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Feminism during Post-feminism: A Study of
Lorelai Gilmore's Spaces in *Gilmore Girls*

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CONTENTS

Abstract/Resumen	2
1. Introduction	3
2. Theoretical Framework	4
2. 1. Post-feminism and the Third and Fourth Feminist Waves	4
2. 2. Female protagonists in the 2000s	6
3. Analysis	10
3. 1. Home and Mother-Daughter Problems	11
3. 2. Lorelai's Entrepreneurship and Independence	17
3. 3. Romance and Luke's Diner	19
4. Conclusion	24
References	26
Filmography	29

Abstract

Gilmore Girls (2000-2007, Amy Sherman-Palladino) is a TV series that revolves around the relationship between Lorelai (Lauren Graham) and Rory Gilmore (Alexis Bledel), mother and daughter, and their evolution throughout the series' seven seasons. The series was aired during a time when post-feminist discourses were incredibly relevant and affecting in a way some of the many female characters of the series.

The aim of this dissertation is to analyse how Lorelai Gilmore both breaks and fulfils some of the postfeminist ideals established in *Gilmore Girls*. To do so, the dissertation will focus on the protagonist's most important places in relation to three main elements in her life: her relationship with her daughter, her working goals and her romantic relationships.

Resumen

Gilmore Girls (2000-2007, Amy Sherman-Palladino) es una serie de televisión que gira en torno a la relación entre Lorelai (Lauren Graham) y Rory Gilmore (Alexis Bledel), madre e hija, y su evolución a lo largo de sus siete temporadas. La serie fue emitida en una época en la que los discursos postfeministas tenían mucha relevancia afectando de alguna manera a alguno de los múltiples personajes femeninos de la serie.

El objetivo de este Trabajo de Fin de Grado es analizar cómo Lorelai Gilmore rompe y cumple a su vez algunos de los requisitos postfeministas establecidos en *Gilmore Girls*. Para ello, el trabajo se centrará en los lugares más importantes en la vida de la protagonista relacionados con tres elementos clave de su vida: su relación con su hija, sus aspiraciones laborales y sus relaciones románticas.

1. Introduction

Created by Amy Sherman-Palladino, the television series *Gilmore Girls* (2000–2007) deals with the everyday lives of Lorelai Gilmore (Lauren Graham) and her daughter, Rory (Alexis Bledel), in the fictional town of Stars Hollow, in Connecticut. Raised in a wealthy family, Lorelai gets pregnant at the age of 16 and decides to do without her parents' help by starting a new life far from them. History repeats itself at the end of the show's revival miniseries *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life* (2016) via Rory's pregnancy. However, this time, Rory will probably rely on Lorelai and their mother-daughter bond, which many consider the main theme in the series. Aired by The WB television network (seasons 1–6) and The CW (season 7)—the latter known for its series for a teenage target audience—the show combines comedy and drama in its thematic and formal choices, oscillating “between a family-friendly type of programming suitable for all ages and a realistic worldview willing to incorporate risqué material and innuendo-filled dialogue” (Diffrient & Lavery 23).

Beyond the mother-daughter relationship, *Gilmore Girls* also focuses on the emotional ties among other female characters such as Lorelai's mother, Emily (Kelly Bishop); Rory's best friend, Lane (Keiko Agena); and Lorelai's best friend, Sookie (Melissa McCarthy). The series' representation of the varied relationships among these female characters articulates feminist discourses related to gender equality and sisterhood, even though the show was broadcasted during what McRobbie refers to as a post-feminist time: “a situation which is marked by a new kind of anti-feminist sentiment” (1). In fact, Rory makes an explicit reference to feminism in the pilot of the series concerning her mother and the origin of her name: “She named me after herself. She was lying in the hospital thinking about how men name boys after themselves all the time, you know, so why couldn't women? She says her feminism just kind of took over”. But

right after that, she seems to undermine Lorelai's feminism saying that, in her opinion, it was the anaesthetic that affected that decision, which illustrates McRobbie's comments on how feminism seemed an old-fashioned ideological movement in the post-feminist context of the early 2000s.

This dissertation is going to analyse how *Gilmore Girls* brings to the fore feminist questions that challenge the post-feminist framework McRobbie describes but also how it follows certain post-feminist ideas through the different spaces present in Lorelai's life. The analysis will focus on Lorelai as a main character and the formal choices, more concretely the spaces, used by the series to portray her mother-daughter bond with Rory (3.1.); her role as a working woman (3.2.); her problematic romantic relationships with men (3.3.). These aspects will be examined in relation to the formal analysis of some scenes in the following episodes: *Scene in a Mall* (4x15), *Raincoats and Recipes* (4x22), and *A House Is Not a Home* (5x22).

2. Theoretical Framework

2. 1. Post-feminism and the Third and Fourth Feminist Waves

The term *post-feminism* started to be used in the 1980s and 1990s and, as Bercuci argues, it "seemed to crystallise around three major issues it has with second wave feminism: victimisation of women, universalising tendencies, and gender role reversal" (Bercuci 253). Pomerantz, Shauna, Raby, and Stefanik hold that, following the belief that sexism was over, two discourses emerged: "Girl Power", which equates consumerism and hypersexuality with liberation and individualized freedom, and "Successful Girls", related to the idea that girls are superior to boys in academic terms and, therefore, feminist interventions in schools are not necessary (186-187). The term "Girl Power" is seen by some scholars such as Genz (93) as a widespread postfeminist attitude that shows

“commercialization and individualization within feminism” and suggests that it compresses the “spectrum and paradoxes” present in “postfeminist femininity” using “sexualized politics, an emphasis on style and youth as the site of emancipation” as a humorous slogan for the new feminine implications of the time.

According to Gill and Scharff, there are themes such as “personal empowerment, entrepreneurship, sexual agency, entitlement to pleasure and emancipation” associated with post-feminism that have become recurrently represented in the media. In the last decades, post-feminism has suggested that “gender equality has been achieved” by using successful images and “empowered” examples such “as the cinematic action heroine, the female lawyer of television drama, and the spectacularly sexually assertive pop star” (Negra and Tasker 4). Another idea stated by this post-feminist movement is that “girls can be whoever they want, and that patriarchy is dead”, yet patriarchy remains present and “continues to set the parameters of what is valuable for young people” (Savigny and Warner 171).

In the 1990s the so-called third wave of feminism also emerged, co-existing with the post-feminist discourses. According to Rampton (4), “the third wave of feminism began in the mid-1990's and was informed by post-colonial and post-modern thinking”. In this stage, many female constructs such as “body, gender, sexuality and heteronormativity” were brought down (4). Feminist women belonging to this third wave presented themselves as “strong and empowered” and “defining feminine beauty for themselves as subjects, not as objects of a sexist patriarchy” (4). Mann and Huffman claim that this third wave of feminism was highly influenced by “intersectionality theory” broadened by women from different ethnicities; postmodernist and poststructuralist feminist views; feminism in general terms; and the upcoming generation of feminists (Mann & Huffman 57).

In the early 2010s the fourth wave of feminism arose, led by the Internet and the importance of social media as some scholars suggest (Shiva & Nosrat Kharazmi 1). In “The Fourth Wave of Feminism and the Lack of Social Realism in Cyberspace”, Shiva and Nosrat Kharazmi (2) declare that fourth wave feminists have made use of the Internet and social networks to discuss the uncontrolled sexism suffered by women. Starting as a hashtag in October 2017, the #MeToo movement is an example of this usage of the Internet to spread feminist messages and ideas. Although this movement was initiated in 2006 by the African American women’s rights activists Tarana Burke, it was the actress Alyssa Milano, who used it to encourage other women to publicly talk about sexual violence (Mendes, Ringrose 1).

2. 2. Female protagonists in the 2000s

In relation to the postfeminist movement, there was a cinematographic genre that gained special importance during the 2000s: chick flicks. According to the Collins English Dictionary, a chick flick is “a romantic film that is not very serious and is intended to appeal to women.”. Negra also defines this concept but in a more specific way as “the major (some might say the only) contemporary film genre consistently (if often unsatisfactorily) dedicating itself to the exploration of romantic intimacy” (8). These two definitions share a central element: romanticism, which is a term that has usually been related to women, the target audience of this kind of films. Films such as *Legally Blonde* (Robert Luketic, 2001), *What a Girl Wants* (Dennie Gordon, 2003), *Mean Girls* (Mark Waters, 2004), and *The Devil Wears Prada* (David Frankel, 2006) are considered chick flicks. Apart from romance, these examples have something in common: female protagonists with a clear goal—either social, romantic, work- or family-related—to be achieved by the end of the film. Besides, the chick flick generic label is often used to describe TV series aired in the 2000s like *Sex and the City* (HBO, 1998-2004), a popular

TV series that deals with a group of four women in their thirties in New York City. This show could be regarded as a clear example of the post-feminist premises McRobbie talks about, since its protagonists act as if equality between women and men had already been achieved, and women could enjoy and take advantage of an egalitarian reality. Scholars such as Negra, Gerhard, and Adriens & Bauwel, state that *Sex and the City* and its protagonists are examples of post-feminism. As one of the protagonists, Samantha Jones (Kim Cattrall), claims in a highly post-feminist statement in the pilot episode of the show: “this is the first time in the history of man that women have had as much money as power as men. Plus, the equal luxury of treating men like sex objects.”

Supernatural backgrounds have also been used to portray female icons in films and TV series, both post-feminist representatives and others who do not stand for the post-feminist ideals. Two examples are Buffy from *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) and Bella Swan (Kristen Stewart) from the *Twilight* saga (2008-2012). In the case of Buffy (Sarah Michelle Gellar), she is a kind of “chosen one”, a part of a myth whose duty is to defeat dark forces, whereas Bella (Kristen Stewart) is an average teenage girl who falls in love with a vampire and, in order to stay with him forever, he turns her into a vampire. According to Bercuci, Buffy “is considered the epitome of the Girl Power movement” due to her independence and strength. While being a normal teenager is all that Buffy wants, this is impossible for her because of her commitments and responsibilities as the Vampire Slayer. Besides, “Buffy never denigrates herself, nor is her girlhood ever depicted as a debilitating detraction or vulnerability” and “it is the very source of her empowerment, what differentiates her from other Slayers and helps her to survive and win where others failed and died” (Genz 162). By contrast, as Coker (1) claims, Bella is constantly describing herself as an outsider, someone who does not fit in, and her desire to be a vampire not only comes from her wish to stay with Edward (Robert

Pattinson), but also from the fact that her romantic relationship with this vampire has made her a target for other vampires. What is more, Bella would not fit in any of the two post-feminist categories that emerged in the 2000s since due to her dependence towards Edward. In fact, she would not fit in feminism either since, as some critics describe, she is an anti-feminist character because of her lack of courage and her “constant need of reassurance or protection from the dominant male figures in her life” (Eddo-Lodge).

Female friendship was an essential element in “chick flicks” (Radner 55) and, in ways similar to *Gilmore Girls*, there are more recent shows revolving around the life of two women with an unusual bond. *Grace and Frankie* (2015, Netflix) and *Dead to Me* (2019, Netflix), deal with the relational bonds of two different couples of girlfriends that live together despite their multiple differences. Other shows like *The Good Wife* (2009-2016), *The Good Fight* (2017) and *Scandal* (2012-2018) focus on the lives of working women and their role in politics. Presenting groups of women from different backgrounds and whose stories develop in different decades *Jane the Virgin* (2014), *Big Little Lies* (2017), *The Handmaid’s Tale* (2017) and *Pose* (2018) depict the many issues that women have to deal with in their everyday lives, presenting the feminist search for equality as an unsolved issue. More recent miniseries such as *Unorthodox* (2020) and *The Queen’s Gambit* (2020) have successfully relied on the stories of young women trapped in different realities, the first tries to escape the religious society where she has been raised and the second has to do with her addiction to drugs and alcohol. All these shows demonstrate how representation has changed in the second decade of the 21st century since there are many series focusing on highly diverse female protagonists, including women of colour, religious women, and women from the LGBT community. Moreover, sorority and supporting groups of female friends are used by the majority of these series as part of their plot.

The nostalgia and success of some chick flicks of the previous decade is reflected on the production of sequels such as *Bridget Jones' Baby* (Sharon Maguire, 2016) and *Legally Blonde 3* (Jamie Suk, 2022). Furthermore, this kind of films still are quite successful and, as happens with the previously mentioned television series, they include a wide diversity of women. Some examples of latest chick flicks are *Pitch Perfect* (Jason Moore, 2012), *Isn't It Romantic* (Todd Strauss-Schulson, 2019), *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* (Susan Johnson, 2018), *Crazy Rich Asians* (Jon M. Chu, 2018), *What Men Want* (Adam Shankman, 2019). It could be suggested that nostalgia played an important role in the making of the already mentioned revival of *Gilmore Girls*, which centres on the lives of these two characters years after the last episode of the show and released by Netflix. But, contrary to expectations, many fans were disappointed with this reboot, some even claim that both the show and characters, such as Lorelai, seemed to be “frozen in time” (D’Addario). However, in my opinion, it offered the perfect version of Stars Hollow adapted into present-day society, completely fulfilling my expectations since the show still revolved around its essential elements and characters.

Another trend that can be highlighted is the proliferation of superhero films starring female protagonists in the last decade, especially those produced by well-known studios such as Marvel and DC Comics. Kinnunen studies the representation of female characters in this genre and, after briefly mentioning *Agent Carter* (ABC, 2015) and *Jessica Jones* (Netflix, 2015), he states that the demand for female superheroes is increasing. In the case of Marvel, there had always been a female character that the main male superhero could rely on, but it was not until Carol Danvers (Brie Larson) from *Captain Marvel* (Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck, 2019) had her film that the company centred on a superheroine and attempted to “expand their fan-base to inspire girls to be strong” and, as the film’s slogan says, “to go “higher, further and faster”” (Wessel 2).

Similarly, DC Comics released their first film starring a female protagonist, Diana Prince (Gal Gadot), in 2017, *Wonder Woman* and its sequel *Wonder Woman 1984* in 2020 (Patty Jenkins). What is more, in 2020 DC Comics released *Birds of Prey* (Cathy Yan, 2020), whose main character had become extremely popular among young girls in *Suicide Squad* (David Ayer, 2016): Harley Quinn (Margot Robbie). Besides, the upcoming Marvel film *Black Widow*, which was supposed to be released in 2020 but had to be rescheduled to 2021 because of the Covid-19 pandemic, is expected to be a box office hit after being a “second-rate team member in the narratives of hyper masculine male superheroes” for years (Freeman). Regarding television, both studios have also launched successful content having female leaders at the centre as *Wandavision* (2021, Marvel Studios) and *Supergirl* (CBS, 2015), the latter based on the character from DC Comics.

3. Analysis

Presenting a combination of discourses from the different feminist waves taking place when the show was aired, *Gilmore Girls* belongs to those TV products popular in these feminist contexts of the first and second decades of the 21st century with many female characters as the centre of its plot. By following Gill and Scharff’s ideas of empowerment and entrepreneurship and Pomerantz, Shauna, Raby, and Stefanik’s notion of “Girl Power”, which Bercuci associates with independence and strength, Lorelai is an example of the post-feminism of the time and of the second feminist wave taking place when she was growing up.

The episodes already mentioned in the introduction are representatives of some of the most important aspects of Lorelai’s life: her relationship with Rory, her goal of owning an inn and her relationship with Luke.

In general, Lorelai is a talkative, free-spirited, childish, sarcastic, teenage-like woman, but, at the same time, she is also mature when the situation requires it: choosing not to marry Christopher since they were too young, working from a very young age to take care of her daughter, calling on Rory whenever they did not agree on something, or she thought that her daughter was making a mistake. In addition, she finds herself surrounded by a quite extensive group of women that includes Rory, Sookie, Lane, Babette (Sally Struthers), Miss Patty (Liz Torres), Emily, and does not feel intimidated by any of the male characters that appear along the show —Luke, Richard (Edwards Hermann), Taylor (Michael Winters), Kirk (Sean Gunn), Michel (Yanic Truesdale).

Along with the central places that the audience recognise in her life —her house, the inn, her parents' house, or Luke's diner— there are also other formal elements from that remark her links with other people and her attitudes towards them.

The analysis of Lorelai is divided into three sections. The first one focuses on the dynamics of Rory and Lorelai's mother-daughter relationship and their most critical moment in *A House is not a Home*. The second section centres on her eventually achieving her goal of co-owning an inn with her best friend Sookie. Finally, the third part of the analysis deals with Lorelai's relationship with Luke and how relevant it has been throughout the series development.

3. 1. Home and Mother-Daughter Problems

The first aspect of Lorelai's life that should be considered is her relationship with her daughter since Rory is the centre of her life. Most of the time, they treat each other as best friends rather than having a regular mother-daughter relationship, which is one of the main characteristics of the show. They have similar personalities that seem to differ once Rory leaves for college.

Throughout the series the audience can see how this relationship undergoes different phases and how, once Rory goes to college and leaves her household, the differences between them surface. Probably the most representative episode of these differences is *A House is not a Home*, where Rory decides to quit Yale and spend some time at home to clear her mind after her boyfriend's father tells her that she is not good enough to be a journalist.

The fact that season 5 finishes with a fight between them resembles the beginning of the season itself, where Lorelai and Rory are also in the middle of an argument that they do not seem to put an end to for a long time. Contrary to the previous case, their fight this time is a result of Lorelai's discovery of Rory and Dean's extramarital relationship. In a similar way as in this fight, Lorelai decides to let Rory find out what her mistake was rather than being with her, which is why she makes her spend the summer with Emily in Europe. Having a relationship where they tell each other everything going on in their lives, this fight is so significant that Lorelai does not even tell Rory that she and Luke are engaged. What is more, Lorelai does not attend her daughter's court meeting after stealing a yacht in the following episodes, which Rory did not expect since she is used to having her mother's support no matter what. Lorelai is no longer treating her daughter as a supportive and understanding friend, but as an adult, which is probably what confuses Rory the most.

Some of the most interesting formal elements in this episode, and in their relationship in general, are the places where Rory and Lorelai find themselves. The title of the episode already points at the importance of places, their home in this case and at how Rory is going to find a house and a place to stay that she has never seen as her "home", a place which has not been "home" for Lorelai either: Richard and Emily's house, which will be analysed later in this section. Moreover, the episode starts with

Lorelai nervously picking her daughter up from prison, which already shows something that Lorelai never expected to do in relation to her daughter. Right after that, the first place they go to is Luke's diner to get dinner, which is probably Lorelai's safe place especially in this episode since she is already dating Luke and it is also the place where she goes after her parents' betrayal (by welcoming her daughter into their household after promising her that they would team up against Rory, so she does not leave college). Whereas Lorelai seemed to be calm with Rory, once she enters the diner, she shows how overwhelmed she really feels by the situation and even positively compares Rory's theft with her teenage pregnancy. However, the space of the diner will later be studied in detail in the third section of the analysis. Before going there, Lorelai asks Rory whether she wants to take food from the diner or stay there, and Rory answers that she wants to go home. This shows Rory's urge to go home, her comfort place. While being at the car after getting food from the diner, Rory tells Lorelai that the reason why she stole a yacht with Logan was because his father told her that she did not have what it takes to be a journalist, something that both Rory and Lorelai have been working since Rory found her vocation. This proves that it does not matter where they are to have serious conversations as long as they are together. Moreover, Lorelai's car has been a regular element in the series, so it makes sense that they consider it an extension of their household, where they feel safe to talk about their issues. In the car, Lorelai makes an extremely feminist statement about Logan's father by saying "He is not God. He is just a man". Later in the episode, Rory tells her decision of quitting Yale to her mother at a restaurant, Weston Bakery, after her last exam. The environment seems to be an ideal and peaceful one, contrasting with their argument over Rory's future. Similarly to the scene in the car, Lorelai downplays Mitchum Huntzberger's (Gregg Henry) —Logan's father—judgement on Rory: "just one man's opinion". This is particularly significant since Rory's inspiration to become a

journalist has always been Christiane Amanpour—a female reporter mentioned along the series and that appears in the last season of the show—, which opposes to Rory’s views on Mitchum Huntzberger’s opinion being the only valid one.

The most significant place in this episode would be Emily and Richard’s house, where she goes to find comfort and support after her daughter’s news and to ask them for help to convince Rory to continue her studies, only to end up being betrayed by them later in the episode. Moreover, that is the place where Rory is going to stay for the following episodes, being her the one who will finally find comfort there. Her parents’ house is extremely significant along the series since it is the place that she left at a very young age so her daughter and her would not end up doing whatever Richard and Emily wanted them to do. So, the fact that she goes there to find support, but it is Rory who finds that in the end is quite ironic. While arguing with her parents, Lorelai comments on how differently Rory’s decisions are treated in comparison to those of Lorelai:

Richard: “She came to *me*, Lorelai. She told me what she wanted, in her own words.”

Lorelai: “Wow, so that does work occasionally with you, huh?”

It is worth highlighting the that, contrary to Lorelai at 16, Rory tries to find her mother’s support when deciding to make a major change in her life. When Lorelai got pregnant, she escaped from her parents’ house to start a new life and raise her daughter unlike her parents did with her, but Rory cannot seem to start a new life on her own. This shows that, despite what the show had shown for five seasons, Lorelai and Rory are not that similar, and the central element of this difference is Emily and Richard’s house.

Additionally, the appearance of her parents’ house is the complete opposite to hers, which could also stand for how different their personalities are. While Lorelai and

Rory live in a simple and small house in Stars Hollow, Emily and Richard's mansion is old, overloaded, large, and located in Hartford. The differences between the decoration and size of both house point to the economic situation of these characters. Emily and Richard's house also lacks the sense of familiarity and warmth that predominates at Lorelai's house. Besides, the Gilmore's mansion is also full of incalculable decorations such as vases, paintings, and antiques. Hung in the living room above the fireplace there is a family portrait of Lorelai and her parents when she was a child representing the complete opposite to the reality between them: unity. In terms of size, despite how big Emily and Richard's house is, it is almost empty most of the time, being occupied only by them and the new maid Emily has decided to hire that week. The fact that the house is so big is also emphasized by the fact there always seems to be an enormous distance between Emily and Richard, the only inhabitants on the house, always being separated by the enormous table in the dining room. While, on the contrary, Lorelai's house always seems to be full of the town's neighbours or friends that she invites over and, every time Rory is at home, her and Lorelai are always together eating, watching TV and so on. These differences point to the different values Emily and Lorelai have and how they are reflected in their lifestyles: the Gilmore House is a place where its inhabitants are distant due to the size of the house, while Lorelai's house is a place of union. These households also symbolise how different these two characters behave as mothers: Emily has a distant and complicated relationship with her daughter while Lorelai and Rory are both friends and family. Leaving her parents' house at such a young age shows Lorelai's duality as being representative of post-feminist discourses such as Gill and Scharff's post-feminist concepts of "personal empowerment" and "emancipation" and third wave's feminism idea of "strong and empowered" women presented by Rampton.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that in the episode we see the complete opposite kind of support in a mother-daughter relationship that has been full of disagreements along the show: Lane and Mrs. Kim (Emily Kuroda). Lane, Rory's best friend, comes from a south Korean and extremely religious household where she had to hide who she really was from her terrifying and severe mother, Mrs. Kim. Lane's mother even threw Lane out of her house after finding her collection of CDs and other items that she does not consider appropriate. But, contrary to Lorelai and Rory who do not accept each other's view and find themselves involved in their biggest argument in the show, in this episode Mrs. Kim helps Lane and her band when Lane tells her that she wants to move back home. Especially relevant is Mrs. Kim's statement "You are not the daughter I raised! Kims don't give up" referring to Lane's decision of quitting the band and doing anything her mother asks her to do because it may also refer to Rory's choice of leaving Yale. Mrs. Kim had raised Lane to be a Christian and perfect wife, but she turned out to be the complete opposite, whereas Lorelai and Rory had always agreed on Rory doing whatever she felt comfortable with. Not only has Lane's house been completely different to Rory's because of how Lane had to hide her true self there but also because her house is also "Kim's Antiques", the family business.

In the case of the mother-daughter relationships presented in this episode, the three households —Lorelai's, Emily and Richard's, and Mrs. Kim— are extremely relevant since they symbolize how, while Lorelai and Rory's relationship is not in their best moment, there are others that are improving. The fact that it is once Rory leaves Lorelai's house and starts knowing herself through her independence may be related to the differences between those generations influenced by the second and third waves of feminism (Lorelai's generation) and post-feminist generations (Rory's generation), which contrast with feminism discourses.

3. 2. Lorelai's Entrepreneurship and Independence

As mentioned in the previous section, after running away from Emily and Richard, Lorelai started working in the Independence Inn as maid and was offered a place to live with Rory by Mia, the owner. That inn is where Lorelai's aim to eventually manage an inn of her own arose. It is in season four when Lorelai —along with Sookie, her best friend, co-worker, and partner— achieves that goal by opening the Dragonfly Inn. The fact that she opens her own inn is related to the idea of the working woman presented by Gill and Scharff (2013) and their idea of “entrepreneurship” as a key discourse of the post-feminist movement.

In *Raincoats and Recipes*, Lorelai has organised an encounter of her closest friends and family at the inn so they can evaluate it and tell her what flaws need to be improved by the opening of the business. Lorelai even invites her parents, who are going through a very complicated moment in their relationship.

“I’ve been working toward this goal for, my God what is it, Rory, now, 20 years? [...] So basically, this is the biggest thing that’s ever happen to me, in my life except for Rory being born and I’m sure my parents wouldn’t want to miss it.”
(Lorelai in the opening of the Inn).

In this quote Lorelai is trying to convince her parents to attend the “run test” at the inn as all their friends are doing. It is significant that she is inviting them to the inn’s test, since working at the Independence Inn was her way to be free from her parents.

Her idea of opening an inn may also be related to the fact that, when she did not have her parents’ support during her pregnancy, she found shelter in the Independence Inn, where she started a new life and, probably for the first time in her privileged life, she found herself useful. In this inn she found someone who, unlike her family, more

concretely her mother, gave her a place to stay and, in a way, a future: Mia Bass. The name of the inn she managed may have been chosen by the creators as a metaphor pointing to Lorelai's achievement of freedom once she left her parents' house and she was finally in control of her own life.

Despite how meaningful the Independence Inn was for Lorelai, the one that she owns looks completely different. The major difference between the Independence Inn and the Dragonfly Inn is that the former is much bigger than the latter, especially in the area of the reception. While in the Independence Inn Lorelai and Michel could attend customers at the same time, this does not happen at the Dragonfly Inn. Maybe the difference in sizes could be related to how big Lorelai's dreams and aspirations were when she was simply a worker, but now that she has her own business everything feels closer. The other difference is that although both inns have furniture for the customers to use, the decoration of the Dragonfly Inn is classical, rustic, and kind of old fashioned, resembling that of other inns that Lorelai and Rory visit throughout the series but contrasting with that of the Independence Inn, which seems simpler. In terms of decoration, the new inn looks as cosy and comfortable as Lorelai's house and although Sookie is also the owner, Lorelai seems to be the one that manages it. There is also a contrast between the two inns because of the colours of the interior of the inn. On the one hand, Lorelai's inn is full of pastel tonalities of yellow and green combined with the previously mentioned rustic decoration, creating a sense of comfort along with the soft illumination inside the building. On the other hand, the Independence Inn's interior is fully grey, creating an impersonal environment.

This business may also stand for Lorelai's enduring friendship with Sookie, who is also the owner of the inn, but only takes care of the kitchen area since she is a professional cook. They had already been working together due to Sookie's job at the

Independence Inn also as a cook. Sookie has been present in the series from the very first episode and she has been an enormous support for Lorelai. Throughout the series Sookie has been Lorelai's main source of advice, starting from her suggestion of asking money to Emily and Richard for Rory's private school to trying to force Lorelai and Rory to make up. It has even been claimed that work in the series is a "manifestation of female friendship" because of Lorelai and Sookie's relationship (Negra 34). This friendship may be an example of the importance of the union between women.

Starting her own business and managing her own inn was everything Lorelai ever wanted since she started working at the Independence inn, which freed her from her parents' control. It looks as if Sookie's focus is only on the kitchen, while Lorelai takes care of everything else. The Dragonfly Inn represents all the hard work and effort that both Lorelai and Sookie have put on it and, in a way, Lorelai is also creating a space similar to the one where she raised her daughter, that is, the Independence Inn. After facing economic problems and several months of renovations, Lorelai and Sookie are finally able to open the Dragonfly Inn, allowing them to keep working on what they love the most. Besides, they are doing it together, representing the topic of female friendship proposed by Radner and the theme of sorority and female union.

3. 3. Romance and Luke's Diner

Throughout the series, the audience has been introduced to different Lorelai's romantic partners, some have even maintained long and stable relationships with her, such as Max Medina (Scott Cohen) and Jason Stiles (Chris Eigeman) among others, or even gotten married, which is the case of Christopher Hayden. But it is undoubtedly her relationship with Luke Danes (Scott Patterson) the most remarkable one. He is even the second permanent character that appears in the series, right after Lorelai and even before Rory,

for whom he acts as some kind of fatherly figure due to Christopher's (David Sutcliffe) —Rory's father— lack of presence. An example of this is Rory's graduation from Chilton, which Luke attends —along with Sookie, her husband Jackson and Rory's grandparents—, while Christopher does not go because he is “out of town.”

For the most part, Luke has been a good friend for Lorelai, always helping her whenever she needed him, and it is not until the fourth season that there is a romantic involvement between them. Along the series, there are many characters that hint Luke's interest on Lorelai, but it takes them four seasons to be together only to break up in season six and then getting married in the series' revival. Therefore, for most of the series, their relationship is platonic.

In terms of formal aspects, places have an enormous importance in Lorelai's relationship with Luke. The fact that, as happens with her relationship with Rory, spaces are extremely significant in Lorelai's relationship with Luke suggest its importance. Starting with the fact that Luke's diner is the first and last place that appears in the show, which is worth highlighting. In the first episode, it is literally the first place that appears as the camera follows Lorelai getting there. What is even more, this pilot's ending is a shot of Lorelai and Rory having dinner at the diner, which resembles the ending of the series: them having dinner at Luke's. The main difference is that in the series' finale Lorelai and Luke are back together, whereas in the pilot they were just friends. Originally, the diner was a hardware store that belonged to Luke's father, so there are many elements —the entrance's sign, drawers, shelves— typical of this kind of establishment. Keeping all these elements may indicate how sentimentally attached Luke is to them. Besides, he lives in the apartment right above the diner, so he barely leaves the place. The diner does not change throughout the series, which may be one of the reasons why it is a constant in Lorelai's life while everything around her evolves: Rory, her relationship with her parents

and the inn. The diner not very big despite being one of the most relevant business in town, but there always seems to be a table waiting for Lorelai and Rory no matter how many customers there are.

After picking Rory up from prison and leaving her waiting in the car while talking with Logan (Matt Czuchy) —her boyfriend— on the phone, Luke’s diner is the first place she goes to. Once she enters the diner, her attitude changes drastically and tells Luke about how worried she is for Rory and the crime she has just committed. The diner is also the place Lorelai goes to after fighting with her parents and leaving Rory at their house. As mentioned earlier, this shows that the diner is probably Lorelai’s safe space, where she goes when things do not go as planned or her live goes into a direction she did not expect. It is Luke’s constant support that may make her feel this way. In the two occasions that Lorelai goes to the diner in the episode, she sits in the first table next to the door, which is the table they regularly use pointing at her familiarity with the place. The diner is also completely different to the spaces that Lorelai shared with some of her previous boyfriends. One case would be that of Jason, her previous boyfriend, with whom the main space in their relationship was his modern and impersonal house. Besides, Jason did not allow her to sleep with him and prepared a room for her where she could sleep. Similarly, the space representing Lorelai’s first romantic relationship in the series was Chilton since Max was Rory’s teacher there. This space was also problematic because it could endanger Rory’s situation in the school.

In relation to the diner, there are also certain objects in the series that stand as symbols for their relationship. The main one could be Luke’s warning at the diner to indicate the prohibition of talking on the phone at the diner that says: “NO CELL PHONES”, a rule that Lorelai is constantly breaking. Another symbol might be the rose that Lorelai wears in her jacket in *Scene in a Mall*. This rose is an extremely important

prop in the episode since it is something that Lorelai and Rory wear, so they recognise each other at the mall, but Lorelai eventually gives it to Luke as a token of gratitude for letting them be at the dinner. This act is highly relevant considering the fact that it will be in the next season's finale that Lorelai proposes to Luke in that same spot of the diner. Apart from the rose, another important element that may be considered a symbol for their long-lasting platonic relationship could be the horoscope that she gave him the first time they met and that he has secretly kept for many years. The existence of this horoscope is not mentioned until he shows it to her on their first date as a couple in season five.

Another formal element extremely significant in their relationship is Lorelai's close-up as Luke tells her how they are going to organise their lives around making sure that Rory finishes her degree at Yale. In a previous scene, there is a similar shot of Lorelai as her father explains how they are going to deal with Rory's lack of confidence by letting her stay with them in the pool house. Lorelai's expression does not change in neither of the scenes as the other male character tells her what is going to be done. Contrary to what happens with Richard and Emily, with whom she feels betrayed and disappointed, Lorelai responds to Luke's plan by proposing to him. This kind of shot is probably showing the audience how the other male characters' speeches get her and how the process of understanding what she is being told is working. Besides, in both scenes she is placed in a lower position than these two male characters, she is seated while they are standing, looking her from a higher position showing his confidence over her in the case of Richard and his determination in helping her in the case of Luke. The fact she is filmed from a lower position is related to the determination of these male characters in these scenes, not because they are more powerful than her. This choice of angles may be related to a subversion of gender roles and how, sometimes, those characters who seem more powerful than others may not always be the ones in control of the situation as it happens

here. Lorelai is the one who makes the last decision in relation with her daughter, and this is portrayed in these two scenes.

Interestingly enough, Lorelai had already been engaged in the series to Max Medina, Rory's teacher at Chilton, her first boyfriend in the series. But, contrary to this relationship where she was not sure about getting married and ends up breaking up with him because she does not feel ready, it is Lorelai who proposes to Luke and has the urgent need of marrying him. In the end, their wedding does not take place due to Luke's discovery of April, a daughter whose existence he did not know about and takes him by surprise. It is also highly interesting the fact that it is Lorelai who proposes to Luke, subverting the typical patriarchal idea of the man kneeling to propose to his future wife. It is Lorelai who takes the initiative in a moment of despair and helplessness probably to create some stability on her life after losing Rory to her parents. They end up getting married in the show's revival after Lorelai's constant doubts and insecurities. Despite the fact that they were engaged and eventually get married, their marriage is the second in their lives. Throughout the series, Luke and his girlfriend go on holiday and get married while being on vacation, but it turns into a complicated marriage that they eventually decide to finish. In the case of Lorelai, she marries Christopher in the last season of the series after her relationship and engagement with Luke does not work out, which takes everyone by surprise, but they eventually decide to put an end to their marriage as well.

In this episode, Luke also buys Lorelai a house as a surprise present that she had previously commented that she liked. But right after that, she tells him that there is a man who has offered to buy the Dragonfly Inn. This upsets Luke since he has just bought her a house—which she does not know about—and planning his future with her and she is considering accepting a job that is going to involve a lot of travelling and the impossibility of a stable relationship. In the end, Luke ends up returning the house as he thinks that

Lorelai is really taking the job she has been offered. This and the fact that Lorelai proposes to him by the end of the episode show how different they are. On the one hand, Luke has thought about his future with Lorelai and has decided to surprise her by buying a house that she likes so they can live there together, but in the end, he decides not to tell her. On the other hand, Lorelai randomly decides to propose to him after her family issues. It could be said that, in a way, they balance each other because of their differences. Even though, despite their different personalities and ways of approaching their future together, the fact that they are both entrepreneurs creates a very important connection between them. Moreover, their businesses are settled in buildings where relevant establishments of the past were located, creating a sense of continuity in Stars Hollow.

So, similarly to Rory, spaces are extremely relevant in Lorelai's relationship with Luke since the diner is not only the first and last place that appears in the show but also Lorelai's safe space, where she goes whenever she feels overwhelmed. This relationship also portrays the success of chick flicks at the time where the female protagonist had both romantic and work-related goals, which is the case of Lorelai.

4. Conclusion

The main aim of this dissertation was to analyse different aspects of Lorelai Gilmore's life that make her a feminist model from the 2000s and how, in some ways, also breaks with those ideals by following aspects of the post-feminist discourse. The fact that *Gilmore Girls* deals with the lives of two women surrounded by a great number of female characters may already indicate the feminist ideology behind it. But it is the focus on Lorelai, a single mother who got pregnant in her teenage years, hard worker and entrepreneur, and, at the same time, her finding of a stable romantic relationship, what

creates a contrast between the post-feminist beliefs of the time, which Lorelai sometimes represents, and discourses from the feminist third wave from the 1990s.

Although there are elements such as the *mise-en-scène*, shots or angles from which the audience sees the characters and that are relevant in certain occasions, it is the spaces what have a significant meaning in Lorelai's life. From Luke's diner as the main symbol of their relationship, to her house and how it is related to the Dragonfly Inn, and her parents' house as the place symbolising the source of her differences with her parents and, more importantly, her daughter. The series is full of places that are especially meaningful for this feminist character in a post-feminist era.

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