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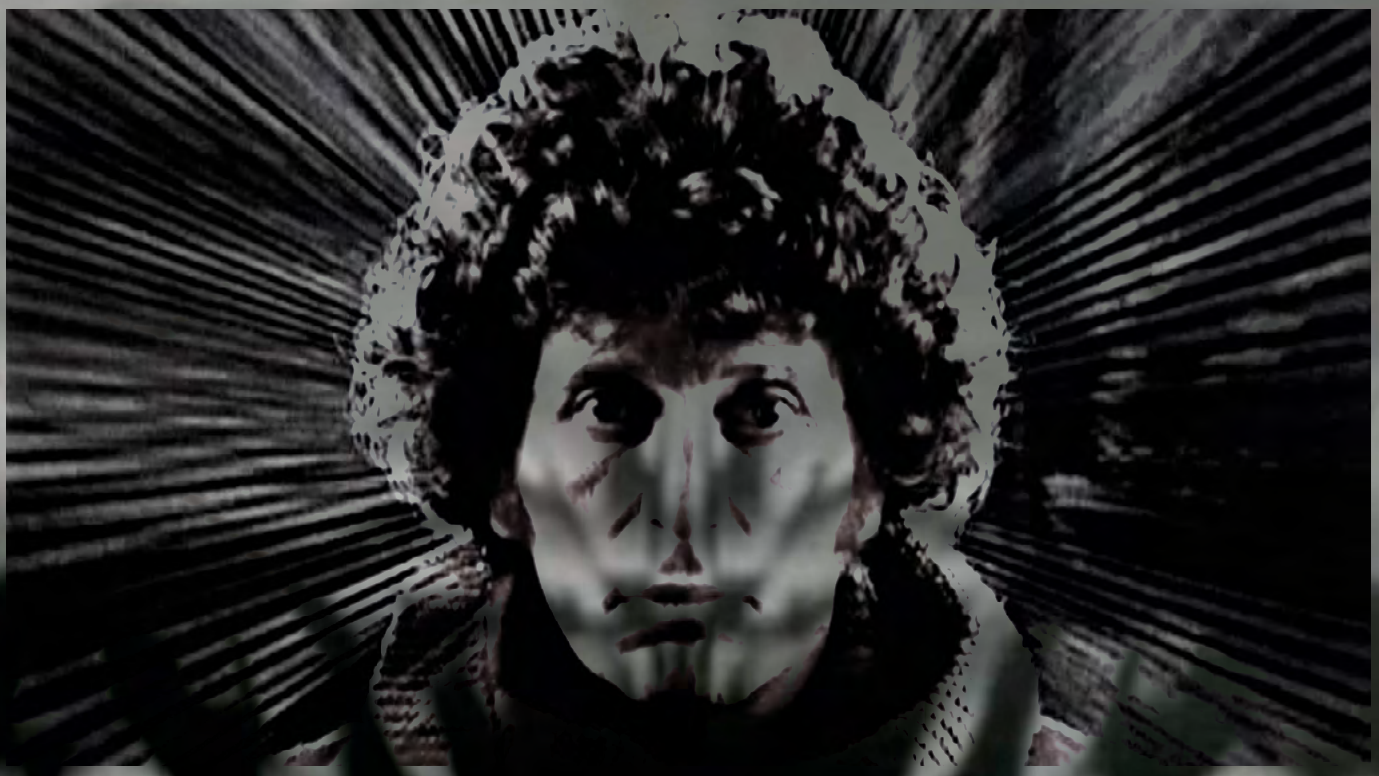

* Tom Baker was the Doctor Who between 1974 and 1981

ALMA MATER STUDIORUM UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA · UNIVERSITAT POLITÈCNICA DE VALÈNCIA

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SERIES has two main purposes: first, to respond to the surge of scholarly interest in TV series in the past few years, and compensate for the lack of international journals specializing in TV seriality; and second, to focus on TV seriality through the involvement of scholars and readers from both the English-speaking world and the Mediterranean and Latin American regions. This is the reason why the journal's official languages are Italian, Spanish and English.

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E-MAIL ADDRESS
seriesjournal.org@gmail.com

HOMEPAGE
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GEOGRAPHICA

FROM WRITTEN UTOPIA TO AUDIOVISUAL DYSTOPIA. THE SERIAL AND CINEMATOGRAPHIC ADAPTATIONS OF *THE TYPESCRIPT OF THE SECOND ORIGIN*

ANNA TOUS-ROVIROSA

Name Anna Tous-Rovirosa
Academic centre Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain
E-mail address anna.tous@uab.cat

KEYWORDS
Catalan TV series; film; adaptation; intertextuality; recurrence themes.

ABSTRACT
Following the recent cinematic adaptation of Manuel de Pedrolo's novel (*Mecanoscrit del segon origen*, 1974), this article undertakes a comparison of the various adaptations for the big and small screen. The series, produced by TVC and shown from 1985-1986, was directed by Ricard Reguant. It is composed of 7 episodes and had Manuel de Pedrolo himself as script writer. The 2015 film *Segon origen*, directed by Carles Porta and Bigas Luna, has a running time of 102 minutes. The starting point for this comparison will be its assignment to the science fiction genre as a utopic or dystopic product. Comparisons will be drawn with other audiovisual and literary products, as well as the original 1974 *Mecanoscrit* novel. The methodology used is to compare these two cultural productions, especially in regard to issues of myth, genre, intertextuality and adaptation.

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1. **INTRODUCTION**[1]

Shortly after the inauguration of Televisió de Catalunya (the first Catalan Television broadcaster), the writer and lover of science fiction Manuel de Pedrolo received a proposal to convert his most well-known novel, *Mecanoscrit del segon origen* (Typescript of the Second Origin), into TV3's first drama series. Pedrolo had recently rejected Bigas Luna's proposal to adjust the novel for the cinema, and he immediately agreed to work with Reguant and the brand-new Catalan television industry.

Following *Segon origen* (Second Origin, 2015), the latest cinematographic adaption of Manuel de Pedrolo's novel (Typescript of the Second Origin, 1974), a comparison can be drawn between the small and large screen adaptions of *Typescript*[2]. The series, produced by TVC and shown in 1985-1986, was directed by Ricard Reguant and is comprised of 7 episodes, with Xesc Barceló working as script writer under the supervision of Manuel de Pedrolo himself. The 2015 film *Segon Origen,* by Carles Porta and Bigas Luna, has a running time of 102 minutes and was produced by Antàrtida Produccions and Ipso Facto Films, with a contribution from Televisió de Catalunya and 30% from the United Kingdom (Second Origin UK Ltd).

The novel narrates the story of a white 14 year-old girl, Alba, and Dídac, a black 9 year-old boy from a little village in Catalonia. They become the two only remaining humans on Earth after they accidentally survive an alien holocaust that eradicates life on the planet. Alba and Dídac's main struggle is to survive in a post-apocalyptic world, escaping physical hazards, but they also try to preserve culture and save the human species. This has been an important novel for several generations in Catalonia as it has been compulsory reading on school curricula for years.

This article's aim is to test the following proposal: If we compare two different productions, both based on the same novel, they will probably maintain the same main theme or myth. Our main argument is that they will maintain it but it is also possible that the form in which the theme or myth is communicated changes, due to the 30 years lapse between the different works, amongst other factors (such as authorship, production conditions and formats). Another important question is whether myth is updated or copied in these two cultural productions. That is: if a theme or myth is transmitted without updating, that will be just a copy (significant, level of expression), not a real update. Otherwise, myth can be transmitted with a real updating (significance, level of content)[3].

The methodology used is to compare these two cultural productions, especially regarding the following issues: myth, genre, intertextuality and adaptation. Scholars such as Brunel, Duch, Ginzburg, Gubern, and Watt (myth and literary themes), Ryan (genre), Genette, Lévi-Strauss and Greimas (intertextuality); Stam, Hutcheon and Leitch (adaptation) define the theoretical background from which this analysis is made. Comparison is based on both diacronical and synchronical perspectives, in order to distinguish between generic marks, intertextuality, myth and recurrence themes.

Themes in cultural productions can be divided into: generic recurrence themes, intertextual recurrence themes, transmission recurrence themes and mythical recurrence (Tous-Rovirosa 2008: 220). We can divide recurrence into Mythical Recurrence, Thematic Recurrence, or Generic Recurrence. As stated by Ryan (1979), Generic Recurrence can also be divided into Compulsory Generic Recurrence, Optional Generic Recurrence or Independent Generic Recurrence.

Through this analysis we will be able to define which of these typologies are being used by each of the analysed works and what can be inferred from these uses.

In order to compare the two works, science fiction as a utopic or dystopic form will serve as the starting point. The texts will be examined alongside other audiovisual and literary products[4] and the original *Typescript* novel of 1974[5].

2. **CONTEXT OF PRODUCTIONS**

Before starting with the comparison, it is important to describe the conditions of production. As we are discussing film (*Segon origen*) and television (*Mecanoscrit del segon origen*), we cannot study it without reference to subsequent and other directly related items. The two audiovisual productions

1 This article has benefited from Josie Swarbrick's translation.

2 As the TV series and Pedrolo's novel are homonymous, we will refer to the TV series as *Mecanoscrit del segon origen* and to the novel as *Typescript* (because this latter has been translated into English).

3 Saussure *apud* Greimas and Courtés, 1982: 375-378; Hjemslev *apud* Eco, 1990.

4 Such as the film *Los últimos días* (David and Àlex Pastor, 2013), the series *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi, 2004-2009) and the novel *Fin* (David Monteagudo, 2009) and the film of the same title (Jorge Torregrossa, 2012).

5 The translation used in this paper is Sara Martin Alegre's edition and translation of the *Typescript of the Second Origin*, published by **Institut d'Estudis Ilerdencs of the Diputació de Lleida, 2016.**

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were made thirty years apart from each other. When comparing two different audiovisual productions such as a television series and a film, one can run into some difficulties, which in this case are accentuated by the time that separates the two works. Regarding economic and technological resources, there is a great difference between the two productions. In an interview (Busquets 2015), Reguant mentions that Pedrolo insisted on using "the aliens", which due to the production conditions of the time implied an added difficulty – as can be seen in the resulting episodes. The director would have preferred a "nuclear disaster" (Reguant 2010). Consequently, it is important to remember that this is a series produced by TVC, 9 years before the release of *Poblenou* (1994), the channel's first serial. *Mecanoscrit del segon origen* was Televisió de Catalunya's first drama series, shown in 1985, one year before the production and release of TV3's first sit-com *Carme i David, Cuina, Menjador i Llit*, directed by Orestes Lara with a script by a famous Catalan writer, Terenci Moix (Martínez 2008).

The seven thirty-minute episodes were shown on Sundays at 9pm by TV3, from December 1985 to February 1986. The budget was 15 million pesetas (approximately 90,000 euros) and it was filmed on video over a period of seven weeks, with unknown actors, aside from the collaboration of Maria Fernanda Gil in the epilogue. In the casting process to find the main actress to play Alba, one of the most emblematic characters in Catalonian culture, all 200 hundred participants were rejected, including the now acclaimed actresses Lidia Bosch (well known because she participated in Spanish TV series such as *La Hermandad, Águila Roja, Los Serrano, Médico de Familia*) and Ariadna Gil (main actress in, for instance, the movies *El laberinto del fauno, Alatriste,* and *Belle Époque*). Àgueda Font was discovered by chance, when she was still studying at the Institut del Teatre. Dídac was played by Guillem d'Efak (son of the Mallorcan singer with the same name), and Moisés Torner played the same character as an adolescent. The decision was made to dub the actors due to their lack of experience.

Regarding to the locations, the ruined town of Belchite, near Zaragoza was chosen. It was destroyed during the civil war and is often used in North-American productions. Scenes were also shot in Sant Carles de la Ràpita, Sant Miquel del Fai, Caldes de Montbui, Mallorca and L'Escala, among others. The fact that the producers 'took advantage' of a real fire for certain scenes gives an idea of the filming conditions of the time.

Reviews of the series were generally not very positive, but its impact on the media was considerable. At the time, the media gave considerable coverage to TV3's first outing as a producer (Baget Herms and Victor Amela in *La Vanguardia*, Ramon Miravitllas and Joaquim Coca in *El Periódico*, among other journalists and television critics). Ratings figures are not available, because TV3 did not start measuring audiences until 1991. Following the broadcast, the front covers of one of the best-selling books in Catalonia showed scenes from the film. The series was repeated twice: on TV3 (1987) and on City TV (2003). The format was conceived as a mini-series (3 half-hour episodes), but in the end it was decided to make a short-lived series.

When Ricard Reguant met with Manuel de Pedrolo, the author considered the adaption of the novel to a series a good idea. He was not surprised, precisely because he had just rejected Bigas Luna's proposal about directing a science fiction film based on *Typescript of the Second Origin*. Ricard Reguant explains why:

> Bigas Luna wanted to make the film in Spanish (there would be no other way to finance it) and Pedrolo didn't like that at all, he was very pro-Catalan. So when I suggested making a series for TV3 in Catalan, the first to be produced by TV3, he said yes immediately (Reguant 2016)[6].

Just as Reguant explains, aside from the financial issues, script supervision was included in the negotiations with Pedrolo, as well as the choice of the protagonist and other specifics like the aforementioned aliens, in order to remain faithful to the novel. Today, "faithfulness" is a controversial and in some ways obsolete concept according to several scholars of adaptation (Stam 2000; Hutcheon 2006, Leitch, 2008), but it was an important issue for the writer. Our perspective is close to Hutcheon's point of view, as she states that adaptations are creative and interpretive acts: "Deliberate, announced, and extended revisitations of prior works" (Hutcheon 2006: xiv). Our interests here are even more closely aligned with Stam's questions:

> Film adaptations can be seen as a kind of multileveled negotiation of intertexts. Therefore, it is often productive to ask these questions: Precisely what generic intertexts are invoked by the source novel,

6 "En Bigas Luna volia fer la pel·lícula en castellà (d'altra manera no l'hauria pogut finançar) i això de cap manera li agradava a Pedrolo, que era molt catalanista. De manera que quan jo li vaig fer la proposta per a TV3 i en català, la primera sèrie produïda per TV3, em va dir que si de seguida".

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> and which by the filmic adaptation? Which generic signals in the novel are picked up, and which are ignored? (Stam 2000: 67).

Manuel de Pedrolo was against an adaptation of the *Typescript* into Spanish because he was very pro-Catalan and his literary *oeuvre* was censored for decades by Franco's dictatorship. However, he was especially interested in Reguant's proposal because it came from TV3. That very year, shortly after the success of *E.T.*, Bigas Luna created another series for TV3, *Kiu and his friends* (*Kiu i els seus amics*, 1985), about a group of five children that become friends with an alien (1982). It was composed of 17 half-hour episodes, which were shown on Sundays at 9pm, from the 6th of October 1985.

Bigas Luna's film project, which had been rejected by Pedrolo, is in fact *Segon Origen,* which finally materialised thirty years after their conversations. Interestingly, it was co-produced by TVC. The filming conditions and production had little to do with those of the earlier television series. In *Segon Origen* the aliens are only referred to at the beginning of the film, even though Carles Porta used sophisticated special effects, unlike Reguant's production. In fact, in the film it is not aliens who destroy Earth, but the humans themselves: "nowadays what people are worried about is climate change, tsunamis, nuclear explosions... things that exist much more in the actual imaginary of people today", Porta affirmed (Salvà 2015). The director, who continued the project started by Bigas Luna following his death, was quite faithful to Luna's original idea but not to his intention to make a 3D film (Llopart 2014, 2015). Furthermore, he opted for a more realistic style than the original filmaker intended. While Bigas Luna asserted that "*Segon Origen* will be my science fiction debut and I want it to be magical", Porta favoured realism: "As much realism as can be found in the apocalypse, of course." (Llopart 2015). The film is a United Kingdom-Spain co-production, and is technically ambitious. All of the actors were cast by Bigas Luna, with the exception of 'the man', played by Sergi Lopez, who was chosen by Carles Porta.

3. THE SCIENCE FICTION AND HORROR GENRES

The science fiction and horror genres have been understood as arising from periods of societal crisis. Both genres have experienced surges of popularity in the wake of war, such as in the 1960s, during the Cold War, or after 9/11 (Tous-Rovirosa 2009). There is a relationship between reality (war) and audiovisual narrative (science fiction). The science fiction and horror genres allow the creation of metaphors to interpret reality. Things that are unintelligible, strange, unexplainable, and alien become a metaphor for the enemy, and they tend to be interpreted in a Manichean way, an apt reading strategy for the oppositions of wartime (Frank 2011: 159-62). However, that is not the case we have here. Audiovisual and literary products such as *Los últimos días* (2013), and to a certain extent *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009), the novel *Fin* (2009) by David Monteagud, and the film of the same name by Jorge Torregrossa (2012), to mention a few recent and familiar examples, show humanity destroyed by an external force, an alien danger against which there is little chance of fighting back (a generic marker of science fiction).[7] One aspect of the Apocalyptic science fiction genre[8] is the destruction of the present in order to propose a better future (utopic) or a worse one (dystopic). There is an important difference to be observed here between the two productions, since the tone of the TV series (*Mecanoscrit del segon origen*), as with that of the book, is utopic (after the destruction one couple can create a new world), while the opening of the thriller starring Sergi Lopez introduces a dystopic tone in the film (*Segon origen*), as we will see below.

The notion of intertextuality seems to be essential when we face these issues. Amongst other scholars, it has been studied by Barthes (1968), Genette (1982), and Kristeva (1966, 1996), and it can be defined as the process through which quotes and recurrences establish a certain relationship with themes and their referents (Tous-Rovirosa 2008: 34). As we are also dealing with myth, we must bear in mind Lévi-Strauss's statement that myths appear as intertextual objects in the texts (Greimas-Courtés 1982: 228).

Although presented differently as a result of the different filmmaking technologies and resources available to the television series and the film, ruined cities and villages appear in both. Each, for example, features a ruined and uninhabited Barcelona. The statue of Christopher Columbus, and Güell Park in the series and the Eixample in the film, are devastated. The main Catalunya square is ruined in both cases, and the motorway is completely blocked by all the cars that stopped there when at the moment of catastrophe. Columbus is al-

7 Alba, in the series, successfully confronts the aliens (epsiode four), using force, specifically the supersonic pistol that also appears in the novel.

8 This is the subgenre in which the *Typescript* productions are included. The Post-Apocalyptic subgenre focuses on the devastating effects of the catastrophe, but with a humankind that has been completely modified.

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so employed as a symbol of the destruction. In *Mecanoscrit del segon origen*, the 1980s series, Columbus and some of the ruined buildings were models built by Agnès Ricart. The arrival of the protagonists in a Barcelona strewn with abandoned cars and corpses was filmed on Icària Avenue, and the run-down shops in Catalunya square was in fact the El Corte Inglés department store, requisitioned to shoot extra scenes of destruction. In the film *Segon origen*, the ruined landscapes are particularly recognizable – the Seu Vella de Lleida, Diagonal Avenue, the Camp Nou football stadium and Catalunya square. Filming was carried out in Lleida (Salvà 2015) and in Tarragona (for the coastal scenes).

The initial setting of the TV series is rural, whereas the film includes both both rural and urban settings. Like the novel, both come to an end by the sea. Porta introduces Menorca into the plot of the thriller in the film. The combination of urban and plant debris, as well as various scenes of the ruined city, evoke images from *Los últimos días* (2013). Just as *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009) presents a clear confrontation between cylons and humans, in many audiovisual productions the origin of the apocalypse is not so clear, as in *Segon Origen*. The Pastor brothers' film begins with a mysterious pandemic and in the two versions of *Fin*, its origin is never made clear.

In both versions of *Typescript*, the TV series and the film, the areas of destruction and chaos generated by invasion (as in *V* or *Falling Skies*), as well as flight from present-day cities, also represent generic markers (Ryan 1979) of science fiction. In H.G. Wells's novel *The War of the Worlds* (1898) the humans barely have time to run away, evacuating their cities in a disorderly fashion. Wells describes the chaos and flight in a literary fashion. This recurrent devastation of cities leaves deserted, desolate, ash-covered scenes, whether in real life[9] or in many fictional representations such as, for example, Steven Spielberg's 2005 of *The War of the Worlds* and the television series *Falling Skies* (2011-2015), which shows the destruction of Boston. The city as a symbol of civilisation (for example, in both versions of the series *V*) and of technological progress (for example *Person of Interest*, 2011-2016), is the key site for destruction and annihilation by invaders as a generic marker of science fiction. Both productions, *Segon origen* and *Mecanoscrit del segon origen*, also share nature holding the promise of escape and new life (which is a thematic recurrence of the apocalyptic fiction as a genre).

As has been mentioned, aliens do not appear in the film, whereas in the TV series Alba physically confronts them, eliminating them with the "supersonic pistol" that also appears in the novel. As explained by Carlos Scolari (2005), aliens as a recurrent figure in science fiction are characterised by their superiority to humans, and are their antagonists. They appear in multiple and diverse audiovisual productions, like both *V* (1983-1985; 2009-2011), the original *Battlestar Galactica* (1978); *The X Files* (1993-2002), the homonymous mini-series (2016) and *Falling Skies*. The radical difference between the two species, as well as the intrinsic evil of the alien, as opposed to the absolute goodness or angelisation of human beings[10], makes communication impossible and justifies human cruelty and evil. In *Segon Origen* there are no aliens. Instead, in Carles Porta's dystopic project, it is the human being – "the man" with no name played by Sergi Lopez – who is the antagonist, the anti-hero who confirms the human being's lack of goodness. And it has got exactly the same meaning as the alien in Frank'sinterpretation, related to science fiction (Frank 2011: 159-60)[11].

The scenes featuring aliens in the 1980s series serve to reinforce the protagonist's status as heroine thanks to her skills that we have already explained (like the attempted rape), and how she finds a way to survive (Robinson Crusoe's myth, see Watt 1999; Duch 2000b). From among the recurring alien characteristics in science fiction (a genre that Pedrolo knew well), the aliens in the TV series stand out for their total lack of communication and powerful supremacy, despite their unhappy ending. In other words, the aliens and the survivors never establish any kind of dialogue beyond aggression. The aliens do not appear in the series until episode four, when Alba is forced to shoot one in self-defence. Just as in their other depictions across the 1980s series, their appearance in this scene is quite rudimentary in terms of technical craft. As Reguant states, Pedrolo was unyielding in negotiations with him and Xesc Barceló: "He liked the flying saucers and all the paraphenalia of science fiction" (Reguant 2010). Compared with the wide variety of aliens that can feature in science fiction (see Hockley 2001, Scolari 2005, Tous-Rovirosa 2013b), those of *Typescript* (in the novel and the TV series) respond to a monolithic model: there is no communication with the

9 For example, in journalistic images taken on the eleventh of September (11-S).

10 The plot is reversed in *Avatar* and *District 9,* two politically correct films that turn a critical eye to the human being, from ecological and anti-racist points of view.

11 "In a society immersed in the movie mythology *of Invasion of the Body Snatchers, Alien, Predator, Independence Day* and *The X-Files*, the meaning of the term 'alien terrorist' oscillates between 'extra-terrestrial parasite' and 'foreign enemy' without any sense of absurd" (Jackson 2005: 71, in Frank 2011: 60).

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survivors. According to Zygmunt Bauman's categories, the aliens' strategy towards the humans in the series is one of annihilation or invisibilisation (making them disappear from the imaginary), rather than one of exclusion (an emic strategy) or assimilation (phagic strategy) (Bauman 2008). The military confrontation arises from incommunication and a lack of assimilation and dialogue. In the film "the aliens" are only mentioned at the beginning, when the mechanic says to Dídac: "They're coming to find us. And this time it's for real". It's also the first explanation that he gives for the catastrophe, but Alba disregards it: "I don't believe that". The *alien* as a recurrent character is depicted in the film as the enemy (Sergi López featuring "the man", as we have explained above), and he is shown as a dangerous stranger and to Alba and Didac.

As both a literary work and television serial, *Typescript* adheres to the generic regularity by which aliens are superior to humans in numbers, strength and ability. As seen in the widespread destruction depicted in these works, the fight between humans and aliens is always uneven and favourable to the aliens. In this case, the superiority of the aliens is accompanied by a total ignorance as to why this annihilation has been carried out and by whom- in the sense that there is no deepening in the figure of the aliens. In the TV series and the film – just as in the aforementioned *Battlestar Galactica*, *Falling Skies* and the fundamental *War of the Worlds* (as the first narrative of an alien invasion on Earth) and as a generic markof the science fiction genre, human beings only have time to flee in a disorganised fashion, to evacuate the cities and avoid as best they can the complete annihilation of the population. The aquatic environment as a fortuitous resource that saves the protagonists from certain death, along with some other survivors, is a variant on the genre brought to the fore by Pedrolo, and is reiterated in the TV series and the film *Segon Origen*.

4. **SURVIVORS OF CATASTROPHE AS A GENRE: APOCALYPSIS**

A primordial anthropological topic in the apocalyptic science fiction genre (which begins from catastrophe as a starting point) is the potential human capacity to confront invaders using available science and technology (echoing the myth of Prometheus). This theme is reproduced in the series and the film, but with a focus on the use of technology in order to ensure the survival of the species. In both, Alba and Dídac have to learn to live in a new world, since the old one is in ruins, and in order to do so they have to develop technical abilities that assure their subsistence and well-being, in their daily life (food, refuge, clothing) and in unforeseen circumstances. For example, in both audiovisual productions, the protagonists are injured (Alba breaks her leg and Dídac catches measles) and they are forced to find a way to solve these problems to survive.

With its technical, problem-solving abilities, human beings manage to overcome animalism in narratives such as Robinson Crusoe and the Prometheus myth (Duch 2000b, Watt 1999). These stories present an optimistic exaltation of human capabilities, as is made clear in the two audiovisual productions. In Porta and Bigas Luna's film, expanding the text into a thriller gives cause for the use of the very same theme in the context of a different threat. The danger is no longer external, but is instead, with clear reference to the Doppelgänger[12], internal. This suggests that an internal capacity of human beings is capable of destroying humanity or returning it to an animalistic state, as occurs with the men who try to rape Alba in the series' sixth episode and with the character played by Sergi Lopez in the film. In these unscrupulous characters, clearly designed to be antiheros in Proppian terms, technical capabilities and progress become harmful to the human race. Regarding the protagonists, they are quite clearly modern heroes, survivors of a catastrophe who carry out exceptional feats like surviving the annihilation of the species and then perpetuating it. It is important to make a distinction between modern and postmodern heroes since the function of the hero in modern narratives is unambiguous and explains the facts as they are. In the change from modern to postmodern tales, the ability to explain "everything" is fractured[13]. In the sense that myth confers a way of understanding human beings, its function is to legitimate and promote social cohesion[14]. The traditional narrative, which frequently updates these myths, recovers and reiterates their social and legitimating function, producing a story in which the hero is erected as a potential mirror with which the reader or viewer can identify.

12 Literary theme from the universal culture of fantasy and science fiction.

13 We have already developed this question in Tous-Rovirosa (2009). "Dexter y la figura del héroe en la narrativa estadounidense. ¿Un héroe posmoderno?", In Trapero, Patricia. *Dexter: ética y estética de un asesino.* Barcelona: Laertes.

14 "The myth, on the margins of the enormous quantity of literary and ritual forms that it may adopt, always leads to a founding and legitimating undertaking". (Duch 1995: 51).

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Actually, a utopic reading of both audiovisual versions of the *Typescript* includes the survival of the protagonists and the perpetuation of the species. From an anthropological point of view, this is clearly linked to the myth of Prometheus, in which he steals fire from the Gods in order to give it to men, who were just as or more defenceless than animals. The heart of the Robinson Crusoe and Prometheus myths is the human being overcoming its animality through the development and use of technical skills. The presence of this myth can be observed in *Segon origen* and *Mecanoscrit del segon origen*, as well as in other television productions, such as the American television series *Lost* (2004-2010) or the film *Cast Away* (2000), just to mention some few examples. In these productions, humans are helpless, and are forced to develop the technical skills that come to define them.

All these productions (*Robinson Crusoe,* 1719*; Lost, Mecanoscrit del segon origen, Segon Origen*) are situated closely to the myth of Prometheus and progressiveness, as opposed to the myth of the good savage and primitivism. The *Robinson Crusoe* theme is used in favourable historical contexts as an allegory for the "ideology of progress", of "overcoming animal instint" (Duch 2000b: 187). It is no coincidence that Ian Watt considers *Robinson Crusoe* to be one of the myths of modern individualism (1999).

5. THE EVIL THRILLER (DYSTOPIA)

The "second part" of the film is a thriller which is introduced in the novel and the series, and fleshed out in *Segon origen* with the appearance of "the man", the character played by Sergi López. From their boat, the series' main characters see a survivor on the coast. When they get closer, they realise they have fallen into an ambush set by three survivors willing to rape Alba. Dídac is left behind and he cannot protect her. Violence and sexual violence are repeated in the film, accentuated by the kidnapping of their son Kai. The reduction of the time passed in the first part of *Segon origen* and the lengthening of the second part is one of the substantial differences that can be observed between the series and the film. Dídac's death, which in Luna and Porta's film is linked with the thriller genre (tragic death), is also different from that of the series (accidental death, chance event). The possible annihilation of its own species puts the human in its most basic and instinctive state when faced with survival, justifying animality in order to fight back against this danger. One way or another, the person who is attacked is transformed. The lack of understanding legitimates cruelty; for the society that is victim to this attack, the danger of animalisation justifies its response (which may be disproportionate). The monolithic discourse is based on a Manichean framework and the rejection of alterity, which embodies evil and danger for the protagonists.

In the proposed utopia (presented by the TV series), the thriller section is another obstacle in the fight to survive. In the dystopic proposal (presented by the film), the thriller section is lengthened and Dídac's death at the hands of "the man" changes the meaning of the film: the species will persevere in spite of itself. In order to fully understand the meaning of the film's thriller aspect, given that the story is more strongly framed within the science fiction genre, we make reference to the "situations" established by Scolari (2005: 68-70). These are the Robinson Situation and the Kingdom Situation. In the first case, the protagonists find they are isolated, at the mercy of some external danger. The Other (the enemy, the danger) is outside. Irrational forces erupt within. In the Kingdom Situation it is an internal danger; there are no boundaries between the enemy and "us". We are in the Other's house, as in the case of *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), or the Other invades us, which serves as a beginning in the science fiction genre that we are analysing. In both cases, the film and the TV series, the danger is external. We assume that these concepts come from the Doppelgänger, as it has been explained by scholars such as Gubern (2002) and Brunel: "All the works studied have at their core this strange sense of another presence [...] the name used by those who see themselves" (Brunel 1992: 343).

6. THE PASSING OF TIME: DIFFERENCES IN FORM AND CONTENT

The differences in form between the two audiovisual productions are mostly found in their audiovisual language and narrative tempo. The audiovisual language of *Segon origen* is rather more sophisticated. The film features cuts between close ups, mid shots and wide shots throughout. Some special effects, in particular, such as the post-apocalyptic landscape (fires, storms) are elaborate. In the 1980s series *Mecanoscrit del segon origen* there is less variety and alternation between shot types. The editing is also less sophisticated than in the film. The dialogue is extremely concise, with great economy of language. The style is synthetic

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and the verbal exchanges brief, evoking Pedrolo's literary style[15].

Another substantial difference is the acceleration of the passing of time in the film in relation to the book, which not only condenses the action but also lengthens the aforementioned thriller plot. The dialogue and action are quicker and more frenetic than in the TV series, which reflects the changes in audiovisual production during the 30 years that separate the series and the film. One surprising fact is that Reguant's version is full of what we now call "music video fragments" (Tous-Rovirosa 2008). These are scenes in which the action of the protagonists is shown accompanied by music, with no dialogue. This can also be observed in the film *Mission: Impossible* (1996) and in the film *When in Rome* (2002), and throughout the television series in the franchise *CSI*[16]. The aforementioned sequences in the music video style, however, as well as those used in the analysed television series use a different treatment of the passing of time (as they are slower, more languid), as *insérts* (Casetti-Odin 1990), as they are also known, tend to have a frenetic pace.

When Dídac dies in the series's seventh episode, Alba cries as she pulls him out of the ruins. She cleans him and holds a vigil. She puts their son Marc next to him. All she says is: "It's already spring", before she utters the well-known sentences about her continuation of the species through her own son[17]. Reguant stated that they had to "eliminate some fragments" (Amela 1985) in the series, in reference to the abundant dialogue of the novel, in order to give priority to the action.

When it comes to content, the source is the story itself, and therefore the works must have several things in common. The age difference between the two protagonists is maintained, although the ages are slightly changed. Alba's 14 years in the book are made 20 in the film (she is no longer a virgin, nor olive-skinned), and Dídac's 9 are made 10. The key scenes of the novel are unchanged. At the very beginning, some boys make racist threats and attacks against Dídac and Alba has to jump into the water to rescue him because she knows he cannot swim, something that saves them both from death when Earth is destroyed. In the TV series, the main characters have several different ideas about why they have survived (being underwater) whereas in the film they do not mention it. Dídac's mother's body is found by Alba, who then consoles the boy in both cases. Both of the birth scenes occur at night, though the child's name is changed (Marc/Kai).

One of the novel's key themes is which values must be preserved for later generations: art, culture (episode six of the series); freedom (for Alba's character this is in relation to her body, in both versions); the lack of religion (in the series this is made obvious by their criticisms of the chapel's sermons, for example).The values mentioned in the film have been brought up to date in line with worries about the environment: Alba's father is carrying out investigations into climate change ("if you look after nature, nature will look after you") and Dídac's mother works in an eco-shop selling locally sourced products.

In regard to the faithfulness of the adaptations to their source material, it is important to bear in mind the extent to which some scholars of adaptation – but not all of them – consider the concept rather obsolete (Stam 2000; Hutcheon 2006; Leitch 2008). Although it cannot be developed in detail here, our starting point in relation to this interesting issue is the greater similarity of the TV series to the novel, relative to the film. The thematic similarity coincides with the use of myth in this case. Or, using Ginzburg's words, if we analyse the isomorphism of certain themes, we can state the updating of myth (Ginzburg 2003: 54). That is: the TV series *Mecanoscrit del segon origen* presents a greater thematic similarity with the novel and this coincides with a similar updating of the myth. Needless to say, it does not necessarily have to be this way. Actually, the different updating of the myth in each cases highlights Hutcheon's statement: adaptations are "second without being secondary" (Hutcheon 2006: 9). As we can see in this case, the film is introducing new themes.

So, the series can be considered to be more similar to the novel than is the film because the film includes new scenes and themes not found in the book. These include: the meeting between Alba and her father in the cave; her father's work, and the resulting preocupation with nature and environment; the visit to the Camp Nou (FC Barcelona's football stadium, emblematic of Barcelona); and the "second part" of the film, containing its thriller aspect.

15 Series: "Alba: We'll go to the forest and sleep there. Tomorrow...tomorrow we'll come back". Dídac: "Yes Alba. Tomorrow".

Novel: Alba: "Never mind... What shall we do now?" (...) Dídac: "There must be some at the petrol station in the village. Shall we go?". Parcerisas has written about Pedrolo's important role in introducing the North-American novel to Catalonia. As a translator, in 1974 Pedrolo had translated 22 related works of North-American literature, such as *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and *Parallel 42* . "If you consider all the North-American autors that Pedrolo translated, you can see that practically a third of everything that had been published in Catalan up to the end of the 1960s had come through him (Parcerisas 2007: 47).

16 *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (2000-2015), *CSI: Miami* (2002-2012), *CSI: New York* (2004-2013).

17 "And I, Alba, an eighteen-year-old mother, watched Marc crying in his cradle and thought that I would be just a thirty-year-old woman when he turned twelve. I fervently wished at the bottom of my heart that he was as precocious as his father Dídac. If he was, I could still have a few children by my child..." (novel).

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The father-daughter relationship is also a variant on the original, along with the actual character of the father himself. In the film, both characters speak in subtitled English. It is important to bear in mind that *Segon origen* is a Spain-United Kingdom co-production and the main actress (Rachel Hurd-Wood) is English. As well as the preoccupation with the environment and technology (the use of mobile phones, for example), the use of the English language is a variation introduced to the film as part of its themes being updated to the 21st century. In the film, Alba is Dídac's English teacher, and does not hide her strong accent when she speaks Catalan. Father and daughter have a good relationship. Alba cannot say goodbye to him as she would have liked, and he becomes a relevant presence/absence in the film, since she cannot accept losing him. This is an important difference in comparison with the series, in which the two characters are physically and spiritually alone. This absence connects with the recent television fashion for themes related to the telemachy and is a highly relevant theme in television fiction as well as in cinema and literature. Therefore, it can be attributed to the time elapsed between the two productions and the need to update the material. The search for the father, a recurrent theme in the history of literature can be observed throughout the history of European culture[18] and in contemporary serial productions, such as: *House* (2004-2012), *Lost, E.R.* (1994-2009), *Grey's Anatomy* (2005-), *Brothers and Sisters* (2006-2011), *Gilmore Girls* (2000-2007), *Six Feet Under* (2001-2005), *Mad Men* (2007-2015), and *Dexter* (2006-2013) (see Tous-Rovirosa 2013a).

In the cinematic adaptation sexuality and desire is portrayed in Alba and Dídac's loving relationship. Their discoveries related to their own bodies and to their sexuality acquire a nuance that is very particular to Bigas Luna, showing his mark as the writer of *La teta i la lluna* (1994) and director of *Jamón, Jamón* (1992). Specifically, this can be observed in a focus on sexuality that is non-existent in the novel and the series, in which sexuality is brought up in the most natural way possible – from the very beginning Alba and Dídac bathe together, and casually talk about what makes men and women different from each other. There were some difficulties when filming the bathing scenes at the lake in Reguant's TV version[19]. There is an affection felt by the two characters which will later lead to a sexual relationship, which comes about in the sixth episode, at the beach, in the sea (Dídac: "Don't you think I'm old enough?"), using elegant close-up shots. It is an idyllic setting, with a combination of nature, innocence and sexuality that evokes productions like *The Blue Lagoon* (1980), *Lost* or the Brazilian soap *Pantanal* (1990). In *Segon origen*, as part of bringing the story up date, the loss of innocence is introduced in as a theme. Furthermore, some scenes on the beach in Barcelona as well as the thriller part in Menorca suggest hell in paradise[20] reinforcing the dystopic tone of the film thanks to the contrast between the landscape and the action. It is important to apply Ryan's (1979) division of generic regularities in order to accomplish the analysis. Compulsory generic regularities coincide with the aforementioned "generic marks" ("generic specifity" as stated by Neale 1980; "architextuality" in Genette's typology of intertextuality), and include ruined cities and villages, and the survival and perpetuation of the species. Then we can observe in both productions some optional and independent generic regularities, such as the birth of their son; violence and sexual violence (rape); kidnapping; Didac's death (tragic in the film; accidental in the TV Series); racist threats and attacks; Alba's swimming-bath to save Didac; and values to future generations. Like the main characters of the *Typescript*, these optional and independent regularities give originality to the novel and to each of the analyzed audiovisual productions, beyond the genre in which they are included.

7. **CONCLUSION**

As we have examined in this paper, the main theme of the novel and the TV series is given changed form in the film *Segon origen* in order to remain an updating of the story's central myths. Changing its form, it makes available a closer to it contemporary audience (see Hutcheon 2006: 107).

The film *Segon origen* introduces new topics (in comparison to the TV series' main ones) such as the perpetuation of the species despite the nature of human beings themselves, Didac's tragic death, hell in paradise, the concern about environment and climate change, and telemachy. Some of these

18 *Moon Palace* (1989) by Paul Auster; *Austerlitz* (2001) by W. G. Sebald, *Perceval ou le Conte du Graal* (Chrétien de Troyes, 1180); *Telemacus Adventures* (Fenelón, 1699); Clemens Maria Brentano, German romanticist; Walter Scott, English romanticist; the character Stephan Dedalus, in *Ulysses* (James Joyce, 1922), who is searching for the ideal father, the artist, but ends up finding he is a "vulgar advertising agent"; *Pedro Páramo* (Juan Rulfo, 1955).

19 As Reguant explains, nudism was not allowed by the forest ranger who accompanied them during the shooting (http://ricardreguant.blogspot.com.es/2010/05/1984-mecanoscrit-del-segon-origen.html).

20 As in the Science Fiction film *The Island* (Michael Bay2005).

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new issues present a dystopic proposal, while some others are due to topical interests (environment, climate change) and current trends in contemporary audiovisual narrative (telemachy). So, the myth is updated but also modified: in both productions Alba and Dídac survive and perpetuate the species, thanks to its industriousness, but the story is explained using different moods (utopic and dystopic). As in this case, the use of cultural references has aimed to construct one specific audience (Tous-Rovirosa 2008). We have also observed that an important generic marker of science fiction – the presence and superiority of aliens – disappears in the film: for Luna and Porta, the danger is not external but internal to human beings. By contrast, in the novel and the TV series the danger comes from the outside, from outer space.

The generic markers of science fiction are shared to a great extent by both productions: an apocalyptic setting (in the TV Series, only rural; in the film, both urban and rural), the Doppelgänger, the Kingdom situation, chaos and destruction, and flight from the cities. Science fiction as a genre enables a Manichean framework, and a lack of understanding of, and distance towards, the Other. The novel and the TV series *Mecanoscrit del segon origen* fit into these generic markers through the figure of the alien, while the film proposes a postmodern interpretation of the main recurrence theme, without becoming a post-apocalyptic fictional product.

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DECONSTRUCTING CLARA WHO. A FEMALE DOCTOR MADE POSSIBLE BY AN IMPOSSIBLE GIRL

JARED ARONOFF

Name Jared Aronoff
Academic centre University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada
E-mail address jaredaronoff@gmail.com

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Doctor Who; companion; Clara Oswald; self-reflexive feminist critiques; television.

ABSTRACT
This paper explores the ways in which the role of the Doctor Who companion has been historically shaped by precedents that dictate the ways that female characters function within the narrative, and how these traits were self-reflexively critiqued by recent companion Clara Oswald. The companion is traditionally relegated to the role of a sidekick, with normative ideals perpetuated by the serial nature of the long-running series. These dictate the characterization of the companion, along with the expression of their sexuality and agency, thus restrictively defining the exclusive space in which female characters are allowed to occupy within Doctor Who. Where other characters had been unsuccessful, Clara succeeds in challenging this role by operating within the hegemonies of the companion narrative to deconstruct them, claiming agency where other companions were unable to, and departing the show having essentially become the Doctor herself – paving the way for the casting of Jodie Whittaker as the first female incarnation of the Time Lord.

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In the introduction to a 1986 illustrated book published as promotional material for the twenty-third season of *Doctor Who* (1963-1989, 2005-), then-producer John Nathan-Turner writes

> It used to be claimed that there were just two requirements to be a 'companion' in *Doctor Who*, the world's longest-running science-fiction TV series:
>
> (1) To be able to scream and run at the same time!
>
> (2) To be able to say 'What do we do next, Doctor?' with conviction!! (Nathan-Turner 1986: 4)

While Nathan-Turner may be writing this in the past-tense, not to mention with a certain cheeky tone, in a book that does not aim to be very critically engaged, his words reflect an attitude that has framed the treatment of female characters in *Doctor Who* throughout the series' history. *Doctor Who* is a series with a fundamental paradox at its center, simultaneously demonstrating a commitment to consistent reinvention, challenging the notion that there are fixed, tangible qualities that make *Doctor Who* what it is, yet also demonstrating a habit of falling back on these qualities, often defaulting to narrative or textual structures that are easy, familiar, or nostalgic. As a result, the series maintains an intimate link with its own history and internal perception of what qualities make up its own complex textual identity, yet also codifies itself as prepared to break with these at any moment. A particularly dramatic example occurred early in the original 1963 season, a period of the show characterized by an initial intention for *Doctor Who* to be an educational programme designed to teach children about science and history. In the serial *The Daleks* (1.5-11) this educational element was shunted to the background for seven episodes as the show concentrated on developing its own form of the campy, science fiction monsters to which executive producer Sydney Newman had been vocally opposed (Marcus). The success of this serial and the popularity of the Daleks, however, resulted in the show adopting this model as precedent, one that continues to influence its narrative structure 54 years later. This internal dependency upon precedents has come to dictate how the show operates narratively, structurally, and thematically, and in many cases can be seen as a strength for *Doctor Who,* but it can also be limiting. The narrative structure of the "Bug-Eyed Monster", as Newman referred to them, has served the series well, but as the show has evolved and begun to more explicitly explore a potential for genre-bending, the overreliance upon monsters can arguably become repetitive and tiresome. It is this same sort of problem that has occurred in the role of the companion.

The 'companion' within *Doctor Who* is a character as central to the premise of the show as the Doctor himself. The companion is the point of identification for the viewer, typically young, female, and human, who the alien Doctor invites with him to travel the universe. At the core of the role is the potential for an inherently feminist assumption – that despite being the title character, the Doctor is not the 'main' character of the series, but that instead we as viewers are seeing the events of the show through the perspective of our female protagonist. However, because this is a series committed to maintaining a connection to its roots, the conventions of the *Doctor Who* companion are therefore rooted in 50-year-old attitudes that have shaped what, for a long time, was the only recurrent narrative space in which female characters were able to operate within the show. This creates normative precedents around the companion's sexuality, function, and role within the narrative that have been nearly impossible for the series to break out of. Clara Oswald, the main companion of the televised series from 2012-2015, is not the first character to challenge these hegemonies, but she does so in a new and arguably more interesting way. The characterisation of Clara redefined the space for women in *Doctor Who*, not by rejecting the conventions that shaped the companion, but by working within them to deconstruct these attitudes from the inside. In the three seasons that Clara spent in this central role of the *Doctor Who* narrative, the character worked within a self-reflexive space to perform subversive critiques of the way she functioned as a product of the series' history and the limiting role she was obligated to fulfill as the companion. What Clara represents is a unique form of feminist filmmaking praxis that thus far has gone underutilized. It is not uncommon for female characters to be assigned restrictive, hegemonic roles within genre spaces, and while the traditional mode of response to this is merely to correct it, this does not offer the same opportunity for critique. Clara uses the inevitable assumptions and expectations directed towards her as a companion, not only to exercise self-awareness of her role within the traditional narrative of *Doctor Who*, and to critique both its present and historical function, but also to claim agency in places where it has been traditionally denied to these female characters. This allows her to take her place within a larger shift in how female characters on *Doctor Who* are presented, helping to craft a space for women to function in roles outside the companion, making the casting of Jodie

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Whittaker as a female Doctor two years after her departure not only possible, but an inevitability.

This paper has been written with an awareness of the discourse surrounding gender politics in Steven Moffat's writing of *Doctor Who,* and while it does respond to some of it in a way, it is not intended to engage with it directly. While much of how Clara functions as a self-critical companion *can* be attributed to lead writer and showrunner of her era Steven Moffat, to give credit for Clara to a singular patriarchal auteur would be problematic, as there are many other creative forces who have been key to the development of her character. Just as how during the Russell T Davies era, scripts by Moffat were read as "signature" or influential devices (Hills 2010), scripts in the Steven Moffat era by writers such as Jamie Matheson can be read with similar unique authorial qualities – particularly those like "Flatline" (8.9) which were key to the development of Clara's character. Other episodes key to Clara's development, such as "Death in Heaven" (8.12) or "Hell Bent" (9.12), while written by Moffat, took on more complex authorial readings as many fans read them as simultaneous author-products with director Rachel Talalay. While there is a long history of reading authorship in *Doctor Who,* one which has been heightened by the relatively new role of the 'showrunner' in Davies, Moffat, and soon to be Chibnall, and while there are certainly interesting and valuable arguments to be made around the role of authorship in this series and its relationship to the representation of female characters, that is a topic for a different paper. The focus here will be on what Clara *does*, and I intend to examine this while keeping in the background of my argument the reliance upon patriarchal notions of auteur theory that are often central to feminist discourse surrounding *Doctor Who*. I will be exploring the impact Clara has had on the history and future of the series as she operates as a fictional, constructed agent to redefine the restrictive space women have been forced to occupy within this show. There may be an unconventional quality to assigning so much theoretical agency to a fictional character, particularly one written largely by men, and the impact of male writers on Clara's resulting persona should not be ignored, despite the presence of other female writers, female directors, and a female actor who aided in her construction. As a female character, however, she is still functioning representationally within a fictional mode of femininity, producing a theoretical tension in which it is difficult to pin down a strictly gendered criticism of her intentionality. This too could be an entirely different paper however, so for the sake of argument we will discuss Clara's character in terms of how she reads, and less so in terms of pinpointing the intention behind that reading.

Also for the purposes of this paper, *Doctor Who* will also be described as a single entity – despite the cancellation in 1989. While an argument can be made that *Doctor Who* is composed of more than one entity, most notably the distinction between a "classic" series and a "new" series, recent seasons have made an increasing attempt to codify each as being inextricably connected to the other, culminating in the recent Christmas special featuring a re-cast First Doctor. Despite this, it may be argued that the divide between the classic and new series is demonstrated by a dramatic shift in tone, style, and format between the two series. However, the show has undergone many of these (including notable examples in 1970, 1980, and 2010) making it equally possible to talk about the series as five, twelve, or many more different entities depending on how one wanted to split it up. It would be equally unproductive to talk about it as two. As Paul Booth put it:

> To determine the entity known as *'Doctor Who',* we must articulate the binary between continuity and fragmentation; we must see *Doctor Who* as *both* a continuous program split into fragmented parts *and* as a series of fragments cohered to a whole at the same time. (Booth 2014: 197)

This is therefore how *Doctor Who* will be engaged with in this paper, as the patterns of influence carry over beyond the distinction between 'eras', and yet these eras also carry with them unique intentionalities that define these distinctions, making it valuable to describe them individually at least on some level yet also valuable to discuss them as a whole on another. This paper will deal with the way a particular 'era' of the show serves to critique elements of those which came before it, and thus I will be attempting to walk a line between reading the series as a single entity with an ongoing pattern of influence, yet also recognizing the inevitable impulse towards periodization and the way these patterns of influence are shaped as a result.

The structure of *Doctor Who* as a serial narrative results in an internal dependency on precedents, requiring the show to maintain a certain degree of continuity with its own past. While this awareness of its history is often exhibited in a manner that is transparently palimpsestic through the constant rewriting of its own canon (Britton 2011), this palimpsest is also articulated through explicit rebranding efforts of the series, codifying new 'eras' with a new look and style (Hills

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2014) as if they were a different show. Despite this, the serial nature of the programme produces a dependency upon the intertextual link between these established texts inside of the larger narrative of *Doctor Who*. After so many decades of building upon past developments, contradicting other developments, and building off of those contradictions, the few elements of the series that remain constant for more than a few seasons begin to ferment into inescapable expectations that the series is required to fulfill. Nearly every aspect of current *Doctor Who* has been impacted by this serial trap, from the common narrative structures of individual stories to the fundamental building blocks that make up the show's identity. The iconographic significance of the TARDIS or the Sonic Screwdriver, the narrative role of the monsters, or the dynamic between the Doctor and companion are all examples of elements that are considered key to what the series fundamentally is, yet all of these are rules which have been broken at least once. The TARDIS has appeared as something other than a police box, the Sonic Screwdriver has be replaced with sunglasses, monsters have taken on roles as recurring or sympathetic characters (such as Strax or Rusty the Dalek), and the companion has operate outside their established gender-based role, but these deviations from the norm have almost always been performed with the implicit expectation that they will eventually revert back to the base state of normality, only serving to reinforce these as elements key to what *Doctor Who* is. These can become a limiting factor for *Doctor Who*, as they eventually become accepted universally not only as a feature of how audiences understand the show but are also expected as a matter of brand identity (Britton 2011), acting as organizational functions that aid in the production and distribution of the series (Johnson 2014). These precedents form a set of qualities that define what *Doctor Who* must be, qualities which can become difficult for the series to meaningfully evolve beyond.

In the context of the companion, the precedents established by these serial expectations therefore function to keep these characters confined within a recurring, familiar, yet largely patriarchal narrative. Precedents left over from the beginning of the series' inception dictate that at any point in time at least one sidekick will join the Doctor on his adventures. The original female companions were Susan and Barbara, who carried with them arcs of ongoing mental maturity and rebelliousness towards the Doctor (Tulloch and Alvarado 1983). These characters set out the show to begin its run on a positive representational note, but when conceiving of replacements for them, some of the least empowering elements of their personas were carried over to their immediate successors, as characters like Vicki, Dodo, and Jo Grant solidified the assumption that the companion should be young, female, infantilized, and dependent on the Doctor.

Various different approaches at reframing the *Doctor Who* companion have taken place; a list that includes Liz Shaw, Sarah Jane, or Romana, but each became undermined by the structure of the narrative they were attempting to redefine. These characters were perceived as less successful as companions by production staff, specifically because they violated established patterns of the show. This is something dramatically emphasized in the departure of Liz Shaw – a character codified by the text as the Doctor's scientific equal, but replaced with Jo Grant after one season and without a proper departure scene specifically because her advanced scientific mind did not fit the established dynamic (Jowett 2014). Characters like these were interspersed throughout the original run of the show, but even those like Ace who successfully found a new space for the companion to function within became deviations from the norm rather than redefining that norm in the first place, as they were almost always followed by characters who would function within the traditional role of the companion. This essentially sent the message that the Doctor/companion dynamic can be experimented with, but the format of the series requires that the companion must inevitably return to the patriarchal nature of its initial function.

Where this becomes limiting for *Doctor Who* is in the way that the companion forms the exclusive space that recurring female characters are expected to occupy. There have been many male companions, including characters like Ian, Harry, Adric, or Rory – but the companion is not the *exclusive* space for recurring male characters. The Master, Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart, Sergeant Benton, or Professor Edward Travers all made recurring appearances over more than one serial without taking on the role of a companion. There have been many side characters who are female, but rarely do they actually remain on the show for more than the length of a single serial – unless they function within the role of the companion and accept the hegemonic implications that come with doing so. This was present throughout the entire original run of the series, with the first non-companion recurring female characters not introduced until the revival. Jackie Tyler, despite marking the first step to carve out a new space on the show for recurring female characters, was not allowed many opportunities to make decisions that would impact the plot or demonstrate narrative agency in the same way that someone like the Brigadier could. Jackie Tyler essentially broke

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down this barrier only insofar as she carved out a space for established companions to have recurring mother characters, a pattern that would be repeated with Francine Jones and Sylvia Noble. Harriet Jones was a recurring female character not related to an existing companion and also demonstrates progress as such, but would often exist in the background of most stories with only a handful of defining moments that had little impact on the rest of the narrative. *Doctor Who* would not successfully create a space for recurring female non-companion characters with an ability to consistently have an effect on the narrative until the introduction of River Song. There is a feminist significance to River's presence over series five and six. Although her power as a character comes largely from her sexual desirability (Amy-Chinn 2014), coding her within a postfeminist lens of autonomous hypersexuality (Gill 2007), and despite also being presented through a narrative mediated by her role as enigmatic love interest to the Doctor, this marks the first time that a recurring female character operating outside the conventions of the companion was afforded the narrative agency and prominence allowed to the degree it was to River Song. River was instrumental in demonstrating that female characters can function within key narrative roles that are central to the plot, paving the way for characters such as Madame Vastra, Jenny Flint, Kate Lethbridge-Stewart or Missy who were able to do so with a much more significant independence from the Doctor. These characters both hold more explicit functions, as Sherlock Holmes-esque Victorian detectives, a head of UNIT, and a villain, respectively, all filling specific, traditionally masculine roles, allowing the space for female characters within the *Doctor Who* formula to further expand.

With this in mind, the reason why many of the attempts at merely producing a new companion character who functions better on a representational level have not been sufficient is because said character will always be functioning within the highly patriarchal narrative space of the companion, a prescribed role for female characters defined by their status as the innocent female character acting as subservient to the all-knowing Doctor. Despite this, Clara succeeds, not as a result of a radical deviation from the norms of the companion, but instead in the way that she accepts these hegemonic precedents in order to perform self-reflexive critiques upon them. Clara can be read as holding a certain degree of self-awareness of her diegetic role within the narrative, and serves to claim agency over this prescribed function and introduce a normative space in which future characters, when faced with the inescapable problematic norms established by their predecessors, can draw attention to their own existence as a construct of outdated narratives. Clara sets a precedent that could allow the role of the companion to not only act as a self-reflexive critique of itself, but even work to repair itself organically over time.

There is an advantage to specifically using self-reflexivity to tackle filmmaking practices that have historically rooted themselves in existing social power structures. To present a fictional character who is female, non-white, neurodivergent, or queer as self-aware of their function within a kyriarchal space, and of how they will be read in relation to tropes associated with that function, allows an opportunity to draw implicit textual attention towards these tropes if not to actively subvert them. This can also be argued as a more practical form of radical engagement within filmmaking as an institution. In order to be successful financially, feminist filmmaking must be executed within the patriarchal space of established film language, one that is grounded in a history of misogynistic devices and tropes that traditionally present female characters within the ideological frameworks of what these women mean to men. These linguistic conventions must be challenged by feminist filmmaking, as traditional forms of constructing meaning have served to reproduce cinematic mechanisms that consistently reinforce sexism through the language of film (Erens 1990). Most forms of feminist filmmaking perform narrative rather than stylistic reframings of cinematic convention, leading feminist film production to exist on a kind of spectrum between casually feminist films and actively feminist films. Most feminist filmmaking leans towards the former, producing a largely conventional narrative within traditional genre spaces, but will place women in central roles typically reserved for men. Some texts that can be considered casually feminist include *Johnny Guitar* (1954), or the rebooted *Ghostbusters* (2016). To call these films casually feminist is not intended to undermine their significance as feminist texts, as attempting to produce arbitrary rankings of what films are the 'most feminist' would be counterproductive, but merely to highlight the ways they uncritically subscribe to a preexisting language of cinematic patriarchy in order to achieve their feminist goals. Actively feminist texts are less common, often being more self-reflexive or experimental by nature, usually performing the aforementioned act of placing women within a central narrative role, but doing so with a highly self-reflexive attitude towards spaces that women are allowed to function within, making explicit use of the subversion of familiar tropes and occasionally engaging with or emphasizing misogyny within the narrative. Actively

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feminist texts have the potential to exist anywhere within the cultural landscape and across the high/low cultural divide. They can include anything from highly influential experimental films such as Laura Mulvey's *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1977), which provokes Mulvey's theories around patriarchal cinematic language, to more recent texts such as *Steven Universe* (2012-), an animated cartoon intended for children which uses positive subversions to reject tropes within the animated children's action genre through a consistently lighthearted and optimistic lens, deconstructing these conventions in a way that is accessible to a younger viewership while often functioning within them. This spectrum between 'active' and 'casual' forms of feminist filmmaking is not intended to provide a definitive framework for categorizing a film as 'feminist' or 'not feminist', as this largely depends on forms of interpretation. Defining a 'feminist' film as a form of filmmaking that functions to deconstruct existing patriarchal power structures on some level is, while somewhat vague, more practical. I intend to demonstrate how such feminist filmmaking can be executed in multiple ways, using *Doctor Who* as a particularly potent example of the way in which feminist texts of the present can construct themselves through an implicit textual response to the past.

Doctor Who has made attempts to redefine the role of the companion through a feminist lens in the past, and different eras can be seen taking on both active and casually feminist approaches to the companion narrative. Ace is perhaps the only companion aside from Clara who produces actively feminist engagements within her era of the televised series, existing within the generic context of an explosive 1980s action sci-fi series but taking on the role of the 1980s machismo action hero in place of the Seventh Doctor. Ace's placement as the last companion before the cancellation of the series in 1989 however, made it difficult for the character to properly redefine precedents around the companion, with only the focus on her life apart from the Doctor carried into the revival in 2005. Despite this, there have been many attempts within *Doctor Who*'s history to produce casually feminist companions. Sarah Jane Smith was a response to the feminist climate of the time, and to criticisms of how female characters were traditionally constructed on *Doctor Who* (Tulloch and Alvarado 1983). She was intended to serve as "the first of a new breed of companions for *Doctor Who*" (O'Neill 1983: 28), as a 'strong' character who would identify as a feminist. Sarah Jane's articulation of her feminism was still operating in a mode which was apolitically coded and flawed, resulting in a critical engagement that reads as a reductive and limited understanding of second wave feminism at best (Hamad 2015), or as a parody of feminism at worst (Dodson 2015), while still failing to provide a significant change to the narrative structure of the companion (Tulloch and Alvarado 1983).

Leela followed Sarah Jane as a companion designed to further break these stereotypes through a far more violent and assertive persona, yet Leela was also dressed in explicitly sexualized clothing meant to claim the attention of adult male viewers. On top of this, Leela was codified as Indigenous, originating from the Sevateem tribe on an unnamed planet, leaving Leela to often be confused or mystified by technology and other "civilized" (Western) values. Leela is allowed the ability to challenge the submissive nature of the companion's role only insofar as the threat of this challenge is mediated by the power of the camera's "gaze" and the colonial authority exerted over her by the text. Perhaps the most notable attempt to reject the precedent of the companion as subservient to the Doctor was Romana, a character conceived of as a Time Lady and therefore as the Doctor's intellectual and scientific equal. While Romana would take on a position of authority with side characters more consistently than other companions, when placed next to the Doctor she would continue to demonstrate a degree of subservience and comparative naïveté, codified less through the lens of her being an unscientific human woman and more through the way her theoretical understanding of the universe was demonstrated as secondary to the Doctor's practical, hands-on experience (Britton 2011). Mary Tamm's "ice goddess" take on Romana was also met with a similar fate to Liz Shaw at the beginning of the decade. However, instead of being deemed too intelligent to function narratively as a companion by the production staff, it was Mary Tamm's dissatisfaction with the writing of her character as a "damsel in distress" that, after only one season, led to her regeneration into a far more innocent, far more feminine incarnation played by Lalla Ward (*There's Something About Mary*). As James Chapman summarizes, "For all these valiant attempts to offer more positive female roles, however, most companions eventually slipped back into the traditional mould of 'screamers'" (Chapman 2013: 7).

These trends clearly emerge as a limiting factor for *Doctor Who* to the extent that they are demonstrably not the result of naïveté. The show's production staff have historically been aware of the nature of the companion role, but have rarely been successful in correcting it, if not demonstrating complacency towards its problematic nature. As Grahame Williams, the producer from 1977-1979 (Campbell 2010), put it "The function of the companion I'm sad to say, is and always has

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been, a stereotype...the companion is a story-telling device. That is not being cynical, it's a fact" (Tulloch And Alvarado 1983: 209). Williams is not the only *Doctor Who* producer to express concern over the problematic nature of the companion's narrative role, with Barry Letts and John Nathan-Turner expressing similar critiques of the companion. Yet through their own work on the show, neither was able to break the female characters they helped to develop out of this mold. Even while trying to read the show outside of the confines of authorship, these producers (many of whom were assigned authorial status within fandom) were certainly in the most prominent position to correct this. Given that production staff have been aware of this problem since as early as the 1970s, it is curious why it has never been permanently corrected. When the series was revived, there were further attempts to address this, with Russell T Davies likening his take on the companion to a "Buffy-style female sidekick" (Lyon 2005: 72), though it has been argued that this was ultimately unsuccessful (Amy-Chinn 2008).

This is because the companion serves a central function to the plot of a traditional *Doctor Who* episode that must be fulfilled, asking questions about what is happening at any given moment in order to provide the Doctor with a diegetic excuse to deliver exposition concerning the complex and typically bizarre universe of the show to the viewer. The convention of female characters asking questions that male characters answer is part of a larger trope within popular television narrative, and creates a representational convention in which women are shown to lack knowledge that men possess, reinforcing ideological codes of cultural patriarchy and working "to organize the other codes into producing a congruent and coherent set of meanings that constitute the *common sense* of a society" (Fiske 1987: 6).

When the series was rebooted, the use of the companion for the purposes of narrative function took on a different form. The companion was still required to forward the narrative of individual episodes by asking the Doctor questions, but as multi-episode arcs were introduced as a more regular component of the seasonal structure of the show, the companion became responsible for providing narrative resolution – a role that would be empowering if it were not consistently mediated by the Doctor. When Rose becomes the Bad Wolf, for example, the Doctor is narratively required to take this away from her in the next scene; when Martha saves Earth from the Master, she does so by travelling the planet teaching humanity how to idolize the Doctor as a god-like being; and when Donna saves the universe from the Daleks, she can only do so by becoming part-Doctor, a part that the Doctor must forcibly strip away from her at the end of the episode. As Piers Britton critiques in relation to companions early in the revived series:

> Excitement, freedom, power and knowledge are accessible to women only via masculine patronage, in this case offered by the Doctor. When he thinks it best to remove this freedom, they have no choice but to accept the role he assigns them, usually within the bosom of the nuclear family. (Britton 2011: 133).

The Matt Smith 'era' marked the beginnings of an effort to critique the removal of companion agency. In mirroring arcs between River Song and Amy Pond, both characters begin their story with their agency taken away from them. In the case of River, this agency is stolen by the Silence – who brainwash her to kill the Doctor – and for Amy this agency is stolen by the Doctor, who imprints upon her from an early age, influencing her to become dependent on him. As each of these arcs progressed, both characters made the independent choice to reclaim this agency, as Amy distanced herself from the Doctor by developing a life and career on Earth, and River pursuing research in the field of archaeology to form knowledge that is neither limited or controlled by anyone, including the Doctor (Burrows 2015). At the culminating moment of each of these arcs, both characters make a conscious decision to reject the force controlling them, yet in both cases this culminates in the choice of domesticity, with River ultimately choosing to marry the Doctor and Amy choosing to live in 1920s New York with Rory. This feeds into tropes around the de-politicization of motherhood and domesticity, reframing them as choices rather than inevitabilities, yet placing female characters in domestic roles regardless (Amy-Chinn 2014).

This is the point at which Clara enters the series, and the arc of her first season is in line with the rest of the female characters of the Matt Smith era, but with a notable adaptation. Where River's agency was stolen by the Silence and Amy's was stolen by the Doctor, Clara has her agency stolen by the narrative of the show itself. From the episodes before her first real appearance, Clara is treated as a mystery, with her actual character buried within the narrative framework of a common trope in the revived *Doctor Who,* the "Woman-as-Mystery" (Mulvey 1990: 35). It is a convention that by this point would be intimately familiar to *Doctor Who* viewers from the similar arcs explored with characters Rose, Donna,

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and River Song. This is the source of the common reading that Clara was lacking in character for most of this season, as any significant moments that would establish this character are overshadowed by the Doctor musing on her enigmatic nature in subsequent scenes. The resolution of the Impossible Girl arc allows Clara a far more appropriate form in which to reclaim agency than her predecessors, as she solves the mystery herself, by being herself, to determine simply that there never was a mystery to begin with, rendering any contribution by the Doctor entirely unnecessary.

This subversion of Clara as a plot device is carried further one season later, as the plot becomes used as Clara's character device. At least half of the episodes in series eight place the plot as secondary to how these events impact Clara's character within the context of her arc. The character traits of a companion have rarely been explored or developed textually throughout the history of *Doctor Who*, as the result of an attitude that this would interfere with the plot. Particularly revealing is how up-front past producers of the series have been about these anxieties, demonstrated by the inclusion of this passage by John Nathan-Turner in an entirely non-critical fluff book that was intended exclusively as promotional material:

> development of character takes airtime and this reduces the amount of dramatization airtime [...]. So, slowly but surely, writers and script editors *and* producers decide to play down the character development of the companion [...] and concentrate on the drama of the story (Nathan-Turner 1986: 5)

This hesitancy to focus on the character of the companion has been present in the revived series as well. Amy Pond has often been read as a companion who was not neurotypical, yet her mental health and abandonment issues were only ever explored in the subtext of a handful of episodes including "The Girl Who Waited" (6.10) and "Asylum of the Daleks" (7.1), treating her character arc in these stories as secondary to the narrative focus of the plot. Meanwhile, in episodes like "The Caretaker" (8.6), the central threat of the episode functions exclusively as a means to push Clara in a specific way and reveal things about her relationship with Danny and with the Doctor, leaving the traditional format of the monster of the week to function as secondary to Clara's own development.

While other companions had dominated the narrative in the past, they had not done so in a way that consistently prioritized their own development within the episode, let alone the season. In "Survival" (26.12-14), while we receive what at the time was an unprecedented glimpse into Ace's personal life, the focus of the episode was still on the Master's alliance with the Cheetah People. In "Father's Day" (1.8), while we receive another then-unprecedented glimpse into Rose's character and family history, the focus of the episode still turns towards the Reapers and the creation and resolution of a time paradox. Meanwhile, the central arc of series eight was around the development of Clara's character and the exploration of her complex relationship to the Doctor. This emphasis on Clara as the driving force of the narrative has been judged as excessive, leading to controversy within fan communities as many repeat the reactionary colloquialism that they would rather be watching *Doctor Who* than 'Clara Who', a position argued in YouTube fan videos like *Doctor Who or Clara Who?? // Problem of the last two seasons* (Öztanyel 2016), or in fan articles such as *'Doctor Who' or 'Clara Who'* (Johnston 2014). This was a criticism that permeated throughout Clara's era since series eight, and while it may have also been levelled at other companions who also took unprecedented centrality within their narratives for the time, such as Rose or Ace, it is the first to which the series responded, giving Jenna Coleman first billing in the opening credits to the episode "Death in Heaven" (8.12). This space has been used to credit the Doctor since 2005, as if to cheekily confirm that the series indeed *had* become 'Clara Who'.

While Clara serves to critique the traditional use of the companion as subservient to the plot by becoming more interesting than the plot itself, the way that Clara serves to divert focus from the plot stems primarily from her development as a complex character. Academic writing on characterisation is relatively rare in relation to analyses that understand a text within larger cultural frameworks. This means that in order to explore the features of Clara's character outlined above, I will be largely be drawing on fan writing, most notably Caitlin Smith's contributions to the fan publication "101 Claras To See". Doing so will help me to demonstrate how Clara's characterization is presented differently from that of her predecessors, and how certain fan responses have interpreted that presentation. Clara Oswald presents a character who is flawed, and not in a way that is two-dimensional or pushed to the subtext of the narrative as previous companions have been, but in a deliberate, unavoidable way, that consistently hurts other characters around her. Clara demonstrates a persona which is ruthless, controlling, and maintains an unhealthy obsession with the way she is perceived – but more important than this is how Clara is deeply ashamed

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of these qualities and seeks desperately to hide them from others, particularly in series seven (Smith 2015b). In her debut season, Clara is a highly internal character, and it is not uncommon for viewers to fail to recognize many of the character traits that come more explicitly to the surface later in series eight and nine. In series seven, Clara reads as almost frustratingly perfect to many viewers, and this is not an accident – it is a construction of Clara's own design. As argued by Smith, Clara is a character who wants to be perceived as perfect, and therefore conceals the parts of herself that she believes to be flawed until she is forced to reveal them, such as in "Hide" (7.10), in which Clara demonstrates her ruthlessness by demanding that the side-character Emma place herself in both danger and physical pain to save the Doctor (Smith 2015a).

In series eight, however, these 'flawed' traits become more difficult to repress as she is faced with an incarnation of the Doctor with whom she feels far less comfortable. She can be seen visibly unravelling throughout the entirety of stories like "The Caretaker" (8.6), demonstrating addictive behaviors in her attitude towards time travel in "Mummy on the Orient Express" (8.8), and ruthlessly threatening the Doctor in "Dark Water" (8.11). What has been read as empowering about the treatment of Clara's flaws however, is that she is never punished for them. Clara's development is framed around a character arc about self-acceptance, in which she learns to embrace the parts of herself that she views as imperfect and use them to her advantage (Smith 2015b). By series nine, Clara does exactly this, using her ruthlessness to relate to Missy in "The Witch's Familiar" (9.2), and using her awareness of the Doctor's dependency on her to manipulate him into breaking his own rules in "Before the Flood" (9.4).

This co-dependency between the Twelfth Doctor and Clara is a major focus of her last two seasons as well. Where the Matt Smith 'era' took the form of a post-*Lost* mystery-driven fairy tale, Peter Capaldi's first two seasons direct their focus more towards the two leads to delve into a compelling character study, pushing these characters to reveal and highlight the worst in each other and using them to explore the anti-heroic textual space the Doctor occupies, as well as the unhealthy dynamic that comes from his relationship to Clara as the companion. There have been Doctor/companion dynamics in the past that had been unhealthy, but they were typically not provided with narrative condemnation the same way that they are in the Twelfth Doctor's era. The Doctor and Rose, for example, had a similar co-dependent relationship, but this dynamic was romanticized – both literally and thematically – much more than is the case with the Twelfth Doctor and Clara. In the case of Peri Brown in the mid-1980s, the Sixth Doctor was physically abusive towards her, attempting to strangle her in his first episode, and while Peri was clearly distraught by this in the moment, its impact on their relationship is largely ignored in future stories.

While Clara's Doctor may not be physically violent towards her, Clara is met with plenty of moments of emotional abuse from the Twelfth Doctor who consistently treats her in a way that is rude, authoritative, or generally condescending. Clara succeeds within this dynamic where past companions had not, deliberately calling out the Doctor in these moments, allowing the narrative to explicitly condemn them. In "Listen" (8.4), for example, Clara is authoritatively told by an impatient Doctor to "do as you are told" – by which the audience can see she has been hurt. Clara stands up to the Doctor, however, by repeating this line back to him later in the episode. Clara achieves this by flipping the Doctor's own behaviour as a challenge to him, daring him to argue that his actions were necessitated by the intensity of the situation, and not the result of his own propensity to view Clara as his subordinate – a challenge the Doctor accepts by following Clara's order and doing exactly as he is told. "Kill the Moon" (8.7) ends with Clara confronting the Doctor with the patronizing way he had treated her throughout that story. Their heated exchange ends with Clara asserting her own agency by leaving the TARDIS and stating that she will no longer travel with the Doctor, a direct consequence of his disrespectful treatment of her. He is only invited back on her terms. These moments are significant, not only as forms of narrative condemnation of the Doctor's behavior, but also because while Clara is given moments of heroism where she is able to be clever and save the day, she is also not codified as overly perfect and lacking in complexity as a result. In equal measure, she is granted moments of insecurity, weakness, and vulnerability at pivotal points in the narrative, all of which make her later strength more empowering and never interfere with her ability to succeed within heroic narrative frameworks later on.

The companion has traditionally been forced to occupy narrative spaces that have often served to reinforce heteronormative values. This heteronormativity has always been prescribed to the role of the companion, not only in terms of the highly patriarchal dynamic of an all-knowing male figure and his female sidekick, but also in regard to the degree that companions have tended to be sexualized. The companion is often described as providing "something for the dads"

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(Chapman 2013: 8). Characters like Leela or Peri were dressed in highly sexualized clothing meant to play up their "to-be-looked-at-ness" (Britton 2011: 122). Tegan's sexuality was consistently emphasized in interviews and promotional material, yet within the series itself this was comparatively repressed (Tulloch and Alvarado 1983). This precedent of prescribed heteronormativity was dramatically reinforced, however, at the beginning of the revived series as Rose and the Tenth Doctor displayed a heightened sexual tension and a more explicit romantic undertone to their relationship than had been seen in a Doctor/companion dynamic before. Rose exists in a powerful position to set precedents for how *Doctor Who* is understood to function. As not only the first companion of the revived series, but also of what continues to be the most logical "jumping on" point for new viewers, Rose has an unmatched capacity to establish a standard by which all future *Doctor Who* companion will be measured (Britton 2011). Rose is independent without challenging the Doctor's authority, strong in a way that rarely troubles gender norms (Britton 2011), compassionate in a way that creates rather than resolves narrative conflict (Amy-Chinn 2008), and bubbly in a way that consistently emphasizes her sexual tension with David Tennant's Doctor.

This is not helped by the rest of the Tennant era, in which the majority of female characters – not exclusively companions but side characters as well – were defined primarily in terms of the Doctor's sexual desirability (Britton 2011), positioning these female characters at a disadvantage, and allowing the Doctor to appear notably more superior and in control (Jowett 2017). Even Donna, while never engaging romantically with the Doctor, must consistently restate this for the viewer, as though the exclusively platonic nature of their friendship were something unusual. Jack Harkness presents a queer twist on this pattern, performing his sexual interest in the Doctor within a larger subversion of the hypermasculine sexual conquest trope that is prominent in many popular science fiction texts such as *Star Trek* (1966-1969). While Captain Jack is critical of this trope in the ways his sexual conquests are not restricted by contemporary heteronormative values, he is still allowed to exhibit an aggressive sexual assertiveness that is not afforded to female characters of the Tennant era (Britton 2011). The precedent of concentrating on the Doctor's sexual desirability is one that likely would have been irreversible if Catherine Tate had not returned as the companion in series four; in his memoir, Russell T Davies details the contingency plan to create a new companion, Penny, and have her enter into an explicit romantic relationship with the Doctor (Davies 2010). This form of heterosexual romance, one that would continue throughout the revived series, is mediated on some level by a rejection of normative heterosexual "social practice" such as settling down or child-rearing (Jowett 2014: 81), but still serves to define the companion's role within a heterosexual context.

While Clara does eventually reject these heteronormative tropes, in her first season she can be read as deliberately playing into them, particularly the conventions of the post-Rose companion. In series seven, Clara is cute, bubbly, clever, and flirts with the Doctor extensively. Rose has established a standard of expectations for the companion, and Clara is introduced with an innate awareness of this. Clara spends most of her first season functioning within the framework of what viewers expect from a companion, but does so *too* perfectly, *too* conventionally, and ultimately becomes more of a post-Rose companion than Rose Tyler herself. Clara's compulsory sexual tension with the Eleventh Doctor is emphasized explicitly by a narrative that occasionally reads as unsettling, yet the text rarely condemns this as such. To determine which elements of Clara's series seven characterization function as critique, and which function as uncritical descents into the conventions of the established companion narrative, therefore depends on interpretation. And when read separately from her two following seasons, this season seven arc tends to read as purely uncritical. Much of Clara's initial characterization suffers as a result of this, meaning that her subversions of the heteronormative role of the companion tend to remain submerged until series eight.

Clara's second season, however, does not suffer from this same issue of execution. The romantic history of this Doctor/companion dynamic is rejected by the Capaldi era from as early as the first episode, and the Doctor's asexual persona reestablished. The Twelfth Doctor and Clara proceed to form a more intimate relationship based on a deep platonic bond rather than a mutual sexual desirability. Meanwhile, Clara begins to stray further from the heteronormative expectations established by her predecessors by exhibiting an increased queer presence within the show. In series eight, the narrative allows Clara to exhibit traits of celebrated imperfection. In this way, she can function within a space of queered failure, a narrative device which, as Jack Halberstam (2011) argues, symbolises a rejection of conformity within the hegemonic structures of prescribed heterosexual normality. Her implied off-screen relationship with Jane Austen further suggests a bisexual identity (one that should not be undermined by her more prominent relationship with Danny Pink in the previous

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season), and is strengthened by her decision to depart the show by leaving to travel with Ashildr. This a queer reading is reinforced by the fact that this scene is mirrored one season later in "The Doctor Falls" (10.12), when Bill, an established lesbian, also leaves the TARDIS by choosing to travel the universe with an immortal woman with whom she has a romantic history.

The way that Clara chooses her ending speaks to another way in which she challenges the space of the traditional companion in terms of agency. Precedents for this convention date back as early as Susan, the original companion and first to depart from the show. Susan spends her time within the series consistently infantilized by the narrative and portrayed as subordinate to the Doctor, but in her final moments, the Doctor tasks himself with explicitly claiming ownership of her agency. At the end of the serial *The Dalek Invasion of Earth,* Susan is married off to a male character that she met in that same story, and stays behind in the year 2051 to live with him. This is troubling in two ways. First, a number of companions left the show in ways that took inspiration from this departure; notably, Vicki, Jo, and Leela's exits from *Doctor Who* followed the same fundamental beats of the character meeting a man, getting married, and departing the show, often all in the same episode. Second, and more disturbingly, is the way the Doctor is shown to almost force this decision upon Susan, locking the doors to the TARDIS and telling her, despite her protests:

> You're still my grandchild and always will be, but now you're a woman too. I want you to belong somewhere, to have roots of your own. With David you will be able to find those roots. Believe me my dear, your future lies with David, and not with a silly old buffer like me.
>
> (*The Dalek Invasion of Earth,* 2.9 "Flashpoint", 1965)

The Doctor thus asserts that he not only knows what is best for Susan, but has the right to make decisions relating to her body and her future on her behalf. This solidifies a precedent of infantilization that comes to be performed the many companions who follow Susan, establishing as a norm the Doctor's paternalistic authority over his infantilized companions.

Within the revived series, companions are allowed more control over their role within the narrative, but only insofar as these moments of agency are framed within a context of self-sacrifice in favour of, or in obedience towards, institutional expectation (Britton,2011). In the 2005 Christmas special "The Christmas Invasion" (2.X), for example, the Doctor is removed from the action and Rose is forced to drive the narrative herself, but still spends the duration of the episode struggling to function without him and largely serving to act as a caregiver protecting his unconscious body. Despite attempts to correct the role of agency within the companion, there have still been notable moments in which this agency is forcibly denied. At the end of the episode "Journey's End" (4.13) the Doctor 'saves' Donna by nonconsensually erasing all the memories she has of her travels with him as she states explicitly that she would rather die. The Doctor ignores Donna's claim of bodily autonomy, depositing her on the doorstep of her mother and grandparents who only re-affirm the good of his actions. The implication of this scene is that the Doctor, as the ultimate figure of patriarchal authority, is more ethically qualified to decide what choices Donna can make in relation to her body than she is, and that while his decision may have been tragic, the greatest loss was the grief and pain that it caused *him*.

Throughout her run as companion, Clara seeks to claim this agency in ways that previous companions had not been afforded. Clara's most radical claim of agency, however, is in the way that she rejects her obligatory narrative space as the companion and instead essentially becomes the Doctor. This process begins in the episode "Flatline" (8.9), a story with which many parallels can be drawn to "The Christmas Invasion" (2.X) nearly a decade earlier, as both stories begin with an incapacitated Doctor leaving the companion to function in his absence. Where in 2005 this episode was centered around the issue of how to get the Doctor back, the 2014 episode reframes the same fundamental conflict in a way that sees Clara slide effortlessly into the Doctor's narrative role. She quickly dons the iconographically charged tools of the Sonic Screwdriver and the Psychic Paper, adopts a companion of her own in the form of Rigsy, and investigates the threat of the episode just as the Doctor would. Where Rose in this situation was portrayed as dependent on the Doctor and unable to function without him, Clara is able to function entirely independently from the Doctor.

It is episodes like "Flatline" that make Clara's normalization of a female Doctor more significant than those performed by characters such as Missy or Kate Lethbridge-Stewart. While these characters normalize the process of a cross-gender recasting of traditionally male characters, they are still taking on roles which are *parallel* to the Doctor,

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whereas Clara in "Flatline" explicitly (as stated many times throughout the episode) is acting in place of the Doctor. As the tension of the episode builds, she becomes increasingly confident within this narrative role, asking herself things like "what would the Doctor do – no, what will I do", or rescuing her companion using unnecessarily witty, quickly delivered dialogueabout her hairband while the Twelfth Doctor's heroic theme plays in the background. Following this episode, Clara begins to take on more of the Doctor's qualities, increasing the ongoing thematic parallel between the two characters. This continues until "Face the Raven" (9.10), in which she reunites with her companion Rigsy and sacrifices herself to save him, spreading her arms in an outstretched body language that serves as an iconographic mirror to that of the Doctor's own regenerations in the revived series. This sets up the show to subvert a trope that has become increasingly common in contemporary media – "Women in Refrigerators", a term coined by comic book writer Gail Simone (1999), to refer to female characters who are killed off specifically to further the arc of a male character, often motivating this man into a revenge narrative in her name. Within the episode, Clara addresses this as explicitly as she can: by *ordering* the Doctor not to insult her memory by taking revenge, claiming agency over her own death and making the scene about what it means for *her*, as opposed to how it affects the Doctor.

Two episodes later, in "Hell Bent" (9.12), however, the story sets itself up for the Doctor to ignore Clara's instruction and take revenge anyway. He arrives at his home planet Gallifrey, confronting soldiers with epic music accompanying his grief-ridden pursuit of justice. Despite this narrative setup of a revenge-based plot following Clara's death, the Doctor takes down Gallifrey swiftly in about twenty minutes with no notable action scenes, and reaches his actual goal of using Time Lord technology to extract Clara from the moment before her death, making the remaining forty minutes of the episode about her. The Doctor intends to 'save' Clara the same way he did with Donna – to return her to a normal life and a 'happy' ending by nonconsensually wiping her memory. Where Donna was not allowed the narrative space to stand up to this form of violation, however, Clara has been slowly claiming this agency over the past three seasons. Clara rejects the Doctor's assumption that he has the right to erase her memory, not only delivering a speech explicitly articulating the importance of her own bodily autonomy, but turning the Doctor's claim of ownership over her body back around at him, and erasing his memory of her instead. She specifically refers to this process as "reversing the polarity" on the memory-wipe device – an iconic choice of words that has been repeated by the Doctor through multiple incarnations since 1972. Clara follows this up by depositing the Doctor's unconscious body and adopting a new companion in recurring character Ashildr from earlier in the season, before stealing her own TARDIS and running away. There is not a single more iconographically appropriate way to draw parallels between Clara and the Doctor than for her to steal a TARDIS and run away, as it forms a direct mirror to the Doctor's own backstory, leaving this moment to be presented as a textual argument that a future incarnation of the Doctor could be female without disrupting the narrative function of either character. "Hell Bent" functions within this as an especially actively feminist episode of *Doctor Who*, also serving to present the first on-screen cross-gender (and cross-race) regeneration of the General to further situate the possibility of a female Doctor within the canon of the show. The General was not the only example of a side character who aided Clara in furthering the argument in favour of a female Doctor prior to the casting of Jodie Whittaker. In the context of Kate Lethbridge-Stewart and Missy especially, these characters serve as successors to male characters who were prominent in the series during the early 1970s. By both literally and figuratively 'regenerating' the characters of the Master and Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart into female incarnations, the series further normalizes the process of cross-gender recasting of iconic male roles, and demonstrates that the functions of these characters can still be executed through a feminine context.

Doctor Who depends upon both the acknowledgement of its own history and the setting of precedents to be built upon, forming expectations around branding and viewership that, in cases like the companion, can become recurring hegemonies that are nearly impossible to truly break away from. What Clara Oswald has done within this structure is not only redefine the way these hegemonies are engaged with to produce new spaces for women to occupy within *Doctor Who,* but also set the series on a trajectory where it can become a progressive tool to perform sophisticated critiques, both of its own past and also of tropes within the science fiction genre at large. Clara Oswald provided the series with a compelling argument for a female Doctor. Her role formed a powerful precedent not only because it allowed for a woman to take on a role with the degree of confidence, power and narrative authority that comes with being the Doctor, but also completely reframed the narrative space for women within the *Doctor Who* format. Furthermore, in series seven, Clara demonstrated a subversive critique of the woman-as-mystery

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trope, presented within a narrative that deliberately mistreats her, but also gives her the space to reject this. In series eight, Clara is placed at the forefront of the narrative, concentrating on her complex and flawed persona rather than her traditional companion role of serving expositional functions that benefit the narrative, instead using the narrative as a tool to function for her. Finally, in series nine, Clara presented a highly self-reflexive critique of past companion departures through a rejection of the Women in Refrigerators trope and nonconsensual memory wipes, achieving a departure that was not only fitting for her character but also emphasizes her Doctor-like qualities in a way that deliberately paved the way for Jodie Whittaker to be cast as the Thirteenth Doctor. Overall, however, Clara consistently demonstrated a self-critical attitude towards her own function within the traditional narrative that female characters have been forced to occupy within the *Doctor Who* formula, a form of engagement with patriarchal textual structures that can be extended to other genres beyond science fiction. Female characters are still read by audiences through established patriarchal frameworks. While much feminist filmmaking chooses to reject this outright, there is value in both production and scholarship that develops or critically engages with characters who themselves critique their narrative while also conforming to it. For *Doctor Who,* it may take a few more decades for the role of the companion to truly escape from the hegemonic precedents of the roles which came before it, but Clara Oswald has opened up new narrative spaces for female characters on this show to occupy. The post-Clara companion can now be the driver of their own plot rather than only an expositional tool, and may serve as a self-reflexive critique both of their own history and narrative role. But, perhaps most importantly, they can be a Doctor.

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"FROM THE MIND OF DAVID SIMON": A CASE FOR THE SHOWRUNNER APPROACH

MIKKEL JENSEN

Name Mikkel Jensen
Academic centre Aalborg University, Denmark
E-mail address mjensen@cgs.aau.dk

KEYWORDS
Showrunners; the showrunner approach; David Simon; authorship; auteur.

ABSTRACT
This article makes a case for the academic soundness of reading together several television shows by the same showrunner. Zeroing in on the case of David Simon, the essay traces the difficulties that one faces if one aims to view together *The Corner, The Wire, Generation Kill, Treme, Show Me a Hero* and *The Deuce*. It also aims to point out the reason how one can study an oeuvre without overemphasizing the agency of the individual in a highly collaborative medium. To that end, the article considers how intellectual historian Quentin Skinner's concept "the mythology of coherence" can help qualify some of the issues with reading several television series together. The article further argues that television scholar Erlend Lavik's term "focused overarching authorship" supports the validity in trying to tease out a collected vision in Simon's television serials. For while David Simon is a *sine qua non* for the programs he has served as the showrunner on, the paper argues that it is crucial that we do not let all textual components point back to Simon as the originator of the textual utterance.

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In the summer of 2017, HBO marketed their then-upcoming series *The Deuce*, created by David Simon and George Pelecanos. Wanting to build up to the release, HBO added a page to their website titled "What David Simon and George Pelecanos Want You to Know About Their Shows", where Simon and Pelecanos outlined the motivations behind a number of shows they had worked on: *The Deuce* (2017-), *Show Me a Hero* (2015), *Treme* (2010-2013), *Generation Kill* (2008), and *The Wire* (2002-2008). HBO thus presented these shows – works, if you will – as a collected whole and invited its viewers to see them as part of an elaborate and sustained statement. The content of this interview, however, framed these TV series as something "more" than mere entertainment. "*The Deuce* takes a look at the remarkable paradigm of capitalism and labor," Pelecanos says, "where money goes and how it's routed; who has power and who doesn't; who is exploited and who's not". This new series, which was scheduled to be released three months later on 10 September, is thus framed as a highly serious political statement on capitalism as such – in line with the serious subject matter of the other shows that focus on topics such as public housing, deindustrialization, Hurricane Katrina, the state of inner-city schools, and gentrification. There is no mention of what is exciting, funny, or thrilling about these shows; this paratext focuses on thematic underpinnings in a vernacular of political seriousness.

At the bottom of the page, however, the website featured a link that clearly signposted that the viewer/reader should understand these television serials within the discourse of an author: "Start watching now with the HBO Collection *From the Mind of David Simon*" (HBO 2017). This appeal to the viewer is very much in line with how the title of the webpage assigns ownership over the series to Pelecanos and Simon; the series are framed as "Their Shows", not "HBO's shows". HBO thus uses the persona of David Simon as a gateway for leading its viewers to these television serials, which are presented as something decidedly different from the content on an "idiot box". HBO's promotional material, then, aims to elevate the television serial while emphasizing "the author". Both strategies can be seen as HBO's attempts to push an agenda that aims to promote the cultural capital of both Simon, these shows and – by extension – HBO itself. So while HBO – as well as the television industry more broadly – has an interest in promoting the idea that people watch shows "through" the notion of the showrunner, it is also something that is of academic interest. For it does seem reasonable to try and view together several series by the same showrunner and this paper makes a case for the academic soundness of doing so. Important to this venture, however, is the idea that we do not let all textual components point back to Simon as *the sole* originator of the textual utterance, for in the case of studying an oeuvre of television serials – a highly collaborative format – it is important not overemphasize the agency – or "authorship" – of the individual.

Television scholars Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine argue that "[i]n aesthetic cultures from music and painting to theater and cinema, it is exceedingly rare to find art without authorship discourses, and the legitimation of newer art forms like cinema is often accomplished through the identification of artworks with artists who create them" (2012: 38). This logic is reflected in how HBO presents Simon as an artist and their/his series as works of art. David Bordwell similarly argues that, in film, "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" (Bordwell 2009: 719, emphasis original). The last part of Bordwell's comment about the author organizing our comprehension surely depends on the individual viewer, but I do believe that his comment is relevant in pointing out how some television content (high-end drama) is framed as authored in a way that is not seen in other forms of programming (e.g. quiz shows and reality shows). Bordwell, however, maybe overstates the notion that only art cinema functions in this way. One could certainly argue that some viewers would have certain expectations of a drama framed as a "David Simon" series, as HBO certainly frames *The Wire*, *Treme*, and *The Deuce*, among others. Viewers might not only expect a David Simon show to have specific formal attributes, themes and tonal qualities, they might well also explain and understand those attributes as "Simonian". This piece of marketing material is thus part of HBO's attempt to label the program as art; i.e. to add to it an air of cultural capital as Bourdieu would have it.

It is not only HBO, however, that is interested in putting Simon forward as a sign of cultural value.[1] Simon also has

1 This could also explain why Simon gets a lot of creative leeway from HBO. HBO could have an interest in using Simon's creative output as a way of signaling that, at HBO, content comes first. Simon himself, however, has expressed skepticism about that notion. As Cynthia Littleton writes, Simon argued – after HBO decided to end *Treme* – "that smallscreen drama at its best can be very good", but "that doesn't mean the medium has turned into a storyteller's paradise", as is sometimes suggested in the discourse around networks such as HBO (Littleton 2013). Similarly, American Studies scholar Frank Kelleter argues that "HBO is first and foremost a commercial institution, even and especially in its elite appeal (as illustrated by the channel's failure to continue ambitious programs such as *Deadwood* or *Carnivàle*) (Kelleter

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an interest in being seen as a public intellectual since such a position enables him to engage in public discourse about topics that are important to him, and to provide interviews and give lectures about politics in general. Certain types of critics and viewers have also been interested in seeing the figure of Simon as a guiding force behind *The Wire* and the other celebrated dramas that bear his name as author. Michael Newman and Elana Levine argue that the process of elevating the status and legitimacy of television drama only becomes possible when cultural elites invest "the medium with aesthetic and other prized values, nudging it closer to more established arts and cultural forms and preserving their own privileged status in return" (2012: 7). As television scholar Jason Mittell notes

> we read the politics of *The Wire* and *Treme* off each other and in the context of David Simon's copious writings and interviews, providing an interpretative frame based on an authorial identity that is more unified and consistent than are actual creative processes (Mittell 2015: 115).

The above points are important to note, because with the rise of complex television (Mittell 2015), discourses surrounding the showrunners of programs like *The Wire*, *Mad Men*, *The Sopranos*, and *Breaking Bad* (to name just some of the most canonized shows) have strengthened. This raises the question of what it means to approach these shows through the lens of the showrunner – for example, to find and trace a common thread through the oeuvre of a writer and producer such as David Simon. Such an approach surely aligns with HBO's marketing strategy, which positions these dramas as originating from a single, central authorial figure. The problem is, however, that these shows didn't spring only "from the mind of David Simon".

Television scholar Robert Thompson stresses that film and television productions are created "not only for a mass of people but by a mass of people", and though some minor roles in production are interchangeable, "one is still left with a number of 'above-the-line' personnel who make a meaningful contribution to the final product" (Thompson 1990: 2).[2] So we might say that *The Wire* and other series bearing Simon's name spring "From the mind and work of quite a lot of people, *including* David Simon". But though Simon's productions have a complex authorship, they are nonetheless presented as a somewhat coherent whole, and I believe it does make sense to see them as such. The sustained interest of his series with urban issues in the US form an interesting intervention in public debates in contemporary America, and by seeing them in relation to each other we are able to uncover a more complex cultural critique than is possible by examining "only" one of the series in isolation from the others. This approach, however, raises the issue of how several discrete works can be treated a coherent whole – a notion that is fraught with methodological challenges. For British intellectual historian Quentin Skinner, treating disparate texts as a whole may reinforce *the mythology of coherence* – that is, the tendency to underemphasize difference, and overemphasize coherence, across an individual's oeuvre.

1. THE MYTHOLOGY OF COHERENCE

Sarah Cardwell provides a useful summary of the auteur approach to a body of films. It seeks out "recurrent thematic, generic and stylistic details within the films, and observ[es] variations, fluctuations and developments across the works" (2005: 11). This ambition is also central to the showrunner approach, but seeing as the creative personnel change from series to series, one could argue that for the showrunner approach the mythology of coherence is even more pressing as a potential fallacy. As I will later show, it is mainly producers and writers that recur across individual productions, and because Simon is able to create television serials that share quite a few similarities, it does seem he has a lot of power in shaping them.

Traditional auteurist discourse is sometimes marked by the mythology of coherence in the sense that it may overstate the extent to which a range of films can be seen as a whole rather than as a "body" of separate parts; it is in want-

2014: 8). Mittell has created a typology of the different ways of stopping shows (*stoppages*, *wrap-ups*, *conclusions*, *cessations*, and *finales*) and *The Wire* ended with a proper 'finale.' *Treme*'s fourth season, which has only five episodes, represents a less narratively motivated 'conclusion' (Mittell 2015: 319-322).

2 The notion of television being intended for a mass of people is arguably related to how, in the US context, there was a long-standing practice of producing *least objectionable programming* (LOP) that, seeking to avoid offending many demographics, modified televisual content to fit this industrial logic. With the change from broadcasting to narrowcasting, however, the focus has changed from least objectionable programming to most repeatable programming (Newman and Levine 2012: 139-140). Television scholar Dean DeFino writes that "the HBO brand is and has always been built upon the principles of exclusivity and specialization known collectively as "narrowcasting"" and "in 1970s, HBO touted itself as elite, offering content unavailable on broadcast television" (DeFino 2014: 39). In other words, narrowcasting as a phenomenon is historically linked in the US to HBO's practice.

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ing seek out the coherence in an auteur's productions that the auteur approach – as well as the showrunner approach – face the same problem that Skinner is interested in addressing. By challenging the fallacies inherent in the once-prevailing methodologies within the field of intellectual history, Skinner has played a key role in its methodological debates. One of his key critiques centers on the issue of reading together several (in his field, philosophical) texts (Eriksen and Kjærgaard 2001: 11). His expression "the mythology of coherence" refers to the practice of seeking out, in the works of a single author, a systematic and coherent "message" that transcends his/her texts, even to the extent of trying to create coherence where there are only scattered ideas and even downright contradictions (Lassen and Thorup 2009: 23). "It may turn out that some of the classic writers are not altogether consistent," Skinner writes, "or even fail to give any systematic account of their beliefs. [...] It will then become dangerously easy for the historian to treat it as his or her task to supply these texts with the coherence they may appear to lack" (Skinner 2002: 67). Skinner's warning of the mythology of coherence thus helps us be wary of tracing a "unified and consistent" argument through Simon's series. Skinner's wording of his methodological points reflects the focus of his work on philosophers like Hobbes and Machiavelli, but this does not make his ideas any less relevant to our current purposes.

Barring *Generation Kill*, Simon's productions have consistently examined urban issues in an American context. With a nod to Skinner's point above, however, it cannot be the critic's task to find in the political argument of these serials a greater coherence than their textual form supports. Intellectual historians Mikkel Thorup and Frank Beck Lassen note that many philosophers take it on themselves to save their favorite philosopher from their own ideas (Lassen and Thorup 2009: 23), and though the showrunner approach is interested in exploring recurrent issues in a particular individual's output, it surely cannot be an ambition to do "repair work" on Simon's political arguments. Being able to point out a contrast between *Treme* and *The Wire* is surely an interesting analytical focus insofar as it opens up an interpretative framework that had otherwise been difficult to see without reading these texts within the showrunner framing. But though there may very well be a common thread running through the works of David Simon, it cannot be the critic's task to try and tease out a coherent politics if these shows tend more often towards contradiction of each other.

The showrunner approach is thus also interested in seeing how the various works across an oeuvre depict a topic in different ways, maybe even in contradictory ways. The purpose is not to call out inconsistencies (as in a deconstructionist approach), but to point out how Simon's series – whether intentionally or not – inflect their shared themes differently. For his part, Simon has presented *Treme* as "an argument for the city" which thus can be understood as a more positive take on the American city than was presented by *The Wire* (Simon in Beiser 2011).[3] I would argue, however, that the critic's task here is to try to answer the question of why these two series are so different in this way. A tentative answer might be that *The Wire* is "pessimistic" or "bleak" because it seeks to explain how the war on drugs could be perpetuated across several decades; the more "positive" *Treme*, on the other hand, tries to argue that New Orleans was worth saving in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Had *Treme* been as "pessimistic" as *The Wire*, it would be difficult to present a story of New Orleans' value. So one might explain the different tonalities of these series in terms of their respective aims with regard to their distinct subject matter and historical contexts. That, however, is an issue for further research.

One should note, however, that the mythology of coherence is very much premised on a reading strategy that reads texts *with the grain* and not *against the grain*. Literary theorist Rita Felski argues that critical approaches to fictional narratives have been dominated by attitudes that "share the conviction that the most rigorous reading is one that is performed against the grain, that the primary rationale for reading a text is to critique it by underscoring what it does not know and cannot understand" (Felski 2011: 217). By emphasizing literary works' biases and blindnesses, such approaches are, with a nod to Paul Ricœur, based on *a hermeneutics of suspicion*. Sharing a core *Erkenntnisinteresse*[4] with ideology critique, this form of criticism looks "suspiciously at works of art" and debunks "them as tools of oppression" (Felski 2004: 30). In her latest book, *The Limits of Critique* (2015), Felski notes that "[s]eizing the upper hand, [such] critics read against the grain and between the lines; their self-appointed task is to draw out what a text fails – or willfully refuses – to see" (1). While much crit-

3 Several critics have argued that *The Wire* seems rather bleak in its portrayal of the contemporary American city. Television scholar Erlend Lavik, however, argues that some of the criticisms levelled against *The Wire* for being too "pessimistic" generally ignore the reasons why the show is structured as it is. He argues that to blame *The Wire* for being too pessimistic or bleak is the equivalent of complaining that a fire alarm is too noisy (Lavik 2014, 142).

4 This old Habermasian term is most commonly translated as 'cognitive interest' which, however, comes with too much semantic slippage and connotative baggage for it to be useful for my purposes. 'Epistemological interest' would maybe be a closer translation but I nonetheless opt for the original German word.

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icism on Simon's works surely read his serials with the grain (and, for instance, examines how *The Wire* offers a critique of institutional failure), *Treme*, for instance, has been met with the hermeneutics of suspicion (Rathke 2012; Thomas 2012). Another example could be the criticism of *The Wire*'s depiction of women (Vint 2013: 93-7; Lavik 2014: 143-52).

So while on the one hand we have Skinner's mythology of coherence, which issues a warning to those critics who would see an oeuvre as a collected whole, on the other hand we have Felski's hermeneutics of suspicion. While the showrunner approach surely should not shy away from critiquing a show from the perspective of a "suspicious hermeneutic", it is, nonetheless, an approach that has its chief interest in seeing connections – whether consistent and coherent, or contrasting – between several serials and miniseries. In this sense, the two approaches serve as guiding lights – as well as cautionary tales – for the analytical reading protocols with which we can meet Simon's series. It should also be noted, however, that there are connections that may be drawn between these series which may not be the product of Simon's – or anyone else's – consciously deliberate intentions.

The showrunner approach tries to trace connections between texts, so it seems more fruitful not to overemphasize a reading strategy based on the hermeneutics of suspicion, whose arguments, according to Rita Felski, "are a matter of not only content but also of style and tone" (Felski 2015: 4). Criticism in this vein is more akin to the OLD's definition the word: "a statement showing disapproval" rather than explorative, inquisitive critique. Though Felski does emphasize that the hermeneutics of suspicion "is by no means a pejorative term" (2015: 4), she laments the tendency that, in literary studies, skepticism has become dogma (2015: 9). Indeed, Felski points to Michael Roth's argument that if scholars in the humanities saw themselves "more often as explorers of the normative than as critics of normativity [...] we would have a better chance to reconnect our intellectual work to broader currents in public life" (Roth 2010). As such, Felski's skepticism towards skeptical readings points out a path that is probably not too useful for the showrunner approach. It does not seem terribly fruitful to stress the suspicious mode of reading a collected body of works. Indeed, the motivation for wanting to write (or read!) an interpretation of a collected body of work is surely that one wants to find out more about that body of work. It is an endeavor that has curiosity and not suspicion as its starting point.

That does not mean that we completely refrain from criticizing these television serials. American Studies scholar George Lipsitz criticizes *The Wire* for not examining the historical development of the Baltimore it portrays, and he draws upon interesting historical context regarding social and economic conditions in the city. "By the 1930s", Lipsitz writes, "Baltimore had the third worst housing stock of any city in the nation", a fact which surely informs our understanding of the Baltimore portrayed on *The Wire* (Lipsitz 2011: 103). In a similar fashion, journalist Jake Blumgart argues that the legacy of Oscar Newman's defensible space theory "is more contested than *Show Me a Hero* suggested" (Blumgart 2015). Such criticism surely qualifies the debate around these shows and I would argue that such socio-historically grounded critique certainly does not do any disservice to Simon's overall project. In one of the partly promotional, partly political interviews Simon did in the weeks around the release of *Show Me a Hero*, Simon said in an interview with Charlie Rose that "I think there are arguments that we need to have in this country and they need to be brought forward and they need to progress as arguments" (Simon in Rose 2015). In their engagement in a critical discussion with these series, both Lipsitz and Blumgart point to aspects of Simon's shows, and their relationship to historical reality, that might be subject to a negative or skeptical critique[5]. In that sense, Lipsitz can be seen as making an important criticism of *The Wire*[6] but, in another perspective, Lipsitz's comments can be seen as helping *The Wire* further contribute to a discussion on the state of the contemporary American city.

While the showrunner approach and the hermeneutics of suspicion point out different interpretative paths, the question remains of how one should understand the interrelation of the different series. For one cannot ignore how canonized *The Wire* has become. It has been the subject of several monographs[7], special issues of journals[8], and several anthologies[9] alongside an ever-growing list of journal articles. *The Wire* thus takes a central place in the canon of complex television, and for that reason the showrunner approach might be inclined to center much of its attention on this show in particular. But to do so is to risk diminishing the status of

5 Lavik argues that *The Wire* features more social-historical context than any other show and as such it is a bit of a stretch to ask for even more (Lavik 2014: 142).

6 To be fair, I should add that Lipsitz does laud *The Wire*, writing that it "may well be the best program ever to appear on television" (95).

7 Vint 2013, Lavik 2014, Williams 2014, Kelleter 2014, Corkin 2017.

8 *Criticism*, *Critical Inquiry*, and *Darkmatter*.

9 Marshall and Potter 2009, Bzdak et al 2013, Dillon and Crommey 2015, Keeble and Stacy 2015.

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the other shows such as *Treme* and *The Corner*. *The Wire* ought not become a sun around which the other shows orbit. It is important that all the shows are seen on their own terms, allowing *Treme* and *Show Me a Hero* to be treated as more than simply belated adjustments to the "central" utterance of *The Wire*. This concern also falls under Skinner's mythology of coherence, which, one could argue, is an even more pressing concern with a collaborative format such as television serials.

Skinner argues that this mythology "gives the thoughts of the major philosophers a coherence, and an air generally of a closed system, which they may never have attained or even aspired to attain" (Skinner 2002: 68). Now, while Simon – in various paratexts – discusses his shows in relation to each other, it seems problematic to suggest that a group of people – many of whom change from series to series and from season to season – can be said to "aspire to attain" a coherent, sustained argument over several series. Kristin Thompson argues that the amount of plot required for writing a television drama series requires a group effort (Thompson 2003: 39-40), but Lavik describes how writers in a writers' room work to serve the showrunner's overall vision. He quotes playwright and television writer Diana Son's explanation of the difference between writing for television and writing plays: "You're always trying to fulfill the aesthetic of the show and of your showrunner. When you're writing a play, you're writing in your own voice" (quoted in Lavik 2015: 26). So the writing of a serial drama is a group effort characterized by service to an overall voice, one shaped at the outset by the creator and managed by the showrunner through their rewrites. Skinner argues that "[i]f it is first assumed in the case of Edmund Burke that a 'coherent moral philosophy' underlies everything he wrote, then it will cease to seem problematic to treat 'the corpus of his published writings' as 'a single body of thought'" (Skinner 2002: 68). This speaks to the core of the mythology of coherence. While I aim to uncover and discuss the common thread running through Simon's series, it must be stated that *Treme* and *The Wire* are to be seen as separate statements, diverging, as they do, in both style, perspective, and tone.

Literary theorist Søren Schou argues that two of literary studies' approaches – deconstruction and the oeuvre approach – stand out by representing two decidedly different forms of *Erkenntnisinteressen*. To Schou, deconstruction is able to find more voices and more dissonances within a single poem than the oeuvre approach is able to tease out from an entire author's production (Schou 1987: 90). But it is the oeuvre approach that is able to engage with a readership that is interested in literature, or in our case, television drama. Discarding neither approach, Schou argues that one can see different texts in an author's production as inscribing themselves in an overall vector that slowly emerges as an author's career progresses (1987: 91-2). Indeed, though one will undeniably be able to find many voices in the works of David Simon, to uncover the common thread(s) running through these TV series enables us to look beyond *The Wire* or *Treme* to see a more multifaceted portrayal of the American city, and to appreciate a more nuanced statement than any one series puts forward. But in order to warrant our treatment of Simon's series as a whole, we need to look more closely at the creative and managerial roles he fulfils, to better understand his degree of agency in producing these series.

2. **DAVID SIMON**

Whereas Andrew Sarris sought to determine who was and who was not an auteur (Sarris 1962), I do not believe it is fruitful to assess whether or not Simon is to be seen as an "auteur." Auteur theory's predilection for separating the wheat from the chaff was premised on an active interest in establishing and elevating a canon, and thus embraced a process of hierarchical canonization. My non-labelling of David Simon is not to suggest that his series do not share central themes or express similar political statement – indeed, it would run counter to the showrunner approach to argue so – but I shy away from such labelling due a reluctant attitude towards auteurist discourse' embrace of hierarchical canons. As Matt Hills points out, however, the very practice of discussing Simon, as opposed to many other showrunners, always already adds weight to his canonization (Hills 2007). The critic thus needs to find specific reasons for studying *a particular showrunner*. I will therefore outline below the key reasons for reading "Simon's" television series together, as a whole.

According to Alisa Perren and Thomas Schatz, the term 'showrunner' first emerged in the US in the first half of the 1990s though the role is much older. It refers to writer-producers who have both creative and managerial responsibilities but, as television scholar Erlend Lavik argues, it is impossible to determine, on any general level, *how involved* showrunners are in other creative decisions outside of writing (Perren and Schatz 2015: 87; Lavik 2015: 19, 31). While some shows change showrunners mid-way through a series' run (e.g. *The*

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West Wing and *The Walking Dead*), other shows have what Tara Bennett has termed "cradle-to-grave showrunners" (Bennett 2014: 213), and Lavik notes that it is more difficult to attribute any one person with the creative responsibility for a series when the roles of creator[10] and showrunner aren't performed by one and the same person (Lavik 2015: 20). But whereas Simon is the showrunner on all "his" shows, on *Treme* Eric Overmeyer is also credited as a "creator." Any study embracing the showrunner approach must take this into account as one could also read *Treme* as part of Overmeyer's oeuvre and thus see it in relation to his stage plays and to the series *Bosch* (2014-), which he developed for Amazon Studios. It is therefore particularly important that Simon has consistently been a cradle-to-grave showrunner as he has both conceived a vision for these shows and has been involved in developing and administering the execution of the initial idea. This makes his role more central and adds weight to the rationale of viewing his productions in relation to each other. By contrast, consider the case of *The West Wing*, where, as Janet McCabe notes, the "abrupt exit" of showrunner Aaron Sorkin "changed everything" (2012: 36). This means that although Sorkin's role in shaping that show was essential, his departure nonetheless leaves the issue of *The West Wing*'s authorship murkier than is the case with series overseen by David Simon as showrunner.

However, while Simon played a part in shaping the narrative structure of his shows, their visual outcome is – by his own description – something that directors and cinematographers (especially director Robert Colesberry on *The Wire*) have played an important part in conceptualizating (Simon 2014). Indeed, it is a common practice for series to have a "conceptualizing director"[11], i.e. the director who is responsible for the first (few) episodes of a series like David Fincher on *House of Cards* (2013-) or Søren Kragh-Jacobsen on *Borgen* (2010-2013). According to Eva Novrup Redvall, such "directors naturally take on a special position when creating the visual style of a series" (Redvall 2013: 118).[12] Production designers, who "supervis[e] the overall look of a film", are surely also to be counted among those who help shape the visual style of a series (Wille 2017). From that starting point, other writers work to support the vision founded by the showrunner, or creator. That, however, does not mean that these writers – like George Pelecanos and William F. Zorzi – do not make a difference in the final outcome of a series (they most certainly do), but they do so within a paradigm laid down by the creator(s) of the show, which is an important reason for examining and discussing Simon's works as an oeuvre.

Apart from *Homicide* (1993-1999), Simon's role has consistently been to initiate, write, and produce the series he has worked on, and although many people recur from production to production, Simon's series have been produced by different groups of people. Firstly, not many editors recur from series to series, and they have all had different conceptualizing directors. Vince Peranio, however, served as the production designer on both *The Corner* and *The Wire*, and Ivan Strasburg was the cinematographer on *The Corner*, *Generation Kill* and *Treme*. Laurence Bennett did production design on both *Show Me a Hero* and (alongside Beth Mickle) *The Deuce*. It is especially producers and writers that recur from series to series. David Simon, Ed Burns, and George Pelecanos often contribute to the writing, while Nina Kostroff-Noble consistently plays a central role as a producer.

David Simon and David Mills co-wrote *The Corner* and both were credited as executive producers alongside Robert F. Colesberry and Nina Kostroff-Noble. Simon was both the creator as well as the showrunner of *The Wire*.[13] He was also a writer, together with Ed Burns and Evan Wright of *Generation Kill*, and on *Treme* both Eric Overmeyer and David Simon are credited as "creators". Simon and William F. Zorzi are the sole writers of *Show Me a Hero*. None of the miniseries use the credit "created by". As such, Simon has a central role in all of these shows and is also particularly visible as a showrunner. While I have been able to find numerous interviews with Simon regarding *Show Me a Hero*, I have found only a few in which Zorzi is also interviewed (Radish 2015). Ed Burns and Paul Haggis, however, appear in numerous interviews. Whatever explains this, it foregrounds Simon's role as a public intellectual. He is a creator of many paratexts, which, when Simon discusses these shows in relation to each other, be-

10 While "showrunner" is an informal title, "creator" is a formal one. The former is often listed as an executive producer in the opening credits of a show, while the latter is listed as the "creator." Creator, in turn, can either refer to the person who has developed the overall concept for a series or the person who wrote the first episode of a series (Lavik 2015: 19-21).

11 This is a translation of the Danish term "konceptuerende instruktør", which refers to the director who directs the first episode(s) of a show and thus sets the style and feel for that series. Redvall uses the term in her *Writing and Producing Television Drama in Denmark* (118).

12 Two out of Simon's three miniseries have been directed by a single director. Charles Dutton directed all six episodes of *The Corner* and Paul Haggis directed all six episodes of *Show Me a Hero*. Susanna White and Simon Cellan Jones directed four and three episodes of *Generation Kill*, respectively.

13 Sometimes, Ed Burns is credited with being a co-creator of *The Wire* but in the opening credits of the show's episodes only David Simon is listed as the creator.

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come invitations to read the shows together. This is especially the case with the paratext cited at the start of this article[14].

In addition to his importance as a writer on these shows, Simon's role as an on-set collaborator is also important. As Christina Kallas suggests, "whether a writer is on set or not" is in fact "one of the most important factors behind American TV drama's success, perhaps even more so than the writers' room concept" (Kallas in Lavik 2015: 86). Simon has made a similar point in an essay praising the input of actor Oscar Isaac to a scene of *Show Me a Hero*: "Filmed narrative is intensely collaborative. And the script is just a script; until you film the sonofabitch, it doesn't actually exist in a form that matters to anyone" (Simon 2016). Adopting the showrunner approach, then, it is crucial that we do not let all textual components point back to Simon as *the* originator of the textual utterance. For it seems that a key problem with the auteur approach is that all textual elements are considered to originate with the director. While David Simon is a *sine qua non* for the programs on which he has served as showrunner[15], his creative control only goes so far. This, however, is directly related to the key danger on which the "showrunner approach" may run afoul: the possibility of giving too much emphasis to the power of the showrunner in a collective production, at the expense of the many other writers, producers, actors, directors, and other creative personnel involved in shaping the final outcome of a show.[16]

One should not, however, go in the other direction and completely downplay Simon's degree of agency in the production of these series. If the showrunner approach is useful it is because we are interested in seeing how several texts taken together form a more complex vision of the themes a particular showrunner continuously revisits and examines in different ways. By comparison, the significance of certain series could be brought into relief through an approach that minimized concentration on Simon's authorial imprint. One could, of course, read *Treme* in relation to other depictions of New Orleans such as the late 1980s TV series *Frank's Place* (Tyree 2010) or the film *Bad Lieutenant: Port of Call New Orleans* (2009) (Parmett 2012). The merit of that approach would surely lie in its comparative affordances, which would mirror a central value of the showrunner approach: that is, to compare the depictions of a given topic, such as residential segregation, across a number of series. The key interest of the showrunner approach, however, lies in the way several shows contribute to a collected utterance – albeit one co-created by many people. Thus it makes available comparative readings of, say, *The Wire* and *The Corner* (Vest 2011; Williams 2014) which would be understood differently from comparisons between *Frank's Place* and *Treme*. So though one should be mindful of the mythology of coherence, it is precisely by reading *Treme* and *The Wire* together that one is able to see the different depictions of the American urban landscape that Simon's series engender, whether those are complementary or contradictory.

I single out these two other approaches as contrasts to the showrunner approach as a way of pointing to the fact that a notion of authorship is necessary in order to read these shows together as a collected statement or utterance[17]. Philosopher Aaron Meskin argues that there is not "any inconsistency in applying the idea of authorship to works of mass or popular culture" (Meskin 2008: 15). As Meskin also elaborates, however, such authorship is very complicated. In the case of media texts, authorship is an ambiguous concept and several scholars have accordingly established a terminology that helps us distinguish between different facets of the term. Jason Mittell distinguishes between *authorship by responsibility* and *authorship by management*, which are his terms for how authorship works in films and television shows, respectively (Mittell 2015: 88). Whereas the former term has to do with the responsibility that comes with the *creative* decisions around which material is included in the film – and, just as importantly, what is left out – the latter has to do with the decision making that goes into overseeing a *production* schedule on ongoing productions in television drama. The first is most often seen with film directors and the latter is a producer's role. Mittell further qualifies this distinction by arguing that "most showrunners earn their authorship by both responsibility and management

14 It is interesting that Simon's first mini-series *The Corner* (2000) is missing from that list. That show is not on HBO's online platform and is thus left out of HBO's promotional material; Simon and Pelecanos' political statements are thus framed by HBO's choice of shows they want to promote on that platform.

15 As Simon's 1991 journalistic account of a Baltimore homicide unit, *Homicide: A Year on the Killing Streets*, was the basis of NBC's six-season show *Homicide: Life on the Street* (1993-1999), one could argue that *Homicide* should also be included in any study of Simon's oeuvre. Simon, however, only wrote or co-wrote seven *Homicide* teleplays (out of 122 episodes), and as such he was never a leading force on the series, playing a relatively minor role in a production spearheaded by Tom Fontana.

16 One should also note that the showrunner's administrative power is particular to the American context of TV drama production. It is, for instance, a different situation in the Danish context where head writers do have a lot of creative freedom but generally don't have the same administrative power as showrunners in the US context (Lavik 2015: 35-37).

17 Skinner, however, stresses that there is no such thing an abstract, overall position in the works of an author. As such, I do not want to suggest that seeking out the common thread in Simon's works implies such overall coherence.

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for countless leadership decisions and [are thus] regarded as the primary authorial figures within an intensely collaborative medium" (Mittell 2015: 92).[18] As such, Mittell argues that some showrunners are able to assume both forms of authorship. David Simon represents such a "strong" showrunner, which provides a further justification for reading his series together.

Whereas Mittell's two terms point out the difference between authorship in film and television drama, Lavik operates with four categories that qualify some of the finer points in discussing the showrunner approach. To Lavik, the term *literal authorship* is the formal crediting (regulated by collective agreements) of who penned the manuscript for a specific episode. Showrunners, however, routinely rewrite scripts in order to better integrate another writer's work into the overall plotting of a TV serial. Lavik's term *general authorship* refers to those who exert influence over the overall production. His last two terms are *distributed* (or weak) *overarching authorship* and *focused* (or strong) *overarching authorship*. The former refers to those cases where the creator, producer, main writer, and showrunner are not one and the same person, whereas the latter term refers to a figure like David Simon who "administers his own vision" (Lavik 2015: 18-21). The important thing to note is the overlap between the role of creator, producer and writer which strengthens the case of *focused overarching authorship*. That concept supports the validity of trying to tease out a collected vision in Simon's television serials. One could, of course, argue that the phrase "Simon's television serials" is itself problematic, as it seems to assign full authorship or ownership of these serials, and one should therefore avoid using that expression altogether. While the expression does belie the true nature of the *material authorship* (in Mittell's terminology) in these shows, the need for linguistic and stylistic elegance and brevity suggests that one can use those terms as long as one is clear about the caveats that must accompany the showrunner approach. Another question, however, is how one can see 'a body of work' as a coherent statement.

To HBO, presenting David Simon in a certain way plays a role in the marketing of their product as elevated above "commercial" content. This strategy, however, entails notions of auteurism. Sarah Cardwell argues that the auteur approach "posits a set of films made by one director as an oeuvre (a body of work), seeking out recurrent thematic, generic and stylistic details within the films, and observing variations, fluctuations and developments across the works" (Cardwell 2005: 11). In this sense, the showrunner approach shares the core *Erkenntnisinteresse* that the auteur study approach embraces. As Lavik notes, however, auteur theory's argument that the director 'writes with the camera' does not acknowledge the degree of collaboration that characterizes work on a film and actually diminishes the efforts of other professions than directors (Lavik 2015: 18). James Naremore, on the other hand, argues that "[r]eaders or viewers always decode messages by positing a source, even if only an imaginary or unconscious one, and the source has a political meaning" (Naremore 2004: 22). Naremore's argument thus builds on Foucault's notion of the author function. Sherryl Vint also draws on Foucault's author function in arguing that showrunners "are not solely responsible for the text but serve as a site that unites various discourses into a coherent meaning" (Vint 2013: 5). The danger with this approach, however, is the possible conflation of *Simon as author function* with the *actual Simon* who appears in authorial paratexts such as essays and interviews. Literary historian Tore Rye Andersen argues that authorial paratexts and marketing material can affect scholarly criticism to such an extent that criticism reproduces the initial authorial paratexts published alongside a literary work. While Andersen's focus is on literary history, his point is further relevant to television serials:

> In an ideal world, readers, reviewers, and critics might approach the text without a glance at the material get-up or paratexts wrapped around it, but in practice the packaging of the text has proven to be a decisive factor in the reception's construction of the work (Andersen 2012: 271).

Andersen thus argues that authorial paratexts help guide the critic's hand when she writes her scholarly articles about a given work, and he further argues that the "focal points of the reviews will thereupon often help determine which areas the first academic articles about the work concentrate on, and these early articles in turn help peg out the course of the subsequent monographs and anthologies" (2012: 271). Similarly, Frank Kelleter identifies how scholars sometimes "duplicate statements from [*The Wire*'s] paratexts" and often "transform them into statements of fact or treat them as if they were results of analysis" (Kelleter 2014: 34). Andersen and Kelleter thus both point to the core metaphor of Genette's original French term for paratexts, *seuils*, meaning thresholds. When the critic reads a paratext, it may well guide the critic along certain interpretative paths. That is not

18 It is interesting to note that both Mittell and Simon use the same exact wording of "intensely collaborative" work.

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necessarily a bad thing, but it is a route one should traverse only with reflection. Especially in the case of a showrunner as vocal and outspoken as David Simon is on many issues, it is pressing that the critic remains conscious of his potential influence on their own viewpoint.

SUMMING UP

Although the auteur approach has been challenged for years within film studies, the project of seeing film makers or showrunners' collected works in relation to each other has not dwindled (Agger 2016: 86). As Lavik rightfully notes, the idea of the director "writing with the camera" has relegated the contributions of many creative personnel to footnotes in media production. In that respect, the auteur approach is rightfully criticized, but the idea of looking at, for example, *The Corner* and *The Wire* in relation to each other ought not to be discredited for the same reason. While HBO's motivation to grant Simon a large degree of creative freedom is rooted in economical rationales (self-promotion and profit), this creative freedom nonetheless gives Simon the chance he needs to tell stories that (with the exception of *Generation Kill*) all concentrate on the ills and appeals of the American city. And in that sense, it makes sense to see him as a strong showrunner who warrants a view of his oeuvre as a sustained statement, one that – taken as a whole – certainly does change both its area of focus and its overall mood or tone, but which consistently speaks to important issues about America's urban realities. In Simon's works, there is a consistent interest in exploring the challenges of disadvantaged minorities but that is something that is explored in different ways in the different series. The mere fact that race is a key interest in Simon's oeuvre foregrounds this as a key concern. But to identify something as a key concern is not same as exploring *how* that theme is developed in different ways in the different series. I believe, however, that to see *Show Me a Hero*, *Treme*, *The Wire* and others in relation to one another is not to attribute David Simon full responsibility over the final form of these series. It seems fruitful to view the depiction of impoverished neighborhoods in *The Wire* and *Show Me a Hero* as different angles on the same issue; these depictions surely differ, but they are nonetheless complementary.

The danger is to trace *all* textual elements back to a single individual – but as long as one does not do that nothing should stand in the way of this endeavor. However, one should not ignore that doing showrunner oriented studies plays into the ambitions of television networks (such as HBO's) to elevate the showrunner as a cultural figure who contributes to the cultural and economic value of HBO's brand. Such studies also lend cultural capital to the showrunner himself. As the "auteur" discourse around a showrunner is also a marketing ploy (though not only that), Lavik argues that it is a discourse one should approach with critical distance (Lavik 2014: 84-7). To approach marketing paratexts critically, however, is something other than rejecting the merits of looking at several texts "by" one showrunner in relation to each other.

The mythology of coherence thus warns of the approach that sees several texts cohere perfectly as *one* statement. Skinner's useful term, then, points out the danger of overemphasizing the unitary nature of an oeuvre. *The Wire*'s first three seasons (2002-2004) occasionally allude to the war on terror and this, of course, must be read as a response to 9/11[19]. That is not to say that *The Wire*'s criticism of institutional failings are only a response to *these* historical circumstances, but we cannot overstate how such criticisms feature across Simon's shows. *Treme*'s celebratory depiction of New Orleans musical culture is surely also to be understood as a defense of the value of that city's survival in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. For Simon's series are statements in and of themselves but so is the entire oeuvre; *The Wire* and *Treme* present a synchronic portrayal of segregated cities, while *Show Me a Hero* breaks new ground in Simon's oeuvre by offering a new angle on this topic, depicting the historical roots of residential segregation. It is only by watching these series in relation to each other that we are able to paint the bigger picture of the ways in which Simon's serials speak to current social and urban issues in American culture.

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19 In *The Wire* episode "Slapstick," it is clearly presented to the viewer that the war on terrorism takes precedence over the narcotics and homicide cases worked on by the series' protagonists. Two FBI agents explain to McNulty and others that "Ghetto drug stuff just doesn't rate, I'm sorry to say" as "the Bureau's a little busy with counter terrorism." As the viewer is aligned with McNulty and his co-workers, it is clear that the viewer is supposed to see the folly in this (3.9).

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CROSSING THE WESTERN BORDERS: WOMEN OF *SON*

ŞEBNEM BARAN

Name Şebnem Baran
Academic centre University of Southern California, Los Angeles, USA
E-mail address sbaran@usc.edu

KEYWORDS
Turkish television; drama exports; scripted formats; quality programming.

ABSTRACT
While Turkish television shows have been quite popular in the Middle East, the Balkans, and South America, Turkish producers have been less successful in exporting content to the Western European and North American markets. After receiving moderate ratings in Turkey, *Son* (2012) was the first Turkish show to be sold to Western Europe when the Swedish public television stv2 purchased the rights to air it with subtitles. While the American adaptation, *Runner,* did not make it on air on ABC despite the pilot order, the Dutch and the Spanish adaptations were filmed in 2016 and 2017, respectively. *Son* (*The End*) remains the only success story among other attempts to introduce Turkish shows into these new markets. In this article, I argue that *Son*'s two opposing female characters offer a reflexive discussion of Turkey's identity, and that this allegorical representation, which anchors the story in the current geopolitical climate—mirroring Turkey's role as an east-west bridge—enables the show to challenge the existing borders of travel for Turkish TV shows.

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While Turkish television shows have been quite popular in the Middle East, the Balkans, and South America, Turkish producers have been less successful in exporting content to the Western European and North American markets. After receiving moderate ratings in Turkey, *Son* (2012) was the first Turkish show to be sold to Western Europe when the Swedish public television network stv2 purchased the rights to air it with subtitles. Although a pilot was ordered by ABC, the American adaptation, *Runner*, did not make it to air; the Dutch (*Vlucht HS13*) and the Spanish (*El Accidente*) adaptations were filmed in 2016 and 2017, respectively. *Son* (*The End)* remains the only success story among other attempts to introduce Turkish shows into these new markets.

In this article, I argue that *Son* breaches the borders blocking Turkish television flows with its unique portrayal of Turkish femininity that allows for parallel East/West binaries, and its utilization of quality programming and complex television characteristics. The lead character Aylin (Nehir Erdoğan) deviates from the female identity model anchored in traditional roles of motherhood by following her desires. This distinguishes Aylin from the mainstream models of feminine identity that compete in domestic Turkish mainstream representation: the modern nation-state model, the more traditional identity associated with the ancient Ottoman regime, and the newly emerging neo-conservative version of the latter. Aylin, who appears to conform to the modern secular identity model at first glance, emerges as a new model. Iranian Leyla (Mehrnoush Esmaeilpour), whose Eastern-ness validates Aylin's Western-ness, acts as a crucial element of this identity construction. Aylin becomes more Western in Leyla's presence. This identity construction for Aylin's character, which posits her as a Western woman less bound to her duties as a mother, ends up enabling *Son* to move towards the Western European markets.

The models of femininity these two women represent also reveals the juxtaposition of "the Western modern" and "the Oriental other", providing European viewers an entry from "the Western" side. The understanding of the East-West dichotomy here is based on discourses of difference, and in order to avoid reproducing or essentializing these artificial discourses, it is important to first trace them. Building on Orientalist discourses, such discussions—mostly coming from the academic fields of political science and international relations (Fukuyama 1989, Huntington 1993)—construct the "West" as civilized, modern, secular, and democratic, whereas the "East" becomes backward, traditional, religious, and undemocratic. These descriptions, which appear in mainstream media coverage (such as opinion pieces by Thomas Friedman) and are usually supported by academic expert opinion like Huntington's and Fukuyama's, ignore socio-political context and historical heritage to attribute the difference between the East and the West to their essences. After a close examination, the juxtaposition of Aylin and Leyla is evidence of the delicate nature of the West vs. East dichotomy. Aylin can only be Western in the presence of Leyla, whose Eastern-ness is similarly proved by Aylin's presence. This mechanism helps *Son* become an easy text to transport to Europe because the show resorts to recognizable depictions of the East vs. West binary. The exact preservation of this dual representation in *Son*'s format adaptations explains how it contributes to the show's mobility. For example, in the case of the Dutch adaptation, *Vlucht HS13* (2016), simply substituting the Dutch character, Liv (Katja Schuurman), for Turkish Aylin and preserving Leyla as the "Oriental Other" makes the story work. Spectatorial expectations work in favor of West-bound flows since Liv and Aylin share Leyla as their common "Oriental Other", therefore making the story more palatable for European audiences.

This hybrid of family melodrama and political thriller bears resemblance to Anglo-American quality programming, and alongside the show's representation of the East vs. West binary, this plays a role in easing the process of adaptation. Generic, narrative, and aesthetic elements of quality programming increase the accessibility of the text outside of Turkey. The juxtaposition of the West and the East or the modern and the traditional becomes embedded in these generic, narrative and aesthetic elements of quality programming. Examples like *Homeland* (2011) and *The Honorable Woman* (2014) reveal how frequently these juxtapositions occur in quality programming.

Moreover, these dichotomies are familiar for European viewers, as Oriental discourses have been recurrent in European history since the 16th Century colonial campaigns, which were legitimized by the East's difference from the West. In Turkey, too, the identity of the Republican nation-state, founded in 1923, was constructed with the help of a similar juxtaposition, which posited the new Turkish identity as secular and modern in opposition to the Ottoman identity as religious and traditional. This representation has been visible on television screens throughout the Turkish Republic's history. While mainstream media discourses in Turkey have painted religiosity as an obstacle to modernity until now, political changes have started to challenge this hegemonic representation under the rule of the conservative

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Justice and Development Party (AKP) since 2002. Increasing visibility of religiosity and changing dynamics of media ownership introduced to mainstream audiences a new identity discourse incorporating modernism and religiosity. These changing discourses in Turkey may explain the show's only moderate domestic popularity. In this new context, the depiction of Aylin does not fit in well with any of these identity constructions. The Republican modern, the conservative traditional, and the emerging neo-conservative version similarly prioritize family in women's lives. However, by putting her own desire to know before her family's well-being, Aylin deviates from all these versions.

By building upon the political context of Turkey's ongoing transformation, I will offer an ideological textual analysis of *Son* to show why, unlike other Turkish melodramas, it could travel towards the West. In order to survey how this happens, an ideological textual analysis is helpful to connect the text and the context of production. Textual analysis is a flexible method. It provides a chance to look at the form, style and aesthetics as well as the meaning they construct and/or represent. Glen Creeber lists the possibilities this method offers while explaining his interest in television: "What interests me the most about television studies are questions of aesthetics, ideology, discourse, narrative, genre, representation, camera work, music, casting, editing, the script, authorship and so on. In short, I can't get enough of the text" (2006: 81). As Creeber acknowledges by mentioning the works of Stuart Hall (1973/1980) and John Fiske (1987), the textual analysis method bears the risk of making assumptions about audiences and reproducing "preferred meanings" or "dominant ideologies" (2016: 82). While I am aware of this danger, I believe it is important to remember how these "preferred meanings" dominate mainstream media coverage and influence what type of content manages to appear on television screens and travel abroad. In other words, whether they are accepted by the audiences or not, these meanings have an impact on production and exports. Drawing on works of Douglas Kellner (1995) and Stuart Hall (1988), Jennifer Esposito (2009) also explains how popular culture represents and constructs cultural meanings and ideologies at the same time. Esposito argues that "[R]epresentations do not just reflect already determined meanings. Instead, they help contribute to discursive understandings" (2009: 524). My goal is to use representations to offer discursive understandings.

Therefore, I argue that what gives *Son* mobility towards Western Europe becomes the reason for its moderate performance in the Middle East, therefore making it a thought-provoking case for analysis. In this context, I first explore the rising popularity of Turkish dramas in the Middle East. I discuss how both Neo-Ottoman academic arguments and mainstream media coverage attribute this popularity to the more egalitarian gender configuration offered by these Turkish shows. Then, I identify how this configuration interacts with identity discourses and representations prevalent in Turkish Republican history. In the specific case of *Son*, the juxtaposition between Turkish Aylin and Iranian Leyla provides an insight into changing dynamics between the modern/secular/Republican identity representation, the traditional/conservative identity representation inherited from the Ottoman Empire, and newly emerging neo-conservative identity representation associated with AKP rule as briefly mentioned above. This juxtaposition intertwined with Anglo-American quality programming standards is crucial in understanding why *Son* did not perform well in the Turkish market and did not gain popularity in the region, but proved to be the most successful Turkish scripted format in Europe.

1. TURKISH DRAMA EXPORTS AND NEO-OTTOMANISM

While the digitalization of content has increased the visibility of authorized and unauthorized forms of online viewing, the last twenty years has also witnessed an increase in the number of authorized transnational television flows. Although television content has traveled across borders before, the course and the content of flows changed dramatically after the 1980s. Increasing numbers of format adaptations and the rise of new centers of production like Israel, Korea and Turkey has instigated a new wave of discussions both in academia and mainstream media which question the impact of a newfound multidirectionality. These discussions have seen the emerging centers of production as evidence of a change in the global television market, which has long been dominated by Anglo-American production. I argue to the contrary, and explain how this Anglo-American hegemony has retained its power despite the emergence of new centers of production. This is because Anglo-American quality programming standards became the defining factor that allowed content from these new centers to travel to North America and Western Europe.

Television flows have long been studied as a way to understand power dynamics between countries participating in the global television market. Theories of cultural imperial-

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ism (Boyd-Barrett 1977; Mattelart 1979; Roach 1997) situate content flows from the core countries in the West to peripheral countries as an extension of hegemonic power. Earlier theories of cultural imperialism had used the lack of agency and the lack of multidirectionality as evidence of Western hegemony. Emerging from the critique of neocolonialism, theories of cultural imperialism described a new form of colonialism replacing the previously exercised politico-military forms of domination (Boli and Lechner 2007: 303). However, other scholars like Ien Ang (1985) and Elihu Katz and Tamar Liebes (1997) emphasized the importance of interpretive differences for consideration alongside the direction of flows. Moreover, the more recent rise of regional centers along with the multidirectional television flows associated with it raised questions about equating the movement of content with hegemony. As another model of media globalization, the "flows model" reflects a similar awareness of global mobility of television content.

In this context, Joseph Straubhaar (2007) and Silvio Waisbord (2004) have focused on the industry to study global television flows. These studies pay more attention to the course of flows and the elements of production such as low production costs, the tested success of shows originating from other countries and the role of trade fairs. Although the role of cultural proximity is acknowledged, aesthetic aspects receive less attention. The role of genre (Bielby and Harrington 2005) similarly comes up to study what travels better. Rather than being treated as stand-alone subjects, culture, language and narrative are studied as parameters of production even when the unequal nature of global flows is addressed (Thussu 2006). These macro analyses might mention aesthetic implications briefly, yet more extensive surveys of aesthetics focus on the national context instead of transnational flows. Format studies (Oren and Shahaf 2012) provide rare exceptions, and address both macro and micro levels of analysis by touching upon aesthetics to discuss cultural specificities. Looking at format trades (Chalaby 2015a, 2015b) also helps to explore categorical differences between different types of content such as reality formats, scripted dramas and comedies while questioning theories of globalization. However, in-depth surveys of aesthetics mostly remain tangential instead of being incorporated at the center. Even when the narrative and aesthetic influences of flows beyond format adaptations (Creeber 2015) are discussed, the emphasis remains on the production perspective rather than the importance of cultural relativity. Studies focusing more on cultural relativity (Brunsdon 1998; McCabe and Akass 2007) take a closer look at content as a text while paying attention to aesthetics. Nevertheless, connections between those macro and micro levels of analysis are not fully explored in the context of global television flows. My project is an intervention in this distinction.

In 2012, the year of *Son's* release, the domestic market in Turkey had already become very competitive as power dynamics changed following an important rise in Turkish television exports. After being situated at the receiving end of global television trades for a long time, Turkey has gained prominence as a finished program and format exporter in the last decade. While Turkish reality formats such as *Gelinim Olur Musun? (The Perfect Bride,* 2004) first started to circulate as templates for adaptation, Turkey's rise became more prominent with the increasing popularity of dubbed Turkish melodramas in the Middle East. The popularity of earlier examples like *Gümüş* (*Noor,* 2005-2007) paved the way for the new wave of finished exports. Between 2004 and 2012, the worth of such finished exports climbed from $10,000 to $200 million (*Hurriyet Daily News,* 2014). Later, the success of Turkish finished melodramas managed to expand beyond the surrounding region as depicted by the famous example *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (*Magnificent Century*, 2011-2014), which aired in over 40 countries.

The desire of the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) to exert more influence in the region intensified during the 2000s, coinciding with the increase in the number of exported TV shows. With these new developments, the term Neo-Ottomanism became a recurring reference in academic and journalistic articles exploring the new regional popularity of Turkish content. Marwan Kraidy and Omar Al-Ghazzi (2013) build upon the notion of Neo-Ottomanism to describe this popularity as "Neo-Ottoman Cool". Elsewhere they define Neo-Ottomanism as "a Turkey-centric policy of projecting Turkish self-confidence politically and economically" (Al-Ghazzi and Kraidy 2013b: 2344). This imperial association contributes further to the ambiguity of the Turkish case if we consider how the early Turkish Republican era held the Ottoman past in disdain, a stance shared by other countries in the region. Calling attention to the shared desire to establish a new identity different from the Ottoman identity, Kraidy and Al-Ghazzi explain in their discussion of "Neo-Ottoman Cool" that "Ottomanism served as the antiquated Other both for Kemalist Turkey and Arab countries born from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire" (Kraidy and Al-Ghazzi 2013: 18) . However, the AKP rule conjured up imperial memories and challenged the other-ization of Ottoman identi-

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ty in the domestic public sphere while promoting Ottoman heritage as a way to connect with Middle Eastern countries. Oscillating between depictions of modernity and traditional values (Kraidy and Al-Ghazzi 2013, Cetin 2014, Kaynak 2015,), Turkish dramas seem to mirror Turkey's ambiguous identity, caught in the middle of the Oriental divide between the East and the West.

According to press coverage (Matthews 2011), Turkish shows travelling across borders manage to remain culturally relevant for Arab audiences while incorporating elements of aspirational modernism, which provides a proximate version of modernity that does not ostracize religion and tradition. For example, these Turkish shows present a more egalitarian relationship between men and women without showing as much sex as do American shows. According to mainstream news coverage, such depiction inspires women to demand more from their husbands. This aspirational gender equality is attributed to Turkey's secular democratic model, which differs from the Islamic nature of other Middle Eastern regimes. Alongside the Western praise for the Turkish model, the Turkish Republic's desire to become more influential in the Middle East endorses Neo-Ottoman Cool as "modern enough" for the region. In other words, according to these explanations, a less threatening version of modernity presents an alternative to Western content in the Middle East. These claims of cultural relevance invoke theories of cultural proximity (Straubhaar 1991, Yesil 2015), which link the success of exports with the cultural similarities between the country of origin and the receiving country. The degree to which Turkish television shows have altered the expectations held by Middle Eastern women towards their partners has also become a recurring topic in newspaper articles about Turkey's rise as a new center of production. In this context, how women live and how they are represented on television becomes an important part of the conversation. Discourses of modernism and traditionalism (Göle 1997, Abu Lughod 1998, White 2003) are mapped on women's bodies, which become ideological symbols for different identities both in domestic and regional contexts.

Despite Neo-Ottoman arguments describing Turkish shows as potentially aspirational progressive texts, and mainstream media coverage supporting such an aspirational connection, these shows preserve a conservative understanding of family. For example, celebrated as a female-oriented drama (Cevik 2014), *Gümüş* became a target for conservative critics including clerics and religious authorities in the Middle East, who publicly condemned the show for being immoral.

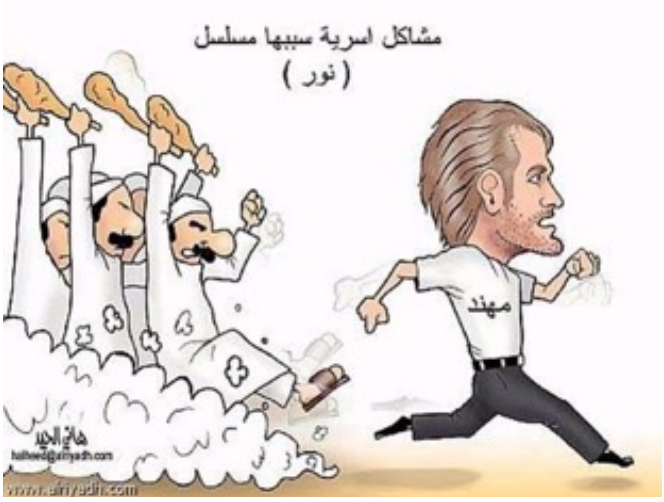

FIGURE 1. CARTOON IMAGE: MEN CHASING KIVANÇ TATLITUĞ, THE STAR OF GÜMÜŞ (NOOR). THE WRITING CAN BE TRANSLATED AS "THE SHOW THAT CAUSES FAMILY PROBLEMS: NOOR".

At the same time, media coverage (Moussley 2008) described the show as progressive for depicting a strong female lead. A closer look at the text shows that this strong female lead is still embedded in a traditional system of values. While questioning the extent of female emancipation attributed to the series, Kaynak elaborates how *Gümüş* reinforces traditional family relations:

> With respect to gender codes, for example, Noor and the stories of subsequent soaps involve traditional roles emphasizing obedience to elders and family. Noor's first episode starts with her being married off to Muhannad through a family arrangement; through the rest of the story, she struggles to be accepted by his upper-class family. The older and religious characters provide the moral anchor; those that deviate from traditional codes find their punishment in the form of death, loss, or social exclusion (Kaynak 2015: Kindle Locations 5446-5453).

As Kaynak explains, the family patriarch Fikri Bey (Ekrem Bora) almost always has the last say in family affairs. Female characters are defined by their status as wives and mothers even when they work outside the home. Maybe more importantly, the story, which begins with the arranged marriage between Mehmet (Muhannad) and Gümüş (Noor), flash-for-

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wards to show all the couples married with children in the future. In other words, a traditional family remains a celebrated societal unit even if some traditional elements are challenged.

The preservation of these traditional elements rarely finds its way into the mainstream media coverage of the popularity of Turkish dramas in the Middle East. While Neo-Ottoman arguments describe Turkish modernity as an aspirational model for Middle Eastern viewers, they do not acknowledge the role of traditional familial relationships in this configuration. In other words, while a more egalitarian relationship becomes desirable, the point of connection is still the traditional family structure.

Son's departure from mainstream Turkish melodramas helps reveal that omission. A delicate balance between representation of the modern and the traditional is essential for the aspirational connection attributed to this success. *Son*'s unique depiction of Aylin and its depiction of Iran as a cautionary tale distance Turkey from the East by underlining their differences. Aylin's deviation from a female identity anchored in traditional roles of motherhood especially raises questions about the extent of the acceptable difference for such connection. The cultural proximity between Turkey and the Middle East—which presents Turkey's democratic model as close enough to achieve—gets lost because of these differences when the emphasis on traditional roles gets toned down. In other words, by challenging the familial roles ascribed to women so prevalent in regionally popular dramas, *Son* distances Turkey from the East to an extent that the aspirational connection is not possible. The same difference also explains the reason for the show's mobility towards the West.

Reconfiguring Turkish Identity with Anglo-American Quality

Gender configuration in *Son*, which is embedded in Anglo-American quality programming elements, emerges as a key to understanding the show's domestic performance and global journey. *Son* begins with a plane crash, which sets a series of unexpected events in motion. Aylin, who believes her husband Selim (Yiğit Özşener) died in the crash, finds out that he never got on the plane. The unfolding story, told through flashbacks, reveals that Selim had an affair in Iran years past, and he was at the airport to pick up with whom he had the affair, Leyla, and their son. Selim mysteriously goes missing after that point, leaving Aylin as well as his adopted brothers Halil (Engin Altan Düzyatan) and Ali (Erkan Can) looking for him. Despite melodramatic elements of this family drama, the past lives of the characters involved soon give the story a new turn. The result is a political thriller interwoven with volatile familial relations.

In addition to complex narratives, complicated characters, and heavy use of flashbacks and dream sequences, this limited series incorporates themes like global espionage and terror—favorite themes for quality TV. These elements, which underline the show's similarity to Anglo-American quality programming, not only help the show travel well as a finished program, but also ease the process of adaptation as a format. What makes *Son* a successful finished program export makes it an easier format adaptation at the same time. In the case of the Dutch adaptation, *Vlucht HS13*, these globally recognizable elements quickly make their way onto the screen. This version is quite condensed compared to *Son*'s twenty-five 90 minute-long episodes. *Vlucht HS13* has ten episodes—all running 43 minutes except for the 83 minute-long premiere episode. Some characters and their storylines are omitted for the sake of time, but flashbacks and stylistic choices such as surveillance technology coverage used in the Turkish version are preserved. The Dutch version even builds upon quality programming elements and introduces a globally recognizable trope when Simon (Daniël Boissevain)—the Dutch counterpart of missing Selim— becomes suspected of carrying out a terror attack.

Post-9/11, with terrorism recognized as a global concern, it is not surprising to see global references to terror attacks in television content. Globally popular shows like *24* (2001-2010) and *Homeland* (2011-) are very well-known examples of this trend. Television content and media discourses around global terror have traveled extensively and it is also important to acknowledge the role of digital technologies in increasing circulation of such content. Both informal (pirated) and authorized online streaming services expose viewers to foreign content which otherwise would not make it to the television screen. This especially favors quality content not geared towards mainstream consumption. Digital technologies give niche content the chance to find viewers around the globe, and the halo effect of increased online circulation paves the way for TV exports and format adaptations.

Scholars like Charlotte Brunsdon (1990) and Janet McCabe and Kim Akass (2007) have previously contested "quality" as an objective analytical category to study television. Without a doubt, the definition of quality is clearly informed by subjective preferences as well as the context of use. Nevertheless, in the Anglo-American context, scholars, tradespeople, and

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viewers have a similar image in mind when a program is described as a quality show. Higher production values, involvement of film directors and actors, in-depth character building, complex narratives, and social critique (Logan 2016) are associated with this type of programming, which can also be called "HBO-type quality".

While he uses the term "complex television" instead of "quality television", Jason Mittell (2015: 48-9) mentions similar narrative and aesthetic elements in his book *Complex TV.* According to Mittell, there are certain storytelling strategies which are more common in complex television shows: "Complex narratives also employ a number of storytelling devices that, while not unique to this mode, are used with such frequency and regularity as to become more acceptable narrative norms rather than exceptional outliers". He identifies these devices as "analepses, or alterations in chronology", "dream or fantasy sequences", "retelling of the same story from multiple perspectives", "breaking of the fourth wall", and "more ambiguous use of voice-over narration". After comparing these to art cinema's storytelling preferences, Mittell argues that despite the danger of becoming confusing, these shows promise a "payoff" for the audiences, who patiently watch until the end (Mittell 2015: 50).

Although Mittell acknowledges the overlap between his complex television and quality television elements prevalent in literature, he overtly abstains from equating both terms (2015: 216). This decision is understandable considering his emphasis on not accepting "complexity as marker of quality" (Mittell 2015: 290). While discussing Sarah Cardwell's treatment of quality as a genre instead of an evaluative category (2015: 212) or explaining his choice to approach melodrama as a televisual mode instead of a genre (2015: 233), Mittell makes it clear that he focuses on storytelling modes instead of genre categorizations. Therefore, he does not approach complex television as a genre and instead describes it as a mode of storytelling, which allows genre hybridization (Mittell 2015: 233).

Son bears many of these indicators of "complexity" or "quality". It hints at the dark relationships between bureaucrats, police, military figures and spies while exploring characters' moves between Iran and Turkey. The famous playwright Berkun Oya emerges as a showrunner since the show's marketing materials almost always refer to him. The show's director Uluç Bayraktar, who started his career in cinema, contributes to the cinematic aesthetics. Like Mittell's examples of complex television, the show hybridizes two genres: political thriller and family melodrama. Mittell's discussion of quality programming, melodrama and complexity is also very useful for understanding *Son*'s unique nature. The show not only "mixes genres", but also "mixes genders" by switching back and forth between Selim's and Aylin's stories to achieve complexity and quality. Quoting Newman and Levine (2012), Mittell explains the same situation as using melodramatic modes of storytelling while mixing genres and masculinizing melodramatic seriality to enhance complexity (2015: 246). Mittell also argues that the popularity of serial melodramas might have contributed to the incorporation of melodramatic elements in "traditionally masculinist genres" (2015: 248). Either way mixing genres and genders is an indicator of complexity according to his categorization.

Moreover, alterations in chronology through flashbacks and the use of dream sequences, as well as the telling of the story from multiple perspectives, place *Son* in Mittell's complex television category.

Independent of scholars' decisions to define complex television and quality programming as genres or modes, as Mittell acknowledges, the storytelling strategies he lists are popular in shows classified in the quality programming category by scholars, journalists and fans. Therefore, Mittell's classification is quite similar to Elliott Logan's survey of quality television. As previously mentioned at the beginning of this section, after an impressive survey of the literature, Logan (2016) identifies controversial storylines, auteur-like showrunners, higher production values, cinematic style, involvement of film actors and film directors, genre hybridity, self-reflexivity, complex narratives and in-depth character development as common elements of this type of programming.

Quality programming has become increasingly important for the American market as digitalization has enabled satellite channels and time-shifting technologies. With the rise of cable (Thompson 1997, Banet-Weiser et al. 2007), niche programming, which is associated with quality content, gained strength. Netflix and other streaming platforms seem to be following premium cable's lead and reproducing similar standards.

Although the rise of quality programming has been a popular topic within the domestic U.S. market, there is not much interest in the global repercussions of this change. Having passed beyond the regular borders of Turkish influence, *Son* becomes evidence of the globalization of Anglo-American quality. While it failed to survive in the U.S. market, the show still managed to travel there as a pilot adaptation thanks to its globally accessible generic, narrative, and aesthetic characteristics. Furthermore, this failed

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FIGURE 2. SIMON AND HIS TWIN BROTHER SEEN IN HOME VIDEO ARTIFACTS IN OPENING SEQUENCE.

FIGURE 3. NEWSPAPER ARTICLE ABOUT SIMON BECOMING A SUSPECT OF A TERROR ATTACK.

American pilot paved the way for two Western European adaptations—an unprecedented situation for Turkish dramas.

Son's mobility is demonstrated in two ways: by its capability to travel towards the West as a finished program, and its transnational adaptability as a format. This dual mobility, however, is not solely dependent on its generic, thematic, and aesthetic qualities associated with easy-traveling Anglo-American quality programming. The show builds upon a unique identity representation which makes it more accessible to Western audiences both as a finished program and a format adaptation. Interestingly, though, this identity representation, which aids European adaptations, makes the show less appealing in the Turkish context.

By presenting Aylin – a modern Turkish woman – in contrast to Leyla – who is constrained by the traditional Iranian society she is living in – *Son* does three things at once. First, it situates Aylin and Turkey at the Western end of a dichotomy opposing the modern, Western, and secular with the traditional, Eastern, and conservative; in doing so, it provides Western European viewers a strong point of identification with the female lead Aylin. Second, it complicates Aylin's modern but family-oriented femininity through her struggle with her roles as a wife and a mother. Third, and finally, Aylin's complicated version of femininity, by challenging the modern vs. traditional dichotomy, acts as an exception to the norm in the domestic market. With such a self-reflexive perspective on identity, *Son* captures the complexity of its context of production, which is dominated by a major political transformation.

3. NATION-STATE, MODERNISM, AND IDENTITY CRISIS: WHAT'S WRONG WITH AYLIN?

At first glance, Aylin appears to be a happy wife and mother. She lives with her husband Selim and son Ömer (Emir Geylan) in a rich neighborhood. She owns an architecture firm with Halil—Selim's adopted brother and best friend. On the surface, she is a "lean-in" woman who works but maintains a happy family life. While critics like Angela McRobbie warn against neo-liberal implications of this identity, lean-in womanhood has become a popular representation on television in the West. McRobbie (2013) traces an emphasis on neo-liberal feminism in the West through her study of *Revolutionary Road* and Sheryl Sandberg's book. Shani Orgad's (2016) study of *The Good Wife's* optimistic representation of Alicia as a working mother who manages to have it all also demonstrates the rise of "lean-in woman" identity in media discourses.

In her article on post-feminist TV criticism, Amanda Lotz (2011:107) argues that TV "televises feminism" as the feminist struggle continues in the U.S. context: "Feminist discourses on television tend to correspond to aspects of feminism explored by US culture as women's roles [are] renegotiated [...]". In the Turkish case, the same role renegotiation makes itself visible on television. However, what appears on television is not just the representation of ongoing feminist struggles. The Turkish Republic's conscious utilization of women's images both to legitimize the Republican Revolution and to provide evidence for the change promised by the same revolution.

Aylin clearly conforms with the Republic's definition of modernity as a happily married working mother. In this context, it is necessary to remember traditional and modern identities are both anchored in heterosexual motherhood, yet

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the latter encourages a work life outside the home. However, a closer look at Aylin reveals that she deviates from the prioritization of motherhood. Her identity is more defined by her love for her husband Selim than her motherhood. Her son and family are important for her, but she goes to great lengths to find the truth about her husband's disappearance. While doing that, she endangers many lives, including hers.

One of Aylin's lines anchors her identity in this prioritization. At the very beginning of the story, Aylin quotes her mother (1.03) to describe her own relationship with Selim. She explains that her mother told her:

> There are three types of women in the world, my daughter. Those who are married to their husbands. Those who are married to their children. Those who are married to their homes. Be one of those who are married to their husbands, my daughter.

Aylin, then, adds how she followed that advice and put Selim at the center of her universe, so losing him shakes her to the core. Thinking he is dead and thinking that he left her are equally torturous for her, and she is willing to risk everything to find him.

Women's identity has been an important part of nation-state building projects. Family and maternal roles are emphasized in post-colonial nation-state discourses, as examples from Turkey, India, and Egypt reveal (Mankekar 1999, Abu Lughod 2005, Akinerdem 2005,). In these cases, women and their bodies become symbols of political transformation and identity reconfiguration. The state's main priority is to establish its difference from the previous regime and legitimize its rule. Despite emphasis on emancipation and modernity, heterosexual marriage and motherhood remain essential for women, so the main difference between the traditional identity model and this modern one is the latter's decision to open the door to work life for women. Nevertheless, even in that case, the modernist-nationalist discourse requires the act of balancing family life and work life for women. Nukhet Sirman coins this model as "familial citizenship" and explains:

> This [familial citizenship] indicates a gendered discourse in which the ideal citizen is inscribed as a sovereign husband and his dependent wife/mother rather than an individual, with the result that position within a familial discourse provides the person with status within the polity (2005:148).

While providing the overall framework of her analysis, Sirman traces the birth of this model to the rise of nation-state in the Turkish case:

> Thus, rather than start from the universal discourse of the citizen, this chapter will attempt to delineate the discourses and practices under which the Turkish nation-state was first produced. It will argue that the production of an imaginary of the nuclear family took place in tandem with the creation of the nation-state as modern. This preoccupation with modernity is what I would identify as the post-colonial condition, which as Hall argues, means that we have to read the discourses and practices of particular locality in relation to the "Euro-imperial adventure" (1996: 252).

As Sirman explains, the nuclear family becomes the building block for Turkish nationalism. Women are important for such imagination as they are the ones responsible for preserving the unity of family, which is the basis for the unity of the nation. This concealed conservatism is in line with Kandiyoti's (1987) argument that secular reforms of the Turkish Republic were not enough to liberate women despite legal emancipation. Following legal emancipation, family emerges as an important structure that anchors women in conservative gender roles.

I argue that this form of familial citizenship promoted by the new Republic is transforming under the AKP regime. Since 2011, there has been a different type of emphasis on women's roles as mothers. Aylin's character does not conform with this change; her priority is her husband, whom she loves, and she puts him before her son and her work. She refuses to be confined to a domestic sphere when she decides to travel to Iran on her own. The family remains the building block for the nation, yet the women who are supposed to protect that unity are pushed towards a more conservative domestic realm. President Erdogan, who has been spearheading this change, has been vocal in encouraging women to have more children. Although he started with calls for couples to have at least three children, he soon raised the number to five (*Evrensel 2012),* saying technology makes it easier to take care of kids and do housework. Meanwhile, according to Ministry of Family and Social Policies data (Karakoyun 2017), cases of complaints of violence against women heavily increased between 2003-2016. These developments have contributed to concerns about what this ongoing change means for women's rights in Turkey.

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AKP's third term is a crucial marker for understanding the shifting discourses of femininity. The release time of the show follows a tumultuous election year, 2011, and precedes the Gezi Protests of 2013. The latter marks the beginning of increasing political tension in Turkey. Around that time, scholars and journalists started to voice their concerns in the domestic context. Increasing censorship and ownership concentration (Cetin 2014) went hand in hand with Turkey's rise as a content creator. The European Union and human rights groups expressed their concerns about the imprisonment of journalists, and freedom of press was further shaken by firings of critics of the government by mainstream newspapers and TV channels in the days leading to elections in 2011.

These developments continued at a slower pace and became less visible when the AKP won the general elections. The claims of censorship were not limited to the press; television content received its share of tightening control. Both the Prime Minister and members of the AKP openly criticized shows like *Behzat Ç.* (2010-2013) and *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (*Magnificent Century).* The Supreme Council of Radio and Television (RTÜK) has enforced stricter rules such as banning the depiction of cigarettes and alcoholic drinks on screen. Profane language and sexual references led to large fines.

In the middle of this transformation, which paved the way for the AKP's consolidation of power, *Son* aired on pro-government ATV. Unlike the overtly political *Behzat Ç.* and the AKP government's least favorite historical drama *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (*Magnificent Century*), it did not attract any political attention at all. Considering the political undertones of the story, this lack of attention can be understood thanks to *Son*'s characteristics. The subtleness of its political critique, and its externalization of the modern vs. traditional dichotomy by imagining Iran as traditional instead of a domestic imagination, separates *Son* from the other shows. Aylin and Leyla become surrogates for this juxtaposition of the modern and the traditional.

The major tension within Turkey's discourses of identity is crystallized as the conflict between traditionalism and modernism. The Turkish Republic, which needed to distinguish itself from its predecessor—the Ottoman Empire—built its identity as the modern nation-state alternative to the traditional empire. In this context, secular emancipation—regardless of the real extent of liberation—becomes a marker of modernism. In other words, the introduction of emancipatory laws is accepted as a proof of progress—something Ottoman rule failed to achieve according to the Republican myth. Nevertheless, the extent of liberation secured by these laws is rarely discussed in relation to women's rights. Melodrama as a genre fully embraces these tensions in the history of Turkey. There is a pedagogic and celebratory emphasis on women's emancipation by the Republican revolution while traditionalism is criticized. Öncü explains how this tension becomes visible on television:

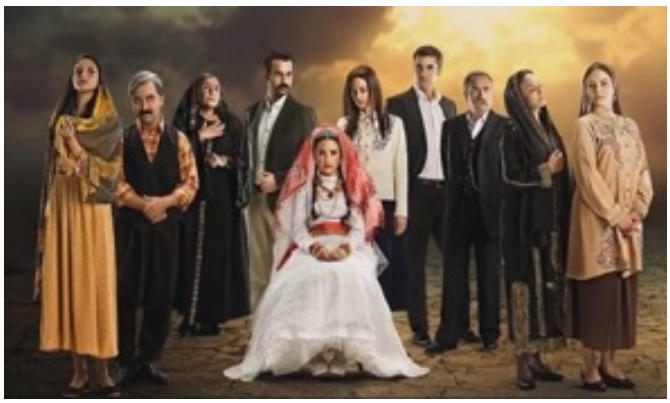

FIGURE 4. IMAGE OF *KÜÇÜK GELIN*.

> Since [the early decades of the Republic] the "backwardness of the East", continuously produced and reproduced in juxtaposition to the "developed" West, has become a way of understanding and explaining decades of stark rural poverty, impoverishment and out-migration of Kurdish populations. Stereotypes of feudalistic blight among the Kurdish populations who inhabit the region have always been formulated as a problem of "backwardness", rather than exclusion. Thus the notion of "the East" has become a generic construct, inscribed in dualistic opposition to the dominant order at multiple layers—geographically remote, backward, unchanging, pre-capitalist, tribal, simultaneously untamed and rebellious (2011: 52).

Unsurprisingly, throughout Republican history, there have been many examples of this pedagogic juxtaposition, which aims to establish the backwardness of the East as the reason for the Kurdish conflict. Shows like *Sıla* (2006-2008) and *Küçük Gelin* (2013-2015) build upon this binary between the East and the West to criticize arranged marriages and child brides in the East. These shows underline the importance of equal education opportunities for girls while also criticizing illegally practiced polygamy.

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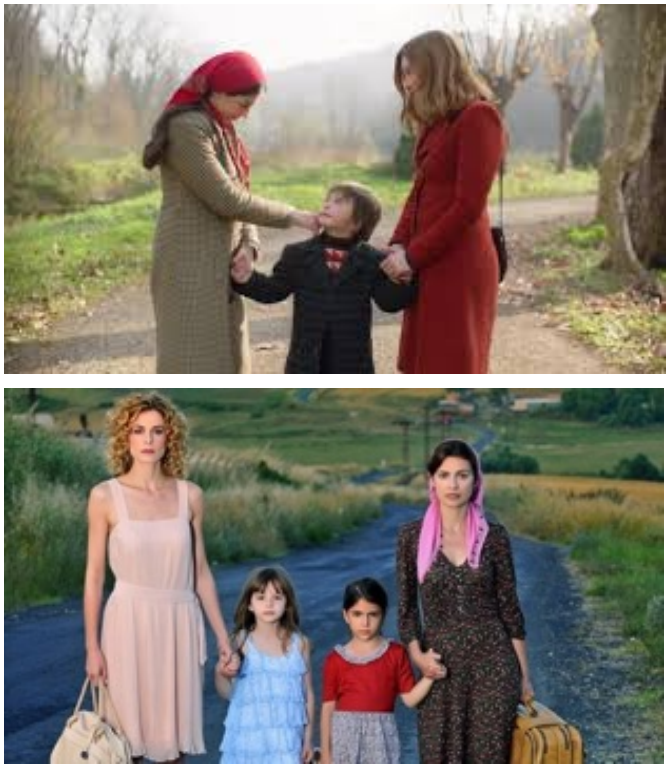

FIGURE 5. *ANALAR VE ANNELER* (MAMAS AND MOMS) AND *ANNELER VE KIZLARI* (MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS) JUXTAPOSING URBAN/MODERN WITH RURAL/TRADITIONAL.

This representation of backwardness associated with the East of Turkey also appears in stories juxtaposing two women. Short-lived shows like *Analar ve Anneler* (*Mamas and Moms*, 2015) and *Anneler ve Kızları* (*Mothers and Daughters*, 2011) use a dual representation like *Son*, but they locate the traditional characters in Eastern Turkey instead of Iran. They juxtapose the urban and educated woman with the uneducated Eastern woman. This representation is gendered considering the emphasis on women's role as mothers, but it is also ethnicized to the extent that the urban educated woman is almost always blonde.

While these shows present a traditional and religiously conservative picture of the East, religiosity is usually attached to location in Turkish television and it appears more as the appendage of a provincial identity. Migrants moving to big cities in the West are represented in a similar light. Due to Republican attempts to control religious opposition, secular policies not only prevented the visibility of covered women on television but also avoided presenting a religious identity independent of geographical origin. Therefore, religiosity becomes a major indicator of traditionalism in this context.

Nevertheless, such depictions are losing their relevance as the context of production changes rapidly. Depiction of religiosity has been an important part of this change. Kumru Berfin Emre Cetin (2014) points to *Huzur Sokağı* (2012-2014) as the first mainstream TV show showing a covered character in 2012. After years of appearance on conservative channels or what Emre Cetin (2014: 2474) calls "ghettoized pious channels", this move to mainstream television is more telling about the transformation of Turkish politics than the transformation of Turkish society. Older depictions of traditionalism are now challenged by representations which say that religion is not an impediment to modernity. *Huzur Sokağı* aired on ATV, which belonged to Turkuvaz Medya Group run by Erdogan's son-in-law Berat Albayrak at that time. In other words, religious visibility on mainstream television coincided with the conservative AKP government's strengthening ties with business.

With the consolidation of AKP's power, mainstream discourses of identity started to change. At this moment of political transformation, traditionalism, conservatism, and religiosity are no longer de facto indicators of backwardness. A new modern nation-state identity incorporating these elements is emerging. This change has paved the way for religious women to be visible onscreen, women who have long been ostracized from mainstream channels. It has also made binary representations confining religiosity to the traditional and non-modern realm less viable.

At first look, Aylin strongly resembles the secular modern identity model for women. A reference to Aylin's parents establishes that her upbringing is clearly a secular Republican one. While talking to her therapist Cem, she tells him how feeling fear is unbearable for her. She says, "I'm the daughter of a soldier. I was raised not to fear anything" (1.07). Her conversation with Cem not only reveals Aylin's complicated feelings and foreshadows what will happen next, but also helps to situate her within Turkish society. The army in Turkey has long been associated with the protection of secular republican ideals. Multiple coup d'etats and attempted coup d'etats have raised questions about the ways in which these ideals were protected by the military. The recent events of July 2016 revealed that the army itself was not completely monolithic in composition when non-secular groups in the army gained visibility during political turmoil. Nevertheless, the secular image associated with the army has long survived. The timing of *Son*, which was filmed between 2011-2012, coincides

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FIGURE 6. AYLIN WAKES UP NEXT TO HALIL AND REALIZES SHE STILL HAS HER WEDDING RING ON.

with the height of the Ergenekon trials, which investigated the allegations of a secular nationalist coup d'etat led by the army officers.

Aylin aligns well with this secular image attributed to army members and their families. She does not wear a headscarf. She has a successful work life outside her home as an architect, co-owning her firm with Halil. Aylin is happily married to her husband Selim, a doctor, and they raise their son Ömer together. On the surface, she fits into the modern representation of women. But as the story unfolds, she deviates from the family-centric modern nation-state model ascribed for her. She risks her life to find Selim although she knows that this might rob Ömer of both his parents. She challenges familial elements of this secular image further by going on a blind date with one of her friend's acquaintances, Barış (Kaan Urgancıoğlu), six months after her husband goes missing. She later goes on to begin a relationship with Halil despite her son Ömer's protests. In other words, Aylin moves beyond the borders of "emancipation without liberation" in Kandiyoti's terms, and she certainly does not fit in the mainstream televisual norms of womanhood. This deviation makes it harder to "identify" with her in the Turkish context.

Except for the older couple Ali and Feride (Ülkü Duru), all the other characters live their lives without being concerned about what others think. Drinking and partying are not unique to *Son*, but what makes *Son* unique is that it does not pass any judgment on these lifestyle choices, and there is no evidence of such choices being criticized or threatened

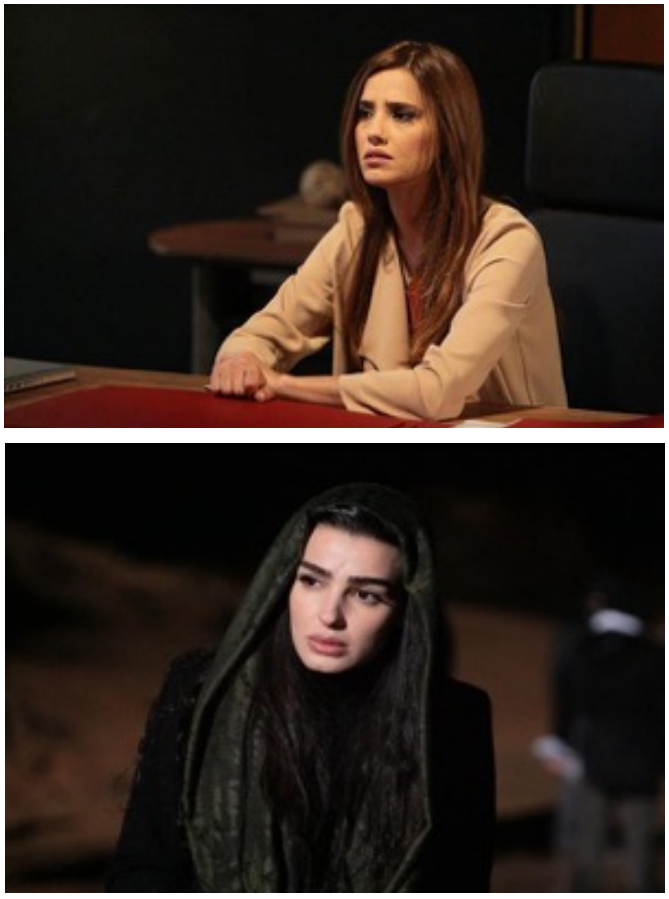

FIGURE 7. AYLIN (NEHIR ERDOĞAN)
FIGURE 8. LEYLA (MEHRNOUSH ESMAEILPOUR)

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FIGURE9.: AYLIN ON A DATE WITH BARIŞ.

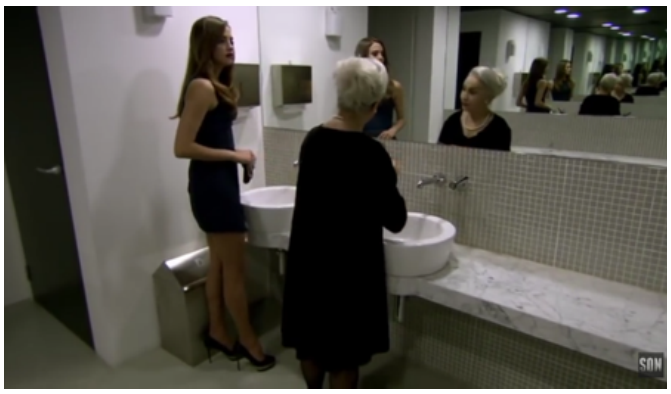

FIGURE 10. AYLIN AND ROZA IN THE RESTROOM DURING AYLIN'S DATE.

in the show. Other mainstream genres such as the romantic comedy *Kiralık Aşk* (2015-2017) have such scenes, but these characters refer to the need to hide their actions from their families and communities.

In short, *Son* presents a very specific segment of Turkish life in its storylines, though not an unrealistic or a pretentious one. Although that life experience exists for a small urban population in Istanbul, since context is a defining factor for viewers' connection to the text, this privileged life experience is harder to identify with. While discussing representations of modernity and tradition on television, Feyza Akinerdem (2005: 53) argues – in regard to the relationship between text and context in television shows – that "for the television fictions, the viewer's position vis á vis the text is constructed within [a] wider social context, in which the text itself is also encoded". Aylin's "Western-ness" becomes clearer within the context of identity representations—the Republican modern, traditional conservative and neo-conservative—as she deviates from the emphasis on motherhood prevalent in all three configurations. Therefore, Aylin's identity sets her apart from other women on television, making *Son* a unique example among other Turkish melodramas.

In this context, *Son* deviates from mainstream Turkish melodrama representations for two reasons. First, it does not conform to the secular, modern, and Republican depiction, which still prioritizes maternal duties. Aylin appears as someone who puts herself and her husband before her child. Secondly, the "backwardness" in this show is located outside of Turkey, with backwardness embodied in the depiction of Leyla, from Iran. As an Iranian "Oriental Other",

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she externalizes traditionalism; thus, Turkey's modernity is taken for granted. Nevertheless, Leyla is painted as a more complex character than reductionist Orientalist depictions in mainstream melodramas. She is a lovelorn single mother trying to keep her children with her in the present, but in the flashbacks, she is also a nurse and a political activist. In other words, Leyla herself is not "backward", yet the regime in her country is.

4. **LEYLA "THE CAGED BIRD" OR AYLIN'S COMPLEX ORIENTAL OTHER**

The decision to locate Leyla in Iran and outside of Turkey as the Oriental Other, while painting her as a complex character instead of a stereotype, separates *Son* from mainstream melodramas and distinguishes it from regionally popular shows associated with "Neo-Ottomanism".

This difference also reduces *Son*'s potential for an aspirational connection in the Middle East, which is prevalent in regionally popular melodramas. As I discussed in relation to Neo-Ottomanism above, Turkish shows are associated with more egalitarian gender configurations, which challenge mainstream identity representations in the Middle East. However, *Son* utilizes Leyla for establishing Aylin's privilege in a way different than domestically and regionally popular Turkish dramas. Instead of depicting Leyla simply as "traditional", the show places her in a traditional society, which limits her freedom in multiple ways. Leyla pushes the boundaries in which an Islamist regime confines her, and she ends up suffering because of these boundaries.

The flashbacks reveal that Leyla faces more problems with the system after finding out about her pregnancy. She first tries to get an illegal abortion, but she cannot bring herself to go through with it. Then she marries Majid (Philip Arditti), another political activist, so that she can give birth without getting punished for being a single mother. Her fake marriage with Majid collapses when Majid can no longer hide his interest in her, and she decides to flee Iran with her twin sons. Leyla ends up leaving one of her sons behind in Iran. Later, despite the danger, she goes back to retrieve him. Unlike Aylin, whose devotion to her husband comes before her son, Leyla is completely devoted to her sons. She is a mother, not a lover. Leyla is still in love with Selim, who abandoned her years ago, but she has no hopes of being with him, and so she fully embodies the motherhood role assigned to her by both traditional and modern models of femininity.

FIGURE 11. LEYLA TRYING TO GET AN ILLEGAL ABORTION.

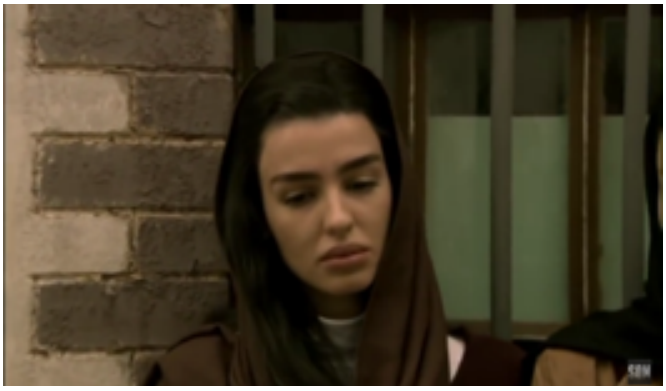

FIGURE 12. LEYLA IN JAIL IN IRAN AFTER GETTING CAUGHT AT THE BORDER.

FIGURE 13. SELIM FOLLOWING LEYLA TO HER HOUSE

In short, she is a modern woman trapped in a traditional system. Her confinement is mirrored on screen as she is almost always trapped physically and visually. She spends time in jail in Iran. She is taken into custody in Turkey. Half the time she is on screen, she is forced to hide both by Selim and

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Halil. Besides narrative confinement, visually she is shown in tight frames. We see her through doors cracked open, and both men and the state monitor and try to control her. In an interesting manner, the male gaze alternates with government surveillance and Leyla is exposed to similar confinement in both the public and private spheres.

Seeing what Leyla lacks helps viewers understand what Aylin has: a protected independence. At first, this seems to be in line with Neo-Ottoman explanations of the Turkish dramas' popularity in the Middle East. Aylin's rights and freedoms might function as a model to emulate for viewers in neighboring countries. However, after a close examination, the difference between Turkey and Iran does not resemble the proximity defended in Neo-Ottoman explanations. Instead, the East becomes a cautionary tale, somewhere to be escaped from for both Aylin and Leyla.

Aylin's experiences especially depict Iran in a way similar to traditional Orientalist representations—a dangerous, barren place with no law and order, yet run by a repressive regime. She, herself, is no longer a safe median between the West and the East for Middle Eastern viewers. Aylin becomes the "Western Other" in two steps. First, she deviates from the familial role assigned to her, which endangers her symbolic proximity to viewers in the region. Without the overlap of a prioritization of motherhood which both the "modern" and "traditional" models share, Aylin loses her proximity to the East. Then, when she physically enters the East, she fully annihilates the potential connection by barely surviving the experience. Her departure from Iran becomes her salvation and she validates her position as a "Western stranger". Therefore, she proves right Kudret's mysterious friend Simon (Martin Turner), who previously addressed her (1.01) as someone who is not familiar with the region: "The East, young woman, is always further east than you think. The further we get from the West, the more unreachable it becomes. Don't you wanna see the sunset? It's the only beauty here that's bulletproof". This moment of reflexivity clarifies overall dynamics of identity construction in *Son*: Aylin belongs to the West. Therefore, *Son* differs greatly from domestically and regionally popular Turkish melodramas, and remains an anomaly for the Turkish market.

With Aylin becoming the "Western" woman, Leyla becomes the "Oriental Other". Despite the attempts by Aylin, Simon, and Kudret to help, she cannot survive. While one of Leyla's sons eventually dies in Iran, she herself ends up being murdered in Istanbul by Halil. Leyla's origin becomes the defining force in the course of her life, for being an Iranian woman limits her choices and her mobility. Although she fights hard to challenge the limits, she ends up failing to leave Turkey for Norway with her twin sons. In a way, her "Eastern-ness" prevents her from entering Europe, whereas, despite all the difficulty, Aylin manages to cross the Iranian border back to her home. The difference between these two women's lives stands in for the difference between their geographies.

5. THE FISH OUT OF WATER INTO THE LAND OF DANGER: AYLIN IN IRAN

Aylin's first moments in Iran depict her looking for the hotel Leyla recommended for her. She walks in narrow streets of the city where Selim first met Leyla. Farsi written in Arabic script appears on the walls as a geographical reminder of location. After she checks into the hotel and enters the room, Aylin takes off the headscarf she has to wear in Iran. The headscarf here becomes the marker of transitioning between the two societies; we see that Leyla doesn't wear her headscarf after she makes it to Istanbul.

Aylin wears the headscarf again once she leaves her room in Iran, but her mannerisms reveal how unaccustomed she is to wearing it. She keeps walking in the city in desperation. Not being able to find any clues clearly upsets her. As she talks to an Iranian woman in veil, Aylin's headscarf finally slides down revealing her hair. The way Aylin acts makes her foreigner status obvious.

Getting no help from the Iranian women she talks to, Aylin ends up wandering on her own. A man approaches her and promises to lead her to Selim when she is alone. Eventually, it turns out that the man is an imposter. He tries to rape Aylin, who is later saved by Kudret (Uğur Polat), Selim's childhood friend. Aylin faces the same threat of rape when Kudret's friend Simon is trying to smuggle her across the border. Iran and the East appear as dangerous places for women. She finally understands that her persistence in looking for Selim might cost her life. As a mother, she decides she needs to return to her son, Ömer. In the end, despite moments of deviation, she embraces her role as a mother thanks to her experiences in Iran.

Aylin's unfamiliarity with Iran and the religious rule there provide an excellent template for the Dutch format adaptation *Vlucht HS13*, in which her Western-ness contributes to the show's adaptability. This version spends less

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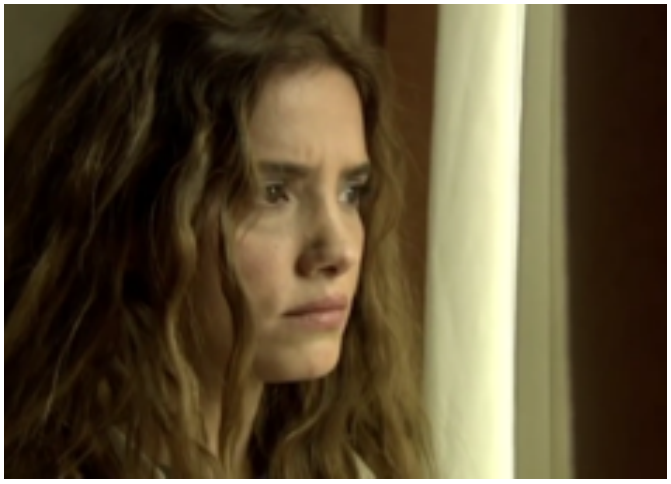

FIGURE 14. AYLIN IN HER HOTEL ROOM.

time in Iran. The missing husband's backstory with Leyla is not shown. Although we don't get to see much of Iran and most of the political elements, Majid (Alan Yedegarian), Leyla's Iranian husband, becomes the main culprit of all crimes in the Dutch version while the same character is not physically violent in the Turkish original. Although the murderer in the Turkish original is Aylin's business partner and her husband's adopted brother Halil, *Vlucht HS13* goes one step further in imagining the East as a dangerous place by making Majid a merciless murderer responsible for all crimes.

In one particular scene, Leyla (Sachli Golamalizad) teaches Liv (The Dutch counterpart of Aylin) how to cover her head. Once again, women's bodies become symbolic border checkpoints as Liv, like Aylin, dons a headscarf. Leyla prepares her for this rite of passage: When Liv asks if it's okay for some of her hair to be seen, Leyla comforts her saying that it won't be a problem (1.10). There is a didactic reflexivity in this moment. Like Liv, viewers find out about the acceptable standards of covering in Iran.

Iran is not an incidental choice for the representation of the East. Although the Oriental Other can be mapped onto other countries in the Middle East, Iran has always been the subject of such comparisons in the Turkish case. Discursively, it functions as an example of how the modern vs. the traditional can evolve in a predominantly Muslim country. "Will Turkey become Iran?" is a recurring question in debates about the threats against secularism.

Comparisons between these two countries have long been common not just in academic surveys but also in daily political discussions. Since both descended from regionally

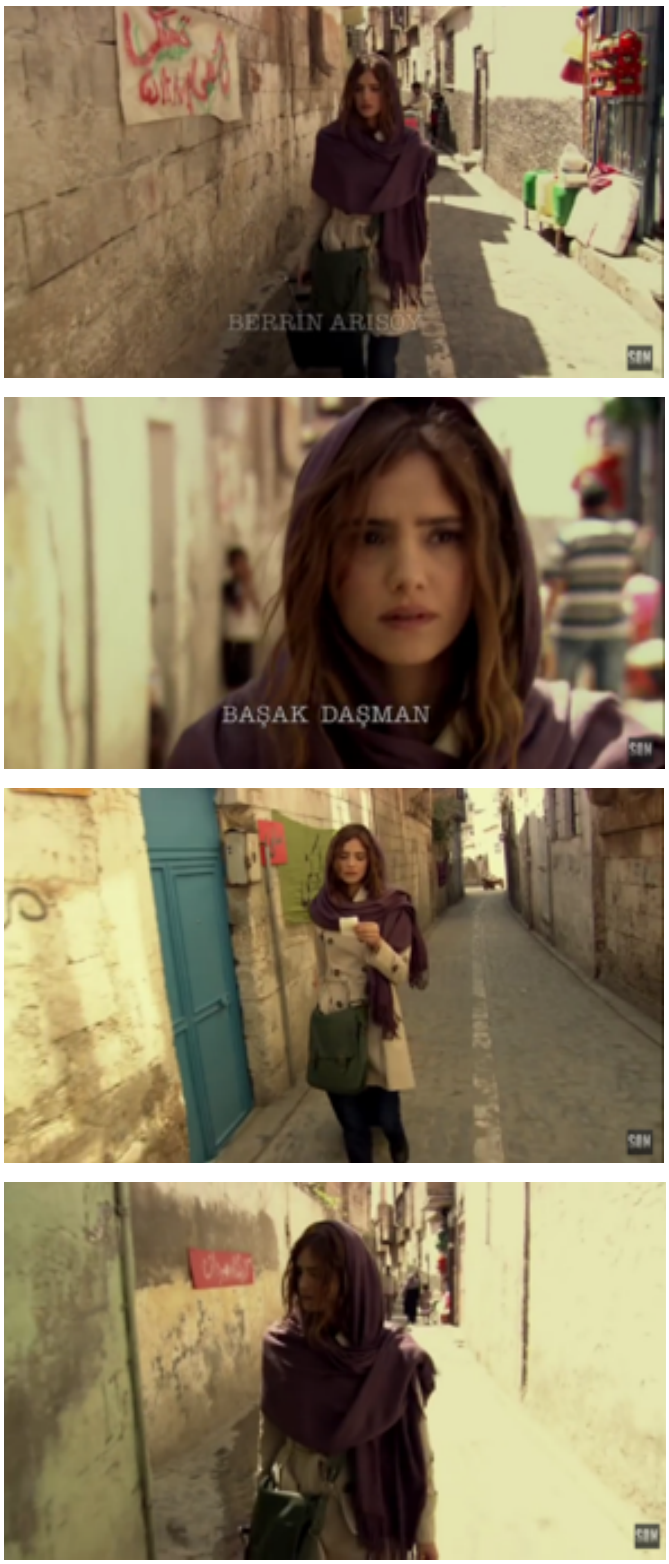

FIGURE 15. AYLIN IN STREETS OF IRAN.

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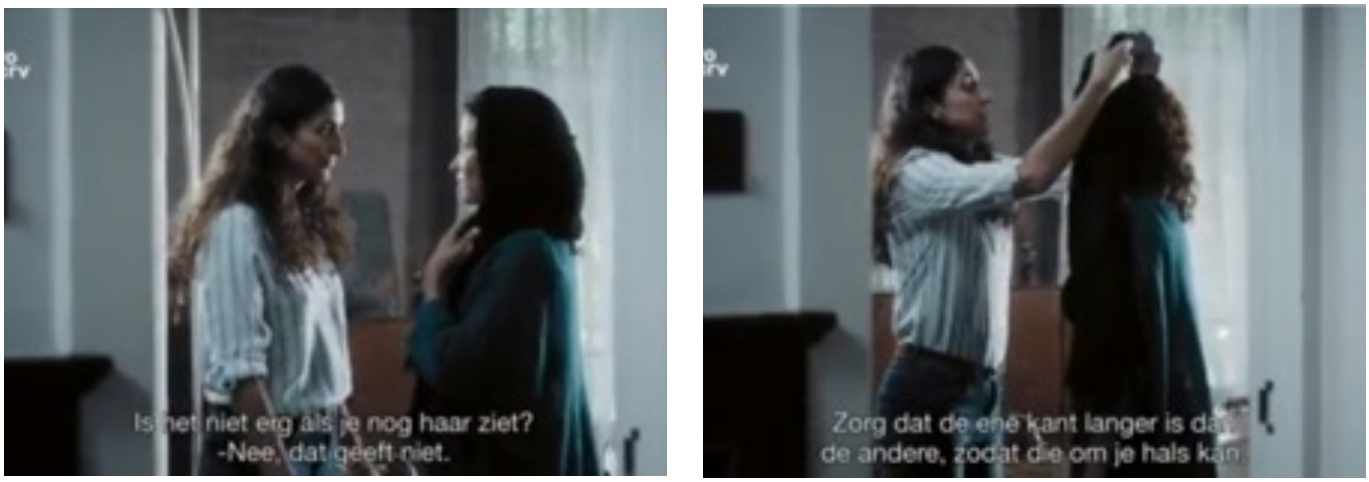

FIGURE 16. LEYLA TEACHING LIV HOW TO COVER HER HEAD.

powerful empires which went through periods of secular reforms, this is a valid comparison. In the Iranian case, the Khomeini-lead Islamic Revolution in 1979 reversed that process. Looking at the comparison between Turkish Aylin and Iranian Leyla at this very specific moment in time provides a chance to zoom in on the link between the representation of women and discourses of modernity. The revolution that led to religious rule in Iran has often been a cautionary tale told by critics of the conservative Justice and Development Party in Turkey. Therefore, Leyla's role in the story emphasizes Aylin and Turkey's difference from Iran and the East in general. In other words, Turkey, which has long been described as a bridge between the East and the West, claims its "Western-ness" and "European-ness" by showing it is different from Iran.

In addition to holding a specific place as a reference within the Turkish context, Iran is a globally recognizable reference due to mainstream media coverage about the religious revolution and the Iranian hostage crisis. Betty Mahmoody's book *Not Without My Daughter*, and the film adapted from it, have further crystallized Iran's identity in the Anglo-American world as an Islamic nation. This identity is also embedded in earlier Orientalist discourses (Said 1978) which depict the East as an uncivilized place, becoming a token for legitimizing "Western" ways.

Therefore, *Son*'s positioning of its lead character Aylin as a fish out of water in Iran, and Leyla as a woman exposed to the regime's oppression, help "Western" viewers identify with Aylin. With that, Turkey's "Other" easily evolves into the East—the never changing opposite of the West. Due to this, the show becomes more relatable as a finished program, and the format adaptation can simply substitute Aylin with a European woman (Liv as we saw in the case of the Dutch adaptation). With such adaptability, *Son* challenges Turkish dramas' existing borders of influence. At the same time, it raises questions of what Turkey's changing identity means for the future of its drama exports.

6. **CONCLUSION**

As the Turkish political model loses its international appeal due to intensifying domestic turmoil, domestic television production and television exports have managed to preserve their strength. Exporting content beyond the former borders of the Ottoman Empire is the goal for Turkish producers. As of the summer of 2017, *Son* is the most successful show in achieving this goal. It is worth noting it achieved this while both deviating from a conservative understanding of the familial unit and still utilizing the dichotomy between the East and the West. This conservative understanding of family-based identity representation, which remains intact, has been a successful template for Turkish drama exports in the Middle East.

Aylin's prioritization of her own desires over her son Ömer for a significant part of the story allows *Son* to depict a different model of femininity, even though it unites Aylin's family at the end. Both her desire to find her husband Selim, and her decision to pursue a relationship with Halil, endanger Aylin's life, making her son Ömer face the possibility of losing his mother along with his father. In that context, Aylin deviates from mainstream representations of motherhood by following her desire to find the truth about Selim instead of creating

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a safe home for Ömer. The show's melodramatic characteristics—such as an emphasis on familial relationships, personal secrets, and quickly shifting alliances—make it in some ways similar to other Turkish melodramas. Nevertheless, the quality programming elements that I discussed at the beginning grant *Son* a level of reflexivity and a complexity that becomes crucial in the show's configuration of feminine identities, making it depart from the norms of other such shows. Aylin, who appears to be raised at the "modern" end of the modern vs. the traditional identity spectrum, can easily be substituted with another "Non-Eastern" woman. This dichotomy helps the process of adaptation and consumption in Europe, but the ways in which Aylin challenges conservative remnants of this modern Turkish identity make her less identifiable within the domestic context. When the show's moderate performance in Turkey and in the Middle East is considered along with its ongoing success in Europe, *Son* shows how women's representation is not just crucial for identity construction of nation-states. Indeed, it becomes obvious that how women act or look not only defines where they go in real life, but also determines where they can travel on-screen. In that sense, *Son* emerges as a unique example for showing how questions of globalization, mobility, and identity are mapped onto the bodies of women both on screen and in real life.

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TV Shows

Analar ve Anneler (*Mamas and Moms*, 2015)
Anneler ve Kızları (*Mothers and Daughters*, 2011)
Behzat Ç. (2010-2013)
El Accidente (2017)
Gümüş (*Noor*, 2005-2007)
Gelinim Olur Musun? (*The Perfect Bride*, 2004)
Homeland (2011-Present)
Huzur Sokağı (2012-2014)
Kiralık Aşk (2015-2017)
Küçük Gelin (2013-2015)
Muhteşem Yüzyıl (*Magnificent Century,* 2011-2014)
Son (*The End*, 2012)
Sıla (2006-2008)
Runner (2015)
The Honorable Woman (2014)
Vlucht HS13 (2016)
24 (2001-2010)

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POPULAR CULTURE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY: A STUDY ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA WHO ARE *THE MAGNIFICENT CENTURY* VIEWERS

SERPIL AYDOS

Name Serpil Aydos
Academic centre Faculty of Communication, Gazi University, Ankara, Turkey
E-mail address serpiloz@gazi.edu.tr

KEYWORDS
Popular Culture; National Identity; Muhteşem Yüzyıl (*The Magnificent Century*); Audiences; Bosnia and Herzegovina.

ABSTRACT
This paper analyses the Bosnian university students' reactions to the Turkish TV series, Muhteşem Yüzyıl, in line with their ethnic and religious affiliations. The questions were directed to 43 university students who were the series' audiences in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including mainly Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats, to determine their thoughts about the series. Descriptive analysis method was used in this study. As a result of the study, Croat and Serb audiences point out that they like the scenario and they expect Turkish producers to make similar series, but at the same time they emphasize on "oppressive politics" of the Ottoman Empire. A significant part of the Bosniaks says they knew the similarities between their own culture and Turkish culture in advance and their opinions regarding Turks did not change after the series. The Serbs and Croats although not using explicit praise words about Turks like the Bosniaks, they used concepts such as "family relationships", "lifestyle" and "culture" while they were talking about intercultural similarities.

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The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – formed from parts of the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires, and which consisted of six republics and two special districts – disbanded in 1991. Ana Ljubojevic says among the reasons for this were the failure to create common historical narratives as well as the regime's economic and political problems. The autonomy of the six republics triggered the separation of media and education systems, which further contributed to the dissolution of the country (Ljubojevic 2010). With Slovenia and Croatia declaring independence, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina and by Macedonia, a civil war broke out, with Serbia and Montenegro attacking both Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The ensuing civil war resulted in ethnic cleansing and mass rapes; cities were burned and hundreds of thousands of refugees displaced. The war resulted in such atrocities due to the nationalistic programs introduced by the leaders of various national communities. Those political leaders and nationalistic intellectuals (most of them ex-communists) had discovered that nationalism was more convenient tool to mobilize support and to gain power than Marxism. For this reason, they fueled painful remembrance of ancient and recent wrongs, frustrated national ambitions and reasons to fear for communal survival between Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats and Muslim Bosniaks (Rusinov 1996: 78-80).

Bosnia and Herzegovina gained its independence in the referendum held on 3 March 1992, was reshaped with the Dayton Treaty on 21 November 1995 following the civil war; independence and was officially declared on 14 December 1995 with the Paris Treaty. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a state that has two entities including the Bosniak-Croat Federation and Republika Srpska. It is surrounded by the Bosniak Croat Federation in the north and Republika Srpska in the east (Eker 2006: 71-2).

Several Turkish TV series began airing on Balkan television nearly a decade after the end of the war and they achieved record-high ratings. Among these series, the most popular is the *The Magnificent Century* (*Muhteşem Yüzyıl*)[1], narrating the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent. This series that unfolds the Ottoman Empire which ruled the region for centuries also included the parts from Balkan history. *The Magnificent Century* began broadcasting in Bosnia and Herzegovina on OBN TV between 2012-2014, under the title of *Suleyman Velicanstveni*. However, the series could also be watched on various websites. Produced by Tims Productions, the series was the most expensive Turkish television drama ever made (Tüzün and Sen 2014: 182), and was presented in Turkey on Kanal D in 2011. İzzet Pinto, who sold the *The Magnificent Century* abroad, says in a 2014 interview that the series was exported to 52 countries, including the USA, China, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and various Middle Eastern and Balkan countries, reaching an audience of about 350-400 million viewers ("Türk Dizilerinin Rek" 2014). By 2015, according to data from the Turkey's Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the series had reached 400 million people in nearly 60 countries (Kamiloğlu 2015).

This study analyzes university students' reactions to *The Magnificent Century*, in line with their ethnic and religious affiliations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has a heterogeneous ethnic and religious structure. As it directly deals with the era of Sultan Süleyman, the Turkish ruler of the Ottoman Empire who was victorious in the Balkans, the series has provoked some discussion[2] in the Balkans where history shapes identities in a fragile way. Above all, the fact that the series' important characters of Balkan origin complicates the audiences' responses. The historical events depicted by the series are not only history, but have also been turned into contemporary events through their remembrance via television, helping to build national identity through public memory (Ebbrecht 2007: 37).

The Magnificent Century has led audiences to rethink their own national identities because it has narrated the Ottoman Empire's five-century rule over the Balkans. For this reason, viewers' conceptions of and reactions to the series are important in terms of settling the place of Ottoman Empire in their perceptions of national identity. Jahja Muhasiloviç's (2015: 2) thesis examining history textbooks of Serb, Croat and Bosniak indicate that, at different levels, Ottoman rule left a negative mark on these groups because it stripped them of independence. On the other hand, the textbooks view of the Republican period and Atatürk more positively (Muhasiloviç 2015:108-10). Against this cultural context, the present study considers the thoughts and reactions of

1 For the series' popularity in Balkans see: "Turks Bewitch The Balkans with Their Addictive Soaps", 01 May 13, http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/turks-bewitch-the-balkans-with-their-addictive-soaps (accessed April 17 2017).

2 For these discussion see: "View: We are all Turks now?", 6 December 2010. http://serbianna.com/analysis/archives/766 (accessed 3 December 2015),

"Turkish soap opera bringing Suleiman back from the dead", December 15, 2013, <http://www.thejournal.ie/suleiman-magnificent-ottoman-empire-tv-series-1213006-Dec2013/ (accessed 5 October 2015),

"Turkish Soap Operas Take Balkans by Storm" 30 December 2010, http://balkanchronicle.com/index.php/arts-a-culture/entertainment/movies/774-turkish-soap-operas-take-balkans-by-storm, (accessed 6 November 2015)

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Bosnian audiences regarding a series not only about the Ottoman Empire, but produced in a country (Turkey) that was at the center of Ottoman power. How can be understood of their admiration of the series produced by a state that was marked at different levels as "other" in their national identity narratives? Furthermore, how did these thoughts and reactions of the audiences differentiate according to their religious and ethnic affiliations? Has watching the series led to a change in their perception of Turks?

In the literature, formation of national identity has been framed as a top-down process that results from the efforts of the national elite. Even though this may have been true in specific historical moments, the rapid spread of mass media and popular culture has seen national identity transmitted and reshaped through more informal means and commercial networks. Tim Edensor – citing theorists of nationalism such as Gellner, Habsbawn and Ranger, Adam Smith and Benedict Anderson – notes that such studies tend not to analyze popular culture and everyday life. Although he accepts that writers, artists, historians, scientists and folklorists have contributed to the high culture, Edensor points out that their contributions do not cover the entire national culture. According to Edensor, the definition of national culture should include pop stars, advertisers, tabloid writers, marketers, fashion designers, and filmmakers. The traditional cultural forms and practices of the nation have been re-located in the process of formation of national identity, by taking advantage of popular culture through meanings, activities, and images. Tradition-bound ceremonies and other cultural ingredients are sustained by their (re)distribution through popular culture. Furthermore, cultural ingredients of national identity are increasingly mediated, polysemic, contested, and subject to change, to the extent that they are circulated in popular culture (Edensor 2002:7-17). In this study, within the cultural studies perspective, we act according to the argument that popular culture is a field where ideological struggle is being carried out and hegemony is gained or lost. As Stuart Hall (1998: 443) stresses, "Popular culture is neither in a 'pure' sense the popular traditions of resistance of these process; nor is it the forms which are superimposed on and over them. It is the ground on which the transformations are worked". We can say that elements of resistance in particular emerge while products of popular culture are consumed. Although they are pervasive due to their easy and understandable contents, they could vary while they are consumed according to class, cultural, ethnic, sexual identifications. As Lawrance Grossberg points out the relation between the audience and products of popular culture is active and productive in many ways (cited in Storey 2000: 14). Texts do not act out their original meaning and in an instant and none of the texts can guarantee what their effect will be. Because people try to understand texts, they also try to give them meaning according to their own life, needs, and experience. In this article, we put forth the different conceptions of and reactions to *The Magnificent Century* while it is consumed according to the ethnic and religious affiliations of its audiences in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The historical period narrated in *The Magnificent Century* has not been directly experienced by the audience, but has been is transmitted by intergenerational memory or through the education system and mass-communication technologies. The audience's memory of the historical period narrated in the series can be clarified through Marianne Hirsch's concept of *post memory* and Alison Landsberg's concept of *prosthetic memory*. For Hirsch, (2001: 9) *post memory* describes the offspring of trauma survivors relate to their parents' experiences. Such experiences include very powerful narratives and images that the children of the trauma survivors hear about as they grow up. Therefore, *post memory* defines the familial inheritance and transmission of cultural trauma. The concept of *post memory* thus helps to make sense of the fact that some (especially Serbian) viewers of *The Magnificent Century's* negative attitudes towards the Ottoman Empire, which constitutes the series' main subject and historical framework despite their admiration to the series.

Landsberg's (2004: 3-9) concept of *prosthetic memory* describes a new form of "memory" as a response to modernity's ruptures, one that emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative of the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theater or a museum. In this moment of contact, one relates to the past event more deeply and personally as though through memory, even though he/she does not comprehend all of its aspects. Landsberg argues that due to its transportable characteristics, *prosthetic memory* is able to challenge more traditional forms of memory. Mass culture technologies transforming *prosthetic memory* have the capacity to create common social frameworks for people who have different social and religious practices. But it does not erase differences or construct common origins. Though people who have these memories are led to feel a connection to the past, they remain aware of their position in the contemporary moment. How viewers of *The Magnificent Century* "remembered" the Ottoman era was transformed by their personal experience of mass communication technologies. Therefore, their negative

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reactions to the series Ottoman Empire over the series can be understood as having a basis in their *prosthetic memory*, and their admiration of the series' drama and actors is a sign of their awareness of their own position in the contemporary moment. In addition, *The Magnificent Century* is itself an agent that influences the transformation of memory in this way.

Tüzün and Sen (2014: 184) presenting examples from various Turkish series that depict traumatic historical events that have long been conversational taboos, but which have found ways to provoke public discussion of that history. Like the series mentioned by Tüzün and Sen, *Magnificent Century* touched upon some taboo issues in both Turkey and the Balkans and turned them into public debate. The emphasis on the Sultan Süleyman's love life was regarded as disrespectful top his legacy within nationalist-conservative circles, and caused a serious public debate in Turkey (Aydos 2013). Moreover, due to its high ratings the series was the subject of concern in the Balkans, with some fearing that it would lead to a growth in Ottoman sympathy.

The Magnificent Century has been interpreted in different ways by audiences in Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to their ethnic and religious identities. On the one hand, the series has reminded people of the close links between Ottoman/Turkish culture and Bosniac, Serb and Croat audiences; on the other hand, it has been perceived as Turkish propaganda by Serb and Croat audiences. The present study aims to put forth the opinions of different ethnic groups towards *The Magnificent Century*, the most popular Turkish series in the region. For this reason, a method of descriptive analysis was used. Descriptive analysis is a type of qualitative data analysis that involves summarizing and interpreting data obtained by various data collection techniques according to specific themes (Özdemir 2014: 336). Its purpose is to present the findings in a summarized and interpreted form. Due to such limitations as geographical distance and language, a massive audience has not been reached, but through open-ended questions directed at audience samples, we were able to obtain more data. Purposive sampling was used in the study as it is in many qualitative studies. We reached 43 university students who were *The Magnificent Century* audience. The link including questions created on the google forms were shared on a social media account used by Bosnian university students, and asked for answers[3]. The students were mainly Bosniak (23), and the rest were of Serb (10) and Croat (10) origin[4]. Open-ended questions were asked about their socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity) and their opinions of the series. The research was conducted between March 5-18, 2017. Most of the students questioned were studying at regional universities such as Sarajevo, Zagreb, Bihac, Apeiron Bonja Luka and Travnik. There were also students studying at İstanbul Technical, Mimar Sinan and Hacettepe Universities. While the findings of the study were primarily obtained from the answers to these questions, some news sites containing opinions from various circles about Turkish TV series aired in the Balkans were also used to provide supporting data.

1. EMOTIONAL TENSIONS: *THE MAGNIFICENT CENTURY* ADMIRATION AND ANGER TOWARDS THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

One of the most important elements feeding the rage for the past is education system and history textbooks forming and maintaining the collective memory. Even though the former Yugoslavian system tried to create a "Yugoslavian identity", it could not create a society in which a common citizenship prevailed over differing identities. This was a result of the Yugoslav cultural policy and education system. Despite the end of the violent conflicts that marked the 1990s and early 2000s, textbooks today include a lot of brutal conflicts presented as turning points in former Yugoslavian States. For instance, in the textbooks of Republica of Sırpska, the Serbian nation is presented as an innocent victim whose people suffered from massacres akin to those of the Jews during the Holocaust, and were threatened by Croatian nationalism and Muslim fundamentalism. Alenka Bartulovic says that due to the textbooks using this type of language, children who live in the region have not been able to form a positive image of their neighbors and see themselves as historical victims. Besides this, these children feel resentment and fury towards their neighbors, and think that their currently peaceful mask will fall one day (Bartulovic 2006: 60-1). Because of the political clash and the distinction reflecting in the education system, when Bosnia and Herzegovina came out of the war, Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats each of the three nations had their

3 Special thanks to Maida Jusic who shared these questions with Bosnian students on her own social media account. She is currently working at Bihac University as a research assistant.

4 According to the results of the population census carried out in October 2013, Bosnia and Herzegovina's population consists of 50.11% Bosniacs, 30.78% Serbs, 15.43% Croats. http://www.internethaber.com/bosna-nufus-sayim-sonuclari-aciklandi-1607569h.htm (accessed 30 December 2016).

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own separate textbooks in the country. The textbooks of each nation were published in different cities and publishing houses. For this reason, three different histories have been narrated in Bosnia (Muhasilovic 2015: 118-9). Muhasilović (2015: 28) claims the perspectives of these societies towards the Ottomans are different in this respect. While Serbian society has never identified itself with the Ottomans and has seen them as invaders, Bosniaks have largely identified themselves with them.

Anthony D. Smith (1999: 163) points out that one of the causes of ethnic violence is unequal distribution of ethno-history. While some communities have partially documented ethno-history, others just have a recent history of oppression and struggle that can be offered to the collective use for some ethnic categories. It could be argued that this phenomenon has affected the depicted Ottoman period as the "the period of oppression and persecution" in the national identity narratives of the Serbs. Similarly, Smith says that there are some distinctive ethnic groups such as Poles, Hungarians, and Croats that boast their long and rich histories, while at the same time there are Serbs, Romanians and Bulgarians whose medieval histories had to be rediscovered and aligned with their recent memories of Ottoman oppression in Eastern Europe. The most effective way to build national identity is using history and the myth of a "golden age". Nationalist trainer intellectuals aiming to developing a nationalist ethos enable people politically, need some samples about the glorious past of the community such as common memories, symbols, traditions. Therefore, a golden age myth is created of ancestral origin, freedom, heroism, and saints (Smith 1999: 66-7). It could be maintained that the intellectuals forming Serbian national identity turned the nation's historical defeats and losses into a "golden age" myth of heroism and sainthood in order to provide a basis for national solidarity. The Serb army was defeated by the Ottoman army in the 1389 war in Kosovo, suffering heavy casualties, and Serbia was included in the Ottoman domination. In Serbian literature, this period is known as the "Kosovo Age" and everything about it has come into the popular imagination of the nation and its cultural definitions. The results of the Kosovo War have not changed in the narrative tradition, but the "defeat" has been transfigured into a "victory". The fight for Kosovo has been turned into a paradigm for struggle, sacrifice, freedom and dignity in the popular imagination (Ljubojevic 2010). Due to the fact that the narrative of "Ottoman persecution" is of great importance to the Serbs' narratives of national history and identity, a fear has arisen in nationalist circles that *The Magnificent Century* would create an Ottoman and Turkish sympathy. Such a sympathy, it is implied, would undermine the most important element of national identity narratives. These arguments have arisen not only from audiences but also journalists and academics. Marko Lopusina, a Serbian journalist who has written books on the Balkan Wars, says in a review on Turkish TV series that "Today, viewers in Belgrade and Zagreb weep not over the fate of their ancestors in the hands of the Turkish Islamic masters but at the fate of Eyshan, Gamus, Scheherazade..." (Lopusina 2010). According to Lopusina, the Balkan people have for decades been opened to the effects of Turkish serials with Islamized folk music, re-emergent Turkish sayings and the idea that İstanbul is a shopping paradise. Furthermore, Lopusina – after noting a large number of Turkish sayings that have become part of contemporary Serbian lexicon, Ottoman meals as part of Serb cuisine, and the large numbers of Serbs who visit Turkey as tourists – adds that these seemingly benign trends are part of the greater geopolitical game of the Balkans. He writes that:

> It is just the soap of entertainment whereas the reality is still recalled among some in Serbia when every Turkish nobleman, and there were many, had a right to have his first take on any newlywed Christian woman. Some smart now say that these genes of rape have been awaken in Serbia and are creating new Janissaries. Have we all become the Turks now? (Lopusina 2010)

Underlying this provocative assessment is the same logic driving the concern towards Turkish TV series in the region's nationalist circles: a fear that the series will undermine the negative "Turkish image" in the narrative of Serbian national identity. This fear is not unfounded. As Edensor (2002: 17) points out, the multiple, changing and contested meanings that surround practices of popular culture contrast with a national identity presented as a "common past" rather than to the "common future", or the "common present". This cul-de-sac has bedeviled accounts of national identity which have ignored the things we watch and read, the places we visit, and the things we buy. After the record ratings of the Turkish TV series, an increasing number of tourists have come to Turkey from the Balkan states; demand for Turkish products seen in

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the series has increased, and increasing numbers of people have started to be interested in Turkey[5].

National identity is not a given structure but a category built historically, and continually re-built. Due to the fact that history is the most important motif in that building process, the commemoration of glorious history and common tragedies on many occasions play a key role in strengthening national identity. These commemorations can be encountered in our daily lives and they can be carried out by formal institutions as well. National identity is an abstract and multi-dimensional construct that touches on all areas of life and is manifest in many permutations and combinations (Smith 1999: 144). Since television series are products of popular culture, and a part of our daily life, we may discuss the reproduction of national identity through them. A series experienced massively and simultaneously by the whole nation can function to reinforce and reflect dominant narratives and social values through its contents and stereotypes. But, on the other hand, products of popular culture, as an area of resistance and struggle at the same time, can invite critical discussion of traditions, social values, and official narratives. In this article, this second function of popular culture is discussed. Namely, while Turkish TV series and especially *The Magnificent Century* received great acclaim in the Balkans where they were shown as part of a global marketing and distribution of Turkish television output, they started the discussion about national identity narratives and concepts of the "other". *The Magnificent Century* depicting a common history and watched with admiration by all ethnic groups, has given rise to such a situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has a population composed of 30% Serbs and 10% Croats. The sympathy of the Bosniak population towards the Ottomans has been reinforced with their admiration towards *The Magnificent Century.* Nevertheless, Croat and especially Serb audiences have experienced various emotional tensions due to the negative "Ottoman" image that is part of their national identity narratives. While these audiences of *The Magnificent Century* point out that they like the scenario of the series, they also feel obliged to speak of the Ottoman Empire's "oppressive politics". While some viewers mention the similarities between their own culture and the Ottoman /Turkish culture and language are many, some say there are no similarities.

An anonymous[6] Serb viewer (v.25) who says the series is popular in all the former Yugoslavia answered the question about the scenario in this way: "interesting, exciting and sad". Although she does not explain why it is sad, it is noteworthy that while the series excites this viewer, she is also distressed. Additionally, in response to what she thought about parts of the series regarding the Balkans, she says: "Serbs don't like the Ottomans because they ruled the Serbs under pressure for years due to their being orthodox"[7]. Although a Serb viewer named Millica T. (v.26) says the series is very popular because it is so good, the story is interesting, and the actors are very talented, she also says Ottomans played a negative historical role in the region where the Slavs and Christians lived. Another anonymous viewer (v.27) commented "(the) series shows ruler Süleyman as a positive historic personality which he is not". This expression indicates that the audience do not trust the series on the grounds that it does not reflect the historical facts. Another Serb viewer (v.29) who says the series is very popular adds that its love story is real, the wars are unreal, but the "killing" in the series are real. In response to the question about the parts of the series related to the Balkans, he says that "expansion of the Ottoman Empire was an aggressive warfare and conquering the weaker regimes." A different anonymous Serb viewer (v.30) says everything is interesting in the series except for the way people are killed, and she adds: "I hope the Turkish people make another soap opera like that". The expression of the viewer that "the way people are killed is not interesting" suggests that she was familiar with this aspect of Ottoman States in advance of watching the television series. Despite this, in what is a good example of the emotional tension some viewers experience, she still hopes that Turkey will make another series. We could see in these examples that Serbian audiences have expressed their anger against the Ottomans in an allusive way.

Another anonymous Serb viewer (v.31) says the series shows that Muslims had a standard of living higher than any other religious group during Ottoman rule. He stated that he began watching the series because he wanted to know how the Turks changed "some things in the Balkans". We

5 Certain travel agencies in Serbia have offered trips to Turkey for the Turkish series named as "Shahrazad's Paths" and the number of Bulgarian tourists traveling to Turkey has increased by 40 percent. Besides this, the Zagreb School of Foreign Languages "Sjajna Zvijezda" has registered a large interest in the Turkish language. "Turkish Soap Operas Take Balkans by Storm" December 30, 2010. http://balkanchronicle.com/index.php/arts-a-culture/entertainment/movies/774-turkish-soap-operas-take-balkans-by-storm (accessed November 6, 2015).

6 7' of Serbian audiences, 4' of Croatian audiences and 2' of Bosniak audiences preferred not to say their names. For this reason, a numbering system of 1 to 43 was used to avoid a confusion regarding the series' viewers.

7 Throughout the manuscript, all quotes are cited as is with no correction or modification.

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could see in this comment how some Serbian viewers have refrained from giving clear answers. He also says, about the series' script, that "they wrote their own history". As mentioned above, one of the most important elements of national identity narratives is "history writing", and it is one of the first steps taken in the process of building national identity. Stuart Hall (2000: 58) says that we go to the "past" not in the strict sense as a real fact, but we go through history, memory, and desire. With the re-telling, rediscovering, and re-creating of the past, history has a strong formative influence on identity. A similar approach comes from Carl Brown who employs the concept of "usable history". He points out that in some cases a society formulates its past in service of its present values, when a people select – or even invent – a past to justify their present. In his book *Imperial Legacy*, Brown provides an example of "usable history" by pointing to a strong proclivity among those living in lands once under Ottoman rule to deplore or discount the Ottoman era (1996: 9-11). According to Maria Todorova (1996: 70), the perception of Ottoman legacy in the Balkans has been, and continues to be, shaped by generations of historians, poets, writers, journalists and other intellectuals as well as politicians. The evolving perception of the Ottoman past within this specific social group is transmitted and disseminated to broader strata of the population through historiographical works, textbooks, journalistic pieces, belles lettres, and art. As one could clearly see, while Serbian audiences admire *The Magnificent Century*, they express their negative feelings towards the Ottoman Empire. We could say that those negative perceptions towards Ottomans are can be explained by "post memory" concept that mentioned before. For example, though a Serbian viewer named Ana Andelkovic (v.33) say that while she knew the scenario might not be historically correct, she feels she has to say that the series is "magnificent and well". She also adds that "Suleiman was the greatest ruler of the Ottoman Empire, which kept the Serbian people prisoners for four centuries". Another anonymous Serbian viewer expresses both admiration and anger against the series and the Turks (v.32). She says the series and the lead actor Halit Ergenç are the best. She, at the same time, notes that the scenario is beautiful and interesting, but it does not reflect reality. According to her, "Turkey conquered the Balkans five centuries ago. Now Turkish power is making inroads through friendlier means". A different anonymous Serbian viewer (v.24) says the scenario has been "changed" and "invented". She also says, "A big portion of Serbians don't see that part of our history as something positive and a lot of them just go crazy if you tell them that Ottomans weren't the bad guys". It is not surprising that the Serbian viewers have a skeptical attitude towards *The Magnificent Century*. Laura Wise says not only the series in particular, but also Turkey's economic investment in the Balkans, its restoration of monuments and establishment of universities supports claims of Ottoman resurrection in the Balkans. According to Wise, Turkey's westward turn has been accompanied by media attention repeatedly expressing ethnically-framed fears, and that collective memory has to constrain modern foreign policy. Despite being the softest form of cultural influence, popular Turkish series are described as having "conquered" audiences across the Balkans (Wise 2013).

Due to the fact they have not lived under Ottoman domination as long as Bosniaks and Serbs, Croatians have not allocated as much attention to the Ottoman Empire in their textbooks as have the other nations in the Balkans (Muhasilović 2015: 57). We could say that for this reason, even though Croat audiences do not approach the Ottomans with sympathy, they are not as angry towards them as are the Serbs. Thus, an anonymous Croatian viewer's (v.37) answer to the question about the parts of *The Magnificent Century* related to the Balkans is as follows: "The Croats have a normal view on the era, because the Turks didn't rule long like other Balkan states". An anonymous viewer (v.34) who started to watch the series on her friend's recommendation says she had a great desire to go to Istanbul after she started watching the series, and indeed did make the trip. She also says she did not watch for historical events, for "incredible Hürrem and her great love". She adds that "I don't care what it was in the past, for me it is not important the Ottoman Empire, I like modern Turkey and her people, especially men". A Croatian viewer named Nora (v.42) says the series is wonderful and she started watching the series thanks to her friends. She adds "My family protest when I watch them and argue with me but I tell them that it presents real relaxation for me and I don't think about that and history". From these examples, it can be understood that some Serbian and Croatian audience members tried to counter negative reactions to their admiration for *The Magnificent Century* by claiming they are not interested in the series' depiction of history but its drama of love and intrigue.

Nevertheless, some Croat audiences criticized the series, reflecting the way in which the Ottoman Empire has to a certain degree been framed as "other" in narratives of Croatian national identity. A viewer named Ivan (v.40) says the scenario is not true but he enjoys it because it is full of intrigues. He also implies the series does not reflect historical facts by

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saying that "I think that Turkish people can't change the history". A Croat viewer named Sasa (36), who says he likes the series, describes the Ottomans' relation with the Balkans as "forcing Islamization and Turkification". Another anonymous Croat viewer (v.39) says *The Magnificent Century* is the "worst one in terms of Turkish propaganda". He also adds that the series is "so cynical for non-Muslims and reflects the history of the Turks."

Balkan nationalism affected by positivism and romanticism destroyed the imagined community of Orthodox Christianity, but preserved an unchangeable and uniform image of Muslim community, and dealt with it in the concept of "millet"[8]. A manifestation of this attitude was the indiscriminate use of "Turk" to refer to Muslims in general. On the other hand, Balkan Muslims displayed the characteristics of "millet" mentality for a long time since they were practically excluded from the process of nation formation in the Balkans, and thus bear the Ottoman legacy (Todorova 1996: 68). The reaction to this attitude among Balkan Muslims is seen in Serbian and Croatian historiography in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Jahja Muhasilović (2015: 29) demonstrates that in some of these narratives, Slavic Christians reacted more strongly against Slavic Muslims than against the ethnic Turks of Anatolia. Some Balkan nationalists were angrier with Balkan Muslims than with Turks because the former had abandoned their Slavic Christian identity and accepted the religion of "the invader." By the same token, because the Muslim population was subjected to ethnic cleansing during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, their attitude towards "Turks" are more favorable than those of Orthodox and Catholic Christians. This is reflected in the ratings of Turkish television series in the Balkans. In the regions with more concentrated Muslim populations, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkish TV series have larger viewership.[9]

It has been observed that Bosniak audiences of *The Magnificent Century* are generally positive about the Ottomans and Turks. For example, a viewer named Halis Campara (v.19) says he has always been very respectful to Turkish people who share the same ancestry and culture with him. Another Bosniak viewer named Lejla Jusic (v.20) says she learned a lot about her country and its history through the series and could see how their culture was elevated with the Ottomans entering the Balkans. Another viewer who thinks the series reflects historical facts is Mirza Pracic (v.22). Of those parts of the series that address Ottoman involvement in the Balkans, Pracic says: "All we should know about Ottoman and their relationship with Balkan, because Ottomans were in this area for about 500 years", and he defines the Turks as "people with big hearted and great souls". Adis (v.3), another Bosniak viewer, says as follows:

> Christians though encouraged to convert [to] Islam, were allowed religious toleration and mixed marriages and the comparative freedom and contentment enjoyed by its people is one of the most important explanations why the Balkans remained under Ottoman rule for over 400 years.

Ines (v.6), another Bosniac viewer, says Ottomans "introduced their tolerance version of Islam which was followed by Bosniaks mostly". Likewise, Elma P. (v.4) says the Ottoman Empire is known as one of the most tolerant in history. İsmar Dedic (v.7), another Bosniak viewer, says that "Bosniaks are more brotherly with the Ottoman era, mainly because they adhered to Islam during the Ottoman conquest", and so "... that's resulted with a majority of Bosniaks now Muslims mostly." It is noteworthy that the views of Bosniak audiences on the tolerance of the Ottoman Empire and of Islam largely contradict those held by Serbs on the same subject.

Some of the Bosniak audiences, however, think that, despite their admiration of it, *The Magnificent Century* does not really reflect the historical facts. Mujesira Bakovic (v.17) is one of them. Another Bosniac viewer, Almedina Sirco (v.18), despite her admiring the scenario, thinks it is not realistic. Nejra Saric (v.1), a different Bosniak viewer, is not sure how much the series reflects historical truth even if she finds it perfect. Yet, another Bosniak viewer named Azra (v.5) says "I think it was written excellent, compared with the history, how it all right I don't know". It should be noted that we cannot say all Bosniak audiences categorically sympathize with the Turks. For example, Sara Sabljakovic (v.2) says "... no matter that they

8 Like other empires, the Ottoman Empire had a very religious, multiethnic and multicultural structure. Until the 19th century, the concept of "Millet" in the Ottoman Empire was used in the sense of "a community of people who believe in a religion or sect". When it came to the 19th century, the concept gained the meaning of "Nation" (Adıyeke,2014:5).

9 Almir Hodzic notes that a new and unexpected cultural trend spreading across the Middle East and the Balkans is the reemergence of Ottoman culture through soap operas. He adds that Turkish shows are most watched in Bosnia, Macedonia, and Serbia due to the large Muslim populations in these countries.
"'Magnificent Century' TV Show: Middle East and Balkans Are Soaking Up Turkish Soap Operas", 10 May 2013, http://mic.com/articles/40763/magnificent-century-tv-show-middle-east-and-balkans-are-soaking-up-turkish-soap-operas (accessed November 4, 2015).

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ruled for centuries in this region we are not Turks and we will never be". Nedim Serbecic (v.15) is much more critical in this regard. He says the series is used to brainwash audiences to believe the Ottomans' rule over the Balkans was a positive thing.

2. REDISCOVERING CULTURAL PROXIMITY THROUGH TELEVISION SERIES

Imagining a national community requires imagining a foreign community. In the era of nation states, the "foreign" (or "the other") is a special category. "The other" is the one who does not have the same nationality as we do and who is not like us (Billig 2002: 95). Due to the importance of otherness in the formation and maintenance of imagined national communities, stereotypical representations of "the other" are frequently encountered in products of popular culture. However, this study considers a work of popular culture that has provoked some members of its audience to realize that the Ottomans, despite their position as "other" in predominant narratives of Balkan national identity, are actually more "like us". This undermines given official narratives of Ottoman history in the Balkans, and is a major reason for the great interest towards Turkish series, and *The Magnificent Century* in particular, in the region. The case of *The Magnificent Century* thus helps to illustrate that globalized media are the medium of stereotypical as well as incompatible, conflicting representations of national identity. As Edensor pointed out, national cultural forms and practices are today sustained by their (re) distribution through popular culture, where they mingle with numerous other iconic cultural elements which signify the nation in multiple and contested ways (2002: 12). We could say that one of these is the way that products of a particular nation's popular culture are consumed by audiences in other nations with the effect of global marketing. It may further be argued that global television productions may open official definitions of national identity to discussion. They can remind viewers of cultural values "otherized" by official history, and allow the rediscovery of common elements in language. This has precisely been the experience made available by the introduction of Turkish series into the Balkan States.

Stuart Hall (1998: 443) highlights that popular culture does not have an absolutely manipulative nature because it includes both fake attractions and distortions as well as elements of acceptance, identification, and familiar experiences for the people. These latter attributes provide the basis of the great interest towards Turkish series in the Balkans. As film and TV critic Vuk Perovic observes, "Audiences can identify with characters, cultural stereotypes... Hundreds of years under Turkish rule mean that we here share similar values." Communications professor Dona Kolar Panov, approaching the issue from another perspective, says *The Magnificent Century* is a popular forum topic for reflecting on shared cultural traditions in the region, adding that it also helps "to overcome the past marred with nationalism, political violence and wars, to finally put to rest the Balkan ghosts. ("Turkish soap opera...").

To discover what similar experiences audiences have found in the Turkish series, our survey asked respondents two questions, one after the other: "Did you change your opinion about Turkish people after watching the series?" and "Are there any similarities between the Turkish culture and your own culture? What did you think about this after watching the series?". While 17' of the Bosniak audiences say their opinion on the Turks did not change as a result of viewing the series, 6' of them say it changed. Moreover, 21' of Bosniak audiences say that there are many similarities between the two cultures. Despite that 1' of Bosniak viewers say there is no similarity, and the other one say "a bit". The similarities mentioned by respondents generally relate to cuisine, music, traditional forms of clothing, architecture, family values, social behaviors, and even gestures habits. For example, a viewer named Adis (v.3) says he had a "good opinion" about Turks before watching the series and also adds that "Bosnia-Herzegovina shows many signs of its nearly four centuries of Turkish rule: the architecture, the occasional shared word, the complimentary glass of rakija after dinner and etc". Another viewer named Elma P. (v.4) says, while evaluating the scenario of the series, that "There are more interesting than American ones with all those lawyers and businessmen who don't have the same customs", and she identified similarities between the two cultures such as baklava and börek (both types of food), and religion. Sara Sabljakovic (v.2) says her opinion about the Turks did not change after watching the series. She also says "...many times when I look Turkish series I can hear the same words as ours, and the food is similar". Ragıp Botoniç (v.16) says: "I had always the same opinion about Turkish people as one friendly nation who support Bosnia and Bosnian peoples in many ways". He also adds that not only Bosniaks but also Serbs and Croats have a similar culture to Turks.

The sense of "cultural proximity" mentioned by many of these audience members is indicates a failure of the effort to

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erase traces of Ottoman heritage in the Balkans. For Maria Todorova (1996: 58-59), a movement that has been striving to erase this Ottoman heritage has in fact succeeded in material, visible ways within the public sphere. The most radical changes occurred in the appearance of cities, specifically in regard to architecture and clothing. Despite this, the Ottoman legacy has proved to be more persistent in the realm of popular beliefs, customs, attitudes, and values. Todorova's account is echoed by an anonymous Bosniak viewer (v.8), who identified cultural similarities in regard to food, idiolect, music and dance. Another Bosniak viewer named Amra Osmanovic (v.13) says "Turkish shows are much closer to us than Spanish, also the people, I think the people is like us". She expresses the cultural similarities as "general mentality", "family relationships", "lifestyle", "clothing", "food", "decoration" and "Islam". After the various Balkan states achieved their independence, erasing the traces of Ottoman has meant realizing a set of ideals that are set in opposition to the Ottoman or oriental, understood in terms of modernization/westernization. This process was supposed to bring in a new set of relations both in the family and in society as a whole, based on individuality and rationality, an entirely new position for women, a revised role for children, and a new work ethos (Todorova 1996: 59). When we look at audiences' interpretations of family values and morals in *The Magnificent Century* we can see that the ideal of westernization has not had the desired effect in some parts of Balkan societies. For example, Bosniak viewer Lejla Jusic (v.20) identified the similarities between the two cultures in terms of "Islam", "food", "clothing", "architecture", and then says "...We have similar tradition, family has a special place in our cultures, our honor and moral. But I already knew it before watching the series but after I only confirmed my opinion." Mina Jovicic (v.23), another Bosniak viewer, says her opinion about the Turks did not change after viewing the series. According to her, Turks are people who have always cared about their traditions and moral values.

In spite of the Balkans' historical experiences of tragedy, anger, and hatred, and the formation of national identity narratives around them, the major reason for the great interest in Turkish series in the region is their cultural proximity, a reality that prevails against predominant narratives of national identity. In our daily life, we share events and reflections on them with the people we know, and we read newspapers and watch TV programs to which we feel close. We stay away from narratives bothering us and inquiring radically our understanding (Inal 2010: 31). In this context, we can say that the ratings of *The Magnificent Century* indicate that many people in the Balkans find Turkish series close to their own world of meaning.

Unlike Bosnian viewers, Serbian and Croatian audiences did not use words of explicit praise while talking about intercultural similarities, but drew upon concepts such as "family relationships", "lifestyle" and "culture" when referring to similarities between their own cultures and Turkish culture. While they tend not to state them explicitly, Serb and Croat audiences have also found reflections of common moral and family values and lifestyles in the Turkish series, which they could not find to the same degree in the American or Latin series. However, on the other side of the coin, "cultural proximity" is a part of historical conflict in the region. In other words, some circles see "cultural proximity" as a product of the "slavery period" under Ottoman rule. In narratives of Serbian and Croatian national identity, Turks are depicted as "other" and "invader"; how, then, do Serbian and Croatian audience members identify with the characters of Turkish TV series? As mentioned in the previous section, Serbian and Croatian audiences tried to negotiate this tension around national identity and otherness by saying "this is [the] Turks' own history" in regard to aspects of the drama that depict periods of Ottoman influence over Serbian and Croatian society and culture. Audience members explained that their reasons for watching the series are usually related to aesthetic qualities of the drama and the acting. These factors are, of course, important reasons for the series' popularity in the region. But, at the same time, Serb and Croat audiences have recognized the great similarities between their own cultures and that of Turkey. For this reason, we could say that cultural proximity is one of the important factors underlying the great interest in Turkish series. For instance, Serbian viewer Millica T (v.26), while saying the Ottomans played a negative role in the region where Slavs and Christians lived, also says that Turkish music and cuisine are part of the national heritage of the former Yugoslavia. An anonymous Serbian viewer (v.30) says that, as the Balkans were part of the "500 years" of Ottoman Empire, there are many similarities between the cultures such as shared words, foods, drinks, and clothes. Ana Andelkovic (33), another Serb viewer, says that, due to its mixed Balkan, Mediterranean and Middle Eastern characteristics, Turkish culture is rich and therefore common attributes shared between the two cultures are normal. Another anonymous Serbian viewer (v.32), who accepts the similarity with Turkish culture unwillingly says "Serbia was under Ottoman Rule for about 600 years, so there was a lot of influence to the culture (there is quite a bit more in Bosnian culture, naturally)."

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Furthermore, three anonymous Serbian audience members (v.24, v.25, v.31) stated that there was no similarity between the two cultures, while one of them (v.31) emphasized similarities between Bosniak culture and Turkish culture.

From the responses of the survey participants, it can be observed that the attitudes of some Croat audience members towards Turks are more stable than are those of some Serbian audience members. It is clear that some members of the audience changed their opinions about Turks after watching the series. For instance, an anonymous Croat viewer (v.34) says her opinion changed to some degree. The same viewer says the similarities between Croatian and Turkish culture are "Turkish coffee, architecture and food". Another anonymous viewer (v.37) listed the similarities between the two cultures as "family relations", "lifestyle", "clothing" and "meals". Another Croat viewer named Ivan (v.40) says there are a lot of "cultural and linguistic similarities" between the two cultures, and adds that he had no certain opinion regarding Turks before watching the series.

Although Croat audience members tend not to mention common cultural values with such great enthusiasm as the Bosniaks, this can be see as an underlying cause of the great interest in the series. Marko B. (v.43), a Croat viewer, says the series is so "intriguing" and "well done", the actors are wonderful. According to this viewer, through their sovereignty over the Balkans, the Turkish "left their mark on culture, cuisine, language, and even on gestures". Another Croat viewer, Mate Bozic (v.41), says he loves the Turkish series, adding: "It is not like I identify myself with the stories.. He answered the question about similarities between the cultures as folows: "The Turks have influenced the Bosnian so much that they don't even have their own identity anymore". Nora (v.42), also a Croat viewer, expressed her admiration for the series' actors and listed the similarities between the two cultures as "language, culture and food". Croat viewer Ivana (v.38) listed the similarities as "language, food, raki, and many things". She also says she will not change her opinions by watching a series.

3. **CONCLUSION**

The Magnificent Century, narrating the Ottoman Empire's many centuries of rule over the Balkans, has been differently interpreted by audiences according to their ethnic and religious identities. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, where about 50% of the population is Bosniak, 30% are Serbs and 15% are Croats, the Bosniak population's sympathy towards the Ottomans and Turks has been strengthened with the great interest in the Turkish series. Despite that, Croat and especially Serb audiences have experienced various emotional tensions due to the negative "Ottoman" image that plays an important part in their respective national identities. For instance, while these audiences expressed their admiration for the scenario, they also had to refer the "oppressive policies" of the Ottoman Empire. While some audiences say similarities between their own cultures and the Ottoman/Turkish culture are many some others say there is no similarity. On the other hand, while they mention the pressures of the Ottoman Empire and say the series has not reflected the historical facts, they say they hope that Turkey will continue to produce similar high-quality series. Even though official narratives of national identity may draw upon negative images of Ottoman history and culture, their admiration of the series is based in cultural similarities and the quality of the series' aesthetic attributes, including its acting and its compelling dramatic scenarios.

Serbian and Croatian audiences, even though they do not use words of praise towards Turks, have used concepts such as "family relationships", "lifestyle", "culture" and "common words" while talking about similarities between the cultures. Like the Bosniaks, Croat and Serb audiences – even if it is only given implicit expression – have found in the Turkish series reflections of common moral and family values and lifestyles they cannot find in American or Latin series. In addition to this, some Serb and Croat audience members argue that the series' historical significance was not of interest, but that they watched for the love themes and intrigue; these attitudes, furthermore, are expressed in a way that suggests a desire to limit negative judgements of their enjoyment from within their own social circles. Such admiration can also be explained through the concept of "prosthetic memory". These viewers did not directly experience the depicted historical period, thus while watching the series, they were aware of the "contemporary moment" as much as the narrated period. For this reason, many say it is just "history".

The Bosniak experience of historical transformations and tragedies may have contributed to their more positive opinions towards Ottomans, when compared with those of Orthodox and Catholic Christians. This can been observed in the comments of Bosniak audiences of *The Magnificent Century*, which is to a great extent positive in regard to the dramatic scenario and the Ottomans and Turks. An important part of the Bosniak audiences say their opinion towards Turks did not change after viewing the series, and they were

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already aware of the similarities between the two cultures. All the similarities mentioned concern food culture, music, traditional clothes, architecture, family values, behaviors, and even gestures. However, some members of the Bosniak audience think the series does not really reflect historical fact, despite their admiration for it.

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IL DISVELAMENTO DELLA POLITICA IN *HOUSE OF CARDS*. UN APPROCCIO SOCIOSEMIOTICO MULTIMODALE

PAOLO PARMEGGIANI

Name Paolo Parmeggiani
Academic centre Università degli studi di Udine, Italia
E-mail address paolo.parmeggiani@uniud.it

KEYWORDS
House of Cards; socio-semiotic; frame; modality; direction of photography; color grading.

ABSTRACT
The paper analyzes the communication strategy of the 13th episode of the fourth season of *House of Cards*. This political drama offers viewers a communicative pact that underlies their social competence to distinguish among the different frames of realism, verisimilitude, sincere confidence, staged fiction, and/or public media representation. Because the episode's meta message to its audience is that whatever is visible has been artfully constructed (both in private and public), the protagonist pedagogically invites the viewer to interpret the facts presented in the episode with cynicism. The themes and the characters are closely related to contemporary television news and political agendas (the events and protagonists of the 2016 US presidential election, foreign policy, the war against terrorism). The paper's analytical approach is multimodal socio-semiotic: in it, I focus on the degree of realism ascribed to different frames (according to Goffman's theory) and analyze the visual markers of photorealism. In particular, I investigate, with the help of digital tools, the conventions adopted in the direction of photography and color grading to differentiate frames and convey the story's trustworthiness and the politicians' dishonesty.

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1. **INTRODUZIONE**

Il caso studio analizzato è la tredicesima ed ultima puntata della quarta stagione[1] di *House of Cards - Gli intrighi del potere* (da qui in avanti *HoC*), serie televisiva prodotta da Netflix a partire dal 2013. Si tratta di un adattamento dell'omonima miniserie della BBC ispirata ad un romanzo di Michael Dobbs (2013). Jakob Verbruggen è il regista della puntata, mentre Pack Beauregard Willimon[2], che ha adattato il romanzo di Michael Dobbs, è lo sceneggiatore.

L'obiettivo di questa ricerca è evidenziare alcune strategie socio-comunicative della narrazione audiovisiva, in particolare quelle inerenti alla credibilità delle rappresentazioni che il potere politico e i media mettono in scena nella sfera pubblica. Questa serie tv diviene così il luogo privilegiato "per comprendere i desideri e le proiezioni, le elaborazioni e le aspirazioni di un immaginario 'popolare' della politica in cui i confini tra realtà e finzione sono da tempo mescolati" (Demaria 2015: 2).

Un fattore chiave che ha determinato l'ampio successo di critica e di pubblico della serie sta, a nostro avviso, nel rapporto del protagonista con lo spettatore. Il potere di Frank Underwood, Presidente degli USA, viene esercitato non solo sugli altri personaggi ma, in forma più seduttiva, sullo spettatore stesso, che ne accetta la relazione pedagogica e ne adotta anche il punto di vista cinico, affinando così quella competenza sociale indispensabile per apprezzare e distinguere i diversi piani di verità.

2. **LA METODOLOGIA DI ANALISI**

Dal punto di vista metodologico l'analisi si è basata principalmente sulla sociosemiotica multimodale. La ragione di questo approccio derivava dalla necessità di coniugare una disamina delle scelte espressive nel testo televisivo con le implicazioni socioculturali e politiche.

Come rileva Ruggero Eugeni, tra semiotica e sociologia sono sempre esistite delle zone di scambio che oggi si definiscono come *sociosemiotica*. "Etichetta abbastanza vaga che tende a raccogliere almeno tre tradizioni di ricerca: la *socio-sémiotique* francese facente capo alla Scuola di Parigi di Algirdas Julien Greimas e dei suoi allievi; la *social semiotics* di Michael A.K. Halliday; e la sociosemiotica critica che trae origine dalle riflessioni di Ferruccio Rossi Landi" (Eugeni 1999: 122).

In questa analisi seguiremo la prospettiva di Gunter Kress che (all'interno della tradizione anglosassone ed assieme a Robert Hodge e Van Leewen) utilizza il termine di *multimodal social semiotics* (Hodge and Kress 1988, Kress and van Leeuwen 1996, Van Leeuwen 2005, Kress 2010). Sottolineandone la connotazione sociale, l'autore incorpora la nozione di *discorso,* derivante dalla linguistica. Un testo (in questo caso audiovisivo) comunica non solo dei contenuti, ma contiene anche una definizione del contesto comunicativo in cui si svolge. In questo modo detta delle norme pratiche per la sua fruizione e definisce il contesto relazionale in cui si svolge.

Il concetto di *frame* è risultato particolarmente ricco di valore euristico. Viene definito (Kress 2010) come principio organizzativo per cui una qualsiasi entità di significato (ad esempio un "testo" o un "evento") si dà una unità e una coerenza interna, distinguendosi e contemporaneamente stabilendo delle relazioni di senso con le altre unità allo stesso "livello". Il sociologo Erving Goffman (1974) aveva già definito i frame come strutture e principi di organizzazione, socialmente costruiti che rendono possibile definire (percepire, categorizzare, etichettare) una data situazione. Questo concetto, a partire dalla sociologia della comunicazione è stato dunque rielaborato ed applicato in diverse discipline; oggi viene utilizzato correntemente nei *media and communication studies* e nella sociologia della politica (Entman 1993, Barisione 2009, Van Gorp 2010, Vliegenthart and Van Zoonen 2011), anche in analisi visuali (Pogliano e Solaroli 2016). In particolare si segnala come Cristina Demaria, analizzando proprio in House of Cards "l'immaginario 'popolare' della politica", utilizzi proficuamente il concetto di *frame* (pur "trasversali" rispetto a quelli qui identificati e in un contesto metodologico diverso). La funzione è descrivere "come alcune narrazioni seriali di genere politico partecipano alla definizione di frame di riferimento, modelli di memoria e di azione, in sostanza di immaginari, intervenendo così nel modo in cui, da spettatori e, possibilmente, da cittadini, acquisiamo strumenti per interpretare il campo stesso della politica, insieme al ruolo che vi giocano coloro che dovrebbero rappresentarci"(Demaria 2015: 2).

Ai fini di questa analisi abbiamo adottato una distinzione tra livelli *micro*, *meso* e *macro* frame (Vliegenthart and Van

1 La messa in onda dell'episodio in italiano è avvenuta il 20 aprile 2016 sul canale satellitare Sky Atlantic. Precedentemente era stata resa disponibile on demand da Netflix.

2 L'elenco completo degli autori è formato da Michael Dobbs, Andrew Davies, Beau Willimon, Laura Eason e Bill Kennedy. Nonostante i registi e gli sceneggiatori di questa serie varino di puntata in puntata, si rileva una forte continuità nello stile e nelle scelte espressive.

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Zoonen 2011). Abbiamo quindi privilegiato un approccio comune nelle scienze sociali che utilizza il concetto di livelli di analisi per indicare la posizione, la dimensione o la scala di un obiettivo di ricerca (Kelle 2005). Applicata alla *politica rappresentata dai media*, il livello del *macro frame* (livello sociologico globale) insiste sulla dimensione "d'ordine più generale e profondo (ad es., 'Guerra fredda', 'Guerra al terrorismo globale' , (...) articolati in termini dicotomici, secondo codici binari (noi/loro, libertà/terrore, bene/male, sacro/profano, razionale/irrazionale, ecc.), e in quanto cornici culturali preesistenti, latenti e facilmente evocabili" (Pogliano e Solaroli 2016: 88). Il *meso frame* (livello di sociologico di comunità e di tecnologie mediali adottate) prende in considerazione "l'interazione competitiva tra diverse organizzazioni e istituzioni (ad es., giornalistiche, politiche, commerciali) – e quindi orientamenti ideologico-culturali da esse adottati ed espressi". Infine il livello del *micro frame* (livello sociologico della relazione interpersonale) può riguardare le "interazioni sociali situate (...) su eventi singoli, circoscritti in termini spazio-temporali" (Pogliano e Solaroli 2016: 88).

Applicando questo approccio all'episodio in questione, abbiamo approfondito, in particolare, l'analisi della *modalità visiva* come indice di fotorealismo. L'ausilio della Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (Lewins and Silver 2007) e del software Transana[3] ha permesso un'analisi di quei segmenti e porzioni nel flusso audiovisivo ritenuti salienti (Flewitt et al. 2009) nella trasmissione. Gli elementi definiti e evidenziati sono stati dapprima la suddivisione in scene e i temi del contenuto narrativo, poi la direzione della fotografia per quanto riguarda l'esposizione, la saturazione, il tipo di ripresa; infine il tipo di relazioni interpersonali sotto il profilo della sfera pubblica/privata. Abbiamo utilizzato anche gli strumenti digitali dell'istogramma e del vettorscopio per misurare in maniera quantitativamente precisa l'esposizione, la saturazione e le dominanti colorate delle inquadrature.

3. I MACRO FRAME E I TEMI DELLA CONTEMPORANEITÀ

L'analisi, a livello dei macro frame, identifica i temi e i personaggi principali della serie rapportandoli, rapportandoli al contesto storico-politico contemporaneo conosciuto dallo spettatore. Riprendiamo in questo l'impostazione dell'analisi socio semiotica di Ruggero Eugeni, che definisce un testo filmico come un dispositivo che "seleziona, convoca e quindi attiva proprio interno alcuni saperi sociali" (1999: 8)[4]. Nello specifico, l'attivazione dei saperi sociali di tipo storico-politico costituisce un prerequisito alla comprensione della puntata.

Se in generale i paradigmi socio politici si riflettono nei temi trattati dalla fiction (Giglio 2010, Haas et al. 2015), la caratterizzazione dei politici come figure negative, spesso corrotte, è un tratto molto comune nella fiction trasmessa dalla televisione americana (Lichter et al. 2000) ed inglese (Van Zoonen and Wring 2012) prodotta dagli anni cinquanta in poi. A differenza di *The West Wing*, una serie NBC di dieci anni prima con cui generalmente si raffronta *HoC* (Fritz 2015, Hackett 2015) e che era improntata sull'onestà e sull'idealismo, qui si mette in scena il fascino del politico, eroe negativo e cinico. Ma prima di evidenziare quali temi della fiction rimandino all'informazione politica mediatica è necessario presentare una sinossi della puntata.

Nel corso della quarta stagione della serie, Frank Underwood e la moglie Claire stanno conducendo rispettivamente la campagna per la rielezione a Presidente e Vicepresidente degli Stati Uniti. All'inizio di questo episodio Claire cerca di utilizzare le sue capacità diplomatiche per convincere il terrorista Yusuf Al Ahmadi a far rilasciare tre ostaggi (la famiglia di James Miller rapita da parte dell'Islamic Caliphate Organization). Per avviare la trattativa, il leader dei terroristi Al Ahmadi era stato temporaneamente portato dalla prigione di Guantanamo in una residenza segreta. Ahmadi, alla fine di un colloquio con il Presidente che ottiene il rilascio di due ostaggi, ordina ai seguaci di uccidere il terzo e di diffondere il video della conversazione. Contemporaneamente il giornalista Tom Hammerschmidt, dopo una lunga inchiesta, vuole pubblicare un articolo in cui rivelerà la corruzione e le menzogne di Frank Underwood. La coppia presidenziale decide una misura risolutiva. Claire suggerisce a Frank un piano per distrarre l'opinione pubblica con la paura generata da una dichiarazione di guerra. Nel finale di puntata il Presidente, che ponendo fine alle negoziazioni con i terroristi ha ottenuto un vantaggio mediatico dalla esecuzione dell'ostaggio,

3 http://www.transana.org

4 Tra questi (intesi come insieme di risorse piuttosto che un sistema coerente) distingue fra conoscenze e competenze (che permettono di manipolare i saperi - oggetto). Eugeni identifica quattro aree di saperi sociali che comprendono il sapere storico, il sapere privato (della dimensione quotidiana), il sapere testuale e intertestuale ed infine quello del sapere metatestuale (che guida le relazioni dei soggetti suggerendo le posizioni interpretative rispetto al testo). Questi, messi in forma e in relazione con la diegesi, "vengono proposti con valori di esemplarità. In tal modo essi entrano in un gioco di rapporti con altri testi o paratesti e, per questa via, rifluiscono nella rete di saperi sociali contribuendo a determinare struttura, rilievi, andamenti." (Eugeni 1999: 8)

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afferma che la sua amministrazione non subisce il terrore ma lo provoca.

Già nelle puntate precedenti erano emersi *hot topics* presenti nella sfera pubblica (Habermas 1977: 2591), in particolare le strategie della campagna elettorale (il sincronismo con le presidenziali USA del 2016 è evidente) e il *negative campaigning.* Puntuali riferimenti[5] alla cronaca politica contemporanea[6], questioni geopolitiche e tematiche ideologiche si integrano tra loro e, ovviamente, con elementi di fantasia.

Ad iniziare dal protagonista, che ha chiaramente delle caratteristiche riconducibili a presidenti del passato come Lyndon Johnson (anche lui democratico texano inizialmente Vicepresidente), Ronald Reagan (che sopravvisse ad un attentato) o Bill Clinton (marito di una First Lady, Hillary, simile a Claire).

Ma in questa puntata il tema più caratterizzante riguarda la politica estera nei confronti del Medio Oriente (all'epoca nell'agenda dell'amministrazione Obama) e la risposta al terrorismo islamico fondamentalista. L'Islamic State of Iraq and Syria ha una tradizione consolidata nell'essere denominato con diverse sigle: ISIS, IS, ISIL o Daesh nel tentativo di ridefinire o delegittimare il gruppo; qui viene chiamato ICO (Islamic Caliphate Organization). Non si parla di Talebani o Al Qaeda: l'accento (come per la campagna presidenziale USA) è sulla cronaca, quella che i telespettatori di Netflix possono vedere live nelle breaking news di altri canali.

L'Iraq è nominato esplicitamente come luogo di crisi geopolitica. Nella scena 11 il terrorista Ahmadi ricorda come, nonostante la seconda guerra del Golfo contro il regime di Saddam Hussein, il paese non è ancora stabilizzato politicamente. "Quale governo? Non c'è alcun governo in Iraq. Non c'è alcun Iraq. C'è solo Baghdad. Gli sciiti, i sunniti, i curdi... In Siria è la stessa cosa". Un riferimento alla reazione USA è quello alla prigione di Guantanamo (scena 5), alla legislazione antiterrorismo e alla gestione dei prigionieri militari del Patrioct Act (promulgata da Bush a seguito dell'attentato dell'11 settembre 2001).

Oltre a eventi specifici vengono citati anche temi più politico-ideologici, come la crescente influenza della First Lady: la sua legittimazione politica rappresenta allegoricamente il raggiungimento dell'uguaglianza di genere. Il riferimento è a Hillary Clinton, la prima moglie di un Presidente a ricoprire una carica elettiva come senatrice e candidata ufficiale per le successive due elezioni presidenziali.

Il tema della parità di genere, che si combina con quello della contrapposizione tra emancipazione femminile occidentale e subalternità femminile nel fondamentalismo islamico, si ritrova in ben sette scene riguardanti la negoziazione tra amministrazione USA e terroristi. L'accostamento tra ideologia terroristica e oppressione femminile era già stato evidenziato nella campagna di bombardamenti contro i talebani in Afghanistan del 2001, quando la First Lady Laura Bush aveva definito la lotta al terrorismo come una lotta anche per i diritti e la dignità delle donne.

Qui la First Lady Claire e il Presidente trattano separatamente con il gruppo dei rapitori, rivelando una differenza di stile relazionale molto accentuata. Mentre Underwood negozia duramente, sottolineando continuamente la sua autorità, la moglie ha un approccio apparentemente molto accondiscendente, concedendo al terrorista la possibilità di lavarsi, di pranzare, di non essere torturato. Inaspettatamente, di fronte a questa strategia morbida, Hamadi ribatte che l'obiettivo della donna è quello di umiliarlo, spiegando: "Che cosa c'è di umiliante? Sono seduto di fronte una donna". La sua reazione ricontestualizza la relazione tra i due personaggi come allegoria di un conflitto tra due atteggiamenti culturali: quello del Califfato che impone alla donna musulmana una limitazione alla vita familiare e la sottomissione all'uomo e il modello "occidentale" delle pari opportunità dove vi è un' effettiva partecipazione femminile alla leadership politica.

Il secondo motivo che porta a connotare come realistica[7] la serie è che autorevoli politici che hanno ricoperto le stesse cariche dei personaggi sono in *contiguità mediatica* con quelli della fiction[8]. Si tratta di un ribaltamento di prospettive: se prima abbiamo evidenziato come la serie cita la politica, ora evidenzieremo come quest'ultima citi la serie. È evidente che lo spettatore distingue tra fiction e informazione politica, ma la presenza di *testimonial* di grande peso istituzionale ha contribuito a rendere più credibili le situazioni rappresentate e più autorevole la chiave di lettura. È una relazione intertestuale tra

5 Michael Dobbs, autore del romanzo, ha iniziato la sua carriera politica come consulente di Margaret Thatcher per divenire successivamente capo di gabinetto del partito.

6 Naturalmente la serie che stiamo analizzando non è l'unica a svolgere i temi dell'agenda politica in sincronia con i fatti reali. Si veda, ad esempio, il caso della telenovela messicana *El Candidato (Torres 2015).*

7 In questo testo la "realtà", ovvero "fattualità autoevidente ed indiscutibile", va intesa e contestualizzati nel quadro sociologico della teoria della realtà come costruzione sociale (Berger and Luckmann 1966), che la vede appunto come una costruzione condivisa di ordine culturale e simbolico.

8 Come nota Cristina Demaria "le narrazioni e le trasformazioni di vecchi e nuovi immaginari hanno sempre giocato un ruolo fondamentale: i politici 'reali' hanno bisogno di raccontarsi ricorrendo a narrazioni che dell'immaginario fanno parte" (2015: 6)

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i protagonisti di questo *political drama*[9] con quelli di altri generi (in particolare i notiziari e le rubriche di informazione politica) ed in altri media (quotidiani, social media, televisione mainstream) che hanno rivestito gli stessi ruoli. Questa caratteristica ha come effetto, nei confronti dello spettatore, di rafforzare l'autorevolezza della serie: si può definire una forma di *celebrity endorsement* (Erdogan 1999, Spry et al. 2011) grazie alla quale la reputazione di politici celebri rende l'immagine del *brand HoC* più credibile e degna di fiducia.

Per illustrare questa ibridazione tra personaggi della fiction e della politica di allora segnaliamo, tra gli innumerevoli esempi, tre eventi che hanno riguardato l'ex Presidente degli Usa Bill Clinton, il presidente del consiglio italiano Matteo Renzi e il governo dell'Iran.

La prima notizia, pubblicata dal *Washington Times* affermava come l'ex Presidente Bill Clinton avesse definito *HoC* una rappresentazione della politica accurata (*real*) al 99% (Ernst 2015). In Italia, dopo che l'ex premier Renzi aveva apprezzato pubblicamente e ripetutamente la serie (pur marcando le differenze con i propri ideali), lo scrittore Michael Dobbs ha affermato di aver "ritenuto prudente inviargli una nota per ricordargli che il libro è solo intrattenimento e non un manuale d'istruzioni" (Fumarola 2014). Infine il canale Namayesh della Repubblica Islamica dell'Iran ha trasmesso (contrariamente a tutte le consolidate regole di censura) un dibattito presidenziale americano fra Hillary Clinton e Donald Trump *assieme* a *HoC*. Questa decisione è stata definita una strategia per rinforzare il giudizio negativo sui candidati americani (Lombardi 2016).

Tutte queste notizie possono essere considerati, pur in senso lato, dei *paratesti*[10] il cui il meta-messaggio implicito è che, guardando la serie, è possibile capire ciò che accade in quel *backstage* (Goffman 1959) della vita politica "reale" e a cui normalmente non è possibile avere accesso.

4. I REGIMI DI VISIBILITÀ

Nei frame che prendiamo in considerazione c'è una modulazione della *credibilità* basata su diverse forme di *visibilità*. Secondo Annalisa Frisina, che utilizza il concetto della visibilità all'interno di ricerche sociologiche con strumenti visuali, questa "riguarda innanzitutto la capacità degli attori sociali di diventare visibili nella sfera pubblica, di essere disposti ad entrare negli sguardi altrui e provare a diventare soggetti, reclamando diritti e riconoscimento, all'interno di una relazione vedere-essere visti" (2013: 165).

Come ha comprovato Erving Goffman (1959), descrivendo la vita quotidiana come rappresentazione, spesso ad una *ribalta* (visibile) corrisponde un *retroscena* (nascosto) in cui si disvelano le messe in scena che le persone portano avanti in accordo con le loro *équipe*. Ciò che Goffman descriveva sociologicamente in questi due diversi frame (pubblico e privato), lo spettatore lo sa per senso comune: i personaggi sulla ribalta pubblica hanno una maschera di facciata per mantenere il controllo delle informazioni comunicate, l'apparenza propone delle norme ideali contraddette da quelle professate privatamente, il regista dell'équipe distribuisce i ruoli affinché la rappresentazione risulti coerente e i segreti rimangano tali.

Essendo il regime di visibilità correlato a dinamiche sociali di potere, oltre che nelle relazioni private e della vita quotidiana, si può rilevare in ambiti pubblici, come ad esempio nello spettacolo, nelle forme di controllo sociale, nelle strategie di riconoscimento (Brighenti 2010). Applicheremo questa chiave di lettura partendo dal frame più generale (macro), dove la sfera politica viene rappresentata mostrando una pluralità di punti di vista e differenti versioni sullo stesso fatto sostengono strategie alternative di poteri tra loro in conflitto.

Il primo tema (la cui linea narrativa è trasversale a tutta la serie e che rappresenta il conflitto principale della trama) riguarda quanto l'informazione riesca a rendere visibile la politica. Il ruolo del *quarto potere* (scene 8, 11, 15, 23, 24, 39) è quello di mostrare le possibili derive del sistema democratico.

Nella scena 8 Tom Hammersmith annuncia che pubblicherà l'inchiesta sulle malversazioni e i complotti del Presidente. Il reporter lavora al *Washington Herald*, evidente citazione del *Washington Post*, i cui giornalisti Bob Woodward e Carl Bernstein diedero inizio al caso Watergate che negli anni settantaportò alle dimissioni di Nixon.

Ma la sceneggiatura propone anche un riferimento al caso *Sexgate*. La relazione tra la giovane cronista Zoe Barnes e Underwood è oggetto di indagine come avvenne nel caso del rapporto extraconiugale tra la Monica Lewinsky e Bill Clinton. Negli anni novanta le conseguenze furono tali da portare il Presidente all'impeachment per spergiuro e ostruzione alla giustizia. Qui il giornalista, pur non credendo (Scena 24: Frank: "Mi credi ?" Tom: "Neanche una parola") alle

9 Creando una tassonomia della fiction televisiva a tema politico, Lance Holbert distingue tra "fictional political dramas"," satirical situation comedies" e "brief snippets of political satire" (Holbert 2005).

10 "I paratesti sono quindi tutti quegli spazi che, spesso a partire da un intento promozionale, forniscono delle precise chiavi di lettura di un testo al suo (potenziale) recettore: pensiamo ad esempio, nel caso del cinema, ai trailers, ai manifesti, ai flani della stampa quotidiana (...) Il paratesto costruisce un sapere metatestuale che può essere trasferito al testo filmico" (Eugeni 1999: 68).

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menzogne perfettamente dissimulate di Underwood, non ha (ancora) delle prove per rendere visibile la sua falsità.

In estrema sintesi, nella cornice narrativa di *HoC* (e nel cinico immaginario delle teorie del complotto), "l'unica verità è che tutti mentono" (Demaria 2015: 18). Il compito dello spettatore diviene discernere tra i diversi gradi della finzione, ovvero capire quanto, a ciò che esibisce pubblicamente un personaggio, corrisponda una "verità" privata, una strategia (condivisa con altri personaggi) o una segreta menzogna.

La stampa riveste il ruolo di *watchdog*, unico argine a un potere politico che ha travalicato le sue prerogative e ha distorto con l'inganno il leale confronto democratico. Ma, contemporaneamente, le amministrazioni si servono di strategie di comunicazione che indirizzano l'opinione pubblica grazie ad addetti stampa o *speech writer* (scene 17, 19, 34, 37, 38). La sceneggiatura rende dunque visibile come l'amministrazione confezioni dei messaggi persuasivi con oculate, ma spesso eticamente discutibili, scelte retoriche. Svela i meccanismi della politica come messa in scena e rappresentazione mostrando il dietro le quinte delle conferenze stampa e dei discorsi pubblici.

Lo speech writer Thomas Yates è un celebre scrittore, con un passato torbido e un presente come amante di Claire. Assoldato per divulgare i progetti dell'amministrazione all'opinione pubblica, prepara un discorso per commentare il rapimento dell'ostaggio. Nonostante il parere contrario degli addetti stampa, Underwood, dopo aver paventato la possibilità che l'ostaggio venga giustiziato (come effettivamente avverrà a causa del Presidente), utilizza le parole dello scrittore (scene 37-38). "Piangere non significa temere. Affliggersi non è un'ammissione di sconfitta.": con queste frasi retoriche di umana empatia mista ad fermezza e coraggio, conclude il suo ipocrita discorso all'America, puntando al coinvolgimento emotivo dell'audience per far dimenticare le proprie responsabilità.

La ripresa (figura .1) sottolinea l'inautenticità di questa costruita manipolazione inquadrando Underwood che pronuncia il suo discorso leggendo il gobbo. Il controcampo della visuale offerta ai media palesa quel backstage normalmente accuratamente nascosto.

Il grado di attendibilità e credibilità viene contestualizzato, oltre che ai personaggi (i politici, gli addetti stampa, i giornalisti) che mostrano/nascondono/lasciano trapelare diverse versioni dei fatti, anche dalle scelte scenografiche e visuali. Non è un caso che alla Casa Bianca molte conversazioni che portano a decisioni importanti o svelano le reali intenzioni dei protagonisti non si svolgano nei luoghi ufficiali come lo

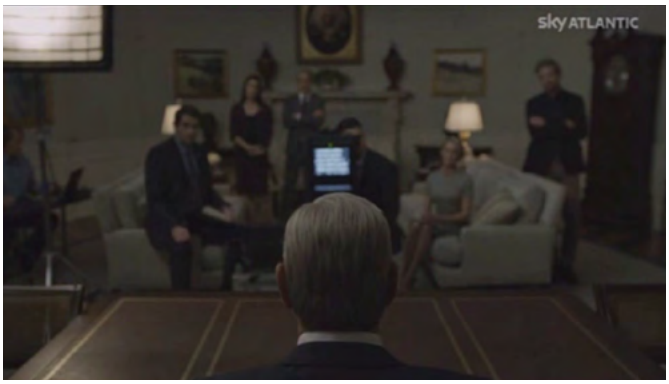

FIGURA 1. DISCORSO ALLA NAZIONE.

Studio Ovale o la Situation Room, ma siano ambientate in corridoi o stanze private. Nella scena 11, ad esempio, Claire ammette al terrorista che "di certe cose si discute a porte chiuse". Questo concetto viene metaforicamente ribadito con una inquadratura in cui due personaggi in controluce (quindi poco visibili) sono ripresi *da fuori la stanza*, incorniciati dal telaio della porta di una residenza che rimane segreta.

Seguendo l'approccio sociosemiotico multimodale (Kress 2010), possiamo evidenziare come una delle strategie usate per differenziare queste cornici riguardi la direzione della fotografia e il *color grading*. I diversi frame sono definiti anche dal tipo di enunciazione: a seconda del punta di vista esplicitato visualmente ("chi sta riprendendo la scena") viene suggerito un corrispondente grado di credibilità. Le scelte registiche costruiscono quindi un codice che connota i diversi gradi di visibilità sociale degli eventi rappresentati attraverso diverse *modalità visive* dei frame.

Il termine "modalità" deriva dalla linguistica e in socio-semiotica si riferisce al valore di verità o credibilità generato dalle rappresentazioni del mondo[11]. Kress e Van Leeuwen affermano che, sebbene nella nostra società esistano diversi tipi di realismo, lo standard dominante con cui giudichiamo il realismo visivo (e quindi la modalità visuale) rimane per il momento il *naturalismo* come viene convenzionalmente interpretato: ovvero il *fotorealismo* (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 158, Van Leeuwen 2005: 282). Il criterio dominante si basa su quanta corrispondenza ci sia tra quello che noi vediamo normalmente a occhio nudo in una specifica situazione e cosa vediamo di un oggetto nella sua rappresentazione. Quindi qui

11 Nella teoria di semiotica sociale non si parla di verità assoluta delle rappresentazioni e il termine ha quindi un valore interpersonale piuttosto che ideazionale. Attraverso la modalità si indica al lettore come interpretare le affermazioni, producendo delle verità condivise (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 154).

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con il termine "fotorealismo" indichiamo un grado di realismo "ottimale" che corrisponde alla capacità tecnologica offerta della fotografia di riprodurre le forme, il numero di dettagli, la gamma tonale, la differenziazione tra i colori e la gamma dinamica di un oggetto[12].

Kress individua diverse caratteristiche del colore che fungono da indicatori della modalità naturalistica (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 160-162): qui particolarmente significative sono la l'esposizione, la saturazione e la differenziazione[13]. Rappresentando questi tre marker su una scala di intensità, possiamo affermare che ogni punto sulla scala (dal minimo al massimo) ha un certo corrispondenza in termini di standard naturalistico[14]. Il grado più alto (o centrale) della modalità non corrisponde necessariamente con il grado di massimo naturalismo; ad un certo valore lo standard viene superato e l'impressione di realismo decresce[15].

Se nelle produzioni televisive fino ad alcuni anni fa il modo di filmare prevedeva una produzione multicamera e un'illuminazione diffusa e in *high key*, ora le serie televisive (in particolare quelle prodotte da HBO o Netflix) stanno abituando il telespettatore a una direzione della fotografia più articolata e cinematografica.

Il marker "illuminazione" è risultato essere un fattore fondamentale nella costruzione del fotorealismo. Secondo l'approccio sociosemiotico queste rappresentazioni utilizzano solitamente un'illuminazione in cui la fonte di luce risulta evidente. Lo spettatore riconosce la presenza di un punto luce che è visibile (o ipotizzabile se fuori campo) in un preciso luogo all'interno dell'ambiente. Può essere, ad esempio, una finestra, un lampadario o una torcia, ma si tratta sempre di oggetti intradiegetici. Viceversa le immagini meno naturalistiche possono astrarre dall'illuminazione ed utilizzare le ombre solo nella misura in cui è necessario evidenziare il volume degli oggetti (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 162)[16].

Igor Martinovic, direttore della fotografia della seconda stagione di *HoC*, ha affermato che il suo apporto più significativo (rispetto alla prima stagione) ha riguardato proprio la posizione delle luci, divenuta *motivata* (Martinovic 2014). In altri termini, invece che utilizzare sul set prevalentemente un'illuminazione diffusa proveniente dall'alto per rinforzare la luce ambiente, i corpi illuminanti sono stati posti in corrispondenza delle fonti di illuminazioni visibili nella inquadratura. L'effetto (*strong naturalistic key light*) ha reso la rappresentazione dello spazio più realistica e ha differenziato questa produzione da quelle televisive low budget e multicamera, caratterizzate da tempi di allestimento molto più brevi e maggiore semplicità nelle riprese.

L'analisi ha evidenziato come la puntata inizi e si sviluppi per la maggior parte della diegesi con il punto di vista *oggettivo* del *narratore impersonale*[17].

Questo flusso viene interrotto dalle riprese dei titoli di testa, composti da 37 inquadrature che riprendono il trasformarsi del panorama urbano di Washington D.C. dall'alba alla notte. Sono state realizzate con la tecnica time-lapse, che (utilizzando una serie di scatti fotografici singoli, intervallati e messi in sequenza) permette di evidenziare i cambiamenti in una prospettiva diacronica di lunga durata. La modalità High Dynamic Range (gamma dinamica elevata) ha ampliato l'intervallo di esposizione della foto tradizionale avvicinandolo alla capacità percettiva della vista umana. Queste forti marche stilistiche, citando Eadweard Muybridge e connotando le inquadrature extradiegetiche con una valenza documentaria, rendono la sequenza un'oggettiva irreale (Casetti e Di Chio 2009) che ci mostra la capitale in modo inedito grazie al potere visuale onnipotente dell'istanza narrante.

Le altre parti che si differenziano dal punto di vista oggettivo per modalità visiva sono le riprese delle conferenze stampa (scene 17,18, 38) viste attraverso le telecamere della CNN, la video conferenza (tramite il display del computer) tra

12 Non si tratta di determinismo tecnologico: gli standard sono variabili a seconda del contesto storico – culturale – tecnologico. Il giudizio, ad esempio, si modifica a seguito di avanzamenti tecnologici: una risoluzione più alta, una resa più fedele dei colori, un miglioramento della gamma dinamica sposta il criterio soglia con cui noi reputiamo realistica un'immagine. Van Leeuwen nota come "When black and white was the norm, colour was regarded as 'more than real'(...) Today colour is the norm and black and white tends to be lower in modality, used for representing the past, dreams, fantasies, etc." (Van Leeuwen 2005: 168).

13 In termini tecnico-informatici nel modello colore HSB possiamo equiparare l'esposizione al grado di brightness (in una scala che va dal bianco e nero assoluto) la saturazione (dal grigio alla intensità massima di colore), la variazione di tonalità (dall'utilizzo di una sola alla massima diversificazione).

14 Gli autori prendono in considerazione anche altri marker come la contestualizzazione, l'astrazione, la profondità, la modulazione.

15 Questa teoria spiega, ad esempio come possiamo trovare poco naturalistico un fumetto (le cui modalità esprimono poca differenziazione e modulazione dei dettagli e dei colori) rispetto ad una fotografia. Spiega anche come una pubblicità che, viceversa, propone una fotografia con colori troppo intensi (eccessivamente saturi rispetto allo standard del fotorealismo) appaia falsa.

16 Seguendo Kress, per illuminazione si intende una modalità visuale che presenta una scala di variazioni che vanno dall'assenza di una fonte di luce visibile (osservabile sugli oggetti) alla massima rappresentazione di zone illuminate e in ombra. Per un direttore della fotografia ciò viene ottenuto posizionando le fonti di luce con una posizione e un'angolazione definita.

17 L'inquadratura oggettiva è la principale categoria dei punti di vista dell'enunciazione filmica e corrisponde al punto di vista di nessuno, o a quella del narratore stesso, trascendente ed impersonale (Casetti e Di Chio 2009).

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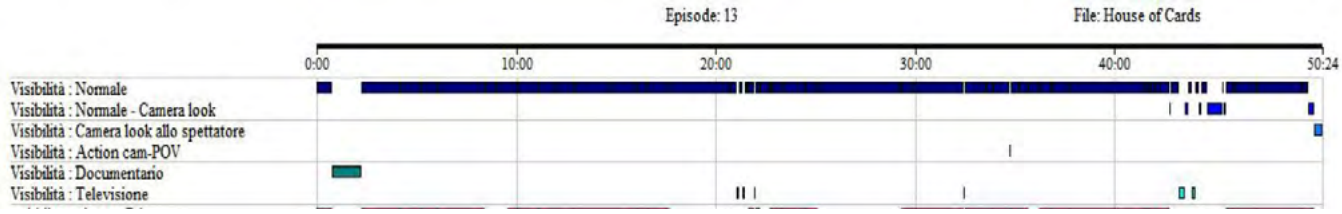

FIGURA 2. *TIMELINE* TRATTA DA TRANSANA CON EVIDENZIATI I FRAME DENOTATI DA DIVERSI REGIMI DI VISIBILITÀ.

Underwood e i terroristi (scena 27) e le riprese in soggettiva dei reparti speciali (scena 29) viste attraverso una *action-cam* indossata da un agente speciale.

La presenza nella stessa puntata di diversi tipi di ripresa, evidenzia la contiguità di questa fiction con la *dieta mediale* dello spettatore: un flusso visivo incessante caratterizzato dalla *rimediazione* (Bolter and Grusin 1999: 73) per cui i media in un continuo rimodellare se stessi incorporano/commentano/ibridano i social media, gli altri generi audiovisivi, altri mass media, strutturando un network che presenta relazioni circolari tra i suoi elementi (attori sociali, personaggi della fiction, rappresentazioni dell'informazione politica, dei nuovi media ecc.). Per il pubblico la pluralità di fonti visive non inficia la continuità filmica, anzi, la differenziazione nella modalità visiva ottenuta tramite questa scelta registica di annidare diverse cornici, metacomunica anche la verosimiglianza della narrazione[18].

Prima di analizzare le modalità visive in accordo con il vocabolario tecnico della fotografia è necessario fare alcune premesse terminologiche. Secondo la teoria dei colori, il concetto di tonalità (chiamata anche tono o tinta) è caratterizzato da un ristretto spettro d'emissione all'interno della luce visibile e da un nome comune (rosso, verde etc.). Nello spazio colore HSB (Hue Saturation Brightness) la tonalità (*hue*) assieme alle altre due coordinate saturazione (*saturation*, ovvero la misura della purezza o dell'intensità di un colore) e l'intensità (*brightness*: la quantità totale di luce percepita) può definire ogni sfumatura di colore.

Tralasciando il tono, e in particolare la scelta convenzionale di usare una dominante colorata fredda in quasi tutte le scene a rappresentare l'autocontrollo e il distacco emotivo dei personaggi, ci siamo concentrati sull'esposizione. Le inquadrature nelle riprese oggettive di *HoC* appaiono nettamente sottoesposte in relazione agli standard televisivi. L'ambientazione è *low key*[19], i personaggi sono lasciati nell'ombra: metaforicamente le loro azioni non sono perfettamente "chiare". Lo spettatore è costretto a sforzarsi di capire, a riempire con la sua immaginazione quello che non appare evidente e, in questo modo, a subire un maggior coinvolgimento (Martinovic 2014).

L'indice di esposizione come marker del fotorealismo diviene particolarmente evidente quando la regia propone la stessa scena nelle due versioni chiara e scura, contrapponendo il punto di vista dei media con quello oggettivo. Ad esempio lo spettatore può confrontare la visione del portavoce del Presidente o quella del terrorista (scene 19, 27) sia con una esposizione "normale" (inquadrature proposte dalle due emittenti CNN e WETW), sia in sottoesposizione (ripresa oggettiva). Nelle immagini che seguono abbiamo contrapposto due inquadrature in sequenza assieme all'istogramma relativo che misura la luminosità dell'immagine[20].

La "ripresa televisiva" (nella modalità di esposizione standard, convenzionalmente corretta secondo i manuali di produzione televisiva e utilizzata correntemente in tutta l'informazione) qui corrisponde a un punto di vista ufficiale (manipolato) dei fatti. Viceversa il frame di "ripresa oggettiva" si distingue per una modalità di sottoesposizione e connota l'evento con "autenticità", "trasparenza", possibilità di vedere i retroscena dell'azione politica. La modalità della saturazione

18 Ci riferiamo a diverse teorie dell'enunciazione che rilevano come questo annidamento di cornici come caso di *débrayage* (distanziamento fra il soggetto dell'enunciazione e il suo enunciato) che crea un effetto di oggettività. Secondo Greimas e Courtés "ogni débrayage interno produce un effetto di referenzializzazione: un discorso di secondo grado, installato all'interno del racconto, dà l'impressione che questo racconto costituisca la «situazione reale» del dialogo" (2007: 70).

19 *Low key* significa letteralmente "tono basso": indica una immagine con una predominanza di toni scuri e con limitate aree chiare. Le ombre divengono un elemento essenziale della fotografia e contribuiscono spesso a definire l'atmosfera dell'intera composizione come "drammatica", tipica dei film noir.

20 L'istogramma è un diagramma che rappresenta la quantità di pixel presenti nell'immagine per ogni tonalità di grigio. È uno strumento per controllare qual è l'esposizione dell'inquadratura: nella sottoesposizione si rileva un maggior parte dei pixel sulla sinistra piuttosto che a destra (sovraesposizione).

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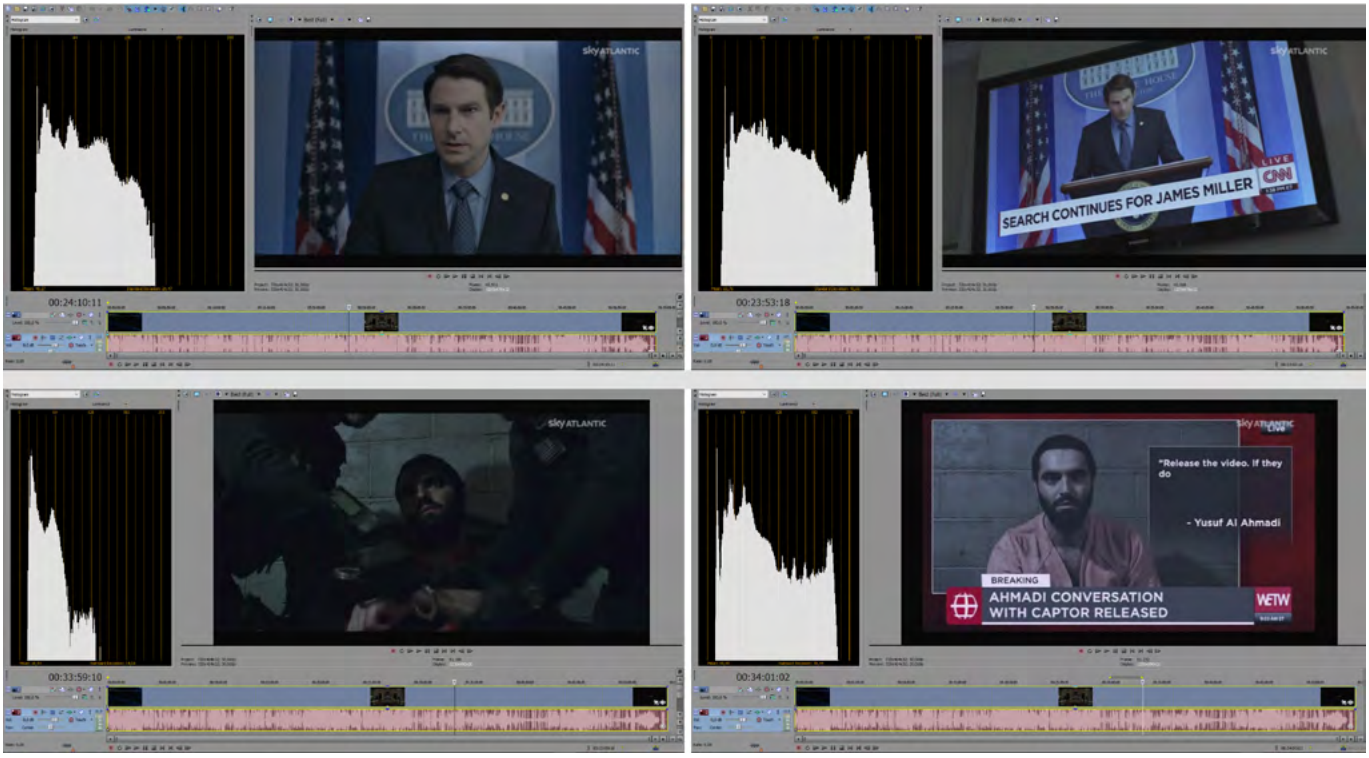

FIGURA 3. COMPARAZIONE DELLE STESSE INQUADRATURE E DEI RELATIVI ISTOGRAMMI CHE MISURANO L'ESPOSIZIONE NEI DIVERSI FRAME DI "RIPRESA OGGETTIVA" E "RIPRESA TELEVISIVA".

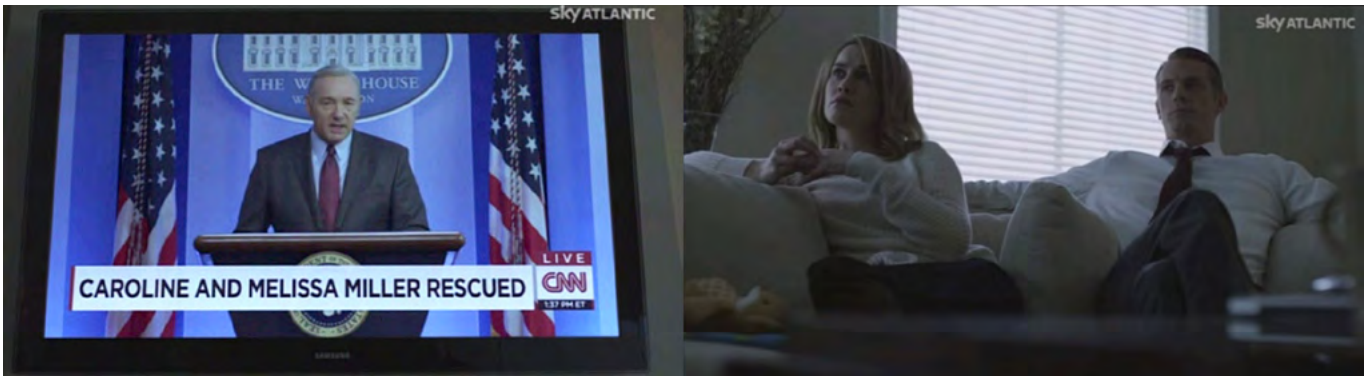

FIGURA 4: LA RICERCA DI VISIBILITÀ DI UNDERWOOD SI EVIDENZIA NELL'ANNUNCIO IN PRIMA PERSONA ALL'EMITTENTE TELEVISIVA CNN LIVE DELLA LIBERAZIONE DI CAROLINA E MELISSA MILLER. NEL CONTROCAMPO L'AVVERSARIO POLITICO E LA MOGLIE COMMENTANO GLI INTRIGHI DELL'AVVENIMENTO.

(la vividezza dei colori) è congruente con l'esposizione: nei frame *low key* si riduce fino quasi al bianco e nero (Figura 4).

In estrema sintesi il testo propone, attraverso la modalità visiva, un ribaltamento nelle convenzioni del fotorealismo mainstream: ciò che si vede bene (poiché offerto allo sguardo della telecamera intradiegetica) è falso, ciò che si vede male (sottoesposto e con colori poco saturi) ha la garanzia di una realtà non mediata. La differenziazione modale non è solo intratestuale, ma anche con il resto del flusso televisivo su cui lo spettatore ha costruito la sua competenza storico-politica (Eugeni 1999).

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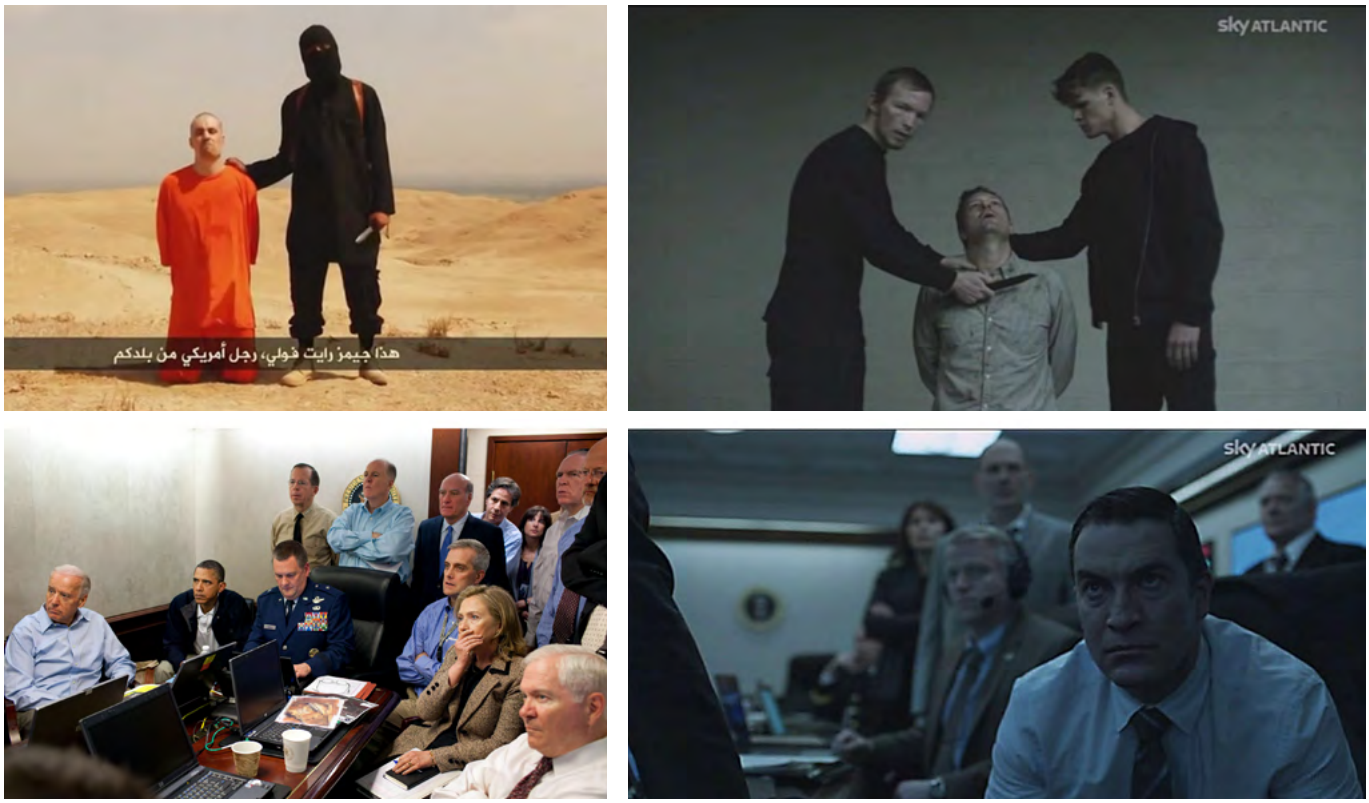

FIGURA 5. CONFRONTI VISUALI TRA CRONACA DELLE NEWS MAINSTREAM E INQUADRATURE OGGETTIVE DI *HOC*.

Nella scena 42 che descrive la morte dell'ostaggio, si riprendono i simboli visuali principali dell'esecuzione del giornalista James Foley (2004), divenuta una macabra icona anche per successive rappresentazioni di decapitazioni. Nella scena 2 viene rappresentata l'amministrazione mentre segue un video con i terroristi. In questo caso il riferimento visuale è a Barack Obama e Hillary Clinton che guardano in diretta la missione contro Bin Laden (2011). In entrambe le scene risulta evidente l'uso delle citazioni iconiche e il metamessaggio operato dai marker del fotorealismo.

5. I MICRO FRAME DEI RAPPORTI INTERPERSONALI TRA PUBBLICO E PRIVATO

Dopo aver analizzato la puntata in relazione al macro e meso frame, questo capitolo approfondirà il tema della rappresentazione visuale nel contesto dei rapporti interpersonali. Il livello *micro* riguarda le interazioni sociali dei personaggi tra loro e con lo spettatore: prenderemo in esame come le strategie della visibilità rendano le azioni e le parole più o meno pubbliche, private o "segrete", ma sempre improntate a regolare il rapporto di potere tra protagonista, personaggi e chi guarda.

Tra le convenzioni visive che modulano il simbolismo dell'autorità, la *salienza* risulta forse la principale. Nell'inquadratura indica il grado di attenzione che un elemento ottiene rispetto agli altri: può essere determinato da fattori come la posizione in primo piano, la dimensione, la sfocatura, il contrasto con sfondo, eccetera. Nella cultura visiva occidentale (e non solo) la posizione centrale di un elemento all'interno del quadro determina quasi sempre la sua salienza (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 194). In *HoC* spesso la composizione prevede il soggetto principale centrato; molte volte gli arredi e i personaggi formano inoltre una simmetria (Martinovic 2014) che accentua l'asse visivo verticale che divide in due l'inquadratura.

Attraverso la composizione centrale simmetrica si costruisce visivamente l'atteggiamento di dominanza del protagonista e la salienza del suo ruolo. Questa modalità visiva caratterizza non solo l'inquadratura televisiva, ma anche il paratesto della copertina della versione in Blu Ray della serie.

Anche la distanza della macchina da presa dai soggetti e la sua fissità sono una cifra caratteristica dello stile di ripresa. Secondo la prossemica (Hall 1964), la distanza che gli interlocu-

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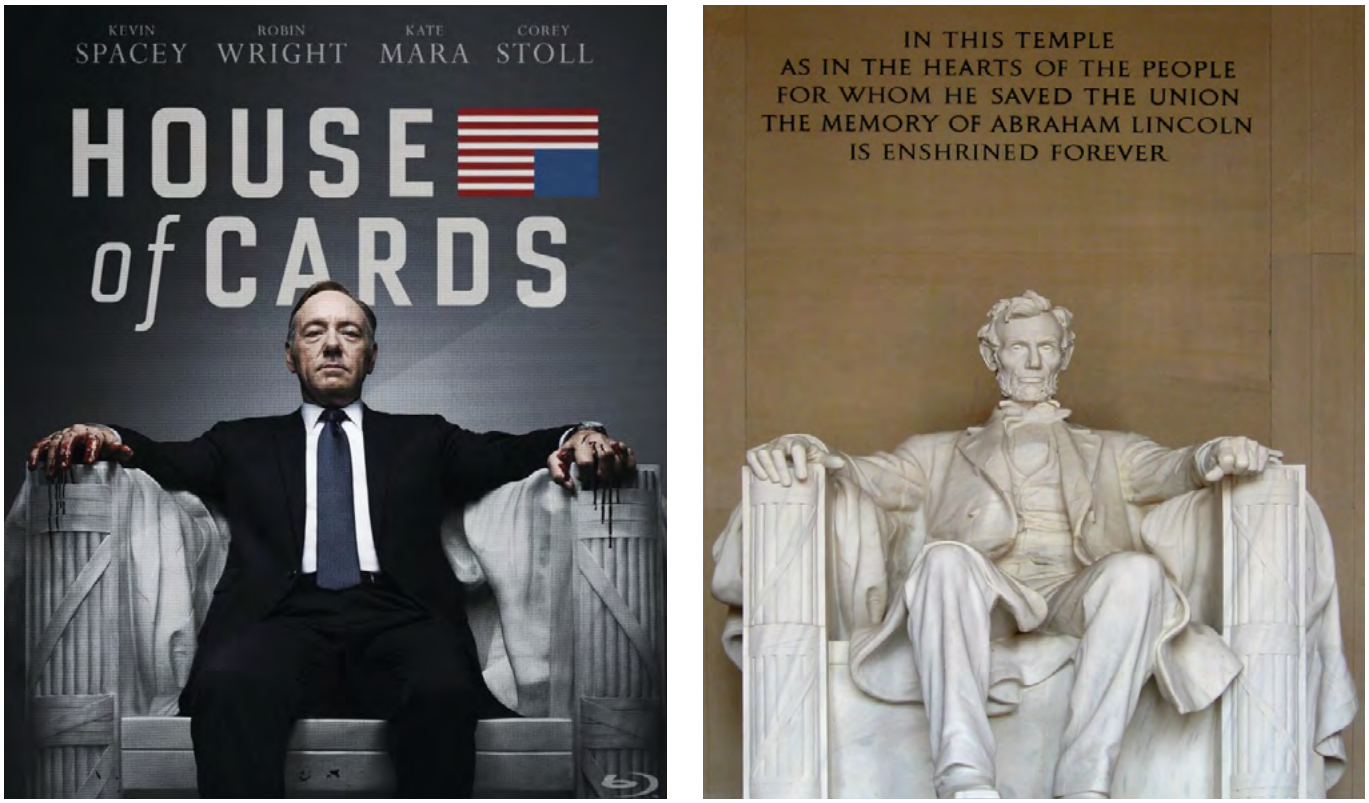

FIGURA 6. COMPARAZIONE DELLE COPERTINA DI *HOC* CON LA FOTO DEL MONUMENTO AD ABRAMO LINCOLN (WASHINGTON D.C.). LA GIUSTAPPOSIZIONE EVIDENZIA IL RIFERIMENTO ICONICO E L'EFFICACIA DELL'ANGOLAZIONE DI RIPRESA CHE SIMULA IL RAPPORTO MONUMENTO – ASTANTE.

tori hanno tra loro contribuisce a definire le relazioni sociali. Se è vero che generalmente i campi lunghi e i totali sono utilizzati per consentire allo spettatore di valutare il contesto in cui si svolge l'azione (a differenza dei piani ravvicinati che permettono di percepire anche nel dettaglio le espressioni degli attori), in questo caso la particolare insistenza nell'uso di inquadrature larghe evoca anche la distanza che il potere richiede ai subalterni. I primi piani sono stati usati con parsimonia, a significare la distanza *sociale* che quei caratteri pretendono (Martinovic 2014): l'intimità si può avere solo in alcuni momenti topici, quando la verità trapela dal personaggio.

Il potere si esprime nella distanza che mette tra sé e gli altri (spettatori inclusi), ma anche nella seduzione che esercita attraverso una benevolente richiesta di affiliazione. Questo effetto si attua attraverso una forma di *embrayage spazio-temporale* (Greimas 2007): il protagonista produce un effetto di ritorno all'istanza di enunciazione interpellando in prima persona il pubblico. Viene evocato, tramite il *camera look*, il simulacro di un nuovo luogo, fuori da quello diegetico; il tempo del racconto si sospende, assieme alle relazioni con gli altri personaggi. Le parole pronunciate da Underwood guardando in macchina sono, dal punto di vista sociosemiotico una *domanda* esplicita di relazione (ovviamente simulata) con noi (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 264). L'interazione viene descritta come una *metafunzione di orientamento:* riguarda la relazione tra i personaggi e lo spettatore ed è regolata dallo sguardo e/o dalla gestualità (Van Leeuwen 2005: 87-122).

Il Presidente (interloquendo a nome dell'enunciatore) mette in pratica una sorta di pedagogia paternalistica e seduttiva. La sua influenza si può esercitare dunque non solo sul piano diegetico, attraverso l'inganno, la sopraffazione o l'omicidio degli antagonisti, ma anche sull'istanza dell'enunciazione attribuendo il ruolo di confidente privilegiato a chi è stato testimone di stratagemmi e crimini[21].

Attraverso questa strategia l'autore propone una forma di perversa seduzione: seguire la serie significa apprezzare,

21 Riportiamo la battuta del primo camera look della serie. Underwood, accanto ad un cane ferito in un incidente, confida: "Momenti simili richiedono qualcuno che agisca e faccia il lavoro spiacevole, la cosa necessaria". Poi, con lo sguardo in camera, uccide il cane.

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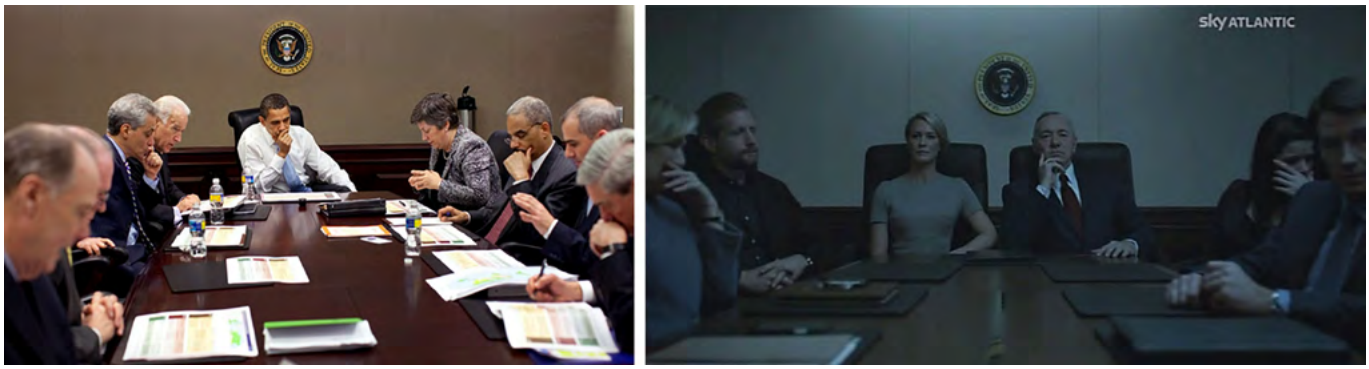

FIGURA 7. CONFRONTO TRA B. OBAMA (2016) E *HOC* SCENA 42.

cinicamente, la sincerità *e* la falsità di Underwood[22]. Lo spettatore, direttamente interpellato, deve disilludersi riguardo l'eticità della politica. Il presupposto per potersi divertire davanti al gioco di intrighi e di doppiezza è usare quella competenza sociale usata nel seguire la narrazione della politica fatta dai media (broadcast e stampa, mainstream e social media) (Cappella and Jamieson 1997) e applicarvi lo stesso cinismo dei personaggi.

L'interpellazione al pubblico è una tecnica espressiva consolidata: diversi autori la hanno usata sia a teatro che al cinema. In *HoC* il modello è Shakespeare, che aveva descritto le conseguenze della sete di potere ad ogni costo e condizione, enfatizzando l'infamia fino a renderla un archetipo in *Macbeth* e *Riccardo III* ed utilizzando l'effetto del *a parte* per spiegare al pubblico gli intrighi e manovre nell'ombra dalla bocca degli stessi protagonisti.

Nell'informazione televisiva lo sguardo in camera è invece una prassi consolidata per anchorman, giornalisti o presentatori che (grazie al loro ruolo) possono rivolgersi direttamente allo spettatore. L'espediente di far parlare direttamente i protagonisti con il pubblico televisivo è una procedura che è presente anche nei *confessionale* dei reality show. Questo è il luogo dove i concorrenti di molti format vengono invitati dal conduttore a rivelare direttamente al pubblico (con uno sguardo in macchina) le proprie simpatie, le strategie di gioco o a fare confidenze "segrete".

Nei *camera look* di *HoC* sembrano esserci tutte queste componenti: prendersi il potere di interpellare direttamente lo spettatore (informazione televisiva) spiegandogli gli intrighi del potere (teatro elisabettiano) e mettendo a nudo valori e sentimenti nascosti (reality).

Un esempio della interrelazione dei frame di diverso livello è rappresentato dall'ultima inquadratura della serie. Qui troviamo Underwood e moglie seduti fianco a fianco nella visione *live* della decapitazione dell'ostaggio da parte dei terroristi.

Lo spettatore può riconoscere (Figura 7) ruoli e ambienti iconici della storia recente (macro frame). Dal punto di vista retorico-visuale, oltre alla simmetria della inquadratura che sottolinea la salienza dell'autorità, la presenza della First Lady che affianca il Presidente (micro frame), segnalando un definitivo cambiamento nella gestione del potere, è un'allegoria della raggiunta parità di genere. Una lunghissima carrellata in avanti avvicina la coppia. In sottofondo i suoni fuoricampo dello sgozzamento e parole in arabo; i consiglieri non abbassano lo sguardo per deferenza o concentrazione nel lavoro (come nelle foto ufficiali), ma per umano disgusto di fronte alla decapitazione in diretta. La coppia presidenziale sostiene impassibilmente lo sguardo nel momento più macabro: la rigidità espressiva e delle postura connotano un potere diventato disumano che si trasforma in un comune camera look.

Lo spettatore sa (meso frame) che la scena non presenta dissimulazioni, in quanto è una ripresa oggettiva sottoesposta (non mediata dai broadcast). Underwood lo interpella (micro frame) direttamente: "Esatto! Noi non subiamo il terrore". Dopo una pausa e un reciproco sguardo di intesa con la moglie, Underwood scandisce "Noi creiamo il terrore". Con questa metonimia, una sorta di trailer della stagione successiva con l'anticipazione delle azioni e iniziative politiche immorali che la coppia metterà in atto, si conclude la puntata e la stagione.

6. **CONCLUSIONI**

La funzione dei frame è (marcando un insieme di segni) far comprendere che ciò che avverrà segue una serie di conven-

22 Frank lo ammette sfrontatamente "Pensi che io sia un ipocrita? Be', dovresti".

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zioni proprie di quel contesto; poiché riguardano la conoscenza della dimensione sociale, attivano nello spettatore la sua competenza come esperto della convenzione relativa (Van Leeuwen 2005). Tutte le competenze sociali che si riferiscono alla conoscenza della politica, alle strategie di rappresentazione pubblica/privata del potere e alla comprensione dei diversi piani relazionali (intra ed extradiegetici) devono essere messe in opera per poter apprezzare lo spettacolo.

La relazione tra i diversi livelli di frame si può definire gerarchica dal punto di vista funzionale. L'utilizzo di precisi riferimenti storici e geopolitici (macro frame) per far accreditare questa serie come congruente iconicamente e tematicamente con la cronaca è il prerequisito per rendere più verosimili anche gli elementi fictionali che creano la trama. Per capire il gioco (tra apparenza e realtà) della politica e il ruolo dei media nell'esibire, manipolare o svelare (meso frame) quegli eventi lo spettatore deve saper contestualizzare le diverse versioni, accreditando ad esempio la modalità *low key* e sottosaturazione come marker di ripresa oggettiva e relegando, viceversa il fotorealismo classico ad esibizione dell'inautentico. Infine, per giudicare come quelle versioni assumano forme e gradi di credibilità diversi, deve inquadrarle nelle specifiche relazioni interpersonali di potere (essenzialmente manipolatorie) che i personaggi sviluppano nella trama e con noi (micro livello).

Questa topologia gerarchia di frame (che ricordo valida soprattutto per la posizione e dimensione del fenomeno nell'ambito sociale), non coincide però con le unità di analisi (inquadratura, scena, sequenza ecc.) in quanto si evidenziano frame molteplici ed intersecantisi (Goffman 1974: 25, Vliegenthart and Van Zoonen 2011).

Il potere del protagonista di *HoC*, che non è solo politico, ma si esplica anche nelle relazioni con gli altri personaggi, nell'autorità di esibire o nascondere, nell'influenzare direttamente il pubblico, trova nell'ultima inquadratura della serie la sintesi finale. L'interpellazione pedagogica "Esatto!" è un prestigioso plauso al pubblico per aver acquisito una nuova competenza socio politica.

HoC ci guida e ci fuorvia nella relatività di ciò che appare, giustapponendo frammenti connotati come "storici", con versioni costruite ad uso dei media, con il gioco di simulazione e disvelamento dei personaggi. Il patto comunicativo con lo spettatore si base su una ricompensa che va oltre la il piacere generico di assistere alla fiction. Si fa appello al suo ruolo come membro di una società in cui c'è un crescente e diffuso senso di impotenza di fronte alle *fake news*, alla *post verità*, alla diffusione delle *conspiracy theory* nella fiction e nei documentari (Arnold 2008: 2589) entrate prepotentemente nella cultura popolare (Birchall 2011: 2590) e nell'immaginario politico.

Se il senso di impotenza del cittadino nei confronti della politica (che neanche il quarto potere più controlla) può essere mitigato dalla soddisfazione di poter conoscere come "realmente" stanno le cose nelle segrete stanze del potere, allora il *cattivo maestro* Underwood ha buon gioco a riassumere, attraverso istruttivi aforismi, la logica delle sue azioni eticamente riprovevoli. E l'apprendimento più sostanziale è la conferma dell'ineluttabilità del cinismo per distinguere, non solo nella serie, a cosa credere. Era lo stesso protagonista ad aver già avvertito direttamente il pubblico: "Noi siamo niente di più che quello che decidiamo di rivelare". Il confidare sinceramente allo spettatore questa condizione di sostanziale ambiguità crea un messaggio disorientante (simile al paradosso del mentitore di Epimenide), ma anche un invito, per chi vuole svelare i meccanismi del potere, a distinguere tra diversi regimi di visibilità e gradi di credibilità.

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TELEVISION SERIES: INVENTORY OF RESEARCH IN FRANCE

BARBARA LABORDE

Name Barbara Laborde
Academic centre Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3, France
E-mail address barbara.laborde@univ-paris3.fr

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TV series; French academic research; academic disciplines.

ABSTRACT
The aim of this article is to propose an inventory of French academic research on TV series. Apart from the main publications (book, articles) of academics considered to be the most productive in this field in France, it draw on current or recently completed doctoral research in France. The TV series allow for a multidisciplinary discourse that can become a fruitful interdisciplinary discourse, provided that it is conceived of as such, opening new crossing and

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This article provides an inventory of French academic research on TV series. Apart from the main publications (book and articles) of academics considered to be the most productive in this field in France, I draw on current or recently completed doctoral research in France, found on the website thèses.fr[1]. This study follows the panoramic work of Séverine Barthes during the "Premières Rencontres Universitaires des Séries Télévisées" in Paris, August 2004 (Barthes 2004). Since 2004, there has been a considerable increase in research on TV series that confirms some of Barthes's conclusion but also forms points of contrast with others.

The list of articles, books and theses gathered in this article presents a broad panel of research on TV series, in various disciplines and in doctoral schools offering qualifications that meet the criteria of the CNU in France to which the academic researcher is affiliated[2]. TV series were for a long time associated with media or television studies rather than with film studies, and so initially were not subject to aesthetic approaches more associated with the academic study of cinema. This spared them the domination (even the monopoly) of a formalist and possibly decontextualized methodology, as well as classification—in this case perilous—in the Art category. TV series therefore opened the way more easily to multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary approaches, which also proved to have their own pitfalls. In view of the multiplicity of disciplines, theories, methods, and terminologies used around the "TV series" corpus[3], in the limited scope of this article I propose an essentially heuristic typology. This I base on the (very French) categorization of the CNU, from Aesthetics (18th Section) to Sociology (19th Section), through Information and Communication Science (71st Section), History (22nd Section), Language and Literature (mainly English-language and French, 9th and 11th sections, respectively), to mention but the most heavily represented categories. Given the most recent academic research, the classification used in some universities to differentiate the "Arts, Literature and Languages" faculties from the "Social and Human Sciences" faculties highlights the theoretical divide in the analysis of TV series, one that is problematic to varying degrees. This interdisciplinarity points out what Séverine Barthes has already underlined: even the concept of "series TV" can be problematic. In a study of representations conveyed by TV, should the series that are used as an example be considered as products of the media? Is the research about this specific TV format? About a narrative content? About an aesthetic form?

1. REPRESENTATIONS, IDEOLOGIES, SYMPTOMS AND REFLECTIONS: THE POSITION OF THE SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES, BETWEEN TEXT AND CONTEXT

Despite the academy's many years of legitimist contempt for television, there has been a proliferation of research on TV series in the last two decades, as Jean-Pierre Esquenazi pointed out (Esquenazi 2009). My aim here is not to analyse this development as such, but rather to show what each discipline with the social and human sciences has done with the corpus of television series they have approached, and with which theoretical tools.

Overall, when it comes to the Social and Human Sciences, TV series are a subject of reflection on representations and their negotiation, which relates to the different actors of their production, dissemination and reception. Dialogue has been initiated between Sociology and the Information and Communication Sciences (ICS), which has generated cross-pollination as well as theoretical and methodological divergences.

The circulation of representations in audiovisual contents are at the centre of theories focusing on the public and on usage. From the appearance of the notion of *sériphilia* (Glevarec 2012, Béliard 2014) in the theoretical and critical lexicon, the question of the uses and practices of TV series has been studied in both Sociology and ICS. Reflection on the domestic use of series—which are not consumed in the darkness of cinemas—justifies a sociological approach (Combes 2013), for TV series attest to a change of paradigm in the sociology of cultural publics and practices. Their current vitality seems to confirm the eclecticism of scholarly and popular cultures, rather than the distinction between them. TV series thus enable us to hone the study of current cultural practices and any "dissonances" they may have (Lahire 2004). Quite a few social science theses have therefore involved a reception study on audiences and their behaviours, involving sociological interviews. The proliferation of discourses on the Internet also calls into question the methods of investigation into audiences and their activities. A certain sociology

1 77 PhDs are now counting returning results « séries télévisées » on website *thèses.f* : http://www.theses.fr/, last connexion on 2 January 2016

2 In France, all PhDs, after being sustained, have to be evaluated and « qualified » by the CNU in order for its author to be recruted by a university as an assistant professor.

3 I mean by the term « corpus » the body of television series explored by academic research.

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of cultural practices thus defends the possibility of using online interaction as a place of social exchange. For research, the Internet has facilitated the multiplication of analyses of online comments written by amateurs or fans, all of which are discursive sources, in addition to the social sciences' and humanities' interview methods — even though Sociology still has difficulty sometimes in defending this type of discourse analysis from a methodological point of view (Levaratto and Léontsini 2012). The proximity—and differences—with the approach in terms of cultural history will be more developed in the final section of this article.

Sociology of media has thus yielded the seminal work of Sabine Chalvon-Demersay who, in the screenplays written for France 2, identified the "fragments of a common culture" (Chalvon-Demersay 1994) that reveal a crisis of the social bonds. Her long survey on *Urgences* (*Emergency Room*) (Chalvon-Demersay 1999 and 2000) is still an anchoring point for current research. The question of the character and "moral sensitivities" (the ethic understanding of the characters) justified her sociological reading of the characters in TV series, thus opening the way to reflection on the "particular merging between the character and the actor" to which they give rise. That work on the nature of fictional characters in literature (Jouve 2008) is employed alongside the literature on stars in film and television.

In the wake of Chalvon-Demersay's work, some studies have combined the sociology of occupations with the sociology of work, from a point of view that links social studies to media policies (Mille 2013, Legagneur 2014). The approach can match up with ICS when the study concerns certain discourses and practices of interpretive communities (Doury 2011) and the various readings they imply — including divergent or oppositional ones. The question of the place given to contexts and conjunctures in the analyses is therefore crucial (Chambat-Houillon 2012).

Focusing on the analysis of the text, its reception, dissemination, and programming strategies may also mean entering into the field of economics and/or marketing. Where TV series are concerned, the economics of media can be based on the question of transmedia and/or multimedia, of "intermediality" (Smyrnaios and Vovou 2008), considered not only as a form of narrative but also as a commercial strategy of the culture industries (Bourdaa 2009, in a more economic approach Laurichesse 2011) or as a modality of reception (Boni 2011a, 2011b and 2017). These types of socio-economic or socio-technical approaches are represented mainly in ICS. The necessary contextualization of TV series as for-profit audiovisual productions serves as a common objective for reflection on representations. The idea is to go further than the study of the text, to place the TV series in its economic, political and discursive context (Sepulchre 2011). Transmedia can so be taken as an "extended world" that could be mapped (Boni 2017) as imaginary universes, often recognisable as brands by fans and cultural industries.

Serial form can itself be seen as the consequence of socio-economic constraints embodied in a cultural history. The role of the "format" or the "formula" in serial narrative construction (Esquenazi 2011) – terms inherited from Rick Altman's genre theory, and often linked to the literary serial – is thus raised and addressed in relation to a particular work's historical, cultural and economic context. From this perspective, Esquenazi draws on a strong interdisciplinarity, including generic reflections or formalist and narratological analyses to determine an "aesthetic project". At the interface between sociology and ICS, several standpoints can thus be identified: from the most severe—the TV series as an "ideological project" without "a credible social project" (Buxton 2011)—to the most nuanced: the TV series as the outcome of an "economic and cultural agreement" (Esquenazi 2013), or as a "symptom" (Jost 2011). It bears "traces", according to Maigret, or, for Éric Macé, "media imaginaries" (Macé 2006). The approaches can vary: socio-economic, historical, format analysis from Buxton's point of view; qualitative inquiry, socio-history, and socio-critical perspective from Esquenazi's; sociology of media, cultural studies, gender studies and discourse analysis from Maigret's (Maigret 2007); and semiology of image and narratology, from Jost's. From these perspectives, the hypothesis of a "common imaginary" identifiable in media audiovisual discourses is more or less associated with sociological inquiry on reception.

The approaches therefore tend either towards the study of the context of the enunciation (the characteristics of the actors of production[4]), its semantic characteristics (the presence of generic and discursive codes), its reception (sometimes from an ethnographic perspective of participant observation [Shih], or by the analysis of online comments), or else an analysis of discourse as it prevails in and outside of the text. For example, Mélanie Bourdaa (from 71st section) crosses gender and fan studies with a a cultural studies approach (Bourdaa 2017).

4 Such as: «Les mines de sel : auteurs et scénaristes de télévision», Dominique Pasquier and Sabine Chalvon-Demersay, in *Sociologie du Travail , Vol. 35, No. 4 (octobre 1993), pp. 409-430*

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Discourse analysis considers discourse as the "reflection" that is a "symptom" of reality, whereas discourse in discourse analysis of Foucauldian inspiration is *reality itself*. Éric Maigret and the PhD students working under his supervision use, more than lexical studies, a discourse analysis inherited from Michel Foucault. From this approach, they study the context and content of discourse and seek to identify therein multiple re-negotiations of identifiable representations in the TV series. These are then taken to manifest the states of a social space, which may be conflictual or hegemonic (Morin 2014, Lécossais 2015 Lallet 2017). In the sociological dynamic, the TV series is logically set in a corpus of adjacent TV programmes, sometimes completed by interviews, to identify the dominant representations. This is how Éric Macé employs this approach when he examines the "effects of ethno-racialization in television programmes", to which fiction series contribute. More recently in his research, *Homeland* serves as a tool for "a heuristic critique of post-2001 wars". Here, discourse and content analysis are based on a sociological inquiry into the agents of the series' production (Macé 2009).

These cultural approaches take into account, to varying degrees, the particularities of television enunciation, and the economic conditions of series production and broadcasting in the complex context of cultural industries. This is undertaken in within a framework of sociological or communicational theories that are contextualized to a greater or lesser degree. The methods of investigation differ however: reception studies confirm or propose new theoretical hypotheses. The semiology of media and images thus propose categorizations (Jost 2016) that imply unified representations based on what a semantic analysis of content allows. Narratological and enunciatory figures of the reader/spectator and the narrator/author are articulated differently, depending on the theory. The impression that the TV series "talks to us" reinforces the "power of series" (Esquenazi 2013). Esquenazi sees "immersion" as spreading out from theories of fiction, mainly with reference to the works of Jean-Marie Schaeffer and Arthur Danto[51]. The "empathy" for the characters, described by François Jost, is based on the rigorous study of enunciation and narration (Jost 1992), and on his theory of television genres and the different "mimetic modes" and "promises" of "proximity" to which they give rise (Jost 2001). Jost discusses the Genetian model of narratology in a communicational schema based on cognition and other theories. He looks, *inter alia*, at the as yet largely unexplored field of web series, starting from an analysis of their situation of enunciation (Jost 2014).

Finding a balance between the analysis of text in an aesthetic point of view and that of context is clearly a task for all who study TV series. Coming from the ICS section, Stéphane Benassi's work (Benassi 2000, 2009, 2010) can be considered among the first to work on formula and seriality in aesthetic terms, considering the aesthetic as a sensible experience in a global interaction with fiction and TV seriality as an experience of fiction.

For his pragmatics of television seriality, Guillaume Soulez proposes a "genesic" model of reading that transcends interest in serial repetition as the only narrative pleasure (generic reading related to the pleasure of recognizing a genre), to evoke an "interpretive opening" "in the terms of a productive or even creative repetition" (Soulez 2011a). The spectator implements his or her reception in a "deliberative" reading (Soulez 2011b), between meta-psychology (seeking to solve the mystery of the fantasy character), meta-poetics (understanding the narrative codes and their transgressions), and the link with a social and political world on which the TV series has an impact. Some research that he supervises in cinema and audiovisual studies thus seeks to connect approaches from narratology and cultural studies (Breda 2015[6], who defends a "narratology of connexion" that addresses the issue of socio-cultural bonds and community) — a sign of the overlap between aesthetics and ICS in the field of film studies.

The difference between ICS and aesthetics also concerns the place given to a formalist reading of the audiovisual *mise en scène* according to sometimes more aesthetic approaches of the serial narrative and of its textual or inter-textual "processes". It is not possible within the scope of this article to distinguish between the shares of formal, structural or semiological invariants on which these theories agree or not when they study TV series (for exemple, Buxton clearly refuses cultural studies, which Maigret defends). I will simply note that the studies are carried out in a perpetual continuum between sociology — which includes diverse approaches and methods — semiology, narratology, pragmatics and semio-pragmatics, oriented towards discourse Analysis or content analysis. I would agree with Roger Odin that "theories, in themselves, can be contradictory; they are taken here for the questions they raise" (Odin 2007: 22).

5 Mainly referring to Jean-Marie Schaeffer and Arthur Danto

6 She defends a «narratology of connexion» that addresses the issue of socio-cultural bonds and community.

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2. **CINEMA STUDIES, AT THE INTERFACE OF VARIOUS DISCIPLINES**

"Cinema and audiovisual" PhD theses pay close attention to the specific features of audiovisual forms: the context, the editing, the sound/image connection, or the genres (Mathieu-Jacques 2016), without excluding the question of reception (Engammare, who combines a semio-pragmatic approach with ethnography[7]). An overlap with cultural approaches is easily identified: at Bordeaux Montaigne University, Geneviève Sellier, a specialist in gender studies, affiliated with the 18th Section, has written many articles on a corpus of French TV series (Sellier2004, 2007). These are characterized by reflection on gendered and sexual representations, with content and discourse analysis applied to the study of gender and class relations. Sellier sometimes collaborates with her colleague Pierre Beylot, a specialist in fiction narrative (Guillot), who is situated at the interface between the Science of Art, the Humanities, and ICS. Also at Bordeaux Montaigne, the young journal *Genre en série*[8] – co-edited by Gwenaëlle Le Gras (in film studies) and Laetitia Biscarrat (in ICT) – has a basis in "media and audiovisual studies" oriented towards gender studies and cultural studies, and raises questions relevant to TV series, between aesthetics and communication. The subjects of PhD theses in film studies reveal the interdisciplinarity used by researchers in "Cinema and Audiovisual" to reflect on TV series; their approaches sit between narratology, poetic reading, and contextual perspectives (Favard2015, who develops a theory of the denouement in a production context where the end is not always provided[9]). These overlaps reflect the use of critical tools from from sociology (studies of fans' usage), transmedia theories (with Jenkins and others), literature, and from work that considers the issue of fictional worlds (Boni 2011, 2017); the use of narratology is sometimes further nuanced by the pursuit of ethnographic inquiry (Arbogast).

It should also be noted that while film studies' increasing theoretical and epistemological interest in TV series has generally been a progressive move, it has in some instances been shaped by a process of legitimization, by which some television is elevated in value as it comes to more closely resemble cinema. The *Forum des images* "Série Mania" festival comes to mind[10], as do the headlines and special files of the *Cahiers du Cinéma*[11] which are accompanied by many critical publications outside of the academic sphere (Winkler et Petit 1999).

3. **ART, LITERATURE, LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATION — THE ALL POSTURE**

From the point of view of Art, Literature, and Languages (ALL), the study of serial narrative is anchored to a number of PhD theses in languages and literature. Generic or narratological analyses are included in theses that are, moreover, not recent (Le Guern 1995). The particularities of serial narrative, the development of its temporality and of continuity, and its "intermedial" nature (Bataille et Cabaret 2013), motivate literary studies to explore the discursive origins of seriality, that is, in repetitive literature (tales in the oral tradition, serialized novels) and especially popular literature, as Umberto Eco did from a structuralist perspective (Eco 1997). Television series are then analysed, sometimes from a semiological perspective, as a contemporary modality of the serial narrative, without foregoing contributions from narratology nor the socio-cultural approach sometimes common to ICS.

The question of representations also marks research in languages, where TV series are envisaged as a cultural object. English departments in universities have based analyses of English-speaking societies on TV series. The strength of these analyses lies precisely in a very sound knowledge of these native cultural spaces, which enables us to understand better certain cultural aspects that are not necessarily apparent to European audiences. In English and North American literature studies, content analysis is based on different terminologies: the word "symptom" is less uses than the word "mirror". (Fouilleul), and there is a question of studying in particular TV series, the "visibility" of the "phenomena" and the "construction of representations" (Lemoine 2013) running through the society represented in the series (Marcucci 2012). While such studies are not isolated to English departments alone (Rose), they are represented on a larger scale. While the terminology used is not the same as that of ICS and of sociology, it converges, via different methods, towards the study of representations and thus towards the analysis of

7 Engammare combines a semio-pragmatic approach with ethnography.

8 Revue en ligne: http://genreenseries.weebly.com/agrave-propos.html

9 Favard develops a theory of the denouement in a production context where the end is not always provided

10 *Forum des images*: series of screenings and lectures as part of the «Series mania» event

11 «Séries: une passion américaine», **July-August 2010 - n°658,** http://www.cahiersducinema.com/Juillet-aout-2010-no658.html

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discourse and content. The inadequacy of terminologies leads certain researchers to specify their approach using compound words such as Aurélie Blot's "semio-sociocultural perspective" (Blot 2011).

Research can be done on a corpus formed for comparative purposes, which was the starting point of Sarah Hatchuel's work[12] between English literature and TV series (Pauchet), or through the lens of a narrative problematic such as reflexivity, meta-textual, or hyper-serial (Hatchuel 2012), or through thematic and/or inter-textual analyses of diegetic content, which also often take character analysis as a base. These characters as "paper beings" and their narrative and symbolic functions thus bring together diverse approaches while differentiating them. Although audiovisual analysis is not neglected, the formalist study of links between images and sounds is sometimes less informed than in film studies. The specific characteristic of audiovisual writing thus appears, in the worst cases, to be reduced to its ability to illustrate civilization-related themes. The implications of such disciplinary turns are therefore also methodological: can one talk of an American TV series without being American? Everything depends once again on the approach: a more text-centred approach that posits the universalism of forms will have fewer implicit cultural references that non-Anglophones would tend to miss, while a more communicational or civilization-centered approach will emphasize cultural particularities more strongly (Le Fèvre-Berthelot). Before Hatchuel, Barbara Villez – director of the "réseaux S.E.R.I.E.S." (Scholars Exchanging and Researching on International Entertainment Series), and author of *Séries télé: visions de la justice* (Villez 2005) – was an example of this kind of approach, mixing an American background, her field (issue of Justice), and questions of representations and informal education through television.

Many theses which, at the time of writing, are currently underway fall within the field of language science and language didactics, even linguistics. The dialogue on form and content therefore persists between literary studies and language studies. Séverine Barthes' PhD thesis in French language is particularly representative in this regard, defending a "rhetoric and semio-stylistic rhetoric" perspective (Barthes 2010). While these studies remain in the minority, in such approaches TV series are an ideal object to illustrate certain aspects of language (Kossi Seto Yibokou). Due to the massive diffusion of TV series they provide fertile ground for exploring language practices and their evolution.

4. MORE MARGINAL DISCIPLINES, IN OR OUT OF THE ACADEMIC CONTEXT

Some disciplines are represented more marginally, whereas they could very legitimately cover some series. For example, whereas animation TV series abound, I have found no PhD thesis on animated television series in the applied or fine arts, even though a few theses on animated films have commenced (Pailler 2016). Every discipline delimits its field as well as its centres of interest.

A contrary example would be the fascination that some TV series have incited in philosophy, in and beyond the academic sphere (for example, among others, see: de Saint-Maurice 2010, Colonna 2015). Laurent Jullier and I, who are not philosophers, analysed *Grey's Anatomy* from the angle of social philosophy and the "ethics of care" (Jullier et Laborde 2012). Our perspective was interdisciplinary since the book aimed to show that care is present at three levels in *Grey's Anatomy*, each of which calls for analysis from a different disciplinary perspective: in the narrative events (narratological approach); the staging or stylistic presentation (formalist approach); and in the fans' comments (pragmatic approach). However, only a few philosophy theses in the online index these.fr address TV series. Hugo Clémot's research is a noteworthy exception; based on the work of both Noël Carroll and Stanley Cavell, amongst others, Clémot argues for the relevance of a "philosophy of cinema", and particularly of TV series (Clémot 2011). Yet these practices are flourishing in the USA[13]: Philosophy as a discipline can use the TV series as a corpus to illustrate an idea or concept, and/or philosophy will appear as a heuristic tool for the understanding of TV series. In the French academic paradigm, they nevertheless seem to be carefully solicited: it is publications for the general public that have to a large extent taken over these possible overlaps of TV series with philosophical reflections. These differences also reflect the particular academic contexts that have developed in France and the USA.

Even marginally, unexpected disciplines such as computer science can study TV series and, for example, their "multimodal" structure (Ercolessi 2013). This attests to a fact with which I would like to end this (necessarily partial) review of the main

12 See the academic works of Sarah Hatchuel : http://www.series.cnrs.fr/spip.php?article17. She leads ambitious research projects around the Université du Havre with other colleagues in different disciplines such as Shannon Wells-Lassagne for exemple who links TV series and literature. The online review TV/series is one of the results of this research group : https://tvseries.revues.org/ .

13 See: http://www.opencourtbooks.com/categories/pcp.htm

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French research on TV series. The current development of series's studies, the taste and the affection that they generate, are probably conjunctural, and it is logical that they give rise to interdisciplinary contributions. Different implications of this corpus for the discipline envisaged confirm the distribution of objects according to disciplines. While ultimately "film studies" does not seem dominant in the theses selected, it is probably because, even though the body of television series provides narrative or narratological originality, it does not provide any real theoretical novelty, in so far as cinema and audiovisual are themselves also objects rather than a discipline. In this framework, TV series have simply opened onto another object, which is characterized mainly by its plethoric nature. This "new" corpus has nevertheless had the advantage of compelling the advocates of highly formalist approaches to focus more on matters of reception—insofar as the texts themselves are often influenced by what the spectators say about them—and production, since the very existence of the TV series clearly depends on the economic constraints linked to the diverse modalities of its broad dissemination.

5. THE VICTORY OF INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND NEW DISCIPLINARY BOUNDARIES.

Finally, everything depends on "where one is talking from". This comment could be made in regard to history, a discipline where some theses see TV series as objects of study. The question is perhaps as much methodological as cultural. Based on the question of *representations* of history (Boutet 2017), academic research in contemporary history seem to be reluctant to take the epistemological risk of working on this very recent corpus, except with the prospect of an overlap between the study of history and contemporary civilization, between history and sociology, such as the approach proposed by certain academic of the École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS)[14]. A very fecund approach in this case is certainly the cultural and/or social history approach, which is not limited to the theory of the reflection of reality or theory of the effects of context (Ahn). As it can be done in the ICS approach but with other methodological tools (including the use of archives), the historical approach underlines the links between forms and representations in a historical perspective of the societies in which TV is situated as a medium. Isabelle Veyrat-Masson should be mentioned here, as one of the first historians who studies TV Series (Veyrat-Masson 1989, 2008). A media historian, Veyrat-Masson built a link between a historical point of view on the media and an approach drawing on information and communication sciences. These kinds of interdisciplinary approaches can be further taken up in order to reinforce them.

In the historical field, questions can cross cultural, social and discursive analyses. The work of Sébastien Ledoux on *Un village français* around the french notion of "devoir de mémoire" can be cited[15]. As well, work by historians on the representation of the the Dark Ages in *Game of Thrones* (Besson, Kikuchi et Troadec 2015) is an example of scholars working across cultural history and sociology. TV series are specially suitable for this kind of interdisciplinary crossbreeding.

With a different corpus, the works of certain academics such as Jean-Marie Schaeffer or Raphael Baroni (Baroni 2007) – rethinking aesthetic and narratology or semiology – open rich perspectives, resolutely crossing disciplinary fields: philosophy, sociology, anthropology, art theory, linguistics, psychology, and cognition (Goudmand 2016[16]; the author is currently is working on a theses called *Sérialité et fictionalité: pour une poétique du récit sériel*). Moreover, this kind of "piecemeal theory" (Bordwell and Caroll1996) can also extend questions of intermediality, even within the disciplines already quoted. For example, the intermedial aspect cannot be reduced to the links between film studies and researches on the audiovisual. From a historical point of view, the links with the uses of radio explored by Glevarec (Glevarec 2017) are relevant, as well as the new opportunities offered to older media by the Internet[17]. Rethinking seriality, fiction, the poetics of the serial from a transmedial and interdisciplinary point of view allows better understanding of the transformations and novelty embodied in social reality (Mille 2016).

CONCLUSION

Studying TV series through the lens of the different disciplinary approaches outlined above is ultimately very natural: the popular origins of television series, designed to please

14 Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales

15 Analyse de la série télévisée «Un village français» dans le cadre du projet ANR Epistémè (2014-2017). Edition « Les controverses d'Un village français », Mediapart https://blogs.mediapart.fr/edition/les-controverses-d-un-village-francais

16 She is working on a theses called: «Sérialité et fictionalité: pour une poétique du récit sériel.»

17 See the last numbers of the review *Télévision* or *Sociétés et Représentations*

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the masses, have been largely designed in ways that enable the plasticity of the approaches and the meanings produced. Whatever coherence emerges from the categorization proposed in this article, it should not mask the many tensions between disciplines: the particular narrative mode, the serial characters, and the representations and uses to which the TV series attest, appear as nodal points, irrespective of any particular approach being used or drawn upon.

The mass media or "media-culture" dimension of TV series (Maigret et Macé 2005), and the plurality of forms, formats and types of scenario that they stage, also explain why they have escaped from the very French paradigm of the divorce between cinema and media that I mentioned in the introduction to this essay. They therefore allow for a multidisciplinary discourse—and that is not the least of their virtues—that can become a fruitful interdisciplinary discourse, provided that it is conceived of as such, opening new crossings and boundaries between disciplines.

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UN VILLAGE FRANÇAIS. A FRENCH AUTEUR(S) SERIES ON A PUBLIC NETWORK

MARJOLAINE BOUTET

Name Marjolaine Boutet
Academic centre Université de Picardie Jules Verne, France
E-mail address marjolaine.boutet@u-picardie.fr

KEYWORDS

France; public network; auteur series; production; writing process; television directing; history; economy.

ABSTRACT

This article is a case study of the French TV series *Un Village français*, broadcast on France 3 from 2009 to 2017. Based on interviews and observations of the cast and crew members, it attempts to unravel the relationships between writers, producers, directors and broadcasters within the French television industry. First, some particularities of television production in France are briefly addressed. These include: the limited number of channels commissioning original TV series; the still unestablished concept and professional practice of showrunners and the lack of an industrialized process in creating televised serial narratives; and the dominant status of directors, which contributes to the weakened position of TV writers within this economy. The focus of the article is then the pre-broadcast history of the series, from the early stages of its conception to the later stages of its production. *Un Village français* is indeed created by an a-typical trio of executive co-producers: a producer (Emmanuel Daucé), a writer (Frédéric Krivine) and a director (Philippe Triboit), championed by a non-executive head producer (Jean-François Boyer). Eventually winning over reluctant channel executives, their stubbornness and ambition was rewarded by prime-time airings on a public channel of what is now widely regarded like a show bearing the marks of authorship. The aim is to understand the creative and economic processes at stake, and their impact on the narrative.

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Unlike their counterparts from the US, French TV series are not the heavily marketed products of a billion-dollar industry, but the offspring of a few craftsmen hired by a handful of public and private TV channels[1] (Boutet 2014). The economic fabric of French television is closer to a proto-industrial loom, with a limited number of patrons commissioning specific pieces to craftsmen, rather than an industrial marketplace where competition rules over makers and buyers alike. According to Pierre Zemniak, this situation is unique in Western Europe. France produces the fewest hours of original scripted fiction (897 hours in 2015 against 1,200 in the United Kingdom and 1,800 in Germany), while series imported to France from the U.S. consistently gain more viewers than any domestically produced shows from 2007 to 2014 (Zemniak 2017: 10; 125).

The relative unpopularity of French TV series – while American, British, Danish and Israeli ones are eagerly bought, broadcast, gauged and discussed – can partly be explained by the fact that this artisanal economy produces mostly TV movies, miniseries and procedurals. That is, the domestic French industry concentrates on the production of self-contained stories, making few multi-season serialized narratives that require the cooperation and long-term involvement of several 'craftsmen', and which engage the viewer in a long-term relationship with fictional characters (Doury 2011: 171-172). The broadcasters' strategy is all the harder to comprehend since season-based narratives with several dozens of episodes are easier to sell internationally (Kirschbacher and Stollfuss 2015: 25-26) and thus are of interest to a growing number of producers. Yet French TV channels pay for 80 per cent of the production of TV fictions and were until 2016 forbidden by law to own producing shares or sales rights, which inclined them to prioritise short-term profitability over the financial risks of long-term investment in ongoing series (Zemniak 2017: 128-30).

Over the last two decades, only three prime-time series with open-ended 52-minutes episodes and a recurring ensemble cast have cleared the 50-episodes mark in France: the police and legal drama *Engrenages* (*Spiral*, Canal +, 2005-), the family comedy *Fais pas ci, fais pas ça* (France 2, 2007-2017), and World War 2 drama *Un Village français* (France 3, 2009-2017). Among them, *Un Village français* [*UVF*] is the only one that has not changed its lead writer, and has generated the highest number of episodes during the shortest production span: in December 2017, 64 episodes of *Engrenages* and 68 of *Fais pas ci, fais pas ça*[2] have been broadcast, against a total of 72 for *UVF*, despite the other series having premiered four and two years earlier, respectively.

Yet it took over two years to convince France 3 executives to air its first season: from 2005 to 2008, the pilot episode's script was in development limbo. The story of a cuckold doctor, an opportunistic business owner, a naive teacher and a sadistic, Nazi-collaborating cop might have looked a poor fit for the public network's demographic of viewers aged over 60, more used to following the adventures of model citizens and brave families. It seemed unlikely that 3.5 million viewers would tune-in week after week, year after year, to delve into the moral and political ambiguities of Nazi-occupied France.

As a historian and television critic, I have been interested in *UVF* since I heard about the project in 2008. I started reviewing the series in 2012, when its treatment of the 1942 "Rafle du Vel' d'Hiv" (Vel' d'Hiv Roundup) convinced me it was a milestone in the evolution of France's memory of World War 2 and its audio-visual depiction. Through my review, the series' creators became interested in my work as a historian and television critic, and we started to meet for formal and informal interviews over a couple of years[3]. This led to the writing of a coffee-table book about the series, its production history and its portrayal of World War 2 (Boutet 2017).

The present article draws upon material assembled for the preparation of that book[4]. It recounts in greater detail the history of how *Un Village français* came to the screen, and what that history reveals of the complex relationship between writers, producers and TV executives in France in the late 2000s. On a broader level, it questions the role, place and even the possibility of *auteur* series on French television, and hopes to show the importance of trust and collaboration when it comes to televisual production[5].

1 In 2016, only 4 French TV channels broadcast original 52-minutes series: the private audience-leader TF1, the public networks France 2 and France 3 (which order more than half of French TV fiction), the French-German niche channel Arte and the premium cable channel Canal +. The second private French network, M6, chose to concentrate on shorter formats over the recent years but aired a 52-minutes miniseries of 6 episodes in January 2017.

2 The first season of *Fais pas ci, fais pas ça* (12 episodes in 2007) was broadcast in half-hour self-contained episodes of mockumentary on Saturday afternoons on France 2. The second season aired in prime-time with on-going 52-minutes episodes and a straightforward fictional narrative.

3 The detailed list and dates of the interviews conducted can be found at the end of this article. Each interview lasted for one to two hours. Some details were checked by follow-up e-mails and research.

4 Notably, observations of the writing room, the producers' office, the work on set and the editing room were conducted in May, June and July 2016 and in June 2017 as the seventh and last season of *Un Village français* was created.

5 In the conclusion of his analysis of the French TV industry, Pierre Zemniak points to the lack of cooperation in the workplace as the most detrimental cultural habit to the making of multi-season quality series in France (2017: 185).

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1. **CONTEXTUALIZATION: THE DELICATE POSITION OF THE FRENCH TV WRITER**

The entire history of the French cultural economy[6] has contributed to undermine the importance of TV writers. Until the 1960s, as in many other European countries, TV fiction was mostly composed of theatrical and literary adaptations of renowned authors. There were thus few chances for writers to create original audio-visual pieces (Bourdon 2001:99-117). Yet in the 1960s and 1970s, with the creation of a second and a third public channel, more fictions had to be produced to fill the new programme schedules. Literary adaptations, period dramas and detective stories were the most popular genres, but few lasted for more than one or two years. The most prestigious programmes, aired in prime-time, were mini-series and TV movies with self-contained storylines, no continuity in the creative teams nor fixed periodicity in the programming (Sauvage and Veyrat-Masson 2014: 156). They were made and considered as cheaper movies by producers, critics and the public alike. In the minds of most French political and cultural leaders, cinema was the true artistic form of audio-visual creation whereas television was mostly commercial, educational at best but with very poor aesthetic value. It was looked upon as mere entertainment, and not as a part of French Culture (Boutet 2014). Until the beginning of the twenty-first century, most fiction writers, directors, actors and technicians worked for television by default, hoping for breaks in the movie industry, theatre or literature (Mille 2006: 161-2).

In the 1980s, French TV executives developed what Jérôme Bourdon calls the "*Dallas* syndrome" (2008), i.e. a love/hate relationship with, as well as a rather strong inferiority complex towards, imported U.S. TV series, which remained cheaper and more popular than domestic fictions. Moreover, with more than 20 episodes produced per year and striking recurring characters, U.S. TV series were much more present and influential for the viewers than bland and scarce national heroes (Zemniak 2017: 65-6). In their interviews of TV writers conducted at the time, sociologists Sabine Chalvon-Demersay and Dominique Pasquier have found that they had a very ambiguous attitude towards these series, which they deemed mediocre and boring while envying their success (1993: 101-2).

This attitude needs to be understood within its historical context. The rising tide of the Nouvelle Vague by the end of the 1950s promoted the idea that the director, and not the writer, was the true – and only – auteur of a film (Pasquier and Chalvon-Demersay 1995: 56). This view was shared by Jean d'Arcy, Head of Programming at the RTF (French public television) from 1952 to 1959, and made official by an agreement signed between the RTF and the union of French TV directors in 1963 (Zemniak 2017: 23). Since then, the director usually writes or co-writes the script, hires the actors and technicians, supervises the cinematography and the editing process, i.e. he or she controls every phase of the production and is considered as the artist whose sheer and uncompromising talent bears artistic value and is the focus for public appreciation of the artwork (Chemla 2008). This sense of cinema as a work of art, meaning an individual – not a collective – creation, further undermines the status of the writer since the Nouvelle Vague model implies that "art" happens on the set and in the editing room, but not during the writing phase, considered as mere preparation. Very few French writers ever set foot on a set. The writer(s) of a French TV series or TV movie are paid around 3 per cent of the total production costs, that is to say less than what is spent for food, transportation and other daily expenses during shooting (Zemniak 2017: 96-101).

Within the industry, writers are among the most surveilled members of a production, since every step of their work is read, criticized, modified and eventually approved by both the producers and the channel executives before the shooting can start. This time consuming process is a source of constant frustration and leaves writers with a narrow margin for creative autonomy (Pasquier and Chalvon-Demersay 1995: 107-8). This is even truer in an audio-visual market where a handful of channels produce original TV fiction with extremely precise guidelines, based on the overall assumption that they have to broadcast "unifying stories" to maximise their audience. This belief is supported by the numbers: the most watched French television series from the 1990s to the mid-2000s were procedurals with a strongly moral fix-it-all main character, such as the paternal *Navarro* (TF1, 1989-2007) or *L'Instit* (F2, 1993-2005), the motherly *Julie Lescaut* (TF1, 1992-2014) and the best-friend-type *Joséphine ange gardien* (TF1, 1997-). At the same time, U.S. TV series were ever more widely broadcast on French networks and cable, being intensely admired and discussed by a growing number of people (Zemniak 2017: 33-6). It did not take long before a few French producers decided to make domestic TV series differently. Yet they would have to fight decades-old habits and strong resistance from established norms.

6 The term "cultural economy" instead of "entertainment industry" is itself significant.

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2. **MAKING AN AUTEUR SERIES**

2.1. **A fortunate encounter of ambition and goodwill**

Emmanuel Daucé was born in 1975, and grew up watching plenty of cinema as well as television (especially HBO TV series). Having earned a diploma from ESSEC, a prominent French business school, in 1998 he entered the most renowned French film school, the FEMIS, where *le film d'auteur* is revered (Desbarats 2016). There he pursued an unusual project: learning how to produce artistically ambitious TV series[7]. He recalls:

> I did not want to be stuck in what French cinema was about, that is to say star-filled blockbusters or elitist auteur films for the 'happy few'. I felt that TV series offered a new creative space to think about the world we really live in. (Daucé 2016)

Deeply aware of the common mistake of considering television series as mediocre cinema instead of comparing the medium with comic books and serial novels, he defended in 2002 a master's thesis titled *TV Series Production in France, or the Ephemeral World of Fiction*. Daucé pushed the idea that French TV series should become more ambitious from an economic as well as an artistic point of view. He believed they should exist beyond their first broadcast and should be considered like parts of a catalogue composed of dozens of episodes made to be watched, rewatched and sold abroad (Daucé 2016). This was a bold stance in an economy where broadcasters bore almost 80% of the financial burden of any program but were legally barred from owning shares of all the production rights (Zemniak 2017: 65, 90).

After graduation, Daucé was hired by Jean-François Boyer, then head of the major TV production company Telfrance. "Back then, French TV channels did not want to hear about serialized narratives," Daucé recalls. "Boyer thought I was out of my mind, but he hired me anyway because he is a gambler. He is a real entrepreneur who likes developing new ideas" (Daucé 2016). In 2004, Daucé helped the French soap opera *Plus Belle La Vie* (France 3, 2004-) to become a success[8], acknowledging the fact that writers, working as a team under the supervision of head writer Olivier Szulzynger, should enjoy complete freedom and not care about marketing polls or even social realism. Yet Daucé and Boyer shared a common ambition of producing more than successful popular entertainment.

They were both inspired by American *auteur* series such as *NYPD Blue* (ABC, 1993-2005), *Homicide: Life on the Street* (NBC, 1993-1999), and the many landmark series of HBO.

> HBO reinvented codified movie genres, the mafia drama with *The Sopranos*, the western with *Deadwood*, the peplum with *Rome*, because TV series offer time and space to develop a narrative, to show what is hidden, to create a link between the characters and the viewers. I wanted to do the same, but in a French setting. One day I had a flash. We were writing *Plus Belle La Vie* and we found ourselves held by a major problem: we lacked villains. I said to myself that Nazis were the ultimate villains. So I had the idea of a TV series set during the Second World War in France. Because this kind of story is always popular, it was a real *genre* and there were obvious life-and-death situations. As a child, my grandparents constantly told me about 'the war', and I grew up playing with World War 2 plastic soldiers, watching plenty of war films. The TV series format would allow us to tell a story never heard before, because we would have time to recreate everyday life and not only historical events. We could follow ordinary people instead of heroes. At first, my purpose was to tell the story of the entire German occupation, one month per episode. (Daucé 2016)

Daucé chose the historic genre with the idea that it could continue through time, cross borders and appeal to viewers years after its initial broadcast. His ambition was from the beginning to sell the show abroad, at a time when foreign broadcasters showed little interest in French series. Knowing that it is easier to sell a large number of episodes, he dreamt of producing 70 instalments of what he already called "Un village français".

7 Carole Desbarats, who was then headmaster at the FEMIS, remembers how every faculty member was impressed by the project, though many of them highly sceptical. Yet eleven years later, Emmanuel Daucé was called back to the school to create a specific program designed to train future French TV series creators.

8 Airing on France 3 right before prime-time since 2004, *Plus Belle La Vie* is the only French soap opera to become highly popular, and consists of more than 3,300 26-minutes episodes, thanks to a unique industrialized writing and producing process (see Mille 2016).

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Frustrated by the lack of responsibility he had at Telfrance, Daucé, then a 30-year-old assistant producer, joined Tetra Media on January 5, 2005 (Daucé 2017). The small producing company had just been bought by Jean-François Boyer. Boyer was immediately convinced by the concept of *UVF* and named Daucé associate producer, in charge of developing new series (Boyer 2016). A few months earlier, the public channel France 3 had issued a call for innovative series of 52-minute episodes. The window would close by the end of January 2005.

The clock was ticking. The structure of the French television industry makes it practically impossible to develop a series without sealing a "writing convention" with a broadcaster, because it provides the writer and the producer a commitment for financial investment from the TV channel itself and from the CNC (Centre National du Cinéma et de l'image animée), a public administration that provides grant to the entire French audio-visual industry (Zemniak 2017: 84-6). It is for this reason that all French TV series are written according to the expectations and more or less official guidelines of a specific TV channel (Pasquier and Chalvon-Demersay 1995: 107-8). France 3 appeared to be the best match for *UVF*: as a public channel, it wanted to educate its audience and glorify French heritage, with a strong preference for non-Parisian settings. With more than half of its viewers over the age of 60 (according to Mediamétrie), the broadcaster was receptive to period dramas.

But neither Daucé nor Boyer were writers. They needed someone who could turn this idea into the ambitious *auteur* series they had in mind. When he was a student, Daucé worked as a script reader for France Télévisions, and in 2003 he read "one of the best scenarios ever" (Daucé 2017), *Nom de Code DP*, the story of a spy undercover in an Islamic terrorist organization planning an attack on Brussels. It was written by Frédéric Krivine. Boyer knew him well, since he was the creator of the successful police drama series *P.J.* (France 2, 1997-2009), which was produced by Telfrance (Boyer 2016).

P.J. was a "semi-serialized procedural" (Cornillon 2014: 5-6), with a narrative structure comparable to *E.R.* (NBC, 1994-2009): main storylines were closed within the episode, while secondary plots, usually of a sentimental nature, went on. Those complex storylines were the product of what was a very unusual writing process in France at the time, "writing workshops" where writers helped to develop one another's ideas, shared the copyrights for generating the scripts. Knowing that semi-serialized procedurals of the 1990s had allowed American *auteurs* to improve their personal style while writing for others, and then develop more personal projects in the 2000s, Daucé wanted to initiate the same evolution in France. He and Boyer agreed that, if Krivine got on board to write *UVF*, they would name him associate executive producer. They wanted to afford more autonomy, but also more responsibility, to writers during the creative process. In their mind, the key to quality, innovation, and hopefully success, was sharing the work, the risks and the benefits (Boyer 2016, Daucé 2016).

Only a couple of weeks left before the call's deadline, the three men held a meeting to discuss their options for a pitch. Krivine was hooked by Daucé's concept:

> I was interested by the challenge of telling the story of people who were not strongly politically involved during World War 2, who were not open collaborators nor members of the resistance, that is to say 95 per cent of the French population. I also perceived immediately that creating a TV series of 70 episodes would allow me to go deep into all the nuances of the human kaleidoscope, while exploring the most dramatic and paradoxical time period of recent history. I wanted to write an ensemble show, and I was excited by the concept of recreating the German Occupation over dozens of hours instead of a mere 90-120 minutes as cinema had done so many times. (Krivine 2017)

Krivine was also attracted by the idea of being co-producer, but was already committed to several other writing projects; he would not have time to develop the concept for such an ambitious series on such short notice. So Daucé wrote a few pages of the script himself and submitted these to France 3, highlighting how *UVF* would accord with the network's editorial inclinations: a French story, a popular genre, a small village, ordinary people, a war everybody remembers or has heard and read about. In competition with dozens of other projects, UVF was awarded a writing convention in February 2005.

2.2. **Artists vs. patrons, or, the question of the economic viability of an auteur series**

With a signed writing convention, a status of co-executive producer, and his other projects completed or cancelled, Krivine cleared his schedule to work full-time on *UVF*. Yet he did not want to be the only artist facing two producers at the table, so he created his own production company, Terego. Joining him in the enterprise were two directors with

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whom he had enjoyed working on TV movies he had written: Philippe Triboit, who had directed *Le Train de 16h19* (France 2, 2003), and Patrick Dewolf, who worked as a director on *Nom de Code DP* (France 2, 2004). They were both very interested in recreating the time period of Occupation, and even more in the opportunity to tell a complex story about ordinary individuals trapped in compelling circumstances. Terego would own 20 per cent of the rights to *UVF*. The partner companies agreed on the fact that "in case of an artistic dispute, Terego would win over Tétra Média, but in case of a financial dispute, Tétra Média would prevail" (Boyer 2016, Krivine 2016). Ten years later, all parties involved agree that it was a very healthy *modus operandi* which allowed these strong personalities to work together (Boyer 2016, Daucé 2016, Krivine 2016, Triboit 2016). Yet Dewolf soon left Terego over artistic differences.

Un Village français became the only French series to be run by a triumvirate, a sort of *three-headed showrunner*. Daucé explains:

> Frédéric [Krivine] is mostly the headwriter, and Philippe [Triboit] is foremost a director. Both have ideas on what the other does but they deeply respect each other's work. My role is to make it happen, on a financial and human level, as well as to negotiate with the broadcaster (Daucé 2016).

This last part proved to be fundamental, because after France 3 had approved the concept, they were less than happy with the directions in which Krivine chose to take the script (Krivine 2016).

At first, *UVF* had the dedicated support of Patrick Péchoux, the head of the Fiction Department at France 3 who had pushed for innovative programs like *Plus Belle la Vie*, and bold TV movies on sensitive subjects, such as the worker's rebellion at the chemical factory Cellatex in 2000, the unsolved murder of the young Grégory Villemin in 1984, children's penal colonies in the 19th century, or even slavery (Constant 2007). But a long illness in 2006 resulted in Péchoux's untimely death at the age of 41, which tragically prevented him from seeing this new project through (Boyer 2016, Krivine 2016). At the time, the CEO of France Télévisions, Patrick de Carolis, and his closest advisor Patrice Duhamel, believed in patrimonial fictions, with clear good vs. evil narratives, pretty costumes and lavish settings, such as the anthology *Chez Maupassant* (France 2, 2007-2011). France 3's executives also assumed their audience would only tune-in for positive characters and model citizens. This editorial line, established by Claude de Givray, the Head of Fiction Department at TF1 from 1985 to 1999 and followed by every other broadcaster, was still the unchallenged guiding rule ten years later (Zemniak 2017: 33-34) .

The France 3 executives had little experience developing ensemble series, let alone a drama with the potential to run for several seasons. They did not understand a mode of storytelling in which the eventual fate of the main protagonists was uncertain, and how an audience could be engaged in a television drama featuring characters who did the right thing for the wrong reasons, or the wrong thing for the right ones. Moreover, they were convinced that viewers would not understand such morally ambiguous behaviour (Krivine 2016). From the start, Frédéric Krivine probably appeared to them as a cold intellectual, his strong political opinions thought to be out of touch with their aging audience, who were imagined as uncomfortable with morally and politically challenging material. The executives wanted more romance, more likable heroes, and more drama, while at the same time looking for historical accuracy, or at least their idea of it (Krivine 2016). This reflects Dominique Pasquier and Sabine Chalvon-Demersay's observation of France 3 in the 1990s, that the complex and changing hierarchy inside the channel's fiction department often led to the writers and producers receiving mixed messages from executives (1995: 107-10).

On the other side of the table was Frédéric Krivine. Having read countless books on the war, and worked under the careful supervision of renowned historian Jean-Pierre Azéma[9], the writer was convinced his vision of World War 2 history was correct, and that his work was being misunderstood. Believing he could not be heard, he stopped listening to criticisms and suggestions altogether. Krivine admits:

> We were facing people who did not understand our project, and so we did not take their opinions into account, even if, in retrospect, some of them made a lot of sense, like developing familial relationships or ending episodes with cliffhangers. I had worked with TV execs before, so I did not cave, in order to defend my position as the *auteur* (Krivine 2016).

9 Professor at Sciences Po, Jean-Pierre Azéma is one of the most prominent French specialist of France during the German Occupation, with a vision miles away from a "Good vs. Evil" interpretation of the past. He gained academic recognition by highlighting the ambiguous behaviours and attitudes of ordinary and powerful citizens between 1940 and 1944.

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The writer was in a stronger position thanks to his status as a co-producer and thanks to the complete support of Boyer and Daucé (Daucé 2016, Krivine 2016). The situation resulted in more than two years of stalemate.

The trio knew there were economic motivations for the networks' reluctance towards the project (they were being asked to invest 5 to 6 million euros in a project that could be readily overlooked by their viewers), but also political ones. Even if France Télévisions is officially independent from the government[10], there are nevertheless close unofficial ties and numerous back doors linking the two institutions (Zemniak 2017: 36-7). As soon as the project had been admitted into the development phase, France 3 had started communicating with the government about its upcoming fiction about World War 2. Expectations were high. Vincent Meslet, the Head of Programming at the time, believed in the project, and his support was imperative. Despite the reservations of some, and the culture of risk-aversion in the French TV business, everybody at France 3 wanted to make *UVF* happen, but nobody wanted to be held responsible for its possible failure. Frédéric Krivine finally agreed to work with an additional writer, who had to be a woman so that France 3 could see that he was trying to add sensibility to his supposedly dry writing. They asked Christiane Lebrima, whom they knew and respected from her work on *Plus Belle la Vie*, to rewrite the dialogue. According to Krivine, she finally rewrote – in a minor way - about 40 out of the 600 lines of the pilot. Nevertheless, it was enough to show France 3 his goodwill. Yet the surreal part was that some TV executives still strongly criticized the writing of the pilot (Krivine 2016). They nevertheless gave the project a green light; shooting could finally begin. In March 2008, the channel finally decided to commission 6 episodes (not 12 as originally planned).

This long process is representative of the profound distrust that exists between French TV executives and writers (Pasquier and Chalvon-Demersay 1995: 108-10; Zemniak 2017: 152), and can help explain why so many French series change or add writers during the development phase. It also underlines why so many bold projects seem watered down when they arrive on air. *Un Village français* is an unusual series, first, because its head writer "did not cave" (Krivine 2016) to the broadcaster's rewriting suggestions, and secondly because he was a co-producer and benefited from the utter support of his fellow co-producers, who took huge financial risks in agreeing to delay the production[11].

2.3. **Drama vs. History: an auteur's singularity and historical accuracy**

When he was a student at the Centre de Formation des Journalistes in Paris in the late 1970s through the early 1980s, Frédéric Krivine was deeply impressed by his history teacher Jean-Pierre Azéma, who had just published groundbreaking books about France during World War 2[12]. That is why he asked his former teacher to become the show's historical advisor. It turned out the professor had also been impressed by the young man and still remembered the almost perfect mark he granted to one of his essays. Azéma agreed to act as the historical consultant on the show, providing that the story will reach 1945 and put some collaborators on trial, the characters would act ambiguously, and all historical aspects of the scripts would be discussed before shooting. Azéma suggested the series be set in the department of Jura, close to Switzerland, in a small city near the demarcation line cutting out the northern part of France occupied by the Germans from the so-called 'free zone' in the South. This setting would allow many historical issues and political stakes of the period to be addressed (Azéma 2017). Krivine named it Villeneuve, in France a generic name for a town, to prevent it from being confused with any actual town (Krivine 2014).

The writing process would involve Krivine and half a dozen of TV writers assembled in a workshop. But before it was launched, Krivine and his former professor sat down for hours over a few weeks to review the relevant historical events, and to discuss the political, economic, social, cultural and everyday issues that concerned ordinary French people at specific points during the war, making a list of the issues upon which they would build the storylines. Further discussions were required to make sure that the characters' knowledge, behaviours, and responses to the fictional events were appropriate to the precise historical moment being depicted. For example, as the characters would be ignorant of Auschwitz, they could utter anti-Semitic remarks from time to time without feeling ashamed. And, of course, some would choose the "wrong side of History", by collaborating with the

10 In June 2008, President Nicolas Sarkozy decided that the Head of France Télévisions will be appointed by the President. Before that, he or she was elected by the members of the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel, the public administration in charge of regulating TV and radio in France.

11 *Un Village français* was Tetra Media's first project accepted by a French TV channel since Jean-François Boyer had bought the firm.

12 Jean-Pierre Azéma, *La Collaboration, 1940-1944*, Paris, PUF, 1975 and Jean-Pierre Azéma, *De Munich à la Libération, 1938-1944*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1979.

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Nazis for genuine and altruistic reasons, like Daniel Larcher (Robin Renucci), who agrees to become the town's mayor and to work with the Germans in order to ease the sufferings and hardships of his fellow citizens (Azéma 2017).

With a narrative spanning over five years, with no military battles nor historical figures, the series could show how people's opinions can change over time, how political sides can become clearer, or more confused, how someone can choose to collaborate in a given situation but will then help the Resistance in another. The ambition was to break with the judgemental discourse of numerous World War 2 narratives, such as the film and subsequent TV series *La Ligne de Démarcation*[13], which depicted collaborators as villains and Resistance fighters as heroes. At the centre of the show was the ambition to evoke an empathetic response from the audience towards every character. Krivine often refers to what a collaborator said during his trial in 1946: "during a crisis, doing your duty is not the difficult part; it is knowing what your duty is" (Krivine 2014). The quote guided him throughout the writing of *UVF*.

Krivine and Azéma's common ambition was to bring some shades of grey to the public memory of World War 2 in France. As Krivine writes in a memo submitted to France 3 in 2006:

> During the war, the vast majority of people were resisting the German occupation far less than it was later believed between 1945 and the 1960s (the 'resistantialist myth'), but they were not necessarily all supporting Pétain like people started to believe in the 1970s after Marcel Ophuls' *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* or Robert Paxton's *Vichy France* (Savoir au Présent 2013).

At first, he wanted to create ordinary characters who did not have much to do with the historical events, those 95 per cent of the population who simply had to go on living their ordinary lives between 1940 and 1944, going to work, raising their children, falling in or out of love, and so on. He was influenced by 1970s TV series such as *La Maison des bois* (ORTF, 1971) and *Le 16 à Kerbriant* (ORTF, 1972), and the film *Le Voyage des comédiens* (Theo Angelopoulos, 1975). These were "war stories where you did not actually see the military aspects of the war, where the plot was first and foremost about complex human beings" (Krivine 2016).

Krivine's personal interest was to expose the nuances of the human condition, rather than re-enacting historical events. Triboit shared his view:

> A good film has many layers of interpretation, so it can speak in different ways to different people. It has to be entertaining, for sure, but it should also trigger philosophical afterthought. For us, that is what a series on public television shall do. In the case of *Un Village français*, it can make you think about freedom and fate, oppression and political commitment, your place in History and more generally about the human soul (Triboit 2016).

Daucé also wishes to make quality TV: "*UVF* shows how people break bad, both morally and socially, when their world is shattered. On a public network, you have to convey a political and social stance you believe in, even if your primary focus is to tell a good story" (Daucé 2017).

Krivine had indeed to write a story that millions of viewers would want to immerse themselves in week after week, so he had to add *drama* to his balanced view of the historical reality. Hence the characters became less ordinary than originally planned: some things had to happen to them, they should stand at the core of moral dilemmas, and it often meant becoming politically involved with one side or another. That is why the main protagonists are public officials (Daniel Larcher, Servier), business owners (Raymond Schwartz, Albert Crémieux), police (de Kervern, Marchetti), teachers (Lucienne, Bériot), communist activists (Marcel Larcher, Suzanne), i.e. people who have an influence on their community. Krivine explains:

> The characters of *UVF* are ultimately more politically engaged than most of real French citizens of that time. I am writing a drama that aims at riveting 15 per cent of the national audience in prime-time, not a History book. The viewers want to see Nazis, collaborators and resistant fighters in a World War 2 drama, not ordinary bourgeois who live like it is 1952. The characters might have been very different if I had been writing for Arte[14] (Krivine 2017).

13 Based on a scenario written by real-life Resistance fighter Colonel Rémy, *La Ligne de Démarcation* was first a film directed by Claude Chabrol in 1966 with Jean Seberg, Maurice Ronet and Daniel Gélin, and was then adapted as a daily 13-minute episode serial on the ORTF in December 1973, with Christian Barbier, Victor Lanoux, the comedian Coluche, and with Rémy playing himself. Two characters of *Un Village français* are named Raymond and Marie like the main protagonists of the film.

14 Arte is a German-French public channel with a niche audience averaging around 2 per cent of total viewers. Its budget for original TV fiction is ten times smaller than that of France Televisions, and its editorial guidelines aim towards innovative subjects, storylines and/or points of view.

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Writing an engaging story and fulfilling viewers' expectations while developing a strong *auteur* point of view was at the core of *UVF* since Daucé started to imagine it: "as a producer, my mission is to accompany an *auteur*, someone with a singular *Weltanschauung* and able to express it through a well-structured story" (Daucé 2017).

Krivine's *Weltanschauung* is truly front and centre in *UVF*, at times at the cost of local historical accuracy. For example, Villeneuve is supposed to be a town of 5,000 inhabitants in the North-East of France, yet you barely see priests or people going to church, whereas you have plenty of communists in a region where Catholicism was very strong in the 1930s and communism a minor political movement deeply affected by its ban after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (the German-Soviet Non-aggression Pact) of 1939.

> My personal obsession always wins against historical accuracy, because I am the one telling the story. I am not that interested in religion and Catholics, so these issues play a minor role in *UVF*. On the contrary, Stalinism is the bee in my bonnet[15], so one of the main characters had to be communist. In a broader sense, I've been deeply struck by the fact that both my grandfathers led double lives during the war. They both had a mistress, and one of them assumed the identity of his brother after he had been deported by the Germans. (Krivine 2016)

Even if Krivine works with other writers to develop plots and sub-plots in each season, he always has the final say about every line of dialogue.

> I see myself as a bottleneck in our writing process. I am the reason why we cannot write episodes like the Americans do: I have to write every line myself, because nobody knows how to do it like I would, and also because the writers I work with prefer to develop their own projects rather than merely continuing mine[16] (Krivine 2014).

The work ethos of writers for French television is very different from that of their counterparts in the United States, for example. References and models are more often borrowed from literature and less from theatre, and style is valued more than dramatic efficiency (Zemniak 2017: 112). Even though the plot developments are decided in a writers' room, *UVF* is first and foremost, an *auteur series*, developing a singular point of view. Thus it doesn't pretend to be an utterly accurate reconstitution of everyday life in France during World War 2. What has made the series work and attract 3.5 million viewers on average, is that this *auteur*'s interests and concerns were used to develop an especially fitting, resonant subject. Since the 1970s, World War 2 narratives, especially ones about the German occupation of France, are built around the idea of double lives, lies, mistaken identity and secrecy, from *Lacombe Lucien* (Louis Malle, 1974) and *Monsieur Klein* (Joseph Losey, 1976) to *Un héros très discret* (Jacques Audiard, 1996). *UVF* taps into that aspect, and makes the very personal meet the collective. It is also because Krivine's vision is understood by his two co-producers, Daucé and Triboit, that this *three-headed showrunner* goes in the same artistic direction. The trio reads and discusses all the scenarios before shooting, and Krivine makes adjustments accordingly.

3. A THREE-HEADED SHOWRUNNER, OR THE MAKING OF AN AUTEURS SERIES

Krivine undoubtedly plays a key role by giving *UVF* its peculiar tone. The overall quality and success of *UVF*, however, cannot be understood apart from the choices of director Philippe Triboit and the methods of producer Emmanuel Daucé. Triboit is a professional who has "no fantasy of making a feature film. He is an experienced TV director[17] and knows how to express quickly and clearly an artistic vision of a given scenario", says Daucé (2017). As Triboit himself says, speaking at length of his directorial approach:

> For *UVF*, I did not want the viewers to see my *mise en scène*, to awe in front of a beautiful shot or a daring camera movement. I did not want to do

15 Frédéric Krivine is the nephew of Alain Krivine, twice presidential candidate and founder of the LCR (*revolutionnary communist league*) after he was expelled from the PCF in 1966 for having criticized the Stalinist interpretation of communism. His parents were both members of the PCF and leftist activists during his childhood. Several members of his family were arrested and deported during the war because they were Jews.

16 When Frédéric Krivine became a father of twins in 2013, he hoped Fanny Herrero, a talented writer who had been working with him in the workshop for years, could partly replace him, but she preferred to develop a new series of her own: *Dix Pour Cent* (France 2, 2015-). So the writing of season 6 and 7 took a little longer than for previous seasons, while France 3 decided to broadcast half a season per year, knowing they would be the last.

17 Before *UVF*, Triboit had directed many TV movies, but also ambitious TV series for Canal + such as *Engrenages* from 2005 to 2008 and *La Commune* in 2007.

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> something 'pretty'. I wanted to be as close as possible to those ordinary characters, so the viewers could almost feel their flesh and bones. The light had to be very natural, the hairdos loose, the costumes and settings should not be shiny or neat. All the furniture should not be from the late 1930s. The characters should live with disparate and worn-out pieces of furniture, wear out-fashioned clothes, like most people still do today. I wanted costumes to reveal both a social class and a state of mind, a personality. The goal was to immerse the viewers in a *period*, not in an antique shop. I wanted dust, rugged material, in order to highlight the period's hardship. I wanted the viewers to feel close to the characters, to feel what they felt and not to be in a position to judge them. That is why the camera is always subjective, showing the point of view of one of the main protagonists on the situation he or she is caught in. My wish was that the series would trigger questions and conversations among families, in the comfortable setting of home. I did not want *UVF* to be just a pretty or entertaining thing you absent-mindedly looked at. (Triboit 2016)

Triboit directed the first 6 episodes of *UVF*, then the first halves of seasons 3 and 4. "He is the one who has given its artistic direction to the series", declares set manager Laurent Cavalier. "The other directors[18] could only twist [a] few things, but not change the main choices in terms of light, setting, costumes and acting direction. The technical team remained more or less the same anyway, as season[s] went by" (Cavalier 2016).

Every actor I have interviewed has also praised Triboit's direction, his ability to create a true stage-like atmosphere on set, with actors and technicians working together and taking the time to explore each scene, despite the fast pace of television production. Triboit has a gift for working with actors and helping them develop their characters. He spends time with them, reading and interpreting the scenario so they are ready on the set when the two cameras start rolling. Due to the multi-camera approach to filming, Triboit also knows he will have a range of options in the editing room.

> "Sometimes it is only once I'm in the editing room that I realize what we have done and what the actors have given on a take. There's something magical. A TV director is less in control than a movie director, and I like it." (Triboit 2016)

A single director supervises the preparation (1–3 months), the shooting (55–60 days, i.e. 3 months including breaks) and the editing (3 months), so that each season's 6 episodes are made across a 9-month period. It would not be cost-effective nor reasonable to give a director more episodes to supervise. The decision to employ a single director for each season, and to commence production only once each script is written, produces a significant "bottleneck" in the overall production workflow[19]. To rein in the expenses, and to cope with several filming locations in distant regions of Ile-de-France[20] and Limousin[21], Daucé chose to *cross-board*, i.e. to shoot every scene in one given location disregarding narrative continuity. It implies that all the scenarios have to be written and approved before the shooting begins. It also gives more freedom to the actors who only have to clear their schedule for a few days and not for months. Thus no role had to be recast over nine years of production.

The budget of *UVF* is 950,000 euros per episode, which is slightly above average (880,000 euros) for a contemporary French series, but rather low for a period piece, where sets and costumes cost much more. Television series tend to have daily on-set costs that are similar to those of a feature film, but operate significantly lower budgets overall. This reflects the fact that, on average, television series are filmed roughly three times faster than feature films. In television drama, each day of shooting will result in 5 "useable minutes", whereas each day of feature film production will yield approximately 1.5–2 minutes. "So we have to use two cameras instead of one, and the director has to explain clearly and quickly what he expects from the actors" (Cavalier 2016). Of course, it helps to shoot 6 episodes in a row, and cross-boarding cre-

18 Olivier Guignard (season 2), Jean Marc Brondolo (second half of season 3 and first half of season 5), Philippe Martineau (second halves of season 4 and 6), Jean-Philippe Amar (second half of season 5 and first half of season 6 and all of season 7). Amar was much involved in the making of season 6 and 7, and participated in the writing workshop of the 7th and last season of *UVF*.

19 A more recent French TV series, *Le Bureau des Légendes* (Canal+, 2015–), changes its director every two episodes, the writing of subsequent episodes continues while the first episodes are shot, and the editing also starts as soon as two episodes have been filmed. That way, Canal+ could broadcast 10 episodes per year. This process gives less power to the director and requires the presence of a showrunner (Eric Rochant) who is in this case more of a supervisor than an *auteur* in the French cinematographic tradition.

20 The main studios are set in a partly shut down psychiatric hospital in Neuilly-sur-Marne (Seine-Saint-Denis) and other recurring locations are set in Crécy-la-Chapelle and Lésigny (Seine-et-Marne).

21 The region is a financial partner of the series.

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ates intense days but greater concentration[22]. Cavalier and Daucé thought that an atmosphere of conviviality was a very important factor on set, and that is why they hired one of the very best chefs of the movie industry, Patrick "Figu" Figueras, who has cooked for Claude Chabrol and Steven Spielberg. The lunch and sometimes dinner breaks had to be something cast and crew members would look forward to and when they could feel at home between shooting periods.

> "Working with a French cast and crew, food is something you cannot be cheap about. It is an expense that is really worth in terms of quality and atmosphere. The key part of my job is not to spend as little – nor as much – as possible, but to spend wisely on what will improve the quality of everybody's work." (Daucé 2017)

Indeed, in France, a TV producer's profit margin is not necessarily increased if their series is a hit – their benefit is simply another season order from the channel. The producers must pay themselves from the positive difference between their production costs and the investment from the channel and its commercial sponsors, often around a 10 per cent margin. A French channel usually pays 80 per cent of the budget, and the CNC gives 15 per cent. The last 5 come from other public and private sponsors. But what makes *UVF* much more profitable for its producers than most French TV series started with a set-back: France Televisions refused to distribute the series on other media (such as DVD) and in other national markets after it was aired on France 3, so the series is published on DVD by EuropaCorp and is sold abroad by Tétra Média itself. Since *UVF* is or has been aired in more than 30 countries, from the United States to South Korea, the co-producers' profits are unusually high, and they can subsequently afford to reduce their profit margin during the production phase itself (Boyer 2016).

Daucé's motto is "spend your money right", meaning that every expense has to improve the quality of the series. That is why Boyer and Daucé chose to buy (instead of rent) most of the accessories, from cars to furniture: since they are antique, they will not lose value – and possibly gain some – once the series is over. Tétra Média also rents permanently the main set of the school in Neuilly-sur-Marne, which allows them not to dismantle it between seasons, which saves time and money. To improve authenticity, and since Triboit was very careful that only natural textiles and historically accurate techniques were involved, costume design represents about 10 per cent of a season's budget. Yet after shooting, some are sold or rented to professionals, and many pieces have been exhibited in museums for their pedagogical value. The cast is composed of experienced TV or stage actors from France and Belgium, and very often, secondary roles became recurring. After the first season, Krivine wrote specifically for the actors and what he felt they could be best at (Krivine 2014 and 2017).

From the start, Daucé, Krivine and Triboit discuss every scene from an artistic and financial perspective. For example, in the pilot, Krivine wanted to have several German tanks rolling through Villeneuve (a scene that is now used in the opening credits). Daucé said: "it costs 200.000 euros [i.e. eight times the average cost of one day of shooting]. Are you sure we need it?" (Krivine 2014). Because he wanted his tanks, the writer imagined that episode 2 will take place in a single location (an abandoned church) and thus will be faster and cheaper to shoot. According to Boyer, this type of negotiation and cost-balancing is only possible because Krivine and Triboit are co-producers, so it is also *their* money they are spending (Boyer 2016).

During the post-production phase, the discussions between the three co-producers are intense "Our main goal is to efficiently hook the viewers with cliffhangers, teasers, music, rhythm, etc." (Daucé 2016). The three men decide the precise story they want to tell in the editing room: the order of the sequences can differ from what was written in the scenario, because each episode must have a specific pace, preventing the viewer from switching to other channels. "The audience must be under the impression that something is always happening, with a very clear knowledge of the character they are following" (Krivine 2016). Triboit elaborates:

> The editing process is the moment where we choose from which angle the scene will be told. For example, if I have shot a scene between Daniel and his wife Hortense, inside an episode where both have major storylines – Daniel struggles with resistant fighters while Hortense has an affair. If I put the scene right after a sequence with Daniel, I will stress his point of view in the next by giving him more close-ups. If I put it right after a scene between Hortense and her lover, I will stress her reactions by choosing the close-ups I shot of her. (Triboit 2016)

22 The filming of 6 episodes lasts 55 to 60 days.

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Some sequences can be shortened or disappear altogether, some can become more significant, a few can move from one episode to another. The choices are not always unanimous or even obvious, but each co-producer listens to the arguments of the other. "That is really when *my* story becomes *ours*" (Krivine 2016).

The agreed-upon version is presented to France 3 executives, who sometimes ask for a few changes here and there. "They had a great deal to say about the first 6 episodes, but since we are successful [i.e., after the first season], they intervene less and less. Popular success gave us an almost complete artistic freedom" (Krivine 2017). After the broadcast of the first season, the trio realized that France 3 was right to ask for more cliffhangers; their original idea to tell the story of the German Occupation one month per episode had produced a quite traditional TV series and an impression of a slow dramatic pace, even if the characters were greyer than usual and tensions mounted during 1.05 and 1.06 . In season 2, Krivine set his story over two months instead of six, and season 3 spans a single couple of weeks. If dramatic amplification seems to have surpassed the initial pedagogical and academic ambition, in reality this tightening of the chronology heightens the viewers' emotional involvement and their understanding of what is at stake, both personally and politically, for each character. It is also a way to assert the *auteurs*' point of view.

CONCLUSION

The history of *UVF*'s production shows how interactions between all the parties involved (writer, producer, director, broadcaster) play a significant part in the creative process. At the end of his analysis of the French TV industry, Pierre Zemniak points to "a work culture of criticism and power plays" rather than enthusiasm and cooperation as one of the main factors which prevents France from being as successful as the United Kingdom or Denmark when it comes to internationally acclaimed series (2017: 184-5). The case of *Un village français* shows that enthusiasm and cooperation can exist and lead to success and creative freedom. With an average of 3.5 million viewers over nine years of broadcasting, *UVF* has become one of France 3's biggest hit in prime-time, with a slightly younger audience than the regular 60+ viewers of the channel, critical acclaims and awards, and the highest engagement rate of a Facebook page about a TV series in French (20 per cent). It was also sold in more than 30 countries, including the United States.

The fact that its executive co-producers were a trio with distinct skills relatively equalised the ratio of power, while giving them greater strength in the complex negotiations with the broadcaster during the development phase. Moreover, the mutual respect and admiration for each other's work, and their agreement on a common goal, prevented a clash of strong personalities and a battle between egos. Their relationship was strong enough to last more than a decade and they were even able to include a fourth partner for the last two seasons. After season 4, Philippe Triboit wished to create other universes, starting with a TV movie about World War 1 soldiers who had been shot as examples by their own superiors (*Les Fusillés*, France 3, 2015). He remained co-producer of *UVF* but was less involved in its day-to-day creation. Since Emmanuel Daucé and Frédéric Krivine had been impressed by the work of Jean-Philippe Amar when he directed the second half of season 5, they decided to further involve him in the creative process: Amar directed the first half of season 6 and all of season 7, participating in the writing workshop and bringing new ideas at a moment when the narrative was moving into the post-war period, dealing with the aftermath of the conflict and the political reconstruction of France.

This trio structure may be more suitable in a French context than the Danish duo (producer/writer) that was the cornerstone of the recent "Danish miracle" (Sérisier 2017: 46), or the American showrunner, since very few French TV writers have developed skills for managing the various requirements and demands of overall production. It might also sufficiently divide the responsibilities to allow each member to still feel like an *auteur*, with time and control over the creation. Yet so far, *UVF* remains the only long-lasting TV series in France to have employed three key creative personnel in this way. Other long-lasting French TV series have organized differently, but it seems that the vast majority now relies on some division of labour and shared creative responsibilities (see in particular Mille 2016).

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UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

UNIVERSITAT
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