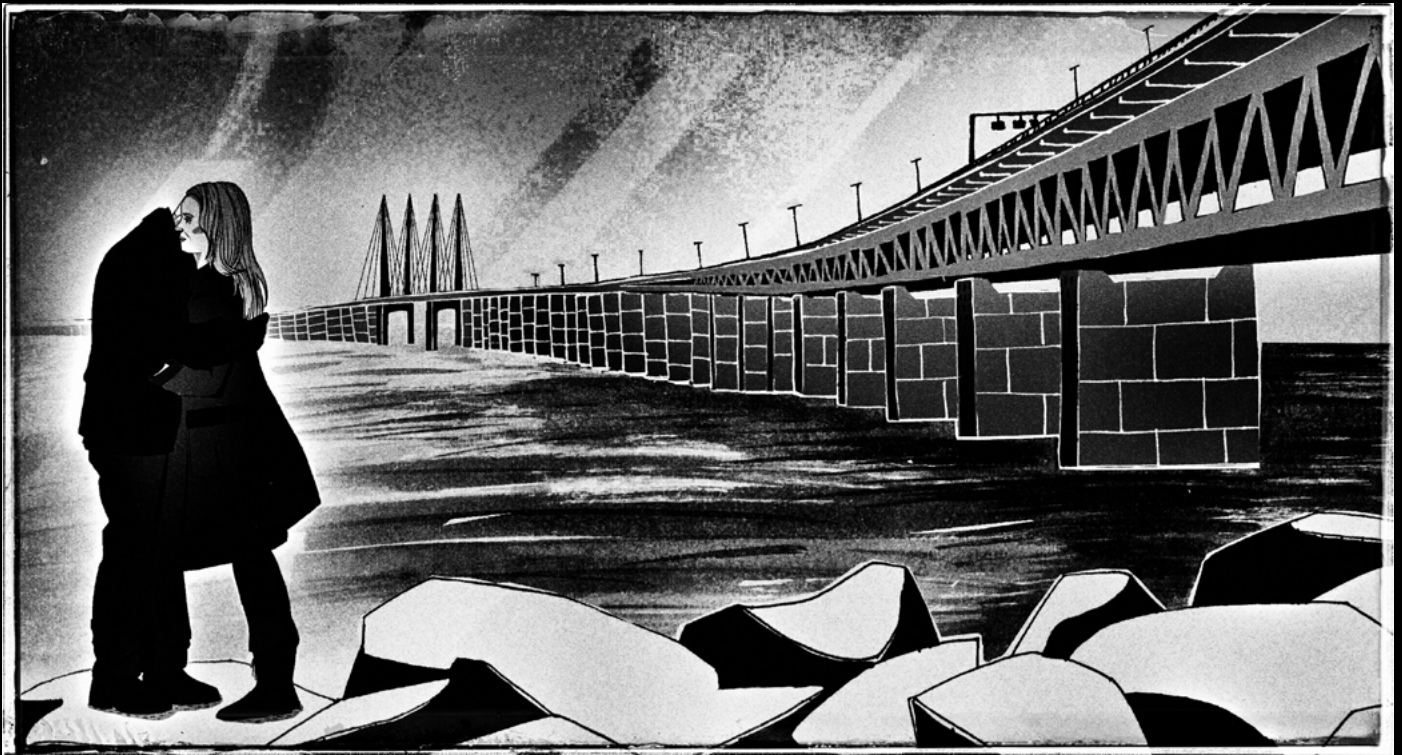ALMA MATER STUDIORUM UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA · UNIVERSITAT POLITÈCNICA DE VALÈNCIA

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DIALOGUE

LA IRREVOCABILIDAD DEL "DESTINO" EN *THE WIRE*: EL CASO DEL ADOLESCENTE "DUKIE"

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THE IRREVERSIBILITY OF FATE:
THE EXAMPLE OF THE TEENAGER "DUKIE"

ABSTRACT

The Wire (David Simon, HBO: 2002-2008) is usually considered one of the greatest television shows ever made, not only because of its quality and original narrative structure, but also thanks to its ability to display the current situation of the subject in a society dominated by the discourse of the untethered capitalism. We wonder about what *The Wire* tells its audience about human beings as individual in our context, but we are interested in how the series does it and what resources it employs too.

In this paper we will focus on the specific case of Duquan Weems (Jermaine Crawford), known as "Dukie", as a perfect example of how indigence and marginalisation are actually useful to the system, so such system does not really search for the solution but the cyclical perpetuation of these groups of population as inevitable collateral damage of the capitalist mode of production. We will analyse the character evolution from his appearance in the fourth season of the series to its final episodes, while also trying to draw paralellisms with other characters. The methodology will be a discoursive and textual analysis of the scenes in which the character is present, how he is shown on the screen and how he relates to all the other elements in the image. This way, we pretend to show how the mise-en-scene of *The Wire* emphasizes the main message of the series: to reveal the real functionning of the discoursive logic of capitalism.

LA IRREVOCABILIDAD DEL "DESTINO" EN *THE WIRE*: EL CASO DEL ADOLESCENTE "DUKIE"

PALABRAS CLAVE

Series de televisión; *The Wire*; análisis del discurso; capitalismo; indigencia; marginalidad.

RESUMEN

The Wire (David Simon, HBO: 2002-2008) suele ser considerada como una de las grandes producciones seriadas del medio televisivo, no sólo por su gran calidad y original estructura en lo que a narrativa se refiere, sino también por su capacidad de mostrar al espectador la situación actual del sujeto en una sociedad dominada por el discurso del capitalismo salvaje. Además de preguntarnos qué es lo que *The Wire* nos dice sobre el ser humano como individuo dentro de la sociedad contemporánea, es nuestra intención cuestionarnos también cómo lo hace y qué recursos audiovisuales emplea para ello.

Aquí nos centraremos en el caso concreto de Duquan Weems (Jermaine Crawford), conocido por todos sus compañeros como "Dukie", como ejemplo paradigmático sobre cómo la indigencia y marginación son en realidad útiles al sistema, de manera que éste no busca realmente la solución o reintegración de situaciones como la del personaje aquí analizado, sino el mantenimiento cíclico de estos grupos sociales como daños colaterales intrínsecos al modo de producción capitalista. Para ello, se procederá a un comentario de su evolución desde su primera aparición en la cuarta temporada hasta el final de la serie, tratando de establecer además paralelismos con otros personajes de la serie. Para ello se hará un análisis discursivo y textual de las escenas en las que aparece, cómo se presenta visualmente en pantalla y cuál es la relación que establece con los elementos y personajes que lo acompañan, mostrando así cómo la puesta en escena de *The Wire* va en paralelo al discurso fundamental de la serie: revelar al espectador el crudo funcionamiento de la lógica discursiva capitalista.

01 **INTRODUCCIÓN**

The Wire (David Simon, HBO: 2002-2008) suele ser considerada como una de las grandes producciones seriadas del medio televisivo, no sólo por su gran calidad y original estructura en lo que a narrativa se refiere, sino también por su capacidad de mostrar al espectador la situación actual del sujeto en una sociedad dominada por el discurso del capitalismo salvaje. Y es que *The Wire* no es un drama sobre individuos superando los fallos de las instituciones sino una representación de cómo dichas instituciones frustran las ambiciones de aquellos a los que supuestamente sirven (Sheehan y Sweeney, 2009). En todo caso, además de preguntarnos qué es lo que *The Wire* nos dice sobre el ser humano como individuo dentro de la sociedad contemporánea, es nuestra intención cuestionarnos también cómo lo hace y qué recursos audiovisuales emplea para ello.

Nos centraremos en el caso concreto de Duquan Weems (Jermaine Crawford), conocido por todos sus compañeros como "Dukie", ya que consideramos que supone un ejemplo paradigmático de dicho fracaso institucional y, en concreto sobre cómo la indigencia y marginación funcionan y son presentados dentro del sistema. Aunque presentados como problemas a solucionar, en realidad no se persigue la reinserción social sino el mantenimiento de estos grupos sociales como daños colaterales intrínsecos al crecimiento y desarrollo del modo de producción capitalista. Así, por mucho que otros intenten mejorar la posición de "Dukie" y su complicada relación con el entorno, en realidad es la propia burocracia institucional despersonalizada dependiente del sistema la que provoca que estos intentos de "recuperación" resulten inútiles. Y es que, como afirma Vint (entre muchos otros), en la crítica a las instituciones que hace *The Wire* se demuestran las pocas oportunidades disponibles para aquellos que viven en barrios marginales (2013: 68) y, en el fondo, la conclusión general de la serie es "the more things change, the more they stay the same" (Vint, 2013: 103).

Comprendemos las limitaciones intrínsecas a la elección de un único personaje y su evolución como corpus de análisis, pero también consideramos que tomar *The Wire* como conjunto y tratar de analizarla de manera holística resultaría en unas conclusiones en exceso generales y superficiales, dada la ya mencionada densidad discursiva de esta producción audiovisual. La serie ha sido empleada en gran cantidad de trabajos académicos y los artículos que aparecen en el apartado de referencias son sólo un porcentaje mínimo de la casi inabarcable bibliografía sobre ella. Sin embargo, en la mayoría

de dichos textos *The Wire* es mencionada simplemente como ejemplo que ayuda a explicar teorías o ideas de disciplinas tan variadas como la teología (Tran y Werntz, 2013), la salud pública (Beilenson y McGuire, 2012), el periodismo (Sabin, 2011; Steiner et al., 2012), el derecho (Bandes, 2010; Burke, 2010) o los estudios de género (Ault, 2012). Por supuesto, una de las disciplinas académica que más se ha ocupado de la serie es la sociología[1], ya que, como ya se ha dicho, *The Wire* es sobre todo una representación magnífica de la sociedad contemporánea desde un punto de vista relacional y organicista. Sin desprestigiar lo interesante y fascinante de muchos de estos trabajos, la aproximación aquí elegida pretende alejarse de toda esta bibliografía existente al tratar de analizar el modo en que la serie en sí, mediante la puesta en escena (y no con simples menciones a tramas o diálogos, como es el caso de gran cantidad de los ejemplos mencionados), transmite una representación concreta de la sociedad contemporánea.

Para ello, se procederá a un comentario de la evolución de "Dukie" desde su primera aparición en la cuarta temporada hasta el final de la serie, tratando de establecer además paralelismos con otros personajes de *The Wire* con quienes comparte representación. La metodología a seguir será un análisis discursivo y textual de las escenas en las que aparece, cómo se presenta visualmente en pantalla y cuál es la relación que establece con los elementos y personajes que lo acompañan, mostrando así cómo la puesta en escena de *The Wire* va en paralelo al discurso fundamental de la serie, que es el de revelar al espectador el crudo funcionamiento de la lógica discursiva capitalista.

02 PRIMERAS APARICIONES: EL MARGEN DEL ENCUADRE

La primera aparición de "Dukie" coincide con la del resto de personajes jóvenes al inicio de la temporada (4x01, escena 9[2]), en el momento en que se cruzan con Namond (Julito McCullum), un chaval que colabora con algunos traficantes en una esquina del barrio como trabajo de verano. Ya desde

el principio la figura de "Dukie" sugeriría visibilidad e invisibilidad al mismo tiempo: el personaje está presente y llega tras sus dos compañeros, Randy (Maestro Harkell) y Michael (Tristan Weems), pero es obviado y permanece en el margen de los encuadres, para luego desaparecer directamente de gran parte de la secuencia. Por supuesto, sobra decir que no interviene en ningún momento de la misma. Su vestimenta también lo señala como diferente: frente a los pantalones oscuros y camisetas blancas que llevan los otros tres, "Dukie" viste ropa vieja de tonos marrones, lo que le otorga además un aspecto de suciedad. Aunque en ningún momento es explicitado en forma dialogada, enseguida queda claro que "Dukie" es un niño casi indigente, o al menos con algún tipo de problema de integración (Figura 1). Más adelante será desvelado que habita en una casa con su familia, todos ellos drogadictos incapaces de ocuparse y responsabilizarse correctamente del chaval. Es interesante para el análisis el personaje señalar que su situación nunca es claramente definida más allá de veladas alusiones (por ejemplo comentarios entre profesores o mediante pullas de otros niños), lo cual confirma aún más la negligencia a todos los niveles respecto al problema de la marginación, como si aquello que no fuera nombrado no existiera. Así, tanto el diálogo como la presentación en pantalla del personaje insisten en la inadaptación socioeconómica como una cuestión sistemática al tiempo que ignorada.

En la siguiente secuencia (4x01, escena 12), en que Michael, Randy y Namond intentan atrapar una paloma en un callejón, la cámara se centra en ellos pero tampoco se olvida de "Dukie", que está en otra zona de la calle, en eje perpendicular con la posición del resto de personajes, lo que de nuevo señala su aislamiento respecto a los demás. El hecho de que

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1   Los que aparecen en la bibliografía, (Potter y Marshall, 2009; Chaddha y Wilson, 2011; Penfold-Mounce, Beer y Burrows, 2011; Kennedy y Shapiro, 2013; y Wood, 2014) son sólo algunos de los más interesantes, pero ni de lejos suponen la totalidad de textos que mencionan la serie, aunque sea de modo superficial, como se explica en esta introducción.

2   Se considera un cambio de escena o secuencia aquellos en los que cambia el escenario y los personajes que aparecen en pantalla. Para esta numeración no se tienen en cuenta los créditos pero sí la escena previa a los mismos.

aparezca marginalmente en pantalla insiste en recordar su existencia aunque esta quiera obviarse, además de señalar que el reconocimiento y observación del diferente, como la del delincuente, es una técnica de poder tanto como es de saber (Foucault, 1990: 152) y que toda clasificación sirve no sólo para conocer más fácilmente una realidad, sino que también funciona para ejercer control sobre la misma. Pero además, todo aquello que es diferente o incluso prohibido, la "anormalidad", sirve para que la normalidad pueda ser definida por oposición (Foucault, 1990: 189). Aquí, el personaje es prejuzgado como un estereotipo antes que como un individuo y, aunque rechazado, es necesario.

En este mismo primer episodio (4x01, escena 26), el grupo de compañeros tiene una breve pelea con otros chavales del barrio. El origen de dicha disputa no es otro que esta banda rival haya pegado a "Dukie", que sigue apareciendo como diferente al resto por su llegada independiente (exclusión del grupo), pero también su ropa, que es oscura, sucia y la misma del día anterior. Namond enseguida decide que han de vengarse. ¿Por qué, si poco antes era él mismo quien insultaba a "Dukie"? El propio Namond nos da la respuesta al decir "only we can whoop on 'Dukie' like that". Insistamos una vez más en que para definirse como normales, o al menos para sentirse integrados con el resto, este grupo necesita un discriminado para compararse positivamente con él, ya que, simplificando, si no existe la marginación social, ¿cómo saber quién es un privilegiado? Esto crea un extraño sentido de cohesión grupal y, con ello, de posesión: "Dukie" es *su* marginado, y las bromas privadas que comparten con respecto a él funcionan en parte como *pegamento social*.

En la mayoría de escenas que tienen lugar en los primeros episodios donde vemos al resto de protagonistas jóvenes (incluso acompañados de otros chavales que funcionan como secundarios o extras), "Dukie" no suele aparecer. De hecho, en la subtrama antes mencionada no es sino la excusa narrativa para que se produzca la pelea entre las dos bandas, pero no hace ningún comentario ni tiene poder de decisión sobre la represalia que decide llevar a cabo Namond.

Ya en el tercer episodio de la cuarta temporada (4x03, escena 17), cuando los jóvenes se reúnen para llegar juntos a la escuela (el día de inicio del curso), "Dukie" entra en plano casi repentinamente por la derecha y se acopla silenciosamente a las tres figuras que avanzan hacia el fondo. El encuadre no cambia para mostrar su llegada y los otros personajes ni siquiera se detienen para recibirle, "Dukie" simplemente se incorpora a la imagen ya existente, señalando su irrelevancia en lo que al grupo de amigos se refiere así como su dificultad

de integración. El pequeño gesto por el cual Randy le da una bolsa con comida puede incluso pasar desapercibido en el amplio plano del callejón por el cual se aleja el grupo. A continuación, para colmo, la madre de Namond (Sandi McCree) lo ignorará completamente. Así, deja entrar a su casa a Michael y Randy, pero no a "Dukie", a quien le cierra la puerta de un modo desagradable, dejándolo solo en la escalera de entrada. De hecho, en un encuadre de los chavales en la entrada vistos desde cierta altura, como si fuera el punto de vista de ella, "Dukie" ni siquiera aparece. Al "castigar" a "Dukie" sin realmente reflexionar sobre las verdaderas razones de la situación de marginación del personaje, la madre de Namond parece perpetuar una concepción de culpabilidad individual de la situación socioeconómica de cada uno, en lo que es una de las bases ideológicas del capitalismo contemporáneo y sobre la que se hablará más adelante.

Al continuar el camino hasta el instituto (4x03, escena 19), "Dukie" avanza por detrás de sus compañeros, casi como una sombra del resto: su presencia es indudable, pero cuanto menos atención se le preste, mejor. En cierto momento, "Dukie" se acerca a un árbol para recoger del suelo un ventilador azul que no funciona. La cámara sí muestra en planos breves de encuadre cercano esta pequeña acción, pero nadie más es consciente de que el chaval se ha llevado este objeto.

Por su propia estructura narrativa en red (y causalidad no lineal), *The Wire* intenta no generalizar y mostrar que la asignación de roles por la procedencia y biografía de los personajes es ridícula, pero existe: la etiqueta de indigente tildaría a "Dukie" inmediatamente como inútil e irresponsable. Recordemos pues que el origen de conceptos como marginación social se encuentra nada más y nada menos que en las políticas represivas en contra de aquellos que no se integran correctamente en el modo de producción capitalista (Fernández Enguita, 1990: 33), siendo una manera de señalizarlos negativamente. "Dukie" es, por su actitud supuestamente pasiva y su situación familiar, inservible, del mismo modo en que lo sería también el objeto roto que acaba de recoger, para el que la única solución es el abandono.

Unas horas después (4x03, escena 26), ya durante las clases y en una escena dividida en varias secuencias que en realidad está mostrando los trapicheos de Randy, encontramos un travelling que comienza en el grupo de chavales que está comprando golosinas, pero que termina, casi como si fuera casualidad, en una imagen de "Dukie" sentado a solas en una de las largas mesas de comedor del instituto, tratando de arreglar el pequeño ventilador. Esto, además de señalarnos momentáneamente que el chaval se dedica a esta actividad sin

que nadie lo sepa, insiste en el aislamiento al que es sometido, ya que el resto de estudiantes a su alrededor conversan animadamente en grupos (Figura 2). Al final del mismo episodio (4x03, escena 36), durante una clase, una alumna atacará a otra haciendo que todos reaccionen conmocionándose. Una vez la situación parece relativamente controlada, "Dukie" se aproxima a la joven sentada situándose cuidadosamente a su lado. Lo sorprendente aquí es que el chaval lleva en las manos el ventilador, que ahora vuelve a funcionar correctamente, y que además lo emplee para tratar de hacer sentir mejor a su compañera, gesto que ella ignora. Viendo la ineficacia de su acción, deja el objeto junto a ella y permanece inmóvil, casi como si fuera invisible.

El pequeño aparato se convierte así en basura reutilizada (aquello de lo que el sistema capitalista reniega, pues paralizaría la demanda), gracias a que él mismo ha prestado atención a un objeto previamente rechazado y abandonado en medio de la calle. Se trata pues de un equivalente al propio "Dukie", un sujeto marginado considerado inútil que requeriría simplemente no ser estereotipado e ignorado de antemano sino reconocido de un modo individual. Al mismo tiempo, demostrando la ineficacia del objeto en este caso concreto, el tratar de ventilar a la agresora, se nos recuerda que en el fondo este tipo de acciones no son verdaderamente útiles para el sistema: lo estropeado no ha de arreglarse (para qué, si podemos comprar uno nuevo). Señalando una vez más la exclusión a la que este tipo de prejuicios puede llegar a someter a los seres humanos, este sutil paralelismo entre "Dukie" y el ventilador ni siquiera ocupa lo que podríamos denominar una subtrama dentro del episodio, sino que sólo aparece en imágenes o detalles breves insertos en escenas

cuyos protagonistas son en realidad otros. Es una figura que está ahí mientras ocurren otras acciones, pero no es relevante ni tiene la capacidad real de intervención. El aquí analizado es, pues, un personaje relativamente pasivo al que sin embargo *le ocurren* cosas (como veremos a continuación), lo que nos hace pensar de nuevo en la falacia neoliberal de la responsabilidad y libertad de elección individual como único motor de la sociedad capitalista.

03 **LA PREOCUPACIÓN DE UN ADULTO: EL PROCESO DE INTEGRACIÓN**

El quinto episodio comienza con una divertida secuencia en la que todos los chavales se encuentran charlando en lo que parece un solar abandonado (4x05, escena 1). Mediante una sucesión de planos medios que incluyen a más de uno de ellos se produce una conversación sobre la posibilidad de que una banda de narcotraficantes del barrio no esté realmente asesinando a otros personajes sino que sean convertidos en zombies. Esta secuencia es destacable precisamente por la idea de que los chicos intenten explicar aquello que no comprenden o que les parece incoherente (como es la veloz sucesión de desapariciones que tiene lugar en el barrio) mediante fantasías, probablemente vistas en el cine, televisión o videojuegos. En asombroso contraste, son capaces de reconocer el calibre de la pistola con que se realizan los disparos que suenan en la lejanía a mitad de la conversación. Esto insiste en las complejas contradicciones internas que el complicado entorno en que se han criado crea en estos chavales, en este caso en relación a la distinción entre realidad y ficción.

Casi como un extraño ejemplo de episodio con forma algo circular, este mismo capítulo termina con una escena (4x05, escena 40) en que "Dukie" guía a Michael y Randy al interior de una casa abandonada para mostrarles uno de los cadáveres dejados por los asesinos de la banda criminal y asegurarles así que los zombies no existen. El chaval, acostumbrado a las sombras, las rendijas y los márgenes, avanza sin miedo tanto por la calle oscura como por el edificio en ruinas, mientras que sus dos amigos no dejan de mirar a su alrededor con temor. Esta seguridad en "Dukie" resulta extraña y llamativa (hasta ahora, recordemos, ha sido presentado como un elemento pasivo) pero, al mismo tiempo, quizás precisamente por situarse en los límites de la sociedad tiene mayor capacidad para observar y conocer el funcionamiento de aquello que le rodea, además de poder desarrollar estrategias ajenas al orden establecido. Es significativo, pues,

que avance el primero en la fila que conforman los personajes al moverse por la casa y que además sea quien lleva la única luz que funciona, haciendo que su rostro sea el más iluminado de los tres en todo momento. Es esta una de las pocas secuencias que incluyen primeros planos de "Dukie" y en las que se le ve actuar con decisión al retirar el plástico sobre el cadáver y afirmar "there's no special dead, there's just... dead". Se trata de una frase lapidaria que puede incluso recordar a ciertos motivos literarios y pictóricos históricamente recurrentes, como la vanitas, que buscan tener presente que no importa quién seas o lo que poseas, la muerte llega a todos por igual.

Quizás también este pequeño y momentáneo cambio en la actitud de "Dukie" pueda ponerse en relación con el hecho de que a lo largo de este mismo episodio un adulto ha comenzado a centrarse en él. Otro de los protagonistas de la cuarta temporada, no mencionado hasta ahora, es Roland "Prez" Pryzbylewski (Jim True-Frost), un antiguo agente de policía reconvertido ahora en profesor de matemáticas. En los episodios anteriores hemos visto las dificultades a las que se enfrenta para adaptarse a su nuevo entorno, que sin embargo enseguida encuentra bastante similar al funcionamiento burocrático institucional que ya conoce. Ciertas acciones de "Prez" con respecto a sus alumnos parecen actuar en contra de las intenciones coercitivas y limitadoras de la escuela que asociamos (y los propios chavales asocian) a otras entidades e instituciones como la policía o la cárcel. Sin embargo, el caso de "Dukie" es especial porque el personaje ya tenía este tipo de clasificaciones, estereotipos y prejuicios totalmente interiorizados y naturalizados. Por la situación en su hogar, que lo convierte automáticamente en un desecho social, el joven nunca se ha sentido de manera diferente. De ahí la importancia de la influencia de "Prez" en él y que, de manera inconsciente, el profesor tienda a prestarle mayor atención y ofrecerle mayores posibilidades de control sobre el entorno inmediato en la escuela. La tendencia de los alumnos es ver la escuela como un lugar coercitivo que limita sus libertades porque, de hecho, a nivel sistémico, la escuela esencialmente prepara a los estudiantes para las posiciones sociales que ya ocupan (Chaddha y Wilson, 2011: 180). El ejemplo de este expolicía reconvertido en profesor demuestra que en realidad tiene las posibilidades de ser un espacio donde realmente puedan dejar de lado las presiones que reciben en el mundo exterior (en este caso, los barrios marginales dominados por el crimen y el tráfico y consumo de drogas).

"Prez", intentando ayudar a evitar su situación de casi indigencia, pretende en el fondo que "Dukie" encuentre un lugar que considerar suyo y donde pueda tener una sensación de libertad y sentirse cómodo. Por tratarse de un personaje cuyas apariciones hasta ahora han estado tremendamente vinculadas con la idea de marginación (como ser visto en muchas ocasiones en el fondo de una escena o pasando desapercibido en algunas de ellas) lo destacable es que este profesor se dirija a él prestándole esa atención individualizada que nadie más le ofrece. El profesor da al joven acceso a los vestuarios y las duchas fuera del horario escolar, además de responsabilizarse de su ropa sucia. Esto es mostrado con planos detalle de algunos de los objetos pertenecientes al sistema educativo, como la taquilla, la bolsa, o la ducha que puede verse a la izquierda en el encuadre final, que indican por una parte la atención del chaval, puesta en todo a lo que no tiene acceso en su hogar de manera habitual, y por otra recuerdan que se trata de un uso no permitido de estas instalaciones, a pesar de ser una acción tremendamente positiva para "Dukie".

Insistiendo en cómo por fin ha encontrado un lugar en la escuela encontramos una breve secuencia en el octavo episodio en que el joven juega con el ordenador mientras "Prez" trabaja, ya fuera del horario de clases (4x08, escena 20). Es decir, "Dukie" pasa más tiempo en el edificio del que es estrictamente necesario, cuando lo habitual es que los niños no deseen estar allí. De hecho, la escena inmediatamente anterior a ésta muestra a sus tres amigos volviendo a casa tras la jornada escolar. Con un encuadre amplio que sirve para indicar que el aula está vacía y silenciosa, vemos a "Dukie" ante la pantalla y al profesor junto a él. "Prez" se incorpora lentamente para avisarle de que pronto tendrán que marcharse, situándose tras el chaval y pasando un brazo sobre sus hombros, adoptando así una postura paternal y de tono protector que culmina con ambos sonriendo y mirando al ordenador en una imagen que parecería de panfleto publicitario (casi mostrándose artificial de antemano) (Figura 3). Es también significativa la habilidad que demuestra el chico en relación al ordenador: no es un inútil, sólo necesita la oportunidad adecuada para demostrar su potencial, pero recordemos que uno de los temas principales de *The Wire* es precisamente exponer cómo dado un conjunto limitado de opciones, lo habitual es que no haya camino más allá de las trayectorias de vida predeterminadas (Chaddha y Wilson, 2011: 185), una idea que de nuevo niega el intento de justificación de la desigualdad por parte del discurso individualista del neoliberalismo imperante en EE.UU.

La adaptación de "Dukie" a una normalización en ciertos aspectos físicos, en este caso la higiene y el uso de ropa limpia, le permiten una reinserción con el resto de compañeros que previamente lo marginaban por tener una serie de predisposi-
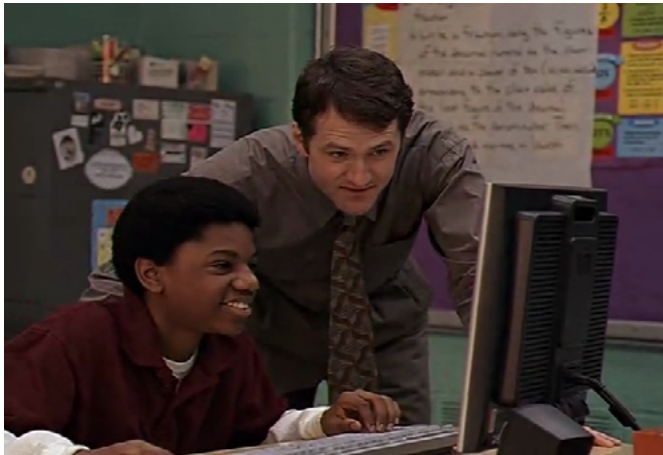
FIGURA 3

ciones hacia su situación. Sin embargo, aunque el ejemplo de "Dukie" nos demuestre que existe la posibilidad de resolver algunos problemas de jerarquización social así como la ridiculez de este tipo de generalizaciones, recordemos que se trata sólo de un caso aislado, concreto y, sobre todo, temporal. Ayudar a un desfavorecido o resolver la situación de un personaje es posible si otra persona le dedica el esfuerzo necesario, pero esto no supondrá la vía para una solución global, pues el individuo (ni "Dukie" ni "Prez") no tiene, ni mucho menos, la capacidad para realmente influir en la situación general.

04 **EL FRACASO (O AUTOBOICOT) INSTITUCIONAL**

Así, la subtrama de la temporada que es la evolución de "Dukie" pronto da un giro, ya que la reintegración social de un personaje destinado de antemano a la marginación no resulta ventajosa para el sistema. Aunque sí lo es la idea de que dicha mejora es posible dentro del concepto irreal de "oportunidades para todos" que domina en la mitología nacional estadounidense. Se trata de una falacia por contradicción (para que uno tenga éxito, otros muchos han de fracasar) en directa relación con las propias paradojas fundacionales del capitalismo en su fase global y neoliberal: crecimiento económico a costa de la pauperización extrema de amplios sectores de la población (entre otros: Klein, 2007; Harvey, 2007).

The Wire nos muestra pues que la escuela, aunque se presente como la institución encargada de lo contrario, en realidad promueve la aceptación por parte de los estudiantes de un lugar preestablecido por el propio sistema, en el caso

de "Dukie", ser un ejemplo de inutilidad (por indigencia) que sirva para conservar la jerarquización socio-económica, que se encuentra cada vez más polarizada. En este sentido, este personaje es más rentable al sistema si se mantiene en los márgenes y sirve como paradigma de anormalidad, lo que en el fondo sirve para perpetuar la situación y no para resolverla. Por otra parte, retomando alguna de las ideas explicadas por Michéa respecto a la inutilidad de un alto porcentaje de la población activa en el capitalismo terminal (2012: 39), el conjunto de la población marginada es dominada más fácilmente que una fuerza de trabajo frustrada, de manera que es preferible mantener un porcentaje de segregación que permitir su acceso a unas capacidades técnicas que, ante la falta de puestos laborales, deriven en un grave descontento social. En resumen, el truncamiento de las recién adquiridas posibilidades de "Dukie" gracias a la intervención de "Prez" nos confirma el fracaso del sistema educativo en relación con su intención de mejoría social, pero su éxito en cuanto perpetuador del modo de producción capitalista. Porque, en el fondo, la intención última de estas instituciones es mantenerse a sí mismas (Bandes, 2010: 438) por cuanto son las principales herramientas utilizadas por el discurso hegemónico para construir la posición del individuo en la sociedad En *Modernidad líquida* Bauman explica cómo el fordismo no es sólo un modelo de industrialización sino que también construye una epistemología, una manera de ver el mundo (2007: 62). Este ejemplo, por supuesto, nos permite remitir a la definición foucaldiana de episteme, el conjunto de estructuras discursivas en las que una cultura concreta piensa y se define a sí misma. Con esto no nos referimos a un conjunto homogéneo de ideas prefijadas sino al conjunto de técnicas y estructuras que actúan e interactúan permitiendo la circulación de ciertos discursos en ciertos momentos (Mills, 1997: 56). *The Wire* muestra la importancia de las instituciones (y las acciones de los individuos que las conforman) en la expansión y permanencia de un discurso concreto, el del capitalismo contemporáneo.

Para "Dukie", el "abandono institucional" se producirá en el momento en que la propia escuela, en contra de sus deseos, decida que se encuentra preparado para abandonarla y pasar al instituto de enseñanza superior. Con ello es alejado de ese espacio que le había otorgado un cierto control sobre su situación personal gracias a que "Prez" le permitía hacer uso de una serie de instalaciones y materiales en principio restringidos. Su llegada a un centro nuevo y desconocido por una disposición tomada siguiendo una serie de criterios arbitrarios que nada tienen que ver con el propio "Dukie" (y mucho menos tienen en cuenta su situación) le devolverán el rol de

marginado e indigente que, como se ha señalado, había conseguido superar al menos en parte. Sin embargo, la situación y futuro de "Dukie" es irrelevante para la entidad educativa, representada aquí por la subdirectora, que, funcionando como metonimia del sistema educativo en general, hace ver a "Prez" que sabe que el profesor se ha preocupado personalmente por el chaval más allá de lo profesionalmente necesario. Y aunque su tono benevolente implica que ve lo positivo de sus acciones, al mismo tiempo insiste en que no puede centrarse exclusivamente en un alumno con problemas porque enseguida llegarán otros que también necesitan su ayuda. Con buena intención (al fin y al cabo, podemos considerar las instituciones como elementos constrictivos de la acción humana creados sin embargo por esa misma acción humana [Flew, 2014: 64-65]), la subdirectora intenta que el profesor novato no se ofusque al no conseguir resolver la situación de uno de sus estudiantes, ya que, sabiendo por experiencia que es imposible cambiar el sistema desde una posición individual, pretende prevenir la frustración de "Prez". Sin embargo, con la excusa de la profesionalidad, le está tratando de inculcar un alejamiento que puede desembocar en tratar a los estudiantes como una masa sin individualizar, es decir, mantener el status quo quitando responsabilidad al sistema.

Convencido, "Prez" intentará explicar a "Dukie" que está preparado para acceder al instituto (4x12, escena 24). En comparación con otras escenas en que ambos se encuentran a solas en el aula junto al ordenador, aquí la cámara se ha saltado el eje (los personajes son vistos desde el otro lado de la mesa) e incluso ha variado la posición en que se sentaban normalmente el uno junto al otro: la situación ha dado un inevitable giro de 180 grados. Aunque le ofrece volver a la escuela cuando quiera e incluso seguir haciendo uso de las instalaciones, el joven sabe que no hay vuelta atrás y decide explicar al profesor cómo funciona el ordenador. Mostrando así que es "Dukie" el que lo empleaba adecuadamente cuando era necesario se nos insiste en que se le está retirando de una posición y un lugar donde es verdaderamente útil y sus habilidades tienen cabida, en oposición a la necesidad del sistema de mantener una casta de marginados (Figura 4).

Regresando de la escuela junto a Michael, para colmo, descubre que su familia ha sido desahuciada (lo cual quiere decir que han desaparecido sin dejar rastro) y todas sus pertenencias conforman una montaña de basura en medio de la calle, lo que le obliga a mudarse con este amigo, recientemente independizado (4x12, escena 28). Aunque a primera vista podamos considerar que conviviendo con su compañero la situación de "Dukie" mejorará, en realidad la cuestión es que, como ocurre

con su paso de la enseñanza media al instituto, se trata de cambios que le son impuestos sin que él tenga ningún poder de decisión sobre ello. En la habitual concepción generalizadora de la población, las diferentes instituciones llevan a cabo sus acciones sin considerar las consecuencias que pueden tener en el ser humano a nivel individual. En una de las escenas en las que llega al que es su nuevo hogar (4x13, escena 18), "Dukie" es consciente de ser una molestia y una carga inoportuna para los verdaderos habitantes de la casa. Así, no enciende ninguna luz y avanza sigilosamente, convirtiéndose de nuevo en una sombra que pretende ser invisible. Aparece directamente en las escaleras, a oscuras y visto desde lo alto de las mismas, señalando así la sensación de incomodidad que siente el personaje. "Dukie" finalmente se dirige en silencio a la habitación que comparte con el hermano pequeño de Michael, en cuya litera de abajo se ha instalado. Se trata de un tipo de cama que, por su propia estructura, implica ya agobio y coacción por parte del espacio sobre el personaje y que también podría remitir a cierto infantilismo. De nuevo, el entorno inmediato de "Dukie" cambia sin remedio y él, pasivo y sin posibilidad de elección, parece verse atrapado por todo lo que tiene alrededor y que le guía en una dirección concreta que no es la que ha elegido, sino la que le viene impuesta por el propio sistema.

El chaval nunca llega a entrar al instituto (4x13, escena 20). Es mostrado primero avanzando con miedo por la calle que lleva hasta el edificio que aparece como una enorme mole de ladrillo desde el punto de vista de "Dukie", sin ventanas y desde un ángulo bajo, lo que empequeñece la figura del joven respecto a la impresión de amenaza que transmite el nuevo centro escolar. Al quedarse paralizado en la acera, unos chavales le empujan y se ríen de él, consiguiendo que finalmente

FIGURA 4

dé media vuelta y se aleje en dirección contraria al resto de jóvenes que avanzan por la calle.

Su abandono queda confirmado en una escena posterior, en que se acerca a la escuela de enseñanza media a la hora de inicio de las clases para dar un regalo a "Prez" con la intención de agradecerle su ayuda y cuidado (4x13, escena 46). El plano ascendente que lo muestra sentado mientras espera la llegada del profesor permite ver la bolsa de Navidad con el presente, pero no ninguna mochila o cartera con libros. La conversación en que el adulto le pregunta por esta misma falta y si no debería estar en ese momento en el instituto se produce en un encuadre amplio que incluye a ambas figuras, señalando así el alejamiento que ha tenido lugar entre ellos, ejemplificado en el diálogo en la obvia mentira que "Dukie" le cuenta y que "Prez" no llega a creerse. De hecho, la última aparición de "Dukie" en la cuarta temporada es (en el clip recopilatorio de brevísimas escenas con música extradiegética con el que terminan todas las temporadas de *The Wire*), desde el punto de vista del profesor, visto de pie en un cruce trabajando como traficante de droga visto desde el coche de "Prez", aparcado en esa misma calle. En una existencia sin verdaderas opciones como la que se ofrece a muchos personajes de la serie, el crimen o la lucha por la supervivencia no es una cuestión de responsabilidad individual sino simplemente la única opción (Bigsby, 2013: 194). Los montajes finales de *The Wire* son significativos porque no buscan cerrar tramas sino insistir en la continuidad de las mismas, la falta de un inicio y de un final precisamente porque todo parece dar vueltas sobre sí mismo, es decir, son una especie de representación de una inevitabilidad histórica y nos recuerdan que aunque para algunos personajes todo ha cambiado, en realidad nada lo ha hecho (Wheeler, 2014: 246).

05 "NO WAY OUT": EL IRREMEDIABLE DESTINO DE "DUKIE"

El inicio de la quinta temporada de *The Wire* nos muestra a "Dukie" exactamente donde lo dejamos: trabajando en una de las esquinas del barrio (5x01, escena 10). Sin embargo, lo vemos poco activo, sentado desganadamente en unos escalones y separado de los que son sus subordinados (los encargados de mover la droga), a los que pregunta con desinterés por la cantidad de producto que queda. Ellos, para colmo, no le contestan y muestran una tremenda falta de respeto. Todo ello, sumado a la amplitud del encuadre (que sirve para minimizar su figura), demuestra su incapacidad para liderar y, por tanto, la misma incapacidad para ser "corner boy" que en la temporada

anterior veíamos en Namond.[3] Sólo cuando Michael aparece por el fondo del encuadre los vendedores vuelven a ponerse en marcha y responden, ahora sí, a las preguntas que él les hace. A lo largo de toda esta parte de la secuencia y hasta el momento en que su amigo le pide (ordena) que vuelva a casa, "Dukie" sigue sentado en la misma posición y apenas mueve la cabeza para corresponder a su compañero. Esta manera de presentarlo, que se repetirá en apariciones sucesivas de esta quinta temporada, insiste en que permanece pasivo mientras todo a su alrededor se mueve (y le afecta) sin que él pueda hacer nada para evitarlo, dando una vez más la sensación del poco control que tiene el personaje sobre su destino.

En el quinto episodio (5x05, escena 7) lo vemos aparecer junto a "Bug", con quien establece una relación cada vez más cercana, en un encuadre amplio que insiste más en el entorno que en la figura del joven, que además avanza arrastrando los pies y con las manos en los bolsillos (una posición consistente con esta imagen de impotencia que quiere darse de "Dukie"). En esta secuencia uno de los que solía ser su subordinado le insulta y le tira una botella de plástico vacía sin que él haga nada, reaccionando finalmente ante una segunda ronda de comentarios dañinos. El resultado es que un conjunto de "corner boys" le pega hasta dejarlo en posición fetal en el suelo. Siendo el sumun de la representación de la indefensión, podemos fácilmente enlazar esta imagen con otros momentos en que diferentes personajes se han visto en una situación similar, como por ejemplo el drogadicto y soplón policial "Bubbles" (André Royo), cuya relación simbólica con "Dukie" será desarrollada en el siguiente apartado, o su compañero en la cuarta temporada Randy. El ejemplo de Randy es significativo porque se trata de un personaje que, por una serie de errores policiales y farragosos procesos burocráticos es descubierto como chivato (lo que es una condena casi segura en su entorno) y pierde a su madre adoptiva. Es el caso mostrado en la cuarta temporada que más y mejor insiste en el fracaso institucional a la hora de auxiliar al individuo desfavorecido, y que va en paralelo a la desprotección generalizada sufrida también por "Dukie".

La propuesta de su amigo Michael para evitar que vuelvan a agredirle es llevarle junto a su antiguo entrenador de boxeo, Dennis "Cutty" Wise (Chad L. Coleman), un ex-convicto que

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3   La evolución de este personaje a lo largo de los episodios anteriores, aunque no sea el tema de este texto, supone una representación de las dramáticas consecuencias que tiene en un joven la imposición de un destino para el que no está preparado por falta de oportunidades y predisposición sistémica a convertirlo en traficante de drogas. El caso de Namond, casi como excepción que confirma la regla, termina de manera feliz para todos los implicados.

ahora regenta un gimnasio para responsabilizarse de algunos de los chavales del barrio con la intención de evitar que terminen inmersos en el tráfico de drogas. Tras confirmar la poca habilidad deportiva del flacucho "Dukie", el chico es visto sentado alicaídamente en un banco mientras "Cutty" recoge la estancia, dando vueltas a su alrededor (5x05, escena 19). Esta configuración de la secuencia funciona para reiterar la imagen de pasividad e impotencia que se quiere dar del joven personaje y cómo, a pesar de que su entorno varíe y fluctúe, su papel en el conjunto de la sociedad está prefijado de antemano.

"Dukie", sin embargo, continúa buscando un lugar donde sentirse a gusto y aceptado. A lo largo del octavo episodio (5x08, escena 2) lo vemos recorrer diferente lugares intentando encontrar un empleo legal y fijo[4]. El personaje avanza por las calles de Baltimore entrando y saliendo de varios establecimientos siempre con la misma actitud y postura desganada, mostrado en encuadres amplios e insistiendo en cómo todo sigue girando en torno a él sin pararse a prestarle ninguna atención. Incluso se le relaciona visualmente con la basura, mostrándolo tanto junto a un montón de bolsas dejadas en una esquina como dando patadas a una lata vacía, una imagen que representa el colmo de la inactividad y aburrimiento. Todas estas escenas que nos han mostrado al chaval como perdido y yendo de un sitio a otro sin tener exactamente claro lo que busca (primero en relación a ser capaz de defenderse y luego en la búsqueda de trabajo) le dan a su arco narrativo un tono errático y de vagabundeo que encaja a la perfección con la idea de que ese no es su verdadero camino.

"Dukie" finalmente se cruza (5x08, escena 32), casi por casualidad, con el carro de un chatarrero indigente que se dedica a robar o recoger restos de metal para revenderlos en el desguace. En este momento, curiosamente, cambia el tipo de planificación empleada para presentar a "Dukie", ya que pasa a acercar la cámara al rostro del personaje en lugar de señalar el entorno en que se encuentra, pero también se transforma su actitud, pues se acerca a este nuevo personaje corriendo y enseguida acepta ayudarle en su actividad. Al subirse al transporte junto al resto de desechos, con lo que además acepta ser transportado por el chatarrero, "Dukie" admite inconscientemente la imposibilidad de encontrar un lugar en el sistema

oficial y consiente figurar en los márgenes, asumiendo así el papel que el sistema le tiene reservado desde el principio. Y es que ante la falta de verdaderas oportunidades (diga lo que diga el discurso institucional oficial sobre la posibilidad de ascenso social y la igualdad de opciones para todos), el único recurso es recurrir a lo ilegal o "alegal", construyendo una economía paralela a la oficial (Vint, 2013: 31 y 45, en relación a la acción del sindicato de estibadores en la segunda temporada de la serie). La escena del siguiente episodio que nos presenta al joven "trabajando" a tiempo completo junto al chatarrero vuelve a mostrarnos al "Dukie" sucio y con la ropa rota que conocimos al inicio de la cuarta temporada (5x09, escena 6).

Dependiendo una vez más de circunstancias fuera de su control, "Dukie" ha de abandonar la casa de Michael cuando éste se ve obligado a huir por haber asesinado a uno de sus "jefes" dentro de la banda a la que hasta ese momento pertenecía (5x09, escena 38). En el encuadre desde la ventanilla lateral del coche de su compañero en la secuencia en que se despiden, su situación ya no tiene remedio: ni siquiera cuando contesta a las preguntas su rostro aparece enfocado, siendo todo el tiempo una sombra borrosa a la izquierda de la imagen (en el asiento del copiloto) frente al rostro definido de Michael. Cuando mira hacia atrás por última vez, el vehículo ya ha desaparecido, dejándole así una única dirección posible: alejarse hacia el callejón y convertirse en un sin techo.

Tras conseguir algo de dinero de "Prez" bajo la excusa de buscar un hogar y enrolarse en un programa escolar (cuando la realidad es que se trataba de un engaño propiciado por el chatarrero, que parece haberse convertido en una especie de "mentor" de la calle para "Dukie"), la última y desoladora aparición del personaje tiene lugar de nuevo en el montaje con que termina la serie en el episodio final. Ya se ha mencionado anteriormente la relevancia de estos cierres de temporada característicos de *The Wire* en los que se insiste en la circularidad y la continuidad extradiegética de lo narrado sólo porque el tiempo del relato finalice. En la imagen vemos un encuadre amplio del mismo callejón, en tonos amarillentos y marrones y con gran contraste de luces y sombras, donde aparecen ambas figuras sentadas la una junto a la otra procediendo a inyectarse heroína (Figura 16 arriba).

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4   La situación de desempleo de la *inner city* de Baltimore es bastante grave especialmente en las clases desfavorecidas y la población de color. Para una descripción más detallada de las consecuencias de la desindustrialización y la "emigración" suburbial en los años 70s y 80s en EE.UU., remitimos al artículo de William Julius Wilson y Anmon Chaddha, "'Way down in the hole': systemic urban inequality and The Wire", y a la obra recopilatoria de textos de David Harvey, "Espacios del capital", ambos citados en la bibliografía.

06 EL ETERNO RETORNO: "DUKIE" COMO FUTURIBLE "BUBBLES"

Retomaremos esta idea de que los propios finales de temporada de *The Wire* insisten en la imposibilidad de un cierre sat-

isfactorio en un sistema en continua evolución, recreando una idea de circularidad y de perdurabilidad (con todos sus fallos, efectos, causas y consecuencias), es decir, como afirma Žižek, aquí no hay catarsis por clímax dramático, no hay conclusión, todo simplemente sigue (2013: 224-225). A pesar de que la situación individual y personal de los personajes seguidos a lo largo de la serie sí que haya cambiado a mejor o a peor, eso no implica que se hayan dado dichas alteraciones a nivel estructural. De hecho, todo lo contrario: el último episodio muestra claramente esta repetición de patrones estableciendo obvios paralelismos entre las historias de vida de diferentes personajes. El caso más claro es el de Michael, que es mostrado justo antes del montaje final asaltando por su cuenta una de las "sedes" de su antigua banda, convirtiéndose así en el *nuevo* Omar (Michael K. Williams). No menos obvio es el ejemplo que aquí queremos resaltar, el de *nuevo* "Bubbles". Este personaje, ya mencionado, aparece desde el inicio de la serie como un drogadicto conocedor de las calles, ingenioso, entrañable y capaz de desenvolverse en un entorno hostil, que además actúa ocasionalmente como informante de la policía. Al final de la cuarta temporada "Bubbles" toca fondo y a lo largo de la quinta somos testigos de su recuperación, que termina con la feliz re-aceptación por parte de su familia. De ahí que, en relación a "Dukie", la narrativa de ambos personajes en estos últimos episodios siga una dirección opuesta. Sin embargo, es en las apariciones de "Bubbles" al inicio de la serie donde podemos establecer los mejores paralelismos a nivel visual y de presentación de estas dos figuras. Además, retomar la primera temporada para señalar las similitudes existentes con la última sugeriría de nuevo la representación de la continua auto-reproducción del injusto sistema en *The Wire*.

Por supuesto, no es necesario insistir en detalles de tipo superficial como que ambos personajes lleven la ropa sucia, llena de agujeros, tengan algunos tics nerviosos, arrastren los pies al caminar, etc. Nos centraremos más bien en la repetición de ciertas estructuras en la puesta en escena que hacen equivaler la situación de los dos personajes, uno ya inserto en el mundo de la drogadicción, "Bubbles", y otro recién convertido en indigente, de manera que nos permita considerar dichas similitudes como una representación de la inevitabilidad de la existencia de la indigencia y su confirmación como una parte intrínseca del sistema.

Así, comparemos la última imagen de "Dukie" con la primera vez que vemos a "Bubbles" inyectándose heroína junto a su protegido Johnny Weeks (Leo Fitzpatrick) (Figura 5). "Bubbles" y Johnny tienen una relación de mentor-alumno similar a la que parece establecerse entre el chatarrero y "Dukie". Podría

uno pensar que, igual que "Bubbles" decide tomar bajo su protección a Johnny para enseñarle cómo funcionan las cosas cuando se está en la calle, compartir la droga e incluso realizar juntos algunas artimañas para salir adelante, el chatarrero recoge a "Dukie" cuando este ha de abandonar la casa de Michael (por ejemplo, parece ser la cabeza pensante detrás del plan para obtener dinero de "Prez" que mencionamos anteriormente). Esta escena del episodio piloto (1x01, escena 19) de la serie se compone a partir de planos detalle de las manos y rostros de "Bubbles" y Johnny para finalizar con un plano de conjunto de la casa abandonada en la que conviven. El plano final se compone de la misma manera que el de "Dukie", con los dos personajes en posiciones similares y mirándose el uno al otro pero sin estar enfrentados, rodeados de tonos ocres y oscuros e inmersos en un contrastado juego de luces y sombras.

Ya en el cuarto episodio de la primera temporada (1x04, escena 12), el detective McNulty (Dominic West) lleva a "Bubbles" en su coche cuando hace una parada en el partido de fútbol de su hijo, a quien abraza ante la vigilante mirada de

FIGURA 5

su ex-mujer Elena (Callie Thorne). Mientras esta escena tiene lugar, el informante policial permanece detrás y es ignorado por todos los presentes. De hecho, en el momento en que "Bubbles" le ofrece la mano a Elena, ella se gira, cierra su abrigo y cruza los brazos en un gesto protector, una reacción de rechazo equivalente a aquella con la que la madre de Namond recibía a "Dukie" en la cuarta temporada.

Poco después (1x04, escena 13), McNulty acompaña a "Bubbles" hasta un callejón. Al igual que las ocasiones en que otros personajes han llevado a Dukie en coche, el vehículo nunca se adentra en las calles o zonas ocupadas por los indigentes y por supuesto ninguno de los acompañantes se baja: Michael se marchaba mientras "Dukie" se adentraba en su nuevo "hogar" y "Prez" se alejaba sin decir palabra tanto al ver al joven en la esquina en la cuarta temporada como al dejarlo junto al chatarrero tras haberle dado el dinero. El gesto compungido de "Dukie", que acepta lo que le da "Prez" por necesidad (y adicción), es también muy parecido a uno de "Bubbles" en un momento, ya cercano al final de la primera temporada, en que McNulty le ofrece gran cantidad de dinero, destinado en principio a rehacer su vida una vez superada la adicción a la heroína (algo que, como sabemos, no sucederá hasta la quinta temporada).

"Bubbles", como "Dukie", es inteligente, habilidoso y mañoso, lo que le sirve para sobrevivir en las calles de Baltimore y obtener sus siguientes dosis a pesar de su insolvencia económica. Entre otras actividades, "Bubbles" consigue con bastante destreza "pescar" una bolsa de viales, intenta vender fruta de un carro y, sobre todo, roba y revende aluminio y cobre, una labor que ya hemos visto como la única a la que "Dukie" puede dedicarse.

Podemos señalar igualmente una secuencia del decimoprimer episodio (1x11, escena 35) en el que "Bubbles" se encuentra en la oficina de la policía dándole información a McNulty y todos los personajes que pertenecen al espacio dan vueltas a su alrededor organizando una redada mientras él permanece apoyado en una mesa frotándose las manos. En este mismo momento, además, está intentando explicarle al detective una cuestión personal, pero este sólo está pendiente de su informante para obtener los datos que le son necesarios, obviando así el resto de lo que dice "Bubbles". En la cuarta temporada "Bubbles" sufrirá una situación similar aunque en esta ocasión el policía responsable es el sargento "Herc" Hauk (Domenick Lombardozzi) y además las consecuencias son bastante más graves (incluyendo la paliza recibida cuya imagen ya señalamos en el apartado anterior). Así, como ocurre con "Dukie", además de con otros muchos personajes de la serie,

la actividad de las diferentes instituciones se desarrolla a su alrededor mientras él queda como un elemento representativo de las consecuencias de dichas acciones que pretende ignorarse o invisibilizarse o, al menos, reabsorberse a nivel discursivo de manera beneficiosa.

07 **CONCLUSIONES**

Como hemos visto, la presentación del personaje de Duquan "Dukie" Weems nos recuerda cómo la existencia de una clase social aparentemente improductiva, situada en los márgenes, es en realidad útil al sistema tanto para establecer una serie de clasificaciones ordenadoras de la población que permitan controlarla mediante la definición de roles y estereotipos como para definir la normalidad por oposición. Al mismo tiempo, su evolución y aparente destino al final de la serie lo hace equivaler a la figura del drogadicto e indigente "Bubbles", insistiendo así en una de las principales ideas que subyacen al conjunto de tramas de *The Wire*, que es la falsedad de la idea de oportunidades para todos que promueve insistentemente el discurso neoliberal hegemónico. De hecho, el propio David Simon ha señalado que uno de los modelos seguidos por la estructura de la serie no es otro que la tragedia clásica griega, por cuanto en estas los personajes ven sus acciones limitadas por unas deidades caprichosas cuyos designios no comprenden pero han de acatar, en *The Wire* sustituidas por las instituciones (Hornby, 2009: 384)[5].

En esta línea, hemos de señalar que se trata de un estatus social negativo dentro de un sistema económico que pretende establecer que este tipo de fracasos son exclusivamente personales (Harvey, 2007: 75), del mismo modo que el éxito es una cuestión de autonomía y capacidades del propio individuo que ha de actuar por sí mismo y en busca de su propio beneficio. En un contexto de individualismo cada vez mayor y de competencia cada vez más agresiva, la carga y responsabilidad de la constitución de uno mismo como sujeto (mediante la maximización de su potencial y otra terminología neoliberal similar) recaen sobre uno mismo exclusivamente (Bauman, 2007: 37-40). De esta manera, se presentan algunas de estas cualidades como la naturaleza humana, cuando en realidad se trata de una auto-constitución de la propia subjetividad en beneficio del sistema. Se nos presenta así un discurso hegemónico que, en busca de su crecimiento y perpetuación como tal dentro de una circularidad y repetición de patrones,

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5   Idea que ha sido desarrollada por Chris Love (2010).

carcome poco a poco los conceptos de solidaridad y comunidad, demonizando la dependencia a todos los niveles y llegando incluso a culpabilizar a los propios desfavorecidos de su posición. No son víctimas del sistema, son los responsables de su propia situación.

El caso de "Dukie" y su paralelismo con otros personajes de la serie nos demuestra una vez más que para que unos pocos tengan verdaderas ganancias y ventajas, otros muchos tienen que verse despreciados, y que si la economía continua avanzando es siempre a costa de dejar gente por el camino. La indigencia no es pues un simple daño colateral del crecimiento económico, sino que es necesaria para y producida por el sistema para asegurar su perpetuación cíclica, aquí sobre todo mediante las consecuencias de las diferentes acciones de las instituciones (algunas de las cuales, como por ejemplo el paso al siguiente nivel escolar, parecerían en principio incluso lógicas), sin que el personaje tenga ninguna posibilidad de evitarlo. En resumen, lo que más hemos visto en las escenas y situaciones señaladas es una insistencia en la pasividad de los personajes, su incapacidad para intervenir en un entorno que sin embargo constriñe y conforma sus vidas sin que ellos (u otras personas) parezcan poder evitarlo. No es que no tengan ninguna posibilidad de elección, pero sin duda sus opciones están restringidas, y en *The Wire* el espectador puede ver claramente cómo las acciones, creencias, actitudes y destinos de los individuos están conformados por sus respectivos contextos (Chaddha y Wilson, 2011: 164).

Así, la concepción de que es posible alejarse de la marginación (junto a la ilusión de que el éxito es posible para todos dentro de una cultura del esfuerzo individual) es la falacia fundamental para sustentar la lógica del capitalismo, una farsa hoy naturalizada por el sujeto que permite legitimar dicho sistema sin importar las consecuencias. *The Wire* consigue representar no sólo las constricciones institucionales existentes y la verdadera condición del sujeto en cuanto "sujeto" por su entorno, sino también la repetición cíclica de las mismas, su perpetuación *ad infinitum*.

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ADAPTING LANDSCAPE AND PLACE IN TRANSCULTURAL REMAKES: THE CASE OF *BRON|BROEN, THE BRIDGE* AND *THE TUNNEL*

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ABSTRACT

Although place tends to be overlooked as a narrative component in audiovisual fiction, it is undeniable that landscapes, settings and locations play a defining role in television series. Not only are these forms of place central to reinforcing the genre, themes and plots of the story; they also serve to reflect the characters' emotions and cultural identities. Therefore, when a scripted format is remade in a foreign country, the narrative dimension of place is one of the elements that need to be relocalised to a new sociocultural environment. This paper aims to examine how the significance of place is adapted in the specific case of transcultural televisual remakes. In order to do so, the study will present a comparative analysis of the Swedish-Danish co-production Bron|Broen (2011-) and its two remakes: the American *The Bridge* (2013-2014) and the Anglo-French *The Tunnel* (2013-). More specifically, the representations of place in these three series will be studied in relation to other narrative components, such as genre conventions and aesthetics, characters, and dramatic conflict. Ultimately, this paper will prove that, when you take a story built for a specific setting and relocate it elsewhere, that new context informs the architecture of the story itself.

Over the last decade, Scandinavian crime fiction in literature, film, and television has been the object of increased interest all over the world. Although the genre itself is not new, the labels "Nordic noir" or "Scandi noir"[1] have been coined in recent years to describe dark and complex crime narratives set in Scandinavian countries. Within this current framework of popularity across different media, Nordic noir television series such as *Forbrydelsen* (2007-2012), *Wallander* (2005-2013) or *Bron|Broen* (2011-), which position place as an essential element in their narratives, have not only become quite successful when broadcasted abroad; but their formats are also being optioned and adapted in different countries.[2]

And yet, even when they play a significant role in these series, Nordic landscapes and settings are often seen as mere dormant backgrounds. As Waade has observed, 'setting is an important, yet often undervalued component of crime fiction and fiction in general, and location in TV drama has typically been considered subordinate to the narrative' (2011a:48). This is due to the fact that, traditionally, the element of place tends to take a backseat in mainstream writing for film and television, where characters, plot structure, and dialogues drive the screenwriting process.

In spite of this, a setting is not just a mere backdrop for a scene or a dialogue, and it can also serve a 'myriad of narrative purposes beyond the generic, decorative or touristic' (2014:42).[3] To illustrate this, Murphy argues that, at least in the case of American independent cinema, place tends to be intrinsically present in screenwriting practices (2014:28). This is something that could certainly be extrapolated to television, especially in the case of transcultural remakes[4] of scripted series, as landscapes and locations need to be interwoven in the narrative from the very beginning of the adaptation process.

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1 The label "Nordic noir" can also be understood as a brand, or within the realm of place branding culture (see Waade, 2011b). However, this article will mainly refer to "Nordic noir" as a narrative genre, and will further explore its defining traits within this framework.

2 Although this article will not focus on the reasons that might be behind the recent international success of Nordic noir television, some authors have offered insightful ideas on this topic, especially in regards to fiction series produced by DR (Denmark's public service broadcaster). See: Bondebjerg and Redvall (2011), Redvall (2013) or Jensen and Waade (2013a, 2013b).

3 In fact, Murphy goes on to explain that 'place can be intrinsic, integrative, stylistic, structural, conceptual and thematic', thus establishing six different (and coexisting) functions that place might have in any given story (2014:42).

4 The term "remake" is used to refer to a very specific form of adaptation, sustained by Leitch's definition of film remakes as 'adaptations of a given story to a new discursive incarnation within the same mode of representation' (1990:138). Therefore, the specificity of remakes resides in the adaptation of a story (or fable) taking place within the same mode and medium (which, in this particular case, is long-form television).

Taking this into consideration, the aim of this article is to explore the narrative role that setting plays in the specific case of transcultural remakes of Nordic noir formats. In order to do so, I have focused on the Swedish-Danish co-production *Bron|Broen* (2011-), one of the most successful and paradigmatic cases of Scandinavian crime fiction in recent years, and its two transcultural remakes: the American *The Bridge* (2013-2014) and the Anglo-French *The Tunnel* (2013-). Mainly drawing from screenwriting theory and format adaptation studies, I have conducted a comparative textual analysis of the first season from each of these three series, specifically looking at how setting interacts with genre, aesthetics, characters and dramatic conflict.

The premise of *Bron|Broen* sets the story in motion with the discovery of a dead body in the middle of the Øresund Bridge, which connects the countries of Sweden and Denmark. In the case of *The Bridge,* the premise is relocated to the Bridge of the Americas between Texas and Mexico, while *The Tunnel* replaces the bridge with the Eurotunnel that links England and France underwater.

Among the different locations portrayed in *Bron|Broen,* the actual Øresund Bridge emerges as a symbolic setting with considerable narrative relevance within the story. In fact, Agger believes that this moving of the bridge to 'the very centre of the narrative [may justify the series'] steady invitation to remakes in the context of other nations: a bridge is not only a geographical fact, but a metaphor loaded with significance and emotions reminiscent of cultural clashes as well as cooperation' (2016:148). Therefore, in this study of *Bron|Broen* and its two remakes, particular attention will be given to the role of the bridge (or the tunnel) as a narrative figure, which is characterised by the duality of a simultaneous connection and separation between two countries.

Ultimately, this paper will argue that setting, landscape and other forms of place inform the narrative of TV series, constituting an essential factor in screenwriting for television. Due to its significance, place must be especially taken into account in the case of transcultural remakes, as the adaptation of a scripted series in a different country presents a set of specific challenges in relation to the global/local dichotomy that characterizes television formats.

01 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Even though the main goal of this paper is not to wade deeper into ongoing theoretical discussions surrounding place

TELEVISION SERIES	BROADCASTED BY	PRODUCED BY	MAIN SETTINGS	LANGUAGES
Bron|Broen (2011-)	DR1 (Denmark) SVT1 (Sweden)	DR and Nimbus Film (Denmark) SVT and Filmlance Intl (Sweden) (Co-funded by Norwegian NRK or German ZDF, among others)	Copenhagen (Denmark) Malmö (Sweden) Øresund Bridge	Danish and Swedish
The Bridge (2013-2014)	FX (USA)	FX Productions (USA) Shine America (USA)	El Paso (Texas, USA) Ciudad Juarez (Mexico) Bridge of the Americas	English and Spanish
The Tunnel (2013-)	Sky (UK) Canal+ (France)	Sky Atlantic and Kudos (UK) Canal+ and Shine France (France)	Folkestone (England) Calais (France) Eurotunnel	English and French

△ TABLE 1. PRODUCTION DETAILS OF *BRON|BROEN, THE BRIDGE* AND *THE TUNNEL*

and television formats, it does seem necessary to briefly clarify the use of certain concepts, so as to explain their pertinence (and how they will be used) in the analysis of *Bron|Broen, The Bridge* and *The Tunnel.*

1.1 Considerations on space, place, landscape, setting and location

The terminology widely adopted to describe space as it is portrayed in film and television presents particular nuances that go beyond the geographical, and therefore need to be precised. For instance, Lury establishes a clear and useful distinction between space and place[5] in television. According to this critic, "space" refers to somewhere more abstract, global and 'all-at-once-anywhere', while "place" is used to define a more tangible, familiar environment (2005:147-150). For Murphy, 'place has cultural, historical and personal implications. (...) It implies a location or setting that elicits a specific or unique identity or personality' (2014:34). Indeed, those contextual implications inform place and, consequently, have a crucial impact on the narrative of a film or television series. Therefore, in the case of transcultural remakes, the 'unique identity' of a specific place will condition the adaptation process.

In regard to the study of landscape, and as editor of the book *Landscape and Film* (2006), Lefebvre offered theoretical contributions that are still considered a cornerstone of landscape studies. Even when this author focused on the relationship between landscape and film, his observations have also been applied to other fields, including TV studies. For Lefebvre, setting does not only refer to the actual locations or 'spatial features' where a story takes place, but also to the way in which they are represented and interpreted (2006:21-22). And yet, Lefebvre also remarks that 'in mainstream cinema, natural or exterior spaces tend to function as setting rather than landscape in the vast majority of cases' (2006:24). How can a distinction be established between these two concepts, then? After a thorough analysis of the depiction of landscape in art history, Lefebvre concludes that filmic landscape is manifested in an 'interpretive gaze' (2006:51), and that 'it is the cultural context that makes it possible to direct the "landscape gaze" onto the narrative spaces of fiction films' (2006:48).

In her analysis of Lefebvre's theoretical reflections on landscape and setting, television scholar Waade further muses that '*setting* concerns the narrative representation and the diegetic world, while *landscape* concerns aesthetic representation and extra-diegetic layers derived from the "landscape gaze"' (2011a:49). In more general terms, it could be stated that landscape and setting are two different spatial forms that represent a given place in a way that is more abstract or concrete, respectively, but always within an interpretive frame informed by their contextual implications.

Lastly, the term "location" is usually understood as the actual, spatial ubication where a story is set. Along these lines, Murphy points to location as a 'geographical coordinate' (2014:34), while Waade also notes that this concept 'is related to the film production and describes the physical place where the film is shot' (2011:49). Even though the exploration of these terms could certainly be developed further, the ideas quoted above should merely be taken as broad strokes that serve to illustrate the way in which these concepts will be used in this article.

5   For additional reflections on the notion of 'place', Casey (1997) has reviewed the historical evolution of this concept from the standpoint of philosophical thought.

1.2 Format adaptation in television

The comparative analysis of place in *Bron|Broen, The Bridge* and *The Tunnel* needs to be contextualised within the bigger picture of worldwide format trade. As Moran and Malbon have illustrated, current television markets are clearly defined by a 'dynamic of adaptation' (2006:11), where both scripted and non-scripted formats are optioned, sold, and relocalised across the globe.

Even when Anglo-American formats are still the defining axis of the television world market trade, formats are now travelling in many different directions, more than ever before. The multiple adaptations of stories like the Colombian telenovela *Yo Soy Betty, la Fea* (1999-2001), or the Spanish *"whodunit"* series *Los Misterios de Laura* (2009-), among others, reflect the worldwide increasing interest in formats produced by non-English speaking countries. Furthermore, these format adaptations are no longer limited to the West, and are also being carried out by countries from very different regions.[6] Thus, the adaptations of Nordic noir television series, such as *Bron|Broen* or *Forbrydelsen*, emerge as another clear example of this dynamic.

Within the realm of format adaptation studies, academics usually refer to "glocalization" (that is, the symbiosis between the global and the local, or the specific and the universal) as a defining trait of this phenomenon. It is assumed, then, that when a television series is remade in another country, the universal elements of that format will interact and dialogue with the local factors that arise from its new local context. The relevance that context has in the study of television becomes even clearer when a long-form series is remade in a different country, since all of its narrative elements must be transformed according to the defining coordinates (whether they are historical, sociocultural, political or related to the broadcasting industry) of this new context. Furthermore, as Beeden and de Bruin have argued, transcultural remakes might enable the articulation of local identities, and 'the success of an adaptation may [in fact] be linked to its ability to reflect and interpret its new context' (2010:5).

And yet, while the study of context remains a pivotal focus of television studies, the notion of the universal tends to be belittled. Even though the word "universal" is not exempt from controversy and can be deemed problematic, television critic Knox has called for academics to revisit this term:

'Yes, it is not unproblematic as a concept; but it is also *here*, and it needs careful critical engagement, not least because

engaging with the universal offers the opportunity to develop a multi-disciplinary conceptual framework, in which the universal and the particular/local are understood as conceptually intertwined. (…) Engagement with the universal opens up opportunities to understand developments in contemporary television in terms of their positioning within a wider and long-standing tradition of storytelling' (2013: 105).

Moreover, 'universal is also a term that has currency within industry discourses, getting comfortably invoked by broadcasters, producers, buyers and sellers' (Knox, 2013:105). For instance, while dissecting the current international success of Nordic series, producers and TV executives such as Christian Wikander (Head of Sweden's SVT Drama department), have argued that 'viewers abroad are especially taken by the universal relevance of the narratives' (Jensen, 2013:24). Hans Ronssiné, Head of Norway's NRK Drama department, further states that 'we have managed to give universal issues a local flavour, reflecting the Scandinavian way of life with its own editing, pace and narrative styles' (Jensen, 2013:24).

One could even argue that the presence of those "universal issues" in any given television series is what might actually enable its subsequent adaptations in different countries around the world. Therefore, the universal elements that might be present in a scripted format across its different retellings should not be avoided; they should not be treated in a generic manner, either, but their interactions with any pertaining local factors must be analysed critically. "Universal" does not necessarily imply a global homogenization, after all. Casey has noted that, in Western modern culture, where 'sameness-of-place' might be seen as a direct consequence of globalization processes, there is nevertheless an actual 'active desire for the particularity of place – for what is truly "local" or "regional" – (…) [because] place brings with it the very elements sheared off in the planiformity of site: identity, character, nuance, history' (1997: Preface, xiii). This 'active desire' for the local (and for a subsequent articulation of local identities) is something that can be clearly perceived when a television series is remade elsewhere. Consequently, the need to reinterpret universal narrative elements according to the specifics of place will always be part of this type of adaptation process.

Taking these reflections into consideration, the following research aims to better understand the engagement between the global and the local in transcultural remakes of television series. By actually focusing on the adaptation of place, this article will try to shed some light on how specific landscapes and settings interact with universal narrative elements in the case of Nordic noir series and their remakes.

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6   See Oren and Shahaf, eds. (2012)

02 THE NARRATIVE ROLE OF PLACE IN *BRON|BROEN, THE BRIDGE* AND *THE TUNNEL*

Swedish director Victor Sjöström, one of the most prominent Scandinavian filmmakers from the silent era of film history, has often been cited as a pioneer in the use of landscape and setting with narrative purposes, especially in relation to the depiction of a film's main themes and the inner worlds of its characters:

'The relation to Scandinavian landscape [was] perhaps the feature most often pointed to as main characteristic of Sjöström's earlier films (...) According to Peter Cowie,[7] landscape in *Terje Vigen* (1917) –for the first time in film history– consequently reflects the conflicts both within and between the characters in the narrative' (Florin, 2009:2).

Later on, other Scandinavian directors, from Dreyer to Bergman, drew from Sjöström's work and applied these narrative functions of landscape and setting in their own films. This cinematic heritage still lingers nowadays, not only in Scandinavian cinema, but also in many of the television series produced in that region, including *Bron|Broen.* The narrative dimension of place initially developed by Sjöström has therefore been integrated in, and further expanded by, storytelling in Nordic television.

Along with this observation, it must be said that any form of place in television seems to be defined by the local variables of its specific context. As this article will illustrate, the cold Scandinavian landscapes in *Bron|Broen*, the asphyxiating desert in *The Bridge,* and the English and French settings in *The Tunnel* shape the narrative of their respective series at different levels. In order to explore how place is adapted in television, this paper will now look at the narrative roles that different forms of space hold in *Bron|Broen* and its two remakes. More specifically, the focus will be placed on how locations, setting, and landscape interact with other narrative elements, namely (1) genre and aesthetics; (2) characters; and (3) external dramatic conflict. This analysis will thus shed some light on how the universal elements of the format, understood as a metatextual entity, engage with specific local contexts in each series.

2.1 Place, genre and aesthetics

As a narrative genre, Nordic noir is fostered by well-established literary and cinematic traditions in crime fiction. Swedish au-

thors Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö's Detective Beck 10-book series, written in the 1950s and 1960s, is widely considered to be the first precursor of what is now called Nordic noir.[8] In the past decades, there has also been a significant proliferation of Nordic crime fiction novels, which have reached noticeable international success. Some of these novels, like Stieg Larsson' *Millenium* trilogy or Henning Mankell's *Wallander* series, have even been adapted for television and/or for cinema screens.

In film and television, the audiovisual language of Nordic noir draws from the genre conventions, iconography and aesthetics traditionally associated with film noir.[9] While there is a clear appropriation of film noir imagery in Nordic noir, some academics have also tried to delve deeper into its localized conventions, in order to define its specificity. For instance, Creeber argues that Nordic noir is 'best understood as a broad umbrella term that describes a particular type of Scandinavian crime fiction, typified by its heady mixture of bleak naturalism, disconsolate locations and morose detectives' (2015:21). Jensen and Waade have further stated that 'a specific use of Nordic imagery and a feeling of melancholy are created through landscapes, climate, architecture, colours and light' (2013a:262), all of which these two authors consider to be production values that 'serve strategic as well as aesthetic purposes' in the production of Scandinavian crime series (2013b:190). Agger believes that 'the Scandinavian touch can be labelled contemporary crime fiction with a social conscience and a Nordic setting' (2010:2), and she has further identified bleak urban and rural settings as defining traits of Nordic noir (2016). Even when the academic debate surrounding the conventions of both Nordic noir and film noir is still ongoing, these quotes illustrate that there seems to be a consensus in regards to place being an essential factor within these two genres.

The way in which the aesthetics of space (in all of its different forms, from location to setting to landscape) is portrayed in film noir can also be recognized in the case of Nordic noir. Place interacts with other elements of audiovisual language and storytelling (such as cinematography, mise-en-scène and sound) to recreate the very specific tone and unsettling atmosphere that characterises this genre, while at the same time giving it its own spin. According to Creeber, that Nordic noir tone relies on:

'A sense of the cinematic [that] can be defined by a rather slow and understated pace, the dialogue often sparse (...) and

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7   In this text, Florin paraphrases the following quote by Cowie: 'Dans *Terje Vigen*, le cadre naturel reflète, pour la première fois dans l'histoire du cinema, la lutte entre les personnages et le conflit intérieur de chaque personnage' (1990: 109).

8   The origins of Nordic noir, both as a narrative genre and as a recent label, have been widely covered by a variety of authors, such as Peacock (2014) or Agger (2016).

9   For more on the defining traits of film noir, see Spicer (2002).

the lighting frequently muted. While there is clearly action (it is, after all, part of the crime genre), its drama also allows for long moments of stillness and reflection' (2015:24-25).

Furthermore, these Nordic settings and their aesthetic traits are also intertwined with classic noir themes, such as the exploration of a dark world that is filled with crime, deception and alienated characters. As Hernández Pérez has noted, Nordic noir narratives invoke classic noir cinema, not only on a formal level, but also on a thematic one, since these stories function 'as a metaphor for the anxieties and social fears present in the context in which [they] have originated' (2014:43).[10] Jensen and Waade have also pointed to the pervasiveness of certain thematic elements in Nordic noir, which might include exploring the darker side of the welfare state, social criticism and the juxtaposition between individualism and society.

Many of the aesthetic and thematic features mentioned above can in fact be seen in *Bron|Broen*. It could even be said that, in this specific case, the Swedish-Danish coproduction also looks at the dynamics of frontiers and border towns, another trait that was part of certain noir films [such as the classic *Touch of Evil* (Welles, 1958)], and which has sometimes been defined as "border noir". Indeed, setting a story on the frontier between two countries enables the exploration of different cross-cultural issues and conflicts, and presents a premise that has the inherent potential to be exported to other bordering countries or regions.

Having said that, what happens when a Nordic noir television series is adapted in a different country? According to Gemzøe, the remaking of series like *Bron|Broen* is part of 'a remake trend that, on the one hand, is inspired by all things Nordic, but on the other hand, actively engages in removing the Nordic feel from the remade productions' (2013:283). That "Nordic feel", as it is found in this genre, is usually replaced by local identifiers and details from the country where the series is being remade. Yet both Gemzøe (2013:293) and Jensen and Waade (2013b:194) point out that, for instance, the *"Nordic-ness"* and tone of *Forbrydelsen* are still present in its American remake, *The Killing* (2011-2014). In terms of setting and aesthetics this makes sense, as the Danish climate and Nordic atmosphere do share some similarities with the gray, rainy streets and skies of Seattle, where the American retelling is set. Even though the case of *The Killing* is only being mentioned here as a brief example, it does seem to highlight a paradigmatic pattern, where the *"Nordic-ness"* of

the format becomes a global trait that coexists with local re-interpretations of place. And, as this article will demonstrate, that *glocalizing* pattern can also be perceived in the case of *Bron|Broen*, *The Bridge* and *The Tunnel*.

Before delving into the specific analysis of *Bron|Broen* and its two remakes, it must be clarified that, while *Bron|Broen* is Nordic noir, *The Bridge* and *The Tunnel* would not really fit that label, as they are neither produced nor set in any Nordic countries. Although they also borrow and share elements from the noir tradition, it might be more appropriate to refer to them as crime fiction, or noir detective drama. These three series do share some of the universal genre and aesthetic conventions mentioned above, such as gritty settings, a slow narrative pacing, and unstable compositions. They also use plenty of bird's eye shots and tracking shots to present the bridge (or tunnel, in the case of the Anglo-French series), in order to underline its role as a physical and metaphorical frontier between two different countries. However, in spite of these universal denominators, the settings, aesthetics, and colour schemes in each series have also been adapted to fit the specific local traits of each country.

For instance, in *Bron|Broen*, the cold, grey cityscapes and the isolated rural landscapes depict a feeling of melancholy [or, as Peacock also puts it, a 'sensation of loneliness' (2014:104)] that Jensen and Waade see as a trademark of Nordic cultural products (2013b:192). Instead of the traditional chiaroscuro lighting typical of classic film noir, lighting in *Bron|Broen* tends to be quite homogeneous and dull in tone, which Hernández Pérez identifies as a visual representation of the social cynicism and general uneasiness present in the series (2014:51). This author also notes that the unstable compositions in *Bron|Broen* contribute to portray landscapes as overwhelming, and even threatening, since people appear to be quite small (and easily swallowed by nature) in comparison (2014:52). Along with reinforcing the melancholy, disaffection, and individualism mentioned above, this aesthetics also discredits the collective perception of a socially ideal Scandinavia, exposing its darkest problems instead.

In *The Bridge*, the grey and the cold are replaced by the dry heat and the grittiness of the desert in the Mexican-American border. However, in spite of the bright yellow hues of the desert sun, this setting can be as dark and unnerving as the Nordic winter. The desert portrayed on *The Bridge* is asphyxiating, and makes it clear that we don't really need the cold to reflect despair and human darkness. Or, as journalist Sam Wollaston puts it, in his review of "British noir" series *Shetland* (2013-), 'constant light is very nearly as oppressive

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10   Original quote by Hernández Pérez: 'como metáfora de las angustias y miedos sociales del contexto en el que se originan' (translated by the author).

and depressing as constant dark' (2014). It must also be noted that in the American series there is also a clear willingness to recreate a juxtaposition between the orderly settings of El Paso and the chaotic streets of Ciudad Juarez (even when, due to safety reasons, the series was mostly shot in Los Angeles and its surroundings).

Lastly, in *The Tunnel*, the bridge is replaced by the Eurotunnel, a dark, enclosed space that generates uneasiness and a certain sense of claustrophobia. These feelings are emphasized by the use of high angle shots and unstable frame compositions inside the tunnel. At the same time, both Calais and Folkestone offer plenty of industrial coastal town imagery, but misty landscapes of the French city tend to be presented in contrast to the more desolate and neglected English town of Folkestone. For the most part, the colour scheme in this series relies on cold greys, blues and greens; but even when lighting and tone might not be quite as dull as in *Bron|Broen,* these tools of visual language (combined with the chosen settings) still contribute to generate a similar feeling of discomfort in the viewer. Therefore, it can be concluded that these three series possess certain universal elements (in relation to tone, genre conventions and the narrative functions of place, among others) that interact with specific relocations of landscapes and settings. Once again, this serves to highlight the global/ local dichotomy present in all transcultural remakes, and corroborates the significance of the glocalization process.

2.2 Place and characters

Since *Bron|Broen*, *The Bridge* and *The Tunnel* are crime fiction series, considerable importance is placed on their crime plot. This main plot, complete with twists, turns, and red herrings, is developed all throughout the first season of each series until its resolution. In spite of this, *Bron|Broen* and its two remakes are ultimately a work of character study, one that explores the friendship that unfolds between two very different detectives from two different countries who are forced to work together. The relationships between Swedish Saga Norén (Sofia Helin) and Danish Martin Rohde (Kim Bodnia) in *Bron|Broen*; American Sonya Cross (Diane Kruger) and Mexican Marco Ruiz (Demián Bichir) in *The Bridge*; and French Elise Wassermann (Clémence Poésy) and English Karl Roebuck (Stephen Dillane) in *The Tunnel,* are the central axis of each respective story. This section of the article will explore how landscapes and settings are used in each series to reflect the tensions between these two main characters, as well as their inner worlds and states of mind.

Although this archetypal dynamic between two opposite characters has been present in many crime fiction series since the 1970s (Hernández Pérez, 2014:47), Creeber identifies this specific double-protagonist stance, in which 'two policemen of similar rank who bring different and constrasting skills to an investigation' and who 'not only represent very different sides of policing, but two types of moral and ethical codes' as a particularly defining element of Nordic noir series (2015:23). Furthermore, these two characters 'represent a reversal of traditional gender stereotypes', which is something that Agger also finds typical of Nordic noir (2016:137). The emotions and traits that are generally associated with men (being level-headed and distant) are seen in the female protagonist, while the ones traditionally associated with women (being emotional and caring) are exhibited by the male protagonist.

Saga and her counterparts, Sonya and Elise, are three extremely methodical, intelligent and hard-working single policewomen devoted to their jobs. Although it is never mentioned explicitly in any of the series, there seems to be a wide consensus in reference to these characters having (or being within the spectrum of) Asperger's syndrome.[11] This can be inferred from their difficulty to identify the emotions of others (cognitive empathy), their struggles with social etiquette and social expectations, or their inability to comprehend irony or white lies.

TELEVISION SERIES	CHARACTER	ACTRESS	CITY AND COUNTRY
Bron|Broen (2011-)	Saga Norén	Sofia Helin	Malmö, Sweden
The Bridge (2013-2014)	Sonya Cross	Diane Kruger	El Paso (TX), United States
The Tunnel (2013-)	Elise Wassermann	Clémence Poésy	Calais, France

△ TABLE 2. FEMALE PROTAGONISTS IN *BRON|BROEN, THE BRIDGE* AND *THE TUNNEL*

On the other hand, Martin, Marco and Karl are extroverted, charming and empathetic policemen who believe that, in

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11 This is often a recurrent issue in interviews with the actresses who play these roles. For instance, Sofia Helin has admitted that playing Saga Norén as someone within the spectrum of Asperger's 'was always intentional – the writer gave her clear instructions about the character's emotional parameters, although he told her it was not something Saga was aware of herself. Helin also conducted her own research, reading books by people with Asperger's syndrome, and said it helped her to understand the thought processes of her character better' (Khaleeli, 2012).

order to do the right thing, sometimes you don't have to necessarily follow the rules. Even though they love their respective families, they struggle with being faithful to their wives, as well as with establishing a bond with their oldest son.

TELEVISION SERIES	CHARACTER	ACTOR	CITY AND COUNTRY
Bron|Broen (2011-)	Martin Rohde	Kim Bodnia	Copenhaguen, Denmark
The Bridge (2013-2014)	Marco Ruiz	Demián Bichir	Ciudad Juarez, Mexico
The Tunnel (2013-)	Karl Roebuck	Stephen Dillane	Folkestone, England

△   TABLE 3. MALE PROTAGONISTS IN *BRON|BROEN,
THE BRIDGE* AND *THE TUNNEL*

Settings can also serve different narrative purposes in the smaller scale of these characters' worlds. As Murphy has mentioned, 'the places that characters inhabit in a story world can very much define who they are, as well' (2014:42). This can be clearly seen in the homes and the cars of the main characters. In all three series, Martin's (and his counterparts') car is very messy, while Saga's car is nice, clean and tidy. At the same time, Saga's one-person apartment in the city is cold and functional, while Martin's family home in the countryside (which he shares with his wife and kids) is rustic, warm and welcoming. Their personal spaces tell us about their personalities and serve as a visual reminder of how different these two characters are.[12]

Furthermore, the two protagonists of each series present two completely different inner worlds. As Karl jokingly muses in *The Tunnel*, when he is talking to Elise: 'This might come as a bit of a shock to you, but I suspect our inner landscapes differ quite significantly' (*The Tunnel,* episode 1.03). Consequently, the two main characters in these three series clash quite strongly at the beginning, both personality-wise and on a cultural level. However, little by little they learn to trust and support each oher, and their relationship blossoms into an unusual friendship that will not only contribute to the solving of the crime plot, but which will also help them with their own personal struggles (propelling the development of their respective transformational arcs). Creeber notes that the understanding of the series' narrative structure, with its dual pro-

tagonist axis, 'is crucial in uncovering the philosophy that lies at the heart of Nordic noir. In particular, it reveals an intensely complex and divided world that can only be healed through a combination of tolerance and cooperation' (Creeber, 2015:24), both between characters and between nations.[13]

Along with reflecting the characters' emotions and personality traits, landscapes and settings (with their local and cultural identifiers) can influence the identities of the characters that inhabit them. Thus, the focus should not just be placed on their "inner landscapes", but also on how the outer landscapes that they live in affect them. Despite the universal traits that we have seen in the two protagonists across the three series, these characters also reflect certain national themes and stereotypes, and are consequently informed by specific cultural denominators that make each character different. A useful example to illustrate this would be Karl's self-deprecating English humour, or Marco's personal conflict in facing corruption within the Mexican police force.

Once again, the adaptation of place enables a dialogue between the global and the local. Furthermore, the way in which local landscapes and settings are portrayed contributes to articulate the glocalization of characters at various levels. As Agger has stated, 'the representations of landscapes and cityscapes are linked not only to emotions inherent in the characters, but also to emotions supporting the plots in ways which cause distinctive national features to negotiate with features possessing a transnational appeal' (2016:134). This becomes even more evident in the case of transcultural remakes, where the global features of a character negotiate in different ways with the specific cultural traits portrayed in each new adaptation.

2.3 **Place and external conflict**

Another essential factor that should be taken into consideration when remaking a television series is the adaptation of dramatic conflict, because the resonance of conflict can be enhanced through the use of local settings and landscapes. For instance, in his analysis of the Danish film *Brødre* (2004)

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12   This observation can also be extended to other specific settings, like Martin's wife's studio, the journalist's home or the killer's secret lair, which also mirror their respective personalities.

13   It is worth noting that these social connotations are woven into the narrative as a key part of what DR executives call the "double story" (or "double storytelling") dogma. This refers to the combination of an entertaining plot with social, ethical and/or moral issues. As Jensen and Waade have observed, due to the fact that *Bron|Broen* is a coproduction, DR's in-house production philosophy only has an indirect role in this specific case (2013b:195). In spite of this, it could still be said that DR's principles are very much present in this series. [For more information on DR's production dogmas, see Bondebjerg and Redvall (2011), and Redvall (2013)].

and its American remake, *Brothers* (2009), Gemzøe notes that 'while *Brødre* is set in the big city with all its lights, bars and public transportation, *Brothers* is set in a small-town American environment in Minessota', where certain themes, conflicts and values linked to American cultural tradition and identity can be better explored (2013:291). This choice, which was one of the changes 'deemed necessary to make something entirely Danish work in an American context' (2013:283), illustrates a significant correlation between landscape and place in the case of transcultural remakes, both cinematic and televisual.

McKee has argued that a story's setting is always made of four dimensions: time period, duration, location and level of conflict. In fact, it is essential to take conflict into consideration in the study of setting, because, 'no matter how externalised in institutions or internalised in individuals, the political, economic, ideological, biological and psychological forces of society shape events as much as period, landscape or costume' (1997:69). According to screenwriting theory, there should always be three types or levels of dramatic conflict intertwined in any scripted work: the inner conflicts (related to a character's personal struggles), the interpersonal or relational conflicts (established between characters) and the extra-personal conflicts (which refer to external problems and threats -originated by the antagonist or otherwise- present in the storyworld). The previous section of this article (2.2. Place and Characters) has briefly addressed some of the inner and relational conflicts present in these three series. In this final segment of the paper, the focus will be placed on how the choice of specific locations and settings, along with their metaphorical implications, contributes to the development of external dramatic conflict in *Bron|Broen*, *The Bridge* and *The Tunnel*.

2.3.1 **The bridge or tunnel as metaphorical**

The two bridges and the tunnel that appear in these three series go beyond being mere props for the characters to cross from one country to another; they also reflect the cultural clash that is at the centre of each story, not only between the two main characters, but also between their two nations. In fact, as Agger notes, the figure of the bridge acts both 'as a vehicle and a metaphor' for the exploration of the negotiations that take place between two countries (2016:152). These human constructions connect Sweden and Denmark, the United States and Mexico, and England and France, respectively, bringing these countries closer and enabling them to collaborate with each other. At the same time, however, the

bridge (or the tunnel) highlights the distance that separates them, pointing to their unavoidable differences. Due to this, the figure of the bridge (or tunnel) is also useful to reflect deeper issues and identity traits that are ingrained in the sociocultural tapestry of each country.

The relevance of the bridge as a narrative figure begs the following question: Why is the premise of this series set on a bridge? Border towns and frontiers can be connected in many different ways, both geographical (like mountains or rivers) or man-made (like bridges, metallic fences or walls). It would seem that the act of building a bridge points to the willingness of two countries to negotiate and establish amicable relations between them, as opposed to the imposition of a wall, such as The Berlin Wall, that only aims to separate and divide. In order to solve conflicts, as Creeber states, 'bridges have to be built' (2015: 24).

In spite of their similar symbolism, these three constructions also offer nuanced differences. In *Bron|Broen*, the Øresund bridge that links Sweden and Denmark appears to be fairly easy and simple to cross, either by car or by train. As opposed to this, the Bridge of the Americas between El Paso and Ciudad Juarez portrays a harsher scenario, with immigration control officers enforcing boundaries much more strictly. Finally, while the Eurotunnel also represents human willingness to conquer natural barriers in order to bring two countries closer to each other, it also implies a different set of connotations. Even though it can be crossed by train and by car, the scenes of *The Tunnel* in which we see the protagonists waiting for their car to be allowed to cross to the other side also reinforce a sense of uneasy tension, evoking a somewhat strained connection between England and France.

In these three series, the cultural clashes and conflicts between two countries are represented through the coordinates of specific linguistic barriers, socioeconomic tensions and, ultimately, themes that deal with nation and identity. Åberg points to 'the national as an essential ingredient' in *Bron|Broen*, adding that in its remakes 'the intercultural thematisation of nation also follows the same pattern, but adapts the specific signifiers of nation and national difference' in each respective case (2015: 101).

While the divide between Sweden-Denmark and the Anglo-French rivalry are both subtler and rooted in a shared history that spans centuries, the American production opted to set the story between two countries that are radically different, so as to explore the conflicts and tensions that are specific to the Mexican-American scenario. Initially, *The Bridge* was going to be set on the frontier between Canada and the United

States, in order to present a similar conflict as the one seen in *Bron|Broen*. But as co-executive producer Meredith Stiehm explains, they realized that 'there's not a lot of cultural or political conflict going on between Canada and the US.' So they chose the Mexican border instead, because their ultimate aim was to actually 'tell the story of two border towns separated by a whole world' (Sepinwall, 2013). This decision entailed considerable narrative changes, which will be addressed in the next section, and which will illustrate that the choice of setting necessarily affects the development of dramatic conflict.

2.3.2 Setting and external conflict in the main plot

In *Bron|Broen,* the main crime plot brings Saga and Martin together in order to stop the antagonist of the series, the so-called "Truth Terrorist", who seemingly plans his murders so as to highlight five different social problems (his "five truths"). These social issues, which shed some light 'on those that have been forgotten and abandoned by the institutions' (Hernández Pérez, 2014:48)[14] are particularly relevant to Scandinavian culture and society: (1) inequality before the law, (2) homelessness, (3) disregard for the mentally ill, (4) failure to integrate second-generation immigrants, and (5) Western hypocrisy in regards to child labour. Therefore, it could be said that the main external conflict in the crime plot seems to be informed by local denominators from the cultural context in which the story is set.

The Tunnel followed this same main-plot pattern and kept most of the social problems and causes claimed by the antagonist, with the exception of the homeless, which they replaced with improper care for the elderly. These are understandable narrative choices, as the aforementioned social issues are actually present across most Western European countries. They are just re-localised to the specifics of the Anglo-French context (for instance, most of the troubled youths in the "fourth truth" are linked to the London 2011 riots). Apart from these "five truths", and as the Swedish/Danish series also did, *The Tunnel* briefly addresses other social and political issues that are relevant to its cultural context, such as the current economic crisis.

However, although *The Bridge* did keep certain references to some of the antagonist's social vindications at the beginning, it ultimately did not follow the same narrative pattern.

The American series carved its own path, which included adding a significant subplot featuring an underground tunnel for the illegal smuggling of immigrants, weapons and drugs. They also introduced the antagonist much earlier, and the moniker "The Truth Terrorist" was never used to refer to him. The American series provides as much social criticism as *Bron|Broen* and *The Tunnel,* but does so without using the killer's "five truths" as a narrative device. Instead, this series opted to delve into the bigger picture of its context, adding new characters, subplots and conflicts that respond to its new settings. Consequently, issues such as illegal immigration, socioeconomic inequality, or the disappearances and murders of hundreds of women in Ciudad Juarez, took a central role in this adaptation, and kept on doing so in the second season of the series. Therefore, it can be argued that local representations of setting do play an essential role in the narrative development of television adaptations.

And yet, even when these very specific cultural differences apparently define the main conflict that moves the plot forward in *Bron|Broen*, *The Bridge* and *The Tunnel*, a narrative twist unveils that nothing is what it seems to be. When the true intentions of the antagonist are revealed, we find that his crusade for the aforementioned social injustices was just a mere excuse. The real reason behind his crimes was a universal tale of revenge, a personal vendetta which is very much present in all three series, and which can ultimately be extrapolated to any country. And this is the point where the dynamic between the specific and the universal elements of the narrative emerges more clearly, illustrating how glocalization is articulated in the adaptation of television formats.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

As we have seen, landscapes and settings in these three television series are not only used to establish the geographical context of the story. They also have social and cultural dimensions, and they interact with other tools of audiovisual storytelling in order to reinforce and enhance the genre, themes, and plots of the series. Beyond that, they can be used to reflect the characters' emotions and identities, as well as their inner conflicts and struggles. Due to this, screenwriters and producers should take into consideration the narrative relevance that their chosen locations and settings hold in

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14   Original quote by Hernández Pérez: 'señalar a los que son "olvidados" y abandonados por las instituciones' (translated by the author).

the storytelling process of any given television series.[15] This becomes even more significant in the case of transcultural remakes, where those narrative roles of place need to be consistent with the sociocultural, political, and even industrial dimensions of their new context.

There are other aspects adjacent to place that have not been mentioned in the analysis of these three series, but that should definitely be addressed in further research. For instance, both *Bron|Broen* and *The Tunnel* are coproductions between different countries and companies. Agger (2016:148) states that *Bron|Broen* (and it can be assumed that, by extension, *The Tunnel*) is a "natural coproduction", according to Hjort's definition of the concept. The stories presented in these television series necessarily rely on the 'participation on the part of two nations, (...) [thus] constituting a kind of "natural" invitation to economic collaboration' (Hjort, 2005:196). On the other hand, although *The Bridge* did have a considerable number of Mexican cast and crew members, the series was exclusively produced and shot in the United States. This raises some questions in regards to the economic, industrial and cultural negotiations that can be established between different countries and their television markets, and they should therefore be explored in the future. Similarly, the bilingualism present in all three series also merits further consideration, since the linguistic tensions between Danish and Swedish, English and Spanish, and English and French, respectively, play a rather relevant role in each series.

Ultimately, this article has proven that place can function as a character, in and of itself. That is certainly the case in the metatextual universe of *Bron|Broen* and its remakes, where the Øresund Bridge, the Bridge of the Americas and the Eurotunnel are a constant presence throughout each respective series, starting with the titles of the series themselves. The two bridges and the tunnel, which always appear at key moments of the narrative, are brought to life, becoming eerie characters that play a central role in their respective stories. And every time they appear on screen, they are a reminder of the constant conflicts and negotiations that take place between characters, cultures, and countries.

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15   Although this paper has focused on Nordic noir, the analysis conducted here can also shed some light on the role of setting as a whole, and should be expanded with further research on other television genres.

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The Killing (2011-2014)
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Touch of Evil (Welles, 1958)
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DISCUSSING TRANSNATIONAL FORMAT ADAPTATION IN TURKEY: A STUDY ON *KUZEY GÜNEY*

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ABSTRACT

When celebrated Turkish TV series, *Kuzey Güney* (Ay Yapım, 2011 – 2013) started to be broadcast on a mainstream Turkish television channel Kanal D, a rumour appeared that it was adapted from the American television miniseries, *Rich Man, Poor Man*, aired in 1976 on the ABC television channel. Although there was no official information that *Kuzey Güney* was adapted from Rich Man, Poor Man the similarities were hard to miss.

This article questions how the process of transnational format adaptation works in Turkish television by analysing *Kuzey Güney* (Ay Yapım, 2011 – 2013) as a case study. After briefly explaining the Turkish television industry's encounter with the TV series format throughout its history, the article questions how foreign TV series were used as inspirational materials, ready to be adapted and produced domestically as a common practice. The article analyses *Kuzey Güney* by particularly focusing on the stylistic, intertextual and cultural dynamics that are activated in its creation.

Turkish TV series started their journey in 1975 with *Aşk-ı Memnu*, adapted from Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil's renowned novel and directed by the film author, Halit Refiğ. Before the impact of this celebrated TV series, the Turkish audience was already familiar with the TV series format through the imported productions that started to appear on television in 1972. Sevgi Can Yağcı Aksel (2011: 3) explains that Turkish audiences were mesmerized by the imported TV series which were available to them from the comfort of their homes. In Türkel Minibaş's words, quoted by Aksel, the common people did not care about anything, neither the petrol crises nor the Cyprus dispute, when Dr. Kimble from the popular TV series *The Fugitive* (1963-1967) came to Istanbul for a visit.

Although Turkish audiences were fascinated by the imported TV series, *Aşk-ı Memnu* made a great impact and it is still considered a Turkish television classic. Therefore, after the achievement of *Aşk-ı Memnu*, the state-run Turkish public television, Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT)[1] took the initiative to continue producing Turkish TV series, mostly directed by the distinguished directors of Turkish cinema. Eylem Yanardağoğlu (2014: 54) underlines the fact that at the end of the 1970s, the television sector had been helping the declining cinema sector since it was television that had put the cinema industry in that tight position in the first place and "TRT's commissioning of TV series was part of a strategy."

As Yanardağoğlu explains (2014: 52), with the establishment of private TV channels in the 1990s, in order to meet the demand coming from the Turkish TV audiences, the production of domestic TV series continued. However, growing number of these series carried practices such as appropriation and adaptation which were commonly used techniques in the Yeşilçam[2] period of Turkish cinema to the Turkish television industry. Even though most of the TV series were created from 'original' scripts, producing a domestic TV series appropriating the basic narrative elements of popular foreign, mostly American, TV series without getting any permission became a tendency, especially at the end of the 1990s and in the beginning of the 2000s.

This article questions how these processes worked in the Turkish television industry by analysing the celebrated Turkish TV series, *Kuzey Güney* (Ay Yapım, 2011 – 2013) as a case study. First of all, the article explains the appearance of the Turkish television industry in the early 1970s by particularly focusing on the high number of imported programmes on the TV schedule. After mentioning the changing Turkish television scene with the establishment of private TV channels in the 1990s, the article concentrates on how foreign television series started to be used as inspirational materials while producing domestic TV series. By approaching this process as a form of transnational format adaptation, the article questions the reasons behind applying this practice. Consequently, the article tries to understand how the adaptation process works by applying Albert Moran's tripartite scheme and analysing *Kuzey Güney*, a Turkish version of the American television classic *Rich Man, Poor Man* (Universal Television, 1976).

01 TELEVISION IN TURKEY AND TV SERIES FORMAT

Silvo Waisbord (2004: 359) says that "global television is likely poised to be a 'wall-to-wall format'." What Waisbord means by this account is that all around the world, television channels are full of the national versions of various kinds of programs which were created by different companies and exported to be domestically adapted and produced. Although today the Turkish television scene is not an exception to Waisbord's portrayal of global television, this scenery can be considered as a relatively new phenomenon.

After a period of test broadcast, the regular television broadcasting started in Turkey on the state-run TV channel TRT in 1972 in the capital Ankara. As Sevilay Çelenk (2005: 49-50) underlines, in those pioneering years, TRT's main intention was to educate; report on/for and inform the public rather than entertain. However, Ayşe Öncü (2000: 301) highlights that although in its early broadcasts, TRT's schedule was constituted of some domestic programmes that celebrated Turkish national values and folk culture to address those initial aims, more foreign programmes appeared on the television screen when TRT's broadcasting time increased.

As Öncü (Ibid.) emphasizes, Turkish television audiences met with American TV series and serials such as *Star Trek* and *Mission Impossible*, and BBC productions like *The World at War* and *Upstairs Downstairs* in the 1970s. "Thereafter, Turkish state television kept up with the global best-seller

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[1] Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) is the state-run television channel which began its broadcasting in 1972. Until the appearance of private TV channels at the beginning of the 1990s in Turkey, TRT was the voice of the nation and had an absolute control over the television broadcasting in Turkey.

[2] Yeşilçam which means green-pine in English refers to a historical period in Turkish cinema which begins in the 1950s and gradually disappeared at the end of 1970s. The name comes from a small street in Istanbul's Beyoğlu district where most of the film companies were located during that period. Therefore, Yeşilçam is also used to refer to the name of the Turkish film industry of this era.

market in action series, soaps as well as documentaries, albeit at the bargain basement level (with due apologies for the metaphor). By 1985, programmes of 'foreign' origin had reached 50 percent of broadcasting time."

However, as Öncü (2000: 302) points out "TRT maintained strict control over the soundtrack, anchoring all visual images – domestic or foreign- in correct and proper Turkish, as officially defined." In this way, the images of global commercial television appeared on Turkish television without threatening, in Öncü's terms, the 'authenticity' of Turkish values. In this sense, imported TV series on TRT were, in Albert Moran's (2009: 117) words, 'canned programmes' which were "devised, produced and broadcast in one territory, [...] shipped in cans or other containers for broadcast elsewhere." According to Moran (Ibid.), these kinds of programmes are already nationalized in the territory in which they were produced but "can be customized for home audiences up to a point by dubbing or subtitling." Correlatively, although 50 percent of the broadcasting time of TRT was constituted of foreign programmes all these foreign materials were dubbed by the actors from the National State Theatre who spoke the standardized Turkish.

Öncü (2000: 302-3) says "all screen characters conversed in the vocabulary, rhythms and narrative forms of 'correct and beautiful' Turkish, whether they be members of the Cosby family or cowboys from the Wild West." In this way, "National television spoke for the nation, and to the nation, in 'proper' Turkish, simultaneously dominant and privileged."

Although TRT was appointed as the only broadcasting institution by law, in 1990 the President of the Turkish Republic, Turgut Özal, declared that there was no law for broadcasting from overseas. During the following four years, the first private TV channel in Turkish history, Magic Box Star 1, and many other new TV channels started broadcasting from overseas without being under the control of any state regulations in Turkey. Çelenk (2005: 179) says this situation caused various legal and ethical complications until the legalisation of the private television channels in 1994. The establishment of private TV channels paved the way to represent what had not been previously represented on TRT such as different identities, dialects and accents as well as popular music videos of *arabesk* singers and programmes on celebrity culture as well as the adaptations of foreign game shows and new kinds of domestic TV series.

Öncü (2000: 314) explains that in the private television channels "televisual genres of global consumerism, selectively appropriated and redeployed to attract the widest possible Turkish audiences, have rendered a concert of cultural alterna-

tives recognizable and hence negotiable in the public arena." In the name of being different, both the public and private TV channels started to imitate global media channels. "This resemblance went all the way –down to small details like the way women presenters dressed or the way cameras zoomed in. The global media exercised a hegemonic power by being accepted as the norm."

Ayşe Öncü (2000: 296) defines the Turkish television 'flow' of that time as

> An amalgam of forms, formats and genres, 'borrowed' from the television screens of Europe or the USA and 'translated' into local versions of game and quiz shows (with contestants in the studio audience or at home); sitcoms (with or without edited in laughter); talk shows (with or without 'active audiences') and music videos (with or without the possibility of calling in to vote for favourites) flow into one another, interspersed with karate films, Brazilian tele-novellas, cowboy movies and ads of premier soft drinks or detergents in world markets.

Alternatively, Eylem Yanardağoğlu (2014: 52) says after the establishment of private television channels, the audiences' appetite for local dramas kept growing. She states that "at the end of the 1990s there were around forty primetime serials per week on television. TV dramas became the major output of commercial television in this period, ranging from seasonal series with thirteen or twenty-six episodes to longer ones that have been on air for at least five seasons."

With the growing demand coming from the TV audiences and the timeslots to fill, the appropriation practices put into action and in a short period the 'Turkified'[3] versions of American TV series such as *Dharma and Greg* (1997–2002), *Married with Children* (1987–1997), *The White Shadow* (1978–1981), *The Jeffersons* (1975–1985), *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch* (1996–2003) *Dawson's Creek* (1998–2003), *Bewitched* (1964–1972) and *Who's the Boss?* (1984–1992) as well as films like *She's Out of Control* (1989) appeared on television.

These TV series neither imitated their source materials scene-to-scene nor simply adopted the generic conventions.

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3   By getting his inspiration from the German expression *getürkt*, meaning Turkified in English, in his book entitled as *Cinema in Turkey*, Savaş Arslan uses the term 'Turkified' in order to explain how Turkish directors copied popular foreign, mostly Hollywood films, in order to meet the extensive demands coming from the public and produce films in high quantity during the Yeşilçam era of Turkish cinema between the 1950s and 1970s.

During the adaptation process, only the distinctive features of the original TV series such as the characters, their personal conflicts and the major events are taken as the base. Although in the beginning, the resemblances between the adapted and the adapting texts cannot be missed, after a certain amount of time, the episodes of the Turkish versions tend to stick to the 'original' scenarios loosely since they create their own plotlines using the limited material that they took.

In this sense, it can be claimed that TV series which were taken as the source materials are treated like TV formats that are ready to be adapted and produced domestically. Bodycombe, quoted by Albert Moran (2005: 296), describes format as a product which "is a recipe for re-producing a successful television program, in another territory, as a local program. The recipe comes with all the necessary ingredients and is offered as a product along with a consultant who can be thought of as an expert chef." In the process of the 'Turkification' of the foreign TV series, there is usually no consultant that controls and leads the team that adapts the format since most of the time these series are not licensed adaptations. Although this situation has been changing in recent years and the number of the licensed TV adaptations has been increasing, unlicensed adaptation was a common practice in the past.

However, instead of dwelling on copyright and licensing issues, this article will get its inspiration from Iain Robert Smith (2008: 4) who in his article on the Turkish *Star Trek* parody, *Turist* Ömer *Uzay Yolunda* (Hulki Saner, 1973), states that "[r]ather than see this unlicensed remake as a derivative plagiarism of the earlier TV series, I position *Turist Omer Uzay Yolunda* within wider debates on the transnational flows of media and the overlapping, intersecting nature of cultural production." Following his argument, this article's case study *Kuzey Güney* will be approached in a similar way.

02 TRANSNATIONAL FORMAT ADAPTATION

Albert Moran (2005: 297) states that adapting the successful overseas programs meant "accessing a template that had already withstood two rounds of R&D [research and development], first to survive development and trialing before broadcasting executives and, secondly, to survive further testing before viewing audiences." Silvio Waisbord (2004: 361-5) relates the popularity of television formats to the "increased demand generated by the explosion in the number of television hours"

and states that for television producers, format adaptation is a cost saving strategy as well as an ultimate tactic to minimize the risk of launching a new TV programme.

The points that were made by Waisbord concerning the popularity of television formats may also be illuminating to understand the reasons behind the strategy to create 'Turkified' versions of the foreign TV series. However, it should be noted that the adapted TV series generally consist of the programmes that were previously broadcasted in the canned formats on Turkish televisions. In this sense, while their success in their home countries guarantee a certain amount of ratings for format adaptation, their already proven achievements on Turkish television in the canned formats also promise another safety cushion for the television producers.

Eventually, through the adaptation of the canned programmes, the already familiar characters and storylines were reintroduced to the Turkish audiences in later years in the recognizable national settings and situations which were attuned to the national traditions and customs. However, this 'Turkified' form of format adaptation still carries a lot of risks and frequently, what captures the audience's interest is not the strongest or most resilient but the most 'fitting' product in reference to Sarah Cardwell's (2002: 28) words.

03 *KUZEY GÜNEY* AND THE RESURRECTION OF CAR NARRATIVES

The Turkish TV series, *Kuzey Güney* (Ay Yapım, 2011 – 2013), a Turkified version of the popular US TV series *Rich Man, Poor Man* (Universal Television, 1976), was among the most 'fitting' products since it achieved to survive in the extremely competitive environment of the contemporary Turkish television scene for two seasons.

Kuzey Güney was produced by the media company Ay Yapım which previously produced hit Turkish TV series such as *Yaprak Dökümü* (2006-2010), *Aşk-ı Memnu* (2008-2010) and *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* (2010-2012). The name of the production company already created a certain amount of expectation from the Turkish audiences and raised *Kuzey Güney*'s popularity when it was launched as the next big TV production of Ay Yapım.

Kuzey Güney also marked the comeback of the adored star of *Aşk-ı Memnu*, Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ, in much better physical shape. In addition, the magazine pages of the newspapers were full of stories telling that Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ, not an actor in origin but a fashion model who won the Best Model of Turkey and

Best Model of the World competitions in 2002 and who was criticized for his poor acting in *Aşk-ı Memnu,* had taken acting classes for his role in *Kuzey Güney*. Therefore, the TV series created a big impact on the Turkish television scene even before it started to be broadcasted and became one of the most popular Turkish TV series of 2011.

However, even before the broadcast of the first episode of the series a rumour had appeared that *Kuzey Güney* was an adaptation of the American television miniseries, *Rich Man, Poor Man*. Although this rumour had spread through Internet forums and everyday conversations, there was no official information that *Kuzey Güney* was adapted from *Rich Man, Poor Man* but the similarities were hard to miss, especially for the older generations.

Rich Man, Poor Man, adapted from Irwin Shaw's novel and aired in 1976 on the American ABC television channel was shown on TRT the following year. During the time it was shown, it was dubbed by the artists from the National State Theatre (1977: 10) and was very well received. In fact, when the main character, Tom Jordache died on the last episode of the first season, the whole country, particularly its celebrities, grieved over the timeless death of the young man according to a major newspaper article with the headline "All the celebrities that we interviewed said the same thing: the charming young man's death was a pity." (http://www.turknostalji.com/resimler/2/tom-oldugu-gun-tum-turkiye-gozyasi-doktu-213.jpg)

It cannot be said that *Rich Man, Poor Man* left an equally memorable trace on people's minds as *Charlie's Angels* (1976–1981) and *Little House on the Prairie* (1974-1983) did which were among the other popular imported TV series that were broadcasted at that time. However, the faint memory of *Rich Man, Poor Man* was revitalized when the Turkish TV series *Kuzey Güney* started to be shown on a mainstream, private Turkish television channel, Kanal D.

Rich Man, Poor Man tells the story of two contrasting brothers, Rudy (Peter Strauss) and Tom Jordache (Nick Nolte) as well as their common love interest, Julie (Susan Blakely), whose lives go in very different directions after high school. *Kuzey Güney*'s plot is based on the same triangle with some specific modifications which direct the series to follow a very different path after the first season. However, the resemblance between the characters of the series, especially in the early episodes, is noticeable.

The resemblances start with the title of the shows. The dichotomy between the brothers which was expressed in the title of the U.S. version as rich man/poor man is reflected in the actual names of the brothers in the Turkish series as

Kuzey (Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ), meaning the North and Güney (Buğra Gülsoy), meaning the South. Additionally, whereas some of the Turkish characters' names verbally mimic the names of the characters in the U.S. version others were designed to physically resemble the characters in *Rich Man, Poor Man* by means of their costumes, make-up or character traits.

Moreover, Tom's 'legal' boxing career and Kuzey's 'illegal' underground fighting career can be considered among the resemblances between the series. However, these kinds of similarities between the two series on much smaller scales are countless. Therefore, it is more constructive to focus on the distinctions between the series since these differences offer a variety of generous materials to discuss how the adaptation process works.

In order to understand these changes which were implemented in the adaptation process, Albert Moran's tripartite scheme offers a constructive path to follow. Moran (2009: 120) who takes his inspiration from Heylen speaks of "a tripartite scheme for understanding levels of activity in relation to a literary or written work that must be taken into account in translation." Moran (Ibid.) explains that this scheme is constituted of linguistic codes, intertextual codes and cultural codes. For him, although television does not work with linguistic codes it does work with form and style which include elements "to give the format program a recognizable 'look' as far as domestic audiences are concerned."

For Moran (Ibid.), the intertextual codes "appear to connect with specific bodies of knowledge held by particular communities, including both local production teams and segments of home audience." These codes include both the organizational norms that are the routines and practices which may be traditional to a local television industry and other kinds of intertextual knowledge that are intertwined with national historical facts or significances.

The cultural codes which Moran (2009: 121) refers to as the third level of adaptation are the "combination of factors that make for communal and national differences. Broadly, these include social matters of language, ethnicity, history, religion, geography and culture." Besides, as Moran (Ibid.) emphasizes, gender relations may also play an important role in a successful domestication of a TV format. While analyzing *Kuzey Güney* in the following section, this scheme will be taken into consideration and the analysis will be constructed accordingly.

The complexity of defining the form and style of a Turkish TV series like *Kuzey Güney* and relating this with the stylistic elements of a specific television genre should be addressed first. Whereas most of the studies such as Yanardağoğlu and

Karam's et al. (2013) and Yörük's (2013) call such programs Turkish soap operas, some studies such as Batı's (2011) prefer to call them Turkish television melodramas. Recently, Arzu Öztürkmen, referred to by Marilungo (2014), commented on this categorical complexity and "underlined the need to agree upon a genre definition and distinguish the *dizi* (literally 'serial, row, sequence' in Turkish) from other similar products such as soap-opera, TV series or telenovela, given some narrative peculiarities of the product." According to Öztürkmen, the length of the episodes and the musical interventions that are used to comment on the narrative events reflect a significant Turkish style.

Nevertheless, as Robert C. Allen (1989: 45) states

> Each country's experience with the range of text to which the term 'soap opera' has been applied is different. It is a bit like ornithologists, taxidermists, and bird watchers from a dozen different countries all talking about birds, but in one country there are only eagles; in another pigeons and chickens but no eagles; in another macaws and pigeons but no eagles or chickens; and so on.

In other words, the industrial, critical and viewer communities which Allen describes as the three different types of interpretive communities are distinctive for each national culture. Since 'soap opera' is perceived by Allen (Ibid.) as a transnational and transcultural phenomenon its articulation also shifts from one location to another.

Therefore, in reference to Charlotte Brunsdon, Eylem Yanardağoğlu and Imad N. Karam et al. (2013: 562) point out that "Turkish TV series show similarities with the 'soap opera' format, which is not completely an American genre." Yanardağoğlu and Karam explain that in the non-Western countries such as Egypt, Brazil, or India, the soap opera format is perceived as a part of the melodrama tradition as it targets female audiences and revolves around the conflicts between poor and pure and rich, urban and unjust.

In this sense, it is practical to define *Kuzey Güney* as a Turkish soap opera in order to put it in a wider category. However, inspired by Öztürkmen's suggestion to agree on a generic category for defining Turkish TV series, it should also be noted that whether they adopt the soap opera, police procedural or hospital drama format there might be some recurring narrative and stylistic elements which are intrinsic to the Turkish TV series and these elements might be closely related to the norms of the Turkish television industry.

Like any other weekly, prime-time Turkish TV series, *Kuzey Güney*'s production team is subjected to the routines and practices of the Turkish television industry which might be different from those experienced by the production team behind *Rich Man, Poor Man* not –only because of the national organizational distinctions but also because *Kuzey Güney* belongs to the television industry of a different era that is much more competitive. The competition in the Turkish television industry is really high and this situation also influences the organizational practices, the working conditions, and the production of the TV series closely.

As a typical Turkish TV series, every episode of *Kuzey Güney* lasts almost 90 minutes. The total broadcasting time of one episode increases even more with the commercial breaks. During one season approximately 40 episodes are broadcasted if the TV series is not cancelled after a few episodes because of low ratings.

The long duration of the Turkish TV series and the television season do not only require working at high-speed but also cause a lot of problems concerning the exploitation of labour power. The extremely long working hours that arise from the difficulty of writing, shooting, and editing almost a full-length film every week and the constant threat of unemployment because of the highly competitive television environment that puts every Turkish TV series under the risk of immediate cancellation, make the organizational norms much more difficult and complex.

These organizational norms also influence the form and style of the Turkish TV series which tend to stretch the main events in one episode in order to fill the 90-minutes-long duration by adopting tactics such as using long takes, extremely long sequences, shaky camera techniques and long musical sequences. For instance, although *Kuzey Güney* appropriates the characters and the main story of *Rich Man, Poor Man,* since *Rich Man, Poor Man* only consisted of 33 episodes there was not enough material to use in *Kuzey Güney* which was broadcasted for 80 episodes.

For that reason, in *Kuzey Güney,* the adapted narrative events were stretched and extended with the support of long scenes, extra sub-plots or long dialogues. As a result, after the first season, although the similarities between the two series continued imperceptibly, it can be claimed that *Kuzey Güney* radically changed its path with the addition of sub stories, new characters and conflicts. Therefore, eventually, *Kuzey Güney* became a highly different TV series from *Rich Man, Poor Man* not only based on its form and style but also based on its narrative.

However, the industrial and organizational norms are not the only factors that contribute to the formation of *Kuzey Güney* since the intertextual and cultural codes play much more significant roles in telling the story of two opposing brothers differently than in *Rich Man, Poor Man*.

The intertextual and cultural codes are almost instinctively activated in *Kuzey Güney* from the beginning. For instance, in both series, in the first episodes, a serious fight takes place between the father and the rebellious brother (Tom in *Rich Man, Poor Man* and Kuzey in *Kuzey Güney*) which even gets physical at the end. However, while what happens after the fight is differently narrated in each series, the reasons that lead the characters to get into a fight in the first place are also not the same.

In *Rich Man, Poor Man* the fight happens because Tom sets fire to the house of a very rich man, Teddy Boylan, after he finds out that Julie, who is broken up with Rudy at the time, is having an affair with Boylan. In the day following the fire, two gentlemen come to the bakery and inform the father about Tom's behaviour as well as the possible financial consequences of his act if they ever find out who set the fire. When the gentlemen leave the shop the father just automatically punches Tom who punches him back almost reactively. This is the fundamental reason of Tom's departure from his home town.

However, in *Kuzey Güney* the same fight happens after Kuzey steals money from his father to buy a gift for Cemre, a dress she liked but cannot afford, and goes to her house to give her the gift and ask her out but finds out instead that his brother Güney has been going out with Cemre without his knowledge. Kuzey, furious about the situation, goes home and is questioned by his father about the money, and although beaten and insulted by him, at first he does not hit back. Therefore, even though Tom immediately punches his father back after he is beaten, Kuzey hits him back only because his father slaps his mother who tries to break up the fight.

This difference between the two series can be considered a result of the cultural representation of masculinity, the respected position of the father and the sacred role of the mother in the Turkish patriarchal family. In this sense, although the events that have taken place in the narratives are similar in general terms, they are narrated in consistence with cultural dynamics and intuitions.

Furthermore, the same cultural codes are activated at some other particular moments as if the producers were trying to find the contemporary, Turkish equivalents of the incidents or issues that were included in *Rich Man, Poor Man*'s narrative. For instance, in *Rich Man, Poor Man* which begins at the end of World War II, when Tom gets into a fight with a war hero, he does not hesitate to punch him and states that he does care more about living forever than dying in the war. However, in *Kuzey Güney*, which takes place in the contemporary world, Kuzey is really ashamed of the fact that he is disqualified from compulsory military service because of an almost fatal injury he got in prison. It always makes him feel like less of a man which is an important distinction that distinguishes Kuzey from Tom.

Moreover, although Kuzey of *Kuzey Güney* and Tom of *Rich Man, Poor Man* are similar in nature and in their approach to life, there are always some obstacles that set Kuzey back and these obstacles do not always come from outside but also arise from Kuzey's own cultural performance of masculinity, brotherhood, and sexuality, from the limits and borders that he creates himself. Whereas Tom of *Rich Man, Poor Man* is a much more free spirited, self-actualized man who becomes successful in life and is happy with a little money and a simple life without extravagance, Kuzey is required to perform a specific form of masculinity and national identity which puts pressure on him to repress his feelings, to control his desires; to avoid over-enjoyment and preserve his own cultural and moral values and principals at all cost.

However, one of the most significant moves in *Kuzey Güney* is replacing the major incident, the fire on Teddy Boylan's house, with a car accident in the Turkish version. The car accident in *Kuzey Güney* happens after Kuzey's fight with his father. Following the fight, Kuzey gets out of the house, gets drunk with his best friend Ali out of misery of losing Cemre to Güney. After a short while, Güney comes to the tavern to lecture Kuzey about the fight. But things between the brothers get tenser. When they leave the tavern, Kuzey, blind drunk, tries to drive. However, after a little rough-and-tumble Güney gets in the driver's seat. While driving and grumbling at the same time, Güney who would take the university entrance exam the next morning, gets furious with Kuzey. Distracted and occupied with the quarrel, Güney hits a man. Eventually, the young man, the victim of the car accident, dies at the crime scene. Kuzey, who takes the blame for the accident, feeling guilty and believing that if Güney takes the university exam he would have a bright future, is sent to prison.

At the end of the car accident sequence, while the small cargo van type car stands on the empty road with its doors open, and the brothers are convulsed on the road with shock and pain, Kuzey flashes out and the audiences find him drinking *rakı* with his best friend Ali in a boat talking about how a little incident can result in causing a life time of misery.

In *Kuzey Güney,* time stops with the car accident and even though others' lives develop and change, for Kuzey a person, a memory, an old physical/emotional wound or a simple obstacle always stop him from moving on. Therefore, whereas in *Rich Man, Poor Man* life flows on in a linear, continuous time span despite what happens, in *Kuzey Güney*, the past always interrupts and suspends the present which is embodied in the frequency of the flashbacks.

The car motif plays a crucial role in Kuzey's stuck position. Different from *Rich Man, Poor Man*, after the accident, the opposition of the brothers is gradually built on the possession of a car. For instance, after Kuzey gets out of prison, one of the first struggles he has to deal with is the fact that he cannot receive a driver's licence for two years since he is a convicted criminal of a fatal car accident. However, Güney, the actual perpetrator of the accident, who starts to work in Sinaner Holding after graduating from the university, receives a company car immediately. It can be claimed that this contradictory status of the brothers, Güney's possession and Kuzey's dispossession of a car, not only raises questions concerning class conflict, the idea of Westernization and the formation of Turkish national identity but on an intertextual level it also revokes a well-known theme in the history of the Turkish novel and cinema that is the car narrative.

Jale Parla (2003: 535-536) says in the history of the Turkish novel, the car played an inspirational role. The car narratives, Parla explains,

> which begin with the seemingly innocent acquisition of cars, grow into enigmatic narratives of possession and dispossession, empowerment and loss of power, function and dysfunction, maturation and infantilism, narcissism and fetishism, fragmentation and self-destruction, not to mention a whole century of estrangement and a feeling of inferiority inspired by the contact with the West.

Jale Parla (2003: 536-7) explains that the car novels which she describes as a subgenre of the Turkish novel, begins with Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem's novel, *Araba Sevdası*, (The Carriage Affair, 1898). In the novel, one day in his daily excursions in Çamlıca, the main character, Bihruz Bey, "whose one fad in life is a carriage that he flaunts as he rides dressed in the most elegant and fashionable manner—without regard to the weather" sees a beautiful young woman riding in another carriage and thinks that such beauty in an elegant carriage like that should only be a cultivated, Westernized lady from

a respected family. Bihruz falls in love with this lady who is actually one of the most famous courtesans at the time, riding in a rented carriage and his obsession with the woman is combined with his obsession with the carriage.

In a similar way, Güney, an ambitious, cunning young man who desires to live like rich people and searches his way to hit the goldmine suffers from what Parla names as *Bihruz* syndrome, which becomes especially apparent in his relationship with Banu. As it was represented in a scene in the second episode which designates the beginning of the love affair between Güney and Banu, the young woman's sexual attractiveness gets mixed up with the fetishistic appeal of her sports car and Güney gets carried away with this complex sensation that he feels for Banu as well as the prosperity that is reflected by her car.

Güney's embodiment of his 'imagined' social status and his desertion of his own cultural roots are successfully expressed in a scene in the sixteenth episode when he slowly passes by Cemre without offering her a lift on his way to the Sinaner Holding. As expected, Güney is punished by Kuzey and Ali who secretly steal the tires of his car and leave him in front of the house without a lift the next morning which can be considered as a direct reference to the classical Turkish film that focuses on a 'car narrative', *Çiçek Abbas*[4] (Sinan Çetin, 1982). However, whereas in the film, the tyrant steals the victim Abbas' tires which he bought by getting money from a loan shark, in *Kuzey Güney*, the situation is reversed in a way to stress that the victim finally gets his revenge from the tyrant.

Güney's getting carried away with the promises of a love affair with Banu can be considered as the fundamental distinction between Güney of *Kuzey Güney* and Rudy of *Rich Man, Poor Man*. Whereas Güney falls into the 'illusive' world of Banu and prefers to be with her even though he does not actually love her, Rudy, a man of principles, rejects Virginia's obsessive love and struggles to be successful through hard work and determination instead of leaning onto her money and social status. In this way, Rudy leaves a much more 'positive' impression on the audiences whereas Güney gradually becomes an antagonistic figure in *Kuzey Güney* which says a lot about the cultural representation of the characters who

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4   *Çiçek Abbas* is among the classics of Turkish cinema. The film revolves around the rivalry between two minibus drivers Abbas and *şakir* who are in love with the same woman, Nazlı. Abbas, kind and bighearted and former assistant of *şakir* who is mean, selfish and a dangler buys a minibus for himself by getting money from a loan shark and gets together with Nazlı. Out of jealousy, one night, *şakir* steals the tires and the engine of Abbas' minibus. Abbas who does not have the money to buy the missing parts gets in a bind and the loan shark confiscates his minibus.

desert their own social status and forget about their 'roots' in Turkey.

Kuzey's relationship with the car is much more complicated than Güney's. The obstacles preventing him to get a driver's licence make finding a decent job harder for him. Although he lives, speaks, and acts like a common man, Kuzey does not completely embrace this social status either. This in-between position of Kuzey becomes apparent in the sixth episode in which he is accidently mistaken for a valet and has the chance to drive a very expensive car.

The joy that he experiences in the car indicates that Kuzey also secretly wants to have a portion of the prosperity that Güney desires but his joy cannot be fully lived when he is pulled over by the police for high speeding. Kuzey escapes from getting arrested by telling a story about a pregnant wife waiting for him at home. However, after this sequence, every time Kuzey actually drives a car which he borrows from his father or a friend, the audiences are filled with the feeling of suspense, fearing the consequences if he gets caught by the police while driving a car without a driver's licence as the perpetrator of a fatal car accident. This ambivalent, childish fear that is embodied in Kuzey's relation with the car motif follows him in almost every step he takes. He is surrounded by hesitant enjoyments, half lived, interrupted pleasures and the fear of losing oneself in the foreign other.

With all those qualifications, Kuzey, as the hero of the story, stands in the ideal position against Westernization. He does not completely get carried away with the values and lifestyle of the West but also does not turn his back to the prosperity that Westernization offers. However, Güney, the *Bihruz*-like snob, who is additionally encouraged and manipulated by his mother to fall for the 'artificial' world, is programmed to self destruction. Therefore, while Kuzey deserves everything good in life Güney is destined to lose everything, even punished for turning his back on his roots.

However, it can be said that this kind of extreme polarization of the good and the evil is a common characteristic of the melodramatic modality of the Turkish TV series which guarantees the 'goodness' of the protagonists and the 'evilness' of the antagonists. The antagonism in the Turkish TV series usually has to do something with the excessive adoption of Western values and lifestyles that are frequently inscribed to the rich classes. While commenting on *The Carriage Affair*, Nurdan Gürbilek (2003: 608) points out that

> Snobbism is defined as something excessive. The snob is not someone who imitates, but someone who imitates excessively, not someone who borrows, but someone who borrows beyond measure, not someone who desires the other's desire, but someone who exaggerates that desire. Thus the critique of snobbism is mostly the critique of excessiveness. There is always someone out there more excessive, more of a caricature than our own true self. The existence of the snob is the guarantee for our feeling genuine ourselves.

As pointed out by Dağtaş (2008) the lifestyle of the rich is regularly represented in excess in the Turkish TV series and *Kuzey Güney* is not an exception in this sense. The lifestyle of the wealthy Sinaner family is surrounded by the specific representations of excessiveness that is expressed through women wearing extremely chic clothes, high heels and make up all the time, hovering servants, extravagantly decorated mansions right along the Bosphorus, top model cars and an arrogance that comes with looking down on the provincial, finding it vulgar. However, this representation of the rich classes easily turns into a caricature or a bad example of what happens when people turn their backs on their cultural roots and adopt the Western ways beyond measure: a demonstration of the idea that no prosperity comes out of money without keeping your 'genuine' self in there somewhere.

Additionally, in reference to Nurdan Gürbilek's ideas about the definition of snobbism as something excessive, it can be said that this extravagant representation of the Sinaner's way of life as well as Güney's aspirations and efforts to become one of them guarantee Kuzey's in-between position and his own way of 'genuineness' in the series which is always under a certain kind of protection. Kuzey is always depicted having a distance from the excessive lifestyles of the Sinaner family as well as Güney's self-delusive involvement in this extravagance. At this point, the car motif becomes useful again to explain how Kuzey's contrary position against this over-Westernized life is protected while partially involving him in it from a safe distance.

The existence of the taxi driver Yunus who functions like a private driver for Kuzey and does not have a correspondent in the narrative of *Rich Man, Poor Man* is one of the significant elements that keeps Kuzey's distance to what the Sinaner family and Güney represent in the series. When Kuzey needs to be transported from one place to another or when one of his extended family members needs a car, he calls Yunus who is ready to help immediately. In this sense, although Kuzey does not possess a car and also 'legally' cannot drive a car, he can be

a part of the prosperity that the car motif symbolically represents in the narrative through a mediator like Yunus without being exposed to the 'illusive' Westernized world too much.

However, Yunus' caricature-like representation, as an 'authentic', provincial Turkish man with his 'sympathetic' North Sea region accent as well as his naive, hospitable and ready to help attitude also indicates that 'authenticity' is something that does not feel that genuine itself. Yunus is represented in the series in a way that supports and materializes Nurdan Gürbilek's (2003: 603) point when she says "The ideal will always look like a caricature of itself, something *alafranga* in the local scene, but the local scene itself is already reduced to a caricature of itself, something *alaturka* before the foreign ideal."

Therefore, it can be said that at the end, Kuzey, who has gradually been placed somewhere in the middle between Yunus, the 'authentic' provincial, and Güney, the Bihruz-like snob, is assumed to be standing in the most 'fitting' position that represents the fact that neither of those positions can exist without each other because they are interconnected. Kuzey as the key figure who is constantly reinvented and redefined by others is also the only one who can travel between different positions without losing his 'genuine' self.

This is why in the very last scene of the series, where Kuzey and Cemre are finally united as well as get rich when Kuzey's 'bakery' business turns into a success, they are seen in a classical convertible car surrounded by a fairy tale-like aura. The car which was sent to Kuzey's house by his boss/partner will carry Kuzey and Cemre to the airport since they are about to move to the Netherlands from where Kuzey will manage his business that has been launched to the foreign lands.

The fairy tale-like atmosphere that is supported by the drop head car, the parkway surrounded by trees, the music, the lighting, the camera which slowly moves away from the couple that seal their happiness with a prosaic kiss indicate that both Kuzey and Cemre are drawn into the enjoyment of the 'illusive' world that the West promises. However, since they know the dangers of over-Westernization, losing one's own cultural and moral values in this 'foreign' other, it is acknowledged that they will be okay and finally be allowed to get pleasure from this sweet life and prosperity since their happiness is guaranteed by Güney's image in the prison, serving time for getting carried away with his desires and aspirations which appears in the final scene of the series. As a result, whereas Tom in *Rich Man, Poor Man* is defeated by his archenemy Falconetti and dies at the end of the first season, moving the Turkish audiences into tears, Kuzey lives happily

ever after in *Kuzey Güney* by celebrating his position as the survival of the 'fittest' in the Turkish context.

04 **CONCLUSION**

This article suggests that although appropriating the basic features of some popular foreign TV series or films while creating a domestic TV series was among the common practices of the Turkish television industry, the stylistic, intertextual and cultural dynamics prevented this process from turning into a scene-to-scene imitation. In order to understand the steps that were taken in this practice the article uses *Kuzey Güney* as a case study.

Apart from approaching the issue by relating the discussion with the significant moments in Turkish television history, the article uses Albert Moran's tripartite scheme for analyzing the influence of the organizational and industrial routines as well as the cultural and intertextual codes on *Kuzey Güney*'s narrative. As a result of this analysis, the article remarks on the major influence of the car narratives, a familiar theme in Turkish literature and cinema, on surrounding the characters with national and cultural conflicts, anxieties and tensions while creating the Turkish version of *Rich Man, Poor Man*'s story.

Albert Moran (2009: 122-3) states that "'adapt', 'tailor', and 'customized' are deliberately neutral terms as far as their larger cultural implications are concerned." He underlines the fact that although home audiences are mixed, heterogeneous and diverse in their tastes and interests, when a TV format is customized the main goal is to reach as many people as possible and this can be achieved through attempting to talk to a national audience. Therefore, Moran suggests that "the advent of TV formats as a central element in the new television landscape appears to signal not the disappearance of the national in favour of the global and the local but its emphatic endurance or even reappearance."

Correlatively, it can be said that the stylistic, cultural, and intertextual codes that are activated in *Kuzey Güney* all refer back to the 'national' in their most banal forms. As Billig, quoted by Moran (Ibid.) says "banally, they address 'us' as a national first person plural; and they situate 'us' in the homeland within a world of nations. Nationhood is the context which must be assumed to understand so many banal utterances." Through these banal national utterances and cultural proximities, *Kuzey Güney* becomes a familiar, domestic product just like Kuzey as a television character becomes 'one of us'. However, in order to extend and build upon the points that are made in

this article, conducting an audience research might be stimulating to understand how these codes and utterances are decoded by the audiences from different ethnic backgrounds, professions, class, and gender positions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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LA POETICA DEGLI SPAZI DI *BREAKING BAD*

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KEYWORDS

Breaking Bad; home, space; modern capitalism; antihero; characters.

ABSTRACT

Breaking Bad produced, thanks to the creativity of Vince Gilligan and his writing room, some of the most emblematic characters in the history of contemporary television. Also, the writers of *Breaking Bad* were able to devise places and spaces that play important symbolic functions: spaces of mediation, spaces of transit, sacred spaces. This article investigates the meanings and characteristics of some of these settings: the swimming pool, the White family home, the meth lab. The analysis considers also the relation between characters and spaces, paying particular attention to the places inhabited by the main character, Walter White.

KEYWORDS

Breaking Bad; casa; spazi; capitalismo contemporaneo; antieroe; personaggi.

ABSTRACT

Breaking Bad è la serie in cui sono nati, grazie alla creatività di Vince Gilligan e della sua writing room, alcuni fra i personaggi più importanti della storia della televisione contemporanea. Ma *Breaking Bad* è anche una serie che ha saputo creare luoghi e spazi con valori simbolici importanti: Spazi di mediazione, spazi di transito, spazi sacri. L'articolo si propone di ricercare i significati e le caratteristiche di alcuni di questi ambienti: la piscina, la casa della famiglia White, il laboratorio di metanfetamine. L'analisi dei luoghi si sviluppa in relazione ai personaggi che li abitano e li vivono con particolare attenzione agli spazi abitati dal protagonista della serie, Walter White.

La serie *Breaking Bad* ha costruito una costellazione straordinaria di personaggi. Vince Gilligan ha portato sul piccolo schermo un eroe che, come ha teorizzato Joseph Campbell ispirandosi alle teorie junghiane delle figure archetipiche, presenta "mille volti" (2000) ed è in continuo mutamento: Walter White è goffo, insicuro, incapace lui per primo di conoscersi e di dare risposta alle sue azioni. Con lui anche gli altri personaggi, da Saul Goodman a Jesse Pinkman, da Hank Schrader alle due mogli/sorelle Skyler White e Marie Schrader, sono complessi, articolati, sfaccettati come mai si era visto prima in televisione. Vince Gilligan si è formato nella writing room di *The X-Files* (1993-2002). Dopo tanti rifiuti e un percorso ad ostacoli insidioso[1], è riuscito nell'intento di fare di un insegnante di chimica di un mediocre liceo di Alburqueque, con una famiglia normale e un reddito che non basta e deve essere arrotondato con un secondo lavoro, il protagonista di una serie televisiva. Gilligan conosce il suo protagonista fin dalla prima pagina dello script, sa quali sono i suoi obiettivi, sa quali sono le sue potenzialità, ma non conosce allo stesso modo gli altri personaggi della serie[2]. Lo stesso Jesse, suo compagno di sventure e quasi figlio putativo, sarebbe inizialmente dovuto uscire di scena nell'ultimo episodio della prima stagione, poi, a causa dello sciopero degli sceneggiatori[3] e della necessità di ridurre da nove a sette gli episodi della prima stagione, diventa il personaggio comprimario e contraltare del protagonista. Anche sul ruolo e sulle caratteristiche dell'antagonista le idee non erano chiare nelle prime fasi del progetto di *Breaking Bad*. Inizialmente il ruolo del nemico numero uno doveva essere di Tuco Salamanca (uno spacciatore messicano psicopatico), ma, banalmente, a causa di precedenti impegni contrattuali dell'attore Raymond Cruz, l'attenzione di Gilligan si è spostata su un personaggio di tutt'altra altra natura: Gustavo Fring. Gus è proprietario della catena di ristoranti fast food Los Pollos Hermanos e di un impianto di lavanderia industriale che serve gli stessi ristoranti, ma è anche uno dei trafficanti di droga più importanti del sud degli Stati Uniti. Gus Fring, che

con i Salamanca ha contatti da oltre vent'anni, è un personaggio tanto simile a Walter White da diventarne nel tempo la nemesi perfetta[4]. Il perno attorno al quale tutto si sviluppa, secondo l'ideatore della serie, è il percorso di trasformazione del protagonista. Gilligan ha intenzione di raccontare per tappe la lenta metamorfosi di White e sa, fin dalla sua prima apparizione, in mutande davanti a una telecamera a dichiarare il suo amore per la famiglia (1.01, "Pilot"), che quell'uomo alla fine della sua parabola pronuncerà le ultime, lapidarie parole: "I did it for me. I liked it. I was good at it" (5.16, "Felina"). Che l'arco narrativo di White venga interpretato come una strada verso il neoliberismo o come un capovolgimento dell'archetipo della redenzione finale, è innegabile che "la presa di coscienza di Walt e le decisioni conseguenti vanno [...] nella direzione opposta all'ammenda, al bilancio delle proprie azioni e dei propri errori, e assumono invece il valore di risarcimento per una vita vissuta come ingiusta. Un orgoglio crescente e un senso di colpa decrescente accompagnano il viaggio di Walt, che si libera via via delle restrizioni morali per abbracciare con un piacere sempre più esplicito l'ebbrezza del potere. L'alibi primo e principale che dà il via a questo percorso è la diagnosi di cancro ai polmoni." (Checcaglini, 2015: 25). La malattia attraversa fasi di remissione e altre di peggioramento, ma la condanna di Walter è già scritta e mano a mano che il corpo si consuma il personaggio segue un percorso di ascesi. Ci sono dei versi di Walter Whitman, il poeta definito come il portavoce del sogno americano, che sembrano quasi rivolgersi a Walter White descrivendo i suoi sentimenti e la sua metamorfosi. Whitman, oltre a condividere le iniziali con White, è il responsabile dello smascheramento della doppia vita del protagonista agli occhi del cognato e agente della DEA Hank Schrader. Hank infatti una sera, invitato a cena a casa di Walter e Skyler, trova in bagno il libro di Whitman *Foglie d'erba* (Withman, 1973: 302), che il chimico Gale Boetticher aveva regalato al suo mentore quando lavoravano assieme nel *super lab* di metanfetamine di proprietà di Gus Fring. Hank legge la dedica sulla prima pagina del libro e trova l'ultimo tassello del puzzle: WW è Walter White, il maestro di Gale, il più abile cuoco di metanfetamine del sud degli Stati Uniti, il super ricercato Heisenberg (5.08, "Gliding Over All").

Qui riportiamo un estratto della poesia intitolata *A te,* citata dal filosofo americano William James (2007:162), uno dei massimi esponenti del pragmatismo, corrente di certo ispiratrice della visione del mondo dell'uomo americano Walter White.

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1   Un'analisi della produzione di Beaking Bad si trova in Sepinwall (2012: 419-459). Sulla genesi di *Breaking Bad*: Pierson (2013) e anche Mittel (2012). Si veda anche Bandirali e Terrone (2013: 70) e Bandirali e Terrone (2014: 59).

2   Per approfondire la questione legata alla costruzione dei personaggi di *Breaking Bad*, si rimanda all'intervista di di David Kronke a Vince Gilligan e al cast in occasione della convention Paleyfest 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YqnoJ10H-qPo. Sulla scrittura di *Breaking Bad* si veda anche Negri (2013: 13-25)

3   Lo sciopero è stato indetto dai sindacati del Writers Guild of America – WGA; è durato 100 giorni e si è svolto a cavallo fra il 2007 e il 2008; la maggior parte delle produzioni televisive in corso hanno subito il quel periodo un arresto o importanti cambiamenti strutturali.

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4   Si veda Morgan e Wotton (2012)

Nessuno ti ha capito, ma io ti comprendo: nessuno
ti ha reso giustizia – tu non ti sei reso giustizia;
Non uno che non ti abbia trovato imperfetto – solo
io non vedo imperfezioni in te
Oh, quali glorie e grandezze potrei cantare di te;
Non hai mai saputo cosa sei – tutta la vita hai son-
necchiato su te stesso;
quanto hai fatto ti viene ricompensato con derisioni.
Ma le derisioni non sono te;
sotto e dentro di quelle, io ti intravedo;
ti ricerco dove nessun altro mai lo ha fatto.
Il silenzio, la scrivania, l'aria impertinente, la notte,
la monotonia quotidiana, se queste cose ti na-
scondono agli altri o a te stesso, non da me però
ti nascondono;
il viso rasato, l'occhio sfuggente, il colorito livido se
ingannano gli altri, non ingannano me;
i vestiti bizzarri, la posa deforme, l'ubriachezza,
l'avidità, la morte prematura, tutto questo io scarto.

(Whitman 1973: 302)

L'ambizione di White, la sua trasformazione narcisistica, sembra rivelarsi chiaramente nelle parole di Whitman; i luoghi e gli spazi in cui Walter si muove si adattano, si piegano e rafforzano la percezione della sua metamorfosi.

Questo è l'argomento che andremo ad approfondire: un uomo che si rompe dentro e finalmente si abbandona all'autopoiesi topologica della società che lo circonda, implode e si lascia percorrere dalla corrente eterotopica della religione consumista, timotica e immorale.

SPAZIO INTERIORE

Il percorso freddo e nichilista di W.W. è quanto di più banale e diffuso nella società contemporanea. Citiamo il teorico della società della stanchezza e della trasparenza Byung Chul, che con poche parole crea il chiasmo narcisismo/eterotopia: "Oggi è in atto qualcosa che compromette l'amore in modo più sostanziale della libertà sconfinata o delle possibilità illimitate. Alla crisi dell'amore non conduce soltanto l'eccessiva offerta di altri *Altri*, bensì l'erosione dell'Altro, che ha luogo attualmente in ogni ambito della vita e si accompagna alla crescente trasformazione narcisistica del sé. Il fatto che l'*Altro* scompaia è in definitiva un processo drammatico, che però – fatalmente – avviene senza essere rilevato dai più. L'Eros riguarda l'*Altro*

nel senso enfatico, che non si lascia risolvere nel regime dell'*Io*. Nell'inferno dell'Uguale, a cui la società contemporanea assomiglia sempre più, non c'è perciò alcuna esperienza erotica. Questa presuppone l'asimmetria e l'esteriorità dell'*Altro*. Non a caso Socrate è chiamato, in quanto amato, *atopos*. L'*Altro* che io desidero e che mi affascina è senza luogo [...] La cultura contemporanea del continuo assimilare non ammette alcuna negatività dell'atopos. Tutto viene perennemente assimilato a tutto, livelliamo ogni cosa nell'uguale, perché è andata persa proprio la nostra esperienza dell'atopia (Atopie) dell'*Altro*. La negatività dell'*Altro* atopico si sottrae al consumo. La società consumistica si sforza così di eliminare l'alterità atopica a vantaggio di differenze consumabili, eterotopiche. [...] Viviamo, oggi, in una società che diventa sempre più narcisistica. La libido è investita, in via primaria, nella propria soggettività. Il narcisismo non è amor proprio: il soggetto dell'amor proprio si prefigge una delimitazione negativa dall'*Altro*, a proprio vantaggio. Il soggetto narcisistico, invece, non è in grado di stabilire con chiarezza i propri limiti; si confonde, così, il confine tra lui e l'*Altro*. Il mondo gli appare soltanto per adombramenti del suo stesso sé. È incapace di riconoscere l'*Altro* nella sua alterità e di accettare questa alterità; per lui ha senso solo ciò di cui può riconoscere, in qualche modo, se stesso". (Byung-Chul Han 2013: .5-8)

Il secessionismo etico a cui assistiamo nel percorso di W.W. è la condizione necessaria all'apertura di uno spazio di esercizio delle proprie abilità, un luogo in cui delimitare una sfera interiore, "l'invenzione dell'individuo mediante enfatizzazione del suo ambito operativo ed esperienziale, isolato dall'ambito di tutti gli altri fatti del mondo" (Sloterdijk 2010: 274). Afferma Sloterdijk: "Separando la mia forza e il mio ambito di competenza da tutte le altre forze e competenze, si apre davanti ai miei occhi una sfera operativa nettamente definita, nella quale il mio saper-fare, la mia volontà, ma soprattutto l'incarico di plasmare la mia stessa esistenza, assurgono, in un certo senso, al potere assoluto". (2010: 274-275)

La tentazione di riabilitare l'egocentrismo sempre più sfrenato del protagonista si fa sentire lungo tutta la serie, la sua crudeltà e freddezza appaiono come il legittimo contrappasso da infliggere a un mondo becero e irrazionale, in cui uno studioso del suo calibro si appiattisce al comando della sua famiglia, la quintessenza del perbenismo e dell'ipocrisia: basti citare la cleptomane Marie che non ammette nemmeno di fronte all'evidenza di avere un "lato oscuro". Ma il tentativo, come vedremo, è in realtà destinato a fallire perché le regole del capitalismo divino a cui si abbandona W.W. quando cerca di recuperare i propri sogni di ricchezza (Walter si è visto sottrarre un brevetto milionario dai suoi ex soci del college) sono

onnipervasive e non ammettono eccezioni. Infatti gli spazi esterni in cui evadere da questo mondo sono in realtà le eterotopie citate da Byung Chul: "differenze consumabili"(2013: 7). In questo senso si esprime anche Peter Sloterdijk: "intendo accennare a un ordinamento spirituale dello spazio in grado di negoziare confini più profondi di quelli che qualunque geopolitica è in grado di concepire. [...] Per definire i risultati spaziali della secessione etica sembra dunque plausibile utilizzare un'espressione come eterotopia." (2010: 270-271) La secessione di cui parla Sloterdijk infatti "introduce nel mondo una scissione sconosciuta. Essa non solo divide asimmetricamente l'umanità tra gruppi di sapienti , che prendono il cammino, e di ignoranti, che rimangono nel luogo della fatale volgarità, ma implica inevitabilmente la dichiarazione di guerra dei primi contro i secondi."(2010: 268) White abbandona il "mondo ordinario" (Vogler 2005) per condurre "un'esistenza pellegrina" (Sloterdijk 2010: 272) e abitare spazi eccentrici. Questi spazi eccentrici non sono necessariamente luoghi *altri,* ma sono identificabili perlopiù come gli spazi familiari che diventano mezzi di transito dal mondo ordinario e profano al mondo straordinario e sacro. "Assenza di dimora ed esistenza pellegrina producono spazi eccentrici mediante la fuga, sicché chi lascia la propria casa, il pellegrino, chi fugge dal mondo, porta sempre con sé il suo deserto personale, il suo eremo, il suo alibi. Per queste nobili figure dell' elusione non è più possibile dimorare nel luogo delittuoso della vita abituale. D'altra parte chi ha sempre intorno a sé lo spazio in cui fuggire non deve più andarsene via fisicamente".(Sloterdijk 2010: 272)

Passiamo ora a fare qualche esempio: la piscina e la casa dei White, lo studio in cui Saul svolge la professione di avvocato, la lavanderia, il laboratorio di produzione di metanfetamine (ma anche l'autolavaggio gestito da Skyler e il ristorante Los Pollos Hermanos di Gus) sono spazi di transito, porte che conducono i personaggi da un mondo a un altro[5]. Non si tratta di passaggi da un mondo finzionale a un mondo reale o viceversa; questi luoghi conducono Walter White da un mondo profano in cui è un semplice insegnante a un mondo sacro dove è Heisenberg, scienziato puro.

SPAZIO DI MEDIAZIONE

Nella piscina di casa White, che non viene mai usata per nuotare, ma fa da sfondo a diversi momenti di incontro e di

conflitto, tutti i componenti della famiglia White compiono il loro rito di trasformazione. Walter sta osservando lo specchio d'acqua e riflette sul fatto che sua moglie lo ha appena lasciato, quando i detriti del crash aereo (causato indirettamente da Walter stesso) cadono nella vasca e sanciscono il definitivo sopravvento della personalità criminale di Heisenberg (3.01, "No Mas"): agitato, spaventato e non lucido, Walt inizia a bruciare mazzette di banconote sulla griglia a bordo vasca, ma immediatamente si pente dell'azione e spegne il fuoco con l'acqua, detergendo se stesso e il denaro con un gesto che ricorda il sacramento del battesimo.

Walter Junior diventa uomo ubriacandosi con il padre e lo zio Hank. Skyler s'immerge nell'acqua gelida della sera completamente vestita, in apparente stato di incoscienza, sotto gli occhi sgomenti di Hank e Marie, e così si consegna a Walter/Heisenberg, ne diventa complice e allontana i figli da sé e dal marito per proteggerli da una vita ormai votata alla criminalità. La piscina di casa White è spesso il luogo d'ambientazione dei famosi cold open della serie. Il più inquietante e visivamente potente è quello che gli sceneggiatori collocano in apertura della seconda stagione (2.01, "Seven Thirty-Seven") in cui un orsetto di peluche rosa, privo di un occhio, galleggia riverso nella piscina di Walter. L'oggetto in acqua, in primissimo piano, anticipa uno degli avvenimenti nefasti che attenderanno lo spettatore durante la stagione di *Breaking Bad.* L'ultima volta che vediamo la piscina di Walter è senz'acqua, abbandonata come il resto della casa, ed è diventata una pista per skater (5.09, "Blood Money"). L'ascesi di Heisenberg è quasi compiuta, manca poco – un'ultima, spietata vendetta – prima di porre fine al viaggio.

In *Breaking Bad* le piscine sono numerose, e quella di casa White non è l'unico specchio d'acqua a fungere da soglia. L'intera parabola di Gustavo Fring ha inizio e termina nella piscina di una lussuosa villa in Messico, di proprietà dei boss del Cartello. Nell'episodio "Hermanos" (4.08), un flashback che rimanda a vent'anni prima, ci mostra Gus e il suo amico Max che tentano una trattativa con Hector Salamanca e altri membri del Cartello a bordo vasca. In quell'occasione i messicani rifiutano di stringere accordi coi due e Salamanca uccide Max con un colpo alla testa, obbligando Gus a guardarlo negli occhi mentre il suo sangue tinge di rosso l'acqua della piscina. Alla fine dell'episodio "Salud" (4.10), in quella stessa piscina, Gustavo Fring ottiene la sua vendetta personale e vince la guerra contro il Cartello per il controllo della droga: avvelena il boss Don Eladio e tutti coloro che hanno brindato con una pregiata tequila che lui stesso ha portato in omaggio. È il momento più alto di Gus. Di lì a poco morirà assieme a Hector

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5   In generale, sull'uso dello spazio nelle serie televisive contemporanee, si veda Grasso e Scaglioni (2009).

Salamanca e per mano di Walter White (4.13 "Face Off"). A partire da quel momento il narcisismo di Walter oscura la sua personalità. Il soggetto narcisistico, come dice Byung-Chul Han: "non è in grado di stabilire con chiarezza i propri limiti; si confonde, così, il confine tra lui e l'*Altro*. Il mondo gli appare soltanto per adombramenti del suo stesso sé. È incapace di riconoscere l'*Altro* nella sua alterità e di accettare questa alterità; per lui ha senso solo ciò di cui può riconoscere, in qualche modo, se stesso." (2013: 8) Il protagonista di *Breaking Bad* è a tal punto concentrato su di sé da non avere più alcun interesse per l'*Altro*, neppure quando questo è il suo comprimario Jesse. Una notte, contemplando l'acqua della lussuosa piscina di un albergo, Walt riflette su come disfarsi di Jesse. Il colore che pervade la scena, per effetto dell'illuminazione artificiale della vasca d'acqua, ha quel particolare tono di blu che caratterizza la *blue meth*, unico vero interesse di Walter White.

Lo studio di Saul, arredato in posticcio stile neoclassico, con pianta poligonale e antri segreti nelle doppie pareti di cartongesso, è una porta che varcano in ingresso e in uscita svariate volte sia Walter che Jesse. Quasi un *passage*, lo studio è contenitore di oggetti, saperi, storie che da lì transitano e si trasformano. L'estetica del mondo posticcio di Saul ci richiama alla mente l'ormai lontano personaggio di Betelgeuse del film *Beetlejuice* di Tim Burton (1988). Il film ha come soggetto la relazione tra la casa e i personaggi (vivi e morti) che la abitano e la conseguente deriva dell'una e degli altri. Entrambi i personaggi, Betelgeuse e Saul, si presentano in uno spot TV promettendo la soluzione di ogni problema, basta una telefonata e i due mediatori si mettono al lavoro, l'uno facendo da tramite tra il mondo dei vivi e il mondo degli spiriti, l'altro intercedendo tra il mondo dei reietti e il mondo dei potenti. L'inutilità di questo teatro dell'assurdo si contrappone e fa da sfondo alla precisione illuminata con cui viene organizzato lo spazio sacro del laboratorio di Walter: una macchina perfetta per fare soldi, contro ogni moralità, contro la famiglia e contro le istituzioni.

SPAZIO SACRO

Lo spazio che articola l'intera narrazione della serie è il laboratorio. Al suo interno, che si tratti di un camper in un deserto o di una moderna fabbrica in un sotterraneo, WW esercita la sua nuova professione. Deve avere il controllo totale del processo, non ammette intrusi, tranne Jesse, che più che un collega è uno strumento nelle sue mani, uno schiavo degno della Roma imperiale.

La messa che viene organizzata per produrre anfetamine nel laboratorio non è altro che la celebrazione topologica del mantra capitalistico: il nuovo Dio è il denaro. Come già accennato, lo spazio sacro del capitalismo è un'eterotopia, un contro spazio indeterminato e amorale, luogo di ascesi individuale, sempre uguale e riproducibile in ogni luogo. Boris Groys, nella sua interpretazione di Walter Benjamin, scorge nella contrapposizione tra la verità indiscutibile della rivelazione teologica e la passione interminabile della ricerca filosofica verso una verità localizzata in un futuro indeterminato, la chiave di lettura del capitalismo moderno come società che simula la necessità del progresso e del sempre nuovo per produrre invece mondi standardizzati e indiscutibili, luoghi privi di negatività che garantiscono la moltiplicazione degli scambi: "ogni teologia che intenda esprimere, formulare, codificare la verità di una determinata religione vuole separarsi sia dalla sfera profana sia da quei luoghi in cui vengono annunciate e professate false verità, non verità. La teologizzazione della verità significa dunque la sua topologizzazione, la sua ubicazione: in un tempio, in una chiesa in un' università o in un partito." (Groys 2013: 86)

Lo scopo di Walter White lungo tutta la narrazione è di sacralizzare ad ogni costo il laboratorio di chimica rilocalizzandolo continuamente. Il laboratorio muta nel tempo per assumere, alla fine, la sua forma più pura; inizialmente è collocato in un camper Winnebago e i due personaggi si allontanano dalla città e dai rispettivi legami per cucinare nel deserto.

In un secondo momento il laboratorio si colloca nei sotterranei di una lavanderia industriale. É un superlab fatto costruire da Gustavo Fring e predisposto da Gale Boetticher, il chimico affiliato del boss che ambisce a prendere il posto di Walt e Jesse. Il superlab rappresenta il punto di non ritorno per il personaggio principale. Dal momento in cui ne varca l'ingresso, Walt non potrà più ritornare alla vita onesta di un tempo, per sopravvivere dovrà continuare a cucinare metanfetamine e deve vestire i panni di Heisenberg. L'ossessione per la perfezione e per il controllo è incarnata dal *bottle episode*[6] "Fly" (3.10). Durante l'intero episodio Walter cerca di catturare una mosca che è entrata nel laboratorio e potrebbe inficiare il buon risultato della partita di metanfetamine che lui e Jesse stanno cucinando.

Il terzo laboratorio diventa uno spazio mobile non localizzato. Gli attrezzi per la produzione di droga sintetica sono nascosti nei veicoli di una ditta di disinfestazione, la

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6   Episodio girato in un interno con un numero limitatissimo di personaggi.

Vamonos Pest, che occupa ogni abitazione infestata per un determinato periodo di tempo e, a lavoro compiuto (disinfestazione/produzione di metanfetamine), si sposta in un nuovo luogo (in)contaminato per ricominciare daccapo. Il laboratorio diventa uno scrigno, una bolla al cui interno Walt continua, imperterrito, a cucinare la sua blue meth, una matrioska impenetrabile e non localizzabile, sempre diversa e in grado di approdare in qualsiasi contesto, un *fast lab* capace di conquistare il mondo, diffondendosi come un cancro sul modello delle multinazionali del cibo; non è un caso che gli affari di Gus vengano gestiti attraverso la catena di ristoranti Los Pollos Hermanos.

L'ultimo laboratorio non è più di Walter, non ha in nessun modo le caratteristiche di sacralità degli altri fino al momento in cui diventa il luogo della fine, dove il caos lascia spazio all'ordine e Walter conosce la sua natura profonda.

Lo spazio non localizzato del laboratorio in ogni sua forma è dunque un'eterotopia, di più, è la celebrazione visibile delle regole del capitalismo moderno, quelle a cui risponde, in sunto, il nuovo eroe della televisione made in USA.

Ora occupiamoci della casa dei White, che, rispetto al laboratorio, sembra percorrere un movimento inverso di profanazione: si assiste al progressivo disfacimento della casa, che vede marcire le proprie fondamenta, prende fuoco, viene devastata da una banda di teppistelli e vede precipitare i resti di un'aeromobile in cortile.

Casa White ricorda quella degli Usher (la casa raccontata da Edgar Allan Poe nel famoso racconto pubblicato nel 1839 *The Fall of the House of Usher*) per la deriva a cui va incontro assieme a coloro che la abitano. La vediamo nuova, luminosa, ancora priva di mobili in un flashback di sedici anni prima nell'episodio "Full measure" (3.13) quando Skyler e Walter la scelgono per costruire la loro famiglia. Nel presente la sua trasformazione segue di pari passo quella di Walter consumandosi stanza per stanza fino alle fondamenta. La luce penetra sempre meno negli spazi dell'abitazione; nell'ultima stagione della serie l'uso del chiaroscuro è dichiaratamente espressionista (Allen 2013): le ombre di Skyler e Walter deformate e trasfigurate, hanno preso possesso delle mura domestiche. La trasformazione dell'abitazione inizia con quella di Walter e procede lenta e inesorabile di stanza in stanza, fino a raggiungere le fondamenta. Dapprima è la cameretta destinata alla secondogenita il luogo eletto da Walt per nascondere il denaro frutto del suo lavoro come cuoco di metanfetamine. In un secondo momento, quando la camera non è più sicura e il volume delle banconote cresce in modo esponenziale, l'attività si sposta in luoghi più adatti:

il seminterrato. La cantina, ma anche il seminterrato o comunque la parte più bassa della casa, come dice Bachelard: "è innanzitutto l'essere oscuro della casa, l'essere che partecipa delle potenze sotterranee. [...] L'appassionato abitatore la scava, ne rende attiva la profondità: il fatto non basta, la *rêverie* lavora. Dalla parte della terra scavata, i sogni non hanno limite". (2006: 61) La cantina, secondo la lettura di Jung da parte di Bachelard, rappresenta l'inconscio. "Nella cantina si muovono esseri più lenti, meno trotterellanti, più misteriosi [...] la razionalizzazione è meno rapida e meno chiara, non è mai definitiva [...] le tenebre dimorano giorno e notte. Anche col candeliere in mano, l'uomo nella cantina vede danzare le ombre sul nero muro" (Bachelard 2006: 62-63) I sogni e le aspirazioni irrazionali di onnipotenza di Walter emergono lenti ma inesorabili. Il desiderio di riscatto e vendetta del protagonista prende il sopravvento, e così, quando la vita di Heisenberg comincia ad invadere lo spazio privato di Walter, le fondamenta in legno della casa marciscono (2.10, "Over"). Il protagonista cerca di salvare la propria abitazione facendo delle riparazioni, sostituendo il legno contaminato dalle muffe, ma il lavoro è uno spreco di tempo. Anzi, è proprio quella zona oscura e polverosa dell'abitazione che diventa dapprima un passaggio segreto per entrare in casa (3.02, "Caballo sin Nombre"), e poi il deposito dell'enorme quantità di danaro che Walter e Skyler si trovano a dover gestire e nascondere. L'episodio "Over" (2.10) condensa visivamente la stretta relazione che unisce il protagonista alle mura della sua abitazione, sia letteralmente che metaforicamente, come scrive Chiara Checcaglini: "La sequenza finale è significativa: con un occhio al bricolage e uno alla metanfetamina, mentre sta comprando attrezzature per i lavori di casa da Raks-Contractor Supply, Walt riconosce nel carrello di un cliente gli inequivocabili rifornimenti del cuoco di metanfetamina. Irresponsabilmente sicuro della propria fama e dell'effetto ammutolente della propria superiorità intellettiva, non ha timore di farsi vedere in volto dall'uomo e dal suo minaccioso compare né di ostentare la propria *expertise*, che diviene essa stessa un mezzo di minaccia, come suggella la battuta finale: 'stay out of my territory' è la prima delle *line* di culto che evocano la presenza di Heisenberg attraverso un'improvvisa e tagliente carica intimidatoria. I pugni stretti, lo sguardo spietato e la voce profonda sono già i segni distintivi delle sinistre e memorabili minacce di Heisenberg. La scena comunica su tre livelli: in primo luogo è una delle prime dimostrazioni di come Walt preferisca arrivare a scoprirsi, pur di porsi come eccezionalità superiore; in secondo luogo, è l'esemplificazione di come abbia la costante necessità di ammirarsi nello

stupore dei suoi interlocutori quando si mostra più degli altri: più furbo, più intelligente, più avanti; infine, nonostante in questo momento della serie Walt voglia tirarsi fuori dal traffico di droga, sancisce che in realtà l'eventualità di mantenere il suo ruolo di *druglord* gli è tutt'altro che indifferente". (Checcaglini 2015: 48)

Quando anche gli anfratti di casa non bastano più per nascondere i contanti, Skyler affitta un garage per depositare i soldi; nell'episodio "Gliding Over All" (5.08) mostra a Walter il bancale di mazzette posizionato imponente e ordinato al centro del box. Marito e moglie sono ammutoliti, in riflessione davanti a un altare eretto con le banconote. I soldi hanno compiuto un percorso che ha avuto inizio nell'intimità della casa, prima nella stanza della piccola Holly e poi nella zona più oscura del *crawl space*, per poi uscire all'esterno e farsi materia costruttiva dell'altare votato a un Dio malvagio e temibile, al Dio del capitalismo.

"Assassinio e delitto, menzogna furto e adulterio ancora oggi possono richiamarsi a modelli divini. Gli dei andavano regolarmente in guerra, dove comandavano e si rendevano responsabili di omicidi e stupri. Dal babilonese Moloch [...] e alle guerre sante dei nostri giorni, dalle crociate agli assassinii, dai sacrifici umani aztechi fino alle attuali guerre per la droga: i misfatti degli dei e dei loro seguaci riempirebbero una sconfinata enciclopedia della disgrazia. Gli uomini di diverse epoche e culture hanno sempre creduto che i loro dei e dee raramente fossero giusti o misericordiosi, e anche la loro ira dovesse sempre essere temuta poiché, come si comprende quasi da sé, - da essa poteva derivare il *malum physicum*: epidemie, carestie, malattie, dolori fino a una morte atroce e prematura". (Macho 2010: 76-77) I greci adoravano Hermes – Dio dei ladri, Seth era il Dio egizio del deserto e del male, Loki, nella cultura nordica, era il Dio dell'infamia, "il patrono della città di Culicàn nel Nord-Ovest del Messico è insieme il santo protettore del cartello della droga, dei rapinatori e dei criminali: il suo nome è Jesus Malverde. Di lui si narra che abbia, come un Robin Hood messicano – o una specie di Zorro –, rubato ai ricchi per dividere il proprio bottino coi poveri. Sarebbe stato ucciso il 3 maggio 1909, fucilato e impiccato. Malverde non è mai stato riconosciuto come Santo della Chiesa Cattolica: tuttavia *el narcosanto* deve aver fatto numerosi miracoli. Il giorno della sua morte viene celebrato ogni anno con una festa e vengono lasciati presso la sua tomba, una cappella a Culiacàn, fiori e offerte. Le bambole di Malverde, che rappresentano un uomo con i baffi e abiti bianchi, sono amuleti diffusi e amati". (Macho 2010: 77) Nell'episodio "Negro y Azul" (2.07) una statua di Malverde

è posizionata in un ufficio della DEA e nell'episodio "Mas" (3.05) Hank regala al collega Steven Gomez, una statuina di Malverde come segno di buona fortuna.

Fino a quando questo scrigno, il santuario/deposito con l'altare/bancale di mazzette, rimane chiuso, ovvero fino a quando esiste una dimensione dialettica, separata, tra il mondo di Heisenberg e quello di Walter, esiste un ordine, seppur labile, delle cose e del mondo, ma "Lo scrigno, il confanetto soprattutto, [...] sono oggetti che si aprono. Quando il cofanetto si chiude, viene restituito alla comunità degli oggetti e prende il suo posto nello spazio esterno. Ma esso si apre! [...] nel momento in cui un cofanetto si apre, la dialettica cessa. Il fuori è cancellato d'un tratto e tutto è preda della novità, della sorpresa, dello sconosciuto. Il fuori non significa più niente e perfino le dimensioni del volume, supremo paradosso, non hanno più senso, perchè si è appena aperta una dimensione, la dimensione dell'intimità (Bachelard 1975: 153). Il denaro non è più al sicuro, Hank ha scoperto tutto, la chiesa rischia di essere profanata e W.W. decide di ripercorrere le origini sotterrando il denaro nel deserto. ("Buried" 5.10) Il deserto di Alburqueque (nello specifico quello della riserva Navajo di Tohajiilee) è anche il luogo da cui tutto ha inizio, dove Walter e Jesse cucinano per la prima volta, dove si stringono patti e alleanze, dove si va formando un nuovo sistema gerarchico che vede Heisenberg al comando, dove muoiono i colpevoli ma anche gli innocenti (l'ignaro adolescente Drew Sharp, Gomez e lo stesso Hank*)*.

Il finale della serie (non sarà sfuggita a nessuno la bella morte di W.W. all'interno dell'ultimo laboratorio, riconquistato alle grinfie dello zio Jack) sembra finalmente liberare il protagonista dalla tensione acrobatica che lo ha spinto per tutta la malattia a volersi continuamente superare, ritrovando la propria normalità nella figura del perfetto scienziato Heisenberg (il riferimento è al fisico tedesco, fra i fondatori della meccanica quantistica che vinse il Premio Nobel nel 1932). Ma l'assurdo grido di Jesse ci riporta in pochi secondi alla perturbante convinzione che anche la morte ci trasporta nella perfetta dimensione eterotopica: non esiste uno spazio di evasione dal gioco perverso dell'esistenza. Tutto gira e rigira eternamente dentro la sfera dell'uomo."Questo luogo costituisce una grandezza eterotopica, intendendo con ciò che i defunti soggiornano in un altrove che si sottrae all'alternativa fra *da qualche parte* e da *nessuna parte*". (Sloterdijk 2008: 14)

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SERIE CITATE

The X-Files (1993-2002)
Breaking Bad (2008-2013)

SYNCHRONIC SERIALITY: THE DISSOLVING OF DIEGETIC BORDERS THROUGH METALEPSIS

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ABSTRACT

In dialogue with Gérard Genette's literary concept of *metalepsis* to television, this paper considers instances of meta-textual actor/character portrayals in serial narratives to show that meta-narrative intrusion fosters a greater empathetic link between the spectator and character, whilst simultaneously inviting the viewer to appreciate the technique as an artifice-aware gesture. The fluidity of diegetic borders brought on by the conflation of performer/performance replicates Baudrillard's simulacra, creating a synchronic form of seriality and transcending rigid genre classifications.

Fiction is the lie through which we tell the truth.
Albert Camus

Reality and fiction are often thought of as a distinctly binary opposition, the real and true in opposition to the invented. For a film or television audience, the universe created within a narrative often depends on a spectator's willing suspension of disbelief, in spite of, or perhaps because of recognizing certain actors and actresses who inhabit a role. Viewers are invited to accept a televisual portrayal of life as a possible world, independent of reality but reflecting it. What, then, is the spectator to make of obvious intrusions of the real world in the fictional one? Gérard Genette's concept of *metalepsis* as a narratological device holds that a transgression of the boundaries of fictional and real world representations occurs through "any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.) or the inverse" (1980: 234–35). Thus, the real enters the fictional world that is created, or the fictional world addresses the author, reader or spectator. Any disruption of the reality/fiction binary creates several simultaneous degrees of viewing consciousness, yet paradoxically, reminders of the real world within the fictional one do not inherently threaten the story-world that has been created. In fact, these moments serve a dual function within the narrative: they foster a greater empathetic link between the spectator and the characters, while simultaneously (and somewhat paradoxically) inviting the spectator to appreciate these techniques as an artifice-aware gesture by the creator.

The fundamental tension between realism and authorial intervention acknowledges a vast diegesis that extends beyond the story-world and largely beyond distinctions of genre, in a synchronic form of seriality; an enhanced seriality is engendered in an extradiegetic engagement with temporality through metaleptic intrusions. Translating Genette's literary concept of metalepsis to the television serial narrative, I will track the reflexivity in television shows created by obvious intrusions of the real world into the fictional one, examining a corpus of television series with instances of non-diegetic spill-over that confuse character and actor distinctions in a refraction of temporalities (past, present, and potential). Through the transparency of the cinematic and televisual conventions that support—yet also challenge—the impression of reality, the emphasis becomes not just about a character/viewer relationship, but about a creator/viewer relationship that presupposes a sophisticated, intertextually-aware spectator.

METALEPSIS AND TEMPORAL REFERENTIALITY

Michael Dunne, in his *Metapop: Self-Referentiality in American Popular Culture*, writes that "the increasing immersion of Americans in all forms of mediation" has shifted the rhetorical intention of self-referentiality in pop culture objects, creating "a contemporary...community based on a mutual recognition of mediated experience on the parts of senders and receivers of cultural messages" (1992: 11). Indeed, many contemporary series rely on participatory models of serial engagement in which spectators negotiate meaning through their interactions with the text. For the purposes of this study, two such categories of metaleptic intervention will be considered as case studies of the phenomenon: the incorporation of actor photos within a narrative, and/or the inclusion of a performer's public persona into the storyworld. In both cases, the insertion of reality into the fictional world creates a temporal link between the past and the present: the moment of iteration (use in the series), and the moment of creation (that is to say, the taking of the photograph [a one-time event], or the development of a persona and/or career [a far more time-intensive project]). Faced with these metaleptic intrusions in the storyworld, a spectator must necessarily engage with the extradiegetic past to decipher the deployment of these strategies, and in so doing, contribute to the richness of the storyworld on a macro level.

For the first category of metalepsis, the incorporation of actor photos within a narrative, examples will be drawn from Ingmar Bergman's 1973 Swedish arthouse miniseries *Scenes from a Marriage*,[1] as well as Alan Ball's 2001 HBO family drama *Six Feet Under*. For the second group, metaleptic intervention is examined in instances where actors star as a fictional version of themselves, engaging the spectators' previous knowledge of their lives and work. This category includes actors appear in recurring roles and celebrity cameo appearances (in which celebrities and popular figures appear in portrayals ranging from realistic to highly exaggerated versions of themselves), with specific examples drawn from the complex web of fiction and reality used in Louis CK's eponymous FX network comedy *Louie*, as well as premium cable series *Episodes*, produced for the Showtime network. Though the circumstances of creation and genre vary widely between these four series, examples were chosen for their relation-

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1 I refer here to the original television mini-series, rather than the edited film version of 1974.

ship to the use of metalepsis in the narratives, and selected from different registers of the "television ecosystem" for the broader interplay of their respective genres. *Scenes from a Marriage,* with its meticulous design, nuanced cinematography, and poetic ruminations on love and loss, is cinematic, high art television from Bergman, widely hailed as one of the most influential auteurs in cinema. *Six Feet Under,* by contrast, is considered an example of contemporary "Quality TV," a discursive category and designation of an alleged aesthetic superiority of certain television shows, making it closer to arthouse than soap opera (aspirationally, at least). These two works are contrasted with series *Louie* and *Episodes* in terms of genre, as the latter are comedies rather than dramas, but also in that the two comedies capitalize on the well-worn reflexivity of serial sitcoms, beginning even in their premise (following fictionalized versions of real, well-known individuals, such as stand-up comedians and actors, in the vein of *Seinfeld, Titus, Martin* and more. This concept harkens back to the earliest days of popular television, to shows like *The Jack Benny Program2*[2], with its show-within-the-show format and a stage persona that set comedian Benny up as the comedic foil). What links the four examples selected for this study, however, is the use of metalepsis as a potential strategy to map self-reflexive textual play across genres, and an interactive audience mode that blurs truth and fiction, past and present.

ACTOR PHOTOGRAPHS AS METALEPTIC INTERVENTION

Ingmar Bergman's 1974 drama/mini-series, *Scenes from a Marriage*, is an exercise in serial form, tracing a thread of quiet moments across a disintegrating marriage. Marianne, as one half of the titular marriage, is a woman who mourns squashed dreams that never came to fruition, with unfulfilled desires of her youth and the unknown of what "might have been" in a parallel life. In the fourth installment of six episodes, "The Vale of Tears" (1.4), Johann and Marianne have been separated for over a year, but meet privately to discuss, reminisce over, and generally question the status of their relationship. Marianne has had to reconstruct her identity when she is abandoned, and she offers to read her journal to Johann in order to give him a sense of her progress in the post-separation search for self. Marianne reads her journal aloud, recounting

stories of a strict upbringing during childhood, her formative teenage years and secretive sexual awakening, and the struggle to find an authentic identity both in the past and present as a woman, wife, mother and individual. As Marianne reads from her journal, the camera pushes in on an extreme close-up of the face of actress Liv Ullmann, and the monologue switches to a voice-over, while actual photographs of actress during her youth appear on the screen. These photos of the actress show the progression of her life from schoolgirl to marriage, one after the other in a long sequence of almost two minutes. It is as if a slideshow of family photos is being presented to the spectator from within the character Marianne's mind; we are positioned to hear her monologue as if she is speaking to the spectator directly, rather than to her estranged and uninterested husband (who has fallen asleep). The spectator is virtually alone with Marianne, seeing the images that illustrate her memories from inside her head. Furthermore, this scene is a powerful reminder of the background of the performer behind the character, with the images compelling the spectator to step outside of the narrative to consider the context of the images, invited to do so by the unwavering stare of Marianne/Ullmann. The photos almost exclusively feature Marianne/Ullmann staring at the originary camera, and thus project the character past the secondary filmic camera, past the narrative, and into the eyes and minds of the audience.

By the time *Scenes from a Marriage* was filmed, Ullmann was truly defined by her connection to director Bergman, as actress and muse,[3] former lover, and co-parent to a daughter. The actress herself admitted in a 1974 interview that she personally related to Marianne's fictional journal revelations, specifically the confession that she had only ever lived for others. Ullmann said, "I have spent most of my life and still spend most of it living for other people, doing what is expected of me... I've wasted oceans of time doing what other people didn't care about my doing for them, while they were doing the same thing for me" (Haskell, 2006: 74). That this real-life statement by the actress sounds like it could in fact be a passage replicating the text in Marianne's fictional journal, speaks to the fact that the audience is invited to transpose what they know of the personal life of Ullmann onto her character's fictional one, and to interpret the dialogue within the context of a complicated relationship between the actual author, Bergman, and the actress, highlighted by these personal photographs from her past. The "what might have been" invoked by the character, is replicated in the minds of

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the spectators, who confront the invisible specter of bygone possibilities when faced with the images of a hopeful, young Marianne/Ullmann, both of whom have yet to live the life in store for them.

In *Scenes from a Marriage,* diegetic levels converge in a temporal intervention that invites the spectator to consider supplemental meaning to the event, giving the episode both an individual and an over-arching meaning. The same might be said of *Six Feet Under,* particularly in an episode entitled "The Invisible Woman" (the fifth episode of the second series), which deploys metalepsis in the incorporation of actor photographs into the narrative, triggering a simultaneous adherence to/expulsion from the story-world. In *Six Feet Under,* Los Angeles matriarch Ruth Fisher (Frances Conroy) desperately tries to create intimacy within her family after the death of her husband upsets the family dynamic and undermines the future of their funeral parlor business. As part of the serial structure of the show, each episode of *Six Feet Under* begins with the death of a stranger, who will become the newest "case" at Fisher & Sons funeral home, each triggering a type of reflection on the family's current relationships. In "The Invisible Woman" episode, a mysterious, lonely woman dies with no one to witness or mourn her passing. Ruth draws a parallel between her own solitary life and that of the unknown woman's death, and reaches out to her three grown children, Nate, David, and Claire to reconnect. Ruth's goal to enrich her family life is undone when her children unequivocally reject her advances at intimacy; unable to recapture the closeness and affection she so desperately craves, she weeps in front of a table filled with framed photographs of her three children. In a tracking shot from Ruth's point of view, the spectator sees the series of family photographs, showing actual childhood photographs (or incredibly convincing digital reproductions) of the actors playing her children, Claire (Lauren Ambrose), David (Michael C. Hall), and Nate (Peter Krause), at various stages of their respective childhoods. Ruth's hand longingly brushes over each of the picture frames, and the camera pans past the set of photos, featuring undeniably recognizable versions of Claire/Lauren as a pigtailed toddler, David/Michael in school pictures, and a smiling Nate/Peter with a boyish haircut and a turtleneck sweater. Ruth drops to her knees, and the camera cuts back to a closer shot of the photo frames, with the actors' faces even more identifiable at such close range.

The grief, loneliness, and inability to recapture the lost past are neatly summed up by this series of photos, with the past haunting the present. Certainly, within the context of the plot, the spectator is to be moved by the character of Ruth's

emotion, acknowledging that she is a disconnected mother who longs for a simpler, long-gone past with her family. However, this scene evokes an even stronger identification with the character through the spillover of non-diegetic images into the diegetic universe. The photographs of the real actors as children are ostensibly real, indexical moments from actual lives that have been lived, the earlier years of actors Lauren, Michael, and Peter. As such, the spectator is invited to read the scene within the fictional world as a nostalgic reminder of the passage of time, while being made aware of a historic and tangible past when the child versions of Claire/Lauren, David/Michael, and Nate/Peter were young. This contrapuntal reading of the images imbues the scene with a sense of nostalgia that anchors us to the character of Ruth within the diegesis. The nature of a photograph and all that it conveys—the missing of a moment in order to capture it on film, the inability to regain lost time, and the ephemeral nature of images and of life itself (a recurring theme of the *Six Feet Under* franchise as a whole)—heightens the emotional weight of Ruth's grief.

In both series, *Scenes from a Marriage* and *Six Feet Under,* the use of child photographs creates a self-conscious historization of the fictional world that captures the moment of the present while showing another, different captured moment of the past. This interplay of past, present, and present-destined-to-become-past affirms itself as its very own indexical moment, timeless yet impermanent, preserved in perpetuity, and undeniably fleeting. When character and performer divisions are blended, reality is appropriated by the narrative and then recreated as truth passed through a prism of fiction, allowing the spectator to identify within and above the diegesis. Through a transparency of the cinematic conventions which support yet also challenge the impression of reality, the emphasis is not just on the character/viewer relationship, but on the filmmaker/viewer relationship as well, linking to the auteurism at the center of art cinema of the 1950s. Jacques Rancière, in his book *La Fable cinématographique/Film Fables,* discusses Jean-Luc Godard's 1998 *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* an eight-part film made from images and sound spliced together from other filmmakers' works. Rancière says that this audio-visual collage, which prioritizes the image over a narrative, reinvents the images as autonomous by removing them from their original context (2001: 219). While it is apparent that the project of Godard's masterwork and these serial television examples are vastly different forms of art in terms of intention and execution, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is also, as Adrian Martin suggests, a personal kind of history, wherein

"huge portions of cinema history, yesterday and particularly today, are missing. Rather, it is one man's history, [Godard's] secret cinema of formative viewing experiences, personal illuminations and epiphanies...This is why so many of its filmic references gravitate around the gods and fetishes that he discovered while hanging out and writing for Cahiers du cinéma magazine in the 1950s...(discoveries like Bergman, Hitchcock, Renoir, Mizoguchi...)" (Martin, 2012). The simultaneous removal of an originary context and embedding of personal history into the reformulated images creates a new, invisible branch of the narrative for a spectator, fusing real and invented, past and present. In the same manner, the inclusion of the actors' childhood photos creates a framework in which the spectator is at once aware of the technical construction of the scene and the inclusion of the photos as a meta-commentary on the unseen.

ACTOR PERSONA AS METALEPTIC STRATEGY

The use of actors' childhood photos is not exclusive to *Six Feet Under* and *Scenes from a Marriage*. Many television series use this technique to build the story-world before the show even begins. Series revolving around family dynamics like 80's American sitcom *Family Ties* (on air from 1982-89), long-running British sitcom *Outnumbered* (2007-14), or the multi-narrative drama *Parenthood* on American network NBC (running from 2010-15, and remarkably also starring Peter Krause), use "through the years" credit sequences that show the actors at varying ages. This creates a visual family tree that implies a shared history between the characters even before the pilot episode opens. As viewers, we may retroactively assign even more meaning to these images once we identify the characters within the hierarchy of the larger fictional family as the season progresses. And, in the case of a long-running series, we are given evidence of the actual physical changes in the actors since the time that the show has been on the air[4]. The story-world becomes what film theoretician Gilles Deleuze calls *l'image virtuel,* a "virtual image" bridge between the perception of reality and the representation of it (Deleuze,

1985 : 93-94); it is a world that reflects reality as it is, but also as what it could have been. The fictional context of the character's childhood remains unseen, inviting us to "fill in the gaps" of their backstory since the context of the actor's childhood remains largely unknown,[5] giving the spectator an artistic liberty to add to and engage with the narrative world.

Similarly, the boundaries of the show's fictional story-world are transgressed by points of intersection in the actor/character lives when actors appear as a fictionalized version of themselves; like childhood photographs, incorporation of a performer's persona is linked to a specific temporality in which the spectator relates the moment of articulation in the present (within the series) to a construction or reconstruction of a performer's life in the past. Richard Dyer discusses a translation of star persona to character (what he deems as the "constructed representations of persons," [Dyer, 2009: 89]) saying that the "phenomenon of audience/star identification may yet be the crucial aspect of the placing of the audience in relation to a character. The 'truth' about a character's personality and the feelings which it evokes may be determined by what the reader takes to be the truth about the person of the star playing the part" (Dyer, 2009: 125). There is an enmeshing of the character and actor, and the audience is invited to transpose what they know of the personal life of an actor onto the character's fictional one, and therefore to interpret their actions and dialogue with a view to reality. The fictional characters are subject to spectator scrutiny due to the non-diegetic spillover that is acquired through magazines, interviews, biographies, and external knowledge of the context of an individual's real life, in intentional references or even accidental connections made by the audience who map the star persona onto the character.

A prime example of such a fluid diegetic border is the creation of *Louie* and comedian Louis C.K., a somewhat curmudgeonly stand-up comic in real-life, who, on and off-stage, riffs about the hardships of being a single dad in his forties. As writer/director/actor/producer of *Louie,* C.K. has fashioned a character who is...*also* a somewhat curmudgeonly stand-up who, on and off-stage, riffs about the hardships of being a single dad in his forties. Self-deprecating and angst-ridden in the absurdity of the everyday experience, the television version of Louis in *Louie* navigates hilarious bad dates, bad jokes, and bad sex, while doling out earnest commentaries on race, class, sexual preference, illness, relationships, war, and parenting. There are

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4   In the specific case of Peter Krause, for example, there is a *double* time capsule effect: the title images of a young Peter Krause next to his forty-something self as character "Adam Braverman" on *Parenthood* in 2014 recalls the *other* childhood images of baby Peter Krause as a thirty-something "Nate Fisher" on *Six Feet Under,* giving the spectator a sense of the over-arching trajectory of Krause's career and a virtual aging that reminds the spectator of the passage of time/real time.

5   An exception, perhaps, might exist in the case of child actors who maintain a career into their adulthood.

rapid-fire tonal shifts from comedy to drama and back again and a flaunting of conventional narrative; for example, Louie's childhood is often represented in flashback, and he is played by different children—the very opposite of the indexical photograph moments of *Six Feet Under* and *Scenes from a Marriage*. In Emily Nussbaum's profile of Louis C.K., she notes unexpected differences between the show's star and main character: "The fictional Louie has a serious Charlie Brown streak. He's awkward with women; he stares gloomily down at his jiggling belly. In person, however, the nonfiction Louis C.K. is an attractive man in his early forties, built square, with pale brown eyes and a neatly trimmed goatee. He carries himself with physical confidence...He is not warm, but he is smart and direct. He answers questions in a lucid flood but doesn't ask much back. Every once in a while, he grins, and when he does, his face softens and lights up, his eyes twinkling" (Nussbaum, 2011). Nevertheless, since the star and his creation share the same career (comedy), city (New York), friends (working stand-up comics who regularly appear in the show), and the same personal backstory (divorced father of two, trying to make it all work), the fictional Louie is perceived as a not-so-thinly veiled version of his creator.

In the spectator projection of the creator-as-character, there is a sort of bounce-back that renders the actual, real life version more sympathetic (or sometimes less, depending on the context of the narrative), because of the character. In a sense, Louis-the-creator becomes Louie-the-character, who in turn becomes his *own* entity that reflects back on Louis-the-creator, not unlike Baudrillard's process of simulacre. In "Simulacre and Simulation," Baudrillard explains that in the simulation of reality, the difference between real and representation is blurred, and the hyperreal simulation replaces reality itself (1998: 635). Louis C.K., by creating a representation of himself, is, in essence, replaced by his fictional version when we assign him the characteristics of Louie-the-character. Thus the character and star become indiscernible to the audience in the conflation of real and imaginary in a Deleuzian "coalescence" between the actual and the virtual, (Deleuze, 1985: 68).

The structure of *Louie* not only engages with this type of coalescence, but it gleefully exploits opportunities to breach the "fourth wall." For instance, in the third season episode "Miami" (3.3) the comedian travels to Florida and has a magical evening with a stranger, a male lifeguard. There are elements of the episode that parallel C.K.'s own life, including the character's heritage: Louie tells his new friend that he lived in his father's native Mexico until the age of seven when the family moved to Boston, just as the actual Louis did. In a recent Rolling Stone article, C.K. calls himself "an accidental

white person" based on the disparity between his looks and his cultural identity: "I was a little kid, so all I had to do was completely reject my Spanish and my Mexican past, which is a whole lot easier because I'm white with red hair. I had the help of a whole nation of people just accepting that I'm white" (Richardson, 2013). C.K. perhaps furthers this commentary of complicated and "assumed" race by casting a black actress to play the mother of his two white, blonde children in the show, in another unexplained reality/fiction blend that fuses his real life divorce with social commentary. Yet just as the script becomes biographical, the "Miami" episode ends with *Louie*'s signature blend of anxiety and misunderstanding: the budding friendship is stopped in its tracks because the lifeguard thinks Louie is making a romantic pass at him, thereby returning the character to the realm of representation. Then, in the tag at the end of the episode, we see a version of this scene being *filmed*, the cameraman bobbing in the waves as actual-Louis acts and directs the shots. The inclusion of such a clip highlights the explicit creator/spectator relationship, recalling David Bordwell's concept of art cinema auteur: "art cinema foregrounds the *author* as a structure in the film's system...the author becomes a formal component, the overriding intelligence organizing the film for our comprehension" (2009: 719, emphasis original). *Louie* showcases the construction of the episode, as if to re-anchor the character in fiction and as an artistic, self-aware creation, that combines arthouse narrative structure with comedic reflexivity.

The confusion of reality/fiction can exploited, as with *Louie*, or unintentional, particularly in the case of inadvertent similarities between star and character traits. As a case study, consider the UK/US co-production *Episodes*, starring Matt LeBlanc, arguably best known for playing the character of Joey Tribbianni on 1990's sitcom *Friends*. In *Episodes*, LeBlanc plays a fictional version of himself, and the series references the star's life, his persona from *Friends*, as well as the subsequent failed *Friends* spin-off *Joey* that was both critically and publicly panned. In *Episodes*, characters joke about LeBlanc's career and poke fun at his real-life struggle with weight gain (a publically-private battle, due to cruel tabloid cataloguing of LeBlanc's weight after *Friends* went off the air). All of these meta-issues are mocked by the writers of *Episodes* and by the actor himself, who, in an interview with the *New York Times*, reveals that he is not particularly sensitive about the jabs at his previous success—and lack thereof. LeBlanc explains, "David [Crane] and Jeffrey [Klarik, the series creators,] told me, 'We're not doing a documentary – anything you're not comfortable with, we won't do,'...Then it became fun. In the beginning I

was the brunt of the joke, but I've said it before and I'll say it again, I don't mind being the brunt of the joke if it's a really good joke" (Itzkoff, 2011). In addition to using real details of LeBlanc's actual life and career, the writers exaggerated his backstory, creating imagined tension with former *Friends* cast-mates and exaggerating LeBlanc's similarities to the dim-witted Joey character. Yet there is also accidental spillover in the doubtlessly unwelcome connection between Matt LeBlanc the star and Matt LeBlanc the character (and indeed to Joey the "ladies' man" character, as well) with the widely circulated reports (again, tabloid rumors) of infidelity, divorce from his wife, and a reputation as a recalcitrant womanizer. There is an association of star persona-to-character and a conflation of truth/fiction that is unsubstantiated yet persistent, based on what the audience knows, or quite simply interprets about the celebrity based on the character, or previous characters, when they are so embedded in an intertextual representation.

This accidental carryover can also occur when a well-known celebrity appears on a series, but as a wholly fictionalized *character* rather than an exaggerated version of themselves. If we return to *Louie*, there is an interesting blend of guest appearances that range from uncomfortably earnest (the seemingly-raw confrontation between Louie and Dane Cook over a real life and formerly acrimonious feud about stolen jokes [*Louie*, "Oh, Louie/Tickets" (2.7)]), to uproariously embroidered characterizations (Joan Rivers, who chastises, then sleeps with Louie after an Atlantic City show [*Louie*, "Joan" (2.4)]), to completely invented characters who just happen to be played by a celebrity, like longtime C.K. friend and actress Amy Poehler, who pops up in the third series finale as one of Louie's previously unmentioned/non-existent sisters (*Louie*, "New Year's Eve" [3.13]). Because the story-world is so rich with celebrity cameos, it takes the spectator a beat to recognize whether the character on screen is supposed to be Amy Poehler as herself, as an exaggerated Poehler-esque character, or simply as a new and wholly fictional character who just happens to be played by Poehler. In these cases, the star persona attached to the actor almost renders them a cameo version of themselves, regardless of who—or what—they represent on screen. A prime illustration of this "unintentional cameo" comes in the form of a three-episode arc at the end of *Louie*'s third season, when Louie is trained to become host of *The Late Show* under the tutelage of "Jack Dall," played by famed film director David Lynch. In a thematically united triptych of episodes, Louis C.K. creates a poignant commentary on the career options for an aging comic (and actually elevates Louie-the-character to a potential level of fame that Louis-the-director actually has

achieved through this very series), while Lynch plays a bizarre television producer/prophet, sent to whip Louie into shape (in "The Late Show part 1" [3.10], "The Late Show part 2" [3.11], and "The Late Show part 3" [3.12]). Whenever the famously strange Lynch appears on screen, the show becomes decidedly "Lynchian" in tone and form: the dialogue is stilted, the actress playing the receptionist changes into a different woman in the span of time from a long shot to a close up, and an unexplained gun sits in the producer's desk (and, unlike Chekov's famous gun, this one will *never* be mentioned again). Though Louis C.K. riffs on the strange idiosyncrasies and rhythms of a David Lynch production, there is also a built-in expectation on the part of the audience, who look for these references and connections to Lynch, even where they may not legitimately exist as an intentional creation. The spectator, in fact, may read into the "Lynchian" quality of the episode and project it onto certain details: canned laughter sounds inexplicably creepy, the colors in a perfectly ordinary office seem washed out, and the décor dated, simply because it is exactly the aesthetic that one might expect in a David Lynch feature. This recalls Kenneth Burke's notion of "a 'repetitive form' as the means of securing coherence within rounded characterization—that is to say that a formal pattern is discernible, and endlessly repeated, beneath the apparent changes in a character's behavior" (Dyer, 2009: 96). A certain level of consistency exists each time a celebrity embodies a new character: Matt LeBlanc will always be marked by the attributes of Joey, from the role that made him famous; David Lynch, appearing in *Louie* cannot help but to retain a certain odd Lynch-ness, in spite of playing Jack Dall, a fictional creation.[6] In this underlying repetitive portrayal, the serial is moved beyond the space of the screen by the character and actor fusion, which in turn becomes temporally and aesthetically synchronic between the filmic world and the real world.

IMPLICATIONS OF SYNCHRONIC METALEPSIS IN THE NARRATIVE

The examples discussed above are masterful meta-fiction, self-referential, tongue-in-cheek, and playing with the con-

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6 The same could be said of Lynch's filmmaking style— immediately, sometimes disturbingly, familiar. In the 1995 documentary *Lumière & Company* (F. Servan-Schreiber et al, NY: Fox Lorber), well-known directors were challenged to create a 52 second short film using the Lumière brothers' original *cinématographe* camera. Despite stringent "rules" of the game, Lynch's film manages to encapsulate his unique aesthetic in under one minute.

struction of the fictional world in dizzyingly complex and meticulously crafted levels of reality. This is not a new strategy, as there is an entire history of reflexivity in postmodern television that plays with audience knowledge and awareness of genre and form. Joanne Morreale chronicles a long-standing tradition of self-referential stylistic devices in series endings, for example, using metalepsis as "a final nod to viewers before the series leaves the air," with "…moments [that] highlight the relationship between text and viewer by enabling the viewer to read multiple levels of meaning" (2000: 110). Finales of shows like *Mary Tyler Moore* and *Cheers* reference the closing of fictional workplaces that become true for out-of-work actors and crew; final episodes of *Newhart* and *Roseanne* rewrote the series' narratives as a complicated dream or a fictional story, respectively; and finales of shows like *Murphy Brown* and *Seinfeld* created complex "recursive loops" allowing the spectators to revisit the premise and tropes of the show alongside characters (Morreale, 2000:110-11). The emphasis of these reflexive endings is on a retroactive assignment of meaning, with spectators revisiting form and content of the narrative world as a whole, marking an endpoint to the series.

By contrast, the examples of metaleptic intervention through photos or star persona focus on a more immediate engagement on the part of the spectator, meted out in small doses, and not just upon the series' end. Jason Mittell writes about narrative complexity as a distinct narrative mode in contemporary American television, elaborating on its discursiveness of form/genre, its "operational aesthetic" and its modes of viewer engagement that suggest a "reconceptualization of the boundary between episodic and serial forms, a heightened degree of self-consciousness in storytelling mechanics, and demands for intensified viewer engagement focused on both diegetic pleasures and formal awareness" (Mittell, 2009: 35, 38-39). In moments of multilayered shifts between real and created, it is as if these complicated intertextual references are a kind of code, a secret language constructed between the show creator and the "plugged-in" spectator. Instead of a teleological "payoff" as with *The Wire* or *Lost* (which demand a long-term engagement by the spectator for a long game, multi-season plot arc), the extreme self-referentiality of the metaleptic intrusion is an instant-gratification payoff, for a spectator in-the-know and in-the-now. It is this immediate payoff that links seemingly unconnected serials in a wide range of genres—prototypical European arthouse series (*Scenes from a Marriage*), premium cable drama (*Six Feet Under*), auteurist comedy (*Louie*), and cable sitcom (*Episodes*)—the television aesthetics and level of discourse may vary, but

the metaleptic use of actors appearing as themselves (in photos or by persona) propels an engagement with viewers in a synchronic form of seriality.

The current "golden age" of television programming that sees internet-television companies like Netflix and Amazon and premium, pay-cable channels like HBO dominating awards nominations and critics' annual best-of lists, is fashioning an ever-increasingly crowded field for network programming. Similar use of metaleptic techniques across distinct and varied genres in different registers showcases a kind of trickle-down effect of creative strategies used to imitate the success of the ubiquitous quality TV movement (itself already in imitation of arthouse film and television). This creates a kind of dual-timeline of causality and engagement, in which examples of metalepsis play on a spectator's engagement with past representations of actors *and,* in fact, of the serial form itself. Like Deleuze's aforementioned virtual image, the transposition of real into fiction (and vice versa) "exists outside of consciousness, in time" (1985: 80). These moments of metalepsis invite a reflection on reality, blurring the boundaries between truth and fiction, past and present, and creating a viewing experience that transcends all categories.

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CONTEXTUALISING DIVERSITY IN TV DRAMA. POLICIES, PRACTICES AND DISCOURSES

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the representation of social minority groups in Flemish TV drama. After a brief review of academic literature on the topic, three questions are asked. First, *'How should diversity be represented?'*, discussing broadcasting policies on diversity as well as the opinions of minority groups. Second, *'How is diversity actually represented?'* Beside quantitative data, this analysis includes a qualitative assessment of six recent TV drama productions on Flemish television. Third, *'Why is diversity represented this way'* Here, production practices and discourses are analysed, using in-depth interviews with production staff in order to better understand their reasons and motivations. The findings show that diversity is addressed by public broadcasting policies, but that minority groups are unhappy about their portrayal. Indeed, quantitative research shows that they are generally under-represented, while qualitative research discloses a lack of diversity in these portrayals. Based on the interviews with producers, these representational patterns can be connected to a number of practical and dramatic considerations, which however do not excuse the lack of on screen diversity.

TV drama, while being fictional, is not disconnected from social reality. One of the key criteria used to judge drama, both by viewers and by critics, is exactly this connection to reality: is it realistic? While television scholars agree on the constructed nature of TV representations, they too tend to value drama that reflects current social issues. Think of *The Wire* (2002-2008), the highly praised HBO show that managed to capture the interplay of social forces in Baltimore which form the context for real-life dramas like the police shooting of Freddie Gray in April 2015 and the ensuing protests.

One crucial aspect in this comparison of fiction and reality is the representation of diversity: does drama accurately represent actual diversity in society? There is a long history of activism and academic research on this topic, starting with feminist critiques of phallocentric media where women are not only under-represented but also stereotypically represented in a narrow range of roles. Race, ethnicity and sexuality are other hotly debated topics in relation to the media at large, including TV drama. Both quantitative and qualitative techniques are used to measure and assess the representation of social groups. One difficulty and point of debate in this research, however, is how to grasp the meanings of these representations. Merely taking into account the on-screen presence of different groups proved to be insufficient, so audience researchers started to discuss the meanings of representations for a range of audiences, including the represented groups (e.g. Bobo, 2003; Jhally & Lewis, 2003). Still, adding insights on meanings for audiences does not allow for a complete understanding of representations, which are heavily contextualised.

This article argues that it is important also to explore the contexts in which representations are constructed, including the broadcasting and production context, to assess the meanings they carry. After a theoretical discussion of the representation of diversity on TV, the issue will be further explored in relation to a number of recent dramas produced in Flanders (Belgium). On-screen representations will be contextualised by considering their production context, including the policies regulating the production of drama as well as the practices and discourses developed by producers.

01 THE REPRESENTATION OF DIVERSITY

There is wide agreement that media, including TV drama, play an important role in representing society. Whatever the concrete medium or device, media 'broadcast' images and ideas, spreading them across society. This is particularly important in relation to aspects of society that are problematic (such as social inequalities) or not widely known (such as minorities). Representation matters, according to Richard Dyer, because it has an impact on how we see ourselves and others: 'How we are seen determines in part how we are treated; how we treat others is based on how we see them; such seeing comes from representation.' (Dyer, 1993: 1)

Women, while numerically not a minority, were the first to analyse and criticise their media portrayals (e.g. van Zoonen, 1994). Race and ethnicity were soon added to the agenda (e.g. Ferguson, 1998), as was homosexuality (e.g. Gross, 2001). Although my aim is not to discuss the representation of these and other groups in detail, some general tendencies can be identified. A first recurrent point of criticism concerns the numeric representation of social groups in relation to their actual proportion in the population. The key method, here, is (quantitative) content analysis, which consistently identified –and continues to identify– the *underrepresentation* of 'minority' groups, understood here as groups with less social power in comparison to 'majority' groups: women (as opposed to men), racial and ethnic-cultural minorities (as opposed to white, Western people) and LGBTs[1] (as opposed to heterosexuals) (e.g. Greenberg, 1980). According to Gerbner and Gross, such a lack of representations in a media-dominated society implies 'symbolic annihilation': 'Representation in the fictional world signifies social existence; absence means symbolic annihilation.' (Gerbner & Gross, 1976: 181)

A second recurring issue concerns the quality of media representations: not 'how much', but 'how' a group is represented. One often invoked criticism here is that of *stereotyping*, where a minority group is reduced to a few, recurring and exaggerated characteristics, positioning it as abnormal and in the process confirming existing power divisions in society (Hall, 1997: 257-258). Another critique is that of *negative images*, where minorities are presented as, or associated with, a problem – recognising, however, that one-sidedly positive images are not a good alternative because they sidestep actual problems and inequalities in society (Hall, 1997: 273).

There is much more to say about the representation of diversity and minorities (see e.g. Hodkinson, 2011), but I want to take a step back and reflect on some problems and shortcomings of the literature on this issue. First, there is a tendency in

1 For Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender. I use this acronym here instead of other, more inclusive labels, as this term is mostly used in Flanders nowadays (in Dutch: 'holebi's en transgenders').

media research *to limit the attention to certain groups* while there are many other minorities and socially marginalised groups. In this article, beside the groups mentioned above, I will also include older and disabled people, two of the multiple minorities which continue to be problematically represented. Second, there is a tendency to focus on the representation of *single groups*, considered in isolation from each-other. However, it is important also to assess how media represent different groups, addressing the diversity within these groups as well as possible overlaps and connections between them. An important concept here is that of 'intersectionality', which refers to the way in which multiple forms of social inequality are intertwined and mutually influence each-other (Choo & Ferree, 2010). Hence, in this article the representation of different groups will be analysed in conjunction, also addressing the ways in which they do –or do not– intersect.

Thirdly, as argued in the introduction, the literature on representation is focusing mostly on the *situation on screen*, criticising misrepresentations but having little to say about the actual processes leading to their continued presence. Authors who do study production processes are able to pinpoint the multiplicity of contexts and practicalities explaining –but not justifying– problematic representations. For instance, Cottle (2000) discusses the limited access of ethnic minorities to media production, but also points out policies, financial restrictions, training, gatekeepers, and many other elements causing unbalanced media representations.[2] Hence, in this article the analysis of representations will be contextualised, focusing in particular on production practices and discourses.

02 METHODOLOGY

As suggested above, this article wants to move beyond an analysis of representations on screen, expanding the scope to the situation 'behind the screen' (the production context) and its multiple contexts. To do this, a three step approach will be taken. First, the analysis will address the question *'How should diversity be represented?'*, sketching the institutional context of Flemish television and the regulations determining the duties of broadcasters in relation to the representation of social diversity. Beside broadcasting policies, this will also include a short discussion of stakeholder opinions, in partic-

ular those of the groups under discussion. Second, the question is asked: *'How is diversity actually represented?'* Beside quantitative data, this part includes a qualitative assessment of recent TV drama productions on Flemish television, also taking into account their generic contexts and constraints. Third, the question is asked: *'Why is diversity represented this way?'* Here, production practices and discourses are analysed, trying to understand the reasons and motivations for representing social diversity in a particular way.

To do this, a multi-method approach is used, combining quantitative and (mostly) qualitative sources and methods. In relation to the first question, *'How should diversity be represented?'*, two sources are used. On the one hand, broadcasting policies are outlined on the basis of official documents as well as personal communication with the diversity manager of the Flemish Public Service Broadcaster VRT, Geertje De Ceuleneer. On the other hand, stakeholder opinions are discussed on the basis of a taped and transcribed panel debate with representatives and spokespeople of five 'minority' groups in Flanders: Katrien Bruggeman of the Nederlandstalige Vrouwenraad, the umbrella organisation of women's associations; Johan De Crom of the Minderhedenforum, an umbrella organisation of ethnic-cultural minority associations; Jeroen Borghs of çavaria, the LGBT umbrella organisation; Mie Moerenhout of the Ouderenraad, the umbrella of organisations for older people; and Nancy Lievyns of GRIP, an organisation for disabled people.

To answer the second question, *'How is diversity actually represented?'*, existing quantitative findings based on content analysis are combined with the qualitative analysis of six recent Flemish shows. These were not randomly chosen but purposively selected to add different variables to the equation. First, different genres were chosen, each with their different possibilities and constraints: soaps, crime drama, and 'dramedy' (combining drama and comedy). Soaps and crime dramas were included because these are important, popular and long-running prime time genres on Flemish TV. Dramedies were selected from the wider range of drama and comedy genres because they explore new possibilities in relation to the representation of minorities, as will be discussed below.

Second, for each genre an example from public channel één and commercial channel vtm was selected. This leads to the following sample: the soaps *Thuis* (één, 1995-) and *Familie* (vtm, 1991-); the crime dramas *De Ridder* (één, 2013-) and *Aspe* (vtm, 2004-2014); and dramedies *Marsman* (één, 2014) and *Amateurs* (vtm, 2014). The two soaps were chosen because they are the only ones on Flemish TV; the crime shows were

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2 There is no space here to delve into studies on production cultures, but for an elaborate discussion see Caldwell 2008 and 2013.

randomly selected as the most recent and important examples in Flanders; and the two dramedies were purposefully selected because they contain interesting representations of certain minority groups. As a consequence, this sample is not random nor representative, so the findings, while indicative of broader tendencies, should not be generalised to all drama on Flemish television. For the soaps and crime dramas, ten random episodes of the 2014 season were analysed. Both dramedies were entirely analysed, 8 episodes of Marsman and 9 of Amateurs. These episodes were analysed using qualitative content analysis, using a topic list of themes and issues discussed in the literature on the representation of social minorities (Larsen 1993; Wester & Pleijter, 2006).

To answer the third question, *'Why is diversity represented this way?'*, the analysis is based on in-depth interviews with people involved in the production of these dramas, aiming to understand their views on diversity and their reasons for (not) representing minorities. These interviewees were: *Thuis* head writer Stef Wouters and producer Wim Janssen; *Familie* executive producer and casting director Steven Pauwels; *De Ridder* writer Rik D'hiet and producer Marina Willems; *Aspe* writer Paul Piedfort and director Kurt Vervaeren; *Marsman* writer and director Mathias Sercu, and director Eshref Reybrouck; *Amateurs* director and producer Frank Van Passel.[3] These interviews were fully transcribed verbatim and analysed using the NVivo software for qualitative analysis.

03 HOW SHOULD DIVERSITY BE REPRESENTED?

As a first step, it is important to understand the *institutional and regulatory landscape* of Flemish television. Flanders is the northern, Dutch-language region of Belgium with a population of about 6.5 million inhabitants. Television in Belgium is completely divided across the language border, so Flemish viewers mostly watch Dutch-language Flemish television. On the one hand, there is a strong public broadcaster, VRT, whose first TV channel één had a market share of 28.69% in 2014 (CIM, 2015a). On the other hand, there are a number of commercial channels, among which vtm is the largest with a market share of 19.81% in 2014 (CIM, 2015a). VRT is the dominant player in Flemish television, with a market share to-

talling 37.6% if we include its second channel Canvas. Hence, it is a force to be reckoned with, its programs occupying the top of the ratings (e.g. 18 of the 20 most watched programs in 2014; CIM 2015b).

VRT is not only the market leader, it also has a 'guiding' role in the audio-visual landscape. It is regulated by five year management contracts with Flemish government and the current contract, for the 2012-2016 period, stresses its importance in addressing and representing Flanders in its totality. The first of its six key tasks is 'Attention to all people in Flanders', which includes not only reaching them as audiences (including senior citizens and disabled people), but also representing them in a balanced way (VRT, 2011: 10). In its programming, the VRT has to 'have an eye for diversity in society' (ibid.: 12). A number of measurable objectives are listed, such as the presence of 33% of women and 5% of 'new Flemings'[4] across all programming (ibid.: 15). Moreover, the balanced representation of women, 'new Flemings', disabled people and senior citizens is quantitatively monitored through annual research. The presence of other groups, like sexual minorities, is not measured but they should be portrayed in a balanced way. All these issues are discussed in an advisory board with representatives of these and other minority groups (ibid.: 15).[5]

A number of instruments are used to operationalize these duties. First, there is a 'Diversity Cell', coordinating all actions and managed by Geertje De Ceuleneer. Second, there is a 'Diversity Charter' (VRT, s.d.) which lays down the basic principles for the representation of diversity. Rather than enumerating groups, it stresses the need to embrace differences and to offer equal opportunities.[6] Third, there is the annual 'Diversity Monitor', a quantitative content analysis of diversity in programming which will be discussed below.

Geertje De Ceuleneer (2015) stresses the importance of showing diversity on screen, for diverse audiences to recognise themselves, to connect and to feel welcome. In terms of ethnic-cultural diversity, the model is not that of 'multi-

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3   These interviews were conducted by students of the MA in Communication Sciences - Media Studies at the University of Antwerp, as part of the 2014 Seminar on Audiovisual Media.

4   This term refers to ethnic-cultural minorities, defined here as people with a nationality from outside the EU15, or who have at least one parent or two grandparents in that situation.

5   At the time of writing, the advisory board was further elaborated to also include representatives of the transgender community, as well as people working on poverty, class and socio-economic inequality not having been sufficiently addressed in diversity policies to date.

6   The Diversity Charter and all VRT policies and actions in relation to diversity can be consulted online on http://www.vrt.be/wie-zijn-we/werkingsprincipes/diversiteit (last accessed 4 June 2015).

culturalism' (where people tolerate each-other) but of 'inter-culturalism', promoting a society where people live together and cultural exchanges take place. Moreover, people are not considered to be part of single groups, but to have multiple, hybrid and fluid identities. As De Ceuleneer explains, institutionally these diversity policies have been supported by annual action plans since 2011. First, policies were introduced 'top down', but based on recent assessments a more bottom up approach was developed, aiming to stimulate producers rather than managers.

Overall, there clearly is a genuine interest in diversity within the public broadcasting organisation, which has devised a number of policies, the results of which, however, are rather limited to date. The focus on particular groups has the side effect of obscuring diversity within and overlap between those groups, while some groups and issues (such as poverty) are not named hence not focused upon.[7]

Switching from public service to commercial broadcasting, the contrast could not be larger as there are no legal obligations to represent diversity, nor are there internal policies in relation to diversity on screen. In a personal message, vtm drama manager Jan Creuwels (2015) confirms that there are no specific policies but he states that fiction does aim to 'mirror society' and that diversity is necessary to give a realistic image of contemporary society, which includes a good range of characters in terms of gender and age. Rather than policies, there are commercial reasons to do so: the target audience are those responsible for purchases aged 18-54, so programs will not target –nor solely represent– only a single and uniform group of viewers. Diversity is clearly viewed from a commercial point of view here, and it is only a purpose to the degree that it contributes to market appeal.

Having considered the regulations and policies on the representation of diversity, it is important to also hear out the *key stakeholders* in relation to this issue, the represented groups themselves. As discussed above, this article focuses on five groups, the representatives of which are all part of the abovementioned VRT advisory board on diversity and have been interviewed in a panel debate in Antwerp (12 March 2015). Overall, what all speakers agreed on, is the lack of diversity in Flemish media, including television. Some issues, in particular the representation of women, have been discussed for a long time but are still problematic; other issues have remained underexplored, such as the representation of older and disabled people. As a consequence, all these groups see

it as their duty to continue raising awareness.

According to Bruggeman (2015), a key issue in the representation of women is the on-going use of stereotypes and cliché images, betraying old-fashioned norms about women associated with the domestic sphere and/or considered as sexual objects. De Crom (2015) criticises the negativity of media portrayals of ethnic-cultural minorities, mostly in journalism and particularly in relation to Muslims, who are strongly associated with extremism and terrorism. He pleads for representations of ethnic-cultural minorities which are not *about* their cultural background: 'It can also deal with other things for a change. People with a migration background are often asked questions about their origins or religion. Of course, that's not an identity we have to hide. But a person is more than his origins.' (De Crom, 2015) Talking about LGBTs, Borghs (2015) discerns four partly overlapping periods and problems: first the complete invisibility of homosexuality in the media; second the appearance of stereotypical representations, particularly of gay men as effeminate; third the discussion of homosexuality mostly in relation to problems such as coming out and discrimination. Here, he refers for instance to the soap *Thuis*, where a young character, Franky, came out and his father reacted rather negatively. On the one hand, Borghs considers this as real to life so worth representing; on the other hand, he states that it would be problematic if only such situations were portrayed on screen. Thus, in a fourth stage he pleads for non-problematised representations of LGBTs: showing them without paying particular attention to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Again, he refers to *Thuis* where Franky continued to have many storylines not dealing with his sexuality, and he adds: 'So different representations can exist next to each other and that's actually ideal, particularly if inclusion is also taken into account.' By 'inclusion', he refers to representations of the diversity within the LGBT community, including people not belonging to the white middle class, transgendered people, people with a disability, bisexuals, older LGBTs etc.

Talking about older people, Moerenhout (2015) criticises their strong numeric under-representation as well as the predominance of two recurring images of older people in the media: on the one hand smiling, healthy people with hardly any wrinkles; and on the other hand people with health problems who need a lot of care. There is no in-between, although people over 60 have a wide range of ages, levels of education and income, health situations, needs, etc. Therefore, Moerenhout pleads for a broader range of representations, avoiding clichés. Lievyns (2015) tells a similar story about disabled people.

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7   For a further discussion of VRT diversity policies and their results, see Dhoest (2014).

First, she echoes Richard Dyer's statement on the importance of media: 'It's important that media reach a broad audience. The image you get from people actually determines how you deal with people.' Second, she comments on the near invisibility of disability. Third, she laments media portrayals of disabled people as suffering and like Moerenhout, she pleads for more diverse representations: 'For us, it's important that people with a disability are seen as complete citizens. They take on a role as employee, as father, mother, brother, sister, they do voluntary work, they are a partner... People with a disability, even a severe one, also take on these roles, so it's important that they're seen in all these roles.' Furthermore, Lievyns (2015) points out that more physical than mental disabilities are represented in the media, and that these roles, in drama, are seldomly played by disabled actors. Overall, her comments and those of other stakeholders clearly echo the problems identified in the literature review: underrepresentation, stereotyping, negative images, and a lack of diversity within representations of each 'group'.

04 HOW IS DIVERSITY ACTUALLY REPRESENTED?

Assessing the situation on screen, a first tool to use is the Diversity Monitor mentioned above. Annually, a large sample of VRT programmes are analysed using *quantitative content analysis*, focusing on the categories mentioned in the management contract. The 2014 Diversity Monitor (De Swert et al., 2015) shows that channel één reaches the two benchmarks mentioned in its contract. Across all genres, women represent 34.4% of all people on screen, which is more than the 33% mentioned in the contract; drama, with 48%, does (much) better. 'New Flemings' represent 7.6% of all people on screen, again better than the 5% mentioned in the contract; in drama, however, één does not reach the benchmark, with only 4% of 'new Flemings'. For older and disabled people only numbers for all VRT channels combined are available. People over 65 represent 4.2% of all people across all VRT channels, while people with a disability represent 1.1%.

Overall, while the VRT does reach the two benchmarks mentioned in the management agreement, it should be said that these benchmarks are not very high. In comparison to the (estimated) proportion of these groups in the actual population, across all groups we can still see under-representation. For instance, based on a more in-depth study on 2013, Jacobs and Hooghe (2014) state that women constitute 50.6% of the

Flemish population, against less than 34.8% on public channel één and 39.5% on commercial channel vtm. Soaps perform best, with 46.7% across all channels, while other drama averages on 42.2% (ibid.: 21). Ethnic cultural minorities are harder to measure, as only nationality is included in official statistics. About 7% of the people living in Flanders have a foreign nationality, but the actual number of people with foreign roots is estimated at about 15% (ibid.: 27). On één, however, they constitute 4.4% in 2013, and on vtm 3.1%. Fiction, across all channels, scores even lower with 0.9%. For the other groups discussed here there are no comparable numbers, but it is clear: underrepresentation is still an issue.

Moving on to a more *qualitative* assessment of representations, and focusing in particular on drama, a first point to make concerns the genres studied here. *Soaps* are usually daily serials, running over a number of years with a large cast of characters and a lot of intertwined storylines. The social realist style they tend to adopt in Flanders makes it possible and even necessary to refer to social reality 'as it is'. As a consequence, soaps allow for the introduction of minority characters, who however have to be integrated in the soap community. Flemish *crime dramas*, on the other hand, have a much smaller cast of regular characters, which narrows the opportunities to include different minorities in the main cast. However, they do allow for the introduction of secondary characters, so in this sense the genre is more flexible than the soap opera with its fixed cast of characters. Still, crime dramas tend to run over a number of seasons with the same core cast, so they are less flexible than *dramedy*, which –in this study– is constituted of single season drama serials. As such, these allow for the introduction of as many minority characters as the producers and writers want. As to thematic focus, they also offer more freedom than the soaps which tend to focus on domestic life, and particularly the crime dramas where criminality limits the contexts in which characters can be introduced.[8]

It is impossible within the confines of this article to discuss all the characters in the six analysed programs, so instead the five minority groups will be focused upon, sketching the broader patterns of representation and illustrating them with some examples. First, *women* are rather well-represented in Flemish drama fiction according to the diversity monitor, and this is confirmed by these six programs. In both soaps, *Thuis* and *Familie*, female characters constitute about half of the

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8   For a more extensive discussion of these genres and their conventions, see Creeber (2015).

cast, and they are portrayed in a great variety of roles and professions, contradicting the stereotype of the 'housewife' and in line with the strongly feminine profile of the soap genre (Geraghty, 1991). The crime dramas are more variable: while *De Ridder* has a female protagonist, substitute public prosecutor Helena De Ridder, *Aspe* has a male protagonist, chief inspector Pieter Van In. Helena also has a female boss and sidekick, so the core team in *De Ridder* is female-dominated while *Aspe* mostly has a male team, although Pieter's boss (and partner) is a woman too, Hannelore Martens. Overall, the women in crime drama are represented as 'strong women', again contradicting older stereotypes. In the two dramedies, these stereotypes are more prominent, in line with the greater reliance of comedy on comic types. Thus, *Marsman* focuses on a group of male characters, Nico Marsman and his friends, who form an amateur rock band. They are surrounded by a range of female characters, including his rather hysterical wife Vera and a number of secretaries, who are represented as either housewives or sexy, in line with the patterns sketched by Bruggeman (2015). *Amateurs*, which deals with an amateur theatre company, has a similar range of female characters. While all characters are comical exaggerations, again we note a number of rather old-fashioned and passive housewives, as opposed to the mostly active and professional men. Overall, however, we have to note that women are well-represented in Flemish drama, both quantitatively and qualitatively, occupying a broad range of roles.

For *ethnic-cultural minorities*, the situation is less rosy. Mirroring their under-representation on Flemish TV in general, in TV drama they are mostly absent. *Thuis,* the public service soap, does have a history of ethnic-cultural minority characters and at the time of writing it includes characters of Moroccan, Polish and Cape Verdean origin. While the origins of the Polish Waldek and the Cape Verdean Mayra are completely unmarked, Adil is presented as Moroccan and Muslim. However, he is represented in a very neutral or even positive light, and overall, not much is made of his background, in line with the wishes of the minority group representatives discussed above. In *Familie,* there are two ethnic-cultural minority characters at the time of writing. Faroud is a Muslim police officer of Albanian origin, represented again in a very neutral or even positive light, definitely against stereotype. Bodé is a refugee from the Ivory coast, and his storyline is entirely dedicated to his status as an undocumented migrant, echoing the pattern discussed above, where ethnic-cultural minorities are mostly associated with problems.

In the crime dramas, the public service *De Ridder* again

performs best. Helena's sidekick is chief inspector Zohra, who is of Moroccan descent but whose background is seldom focused upon and who does not correspond to stereotypes of Muslim women as submissive. One problem, however, is that she is the only core minority character, so she carries a heavy 'burden of representation', having to represent an entire community (see Hodkinson 2011: 208). Geraghty (1991: 142) refers to this type of characters as 'singletons', single characters who disappear under the responsibility of carrying the race issue. In *De Ridder,* however, Zohra's race and ethnicity are rather unmarked, which is more like the situation Geraghty (ibid.: 144) describes as 'incorporation', where minority characters are represented as part of the community. In contrast, occasional storylines in *De Ridder* do focus on ethnic-cultural minorities and their problems. In *Aspe,* this is actually the only way ethnic-cultural minorities are (rarely) introduced, confirming their overall association with problems and crime in media. Finally, both *Marsman* and *Amateurs* are virtually all-white and all-Western, both portraying very 'Flemish' milieus and confirming the general pattern of under-representation on Flemish TV. Overall, then, ethnic-cultural minorities are rarely represented in the dramas analysed here, but their portrayals tend to be neutral or even positive rather than stereotypical.

Turning to *LGBTs*, again the soaps are rather inclusive. In the past, *Thuis* figured a very prominent gay storyline, first around the coming out of Franky, the son of two key characters, and subsequently his marriage to Tibo which provided the 'season finale'. As a rather masculine plumber, Franky was represented in a resolutely non-stereotypical way.[9] Similarly, the current lesbian couple in *Thuis,* Ann and Mayra, is constituted of central characters whose sexuality is not focused upon and who are represented in a very feminine way, so again going against 'old' stereotypes of LGBTs as effeminate men and butch women. In *Familie,* the gay couple Rudi and Zjef is similarly represented in a rather neutral way; although the problem of coming out and (non-)acceptance are touched upon, both characters are represented as part of the soap community in a non-stereotypical way. The crime dramas are less inclusive. *De Ridder* has no LGBT characters in the central cast, although homosexuality is occasionally the theme of a weekly storyline. In *Aspe,* the central character's sidekick used to be the gay inspector Guido, whose sexuality was por-

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9   There is no room here to extensively discuss each representation, but upon closer reading this character could be criticised for being heteronormative in his wish to blend in and marry (see e.g. Avila-Saavedra 2009).

trayed in a very subtle way, very much in accordance with the non-problematized representation preferred by Borghs (2015). However, in the last season (which was analysed for this paper), no LGBT characters were included. Both dramedies are more inclusive, with mixed results. In *Marsman,* the protagonist's daughter Femke and her girlfriend Dominique play a prominent role, and they are represented in a very non-stereotypical and non-problematized way. In *Amateurs,* only two secondary characters are gay, and they are presented in a very marked and effeminate way, in line with older stereotypes but also in accordance with the more comic tone of this show. Overall, however, lesbian and gay characters are included in many programs in a rather neutral or even positive way; at the same time, there's always only a couple of them, illustrating the persistent problem of 'tokenism' where single characters represent entire groups of the population (see Hodkinson, 2001: 208). Transgender characters, to date, have been absent in Flemish fiction, although after the period analysed here Franky, the gay character in *Thuis,* came out as transgender, a storyline that is developing at the time of writing.

Older people (over 60) are strongly under-represented on Flemish TV in general, and the same is true in the drama analysed here. In *Thuis*, only a few characters are (just) over 60, and they are mostly represented as dynamic and healthy, in line with the first type of representations discussed by Moerenhout (2015). *Familie* has a similar number of older characters, two of which are very old and live in a retirement home, but they only play a secondary role. Overall, the soaps mostly figure adults between 20 and 45. The same is true for the crime dramas, where the average age is a little higher but where older people over 60 hardly figure, apart from secondary roles. In the dramedies, the situation differs. *Marsman* has a rather young cast, although there are two interesting older women: Yvonne, the protagonist's deceased mother, who occasionally appears to reprimand her son; and Rosa, a secondary character who is represented as very motherly and warm. Both are quirky and original, not conforming to established representations of older people. *Amateurs* has a larger cast and also figures more older characters. Jos, the chairman of the theatre company, is a very round and gentle character, who is contrasted with a number of secondary, more two-dimensional older characters: Frank, his nemesis, who is more energetic; Philomena, who is old-fashioned and intolerant; and Leonard, a former actor who is now demented. Despite the quite sharp and rather stereotypical representation of some characters, of all the shows discussed here *Amateurs*

actually shows the widest range of older people, who tend to be quite invisible in Flemish drama overall.

Finally, of all the groups discussed here, *disabled people* are certainly the least visible on TV. At the time of writing, two main characters in *Thuis* have a temporary physical disability (blindness and paralysis), which is the focus of their storyline. Similarly, in *Familie* two characters are injured, but neither permanent nor mental disabilities are represented. In *De Ridder*, only one (secondary) character is disabled, but he is interesting as he's a lawyer, going against the stereotype of disabled people as needy and dependent. In *Aspe,* no characters are disabled, but some are injured and one dies because of an accident. In contrast, both dramedies prominently feature disabled characters, which is rare on Flemish television and which is why both shows were selected. In *Marsman,* the protagonist's brother Rudy is autistic, a rare example of mental disability on television. Moreover, he is treated in a very balanced way and presented as 'different', not abnormal. Two other characters are also disabled: Mark, one of the core characters, lost an arm in an accident, while Lander, a secondary character, has a lighter form of autism. Thus, *Marsman* presents a range of portrayals which is unique on Flemish TV and which earned the serial several prizes, including the VRT Diversity Trophy. *Amateurs,* which on the whole tends to portray its characters in a more exaggerated and sometimes stereotypical way, also figures a character with a mental disability, Pierre, who is represented in a very sympathetic way. While he is rather childish, his girlfriend Laura is a highly intelligent autistic person, so this serial too presents an unusually diverse image of disability while overall, this theme is hardly touched upon on Flemish television.

This overview of minority characters in six Flemish serial dramas is necessarily sketchy, but some patterns emerge. First, numerically, most groups tend to be under-represented, with the possible exception of women. Second, most portrayals of minorities are rather neutral or even positive, very much in line with the wishes of the stakeholders. Thirdly, however, because of the limited number of minority characters, these do not manage to capture the diversity of any group. Hardly ever are intersections between different minority positions explored: ethnic-cultural minority characters tend to be young, straight and able-bodied; LGBTs tend to be young, white and able-bodied; older people tend to be white, straight and able-bodied; and the few disabled characters are young, white and straight. Only female characters are represented in a range of roles, although the interplay between different positions is hardly explored.

05 WHY IS DIVERSITY REPRESENTED THIS WAY?

To sum up, what we have so far is a regulatory and policy context stimulating diversity on public service but not on commercial television; stakeholders who are critical of the representation of women, ethnic-cultural minorities, LGBTs, older and disabled people in the media; and six dramas which do include a rather large and varied range of female characters, but only token –if rather neutral– characters belonging to other minority groups. In some genres and for some groups, public service drama performs better, but overall, there are many similarities between each pair of dramas belonging to the same genre. So how can we explain this? A good start, I would argue, is to talk to the writers, producers and directors who have created this drama. Doing this, however, we need to be aware that these accounts are 'cultural' and constitute yet another set of texts and discourses to be interpreted, rather than a transparent account of decision-making processes (Caldwell, 2013).

Talking to the production staff, a first finding concerns the *limited direct impact of policies* on the everyday production of public service drama. For instance, *De Ridder* has a prominent ethnic-cultural minority female character but according to writer D'hiet, this is not because of diversity policies: 'Actually that's not your first preoccupation as the writer or author of a series, to conform to certain ideas about diversity. That's not the way an idea comes to life.' He does acknowledge the importance of diversity and presenting a representative image of society, but policies are not his key preoccupation. While *De Ridder* is produced for the VRT by external production company Eyeworks, the soap *Thuis* is produced 'in house' which explains why it is more directly influenced by diversity policies. For instance, head writer Wouters acknowledges that the first ethnic-cultural minority in the soap, Mo, was deliberately introduced because of diversity policies. Producer Janssen adds that no quota are imposed on individual programs, but that there is a strong public service ethos: 'I have the impression that the people working on *Thuis*, and many people working for the VRT, naturally have a kind of public service character in which you realise you play a role in society.'

While diversity policies are not directly nor strongly imposed on producers working for the VRT, for vtm the same is true about *commercial considerations*: they do play a role in the background, but there is no direct commercial interference in the production process. For instance, the soap *Familie* is mostly preoccupied with reaching the right profile of viewers. Traditionally, it reached a rather old audience, many of whom fell outside of the commercially interesting 18-54 age range. As a consequence, *Family* was rejuvenated, which explains the rather limited presence of older characters, as confirmed by producer and casting director Pauwels. Talking about the long-running crime drama *Aspe,* director Vervaeren also stresses the importance of reaching the right audience: 'That's primordial. The first thing a channel checks is its target audience.' Diversity, in that respect, is merely a side-thought, as writer Piedfort confirms: 'We never got information on that, certainly never instructions. But thinking purely commercially, I think: the broader the audience the better. The ethnic-cultural minority audience is a big market, so I would say: Who gives a damn?'

If policies and commercial preoccupations are not a key rationale for including more diversity, then what is? Talking to the production staff, it seems that diversity is something they do care about. The interviewees are generally aware of the fact that diversity is underrepresented and that drama does not accurately represent the actual diversity in society. For instance, *Amateurs* producer Van Passel says: 'If diversity means that TV serials are a reflection of society, then I think that's not the case. I think the majority of TV fiction is behind reality in that sense.' *Familie* producer Pauwels shares this opinion, but he is quick to add practical reasons: 'There's not all that much colour on TV, here. But that's maybe because we don't find the right people who are schooled actors. Acting is a profession and you can't just get someone from the street to play that.' Such practical considerations related to *casting* are actually among the strongest recurring elements in the interviews: finding good actors, with diverse backgrounds. As a response to this problem, in the past training sessions for minority actors were organised, and more recently some Belgians of Moroccan origin started their own casting agency.[10]

This is certainly the case for ethnic-cultural minority actors. For instance, *De Ridder* producer Willems says: 'Actually the biggest problem in relation to allochthonous people, is that we have very few actors and actresses of allochthonous origin.'[11] While she stresses how important diversity is to her, she also states that this should not be forced and that introducing bad actors to reach quota would hurt a production. This is also the case for older people, as Van Passel stresses: 'There are very few older actors. So you try to avoid that as

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10   See www.hakunacasting.com/en (last accessed 4 November 2015).

11   Allochthonous is a term used to refer to people with a non-European migration background in Flanders.

much as possible, because it often doesn't work.' Like others, he says that the lack of diversity is not a matter of bad faith: 'The practical consequences are just much bigger than people who don't produce fiction can imagine. Because if diversity implies that you represent people in fiction who don't belong to the standard group of actors, then you have to find them, one way or the other.' Similarly, there are hardly any disabled actors, which explains why most roles of people with a disability are played by able-bodied actors.

Finding good actors is so important because producers aim for *credibility*: they want to get it right. For instance, talking about the central character with autism in *Marsman,* director Reybrouck says: 'If you do it, you have to do it right. It has to be credible. So if it works, it's beautiful, but on the other side we had a bit of fear for a negative response.' They also want to get it right because diversity is a very *sensitive topic*. For instance, commenting on the strong connection between diversity and religion post 9/11, *Thuis* writer Wouters say: 'To tackle that kind of diversity, it's a very charged topic.' Producer Janssen adds: 'Yes, you really have to approach that in a very conspicuous manner.' Most interviewees also talk about realistically *reflecting society*. For instance, *Familie* producer Pauwels says: 'Diversity is actually when you want to reflect society, when you show all aspects of reality. That you don't limit yourself to average typical families, but that you also show extremes or minorities.'

Capturing this sense of reality, however, is a matter of balance. On the one hand, the interviewees want to *avoid stereotypes*. For instance, *De Ridder* writer D'hiet says: 'I don't think Zohra is a self-evident cliché. She has certain things that completely fit the culture she comes from, but on the other side she surprises us.' On the other hand, the interviewees do not consider *positive images* as a good alternative either, in line with the literature discussed above. For instance, when asked if they want to strive towards more positive images, *Familie* producer Pauwels says: 'Yes, sometimes we do. Sometimes we don't. We should not avoid problems that are there.' *Thuis* producer Janssen agrees, stating that it's important to draw characters as full human beings. Looking back upon the first ethnic-cultural minority character introduced in *Thuis,* he says: 'Laughingly, I sometimes say "Mo, the perfect Moroccan". He was actually how we wanted Moroccans to be. That's something we wouldn't do anymore.' Instead of positive images, *neutral and non-conspicuous portrayals* are what many producers aim for. For instance, talking about the gay police inspector in *Aspe,* director Vervaeren says: 'His being gay could not be a problem. It could not be an issue in the sense of

"Oh, he's gay, be careful". No positive discrimination, no negative discrimination. We took enormous care to do neither.' Discussing the lesbian and disabled characters in *Marsman,* writer Sercu states that the strategy was the same: they had to be 'ordinary'. In a similar vein, *Thuis* writer Wouters states that you don't have to always treat diversity as different: 'When Adil came into the serial, for a long time we didn't do anything with the fact that he was coloured. He was just a worker like others, and we treated him in a very normal way.'

Talking about the best way to introduce minority characters and storylines, most of the interviewees agree that diversity should not be forced upon the viewers. For instance, *Thuis* producer Janssen says that contemporary drama viewers do not like to have themes or opinions imposed on them: 'So you don't have to treat them like: "We're from television, we know how things are and we are going to tell you".' Writer Wouters adds that storylines have to grow from characters: 'We get a lot of questions to discuss certain social themes, but if it can't organically grow out of the characters and the things they want, we can't tell it because we think then you'll make bad stories.'

This brings us to the essence of the interviews: what it all boils down to in the eyes of the production staff, are dramatic considerations. Wouters: 'We want to tell good stories. And if these are good and connect to society, this means that society recognises itself in the stories we tell.' Diversity is subordinate to that, but it can help to tell good and dramatic stories. For instance, *Amateurs* director Van Passel explains how the disabled character Pierre was primarily a way to create a dramatic storyline for his struggling single mother. Similarly, *De Ridder* writer D'hiet states how it is important to have a diverse cast to create tensions and conflicts: 'So it's partly out of self-interest that you create a cast that's as diverse as possible.' In that sense, he feels more responsible to give viewers a good storyline than a politically correct picture of reality. Similarly, *Marsman* director Reybrouck does not think fiction should necessarily focus on diversity: 'It's an added value if it's there, but as a director you always focus on your story. (...) In *Marsman* it was different, because in *Marsman* it was really about autism, to a large degree. But if you tell a rather general story, why would you add diversity?'

06 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

So, why add diversity? Reviewing the different sources consulted for this research, there seems to be general agreement

that the representation of diversity matters. Academic literature as well as stakeholders stress the importance of minority representation for the way these are viewed and treated in real life. Flemish government and public broadcasting officials concur, aiming for an increased and balanced representation of diversity through a number of regulations and policies. Quantitative findings, however, highlight the continued under-representation of certain groups. Qualitative research shows how minority portrayals in Flemish drama tend to be rather non-stereotypical and neutral, but that there is a lack of diversity within and intersections between the portrayals of minority groups.

Talking to production staff is a good way to better understand this situation. While all the interviewees are aware of the limited diversity on screen, and are sympathetic to the cause (which is unsurprising, as it is a socially desirable one), they do not feel responsible. First off, they are not directly obliged to represent more diversity, not in public service broadcasting where policies are not strongly enforced, and certainly not in commercial broadcasting where reaching the target audience is primordial. Secondly, producers point at practical reasons for the lack of diversity, primarily the shortage of (good) actors belonging to a number of groups, in particular ethnic-cultural minorities, older and disabled people. Thirdly, representing minorities is a sensitive topic and there seems to be a certain fear to tackle minority issues as there is a risk of not getting it right. Fourthly, the interviewees consistently point at the priority of good storylines, which however may also lead to the inclusion of a diverse cast for increased dramatic potential. Fifth, the production staff does generally have a clear sense of the best way to introduce minority characters: not stereotypical nor overly positive, but balanced and rather neutral. This is in line with the positions taken in academic literature and by stakeholders, but it does lead to the erasure of certain social problems, such as the disadvantaged socio-economic position of ethnic-cultural minorities and the marginalisation of older and disabled people. It also leads to the presence of a few rather neutral token characters, who do not manage to evoke the actual diversity in society.

What we need in drama is a much wider range of representations, not necessarily focusing on problems but also not avoiding them; not drawing particular attention to the minority status of characters, nor treating them as representatives of a single group, but treating each as individuals, taking up different positions in society and carrying a range of storylines. To accomplish this, it seems that more extensive consciousness-rising (by stakeholders) and more strongly imposed policies (by government and broadcasters) are necessary, because after years of diversity actions, Flemish TV drama remains predominantly populated by young, white, straight and able-bodied characters.

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STEERING THE AUTHOR DISCOURSE: THE CONSTRUCTION OF AUTHORSHIP IN QUALITY TV, AND THE CASE OF *GAME OF THRONES*

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ABSTRACT

This essay examines how the authorship is discursively constructed and employed as an indicator of quality in the marketing of US cable network HBO's TV series 'Game of Thrones'. It relates the authorial concept of literary studies to that in the visual media and analyses *mise-en-scène* and narrative structure of the show pilot in order to detect markers of an authorial voice within the text. Subsequently, it turns to a selection of paratexts – critical reviews, producers' commentaries and special features of the show's DVD box set – to show how the team of producers help manufacture and promote the presence of a showrunner-auteur collective in order to foster a perception of this text as a 'quality TV' narrative.

Castles, swords and chain mail, machinations and counter-schemes, the occasional dragon and even a newly-invented language – for many people this reads like *Dungeons & Dragons*-esque fantasy in the tradition of J. R. R. Tolkien. George R. R. Martin not only shares the middle initials with the creator of *Lord of the Rings*, but, with *A Song of Ice and Fire*, has created a series of novels that received enthusiastic acclaim from international critics and readers, established him as a renowned fantasy author and won him the unofficial title of "American Tolkien".[1] In 2007, Martin agreed to collaborate with cable network HBO's writer-producers David Benioff and Daniel B. Weiss to act as the showrunner-troika overseeing the adaptation of Martin's epic novel series to TV under the name of *Game of Thrones* (*GoT*).[2] Its master narrative features the medieval fantasy world of Westeros, in which five families strive to seize the all-governing Iron Throne, and, with five seasons completed and season six already in the making, the overall result has led TV critics to hail the show as one of the pinnacles of quality television storytelling.[3]

Television critics and scholars alike have been eager to employ the label of *Quality TV* "to elevate certain programs over others, with such programs united less by a formal or thematic elements than a mark of prestige that reflects well upon the sophisticated viewers who embrace such programming" (Mittell 2011). Since the mid-2000s, and, due to a variety of arguments around e.g. the concept's implicit re-enforcement of normative classifications, *Quality TV* as a concept has become highly contested (see e.g. Edgerton and Rose 2005, McCabe and Akass 2007, Mittell 2011, 2015). It is important to point out that, in the context of this essay, I apply the term *quality television* in the way Newman and Levine understand it, "in reference to those programs that target a narrow, upscale audience and that are widely viewed as high quality by these viewers as well as by many critics and scholars. [Those viewers, critics, and scholars] do not use the term as [their] own designation of value. In this respect, [their] use follows that of Jane Feuer, Paul Kerr, and Tise Vahimagi" (Newman/Levine 2012: 172, referring to Feuer/Kerr/Vahigmagi 1984). I see Quality TV as a discursive construct that is used by a variety of agents

including network officials, producers and writers to assign cultural value to a television text (aka. a series or serial) and to position networks that develop such texts as distinctive in the marketplace.

This essay will therefore examine how the construction of authorship as an indicator of quality plays a crucial role in the success of *GoT* in order to make visible the workings behind the larger discursive attribution of quality. As Seiter and Wilson have argued in the context of soap operas: "Television studies debates around quality have tended to limit the discussion to certain genres [mainly drama], while others, [...] have been discussed only in terms of the popular" (in Edgerton/Rose 2005: 137). The latter definitely holds also true for the genre of fantasy. As I will show, then, the distinct marketing of authorship as a perceived marker of quality has proven a successful strategy of HBO in the particular context of *Game of Thrones*. To do so, I will relate the authorial concept of literary studies to that in the visual media and then analyse *mise en scène* and narrative structure of the *GoT* pilot in order to detect markers of an authorial voice within the text. Subsequently, I turn to a selection of paratexts – critical reviews, producers' commentaries and special features of the show's DVD box set - to explore how the team of Benioff, Weiss and Martin help manufacture and promote the presence of a showrunner-auteur collective in order to help foster a perception of this text as a quality television narrative. Ultimately, they actively engage in a "cultural upgrade" of the text in order to foster elevation from 'popular fantasy' to the purported prestige of quality television.

01 AUTHORSHIP IN VISUAL MEDIA: A MUCH-DEBATED CONCEPT

The concept of authorship originated in literary studies, building on the Renaissance notion of an individual genius who, through the act of writing, becomes a creator of divine art. Due to a contemporary shift in focus more on the function of authorship as a discursive practice,[4] though, its validity in a poststructuralist, postmodern understanding of literature, as well as an adaptation to the media of film and television have been fuelling scholarly debates ever since.[5] In the visual media that inherently lacked legitimisation through an author due

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	Beginning of TV programming, the "Single Play" as prominent form	Development & consolidation of TV genres	First talk of "Quality TV"	Emergence of Quality TV: TV considered producer's medium	First recognition of TV auteurism	Full-blown interest in TV auteurs and creators begins	Future of the medium of TV in doubt
TV	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s
	Beginnings	**2nd Decade**	**3rd Decade**	**4th Decade**	**5th Decade**	**6th Decade**	**7th Decade**
Cinema	1890s	1900-1920	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s
	First film screenings	Theatrical film born; movies sometimes known as "photoplays"	Development & consolidation of film genres	The studio era in its prime: film considered producer's or star's medium	Developing interest in directors as film artists	Trouffaut's seminal essay on auteurism published	Golden Age of auteurism: Sarris brings auteur theory to the US

△ FIG. 1. DEVELOPMENT OF AUTHORSHIP DISCOURSE IN FILM & TV IN THE US (LAVERY 2010)[7]

to their collaborative nature, an all-controlling visionary force behind the production of visual texts was particularly longed for by French and US critics.[6] While, with the medium of film, critics and scholars were eager to identify such authorial figures in the director of certain films during the 1960s and 70s, television, "because of the technological complexity of the medium and as a result of the application to most commercial television production of the principles of modern industrial organization" (Allen 1992: 9) was slower to catch up to the status of an author-driven medium (see Fig.1).

Nowadays, authorship in television is often intrinsically tied to the showrunner, a position on top of a television drama's production hierarchy that is also variably labelled 'showrunner-auteur', 'writer-producer', or 'hyphenate' of a TV show, thus, according to Newman and Levine, reflecting its accountability for "aesthetic integrity of the television text" (2012: 40), including all duties that this accountability entails, e.g. overseeing the work of script writers, directors, sound and video editors and adding his or her own personal artistic vision and style to the process. Jason Mittell attributes this type of authorial figure with "authorship by responsibility" or "management" (2015: 98, 102).

On a narrative level, authorship in serialised drama usually manifests in a novelistic formation of story-arcs incorporating an extensive master-narrative with only few or no self-contained plot-threads, therefore connecting episodes to larger narratives. Newman and Levine identify authorship in a general trend regarding *mise en scène*, i.e. the visual presentation of a show, thus ensuring the before-mentioned 'aesthetic integrity'.[8] Because it is the showrunner who is in control of the look and feel of a show, the position often functions as the "television equivalent of a novelist or cineaste" (Newman/ Levine 2012: 42) in the promotion of a show. Moreover, the showrunner-auteur acts as a perceived guarantor of art, and legitimises the television show as following the vision of one authorial figure. Moreover, Newman and Levine argue, that, on the reception side, the showrunner-auteur acting as brand manager can become the object of cult fan engagement which may read television texts as glorified products, as valuable parts of the showrunner's *œuvre*, which in some cases can even lead to the showrunner achieving a status of celebrity (cf. 2012: 43-58).

02 AUTHORSHIP AND HBO

Since its success with shows such as *The Sopranos*, *Six Feet Under*, *The Wire* or *Boardwalk Empire*, celebrating showrunners as producers of artistically-valuable quality television has been a particularly crucial element of cable network HBO's larger strategy of quality programming.[9] Although it did not invent putting the focus of attention on one showrunner-auteur, the network has made it an art form in itself to build a public image of a creative haven promising quality, where writers are provided with a maximum of support and a minimum of interference. As I have noted elsewhere, "[writer]-producers who had learned their craft on production sets of the Big Three [networks], but felt the urge to break out of the production cycles of regular TV", flocked to the premium cable network, "thus boosting HBO's inventiveness factor even more." A steadily-growing collective of showrunners including Tom Fontana with *Oz*, Matt Weiner with *The Sopranos* and, later, *Mad Men*, Aaron Sorkin with *The West Wing* and later

6   For a more inclusive discussion of the topic, see e.g. Truffaut 2009[1954]; Sarris 1963; Kipen 2006; Caughie 2008; Newman/Levine 2012; Mittell 2015.

7   cf. David Lavery, 'The Imagination will be Televised' (presentation transcript, Stuttgart: 2010) 5. <http://davidlavery.net/Collected_Works/Essays/The_Imagination_Will_Be_Televised.pdf> accessed 21 Nov 2015.

8   Jason Mittell, 'No, The Sopranos didn't ruin television', JustTV Blog, Feb 21 2012. <http://justtv.wordpress.com/2012/02/21/no-the-sopranos-didnt-ruin-television/> accessed Feb 23, 2012.

9   cf. Janet McCabe and Kim Akass, 'It's not TV, it's HBO's original programming' in *It's not TV*, ed. by Marc Leverette et al. (New York: Routledge, 2008) 87.

The Newsroom, David Milch with *Deadwood*, David Simon with *The Wire* and, most recently, *Show Me a Hero,* and Larry David with *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (1999–) "added enormously to the growing reputation of HBO as a harbinger of innovation and quality" (Steiner 2015:16)[10] – and they have been very eager to support and foster this perception in promotional interviews.[11] By creating shows that are different from 'regular' public and private network content in ways of both promotion and production (e.g. genre-blending), those showrunner-auteurs were and are of paramount importance for adding to HBO's reputation as the one cable channel far ahead of any other in terms of quality.[12] Ultimately, as Catherine Johnson has noted, "HBO's 'difference' from free-to-air network television is thus articulated in a brand strategy that draws on a critical history of US television in order to position both its programming and its audience as 'elite' and sophisticated." (2007: 10). In recent years, though, other premium cable and broadcast networks adapted this branding strategy to their needs, therefore, with critically-acclaimed shows such as *Breaking Bad* (AMC, 2008-13), *Mad Men* (AMC, 2007-15),[13] *Homeland* (Showtime, 2011-), *House of Cards* (Netflix, 2013-) and *Orphan Black* (BBC America, 2013-) on both network and premium cable channels, is ultimately leading to a "HBO-ification"[14] of US television drama.

03 AUTHORSHIP AND THE TEXT OF *GAME OF THRONES*

Within the general discourse around quality, and authorship in television in particular, the identification of a single, visionary figure in charge of overseeing the artistic integrity of a TV show can often become a difficult endeavour. And due to the earlier-mentioned collaborative nature, visual media can generally only infer an authorial voice or function. Jason Mittell, with a friendly nod to Foucault, defines this "inferred

author function" as "a viewer's production of authorial agency responsible for a text's storytelling, drawing on textual cues and contextual discourses" (2015: 117).[15]

In the following, I will therefore analyse three different loci of a possible authorial voice, thus hoping to identify such textual cues of an inferred voice within the text itself, and through a selection of paratexts that might point to such contextual discourse in the case of *Game of Thrones*.

As has been mentioned earlier, an authorial voice on the level of the text itself is most likely to be found in a show's mise-en-scéne and its narrative structure. With the case of *Game of Thrones*, the narrative structure of both the pilot and the subsequent episodes of *GoT* largely follow the form of George R. R. Martin's novels: different threads of the larger narrative comprise chapter-like character POV sequences, each chapter/thread focuses on one character and follows his or her development. Rather than choosing a more direct first-person perspective, *GoT*'s point-of-views are realised by third-person perspectives, thus allowing for a stronger identification with each chapter's protagonist because the viewer is able to witness not only the actions of the protagonist, but also his or her immediate reactions to the world. This way of storytelling has the effect of throwing the viewer directly into the narrative, with the audience initially stumbling from scene to scene, trying to grasp what is happening. One quickly learns that this fantasy narrative features gritty realism, where one will not find clear-cut character delineations of manichean Good vs. Evil in the tradition of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, but rather an intricate tale based on a medieval world that tells of both the good and the dark sides of the human being, and the conflicts this internal struggle causes for each of the characters. Avid readers of the novels feel right at home with the way of storytelling presented in the TV show because the television producers have made sure to adapt the basic features of how Martin weaves his narrative strands.

Regarding the particularity of *GoT*'s narrative, the show's pilot also announces an over-arching theme and peritext which subsequently and by definition introduces all of the show's following episodes and sets a distinct frame to the narrative: the opening sequence. *GoT*'s opening sequence introduces the viewer to a stylised computer-generated imaging (CGI) map of the narrative's world which is concavely arranged on the inner side of a globe. In its centre resides a glowing

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10 The showrunners' list of series is, of course, only fragmentary.

11 cf. e.g. Mark Lawson, 'Mark Lawson Talks to David Chase', in *Quality TV*, ed. by Janet McCabe et al. (London: I.B Tauris, 2007) 213-215.

12 cf. Janet McCabe and Kim Akass, 'It's not TV, it's HBO's original programming' in *It's not TV*, ed. by Marc Leverette et al. (New York: Routledge, 2008) 91. and

13 cf. Tim Molloy, 'AMC and the Triumph of the TV Auteur' *The Wrap*, Dec 15, 2010. <http://www.thewrap.com/tv/article/amc-and-triumph-tv-auteur-23277> accessed Feb 07, 2012.

14 Colin Tait, 'The HBO-ification of Genre ' *Cinephile*, Vol. 4, 2008. <http://cinephile.ca/archives/volume-4-post-genre/the-hbo-ification-of-genre/> accessed 04 April 2012.

15 This might also hold further implications for a yet untheorized "inferred reader/viewer function", which might echo Stuart Hall's modes of preferred, negotiated and oppositional reading (cf. Hall [1973] 1980) and Newcomb and Hirsch's "Cultural Forum" (1983)...

comet-like ball of fire surrounded by several rotating metal rings, into which depictions of a tale (a dragon fighting a stag, resembling the imagery of ancient tapestries) are forged. From this comet, the CGI sweeps through space and allows a view on massive continents and seas that clearly differ from the real world's geography. The CGI then zooms in towards one of the continents, out of which, driven by and consisting of a complex set of cogs and sprockets, a city labelled 'King's Landing' emerges. After a few seconds of hovering over this elaborately-growing clockwork, the CGI continues its camera flight and glides over valleys, lakes, forests and settlements, following a marked trail towards a different location, where a similar clockwork enfolds and forms a solid castle by the name of 'Winterfell', with turrets, walls, stables and even a large tree, all part of the clockwork. The CGI journey continues towards a monumental wall, next to which another clockwork-castle artificially emerges, cog by cog, until it becomes clear that this is a stronghold governing the wall, and, by the movement of the camera, implying that something unknown does exist beyond that wall. The camera-flight then withdraws from the wall, flies back over Winterfell towards King's Landing and then changes direction, tilts its perspective in flight and expands again into a zoom over what looks like a desert, to encounter a smaller set of cogs forming a wide-spread clockwork from which emerge large horse statues and a set of foreign-looking tent-houses. And throughout the whole sequence, an impressively orchestrated show theme provides an epic soundscape to the opener.

With this opening sequence (duration 1:40 minutes), the show introduces the viewer to the complex world of the narrative. By employing the clockwork-metaphor, it foreshadows the interconnectedness of each of the sub-plots: Master cogs in the centre of each clockwork, emblazoned with the major participating parties' coat of arms, help to identify the realms of the corresponding houses. With the deliberate choice of background music over a narrative voice-over that could have provided an explanatory introduction to the fictional world, the viewer is still kept in the dark about more details of the narrative setting. And, last but not least, the vastness of the world explored by those fast and steep CGI camera flights symbolises and promises the largeness of the underlying narrative: all that land will be relevant for the storytelling/ worldbuilding process, and it is going to be an epic narrative, covering so much space. Ultimately, the opening sequence can both be understood as the series creator's graphic framework and summary of the show's key features: a highly complex narrative with myriads of contributing elements (i.e. cogs) that

lead to grim storytelling with what one might label 'internal realism' (a believable, realistic character depiction in a fantasy world), driven by a mechanical (clockwork) rationale of total consequence following the causes and effects of human interaction.

Following the CGI interlude of the opening sequence, the pilot then subsequently introduces 18 major characters, including the core families of the Houses of Stark, Lannister, Baratheon and Targaryen, manages to interweave those with four larger back-stories fuelled by loyalty, betrayal, vanity, incest, corruption and loneliness and ends with a cliff-hanger to make sure that viewers will want to continue with the show. Since exposition or any kind of introductory element is completely missing during the pilot episode, the method of *in medias res* presentation throws the viewer right into the fictional world and, by doing so, challenges him or her into active participation and investment in order to make sense of what is presented. One benefit of such an *in medias res* multi-perspectivisation clearly is the possibility of introducing large numbers of characters and relationships, which set the basis for several season-long story arcs, among them the plot of the 'Menace behind The Wall', which the viewer was thrown into right from the start of the pilot. Robin Nelson frames these elements as follows: "[P]acey cutting of dynamic images and a strong soundtrack typify the modern drama series [... .] it is perceived to be necessary at the start of any drama to capture the audience [... where] an exceptionally fast-cut sequence precedes the unfolding of the action proper of the episode" (Nelson 1997: 36). While *GoT* might be seen as a fantasy-genre show, many of its features suggest that this show actually is a high-production-value drama.

These particular features, I want to claim, can be identified as markers of an inferred authorial voice *within* the text of *GoT*: the deliberate choice of telling all sub-plots in chapter-like story-arcs with usually a collection of "chapters" forming one particular episode, the choice of third-person perspective as the main way of presenting the plot threads, the distinct visual style which in some parts remains very observant and distant and in other parts quickly switches to an attentive, participatory mode, all of those elements identify a larger underlying idea of telling the story. It has to be noted, though, that *GoT*, through its particular creative setup, also further complicates the task of attributing authorship. Although there seems to exist a certain kind of authorial voice that governs all of the master-narrative over the course of the show's first season, it is not quite clear how to actually grasp it and, furthermore, to whom we might accredit this voice

to. Can we attribute 'authorship by responsibility' to Weiss and Benioff, the actual showrunners, or is it rather a second instance, that of George R. R. Martin, the author of the original book series, who has the final word on the look and feel of the show to make sure that everything confirms to the standards set by his novels?[16] One might argue that Martin's source material was written in a way that has a distinctively televisual quality to it – its presentation in character-driven chapters, each of which features a different protagonist in order to build up larger story-arcs, calls for serialisation.[17] The discourse around the adaptation process – which included the act of re-imagining and altering the book's story-lines by Benioff and Weiss, but then had to be sanctioned by Martin in the final process – highlight the particular difficulty of an attribution of authorship on a textual level to one of the parties involved . When we adapt the notion of an author 'aura' as introduced in Jonathan Gray's seminal study on paratexts to our case of *GoT*, we might say that, for the *GoT* universe, George R. R. Martin "serves as shorthand for a set of values, themes, and aesthetic moves that are seen to be consistent across his work." (Gray 2010: 122). This consistence is implicitly also seeping through into the new outlet of Martin's universe, the television series.

04 AUTHORSHIP, PARATEXTS AND *GAME OF THRONES*

As has been shown, an attribution of an authorial voice via the inferred author function on the textual level of the show is rather difficult. As I will show in the following paragraphs, the inferred author function is highly dependent on paratexts that help frame such a reading in particular ways. With *GoT*, there exists a whole universe of paratexts surrounding the show that reinforce if not a clear attribution to, then at least a discourse around authorship. According to French literary theorist Gérard Genette's definition of the paratext, the concept can be broken down to the formula of *paratext = epitext + peritext*. With explicit referral to literary text, Genette defines the epitext as those elements "which are situated outside the book: generally with the backing of the media (interviews, conversations), or under the cover of private communication

(correspondence, private journals, and the like)" (1991: 264). The peritext on the other hand "necessarily has a *positioning*, which one can situate in relationship to that of the text itself: around the text, in the space of the same value, like [...] the preface [...or] the title of chapters" (1991: 264; *emphasis in original*). As has been noted earlier, *GoT*s opening sequence can be interpreted as a peritext. Cultural and Media scholar Georg Stanitzek argues against Genette's strict boundaries to a book/work paradigm and makes cases for paratexts in the media of Film and Television. He finds that televisual paratexts in particular cover a wide range of peri- and epitextual elements, e.g. film/show teasers, trailers and both on- and off-air promotional strategies, which may serve to enhance the promotion of authorial intentions in the underlying texts (i.e. film, show, narrative) (Stanitzek 2005: 38). Jonathan Gray further expands and actualizes this understanding: "that paratexts contribute to the text and are often vital parts of it is to argue that paratexts can be part of the creative process, and not just marketing "add-ons" and "ancillary products," as the media industries and academia alike have often regarded them." Gray further argues that "to ignore paratexts' textual role is to misunderstand their aesthetic, economic, and socio-cultural roles" (Gray 2010: 222). And while Gray calls for a more phenomenological approach to paratexts, Matt Hills again extends this reading towards a 'truly' phenomenological universe of para-paratexts that might also "work to (re) frame a targeted paratext. [...M]ultiple paratexts might [also] reflect on one another via chains of contextualization" (Hills 2015: 25-6).

In the following, I will apply Stanitzek's and Gray's notion of the paratext to the case of *GoT*, where a selection of epi- and peritexts will serve to display how authorial intentions are one reoccurring theme highlighted by almost every participating faction. As Jonathan Gray has noted: "Television authors still try to exert authority and control over "their" texts, [and] producer-end paratexts hold significant power in inflecting audiences' interpretive frameworks" (2010: 124). The selection of peritexts include the showrunners' and production team's personal statements voiced in the extra features of the show's DVD box set, and surrounding press releases published by HBO and George R. R. Martin. Epitexts comprise elements of HBO's multimedia interaction with fans and 'opinion leaders' in order to shape the reception of the show, as well as critics' reviews.

While two of the DVD box sets' extras are concerned with dissecting the intradiegetic level of *GoT* (e.g. an in-detail introduction to the characters), other extras shift the focus of

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attention towards the extradiegetic level of the narration. Extra #5 deals with the adaptation process of transforming the book text into a television narrative. The showrunners Benioff and Weiss voice their respect of Martin ("We are all walking in his dream right now"[18]) and underline their efforts to make the adaptation as 'truthful' as possible in order to transport the authorial intentions of Martin to the television screen. Furthermore, Benioff, Weiss and Martin highlight that the only way of adapting the literary original could have been with HBO, because the story is perceived as far too complex and 'rich in detail' (hinting at the shortcomings of telling an epic story in the limited time frame of a movie, as well as explicit content of both the novels and the series, which they imply would have been cut out in productions of other channels).[19] By attributing those production possibilities as inherent with HBO, they implicitly elevate the channel towards a harbinger of Quality and Uniqueness. Subsequently, the showrunners and the author mutually praise the on-going collaboration, building on the myth of a showrunner-auteur troika who collectively engage in creating each of the different narrative threads in order to weave an "intricate tapestry".[20] It is important, though, to question the motivation behind such statements, because they often also fulfil the function of promoting the individual, or in the case of GoT, the auteur-collective as a part of the larger HBO marketing strategy.[21] This also mirrors Gray's notion of television authors as "mediators between the industry and audiences, and the author function as a *discursive entity* used by the industry to communicate messages about its texts to audiences, by the creative personnel often conflated into the image of the author(s) to communicate their own messages about these texts to audiences, and by audiences to communicate messages both to each other and to the industry" (Gray 2010: 127 my emphasis).

Another extra of the DVD box set is completely dedicated to explaining the motivations and efforts behind creating a fictional language for the show.[22] Here, Martin's novels and the work of the HBO crew are set in the tradition of J.R.R. Tolkien, who, with the Elvish language featured in *Lord of the Rings*, was the first to include a uniquely-invented language in a fan-

tasy world. The spirit of this tradition is picked up by Benioff and Weiss in the commentary passages, where they explain why they decided to include a fully-formed fictional language in the world of GoT. The showrunners highlight the fact that, although George R. R. Martin had included a small selection of Dothraki terms in his novels, they were the driving forces behind creating the language for the show.[23] Martin credits the showrunners' creation as a great extension of his fictional world and thus honours their role in the process of authoring the show.[24] Benioff adds that the authenticity of the narrative has been improved by the addition of that element,[25] thus enhancing the narrative's 'internal realism'. Mark Wolf's take on subcreation in the context of world-building and his layering of different levels of authorship proves helpful to frame the roles of the different agents here: Wolf introduces the roles of "heirs" and "torchbearers" who fulfil the responsibilities of keeping a narrative universe functioning and alive after the disappearance of the original author. The difference between "heir" and "torchbearer" is one of relation: while the heir is usually a person close to the late original author (family, friend), a "torchbearer" is brought into play by an institution. (cf. Wolf 2012: 274f.). In the context of GoT, the problem clearly is Wolf's underlying assumption of a deceased original author and a subsequent diachronic succession of authorial agents: This complicates things in our particular case of GoT, since we have Martin as the original author who is actively progressing his literary universe, and the special particularity of Benioff and Weiss, who act as showrunner-"torchbearers" for Martin, but also expand the televisual universe following their own visions.

The general motivation behind all those accounts featured on the DVD is to provide the audience with a form of insider knowledge, information that the common television program viewer would not be able to access. In addition, DVD extras enable showrunners to interpret parts of the production and explain their intentions and motivations behind certain aspects of the show. According to Matt Hills, such commentary features therefore "cement the position of producers of a show (usually the writer, director, or showrunner) as objects of fascination and authority" (2007: 53). In the case of GoT, these extras, by focussing in equal parts on the comments of

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18   cf. HBO extra feature: David Benioff, in 'From the Book to the Screen' at minute 00:42.

19   cf. 'From the Book to the Screen', minute 01:05 to 01:43

20   cf. 'From the Book to the Screen', minute 01:52 to 02:12

21   cf. McCabe/Akass 2008, p. 88.

22   cf. HBO extra feature: 'Creating the Dothraki language'.

23   cf. HBO extra feature: David Benioff in 'Creating the Dothraki language', minute 00:24 to 00:36.

24   George R. R. Martin, 'Klaatu Barada Nicto...' *Not A Blog*, April 12, 2010. <http://grrm.livejournal.com/148593.html> accessed April 20, 2012.

25   cf. 'Creating the Dothraki language', minute 04:30 to 04:38

the author and the showrunners, can be seen as legitimizing the showrunner-"torchbearers", as well as consolidating the audience's perception of Martin and the showrunners as a showrunner-auteur troika even further.

While many of the DVD extras aim at extending viewer pleasure through providing additional information on extradiegetic elements, the *Viewers' Guide* featured on *GoT*'s official website strongly encourages its visitors to get immersed in a vast array of special features supporting and extending the show's narratives. An interactive map of the fictional lands of Westeros displaying the locations of every episode's narrative enables the viewer to geographically link and relate the different story-arcs and follow the progression in the narrative through changing areas of influence and territories of each of the Houses. And genealogical trees of all Kings and Houses (i.e. families) allow for an in-depth analysis of the complex web of social relations spun within the master-narrative. Through their content and their way of presentation – all of the material featured in the *Viewers' Guide* is beautifully crafted in the look of ancient scrolls - these peritexts clearly enable viewer investment and allow for greater pleasure gained from the main narrative.

A different kind of peritext can be identified in George R. R. Martin's blog.[26] The author uses his 'Not A Blog'[27]-platform to communicate with his fan base and has documented the progress of the adaptation project, from his initial production announcement of July 16, 2010,[28] to more recent updates regarding *GoT*'s chances of winning industry awards. His general style of writing is matter-of-fact and succinct, but when it comes to the collaboration with HBO and Benioff and Weiss, Martin tends to use emphatic language, such as addressing the cable network as "my friends at HBO"[29]. Furthermore, he openly promotes the wealth of merchandise that is available for the *GoT* universe. In addition to that, he also features an on-the-road diary of his ongoing global reading tour, thus linking his own voice of the literary author with the multimedia campaign of the premium cable network. Doing so, Martin further enhances the perception of Benioff and Weiss as his

"torchbearers", but also asserts his own position as the original author.

But Martin's blog is only one among many cogs and wheels in the intricate clockwork of HBO's viral marketing campaign machine. HBO targeted those people who were labelled by Amanda Lotz as 'opinion leaders' or 'super-fans'[30] and had a limited set of give-aways produced and delivered, e.g. a package labelled 'The Maester's Path'. This package included a multi-medial[31] invitation to the fictional world of Westeros, and implicitly aimed at the recipients' collaboration in regards to spreading the news.[32] In many ways, the campaign worked perfectly:[33] in addition to providing experiential descriptions within their blogs, many of the targeted group of 'super fans' also promoted details provided by HBO's introductory letter to the package, which made a special point of praising the authorial collaboration between Martin and HBO.[34] Therefore, through reaching out to these influential viewers who might value and promote the show in online communities, HBO has shown to be able to tap into the online universe of chat rooms and blogs to ensure that there is lots of positive buzz created around the paratexts, the underlying text, and the network itself.

Critical reception of the show mostly followed the general trend defined by the positive feedback issued by the opinion leaders and their respective communities. Some critics

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26   See George R. R. Martin, *Not a Blog.* <http://grrm.livejournal.com/> accessed Aug 26, 2015.

27   Note the similar distinction strategies via a negation of mass media conformity applied by Martin and HBO (HBO's campaign 'It's not TV. It's HBO').

28   cf. George R. R. Martin, 'From HBO' *Not a Blog*, July 16, 2010. <http://grrm.livejournal.com/164794.html> accessed March 28, 2012.

29   George R. R. Martin, 'You Win Or You Die' *Not a Blog*, April 11, 2012. <http://grrm.livejournal.com/274885.html> accessed April 14, 2012.

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30   i.e. "those peer-influencing viewers who might talk up a series in offices and chat rooms" (Lotz 2014: 125)

31   In the true sense of the word; it included odour samples of the narrative's different locations as well as cloth samples and papyrus rolls that allowed for a multi-sensory encounter with transmedia elements of the narrative.

32   For exemplary accounts, cf. e.g. J.C. Hutchins, 'Winter Is Coming' February 25, 2011. <http://jchutchins.net/site/2011/02/25/winter-is-coming-a-transmedia-fiction-experience-with-j-c/> accessed July 18, 2015. // Or: Myles McNutt, 'Achieving Authenticity: Unboxing (the Unboxing of) Game of Thrones' Maester's Path' *Cultural Learnings*, Feb 27, 2011. <http://cultural-learnings.com/2011/02/27/achieving-authenticity-unboxing-the-unboxing-of-game-of-thrones-maesters-path/> accessed Aug 19, 2015.

33   As Klastrup and Tosca note: "the company expected 3,000 fans to register on the website but in fact logged 40,000 users. Campfire [the transmedia outlet in charge of the campaign] expected 100,000 unique monthly visitors and ended up with 200,000. And *The Maester's Path* website had more than 2 million page views, with an "average time spent on the Website of 10 minutes," which is a long time by web standards. Perhaps even more interesting, Campfire estimates in the same interview that all together the campaign had more than 120 million "social impressions" - that is, the total number of people who had seen a status update. a blog post, or similar reference relating to Game of Thrones on social media sites such as Facebook, GetGlue, Twitter, and blogs." (Klastrup and Tosca 2013: 304).

34   See picture of letter at: J.C. Hutchins, 'Winter Is Coming' February 25, 2011. http://bit.ly/1ErWozZ, accessed Jul 18, 2015.
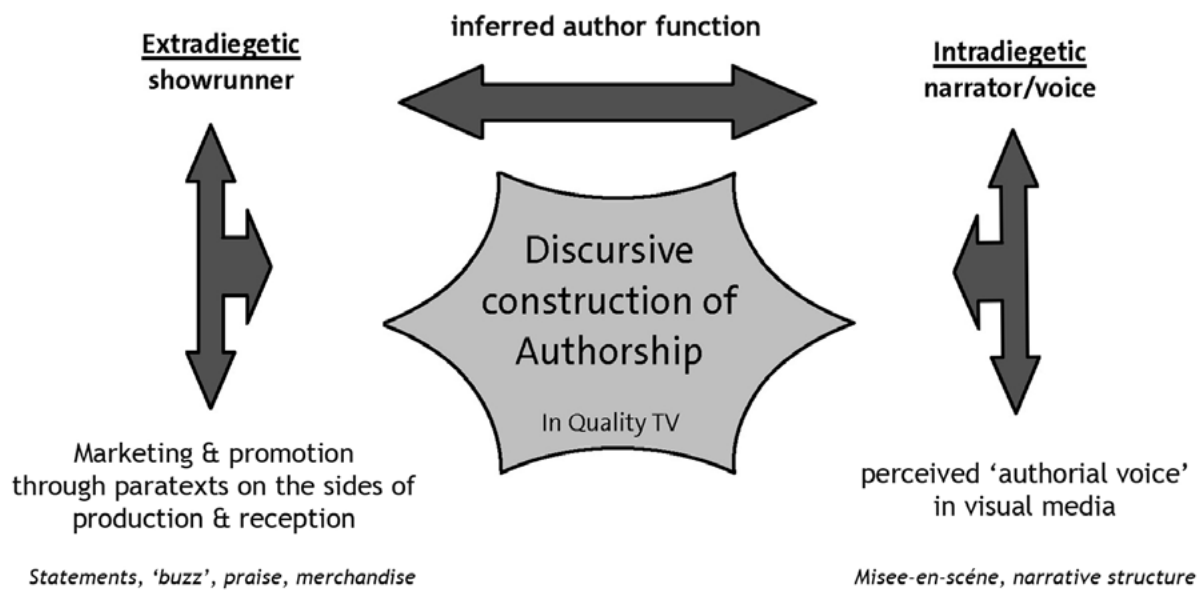
△ FIG. 2. DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF AUTHORSHIP: RELATIONS

and reporters even issued pre-air reviews of the first season, which is quite uncommon for television drama[35] (e.g. see *The Guardian*'s suggestively-titled 'Is A Game of Thrones the most eagerly anticipated TV show ever?'[36]). Targeting pre-existing *A Song Of Ice and Fire* fan communities, other critics highlighted products that used the show's almost instant success and fame to extend the *GoT* experience even further. Through the first season, *GoT*-inspired *haute couture* fashion[37], fan merchandise[38], and even books on the philosophical backgrounds of the show[39], as well as DVD sales numbers[40], became the

centre of critical attention. And most critics focussing on the show itself were eager to hail its qualities: in almost all critical accounts listed on metacritic.com, the tropes of authorship initially promoted by HBO through its various channels are re-employed by those reviewers (including statements such as 'expert control of the storylines', 'exceptional storytelling', and 'richly-drawn characters', 'intricate back story and plotlines') as indicators of authorial quality, culminating in an overwhelmingly positive feedback of the show (with an overall positive-negative review ratio of 47 to 0 [41], with six 'mixed' reviews that criticise the open display of explicit content, its complexity, or/and berate the whole series as 'boy fiction'). Ultimately, this also promotes a high-quality product backed by a showrunner-auteur troika.

05 **CONCLUSION**

Game of Thrones can be seen as a prime example of how transmedia storytelling is exercised and celebrated by a television series. From George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Fire and Ice* book

35   cf. McNutt 2011.

36   cf. Mathilda Gregory, 'Is A Game of Thrones the most eagerly anticipated TV show ever?' *The Guardian*, July 13, 2010. <http://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/tvandradioblog/2010/jul/22/game-of-thrones-most-anticipated> accessed Aug 4, 2015.

37   cf. Patrick Kevin Day, '"Game of Thrones" inspires ... a high fashion line?' *LA Times*, Feb 16, 2012 <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/showtracker/2012/02/game-of-thrones-helmut-lang.html> accessed Aug 02, 2015.

38   cf. David McCutcheon, 'Game of Thrones Goods in the Works' IGN, Nov 10, 2011. <http://uk.ign.com/articles/2011/11/10/game-of-thrones-goods-in-the-works> accessed Aug 03, 2015.

39   cf. Jacoby, Henry O. *Game of Thrones and Philosophy: Logic Cuts Deeper than Swords*. Hoboken: Wiley, 2012.

40   cf. Lisa Richwine, 'Exclusive - "Game of Thrones" rules HBO's DVD sales' *Reuters*, March 16, 2012. <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/03/16/uk-tv-gameofthrones-idUKBRE82F0142012O316> accessed Aug 28, 2015.

41   As of April, 2012, when Season 1 of the show had concluded and Season 2 had just aired its premiere episode, cf. 'Game of Thrones' Metacritic.com, <http://www.metacritic.com/tv/game-of-thrones> accessed April 15, 2012.

series, of which the first volume was published almost two decades ago, to the television show, its surrounding paratexts and related products, including interactive web features on both HBO's proprietary streaming service HBO GO and the official show website, the DVD and BluRay collectibles, role play games, comics and merchandise – all those elements allow for a way of watching that extends the experience of consuming television content as-is. The existing authorship discourse is deliberately highlighted via the inferred author function by different agents with different agendas, particularly in the universe of paratexts on both sides of production (i.e. features and texts produced by HBO's production team and George R. R. Martin) and reception (i.e. texts produced by critics and fans) in order to reinforce the showrunner-troika's authorial 'Aura'. To quote Jonathan Gray: "Paratexts, and various forms of bonus materials in particular, aim to play a constitutive role in creating value for a film or television show, even if in practice this value is not created equally for all audiences. Some audiences will seek out such paratexts precisely in order to reaffirm their sense of the film or program's value. Others will regard the mere existence of paratexts and hype as the clearest example of the lack of artistic integrity, seeing them as akin to a painter selling his or her work in a shopping mall storefront with a gaudy neon sign. In either situation, the paratext helps create a sense of value (whether positive or negative)." (2010: 128) In the case of *GoT*, the selection of paratexts presented here give voice to the showrunners and the author of the literary original series of novels not only in the DVD extras but also in the specials featured on the show's website, strengthen a perception of importance of these factions on the reception side, and foster a discourse about authorship within the show, thus elevating the show towards a quality production that promises uniqueness and ingenuity.

On the other hand, the showrunner-auteur troika's agendas ought to be scrutinised because they play with a concept that has been and is much-debated in media studies, linking a perceived or constructed intradiegetic authorial voice to an also-constructed extradiegetic author, and utilising it for self-promotion and marketing purposes in order to enhance their own as well as the brand reputation (see Fig. 2). As I hope to have been able to show, then, the discursive construction along the tropes of authorship have proven a very fruitful means to achieve the goal of elevating television texts, and made the promotion of authorship an important element in HBO's marketing strategy – particularly within the realm of the *Game of Thrones* universe.

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STEERING THE AUTHOR DISCOURSE: THE CONSTRUCTION OF AUTHORSHIP IN QUALITY TV...

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GOMORRA REMIXED. TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING TRA POLITICHE DI ENGAGEMENT MAINSTREAM E PRODUTTIVITÀ DEL FANDOM

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KEYWORDS
Post-seriality; *Gomorra*; participatory culture; fandom.

ABSTRACT
Gomorra - La serie (2014 - ongoing) is a television series which approaches the standards of the so-called "quality television" (McCabe & Akass 2007), thanks to its cinematographic proper- ties and because it is capable of forming cross-media fictional universes. This paper sets out to analyze this product and its potential of transmedia storytelling. Through the analysis of the related works on fictional seriality and post-seriality, the paper deals with the genesis of *Gomorra - La serie*, analyz- ing the ties with the book by Roberto Saviano and with the film by Matteo Garrone. The observation also extends to the audiences of this serial and its grassroot manipulations — fanfiction, fanvideo, tributes, parodies and citations — which circulate through social media as an expression of the partic- ipatory culture of digital media.

INTRODUZIONE

Gomorra - La serie (2014 - in corso) è un prodotto televisivo seriale ispirato al romanzo omonimo (2006) di Roberto Saviano, da cui è stato tratto anche il film (2008) di Matteo Garrone. Come è stato messo in luce attraverso l'analisi del modello (Barra & Scaglioni, 2013), si tratta di una serie che si è saputa emancipare dalle formule narrative e dagli standard produttivi della fiction italiana (Brancato, 2007; Buonanno, 2002, 2012) per avvicinarsi a quelli della cosiddetta "Grande Serialità" americana (Cardini, 2014), grazie alla sapiente combinazione di alcuni fattori quali la dimensione qualitativa, la strutturazione in episodi e stagioni (Bandirali & Terrone, 2012), la formazione di universi finzionali crossmediali (Giovagnoli, 2009), l'interesse dei mercati internazionali, il ruolo del fandom (Scaglioni, 2006). Il nostro saggio intende riflettere sull'impianto narrativo e sulle caratteristiche tecnico/stilistiche di tale prodotto per osservare se e quanto esso aderisca alle condizioni del transmedia storytelling. Con questo obiettivo, il nostro lavoro cerca dunque di mettere in luce la posizione che la serie occupa all'interno di una trama di relazioni che dal libro si diramano fino ai prodotti *grassroot*, osservati principalmente nella loro forma audiovisiva (fanvideo, parodie, ecc.). L'impianto metodologico della ricerca è dunque *multi-methods*, dal momento che combina ed integra differenti tecniche di raccolta delle informazioni, intersecando l'analisi dei modelli produttivi/estetici/narrativi con lo studio della produzione dal basso.

Il saggio si divide pertanto in tre parti: nella prima sezione *Gomorra - La serie* è analizzata al fine di evidenziare gli aspetti cruciali legati ai modelli produttivi, alle caratteristiche estetiche, alla struttura narrativa, alla caratterizzazione dei personaggi, alle scelte di palinsesto, al ruolo della regia e ai rimandi al libro. La seconda sezione indaga la produzione culturale *grassroot* legata alla serie, inscrivendo tale processo all'interno della letteratura che si occupa del fenomeno, ma sollevando alcune questioni specifiche della serie, quali il rapporto con l'autorialità, l'ambiguità delle audience, la dinamica locale/globale. Di questa parte della ricerca — tuttora in corso — saranno discussi per motivi di spazio solo i prodotti caricati su YouTube, piattaforma particolarmente indicativa che si è ormai consacrata[1] come una leva all'interno del sistema mediale. Infine, queste riflessioni confluiscono nella terza sezione in cui si discute il tema della transmedialità con il fine di dimostrare come *Gomorra - La serie* — a dispetto della declinazione attraverso più media fino al contributo delle

culture partecipative (Jenkins, 2006a, 2006b) — non possa considerarsi un caso compiuto di transmedia stoytelling.

01 **GOMORRA OLTRE LA TV. CONVERGENZA E POST-SERIALITÀ**

La prima stagione di *Gomorra - La serie* consta di 12 puntate da circa 50 minuti[2] trasmesse dall'emittente satellitare Sky, tra maggio e giugno 2014. Lo show centra il record di ascolti per una serie premium in onda sul satellite, conquistando un'audience media di 700mila contatti per puntata (fonte Auditel)[3]. Il successo viene confermato dalla messa in onda in chiaro su Rai Tre (dal 10 gennaio al 15 febbraio 2015)[4]. Inoltre, *Gomorra-La serie* è il prodotto seriale televisivo più acquistato all'estero (70 Paesi) ed il primo ad essere proiettato nelle sale cinematografiche, dove è approdato nel settembre 2014,

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1   Cfr. a tal proposito il contributo di Delwiche e Jacobs Henderson (2013).

2   La durata varia: 53' il primo episodio, 56' il secondo, 47' il terzo, 43' il quarto, 48' il quinto, 55' il sesto, il settimo, l'ottavo, il nono, il decimo, l'undicesimo e il dodicesimo.

3   Trasmessa in simultanea su Sky Atlantic 1/+1 HD, Sky Cinema 1/+1 HD e su Sky On Demand, la serie ha totalizzato i seguenti ascolti: le prime due puntate, in onda martedì 6 maggio 2014, sono state viste da 658.241 spettatori medi complessivi (prima puntata 641.641 spettatori medi complessivi e 1.089.071 spettatori unici con una permanenza del 59%; seconda puntata 674.839 spettatori medi complessivi e 889.659 spettatori unici, una permanenza del 76%); il terzo episodio, in onda il 13 maggio, è stato visto da 562.969 spettatori medi complessivi, con una permanenza del 66%, mentre la quarta puntata ha ottenuto un seguito di 655.243 spettatori medi complessivi e una permanenza del 78%. Il quinto episodio, in onda il 20 maggio, è stato visto da 681.644 spettatori medi complessivi, con una permanenza del 78%, mentre la sesta puntata ha ottenuto un seguito di 669.674 spettatori medi complessivi, una permanenza del 76%. Il settimo episodio, in onda il 27 maggio, ha raccolto un ascolto di 665.751 spettatori medi complessivi, con una permanenza record dell'84%, mentre l'ottava puntata è stata la più vista di sempre con un seguito di 696.379 spettatori medi complessivi e una permanenza dell'80%. La nona puntata, in onda il 3 giugno, ha raccolto un ascolto complessivo di 694.085 spettatori medi, con una permanenza del 78%, mentre la decima puntata ha segnato 748.140 spettatori medi complessivi e una permanenza del 90%. L'undicesima puntata, trasmessa il 10 giugno, ha raccolto un ascolto complessivo di 821.858 spettatori medi, con una permanenza del 70%, mentre la dodicesima puntata, in onda dalle 22 circa, è stata seguita da 873.798 spettatori medi complessivi (con una permanenza dell'88%), risultando l'episodio più visto dell'intera stagione. Con circa 700 mila spettatori medi a puntata, Gomorra è la serie targata Sky più vista in assoluto nella storia della pay tv.

4   Su Rai Tre *Gomorra – La serie* davanti al video 1.617.000 spettatori (6.76%), nel primo episodio, e 1.909.000 spettatori (11.91%) nel secondo, andati in onda sabato 10 gennaio 2015; 1.450.000 spettatori (5.88%) nel terzo episodio e 1.575.000 spettatori (7.94%), nel quarto, trasmessi sabato 17 gennaio; 1.355.000 spettatori (5.33%) nel quinto episodio e 1.656.000 spettatori (8.28%), nel sesto, trasmessi sabato 24 gennaio; 1.301.000 spettatori (5.04%) nel settimo e 1.543.000 spettatori (7.19%), nell'ottavo episodio, andati in onda sabato 31 gennaio; 1.435.000 spettatori (5.45%) nel nono e 1.676.000 spettatori (7.81%), nel decimo episodio, messi in onda sabato 7 febbraio; 676.000 spettatori (2.73%) nell'undicesimo, e 1.684.000 spettatori (7.28%) per il dodicesimo episodio, trasmessi sabato 21 febbraio.

nella formula di 3 puntate per volta, per quattro settimane consecutive.

Co-prodotta da Sky, Cattleya, Fandango, La 7 e Beta Film, *Gomorra - La serie* ha ammaliato la critica internazionale, che l'ha assimilata alle migliori serie tv *crime* contemporanee (insieme a *The Wire* e *The Sopranos*)[5] e al cinema di autore (Tarantino e Scorsese)[6]. Il successo della serie si somma a quelli del romanzo di Saviano (5,5 milioni di copie vendute[7]) e del film di Garrone, decimo miglior incasso della stagione 2007-2008 con oltre 10 milioni di euro[8].

Per comprendere le ragioni di questi numeri, occorre fare riferimento alla potente trasformazione, a partire dagli Anni Duemila, degli assetti tecnologici, culturali e sociali della televisione dei decenni precedenti, che ha condotto all'affermazione di Sky e della sua proposta radicalmente innovativa rispetto alla concorrenza generalista. Siamo approdati nell'era dell'abbondanza (Brancato, 2011; Scaglioni, 2013) segnata dall'offerta smisurata, dalla convergenza dei media e delle piattaforme e dalla digitalizzazione dei contenuti. In questo quadro socio-mediale, i broadcaster individuano nella fiction uno degli asset di investimento essenziali. Nello stesso tempo, le culture partecipative investono le audience che, grazie a pratiche come il *fansubbing*, lo streaming, il download (Jenkins, 2006b), consumano quantità crescenti di prodotti culturali, spesso su device mobili (smartphone, tablet, ecc.) e secondo modalità altamente personalizzabili, fino a generare il ben noto fenomeno del *binge-watching* (sorta di "abbuffate" di serie televisive). Tali pratiche e tali fenomeni consentono di parlare di una "post-serialità" (Brancato, 2011), ovvero una serialità che esibisce proprietà radicalmente nuove nelle forme di produzione, distribuzione e consumo rispetto ai decenni precedenti.

02 **SKY ITALIA E LA SERIALITÀ TELEVISIVA**

In Italia il soggetto che raccoglie la sfida di investire direttamente nella produzione di fiction sul modello della *quality tv* d'oltreoceano è Sky Italia, una volta raggiunta la soglia critica di 4,5 milioni abbonati, negli anni 2003-2008. Il modello produttivo riflette il modello di business dell'emittente,

incentrato sull'acquisizione di abbonati, sulla loro fidelizzazione e sulla costruzione, valorizzazione e radicamento di una credibile *brand identity* (Richeri, 2012), anche attraverso le componenti visive (logo, musiche, lettering, *key visual*) delle serie (Grasso & Scaglioni, 2010; Johnson, 2012).

Tale configurazione fa sì che Sky si emancipi dai limiti dei broadcaster free — Rai e Mediaset — e possa puntare a standard qualitativi ambiziosi (Cucco, 2013). Il raggiungimento di questi standard rappresenta un dovere nei riguardi di abbonati sempre più avvezzi agli elementi distintivi della grande serialità statunitense[9]: l'uniformizzazione di Sky ai canoni della "quality television" (McCabe & Akass, 2007), e in particolare al modello HBO (Edgerton & Jones, 2009), si estrinseca in racconti dal respiro globale, look visivo ricco ed attraente, tecniche di scrittura, regia e montaggio di stampo cinematografico, multistagionalità, linee narrative orizzontali e verticali, universi complessi e sviluppo del fandom. Il modello produttivo della fiction Sky (Barra & Scaglioni, 2013), perfezionato dal 2008, non potendo avvalersi di professionalità aziendali, si rivolge ai produttori cinematografici con cui si relaziona da anni – Cattleya, Colorado, Fandango – cui si aggiungono spesso partner stranieri. Le coproduzioni estere da un lato accrescono l'appetibilità delle serie nei mercati internazionali e, dall'altro, rappresentano una garanzia per gli investitori nazionali (case cinematografiche ed emittenti free, interessate all'esclusiva della trasmissione in chiaro).

03 **DALLA PARTE DEI CATTIVI. ESTETICA DI GOMORRA E STRATEGIE D'IDENTIFICAZIONE**

3.1 **Gomorra e Romanzo Criminale**

L'analisi del modello Sky, alternativo alle formule agiografiche della Rai e alla politica editoriale Mediaset (Barra & Scaglioni, 2015), è preliminare per la comprensione dell'affermazione e del culto di *Gomorra - La serie*. Se la serialità determina il radicamento sociale delle industrie culturali (Abruzzese, 1984) e modella le identità nazionali (Buonanno, 2002, 2012), il nostro obiettivo è capire come questi processi culturali si rimodellino in virtù dell'inedito ruolo svolto sulla scena nazionale dalla fiction Sky. A questo proposito, ci sembra utile procedere ad un'analisi comparata, socioculturale e mediologica, delle due

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5   Cfr. Severgnini (2015).

6   Cfr. Jones (2014) e Rees (2014).

7   Secondo gli ultimi dati resi disponibili sul sito web (dicembre 2014): http://www.robertosaviano.com/gomorra/ (31-05-2015).

8   Fonte: http://movieplayer.it/film/boxoffice/italia/2007/ (31-05-2015).

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9   Il broadcaster ha riconosciuto la centralità della serialità (soprattutto) americana, varando un canale apposito (Sky Atlantic).

serie che, più di tutte, hanno garantito una massiccia internazionalizzazione dell'esperienza produttiva italiana: *Romanzo Criminale* e *Gomorra - La serie*. Esse condividono una comune genesi mediale: da opera letteraria (*Romanzo Criminale*, di Giancarlo De Cataldo, 2002, e *Gomorra*, di Roberto Saviano, 2006), transitano al cinema (*Romanzo Criminale*, regia di Michele Placido, 2005, *Gomorra*, regia di Matteo Garrone, 2008) e infine approdano alla serialità televisiva. La condivisa estrazione letteraria è significativa, poiché sia il romanzo di De Cataldo sia l'opera ibrida di Saviano possono essere ricondotti alla categoria del New Italian Epic (Wu Ming, 2009), ovvero contribuiscono all'elaborazione collettiva di una "neo-epica", eterodossa e straniante, della storia patria (Eugeni, 2013), mettendo il lettore di fronte a dilemmi etici rispetto ai quali non può fare a meno di prendere una posizione (Montani, 2010). Visivamente questa "neoepica", per le due serie, dà luogo a uno stile duro e immediato, che oltrepassa qualsiasi limite di rappresentabilità della televisione italiana. L'effetto di straniamento è ottenuto con l'impiego di un cast di volti poco noti, selezionati dal teatro o dalla strada, e dalla valorizzazione dei paesaggi: in *Romanzo* ritroviamo "facce pasoliniane" e luoghi a metà tra metropoli e campagna (Canova, 2013), mentre in *Gomorra - La serie* corpi e visi incistati nel degrado delle periferie urbane partenopee (scelta che segue l'intuizione del film di Garrone)[10]. Diversi sono invece i processi transmediali (Giovagnoli, 2009): in *Romanzo Criminale*, la serie sviluppa più compiutamente gli intrecci narrativi del romanzo, recuperando i cosiddetti *missing files* inevitabilmente sacrificati nella formula compressa del film di Placido; *Gomorra – La serie* attinge al contrario ad inchieste e reportage di Saviano, pubblicate successivamente al libro, sebbene in qualche modo ad esso collegate, laddove la pellicola di Garrone adatta, seppur con libertà, alcuni dei racconti dell'opera di Saviano.

Il richiamo alle declinazioni transmediali di *Romanzo Criminale* è utile in questa fase per contestualizzare il fenomeno *Gomorra* nell'alveo di un più complesso e inedito processo di riconfigurazione anche in Italia della *spectatorship*, fondata sui dettami della *quality television* e fortemente intessuta, come proveremo a dimostrare, di storie stratificate e personaggi ad elevata densità simbolica, in grado di stimolare la creatività dal basso dei fan.

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[10]   Tale scelta traspare con evidenza nel casting dei ruoli di contorno, affidati spesso ad attori scovati sul campo, mentre alcuni dei protagonisti possono vantare trascorsi cinematografici (Marco D'Amore, Maria Pia Calzone), teatrali (Fortunato Cerlino) o televisivi (Salvatore Esposito).

3.2 **Comando vs. sottomissione**

Ci concentreremo ora sulla narrativa transmediale di *Gomorra*, tra romanzo, film e serie tv[11], nell'intento di evidenziare le strategie di costruzione di una narrazione complessa, attraverso personaggi dalla grande carica espressiva. Il film di Garrone rispecchia sostanzialmente il mix di storie autonome del libro di Saviano, riprendendone la frammentarietà. La serie, pur citando fatti narrati dal libro (il bicchiere di urina, l'omicidio di Gelsomina Verde, ecc.), si nutre di altre sostanze narrative, già pubblicate (come alcuni reportage di Saviano successivi a *Gomorra*) o inedite. Lo storytelling della serie televisiva aggira la *vexata quaestio* del realismo, trasfigurando alcuni episodi realmente accaduti in pura creazione narrativa.

Il tema principale è l'ambizione del gregario Ciro Di Marzio di conquistare il clan Savastano, dominato da Don Pietro, al cui fianco vivono la moglie Donna Imma e il figlio Genny. Da questa linea narrativa se ne dipartono altre, organizzate intorno alla polarità comando/sottomissione. L'opposizione Bene/Male perde dunque ogni senso, in quanto è palese la volontà di costruire un universo cupo, di personaggi immorali e dannati, privo di modelli edificanti. Tuttavia, localizzare eccessivamente questa scelta — ovvero ritenere che l'intenzione sia esprimere una condanna di Napoli — è un'operazione rischiosa, in quanto sono molteplici gli elementi (il finanziere lombardo Musi, le proprietà immobiliari a Milano, il viaggio in Honduras, il fortino di Conte a Barcellona, la criminalità africana) che indicano come la camorra raccontata sia il portato di processi economico-sociali di globalizzazione e finanziarizzazione del crimine organizzato. La marginalità degli eroi positivi (la mamma di Diego, Bruno) e l'assenza delle forze dell'ordine esprimono, inoltre, la sproporzione delle forze in campo tra Stato e bande criminali, che amministrano il territorio oppressivamente, sino a rendere l'affiliazione quasi una scelta obbligata. Particolarmente significativo appare il caso del direttore del carcere, che, sebbene apparentemente mosso dalla volontà di imporre il rispetto delle leggi, è in realtà l'emblema di un sistema di correzione largamente fallimentare nel recupero dei detenuti, oppressi da condizione di detenzione inumane, coinvolti in lotte tra bande, infine schiacciati sotto il peso di una dimensione irredimibile (è il caso del giovanissimo suicida Pasqualino).

Una tra le linee drammaturgiche più produttive è, a nostro avviso, il conflitto tra vecchio e nuovo, tra i sodali di Don

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[11]   A *Gomorra* si ispira anche l'omonima opera teatrale di Mario Gelardi e una serie di libri, documentari, artefatti culturali collaterali.

Pietro, ligi alle leggi dell'onore e del rispetto, e i giovanissimi scagnozzi di Genny, insofferenti a regole e gerarchie, e lo stesso Ciro, assassino di donne e traditore per ambizione; tra il boss al culmine della carriera, Don Pietro, e quello ascendente, Conte; tra padri e figli, naturali (Don Pietro e Genny) o putativi (Attilio e Ciro); tra madre e figlio (Donna Imma e Genny). Questa serie di conflitti drammaturgici accoglie, nel racconto, una mutazione antropologica del crimine organizzato napoletano, caratterizzata da un inquietante abbassamento dell'età minima per gestire una piazza di spaccio o compiere un omicidio e dalla feroce sfrontatezza di una classe di giovanissimi criminali.

3.3 La qualità totale

L'obiettivo degli autori e dei produttori della serie è lavorare ad un prodotto caratterizzato dalla qualità totale, aspetto che si riverbera, rispetto alla sceneggiatura, nel tentativo di convogliare tutte le risorse del linguaggio cinematografico alla costruzione di personaggi particolarmente carismatici e sviluppati nei dettagli. In questo senso, gli autori lavorano sulle capacità mimetiche e interpretative del cast, sulla raffinata e sfaccettata psicologia di tutti i personaggi, ma anche sulle scenografie. Gli spazi abitati, infatti, appaiono sempre funzionali a caratterizzare le relazioni di potere tra i personaggi. Pur nel degrado delle periferie, i boss vivono in lussuose ville, volgarmente arredate, mentre gli affiliati e le loro famiglie abitano modeste case popolari.

Gli stessi stili di regia sono abilmente utilizzati dallo showrunner Stefano Sollima per coordinare ogni professionalità artistica in direzione del risultato finale: è per questo che, nei due episodi costruiti su Donna Imma (*Imma contro tutti, Il ruggito della leonessa*), la resa luministica degli ambienti meneghini e il tratteggio delle psicologie femminili sono affidati alla regista milanese Francesca Comencini, mentre Claudio Cupellini, regista del duro noir *Una vita tranquilla* (2010, con Marco D'Amore e Toni Servillo), dirige quattro degli episodi più cruenti. In questo quadro di generale coerenza estetica rientra la selezione delle musiche. Insieme ai beat sintetici e distorti dell'elettronica dei Mokadelic, si segnala l'uso delle canzoni neomelodiche, anch'esso mutuato dal film di Garrone, soprattutto in senso contrastivo (es., montaggio del brano romantico *Ancora noi* di Alessio con le immagini del suicidio in carcere di Pasqualino). Tutte le componenti tematico-stilistiche della serie rispondono al disegno di adesione ai canoni dei generi gangster e noir, inserendosi nella *golden age* delle *crime series* della tv anglosassone (Sanders & Skoble, 2008). Questa

complessa materia estetica, in cui confluiscono scrittura, regia, recitazione, scenografia, fotografia, musiche, produce in ultima istanza icone, simboli e racconti densi, ricchi e appassionanti. È per tale ragione che almeno alcuni dei protagonisti della serie – Ciro, Genny, Don Pietro e Conte – esibiscono una costruzione così complessa, raffinata e stratificata, da innescare non banalmente processi di identificazione, ma "several distinct *levels of engagement* which together comprise (...) a *structure of sympathy*" (Murray, 1995: 5). Questi livelli corrispondono a una serie di processi involontari, cognitivi ed emozionali che, combinati insieme, producono un fascio illimitato di possibili schemi di coinvolgimento dello spettatore rispetto alle immagini, sebbene, come vedremo, Saviano la pensi in maniera differente. La crescente complessità narrativa della serialità televisiva contemporanea (Mittell 2015) sembrerebbe produrre esattamente una ricca stimolazione, sensoriale e culturale, ai fini di un *engagement* dello spettatore sempre più aggressivo e giocato, per l'appunto, spesso sulla costruzione di personaggi, atmosfere e trame, all'interno di universi narrativi coesi, coerenti e credibili, in grado di sfidare le competenze ermeneutiche dello spettatore. Tali strategie di *engagement*, potenziate spesso (ma non nel caso di *Gomorra*) da apparati paratestuali e ulteriori prodotti transmediali predisposti dai produttori, possono dirsi riuscite solo allorché le audience, oltre a garantire il consumo del prodotto, si costituiscano come fandom attraverso la creazione di artefatti culturali e cognitivi legati alla serie amata: è quanto proveremo a verificare sia accaduto con *Gomorra – La serie*.

04 IL RUOLO DEI PUBBLICI CONNESSI

L'analisi delle relazioni transmediali e del potenziale simbolico dei personaggi ci conduce alle pratiche comunicative e ai prodotti grassroot elaborati da pubblici connessi che si sovrappongono o incrociano con quello 'televisivo'. Del resto, nell'attuale sistema intertestuale dei contenuti mediali, gli User Generated Content (UGC) occupano uno spazio sempre più grande e rappresentano un universo di grande interesse epistemologico nel segnare la trasformazione dei pubblici televisivi da fruitori a *user* segnalata da molte ricerche già a partire dagli anni '80 -'90 (Hobson, 1982; Ang, 1985; Jenkins, 1992; Fiske, 1992; Abercrombie e Longhurst, 1998; Hills, 2002; cfr. anche Baym, 2000). Rispetto al passato in cui il consumo televisivo soggiaceva a regole routinarie ben descritte dalle ricerche di Silverstone (1994) il consumo odierno è pertanto frammentato in pratiche di fruizione e produzione inglobate

in un mediascape il cui modello è quello della *self-mass communication* (Castells, 2009) che si nutre di flussi di comunicazione interpersonale e mainstream, globalizzati e ambientati negli spazi pubblici del web (Ito, 2008). Sebbene con le cautele evidenziate da diversi studiosi (Couldry, 2005; Dujarier, 2009; Livingstone, 1998), le opzioni tecnologiche disposte dai media digitali hanno riconfigurato le potenzialità delle audience predisponendo piattaforme creative in cui i prodotti di culto sono manipolabili e remixabili (Crawford, 2012; Fiske, 1992; Sandvoss, 2011; Scaglioni, 2006). La partecipazione dei pubblici alla generazione di contenuti non è ovviamente il portato esclusivo del progresso tecnologico e della digitalizzazione — si pensi ad esempio alle preconizzazioni di de Certeau. Tuttavia, i social media consentono uno sviluppo esponenziale di tali pratiche detonando la riflessività connessa (Boccia Artieri, 2012) e attivando processi di co-costruzione (Bruns, 2012) che offrono tasselli all'elaborazione corale della cultura (Salzano, 2013).

È stato osservato che questi nuovi pubblici sono particolarmente sollecitati dalla grande serialità televisiva nel produrre feedback (Brancato, 2011; Hills 2002): non fa eccezione *Gomorra - La serie*, quantunque con alcune divergenze dal modello americano. Le produzioni statunitensi, difatti, mettono in atto efficaci strategie di *engagement* del fandom delle serie sfruttando il social web — sia attraverso il sito dedicato che, per esempio, agendo sui social network — per costruire spazi sociali in cui i pubblici possono fruire di estensioni narrative, dialogare anche con membri del cast e della crew e fare esperienza —all'interno della community così costituita — del materiale simbolico condiviso.

A differenza di questo modello, nel caso di *Gomorra* i produttori non sembrano sfruttare appieno le potenzialità social offerte dalle piattaforme online e non offrono ai pubblici artefatti culturali come web episode, spin off, interactive game o prodotti simili che solitamente sono pensati per il fandom[12]. Si tratta, a nostro parere, di un vuoto nella comunicazione tra produzione e pubblico, di una vera e propria lacuna nella strategia comunicativa mainstream[13], di uno spazio

simbolico che, nella nostra osservazione, Roberto Saviano sembra voler occupare — o quantomeno attraversare — ricorrendo ad una serie di interventi diretti che analizzeremo qui di seguito.

Di contro, se la declinazione transmediale via social web promossa dall'alto è limitata, l'appropriazione dal basso è invece molto sviluppata e presenta alcune peculiarità. Per la sua analisi, in questa sede affronteremo come detto solo il caso delle rielaborazioni che passano per il canale YouTube "epicentro dell'odierna cultura partecipativa" (Jenkins, 2006b). Sulla scorta delle riflessioni di Fanchi (2014), i contenuti audiovisivi grassroot sono stati analizzati considerando le seguenti variabili: il registro retorico utilizzato, la presenza di rimandi intermediali, i linguaggi espressivi impiegati e il grado di visibilità. Per ragioni di spazio saranno di seguito descritte solo le principali emergenze.

05 **IL FASCINO E IL DISGUSTO. L'AMBIGUITÀ DI GOMORRA**

Come detto, se da un lato manca una completa e coerente offerta comunicativa della produzione attraverso il web, dall'altro Saviano sfrutta sovente i social media proponendo interventi che sembrano voler ancorare le differenti forme di *Gomorra* — la serie come il libro — all'urgenza di cronaca e di denuncia. Molti studi in tema di caratterizzazione dei personaggi, plot narrativi ed estetiche (Smith, 1995; cfr. anche Martin, 2013) hanno analizzato le dinamiche allineamento/repulsione tra il pubblico e il prodotto narrativo, arrivando a sottolineare — come confermano anche le ricerche sul fandom (Scaglioni, 2006) — che da parte del pubblico sia spesso riscontrabile un'adesione pàtico-emozionale al sistema di valori del prodotto seriale. Occupando i vuoti lasciati dalla produzione, Saviano usa invece la sua forza comunicativa a sostegno della tesi per cui *Gomorra - La serie* chiude a qualsiasi possibilità di immedesimazione ed empatia nell'audience[14]: per lo scrittore campano il racconto — sebbene nella forma di spettacolo ed intrattenimento — esibisce unicamente uno statuto "parresistico", ovvero mira specificamente a mostrare fatti reali pur attraverso l'artifizio narrativo. Saviano sembrerebbe così estendere anche alla serie televisiva quel compito

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12   Cfr. in tal senso pandoropedia.com o pottermore.com. Cfr. anche il caso di *House of Cards*: gli autori hanno infatti usato la piattaforma Twitter per costruire account fittizi come quello di Frank Underwood, realizzando un sapiente connubio tra online e offline e tra fiction e non fiction, dal momento che si sono registrati casi di pratiche comunicative che hanno coinvolto anche politici reali (da Obama a Michele Emiliano: cfr. http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2015/04/13/emiliano-house-of-cards_n_7054952.html), intensificando l'engagement con i pubblici.

13   La produzione social attorno a un prodotto seriale come *The Walking Dead* è invece emblematica delle potenzialità non raggiunte dalla serie italiana: cfr. Tirino (2015).

14   Nessuno con cui lo spettatore può solidarizzare, nel quale si può identificare. Nessun balsamo consolatorio. Nessun respiro di sollievo. Lo spettatore, in maniera simbolica, non doveva avere tregua, come non ha tregua chi vive nei territori in guerra" (Saviano, Perché sono tutti cattivi nella Gomorra che va in tv. La Repubblica. 10-06-2013)

di 'testualizzazione del reale' di cui parla Grande (2002): pro-porre un testo che continui, come nel caso del libro, a costruire ed esporre la realtà intesa come spazio socio-culturale rappresentabile e comunicabile.

Naturalmente è difficile parlare di *Gomorra* senza tener conto che si tratta *anche* di una storia di camorra e che tale storia afferisce a un territorio con una distinta identità: la vasta periferia urbana tra Napoli e Caserta. In questo senso, YouTube può per questo essere usato come 'macroscopio' (Bennato, 2015): tra quanti appoggiano o rifiutano Saviano la piattaforma ospita numerosi video sviluppati a partire dall'idea che *Gomorra* sia innanzitutto un fenomeno socio-comunicativo che investe soprattutto Napoli, i suoi secolari problemi di disoccupazione e malavita, la situazione delle Vele di Scampia, l'assenza di futuro e prospettive. Pur essendo questa solo *una* delle chiavi di lettura di *Gomorra - La serie*, Saviano agisce con forza nel perimetro di questo spazio simbolico, servendosi del canale YouTube personale per condividere interviste, colloqui con gli interpreti della serie e reportage dalle terre di camorra[15]. Attraverso un uso corposo del paratesto (Genette, 1997), lo scrittore sembra voler mantenere il controllo sul *franchise*[16] per condizionare l'esegesi del testo: se l'istanza narrante della serie è spersonalizzata (Gaudreault, 2007), Saviano ri-media questa funzione quasi imponendo una sorta di marchio di fabbrica[17] e tracciando un layout — 'raccontare il mondo attraverso gli occhi della camorra'— che insiste sul ruolo di denuncia che avrebbe anche la serie. Tuttavia, la sovrabbondante — se non invadente — partecipazione di Saviano sembra a volte comportare il rischio di produrre distorsioni in merito all'interpretazione e al consumo di un prodotto come *Gomorra - La serie*, arrivando a generare anche strumentalizzazioni politiche, e detonando letture distorte del prodotto culturale e dura opposizione di parte della società civile[18].

06 **IL MODELLO THE JACKAL**

Come visto, sulla ricezione di *Gomorra-La serie* hanno inciso alcuni fenomeni di disturbo, quali il tentativo di influenzarne l'interpretazione da parte di Saviano, le fuorvianti polemiche giornalistiche o l'impostazione pedagogica della messa in onda su Rai Tre[19]. Nonostante questi condizionamenti la serie si è conquistata il consenso di una vasta audience affascinata, in primo luogo, dagli altissimi standard qualitativi sopra citati. A dimostrazione della forte presa sull'immaginario popolare, la Rete pullula di video che, bypassando il tema della criminalità camorristica, giocano sull'appropriazione del linguaggio, delle caratteristiche e degli atteggiamenti dei personaggi, remixando, manipolando e rimontando la fonte originaria. Al contrario di quanto afferma Saviano, appare pacifica, in queste produzioni, una profonda adesione emozionale e passionale, che si concentra soprattutto sul dispositivo linguistico[20].

In aggiunta a ciò, la credibilità delle scelte di casting ha fatto sì che i personaggi con i loro volti e le loro espressioni accelerassero il processo di immedesimazione interrotto a livello del libro: il camorrista esibisce progetti, fallimenti, insoddisfazioni, debolezze, vizi, speranze che lo umanizzano. Contemporaneamente, la sceneggiatura rielabora gli archetipi narrativi del ribelle, della donna guerriera, del tradimento (Smith, 2011). Tra i pubblici, la piattaforma YouTube e i video virali è stato edificato uno spazio simbolico di culto, fondato sulla commistione tra elementi del poliziottesco e del gangster movie con immagini iconiche, frasi ed espressioni della serie[21]. Spaziando principalmente tra i registi parodistico[22] e

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15 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hS3suOoovRs; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y_ooZaHTox8.

16 Saviano ha per esempio riversato sul proprio canale YouTube parte dei contenuti offerti con l'uscita del cofanetto dvd della serie.

17 Del resto, è stato già scritto che Saviano sembrerebbe «incapace di raccontare senza ricorrere al supporto decisivo della sua presenza fisica» (Mazzarella, 2011: 38)

18 Si veda a tal proposito il seguente video giornalistico di Duccio Giordano per L'Espresso: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9pAyVn2kfks. Come si può notare, la richiesta da parte della produzione di girare scene presso il quartiere di Scampia diventa l'occasione per creare un dibattito sull'intero lavoro di Saviano, facendo emergere problematiche che in gran parte esulano (pur con le precisazioni espresse in questo saggio) dalla richiesta specifica della produzione. Emblematico a tal proposito l'intervento di Maurizio Gemma, Direttore Generale Film Commission Campania, che in quell'occasione afferma: "trovo paradossale che si possa pensare che negando

la realizzazione di un film in un quartiere si possa [...] distogliere l'attenzione dei media dai problemi che sono determinati da questioni concrete, reali..". Ancora, segnaliamo le riflessioni del Parroco del quartiere Don Aniello Manganiello che durante il dibattito afferma "Non vogliamo censurare nessuno...forse noi siamo stati censurati..".

19 Fabio Fazio presenta la serie che è mandata in onda, come detto, su Rai Tre a partire dal 10 gennaio 2015 in seconda serata per sei puntate. Fazio per l'occasione intervista protagonisti della lotta al crimine organizzato: tra gli altri, lo stesso Saviano, Don Patriciello, Raffaele Cantone: http://www.rai3.rai.it/dl/PortaliRai/Programmi/PublishingBlock-7bfd0eb9-2be2-4648-a7e1-612fa1375059.html?ContentItem-042328ea-9c89-4f3f-a4a0-f9ac5a47668b; http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2014/07/15/luigi-gubitosi-rai-gomorra_n_5587789.html.

20 Naturalmente sarebbe opportuno effettuare uno studio diacronico per verificare quanto di questo linguaggio si possa sedimentare, negli anni, tra il pubblico della serie.

21 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-JgjZcOzu8; https://www.facebook.com/realrapinvena/videos/vb.197238447004646/961431137252036/?type=2&theater

22 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-2vroTbnVs; https://www.facebook.com/1129751837051666/videos/vb.1129751837051666/1132939013399615/?type=2&theater

mitologizzante[23], i video – secondo i principi della remix culture[24] (Manovich, 2007) – abbondano di tecniche memetiche (Chen 2012; Dawkins, 2006), crossover, mash-up e intrecci intermediali.

In realtà, nel caso di *Gomorra*, tra mainstream e *grassroot*, tra produzione e fan, ha svolto un ruolo decisivo un terzo attore in grado di generare una relazione ambivalente tra i materiali *bottom up* e quelli ufficiali: parliamo del collettivo The Jackal. Inquadrabili come Pro-Am (Leadbeater & Miller, 2004) che lavorano con standard professionali, i Jackal sfondano i limiti della mitologia interna alla Rete, per approdare ed essere riconosciuti e apprezzati nei media generalisti, compiendo quel passaggio da subcultura a prodotto/personaggio mainstream di cui parla Boccia Artieri (2008).

Un tale successo di pubblico è stato reso possibile dalla cosiddetta "Trilogia della frittura", una produzione web in tre minipuntate, ufficialmente conosciuta come *Gli effetti di Gomorra sulla gente*, che è valsa ai Jackal un capitale complessivo di 10 milioni di visualizzazioni.

La miniopera del collettivo partenopeo lavora tutta all'interno del regime discorsivo della parodia: il testo audiovisivo è progettato per mostrare un fantomatico signor Cavastano (Ciro Priello) — un camorrista che si rivela da subito ridicolo — che esercita modi da "guappo" nei confronti del povero Fabio (Fabio Balsamo), vittima di lunghissime conversazioni *nonsense* nutrite dalle ossessive citazioni dei personaggi della serie. L'affermazione popolare di questo dispositivo spettacolare deriva da una fondamentale intuizione dei Jackal: essi hanno compreso che l'elemento di riconoscibilità della serie risiede esattamente nella sua ricchezza linguistica la quale, sapientemente manipolata[25], è in grado di rievocare movenze, tic, stile comunicativo dei vari personaggi. L'escamotage inventato dagli sceneggiatori della "Trilogia della frittura" consiste nel concentrare nel signor Cavastano le diverse figure camorristiche della serie televisiva, ottenendo così un duplice risultato: in primis, costruire esperimenti di rottura che evidenziano l'assurdità e l'incomprensibilità del camorrista[26]; in

secondo luogo, elaborare uno stratagemma finzionale con cui dare vita ad una sottile parodia del fandom stesso di *Gomorra - La serie*, come dimostrano – oltre che il titolo scelto per la miniproduzione (*Gli effetti di Gomorra sulla gente*) – le numerose battute di Fabio all'indirizzo di Cavastano che mettono in evidenza come quest'ultimo stia letteralmente rimasticando i dialoghi della serie in un mood ossessivo in grado di mettere a repentaglio anche la propria salute psichica.

La miniserie si è radicata nell'immaginario non solo di un vasto pubblico di appassionati, ma anche di un pugno di youtuber, condizionandone le produzioni: tuttavia, se i The Jackal immettono in rete una reale pratica di produttività testuale, i loro epigoni imbastiscono invece quelle che, riprendendo Hills (2013), che a sua volta richiama un lavoro di Fiske (1992), possiamo considerare mere pratiche di "mimetic textual productivity", con un uso predominante di mash-up, remix e photogallery.

La trilogia de *Gli effetti di Gomorra* si è pertanto consolidata come modello dei vari artefatti *grassroot* plasmati dal fandom, rappresentandone contemporaneamente la chiave di lettura: i Jackal hanno cioè confezionato un deposito di risorse simboliche, a cui hanno attinto quasi tutti i video successivi[27] e su cui essi stessi sono tornati, in una sorta di autoparodia[28].

Numerosi prodotti derivativi sono ben lontani dagli standard estetico-narrativi dei Jackal e, nondimeno, raggiungono discreti risultati in termini di visualizzazioni esclusivamente perché, secondo le logiche del "so bad is good" (Phillips, 2013), esibiscono i caratteri dell'eccentricamente scadente, del trash, del kitsch, attirando, per ciò stesso, la curiosità delle audience online.

07 **UN PARADOSSO "GLOCAL"**

Gomorra - La serie rappresenta, ad oggi, il prodotto televisivo seriale italiano più venduto e apprezzato all'estero, nonché uno dei rari casi che mette d'accordo pubblico e critica, sia in Italia che nei Paesi in cui è stato distribuito e visto. Le fanpage su Facebook rivelano la presa esercitata su un pubblico assai più vasto di quanto i dati di ascolto ufficiale possano certificare, evidenziando, allo stesso tempo, la spasmodica at-

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23   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3ZMP1WqQnE ; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84cPKnYghPA; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1T5N96OqJM.

24   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4gLKwE-Heo.

25   In relazione al film di Garrone vi era già stata un'efficace parodia; The Jackal sono però più incisivi nell'individuare la presa di Gomorra a livello del linguaggio. Vedi Gomorroide: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xz1uVvwuaUE.

26   Da notare che anche in uno dei capitoli della trilogia dei Jackal (*Gli effetti di Gomorra sulla gente #3*) vi sia un intervento di Saviano che prova a disambiguare il testo, sostenendo che scherzare sulla camorra, in fondo, è un'operazione benevola ed anzi utile a de-mitizzarne le gesta.

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27   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLHT4t77ADo&index=6&list=RDM4gLKwE-Heo; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CG5R1ZP7_M&list=RDM4gLKwE-Heo&index=7; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EysOW2JCZf4&index=8&list=RDM4gLKwE-Heo; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lJXr-ooCyI4

28   Vedi https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=51c-P-rOT8I&index=27&list=RDM4gLKwE-Heo e https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJZKRpAM3uE.

tesa della seconda stagione (che, in base alle notizie ad oggi disponibili, dovrebbe andare in onda nella primavera 2016). Eppure l'analisi, sebbene parziale, dei video dei fan pubblicati su YouTube svela, inaspettatamente, che essi sono in massima parte circoscrivibili ad un fenomeno locale[29].

Siamo in presenza, dunque, di un paradosso. Da un lato, infatti, la lingua napoletana usata dagli sceneggiatori — parzialmente ri-costruita e addolcita per essere compresa da un pubblico più ampio — appare una scelta vincente nel cadenzare la narrazione poiché strutturalmente musicale e ritmica, come i brani rap che punteggiano la serie. Dall'altro, questa stessa lingua, nel momento in cui diventa l'elemento pivotale attorno a cui ruotano le produzioni *grassroot* — a causa, soprattutto, dell'affermazione indiscutibile del modello Jackal — parrebbe agire come una barriera all'ingresso e come strumento di inclusione/esclusione. Se *Gomorra* è una serie dal radicamento globale, il fenomeno de *Gli effetti di Gomorra* ha determinato una localizzazione del fandom — di cui YouTube è il palcoscenico — che si risolve in una giocosa, ma complessa, strategia di rappresentazione identitaria campana.

08 **UNA TRANSMEDIALITÀ "DEBOLE"**

Se, dunque, grazie alla poderosa ristrutturazione tecno-culturale del sistema televisivo italiano, Sky Italia si è cimentata nella produzione autonoma di serialità televisiva, proiettando sui mercati internazionali almeno due opere di elevata qualità (*Romanzo Criminale* e *Gomorra – La serie*), la tv riconducibile a Rupert Murdoch non è riuscita a sviluppare un soddisfacente apparato di testi collaterali adibiti all'*engagement* delle audience, generando un vuoto simbolico in cui, con diversi obiettivi e mezzi, si sono inseriti Roberto Saviano, lo scrittore "padre" del *franchise* e interessato ad attestare la sua *authorship* anche sul progetto televisivo, e il mondo del fandom, che ha declinato la transmedialità in una vasta gamma di artefatti culturali online.

Normalmente il transmedia storytelling serve per ampliare il racconto attraverso più piattaforme: raramente il pubblico incide concretamente sulla storia. Interessante è dunque valutare da un lato le diverse declinazioni del testo (espansione diegetica), e dall'altro le concrete appropriazioni da parte dell'audience, in una dimensione *grassroot*. "A television drama series constructs a narrative world in which po-

tentially hundreds of episodes can be situated, the locations and characters that inhabit this world binding the events of individual episodes together. Drama invites a particular form of engagement from its audience, one that is based on their interaction with a fictional world." (Evans 2011: 10). Questo mondo narrativo è caratterizzato anche dal fatto che si sta parlando di un testo di fiction che è di qualità, e che quindi emerge dal flusso di cui parlava Williams (1974) e si propone come "essential viewing" (Jancovich & Lyons, 2003). Un programma di questo genere non può essere visto in modo distratto, casuale (Furby, 2007). Per quel che riguarda un testo narrativo che viene veicolato attraverso più media, a partire dalle teorizzazioni di Genette (1997) si è compreso che la narrazione è plasmata più da tutto quanto ruota attorno al testo — adattamenti, spin-off, merchandising, attività di marketing, ecc. (il paratesto) — che dal testo stesso (cfr. sul transmedia storytelling Pearson, 2009). John Caldwell (2003) ha parlato a tal proposito di "second shift aesthetics": nelle sue ricerche, ad esempio, le fan di *Dawson's Creek* sono indotte a frequentare il website della serie per ottenere informazioni aggiuntive, e da lì, poi, fluttuano verso i siti di merchandising. Secondo questa lettura del fenomeno, la transmedialità è propriamente un'operazione di marketing diretta dalla produzione, e identifica il flusso dell'audience da un medium all'altro ma sempre attraverso un legame con il testo principale, del quale i diversi testi satellite offrono una promozione commerciale. Le cose sono cambiate rispetto a questa lettura iniziale: secondo Geoffrey Long (2007: 22) "Retelling a story in a different media type is adaptation, while using multiple media types to craft a single story is transmediation". E, come suggerisce Jenkins (2006: 95), la transmedialità si ottiene: "integrating multiple texts to create a narrative so large that it cannot be contained within a single medium". Infatti,

> the non-televisual (or filmic) elements of the text are not produced as secondary to a primary source; they are instead part of a synergistic whole, with each contributing to the experience of the viewer in different ways. Narrative is key to the construction of a transmedia text; it is because a narrative world becomes so large that it is necessary to make use of additional platforms (Evans 2011: 28).

Il testo base funziona come un *source text*, dal quale si diramano i vari sviluppi transmediali che sono in continuità e contestualmente differenti (ad esempio esplorando e sviluppando momenti che mancano nel testo iniziale). Secondo

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29 Uno dei pochi video non campani: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NaeU8jXOh9Y.

Jenkins (2006: 96), infatti, "in the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, each medium does what it does best — so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics, and its world might be explored and experienced through game play". Non serve un adattamento "stretto" tra un medium e l'altro: alcuni elementi della storia sono sviluppati grazie alle potenzialità di un medium, mentre altri possono essere tralasciati e via di seguito. Oltre a queste caratteristiche che riguardano la storia stessa, la nuova transmedialità, secondo Evans e altri (Hills, 2002), rispetto alla sua prima accezione, presuppone una congruenza nella sua autorialità: tutti i prodotti transmediali vengono da uno stesso produttore/autore. La questione su chi sia autore, se il singolo individuo, o la produzione, dipende dal fatto che l'autorialità è legata al singolo medium; facilmente riconoscibile nel cinema diventa via via più sfumata nei contesti televisivi e dei nuovi media: "in many transmedia television texts a sense of authorship is not necessarily attributed to an individual but instead to the larger production and broadcast institutions behind those individuals" (Evans 2011: 33). L'ultimo elemento che si rende necessario perché si possa effettivamente parlare di transmedia storytelling è il tempo: a differenza dei tempi del merchandising o dell'adattamento, un testo transmediale deve essere prodotto nei tempi adatti, rispettando quelli televisivi e mantenendo una coerenza interna al racconto (il che richiama con maggiore rigore l'importanza di una riconosciuta autorialità che è infatti in grado di gestire e coordinare i tempi). In definitiva, dunque, per avere un transmedia storytelling è necessaria una coerenza narrativa, autoriale e temporale. In funzione di questi criteri, quale tipo di transmedia storytelling sviluppa *Gomorra*? Partendo dalla cronaca giornalistica, il nucleo narrativo centrale dell'universo di *Gomorra* attraversa la letteratura, il cinema, il teatro, la televisione. Tuttavia, possiamo rinvenire un progetto autoriale forte che coordini tali operazioni? Il collante è il ruolo riconosciuto a Saviano, quale *auctoritas* in grado di supervisionare e "benedire" il lavoro di tutti coloro operano sull'incandescente materiale del romanzo. In qualche modo, seppur forzando l'analisi (in quanto lo scrittore partenopeo ha partecipato ai vari progetti ma con "pesi" assai differenti dall'uno all'altro), potremmo riconoscere un'intenzione autoriale ai transiti mediali del blocco narrativo centrale. Ma se per avere una transmedialità "forte" occorre, da un lato, che si esplorino le singole potenzialità di ciascun medium per espandere, integrare e potenziare l'universo narrativo su cui si sta lavorando (Jenkins, 2006) e, dall'altro, che questa esplorazione sia accompagnata da una coerenza temporale e narrativa, progettata dalla produzione, possiamo

escludere che *Gomorra* possa esibire tale proprietà. Sotto il profilo della coerenza temporale, infatti, possiamo dire che la produzione cinematografica e quella televisiva abbiano lavorato, rispettivamente tra il 2008-2009 e il 2013, senza che ci fosse nessuna piattaforma di progettazione e, probabilmente, quando è iniziato il progetto di Garrone nessuno stava pensando alla realizzazione di una serie tv nella stessa temporalità diegetico-finzionale. Per quanto concerne la coerenza narrativa, analizzando entrambi i prodotti, appare evidente come non sussista alcuna forma di coordinamento: è vero che le due opere confezionano del materiale narrativo originale, ma non si rileva un chiaro tentativo di integrare l'impianto del film e della serie in un unico universo narrativo, al cui arricchimento ciascun medium dovrebbe contribuire secondo le proprie peculiarità: in sintesi, i due progetti lavorano su binari paralleli, pur mostrando, in modalità differenti, una serie di richiami al *source text* (il romanzo) originario. Inoltre, come spiegato in precedenza, la produzione non ha allestito gli strumenti di engagement del fandom di cui si è discusso. Alla luce di quanto sottolineato, possiamo avanzare l'ipotesi che quella al lavoro rispetto ai vari transiti mediali di *Gomorra* sia una transmedialità "debole", caratterizzata, cioè, da un'espansione finzionale piuttosto casuale e irregolare, secondo l'accumularsi di progetti (cinema, tv, teatro, ecc.) accomunati soltanto dal riferimento al romanzo di Saviano. Negli interstizi di questo transmedia storytelling confusionario, eppure ricco di stimoli e potenzialità socioculturali, si inserisce con impetuosa forza tutto il lavoro *grassroot* del fandom, che completa, arreda, convoglia nuove energie emotive, culturali e artistiche, andando a rispondere ad esigenze di partecipazione e appropriazione identitaria, che i soli canali ufficiali di comunicazione social e web della produzione non riuscivano a soddisfare. La stessa implementazione, per la prima volta in Italia, di una serie di pratiche di fandom di massa, in grado di spostare gli equilibri e attirare l'interesse persino di media mainstream, è un'ulteriore dimostrazione della capacità di *Gomorra* di giocare ad armi pari – ovvero con uguale capacità affabulatoria e dotazione di icone, simboli e storie complesse – con la serialità televisiva d'oltreoceano.

CONCLUSIONI

Come detto, l'obiettivo cognitivo del presente lavoro è quello di osservare un prodotto come *Gomorra - La serie* alla luce dell'interessante dibattito sul transmedia storytelling. La nostra ipotesi è che per questa serie non si possa parlare

di opera transmediale totale. Per verificare tale ipotesi il saggio affronta i principali snodi della serie, soffermandosi sull'analisi del modello per poi osservare da vicino le relazioni intrattenute dal prodotto audiovisivo rispetto alle altre declinazioni mediali. Attraverso questa ricognizione sono emersi alcuni aspetti interessanti discussi nel corso del saggio. Ad esempio, la struttura narrativa e la costruzione dei personaggi sono state osservate da vicino per argomentare, in linea con la letteratura sull'argomento, come la serie abbia presa sul pubblico e ne consenta l'identificazione, a dispetto del tema e dei personaggi e a dispetto anche del ruolo ermeneutico di Saviano. A tal proposito, e in riferimento al sotteso tema della transmedialità, è stato analizzato lo spazio occupato da Saviano nel tessere l'evoluzione intermediale di *Gomorra*.

Gomorra - La serie è stata quindi esaminata anche nella sua appropriazione *grassroot*, mediante l'osservazione di molti ambienti online e, principalmente, di prodotti audiovisivi veicolati attraverso la piattaforma YouTube. Le culture partecipative sono state analizzate sia in riferimento al tema portante della transmedialità, sia in relazione ad alcuni aspetti di cui si è discusso, come l'ambiguità dell'audience, la dialettica locale/globale, le emergenze in tema di parodie e fanvideo. Infine, la presunta transmedialità della serie è stata osservata anche alla luce della produzione web ad opera del collettivo The Jackal: come si è cercato di argomentare, la miniserie prodotta da The Jackal ha colmato un vuoto lasciato dalla produzione, costituendosi di fatto come link tra la produzione stessa e l'universo degli UGC che ruotano attorno a *Gomorra - La serie*.

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AMBIENTI CHE COSTRUISCONO IL RACCONTO: LE SCENOGRAFIE DI *GOMORRA – LA SERIE*

INTERVISTA A PAKI MEDURI

Uno dei punti caratterizzanti di *Gomorra – La serie* è stato senza dubbio il lavoro sulle scenografie: il contrasto tra gli spazi cittadini, grigi e ingovernabili, e le abitazioni dei gangster, stipate di suppellettili dal gusto eccessivo, immagini religiose e figure di animali, contribuisce a definire i personaggi e gli archi di trasformazione che questi attraversano e, più ancora, rappresenta uno degli elementi di continuità della prima stagione.

Abbiamo intervistato Paki Meduri, lo scenografo di *Gomorra*, mentre si trovava proprio a Scampia, il quartiere napoletano in cui è ambientata buona parte della serie, durante una pausa nella lavorazione della seconda stagione, e gli abbiamo chiesto di parlarci del suo background professionale, di come ha ideato le scene, del modo in cui il suo lavoro sul set si è integrato con quello degli sceneggiatori per costruire l'universo narrativo in cui si muovono i Savastano.

N *Come si diventa scenografi per la TV? Quali competenze è necessario acquisire per fare questo mestiere?*

M Come per altri lavori: si studia e si fa molta, molta pratica sul campo. Io sono architetto, ho lavorato dapprima come scenografo teatrale, poi dal teatro sono passato a fare i primi cortometraggi, i videoclip, le pubblicità, i film per il cinema e recentemente le serie per la TV. Non esiste un percorso di studi specifico per diventare scenografo per la TV, nel senso della fiction.

Il tipo di specializzazione che uno ha richiede formazioni diverse e soprattutto comporta l'appartenenza a circuiti professionali di fatto distinti. Fare lo scenografo per la TV dal vivo, allestire un palco e uno studio, richiede un altro genere di trafila. Anche la pubblicità è un settore separato sia dalla fiction TV sia dal cinema. È raro che uno scenografo riesca a fare l'uno e l'altro. Chi ti conosce come scenografo di pubblicità non ti conosce come scenografo per il cinema, e viceversa. Io riuscivo a fare un po' tutto, ma ultimamente mi sono orientato verso la TV e il cinema.

N *Da quante e quali persone è composta la tua équipe?*

M Gli scenografi hanno una squadra. Ho il mio arredatore, i miei assistenti, gli aiuti scenografi, gli attrezzisti di scena, gli attrezzisti di preparazione, gli aiuti attrezzisti, i manovali. Per *Gomorra* la squadra è abbastanza folta perché il lavoro che stiamo facendo è molto complesso.

N A *partire da cosa lavorate per costruire la scena? Come si passa materialmente dall'idea dell'ambiente all'ambiente ricostruito per la scena?*

M Si inizia cercando le location adatte a quello che si vuole raccontare. A volte queste location vanno modificate, altre volte invece è necessario costruire ex novo perché non si riesce a trovare un ambiente adatto. In questo caso si fa un progetto, se ne discute con il regista, con la produzione per capire qual è il budget a disposizione. Si fa una proposta al regista e da lì parte la discussione. Di base si fanno progetti e bozzetti.

N *Anche in Italia si sta diffondendo la figura del location manager; ci spieghi, in base alla tua esperienza, chi è e che tipo di lavoro fa?*

M Il location manager è il mezzo con cui lo scenografo realizza il luogo; se hai bisogno per esempio di un palazzetto dello sport, il location manager va a visionare un certo numero di palazzetti dello sport finché non ne trova uno adatto. Per me è importantissimo, soprattutto in un set come quello di

Gomorra in cui ci sono almeno due ambientazioni al giorno: io passo le giornate in macchina con il location manager. È una figura di raccordo, a metà tra reparti, tra scenografia e produzione. La sua appartenenza all'uno o all'altro dipende anche dai rapporti interni: per come lavoro io è il mio braccio destro. Di solito viene scelto di comune accordo, in base a rapporti consolidati con la produzione o con lo scenografo.

Fino a qualche anno chi girava film o serie al di fuori delle ambientazioni più familiari si rivolgeva a persone che avevano avuto esperienza con precedenti produzioni. Il location manager non ha sostituito del tutto queste figure, che continuano a essere interpellate come referenti locali, ma lavora come tramite tra queste e la produzione. Per *Gomorra*, ad esempio, abbiamo dei contatti in ogni zona di Napoli in cui lavoriamo: se dobbiamo girare a Scampia o a Ponticelli il location manager va dal referente locale e gli chiede di trovare un certo numero di case tra cui lo scenografo possa scegliere quella in cui girare.

N *Da spettatori si ha l'impressione che gli ambienti di Gomorra, ancora più delle vicende che coinvolgono i personaggi, siano il vero elemento di continuità della serie. In che modo la costruzione narrativa e la costruzione scenica si sono influenzate a vicenda? In che fase della lavorazione hai letto la sceneggiatura e come l'hai utilizzata?*

M Quando ho avuto le sceneggiature, e prima ancora il soggetto, ho iniziato a esplorare il territorio per capire, intanto, dove era stata pensata la storia, poi in che modo la sceneggiatura attribuiva a ogni personaggio un luogo caratterizzante (un quartiere, un palazzo, un'abitazione...). Questo lavoro è stato particolarmente importante e delicato, perché il nucleo narrativo della serie prende spunto da avvenimenti realmente accaduti e il nostro regista, Stefano Sollima, ci ha chiesto proprio di cercare di aderire quanto più possibile alla realtà.

Avevo un filo diretto con gli sceneggiatori, che a loro volta, ancora prima di me, avevano fatto un giro in queste zone. Quando, nella mia perlustrazione, vedevo delle cose che non mi tornavano li chiamavo e loro mi spiegavano le motivazioni che stavano dietro allo script, oppure cambiavamo insieme la sceneggiatura, chiaramente nella parte della descrizione dei luoghi, non per quanto riguarda i dialoghi e gli eventi. C'è uno strettissimo legame tra scrittura e creazione degli ambienti.

Poi, è normale che lo scenografo prenda la sceneggiatura e la faccia sua inventando degli ambienti che non esistono, sia per gli esterni, sia per gli interni. Quella che sullo schermo è ripresa come Scampia, ovviamente, non è solo Scampia, ma un

puzzle di quartieri. Idem per le case: gli esterni spesso sono in un quartiere e gli interni in un altro.

N *Questa sinergia così profonda tra reparti è tipica nella produzione della serialità italiana o Gomorra è un caso fortunato?*

M È un caso particolare. In *Gomorra* questo processo di confronto è stato possibile perché ci sono stati il tempo e la voglia di lavorare in maniera collaborativa. Altrimenti si è costretti a procedere in maniera fredda, impersonale, prendendo alla lettera la sceneggiatura.

Nel nostro caso, per fare un esempio ipotetico, se sulla sceneggiatura c'era scritto che una certa scena aveva come ambientazione un "esterno porto", ma secondo noi della scenografia sarebbe stato meglio girarla in un garage, abbiamo avuto la facoltà di riambientare la destinazione della scena, chiaramente avvertendo i nostri sceneggiatori e agendo d'accordo con loro. Questo è stato possibile perché condividevamo l'obiettivo di servire la scena, di renderla più credibile.

Non è un modo di lavorare comune, ma chi ha costruito *Gomorra* – penso soprattutto allo showrunner Stefano Sollima, che in questo ha avuto il pieno supporto dei produttori veri e propri – ha voluto applicare le regole del cinema di qualità alla serialità televisiva, quindi ha arruolato non solo registi (lo stesso Sollima, Claudio Cupellini, Francesca Comencini), ma professionisti – scenografo, costumista [Veronica Fragola, *ndr*], montatore [Patrizio Marone, *ndr*], direttore della fotografia [Paolo Carnera e Michele D'Attanasio, *ndr*] – che avevano esperienza con il cinema, abituati a tempi di lavorazione meno affrettati e processi più collaborativi.

N Tra gli oggetti più ricorrenti nella serie ci sono l*e immagini religiose, soprattutto figure di Padre Pio, e quelle di animali selvatici, che dominano le scene in interni, sia le abitazioni dei criminali sia quelle della gente comune. Come mai?*

M Potrei dire che l'idea è mia perché faccio io la scenografia del film. In realtà l'uso ossessivo di Padre Pio nasce quasi per sfida, dallo scontro tra una mia convinzione preesistente e la constatazione della realtà napoletana. Venendo qui a girare pensavo infatti che l'iconografia religiosa fosse molto presente a livello popolare, e non sbagliavo, ma quello che non avevo immaginato era la diffusione esorbitante di immagini di Padre Pio da Pietrelcina, che hanno praticamente surclassato lo stesso patrono San Gennaro.

Durante i sopralluoghi per gli interni della serie ho trovato in quasi tutte le case almeno una immagine o una foto di Padre Pio. Da lì è nata una specie di sfida e mi sono detto:

"Voglio usare Padre Pio in tutte le location in cui entro!". Ci sono riuscito, acquistando una quantità enorme di statue e immagini tutte diverse. Gli animali di ceramica, invece, sono un po' una mia firma: leoni, pappagalli, tori, cavalli, tigri... Anche Padre Pio alla fine sta diventando una mia firma!

N *Gli interni delle case dei gangster sono coloratissimi, kitsch e iperdefiniti. Tranne quello di Ciro di Marzio, come mai?*

M Ciro è un personaggio che cerca di mantenere un basso profilo. Anche qui abbiamo preso spunto dalla cronaca: nella realtà quelli come Ciro – ambiziosi, cauti – preferiscono non essere troppo visibili, pur avendo tantissimi soldi, mentre altri che sono più stolti o più ingenui ostentano il loro benessere, ma di solito fanno una brutta fine.

Quello che ho più caratterizzato, anche dal punto di vista attoriale, è il personaggio di Salvatore Conte, ritraendolo come invasato, pazzo, psicopatico, circondato da ninnoli sacri, belve, animali, Madonne e Cristi. Nella seconda stagione si vedrà anche la sua casa. Lì mi sono divertito molto, e vedrete...

Intervista realizzata
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