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**“Your Dad’s a Prick”: Analysing Parenthood from a  
Millennial Perspective in the TV Series  
*The End of the F\*\*\*ing World* (2017-)**

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*The End of the F\*\*\*ing World*, parenthood, hegemonic masculinity, nihilism, millennial teenager



## **Abstract**

This dissertation examines parenting behaviour under the millennial point of view in the TV series *The End of the F\*\*\*ing World* (2017-). The male adult characters will be the focus to examine parenting roles. By examining parenthood, the linking device to connect their roles is by analysing their hegemonic masculinity. Articles about gender studies, class issues and parenthood activities will be taken into consideration to analyse parenting behaviour in the TV series. Additionally, the detachment of the millennial teenager from their parents is conveyed in the show and thus, the parenting rejection is constantly remarkable. Therefore, this paper will be original in that new masculinities will be considered to frame the parenting figure and the reason for millennial rejection. Moreover, this dissertation will be pioneer in analysing cultural aspects from this TV series, thus further research on the topic can be carried out. Consequently, the paper will present the different pertinent parenting roles in the TV series that are relevant for the millennial youth, as they are the target audience of this youth cultural product.

## **Keywords:**

*The End of the F\*\*\*ing World*, parenthood, hegemonic masculinity, nihilism, millennial teenager.

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## 1. Introduction

21<sup>st</sup> century millennial youth culture displays a remarkable connection to teenagers' cultural expectations and practices. In this sense, it could be argued that their cultural expectations are somehow different from previous generations. *The End of the F\*\*\*ing World* (2017-), created by Jonathan Entwistle and written by Charlie Covell, might somehow reflect these differences. This successful story narrates, from a nihilistic perspective, the life of Alyssa and James, two teenagers who desperately flee away from their parents to set in motion the typical journey towards independence and maturity. But their journey, as life is, is absurd and not even truly valuable (ter Borg 1988, 3). Like nihilism, millennial theory claims for an extent of such behaviour since "millennials have grown up in a world that promised them everything but neglected to deliver" (Koltum 2018, 102). The protagonists' characterisation has been endowed with a touch of insanity, merely to represent that millennial discontent towards life. For this reason, their discontent affects the perception of everyone surrounding them, specifically their parents, who in *The End of the F\*\*\*ing World* become the main target of criticism. Alyssa's and James' nihilistic criticism, which could be perceived as anti-social and individualistic (James 2011, 715), also mirrors present-day millennial attitude to parenting, which is basically rejection. This detachment, therefore, might be rooted in their cultural expectations and needs, which have both increased during this new millennial era.

*The End of the F\*\*\*ing World* has not received proper scholarly attention yet, in that no cultural or any other analysis has been published to date. However, the question of youth space in television is not new. It arose in the 1950s, where a late time slot on BBC channel allowed TV shows specifically addressed to teenagers (Woods 2016, 31). Later, in the 1980s, that TV slot started to gain acceptance with the introduction of youth dramas, where the protagonists' quest was to face life once after their compulsory education (31). But evolution of British youth drama cannot be understood without American television. *Saved by the Bell* (1990s), for instance, quickly became a hit in broadcast syndication, remaining so throughout the 1990s, by achieving cult classic status and developing influence on present-day youth television products (Pasquier 1996, 352; Barner 1999, 561). Indeed, youth television has traditionally retained some common characteristics and tropes, which problematise rebellion, rites of passage or resistance against authority, but mostly on a superficial and archetypal way. From 2000s onwards, however, channels such as the BBC, E4 and Channel 4 pioneered in new youth television formats directly addressed to a new millennial generation (Berridge 2013, 788). Products such as *Skins* (2007-2013); *The Inbetweeners* (2008-2010) and *Misfits*

(2009-2013) gave space to developing new British voices (Woods 2016, 41), as well as their demands and expectations (Frei and Schmeink 2014, 99). According to Woods, youth space in television has quintessentially become a millennial space (2016, 27), so TV series such as *The End of the F\*\*\*ing World* might have landed in our TV sets to stay. Then, cultural research on this contemporary TV series seems to be relevant, as there are possibly many gender and cultural issues worthy of attention.

This dissertation then aims at analysing *The End of the F\*\*\*ing World*. Since this TV series is particularly interested in the representation of adolescence and family relations, the representation of parenting will provide the scope for this essay. The show openly and constantly raises questions about parenting skills and millennials expectations, with a negative or satirical tone and a dark sense of humour. Although it is true that Youth television in the 80s and 90s also targeted parents in a comical way, possibly “as an ideological means of resistance to the standards and values of the dominant culture” (Schwartz 1978, 789), today this act of resistance remains as a typical adolescent ritual, but introduces a new factor: millennial nihilism. Teenagers are not contented just with their parents’ economic support, but they need other and higher cultural expectations, such as love, education or protection (Beutell and Behson 2018, 69). For this reason, the way in which these fictional teenagers criticise absent parenting role models is through satire and a nihilistic sense of black humour. Several depictions of absent and dysfunctional parenting are present in this TV series, but what do they all have in common? The common denominator might be patriarchal and abusive relations within the family and the enactment of hegemonic masculinity.

This paper will thus examine, from the perspective of Cultural and Media Studies, the connection between millennials and their parents in the TV show. Also, such representation will be analysed under the millennial point of view and considering notions of hegemonic masculinity. This concept conceptualises what culturally acceptable male behaviour is and, at the same time problematises the subordination of women and other deviant masculinities in the patriarchal order (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 832). In the end, the dissertation will follow the representation of the three main fathers on the show: Phil, James’s father who is physically there but refuses to take any responsibility in his parenting obligations; Leslie, Alyssa’s biological father who abandoned her; and Tony, Alyssa’s stepfather who sexually abuses her. Also, other minor parenting roles will be crucial for this case study. Nonetheless, this paper aims at demonstrating the absolute millennial rejection to any kind of present-day parenting role models due to their parents’ negligence.

## **2. Phil, James's father**

Phil is the first father to be analysed in the TV series. He is characterised for a peculiar sense of humour which irritates his son and later, Alyssa too. For instance, James's father's humorous remark about the queen reflects his own foolishness (Covell 2017a, 00:51). This perception is caused by the lack of intelligibility between them and their different sense of humour. Keeping in mind that black humour is key, it also serves to reinforce the social incompetence of the father (Pehlke et al. 2009, 136). However, this communication gap between father and son, product of their cultural and general distance, reinforces the stereotype of the adolescent that cannot stand his "fool" father. In other words, Phil's mere presence bothers James, so considering that both live together, the joke is always served: "oh, no!" (Covell 2017a, 10:00). Nevertheless, Phil seems to turn a blind eye to his son's observations and joins James and Alyssa in conversation. He remarks his son's concerns to Alyssa: the possibility of having a gay son, "something which would be fine" (10:10), while trying to be as cool as them with no hint of success. This could be perceived as an unsuccessful and humorous effort of parental acceptance. Besides, Alyssa answers: "maybe I am gay! We're dealing with a really broad spectrum these days" (10:55), representing male homosexuality more interiorized than female by parents. Phil's shocking reaction, relevant in a close up shot (10:58), not only highlights the comedic and foolish representation of working-class parenting (Pehlke et al. 2009, 135) in the show, it also problematises James's father traditional views on gender boundaries and performativity. Furthermore, there is normally a close relationship and good communication established between parents talking to their children about sex (Wilson et al. 2010, 56), otherwise the communication attempt can turn out unsuccessful. Despite this, Phil, without having a close relationship with his son, talks about sexuality and claims that in sex, "men must be England and women must think about England" (Covell 2017b, 05:05), encoding an old-fashioned discourse by establishing an archaic colonialist comparison between sex and country. Although he thinks he is amusing and his representation can be too, the real delivering message of the TV show is a constant criticism on the generational gap between working class parents and millennial children.

In addition, Phil's yearning for millennial acceptance always finds opposition. He is believed to be "such a prick" by both son and girlfriend. (Covell 2017a, 11:14, 2017b, 02:22). For this reason, James punches him in the face while eloping (Covell 2017a, 11:20). In this climatic scene James epitomises the role of the rebel son (17:02) and, regardless his immoral behaviour, he is ironically encoded as a hero, what is also endorsed in the soundtrack. The

protagonist that punches his father, steals his car, and considers this “a good place to start” (Covell 2017a, 17:14), initiates his own rite of passage, a typical trope in youth television (Graziano and Ferreri 2014, 60). Additionally, such revelation is not only perceived by James as positive but also by the audience. This climatic moment is indeed the beginning of the teenagers’ journey as “heroes”, what is known as a resistance act to free themselves from the hegemonic established discourse (Clarke et al. 2002, 66). It is also a relief for the spectator in that the hero, millennial James, has performed his expected identity encouraged by his girlfriend’s statement: “your dad’s a prick” (Covell 2017a, 11:12). In other words, breaking away from his father represents the need (from an adolescent point of view) for independence, and a dream come true for any alienated millennial. Undoubtedly, for them the house is a prison, the father its kidnapper, and the teenagers can only be released from this existential prison with violence.

Moreover, James is certain that Phil will not call the police because “he is a prick . . . and pretty optimistic” (Covell 2017b, 02:25), what is also reinforced by the camera when sat on the sofa with a frozen bag of peas on his blue eye. Note should be taken that while he is watching a TV programme, laughs can be heard coming out of the television (02:30). This reflects what Phil himself provokes, which is just laughter since he expects his improbable son’s return (Covell 2017b, 02:39). This humorous remark is on account of his neglective parenting role, since in TV series where fathers are present, “fatherhood is either enacted or discussed” (Pehlke et al. 2009, 124) and here it is funnily absent. However, at the end of the episode Phil calls the police to report the missing of James. The camera angle goes in slow motion from the father’s back to his front with a sad background music on (Covell 2017b, 20:50), representing Phil’s harsh task to face reality (Covell 2017e, 02:35). After all, since he only cares about his son’s health and not his deeds (Covell 2017b, 05:06), Phil avoids problems by immersing himself into his own reality where his son could only be innocent. His constant remarks about James’s benevolent personality (05:34; Covell 2017g, 07:56) contrast with his acts of vandalism (Covell 2017b, 05:35).

By the same token, Phil’s generational gap between himself and his child keeps on reinforcing the idea of a failed father attempt. An instance of this is when Alyssa wonders about James’s cooking as he clarifies: “Taught myself” (Covell 2017c, 05:27). This is immediately followed by a flashback of James’s father eating pizza and ice-cream in front of a seven-year-old James (05:34). The hardcore music playing emotionally adds up to James’s frustration during those years of parental negligent behaviour and absence. As James’s innerly assumes: “it was that or type 2 diabetes” (05:36). Phil may have bought all that junk food to

gain his son's acceptance, yet millennial James did not perceive it like that. Here, the father's attempt of being a cool one is what crumbles. Moreover, the mere presence of a parent is useless if they are not aware of their children's needs (Kirkorian et al. 2009, 1351). Indeed, it should be noted, Phil's attribution of pity and sorrow when he is alone, reflecting what James claims: "when you have silence it's hard to keep stuff out, maybe dad spent his whole life trying to avoid silence" (Covell 2017c, 18:26). This shows nothing but a depressive father image (18:31), representing Phil in a better light. Besides, he did not report his son for the car's theft; on the contrary, he waited until he was interviewed by the police (Covell 2017e, 05:02) and still he was taken aback by his son's negative conduct (05:32).

Furthermore, provided that giving a thirteen-year-old boy a knife as a birthday present is not acceptable for the police officers (Covell 2017f, 07:26), therefore neither it shall be for a fair audience. For this reason, the teenagers have been hitherto represented under the frame of young heroes, yet always from a troublesome perspective (Oswell 1997, 36), what dialogues and music also reinforce. However, Phil's naivety blinds all possibilities for him to uncover the calamitous truth about James (Covell 2017f, 07:46). On the contrary, the two female officers epitomise the common sense that Phil lacks (07:51). As Stevens suggests, the locus of control (the strong belief or ability to control a situation) is performed by mothers (1988, 636). This stereotype, unfortunately, naturalises the discourse that maternity is the only, or at least, best parenting option, which at the same time contrasts with the maternity of Alyssa's mother (later analysed in this paper). Consequently, parenting role stereotypes in this TV series are ephemeral and easily dismantled.

### **3. Leslie, Alyssa's biological father**

Leslie, Alyssa's biological father, is also worth analysing. The shadow of a prospective "brilliant father figure" (Covell 2017d, 06:20) has constantly accompanied Alyssa. She always wears her father's leather jacket as it is the only Leslie's tangible gift she owns (07:25). Nevertheless, Alyssa's expectations about parenting are far from what the audience might expect. When James commits a crime, Alyssa asserts: "my dad's gonna love you" (Covell 2017f, 00:54). This idealisation comes to an end when they finally meet (20:42). In fact, what the sad guitar music implies in this particular climatic moment is a decay in such idealisation. From the moment Leslie is presented on screen, some cultural expectations encoding his atrocious father stereotyping are visibly clear (Covell 2017g, 00:27). Alyssa seems to be, however, the only one who does not perceive his father's true persona, possibly due to the longing for his absence all these years (09:18). Nonetheless, in the long run, the

child will realise about “the fact that the picture of the father is solely based on fantasies” (Meerum et al. 2002, 261). Differing from her, James’s negative judgement towards Leslie’s behaviour is connected to the audience’s expectation. His immature conversations at the pub with his friend encode the representation of a pathetic and irresponsible father (Covell 2017g,17:02). The fact that he is a drug dealer does not bother Alyssa, but James (08:51), as he starts hesitating about leaving Leslie’s place (09:10). In other words, Alyssa, who has never had a caring father (Covell 2017a, 14:12), starts hoping for a parental relationship. Thus, Alyssa continues idealising Leslie to the point that for her, he could be, funnily enough, compared to Gandhi (Covell 2017g, 10:59). On the other hand, “parents’ experiences cannot be used as a road map” (Furlong et al. 2011, 362) since there is a generational gap. Nevertheless, Alyssa’s attitude towards her father reinforces her mistaken behaviour as a millennial teenager, by accepting and following Leslie’s wrong practices. However, that idealisation remains until she discovers the existence of Leslie’s other family (Covell 2017g, 17:02). From this moment, Alyssa’s idealisation of her father starts decaying gradually (17:17). She perceives his irresponsibility when Leslie prevents bringing his other family to light, fleeing from that situation while running over a dog (18:22). This combination of subsequent shameful events is deliberately from bad to worse, representing his negligence as a father and increasing the millennial rejection.

Leslie’s socio-economic class should be defined as underclass. His house and his cultural habits are so peculiar and troublesome that they could be regarded as a comic relief in the narrative continuum of the TV series (Covell 2017g, 00:40). Certainly, the joke is always on father and daughter and the mutual perception of each other. To start with, Leslie lives in an isolated caravan near the beach (Covell 2017f, 21:03). This social distance somehow represents his lack of interest in social relationships and norms, as later explained. Although his lifestyle could be easily perceived as “alternative” (Covell 2017g, 10:25), in the course of the TV series his representation is increasingly pejorative. Unacceptable cultural practices such as throwing knives as a hobby (04:00) or inviting Alyssa and James to drink or smoke (01:21) not only define his ethics as an adult, but also his lack of parenting skills. In fact, Alyssa accepts his offer (01:27) possibly as a ritual practice of bonding. Moreover, Leslie’s performativity encodes the epitome of hegemonic masculinity and manliness (Covell 2017h, 04:00), with an interiorised sexist discourse, which contributes to the social conventions of traditional masculinity, to the point of questioning James’s sexuality pejoratively: “is he a poof?” (00:57). This could be compared to Phil’s prejudices, yet Leslie’s masculinity is clearer represented on account of his lifestyle. His hegemony intends a “model of cultural

control” (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 831) which cannot succeed. Subsequently, Leslie’s parenting figure is ironically questioned by James: “why are you such a prick?” (Covell 2017h, 15:47), reinforcing the representation of Leslie’s father failure noticed both by the audience and by the millennial teenagers.

The climatic representation of Leslie’s toxic masculinity is disclosed the instant he reports Alyssa’s and James’s accidental murder for money (10:20). Here, Alyssa’s extreme disappointment is rooted in her already vanished father-daughter relationship. However, it is true that she is first discontented towards her previous father’s irresponsible acts (Covell 2017g, 18:22). This discontent later turns into hatred as Alyssa claims to “hate [her] dad more than [her] mum” (Covell 2017h, 03:38), what James agrees with (03:43). Perhaps, the reason why fatherhood is pejoratively perceived by millennials is not only rooted in their evident uninvolved father-adolescent parenting (Hanson and Bozett 1987, 334), but also in their negligence as a matter of parental performance. One more time this discourse legitimises motherhood as the best way of parenting system. Regardless Alyssa’s rejection towards her mother (later analysed in this paper), the main target of criticism is her biological father. Her negative judgement towards a male adult, in this case her father, is now believed to be fair; which is supported by Alyssa’s own assumption: “it’s easier to believe someone is the answer if you haven’t seen him in years, because they are not real” (Covell 2017h, 07:07). In fact, Leslie laying drunk on the sofa (07:15) contributes to reinforce Alyssa’s hopelessness towards such an incompetent father. To sum up, the idealisation of Alyssa’s father progressively decays until Leslie sells his daughter, literally and metaphorically (10:20). Also, James defends Alyssa and prevents her from having an argument with her father (09:56), displaying a protection towards her which has not been hitherto noticed by any other character. The only affection she has ever received is James’s. Thus, this individuation process could be somehow explained, according to Feiring and Lewis, in terms of social negotiation balanced between “connectedness and autonomy” (1992, 352) in such adolescent relationship. That is, parents are never a chosen option if any other teenager can suit the protecting role.

#### **4. Tony, Alyssa’s stepfather**

The last representation of fatherhood to be commented is Alyssa’s stepfather and at the same time father of twins with Alyssa’s mother. Arguably, he could be perceived as middle class; while drinking his coffee and reading the newspaper (Covell 2017a, 03:04), he is pictured as a reader interested in social affairs. Also, Tony and Alyssa’s mother host a fancy party at their

backyard where Alyssa is required to serve the food (13:36), feeling herself as an outsider from that party and from that family (15:10). Since “families are . . . defined by a parent’s relationship to their child” (Antunes 2017, 219), she is represented as a servant rather than a member of the family. Hosting parties to keep up with the elite relationship is traditionally a common cultural practice by the upper middle class. Indeed, Tony’s clothing also symbolises his high status (Covell 2017a, 13:41; Covell 2017g, 06:17). However, representing Tony as an educated upper-middle class, ironically does not involve a better parenthood. In fact, his social status is contraposed to the rejection from his millennial stepdaughter, and from the audience. Alyssa considers, despite of living in a big house with a well-off family, that “this is a load of bullshit and [Tony and her mum’s] life’s bullshit” (Covell 2017a, 13:59). This is Alyssa suggesting that appearances are deceptive. Her needs are different from those adults’, she does not need a big house or money if she cannot have what specifically Alyssa needs; care, protection and love.

In addition, a remarkable importance is given to Tony, what the camera angle constantly reinforces by endowing him of certain power (Covell 2017a, 02:58; Covell 2017b, 19:04), suggesting a position of power within the family, a typical representation of hegemonic masculinity in a patriarchal context. In his family, the differences in agency between his wife and himself, either in private or public spheres, reinforce his hegemonic masculinity (Roberts 2018, 277). Nonetheless, this patriarchal superiority hides an abusive father-daughter relationship: sexual abuse. What is first heard about him is his disrespectful suggestion on Alyssa’s bra’s little size (Covell 2017a, 03:05), which already reproduces what the viewers will witness about this character throughout the show. Moreover, it is his wife who is taking care of the babies and doing the housework (Covell 2017a, 03:28). All these examples directly connect the discourse on male superiority with a toxic masculinity, representing in Tony the traditional hegemonic masculinity understood as “the pattern of practice . . . that allowed men’s dominance over women” (Connel and Messerschmidt 2005, 832). He also suggests Alyssa to leave the house if she wishes, while complimenting her appearance and slowly touching her back (Covell 2017a, 14:12), suggesting, since she is not surprised, a common episode of sexual harassment. This provokes a rejection towards Tony both from the audience and from Alyssa, who is subordinated to her stepfather. She does not fit in the family and the melancholic sounding lyrics suggest her bad luck: “I learned the truth at seventeen, that love was meant for beauty queens” (14:48). In addition to that, Alyssa also witnesses other different profiles of sexual abuse in the show: a driver who eventually abuses James (Covell 2017b,13:40) and Clive’s raping attempt (Covell 2017c, 19:35); both cases will

be further analysed in this paper. This toxic masculinity beheld three times by Alyssa frames the current female fear towards male oppressors, as seen in the stepfather-stepdaughter relationship (Covell 2017a, 14:12). This can be, arguably, one of the many reasons why Alyssa has idealised her biological father. Even though at that point in the show she has still not met him, “the harmful effects of an abusive father figure on the development of girls may be more negative than the effects of an absent father figure” (Downs and Rindels 2004 ,668).

Not only Tony’s behaviour with Alyssa, but with women in general, also reinforces his toxic masculinity. As Risman states, “testosterone increases with status” (2018, 10), although Tony’s legitimisation of testosterone encodes a perception of a barbaric character. When he and his wife are interviewed by the two female police officers, the shots illustrate his hegemonic masculinity within a considerable patriarchy in that house by his standing position against the chimney (Covell 2017e, 06:50), reinforcing his powerful masculinity. His grotesque constant interruptions and mansplaining about Alyssa are interrupted by the officers, who kindly suggest Tony to let her wife speak (07:29). Additionally, he ceases with indifference while stating: “it’s not my daughter, not my problem” (07:32), suggesting his wife as the only one to be blamed concerning Alyssa’s behaviour. What the expressions of the officers’ faces promptly legitimise is Tony’s atrocious father figure (07:44). This representation of his toxic masculinity devaluating women (Kupers 2005 ,714) proposes, once again, motherhood as the best parenting option, since the female officers seem to act with the common sense. Consequently, Tony could be decoded as the “villain” in the show. What makes him the worst father role model is not only his enigmatic and suspicious evil character (Covell 2017a, 13:27), but also his legitimised toxic masculinity towards all women. For this reason, his fatherhood is the most unacceptable parenting in the audience’s eyes and Alyssa’s, who has always been subjugated by traumatic and toxic relationships. Therefore, without a doubt, Tony’s parenting role is, surprisingly enough, worse portrayed than Leslie’s fatherhood on account of his offensive toxic masculinity. In other words, Tony’s performance encodes a traditional patriarchy and toxic role model that is no longer acceptable neither for Alyssa, nor for the audience.

## **5. Other minor parenting roles**

Alyssa’s experience with male father figures has been atrocious. In her journey with James, a driver stops to offer the teenagers a lift (Covell 2017b, 07:59). Alyssa mistrusts the driver clearly (08:24) since she has been sexually abused by her stepfather (Covell 2017a, 14:12).

Conversely, James does not hesitate in accepting the driver's offer (Covell 2017b, 08:10), probably due to his experience with his soft and idiotic father (Covell 2017a, 10:10). That driver also represents a parenting role whose hegemonic masculinity is first legitimised by his usage of language: "Are you alright, love?" (Covell 2017b, 08:53) to Alyssa and "Is she alright, son?" (08:56) to James. The driver's sexist language (12:02) forges his "sexual-typing role" (Clarke et al. 2002, 48). Apart from this, it could be argued that his behaviour is hitherto accepted by the audience, even though Alyssa already disagrees: "this guy's a prick" (Covell 2017b, 10:34). Later, James is sexually abused by this driver (13:05) and Alyssa accidentally witnesses the scene (14:03). Henceforth, the driver's character is rejected by the audience and by Alyssa, who threatening him, steals his wallet (14:02) as a punishment for his non-acceptable behaviour towards James. In this scene, what is slightly accepted is the image of a teenager threatening an adult. Alyssa takes advantage of the driver's atrocious behaviour to display an excessive power over him. In other words, Alyssa's act of rebellion as a teenager is accepted on account of the driver's scandalous behaviour.

Likewise, Clive, the owner of the house that Alyssa and James illegally occupy (Covell 2017c 02:47), seems to be benevolent towards Alyssa (18:40). Nevertheless, the thriller music and Clive's slow-moving steps (19:02) are suspicious for what eventually occurs, which is the attempt of raping Alyssa (19:40). Clive includes physical violence over her and thus, he enacts a toxic masculinity (Connel and Messerschmidt 2005, 840). As soon as James realises, he stabs him in the neck, resulting in Clive's death (Covell 2017c, 19:51). Again, James protects Alyssa, as she has defended him before (Covell 2017b, 14:02), representing the constant idea of teenagers' alliance, leaving parenting roles behind (Feiring and Lewis 1993, 339). However, James's deed, even though it is considered a sin, an illegal and a brutal act, is somehow justified on account of that hideous adult behaviour. Moreover, Clive being a serial killer (Covell 2017d, 04:55) further justifies James's assassination and possibly portrays Clive as the villain character in the scene.

After these two abusive parenting role characters, Alyssa's mother is also worth commenting. She is represented as the oppressed woman who lies to her husband (Covell 2017f, 15:31) due to her lack of agency in the family. Alyssa rejects her, but still, she admits that her mum "used to be nice, but then she divorced [her] dad and met Tony" (Covell 2017a, 02:58). Alyssa's repudiation to her mother, as Downs and Rindels claim, is either on account of an absent father figure or also because the mother's boyfriend was abusive to the mother or the daughter (2004, 669). Therefore, since Alyssa suffered the consequences of an absent father figure (Covell 2017a, 03:31) and she also experienced abuse from her mother's

boyfriend (14:28), her rejection towards her mother figure increases. However, Alyssa's mother is at every turn in Alyssa's mind: Alyssa phones her when she has fled from home (Covell 2017b, 02:59), she thinks about her when she is in trouble (Covell 2017c, 10:50), or even she dyes her hair because "[her] mum always wanted [her] to go blond" (Covell 2017d, 08:27). This is an indication of Alyssa, after all, missing her mum. Conversely, Alyssa's mother, did not even reported her missing to the police (Covell 2017e, 08:10) and she did not know about her boyfriend, James (08:20). What her shocking face expresses after the police informs her about her daughter's boyfriend is how limited information she has acquainted about Alyssa's life and her acquaintances. Since "awareness of friends might be a better index of close parent-adolescent relationships" (Feiring and Lewis 1993, 352), it could be argued that mother-Alyssa relation is not close, but distant. In sum, even though Alyssa's mother is also rejected by her millennial daughter, who still has hope in her mother, Alyssa hates her less than her biological father (Covell 2017h, 03:39). Additionally, the presence of Tony in the family has increased Alyssa's hatred towards her mum; otherwise, as she herself suggested (Covell 2017a, 02:58), the mother-daughter relationship would have been closer.

Another female parenting role preferred to fatherhood is James's mother. She committed suicide in front of him when he was a child (Covell 2017e, 01:25). After that, James is condemned to live alone with his father, being this episode in James's life the possible root for his father's rejection. James's mother seemed a good parenting role to him as he assures (Covell 2017c, 00:54), even though she could not put up with everything in her life (Covell 2017h, 04:29). Like James's mother, the two female police officers in the TV series also perform a female parenting role. They have been acting with their common sense (Covell 2017e, 05:15; 08:10), epitomising a good parenting behaviour. Additionally, they seem to worry more about the teenagers than their own parents (Covell 2017h, 09:48), who have demonstrated somehow a lack of parenting skills. The female police officers want to help the teenagers from a legal point of view and, while preventing them from escaping, one of them results hurt by Alyssa (16:46). The reason why Alyssa hits the police officer is due to her involuntary separation from James in case they eventually end up imprisoned. The teenagers' resistance in their collective power is displayed in their conflict with the police (Corrigan and Frith 1976, 237), reinforcing the idea of togetherness against the police or against any other adult parenting role from the teenager's point of view. This is, the teenagers support each other under all circumstances, especially when adults, who have agency over youth, exert that power against the teenagers' will.

## 6. Conclusion

After considering these aspects, *The End of the F\*\*\*ing World* has proved to be relevant in the question of parenthood attached to the hegemonic masculinity. Additionally, the millennial teenagers' target of criticism has been the parenting roles throughout the whole TV series, regardless their behaviour. It is true that it is not the first TV series that portrays parents in a comical way. However, in this TV series, the motivation to laughter is given by the nihilistic millennial humour to represent their parenting neglection. The shared feature for parenting rejection has been their hegemonic masculinity, graded in the different parenting roles. Phil's criticism is relevant on account of his parenting absence and other features such as his dialogues, encoding the hegemonic masculinity; Leslie's literal parenting absent role has been idealised while at the same time he also represents the hegemonic masculinity throughout all his characterisation; and Tony epitomises the toxic masculinity due to his abusive behaviour. In addition, other commented parenting roles such as the driver and Clive reinforce the connection between fatherhood linked to a hegemonic masculinity and therefore, rejected by millennial James and Alyssa.

Not only male parenting roles, but female parenting roles are also criticised by those millennials. Both teenagers claim to prefer their mothers over their fathers (Covell 2017h, 03:41). In addition, the female police officers are the only adults whose parenting role is considered to be fair. For this reason, it might be argued that the TV series suggests the idea of motherhood as the best parenting option, also under the millennial point of view. However, this idea is dismantled at the end of the TV series where the police officers, performing the teenagers' mother role, are also rejected by those young characters. The reason why James and Alyssa also reject them is rooted in the idea that those adults' conduct will never be accepted by the nihilistic millennial point of view, since millennials' expectations will always be high (Ng et al. 2010, 282) and they will remain together. That is, although only fatherhood seems to be rejected by millennials, motherhood is eventually rejected too, resulting in the total refusal of parenting roles from the nihilistic millennial perspective. In the last episode, the teenagers try to escape. Nonetheless, regardless how far they flee, millennial teenagers will always be subordinated to their parents. Thus, the possible interpretation for the ending of this first season, where James turns eighteen (Covell 2017h, 18:26), represents his "end of the world" approaching on account of responsibilities or legal imprisonment, yet while he was under eighteen, his "end of the f\*\*\*ing world", as any other millennial teenager, has been to stand his parenting figure, who will never gain millennial acceptance.

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