Aitana Tovar Garcia Corrochano

My Table

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Attestation of Authorship

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

Exegesis

Introduction

This thesis is presented in two parts: a script for a pilot episode of a series called *My Table*; and an exegesis which provides an academic context for and reflects on the development of the work. My research was focused on the question of how a TV show set in my home country, Peru, might serve to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives and relationships of four characters who are connected by a long history of friendship and a shared business venture.

The exegesis is divided into five sections. First, an introduction that shows the world in which this story is framed. Second, a literature review that focuses on 1) dramedy and sitcom; 2) the development of the characters; 3) COVID-19 in Peru; and 4) the millennial generation. Thirdly, a comparative analysis with other pilots, as my methodology and plan. Then, I analyse the process of writing the first and second draft of the pilot. And, finally, I present my conclusions. The references can be found at the end of this essay.

This pilot episode is for a TV series for a streaming platform. Abril, Constanza, Juan Pablo and Tomás are four best friends in their early thirties that own a marmalade factory. The year is 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic is very recent, and even though they have survived it, the consequences it has left in their lives are tremendous. Additionally it has affected their company and, even though they have been able to pay their workers and keep their company open during the pandemic, it is now about to go bankrupt. After one of the four of them goes behind the others' backs and accidentally receives a sales proposal, they wonder if selling is a good idea or not. The characters feel they have given so much to the company, and also lost so much because of it. With the economical stresses of the pandemic, exiting by way of sale may present a good option. Hence, they remember the day in which they met when they were only eighteen years old, and the situations that led them to the creation of Aurora Handmade Marmalade Company. They remember, too, the sacrifices they've made, and wonder if selling will be worth it. They also argue about how this decision might affect their personal lives and the relationships between them. The episode ends with the death of a doctor during the pandemic.

The pilot is divided in two timelines. One of them shows the four friends at thirty-three, in their already built up company that is about to go bankrupt. The other one shows them in their first year of university, meeting, getting to know each other in their personal lives, and coming up with the idea of selling marmalade.

Before I focus on the world of the story, I'd like to get into my inspiration for this show. I was born in Lima, Peru in 1999, and spent my childhood and teenagerhood watching TV shows from the United States of America. Most of the USA shows I watched were sitcoms. López (2008, as cited in Padilla Castillo & Requeijo Rey, 2010) shares the BBC definition of this genre, which states it is a comic TV show that depicts daily live situations always with the same group of characters. I enjoyed the sitcoms, despite that I did not understand them thoroughly. I did not understand that, even though I enjoyed the format, I did not connect with the shows culturally, given that I lived in a South American Spanish-speaking country and came from a traditional Catholic family. Without this understanding, I grew up thinking I was one of those people who simply did not like watching TV. This confusion was clarified years later when I grew up.

It was when I turned eighteen years old and started university, that I started to love it again. I wasn't seeing my school friends anymore, so the social pressure of watching the same TV shows and talking about them during breaks was gone. That's when I stopped forcing myself to watch what everybody watched and started looking for TV shows that actually caught my attention. I found a lot of TV shows that no one I knew had heard of, but that I thought were amazing, most of them made in Spain. Before *La casa de papel* (Pina et al., 2017-2021) became popular, I was already binge-watching Spanish series such as *Bajo sospecha* (Atresmedia, 2015-2016), *El barco* (Écija, Pina & Escobar, 2011 - 2013), *Gran Hotel* (Campos & Fernández-Valdés, 2011 - 2013) and many others that had me so hooked that I just couldn't stop looking at the screen.

What I remember most when I started watching these TV shows is the first episode of *Bajo sospecha* (Atresmedia, 2015-2016), which begins with the First Communion of the character Alicia. The First Communion is a Catholic sacrament. It is posterior to the Baptism and previous to the Confirmation. The central aspect of this ceremony

is that the parishioner will receive the communion wafer, which represents the Body of Christ, for the first time. As I was raised Catholic, I quickly understood this reference: I myself had my First Communion Ceremony when I was a girl. I remember thinking that it was the first time that I saw something on TV that I was actually familiar with. Even though the TV show was from Spain, the shared religion made me feel connected to it. It was a game changer seeing part of my own cultural background represented.

The aforementioned cultural representation and the scholarly and social environment in the University inspired me to create a story that took place during that stage of life. This setting was very interesting for me, given that this offered room to explore the characters' conflicts as young adults. University students already have a past: first partners and first heartbreaks have already happened, best friends are already there, and you have, up to a certain measure, figured out who you are. Aside from that, people at this age are acquiring adult responsibilities new to them, while still having fun and reckless experiences that started in high school.

It was due to these newfound influences (the TV shows from Spain and the university environment) that I started writing scripts as well as books. I got the idea of writing a story about some wealthy friends reminiscing about the time they met in university and started a company that made them rich. I then decided I would place my main characters at the age of eighteen, on their first day of university, meeting due to a group assignment. Since they were getting to know each other in university, each of them already had a personal background. Aside from that, university is an environment in which one finds so many people that one is not forced to be friends with anybody he or she doesn't like. Hence, with this knowledge I decided that for my TV show I would have a group of friends founded in acceptance and respect of one another. With this came something that would be key in my story, and it is the way they would support each other.

I named the programme *My Table* because marmalade (the product the company they founded would sell) is something we all love to have on our tables, and at the same time, our best friends, those who have almost become family, are the ones we want to have sitting with us at our table.

The story is to be set in two timelines: the past, when they were in university and starting their company; and the present, a moment in which they receive the offer to sell their company and because of this they start to argue for the first time in fifteen years.

Like many ideas, many of the components of the story were loose or not considered in-depth at the beginning. I didn't consider beforehand, for example, where to place the story. I always pictured it in a city, but not a specific one. City elements, such as buses, malls and parks were always settings where this story took place, but never did I choose one real-life city to place it in. When I started writing this story during the Master's, I received the suggestion of placing the story in Peru, and particularly in the university I attended, given that it was an environment I knew well. Just as I heard this suggestion, I was unexpectedly enchanted by the idea of writing a story set in my own cultural background, but at that very moment, I also knew that I could not set a story in Peru excluding COVID-19 and the impact it had. Therefore, I placed the second timeline of the story (the one in which my characters are in their thirties) in 2021, the year after the COVID-19 lockdown, in which Peru was still not at all recovered from the way the pandemic destroyed it. The past timeline of the story would then be set in 2006, a historically important year in Peru, given that it was during that year that the nation changed presidents.

With this outline, I could start writing the story. But, why was I writing it? What was the question I wanted to answer, especially if I was setting the story in two years that were so important for the contemporary history of my country? I set the following research question: how a TV show set in my home country, Peru, might serve to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives and relationships of four characters who are connected by a long history of friendship and a shared business venture? With this project, I aim to explore the intricate social and political dynamics that unfolded when COVID-19 struck my homeland, by examining the relationships of four friends. The two timelines serve this purpose because they provide a contrast: characters' lives and jobs are jeopardised by the pandemic in a number of ways. To choose dramedy as a genre is also important because it is functional to expose comedy creating funny moments to entertain the public, while exposing what

COVID-19 meant for my characters. I will delve into the genre further in this work. What I've read has served me to explore this issue and to develop my script.

In the exegesis, I will delve into the world of the story and marmalade making. Then, I will delve in a detailed literature review about dramedy and sitcom, characters' development, COVID-19 in Peru and millennials, since that's the generation of my characters. After that, I will do a comparative analysis with other pilots. And, before I finish, I will get into the process of developing my script. Finally, I will present my conclusions.

The world of the story

As a Peruvian, I spent my whole childhood, teenagehood and the first years of my twenties in Lima and I only moved countries in 2022, when I had already finished university. I clearly remember that during 2006 there were presidential elections, and all of us were asking one another who our families were voting for. I remember Alan García was elected. Years later, when presidents kept on changing (given that in Peru they change every five years), my father kept on saying that during this government of Alan García, the economy was favoured. Because of this, I chose to situate one of the timelines of my story in that year. It is in this year that my characters start their marmalade company.

In 2020, days before my birthday, Peru went under quarantine because of COVID-19. 2020 is a year I can remember clearly. Even though there was nothing new to tell about how life went inside my house, outside a lot of things were happening. Mostly, we heard the news about the cases of contagion and death, and the awful reality going on in the hospitals. There were people who tried to go out as much as possible, whether it was to go grocery shopping or do other strictly necessary chores, but at my household, we tried to do the opposite: we were trying to get everything delivered and avoid going out as much as we could. The economy was visibly affected. According to Palomino-Ruiz et al., in their article Job Insecurity According to the Mental Health of Workers in 25 Peruvian Cities during the COVID-

19 Pandemic (2022), given that the pandemic led a number of diverse businesses to close, from start-ups to big sport events, many people lost their jobs. Reading more into it, these redundant workers were civilians using other companies' services that now had to stop using them, so the economy was hit harder. In 2021 the situation did not change much, and because of the new waves of COVID-19 new quarantine protocols were established, yet people obeyed these less than previously, and education continued being offered online.

I decided to place my story in these two timelines. I wanted the characters' company to grow, and the easiest way to do it was to locate it hand in hand with the Peruvian economy. I placed them at the beginning of 2006, the year of the change of presidents. The president in Peru doesn't change until July 28th, but it was functional for the story that the characters met at the start of the semester and that the enterprise had started instead of only being an idea when that change occurred.

I chose the year 2021 because that was the year Peruvians dealt with the consequences of COVID protocols more than with COVID itself. There were new quarantines, but these were neither established nor followed very strongly because those of 2020 had hit the economy too hard. Hence, my characters are trying to bring their company back up after it resisted 2020, the way a lot of other Peruvian enterprises could not.

Also important for the story is for me to establish how students lived during their university years in Peru. Unlike in other countries, in Peru people live with their parents until the end of their university studies. Most of the time, people only leave their parents' houses when they get married. My characters, while still living in the place they grew up, represent a range of the different socio-economic groups of Lima.

The story depicts how my characters founded a startup Handmade Marmalade Company in 2006. The company grew and became successful until COVID hit. In 2021 the company is struggling. Why I chose marmalade as the device to link the characters will be discussed in the next section.

Marmalade

Marmalade, for me, is what we call “mermelada” in Spanish. We also have the word “jalea”, which we regularly translate to “jam”, but for us there’s a difference between the two of them. Whereas “jalea” (jam) is basically the jelly made by boiling sugar and fruit, “mermelada” (marmalade) is caramelized jelly containing pieces of fruit.

There is nothing in the Peruvian context that makes marmalade a special kind of sweet treat. It is true that we have a lot of fruits in our country, but it is also true that marmalade is not a typical Peruvian spread. We have a lot of typical national food, desserts and sweet spreads, but marmalade is not associated as part of our food culture. The selection by the characters and their marmalade factory startup follows a personal preference of mine. I love marmalade, making and eating it and, as familiar as I am with it, I still always find it incredible.

To go deeper into the world of the story, I chose for my characters to start a business that will grow into a Handmade Marmalade Company. I chose for it to be handmade because this story was supposed to be about friendship, a chosen family, comedy and sweetness. In my family, I’ve always heard the saying that a kitchen is the home’s heart. Without realising it, while thinking about the pilot’s scenes, I always imagined them making marmalade together, closing jars and sticking their factory logos and production date labels on them. Having the characters personally involved in this process also brings an invitation to multiple comic scenes happening around it. Keeping the idea of the marmalade making being handmade gives the story a funny, sweet, sticky vibe, which is what I love the most about this story and about marmalade itself.

The process of marmalade making is very simple. According to Cocineros Argentinos, in their video RECETA SÚPER FÁCIL DE MERMELADA DE DURAZNO (2022), it is basically mixing fruit with sugar in proportions of 4:1 and adding the juice of one lemon per every two kilograms of fruit. In their video, the recommendation is

to leave the mix overnight and the next day cook it in a pot at low heat (Cocineros Argentinos, 2022). Nonetheless, I have made marmalade my whole life, and I've always mixed the fruit with the sugar and lemon and put it on the fire or heat straight away, which is what my characters will be doing. The stirring is slow and intermittent, done only to avoid the sugar from sticking to the bottom of the pot and caramelising. Once the marmalade is ready and cools down, it is ready to eat.

Nonetheless, the show I'm writing is not only about marmalade making. If so, it would be a recipe or cooking show, and I would not be doing a Master's of Creative Writing to develop that idea. This TV show is about four very different people, who in any other circumstances wouldn't have been friends, connecting thanks to the marmalade.

There have been multiple TV shows that start with this premise, only that the element the characters rotate around is different. In many teen TV shows, the element is music, and the characters are sixteen-year-olds that discover they have a talent and become friends. One clear example of this is *Rebelde Way* (Morena, 2002 - 2003), a TV show in which the son of an abusive millionaire, the daughter of a stripper, the daughter of an absent father, and the son of a murdered man meet and dislike each other, but grow closer and closer because the music they make together sounds amazing.

In the case of *My Table*, the element is not music, but marmalade, and it is not a band they form, but a company they build. This is not the first time food is used as the element that brings people together and serves as a connector in stories. In the movie *No Reservations* (Hicks, 2007) a woman loses her sister and brings her niece up, after the death of her mother, in the kitchen of a restaurant. In a similar way, in my platform series food serves as the element that keeps this eclectic group of friends together and helps them endure the difficulties of life and the consequences of the pandemic.

Literature Review

Dramedy and Sitcom

According to Nash, in his book *Save the Cat! Writes for TV: The Last Book on Creating Binge-Worthy Content You'll Ever Need* (2021), "In TV there really are only two high level genres: Drama and Comedy" (Nash, 2021, p. 15). Graciela Padilla Castillo and Paula Requeijo Rey, in their article La sitcom o comedia de situación: orígenes, evolución y nuevas prácticas share this thought, and add that drama and comedy are not isolated from each other (p. 192). I will now explain comedy (to which I will add the definition of sitcom), then drama (where I will add the definition of melodrama and telenovela), to finally get into the dramedy genre.

Alex Epstein in his book *Crafty TV Writing. Thinking Inside the Box* (2006), states that comedy is based in cruelty and making characters go through something bad without having them grow from it. He also states that comedy can be carried out by making a familiar situation absurd. According to Mª del Mar Grandío Pérez and Patricia Diego González, in their article LA INFLUENCIA DE LA sitcom AMERICANA EN LA PRODUCCIÓN DE COMEDIAS TELEVISIVAS EN ESPAÑA. EL CASO DE "FRIENDS" Y "7 VIDAS", the key aspect of sitcoms is the reaction of the characters to their circumstances.

Now, I will get into what drama is. According to Epstein (2006), "Drama is usually about high stakes" (p. 145). This is relevant to my story, given that my characters have everything to lose (marriages, friendships, the company they built together).

Juan Piñón, Giuliana Cassano and Constanza Mujica (2020), in their article Presentación: Melodrama, telenovela y globalización, delve into the definitions of melodrama and telenovela. They state that a melodrama is dedicated to the representation of a society (Piñón, Cassano and Mujica, 2020). Piñón, Cassano and

Mujica (2020) talk about the telenovela as a “melodrama televisual” [televisual melodrama] (p. 4).

I believe my pilot fits into this category too, because the characters belong to various social statuses, and serve as a representation of them. More than that, they have very different origin stories, representing orphan or abandoned children, single parent children, and children from traditional families. Even more, in the storyline in which the main characters are in their thirties, they are starting to form their own families, representing a more contemporary society.

But now, having delved into the definitions of comedy and drama, and their most important forms in regards to this exegesis, I want to get into the one that Nash (2021) considers to be “one additional genre: Dramedy” (p. 16). This is the genre my pilot is inserted in. Nash (2021) defines dramedy as “drama with a lighter tone” (p. 16).

As its own name shows, “dramedy” is the combination of drama and comedy. According to Salamova in her article Adaptation of stand-up persona to the narratives of sitcom and dramedy (2016), “the format of dramedy, due to its hybrid nature, provides a wide range of opportunities to reinforce the critical message about the modern person and his/her everyday life” (p. 37). Havas and Sulima, in Through the Gaps of My Fingers: Genre, Femininity, and Cringe Aesthetics in Dramedy Television (2020) state that:

> By means of these series’ frequently humorous approaches to dark subject matter and/or tragicomic portrayals of characters, they invite fluctuating viewing positions that alternate between laughter, uneasiness, and frustration, provoking ambiguous reactions and discussions in social media, journalism, and academic commentary (p.76).

This way, dramedy is a genre that’s supposed to be light, but that can also be used to criticize the daily problems of society.

I chose this genre because I think it is the one that best serves my story. *My Table* intends to narrate the problems that a group of entrepreneurs face in their everyday lives after COVID–19 hits their lives at every level possible. They have to face new family challenges (such as the loss of a partner), personal problems (for example, a marital crisis), interpersonal issues (fighting with friends over decisions being taken to handle this difficult situation), and business bankruptcy (like the one their marmalade company is facing); hence, a dramatic component predominates the writing. Nonetheless, as a consumer or watcher, I dislike when an entire series is made out of difficulties, which is why I chose to add comedy to it. Juan Pablo's character is goofy, and the one who will be bringing the most laughter to the screen. Tomás' character is less loose, but the scenes with his son will always be sweet. Abril's interactions with her family and her marmalade-making will always bring funny comments. This will not be because she's a goofy person. On the contrary, it happens because she's so serious and matter of fact, qualities that unintentionally make her witty. And Constanza will be bringing humour by being the only person in her family who's actually conscious of the reality of the country in which they live, rather than the money bubble her family and childhood friends brought her up in.

In the comparative analysis section, I will make a contrast between other TV series that fall in this genre and my script.

Character Development

This script is the pilot of a TV series about four main characters, two females and two males. From the beginning, I wanted each of them to have a particular story. As I mentioned before, by introducing these characters when they're already in university, I am giving them a start that doesn't exclude their past. In this stage, students are still teenagers, but at the same time, they are starting to insert themselves into adult life. I wanted to provide characters easy to relate to, but I did not want to fall into any clichés or stereotypes. My intention, then, was to create complete and complex

characters in their teenage versions, but with still a lot to develop, because I am also revealing their adult selves.

According to Jamie Nash, in his book *Save the Cat! Writes for TV: The Last Book on Creating Binge-Worthy Content You'll Ever Need* (2021), the creation of good characters is extremely important in stories. In his own words,

> TV viewers are choose-ey. You gotta make a case for why your show is gonna be invited into their living rooms. Truth is, people spend more time with Walter White and Sheldon Cooper and Sheriff Rick Grimes than their extended families. These "guests" need depth, they need to not get on watchers' nerves, they need to be worthy of people's time. (Nash, 2021, p.21)

So, to give these characters' depth, he states that there are three necessary keys: a "flaw" (Nash, 2021, p.24), a "want" (Nash, 2021, p.24), and a "need" (Nash, 2021, p.24). Nash (2021) defines "A flaw - a personal problem that needs fixing" (p.24), "A want - a trackable goal that they're pursuing" (p. 24) and "A need - a life lesson that must be learned" (p.24). He exposes that the "hero" (Nash, 2021, p.24) (which for him is the protagonist) will desire something, but that through it, he or she is looking to heal inside, to cover or repair an issue that lies within, or to simply prove themselves something (Nash, 2021). The "hero" (Nash, 2021, p.24) is not aware of this, in fact, Nash (2021) talks about "the broken compass" (p.28) which leads the characters into the decisions that keep the story going: the characters know what they want, but not necessarily what they need, so they keep on making decision after decision in the way of their want, without realising that they are just acting out of an internal unresolved issue (Nash, 2021).

Madeline DiMaggio also suggests deepening the characters' personal psychology in her book *How To Write For Television* (2008). According to her, it is vital to know what kind of life the characters led before (DiMaggio, 2008). She states that it is not necessary to put that in the story, but that knowing it as an author is very important (DiMaggio, 2008). Hence, I decided to delve into the past of my characters focusing

mostly on the relationship they held with their family members. I will now unveil this and who they were at 18 years old, when the story started.

My first protagonist character is Constanza. She is the daughter of a millionaire but, unlike what we could expect from a girl whose family has the most expensive cars on the market, she drives an old, modest Toyota and is completely devoted to social work. She doesn't care about the socioeconomic stratum her friends come from. She has a brother and a sister very close in age: her brother is ten months older than she is and her sister eleven months younger. She has a best-friends bond with both of them, but especially with her sister, to whom she knows she can tell anything. She is in love with Hans, a medical student who is a friend of her brother's. Constanza has a good relationship with her father, but she is not at all as close to him as she is to her siblings or her mother, with whom she has the sweetest relationship: her mother tries her hardest to take care of an indomitable, kind-hearted, independent daughter, and Constanza keeps trying, in the sweetest ways she knows, to show her that she is completely fine and doesn't need to be taken care of all the time.

Abril is the second female protagonist. She is the one who brings the marmalade into her group of friends: she knows how to make it and everyone is surprised how delicious it is. She was abandoned by her parents and lives with her aunt's family. Abril rotated through the whole family's homes, until her newly wed aunt took her in as a ten-year-old and raised her as a daughter. Despite her aunt and uncle always treating her gently, she feels undeserving of the love they give her, and tries harder than she should to take care of their two children. For her, spoiling and caring for her two little cousins is a way to thank this couple who adopted her and, hopefully, make her presence not feel like the inconvenience she's always felt that she was. She has a boyfriend called José. He is the definition of an ordinary guy, and she is deeply in love.

My first male main character is Juan Pablo. He comes from a very humble family who live in a poor neighbourhood. In fact, he's the first person in his family who will access a university education. This is very important for his relatives, given that it means not only that Juan Pablo himself will have a university career, but also that they have a family member that attended university. The only inconvenience is that,

while his whole family expects him to study Law, he has secretly transferred to Communications for Development. He knows both of his parents work two shifts to bring him up: his father is a construction worker during the day and a watchman at night, and his mother is a housemaid during daily shifts and cleans offices after five. He feels terrible for changing courses without telling them, but he knows they will oppose, and his desire to make the world a better place is bigger than the shame he feels for lying to them. In front of his classmates, he is not ashamed of the place he lives or his economic situation, but he is always aware of his appearance because he wants others to see him the way he sees himself: as a very intelligent guy with a lot to offer in order to ameliorate the country's situation.

My last main character is Tomás. He is a single eighteen-year-old father, who needs to reconcile being a full-time dad to a one-month old baby while studying. He is homosexual, proud and out of the closet, but he is not dating at all: he is a parent and that is his only priority. During the pilot, he makes no complaints about starting young: far away from stereotypes, his son is the shining light in his life. I chose to represent him this way because teenage parenthood is only seen negatively and, even though it is hard, I would like to highlight the good parts about it as well. His relationship with his mother is good, but the same cannot be said of the one he holds with his father. They were never close: his father would work and then watch TV, never paying him enough attention. However, the relationship broke irrevocably when his father realised Tomás was homosexual. Trying to please his father, Tomás dated a girl, but when she got pregnant, he realised the lie had to end. The girl never wanted to be a mother so young, but she was pro life, so she had the baby. Tomás couldn't stand the idea of never knowing where his son ended up, so he kept the baby. Tomás and his father never saw each other again, but he pays for his education and sends him a monthly allowance, which Tomás uses entirely to provide for his baby.

The four of them, each due to their own personal background, have the "flaw" (Nash, 2021, p. 24) that they want to prove themselves they do not need anyone else. Their "want" (Nash, 2021, p. 24) is their marmalade company. Throughout this story (of which for this Master's degree only the pilot is being evaluated) these characters will

look to bring up their marmalade company, without realising that it is actually coming from their “broken compass” (Nash, 2021, p. 28).

Between the teenage and adult versions of each of my characters, there’s always a change. The time between these two ages is fifteen years, so it is expected that, during this time, multiple facts, circumstances, and decisions might have brought them to form in a way that might either be predictable from their younger version, but also might be very different. Something vital for my characters has been, as I mentioned before, the pandemic. All my character’s adult versions evolved massively when I decided to add COVID-19 to the story. They were no longer just the grown-up version of their younger selves, changed only by some events that happened between these fifteen years (that would keep us interested, make us want to see what happened that changed them). Now COVID itself is a circumstance that moves them.

For their adult version, I am focusing more on their “need” (Nash, 2021, p.24), meaning, what they have to learn (Nash, 2021). In this timeline, their marmalade factory is about to go bankrupt, and they are considering selling it. Regardless of the decision they will make by the end of the first season, they will finally be faced with their “lesson” (Nash, 2021, p.24).

Constanza, at 33, is pregnant and married to Juan Pablo (one of the two male protagonists). She is the one who sees the company’s numbers and, when COVID–19 hits, she doesn’t manage to be completely honest: her sumptuous upbringing and the speed in which the events of the pandemic occurred make her go behind her friends’ backs. Despite that, as a person she is still very helpful, and hasn’t stopped doing charity work. And, in spite of being married to Juan Pablo, she still cares for Hans, the love of her youth, and is always concerned for his well being, mostly because he is a doctor, which has exposed him to the virus.

Abril developed into a businesswoman, completely driven and passionate about marmalade making. Having broken up with her boyfriend José, and being very sad about it, she now prefers one-night stands to relationships: she no longer wastes time nor energy in anything that is not directly related to her work. What has

changed, and this is positive, is the relationship she has developed with her family. After some members of her family get COVID-19, Abril takes care of them and stops seeing herself as an outsider in the family, and starts seeing herself rather as her uncle and aunt's daughter. She is probably the only character of the story to have a good consequence from the pandemic.

Juan Pablo has changed a lot since he was younger, but not because of COVID. At 33, Juan Pablo's insecurities come to light: he doesn't believe that Constanza, his wife, truly loves him, because he fears that she might see him as inferior due to his origins (even though she knew about them since the beginning). Aside from that, he fears that she might love her ex-boyfriend Hans more, especially now that he knows that Hans is still, up to some measure, in Constanza's life. The company and the money that came with it have given him a self-confidence that is fictitious. He used to be sure of himself, unashamed of the world he came from, always looking over his appearance because he wanted the kids from university, who were economically better off than him, to take him as what he felt he was: a smart guy that could do something to change the Peruvian situation. Now, he is an insecure adult, afraid that the society he has entered through his marriage and the success of his company will take him as what he used to be: a kid from a poor neighbourhood.

Tomás is a character that doesn't change much in relation to his core, given that at 33, just like at 18, he is a single father and is devoted to his son. In every decision he faces (including the selling of the company), his son is the centre. The difference is that he is in this same position because of COVID-19: it is due to this disease that he loses Gonzalo, his partner, and is left alone with his son again, but this time with limited health. The virus got him too and, although he's in recovery, he still needs assisted help, which limits his job performance as well. This character's adult version was inspired by the husband of a friend of my mother's who, after surviving COVID, got the same symptoms as the ones presented in Tomás. Aside from that, in Peru the homosexual union is not legalised, and Tomás highlights the sorrow of having lost his partner and not being able to call himself his widower. Tomás is now a sad character, who reflects the sadness the pandemic left behind, the physical ailments that some people face after the virus and some social problems in relation to how the Peruvian laws regard same sex marriage.

The “lesson” (Nash, 2021, p.24), fifteen years in the making, to their “need” (Nash, 2021, p.24) will be that Constanza, Abril, Juan Pablo and Tomás do not need to prove themselves or anyone else that they can do good on their own. Throughout the seasons of the show, they will come to understand that human beings need one another and that it is okay to ask for help when necessary. This understanding will set them free from their “flaw” (Nash, 2021, p. 24), and they will be able to make their final decision in regard to the company without this burden.

Covid-19 in Peru

When I received the suggestion that my story should develop in Peru, I was thrilled to place it in my own social and cultural background. I loved knowing I would have a story I could so well identify with. Because of this reason, I decided that COVID had to have the impact it has had in real life. It had to be a story every Peruvian could somehow relate to, and minimizing how COVID hit this country would only drive in the opposite direction.

In Peru the number of deaths due to COVID-19 was tremendous. According to Lossio in his article Covid-19 en el Perú: respuestas estatales y sociales. Covid-19 in Peru: state and social responses (2021), when the quarantine ended on June 26th 2020, there were 268,602 cases of COVID and 8,761 deaths. The pilot I’ve written is placed in this environment. The characters in my story lived and worked in this context, as did their friends and relatives. It is not realistic to overlook such an eventful disease. Because of that, I chose to see my characters' lives affected by COVID-19 in a number of ways, and my research inspired me to take into consideration every possible aspect.

There were some sequels to COVID-19 that can be considered minor. One of them was the loss of the sense of smell. According to Barón-Sánchez et al., in their article Afectación del sentido del olfato y el gusto en la enfermedad leve por coronavirus (COVID-19) en pacientes españoles (2020) even though all the patients on their trial

recovered the sense of taste, for 22.6 percent of them the loss of the sense of smell lasted. I wanted to depict in my script that even though the virus was not always lethal, and some people experienced it as a cold, there were still consequences. To represent that these complications are completely liveable, I decided not to make it protagonic. This will be the consequence a secondary character suffers.

I do not mean to state that there are consequences that do not matter: they all do. Nonetheless, there are ones harder to live with. This is why I chose to represent this in the characters that suffer them in my story: minor characters suffer from minor consequences, and main characters suffer from the main ones. According to Ponce Lino et al., in Secuelas que enfrentan los pacientes que superan el COVID 19 (2020), some people have experienced dyspnoea even after they recovered. This I consider to be harder to overcome, and that's why I chose one of my main characters to be the one who has to live it. By placing this issue in a character of that relevancy, I can give it enough space on the screen to be a problem that gets represented as its whole.

But the most tragic consequence is death itself. That's why I chose two of my main characters to lose their loved ones to the pandemic. My story is set in two times, so the characters who die will be alive in the past timeline, and their absence in the grown-up scenes highlights the loss. In addition, by having my protagonists not be the ones who die but the ones that suffer from the death of their partners and lifelong friends, I represent in my story the emotional consequences of this disease.

Before COVID, walking beside the *malecón* of Miraflores, in Peru, used to be a pleasure. Now, there are tributes to the doctors that died saving people during the pandemic. According to Pacovilca-Alejo et al. in Determinantes de letalidad por la COVID-19 en trabajadores de salud en la primera y segunda olas en Perú (2022), during the second wave, 13,047 caregivers in the health sector between the ages of 30 and 39 got infected, and 69 of them died. My character's age in the present timeline of the story is thirty-three years old. The aforementioned fact inspired me to represent this as well, and I did so by choosing one of the characters that dies to be a healthcare provider. This character will not die during the first wave of COVID but during the second, forming part of the number I just cited.

As I've noted, my research led me to be very concise in the way COVID-19 marked my characters' development from the past timeline to the present one. But to write them as whole characters, I have also taken into consideration the generation they form part of.

Millennials

The generation the main characters of my story belong to is the Y, better known as Millennial Generation, given that they were born in the year 1988, and people born between the years 1981 and 2000 belong to this generation, as Begazo Villanueva and Fernandez Baca say in their article Los millennials peruanos: características y proyecciones de vida (2015). Since they were born around the middle of this age group, their siblings, partners and other friends also belong to this generation. I consider it important to state the most relevant characteristics of this group of people and highlight which of these ones are central in determined characters. Since this story revolves around these people building up a company in one of its timelines, and them dealing with interpersonal issues and circumstances in their past storyline just as much as in the present one, I wanted to study Millennials' work and relationship ethics to create more convincing writing.

According to Begazo Villanueva and Fernandez Baca (2015), millennials are always trying to open their own companies. They don't want jobs that won't make a difference, but at the same time, they are looking for commodities around their work, such as working from home and having flexible schedules, not office hours (Begazo Villanueva & Fernandez Baca, 2015). For them, success is very much related to doing what they love and becoming great at it (Begazo Villanueva & Fernandez Baca, 2015). This is a key characteristic of all my characters, given that they devote themselves, since the age of eighteen, to build their marmalade company and make it grow, in spite of also being first year university students, still not sure if they want to pursue the career they've chosen or if they want to change majors, some of them

being very busy with extracurricular activities, and one of them also being a parent. They embody and represent, then, the entrepreneurs of their generation.

Relationship-wise, Begazo Villanueva and Fernandez Baca (2015) explain that this generation is very different from the ones seen before. For starters, they are open to homosexual relationships (Begazo Villanueva & Fernandez Baca, 2015). This will be very important because one of my characters maintains a relationship with someone of his own gender, and then mourns his loss. It is very important for the story that his friends not only accept his relationship, but also support it and, after his partner's loss, are always there for him. This wouldn't have been possible if I wanted to write a realistic story, set in another generation.

Mónaco Gerónimo, in the article Pareja y bienestar en jóvenes de la generación millenial: un programa de educación emocional para unas relaciones afectivas saludables (2021) expands on the topic observing that although Millennials want to fall in love and be loved by a partner, they don't necessarily want to get married. They prioritise their personal future, instead of choosing it in relation to their partner's (Mónaco Gerónimo, 2021). This will also be central in another one of my characters, who for years dates a boy whom she believes to be the love of her life, and they take separate ways simply because their professional futures don't match.

Methodology and Plan

As a creative-led thesis, my methodology was primarily to look at examples of the type of series I want to be writing, to see what works and what does not from my own perspective and to figure out how to build my own script with this in mind. My focus was on how the characters were developed in a way that seemed natural and supported the plot I had in mind.

Comparative analysis with other pilots

I chose the script pilots of *How I Met Your Mother* (Bays & Thomas, 2005) and *The Sex Lives of College Girls* (Kaling & Noble, 2020). It is important for me to highlight that I am not using the aired pilots, but rather I am analysing the scripts of the pilots and comparing them to mine. The first one was selected by me because it is a comedy that happens in two timelines. In this, Ted Mosby, the main character, tells his children how he met their mother years ago (Bays & Thomas, 2005). The main story, then, happens in Ted's youth, and his older self (the one who tells his children the story) is a voice-over (Bays & Thomas, 2005). In spite of that, in the pilot, and by times during the progression of the seasons, the children are shown (Bays & Thomas, 2005; Bays et al., 2005 - 2014). Even though my pilot does give importance to both timelines, I thought it was appropriate to compare it with this pilot, because it starts with relating past facts from a posterior moment. The other example I chose is *The Sex Lives of College Girls* because it is the story of four girls meeting on their first day of university and, despite having very different backgrounds and very little in common, they become friends (Kaling & Noble, 2020; Kaling et al., 2021 – to date). I thought this was a good pilot to analyse because my story is also centred on four very different eighteen-year-olds meeting on their first day of university.

I also thought it was convenient to compare my pilot to another Latin-American TV show. I chose *La casa de las flores* (*House of Flowers*) (Caro et al., 2018; Ley et al., 2018 - 2020), a Netflix show. This one works perfectly because it resembles the nature of my story very much: according to Internet Movie Database (https://www.imdb.com/), it is a dark comedy with drama. This show was made for a streaming platform series, just like the pilot I've written. This series is about an

aristocratic family that owns a flower shop, and the catalyst element of the pilot is that the father's lover kills herself at said family business (Caro et al., 2018; Ley et al., 2018 – 2020). Once this death happens, Pandora's box is open, and secrets of the family start coming to light (Caro et al., 2018; Ley et al., 2018 – 2020). In this particular case I could not obtain the script. Hence, I am basing this analysis in the aired episode (Caro et al., 2018), which works well enough because of the criteria I am establishing for this comparison. I will now analyse and compare these pilots with mine against the criteria of introduction of characters, how they handle timelines, genre and the surprise element at the end.

The first criteria I want to evaluate is the introduction of the characters in the pilot. As I have mentioned before, according to Nash (2021), it is very important to have good characters. In *How I Met Your Mother*, the main character's best friends are introduced one by one, and with them the role they play in the story (Bays & Thomas, 2005). Since their first scene, we know that Robin will be the girl he is in love with and Marshall one of his best friends (Bays & Thomas, 2005). In *The Sex Lives of College Girls*, the girls are also introduced one by one (Kaling & Noble, 2020). When they first appear, they are accompanied by some of their family members (Kaling & Noble, 2020). Hence, in these scenes we don't only get a glimpse of who they are, but of their backgrounds as well. Each of them is shown as an independent individual, with differences between them in personality, but at the same time, their families' presence characterises them as from different social groups. In *La casa de las flores*, characters get introduced and then the dynamic they'll be most involved in is foreshadowed. For example, Julián de la Mora (one of the aristocratic children of the family) is introduced in an intimate moment with his girlfriend (Caro et al., 2018). And Diego Olvera is mentioned to be a financial helper of the family (Caro et al., 2018). Nonetheless, in the first scene they share, Julián and Diego's interaction is particular, and in their first scene alone it is clear that they're lovers (Caro et al., 2018). Even though the dialogue is sometimes descriptive, it is shown how the character's are and what their major interaction with one another will be.

My pilot differs from all of these because it introduces each character twice (first as adults, then as teenagers). Nonetheless, what this pilot has in common with the ones

analysed is that the characters are introduced one by one and in relation to their environment. The only ones introduced together in their adulthood are Constanza and Juan Pablo: they are married at this stage of the story, and to present them together implies presenting their lives as well. When my four characters are introduced as adults, the viewer gets to observe who they are, their marital status, their priorities and struggles. And, very like the TV show pilots analysed, we get to quickly observe the connection between them, which is their friendship and the company they run together. After seeing them as adults they're exposed younger, and the spectator remarks how similar or different they are from their older selves, which opens the question of which events might have made them change. The introduction of these characters in their younger versions is very similar to the one of *The Sex Lives of College Girls*, because characters are with their family and social environment. I do this because I believe it is important to represent the different Peruvian realities. And, like in *La casa de las flores*, I try to state as soon as possible the bond that unites them, which also is why I introduced Constanza and Juan Pablo together (since they are united by marriage) and why I brought them to the door of their company at scene four.

In second place, I analyse the use of two timelines. This is not a tool used in *The Sex Lives of College Girls* nor in *La casa de las flores*, so I will only analyse it in *How I Met Your Mother*. In this show, the timeline in which the main character is already a father is very brief, and the story happens at the moment the voice over father is narrating (Bays & Thomas, 2005; Bays et al., 2005 - 2014). My pilot is different in this aspect. As I've mentioned, my story also shows two timelines, set in the years 2006 and 2021, and they're both important. The 2021 timeline is important because this is the moment in which their enterprise is about to go bankrupt, whereas the one in 2006 matters because it shows when these people met, connected and decided to try to sell marmalade for a university project. A lot of questions emerge from the 2021 timeline, such as how Juan Pablo and Constanza ended up together? Why is Constanza no longer with Hans? What happened to Abril's parents? How did Tomás get together with Gonzalo? But these questions can only be answered by looking into the past (which is 2006) and the lives they have lived since they met.

The third aspect in which I want to compare these pilots is genre. According to Internet Movie Database (https://www.imdb.com/), *How I Met Your Mother* is a comedy, drama and romance series, *The Sex Lives of College Girls* is a comedy and *La casa de las flores* is a comedy and drama. As I stated before, *How I Met Your Mother* is a voice over narrator who tells his children the whole journey he went through to meet their mother (Bays & Thomas, 2005; Bays et al., 2005 - 2014). The comic elements on this pilot, from my point of view, come from the interactions the main character in his young version holds with his friends. There are also some romantic elements in the pilot, given that Ted (the father) meets a girl he likes very much, and his best friend, Marshall, gets engaged (Bays & Thomas, 2005). Nonetheless, I do not find any dramatic elements in the pilot. I believe Internet Movie Database (https://www.imdb.com/) refers to how these are played out throughout the whole series (Bays et al., 2005 - 2014). In *The Sex Lives of College Girls*, the funny moments are held by the interaction of the parents towards the generation of their daughters. Throughout the series, after the parents have dropped them off, their appearance in the show is constant, but limited, and the comedy moments do not limit themselves to that, but in the pilot I believe they are (Kaling & Noble, 2020; Kaling et al., 2021 – to date). It is also very important to state that this is so since the very first scene, in which the mother of one of the characters stops two teenagers that are kissing (Kaling & Noble, 2020). By adding this to the first scene, the tone of the show is being set, and that is something I do in my pilot as well. *La casa de las flores*, on its end, holds the comic elements very much intertwined with the dramatic ones. One moment that clearly illustrates this is when two of the characters fight over which one of them will take care of the dead body they just found on the family business (Caro et al., 2018).

My pilot has elements of comedy, and it relates to the three of these pilots' ways. Just like in *How I Met Your Mother*, they come from the interactions between the characters, for example, the one in which Tomás' son can not respond to a question set out by his teacher. Nonetheless, there are also some situational comic moments, such as the moment in which Constanza cannot open her car door. In the line of *How I Met Your Mother*, some romantic elements also appear, like eighteen-year-old Abril coming back home with her boyfriend and flirting at her house door. However, I would not consider this TV show a romantic one, and therefore I will not delve into

this genre anymore. Staying in comedy, the first scene of *My Table*'s pilot also serves to set the tone of the TV show, just like in *The Sex Lives of College Girls*. In this scene of Abril making her one night stand try out marmalade, having him burn his mouth by this and also stating that he can not call her again, it is not only the sharp personality of the character that is shown, but also the show's nature. I tried to do this in the first scene with every character, lighting up the sad conversation between Tomás and his son about the loss of Gonzalo with the aforementioned interaction between the teenager and his teacher, and showing Constanza's relaxed personality when she gently diminishes Juan Pablo's worries.

Nonetheless, the genre of my pilot also has elements of drama, and these are about something very specific that happened in real life: COVID-19. There are hard situations also exposed in the 2006 timeline (for example, Juan Pablo's economical situation) but this, inside the story, is not dramatised. The drama in this story is constituted by what COVID meant and the scars it left on the people, on the society and on the country's economy.

Just like in *La casa de las flores*, I try to integrate some of the dramatic moments with the comic ones, so that not even those become so hard to digest for the potential spectator. Moments like Juan Pablo taking Tomás' walker trying to help, or Abril going back to her sharp self after comforting Tomás for the loss of Gonzalo were made to keep the fun element of the show alive and not let it have more of drama than comedy.

Finally, I'd like to focus on the final surprise element that these pilots have. This is present in all of the pilots analysed. In *How I Met Your Mother* (Bays & Thomas, 2005), we are surprised that at the end of the pilot, Robin, an amazing girl that seems perfect for the main character, is not the mother. This element is vital for the development of the series (Bays et al., 2005 - 2014) for two reasons: first, because Robin will be one of the main characters throughout the series; and second, because the viewer will keep on wanting to know who the mother is. In *The Sex Lives of College Girls* (Kaling & Noble, 2020), the surprise element at the end will be that the rich mean girl of the dorm is a lesbian. This element will also be important for the rest of the seasons (Kaling et al., 2021 – to date) because, as the very TV show title

states, this story is about the flatmates' love lives. And in *La casa de las flores* (Caro et al., 2018), the surprising element at the end of the pilot is that the dead body found in the family flower shop is the one of the father's mistress. This is very important because it highlights the amount of secrets hidden behind this apparently perfect family. In the case of my pilot, the surprise element at the end is the death of one of the characters in the 2021 timeline. This will also be important in relation to any future following episodes, given that every time this character appears as his eighteen-year-old self now, the memories around them will be perceived differently by the other characters.

Development of the Script

As previously mentioned, I came up with this idea when I was in my first year of university. I did not have an exact idea of what it was about, I had just figured six wealthy characters that were very close friends, spending a weekend together as if they were a family, talking about investing money as if they were talking about having pizza for dinner. In a burst of emotion, they decided to reminisce about the years they met each other.

Much of this was discarded when I started the Master's and started writing the PGR1. By writing this story and not only thinking about it, I noticed that introducing six rounded characters in one episode of approximately 55 minutes was too much, more so considering that I planned on introducing them in two different ages: this would make them not six characters, but twelve. I decided to cut off two, and so I started to develop four characters fully flexed in both their late teenage years and their early thirties.

I also decided on the trigger of the story. I thought that, better than it being any weekend in which they felt emotional, an event could propitiate this remembrance. So, I decided that the offer of selling the company they built together could do the trick. Then, when I was suggested to place the story in Peru and I decided COVID-19 could not be excluded from it, it made sense that selling was appealing for them because, just like many other companies in said country, they almost went bankrupt because of the pandemic.

During the first weeks of the Master’s, I made a scene list. I would set these in space and time, and briefly expose what happened in each scene. I received feedback about it and, when it was ready, I started to write the first draft.

Draft one

This version of the pilot was developed during the first semester. I started writing it with the scenes list we had completed, but writing the scenes in whichever order pleased me. Week by week I wrote more scenes and received feedback on them. I wrote some scenes twice to present two alternative endings or to change some very particular things the characters would say. Before the April break, I already had the first half of the pilot complete.

During the writing of the scenes, I kept clarifying and thinking more about the circumstances of the bankruptcy. In the beginning, the sales offer was supposed to be just a surprise, but as time passed and I had my weekly supervision, the question of why would someone sell a perfectly well-functioning company that gives its owners money by the minute kept on appearing. I finally decided that, with the COVID context, it made a lot more sense that they were about to go bankrupt. This changed the tenor of a lot of the scenes, and certainly the pilot as a whole.

When I finished writing all the scenes we had listed at the beginning of the year and the story worked, we realised that the sales offer, which we considered the climax, was almost at the end of the draft, and reaching it was tedious. According to Nash (2021), this moment should happen within 10 percent of the story. I was right on this observation: in my first draft, the climax was completely misplaced. That's when the second draft started.

Draft two

In theory, I reordered the scenes and presented the second draft complete before the July-August break. However, I went back to Peru for the holiday period and, without meaning to, my head filled with new ideas for this pilot episode. The moment I came back to New Zealand, I made two very important changes in it.

First of all, I ordered the scenes once again. Nash (2021) suggests that the author should present the “ordinary world” (p. 70) in the first 10 percent of the story. This was not the case of my pilot, which takes 16.5 out of 66 pages (exactly 25 percent of the pilot). I believe my introduction was larger than expected because I introduced my characters separately first. I had in mind all the time that the main characters met at the entrance of the company’s building from as early in the episode as possible, so I introduced this scene right after presenting them individually. I wanted to present them first because I wanted to emphasise how each of them was from the beginning. According to Nash (2021) something very important during the “set-up” (p. 70) is that “Takes time to demonstrate a character’s flaws that negatively impact the hero’s life” (p.70). During this portion of the pilot, I tried to expose some of those defects, while still having likeable and funny characters. There is always the defect they all share, that I’ve described before, but in this section I am focusing on their individual deficiencies, given that I believe they are better perceived in this first percentage of the pilot. In Abril, what is highlighted is how surly she is, in Juan Pablo it is how much attention he pays to his appearance and in Constanza it is the fact that she’s not completely transparent. In Tomás’ case, it was not a defect that I chose to highlight, but rather other aspects that “negatively impact the hero’s life” (Nash, 2021, p.70). For him, then I chose to focus on how mournful he is and his recovery process. Alex Epstein in his book *Crafty TV Writing. Thinking Inside the Box* (2006), states that “it’s the character’s strength or weakness that causes the situation to be a problem” (p. 48). I believe that the character this applies the most to is Constanza: it is her default that causes the start of a fight between friends that have never argued that badly. Aside from that, presenting them in their company setting, in the first scene they share, shows how these characters share this story.

The change in the order of the scenes also took into consideration placing the climax towards the beginning. As I mentioned before, Nash (2021) states that the first 10 percent of the narration belongs to creating the world the characters lived in before this story started and what he calls the “catalyst” (p.70) comes right at this point. As I mentioned, my climax moment comes at the 25 percent point of the pilot, but I believe it is functional given that it happens right after the introductory scenes. It was also beneficial, because it gave the characters a chance to develop the conflict: their friendship was intact, and now we get to see how it will change with this sales offer,

that might also be the detonating point for things that were sometimes unsaid. In addition, showing their young selves after the climax shows the importance of returning to 2006: the conflict they are having as adults needs to be resolved taking the past into consideration. Seeing how their effort, friendship and love relationship in one case have been built and strengthened with the years thanks to this entrepreneurship they started so young will show why some of them think selling is appropriate, while others think there's no price to pay for all their endeavour.

Juan Pablo, for his part, claims that he's worked too hard to build up the company, but later on, in scene 33, he will have a fight with his wife, Constanza, and admit the real reason behind his opposition to selling: he believes that it will ruin their marriage. Juan Pablo had a very poor upbringing and Constanza a very wealthy one. He claims that if marmalade had not made them bond, they would have never seen each other again. This conversation and fight take around seven pages, which implies that it is a seven minute scene. Right after this, comes a memory of the characters when they were younger, which proves Juan Pablo's points right: even though there was a very comfortable and nice vibe between him and Constanza, social differences were present. According to Nash (2021), there is a moment in the story, happening at the 75 percent point of the story (here it being the pilot), which he calls the "all is lost" (p. 71). In this one, "it looks like the hero will lose. Usually contains a *whiff of death* where someone has died or the threat of real death is in the air." (Nash, 2021, p. 71). Juan Pablo, who at the beginning was insecure about himself (although he does not show it), but happy in his marriage and struggling to keep the company he loves so much afloat, is now about to lose it all. The next point Nash (2021) refers to is the "dark night of the soul" (p. 71). This usually occurs between the 75 percent and the 80 percent of the script (Nash, 2021). In this one, Nash (2021) states that "meaningful learning happens on the way to transformation" (p. 71). The receiver of this new information is Constanza, who learns why her husband does not want to sell their company and is finally aware of the insecurities he holds around their marriage. This gives space for their relationship growth. It is true that in my pilot these two moments (merged into one long scene) do not happen at the points Nash suggests. I believe that this is a consequence of the long beginning and delayed "catalyst" (Nash, 2021, p. 70) I've already referred to.

And, second, I added a further character: Hans, a gentile young man who is a millionaire living amongst Lima's high society. This character was inspired by a walk I took along the *malecón* of Miraflores when I was in Peru. There, the Medical College has covered the front of their building with pictures of the doctors diseased due to COVID-19. Since Hans shows up, we know he will be very important in Constanza's story, even though we know she will end up marrying another man. Aside from that, in his first scene, he mentions that he is studying towards becoming a doctor, so we know he will be important for the part of the story that sets in 2021, when the fight against COVID in Peru was still very strong. Knowing this character in his young version, studying medicine and seeing how the virus has repercussions on him is a tribute from me to the Peruvian doctors who died because of the pandemic.

Towards the end of the writing process, I found a very important recommendation when I was rereading my TV-show-writing theory books: Nash (2021) states that "both premise and non-premise pilots have to thoroughly introduce all the key elements" (p. 104). I then noticed that I had foreseen some elements for the development of the season that I was not showing in the pilot, so I decided to add some details to it. One example of this is the addition of Constanza's siblings. I knew, since the beginning, that she was one of three, but in the pilot only her brother was mentioned. He was even mentioned three times: when he texts her at the beginning, when Hans mentions the coming birthday party of Constanza's brother, and when he calls her. Meanwhile, her sister was not mentioned at all. Hence, I decided to add their bedroom doors on the upstairs hallway of eighteen-year-old Constanza's house. Another example of this is in the 29th scene, in which Tomás' mother mentions Gonzalo, the son of one of her friends, who is a little older than Tomás. As we know from the scenes set in 2021, Gonzalo will be Tomás' partner. Including him in the dialogue from the 2006 scenes already states how they knew each other. One last example is the scene of Juan Pablo holding a paper that states that he transferred careers, betraying his family's expectations of him. With these little details, I deepened my characters. Hence, by adding these small details to the pilot episode, I am making these storylines visible, and propitiating their development in the continuation of the story.

I received feedback and corrections on this draft as well, of course. For example, I was told to open the pilot with Abril's first scene instead of Tomás', to mark the tune of the story and show that she's the marmalade creator of the group and, of course, of the company. I also corrected some of the scenes, for example, Tomás's first scene with his son originally took place in their car, but I was advised to place it somewhere else, and, after I moved it to the son's room, I was told the scene became richer, showing also how the pandemic changed school education. Minor changes were also made in the continuous meetings with my supervisor, but this second draft is, in its bigger measure, the pilot.

Conclusions

Answering the research question “how a TV show set in my home country, Peru, might serve to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives and relationships of four characters who are connected by a long history of friendship and a shared business venture?” was more labourious than I thought at the beginning. Writing a story that explored the area the question was drawing, and investigating, to make sure I was covering every area thoroughly, was a demanding task.

I decided to centre the world of my story in the country I grew up in. As it has been shown throughout my exegesis, my story happens in two timelines. I chose the years 2006 and 2021 because of the importance they both have for the Peruvian economy. This allowed more depth in the script, giving a contextual reason why the character’s company went so well when they founded it, and why they are about to go bankrupt in their early thirties.

Marmalade was a personal preference: I really enjoy making it, as well as eating it. Nonetheless, in spite of the show being about teenagers and adults building up a marmalade company, the show is not about the marmalade making, it is about their friendship. The marmalade was the connecting element that unites four people with such very different backgrounds.

The “dramedy” genre is the most appropriate for my script given that it allowed me to expose the impact of COVID-19 in my four characters’ lives, while still having a light and enjoyable show. I believe I could expose so many different areas of the virus and its repercussions, because the comic elements on the show gave the necessary relief to the sad scenes. This way, I could make more aspects of the pandemic and its consequences visible, without tiring or overwhelming the consumer.

The development of the characters presents the eighteen-year-old version of them, just as the thirty-three-year-old one. At eighteen, these characters feel the need to prove to themselves that they can do good on their own, each one for their own personal reasons. The big change that is presented in them between this age and

thirty-three, is that the offer of selling their marmalade company will make them realise that they don't have to do it all by themselves. This decision will oblige them, throughout the show, to face this shadow they carry, and they will decide if they sell or not free of this belief that had always limited them.

COVID-19 hit Peru really hard, and it affected everyone differently. Under the intention of representing this sickness globally, I decided I should put the consequences of major scope on my protagonist characters, and the less important ones on my secondary characters. I did so to illustrate the magnitude of each consequence. Taking into consideration how COVID-19 affected Peruvian doctors, and the amount of them that lost their lives in this battle, I represent this loss in the 2021 timeline of the characters, and I give space to develop, in the forthcoming episodes, how this loss affects the other characters.

Since my characters were born in the millennial generation, I've intended to represent the most important characteristics of this generation in them, so the way they behave in their work and their couple relationships (their own as much as their friends') has been shown to be central in my pilot. This has been a core for how I built them as characters. Each of them have their own personalities, but they are all millennials.

The comparative analysis with other pilots in terms of the introduction of characters, timelines, genre and the surprise element at the end, has allowed me to analyse my own pilot and check its functionality. I consider that, while I developed this analysis, I was able to deepen the points of my pilot where it was not strong. When I finally wrote the comparative section, I noticed that I had ameliorated the spots in which I had seen defects in my pilot before. This analysis allowed me to write a pilot that was more complete and functional.

Finally, this pilot grew from a list of scenes to a first draft. The change in the scenes order and the inclusion of a character are what marks, for me, the definite change between the first draft and the second.

The inclusion of all the elements analysed in this exegesis, and the deepening in some of them, were the ones that helped me write a fully-flexed pilot that explored and answered the research question stated. This final version of the pilot is the one that's presented with this exegesis.

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