Narratives of Intelligence: Humor, Performance, and Cognition in *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*

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Resumo

Este artigo analisa como The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel (2017) representa diferentes formas de inteligência feminina por meio de estratégias narrativas baseadas em performance cômica, adaptação social e identidade cultural. Partindo de pesquisas que correlacionam humor e cognição, bem como de teorias de inteligência interpessoal e intrapessoal, o artigo argumenta que as personagens Midge, Rose e Astrid articulam modelos narrativos de cognição e julgamento moral. Esses modelos organizam sua percepção de mundo, suas interações sociais e suas identidades. Ancorada na ideia de que as narrativas não apenas refletem, mas moldam ativamente a experiência, a série é entendida como um laboratório ficcional onde a inteligência feminina, frequentemente silenciada ou deturpada, é dramatizada e reconfigurada. O artigo contribui para o debate interdisciplinar sobre narrativa e cognição humana, concentrando-se em como as narrativas ficcionais encenam formas plurais e situadas de inteligência.

Palavras-chave: *inteligência; narrativa; cognição; gênero*.

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Abstract

This paper analyzes how *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (2017) represents different forms of female intelligence through narrative strategies grounded in comic performance, social adaptation, and cultural identity. Drawing from research that correlates humor and cognition, as well as theories of interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence, the paper argues that the characters Midge, Rose, and Astrid articulate narrative models of cognition and moral judgment. These models organize their perception of the world, social interactions and identities. Anchored in the idea that narratives do not merely reflect but actively shape experience, the series is understood as a fictional laboratory where female intelligence, often silenced or misrepresented, is dramatized and reconfigured. The paper contributes to the interdisciplinary debate on narrative and human cognition by focusing on how fictional narratives enact plural and situated forms of intelligence.

Keywords*: intelligence; narrative; cognition; gender*.

Introduction

The Amazons were a group of women warriors known for their physical prowess, courage, and honor, inhabiting the mythological city of Themiskyra on the shores of the Black Sea (Cartwright, 2019). Outside the realm of myth, however, women have faced a vastly different reality, one in which their battles were fought without supernatural gifts. Instead, they had to fight for basic rights: to vote, to control their own bodies, to be educated, to be heard, and, more recently, to receive equal pay for equal work. Historically, women were systematically denied access to intellectual recognition. For centuries, the dominant narrative positioned them as intellectually inferior, justifying exclusion from schools, professions, and spaces of decision-making. This cultural script was internalized, reproduced, and enforced through gender roles that kept women tied to the domestic sphere, where their intelligence was often invisible or undervalued.

Yet women have consistently resisted and rewritten this narrative. Through persistent struggle, they have gained access to education and professional fields once considered exclusively male domains. Today, the 21st

century has opened space for a more plural understanding of intelligence, one that recognizes diverse forms of cognitive ability beyond standardized testing or academic achievement. Among these is the capacity for humor, which requires quick thinking, linguistic dexterity, and social insight. Humor, often dismissed as entertainment, is in fact a powerful marker of narrative cognition. In the realm of stand-up comedy, where structure, timing, and audience attunement are crucial, women have not only proven themselves capable but have also reclaimed the stage as a site of intellectual and cultural agency.

The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel (2017), a critically acclaimed television series created by Amy Sherman-Palladino and released by Amazon Prime Video in 2017, brings these themes into focus through a richly textured narrative. Set in late-1950s New York, the series follows Miriam "Midge" Maisel, a privileged Jewish housewife who, following the collapse of her marriage, discovers she possesses a rare talent for comedy. Through fast-paced dialogue, stylized visuals, and emotionally charged performances, the show constructs a narrative in which female intelligence, expressed through humor, emotional attunement, and social adaptability, becomes central. Midge, alongside the equally compelling figures of Rose and Astrid Weissman, invites viewers to reconsider what counts as intelligence, who gets to be seen as intelligent, and how narratives, both personal and cultural, are used to perform, deny, or affirm that intelligence.

In contemporary debates on the human mind and society, narrative has emerged as a central organizing principle. From psychology and sociology to philosophy and evolutionary science, scholars have emphasized how stories mediate our understanding of reality and structure social behavior (Smith 2003; Haidt 2012; Shiller 2019). Narratives are not just modes of entertainment or communication; they are cognitive devices that shape memory, morality, perception, and identity. As Christian Smith (2003) argues, humans are moral agents and narrative beings, storytelling is not optional but fundamental to how we know both ourselves and others.

This paper explores how the television series *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (2017–2023), created by Amy Sherman-Palladino, uses narrative to stage female intelligence in ways that challenge dominant cultural scripts. Set in 1950s and 60s New York, the series follows Miriam "Midge" Maisel, a Jewish housewife turned stand-up comic, who re-narrates her life and identity through comedy. In addition to Midge, the paper focuses on two supporting characters, Rose Weissman and Astrid Weissman, who negotiate social norms through other, less theatrical but equally strategic forms of intelligence. All three women use different kinds of narrative cognition to navigate, reproduce, or resist the gendered expectations of their milieu.

This analysis frames *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (2017) not only as a product, a television show with rich characters and witty dialogue, but also as a process: a vehicle through which viewers access complex psychological, cultural, and ethical experiences. Drawing on research that connects humor to intelligence (Greengross 2011; Christensen et al. 2018) and informed by Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1996), the paper situates these characters as embodiments of narrative cognition: they understand and act in the world by narrating, performing, and being shaped by it. Their identities are constructed through storytelling devices that reflect inner conflicts and social negotiations. Comedy in the series becomes more than entertainment; it functions as epistemology and resistance. The narrative arc itself is structured around processes of cognitive adaptation and transformation. Viewers are invited to decode these performances as expressions of intelligence that challenge normative hierarchies. Thus, the series offers a space to reflect on how narrative mediates not only action but also perception, desire, and belonging.

Narrative, Cognition, and Humor: A Theoretical Framework

Understanding how the mind interacts with narrative requires a multidisciplinary lens. Jonathan Haidt (2012) posits that moral reasoning is largely post hoc, our minds craft narratives to justify intuitions and social behaviors. Similarly, Smith (2003) argues that our identities are built narratively; stories are how we render moral judgment and constitute the self. In fictional narratives, these processes are dramatized, providing insight into how humans make sense of themselves and others. In this sense, storytelling is not a passive act of recounting events, but an active cognitive operation that organizes memory, emotion, and behavior. The stories we tell, and those we consume, are deeply implicated in how we learn to understand ourselves and position ourselves within the social world.

In this context, the production and reception of humor can be understood as sophisticated forms of narrative cognition. Studies have shown that humor is closely tied to intelligence, particularly verbal creativity, abstract reasoning, and emotional insight (Greengross & Miller, 2011; Christensen et al., 2018). The ability to craft a joke, detect incongruity, and prompt laughter requires complex mental processes that involve perspective-taking, linguistic fluency, and cultural attunement. Humor also relies on shared contexts and the manipulation of expectations, which makes it a uniquely relational and interpretive mode of thought. When deployed strategically, comedy becomes a form of cognitive performance that reflects and reconfigures the world.

Scholars such as Christensen et al. (2018) point to empirical data showing that individuals with higher scores in verbal and fluid intelligence

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tend to perform better on humor production tasks. Their findings suggest that "intelligence and humor are closely linked," particularly through the ability to generate original, context-sensitive responses. Similarly, Greengross and Miller (2011) emphasize that humor is not only a sign of cognitive ability but also a signal of social fitness and adaptability. Despite gendered assumptions in some of this research, for instance, the claim that men outperform women in humor due to sexual selection biases, both studies ultimately support the idea that humor is a sophisticated and strategic form of thought. This perspective is particularly valuable when analyzing female characters like Midge Maisel, who uses comedy not only as performance but as self-narration and redefinition.

Other studies reinforce the idea that humor comprehension and appreciation are themselves forms of intelligence. Couturier, Mansfield, and Gallagher (1981) investigated humor and creativity in eighth-grade students using tasks that measured divergent thinking, metaphorical associations, and creative fluency. Their research demonstrated a positive correlation between humor aptitude and broader cognitive flexibility. Similarly, Feingold (1983) developed a Humor Perceptiveness Test to assess how individuals process comedic material, finding that humor sensitivity requires both emotional intelligence and cognitive complexity. These insights help ground the claim that humor, as both a form of communication and a cognitive event, deserves to be analyzed within models of intelligence.

This paper focuses on three interrelated cognitive forms as they appear in *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (2017),

- Humor as intelligence: a verbal, performative, and social expression of cognitive complexity.
- Interpersonal intelligence: the ability to navigate social roles and expectations with emotional and relational sensitivity.
- Intrapersonal intelligence: the capacity to reflect on oneself, understand one's own emotions and motivations, and manage behavior accordingly (Goleman, 1996; Gardner & Hatch, 1989). These forms of intelligence often operate beneath the surface of conventional academic or professional success but are crucial for understanding how individuals perform and negotiate identity, especially within narrative frameworks.

In *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (2017), each of the three main female characters embodies these intelligences in distinct ways. Midge Maisel, the protagonist, uses humor as a form of narrative and cognitive agency. Her transition from housewife to stand-up comic is not just a change in profession, but a reorganization of self through narrative performance. Her jokes are laden with autobiographical material, cultural commentary, and emotional subtext. In reclaiming her voice onstage, she demonstrates the

cognitive depth required to restructure trauma into comedy. Her comedic timing, improvisation, and ability to read an audience speak directly to both her narrative sophistication and her psychological insight.

Rose Weissman, Midge's mother, illustrates another form of intelligence that is often overlooked: the intelligence required to read, manage, and perform social expectations. Her ability to present the perfect image of the Jewish wife and mother in mid-century New York reflects highly developed interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Rose understands the unwritten rules of her community and adjusts her behavior, accordingly, often hiding emotional turmoil behind poise and ritual. Her intelligence is less theatrical than Midge's but no less intentional. Through her controlled performances, within the home, at social events, and in her daughter's life, Rose enacts a form of narrative discipline that maintains familial and social coherence.

In contrast, Astrid Weissman represents the limits of these cognitive capacities. As a converted Jewish woman married into the Weissman family, Astrid is constantly trying to prove her belonging. Her exaggerated piety and rigid devotion to tradition are signs of her insecurity, but also of her difficulty in navigating unspoken cultural scripts. Unlike Rose, she lacks the narrative flexibility and self-awareness to modulate her behavior effectively. Her inability to read social cues, adjust her emotional responses or manage her self-presentation becomes a source of tension and humor within the series. Her portrayal thus highlights the challenges of narrative misalignment, when the story one tells about oneself does not resonate with the stories others are expecting to hear.

Midge Maisel: Narrating the Self Through Humor

Miriam "Midge" Maisel begins her journey as a seemingly perfect wife: stylish, attentive, obedient to gender norms. She cooks for her husband, applies her makeup before bed and again before he wakes up, measures her body obsessively, and supports her husband's aspirations, even his casual hobby of stand-up comedy (Episode Two, Season One). Midge embodies the 1950s ideal of domestic femininity. However, when her husband confesses, he is leaving her for his secretary, her world collapses. This betrayal, rather than silencing her, serves as the narrative rupture that propels her transformation. In a drunken, impulsive visit to the Gaslight comedy club, she takes to the stage and turns her personal devastation into comedic material (Episode One, Season One). This moment is both cathartic and foundational, a spontaneous act of narrative agency through which Midge begins to reclaim authorship over her life.

Comedy becomes Midge's medium for sense-making. As Ian Brodie (2014) explains, stand-up is a dialogical art form that demands not only

original content but real-time social reading: the comic must craft stories that connect cognitively and emotionally with the audience. Midge's success stems from her ability to script new meanings into old roles - wife, mother, woman, Jew - while maintaining emotional and cultural resonance. Her humor emerges as a vehicle for reframing trauma, exposing hypocrisy, and transforming vulnerability into strength. This transformation is not immediate or linear; it unfolds across multiple performances in which Midge experiments with tone, content, and voice, reflecting an evolving narrative self.

Midge's intelligence lies not just in her punchlines, but in her capacity to observe, to recontextualize, and to turn private pain into public commentary. As the series progresses, her stand-up becomes sharper and more politically charged, drawing from her experiences of gendered expectations, familial pressures, and religious identity. She does not detach from her cultural background; rather, she incorporates it into her material, using Jewish customs and characters, especially her parents, as sources of affectionate satire. Her use of hyperbole and irony allows her to critique without alienating, to expose without condemning. The tension between critique and belonging becomes central to her performance style.

Her trajectory as a comic is deeply inspired by figures such as Joan Rivers, who similarly challenged the gendered boundaries of stand-up. As Beth Purcell (2015) notes, Rivers combined sarcasm, self-deprecation, and taboo-breaking in a way that both reflected and defied societal norms. Midge's creator, Amy Sherman-Palladino, acknowledges Rivers as a major influence, noting the "dichotomy" between the desire for feminine acceptance and the intellectual boldness required to succeed in comedy (Busis, 2017). While Rachel Brosnahan, who plays Midge, highlights the similarities between the two women, she also points out a key difference: "Joan Rivers is somebody who felt like she never belonged… for Midge, it's the opposite" (Starkey, 2017). Midge is not marginalized from the start, her transformation occurs precisely because she begins from a place of social privilege and chooses to narrate her way out of it.

Still, her comedic style is not always easy to market. As seen in several episodes, particularly in Season Three, Midge faces pressure to "tone down" her material to appeal to mainstream audiences. Suzie, her manager, encourages her to adapt, arguing that being too smart or too personal will alienate her listeners. At one point, Midge agrees to change her sets, incorporating less controversial or more broadly relatable jokes, sacrificing some of her bite. But this compromise leaves her unfulfilled. By Season Four, Midge reflects on what has truly resonated with the audiences: the moments when she was most authentically herself. In Episode One, Season Four ("Rumble on the Wonder Wheel"), she explains to Suzie that opening for other performers no longer

satisfies her, not because she lacks stage time, but because she must censor her voice. This decision marks a return to narrative integrity.

What's more, her challenges are not limited to creative control. Midge also navigates the moral and social judgment directed at women in comedy, especially those whose material is seen as inappropriate or vulgar. Her raunchier jokes are received with disapproval by more conservative audiences, even within her own community. This discomfort is not simply about content, but about a woman claiming the right to speak candidly, to transgress the bounds of propriety, and to laugh at things traditionally hidden or repressed. This struggle illustrates that narrative cognition is not just about crafting stories, it is also about negotiating the social conditions under which those stories can be told, and by whom.

Through it all, Midge's intelligence remains her most consistent trait. It is not the academic intelligence traditionally validated by institutions, but a social and performative intelligence that allows her to see, translate, and reshape experience. She is not a disruptor from the margins, like Rivers was, but a woman who gradually rewrites her own story from within the center. She narrates herself out of silence and into visibility, using humor as a tool to expose injustice and claim space. And as the audience follows her arc, we are invited to witness, and to cognitively engage with, the unfolding of a female consciousness that is aware, witty, flawed, and, above all, narratively alive.

Midge's story thus exemplifies narrative cognition at its most dynamic. Her trajectory shows how humor can reorganize trauma, how performance can become reflection, and how comedy can serve as a platform for the rearticulation of gendered identities. The brilliance of *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (2017) lies not only in its aesthetics or its period detail, but in its capacity to dramatize the cognitive labor behind storytelling. Midge Maisel is not just funny, she is intellectually formidable, emotionally agile, and narratively transformative. She demonstrates how selfhood can be actively authored rather than passively inherited. She teaches her audience to listen differently, to laugh reflectively, and to challenge the boundaries of propriety through wit. Her performances become sites of epistemological rupture, where dominant narratives about femininity are momentarily undone. She invites us to recognize humor as a mode of knowledge, not just expression. And in doing so, she rewrites not only her own role, but the cultural expectations of what a woman is allowed to say, and how loudly she can say it.

Rose Weissman: Social Intelligence as Narrative Performance

Marin Hinkle, known to many viewers from *Two and a Half Men*, reinvents herself in *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (2017) through her portrayal of Rose Weissman, a character who embodies the archetype of the elegant,

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socially astute, and overbearing Jewish mother. From her poised appearance to her obsession with her daughter's success and reputation, Rose is meticulously constructed as a figure who operates within the expected roles of her cultural and historical context. She is, in many ways, the mirror against which Midge measures her own transformation. However, rather than presenting Rose merely as a caricature, the series reveals her as a woman deeply fluent in the unspoken codes of her social world, an example of interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence carefully deployed to sustain order, appearance, and power.

Rose's behavior is governed by a strong internalized narrative about what it means to be a respectable Jewish woman in mid-century Manhattan. Her perfectionism is not a product of vanity alone; it reflects her cognitive ability to read social situations, anticipate judgment, and strategically position herself and her family. Her daily routines, like applying makeup in secret before bed and again before her husband wakes up, are performances of social and marital stability (Episode Four, Season One). These actions reveal a profound understanding of her cultural role and the value placed on seamlessness and control. While they may appear superficial, they are in fact deliberate efforts to maintain a coherent public narrative, one where her family is perceived as successful, stable, and unblemished by scandal.

Midge's imitation of her mother, particularly in her early attempts to replicate these rituals, indicates that Rose has passed down not just behaviors but a narrative template for what womanhood and marriage should look like. Their discussions about wardrobe and presentation during the family's vacation to the Catskills (Episode Four, Season Two) further exemplify how femininity is constructed and policed through repetition, appearance, and symbolic labor. Rose is not unaware of the fragility of these structures; she obsessively consults psychics (Episode Two, Season One), not simply out of superstition, but because they promise a reassuring narrative coherence in moments of personal or familial disruption. These gestures are part of her psychological effort to sustain the illusion of perfection that grounds her identity.

Her breakdown upon learning of Midge's separation demonstrates how deeply she identifies with the narrative of marital success. Rather than supporting her daughter emotionally, she collapses, distraught over how the community will perceive the Weissman family (Episode One, Season One). This shift in focus from the daughter's suffering to the mother's social anxiety illustrates how Rose's self-concept is intertwined with the family narrative she has spent her life scripting. As Martha Ravits (2000) argues, "the domineering, meddling mother" is a recurring figure in Jewish cultural representations, often depicted as manipulative or martyr-like, striving to impose her will under the guise of love and sacrifice. Rose embodies this archetype with

sophistication, adding depth to a character who is as performative as she is perceptive.

This cognitive labor, adapting behavior to expectation, sustaining composure, managing reputation, is a form of intelligence rarely validated in traditional discourse. Yet it is precisely what allows Rose to be so effective in the world she inhabits. Her intelligence is narrative in nature: she reads social scripts, anticipates outcomes, and edits herself accordingly. Unlike her daughter, who subverts social narratives through comedy, Rose perfects the one she has inherited. In doing so, she is able to maintain status and control, even when she is emotionally at odds with her surroundings. Her identity is shaped by the imperative to "keep things together," which often means suppressing her desires, fears, and doubts to preserve a consistent social front.

Rose's intelligence becomes even more evident when she is contrasted with Shirley Maisel, her daughter's former mother-in-law. Shirley is loud, emotional, and unfiltered, a woman who embodies the same stereotypes Rose works so carefully to avoid. In a particularly comedic scene, Shirley arrives at a dinner party at the Weissmans' home and threatens to make matzo ball soup with flour she keeps in her purse (Episode Two, Season One). While both women deeply care about their children and embrace their roles as matriarchs, their ways of engaging with the world differ starkly. Shirley externalizes her anxiety, whereas Rose contains it. The comparison underscores Rose's ability to adapt to the silent expectations of her role, an ability that reflects cognitive restraint, social strategy, and emotional intelligence.

As Dominique Ruggieri and Elizabeth Lebron (2010) argue, early portrayals of Jewish women in American media often emphasized negative stereotypes - pushy, materialistic, weight-conscious, overbearing. *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (2017) reclaims and recontextualizes these tropes, allowing characters like Rose to exist as full, complex subjects. Her assertiveness is reimagined as strategy; her manipulation as survival. Her choices may be traditional, but the cognitive effort required to sustain them in a rapidly shifting world is far from simplistic. Rose is not portrayed as lacking ambition or depth, she is portrayed as someone who directs her intelligence inward, toward the maintenance of a world she understands intimately and chooses, at least initially, not to leave.

Ultimately, Rose's narrative is one of controlled performance. She does not pursue radical transformation like her daughter, but she exhibits an acute awareness of the narratives that govern her reality and makes use of them to exert influence. Her intra and interpersonal intelligence allow her to master the art of social presence, even in silence. She may not be on stage like Midge, but she is always performing. And in that sense, her story, too, is one of narrative cognition, quiet, strategic, and indispensable to the world of *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (2017).

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Astrid Weissman: The Limits of Narrative Adaptation

Among the secondary characters in *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (2017), Astrid Weissman may initially appear minor, but her presence reveals important dynamics regarding identity, performance, and narrative belonging. As the converted Jewish wife of Midge's brother Noah, Astrid embodies a familiar yet rarely examined archetype: the outsider striving to internalize the codes of a community into which she has married. Her character brings into focus the complexities of **intra- and interpersonal intelligence**, not through her mastery of these domains, but through her evident difficulty navigating them. Where Rose Weissman exerts total control over how she is seen, Astrid overperforms her commitment to Jewish identity, often to comical or alienating effect.

Astrid's storyline is centered around her repeated attempts to prove that she belongs, not just to the Weissman family, but to the broader Jewish community that surrounds them. Her behaviors are marked by an almost frantic need for validation: she fasts rigorously for Yom Kippur, insists on attending temple even during family vacations, and distributes mezuzot from Israel at every possible opportunity (Episode Six, Season One). Her religious observance is so exaggerated that it disrupts rather than affirms her integration into the group. In one scene, even as Joel's family attends temple, they roll their eyes and complain about Astrid singing too loudly and "doing too much" (Episode Seven, Season Two). These moments highlight how her inability to read social nuance undermines her attempts at inclusion.

Astrid's exaggerated piety also extends into her private life. Desperate to conceive a child, she tries unorthodox methods, including applying an odorous ointment believed to increase fertility (Episode Four, Season Two). Her behavior, while portrayed humorously, stems from a deeper anxiety: if her conversion is not fully accepted, will her children be accepted either? The pressure to "be more Jewish than the Jews" leads Astrid to adopt a hyper-visible religiosity, yet she lacks the emotional and social calibration to know when her performance is effective and when it becomes intrusive. Unlike Rose, who controls her environment with subtlety, Astrid's need for approval overwhelms her capacity to adapt.

This contrast is essential to understanding the cognitive framing of Astrid's character. Rose's intelligence lies in her restraint and timing, she modulates her persona depending on who is watching. Astrid, by contrast, displays a lack of both **intrapersonal awareness** (the ability to accurately read and regulate her own emotional state) and **interpersonal intelligence** (the capacity to interpret and respond appropriately to others' cues). Her overreliance on external validation reveals her internal insecurity, one that no number of pilgrimages to Israel can resolve. Her inability to integrate

authentically is not due to a lack of effort, but a mismatch between intention and perception, a key failure in narrative cognition.

Astrid's dialogue often exposes her deep yearning to belong. In a poignant moment cited by *The Jerusalem Post*, she tells Midge: "I thought that converting would help," revealing her frustration that her mother-in-law still doesn't fully accept her (Spiro, 2017). This sentiment encapsulates the emotional cost of living in a narrative that is not one's own, a script learned from the outside, rather than inherited or internalized. Her gestures of inclusion, like bringing home an enormous mezuzah case and rabbi trading cards from her eleventh trip to Israel, are met with bemusement rather than admiration. The disconnect between Astrid's intentions and how she is perceived underscores her failure to cognitively map the social environment she inhabits.

What makes Astrid particularly compelling is that her intelligence, or lack thereof, is not defined in relation to work, education, or ambition, but through her **narrative misalignment**. She attempts to embody the role of the perfect Jewish wife, but she cannot adapt her behavior to shifting contexts or recognize when her performance has missed its mark. While Rose reads the room with precision, Astrid misreads it entirely. Moreover, unlike Rose, who keeps her emotional vulnerability behind closed doors, Astrid externalizes her doubts, fears, and disappointments. She tells Midge about her fertility struggles; a conversation Rose would likely avoid out of fear that it would disrupt the narrative of perfection she works so hard to maintain.

In this sense, Astrid becomes a figure of cognitive tension. She represents the emotional labor of those trying to belong to a community that offers scripts they cannot quite inhabit. Her failures, social, emotional, narrative, are not simply character flaws, but evidence of what happens when narrative cognition falters. She misjudges tone, timing and emotional atmosphere. And yet, her efforts are sincere, making her one of the more emotionally complex and narratively unstable characters in the show.

Ultimately, Astrid's portrayal reveals a rarely acknowledged dimension of intelligence: the ability to read cultural scripts and adjust to them meaningfully. Her lack of this capacity creates both comedy and pathos, highlighting how fragile the act of fitting in can be. In contrast to Midge and Rose, Astrid does not command her story, she stumbles through it, misreading cues and overperforming in ways that alienate rather than integrate. And in doing so, she shows that intelligence is not only about what one knows, but about how well one can navigate the stories we are expected to live within

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Conclusion

Midge, Rose, and Astrid represent distinct modes of narrative cognition, each illustrating how identity is formed and performed through the story. Through humor, social adaptation, and religious embodiment, the series dramatizes how different types of intelligence, particularly those often gendered or dismissed, can be observed, misunderstood, or valorized within specific cultural contexts. Midge constructs her identity through stand-up comedy, rewriting herself publicly and actively resisting narrative roles that no longer serve her. Rose maintains her power through narrative preservation, embodying an intelligence that is socially strategic, subtle, and deeply attuned to communal expectations. Astrid, by contrast, is caught in a cognitive mismatch between her inner motivations and her community's expectations, revealing the emotional cost of narrative dissonance. These three characters collectively stage what the dossier proposes: that narrative is not simply a way of describing life, it is the means through which life is lived, understood, and evaluated.

Midge's trajectory is perhaps the most explicit example of narrative agency. After her marriage collapses, she does not retreat into silence or shame but rather reclaims her voice through comedy. By turning pain into performance, she transforms her personal rupture into a new script for living. Her jokes are autobiographical, culturally referential, and sharply observational, each one a demonstration of how storytelling can be used as a form of epistemic authority. Midge is not just narrating events; she is constructing meaning in real time, inviting audiences (both in the show and watching it) to see differently. This form of intelligence, humor as critical cognition, demands narrative skill, emotional insight, and social awareness. Her story confirms that laughter is not merely a response but a response mechanism, a form of knowing that reframes social scripts and reclaims individual authorship.

Rose, in contrast, performs a quieter but equally sophisticated form of narrative intelligence. Her life is structured by norms that she has internalized and perfected: elegance, restraint, and control are the tools through which she sustains the illusion of perfection. Rose does not seek to rebel against her world; she seeks to master it. And yet, her ability to read, adapt to, and influence social dynamics reflects a form of intelligence often rendered invisible because it does not disrupt, it maintains. Rose understands that her identity is performative and that the appearance of stability is central to her family's and community's coherence. Her story demonstrates that conformity, too, requires narrative cognition: the ability to modulate oneself in relation to others, to play one's part without losing sight of the script. She is not less

intelligent than Midge; she is narrating from within a different system of meaning.

Astrid, meanwhile, illustrates the consequences of failing to align one's internal narrative with the external one being demanded. Her exaggerated gestures of religiosity and belonging expose her lack of the very intelligences that Rose and Midge display so fluently. She desires to belong, but her actions often come across as disruptive or performative in the wrong ways, not because she lacks sincerity, but because she lacks the capacity to adapt her narrative to the context she inhabits. Her struggles highlight how identity is not just expressed, but negotiated, cognitively and emotionally. Astrid's arc is a cautionary tale about the limits of mimetic belonging: when one memorizes the script without understanding the role. In her, we see the emotional fragility that arises when narrative cognition falters, when performance lacks coherence, and identity remains unanchored.

This analysis underscores how *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (2017) functions not merely as a nostalgic period piece, but as a meditation on storytelling itself. It stages narrative as a living process, dynamic, adaptive, and central to human cognition. By centering women's voices and giving dramatic weight to forms of intelligence that are often overlooked, stand-up comedy, social poise, religious enactment, the series recovers narrative as a site of female agency. What might first appear as entertainment reveals itself to be an intricate portrayal of how people construct meaning, respond to disruption, and navigate shifting identities. In doing so, the series becomes an extended reflection on how stories not only entertain but instruct, organize, and liberate.

This paper affirms that narratives, whether told on stage, in the home, or through ritual, are not passive reflections of life but active instruments of cognition. They mediate the interface between self and society, enabling us to perceive, remember, and act. *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (2017) shows that what we say about ourselves shapes who we become. Its characters invite us not only to witness the stories of women in mid-century America, but to understand how those women came to know themselves through the very act of telling. At its core, the series offers a powerful lesson in narrative epistemology: to narrate is to know, and to know is to shape one's place in the world.

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Temporada 1:

"Pilot". Direção de Amy Sherman-Palladino. Episódio 1, Temporada 1, 2017.

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Temporada 2:

"We're Going to the Catskills!". Direção de Daniel Palladino. Episódio 4, Temporada 2, 2018.

"Look, She Made a Hat". Direção de Jamie Babbit. Episódio 7, Temporada 2, 2018.

Temporada 4:

"Rumble on the Wonder Wheel". Direção de Amy Sherman-Palladino. Episódio 1, Temporada 4, 2022.