2006) offer three questions in their publication *Analysing Media Texts*, questions which quite clearly summarize Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis approach, namely:

- How is the world (events, relationships, etc.) represented?
- What *identities* are set up for those involved in the programme or story?
- What *relationships* are set up between those involved?

The questions above guide this investigation. However I have changed the words from *set up* to *constructed* since this is much more in line with the gender focus of this thesis. I have also complemented the three questions with two additional questions, what roles are assigned to persons in the text itself? And are there any contradictory ideas and values in the text?

Butler & Keith (1999) offer a model for critical discourse analysis in *Language Power and Identity*. I have combined this model with various models presented by Selby & Cowdery (1995) in *How to Study Television*, all in order to make the results more accessible and the overall impression clearer for the readers.

Before moving on there are some additional concepts which will need further explanation namely, *ideology* and *codes*, this since they are both crucial for the investigation as well as rather complex to explain and understand.

Fairclough uses a critical approach when describing ideology, namely “Ideologies are representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation” (Fairclough, 2003). Ideology can in short be explained as a set of beliefs that provides a framework for members of a culture and assists individuals when considering social issues and their surrounding world. Hall concludes: “In the most general sense, ideology is organized thought – sets of values, orientations, and predispositions that are expressed through technologically mediated and interpersonal communication” (Hall). Selby and Cowdery (1995) summarizes
the importance of a clear ideological concept when performing media studies “The concept of ideology is…central within the areas of media and communication studies for it introduces the key idea that the media do not simply provide us with a window onto the world but rather interpret events in a ideological way.”

An ideology is to an extent manifested when represented with codes and signs prominent within each ideology. Codes are best described as a “system into which signs are organised in such a way as to convey meanings” (Selby and Cowdery, 1995). We have social codes to consider in numerous domains, there is one code when attending a lecture and another one when standing in a stadium watching a football match. Furthermore, Bignell offers a rather clear description of codes and signs in his book Media Semiotics an Introduction:” For instance, denim jeans used to be work-clothes, and were clothing signs in a code of clothes for manual labour. Today, jeans are a sign whose meaning is ‘casual style’ or ‘youthfulness’, signs belonging to a style code of everyday dress in contrast to suit trousers, which signify ‘formality’ and belong to a different dress code” (Bignell, 2002). The representation of ideology in Californication is in many ways manifested by the use of various signs and codes accepted in the context in which they exist.

Representation

Representation is a complex subject to address. The concept is not obvious and concrete, but rather complex and abstract. One possible way to describe representation is as Hall puts it: “[...] representation is the production of meaning through language” (Hall, 1997:16). Hall offers a rather complete description of representation as he considers representation to be closely linked to culture. According to Hall, culture can be described as the way we interpret the world. If two individuals share a similar notion of the world, and express their thoughts and ideas about the world rather synchronized then Hall is keen to claim that they are from the same culture (Hall, 1997). However it is also essential to remember that individuals can be from the same culture but hold opposing views about aspects of the same culture.

Culture is a key aspect when discussing representation, since we and our representative culture give meaning to objects, events and identities. In one culture denim jeans might represent rebellion and in another culture the same clothing might represent prosperity
(Gauntlett, 2002). Representation is closely linked to preconceptions, knowledge and identity. In this essay I will consider representation as described by Hall, as production of meaning through language. Also the power of representation cannot be neglected nor should it be. During this process I will search for indicators of representation of ideologies and discuss the effect of the same.

**Representation of gender on television**

As stated above representation can be explained as, the way in which individuals within a certain culture produce meaning through the use of language. Language is then to be considered in a wider sense than just words and letters in a common system. There is a discrepancy between researchers concerning gender representation on television one side claim that there is a hegemonic process which would amount in women being mistreated through ideologies of power (Hanke, 1992). The other side does not neglect this, however they tend to find positive aspects in modern TV productions such as increased involvement of women on screen, also redefined gender roles that might be visible in various productions (Gauntlett, 2002). The latter view, increased involvement of women on screen and redefined gender roles are features prominent for this investigation and therefore important aspects to consider during the process.

During the period 1950-1970 only 20-35 per cent of the characters in prominent roles in TV productions were women (Gauntlet, 2002:34). Almost 20 years later a study concluded that female participation had increased most noteworthy in comedy programmes with a 43 per cent participation of women (ibid.). Since my study is concerned with representation and production of ideology it is interesting to consider these aspects when analysing the text.

There was a complete change in the 90s concerning gender representation on TV when shows such as *Friends, Dawson’s Creek and Frasier* started implementing a new order. This new order continued on the path of increased women involvement combined with strong independent female characters, this in addition to a modified masculinity. In *Friends* the male characters are easily fitted within conventional standards of masculinity such as being in the role of the provider, physically strong, rather direct in their communication. However there are some characteristics of sensitivity added for example a desire to occasionally wanting to
discuss emotions, discrete crying and a longing for love. Similarly the female characters are ‘non-housewifey’ strong and intelligent women (Gauntlett, 2002). Nevertheless, more stereotypical traits such as the more conservative view that all women long for the childhood dream of the perfect marriage, it is very prominent in most of the characters in the series named above (ibid.) There are some noticeable tendencies in these productions of challenging more conservative gender roles and an ambition to add further depth to the characters. It is my belief that I will detect a stronger process of more prominent gender redefinitions and more so of masculinity in transformation in *Californication*.

**Gender Constructions: Representation of Masculinity and Femininity**

There is a need to clarify the difference between the socially constructed gender and the biological aspect, since the latter is of no interest for this upcoming investigation. In Gauntlett’s *Media, Gender and Identity* Judith Butler declares the following: “The binary divide between masculinity and femininity is a social construction built on the binary divide between men and women – which is also a social construction” she then continues “‘sex’ is seen as a binary biological given – you are born female or male – and then ‘gender’ is the cultural component which is socialised into the person on that basis”. My core focus for this investigation is the cultural interpretations that are made based upon biological differences. This since it is my ambition to prove that *Californication* alternates between more experimental views on gender while at the same time enforcing rather traditional family values.

Gender however is a rather fluent description and its meaning can vary greatly over time and from context to context. Therefore I find it necessary to clearly define some of the background of gender studies and declare what approach I will favour for this essay.

Over the last thirty years or so, scholars have been concerned with the fact that masculinity is undergoing a “crisis” (Gauntlett, 2002). Still what this crisis might involve seems to be a bit more uncertain. One aspect is surely the alteration of the role as the provider. Seeing as women all over the globe have shown that they can function without a man, this in addition to advancements in the scientific field adds further concern to the male population in their conservative provider role. Gauntlett states: “It’s a set of changing circumstances, and men, most certainly need to renegotiate their place within this new culture” (Gauntlett. 2002:7).
In early gender studies there is a clear dominance of focus on female aspects and complications. This one-sidedness might be explained with the fact that it was the women’s movement that introduced gender studies on scholar level. However in recent years this tendency has changed, not dramatically still a change is notable. The change as such involves an alteration in focus since gender studies in our times often involve masculinity to a larger extent (Gauntlett, 2002).

I therefore find it important to further investigate what sort of an ideology of masculinity is detectable in *Californication*, what the messages of this ideology and how it is being represented. Furthermore, female gender is an interesting field that also must be explored in order for a fuller description. Seeing as the depiction of male and female gender in *Californication* most likely will lead me into the field of the nuclear family and normative representation this also needs addressing. The choice of performing a critical discourse analysis on a *Californication* comes from the notion that many of the books written are insufficient when addressing gender roles such as masculinity, since gender is in constant progress and the up to date knowledge therefore becomes limited. Gauntlett and I are in full agreement when he states that top selling magazines and novels, as well as TV productions and movies offer information and up to date information concerning feminine and masculine ideology (Gauntlett, 2002).

**Hegemony**

In short, one can claim that hegemony is the power that one social group holds over other groups in society. The term hegemony was originally formulated by Antonio Gramsci in the 1920s, hegemony tries to explain how the dominant parties in society can remain dominant and still have the support of the subordinate groups (Lull, 2000). According to the idea of hegemony this procedure is achievable much due to fact that the dominant groups produce and circulate ideas through various channels in the existing society. This is a procedure made possible to a great extent by mass media, since the media are influenced by these strong interests in the society to maintain their status and culture by reproducing ideas formulated by the superior group.
Since the time when Gramsci formulated his theory technological achievements have manufactured a medialisation that clearly favours the elite groups in various societies on their quest to ensure that their beliefs and ideologies are reproduced and enforced. The process of hegemony is constant and in order for a group to maintain their power position, the subordinate groups must accept their system of supremacy and their culture of power (Lull, 2000). However when considering the idea of hegemony one must consider that resistance towards the dominant ideas is a necessary part of the process.

Hegemony is interesting in this study since it is one possible approach in order to find suitable explanations in two closely linked fields, namely the construction of identity often made through the TV media, also the production of ideologies. This since the various ideologies represented in the text are manufactured by Showtime in order to optimize their profit, and in regards to this notion one should consider the part that ideology plays in promoting the dominant groups in the hegemonic process.
3. Methods

The series *Californication* is divided into 12 episodes and each episode has a total playtime of 30 minutes. For a fuller understanding of the text as such I have chose to include every episode in the investigation. This choice was made after the first examination of the data. I discovered that even if I would be able to draw well-founded conclusions from only watching three or four episodes, I still felt that the total validity would be jeopardised.

I have chosen a qualitative method, text analysis, more precise critical discourse analysis. This choice seemed obvious since representation and ideologies are the focus areas and this method allows the researcher to interpret the findings and reach conclusions not detectable with a quantitative method. One significant aspect of using a qualitative method as text analysis is that the researcher is able to achieve in depth knowledge about a topic. This since the focus is on a smaller amount of data then with a quantitative method, the researchers are able to conclude a lot about a little. Another aspect of text analysis that I find advantageous is the fact that the method allows the researcher to penetrate deeper into the theoretical approaches thus achieving higher validity, the ability to actually measure what you set out to measure (Østbye et al. 2003). I consider the qualitative method favourable when aspiring for deeper knowledge and understanding of a topic is the desired ambition. Critical discourse analysis is constructive when the purpose is to describe and explain a certain topic or a specific tendency in depth since it enables you to penetrate beyond the text (Fairclough, 2003).

When using a qualitative approach, as the critical discourse analysis, you often start with reading the data for a complete first understanding of the texts. When doing so it is favourable to have guiding questions that facilitates a clear focus. After a first reading it is advisable to categorise the data into more easily accessible categories in order to more clearly reach fuller understanding and to consider possible tendencies and discrepancies. The aim remains to establish certain key aspects and features of the texts for increased understanding of the fundamental ideologies (Østbye et al. 2003).

As I started my analysis of *Californication* I began by watching the entire series in order to get a clearer image of the thoughts behind the production as well as general themes. I then
continued to watch all episodes again from a more descriptive angle as I tried to consider the episodes and divide them into the smaller components by which the show is created. During the initial process I made adjustments as the course of action became clearer and clearer. As the procedure continued more prominent aspects became more visible and I was able to establish which ideologies are frequent and how these are represented within Californication.

Since I have made the choice of depending on a qualitative method there is a need to initially address the issue of subjectivity. During this investigation there will inevitably arise questions concerning preconception, much due to the fact that many of the findings will be based upon interpretations made by me. It is impossible not to bring any luggage to an investigation such as this, whether it is cultural or historical luggage it is still very much there. The luggage that I am referring to is the values, beliefs, expectations and cultural references that I as a member of certain culture or society bring to this process. This preconception is not something negative as it is inevitable and helpful. However I must be aware of this tendency and relate my findings to these aspects, since they are bound to effect my conclusions.

Drawing conclusions and interpreting a text is a complex process. It is an ongoing practice made possible much due to the fact that preconceptions submerge with the codes and language of the texts and understanding is made (Østbye et al. 2003:71). Hatch continues along the same line when he states that: “Interpretation is about giving meaning… It’s about making sense of social situations by generating explanations for what’s going on within them. It’s about making inferences, developing insights, attaching significance, refining understandings, drawing conclusions…”(Hatch, 2002:180).

Hatch declares that the qualitative research is a complex process in which inner states are made observable through the use of subjective judgements. Thus instead of claiming complete objectivity researchers in favour of a qualitative method advocates the reflexive use of subjectivity in order to convey and comprehend the underlying themes and ideologies within the texts.

In the beginning of the analytical process I thought that I had stumbled upon some revolutionizing facts, this was during the first time that I observed the series as such. In fact, this first viewing of the series laid the foundation for this entire process. I felt that the series portrayed masculinity and femininity in ways that where rather ground breaking and up to date. Enthusiastically I made a beginners mistake as I started formulating the greater part of
the text based only on the first findings that I detected. As I was convinced that I found gender representation that would revolutionize the analytical scene. The protagonist Hank was a breath of fresh air as he and the other characters stood in conflict with parts of the society of Hollywood and all the values that surround this environment. The female representation in Californication appeared to be modern as the characters embraced rather unorthodox values and clearly, in my opinion, connoted many impressions of strong independent femininity.

As I continued to review the series it became obvious to me that I had completely neglected the fact of my own cultural luggage and my preconceptions in relation to the series. I had detected tendencies that really did not exist, moreover they were not nearly as visible that I initially considered them to be. I was in a sense looking for confirmation to ideas and preconceptions that I constructed during this initial viewing. This tendency clearly relates to the theories presented by Hatch and Østbye, as they state that interpretation is an ongoing complex process. I was so focused on finding revolutionary tendencies that I almost became blinded by the concept.

This insight served as much needed alarm, I was on the right track with the tools used in the process however with an ambition that was completely wrong. Performing a qualitative text analysis is not about neglecting finding that does not serve your purpose, rather the opposite. As the researcher approaches new material, thus gaining new insights he or she must then re-evaluate their preconceptions and adapt their beliefs and methods to this new material (Østbye et al. 2003:71).

I therefore made a conscious choice to reconsider the text and my methods and the analysis as a whole. Eventually, after reading the text several times and having reassessed my luggage and my ambition I came to the point of having an analysis with well-founded results. The outcome was not what I had anticipated; on the contrary it was something completely different. Still it is my opinion that the insights gained during this process is of great importance for me both as an individual and as an educator.
4. Text analysis

For an optimal understanding of the analysis of the series *Californication* there is a need for some additional knowledge about the characters and the environment in which they live. I will therefore start this procedure by introducing the series and the overarching concept of the show, under the title *Californication*. This procedure will then be followed by a description of the main characters featured in the series, since knowledge concerning their respective identities is a necessity for better understanding of the analysis and the conclusions drawn.

There is a clear description of the characters in a presentation text at the Showtime webpage; I will use this description in the introduction of the characters. As well as combine this description with my thoughts and the detected tendencies as the critical discourse analysis is performed. Furthermore the characters will then be discussed in regards to the concepts of representation and ideology; this will be performed under the titles *Masculinity in Californication, Femininity in Californication, Ideals and Family Values in Californication*. There is a need for these categories since a media text is thoroughly combined factual and fictive representations which all express something (Dahlgren, 2000). Furthermore, these categories will assist the reader in the general understanding of the analysis and the conclusions reached.

*Californication*

When considering the question how the world is represented, on a more concrete level one answer would then be: the identities and their world is upper middle class in America, more precise Los Angeles, USA. We as readers are immediately introduced to a number of characters all living and working in or in connection to Hollywood, L.A. These characters all represent various identities and have a rather complicated relationship to each other. The overall environments are best described as upper middle class, this notion is then confirmed seeing as the employment of the main characters varies from architect, chief editor, writer, salon owner and owner of a bureau. There is no detectable shortage of funds as they all are living in semi-mansions containing the latest technical advancements. These features are noteworthy in direct context to the codes discussed in the method chapter, this since the interpretation of
these codes are based upon conventions accepted by the culture in focus (Dahlgren, 2000). The location Hollywood in combination with objects in the characters lives such as cars, clothes, and technological equipment etcetera and their living situation in general connotes a clear notion of upper middle class. As readers we become aware of the fact that we are presented with identities of the semi rich often depicted in series in this genre (Gauntlett, 2002).

**Main characters in *Californication***

*Hank Moody:*
Famed novelist & NYC transplant Hank relocates to LA after his acclaimed book is optioned, but it later becomes a crappy romantic comedy, which sparks a horrible case of writer's block. He's struggling to get his career back on track with the help of his agent/best friend, raise his pre-teen daughter, all while pining for his ex-girlfriend, who is now engaged to another man. It may sound desperate, but he enjoys life and owns all his various vices — drink, drugs and women — with a refreshing sense of honesty and unapologetic candour. He's holding it together while falling apart, and he doesn't mind it one bit.


*Karen:*
Hank's long-time ex-girlfriend and the mother of his pre-teen daughter. She was happy with struggling genius writer Hank when they lived in New York, but she can't begin to hide her disgust in L.A. Hank's inability to return to his promising craft and his immature, predictable behaviour. She's now engaged to a mature man who is successful and protective, but her love/hate relationship with Hank might jeopardize her pending marriage and her sanity.


*Becca:*
Hank and Karen's twelve-year-old daughter has seen it all. Watching her parent's bad break-up and her father's once promising career take a hit has made her wise beyond her years. She walks a fine line between their issues, all while dealing with the same adolescent issues — boys, drinking, parties — as her peers. But, unlike her mother, Becca understands her father
and truly accepts him for who he is. The women come and go, but Hank's heart truly belongs to his daughter.

Mia:
This sexy siren upends Hank's life in a way he could never imagine. Their one-night stand after meeting at a bookstore sends Hank's life into a tailspin, but also results in some much-needed redemption and builds his confidence in a most unlikely way.

Charlie:
Hank's best friend and agent lives his life on the straight and narrow path and can't understand why Hank can't just kick his various habits and settle down with a good woman. But, underneath, married Charlie envies Hank's swinging lifestyle and Charlie's behaviour behind closed doors will contradict his morally sanctified tone and cause problems on the home front.

These characters presented above are offered as main characters on the Showtime production webpage, however I think there is a need to complement this list with a shorter description of three additional characters, namely

Bill:
New partner of Karen and father to Mia, this composed, well organised man offers a direct contrast to Hank as the two are often compared within the text. Bill is almost everything that Hank is not and as they are forced to share the same domains complications often arises.

Marcy: Charlie’s wife and Karen’s best friend, this progressive woman is a fresh breath of air which frequently adds a layer to the series. Marcy and Karen are older than the other women depicted in the text and are often serves as representation for an alternative version of femininity.

Dani:
Charlie’s young assistant, a rather multifaceted young lady that with her body and intellect complicates Charlie’s situation in ways he never thought possible. It is my opinion that she
contributes to the ideologies in the series on many levels and I therefore felt a need to include her despite a not so prominent role in the text.

I must comment further upon the descriptions given above by Showtime, I am not in complete agreement with these descriptions since I feel that they are highlighting aspects not completely representative for the characters. The descriptions are focusing on stereotypical traits, an aspect which has as a preliminary aim to guide the reader to progressing in a wanted direction (Gauntlett, 2002). It is often the case of media using stereotypical representation of characters for various intentions. Shelby & Cowdery claims that there are two aspects to consider while regarding the use of stereotypes namely; on one side you have the audience that can identify the stereotypes thus identifying it as criticism towards the ideology at hand, on the other side you have members of the same audience who feel that their opinion is confirmed rather than criticised (Selby & Cowdery, 1995). *Californication* offer many options for various interpretations, it is therefore of great need to fully understand the text that is presented before you, in order to correctly interpret the criticism given.

However it is my ambition to use these descriptions for an increased perception in regards to my thesis statement in the upcoming analysis. This since the descriptions clearly minister the construction of identities completely in line with the production company desire, creative ambition, optimal profit and maximized audience. A tendency clearly connected to the discussion of representation and construction of ideologies from preconceptions of existing identities.

Prior to starting this investigation I will again consider the three aspects formulated by Gillespie & Toynbee (2006:122), which together summarizes the critical discourse approach (Again please note that I have changed the words *set up* to *constructed* since this is much more in line with gender studies, thus more suitable for this investigation):

- How is the world (events, relationships, etc.) *represented*?
- What *identities* are constructed for those involved in the programme or story?
- What *relationships* are constructed between those involved?

Gillespie & Toynbee then continue to state that a key aspect in a critical discourse analysis is to consider any part of the text as a possible constructor of representation of the world as it
sets up identities and relations. With that in mind I can then conclude the following at an initial phase of the analysis of *Californication*

There are several *character identities* constructed within the text, there was a description of identities earlier and I will shortly present a short summary again, since a clear perception of the identities featured in the text is a necessity for this analysis.

The protagonist Hank Moody is a troubled writer who struggles to face the complex world that he has created for himself. We then encounter his former partner Karen and their daughter Becca. Karen is now a respected architect with a well organized living situation. At present Karen and Becca are not living with Hank, they are instead living with Karen’s new partner Bill whom in his turn also has a daughter, named Mia. There are several variations noticeable between the characters Bill and Hank, at an initial phase one is made to believe that there are great differences. This investigation will however make it evident that this is not the case. It is rather a very prominent example of the construction of multifaceted characters as part of tendency easily detectable in new media productions.

There are two additional characters who are crucial for establishing a comprehensive image of the text and its ideologies, namely Charlie Runkle, Hank’s agent and best friend, and Charlie’s wife Marcy. They are old friends of Hank’s and Karen’s and are therefore a great source to consider when regarding the more implicit aspects of Hank’s social life. The last character is that of Dani, Charlie’s assistant, an innovative young woman with a clear aim in life; successes.

All these identities serve a specific part in the text as they all partake in the *representation* of the world constructed within the text. They all represent various ideologies which are manifested through the use of a variety of signs and codes. It is these codes and signs that I shall contemplate and explain in detail, in the procedure of analysing the text *Californication*. Hall states that ‘*representation is the production of meaning through language*’ (Hall, 1997:16) it is therefore essential to gain understanding of the codes and signs used in this communication process which the text is.

The characters in the text are in a social context linked to each other, they are a part of the same construction and functions within the same system of codes. These connections involve various power complications, since the varied representation of several ideologies within the
same domain remain a breeding ground for differences (Gauntlett, 2002). A notion most likely considered particularly by the production company *Showtime* since there is more than one character for basically all viewers to either relate to or resent. Or as Gauntlett states: ‘*Something is provided for all so none may escape*’ (Gauntlett, 2002:21).

This concept of providing several identities in the same text and construct contradictory ideologies for an increased audience is not a new tendency on the contrary this has often been the case in media productions (Gauntlett, 2002). Moreover, many characters can represent various identities and concepts as their character develop over time.

One of the more innovative aspects of this production is the criticism against the society in which the text is produced. Moreover many characters in the show represent various ideologies, this is portrayed through the usage of character development. To further explain this notion I will now continue the analysis by presenting the most prominent ideologies in the text and then discuss the representation of these.

**Masculinity in *Californication***

The world constructed and represented in *Californication* proposes several noticeable ideologies, the first and the most obvious is the representation of masculinity. This ideology is clearly manifested in the protagonist Hank, as well as in the characters of Charlie and Bill. There is however an aspect to consider when regarding ideological structures in a text, namely that an ideology is not purely personal thoughts and ideas, on the contrary since an ideology is in essence shared with others (Hall, 2000). I therefore argue that in this specific context the identities of Hank and Bill are not consistent in the representation of masculinity. The representation of masculinity presented in *Californication* is multifaceted. In the beginning of the text Hank is representing a machismo ideology; his total lack of commitment, drinking habits, view of women, homosexual jokes and his complete indifference to the complicated situation which his former family are in, are all aspects which verifies this notion. Having said this one must consider the aspect of *point of view*, Hank’s progression towards a more empathic man varies greatly, depending entirely on perspective. Moreover, the ideologies which some of the male characters represent varies over time and are often dependent up on this aspect as well as character development. These aspects both serves a fine enhancers of a
prominent perception in this thesis, namely that *Californication* is revising the characters and their ideologies over time.

Hank is a machismo representative with many conservative opinions and features, however there are some more modern notions detectable such as loving and caring for his daughter. Even if the latter aspect frequently fails, it is detectable and therefore regarded in the process. This machismo of Hank characteristics are then contrasted against those of Bill and Charlie, mostly Bill since Charlie remains a borderline character alternating depending on context and domain between the two ideologies; masculinity and machismo. This dualism offers the possibility for the audience to relate to one side and take frown upon the other, an optimal construction for the production company, seeing as this construction most likely will maximize the possible audience (Selby & Cowdery, 1995).

Bill is focused, structured, in charge and genuinely concerned of his family as is Charlie, however there are some tendencies of favouring Hank’s machismo in some situations. Charlie has a tendency of representing two sides, masculinity and machismo, this aspect is profited upon as he becomes a significant factor for implementing more traditional values. His character is much more fluid in its identity and often serves as an enhancer of certain values and ideals. The initial construction of masculinity is therefore not consistent and there is not a hegemonic process at this phase, other than perhaps a call for change in the present existing ideology (Lull, 2000).

However, this tendency of masculinity in alteration is prominent and most likely related to character development and point of view. It is my intention to establish that this transformation begins in traditional machismo combined with modern ‘slackerism’, features manifested through the character of Hank in the beginning of the text. These features are then contrasted against both the character development of Hank and contrasted against the other characters which have more fluid identities. Furthermore, as the texts proceeds there is an alteration detectable in the character of Hank, as he becomes more synchronized with the other characters of the text, thus implementing the change in perspective and messages expressed. Hall (1997) concludes that culture can be described as the way we interpret the world, and as Hank progresses and partakes in for him a new culture this can be seen in context to an ambition of the production company of expressing the “right way”.

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This progression is made possible much due to the fact of character development and change in point of view. If Hank were to remain the one dimensional male character often depicted in older productions, then I am not hesitant to make the claim that this production would have been cancelled long ago. However since there is a fluidity detectable in the characters the audience are more likely to embrace the message conveyed (Gauntlett, 2002).

Initially Hank is neglecting basically every single aspect of being an adult as well as a father, throughout the text there are many indicators of this notion such as: ‘promise that you [Hank] will be on your best behaviour’, ‘it is just a matter of time before he fucks up, it’s Hank remember?..’, ‘grow the fuck up, Hank’, ‘you are completely useless’, ‘father why is there a naked woman in your bedroom’, quotes that all confirm the notion of Hank being a complicated character with less favourable traits.

Moreover there are many signs verifying this aspect; his clothing is constantly untidy and the car he drives is in a bad shape, the car being a Porsche, something that adds additional aspects to the notion of lost glory. Once Hank was a man that had a family and functioning life, thus money enough to buy a brand new Porsche, at present the family is dysfunctional and so is his car. Both the car and his over all appearance can be considered elements which contributes meaning to the text, as they both serve as enforcers of the representation of Hank. The Porsche once a very expensive car with great capacity is now just a wreck waiting for demolition, the car can easily be seen as a paraphrase of Hank. The construction of Hank’s character is at this point not to subtle. Hall (1997) claims that representation is closely linked to culture and seeing as this text is a production made in and representing the western world, the meaning of the conveyed is rather clear to the reader.

There are many indicators regarding Hank’s responsibility for complicating his own situation ‘You have not produced shit for the last couple of years’, ‘this house [Hank’s] is a complete mess’, ‘you are a mess’, ‘you need help’, ‘perhaps if you took some responsibility things would not be so fucked up’, ‘I am a writer but I do not write’, ‘I am droving in a sea of endless pussy’, ‘I messed up’ and ‘desperate time’s calls for desperate measures’. In addition to these rather clear quotes the audience receives various linkers to the characters past through flashback material in the text. It is here that it becomes apparent that he is the constructor of his own private nightmare; ‘I am fucked up right now and I need help’. All quotes above are supplementary food for thought concerning the perception of Hank, the notion of him being a participant in a non favoured ideology becomes more and more evident.
This is very much implied to be the effects of him neglecting the updated masculine ideology, thus remaining in the traditional masculinity which often is connected with features as, sturdiness, silence and absence (Gauntlett, 2002). Quotes similar to; ‘an analogue guy in a digital world’, ‘I moved on Hank’ are frequent throughout the text. Moreover the character of Hank often uses disparaging comments towards his environment, a tendency which implies a hegemonic process since this action is often considered as dominance towards groups and individuals which are considered to be lower on the hierarchy (Lull, 2000). However since Hank is the only one indulging in this crusade it becomes rather obvious that an alteration is approaching. This progression is clearly expressed in the changing point of views, in the beginning of the show we are more dependent upon Hank’s view as the only one. However as the show progresses the view points are increasing and are made more and more elaborative as the characters develop.

This representation is then contrasted against a semi-modern interpretation of masculinity through the characters of Charlie and Bill. The latter has a refined frame of reference; he is actively speaking for increased environmental awareness, lives in a well managed house, favours art and classical music in addition to driving an environmental friendly car. At this point of the show Hank and Bill are in fact complete opposites.

If we cling on to the notion that Hank is to be considered the rebellious one, we can detect several cultural references to support this notion. Namely the fact that he is; constantly smoking and drinking, frequently wearing sunglasses and supporting a black wardrobe containing nothing other than denim, t-shirts and leather, these are all attributes often used in text to enhance the notion of rebellion (Hall, 1997).

This is then to be regarded in relation to Bill’s appearance; non-smoking, bright colourful clothing and with a passion for more formal clothing in combination with a passion for tennis, the only sport Hank ever engages in is boxing, a choice that enhances the masculine approach. Hall concludes that ideologies are predispositions and sets of values and it is evident that Hank and Bill are not sharing the same ideology at this point.

In one episode Hank falls into a swimming pool and is forced to borrow some clothes from Bill. The reaction when Hank enters the room in this brightly coloured outfit is nothing other than laughter, the clothes are quite ordinary and nothing that would get a reaction in an
ordinary context, however when comparing Hank’s appearance to Bill’s there is a rather distinctive difference, thus the laughter. Even if the characters are on one side existing in the same code system there are still great differences in the perceived identities expressed through various sequences. The stereotype of the taunted author is contrasted against the more modern man and their various lifestyle choices. This might be seen as prominent examples of how the character identities are constructed and how the relationships are constructed in the show.

The tendency of Bill being looked upon as rather stiff and boring is often commented upon during various dialogues in the text with words such as ‘Bill’s baby arms’, ‘Bill is rather boring’, ‘I spent time with the man, time stood still’, ‘no Bill bashing you promised’. In the initial phase of the text Hank is representing a complex character without any direction or goal in life other than offering a secure environment for his daughter in which he fails as well. Bill being his direct opposite and displays a more visible agenda as well as favourable qualities positive and easy going. The use of stereotypical depiction is often used to immediately create an apparent frame of reference for the audience (Gauntlett, 2002) this tendency is rather visible in this text at this point, as Hank remains a machismo rebel without a cause and certainly without success in direct contrast to the organized Bill. The not so discrete contrasts between the two contradictory ideals are clearly visible as Hank remains fairly conservative and unwilling to adapt, thus still on the outside of the dominant ideology.

One opportunity to compare the two male characters and the ideologies that they are representing at this point is when Karen gets abused by a man at a fundraiser which they all partake in. We are then to consider the aspect of how the world is being represented in Californication. The man calls Karen a ‘cunt’, he then continues to elaborate on this train of thought with sentences such as ‘what did you say? I ‘cunt’ here you.’ Naturally she becomes rather upset by this behaviour. Bill immediately embraces her in order to calm her down, as well as prevent Karen from attacking the man, whereupon he states ‘Do you want me to have him thrown out? Just say the word and he’s gone’. He is again rather controlled yet he strikes on a semi-masculine facade, something that is commented upon by Karen, when she states ‘Let go of me, I can take care of myself’.

Bill made a choice of not defending Karen in a more physical manner as she was abused, he neglected the fact that she insisted that the offender had called her ‘cunt’. It was easier and perhaps also much more representative for his character to let someone else escort the
offender out of the room, had Karen only requested it. Bill avoided confrontation and violence, something that clearly separates him from Hank at this point.

Later that evening, as Karen and Hank leave the fundraiser with their respective partners, the man that offended Karen passes by. He says, ‘see you next Wednesday’ and Hank directly senses that something is wrong and asks Karen who that man was. She tries to dismantle the situation, well aware of Hank’s impulsive tendencies, still she admits that the man did call her a ‘cunt’. On that given signal Hank cries out ‘did call you what!?!’ He then turns around and approaches the man and beats him down to the ground. When regarding the fact that Karen claimed that she could handle the situation herself earlier, she has a rather satisfied smile on her lips as Hank then passes by and says ‘goodnight’. This situation offers alternative interpretation, since Karen initially became upset with Bill as he embraced her and asked if she wanted the man thrown out. Again she does not seem too upset about Hank’s “machismo”, as long as she favours the context.

When regarding how the world is represented explained above, and then considering why the world is being represented in regards to the world represented in Californication, I can suggest the following concerning why this scene was performed; there remains constant fluidity for each character in this text. It is often the case of one ideology being directly contrasted against opposing ideologies as well as characters/identities, this can then be considered a contrast on a micro level. More precise the contrast is here found in both Karen’s actions as well as in the different approach used by Hank and Bill in addition to their different ideological sphere. Furthermore, Hank diverted from his machismo as he tried a more civilized approach, a new concept for him, he remained polite until a certain point at which he once again became an old school alpha male. Surprisingly enough the result was not purely shame. On the contrary Karen seemed rather satisfied with the outcome. This can be seen as the beginning of an alteration in concepts and performances, namely that of Hank’s representation of the machismo ideology.

This dualist tendency is then suggested again on macro level, as the text itself frequently offers serious criticism against both the city in which it is produced as well as the lifestyles depicted within the production. Hank is reluctant to partake in the event since he ‘hates the commercial aspect of Hollywood and the superficial world’ that he believes it to be. There are often comments made upon the shallow world of Los Angeles. Identities are constructed only as criticism against the existing world of Hollywood. Moreover Hanks behaviour can be
considered as a metonymy for a rather dysfunctional ideology as can the entire text itself with regards to dysfunctional society, namely Hollywood. Hank is the ultimate cliché, a writer who has not written in years, lonesome and constantly intoxicated and unwilling to change and whom exclusively socialises with other shallow characters of the city. The stereotypical character is used to both comment upon Hollywood as a society in need of change, as well as a clear signifier for the reader in order to achieve a fuller understanding of the text (Bignell, 2002).

It is interesting that the text initially manifests a clear notion of a machismo which is hard to embrace, also the text frequently alters the representation of masculinity, most likely in order to make a more obvious point. As Hank transforms from an archetype from the past to a man in touch with love and family the alteration becomes more vivid. There is a tendency of Hank being able to fall back in to semi-machismo after being successful in his new domain, civilized and more in touch with his emotions, and that the outcome might not be frowned upon. As readers we are then simply observing this transformation of ideologies made evident through the use of character development, as the text slowly makes the process more obvious.

If there are some evident differences between the representation of Bill and Hank, the latter have a great deal in common with the third identity represented by the character Charlie. The two share a rather harsh view of masculinity, many references to homosexual males in prejudiced terms in addition to the use of an often explicit language ‘I wish you would have said that before all the blood started rushing to my cock’, ‘your assistance makes me want to touch myself in bad places’, ‘lets get some top shelf pussy’, ‘a nun and a blowjob’, she wants it up the pooper’.

The stereotypical use of homosexual references and explicit comments of women remains aspects which clearly illustrate the power struggle prominent between those involved. This since the references remains unmistakably disparaging and serves no other function than to empower the two males on their common escapades. This notion is again disturbing seeing as the use of bias comments might enforce these perceptions in parts of the audience, rather then erasing these tendencies (Selby & Cowdery, 1995). Still they are obviously an aspect which clearly increases the notion of unwanted machismo, since it is frowned upon by the rest of the characters.
Charlie is happily married and has what would be considered as a good life, he does however wander off from this narrow path. The direct reason for this action is the fact that his assistant declares that she is interested in some advanced sexual exploits with Charlie. This is all that is needed for Charlie to act on his impulses. As a reader of this text I became quite amazed at the rather stereotypical arrangement between the male superior in charge and female secretary/assistant thus subordinate, since it just seemed to obvious.

There is however an interesting modification performed in the world of social power regarding this specific context. As Charlie embraces the idea of starting an affair with his assistance he becomes the subordinate one in their relation. Moreover he is depicted as a representative of a group which has no control over their present situation, thus enforcing the recent for an ideology of machismo. This scene can clearly be related to that of the notion of masculinity equalling power and control, however it is certainly not the case here thus a change in representation of ideology. Moreover since Charlie departs from the traditional role as a husband he is subsequently punished for this action, yet another direct implementation of the alteration and preservation of an ideology. Gauntlett (2002) claimed that men will most likely need to renegotiate their role in this new society, and indeed it seems to just so.

Charlie is consequently kicked out of the house that he and Marcy shares. During this period of martial solitude Charlie moves in with Hank, and their social life contains nothing but; various bars, gym, girls and hanging out at home, the ultimate macho cliché ever so embraced. The contrast from the structured family life is total, and as Hank’s daughter later on moves in to the house Charlie is forced to move into a hotel his agony is beyond description. It is during this process that the alteration of masculinity depicted in Hank’s character development is most prominent. As he, despite partaking in the various machismo activities, frequently lectures Charlie on the fact that they had it all and lost it. This sequence is again relating back to Bignell (2002) as the signifiers in the episode are as shown above rather obvious. In order to fully understand this notion I deem it necessary to look upon some of the other prominent ideologies in the text, thus achieving a much more complete picture of the text. Let us therefore continue the analysis with discussing how femininity is represented in *Californication.*
Femininity in *Californication*

All the main female identities represented in *Californication* can be regarded as independent women with high drive and strong motivation. When compared to the male identities there remains little discussion of which side is dominant one. Through linkers within the text which clearly relate to the past it becomes clear that the female characters often have been held back by their male respective. This relates to the historical aspect of discourse that Gillespie and Toynbee (2005) discusses were it is more of a social construction of reality.

However as the text proceeds it becomes evident that there has been a change in relations since then. Karen’s sentence ‘we out grew each other’ and ‘I moved on’ might serve as a quite clear indicator of the process, also as an indicator of the progression of identities fully synchronized with the present society. As many researchers have established a growing notion of a change in gender perspectives in media texts with dominance from women as a result (Gauntlett, 2002).

Even such a young character as Becca is considered more responsible and organized than her father Hank. The unstructured male characters portrayed in the text are a progression of the strong assertive male often depicted in older texts, (Bignell, 2002). As the unavoidable marriage between Bill and Karen is about to happened and Hank is still lost in oblivion, Becca then makes the conscious decision of moving in with her father. ‘Rock bottom, the death of hope. I can’t leave him now. The man’s got nothing’.

The female characters are frequently proven to being more organized than the masculine characters, this is then again confirmed as mother and daughter discusses the inevitable relocation ‘knowing Hank it will most likely be you that takes care of him’ and ‘bring over your laundry, your father will only throw the dirty clothes away and buy you new ones instead’. Hank’s character might have begun testing the fluidity if his identity but is far from the finishing line.

There are many indicators with reference to how to be a woman in *Californication*, and I am again inclined to conclude that they all amount to promoting strong women which makes conscious choices regarding their cultural as well as physical body. The series clearly displays an inclination towards testing the boundaries of female representation. However there is a variation in chosen course of action by the characters. There is a clear divide noticeable
between the younger characters and the more mature ones, as the younger ones are more aggressive in their actions. This is clearly linked to the statement made by Gauntlett (2002), which states that it often through media that we come in contact with various lifestyles. The notion of younger individuals acting more insistent in their lifestyle choices and over all progression in many fields is often verified in the real world as well in the fictive one.

Two rather evident examples of this is found in Mia whom seduces Hank and subsequently steals his novel and Charlie’s assistant Dani whom ‘lures’ Charlie into a sexual escape, she then continues with engaging in a relation with his wife in addition to positioning herself in a much higher position at his agency. As a reader of this text I am utterly amazed at the rather innovative strategies used by its producers, namely the multifaceted identities and ideologies in constant transformation made visible through character development. This in addition to the entire nonchalance in regards to taboo subjects. As seen in Mia’s actions towards Hank, though they are borderline sociopath material they still serve as great enforces of an idea, namely dominant women who refuses to be put aside.

The men in this text are as forced to renegotiate their place in the new society (Gauntlett, 2002). Even though the protagonist Hank, and in some sequences also his sidekick Charlie, is a macho cliché it is the women who to a great extent set the standards. One can of course not neglect the fact that Hank is a sloppy Casanova, however the women that he “conquers” is non-characters of the text and serve more as enforces of stereotype, that of the macho relic from the past.

In order to return to the strong women of the text we might turn our attention towards Mia. She is a young woman with a very determined mind, and when she then sees Hank in a book store, she goes after what she wants namely; him. As the ritual of seduction takes place, the older man of fame, Hank, is gravely mistaken when considering the young Mia an optimal adventure. As the lovemaking is shown explicitly it is Mia on top and in control, as she is about to orgasm she punches Hank in the face with her fist repeatedly until she is satisfied.

She then gathers her belongings and leaves the older man naked in bed as she exits the house with a big smile on her face. At this point there are many signs to consider which all carries meaning in their context (Bignell, 2002), the older man and the younger woman, the sexual escapade, with her on top repeatedly punching him in the face and the fact that she leaves him.
It becomes rather obvious that there can be no mistake as to which one is in charge. Still at an initial phase the outcome seemed to be the complete opposite.

When Mia, after their one moment of passion, meets Hank and Karen for the first time she declares to Hanks utter despair that ‘sure I know you. (long pause), you are that author who writes about good old fashion family values’, the message here is not to implicit, she is in control not him. He is not the carefree macho character.

She then continues to press Hank into helping her with her writing or ‘I’ll cry rape’. When Hank finally manages to write a novel of his own she steals it and manages to get it published in her name. Hank then confronts her as the meeting with the agents takes place ‘come on Mia, just out with it’ she then replies ‘Oh, wait I know what I could say, thank you Hank. It's been a great to have your favourite writer in the whole world to help you along with your very first [FUCK] novel’. The novel is a shorter version of the present situation, and in her opinion it is her memory and experience as much as Hanks. As odd as it might seem this bizarre constellation manages to work out their complication in the end as his/her novel now called fucking and punching is published.

Despite her usage of unorthodox methods I consider this to be a statement of the complications which can arise when not respecting traditional family ideals in combination of not regarding the changing ideological structures. Bignell (2002) also comments upon the fact that in meaning might show a discrepancy due to cultural references, however in this text there is progression shown through the fluidity in the characters. Hank set out as a conqueror, depending on his male advantage, however he found that the table had turned as he became the conquered. These tendencies are repeated throughout the entire text, the only variation is the intensity of depiction, this being the case of Dani as well, the other young female character in the series.

She surprised her boss Charlie to the absolute maximum as she sends him photos of her in daring positions, this after being fired. The two then continued to establish an advanced S/M relationship, he claimed to experiencing guilt emotion, despite this he did not end the affair. He did rather the opposite when declaring to Hank that he thought that he could rid himself of these feelings when getting the proposition from his wife of a threesome with Dani. Again things took a completely different turn than expected, Charlie eventually was kicked out of the household and in addition Dani received a promising position at his agency. She
summarized the situation ‘we proved that sex in the workplace can mix, we subverted some dominant paradigms and from a feminist standpoint we are about to launch a major feminist writer’, the feminist writer here being Mia. Again we are faced with very unconventional methods for implementing change in perspectives. The fluidity in characters are prominent as the male characters in the beginning were superior, boss (Charlie) and idol (Hank). This is then to be considered in relation to the female characters subordinate, due to the fact that they were employee (Dani) and fan (Mia).

From a more modern perspective I am here inclined to suggest that despite its illogicality the text often convert a taboo topic into a saga of success. It is often the case that the Californication promotes an ideal that at first clashes in some sense with an ideology which emphasizes strong female values and then altering the premises for an alternative interpretation. In addition to the effect being that the power structures are revised there is also female supremacy. However I must again comment upon the fact that in the initial phase of the text, there are a great number of incidents involving Hank and various women, this does not support the previously stated notion. Nevertheless these incidents are declining until they are non-existing as the fluidity of Hank’s character is portrayed through the fact of him promoting a clear aspiration of re-establishing his old relationship with his ex-wife.

This also being the case of Marcy, she is the proud owner of a studio with prime focus on intimate hairstyles and alternative methods for the removal of body hair. This topic as such is not the most prominent one from a feminist perspective. Though the text offers a modified status quo when involving various arguments for and against this, Marcy’s ‘hairless clam’ is often the case of laughter to which she is indifferent ‘I love my clam’ and ‘I am in charge of my own world.’ This in combination with an entire episode focusing and commenting upon the need for a more natural woman or as Hank puts it ‘I won’t go down in history, I will however most likely go down on your sister. And when I do, I expect to find a hint of pubic hair. Why is the city of angels so hell bent on destroying its female population? The usage of explicit material is often depicted in situations which make the content itself appear almost laughable. Again I am disposed to make the claim that the text modifies current beliefs and values, seeing as almost every taboo topic are addressed in some sense in the text. Hanke (1992) claimed that women would be mistreated due to the hegemonic process of power, however in many cases that belief is somewhat challenged as we see more and more strong
women in various productions. Increased involvement of strong female characters in media texts is one way of redefining gender roles (Gauntlett, 2002).

A character representing Hanks female opposite, and simultaneously his highest desire, is Karen the woman whom eventually resigned and left him. The character of Karen is representing a strong, mature and independent woman. As Hank continued to embrace traditional male values, thus counteracting her development she took control and left him. Karen is the one which frequently encourages him to ‘get his shit together’. She has great difficulties disguising her resent for his lack of commitment, moreover his lack of achievement since he is simply just throwing it all away. Karen remains motivated and constructs an environment stable and secure for her daughter and herself. She is doubtlessly a self made woman as are the rest of the female characters as well.

There is however a need to consider the usage of more advanced roles in the younger female identities, the notion of change is most likely more easily accepted when presented in the form of a younger character. However the production as such is implementing change on almost every level of femininity, this in regards to more conventional belief. The female identities are a direct contrast to Hank and often Charlie, the end result being that the latter two are considered as retrogressive individuals and part of an ideology which is in desperate need of alteration. Something that is very much in line with the theories of Gauntlett (2002).

**Ideals and family values in *Californication***

In the beginning of the text there is frequently a notion of experimental values and ideals prominent. As readers we are faced with alternative and modern family structures, this being the case of Hank, Karen and Becca with their relatively non functioning arrangement. Still there is a humorous aspect, as to secure the identities of the characters a place with the audience. Selby & Cowdery (1995) concludes that the usage of humour is frequent in newer productions when introducing a new line of thought or a topic that might be regarded as complex.

Charlie and Marcy are experiencing difficulties of their own as the latter wants to progress and receive neither reaction nor support from her partner. The topics are again of such that
there remains a possibility for the audience of relating to it, and if not then the possibility of laughter is an alternative.

Bill and Mia are also experiencing complications in their relation, at first it appears to be ordinary complications that might arise when parenting a teenager. Almost every complex situation mentioned in the text at first seems rather insignificant and a price which all parties are willing to pay for their present constellations. However as the text proceeds it becomes apparent that some essential alterations are needed. This structure and the usage of stereotypes are prominent features in modern text (Gauntlett, 2002), however when regarding the text in general other aspects then humour is prominent.

Hank’s inability to structure his living situation is obvious, as are the numerous encounters he has with the opposite sex, features which all presents the readers to a notion of despair. Nevertheless at the phase of an initial reading one possible interpretation is that Hank is in charge and is living a great life of casual sex and no responsibilities. This first notion is well in line with the thought of Gillespie and Toynbee (2006) when they conclude that hierarchies may be implicit in the structure of narratives within the text. As readers we might read the text as the character of Hank is a part of a superior hierarchy namely the male hierarchy and therefore in a dominant position. The first notion of modern and progressive themes and ideals are contrasted against rather conservative thoughts such as the superior male. This usage of a stereotypical male character can also be explained by the fact that stereotypes are easy and competent enhancers of impressions, thus simplifying the overall understanding for the audiences (Lewis, 2001).

The description of each character at the Showtime webpage, confirms this notion as they state: “..but he[Hank] enjoys life and owns all his various vices — drink, drugs and women — with a refreshing sense of honesty and unapologetic candour. He's holding it together while falling apart, and he doesn't mind it one bit”. However this description is not adequate according to me, as Hank eventually alters his perception and becomes a man of this time and era, this alteration clearly differs with the notion “he doesn’t mind it one bit”. The descriptions given on the webpage might be adequate for the first episode(s) however there is fluidity in the characters and there is often proof of views shifting in terms of point of view. Moreover as the characters develop over time we can note “power” emerging from below, as the tradition male norm is challenged by a more modern version of masculinity.
The change is notable and the progression is evident, it all starts when Karen declares that she is marrying Bill. From that moment Hank tries his best to change and adjust his conceptions of the world. It is however a slow process and there are many obstacles along the way as Hank struggles to embrace the earlier so resented ideology of progressive masculinity and more traditional values and ideals.

The text shows clear evidence of how the process is performed; he takes a job writing a blog for a magazine, something that he utterly resents. However when Karen asks him to ‘keep the job for Becca’s sake, give her some to look up to’ an understanding is established. Hank concludes; ‘My family is flowing away, as I drown in a sea of pointless pussy. She will not always love me no matter what’. It is now clear that he has reached an insight concerning his present situation, and at the same time the production company is not too eager to make this alteration to evident. However at the same time it becomes evident that Hank is now more in contact with expression of love and vulnerability both features pointed out by Gauntlett (2002) as noteworthy in the new masculinity.

This alteration of lifestyle choices and ideology functions on more levels then one, as Hank embraces beliefs that are distances away from his former lifestyle, as he appears to become a much more content individual. The ideologies of harsh masculinity and promiscuity are now long gone, so is also the endless wandering and self deprivation. He embraces his family and matures as an individual and in regards to the present standards of masculinity and traditional family values or as Hank puts it ‘Perhaps it is time for your old man to grow the fuck up’.

The overall characters of the text are part of a similar development seeing as the progression of Hank had a direct effect on Karen. As it became apparent to her that he is the man she loves, and once he has proven that he is mature enough and ready to commit she embraces him again, to Becca’s great satisfaction. As Hank has left his old time machismo, inefficiency and swinging lifestyle he has also come to realize that the more traditional values, such as dancing with your woman, engaging in marriage and living as a family is something that has longed for the entire time.

In the latter part of the text there are many indicators of Hank regretting his choices and searching redemption ‘I had a shot once but I blew it’, ‘I am sorry I never gave you a day like today’, ‘I don’t know what I was so afraid of’, ‘so negative, I look around and it is the most
beautiful thing I ever have seen’ and ‘once again the joke is on me cause I’m the stupid one’.
The changes that Hank performs might appear as small alterations in a modern world, still they all serve as great examples for implementing an ideology in the overall context.

According to Gillespie and Toynbee (2006) media texts often make use of constant transformation in form and content, this since media texts as such are much dependent upon innovations in style and form. Something that correlates well to the notion that Californication, in an initial phase, is promoting modern and progressive ideals in combination with some conservative aspects such as dominant masculinity. However there is a change detectable as the text changes perspective and makes great use of the characters fluidity, as the present new ideologies for the reader to embrace. Namely conventional family values and a modern masculinity.

This alteration in character is detectable in almost every single character, Charlie whom once was so determined that a threesome was his highest dream, furthermore nurtured a longing for the single lifestyle of Hank. However once he tasted the sweet nectar it almost immediately turned sour. Marcy his independent wife whom got so irritated with her no progressing husband that she forced him to move away, also realized that without the pure love of her man there was no meaning.

Bill the man who was so captivated by the thought of having a wife and constructing a new family that he lost track of love, also came to realize that without love there can be no marriage. So as he is deprived of Karen he instead focuses on his emotionally neglected daughter Mia. The text has performed a rather drastic alteration when regarding this somewhat unexpected change of ideologies and representations.
5. Conclusion

I have discussed gender representation in *Californication*. The text proposes a more modern and experimental view upon the ideologies of masculinity and femininity, while simultaneously presenting the return to more traditional family values. During this process I have depended upon critical discourse analysis, an approach clearly favourable when searching for in depth knowledge concerning a text of this type. The critical discourse analysis method allows the researcher to penetrate deeper into the text, thus revealing tendencies and features otherwise rarely detected (Shelby and Cowdery, 1995).

In the beginning of the text *Californication* there was a clear discrepancy detectable between the representations of ideologies. As the character Hank was unable to accept cultural aspects of which the others were in almost complete agreement. I am therefore inclined to propose the notion that the ideology represented by Hank, conservative masculinity, was in direct conflict with his environment and the cultural system surrounding it. The initial ideology represented by Hank was contradictory to others represented in the text, thus a reason for conflict.

Conflict is one theme often capitalized upon in media text, since it enables or almost forces the readers to agree or disagree (Shelby and Cowdery, 1995). Moreover Gillespie and Toynbee (2006) state that media texts are actually presenting a considerable amount of continuity, things might appear to change but often they stay the same. A notion that clearly relates to the findings of this analysis since it at an initial reading appeared to be presenting almost nothing but rather modern views and progressive ideas, however the concepts would change greatly during the analytic process.

One prominent example of this would present itself as I compared Hank’s representation to the other characters in the text. Almost all the other characters, with the exception of Charlie, frowned upon Hank’s behaviour and the ideology that he represented, that being the conservative masculinity. There was however a sense of understanding from several characters when it came to the representation of sexual liberation, however as these fantasies were fulfilled the result was often discouraging for the participants.
Still one must consider the following, those not regretting their escapades in addition to profiting from the same were the younger women namely; Mia and Dani. It is therefore my opinion that these characters are in some sense representing a new femininity, synchronized with those of Karen and Marcy but with one small alteration, the former were single, more precise unmarried.

Gillespie and Toynbee (2006) conclude that media texts are dependent upon innovation but often they are much more stable in ideologies and an innovative feature or notion might just mask underlying continuities. The characters develop in correlation to each other and the themes and notions are restructured as the text proceeds. *Californication* is a fine example of this notion as the gender representation changed over time and progressed in clear relation with the detected character development.

Karen and Marcy also elaborated on their behalf in a similar notion, however they were too some extent held back by the fact that they either were in a marriage or had a partner, an aspect that clearly were in disagreement with the ambition to engage in sexual escapades. They did however set out to achieve goals of their own, something that they was successful in. The success that the women in the text achieved should not be neglected since this aspect promotes a modern version of female gender representation in TV-productions and is well in line with the thoughts of Gauntlett (2002).

The characters representing the ideology of conservative masculinity changed as they progressed during the text towards a more modern perception of masculinity. In the initial part of the text conservative masculinity was portrayed by Hank, whenever he participated in a situation where he could be considered to represent the unwanted ideology he received various complications. This was also the case for Charlie, he longed for a lifestyle of casual sex with many women. However as he had the opportunity it all appeared a bleak image of his fantasy. “It’s a set of changing circumstances, and men, most certainly need to renegotiate their place within this new culture” (Gauntlett, 2002:7).

As the two embraced the notion of an updated version of masculinity “which places a greater value on love, family and personal relationships and less on power and possessions” (Gauntlett, 2002: 7) they were subsequently in phase with their social domain. The result was obvious as their entire conception of the world was altered.
When considering the ideals and family values represented in *Californication* there are some features clearly linked to the passages above. Namely there is a clear ambition to promote traditional ideals and conventional family values such as that of marriage and true love. A tendency that clearly can be related to the statement made by Gillespie and Toynbee (2006), namely: tendencies stay much more the same then it might appear.

Neither of the older characters portrayed in the text experienced a notion of satisfaction until they had a ‘soul mate’ or the possibility of one. In the preliminary stage of the text there seemed to be a notion of content within the alternative constellations, this would however prove to be greatly misleading as they all searched for something else, again true love. The clarity with which this message is expressed is stronger than I ever would have anticipated, seeing as the unconventional formations presented in the beginning seemed as a completely functional solution. However, through the character development and progress of story fiction has the capacity to show the social world with particular intensity and aptness (Gillespie and Toynbee, 2006).

I am therefore inclined to conclude that as the representation of masculinity in transformation is clearly represented in the characters of Hank and Charlie. The two are initially embracing rather harsh ideologies of conservative masculinity. The characters then evolve to the updated and more accepted version of masculinity. Furthermore this progression is greatly accepted from those affected from it, namely their families but also every one present in their domains.

The ideologies of femininity are constantly more updated and in phase with the existing world in which we live. However there are smaller alterations detectable as the representatives for each version of femininity test various boundaries. Over all the characters representing these ideologies are more synchronized with the present world and are therefore in smaller need of alteration.

This development of representation can then to be considered as manifesting rather modern and progressive version of these ideologies. There is however a clear contradiction noteworthy when regarding the ambition of the production company of producing relatively conservative features concerning family values and ideals. An ambition possibly connected to the surrounding society, this since there is a need for manufacturing concepts that are embraced by the audiences for an optimal outcome for the product presented (Storey, 1999), in this case the text *Californication*.
This is most likely the case of the redefined masculinity and experimental femininity as well, seeing as these are two prominent ideologies in the existing society, thus most likely to have an impact on the audience. Gauntlett (2002) states that the media serves a great factor in the construction of identity, I can do nothing but agree. This notion considered in relation to an idea expressed by Bignell (2002); that our understanding of our identity is based upon already existing signs, clearly relates to the importance of reflecting on the ideologies presented by media and in addition to regarding the specific context. *Californication* as a text is presenting various ideologies that have been scrutinized in this analysis. The result is of this analysis that while *Californication* is in many ways a series based on modern and progressive representations of masculinity and femininity, a closer study reveals that the production at the same time actually promotes traditional ideals and a return to conventional family values.
References


Østbye et al. (2003) (red.): *Metodbok för medievetenskap*. Malmö: Liber AB
Guiding Questions

How is the world *represented*?
What *identities* are constructed for those involved in the programme or story?
What *relationships* are constructed between those involved?
Are there contradictory ideas and values in the texts?
What roles are assigned to persons in the text itself?