

Summary

The film-therapeutic potential of the modern musical. The case of the Crazy Ex-Girlfriend series

Maria Faustyna Gilewicz

Modern musicals are mostly created with the use of Postmodern aesthetics. As a result, watching the production is a form of entertainment for the viewer, and each subsequent screening can provide new discoveries. The phenomenon of *La La Land* (2016, dir. D. Chazelle) confirms that a production based on nostalgia for a classic musical can become a huge success. Not only films, but also series such as *Glee* (2009-2015, dir. I. Brennan, B. Falchuk) and *Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist* (2020- 2021, R. Shepard) benefit from this; however, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* has a set of characteristics that set it apart from other productions. CEG also takes up a postmodern game with the viewer, referencing hundreds of films, series, genres and pop culture phenomena. However, it not only uses quotes, but at the same time introduces a new quality: to the world of the musical on the one hand, and psychology - on the other. Familiarity with well-known tropes allowed the creators to efficiently deconstruct them.

The series are divided into two main thematic parts. The first and second seasons focus on Rebecca's obsessive feelings and her need to be loved. The third and fourth seasons are devoted to the protagonist's diagnosis and her journey toward getting to know herself better. Both thematic areas have cinematic therapeutic potential, and in a perverse way allude to the series' title. Rebecca is called crazy by both her love obsessions and her mental problems. The construction of the series and the issues it raises made me decide to make *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* the theme of my dissertation. The creators of the series succeeded in not an easy feat. They combined a musical - a genre very far from reality - with important issues related to, among other things, mental health. Throughout the series, it is repeatedly stated that Rebecca's idealized vision of love is due, among other things, to the cultural image in which she grew up, which treats women as so-called damsels in distress, unable to find happiness without the rescue of the prince of her dreams. Creating harmful stereotypes and instilling them in children from an early age has dire consequences for the psyche of adult women, as I mentioned in the article cited above. As someone who comes from a similar generation to Rebecca, I identify all the more with many of the authors' insights, and think

that deconstructing stereotypes plays an important role in shaping the sense of values of younger viewers.

But for me as a researcher, the *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* series is unique primarily because of its handling of mental health issues. The main character in the third season of the series is diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. This gives Rebecca's previous behavior a whole new meaning, and in addition, over the next two seasons, the woman settles into her new reality and learns how to live with borderline. The issue of stigma associated with mental disorders and loneliness and lack of a sense of belonging also plays an important role in the series. The songs *You Stupid Bitch* (1.12), *A Diagnosis* (3.6), *The End of the Movie* (3.4), *Sexy French Depression* (1.8) and many other songs in the series address mental health issues that can be universal not only to a person with borderline, but also to people struggling with other types of disorders. As a person who has been struggling with her mental health for years, I appreciate the subject matter covered in the series and its film-therapeutic potential. Both the series' subject matter and its musical form make it a work that holds a special place among musical productions.