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The Flipside of Feminism:

Mapping out your gender-swapped hero/ine in *High Fidelity*

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes the gender-swapped main character in *High Fidelity,* Robyn Brooks or Rob, by relying on adaptation theory, feminism, gender swap theory, and discussions in published reviews. The essay uses *Map Your Hero(ine)* (*MYH*) by answering a survey on the webpage and experimenting on how it is to use the platform to research gender swap in adaptations. Furthermore, the paper offers reflection and suggestions on what could be adjusted for a better user experience. The essay's main concern is evolving the current gender swap trend and what we can learn about the representation of female characters in those films or TV series. The essay concludes that female versions of formerly male-oriented stories are a double-edged blade. On the one hand, it can provide role models for women depicting them in roles commonly allotted to the male gender and inviting a discussion on gender performativity. However, it also sets them up for being compared and thought of in relation to men.

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Introduction

This is a man's world, is the first sentence of the sixties soul tune "It's a Man's, Man's, Man's World," written by James Brown and Betty Jean Newsome. Those words might also ring true when describing the universe that the gender-swapped female Robyn steps into in Hulu's 2020 adaptation of *High Fidelity*, a book written by a man about a man. The streaming platform series follows other recent remakes and adaptations that portray an originally male character as female. For example, John Watson as Joan Watson in the Sherlock Holmes adaptation *Elementary* (2012–2019). A woman taking over the *007* codename in the most recent Bond movie, *No Time To Die* (2021). The movies *Ocean's Eight* (2018) and *Ghostbusters* (2016) where the main characters have been swapped from being male to being female. Although there is a long history of swapping genders in adaptation, there seems to be an ongoing hype in Hollywood where both adaptations and remakes use this technique.

However, at the same time, it is also interesting to ask why gender swap has been so popular: why recast James Bond or Rob Gordon in the *High Fidelity* film as a woman? What does it accomplish? Can gender swap provide role models for women? And first and foremost, what can we learn about the representation of female characters through gender-swapping in adaptations and remakes? These are some of the questions posed in this thesis. This thesis uses *High Fidelity* to experience how it is to use the webpage *Map Your Hero/ine* (*MYH*). Furthermore, the essay asks whether anything can be adjusted to enhance the user experience of the *MYH* website.

High Fidelity provides the case study for this research, with particular attention to the latest adaptation, Hulu's TV series adaptation from 2020. The main focus is on the gender-swapped main character Robyn Brooks, nicknamed Rob. The story is based on a novel by Nick Hornby that goes by the same name and was published in 1995. There is another adaptation, a movie released in 2000 directed by Stephan Frears. The main character is a man

in both the novel and the film. Both male versions of the characters are usually called Rob. The one from the novel is called Robert Fleming, and the one from the movie, Robert Gordon. The gender swap provides a platform to discuss gender politics in adaptation. The argument is two folded in this thesis. Due to the variating nature of adaptations and their relation to a former story, they can be compared. Casting women in previously male roles also puts women up for being compared to their male counterparts. Swapping gender in adaptation also creates a platform to discuss gender performativity and present women in roles historically allotted to males.

In the first chapter, the essay discusses relevant theory and terminology. In terms of adaptation, the thesis discusses Linda Hutcheon's *Theory of Adaptation* (2005) and Gary R. Bortolotti and Linda Hutcheon's article "On the Origin of Adaptations: Rethinking Fidelity Discourse and "Success"—Biologically" (2007). In relation to gender swap, this thesis considers Lauren Rosewarne's *Sex and Sexuality in Modern Screen Remakes* (2019), particularly the chapter "The All-Lady, Feminist Extravaganza: Sex-Swaps, Sexual Scripts, and Progressive Politics." Furthermore, it discusses Underwood, Ted, David Bamman, and Sabrina Lee's article "The Transformation of Gender in English-Language Fiction," an article that uses distant reading to look at the transformation of gender in Anglophone literary fiction. The term distant reading is borrowed from Franco Moretti in his article "Conjectures on World Literature" (2000). Moreover, the essay also discusses methodology in the first chapter. This thesis uses a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative analysis. It relies both on distant reading and close reading and uses a case study to research gender swap in adaptation. The essay discusses the different variations of Rob using a comparative analysis.

The second chapter takes a closer look at gender swap by discussing Rosewarne's theories and published reviews. The case study, *High Fidelity,* is introduced. The chapter reflects on the experience of using the research website *Map Your Heroine* by using the case

study to fill out the survey. The survey is organized into quantitative and qualitative parts, and this research will go through both and offer suggestions on what could be adjusted to make the user experience better.

The third chapter uses *Voyant* to analyze the three versions of *High Fidelity*, the novel, the movie script, and a transcription of the Hulu TV series. *Voyant* is a distant reading software available online and connects to *MYH*. Hence, the software is a part of experiencing how it is to use the online environment on *MYH*. This paper introduces chosen features on *Voyant* and gives an example by using them to study Rob. Episode eight focuses on another character than Rob. This chapter also compares episode eight to the other episodes of the *High Fidelity* TV series. The last chapter offers a conclusion and provides a list of suggestions for *MYH* to adjust. Furthermore, there is an elaboration on the limitations of this study and ideas for further research.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

This chapter discusses the main theory that is used as a foundation for further discussion in this essay, including adaptation theory, gender-swap, and feminism. The main terms are explained; adaptation, remakes, gender-swap, feminism, gender, and distant reading to name a few. The research is guided by using the webpage *Map Your Hero(ine)* where the webpage offers an opportunity for students and general readers to map out their favorite characters by filling out a survey. Furthermore the page links to an online text analyzing page *Voyant*. There is an environment to insert digital texts for distant reading analyzes. This will be explained further in this chapter. Because *(MYH)* is new the essay will also offer reflection on the experience of using the survey and offer some ideas on what could be done differently. The research uses *High Fidelity* as a case study, both adaptations (2020 and 2000) as well as the source novel by Hornby (1995). The focus will be on the gender-swapped Tv series adaptation from 2020.

1.1 Adaptation Theory

In *Theory of Adaptation* (2006), Linda Hutcheon approaches the idea of adaptation as something that evolves similar to living organisms and "is a form of repetition without replication" (xvi). In her work from 2006, she points out that despite much discussion and pointers against the idea, there is a stubborn mentality attached to adaptation, that it comes second to the source material: "Whether it be in the form of a videogame or a musical, an adaptation is likely to be greeted as minor and subsidiary and certainly never as good as the "original" (xii). Hutcheon offers a standpoint on adaptations other than secondary works and was an inspiration for the study; "[t]his critical abuse is one of the provocations of [Hutcheon's] study" (xii). If a viewer sees an adaptation first, that particular person does not experience the work as an adaptation. But if reading, e. g. a novel after seeing a film adaption, the process, which she describes as oscillation, happens in reverse and deconstructs the idea that adaptations

are somehow hierarchical (xv). The fidelity discourse has come a long way since the publication of Hutcheon's theory in 2006.

Casie Hermansson writes about the anti-fidelity discourse in "Flogging Fidelity: In Defense of the (Un) Dead Horse" (2015), where she argues that fidelity criticism is an essential tool in adaptation studies. She defines fidelity as "the particular book-to-film comparative approach, usually in that order and often in case study format, whose main tendency is to evaluate the adaptation's faithfulness to the original" (Hermanson 147). The discussion has a long history, but Hermansson names the article "The Well-Worn Muse" written by Dudley Andrews as "perhaps the most catalyzing work in this respect," where Andrews dismisses fidelity (147).

While the discussion was important to reconsider valuing adaptation for being close to the original in its representation, an alternative solution to a comparative approach has not presented itself. Hermansson says: "Any comparative work—the casestudy approach most obviously—can be seen as fidelity criticism in essence, even when evaluative criteria may be entirely absent from the analysis" (148). Because of the need to work with comparative analysis this creates a paradox, and Hermansson argues that fidelity should be reinstated as one of the methods of adaptation studies: "It is time to include fidelity—aporias and all—in the intertextual toolbox of adaptation criticism. It is one tool among many, and sometimes not the right tool for the job. But at other times, and perhaps in combination with other tools, it is the only one that will do" (156). That said, leading the discussion back to Hutcheon, adaptation is not considered subsidiary when Hermansson opts to embrace the term. There it is thought of as an option, a tool for reading, and one of many.

Hutcheon's method throughout *A Theory of Adaptation* is to study texts comparatively across various forms of media and "then tease out the theoretical implications from multiple textual examples" (xii). She builds a theoretical framework by gathering different information

while searching for threads that might be useful to discuss adaptations. To get there, she asks basic journalistic questions using the interrogative pronouns; *what, who, why, how, where,* and *when,* and structures her book into chapters using one to two at a time to guide the discussion to get a better sense of both the adapted works and the adaptation process. The simplicity of the idea is genius and user-friendly.

Hutcheon sees a correlation between adaptations and Darwin's theory of evolution. In the same way, as species evolve to survive and adapt to their environment, stories take on new forms through adaptation to stay relevant. She mentions the movie *Adaptation* (2002). The film is an interesting case study regarding the process of adapting a novel into a film. In that particular movie, the screenwriter writes himself into the script as the main character, reflecting the problematic nature of adapting *The Orchid Thief* (1998). A non-fiction book by Susan Orlean. Furthermore, the film suggests in its visual imagery a connection between adaptation and biological evolution. Hutcheon implements this perspective on adaptations and says: "Stories do get retold in different ways in new material and cultural environments; like genes, they adapt to those new environments *by virtue of* mutations—in their "offspring" or their adaptations. And the fittest do more than survive; they flourish" (32).

Hutcheon builds on Richard Dawkins' idea in *The Selfish Gene* (1976), where he suggests that there is a correlation and a "cultural parallel to Darwin's biological theory" (32). Richard calls cultural transmittable units "memes" (Hutcheon 32). Hutcheon points out that memes are different to genetic transmissions because they continuously change; "unlike genetic transmissions, when memes are transmitted, they always change, for they are subject to "continuous mutation, and also to blending"(qtd. in Hutcheon)" in part to adapt for survival in the 'meme pool'"(32). Despite sharing its name with a popular term used in social media, Dawkins' memes are something different. They signify ideas, units similar to genes in his

theory: “his cultural parallel to genes” (Hutcheon 167). Stories can also qualify as memes, Hutcheon argues (167).

Hutcheon, along with the biologist Gary R. Bortolotti expand on the discussion of thinking about adaptation in terms of post-Darwinian biology in “On the Origin of Adaptation: Rethinking Fidelity Discourse and “Success”—Biologically” (2007). They argue that it is possible to understand adaptions as the process of replication and see a homology between the two: “By homology, we mean a similarity in structure that is indicative of a common origin: that is, both kinds of adaptation are understandable as process of replication” (444).

Contrary to the fidelity discussion, they point out that adaptations can stand as independent works of art (444–445). They argue that instead of discussing adaptations in relation to fidelity to the “original,” its success can be thought of in terms of “lineage of decent” (445). Similar to biology, a forefather and decedents, the stories change. This idea opens up space to discuss adaptation without thinking of how faithful it is to the “original source.” It also opens up space to think of cultural implications and the surrounding environment of the variation of the story: “a way to think anew about broader questions of *why* and *how* certain stories are told and retold in our culture” (445). The idea of “original” and “source” in the fidelity discourse relates to a broader cultural conversation that reaches back to the Romantic ideology of the originality of an artistic genius, as Hutcheon and Bortolotti indicate (445). They relate this discussion again back to biology and point out that biology does not judge in terms of fidelity although the common origin is recognized: “Biology can celebrate the diversity of life forms, yet at the same time recognize that they come from a common origin” (445). Instead of thinking about the first version of a story as the “source,” it is possible to think of it as the “ancestor” (446).

Hutcheon and Bortolotti build on Dawkins's idea about cultural memes. Genes are replicators that require a vehicle, and organisms act as such. Dawkins defines replicators as;

"anything in the universe of which copies are made" and argues that high survival depends on "coping-fidelity" amongst other things (qtd in Bartolotti and Hutcheon 447). The article points out a misconception within biology. It is not the survival of individual organisms or groups, but adaptations rely on the survival of replicators (447). For narrative adaptation, there are units of replication that help us understand change over time (447). However, those replicators need a vehicle, and organisms act as such for genes. Adaptations do the same for narrative ideas, which are embodied physically through a medium, e. g. novel or a play (447).

Bartolotti and Hutcheon put up a formula for adaptations "narrative idea + cultural environment = adaptation" (448). Within biology, that is the equivalent of "genotype + environment = the phenotype we see and experience" (448). They explain that in classical biology, genotypes are "underlying blueprints," whereas phenotypes are what appears to us in relation to the environment or what produces those phenotypes (448). .

The limitations of Hutcheon's and Bortolotti's study of the thinking of cultural adaptations in comparison to biology include the randomness of biological adaptation opposite to culture, which has a direction. With that comes a more controlled environment with the intellectual intention to change a story (453). Furthermore, adaptation can also affect change within a culture by involving cultural debates. There is an intention that comes with retelling a story while biology is random; "biological *discourse* cannot help us here; it is the discourse of culture (as constructed in opposition to "nature") that foregrounds intentionality rather than pure randomness" (453). In aspect to the aim of their study, they emphasize that cultural impact is in retelling stories over aesthetic value: "Cultural impact and aesthetic value have rarely been synonymous; the same is true for artistic merit and economic success" (454). Cultural discussions will be the focus of this essay. It looks at the cultural impacts and discussions of retelling stories through gender swap rather than the aesthetic value of the case study.

1.1.1. Intertextuality

One way to understand the relationship between the adapted work and the source text is by looking at it from a perspective of intertextuality. Linda Hutcheon writes in *Theory of Adaptation,* "seen from the perspective of its *process of reception,* adaptation is a form of intertextuality" (8). This thesis borrows the term from Julia Kristeva. In "Word, Dialogue and Novel," Kristeva builds on Mikhail Bakhtin's idea that the literary word is in a dialogue with other texts; "a dialogue among several writings" (Kristeva 36). She takes the idea further and compares the structure of texts to mosaics where everything is gathered and put together from different pieces, which it absorbs and transforms; "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (37). Hutcheon refers to Kristeva's idea of texts as mosaics of citations and stresses how important this idea is in challenging the Romantic ideology of originality; "dominant post-Romantic notions of originality, uniqueness, and autonomy," (Hutcheon 21).

Hutcheon sees adaptation as an intertextual phenomenon from the perspective of reception and argues that other works resonate through the memory of the consumer through the variating repetition of the story (8). Intertextuality also plays a role in the creative process of reinterpreting a story (22). Thinking of adaptation as a process encourages a discussion concerning how people interact and tell stories; "it permits us to think about how adaptations allow people to tell, show, or interact with stories" (22).

1.2. Gender-swap in Reboots

In *Sex and Sexuality in Modern Screen Remakes* (2019), Lauren Rosewarne researches remakes where the story is given a fresh point of view in relation to sex or "with new approaches to sex" (1). The study includes sex swaps, feministic takes on films, eroticized content, and queer version of formerly screened stories (1). Gender swaps are the theme of

chapter two, “The All-Lady, Feminist Extravaganza: Sex-Swaps, Sexual Scripts, and Progressive Politics.” In that chapter, Rosewarne discusses the politics of sex swaps, what feminism in filmmaking means, and reflects on the zeitgeist surrounding the phenomena. Rosewarne only discusses remakes. She uses the same definition for the term as Thomas Leitch. He says that remakes are; “new versions of older movies” (qtd. in Rosewarne 3). She clarifies and says: “my focus is on already-filmed stories that have been given a new life—or, even, new *lives*—by being filmed anew” (3).

Rosewarne defines the first screened version as an adaptation, but the postproductions are remakes or reboots. The terms remakes and reboots are used synonymously in this paper. Furthermore, Rosewarne states that remakes can also be considered adaptations. The difference is that remakes are often also influenced by a preexisting filmed version, as is the case for Hulu’s *High Fidelity* (2020) series. There actress Zoë Kravitz plays the main character, Rob. The role was previously performed by John Cusack in the movie adaptation (2000) of Nick Hornby’s novel *High Fidelity* (1995). The series is defined as an adaptation, but it uses some of the same techniques as the film, for example, making the main character speak directly to the camera.

Recycling an older film has production value. It is already a known entity that is potentially easier to market. Same counts for screen adaptations of texts. Using an existing story to adapt to a movie or series has benefits. Published books come with a market attached to them. Simone Murray writes in *Introduction to Contemporary Print Culture: Books as Media* (2021): “[B]ooks that generate highly dedicate fandoms have immense appeal to screen producers as ‘presold’ properties with established brand recognition” (127). Producing a film or series is a financial investment and using a known story builds upon an already existing fan base. It offers security to film producers. Swapping out characters in a remake can be less of an effort than creating a new story from scratch and a safer bet for production companies.

Because the story already comes with a market. What can we learn about the representation of female characters through sex swaps in adaptations, remakes, and the discussion surrounding them in reviews? This question is discussed further in chapters two and three below.

1.3. Feminism

For further discussion regarding the gender politics in the gender-swapped version of *High Fidelity*, it might be wise to take a closer look at the term *feminism*. It is relevant to the discussion of gender politics and power relations when comparing a female gender-swapped version to its originally male representation. Here, the ideology is borrowed from two theoreticians, Simone De Beauvoir and Judith Butler. In *The Second Sex* (1949), De Beauvoir presents the idea of femininity as a social construct: "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman" (601). She compares the upbringing of boys and girls and how social conventions form and construct femininity. Another important point in De Beauvoir's work is the idea of women as others. Women come secondary to men, who are the default entity:

> Humanity is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being… She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; his the Absolute. She is the Other. (43–44)

This idea of otherness is relevant to the formerly asked question of the relationship between adaptations and the current trend of making female versions of male movies. If adaptation compares to the "original work," what does it tell us about the buzz around making female versions of male character-driven films? One way to look at the process of female gender swap is this secondary status of females and femininity viewed in relation to a male character. As opposed to creating another story told and written by and from the perspective of the women. It would give them space to be viewed not as others but as the absolute.

In “Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir’s Second Sex,” Judith Butler disentangles the idea of the famous words “one is not born, but rather becomes, woman.” There Butler points out the distinction between sex and gender and zooms in on the words *becomes*: “In keeping “become” ambiguous, Beauvoir formulates gender as a corporeal locus of cultural possibilities both received and innovated” (37). Not only does one become a gender in relation to culture but also by interpreting the cultural form of the body; “cultural construction imposed upon identity, but in a sense gender is a process of constructi[ng] ourselves. Gender must be understood as a modality of taking on or realizing possibilities, a process of interpreting the body, giving it cultural form” (36). There is a relationship between the outside–inside construction of identity. It is a process of becoming something by “an active process of appropriating, interpreting, and reinterpreting received cultural possibilities” (36).

In Butler’s influential work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), she proposes that gender is performative:

> [G]ender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. Hence, within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. (127–128)

This in essence means that gender is not becoming something, but repeating performative actions that signify something within a cultural context: “Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (148). She builds on De Beauvoir’s idea of becoming a woman and interprets the idea as a process that “cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end” (148). Butler takes the idea further by saying that an ongoing performative process makes up gender identity. Butler challenges the subjective

definition of woman in second-wave feminism: “Feminist critique ought also to understand how the category of “women,” the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought” (70). The feminist’s desire to seek a better representation through language and politics needs to acknowledge that representation lies within the same discursive situation that the power structure does. However, representation and the discursive situation cannot be escaped. Butler proposes that:

> The identity of the feminist subject ought not to be the foundation of feminist politics, if the formation of the subject takes place within a field of power regularly buried through the assertion of that foundation. Perhaps, paradoxically, “representation” will be shown to make sense for feminism only when the subject of “women” is nowhere presumed. (81)

It is difficult to get distance from a situation that one is involved in, and the feminist subject is a part of society. The field of power that is actively in place, and the subject, take part in asserting their role while performing it. Therefore, Butler suggests that feminism should not presume what it means to be a woman.

1.4. MAP YOUR HERO/INE

Map Your Hero(ine) (*MYH*) is a webpage that invites readers to map out their favorite fictional characters. This thesis uses this database to guide the research process of the case study. The representation of hero/ines can differ between mediums and adaptations: “This project aims to map the representation of heroes and heroines in fiction and their adaptations” (Supheert). *MYH* offers a platform where students and general readers can answer questions about their favorite characters and builds up a database which can again contribute to further research. Characters can be considered role models and can arguably shape or reflect our reality in a conversation with society: “Literary characters, or adaptations, provide important

role models for readers or viewers, shaping their view of society and themselves, and by extension shaping their lives" (Supheert). Gender swap could provide role models for women, including them in a space historically allotted for men. This will be discussed further in the following chapters below.

One way to measure the reader/viewer's response to a character is by gathering qualitative information. *Map Your Heroine* does this through a survey and asks participants to reflect on identification, appearance, gender identity, profession, agency, and personality. The questions ask the reader for opinions or experiences of the character they choose. The *MYH* webpage builds on Van der Deijl's personagebank and Underwood's site on gender visualization. The first one is a webpage that maps out characters in Dutch literature. The aim is to see how diverse characters in Dutch literature are in works written after 1945. The second one focuses on gender in Anglophone literature. *MYH* goes beyond these two sites by including comparisons between characters and including a range of aspects, including gender: "The envisaged site will combine elements from Van der Deijl's personagebank and Underwood's site on gender visualisation but will go beyond these by allowing for a comparison between characters and by broadening the scope to a range of aspects, including, but not limited to, gender" (Supheert). The allowance for comparisons between characters and including a range of aspects makes *MYH* valuable addition to the field of literary, film, and cultural studies.

MYH is a new project, published in 2021, and a research project by Roselinde Supheert, a professor at Utrecht University. She teaches English language and literature and intercultural communication. High Fidelity is here used as a case study to try out the experience of using the website. Here the text will focus on aspects related to the gender swap. The essay will discuss the case study in connection to the questions of the survey and give suggestions on how they can potentially be improved.

This essay will refer to the first part as Questionnaire A and the second part as Questionnaire B. The participant answers questions concerning a particular work, describing its medium, title, author, publication year and place, and where most of the action takes place. In the case of an adaptation, participants answer questions about the source work before registering the adapted story. The second part of questionnaire A focuses on the hero/ine. If the character comes from a story someone has already registered, the participant only fills out questions about the hero/ine. If someone has already chosen the same character, this part of the process becomes irrelevant, and the participant can straight away choose to answer the survey questions. To differentiate between the two parts of Questionnaire A, the first part (concerning the work) is referred to as Questionnaire A1, and the second part (concerning the characters) is Questionnaire A2. This is done to avoid any misunderstandings and make it easier to show what the essay is referring to each time.

1.4. Distant Reading and "Gender Politics in Language and Writing"

This essay uses both close reading and distant reading. The latter is used when using *Voyant,* a text reading tool available online. Distant reading is a methodological tool used in literary studies which traditionally focuses on a large corpus of works and reads them from a distance, not by reading them closely but rather by looking for trends and patterns between a large corpus of works from an extended period of time. The method is often quantitative, measuring and counting information from literature with computer software. Franco Moretti used the term "distant reading" in "Conjectures on World Literature" (2000). The term is often attributed to him. Distant reading focuses, for example, on genres or systems within texts. Distant reading suggests watching texts from a distance can reveal knowledge concerning aspects one might otherwise miss.

> Distant reading: where distance, let me repeat it, is a condition of knowledge : it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes—or genres and systems. And if, between the very small and the very large, the text itself disappears, well, it is one of those cases when one can justifiably say, Less is more. If we want to understand the system in its entirety, we must accept losing something. We always pay a price for theoretical knowledge: reality is infinitely rich; concepts are abstract, are poor. But it's precisely this 'poverty' that makes it possible to handle them, and therefore to know. This is why less is actually more. (Moretti 57–58)

Instead of continuing to focus solely on close reading and individual works, distant reading includes works on a larger scale of world literature: "we know how to read texts, now let's learn how *not* to read them" (Moretti 57). Instead of reading each word individually, it is also possible to let the software analyze the texts and research literature from a distance by analyzing other aspects. The method is often quantitative, measuring and counting information from literature with computer software, while close reading is usually qualitative. That can include trends, or in the case of Underwood et al.'s article, gender politics.

In "Transformation of Gender in English-Language Fiction" from 2018, Ted Underwood, David Bamman, and Sabrina Lee explore variations of gender in fiction, reaching from the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first (1). Their understanding of gender is "a conventional role that people [are] expected to assume in order to become legible in a social context" (1). The research is based on quantitative distant reading analyses. Both authors and characters are taken into account and considered. Both groups "have been coded according to a tripartite scheme (feminine / masculine / other or unknown), because that scheme organized most public representation of gender in the period [they] are studying" (1–2). Their conclusion is, on the one hand, that "gender divisions

between characters have become less sharply marked over the 170 years," and on the other hand, that there is a "decline in the proportion of fiction actually written by women, which drops by half (from roughly 50% of titles to roughly 25%) as we move from 1850 to 1950" (1). The development during this period reveals that there are also fewer women and girl characters (1). These conclusions are self-contradictory: "We are confronted with a paradoxical pattern. While gender roles were becoming more flexible, the space actually allotted to (real, and fictional) women on the shelves of libraries was contracting sharply" (1).

Underwood et al. found that women are more likely to write about women: "In books written by men, women occupy on average only quarter to a third of the character space. In books written by women, the division is much closer to equal" (12). Furthermore, women's writing tends to be less gender-specific: "Gender differences seem to be drawn more starkly in stories written by men" (19). The research does not offer a conclusion as to why that is but hypothesizes that it might be because women take up less space in the imaginary worlds of men: "related to the underrepresentation of women in their imaginative worlds" (19). They relate the idea to Katha Pollitt's term "The Smurfette Principle" used for fiction when only one woman is represented within a male-centered movie.[1]

1.5. Are Women Still Underrepresented?

According to the report, "Boxed In: Women On Screen and Behind the Scenes on Broadcast and Streaming Television in 2020–21," from Sand Diego State University's *Center For the Study of Women in Television & Film* (*CFtSoWiT&F),* the percentages for the years 2020–2021 show that females represented as major characters on streaming programs have reached

[1] Underwood et al. name Katha Pollitt's term of the lone woman in male fiction in this context, "The Smurfette Principle" (19). *The Smurfs* are a comic franchise created by Peyo (Pierre Culliford). Smurfs are little, blue humanlike creatures. In the story, all characters are male except for one. She is called Smurfette. Pollitt used The Smurfette Principle to refer to various movies where the lone woman appears in male-centered movies, and was coined first in an article by Pollitt published by *The New York Times Magazine* under the name "Hers; The Smurfette Principle" on 7 April 1991.

52% (Lauzen, "Boxed In" 3). That means that they are no longer underrepresented. On broadcasting networks in the U.S., women have cast a major role in 45% of content (3). The percentage of women working behind the scenes was lower, 33% on streaming programs and 31% on broadcast networks (4).

In comparison to another *CFtSoWiT&F* report, "It's a Man's (Celluloid World, Even in a Pandemic Year: Portrayals of Female Characters in the Top U.S. Films of 2021," female portrayal in films in the U.S. tells a different story. Out of the top 100 grossing films, 31% of films featured female protagonists, 57% male protagonists, and 12% a mix of gendered protagonists (Lauzen, "It's a Man's" 4). Within the film industry in the U. S. there is room for improvement.

Behind the scenes, women are still underrepresented in films, as another article by Lauzen reviews, "The Celluloid Ceiling in a Pandemic Year: Employment of Women on the Top U.S. Films of 2021." In the top 250 grossing films in the U.S. in 2021, women compromised 25% of those working behind the scenes going up two percent from the previous year (2). The roles are female directors, who comprised 17% out of all directors working on the top 250 films that year, writers (17%), editors (22%), cinematographers (6%), producers (32%), and executive producers (26%) (6). That shows how male-centered the film industry in the U.S. still is.

The NPD Group, a global information company, reported in 2020 that 67% of the top 100 literary fiction books in 2019 were written by female authors (Graham).[2] According to *Statista*, 74% of employees in the publishing industry are women and men account for 23% (Watson). However, women were more likely to be employed in marketing, publicity, or

[2] The reasoning for discussing a different year for the publishing industry is due to still limited data insight published for the book publishing industry in 2020 and 2021.

as literary agents, whereas men were more likely employed in executive-level positions (Watson).

Lee & Low Book's *The Diversity Baseline Survey (DBS 2.0)* collects statistics for diversity within the publishing industry in the U.S. Publishing in 2019. The data was collected and analyzed at Boston University by Laura M. Jiménez (Ph.D.) and Betsy Beckert (graduate student). The research found that employees, review staff, and literary agents are majorly white, or 76 percent 74 percent of the employees are white cis women. ("Where Is the Diversity"). The publishing industry has been criticized for severely underrepresenting all racial identities other than white. Cis women and men make up 97% of the industry, leaving just 3 percent for non-binary, transgender, intersex, and other genders ("Where is the Diversity"). White cis women are no longer underrepresented within the book publishing industry. They make up the majority of the industry in North America. Moreover, in the top 100 literary fiction books sold in the U.S. in 2019, female authors were a majority.

1.6. Methodology

This paper uses a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative research with a special focus on combining the two with the text mining website, *Map Your Hero(ine)*. The three different Robs of *High Fidelity* are here used as a case study going through different features of *MYH*. *High Fidelity* is chosen as a case study because the different variations of the story invite a discussion concerning gender performativity. The main focus will be on Hulu's TV series adaptation of *High Fidelity* (2020). This paper will use comparative analysis when discussing the three different Robs of the story. Furthermore, it will use both adaptation theory and feminism to discuss the gender swap and modernization of the case study.

After giving a theoretical framework in this chapter, the paper will discuss gender swap in more detail and introduce the case study. Furthermore, the essay will discuss relevant

published reviews as reader responses. Afterward, the discussion will be led by features on the webpage *MYH*. This will be done by answering the questionnaires on the *MYH* after discussing the theoretical framework and giving an introduction to gender swap. The reviews are used to find reader responses due to the still limited database on *MYH*.

Through the distant reading tool *Voyant*, which is also present on and a part of *the MYH* website, Hulu's script is compared with the novel and the movie through distant reading textual analysis. This will be done with a particular interest in the main character Rob and gender politics, inspired by the article "The Transformation of Gender in English-Language Fiction" (Underwood et. al. 2018). This chapter uses a mixed method of distant reading and closes reading by zooming in on chosen parts of the text when needed or to discuss gender politics further by providing examples from the case study. For example, due to the first-person narrative of the novel, at times a closer look at the text is needed. Furthermore, *Voyant's* algorithm is not designed to extract gender, so sometimes a closer look at the text is ideal in order to see who the speaker is in relation to certain words. However, quantitative collection of data will be a focus in chapter three and is what leads the information gathering there, followed by a closer look at the text.

Chapter 2: High Fidelity, Gender-swap and Map Your Hero/ine Survey

This chapter goes further into the theory and discussions surrounding sex and gender swaps. The case study, Hulu's series adaptation of *High Fidelity*, is introduced. This adaptation is used as a case study because it provides a platform to discuss sex swaps and gender performativity. It places a woman in a traditionally masculine space of the record store owner and the rock critic. A quantitative and qualitative questionnaire on *MYH* provides a compass guiding the discussion in this chapter. The webpage is new, so the case study will also be an experiment using *MYH* and offer a reflection on the experience of filling out the survey. The reader/viewer responses are still sparse. Due to that, this chapter will introduce and discuss opinions in published reviews that have appeared in magazines and newspapers such as *Pitchfork,* and *The Guardian*.

2.1. Gender swap

As discussed in the first chapter, gender swap is popular in modern-day Western society. However, swapping genders in adaptations is nothing new, and just as we see examples of male parts swapped for females, it can also be the other way around or include other genders. Rosewarne points out that the sex swap technique provides reasoning to revisit a story and tell it again from a different angle; "sex-swap provides filmmakers a new reason to revisit a title" (34). This technique retells the story from another point of view and often modernizes the story. An example could be answering to audience's demand to see underrepresented characters on screen. Kravitz is not only female but also mixed race. Rob is not the only character that changes to modernize the story to be more inclusive of underrepresented voices. This adaptation is an example of how stories evolve to stay relevant, relating back to Hutcheon's theory.

Sex swaps have been criticized for only appearing to be modernizing. Studios are not necessarily progressive when producing remakes in order to represent women more fairly. Remakes are a safer economic choice than original material, building on an already known entity of the reboot. It shows how risk-averse Hollywood is and keeps women from having space to create original material:

> Sex-swaps as a tool of modernization have, however, been criticized. Some commentators have argued that instead of being motivated by a yen to portray women more fairly such films are merely a means for studios to appear modern, to appear woke, and to distinguish the remake from originary material. Such arguments posit that far from such presentations being genuinely progressive, instead, they reflect the risk-aversion of Hollywood and are a mere toe-in-the-water of gender equality delivered through the economically safe vehicle of the remake. (Rosewarne 46).

Netflix's video "What's Wrong With Gender-Swapped Movies: Take Two" discusses the issue of remakes potentially setting women up to be compared with men. There seems to be a structural misconception in society that stories have to have a white, male reference point: "We have to get away from this tendency to always view the female in relation to a white, male reference point. And we have to overcome the widespread assumption that people will only care about female stories if they bear a resemblance to an established male narrative." (8:08–8:24). Rosewarne articulates the same issue:

> While it is common in discussion on remakes to reference similar or source films—notably to help contextualize a new title—arguably this yen is particularly pronounced for films with female leads because it's a far rarer occurrence and, thus, any comparison to earlier material almost always means a comparison to *male* content: any sex-swap remake is, therefore, subject to scrutiny as being a *female spin* on a male "original." (41)

Men are the automatic reference point that females are compared to.

In an interview Sarah Kucserka, one of the showrunners for Hulu's *High Fidelity*, told *Backstage* that she and her writing partner, Veronica West, had dreamt about writing an adaptation of the story: "We took a moment and asked [ourselves], if we could do any one project, what would it be? It was literally the first thing that came out of our mouths: 'High Fidelity' with a woman" (Kucserka). In this case, the adaptation is initiated by women who are passionate about sharing a female perspective on an originally male story: "I think there are a lot of women who are constantly finding themselves not quite able to commit to relationships, to careers, to growing up, and realizing it isn't giving up. We really felt like it was such a great story and such a role for a woman and, frankly, especially a woman of color" (Kucserka). Creating a role for women which struggle to commit provides a platform, a model for women to mirror themselves, and a conversation about gender.

2.2. HIGH FIDELITY

In 2020, Hulu released a TV series called *High Fidelity* based on a book by Nick Hornby from 1995. The novel takes place in London and revolves around a record store owner, Rob (short for Robert). The story is a first-person narration and a romantic comedy. Rob is unsuccessful in his romantic relationships and enthusiastic about his profession, music. He likes to make top five lists of songs. Rob decides to go through his top five most memorable heartbreaks list. Driven by the will to know why he is why women reject him, he reaches out to the women on his list to find out why they broke up with him.

A movie adaptation of Hornby's novel came out in 2000, directed by Stephen Frears. The screenplay was written by D. V. DeVincentis, Steve Pink, and John Cusack. The last one mentioned also played the role of the main character, Rob (Robert Gordon). The action moves from London to Chicago. The writers decided to deal with the inner dialogue-inclined

narration in two ways, by breaking the fourth wall and using voice-over. Breaking the fourth wall means addressing the audience directly. In the case of a film, the actor turns to the camera and speaks straight to it. Similar to the novel, the main character is scared of committing to love and uses music as a self-defining tool like the original. *The Hollywood Reporter's* review, published 17 March 2000, pointed out: "the film's commitment-phobic take on issues of love and work and its passionate belief in the centrality of music in forming self-definition" (Baumgarten). In the film, Rob owns a record store, Championship Vinyl. His employees at the store are two male music nerds, Dick (Todd Louiso) and Barry (Jack Black). Music plays a central role in defining Rob's personality, and the same goes for the philosophy of "what really matters is what you like, not what you are like" (De Vincentis et al. 58). His top five most memorable heartbreaks are also central to this variation of the story.

In the streaming platforms series, Rob is female. The nickname stays the same but the name changes to Robyn Brooks. Sarah Kucserka and Veronica West are the creators of the show. Zoë Kravitz stars as the main lead and producer of the Hulu TV series. Furthermore, she is also a scriptwriter along with Solomon Georgio, Josh Koenigsberg, Sarah Kucserka, Veronica West, Leigh Ann Biety, E.T. Feigenbaum, Franklin Hardy, Celeste Hughey, and Eli Wilson Pelton.

The series changes the local again and takes place in New York in the modern-day era of the time when it was released in 2020. It keeps the elements of breaking the fourth wall and using voice-over to get the inner dialogue across to the audience. While the name of the record store stays the same, Championship Vinyl, the employees are adjusted to be more inclusive of underrepresented characters on screen. Dick is called Simon (David H. Holmes) in the series and is gay. He acknowledges his sexual orientation during a relationship with Rob and is one of the subjects of her top five most memorable heartbreak list. They remain

friends. The friendship between the personnel at Championship vinyl in the series is more closely knitted that in the other variations of the story.

Episode 8 centers on Simon, where the audience gets to hear the story told from his perspective, and he shares his top five most memorable heartbreaks. The other employee, formerly Barry but now Cherise, is a gender-swapped character played by an African-American actress Da'Vine Joy Randolph. Furthermore, Rob's list does not only include men. One of those five is a woman, Kat Monroe (Ivanna Sakhno). That might support Underwood et al.'s theory that women write more gender-fluid stories. The creators of the show, Sarah Kucserka, and Veronica West, are women but the writing team also includes male writers.

The main focus of this essay will be on gender swap. However, in terms of modernity, this paper acknowledges that the series answers to audience demands and includes a diverse cast of actors. It relates to how stories interact with the community and its cultural environment. That leads to Bortolotti and Hutcheon's previously mentioned adaptation model, "narrative idea + cultural environment = adaptation" (448). The narrative idea here is *High Fidelity*. The cultural environment asks for more diverse characters. The result is an adaptation with a more diverse cast.

Technology is another aspect that modernizes the story and can be thought of and placed into Bortolotti and Hutcheon's equation. Mentions of Instagram, influencers, and playlists (as opposed to mixtapes) all play a part in modernizing the story and adapting it to reflect western society as it is today. *High Fidelity* + modern technology and societal behavior surrounding that technology = Hulu's *High Fidelity* 2020 TV series.

The show aired on February 14, 2020, and was canceled after the first series. It remains unknown how popular the show was on Hulu because streaming platforms do not publish traditional viewership data (Goldberg). The show got mixed reviews. On the *Rotten Tomatoes* webpage in 2020, it got impressive ratings and scored 86% among critics and 82%

among viewers (Goldberg). Adrian Horton titled her *Guardian* article "High Fidelity review—remake that's too cool for its own good." Horton finds Rob's self-excusing behavior tiring: "Rob's world exhausting, but also compelling […] largely due to a great supporting cast." There she mentions the episode told from Simon's point of view and finds his top five heartbreak list more convincing. It "does more to explain the toxic lure of self-destructive love than Rob's hours of "I'm an asshole" soliloquies" (Horton). The opinion presented in the quote raises the question of whether the world presented in the TV series is adjusted enough for a female's perspective if the only episode that centers on a man is more believable. Perhaps the self-excusing behavior takes away from the assertiveness of the character.

In an article for *Consequence,* "Top Five: An Oral History of High Fidelity," Andrew Buss interviews some important members involved with the *High Fidelity* movie, amongst others. Nick Hornby is one. Hornby reflects on his experience of writing and publishing the novel and that he wanted to write a romance novel written from the point of view of a man:

> My first impulse was to write about a romantic relationship from the guy's point of view. I had read quite a lot of fiction by women, and that was my favorite kind of fiction, but at that time, it occurred to me that there was [not] a book from the guy's perspective about that side of life. And certainly not one that was plain spoken I suppose. (Buss)

It is interesting that a world originally adjusted by the author to represent a male's point of view in a women's fiction genre becomes so compelling that it is no longer representative of females. Why is it that when a man puts himself into a female lineage of writing it becomes original, but when a woman is made to represent that same world, she is compared to a man? Of course, there is a big difference. The novel is not an adaptation. It does not sign up for being compared to something else by using an older narrative to modernize. Whether the intent is to limit risk, find a role model for women to mirror

themselves in, or create a cultural conversation concerning gender, it places the female character against a formerly male version. To come back to the words of Simone De Beauvoir: “He is the Subject; his the Absolute. She is the Other” (43–44).

Jillian Mapes quotes Amanda Hess's 2018 article “The Trouble With Hollywood’s Gender Flips,” in a review on the Hulu series for *Pitchfork.* Hess talks about how women have to live through men’s stories and fix the issues concerning sexism while indulging in feminism at the same time. Not only that, but the movies also have to be of good quality, with good politics and morale:

> These reboots require women to relive men’s stories instead of fashioning their own. And they’re subtly expected to fix these old films, to neutralize their sexism and infuse them with feminism, to rebuild them into good movies with good politics, too. They have to do everything the men did, except backwards and with ideals” (qtd. in Mapes).

To try to fulfill all those requirements is a lot to ask. It puts women inside a man’s world and trying to mend it by making it morally more accepting for modern-day society by getting rid of the toxic masculinity and sexism.

The male Rob in the book and the movie grows up believing in fairytales. The movie itself is a deconstruction of the happily-ever-after perfect relationship dream. Both male characters realize that the expected or fantasy dream of being in a relationship does not exist. This message disappears in the Hulu series, but the character slowly grows and matures throughout the series: “While Rob’s journey in previous versions offered only slight personal progress […], Kravitz’s Rob shows the real-life challenges and vulnerabilities of self-improvement. By the last episode, she’s taken the first steps toward treating the people in her life better, and makes a decision that plants her firmly pointed forward” (Mapes). While the plot in the book and the movie ends where he gets the girl (although the marriage proposal

fails), Robyn ends up alone. However, she has her friends and is trying to mend her relationship with others. The Roberts are still as friendless or ungrateful for their friends. Robyn's journey depicts another kind of love, friendship, and the power of self-improvement. "The "female" twist on *High Fidelity*? Growth and maturity" (Mapes). Personal growth is also arguably what makes the *High Fidelity* series interesting, despite the negative criticism. It adapts the character and allows Rob to evolve and become more mature.

Mapes still concludes that the TV series variation of the story cannot escape the toxic masculinity or negate it. She is spot on when she describes the essence and charm of both the novel and the movie is the character letting the audience in on his deepest secrets: "Part of what made Nick Hornby's 1995 novel such a hit, leading to a 2000 movie adaptation, was its uncensored view into the psyche of stunted, self-pitying, supposedly sensitive straight men who obsess over *stuff*" (Mapes). Robyn has as well many monologues where her characters directly address the audience. However, does she reveal any uncomfortable secrets, or as Mapes puts it "uncensored view into the psyche." Robyn does share her thoughts, most commonly breaking the fourth wall. However, the audience does not get to know about the affair before she admits it to her ex Mac (Kingsley Ben-Adir), on whom she cheated. Robyn does not share her deepest, darkest secret with the audience until it is no longer a secret.

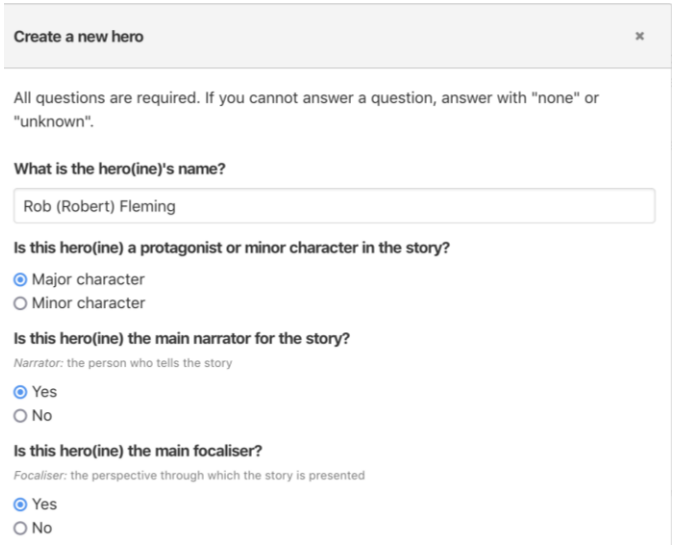
2.3. Map Your Heroine Survey

Characters can be considered role models and can arguably shape and reflect our reality in a conversation with society: "Literary characters, or adaptations, provide important role models for readers or viewers, shaping their view of society and themselves, and by extension shaping their lives" (Supheert). Gender swap potentially has the means to represent models that more commonly have been reserved for the opposite sex. For example, in Rob's case,

showing a female within the music business shows other women that they can potentially belong there.

One way to measure the reader/viewer's response to a character is by gathering qualitative information. *Map Your Heroine* does this through a survey that asks participants to reflect on identification, appearance, gender identity, profession, agency, and personality. The questionnaire asks the reader for opinions or experiences of the character they choose. That is referred to here as Questionnaire B. *MYH* asks participants to register new works and characters into the system by answering demographic questions. That is only done once for each story and each character. These questionnaires are referred to as Questionnaire A1 for the works and Questionnaire A2 for characters. The website is still in the developmental process, but *High Fidelity* is used here as a case study to reflect on the website. Here the text will focus on aspects related to the gender swap.

2.3.1. Questionnaire A

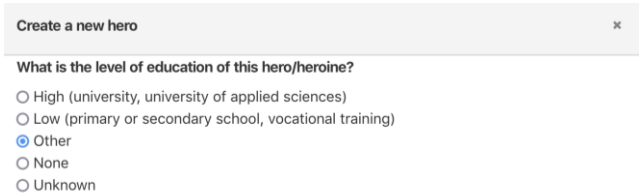


Picture 2.1. Shows the start of Questionnaire A2

The quantitative questionnaire, or Questionnaire A, is split into two. In Questionnaire A1, the participant answers questions concerning a particular work, describing its medium, title,

author, publication year and place, and where most of the action takes place. In case of an adaptation, the participant has to register the source work. That is only done once for each story. Questionnaire A2 focuses on the hero/ine. If someone has already chosen the same character, this part of the process becomes irrelevant, and the participant can straight away choose to answer Questionnaire B. All the pictures are screenshots of the *MYH* webpage. This research has chosen to focus on the main character of *High Fidelity* and use Rob as the hero/ine of choice to map out. As formerly mentioned, Rob as a nickname sticks in all three different versions, but the full name differs, Robert Fleming (novel), Robert Gordon (film), and Robyn Brooks (series). Participants can record multiple characters from each work, and they can either be major or minor characters. The results are presented on *MYH* under a tab called Results. The answers substitute a database for further research. The researcher found most questions in this part clear and understandable, and the information valuable and concise. Below are a few suggestions on what could potentially be adjusted.

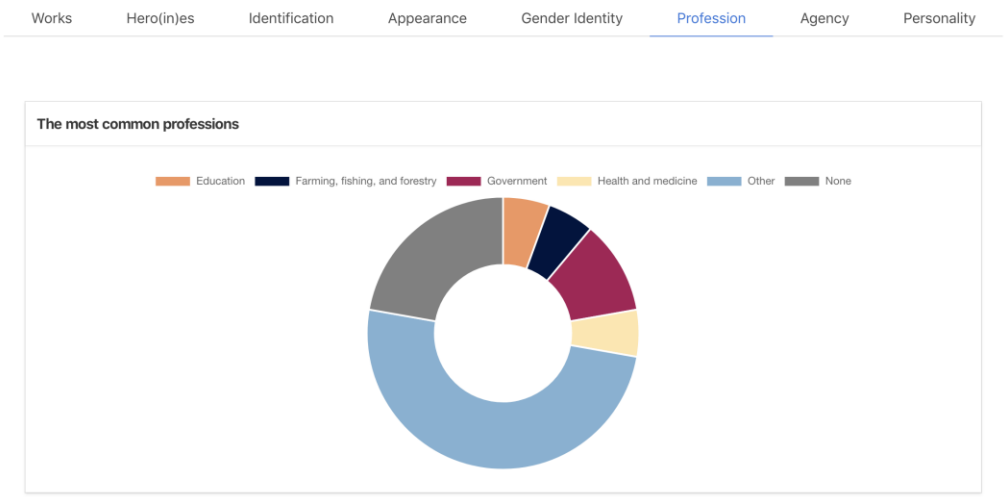
The questions concerning education could give participants more options. For example, Rob is a college dropout. It could potentially be an interesting study to see how often fictional characters are college dropouts. Would that change with a sex-swap remake? In this case, not. All three Robs are college dropouts.



Picture 2.2. Shows a question regarding education.

The survey could include more options for professions or perhaps rephrase the question itself (see Picture 2.4.). Almost half of the answers go into the category of "Other" as Picture 2.3. below shows. The picture represents a pie chart of how participants have filled out the question regarding professions and appears in the "Results" database on *MYH*.

Perhaps the question could be adjusted by referring to the options as *industries*. The word industry is more descriptive of the choices. Comparing the list to other surveys online, one is

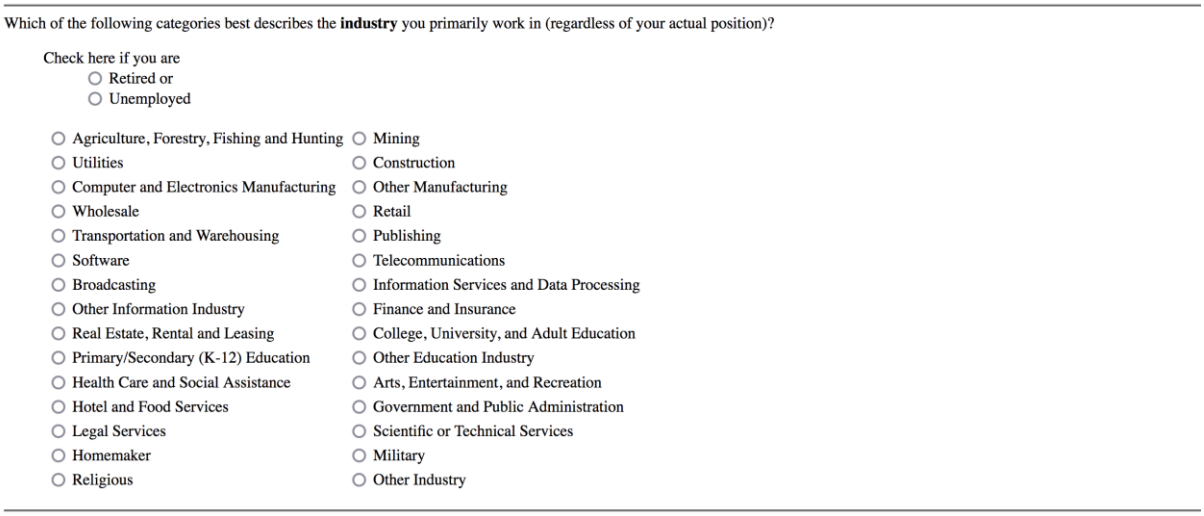


Picture 2.3. Shows Results for the most common professions

Picture 2.4. Questions regarding the profession or main occupation of the hero/ine.

picked at random and presented here, titled “General Demographics Questionnaire,” designed by the GVU’s WWW Survey Team at the GVU Center, College of Computing at Georgia

Institute of Technology. The survey is outdated and the latest update was in 1998, but it is


Which of the following categories best describes the **industry** you primarily work in (regardless of your actual position)?

Check here if you are
- ○ Retired or
- ○ Unemployed

○ Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	○ Mining
○ Utilities	○ Construction
○ Computer and Electronics Manufacturing	○ Other Manufacturing
○ Wholesale	○ Retail
○ Transportation and Warehousing	○ Publishing
○ Software	○ Telecommunications
○ Broadcasting	○ Information Services and Data Processing
○ Other Information Industry	○ Finance and Insurance
○ Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	○ College, University, and Adult Education
○ Primary/Secondary (K-12) Education	○ Other Education Industry
○ Health Care and Social Assistance	○ Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
○ Hotel and Food Services	○ Government and Public Administration
○ Legal Services	○ Scientific or Technical Services
○ Homemaker	○ Military
○ Religious	○ Other Industry

Picture 2.5. ("General Demographics Questionnaire")

still a good example, mainly in how the question is phrased by referring to the choices as industries. The writer of this particular thesis was confused about which category to choose. Rob is a business owner, so "Business, management, and administration," might be a choice, but essentially he is a "Salesman" that sells "Arts, culture, and entertainment." Thinking of the choices as industries and which industry Rob serves, the last recited category, "Arts, culture, and entertainment," would be ideal. This way of thinking is the reasoning behind the suggestion to add the word industry to the question itself. The categories of the *MYH* are good, but perhaps adding a few choices could be helpful. Keeping the list concise on *MYH*, as it is, limiting the options is good and might be advisable. For example, *MYH* offers "Arts, culture and entertainment" as a choice. That is more inclusive than the option "Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation," as it is in the GVU survey. Culture is not only something to enjoy, but it also conserves valuable information connected to society. The survey could add homemakers to the list. The choice could potentially be interesting for research on gender, although it is not of interest here.

2.3.2. QUESTIONNAIRE B

The researcher found most questions in this part clear and understandable, and the information valuable and concise. Questionnaire B the participants to answer questions on a scale from one to seven. One signifies that the participant strongly disagrees and at the other end of the scale, seven, means that s/he or them strongly agrees. The questions are taken directly from the survey and quoted from there verbatim. There are 31 questions in the survey. Some questions are only mentioned, but this paper does not reflect on them. The reason is that the questions were not of interest to the case study and gender swap.

Questionnaire B starts asking three questions on identity. The first two ask the participant how well they identify with their hero/ine. The third question asks if the participant wishes to be more like their hero:

1. You identify with your hero(ine) because you find common qualities between your personality and that of the character.
2. You identify with your hero(ine) because you are able to explore intriguing experiences and moral boundaries through the character.
3. You wish to be more like your hero(ine).

The researcher finds the questions clear, concise, and understandable. Looking at reader/viewer responses in published reviews, some critics found it difficult to relate to Hulu's Rob, not because of the heroine herself but because they felt that Zoë Kravitz was miscast for the role (Kang, Horton). For example, Adrian Horton found her unrelatable in the role; "as a relatable everywoman whose self-pity is supposed to anchor a five-hour show," and "a difficult protagonist to have sympathy for" (Horton). Zoë Kravitz is the daughter of rockstar singer Lenny Kravitz and actress Lisa Bonet. Horton relates the actress's personal life, which affects the critics' view of her as a performer.

Not many spoke about wishing to be more like Robyn, referring to the third question in the quote above. However there is an example of someone imagining that others would want to be more like her. Inkoo Kang writing for *The Hollywood Reporter* sees Robyn as a compassionate person. Despite finding Zoë Kravitz a miscast for the role and unbelievable Kang sees positive aspects in: "*High Fidelity* keeps telling me that she's a screw-up, but most people would die to have her problems — and her judgement, and compassion and overall groundedness." Despite being lost romantically she owns a record shop and an apartment in New York. She lives a life many would want to have. Beyond wanting the life she has including her problems, Kang suggests furthermore that more people could find her positive aspects admiring and wanting to be more like her in terms of judgement, compassion and groundedness.

The next category in Questionnaire B focuses on appearance. Question number four is a yes or no question, and if the participant answers yes, questions five to nine appear:

4. Do you have information about the appearance of your hero(ine)?
5. You consider your hero(ine) beautiful.
6. You wish you looked like your hero(ine).
7. The appearance of your hero(ine) influences your feelings towards them.
8. Your hero(ine)'s appearance impacts their experience in the story.
9. The hero(ine) is aware of the effect of their appearance.

When dealing with a televised or filmed version of a story, an actor represents the hero/ine. Similar to question three above, where the critic Horton found Zoë Kravitz unbelievable due to her personal life and inheritance, the actor's physical appearance affects the character. That is of concern, at least in questions number five to seven. Some critics felt that Zoë was too glamorous for the role:

> *High Fidelity* […] asks us to disbelieve our eyes by positing Kravitz — who is very much styled here as "Zoë Kravitz, impossibly glamorous daughter of a rock star" — as a relatable everywoman, […]. If anyone can be too gorgeous and effortlessly cool for a role, it's Kravitz here. (Kang)

Kang again connects Zoë's personal life to her performance in the series and finds it unbelievable that someone like her could be an "everyday woman." In this example, it might be beneficial for the survey to differentiate between the character and the actor for relevant mediums. Perhaps, this could be accomplished by adding a sub-question after questions five to seven and asking whether an actor is influencing the viewer's experience of the character. An alternative suggestion would be asking a yes or no question about whether the medium includes an actor. If the participant answers yes, a question would appear below the questions and, for example, ask; how much does the actor influence your answers for questions five to seven?

The report found the gender identity questions to be clear and concise. They relate well to this case study with its focuses on gender. They ask whether gender defines the character's personality, if the hero/ine embraces the identity, and if they attempt or struggle to fulfill social expectations regarding gender:

10. You're hero(ine)'s gender identity defines their personality.
11. Your hero(ine) embraces their gender identity.
12. Your hero(ine) attempts to fulfill social expectations derived from their gender.
13. Your hero(ine) struggles to fulfill social expectations regarding their gender.

The main character's music fandom in both the movie and the novel is colored by masculine traits: "There is a specific strain of toxic masculinity that lurks underneath the surface of and is core to the music fandom in *High Fidelity*. It's the kind where men who struggle with conveying their feelings turn to their record collections as emotional support blankets"

(Mapes). She sees the character as being defined by his gender and relates well to question ten. The gender identity defines both male versions of Rob.

The extreme righteousness and opinionated music fanatic side are tuned down in the series, and a different side showed. For example, in episode five, Rob visits a woman called Noreen Parker (Parker Posey). Noreen wants to sell a record collection for 20$ owned by her cheating, soon-to-be-divorced husband, Tim Parker (Jeffrey Nordling). Rob is reluctant to buy the records. Up till here, the story progresses in a similar way to the novel. However, the show adds an angle where Rob decides to find Tim and judge for herself if he is worthy of the collection. She goes with a man she met on a date in the first episode, Clyde (Jake Lacy).

While talking to Tim, he ignores and talks over Robyn. That reflects a societal behavioral pattern that women frequently suffer from and is demeaning. The gesture is a power play, shows a lack of respect for women, and belittles Robyn's input. Her authority is questioned even though she is here in the role of an expert in a conversation about popular music. After Robyn finally gets space to elaborate and correct a factual error in Tim's monologue, he turns to Clyde and says: "Got yourself quite a little firecracker there, don'tcha, pal?... Listen, a word of advice, it's all cute now, but it gets old. Fast. Trust me." (Ep. 5, 19:20–31). That is another example of a power play. Instead of Tim admitting he is wrong, he belittles Robyn again, now by minimizing her input and calling it cute, making it sound as if it is irrelevant. Tim's dominant personality is emphasized by his girlfriend, who does not utter a word during the conversation. She responds only through body language and gestures. The other man Clyde is the only one worthy of Tim's attention. It creates a hierarchy placing men above women.

There is more gender fluidity in the female Rob. While the book focuses on establishing a male-oriented romantic comedy figure that shares deep secrets and lets the reader into their mind, the show is more diverse. Robyn defies gendered norms, and this modernizes the story.

One of her exes is female, although she mainly dates men. Her go-to drink is whiskey, defying female gender norms and portraying a rough rock-n-roll style: “ Still drinking whiskey neat like a tough guy?” (Ep. 4, 8:32–8:33). Her brother sometimes calls her Roberto (Ep. 7 and 8), and at one point even compares her to a boy: “Oh, you're an adult? 'Cos you dress like a little boy” (Ep. 7, 23:06–7). Belittling her when she tries to act mature and suggesting that she does not live up to society's expectation of gender performativity. At least concerning her dress code. In that particular situation, Robyn is mothering him, telling him to go home because he is too fucked up from alcohol and drugs. Which makes her a responsible person, an adult, and someone who cares. She is neither self-obsessed nor naïve in this instance. She is acting as a caregiver, a quality commonly associated with a feminine representation of gender performativity.

The discussions in the previous paragraph are a good introduction to the questions concerning agency. The questions are clear and concise. This research has no comments on how to make them better. They are both good and relevant as they are. Here questions 17 and 18 will be chosen out of the five questions below for further discussion:

14. Your hero is responsible for the challenges they face.
15. Your hero(ine) acts independently in facing challenges and problems.
16. Your hero(ine) is hindered by external factors in exerting their will.
17. Your hero(ine) considers the best interest of those around them.
18. Your hero(ine) changes, develops, or learns throughout their challenges.

In connection to question eighteen, as previously mentioned, the female take on *High Fidelity* is about maturity and growth: “The “female” twist on *High Fidelity*? Growth and maturity” (Mapes). While Robyn self-reflects, both male versions of Robert learn to consider others in terms of music taste. As opposed to teaching them what music one should listen to. The novel Rob realizes that it is possible to create a mixtape for someone else based on their

music taste, when his girlfriend, Laura is happy when she hears music that she enjoys: “Laura hears the opening bars she spins round and grins and makes several thumbs-up signs, and I start to compile in my head a compilation tape for her, something that's full of stuff she's heard of, and full of stuff she'd play. Tonight, for the first time ever, I can sort of see how it's done” (Hornby 443). He takes a step, a small step, towards considering others. The movie Rob likewise plans to make a mixtape for Laura (Iben Hjejle): “I’ve started to make a tape, in my head, for Laura. Full of stuff she’d like. Full of stuff that’d make her happy” (1:46:37–1:46:46). This scene is not a part of the script. To counter this example, in the TV series Robyn gives her friend Cherise a guitar. Cherise has been juggling two jobs and dreams of being a singer-songwriter. Robyn takes a step towards considering and supporting Cherise's dreams by giving her the instrument she needs and wants. It is not only a step towards considering others, but more importantly, supporting others.

The next theme is a profession. Here the first question, number nineteen, is again a yes or no question. If the participant hero/ine has a profession, the answer is yes, and they can answer the questions that follow:

19. Does your hero(ine) have a profession?
20. The profession of your hero(ine) reveals aspects relevant to their personality.
21. The profession of your hero(ine) reveals reflect their social status.
22. The profession of your hero(ine) enables their character to grow.
23. The profession of your hero(ine) defines their life inn a significant way.

All questions are relevant here, and Rob’s profession is essential to his character. As formerly mentioned, both the commitment-phobic attitude and music are central to film Rob's character; “the film’s commitment-phobic take on issues of love and work and its passionate belief in the centrality of music in forming self-definition” (Baumgarten). Question twenty-two is inviting to discuss further terms of Rob and how gender is portrayed differently in the

sex-swapped version. In Robyn's case, not much happens growth-wise in her profession. Both in the novel and the movie, Rob decides to release an album for two musicians that come to the store and try to steal albums. The female Robyn only borrows albums. Creating a label is a step towards something new and could allow the character to grow. Laura, Rob's girlfriend in the novel and the movie, also encourages him to move forward. In Robyn's case, there is no one who encourages her to strife for more in terms of her career. It also symbolically shows how the male Robs is a part of supporting original creation. Robyn acts as a middle man borrowing things to help musicians and offering artists space to sell their art in her store. However, she is not a part of the creation process and takes no credit either.

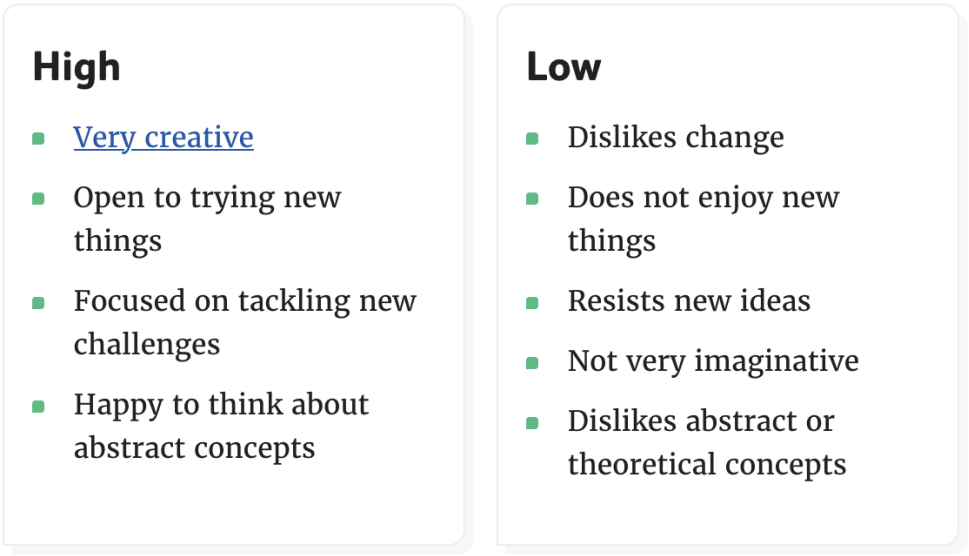
Questionnaire B includes a series of questions regarding personality traits:

24. Your hero(ine) is assertive.
25. Your hero(ine) is independent.
26. Your hero(ine) is vain.
27. Your hero(ine) is confident.
28. Your hero(ine) is well rounded.
29. Your hero(ine) is honest.
30. Your hero(ine) is loyal.
31. Your hero(ine) is cooperative.

In Rob's formerly mentioned music fanatic, opinionated stance on music and pop culture, the two male versions of Rob are assertive. In Hulu's version, Robyn realizes that there might be other opinions, and she acknowledges them. For example, in the first episode, when she meets Clyde for the first time, they discuss Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours*. She acknowledges that her opinions can differ from others, including that for her it is more about the story around the band: "To me, this band's more about the drama. You know what I mean?" (Ep. 1,

7:30–7:35). Realizing that opinions can differ shows both more maturity, empathy and inclusiveness in comparison to her both male counterparts.

Although the personality traits are relevant and well-chosen, this essay offers an alternative suggestion. Many theories in psychology work with a model of five dimensions of personality, called the "Big 5" (Cherry). The traits are openness, conscientiousness, extraversion (or extroversion), agreeableness, and neuroticism. Kendra Cherry, writing for the website *Very Well Mind,* names relevant researchers to the "Big 5" personalities, D. W. Fiske (1949), Norman (1967), Smith (1967), Goldberg (1981), and McCrae & Costa (1987). The traits of openness are eagerness to learn something new and high in people who tend to be creative (Cherry). Common traits for openness are shown in the Picture 2.6. below:



Picture 2.6. (Cherry)

The other primary personality traits also have high and low qualities and a range between the two extremes (Cherry). It would be possible for *MYH* to include this by placing the defining traits on each end of a spectrum, on the one to seven scales in the survey. Or as it is now and only includes the "high" quality within the survey, e. g. your hero is creative. The survey might, for example, offer four choices for each of the "Big 5" personality types.

The *MYH* survey seems to incorporate some chosen secondary personalities, mainly positive traits. With the exception of vain, which is considered a negative trait. Cherry's article also mentions some of the same secondary personality traits as *MYH*. This also works well. If that is the case, this paper suggests adding to the choices or giving a negative trait at the opposite end of the spectrum. It might help further research and makes the choices and results more precise.

Finally, the survey asks the participants three demographic questions concerning gender identity, age group, and nationality. It could be helpful to include more questions since the survey is based on qualitative reader/viewer responses. Asking more questions could help in discussions about societal reflections of adaptations. For example, whether the reader/viewer is a student or a general reader, race, and perhaps occupation as well. Furthermore, it might be helpful to add what the numbers refer to on the Results page. For example, the numbers in the graphs refer to how agreeable they found the statement. That is done in the survey but not mentioned in the results. It might help those who have not filled out Questionnaire B and do not know what the numbers refer to beneath the graphs. The survey questions have given valuable guidance in the process of discussing the gender swap in *High Fidelity*. The order of topics within Questionnaire B also flows well. Most questions are clear and concise, but there are several suggestions on what could potentially be adjusted.

Chapter 3: *Voyant*

This chapter offers a distant reading analysis of *the High Fidelity* series (2020), with some comparative analysis of the former adaptation and the source work. *MYH* links to another webpage, *Voyant*, which is an online tool that offers an environment to work on textual analyses: “It is a scholarly project that is designed to facilitate reading and interpretive practices for digital humanities students and scholars as well as for the general public” (“About” *Voyant Tools Help*). This tool was used to distant read chosen elements within the three different *High Fidelity* texts.

It was hard to come by a screenplay for the TV series, and transcription will have to suffice. In part, the transcription was available online, but two episodes were missing, which were transcribed especially for this research. Names were missing and were added manually. That unfortunate circumstance draws attention to the particular features of the screenplay and opens up a conversation about subtitles. The connection between the picture, sound, and text assumes that the viewer can recognize who is speaking at relevant times through image and sound, or only picture. The text reads in context with what is happening on the screen visually (and audibly). The screenplay and the novel have to carry this information through the written text.

On top of comparing the source work and the two adaptations, this chapter will also offer a short discussion on gender dynamics between episodes in the series. One episode centers on another character, Simon, and he shares his “Top Five Most Memorable Heartbreaks” list. He also addresses the camera breaking the fourth wall just like Rob does, taking straight to the audience. Simon is gay, and his character is adjusted to give more space to the underrepresented voices in Hulu´s remake of *High Fidelity*.

3.1. UNDERWOOD

Ted Underwood et al.'s article "Transformation of Gender in English-Language Fiction," does not include first-person narratives because "there are no signs of gender attached to the pronoun 'I'" (2). *High Fidelity* is a first-person narrative, and both the movie and the series express this by breaking the fourth wall allowing Robert and Robyn to address viewers and share their inner dialogue. However, that is not a big issue since this is a case study and not a study of a corpus of different works, it allows for some manual labor. Although there are several first-person speakers, there are only three texts up for discussion and when necessary, information is gathered manually. For example, if there is a particular word up for discussion, by manually checking which characters use the word, there is no longer an issue. The software is helpful since it makes it easy to look up all instances of when a particular word is used within the text. That is relatively simple when there are only three different texts up for discussion. If it were a hundred or more, this would be very time-consuming.

The algorithm is not the same as used in Underwood, Bamman, and Lee's article and is not designed to extract gender. They use a software called BookNLP. This research uses *Voyant Tools* because it links to the webpage *MYH.* The decision plays a part in using the webpage and reflecting on the user experience in this essay. Here, the study focuses on recurring words and a comparative distant reading analysis to see how the works differ and is in part inspired by Underwood's article. This research differs significantly because this is a case study, and due to another software and algorithm. As mentioned earlier, *Voyant* does not extract gender. This experiment does not use Underwood et al.'s framework but is inspired by it. Namely by focusing on gender and looking for words that might in any way be significant to gender.

When possible, the study also tries to connect to themes discussed in chapter two, but it is in no way consistent. The inspiration comes mainly from the idea of using what

Underwood et al. refer to as a "bag-of-words representation" (14). Those are words that are significant to the characters in some way. They "represent[s] each character by the adjectives that modify them, the words they govern, and so on" (14). Keeping that in mind, certain words have been picked out by looking at the frequency of usage within the text. Another reason for picking out a word is if it is considered to be of interest when comparing the three different Robs, and when looking at the differences between genders. That is done by placing the three texts into *Voyant* and looking at which words are most commonly used. Furthermore, the research will look for words relevant to Rob's profession. The record store business is male-centered and therefore of interest here to see if there is a difference between how often those words appear between the three variations of the story.

In the article, Underwood et al. search for words that show a clear differentiation between the genders early in the period from 1800 but over time become less gendered. They give an example of the word "felt" (23). In "Metamorphoses of Gender," a chapter in *Distant Horizons* (2019), Underwood works with the same research but adds to it, e. g. a discussion about gender and genre. He found that in Westerns, characters were more clearly gendered, as would be expected for books written for men, while romances inhabit less gendered characters or average for books by female authors (18). It speaks directly to *High Fidelity*. Hornby's romance offers a male point of view so strongly that many critics felt that the Hulu series adaption could not get away from it and adjust the world to a female or gender-fluid point of view, as discussed in the preceding chapter.

3.2. Analyses

The texts of *High Fidelity*, the novel, the film score, and the series transcription, were inserted into the text analysis software *Voyant.* One function in the software is called *word clouds.* It provides a visual representation of the most common words within the chosen text

or texts. The size of the words refers to the frequency. The larger a word is represented means that it is used more often in the text. In pictures 2.1.–2.3., each work was inserted into *Voyant* separately. It is also possible to add multiple texts into *Voyant* at the same time and compare them.

Picture 3.1. Voyant word cloud for the series 2020.

In the script and transcript, names identify who is speaking, but the first-person nature of the novel changes that dynamic considerably. Rob's name appears in big letters in the screenplay and transcription, while the word cloud representing the novel has the narrator's identity split between different versions of the first pronoun; I'm, I've, etc. That is due to the first-person narrative in the novel. The movie and the series adapt this in two ways, as

Picture 3.2. Voyant cloud – the novel 1995.

formerly mentioned, by breaking the fourth wall and using voice-over. The reason why the names appear so often in the movie and TV series word clouds (Pictures 2.1. and 2.3.) is

because the script and the transcription have to specify who is speaking within the text each time.

Picture 3.3. Voyant word cloud – the movie 2020.

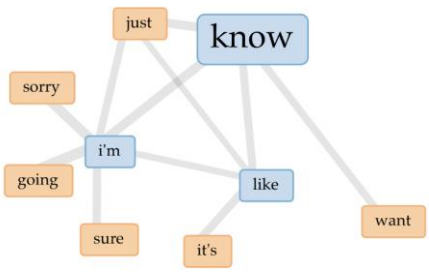
The character's nickname does not change with the sex swap, but the name does change slightly, Robert–Robyn. However, in all three works, the character mainly goes by Rob. The gender fluidity of the Hulu TV series comes through the name itself. Cam sometimes refers to Rob as Roberto. Cam is Rob's brother in the series and has a gender-swapped creative flair on Rob and Laura's friend Liz (Joan Cusack).

Picture 3.4. Voyant all three works.

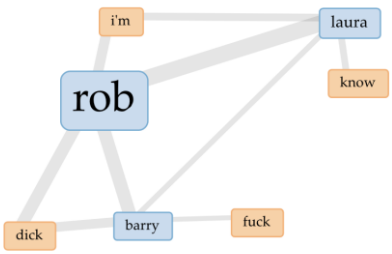
In Picture 3.4. is a word cloud including all three versions of *High Fidelity*. When comparing all three texts, the most frequent words are; *Rob, know, I'm, just,* and *like.* The verb *to like* comes in second place in the screenplay and third in the other two works. The

word *like* is often used as a conjunction or an adverb and therefore can be interpreted differently. There are a lot of words connected to spoken languages, such as just and really, and could be thought to relate to the pop culture influences and the everyday vibe of the story. Looking at the most common words is helpful in looking for interesting words within and between the text. It gives clues concerning which words could be relevant to study. The word like, also resonates with a perspective on people in *High Fidelity:* "A while back, when Dick and Barry and I agreed that what really matters is what you like, not what you are like" (Hornby 166). This before-mentioned quote is from the novel and thought by Rob. It is also used in the TV series here spoken by Simon: "The things that you like are as important—no, no, no, more important that what you are like" (Ep.1, 15:57–16:04). Robyn enthusiastically agrees with him. If this is the philosophy of how one should behave, it does not matter how you treat others. It is more important to be assertive in your opinions. What you like defines and makes up your personality, reflecting how you are. While Robyn learns throughout the show that it does matter what you are like, the male versions of Rob only learn how to accept that others might have different opinions on what they like. By the end of the series, Robyn tries to mend her relationships, talking to Clyde and giving Cherise a guitar to support her dreams. The male Robs understand how to make a mix-tape for Laura with music that she likes. There is a big difference that supports the aforementioned statement: "The "female" twist on *High Fidelity*? Growth and maturity" (Mapes).

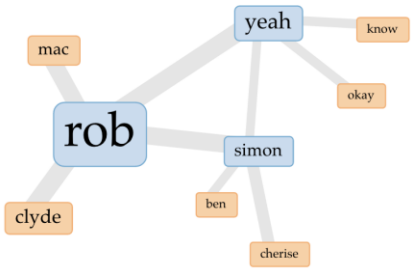
Picture 3.5. The novel Rob:



Picture 3.6. The movie Rob:

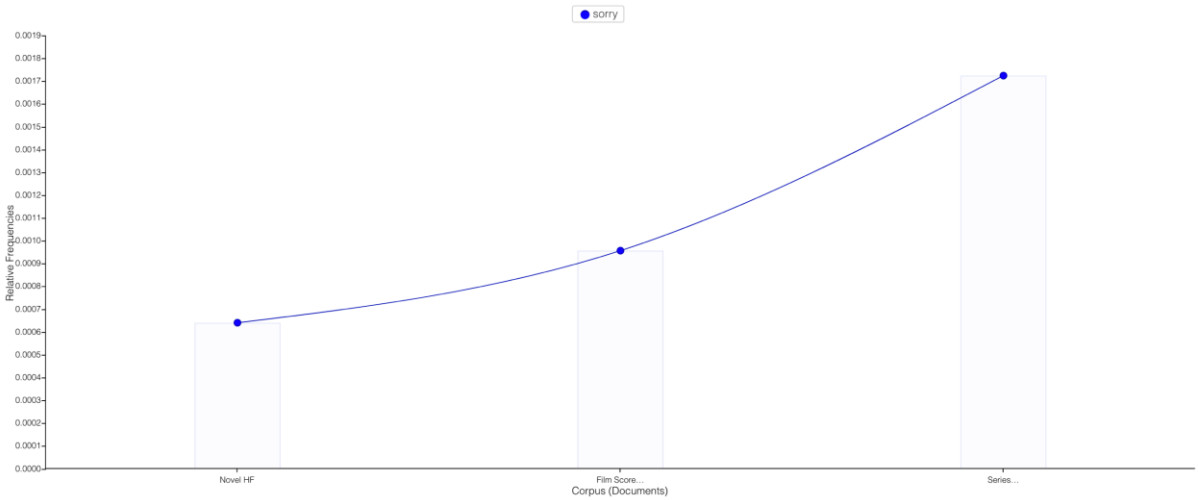


Picture 3.7. The series Rob:



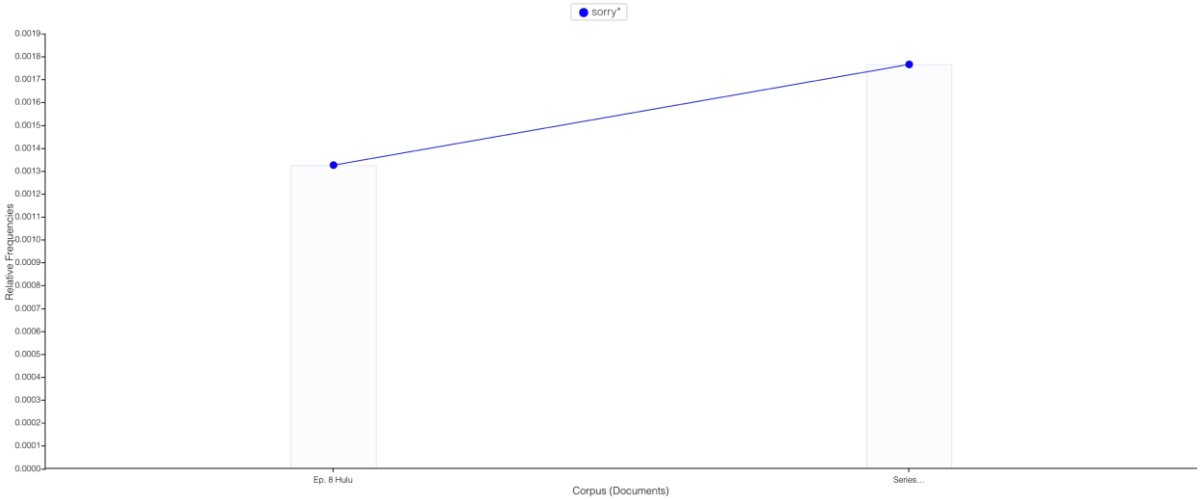
Another feature in *Voyant* links. They allow the user to choose a particular word and see how it links to other words in the text. It is also possible to check more than one word at a time. Picture 3.5. shows the first person pronoun and its relations to the verb to *know*. The other works include the same verb but in Picture 3.5. we do not see other characters. Instead of other hero(ine)'s we see verbs; going, want, and the word sorry. That is an example of a way to find something worth looking at closer. The last word, sorry, appears 70 times (0.172% of the total word count) in the TV series, 37 times (0.047%) in the novel, and 25 (0.0956%) times in the film script. This can be viewed in Picture 3.8., it uses a feature within *Voyant* called Trends. It shows the relation between the texts in the graph. The feature can also compare different words within the texts.

Rob says sorry 14 times in the movie (0.026 comparing it to the total amount of how often sorry appears in the script, uttered by any character). In the TV series, Rob says sorry 46 times (0.11352 out of all instances in the series). The word appears 31 times in the novel (0.079 out of all times sorry appears in the novel). The female Rob says sorry most often.



Picture 3.8. Voyant, the picture compares the three works.

When comparing episode 8, where Simon tells the story from his perspective and shares his "Top Five Most Memorable Heartbreaks," sorry is used less frequently compared to other episodes in the series. Psychological research from 2010, "Why Women Apologize



Picture 3.9. Voyant, the picture compares the three works.

More Than Men: Gender Differences in Thresholds for Perceiving Offensive Behavior," found that women apologize more frequently than men. The study was conducted for the University of Waterloo by Karina Schumann and Michael Ross. According to the research, the reason why women apologize more often is due to women having lower

thresholds for what they consider to be offensive; "men apologize less frequently than women do because they have higher thresholds for what constitutes offensive behavior" (1653).

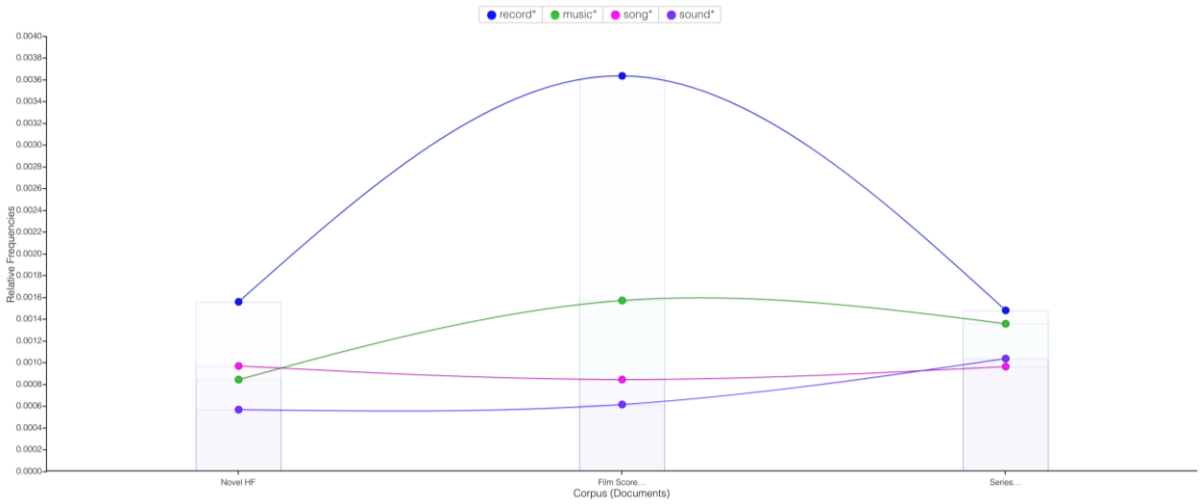
Schumann and Ross conducted two studies for this research. In the first one, participants filled out an online questionnaire for twelve nights in a row. The results showed that women apologized more often but also reported more offenses. Both males and females "apologized for an equal proportion of their offenses" (1651). That led to studying number two, where participants were asked to imagine three different conflicts with a friend. Women experienced their own offenses as more severe compared to men "women perceived [the offences] and their own recalled offenses as more severe than men did, and perceived severity predicted judgments of apology deservedness" (1653). The bottom line here is that women apologize more often because they have a lower threshold toward what they consider to be offensive.

Sociologist, confidence-builder, and author, Maja Jovanovic, discusses women's apologetic behavior in a TEDx talk, "How Apologies Kill Our Confidence," (2019). She points out a communicative pattern that she claims describes women and says: "Apologies have become our habitual way of communicating, and it's killing our confidence" (6:44–51). She suggests that women stop minimizing themselves and take up more space by rethinking their use of language, in particular, to stop apologizing so much. Jovanovic blames a concept called feminine modesty: "[the t]endency for women to underrepresent accomplishments" (13:25). Through these ideas, we can see the concept of Butler's gender performativity, women behave in a certain way that is considered feminine and at the same time uphold those traditions by performing them.

Gender dynamics between the words *woman* and *man* in the series are worth a second look mainly because *man* is used as a catchphrase. One example is when Robyn is speaking

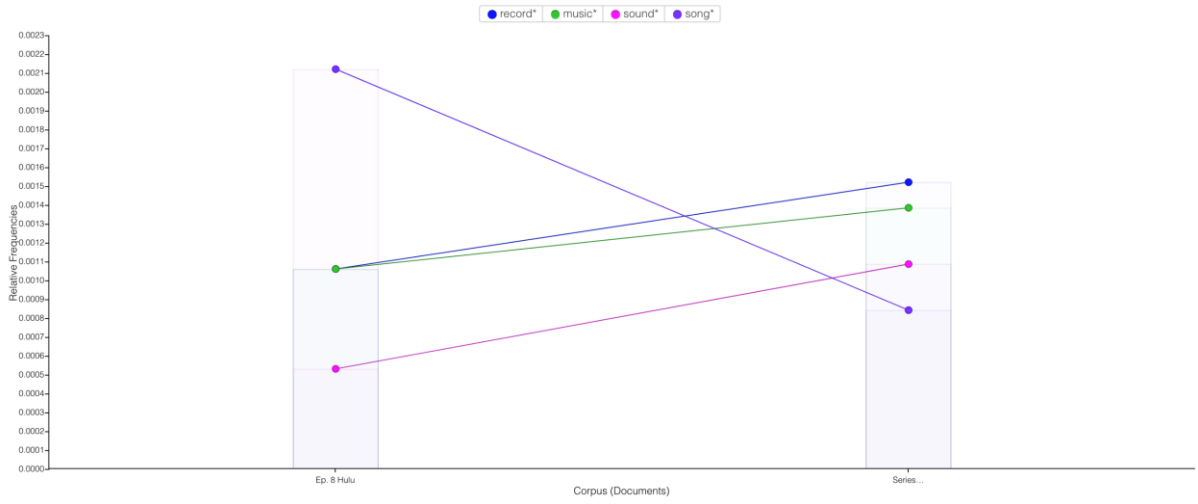
to Cherise: “Yo, Cherise! Come on, man!” (Ep. 2, 16:47–16:49). In the series, man is used 162 times while woman appears 34 times. A considerable amount is due to the transcription calling unnamed characters men or women to indicate who is speaking, 20 instances for females and 33 for males. They might have gone by a different name in the original script for the series. The use of the word man for both women and men is reflective of language use today. But it also suggests and supports the findings of Underwood et al. that female authors are less gender-specific. Using the word man to refer to anyone makes the word less gendered. It takes the gendered connotations away and makes it represent all genders. The words woman and man both include man, but the prefix wo- is what creates the differences between the two. Thinking back to Simone De Beauvoir’s theory on women as the second sex, this already shows this habitual thinking within the English language. The man is the default, and woman is differentiated in relation to man, to go back to De Beauvoir’s quote: “She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her” (43–44).

Rob’s hobby and profession are music, in all three variations of the story. As critics have pointed out, the rock critic and the record store business are historically masculine spaces: “Rob’s race and gender is of special significance because music culture has historically been so dominated by white male perspectives” (Chaney). The quote invites a closer look into how the musical world is represented between the three mediums. The researcher thought of words related to music, and more specifically describing a record store and a pop music enthusiast. After looking up which words appeared in the texts, the words that most frequently appeared were chosen. Picture 3.10. below, shows the words *record*, *music*, *song*, and *sound* and how often they appear in each work. As the graph shows, there is more emphasis on *records* in the film score.



Picture 3.10. Voyant, the picture compares the three works.

Music appears more often in the series and the film than in the novel. The word *song* appears to be quite similarly spread throughout the mediums, the novel and series are close, although the series mentions *music* and *sound* more. It might support the idea that the film is more focused on the record store and records, leaning more heavily on the music business connotations of the story than the other two mediums. As formerly mentioned, the world of the record store owner is historically masculine. Comparing Simon's point of view episode to the rest of the series changes these dynamics. While

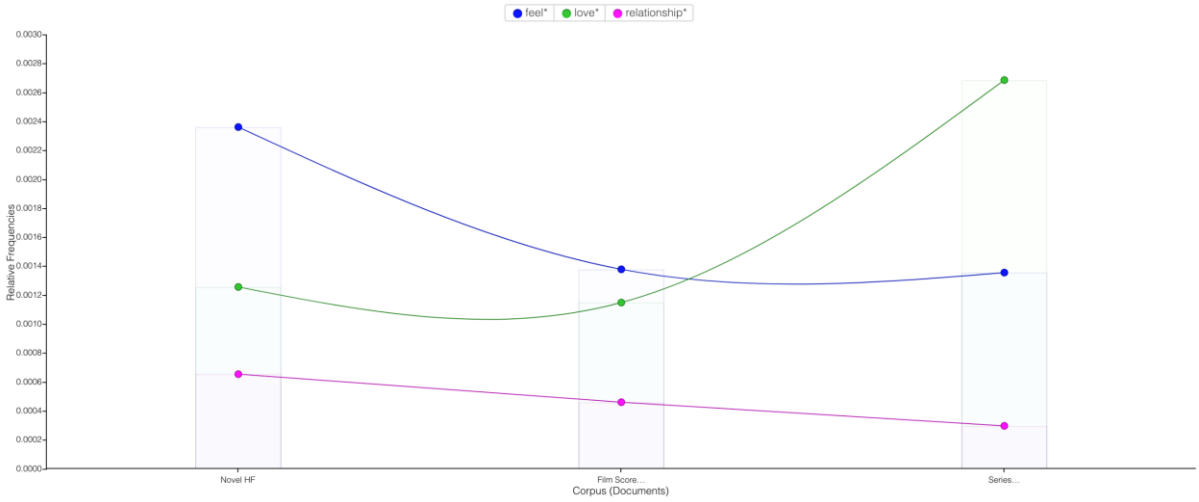


Picture 3.11. *Voyant*, the picture compares ep. 8 to the other episodes of the Hulu series.

song gets more space in that particular episode, the other three words are more commonly featured throughout the series. The emphasis has changed. Simon is an employee in the store,

but episode eight relies more heavily on his romantic life. Furthermore, he is not the owner of the store Robyn is. The fact that a woman is made the owner of a record store offers possibilities to challenge normative gender performativity and consequently create role models for women. For example, seeing a woman own a record store gives women a figure to connect to in that particular industry. However, the essay acknowledges that because Simon is gay, he would also be a role model being an owner of a record store.

When looking at words related to the romantic comedy genre, such as *love*, *feel, and relationship*, love is more commonly used in the series. The graph in Picture 3.12. below shows this. Hulu released the show on Valentine's day. That might suggest a marketing campaign emphasizing the romantic comedy genre. The trailer for the 2000 film starts with Rob saying: "My store is called Championship Vinyl" ("High Fidelity (2000)" 00:2–00:3). Which places the emphasis more on the masculine space of the record shop.

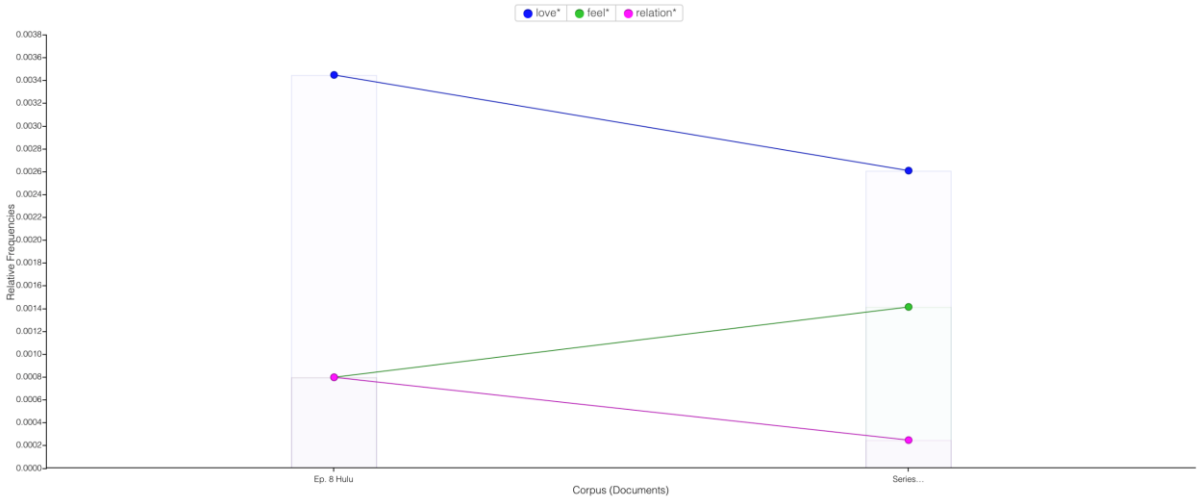


Picture 3.12. Voyant, the picture compares the three works.

Choosing the word feel and others forms of the word is inspired by Underwood et al.'s article. There the verb is used as an example of a word that becomes less gendered with time (23). The word *feel* is most commonly used in the novel. In the series, the word is often used in the phrase *I feel you,* or *you feel me?* The online Cambridge dictionary defines the

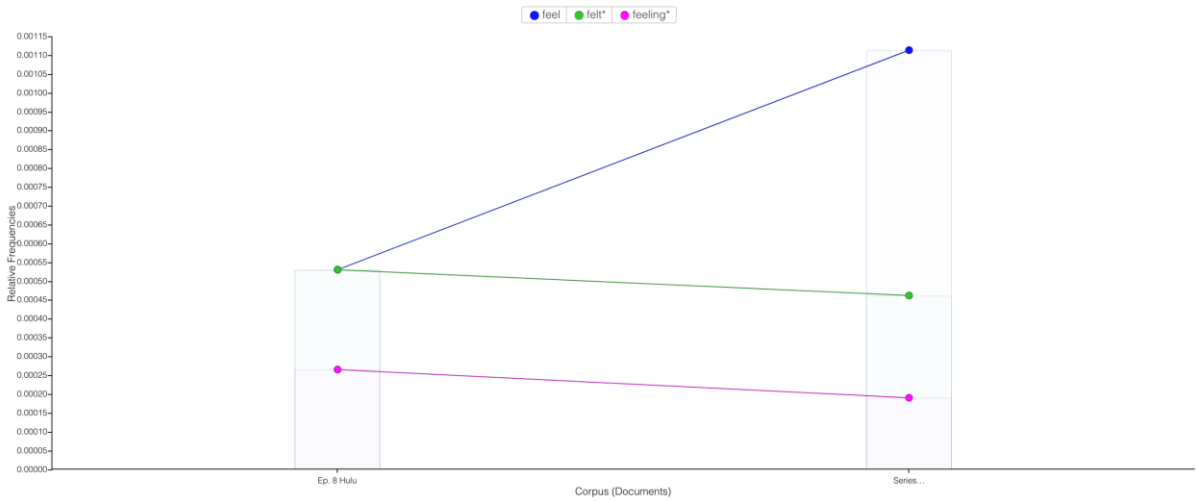
idiom in this way; “do you understand what I am saying?” and categorizes it as U.S. informal English (“(Do) You”).

Looking at the same words within the series, we see that *love* and *relationship* get more coverage in episode 8 compared to the rest, but feelings are used more in the series. The past tense *felt* is used slightly less often in the series, and so is the word *feeling* but *feel* is



Picture 3.13.. Voyant, the picture compares the three works.

used significantly more often. Simon shows more longing after a committed relationship, while Rob struggles with commitment. Simon is even so committed that there is only one man on his heartbreak list, Ben (Benjamin). As the show develops, he also matures. He realizes that he will never be happy with Ben and moves on toward something new. By the



Picture 3.14. Voyant, the picture compares the three works.

end of the series, the viewers leave him where he has found another lover to start a relationship with, Blake (Edmund Donovan). Simon commits and giving this example next to Robyn further distinguishes her struggles with commitment. The word feel is used more often by men.

Voyant is a valuable feature on *MYH*. The text analysis through the distant reading software supports the findings of chapter two in several ways. Women have a more apologizing nature, and Robyn says sorry more often than her male counterparts. Research shows that they apologize more because they are more sensitive to offenses which might suggest that they have a stronger moral compass which is the case for Robyn. Seeing a woman in a historically masculine space creates a role model for other females to imagine themselves in a similar position. Despite starting the search for words by looking for frequency, some findings, especially the word sorry, reflected findings in chapter two. Hopefully, others can find methods and ways to systematically connect the two.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

This thesis discussed gender swap in adaptation. Relying on adaptations theory, the essay elaborates on how stories are able to evolve to adapt to modern-day society. Furthermore, the thesis involves a gender swap remake theory, and this research confirms that this adaptation technique is one way to modernize a story. The paper draws from feminist theory and theory on gender performativity while elaborating on the case study of Hulu's *High Fidelity* TV series. Furthermore, a comparative approach is taken to discuss common threads and differences between the different variations of *High Fidelity*. The main character is chosen and in the case study the female Rob is gender swapped from previously be a male character in the former versions of the story.

While mapping out the character, Rob, this research relied on Roselinde Supheert's website *Map Your Hero(ine)*, a platform for students and general readers to answer questions regarding fictional characters. The platform is relatively new, so the results are not extensive enough to be reliable. The focus here is on giving a perspective of the user experience. This is done by intertwining the questionnaires into the discussion and giving feedback on what is clear and what could be adjusted. This research uses published reviews to find reader/viewer responses to the story. The *MYH* website links to an online distant reading data analysis tool called *Voyant*. Chapter three used this feature of the webpage, comparing the three different texts of the case study, for example, by studying the word sorry and finding the gendered relations to the apologetic nature of women. This is reflected through *High Fidelity* where the female variation of the main character says sorry more often than her male counterparts.

Gender swap can offer possibilities to challenge normative gender performativity and consequently create role models for women. For example, seeing women own a record store gives women a figure to connect to within that industry. While gender-swapped adaptations can provide a platform to discuss gender dynamics, the recent trend of making female

versions of originally male-centered movies sets women up for being compared to men. There is also pressure to see these movies or series not only depict women in male roles but also erase the toxic masculinity from the story making it reflect the times and preferable to make the story better at the same time. Which is a lot to ask for. Gender swap culture has been criticized for falsely promoting feminism and equality while it is only away for risk averse studios or producers to seem inclusive. Despite women being equally represented on streaming platforms, the balance behind the scene is still lacking and that includes directors and writers. As opposed to gender swapping formerly male characters women could also be allotted more space to create stories told from their perspective or stories that do not compare them to men.

While using MYH, most questions proved to be clear, concise, and relevant. There are a few suggestions on what could be adjusted. The research offers some suggestions on how to enhance the website. They are written as bullet points below for practical reasons to make them into a usable list of items:

- Questionnaire A:
    - Education: Offer more choices and include college dropouts.
    - Profession: Perhaps rephrase the question and include the word *industry*. That might help to narrow down the choices for participants.
- Questionnaire B:
    - In questions regarding appearance, it might be beneficial to differentiate between the character and the actor for relevant mediums. In some instances, as was the case for some reviewers concerning Hulu's *High Fidelity,* the appearance of the actress made them doubt the character.
    - When asking about personality traits, it could be helpful to either add a few more options or place an antonym to oppose the given choice.

        - Perhaps base the traits on the "Big 5" personality traits.
    - This research suggests including more demographic questions regarding the participants, specifically whether the reader/viewer is a student or a general reader, race, and occupation.
- Results:
    - Perhaps add a description in Results to explain what the numbers stand for, below the graphs which show the results from Questionnaire B.
    - For the future's sake, it could be worthwhile to classify answers by year or every five years due to the factor of role models to open up possibilities for comparisons and to allow it to reflect the times.

These are the main ideas that the research finds could be adjusted slightly to better the user experience on the *MYH* website. It finds *Voyant* a relevant and helpful addition to the site. The data collected through the distant reading analyses tool gave insights into the text. However, this research does not offer a systematic approach to this. Hopefully, someone will continue to look for a systematic approach to link the survey and results database better to *Voyant.*

This research is limited to textual analysis. However, both adaptations of *High Fidelity* belong to a medium where visual and audio representation plays a considerable role. A crucial part of a movie/TV adaptation of novels is the process of performing the text and all the surrounding elements such as *mise n' scene,* color palettes, costumes, sound effects, and music, not to forget the performance and the look that the actors bring to the characters, all combined plays an enormous impact on the overall aesthetic of the moving image format. At times the discussion referred to the actress Zoë Kravitz. Moreover, the performance elements of breaking the fourth wall and voice. Hopefully, someone will continue this research by looking into the performative elements in relation to gender. Furthermore, there

are other characters to consider besides Rob, in connection to gender swap in the *High Fidelity* TV series, for example Cherise.

The surrounding world and who represents it is another angle to research. How are the gender dynamics when it comes to the people working behind the scenes of the *High Fidelity* TV series, and does it differ from the personnel working on the movie production? That can include costume design, the production team, and the soundtrack, to name a few. Since the story relies heavily on Rob's profession and musical knowledge and enthusiasm, it might be interesting to look at the gender dynamics between the musical artists on the songs mentioned in the novel, film, and TV series. What is the balance between male and female performers or songwriters? Out of curiosity, I did start to look into these dynamics, and it showed a male-oriented playlist between all three variations of the story. It is a worthwhile study for music enthusiasts who care about equal representation within the music industry. Since *High Fidelity* leans heavily on popular music, it might be a challenge not only for literary or film studies but also for the music business, musicology, or popular music history to discuss the gender dynamics of the *High Fidelity* soundtrack.

Beyond gender dynamics considering the music in the series, looking at the intertextual relationship between the song lyrics of the soundtrack in relation to the narrative is another topic that this research did not include. More precisely, research how Rob's inner world and emotions are connected through those texts. For example, in episode one, on the date with Clyde, he and Rob discuss a song by Fleetwood Mac, "Dreams." Her former fiancé is called Mac. The title of the song reflects the hope Robyn saw in the relationship with Mac. And note that the band is called Fleetwood Mac. She allowed herself to dream about the future. The lyrics speak of loneliness:

But listen carefully to the sound of your loneliness

Like a heartbeat, drives you mad

In the stillness of remembering what you had

And what you lost

And what you had

And what you lost (“Dreams”)

Throughout most of the series, Robyn dwells on what she had, thinks about what she lost, and becomes obsessive. It drives her mad, but she does not speak about it, but it is laid in front of the audience in the first episode. The inner conversation is showed through the soundtrack in this example. Another research could look into how this is done throughout the series. As Robyn comments about listening to playlists: “I’m just saying it’s like that for a reason. There’s a story there, man.” (Ep. 4, 27:34–38). Similarly, the soundtrack is a playlist, and there might be a story there.

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