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GLOCAL DETECTIVES
CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN EUROPEAN TV CRIME DRAMAS

EDITED BY LUCA BARRA, ALICE JACQUELIN AND FEDERICO PAGELLO

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BEYOND CINEMA

GLOCAL DETECTIVES CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN EUROPEAN TV CRIME DRAMAS

Researching European Crime Narratives and the Role of Television: An Introduction

Luca Barra, Alice Jacquelin, Federico Pagello

Television screens across Europe are more and more filled, in their channels' schedules as in the digital platforms' libraries, with detectives, investigators, police(wo)men coming from abroad. After a long-lasting prominence of US figures, reflecting a larger hegemony often read as cultural imperialism, the last decades have complicated the picture, offering an increasing visibility (with different roles and resonances) to characters coming from the UK, the Nordic regions of Scandinavia, the major continental markets as France, Germany, Spain and Italy, the Mediterranean regions, the Eastern and Central European countries, and so on. This partial yet relevant opening has been saluted as a change of direction in global circulation flows, leading many to think about its consequences on a larger, shared idea of European culture; at the same time, many limits and complexities in this increased presence have also emerged. In both perspectives, European crime narratives are seen as complex objects and need therefore to be adequately researched. Television detectives are national, and global, and often glocal. Their popularity and circulation in European markets bring cultural diversity and put audiences in touch with other not-so-far yet distinct cultures, while also – sometimes – laying some ground for the development of a truly transnational, cross-European, shared popular culture.

This special issue presents some of the research findings of the H2020-funded project DETECt – Detecting Transcultural Identity in European Popular Crime Narratives (2018-2021), led by Monica Dall'Asta (University of Bologna) in collaboration with more than 40 scholars and professionals affiliated to 17 institutions, located in 10 European countries.[1] This large consortium examined a set of questions about the emergence, circulation, promotion and representation of European transcultural identities in the field of popular media: are popular narratives conveying and supporting the shaping of a new, shared feeling of belonging to a same continental cultural heritage – or do they instead highlight the crisis in the process of European integration that has been politically and socially visible during

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the last decade? Do private and public institutions across the continent encourage or hamper the production, distribution and consumption of European popular culture? What role can European policies play in this context? Do audiences take advantage of the increasing opportunities to be confronted with popular narratives coming from other parts of Europe? The research specifically examined the crime genre as a crucial vehicle for the circulation of popular narratives across the continent, facilitating the growth of transnational networks in European creative industries as well as a continuous cultural exchange among European citizens.

DETECt built on a series of previous research programmes. With EU-funded project EPOP: Popular Roots of European Popular Culture in Film, Comics and Serial Literature (1850-1930) (led by Monica Dall'Asta in 2008-2010) and the AHRC-funded Visualising European Crime Fiction: New Digital Tools and Approaches for the Study of Transnational Popular Culture (led by another DETECt scholar, Dominique Jeannerod, in 2014-2015), the many ways in which European popular narratives have circulated across borders and across media since the rise of modern cultural industries in the last two centuries were explored from different perspectives. Other researchers have addressed more specifically the question of the Europeanness of European popular culture in the contemporary era. In the late Nineties, an international group led by Milly Buonanno looked at the issue of European cultural identity in television series for the 'Eurofiction' project but their conclusion, in fact, was quite harsh: 'Whether we like it or not, we have to conclude that "TV fiction expressing a European identity" is a fiction and will continue to be one unless something drastic happens in Europe these next few years'.[2]

More recently, the findings of the HERA-funded project MeCETES: Mediating Cultural Encounters through European Screen (led by Andrew Higson, Ib Bondebjerg and Caroline Pauwels) supported a different, more encouraging view, emphasizing how significant changes have occurred in the European media industries, and in society at large, during the last couple of decades, promoting what they called 'banal Europeanisation'.[3] Building on the idea of a 'soft' European integration promoted through the inclusion of European popular culture as a part of the everyday experience of the Union's citizens, MeCETES highlighted the transnational dimension of the production and circulation of popular film and television in Europe, to insist on their ability to give shape to a variety of 'cultural encounters' and, therefore, to the emergence of a shared European identity.[4] At the same time, they warned against any simplistic assessment of this process, stressing how even the circulation of the most successful example of European TV series – including, not coincidentally, those in the crime genre – appear to be quite uneven and always in need to face the strong competition of US television.[5]

In fact, while it is undeniable that a 'European television fiction renaissance'[6] has been really taking place during the last recent years,

enhancing both the quality and the quantity of series able to circulate outside the national borders and to reach an international audience, it remains dubious whether this phenomenon can be seen as the advent of a truly European popular culture, since its circulation often stays within the conventional borders of nations and other geographical and cultural macro-regions, with the exceptions of a few shows that reach an urban, cosmopolitan niche audience. To this day, the ironic consideration of the Eurofiction research team thus perhaps still partially stands: 'The closest thing the researchers turned up, the one programme that fostered a pan-European sense of identity and elicited dialogue *sans frontières* an indirect reference also to the "Télévision sans frontières" European directive, authors' note, was the annual Eurovision Song Contest' (and, we could possibly add, the UEFA European Football Championship).[7] Moreover, cultural, economic and policy obstacles keep limiting the transnational circulation and, crucially, the international reception of these European TV series, to those sectors of the foreign audiences that are already inclined to watch foreign products, confining them to a 'large niche' of affluent, educated, culturally-savvy viewers.

In what follows, we will highlight some overall considerations about the transcultural significance of European crime narratives, before briefly discussing the specific case of TV crime series, which are the focus of this special issue. A short presentation of the articles will end the introduction.

FROM 'EURO NOIR' TO GLOCALISED, INTERMEDIAL CRIME NARRATIVES

The question about Europeanness of European popular culture, in general, and crime narratives, in particular, can be addressed in radically different ways: from exploring theoretical debates about the concept of European cultural identity to analysing their concrete manifestations in the current historical and political context; from studying industrial strategies and EU policies promoting international cooperation to examining the textual representation of cultural identities and the audiences' responses to it. As proven by the articles included here, the DETECt consortium has engaged with all of these perspectives, trying to develop a comprehensive framework and to identify some general trends. Two main perspectives have been particularly helpful in approaching television crime series.

A first line of enquiry concerns the labelling of contemporary European crime narratives, and their role in defining how cultural identity is (re) presented and marketed. In particular, DETECt scholars examined whether a label as 'Euro Noir' could be fruitfully used to indicate the emergence of a shared identity in European crime narratives. Fully aware of the many objections to this hypothesis, the researchers examined how and why popular culture in Europe is more often described using national

or regional labels (e.g. Nordic Noir, Mediterranean Noir, Tartan Noir, the French *polar*, the Spanish *novela negra*, the Italian *giallo*, etc.), rather than by emphasising its European dimension. At the same time, the broad transnational circulation and influence of these localised labels (as in the paradigmatic case of Nordic Noir), and the inherently transcultural nature of these phenomena (as in the crucial example of Mediterranean Noir), have been emphasized. As Kim Toft Hansen wrote in the introduction to *European Television Crime Drama*, edited with Steven Peacock and Sue Turnbull, it is possible to argue that:

> *[if] the stories [...] clearly cross borders in the narratives, and if the films or television series also appear multilingual and international in their financial and creative collaboration, then Euronoir may indeed be a way of articulating transborder identities and investigative collaboration. Euronoir is, then, more than just crime fiction from a European place; Euronoir may rather comprise narratives that identify, negotiate, criticize, establish or even destabilize cross-continental realities, translocal signifiers or transnational geopolitics.*[8]

The last few decades have seen a growing effort to develop strategies to increase the truly transnational dimension of European crime narratives, especially as a result of the creatives', producers', commissioners' and policy makers' awareness of the existence of a variety of obstacles. The articles included in a special issue of the *European Review* have engaged with the difficulty to offer a clear definition of 'Euro Noir',[9] the limitations encountered by the distribution of crime films,[10] the role of gatekeepers in the circulation of crime novels,[11] the frequent absence of any labeling as 'European' for crime novels.[12] Such studies show how, despite a clear diversification in the offer of crime narratives from across the continent, an immediately recognizable representation of European identity is hard to be found in contemporary popular culture.

A second, connected, strand of inquiry concerned the notion of glocalism. A special issue of *Academic Quarter* edited by a group of DETECt scholars has particularly engaged with this concept to insist on the ability of crime narratives in all media to combine local, national and regional cultural traits with a transnational attitude.[13] The label 'Euro Noir', it is suggested there, can be used to indicate the (qualitative) effects of a (quantitative) increase in the translation and marketing of European crime novels between the late 1990s and the early 2000s, which stimulated a variety of transcultural exchanges and transnational cooperation.[14] The lens of glocalism proved to be particularly suited to address the field of television, as proven by other telling cases addressed in that publication: the circulation of Nordic Noir TV series in Eastern Europe and the emergence of what has been called "Hungarian Nordic Noir," a paradoxical label;[15] the increasingly cosmopolitan audio-visual industry in Berlin and the subsequent change

in the perception of German popular culture throughout the continent;[16] and the abandon of traditional urban settings to make use of a variety of 'peripheral locations' in Italy,[17] a shift that can be found everywhere in European TV crime series, as proven by two articles included as proven by two articles included here.

Glocalism is also linked to another key feature of crime narratives: inter-mediality.[18] Crime narratives are indeed able to cross borders more easily than other genres also thanks to the peculiar success of 'glocalised' literary crime fiction in attracting international audiences, which then leads to the creation of films and television series able to give expression to local cultural identities as well as to circulate (again) on a transnational level. In the last decades, European television in particular has benefitted from the audiences' wide interest in this particular form of representation and cultural tourism, providing both the familiar pleasures of globalised crime fiction and the unexpected flavour granted by unusual, picturesque settings. A large number of successful European TV crime series is adapted from literary works, and this is a specific characteristic of this production (differently from its US competitor). To understand the continental dimension of European crime narratives in particular, and of popular culture in general, it is necessary to adopt a comparative approach able to take into consideration the systematic links among different media.

THIS ISSUE: EUROPEAN TV CRIME SERIES

This issue specifically focalises on television crime series, undoubtedly the most popular kind of crime narratives in recent years. It is not surprising that the trends highlighted above are particularly evident in this field. In fact, a shift toward the production of TV shows that have a strong 'glocal appeal' has become more and more evident. The idea of a 'European television fiction renaissance' taking place since the mid-2000s is indeed based on the analysis of the many transformations that, with premium operators, on-demand platforms, and a renewed role of national public service broadcasters, have strongly reduced the traditional tendency of European players to address almost exclusively their national audience, with more and more frequent attempts to produce serial narratives able to reach a domestic and an international audience at the same time.

Interestingly enough, DETECt's focus on the crime genre helps us to stress how both the increasing transnational success of contemporary European TV crime series has benefited from such contextual changes and, vice versa, crime television has been a push towards industrial, narrative and consumption transformations. A significant number of the first-rate international hits in contemporary European television are indeed crime shows: from *Sherlock* to *La casa de Papel/Money Heist*, from *The Killing* to *Inspector Montalbano*, from *Peaky Blinders* to *Gomorra*, from *The Bureau*

to *Babylon Berlin*. Nordic Noir television series have been widely studied both for their circulation and for their ability to influence several productions across the continent.[19] A crime show as the Welsh *Hinterland* has been convincingly discussed as paradigmatic of the glocal strategies adapted by producers and consumers of popular culture, well beyond this specific genre.[20] What is most relevant, perhaps, is how the success of European TV crime series reflects both quantitively and qualitatively the changes that impacted the whole of television, and popular culture more broadly. As in other cases, in fact, common and often discussed labels as 'quality TV' or 'complex TV'[21] clearly work here in two ways: on the one hand, they are used to facilitate the creation and critical appreciation of crime shows that thematically and stylistically aim to detach themselves from the classic procedural crime series traditionally produced by national broadcasters;[22] on the other hand, they are part of a promotional discourse that producers and distributors are never tired to repeat when discussing the international appeal of their new products.[23] In the DETECt framework, therefore, the complexity of contemporary TV crime series became a perfect example of transnational and transcultural European popular culture.

All the articles included in this special section have been researched and written by members of the DETECt consortium. Coming from seven different countries and looking at television series in almost every corner of the continent, these studies present a multi-faceted analysis of the diversity of contemporary European crime television. With no ambition to provide an exhaustive mapping of the enormous, and constantly growing, production in this field, the articles nevertheless touch on all the analytical perspectives adopted in the DETECt project, taking into consideration phenomena pertaining to the production, distribution, consumption of TV crime narratives in Europe as well as their ability to give shape to significant representations of its varied cultural identity.

The first contribution – 'BBC's *Sherlock* and Europeanness: A Case Study on the Circulation of a European TV Crime Series in Italy' –, by Luca Antoniazzi and Sara Casoli, closely follows the creation, international dissemination and reception of one of the most relevant European TV crime series. *Sherlock* can be first seen as a quintessentially British show, but this specific case study helps to emphasise the contradictions at the core of the process of European integration, focusing first of all on the obstacles and resistances to its emergence. The production, distribution and reception of *Sherlock* can be seen as exemplary of the development of contemporary quality crime shows in Europe, a trend that was crucial for the creation of truly transnational series in Europe but that also highlights their difficulties in becoming truly popular phenomena at a European level. The article closes with an analysis of the Italian circulation of the series, showing how even though a significant section of the audience has deeply engaged with the show, its quantitative success remained comparatively limited.

Laetitia Biscarrat's 'On the Circulation of European TV Crime Series: A Case Study of the French Televisual Landscape (1957–2018)' also combines the study of the distribution and the consumption of European crime series to explore the circulation of non-domestic series in a specific territory. Building on a far-reaching quantitative analysis of the foreign shows imported by French TV over seven decades, Biscarrat is able to highlight the increasing diversification in the type of shows broadcast by linear television in France, as well as the obstacles that persist in promoting a deeper kind of diversity both behind and in front of the camera.

Valentina Re and Kim Toft Hansen's 'Producing Peripheral Locations: Double Marginality in Italian and Danish TV Crime' takes more literally the topic of glocalisation, working in the framework of 'location studies.'[24] The article examines in parallel two case studies, offering an unusual and thought-provoking analysis comparing two TV industries in the North and South of Europe. As it is currently the case with crime narratives on a global and intermedial level, both Italian and Danish TV series have engaged more and more with locations far from their typical metropolitan settings. Re and Hansen explore the idea of "peripheral locations" and discuss how the production and the representation strategies both contributed to strengthen this phenomenon.

A rather similar subject is at the centre of the fourth article included in this special section, 'Away from London: Crime and Regional Film Commissions in the UK.' Here, Markus Schleich explores closely the policy background against which this widespread move away from the traditional use of the capital cities as the privileged setting of TV crime series happened. In particular, the author examines the impact of United Kingdom's film policies through the case of the Yorkshire Film Commission, and discusses a specific crime series, *The ABC Murders* (BBC One, 2018).

Anna Keszeg and Roxana Eichel's 'Paths to Quality Television in Eastern Europe: Where Hungarian Romanian HBO From?' takes again a wider perspective, looking at different aspects of the production, distribution and representation of Eastern European TV crime series to illustrate some key traits of the important development in this market. The article focuses on Hungarian and Romanian shows produced by HBO Europe. Eastern European crime series confirm larger trends that shape the creation and circulation of popular narratives in general, and crime stories in particular: the strategies of the US corporation, the strong ties to Nordic Noir, the role of remakes as well as the connection with art cinema and the film festival circuit prove once again how a fully comparative perspective, looking at intermedial relationships and critically building on glocalism, can be crucial to understand the complexity of European crime narratives.

After a first part taking more an industrial perspective and completing it, in a systemic analysis, with narrative and consumptions aspects, the last two articles collected here forward with more strength some relevant questions about the politics of representation and reception of

European crime narratives, with a direct focus on issues of identity and diversity. Contemporary crime narratives, in all media, have indeed also become the ideal terrain to present new form of gender, ethnic as well as 'neurodivergent' identities. This process obviously challenges all simplistic notions of European identity as a self-evident, one-dimensional cultural construct and has been used to diversify the representation of stereotyped or marginalised communities both politically and commercially.

Álvaro Luna-Dubois's 'Constructing Ethnic Minority Detectives in French and German Crime Television Series' looks at how contemporary television crime series offer more room for the protagonism of characters from underrepresented social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds when compared to the past trajectories of the genre. After developing a taxonomy of different types of detective figures from a minority background, Luna concludes that, while we are certainly witnessing an important increase in the representation of minorities in European popular culture and society, the shows he analysed do not provide an entirely satisfying expression of the complexity of their rich cultural identities.

The closing essay, 'European Neurodivergent Detectives and the Politics of Autism Representation,' has been written by the principal investigator of the DETECt research project, Monica Dall'Asta, addressing a much-less discussed yet crucial kind of social and cultural identity through the frame of 'neurodivergence.' The article first offers an introduction to the current debates about the political significance of autism, a condition which has been widely, and controversially, re-defined in the last decades. The topic is suited to address contemporary crime series, as many protagonists of these shows are explicitly or (more often) implicitly portrayed as subjects with autistic traits. Through an insightful analysis of viewers' and critics' responses to a corpus of European TV crime series focused on 'autistic' detectives, Dall'Asta proves how the concept of 'neurodivergence' can be used to address how popular crime narratives represent, promote and question new cultural identities on both a national and transnational level.

The articles included in this special issue offer a rich and compelling account of the many perspectives, theoretical frameworks and methodologies that can be applied to better understand contemporary European television crime series, while at the same time touching and building upon some crucial, transversal concepts able to emphasize the relevance and variety of European crime narratives across nations and across media. While not providing a systematic mapping or a complete understanding of the many questions at place, we hope that this collection could give the reader at least a number of useful inputs on relevant concepts, issues, spaces, examples, and provide grounds for much needed further research in television and media studies.

Notes

[1] For more details on DETECt, see the presentation of the project in this issue.

[2] Gunhild Agger, 'Fictions of Europe', *NORDICOM: Review of Nordic Research on Media and Communication* 22.1 (2001), p. 43.

[3] Ib Bondebjerg, 'Transnational Europe: TV-drama, Co-production Networks and Mediated Cultural Encounters,' *Palgrave Communications* 2 (2016), https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2016.34.

[4] The main findings of the MeCETES project are presented in: Ib Bondebjerg, Eva Novrup Redvall, and Andrew Higson (eds.), *European Cinema and Television: Cultural Policy and Everyday Life* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Ib Bondebjerg, Eva Novrup Redvall, Andrew Higson (eds.), *Transnational European Television Drama: Productions, Genres and Audiences* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan 2017).

[5] An insightful study of the circulation and reception of European crime series in the UK, Belgium and Denmark is found in the chapter 'The Dark Side of Society: Crime Drama,' in Bondebjerg *et alii*, *Transnational European Television Drama*, pp. 223-255.

[6] See Luca Barra and Massimo Scaglioni, *A European Television Fiction Renaissance: Premium Production Models and Transnational Circulation* (London, New York: Routledge 2021).

[7] Agger, 'Fictions of Europe,' p. 43.

[8] Hansen, Peacock, Turnbull, 'Down These Mean European Streets,' *European Television Crime Drama and Beyond*, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan 2018), p. 6.

[9] See Jan Baetens, Ana Schultze, Fred Truyen, 'Donald Westlake's Ordo: Not Euro, not Noir, but Euro-Noir?', *European Review*, published online 15 July 2020, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798720001180.

[10] See Stefano Baschiera, 'European Crime Cinema and the Auteur', *European Review*, published online on 10 August 2020, 1-13, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798720001143.

[11] See Migozzi, Jacques, Natacha Levet, and Lucie Amir. 2020. "Gatekeep-ers of Noir: The Paradoxical Internationalization of the French Crime Fiction Field." *European Review*, published online on 16 July, 2020, 1-17, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798720001118.

[12] See Lucie Amir, Biscarrat Laetitia and Jacquelin Alice, 'Impossible Euronoir? Le polar européen dans sa réception critique française,' *¿Interrogations?* 32 (2021), https://www.revue-interrogations.org/Impossible-Euronoir-Le-polar [accessed 1 October 2021].

[13] Monica Dall'Asta, Natacha Levet, and Federico Pagello (eds.), *Glocality and Cosmopolitanism in European Crime Narratives*, special issue *Academic Quarter* 22 (2021), https://journals.aau.dk/index.php/ak/issue/view/411 [accessed August 23, 2021].

[14] See Jacques Migozzi, 'Crime Fiction Import/Export in European Publishing: The Emergence of Euro Noir through the Process of Translation' *Academic Quarter* 22 (2021), doi: https://doi.org/10.5278/ojs.academicquarter.vi22.6599.

[15] See Sándor Kálai and Anna Keszeg, 'Is There such a Thing as a Hungarian Nordic Noir?: Cultural Homogenization and Glocal Agency,' *Academic Quarter* 22 (2021), doi: https://doi.org/10.5278/ojs.academicquarter.vi22.6600.

[16] See Lothar Mikos, 'Berlin's Cosmopolitan Production Culture,' *Academic Quarter* 22 (2021), doi: https://doi.org/10.5278/ojs.academicquarter.vi22.6602.

[17] See Massimiliano Coviello and Valentina Re, 'Translocal Landscapes: La porta rossa and the Use of Peripheral Locations in Contemporary Italian TV Crime Drama,' *Academic Quarter* 22 (2021), doi: https://doi.org/10.5278/ojs.academicquarter.vi22.6601.

[18] See Federico Pagello, 'Dal giallo al crime. Glocalismo, transnculturalità e transmedialità del poliziesco italiano contemporaneo.' *mediAzioni* 28 (2020), 30-47, http://www.mediazioni.sitlec.unibo.it/index.php/no-28-special-issue-2020/ [accessed 1 October 2021].

[19] On the impact of Nordic Noir see, among other sources: Glen Creeber, 'Killing Us Softly: Investigating the Aesthetics, Philosophy and Influence of Nordic Noir Television,' *The Journal of Popular Television* 3.1 (2015), doi: 10.1386/jptv.3.1.21_1; Kim Toft Hansen, Steven Peacock, Sue Turnbull (eds.), *European Television Crime Drama and Beyond* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan 2018); Linda Badley, Andrew Nestingen, and Jallo Seppälä, Jaakko (Eds.) *Nordic Noir, Adaptation, Appropriation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2021).

[20] See Elke Weissmann, 'Local, National, Transnational. *Y Gwyll/Hinterland* as Crime of/for All Places,' in *European Television Crime Drama and Beyond*, eds. Kim Toft Hansen, Steven Peacock and Sue Turnbull (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan 2018), 119-137.

[21] See Kim Akass, Janet McCabe (eds.), *Quality TV. Contemporary American Television and Beyond* (London: IB Tauris 2007); and Jason Mittell, *Complex TV. The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (New York: New York University Press 2015).

[22] See Lindsay Steenberg, '*The Fall* and TV Noir,' *Critical Studies in Television*, 18.1 (2017), 58-75, https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476416664185; and Federico Pagello, 'Images of the European Crisis: Populism and the Contemporary Crime TV series,' *European Review*, published online on July 2020, 1-14, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798720001167.

[23] See Valentina Re, 'Crime sì, ma di qualità. Sulla circolazione transnazionale del prodotto televisivo,' *Imago* 21.1 (2020), 167-183.

[24] For an introduction the methodology of location studies see Kim Toft Hansen, Anne Marit Waade, *Locating Nordic Noir* (Basingtoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2017), 53-76.

BBC's *Sherlock* and Europeanness: A Case Study on the Circulation of a European TV Crime Series in Italy

Luca Antoniazzi and Sara Casoli
University of Bologna

This paper considers BBC's *Sherlock* (2010-2017) to intervene in debates on European identity and the transnational circulation of popular culture. The series, one of the most recent and successful television adaptations of Arthur Conan Doyle's novels, is set in contemporary rather than Victorian London. It represents an example of both 'quality' international television and 'prestige' British popular culture. As noted by other writers, among the characteristics that enabled the commercial success of the series is its capacity to merge nostalgic elements deriving from the widespread imagery of the 'original' Sherlock Holmes with new and innovative textual components (e.g. use of digital technology, social media). The paper considers how *Sherlock* negotiates between tradition and innovation by bringing together past and present. It argues that such negotiations could perhaps be considered a mark of Europeanness, understood as a process of negotiating national identities. The paper then looks at the reception and circulation of *Sherlock* in Italy through the lens of cultural encounter theory. The series can be considered a success in terms of ratings and audience share. To some extent *Sherlock* has triggered both reflections on British television and self-reflections on Italian culture. Nevertheless, from the data we have collected, we observe that such reflections, however significant, remain limited.

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INTRODUCTION[1]

Sherlock Holmes' observational attitude could be particularly helpful when it comes to dealing with serial TV as 'material documentary evidence that is used to make sense of our lives,'[2] as TV can tell us a lot about the conventions, traditions and the cultural shaping of our society. Through its analysis of *Sherlock* (BBC, 2010–2017), this paper deals with European identity and the exchange of popular culture within Europe.[3] An increasingly rich literature has recently been produced on transnational media circulation in Europe. In particular, we are interested here in cultural encounters with Europeanness as processes that can help to bridge cultures by creating common ground among audiences in different countries.[4]

As usual for case studies, our work has no ambition to be exhaustive, or fully generalizable, and its conclusions will certainly be partial. However, we believe that much can be learned from *Sherlock* as a series that has been conceived both as an embodiment of British cultural heritage and as an international product suitable for export. *Sherlock* is unmistakably a British product, but it is also relevant as far as 'Europeanness' is concerned. Milly Buonanno has interestingly claimed that 'the high reputation for quality enjoyed in Italy, as elsewhere, by British television drama, can even turn [...] [marked] Britishness [...] into the proud emblem of a shared transnational *Europeanness*.' She defines 'marked Europeanness' as the 'unmistakable evidence of European involvement and presence at some level of the creative and production process.'[5]

All four seasons of *Sherlock* and the special 'The Abominable Bride' were all planned and written before the Brexit referendum[6] – but one might legitimately ask, why, after Brexit, one chooses a British case study to talk about European identity? Although the EU project and Europeanness are related, we do not conceive them as totally overlapping. Should we not consider Switzerland, Norway, or other countries in central Europe as non-European because they are not part of the EU? Even if UK citizens voted to leave the EU, this does not make them non-European. 'To be a "European" is different from being a member of a "European nation",' wrote Philip Schlesinger.[7] It is also noteworthy that even the historically Eurosceptic UK, the day after the EU referendum appeared split almost in half, and with 46% of people aged between 18 and 25, mostly 'remainers', not showing up at the ballot box.[8] It would be inaccurate to think of Brexit as a return to an 'original' British identity; rather, Brexit is more reasonably understood as the start of an identity transition shaped and articulated by new forms of nationalist rhetoric.

In the following sections we seek to answer these two questions: (RQ1) To what extent can *Sherlock* be regarded as marked by 'Europeanness'? (RQ2) What does the Italian circulation and media reception of this series tell us about cultural encounters and European identity?

In the next section, as anticipated, after introducing the concept of cultural encounter, we define what we mean by Europeanness. Subsequently we proceed to answer our research questions in two distinct sections. Firstly, to answer RQ1 we analyse two aspects of *Sherlock*: its production history; and its textual and narrative construction.[9] After analysing its production, we carry out a textual analysis of the series, taking a narratological perspective[10] to understand how *Sherlock* mediates between national and non-national identities and to what extent it could be read as marked by Europeanness. As discussed by Allrath, Gymnich and Surkamp, a narratological, textualist perspective on a TV series 'regard(s) structure as a carrier of meaning and seek(s) to capture the interplay between form and content.'[11] Hence, this approach can be useful in analysing *Sherlock*'s ability to negotiate between national and transnational (and possibly

European) identities. By analyzing the aesthetic and narrative configuration of the series as well as its plot devices, we consider how *Sherlock* merges national culture with American TV features and, while fostering the idea of a national identity, also challenges it.

We then consider the scheduling strategies of the Italian networks that have broadcast the series. This scheduling provides both quantitative and qualitative information about the popularity of the series, consumption and exploitation patterns, and the demographics of its audience.[12] We also look at the reaction of the press to identify the features of the series that have proven most attractive to journalists and commentators. As Paul Rixon reminds us, '[b]y analysing television reviews and associated critical articles, we can gain an insight into how a society values, reflects on, and struggles over the meaning of television as a cultural medium.'[13] We have collected all the available published journalistic materials from Italian media and looked at quantitative data on programming, audience share and ratings. Before getting into the heart of the findings, in the section that immediately follows, we lay out the research, defining the theoretical framework and conceptual boundaries.

'EUROPEANNESS' AND CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS

As anticipated in the introduction, in order to develop our analysis of *Sherlock* and understand its relevance to European identity, a sound definition of Europeanness is required. Cultural identities can be defined as symbolic systems that justify and explain the political alliance of different social groups and their commitment to stay together as a unit to protect the life and wellbeing of each member. Put simply, collective cultural identities tell us, cognitively and emotionally, why we are together and 'aid in the spread of habits of voluntary compliance'[14] to certain social rules and conventions. Neil Fligstein, in his widely read contribution[15] to debates on European identity, acknowledges that, although weak and confined to certain social classes, in many European countries we can see emerging a sense of identification with the process of European unification. A substantial, although decreasing, proportion of people in Europe feel they have both a national and a European identity. However, in his illuminating account, Fligstein does not provide an objectivist definition of European identity, basing his assessment on how people 'feel' and 'perceive' their own relationship with the EU project.

Klaus Eder[16] argued that European identity cannot be defined as traditional national identities through normative, monolithic, and substantive definitions. Nor can such identity be defined in terms of pure cosmopolitanism, as a radical transcendence from national dimensions.

Eder proposes European identity be rooted in the collective memory of the 'murderous nationalist past' of Europe (e.g. world wars, colonialism) and its destructive socio-political consequences. He writes that it is useful to look at 'European collective identity by viewing it as the accumulated conflictual efforts to construct the particularity of the Europeans as a transnational people'[17] who reject such violent heritage. At the core of European identity there is therefore the struggle against a violently nationalist past and, at the same time, the tensions generated by the impossibility of totally transcending these roots. There is a need to remember national identities with external (European) interlocutors that could encourage critical reflection and simultaneously strengthen mutual recognition and collective creativity. Identity formation, in Eder's account, should be understood both as a process of remembering together local or national European pasts and as 'a collective learning process in which people not only become conscious about the collective "We" [...] [but also about the] particular obligations that these Europeans share among themselves and with no one else.'[18]

One might argue that, in the age of what has been called globalization, these processes of identity negotiations are shared by many countries around the world. This might be true to some extent, but as many media scholars have stressed, globalization theory has often overemphasised the magnitude of certain processes that in some cases were not even unprecedented.[19] Although there have been some significant (and diverse) changes with the advent of new technologies (satellite technologies, the Internet) and new international trade agreements, world cultural identities are still very much national (where nation exist not only on paper). Given this background, we see the EU political unification process as unique because it entails a real and profound collective institutional change with huge repercussions for all social groups forming its constituent national communities.

We believe that these negotiations of identity, based on the sharing of national memory and learning of collective consciousness, are inscribed in some European television dramas to the point of becoming the distinguishing mark of Europeanness. Writing about the Welsh series *Y Gwyll/Hinterland* (BBC, 2013-2016), shot in rural Wales, Elke Weissmann[20] identifies three levels of symbolic realms that are respectively meaningful to local, national, and international audiences. The series attracted local spectators of rural Wales; a portion of British national audiences, mainly within urban cosmopolitan groups; and a significant portion of European international audiences. Similarly to many Nordic Noir products, 'the series [*Hinterland*] was made for all three realms and as a result includes significant textual negotiations that mark them.'[21] The series was produced and supported by a range of different organisations at local, national, and European levels that mirrored such tripartition.[22] As is common in the European context, many key organisations involved in the production

and distribution of the programme were supported with public money; as such, their mandates include a mix of economic and extra-economic goals (e.g. giving a voice to minority groups, providing a more diverse picture of European culture by exposing British margins, and making these places visible to help the tourist industry). It is precisely this negotiation that distinguishes our still-emerging European culture, this tension between keeping symbols rooted in specific places and national histories and making them understandable and relatable to different cultures to allow their broader circulation. *Hinterland* is therefore characterized by marked Europeanness as its stylistic and narrative negotiations reflect those of European cultural identity. The relative transnational success of this type of series demonstrates how synergy and negotiation among local, national and transnational components can be capitalized to target a diverse audience. The feature of Europeanness might not be so easy to identify, as Buonanno herself foresaw, as we also observe 'unmarked Europeanness' in the case of TV formats circulating transnationally that undergo a process of strong indigenization and even ready-made products imported and 'mediated' by national industries.[23] Also, Buonanno adds, European features are not always recognized by audiences and their reaction to such materials can be diverse. In this specific respect, cultural encounters theory can help us to fruitfully consider audience reception of transitional cultural products.

Cultural encounters refer to experiences of and engagement with foreign or culturally distant media productions. Media scholars in sociology of culture and media studies have shown the capacity of transnational cultural encounters to bridge different cultures.[24] Audiences recognize both similarities and differences during exposures to 'otherness' and this peculiar relatability in turn triggers a process of self-reflection on one's own culture. Looking at UK audience reception of the Scandinavian series *Broen/ The Bridge* (SVT1/DR1, 2011), Ib Bondebjerg concludes: 'what we see again is this double effect of mediated cultural encounters: the interpretation of (and fascination with) the Nordic Other prompts a self-reflexive discussion of British culture and society.'[25] Aforementioned established sociologists such as Neil Fligstein and Klaus Eder, along with cultural policy scholar Monica Sassatelli,[26] have also argued that long-lasting exposure to cultures from other countries can bring social groups closer. This argument is important, or should be, for all those who are worried about the spread of national populism and cultural prejudice.[27] But it is even more important as an argument for those engaged in conversations related to European cultural identity formation and the crisis of the EU as a political entity.

Bondebjerg identifies three levels at which encounters can activate emotional and cognitive responses. Responses and reflections at the *personal level* refer to the resonance of media narratives with particular life experiences of individuals, such as love affairs, childhood traumas, and family relationships. Responses at the *collective level* relate to collective identity and social groups, national or regional cultures, social

class, or gender. An example could be the recognition of and empathy for similar dynamics of class emancipation in a different social context, or the relatability to the cultural history of a different country. Finally, at the *universal level*, the deepest level of engagement, audiences' reflections are triggered by basic human feelings as, for example, empathy for others' humiliation and suffering. Audiences' reactions can be simultaneously triggered at different levels, but given the scope of this paper and the definition of Europeanness that we have embraced, central to our analysis is the collective level of self-reflexivity.

It is important to stress that Bondebjerg and colleagues acknowledge that critical self-reflexivity is only a possibility and not an automatic reaction to cultural encounters. Some programmes do not challenge stereotypes or structured schemas relating to different cultures. Bondebjerg and colleagues give the example of historical dramas such as *1864* (DR1, 2014) and *Downton Abbey* (ITV, 2010-15) as fictions that 'are primarily reconfirmations of an already established reality.'[28] But even popular crime dramas like *Midsomer Murders*, which the authors also consider in their analysis, seem to us to encourage uncritical reaffirmation of national stereotypes. The programme relies on superficial repurposing of narrative tropes of the golden age of English literature (e.g. politeness, the mystery of rural England), on caricatured characters and locations, traditionalist values embodied in large parts of its episodes (a producer famously referred to the series as 'the last bastion of Englishness').[29] The encounter of *Midsomer Murders* by Danish audiences, argue the authors, triggers processes of recognition of similarities and differences with English society — and we do not dispute that; but the potential of the series to trigger transformative processes and cultural closeness remains questionable.[30] In summary, in this section we have defined Europeanness, and although it is a useful concept, we have shown that it is not always easy to capture. We have also stressed that when products from another European country are encountered on-screen, they might not trigger critical self-reflection on cultural identity.

Let us now consider the specific case of *Sherlock* to intervene in these discussions. In the next section we address RQ1, essentially showing that *Sherlock* can be considered European because: (1) it is produced by a public service broadcaster, a raw model in many EU countries, that is bound by a public mandate to root its production in national culture while dealing with an ever more transnational TV market; (2) it is a product that is thought to challenge American industries nationally and internationally, so it is designed to be similar to but distinct from American output (reiterating the traditional America vs Europe rivalry that now extends to international television more than ever before);[31] and (3) *Sherlock*'s writers are forced to challenge the same cultural heritage in which the series is supposed to be rooted.

SHERLOCK AND EUROPEANNESS

Sherlock embodies similar textual and cultural negotiations that characterize products such as *Y Gwyll/Hinterland* and many Nordic Noir TV series. Analysing the production history of *Sherlock*'s showrunners Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss, we can see how it has been shaped by the interaction of different players, like BBC Wales, BBC Worldwide and the American network PBS, mediating between national (even local) and transnational concerns. However, the role of the BBC and its ongoing (albeit recently weakened) institutional rootedness to the European tradition of PSB is key to understanding *Sherlock*, as both a cultural and an economic product.

Sherlock is designed to meet the various needs of the players involved in its production, from creating a show addressing the nation by means of its cultural heritage (BBC's formal mandate) and textual conformation, to more industrial and commercial necessities connected to 'selling' *Sherlock* outside the UK. The series benefits from the high reputation of its writers and producers, since Gatiss, Moffatt, and Moffat's wife — renowned TV producer Sue Vertue — are all well-established figures in the British TV industry. Thanks to their position in the landscape of the British TV market, the creators of *Sherlock* have been able to produce a hybrid (and therefore economically risky) show, which merges national and transnational aims. On one hand, the series marks its British identity by exploiting the familiarity of the detective within a British cultural tradition in order to articulate, elaborate and prompt an idea of the 'nation' that cooperates in maintaining a sense of cultural identity. Additionally, the format of the series also confirms its British connotation. With each season split into three, ninety-minute episodes, *Sherlock* recalls the tradition of British police procedurals[32] and a sense of stylistic grandeur that is typical of many British mini-series.[33] On the other hand, the series, like other TV dramas, is a nationally produced commodity that can be traded worldwide and which gains transnational circulation in different markets as a competitor to US 'quality' TV.[34] Interestingly, the ninety-minute format proves crucial to promoting the international dimension of the series. As noted by Creeber, this format 'does allow each episode a scale unlike the majority of television dramas and provides *Sherlock* with a sense of 'event television', also permitting the series' marketability to overseas sales territories as a stand-out programme, serving to promote the BBC as a 'quality broadcaster.'[35] Mixing traditionally British elements with other features emphasising its transnational 'saleability', *Sherlock* shows the effort, by the most important European PBS broadcasting network, which has often served as a model for other European television, to renegotiate its role and priorities. Evans writes that the

> *BBC's version of Sherlock Holmes reflects his source [Holmes as a character] in a modern public service broadcaster negotiating both its position within a global television market and its own cultural past. The combination of quality and prestige drama that he encapsulates echoes both the BBC's response to the growing global popularity of U.S. drama and how it continues to negotiate its place within a long history of British heritage and literary productions that pre-dates television.*[36]

The BBC's model for producing TV series that must combine the necessities of both the domestic and the international market can be seen as a virtuous example for other European PBS television networks coping with a changing context, problems and prospects.[37] Indeed, with *Sherlock*, the BBC demonstrates how public broadcasting services can place themselves in the international market as a brand not only in commercial but also in cultural terms. Proposing itself as a productive subject capable of attracting a varied and international audience while reaffirming its cultural value to the public, the BBC conciliates national and transnational, as well as cultural and economic values.

The balance between these divergent directives is crucial to determining not only the commercial but also the cultural and aesthetic identity of the series. The textual negotiations that we find in *Sherlock*, the stratified and multifaceted nature of the value proposition of the series, are key features of television drama and reflections of those 'conflictual efforts' identified by Klaus Eder, mentioned in the previous section, as defining features of an emerging European identity. In this regard, we can look at *Sherlock* as a multimodal text and analyse it through a narratological toolkit, as anticipated in the introduction.

Marks of Europeanness can be found in the text itself, in its aesthetic configuration and narrative structure. As observed by Elizabeth Evans (2014), *Sherlock* concerns itself with dual standards of 'quality' television, British and American. While the former predominantly concerns the story, the latter shapes the discourse. The series, indeed, recreates repeatedly the aesthetic characteristics of US quality TV drama. For example, it exhibits a cinematographic visual style (well-finished,lit, and enriched in texture, sometimes with the addition of text) and fast editing of scenes, illustrated when Sherlock uses his 'mind palace' to solve a mystery or when the series displays Sherlock's deductions by 'writing' his observations directly on the image. Moreover, *Sherlock* employs entangled, puzzled and non-linear storylines that challenge viewers' capacity to follow the events. This is evident, to name just one case, in episode S3E03 'The Sign of Three', both when Sherlock questions some women about 'the Mayfly Man' in a sort of mental courthouse and when, during his best man's speech at John's wedding, he resolves a case in real time. The work carried out by Moffat and Gatiss on the characters tends toward a transformation of the figures

we find in the Sherlockian canon: Watson, Moriarty, Irene Adler, Mary, and Sherlock himself are more complex and psychologically profound characters than their literary counterparts, as requested by the dominant mode of televisual storytelling. The employment of all these aesthetic, stylistic and narrative strategies presented by *Sherlock* can be ascribed to a phenomenon of incorporation of American 'know-how' in the field of TV series aesthetics by the British – and, more broadly, European – TV industry. Aligning *Sherlock* with the standards of contemporary high-quality seriality, the adoption of these features helped the series to circulate internationally and to attract an international audience.

However, while *Sherlock*'s discourse emphasises the influence of the US's TV aesthetics, its British origins are not neglected. By actualizing the adventures of Sherlock Holmes, Moffat and Gatiss' series does not forget to establish a bond with the British tradition of 'quality' television, the prestige TV drama, which privileges literary adaptations and references to British cultural heritage. Holmes is a British 'popular hero' who, functioning as a focal point of cultural reference that condenses and connects cultural and ideological concerns,[38] establishes a direct linkage with a certain type of *Britishness* and consolidates its belonging to the British cultural identity. While modernizing Sherlock Holmes' adventures both in style and content (for example, by setting the stories in a 21st century, cosmopolitan, technological London), the series adapts them with deep respect for the traditional Sherlockian canon. The continuous references to the deerstalker hat and its meta-textual iconicity are just the most evident figurative trait that connects *Sherlock* to the cultural heritage of the original Holmes.

Other elements fostering this connection are the recurring appearances of established and well-known characters of the Holmesian world (including Watson, Lestrade, Moriarty, Mrs Hudson and Irene Adler) and the more or less explicit references to narrative situations from Conan Doyle's literary canon (from 'The Hounds of the Baskervilles', S2E02, to the 'Reichenbach Falls', S2E03). Moreover, while Sherlock Holmes is a highly globalized figure and frequently exported outside the UK,[39] *Sherlock* stresses its Britishness by the use of stereotypical icons (e.g. the black cabs, the tea drinking habits of Mrs Hudson, the gentlemen's club attended by Mycroft) and an air of Victoriana permeating the entire series (which culminates in the special episode 'The Abominable Bride'). But, again, both the BBC public mandate and the size of the domestic market that Britain shares with many European countries set economic and aesthetic limitations that American productions do not normally experience. For example, the American televisual adaptation of Conan Doyle's book, *Elementary* (CBS 2012), displays an aesthetic that is substantially dissimilar from BBC and other previous adaptations (e.g. by using shorter episodes and an entirely different setting). Although both series are set in the contemporary world, *Sherlock* relates far more closely to Doyle's work. As demonstrated by Roberta Pearson,[40] these differences were not simply influenced by

commercial strategies but ultimately due to the European policy and industrial environment that influenced the aesthetics of *Sherlock*.

Even if confirmed by the cultural heritage of Sherlock Holmes and his 'cultural currency' as a British popular hero, the national identity and the cultural stereotypes embedded in *Sherlock* are challenged by the changes made to the source material by Moffat and Gatiss. Indeed, the Europeanness of *Sherlock* also emerges from the show's questioning of its Britishness and a process of self-reflection on British culture. The rewritings operated by Moffat and Gatiss contribute to distancing *Sherlock* from a complete adherence to a flat representation of British cultural history, leaving room for forms of meditation, self-reflexivity, and intersection between national and non-national identities. For example, on more than one occasion the BBC series performs a social and political critique of British institutions (often personified by Mycroft but also by Lady Smallwood), specifically targeting the endurance of a 'post-colonial melancholia'[41] as well as nostalgia for imperialism. As discussed by Paul Gilroy, residue of the imperial and colonial culture still lives in contemporary British culture and society, which sometimes shows an 'inability to really work through the loss of global prestige and the economic and political benefits that once attended it.'[42]

Sherlock exhibits signs of criticism towards an imperial past and these melancholic feelings of loss and decline. Interesting in that regard is Martin Freeman's rendering of Doctor Watson and his post-traumatic experience and aversion for the Afghanistan war. Like his Victorian literary predecessor, Freeman's Watson is a veteran who fought during an Afghan war, but the distress he feels toward his military experience and the difficulties he suffers in reintegrating into civilian society (as clearly seen in episode S1E01 'A Study in Pink' and throughout other episodes, including S3E02 'The Sign of Three') are symptomatic of a mutated socio-political reality unlike the one in which Conan Doyle was writing. Thus, while inviting the audience to consider the differences with the Victorian Watson, Freeman's interpretation makes viewers reflect on what it means to fight a war in Afghanistan in the 21st century, calling for a critical consideration of the contemporary legacies of imperialism and their consequences in a transformed geopolitical landscape.

Another example of how *Sherlock* exploits its literary sources to conduct a critical analysis of British society and the UK's position in the contemporary world is the characterization of Sherlock Holmes himself. Rather than representing the famous detective as 'an exemplar of enlightenment order, capable of securing the capital of the British Empire through a combination of romantic genius and rationality' as the canonical Holmes was,[43] Benedict Cumberbatch's Sherlock is a sociopathic and isolated detective who operates on the edge between what is or is not socially and legally accepted, often acting as a threat to the British social order rather than as its keeper. For example, he is often rude towards the

people around him, as he seems incapable of compassion and empathy; he disregards and scorns icons of the British State such as Scotland Yard and Buckingham Palace, as when he sits in the Palace wearing only a bed-sheet in episode S2E01 'A Scandal in Belgravia'; he tortures people, throwing a man out of a window in the same episode, or even kills them, like when he assassinates Magnus in cold blood, in episode S3E03 'His Last Vow'. However, even if *Sherlock* shows a certain degree of criticism towards the social and political reality of contemporary England, traces of postcolonial melancholia and representations of British imperialism are still present in the series. An example can be found in episode S1E02 'The Blind Banker', where the narration enforces the old stereotypes of Orientalism, of the 'Yellow Peril'[44] and of Chinese people as culturally alien – and bearers of fascination, anxieties and fears.

To some extent, therefore, *Sherlock* displays a tension between the reaffirmation of the Britishness of Sherlock Holmes, and a questioning of its values and worldview. In this gap there is, in our opinion, room for manoeuvre for a self-reflexive analysis of the British cultural identity that can be considered a step forward in the discussion of a transnational – or even European – cultural identity. The open-ended but recognisable trait of Europeanness refers to the real questioning of national culture due to new geopolitical challenges and the internationalisation of the economy. This process is particularly strong in the EU, especially when compared to similar processes in other areas of the world. In this sense, to some extent, *Sherlock* can be seen as a British-European product as it challenges several tropes of English national culture and evokes themes such as a post-colonial melancholia perceived also in other European nations.

Nevertheless, arguing that *Sherlock* directly or indirectly bears some marks of Europeanness does not imply that these marks are necessarily recognized and appreciated by audiences. In order to tackle this issue, we will now take into consideration the Italian reception and circulation of the series.

ITALIAN CIRCULATION AND CRITICAL RECEPTION

In this section we address RQ2. We look at the programming and critical reception of *Sherlock* to see what publics it was offered to, and what types of conversation it has generated in the media. The circulation of *Sherlock* is articulated in three stages – penetration, expansion, and consolidation – each centred on the launch of the series by different exploitation channels, free-to-air, pay TV, and VoD (see Figure 1).

The first stage begins with the broadcasting of the first two seasons between 2011 and 2013. The penetration strategy that the media company

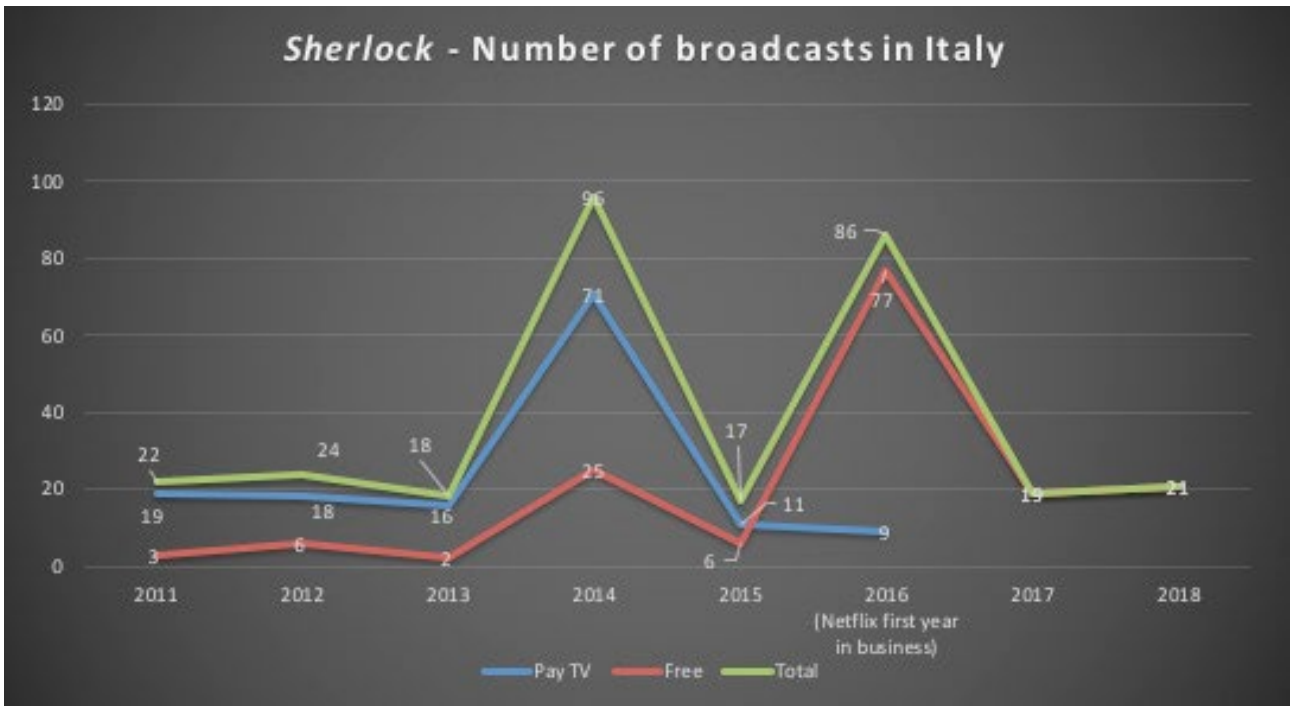

Fig. 1: Number of broadcasts of *Sherlock* on free-to-air and pay TV channels 2009–18 (Source: Auditel ratings data from www.auditel.it, elaboration added).

Mediaset designed for the product had two routes: pay TV and free-to-air television. The first episode of *Sherlock*, S1E01 'A Study in Pink' (*Uno Studio in Rosa*), was broadcast for the first time on pay channel Premium Joi (19 runs), a mainstream channel whose schedule is devoted to family entertainment. The first three episodes were broadcast in February 2011 on Fridays in prime-time slots and repeated between May and June, on a diverse range of time slots and days of the week. The second Mediaset exploitation trajectory began in December 2011, during the Christmas holidays, when the programme was broadcast in prime-time by free-to-air Mediaset channel Italia 1, a channel mainly aimed at teenagers and young adults. The average audience share on Italia 1 was a good 6.98% where the average audience share of the channel the same month was 7.82% (see Figure 2). Thus, through its pay TV channel, Mediaset tried to exploit the programme's potential to attract a generalist public as family entertainment. Although Joi is a pay channel, the attempt to engage a larger audience mirrored the choice of the BBC, which broadcast the programme in prime time on BBC1. Moreover, through free-to-air TV, Mediaset exploited the product by targeting a relatively young audience capitalizing on the innovative textual elements of the series (contemporary London, technology, gay-friendly attitudes). To do so, Mediaset, as the BBC did in the UK, created a broadcasting event for Christmas to mainly target teenagers and young adults, but with the potential to further engage families.

Sherlock's life on Joi in 2012 continued following a similar scheduling pattern as in 2011. Between 26 June and 11 July, the first series was broadcast on digital terrestrial television (DTT) channel Italia 2, Mediaset's semi-generalist channel primarily addressed at a young male audience,

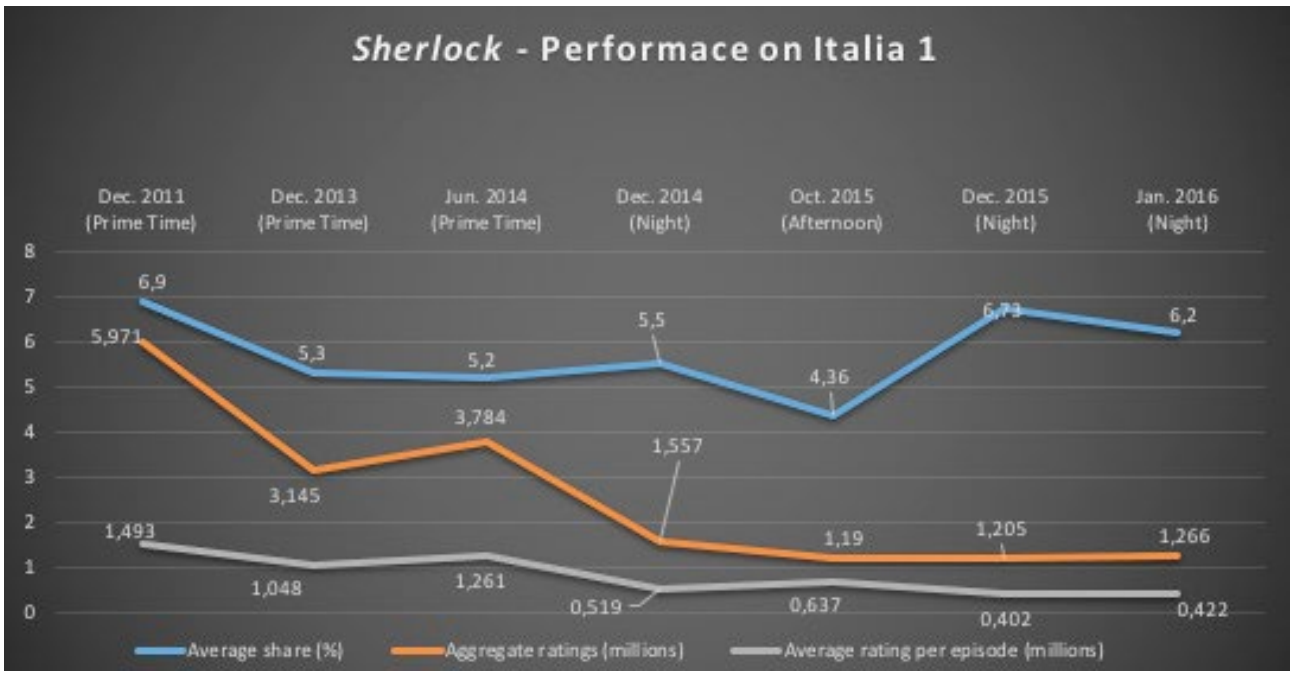

Fig. 2: *Sherlock* audience share and ratings on Italian television channel Italia 1 2011-16 (Source: Auditel ratings data from www.auditel.it, elaboration added). Columns 1, 2 and 3 (Dec. 2011, 2013 and Jun. 2014) include data for one episode aired in January of the following year. Column 1 includes data of the three episodes broadcast in prime-time, as for the other columns, plus the data of an additional night broadcast.

with six total repeats (with modest ratings). The first series then returned to Joi in mid-September (two broadcasts per episode), to prepare the ground for the new episodes that would air from 6 to 21 October on Saturdays in prime-time. In January 2013, Joi broadcast the series 16 times in the afternoons, in late evening and at night. In December, again during the Christmas holidays, the first series returned in prime time to Italia 1 (the third episode aired on 2 January 2014) with comparable audience performance to 2011/12 (5.3%).

In this first stage of *Sherlock*'s exploitation, the series did not receive huge attention from the media, but the critical reception of the series was generally good. Journalist Antonio Dipollina, in the influential liberal-progressive newspaper *La Repubblica*, wrote a favourable piece stressing the gay- and tech-friendly components of the series. He noted that this was not a tremendous change though, as 'the important thing is that, as the original [Sherlock Holmes], when he meets you he is able to reveal who you are, your vices and where you have been during the last four hours.'[45] Antonella Gullotti and Daniele Assorati on *Sette TV* reiterated the idea that even in the contemporary setting, Sherlock's charm is not lost, the same charm found in other British series created by Moffat and Gatiss.[46] Another journalist titled her piece 'Holmes, back to the future' in an online magazine;[47] 'Sherlock Holmes travels in time' wrote Renato Franco in *Corriere della Sera*, the most widely-read Italian newspaper.[48]

In general, we see in the Italian press a fascination with the innovative elements of the product, skilfully combined with the traditional key features of Sherlock Holmes's personality and heritage. There is a sense of appreciation for its rootedness in literary drama and British cultural history. These ideas in the Italian media reception reflect some of the key themes identified by Paul Rixon[49] in the UK press, in particular the

'contemporary twist' and the 'linkage to the literary Sherlock Holmes.' As Rixon emphasizes, these themes are very much influenced by promotional material circulated by the BBC. Thus, in this first phase of the commercial exploitation of *Sherlock* we see a reflection of themes identified in the British press and to some extent promoted by the BBC. Renato Franco's article is interesting in this respect as it includes long and numerous quotes from international journalists and commentators.[50] These include quotes from *The Guardian* and *USA Today* as well as excerpts from an interview with Cumberbatch. Such citations show how commentary on cultural production travels from one country to another through the media – as with programming strategies we therefore see similarities between the British and the Italian contexts. At this stage though, such cultural encounters do not seem to trigger critical critical reflection either on British cultural identity or on the similarity or dissimilarity to Italian culture.

In 2014 the second stage of *Sherlock*'s commercial life in Italy began. The launch of the third series moved to DTT pay channel Premium Crime (Mediaset Premium, SKY Italia) and the broadcasting frequency of the series intensified. In 2014 the series was exploited with more intensity, reaching 96 broadcasts. In January the repeats of the first edition were broadcast on free thematic channel Top Crime (Mediaset, Tivùsat, SKY Italia) and between 5 and 25 April the new episodes were launched on Premium Crime. Repeats of the programme were broadcast on these channels from summer to fall of the same year, and again, as usual, in December on Italia 1. Between 2015 and the first half of 2016, the programme aired only 39 times on Italia 1 (nine reruns), Premium Crime (20) and Top Crime (10). On Italia 1 we observed a relatively steady audience share over the years but a decrease in terms of ratings, primarily because in December 2014 the programme was moved from prime-time slots to afternoon and night-time slots, targeting perhaps a more niche audience. Simultaneously, *Sherlock* was made available on VoD platform Infinity TV (Mediaset) and on Netflix, which had now arrived on the Italian national market. In this phase, though, the market share of these platforms was very limited.

In this second stage of *Sherlock*'s lifecycle, critical interventions multiplied, their tone and content openly supportive and full of praise. The range of media outlets mentioning *Sherlock* increased, with articles in the aforementioned major newspapers, *La Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera*, but also in more niche media outlets. The leftist newspaper *Il Manifesto* wrote that what is really remarkable about the series is that the contemporary setting helps viewers appreciate *this* Holmes' distinct personality, which somehow emerges by both referencing *and* detaching itself from its traditional Victorian background.[51] The conservative newspaper *Libero* titles its article: 'Everybody down on their knees for Benedict.'[52] But what seems interesting is that at this stage we see traces of the kind of reflections stimulated by cultural encounters at the collective level, as previously defined by Ib Bondebjerg.

Aforementioned journalist Dipollina, for example, emphasised the difference between Italian TV narratives and English ones. He titled a short piece on the series, 'Sherlock, the masterful series that we can only dream of', where 'we' stands for Italians. He continues writing that, 'It would be useless to underline the gigantic differences between this kind of audience share in GB and the most popular shows [in Italy].' In the title of another article, he sarcastically calls *Sherlock* the 'anti-World Cup series'[53] as it was broadcast in Italy simultaneously to the 'terrible' football match between Italy and Nigeria. The fact that *Sherlock* had a lower audience share is something that we Italians should take note of, he ironically claims, perhaps alluding to Winston Churchill's famous stereotyping statement about Italians' obsession with football.[54] Similarly, critic Francesco Specchia wrote that because of the high quality of the television programme he was only expecting an average audience performance, alluding to Italians' bad taste in television. Thus, here we find some traces of collective reflections on the comparison between Italian and British television, cultural preferences, and perhaps veiled reiteration of national stereotypes. Such reflections, to our eyes, although infrequent and superficial, are significant. One might plausibly argue that self-reflexivity is taking place in more subtle ways and perhaps more in-depth empirical research would reveal this with more clarity.

At the end of 2015, Netflix arrived in Italy, and TVoD platforms like Chili TV and Infinity TV started to gain visibility and become important players in the audiovisual industry. In 2017, *Sherlock* season four was launched on Netflix. The first episode was uploaded on the platform on 2 January, the second on 9 January and the third on 16 January, only 24 hours after the series was broadcast by the BBC. Old episodes were already available on Netflix by the end of 2015, but certainly, the consolidation of Netflix's market share was a game changer for *Sherlock* viewership. It goes beyond the scope of this paper to provide an account of changing 'cultures of consumption' and the impact of binge viewing on the promotional strategies and economic exploitation of the product. However, we consider the consequences on *Sherlock*'s exploitation on other channels.

It seems that the consolidation of VoD that began in the second half of 2016 caused *Sherlock* to be broadcast exclusively on free TV. In June 2016, repeats were aired on Paramount Channel (now Paramount Network) a free Viacom channel, which operates on DTT and Tivusat (satellite). The channel aired *Sherlock* 64 times from 9 June to 23 October in almost all time slots, both during the week and at weekends. Paramount Network broadcast the series 19 times in 2017 and 21 times in 2018 on a diverse range of days and time slots. In 2019 and 2020, episodes from all four seasons were broadcast in prime time on Tuesdays on Spike TV, another Viacom channel.

In the most recent critical reactions to *Sherlock*, we do not see a huge difference from those of previous years. Themes and tones are largely

the same, but a sense of emotional attachment emerges in some of the later reviews. In almost all of the recent significant interventions, there is a consecration of the series as one of the most important of the last 20 years and a lauding of the BBC as a (European) alternative to American quality TV. Gianmaria Tammaro in *La Repubblica* wrote, 'Sherlock has become a classic. One of the best examples of contemporary "seriality". An intelligent way of writing and reimaging. It was one of the best series of the 2000s. Something thoroughly new.'[55] Lorenza Negri in *Wired* wrote that 'British productions — those authored by the national BBC, the more brave ones by Channel 4, those more conformist by the ITV and so on — are and remain among the best worldwide, even after the advent of shows produced by Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and other digital platforms.'[56] Another journalist wrote on a Web magazine that 'in 2010, the BBC [with *Sherlock*] devised a new storytelling mode. A fragmented one but at the same time able to keep together all the pieces.'[57] Although the space devoted to *Sherlock* by the media has not expanded in recent years, current reviews by critics and commentators praise *Sherlock* for changing our sense of what contemporary TV fiction can be.

Italians all know Sherlock Holmes and have memories of him and his stories thanks to Doyle's books and subsequent film and TV adaptations. But the emotion expressed in these articles also seems to be about British television, and about the BBC as a raw European PSB model that has succeeded in combining 'quality' and audience popularity. Thus, the Europeanness of *Sherlock* is related to the fact that the quality of the programme is not only desirable but also a realistic and achievable objective since the budget, themes, stories, and formats are not too far away from those Italian producers could invest in (e.g. RAI, Mediaset) and are surely relatable to Italian publics. Although nuanced and limited to few journalistic conversations, a sense of shared collective memory can be observed here, and a sense of meaningful dialogue between tradition and innovation in 'cultures of production' is taken, explicitly and implicitly, as a distinctive feature of being European.

Some commentators have written that nationalism and imperialism still inhabit the series, as there is a celebration of London as a 'digital global capital' and a non-threatening, non-critical restyling of British identity. This might be true to some extent, but Europeanness, as defined here, will hardly form through washing away European history's dark shadows, but rather through remembering and reconsidering them together with other Europeans to form collective shared critiques of that same history.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have shown that in *Sherlock* we can appreciate the presence of Europeanness, as defined in section 2. 'Genetically engineered to appeal to a wider range of viewer tastes'[58], both nationally and transnationally, *Sherlock* represents the BBC's attempt to balance contradictory goals: satisfying 'the culture' as well as 'the market'. On the textual level, *Sherlock* maintains elements that enhance a sense of national identity and boost the Britishness of the series. However, the show also displays a tendency towards a transnational dimension, adopting a generic hybridity that blends multiple visual, stylistic, and narrative elements drawn from different TV quality traditions. Thus, *Sherlock* prompts forms of cultural self-reflexivity, ignited by writers' disruption of national identity and conception of a more shared, mediated, and transnational cultural identity that can potentially bridge different national and local cultures.

We then considered *Sherlock*'s circulation and reception in Italy to look at its viewership and, as we have shown, its circulation through a wide range of avenues, from free-to-air TV to pay-per-view and VoD platforms. Where ratings and audience share data was available, we observed good outcomes (even if, predictably, they were not comparable with its home market performance). However, the circulation history of the programme shows that it is far from being a mass cultural phenomenon in Italy. As Neil Fligstein observed,[59] as with many similar television products, the show was mostly appreciated by niche or relatively limited audiences on those exploitation channels that are normally linked with urban middle classes or niche audiences such as Pay TV, VoD and thematic channels (social groups who are normally sympathetic with the EU and feel partially European).

The critical reception became increasingly positive over time, confirming similar tendencies observed by Bondebjerg in relation to other non-national European series. Initially, we saw the circulation of themes and narrative constructions similar to, if not originating from, those of the UK press. As time went on, the appreciation for the series spread throughout the media. More frequent and passionate reviews appeared, including some indirect comparisons with Italian TV productions and Italian viewing preferences. In 2020, *Sherlock* was praised as a classic and, confirming Milly Buonanno's claims about British television, the series was considered a British success and a blueprint for reaching cultural and economic independence from American productions (a way to define Europeanness *ex negativo*). However, when we consider media coverage, even in specialized outlets, we realize that the number of serious journalistic contributions is low, and the debates generating critical reflexivity on a collective level are limited. Thus, in our view, it is unlikely that even excellent products, such as *Sherlock*, would trigger deep social reflection on national identity if exposure does not intensify, lengthen, and most importantly expand to the lower-middle

classes, working people and regional communities. The democratization of media consumption to promote equality of access appears to be critical to cultural policy making in Europe to cement any form of a shared imagined future among European people. As Schlesinger stressed, '[t]he production of an overarching collective identity can only seriously be conceived as the outcome of long-standing social and political practice'[60] which, in our view, should go beyond simply encouraging further exchanges. Such encouragement would only continue to connect non-national or transnational television with audiences who already feel affinity for Europe, leaving a gap between this programming and potential viewers who tend to consume and identify with nationally-rooted and local cultural productions.

Notes

[1] This paper has drawn on data collected during two research projects. The television-related research project 'Distribution, Adaptation, Circulation. An Industrial and Cultural Model of Anglophone Television in Italy' coordinated by Luca Barra (University of Bologna) and the Horizon 2020 research project DETECt — *Detecting Transcultural Identity in European Popular Crime Narratives* (2018–2021) [Grant agreement number 770151], coordinated by Monica Dall'Asta. Luca Antoniazzi provided sections 1 (*Introduction*), 2 (*'Europeanness' and Cultural Encounters*) and 4 (*Italian Circulation and Cultural Reception*); Sara Casoli wrote sections 3 (Sherlock *and Europeanness*) and 5 (*Conclusion*).

[2] Bonnie Brennen, *Qualitative Research Methods for Media Studies* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 204.

[3] *A European Television Fiction Renaissance: Premium Production Models and Transnational Circulation*, ed. by Luca Barra and Massimo Scaglioni (London: Routledge, 2020); *Transnational European Television Drama: Production, Genres and Audiences*, by Ib Bondebjerg, Eva Novrup Redvall, Rasmus Helles, Signe Sophus Lai, Henrik Søndergaard and Cecilie Astrupgaard (London: Palgrave, 2017).

[4] Ib Bondebjerg, 'Bridging Cultures: Transnational Cultural Encounters in the Reception of the Bridge,' in *Danish Television Drama Global Lessons From a Small Nation*, ed. by Anne Marit Waade, Eva Novrup Redvall, Pia Majbritt Jensen (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2020), 209–230.

[5] Milly Buonanno, 'Italian TV Drama: The Multiple Forms of European Influence', in *European Cinema and Television*, ed. by Ib Bondebjerg, Eva Novrup Redvall and Andrew Higson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 195-213 (pp. 210-211).

[6] *Sherlock*'s fourth season was announced in July 2014 while David Cameron announced the referendum the 20th of February 2016. The shooting of the fourth season started in April 2016 two months before the referendum.

[7] Philip Schlesinger, '"Europeanness" – a new cultural battlefield?' *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 5.2 (1992), 11–23 (p. 15).

[8] Brexit won supporters only among people aged 55+. The 65+ turnout was around 90%. See John Curtice, 'The vote to leave the EU: Litmus test or lightning rod,' in *British Social Attitudes: The 34th Report*, ed. Elizabeth Clery, John Curtice and Roger Harding (London, UK: Natcen Social Research, 2016), pp. 1–24. Available at: https://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39149/bsa34_brexit_final.pdf.

[9] Glen Creeber, 'The Joy of Text?: Television and Textual Analysis', *Critical Studies in Television: an International Journal of Television Studies*, 1.1 (2006), 81–88; Glen Creeber, *Tele-visions: An Introduction to Studying Television* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Alan Mckee, *Textual Analysis. A Beginner's Guide* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2016); Bonnie Brenner, *Qualitative Research Methods for Media Studies* (London: Routledge, 2017).

[10] Gaby Allrath and Marion Gymnich, 'Introduction: Towards a Narratology of TV Series', in *Narrative Strategies in Television Series*, ed. by Gaby Allrath and Marion Gymnich (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave, 2005), 1–43; Sarah Kozloff, 'Narrative Theory and Television', in *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled. Television and Contemporary Criticism*, 2nd ed., ed. by Robert C. Allen (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 52–76.

[11] Gaby Allrath and Marion Gymnich, 'Introduction: Towards a Narratology of TV Series', p. 38. See also Lawrence R. Frey, *Interpreting Communication Research: A Case Study Approach* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1993).

[12] Luca Barra, *Palinsesto* (Roma: Laterza 2015); John Ellis, 'Scheduling: The Last Creative Act In

Television?', *Media, Culture & Society*, 22.1 (2000), 25–38.

[13] Paul Rixon, '*Sherlock*: Critical Reception by the Media,' in *Sherlock and Transmedia Fandom: Essays on the BBC Series*, ed. by Louisa K. Stein and Kristina Busse (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company Inc., 2012), 165–78 (p. 166).

[14] Karl Deutsch cited in Neil Fligstein, *Euroclash: The EU, European Identity, and the Future of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press on Demand, 2008).

[15] Fligstein, *Euroclash*.

[16] Klaus Eder, 'Remembering National Memories Together: The Formation of a Transnational Identity in Europe', in *Collective Memory and European Identity*, ed. by Klaus Eder and Willfried Spohn (Abington and New York: Routledge, 2016 [2005]).

[17] Eder, 'Remembering National Memories Together', p. 209.

[18] Eder, p. 219.

[19] See for example the following collection of essays that challenges the myth of powerless states theory: *Global Media and National Policies*, ed. by Terry Flew, Petros Iosifidis, and Jeanette Steemers (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2016).

[20] Elke Weissmann, 'Local, National, Transnational. Local, National, Transnational *Y Gwyll/ Hinterland* as Crime of/for All Places', in *European Television Crime Drama and Beyond*, ed. by Kim Toft Hansen, Steven Peacock and Sue Turnbull (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 119–137.

[21] Weissman, p. 131.

[22] The TV network that commissioned the series, Sianel Pedwar Cymru, and the production company Fiction Factory are organisations active at local level. The EU Media Programme provided international funding and the national organisations BBC Wales and BBC4 broadcast the programme.

[23] See also Luca Barra, 'Invisible Mediations: The Role of Adaptation and Dubbing Professionals in Shaping US TV for Italian Audiences', *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture*, 2.4 (2013), 101–111.

[24] Ib Bondebjerg, 'Bridging Cultures: Transnational Cultural Encounters in the Reception of the Bridge,' in *Danish Television Drama Global Lessons from a Small Nation*, ed. by Anne Marit Waade, Eva Novrup Redvall, Pia Majbritt Jensen (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2020), 209–230; *Transnational European Television Drama: Production, Genres and Audiences*, ed. by Ib Bondebjerg, Eva Redvall, Rasmus Helles, R. Lai, Signe Sophus, Henrik Søndergaard, Cecile Astrupgaard (London: Palgrave, 2017); Gerard Delanty, 'Cultural Diversity, Democracy and the Prospects of Cosmopolitanism: A Theory of Cultural Encounters,' *The British Journal of Sociology*, 62.4 (2011), 633–656.

[25] Bondebjerg, 'Bridging Cultures', p. 222.

[26] Fligstein, Euroclash; Eder, 'Remembering National Memories Together'; Monica Sassatelli, 'Narratives of European identity,' in *European Cinema and Television*, ed. by Ib Bondebjerg, Eva N. Redvall, Andrew Higson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 25–42.

[27] The fact that cultural encounters can create closeness between people does not imply that the construction of a European cultural identity is just around the corner or that it is possible to strengthen 'togetherness' through European non-national media content circulation. Alina Polyakova and Neil Fligstein see the creation of a European identity inhibited by the fact that the benefits of 'being together' are mostly enjoyed by middle and upper classes. Large sectors of the European population have seen their social security decrease, blaming the top-down nature of European integration, then seeking protections from nation-states from the neoliberal policies encouraged by the EU. See Alina Polyakova and Neil Fligstein, 'Is European Integration Causing Europe to Become More Nationalist? Evidence from the 2007–9 financial crisis', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 23.1 (2016), 60–83. See

also Richard Collins, 'Television, Cohesion and the EU', in *The Palgrave Handbook of European Media Policy*, ed. by Karen Donders, Caroline Pauwels and Jan Loisen (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 172–186.

[28] Bondebjerg *et al.*, p. 167.

[29] Anita Singh, '*Midsomer Murders* Creator Suspended After Calling Show "The Last Bastion of Englishness"', *The Telegraph*, 14 March 2011, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/8381769/Midsomer-Murders-creator-suspended-after-calling-show-the-last-bastion-of-Englishness.html [accessed 14 November 2020].

[30] Luca Antoniazzi, '*Midsomer Murders* AKA *L'ispettore Barnaby*: How Did It Find Its Way Into the Italian Market and Why Was It Successful?', *The Journal of Popular Television* 8.3 (2020), 255–262. See also Tiffany Bergin, 'Identity and Nostalgia In a Globalised World: Investigating the International Popularity of *Midsomer Murders*', *Crime, Media, Culture*, 9.1 (2013), 83–99.

[31] This rivalry in relation to film distribution is well documented; see an early contribution by Armand Mattelart, 'European Film Policy and the Response to Hollywood', in *World Cinemas: Critical Approaches*, ed. by John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[32] This is especially true for crime TV series produced by ITV more than the BBC, such as *Inspector Morse* (1987-2000). Cf. Glen Creeber, '*Sherlock*', in *The Television Genre Book*, 3rd Edition, ed. by Glen Creeber (London: BFI, 2015).

[33] Glen Creeber, 'The Miniseries', in *The Television Genre Book*, 1st Edition, ed. by Glen Creeber, (London: BFI, 2001); John De Vito and Frank Tropea, *Epic Television Miniseries: A Critical History* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co, 2010).

[34] Roberta Pearson, 'A Case of Identity: Sherlock, Elementary and Their National Broadcasting Systems', in *Storytelling in the Media Convergence Age Exploring Screen Narratives*, ed. Roberta Pearson and Anthony N. Smith (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2015), 122–148; Elizabeth J. Evans, 'Shaping Sherlocks: Institutional Practice and the Adaptation of Character', in *Sherlock and Transmedia Fandom: Essays On the BBC Series*, ed. by Louisa Ellen Stein and Kristina Busse (Jefferson; McFarland, 2014), 102–117; Tom Steward, 'Holmes in the Small Screen: The Television Contexts of Sherlock', in *Sherlock and Transmedia Fandom: Essays On the BBC Series*, ed. by Louisa Ellen Stein and Kristina Busse (Jefferson: McFarland, 2014), 133–147.

[35] Creeber, 'Sherlock', p. 25.

[36] Evans, 'Shaping Sherlocks', p. 115.

[37] Johannes Bardoel and Leen d'Haenens, 'Reinventing public service broadcasting in Europe: prospects, promises and problems', *Media, Culture & Society*, 30.3 (2008), 337–355 (p. 337).

[38] Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott, *Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero* (London: Macmillan, 1987), p. 14.

[39] Neil McCaw, 'The Global Hybridity of Sherlock Holmes', in *Crime Fiction and National Identities in the Global Age: Critical Essays*, ed. by Julie H. Kim (Jefferson: McFarland, 2020).

[40] Roberta Pearson, 'A Case of Identity: *Sherlock*, *Elementary* and Their National Broadcasting Systems' in *Storytelling in the Media Convergence Age*, ed. by Roberta Pearson and Anthony N. Smith (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

[41] Paul Gilroy, 'Joined-up Politics and Postcolonial Melancholia', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 18.2–3, (2001), 151–167.

[42] Gilroy, p. 162.

[43] Anne Kustritz, 'Imperial and Critical Cosmopolitans: Screening the Multicultural City on *Sherlock* and *Elementary*', *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, 14 (2017), 143–159 (p. 143).

[44] Ruth Mayer, *Serial Fu Manchu: The Chinese Supervillain and the Spread of Yellow Peril Ideology* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013).

[45] (Our translation). Or. Text. '[...] l'importante è che, al pari dell'originale quando ti incontra ti rivela chi sei, i tuoi vizi e dove sei stato nelle ultime quattro ore. Antonio Dipollina, *La Repubblica*, 18 Febbraio 2011, https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2011/02/18/watson-reduce-dell-afghanistan-elementare.html [accessed 26 October 2020]

[46] Antonella Gullotti and Daniela Assorati, 'Holmes perde la pipa ma guadagna il GPS', *Sette TV*, 4 Gennaio 2013.

[47] (Our translation). 'Holmes, ritorno al futuro'. Katia Ancona, 'Holmes, ritorno al futuro: dal taccuino allo smartphone', *Kataweb*, 13 Febbraio 2011.

[48] (Our translation). 'Sherlock viaggia nel tempo'. Renato Franco, 'Sherlock viaggia nel tempo e oggi indaga con lo smartphone', *Corriere della Sera*, February 2011, http://www.mediaset.it/binary/98.$plit/C_22_rubrica_qm_210_grpspalladx_gruppoallegati_lstAllegati_allegato_0_upfAllegato.pdf. See also Renato Franco, 'I Classici Stravolti dai Serial TV', *Corriere della Sera*, 23 Ottobre 2012.

[49] Paul Rixon, 'Sherlock: Critical Reception by the Media', in *Sherlock and Transmedia Fandom: Essays On the BBC Series*, ed. by Louisa Ellen Stein and Kristina Busse (Jefferson: McFarland, 2014), 165–78.

[50] Franco, 'Sherlock viaggia nel tempo.'

[51] Giovanna Branca, 'Il detective vittoriano nella Londra di Oggi', *Il Manifesto*, 12 Gennaio 2016.

[52] (Our translation). 'Tutti in ginocchio da Benedict'. Francesca D'Angelo, 'Tutti in ginocchio da Benedict', *Libero*, 3 April 2014.

[53] (Our translation). 'Gli anti-mondiali in serie'. Antonio Dipollina, 'Gli Anti-mondiali in serie', *La Repubblica*, 20 Giugno 2014.

[54] 'Italians lose wars as if they were football matches, and football matches as if they were wars' (Winston Churchill).

[55] (Our translation). Or. Text: '*Sherlock* è riuscito a diventare un classico. Uno degli esempi migliori della nuova serialità. Un modo intelligente di scrivere e reimmaginare. [...] Decisamente tra le più importanti [serie] dei primi venti anni del 2000. [...] Qualcosa di intimamente nuovo.' Gianmaria Tammaro, '*Sherlock*, dieci anni fa la serie con Cumberbatch', *La Repubblica*, 27 Luglio 2020. https://www.repubblica.it/serietv/netflix/2020/07/27/news/sherlock_10_anni-262928059/ [accessed 27 November 2020].

[56] (Our translation). Or. Text: 'Le produzioni britanniche – quelle firmate dalla BBC nazionale, quelle più audaci di Channel 4, quelle più conformiste di Itv e così via – sono e restano tra le migliori del panorama mondiale, anche dopo l'avvento degli show targati Netflix, Amazon Prime Video e altre piattaforme digitali.' Lorenza Negri, '5 Ottime Ragioni per Riguardare *Sherlock*', *Wired*, 21 Luglio 2020, https://www.wired.it/play/televisione/2020/07/21/motivi-riguardare-sherlock-serie-bbc/?refresh_ce [accessed 16 September 2020]

[57] (Our translation). Or. Text: 'La BBC, già nel 2010, era riuscita a comprendere un nuovo modo con cui raccontare un storia. In modo frammentato, ma allo stesso tempo capace di ricollegare tutti i tasselli.' Emanuela Di Pinto, '*Sherlock*, una Rivoluzione su Piccolo Schermo?', *Spettacolo*, https://spettacolo.periodicodaily.com/sherlock-una-rivoluzione-su-piccolo-schermo/ [accessed 11 October 2020].

[58] Roberta Pearson, 'A Case of Identity', p. 139.

[59] Fligstein, *Euroclash*.

[60] Schlesinger, 'Europeanness,' p. 17.

On the Circulation of European TV Crime Series: A Case Study of the French Television Landscape (1957–2018)

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Despite the advent of over-the-top platforms, linear television still remains the dominant medium in European markets. This article provides a case study of the circulation of non-French European crime series in the French televisual landscape. It is based on a diachronic analysis of the flow of TV crime shows produced in Europe and broadcasted in France from 1957 to 2018. The data was collected from the official French TV archives as well as from experts and professional sources such as TV programme guides, databases, newspaper articles or amateur sources. All national channels were taken into account, be they state television, mainstream commercial channels or cable channels, except for OTT platforms. The analysis, based on format studies, provides three main results. First, the circulation of European TV crime series in France is rooted in an industrial process. It entails a process of indigenization performed through human mediation in order to fit into the culture and industry of the broadcasting territory. The second result tempers the ideal of European cultural diversity. Indeed, a diachronic perspective highlights the limited cultural diversity in this field, as German, British and Nordic Noir productions dominate European TV crime series. Lastly, data indicate continued issues with gender and ethnic equality in media industries, as crime narratives are still construed by a white and male-dominated creative industry.

Keywords
TV crime series
French linear television
Archives
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European circulation
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INTRODUCTION[1]

Introducing the 2012 issue of *Cinema & Cie* dedicated to European television series, Alice Autelitano and Veronica Innocenti stated that studies on television serial narratives mainly focus on US productions.[2] Almost ten years later, this observation still proves relevant in the French case, though some exceptions stand out, as the French academic and critic interest in television series increasingly consider national productions. However, as far as Europe is concerned, this geographical scale still remains largely unexplored in French academia, except for certain case studies. For instance, Spanish and/or Catalan television series are largely forgotten by French scholars from both media and Spanish studies.[3] Moreover, the European scale is considered an uneasy framework due to its strong heterogeneity.[4]

To answer such a methodological challenge, this article studies the circulation of non-French European television crime series within the French territory. Which European series have been broadcast on French screens? When and where were they released? Which transcultural patterns emerge from access to these television series? Though sometimes vague due to its general stance, the concept of 'circulation' is interesting as it avoids the tendency towards homogenization (assuming that globalisation only means imperialism), as well as the drawbacks of the liberal viewpoint obsessed with individual agency.[5]

Thorough academic research tackles the issue of European televised circulation, be it according to the crime series TV genre[6] or from the viewpoint of transnational television[7], sales of formats[8] and European co-productions.[9] Recent data shows that, in 2017, despite the incentive of the Creative Europe programme (2014-2020), few co-productions were broadcast in Europe[10] whereas 58% of TV scripted titles originate from the EU28. Though not specific to crime series, these figures highlight the key-role of European circulation for the television industry. European TV fiction benefits from the 1986 French broadcasting obligations law,[11] which makes mandatory for French channels, on behalf of cultural diversity, to broadcast 60% of European films and series — among which at least 40% must be originally in French language — during the high audience rates hours.

According to Castelló[12], television fiction plays an important part in the process of national culture building as a fictional nation is a politically conceptualized stage on which stories can take place. As such, foreign TV crime series broadcasted in France can be defined as 'mediated cultural encounters'.[13] In the European context of strong nation-states, and an important public service broadcasting tradition correlated with the absence of an integrated European TV market, the circulation of crime television series can thus be understood as a transcultural flow circulating within the French television landscape. Based on the French national television archives (INA), this case study provides a diachronic exploration of the market structure, highlighting its evolution regarding industrial factors. To this end, the first section shortly presents the framework of the study and the second section explains the methodology used. The four following sections display results regarding the transcultural circulation of television crime series on French screens.

KEY CONCEPTS

Historically, crime series have existed long before the advent of television: they first belonged to the realm of printed media, and were produced for the radio and as serials for the cinema before reaching TV screens. Crime series are strongly linked to the development of French television. As

early as 1950, the state television channel RTF (Radiodiffusion-télévision française) broadcasted *L'Agence Nostradamus* (Claude Barma) featuring two male detectives and *Les cinq dernières minutes* is commonly considered as the first long French television crime series.[14] Crime series on French television present a historical picture of both local and international titles available for French viewers. Such an historical approach of crime series enables to label it as a genre. Indeed, genre can be analysed as 'an historical practice' ubicated in the media interdiscourse.[15] This definition of TV genre circumvents the textualist assumption that there is a proper taxonomy of a genre which can be found from its internal operations.[16] On the contrary, it highlights the need to understand cultural artefacts throughout 'the materiality of its communication'.[17]

According to François Jost[18], analysing TV genres as a 'communicational reality' implies to focus on the relation that is built between producers, broadcasters, intermediary mediations and audiences. TV genre operates as a 'promise' that triggers repertoires of expectations amongst the viewers. These repertoires of expectations depend on the social and cultural background of the audience as well as the programming strategies at stake. For example, expectations differ when watching daytime crime series on the DTT (Digital Terrestrial Television) and prime time crime series on the cultural channel Arte. Consequently, the definition of crime series as a communicational reality implies to focus on its materiality. In other words, if the characteristics of a genre aren't intrinsic to the TV programme, then it becomes necessary to 'locat[e] genres within the complex interrelations between texts, industries, audiences, and historical contexts'.[19]

To achieve such an aim, this study relies on the concept of format in order to describe the communicational reality of European crime series genre(s) broadcasted in France. Format studies are an internationally emerging field of research in television studies[20] and the concept of format is still largely discussed. Marie-France Chambat-Houillon, who provided an analysis of the uses of the notion in the academic and professional TV spheres, highlights the diversity of its uses and definitions.[21] According to her, it can refer to a standard of production, a standard of programming or an interpretive model. In a similar perspective, Kira Kitsopanidou and Guillaume Soulez underline that format is studied either from a political standpoint focusing on power relations, as a framework for partners' cooperation or as an interpretive instrument for audiences. They insist on the culture of formats that prevails in the audiovisual landscape.[22] Lastly, Hélène Monnet-Cantagrel explains that studying television serial narratives from a format perspective enables to articulate the commercial logics of media industries, the creative process at stake and audiences.[23]

While Albert Moran's book *Copycat TV*[24] is a landmark, this short review of French theorizations confirms that the concept has moved from its definition as a 'cooking recipe' towards a more complex reading. Based on Chalaby's four dimensions of television format[25] (legal dimension, recipe,

proof of concept, method of production), Keinonen defines format as 'a technology of economic and cultural exchange'.[26] As such, it has proven really useful in the field of adaptation studies, as it enables to tackle both the level of production with its various mediations and the reception by local audiences of the format adaptation. In this paper, I argue that the concept of format is also relevant to study transnational TV content circulation. The international circulation of TV products is commonly divided between adaptations and canned programming. The later refers to ready-made contents sold and distributed abroad. '"Canned" programming is typically the output of a specific national TV and media system, but it spills across borders when licensed into different territories, sometimes even globally'.[27] But, though ready-made, canned TV products also undergo adaptation procedures, as for example with dubbing. Luca Barra states that there is 'a series of sophisticated routines, on both the production and consumption side, that mediate between the cultures of countries of origin and destination, giving birth to a new, specifically created, product'.[28] In other words, canned programming also implies adaptations, though they might operate on a more invisible level.

The concept of format here proves useful to interrogate the characteristics of European crime series broadcasted in France, because it focuses on industrial and cultural negotiation. It also operates as a methodological tool to work on a transnational basis. Regarding European media transnational history, Jérôme Bourdon describes its main framework as the 'mental jail of the nation'.[29] Indeed, 'methodological nationalism'[30] constitutes a recurrent feature in the study of transnational television. Strong national traditions, linguistic diversity in Europe as well as the belief in national sovereignty of postcolonial nations[31] can explain the strength of the nation framework. Focusing on the marks of cultural negotiation from the format perspective rather than the national characteristics conveyed by media contents is a way to identify the simultaneous dynamics of international and national, global and local that constitute the entangled layers of television broadcasting. Format operates as a methodological tool to debunk the nation framework: while the indexation of data relies on the country of production and destination, the analysis aims at subverting the national lens from within as it integrates other territorial layers.

COLLECTING METHODOLOGY

The corpus of European TV crime series imported in France is built both from the official French national archives (INA), experts and professional sources such as TV programme guides, databases, newspaper articles or amateur sources (e.g. fan webpages). All national channels were considered, be it state television, generalist commercial channels or cable channels, except for online streaming platforms such as Netflix or Amazon

Prime. The empirical material includes the title of the series both in French and in its original language, the country of production, the original broadcasting channel and year as well as the length of the episodes, the date and channel it was first released in France, and the 'creators' of the series, identified by their name, gender and race assignations. This category needs to be explained. As the workings of production differ according to the period and the national organization of media industries,[32] 'creator' is an umbrella designation which can refer, according to the UNESCO,[33] either to the screenwriter, the producer or the director of the series.

The label crime series includes mostly 'cop shows', however, spy and action TV series as well as legal drama were excluded from the corpus. Indeed, police TV series work properly on the European exportation market.[34] As for seriality, the definition referred to in this study encompasses long-running dramas, as well as very short mini-series. European coproductions, including France, were not taken into account. These operate from a different industry strategy regarding the targeted audiences, which include French audiences as one of the main goals.

This collecting methodology has provided a corpus of 315 titles broadcasted in France between 1957 and 2018. It is impossible to assert that it encompasses all European TV crime series broadcasted in France since the beginnings of television. Indeed, the logics of archives management, be it the criteria of broadcasting rights, the pre-1995 archives or the human factor in the indexation process as well as the scope of serialization would make it highly unrealistic to claim for exhaustivity.

EUROPEAN CRIME SERIES IN FRANCE: SCHEDULING PERSPECTIVE

From its beginnings, non-French European crime series have supplemented the development of French television. From the state monopoly to the process of privatization triggered in the 1980s and the subsequent new channels until the advent of the terrestrial digital television (TDT) in 2005, crime series have played a pivotal role on French screens. Due to their tasks and obligations, the main providers of non-French European crime series are public broadcasters (29% of the imported titles). While the corpus includes a large time-scale, this number does not imply a homogenization of the history of French television. Indeed, most of the data was collected since the 1980s (for instance only eight titles could be identified during the 1970s). Besides, this result coincides with a 2015-2016 four weeks' analysis of television fiction in Europe: it states that public channels play an active part in the circulation of TV series in Europe.[35]

The second French providers of crime series are culturally-oriented channels, which broadcasted 22% of the titles imported. Thematic channels

such as Canal Jimmy (e.g. *Trial & Retribution*, UK, ITV; *Code 37*, Belgium, VTM) or *13ème Rue* (e.g. *Doppelter Einsatz*, Germany, RTL; *Annika Bengtzon: Crime Reporter*, Sweden, TV4) have played an important part in bringing non-French European titles to France. It is also interesting to notice that the major generalist private channel TF1 has only played a minor role in this process of internationalization. Indeed, its editorial line focuses rather on movies, American drama and French series, the latter starting again to trust the biggest annual audiences in 2017 according to Mediametrie.

As for TDT-born channels, they imported only 16 new titles between 2005 and 2018. NT1 (TF1 group) imported eight titles: *Ein Starkes Team*, ZDF; *Polizeiruf 110*, ARD; *Delitti e segreti*, Rai 1; *SK Kölsch*, Sat.1; *The Knock*, ITV; *Il capitano*, Rai 2; *SOKO Rhein-Mai*, ZDF; *The Guilty*, ITV. W9 (M6 group) imported three new titles (*GSG 9 - Die Elite Einheit*, Sat. 1; *Vermist*, VT4; 48 Ore, Canale 5) and Direct8/C8 (Bolloré then Canal Plus group) brought four titles (*Der Letzte Bulle*, Sat.1; *Ripper Street*, BBC One; *Partners in Crime*, BBC One; *Bancroft*, ITV). As for Virgin 17 (Lagardère), it imported one new title (*SOKO Donau/Wien*, ORF) during its two years of existence. These private commercial TDT-born channels run with low budget, hence making it difficult to invest in new broadcasting licenses. However, this does not mean that they do not feature European crime series, as these low-budget channels vehemently broadcast police drama reruns. For instance, a recent study from the CSA on TV fiction between 2015 and 2019 highlights that reruns on TDT channels TMC and TF1 films et series (formerly called HD1) of *Poirot* (ITV, 1989-2013) still make it one of the twenty non-French TV fiction titles most broadcast in 2019 on French TV.[36]

Crime narratives, previously defined as mediated cultural encounters, play a part in the process of Europeanization both through first broadcasting and reruns. Though their share tends to be lower, due to their lack of novelty and subsequent location in the scheduling grid, reruns form a constant layer of European crime series on French television. As such, they contribute to the sedimentation of a social imaginary through repetition. Audiences are acquainted to reruns to such an extent that they belong to a common perception of Europe, hence performing a 'banal Europeanization'[37] process. Applying this concept to European TV drama, Bondebjerg asserts that '[b]y looking into the everyday life of other Europeans, past and present, our national reality is challenged and expanded. We experience diversity and difference, we get a new perspective on our own life and history, and perhaps we also discover that Europe is not just something over there in Brussels.'[38] Looking at reruns from that perspective enables to shift the focus from the idea of European identity as a conscious political identification to the role of popular media in shaping a shared experience for many European citizens.

A CONTAINED CULTURAL DIVERSITY LED BY UNITED-KINGDOM, GERMANY AND NORDIC COUNTRIES

The analysis of the main channels broadcasting crime series has revealed some patterns in their circulation: public channels as well as thematic channels play an important part while TDT-born channels form another actor of this 'banal Europeanization' through reruns. A closer look at the geographical origin of imported titles reveals that the UK, Germany and, related to the more recent spread Nordic Noir titles, the Nordic countries dominate the picture.

Regarding all type of TV fiction, the European Audiovisual Observatory (2019) highlights that UK leads in terms of number of episodes and hours.[39] Besides, UK productions are available in the largest number of countries of EU28. In 2017, eighteen out of twenty-one TV scripted shows present in at least seven countries were produced or co-produced by the United Kingdom. For instance, *Sherlock* (BBC One) was broadcasted in twelve countries, *Midsomer Murders* (ITV) in ten and *Wallander* (BBC One) in nine countries. Historically, the UK television landscape is organized around a private-public system, which is reflected in the France import with the BBC and ITV as the main sources of crime series.

Regarding Germany, the European Audiovisual Observatory establishes that, all formats considered, it is the runaway lead fiction TV-producing country, in terms of number of titles and number of hours. Both in France and Germany, the crime series genre is the most important of the twenty biggest audience in TV fiction: in 2018, sixteen out of twenty titles were *Krimi* (CSA/Médiamétrie / Eurodata TV Worldwide). Not only does Germany broadcast successfully crime series, but it has also been exporting titles to France since *Hafenpolizei* (Das Erste, RDA) was broadcasted in 1967 on the State channel ORTF. Titles such as *Derrick* (ZDF), *Der Alte* (ZDF) or *Alarm für Cobra 11 Die Autobahnpolizei* (RTL) were huge audience success and have been rebroadcasted endlessly on French screens.

Regine Chaniac states that German television producers in the 1970s successfully developed crime series inspired by foreign blockbusters rather than adapting national crime fiction literature, which may have influenced its intercultural exchange opportunities. She states that German series 'answer the format, length and 'neutrality' criteria which ensure a good circulation in Europe',[40] an observation shared by Henry Larski according to whom *Derrick* and *Alarm für Cobra* convey the stereotype of 'a nowadays respectable country, were effort, work and success sum up both from an individual and a collective path. They operate like "diplomates of a too normalized Germany"'.[41]

Moreover, from an industrial perspective, both countries benefit from important economic resources[42] and from a televisual landscape that

matured earlier than in France, giving them a head start regarding both internal production and export possibilities. Instead, the history of French television is characterized by late development followed by state monopoly and a subsequent progressive privatization. The market was a concentrated and quite isolated audiovisual landscape for a long time. For instance, in 1939, there were about 20.000 TV sets in UK and Germany, whereas this number was achieved in France only in 1950. In 1992, there were only one million French homes connected to cable TV whereas there were more than ten millions in Germany.[43] The corpus of this study encompasses this long history, from the state RTF in the 1950s to the current richer supply of television programming. This pre-history, as well as the legal quota obligations, are reflected in the increasing number of new European titles imported to France.

In 2007, Nordic crime series appeared on French screens. In only a decade, the number of Nordic titles on French television has increased dramatically and was in 2018 only surpassed by the number of titles from the UK and Germany, which have been dominating the history of French crime television series imports.

The development of the Nordic Noir brand has modified the structure of the market, starting in the first decade of the 2000s. Interestingly, a similar pattern appears at the same time in the French press regarding Noir novels from Northern Europe. The Nordic Noir label is constructed by the media as a key-actor of the noir novel industry.[44]

The arrival of a group of Northern European countries as a third leader in the market of TV crime series needs to be contextualized regarding the French television landscape. The development of digital television, the multi-channel system and delinearisation of the viewing experience have resulted in an increase of shows, as well as a simultaneous erosion and specialization of audiences. As a consequence, in France, most Nordic noir titles were broadcast on pay-tv channels (e.g. *Livvagterne*, Denmark on Canal Jimmy or *Sorjonen*, Finland on Polar +) or the cultural channel Arte

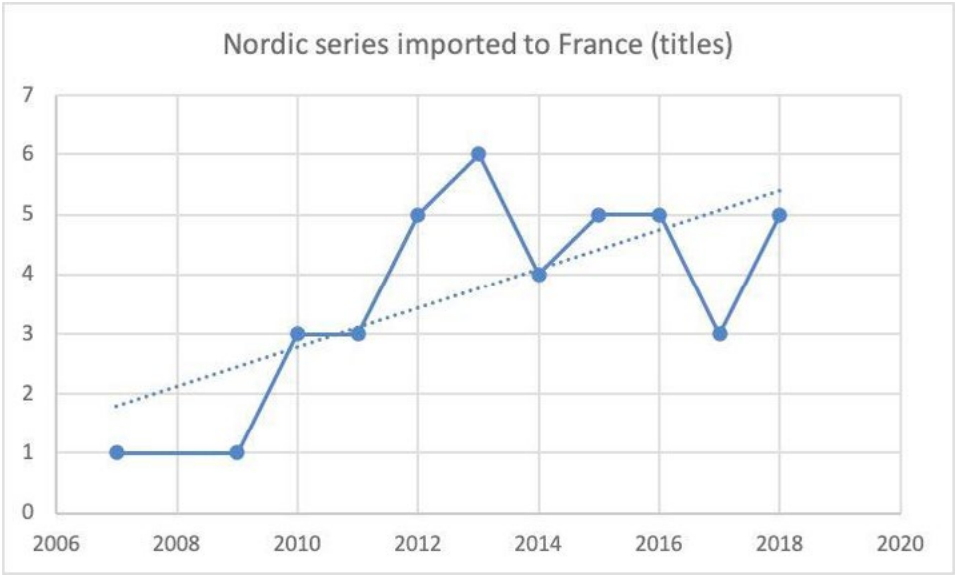

Fig. 1: An increasing number of Nordic Noir titles imported to France (2007-2018)

(e.g. *Øyevitne*, Norway; *The Lava Field: Hraunið*, Iceland). The increase in number of channels has caused an increase in import of new titles, as much as twenty-four in 2018. However, the following fragmentation of audiences means that, excluding the audience of platforms such as Netflix, Nordic crime series are consumed by a smaller percentage of the global TV audience than other crime series imported to France. If we compare the audience share of the first episode of two non-French European series broadcasted in 2018, for instance, it appears that *Elven* (TV3, Norway) broadcasted on the cultural channel Arte reached a 5.80% share for a 992.188 global audience while *Maltese – Il Romanzo del Commissario* (Rai Uno, Italy) broadcast on France 3, a public channel with a popular and ageing audience, reached a 14.10% share for a 2.626.380 global audience. This indicates that such exported titles tend to become niche-programmes in foreign territories like the French. In other words, the number of titles imported does not equate strictly an extension of cultural diversity for all viewers.

THE MULTI-LAYERED MEDIATIONS OF CRIME SERIES CIRCULATION

The format studies perspective lays the emphasis on the mediations that provide cooperation for canned products broadcast. Dubbing plays a pivotal role in this market. Relying on an ethnographical study of Italian editions of two sitcoms *The Simpsons* and *How I met your mother*, Luca Barra highlights the key-role of adaptation and dubbing mediations in the global circulation of media products.[45] Dubbing is crucial to a successful export/import of TV drama, and so in the efficiency of crime series to be appropriated by a wide audience, not restricted to its literacy and cultural capital. As such, the success of non-French fiction in programming strategies, as well as the development of a VOD offer, has increased revenues for dubbing and subtitling industries. In the French audiovisual sector, it is the third market (15%) of all technical industries in 2017.[46]

Besides, it is interesting to notice that these mediations don't operate strictly at the national level. On the contrary, the adaptation process can provide relevant insights into the sites of negotiation between various territorial scales. From a format perspective, not all German crime series are marketed for a national German audience. To interact with local audiences, the ARD group produces different local versions of *Tatort*, another famous *krimi* on French screens. Besides, the international level is also relevant as crime series can also be adaptations of American drama. For example, *Post Mortem* (RTL, Germany) is an adaptation of *CSI*, and *Law & order* has a London version (ITV, UK). At the European scale, *Countdown – Die Jagd Beginnt* (RTL, Germany) is an adaptation of the Spanish crime series *Cuenta Atrás* (Cuatro).

All these series — both originals and adaptations — were exported to

France and appropriated for local French audiences via dubbing/subtitling and scheduling. Scheduling a crime series may re-negotiate its cultural status. For example, *Vis a vis* (Antena 3), a Spanish crime series that originally targeted a national Spanish audience, was aired during summer 2018 at a 'graveyard slot' in France on Teva, a private channel targeting a popular female and family-oriented audience. As a result, the scheduling of the series caused a drop in the series' cultural status. Also, episodes were cut from the Spanish standard of seventy-five minutes to fifty minutes instead, increasing the number of episodes in the first two seasons of the show. Consequently, there are eleven episodes in the original first season of *Vis a vis* whereas the French version encompasses sixteen.

Lastly, in France, the consumption of TV series is strongly structured by cultural hierarchies.[47] The two channels best embodying this feature are the private pay-TV channel Canal Plus and the German-French culturally-oriented channel Arte. Yet, they represent respectively only 9 and 10% of European importations. Launched in 1984, Canal Plus based its editorial line on sport, humour and sex for an upper-class male audience. 'While you're on Canal Plus, at least you're not watching TV' stipulated the 1996 motto, echoing HBO famous tagline. Canal Plus has not really laid the emphasis on TV series until the 2000s. It then launched its own series label 'original creation' inscribed in the distinction strategy of the channel.[48] As for Arte, created in 1992, it only broadcasted few titles during its first years. The two first imported European titles found were *Die Gerichtsreporterin* (ARD, Germany) and *Monaco Franze – Der ewige Stenz* (ARD, Germany), both in 1995. More recently, the interest of cultural elites, both academics and critics, for 'quality television', as well as the trend of the Nordic Noir are reflected in Arte grid. Since 2009, the scheduling of newly-imported crime series has increased with titles such as *Norskov* (TV2, Denmark) in 2016 or *Elven* (TV3, Norway) in 2018. To put it in a nutshell, dubbing as well as the scheduling strategies of the channels perform 'invisible mediations'[49] that reshape both the form of the product as well as its symbolic, and therefore economic, value. Thus, crime series circulation implies a process of 'indigenization'[50] to fit into the local industrial and cultural pattern.

CIRCULATING TV SERIES, CIRCULATING INEQUALITIES: INDICATIONS OF A WHITE, MALE-DOMINATED CREATIVE INDUSTRY

While various European countries as well as the European Commission reflect on the possibility of conditioning funding to gender equality, the corpus provides an insightful mirror of the inequalities at stake in media industries in Europe. Though the 1995 Beijing Conference on the Rights of Women has provided a framework to achieve gender equality in the media, women in media industries still suffer from precarity, low wages,

vertical and horizontal segregation, sexist and sexual harassment.[51] Nowadays numerous European countries provide indicators about gender representation in the media, yet data regarding women in creative industry are still scarce. The 2013 European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) report was the first to deliver comparable data on the number of women in decision-making positions in European media, hence highlighting that 'the organisational culture of media remains largely masculine'.[52] In 2018, the European Platform of Audiovisual Regulatory Authorities (EPRA) issued a report on the representation of women in the audiovisual media industry which also emphasizes the existence of pervasive disparities.[53] Lastly, the 2020 European Audiovisual Observatory report on female directors and screenwriters in European film and audiovisual fiction production states that women were involved only in the direction (*i.e.* directed or co-directed) of 16% of all episodes of audiovisual fiction between 2015 and 2018.[54]

The circulation of non-French European crime series in France is shaped by this prevailing gender gap. Based on data from non-French European crime series aired in France, it appears that television fiction remains a male-dominated industry. Only 18% of creators of European crime series broadcast in France are female, giving a clear impression of a lack of gender equality. Unsurprisingly, the crime series created by women broadcast in France mainly derive from the main providers, UK (thirty-nine women) and Germany (eleven women). Besides, Nordic countries, described as 'leaders on gender equality',[55] by OECD stand out with fourteen female creators, most of them from Norway (eight), in a short time lapse. A diachronic perspective based on the first original release year of each title reveals a pattern regarding the dynamics of gender equality and innovation. Indeed, we can observe that women are present in the early years of television creative industries. For instance, Hannah Weinstein, famous for inventing and producing the television series *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1955–59), was the female producer of *Colonel March of Scotland Yard* (ITV, UK) as early as 1956. Yet, they tend to become increasingly invisible whilst the field gains in maturity. Such a pattern has already been identified by the film historian Ally Acker[56] and more recently Deborah Gay[57] showed its recurrence in the French web series industry.

In the period 1956–1999, there are only five female creators/producers in the sample. June Wyndham Davies produced *Sherlock Holmes* (ITV), Pat Sandys produced *The Agatha Christie Hour* (ITV), Lynda La Plante created *Prime Suspect* (ITV), Jenny Reeks and Michelle Buck were executive producers for episodes of *Wycliffe* (ITV) — whose producers were all men — and Beatrice Kramm produced *Helicops* (Sat.1, Germany). Most of these female creators appear repeatedly in the corpus. There is no clear pattern of improvement in the process of gender equality until 2014. From 2014 to 2017, the number of female creators rose to seven in 2014 and 2015, and ten titles were produced by women in 2017. This slight improvement is correlated with the increasing number of Nordic Noir titles broadcasted in France.

Moreover, it is remarkable that female creators most often work in collaboration with men, as opposed to female pair-working or a unique male creator. For instance, Stephen Smallwood et Emma Kingsman-Lloyd produced *DCI Banks* (ITV, UK), Anne Sewitsky and Hans Christian Storrøsten created *Monsters* (NRK1, Norway), etc. A similar pattern appears in the recent report of the European Audiovisual Observatory (2020): women are proportionally more likely than men to work in gender-mixed teams. In other words, while men possess fully their power positions, women often share the creative process with a man, be it due to individual career development or to gender mainstreaming legislation pushing for gender parity.

Lastly, it is important to notice that the cultural industry circulating popular products in Europe also contribute to the normalization of whiteness in Europe 'behind the camera.' 'Critical white studies' imply that whiteness is a social experience of domination characterized by an hegemonic position within race power relations.[58] Here, data collection supports that assumption. Only 1% of the creators come from ethnic minorities, which means that there is almost no ethnic diversity among the creators of crime series. While European history and culture are strongly entangled in postcolonialism, the market of imported crime series remains characterized by its lack of diversity.

CONCLUSION

Two sets of conclusions may be drawn from this study. First-of-all, the contribution of this research lays in its theoretical framework. According to Jérôme Bourdon,[59] there are two main drawbacks to the study of television in Europe. The first one is the *topos* of the Americanization of

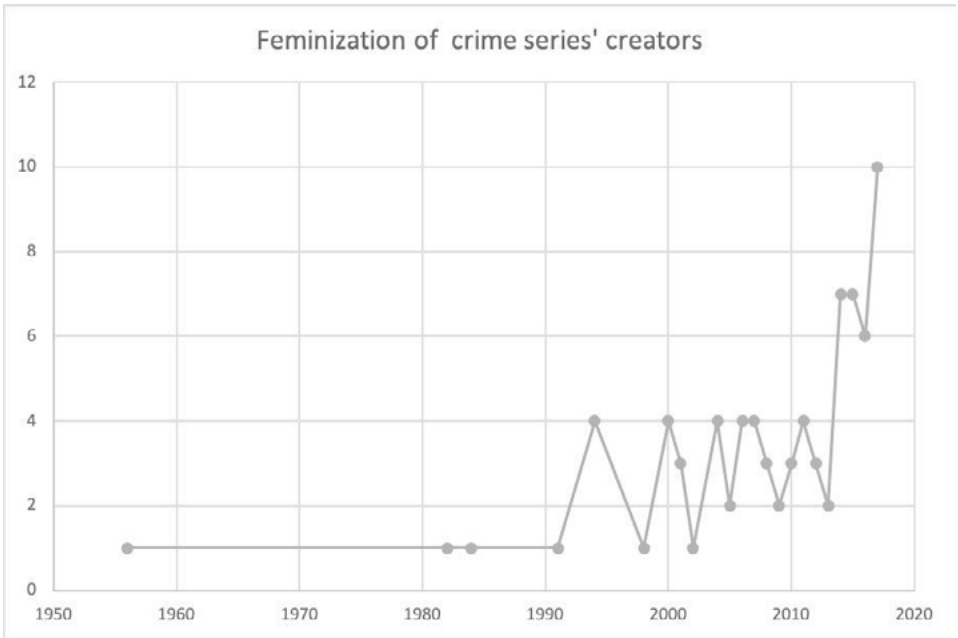

Fig. 2: First appearance of female creators amongst crime series sold to France

culture. Looking at the circulation of non-French European crime series broadcasted in France between 1957 and 2018 has shown a long history of cultural exchanges through France, hence debunking that assumption. The second drawback is the hegemony of the national frame for a transnational analysis. Following Heidi Keinonen's definition of television format as a 'technology of economic and cultural exchange'[60] has provided a relevant theoretical framework to discuss the entangled layers of circulation through the French television landscape. Applied to this case study, this approach has given insights into the French television flow, for instance regarding the multi-layered mediations at stake in the circulation process. As such, this article also works as a programmatic basis for future research. Another contribution comes from its transferability. Indeed, both the framework and the results can be used for further or comparative analysis.

The second set of conclusions stems from data analysis. Three main results may be drawn from this study. Firstly, the circulation of crime series is rooted in an industrial process. It always entails a process of indigenization performed through human mediations in order to fit into the culture and industry of the broadcasting territory, while the import/export pattern indicates an increasing interest in non-French European titles on the French television market. Secondly, transcultural identities signaled in the increasing exchange of series appear heterogeneous in nature, although Germany, the UK and the Nordic region dominate the image. However, it is important to emphasize that such heterogeneity in the circulation of European titles still display a rather traditional view on cultural diversity, as the data indicates continued issues with gender equality in European media industries, including the production of crime series. If crime narratives disseminates such a thing as a transcultural culture, they are still construed by a white and male-dominated creative industry.

Notes

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Producing Peripheral Locations: Double Marginality in Italian and Danish Television Crime Narratives

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Alongside the enduring interest in capitals, location strategies in European crime series production have showcased an increased attention towards stories from and topographies of peripheral, distant and rural locations. We define and discuss this transcultural and transnational trend through the concepts of peripheral locations and double marginality, in the sense that these locations are usually distant from both production hubs and the symbolic centres of the nations, thus providing a fresh, sought-after visual identity to new crime series.
Combining representational studies with a production studies perspective on Italian and Danish PSB crime dramas, including a media systemic exploration, we analyse the particular location strategies in a range of profiled series broadcasted by Rai in Italy and TV 2 in Denmark. In the end, we compare these strategies and reconfigure the notion of peripheral locations in the view of the analyses, while lifting the perspective to European level, thus showing how the tendency towards using peripheral locations in television dramas uncovers a new, European translocal sense of place and emphasize the role of TV series in forming a collective spatial imaginary of Europe.

Keywords
Peripheral locations
Production studies
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Italian television
Translocal spaces
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INTRODUCTION[1]

For practical and historical reasons, location strategies in European crime series production have catered to the capitals. Historically, the crime genre has used the urban topography of big cities as a labyrinthine backdrop for the dramatic events, while film and television production hubs have found their natural production ecologies in and around central urban areas. However, the place-bound nature of crime narratives has also motivated local stories about crimes and investigation, a tendency that has been reinforced by recent place-branding models in close interaction with screen production. Alongside the enduring interest in European capitals, there has been an increased interest in the stories from and topographies of peripheral, distant and rural locations for crime series. Internationally distributed titles, such as *Hinterland* (S4C, 2013-16), *El embarcadero* (Moviestar+, 2019-20), *La trêve* (La Une/France 2, 2016-18),

Sorjonen (YLE, 2017-), *Der Pass* (Sky, 2018) and *Wataha* (HBO, 2014-), have in various ways used locations in the geographical national peripheries as an important ambience in the series. This article researches this tendency with a special, comparative focus on Italian and Danish crime dramas from the broadcasters Rai and TV 2, respectively.

The two public service broadcasters (PSB) in focus in this article have not been compared in academic research before, since direct collaboration between broadcasters and production companies from the two countries is still missing. As we demonstrate below, though, the two media institutions share a number of similarities as corporations, which makes them interesting to relate academically. At the same time, crime dramas produced by or for the two broadcasters have moved towards peripheral locations in a significantly similar way. Since Italian-Danish television co-production or direct financial collaboration remains untested, a comparison of the location tendencies in crime dramas for the two broadcasters indicates a wider and consistent tendency in crime drama production in European television. Through a production studies perspective on Italian and Danish PSB crime dramas, including a media systemic exploration, this article provides insights into recent location strategies in contemporary European television production. Although the empirical material servicing the argument of the article comes from analyzing production, the overall argument remains aesthetic in the sense that the locative and cinematographic similarities between financially unassociated territories stress a tendency within television production cultures that reaches beyond creative co-production practices and direct financial collaboration (such as pre-buy and co-financing agreements). Relating Italy and Denmark launches an attention towards a transcultural aesthetic practice around choices of location and cinematographic and narrative treatment of places rather than maintaining direct transnational ties as indications of shared cultural sensibilities. In this sense, comparing Italy/Rai and Denmark/TV 2 serves as a metonymical argument for a larger, continental tendency towards utilizing peripheral, distant and rural locations in crime series and beyond.

The core concept of the article is *peripheral locations*, i.e. the actual shooting location of a drama is placed in the geographical periphery of a nation state.[2] The concept is developed from anthropology and ethnography of space,[3] borders and liminality in geo-political television[4] and the combination of televised local colour, geography, tourism and policy studies.[5] We identify the stylistic consequence of this transcultural trend in crime series as *translocal spaces*, i.e. a similar localization trend in European crime series. While locations are portrayed through vividly comparable stylistic qualities (city panoramas, landscape drone imagery, and locative place images), the exoticism and local colour of the places still mark the series as local productions. Peripheral locations, then, highlight a *double marginality*, i.e. production circumstances are influenced by the

geographical, physical distance, while such locations provide a fresh, sought-after visual identity to new crime series. In this way, the tendency towards using peripheral locations in television dramas indicates a televisual Europe of regions associated with common, translocal place imagery.

DEFINING PERIPHERAL LOCATIONS

With the rise of political interest in local media production and increased regional funding for film and television, new research interests into the circumstances, challenges and value of production in the national peripheries document 'how culture can foster economic development in smaller regions'[6] and 'stimulate local employment.'[7] Alongside, we have seen a significant focus on locations as a focal point for such interests, including the liminal character of the peripheries,[8] coastal landscape imagery,[9] local identity constructions,[10] and the relationship between the national/regional success of a series and the region where it is set.[11]

The notion of *peripheral locations* encompasses these perspectives, but the concept also accentuates the consequences of the geographical position of such locations. Such locations are often found far away from both the regular production hubs (often situated in the capitals) and the symbolic, ideological centres of the nations, producing a double marginality in both a practical and a symbolic sense. For popular cultural imagination, peripheral locations produce what Saunders refers to as *liminal spaces* with a double geopolitical function as both 'a barrier to movement as much as gateway between these national spaces.'[12] Placing narratives in peripheries also motivates stories about such particular liminalities, including the geopolitical concerns with borderlines, and, in crime narratives with specific interest in legal thresholds, attention skews towards geographic

Fig. 1: Translocal landscape imagery in four European television crime dramas: *Frikjent* (TV 2 Norway, 2015-), *Ófærð* (RÚV, 2017-), *Hinterland* and *Rocco Schiavone* (Rai, 2016-) shows visual similarities between otherwise unassociated productions.

liminality (the place) underscoring the conflictual juristic liminality of the stories (the crime). In other words, placing stories in peripheral locations tends to stimulate stories about *being* in the periphery, including what lies beyond borders (*external liminality*) as well as being away from the symbolic centre of the nation (*internal liminality*).

From a production perspective, peripheral locations are often considered expensive and practically challenging. In production, locations away from production hubs are often referred to as *distant locations*, which in our case is a competing term, but the idea of distance does not emphasize the notion of peripherality. Producing outside central production hubs without studios or technical facilities challenges the ordinary production procedures, while moving creatives and equipment from the centre to the periphery costs extra. Creatives often, however, accentuate visual innovation through the aesthetics of locations rarely used in screen productions, indicating that producing in the peripheries provides an opportunity to establish a 'fresh look' in a television series. Nevertheless, producers also highlight that the local funding opportunities rarely fully compensate for the extra expenses in using non-traditional, peripheral locations. In other words, the rise of local co-funding makes up for some of the additional expenditure, but fiscal incentives are by no means the sole reason why we see an upsurge in peripheral locations in television drama. Explaining encounters with specific locations, creatives often refer to special embodied and emotional experiences of local colour, nature and local identity, highlighting the aesthetic opportunities often sought out in producing a television series at a peripheral location. Peripheral locations appear to produce a tripartite opportunity to institute a self-reinforcing relationship between new visuals, new narratives and new story-worlds. At the same time, however, it is striking how innovative aesthetics shares a number of stylistic similarities across cultures (the visual way that local places are treated appear very similar), creating a translocal imagination around the stylistic treatment of peripheral originality influenced by landscape painting, place photography, tourist marketing material, and places and landscapes in popular television (see image 1).

Below, we introduce the broadcasters Rai and TV 2, and afterwards we analyse the particular location strategies in a range of profiled series broadcasted by these television institutions. In the end, we compare the strategies and reconfigure the notion of peripheral locations in the view of the analyses, while finally lifting the perspective to a transcultural, European level.

MEDIA SYSTEMIC DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

There are a range of media systemic differences between Denmark and Italy, starting from the obvious acknowledgement of the different sizes of the respective TV markets.[13] One significant difference is also that the position of commercial television and media is stronger in the Italian media landscape than in the Danish one. The profiled position of two all-commercial broadcasters, i.e. Mediaset (commercial broadcaster) and Sky Italy (pay tv service), shows a significant difference in relation to the comparatively strong position of public service broadcasting in Denmark. The Danish broadcasting system is dominated by the DR corporation, a 100% publicly financed public service provider, and the commercial public service television broadcaster TV 2 as well as a range of all-commercial players with a comparatively low share of viewers. These differences create a stronger position of public service broadcasting in Denmark than in Italy and a stronger direct commercial competition in Italy.[14]

On one level, Rai in Italy and DR in Denmark compares well as they are both multimedia services (including television, radio, online media and publishing), and they share a long pre-television history within radio broadcasting. Nevertheless, the high level of public funding for DR establishes a different position giving them an opportunity to navigate more freely and with no direct ties to such commercial activities that fund approximately a third of the annual Rai budget. In its financial organization, Rai has more similarities with TV 2 that — until 2003 — was funded by 50% license fee and 50% advertising. Today, TV 2 receives no public funding, but the intermediary position between public service remits and commercial activities highlights similarities between Rai and TV 2 and creates the main reason for comparing these two broadcasters in this article. As table 1 shows, Rai and TV 2 are both 100% state-owned, and while privatization has been suggested in relation to both institutions, this has not yet been successfully attempted. Both institutions have regional obligations with administration and production facilities placed elsewhere than in the capital, although much organization planning originates from the capital, including a historic tendency to place TV series production in the capitals. Nevertheless, the strategic placement of regional offices highlights the regional attention given to the policy background of both broadcasters. Altogether they have a comparable audience share and similar policy motivations and internal interests in profiling different regions of each country. One main difference, however, is that the reach and organization of Rai is transnational, predominantly in the neighbouring countries, but also as pay TV in other territories, including Denmark.

TABLE 1:
Comparison of the institutions Rai and TV 2 in Italy and Denmark, respectively.

	Rai	TV 2
OWNERSHIP	100% state-owned	100% state-owned
PUBLIC SERVICE REMIT	All activities	TV 2 Denmark (main channel)
FINANCING	Licence fee and advertising	Subscription and advertising
BROADCASTER CATEGORY	Commercial public service (all channels)	Commercial public service (only main channel) and commercial activities (the rest)
PRIVATISATION	Suggested, but never attempted	Suggested, but never attempted
MAIN OFFICE	Rome, Milan and Turin	Odense and Copenhagen
PRODUCTION FACILITIES	Rome, Milan, Naples and Turin and 17 regional offices	Odense and Copenhagen (only news production) and 8 regional offices
CHANNEL SYSTEM	Multi-channel system	Multi-channel system
STREAMING	RaiPlay (BVoD)	TV 2 Play (SVoD)
MAIN LINEAR CHANNEL AUDIENCE SHARE	Appr. 17% (Rai 2020)	Appr. 25% (TV 2 Denmark 2019)
OVERALL AUDIENCE SHARE	Appr. 36% (all channels 2020)	Appr. 40% (all channels 2019)
LOCAL CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS	They only concern regional, public information and linguistic minorities. References to the diversification of locations are included in Rai Fiction production strategies *Nessuno escluso*.	'TV 2 Denmark must offer a wide societal coverage of Denmark [...] in the different parts of the country.'
NATIONAL CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS	Rai must ensure 'complete and impartial information, as well as [...] encourage education, civil growth, progress and social cohesion, promote the Italian language, culture and creativity, safeguard the national identity and ensure socially useful services.'	'The range of programmes must strive towards quality, versatility and diversity. [...] In programme activities, special attention towards Danish language and culture must be emphasized.'[15]
INTERNATIONAL CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS	To promote and support Italian culture and Italian excellences abroad.	None
FOUNDED	1944 (as Rai)	1988

RAI IN THE ITALIAN PERIPHERY

The acronym RAI (Radio Audizioni Italiane) appeared in 1944 to replace the previous EIAR (Ente Italiano per le Audizioni Radiofoniche), established by the Fascist regime in 1927 with the radio broadcast monopoly license for the Italian territory. From 1924 to 1927, EIAR was referred to as URI (Unione Radiofonica Italiana). Upon the official launch of television broadcast in 1954, the company once again reshaped the meaning of Rai to Radiotelevisione Italiana, a term by which the PSB is still known today. Currently financed by license fee and advertising revenues, Rai has production centres in Rome, Turin, Milan and Naples and offers a portfolio of 14 national free-to-air channels (generalist, semi-generalist and special interest channels, 6 of them also distributed across Europe), three international non-European channels, and two regional channels. Since 2016 it has progressively strengthened its nonlinear offers through the launch of the RaiPlay platform.

Like many other European PSBs, Rai has obligations to deliver complete and impartial information, promote education and social progress, and stimulate Italian culture and creative industries. Among the obligations deriving from being the exclusive concession holder of the Public Radio, Television and Multimedia Service,[16] two are particularly interesting in the light of the objectives of this article. Firstly, Rai must reach the entire national population and specifically guarantee public information at a regional level too, including addressing and protecting linguistic minorities. The national coverage happens through institutional presence in each region with local seats and editorial offices, and through collaboration with various cultural players in the territory. Secondly, Rai is obliged to support the development of national audiovisual industries, including co-producing with and supporting independent producers as well as stimulating the Italian film industry.

Through its production branch Rai Fiction (established in 1997), Rai has become the leading player in television production. In the period 2017-19, Rai offered no less than 74% of Italian serial content, compared to the 8% by Mediaset (the main competitor and commercial broadcaster), the 7% by Sky (the main pay TV service available in Italy), and the 6% by Netflix (the dominant SVoD service).[17] In the latest years, this leading position also interrelates with an increasingly more dynamic and efficient collaboration with independent production companies. Increasingly, 'production companies and broadcasters collaborate as a team on financing, creative and production management, sharing risks and benefits,' writes Luca Barra.[18] In relation to this, diversification of locations plays an important role in Rai Fiction's production strategies:

> *Rai Fiction wants to enhance the diversity of territories and territorial cultures, thus encouraging a process with a strong economic and more importantly cultural value. This process promotes inclusivity in the entire country and also from an international perspective. Local, in this sense, does not mean localism: rather, it means the accuracy of a reference point, and a setting that can become universal exactly because of its specificity.*[19]

According to Eleonora Andreatta, former head of Rai Fiction (now Netflix's head of Italian original content), the representational strategy has been explicit: 'To us, talking about Italy means representing it in its territorial diversity. The setting is not an appendix or a background. It contextualises and gives substance to the plot [...]. In the last few years, we have been shooting in every region of Italy, telling the story of our country in all its cultural variety.'[20]

TV 2 IN THE DANISH PERIPHERY

Compared with the long pre-television history of Rai, TV 2 Denmark was born as a television broadcaster in 1988, breaking the PSB monopoly in Denmark held by DR, the traditional public service institution. TV 2 was introduced as a commercial alternative to DR, at first receiving funds from the Danish licence fee, but today its activities are funded primarily by advertising (since 2003) and by channel subscription (since 2012). From the start, TV 2 had regional obligations, predominantly materialised through eight regional, stand-alone channels that still today receive public funding from the media licence fee. TV 2 provides a multi-channel service for various target audiences, including the SVoD TV 2 Play, but only the main channel has a public service remit and broadcasts daily regional news. The public service remit for the main channel is essentially oriented towards a national context and holds no indications of international obligations: 'In programme activities, special attention towards Danish language and culture must be emphasised.'[21] However, according to the remit, 'TV 2 Denmark must offer a wide societal coverage of Denmark [...] in the different parts of the country.'[22] In other words, the primary public service obligations of TV 2 facilitate a national and a local coverage of Denmark.

Besides news, all TV 2 programmes must be produced by external production companies, an obligation originally intended to stimulate independent production in Denmark, which it successfully did and still does. This includes fiction too. Originally, this was called *the enterprise model*, but today this model has been surpassed by a *co-production model*, since the amount of co-funding from TV 2 has been greatly reduced in favour of both local and international co-financing.[23] From the first large-scale fiction productions, TV 2 has used local production in different areas

in Denmark as differentiation from DR that has been producing most of its dramas in and around Copenhagen. On the one hand, TV 2 could in this way uphold the obligation to regional coverage, and on the other hand position offers from the fiction department in opposition to their main competitor. TV 2's first long-format crime series *Strisser på Samsø* (1997-98) was set on small rural island, and since then the broadcaster has continued to portray locations around Denmark, including peripheral locations in crime series such as *Norskov* (2015-17), DNA (2019-) and *Hvide Sande* (2021-).

For Katrine Vogelsang, the head of fiction, this has been a very conscious strategy:

> *I think that it actually springs from the story ideas. It has been a distinct agenda for me to get away from Copenhagen. If you want to get away from the stories about the system, often originating from Copenhagen where the Danish parliament is, then you need to pull away to get a different perspective on the Danes. TV 2's main series have been situated much more in the provinces. TV 2 was born regional. We live in Odense, and we stand on the shoulders of the regions, reaching clearly beyond an audience in Copenhagen.*[24]

As we show below, the consequence has been a revised image of the Danish peripheries that has been able to gain a voice through dramas set in different Danish localities.

EXPLORING ITALIAN PERIPHERAL LOCATIONS[25]

In recent years, Rai Fiction has re-evaluated and diversified its production strategies, intensified in competition with original content produced by pay TV (Sky) and SVoD platforms (Netflix, Amazon Prime) and the increasing circulation of formats from especially other European countries. This process has offered interesting examples of balancing tradition and innovation while 'translating' international variations into the Italian cultural context.

Rai Fiction's production strategies, emblematically titled *Nobody excluded*, refer to three main objectives: 1) to consolidate the traditional broadcasting service while gradually renewing the offer of the main channel (Rai 1), 2) to enhance narrowcasting by experimenting with formats, genres and languages on channels like Rai 2 and Rai 3, and 3) to consolidate the relationship with national audiences, while simultaneously strengthening the capability to reach international audiences. According to the strategy, two main traits must characterize Rai's TV dramas: Firstly, authenticity is maintained as key for international exposure, defined as e.g. 'overcoming cultural stereotypes', 'truthful representation of society', 'multiple points of view', and 'strong identity connotation'. Secondly, in order to compete with 'the best international television,' Rai focuses on developing and updating

the most popular international genres through high production value and quality TV. Our attention towards *peripheral locations* in Italian crime narratives must be understood within Rai's attention towards authenticity and 'quality' for audiences in both a national and an international context.

Although the primacy of Rome as a location and production centre is attested — both in economic and symbolic terms — throughout Italian film and television history,[26] Rai has previously diversified locations in two ways. Firstly, the representation of rural suburbs, especially picturesque medieval towns, leads to narratives about crimes and mysteries with minor effects on reassuring and conservative environments, e.g. *Il Maresciallo Rocca* (1996-2008) set in Viterbo, *Don Matteo* (2000-) set in Gubbio, later Spoleto, and *Carabinieri* (2002-2008) set in Città della Pieve. Secondly, in portrayals of Southern Mediterranean areas the outcome is often stories about the contrast between the gorgeous natural and cultural heritage and the brutality of crime, e.g. *Il commissario Montalbano* (1999-). However, localisation strategies in these productions tend to consolidate, rather than subvert, cultural and visual stereotypes, while the locations often remain simple, albeit splendid narrative backdrops with no strong narrative motivation for the storyworld. Without the complexity and visual style of international television, these examples do not correspond with the social negotiation of spatial identities here associated with peripheral locations.

Set in Bologna with production facilities hardly available and broadcast on Rai 2, a pioneering exploitation of a peripheral location can be found in the primetime crime series *L'ispettore Coliandro* (2006-). The series is marked by the cinephile style of directors Marco and Antonio Manetti and the irreverently ironic and politically incorrect approach of screenwriters Carlo Lucarelli (author of the Coliandro novels) and Giampiero Rigosi, who claims: 'There is a Rome-centred imaginary [...] In my view, diversification is the answer. Nowadays, Coliandro represents Bologna more than Balanzone! When he comes to Bologna, Giampaolo Morelli [the actor playing Coliandro] always goes around only wearing Coliandro's leather jacket'.[27] Over the years, in fact, the shooting of *Coliandro* has become a collective ritual for the city, and the last episode of the fifth season was screened at the Bologna film archive, simultaneously with the television broadcast. The city of Bologna is depicted in a 'fresh' and unconventional way, emphasizing everyday life atmosphere. As Marco Manetti underlines: 'We were asked to film the exteriors in Bologna, but we wanted to shoot everything in Bologna, also the interiors, because we wanted the city to be felt, that Bologna could be glimpsed behind the windows. Localizing is an incentive for the circulation of Italian works.' And Antonio Manetti remarks: 'In Scandinavian thrillers, the smaller the locations, the more they work. If I had to choose between Stockholm or an isolated Scandinavian village, I would choose localizing.'[28]

Collaborating with screenwriter Sofia Assirelli, Lucarelli and Rigosi created the crime series *La porta rossa* (2017-), a series with a gloomy

atmosphere, combining the realism of the detective story with a supernatural storyline. Although originally set in Bologna, the setting temporarily moved to Turin, but in the end it was produced in Trieste, motivated by director Carmine Elia who explains:

> *I fell in love with the fact that it was a border town, a city suspended between the sky and the sea, between Mediterranean and Northern Europe. A true border town, as if it were the delta of a river that enters the sea. I proposed to shoot in Trieste because it seemed to me a geometric, sharp-cornered city that could become a key part of our story. And Maurizio [Tini] was able to understand this.*[29]

Producer Maurizio Tini confirms: 'It was necessary to find a place that was as little "seen" as possible precisely because we were going to tell a story atypical for Italian serial production, so we also had to stand out from that point of view. We needed a city with its own characteristics, its own history, its own character.'[30] Simultaneously with the Rai 2 premiere, the last episode of the second season was screened in the city at the Rossetti theatre on 20 March 2019. Furthermore, fans of the series organized a convention on 19 October 2019 in Trieste to celebrate the engaging location that provided a key contribution to the visual identity of the show.[31]

The literary origin of the storyworld often determines the location of a crime series. *Rocco Schiavone*, adapted from Antonio Manzini's literary series and set in Valle d'Aosta, and *L'alligatore* (2020) based on Massimo Carlotto's novels and set in the lagoon landscapes of Northern Italy both provide great examples of this trend. In both Rai 2 series, peripheral locations establish an influential ambience around the protagonists (the Deputy Commissioner of the State Police Schiavone and the sleuth nicknamed 'Alligatore', respectively), emphasizing their main characteristics by analogy or contrast. Such adaptation processes also facilitate peripheral locations in the more conventional series produced for Rai 1, e.g. *Imma Tataranni – Sostituto procuratore* (2019-) based on Mariolina Venezia's novels. The protagonist offers a challenging representation of the female detective, corresponding with the representation of the Southern city of Matera, disputing a range of Mediterranean stereotypes tied to both place and people.

Besides influences on the female detectives, the two series *Non uccidere* (2015-18) and *Bella da morire* (2020) clearly display the international impact of Nordic crime series often referenced as Nordic Noir on the representation of Italian locations. From the interval between the two series, we may highlight how the international influential genre variation have been elaborated and adapted into the Italian cultural context. In *Non uccidere*, the storyworld is permeated by an oppressive and excruciating atmosphere emphasized by the 'Nordic' urban setting in Turin in Northern Italy and the dark colour tones of the imagery. In production paratexts (e.g.

Fig. 2: Based on Massimo Carlotto's novels, *L'alligatore* (2020), whose eponymous hero is played by Matteo Martari, is set in the lagoon landscapes of Northern Italy: the protagonist's gloomy attitude and his nickname are deeply related to the environment.

interviews),[32] actors and creatives make explicit references to the 'Nordic' visual style of the show as a 'disruptive' element in the Italian context.

Five years after the premiere of *Non uccidere*, *Bella da morire* presents another and slightly more balanced attempt to 'translate' Nordic Noir's genre variation into the Italian context. In the narrative, the tough and solitary police detective Eva Cantini (Cristiana Capotondi) returns to her native town Lagonero (literally *dark lake*). The imaginary Lagonero differs from the original ideas presented during the writing process that staged the story near lake Como in Northern Italy. As the screenwriter Gravino recalls: 'We had set the story in a more British world. We imagined a very gray, rainy, foggy lake, [...] a location that immediately referred to Nordic and British tales, which immediately placed the series in this great trend.'[33]

The eventual locations became lakes Albano and Bracciano, combined to create a unique fictional lake. Although they are closer to Rome, the specific representation of these more Mediterranean locations avoids the pitfall of visual stereotypes and, indeed, adds some Nordic nuances. As director Molaioli claims:

> *The suburbs have been often represented only as a reassurance, a little false place. Here, there were suburbs to tell too. Economic reasons led us to shoot close to Rome, but I was fond of the original idea of Nordic suburbs and I have tried to conceive the locations as Nordic: although illuminated by the sun, they are never completely clear and limpid. Therefore, while remaining close to Rome, we have moved away from the concrete geographical places.*[34]

'In our first ideas', continues producer Cotta Ramosino,

> *The Nordic-European model was also reflected in the locations, and the idea was to describe Northern Italy by the lake. The water and the lake have always been important, and we have managed to maintain them by using the lakes near Rome. In order to reach this slightly Nordic atmosphere, we have created a place that does not exist: a fictional lake but with recognizable, real elements, faithful to the original Nordic inspiration.*[35]

Running through these arguments regarding producing at peripheral locations, we find a sometimes embedded, sometimes explicit authenticity claim: although some series have been remarkably influenced by international genre stylistics, the sense of real places and representative storylines permeate the placement strategies of the series. This complex relationship between influential intertextuality and authenticity also imbue, as we shall see below, the recent localisation trends in series produced for and broadcast by Danish TV 2.

Fig. 3: *Bella da morire* reworks Nordic Noir's genre variation into the Italian context by telling the story of the tough and solitary police detective Eva Cantini (Cristiana Capotondi) returning to her native town Lagonero.

EXPLORING DANISH PERIPHERAL LOCATIONS[36]

Even if TV 2 as a broadcaster was born with regional obligations, and even if the break-through television series was a crime drama in the Danish periphery, it took over a decade before the regional shift in TV 2 dramas kicked off. Surprisingly, the broadcaster neglected to follow up on *Strisser på Samsø*'s significant audience success. A decade later, three crime series premiered on TV 2. *Anna Pihl* (2006-8), *Blekingegade* (2009) and *Den som dræber* (2011) all take place in Copenhagen, though *Anna Pihl* directs attention towards peripheral Copenhagen (the so-called Western District). The watershed was, however, the engagement of Katrine Vogelsang in 2011 as head of fiction at a time when broadcasters realized that television series was a significant asset in the ensuing digital turn of television viewing. Her regional philosophy quickly impacted series produced for TV 2, including *Badehotellet* (2013-), their absolutely most popular television series. This historical drama is set in the Northern Danish periphery around the popular tourist town Skagen, although primarily shot in studios in Copenhagen and selected exterior scenes and breakers on-location.

Earlier the same year, TV 2 premiered the successful crime series *Dicte* (2013-16), adapted from novels and characters by the crime writer Elsebeth Egholm. Although set in Aarhus, the second largest city in Denmark, the series put focus on provincial Denmark and included, already in the international promotion material, a heavy accentuation of spatiality. The material, for instance, refers to *voyeur-breaks* as a visual concept: 'We will implement a more stylised visual layer showing the city as it appears in-between the street and the rooftops in order to get a distanced gaze into people's homes. The visual layer is meant as transitional and ambient images that embrace the city and reminds us of the life lived around our characters.'[37] Flanked by efficient locative imagery from Aarhus, *Dicte* appears as much framed by place as by character in the promotion leaflet.

After *Dicte*'s success, fuelled by the prerequisite to boost international co-funding for increasingly expensive television series, crime narratives

Fig. 4: *Badehotellet* is a comic period drama, but the peripheral imagery — a contemplating character with back turned towards the camera standing at the *literal* periphery — is part of the title screen of the series, too.

have since been the most profiled genre in the broadcaster's fiction portfolio. As stated by Pernille Bech Christensen, executive producer at TV 2, 'crime is clearly still the genre that works best. It is the easiest one to co-produce.'[38] Two miniseries, *Kriger* (2018) and *Efterforskningen* (2020), take place in Copenhagen, while the long-form crime series *Greyzone* (2018) is situated in a North-European transnational space motivated by the co-production model between primarily Denmark, Sweden and Germany. Since 2015, the broadcaster's five additional crime series in different ways implement Danish peripheral locations, enabling local municipal financial and practical support for all five productions. Coastal municipalities and resultant coastal landscape imagery are common features of all five series: *Norskov* (2015-17) was produced on-location predominantly in Frederikshavn in Northern Denmark; *DNA* (2019-) was a large-scale Danish-French co-production, but the series involved profiled on-location shooting in northern Denmark; both *Sommerdahl* (2020-) and *Alfa* (2020) contain settings in Northern Sealand, Helsingør and Gripskov, respectively; and *Hvide Sande* (2021-) is shot on-location in primarily Hvide Sande on the Danish west-coast. Often producers claim authenticity when asked about the effect of peripheral on-location shooting, e.g. Thomas Radoor, Nordisk Film's executive producer on *DNA*: 'This "the local is global" has been widely used, but I still think that there is more to it. I think that we are suckers for authenticity and that we have become more conscious about "bullshit". I think that we have become better at recognizing a story that feels real.'[39] The *authenticity claim* frequently reverberates in close association with the emotional experience of something original and prominent about a new, fresh location. This includes the opportunity for characters to have a 'fresh' start as well; for instance, the development material for *Hvide Sande* refers to the peripheral location as 'the geographical version of a "factory reset".'[40]

The two productions *Norskov* and *Hvide Sande* share a number of remarkable similarities. As the only two long-form Danish series so far, they have both been shot entirely on-location in and around small coastal towns, based on what Hansen and Christensen (2017) refer to as *stories from below*: stories echoing real stories discovered by researching the topography, demography and local identity of a place. In early development material (dated April 2012), *Norskov*'s creator and scriptwriter Dunja Gry Jensen indirectly makes the authenticity claim: 'We have a great desire for reality. Real police work. Real crimes. The real Denmark. Real Danes. We believe that others feel the same. That they are actually interested in how police work takes place in reality.'[41] Morten Rasmussen, producer on *Hvide Sande*, highlights a reversed development process for the series: 'Normally, we start developing story and character, subsequently finding locations for the narrative and universe. This time it was in reverse order.' Per municipal association to Aarhus as the Municipal Capital of Culture in 2017, 'writer teams were invited to Hvide Sande with the set assignment to

Fig. 5: Translocal imagery in *Norskov*, once again a contemplating character standing at the literal periphery, marking the darkened liminality of the location.

create a fiction series based on the area's nature, culture and population.' The result was 'a strong foundation for an original, international series with local anchorage.'[42] In this way, on-location shooting and *stories from below* resonate with the embedded reference to authenticity. At the same time, it appears clear from statements like these that the physical movement of stories to peripheral, coastal locations induced an opportunistic possibility to discover new, untold stories.

In both cases, the creators spend considerable time sourcing local narratives and atmospheres, either by travelling to and researching the locality (as the creator of *Norskov* did), or by actually spending time living in the area (as the writers of *Hvide Sande* did).[43] In this way, municipal participation in local crime productions serves an opportunity to contest the territorial stigmata sometimes attached to peripheral locations,[44] while also establishing a reasonable opportunity for enriching tourist activities and local place branding. In such cases, there are obvious benefits for the creatives as well as the local environment with an interest in attracting such a production. Creatives behind both *Norskov* and *Hvide Sande* stress the remarkable opportunity to uncover stories that they were unable to come up with themselves, while there are natural obstacles, including basic challenges of the local weather conditions. For instance, producing sunny *blue sky crime* in Hvide Sande during the coldest summer in 29 years created some trouble for the *Hvide Sande* crew. During a local online premiere event for the series *Hvide Sande* (May 2 2021), the producer Morten Rasmussen maintained that the challenges were clearly outweighed by the local support (including hiring a location manager with local knowledge for the production) and the effect of on-location shooting:

> *We were met with open arms out here, which makes a difference, because so many gifts come from working on location. You get a 360° space to work in, and you get an authenticity, which is hard to create in a studio. […] You can feel these gifts throughout the series. You can feel that we are in a real place.*

During the same event, the municipal head of culture Per Høgh Sørensen highlighted the intense participation of 1,400 local extras and hundreds of volunteers working for the series, stressing how such participation establishes local pride and community building. In fact, something similar took place during the local production of *Norskov*, which shows how new television series — expensive as they may be — also involve a hidden economy of precarious labour and voluntary participation. Essentially, when creatives highlight the additional uncovered expenses for shooting at distant or peripheral locations, local production holds a conspicuous difference from the production environments in production hubs where it is not as effortless to engage a local free labour-force. Such production stories about visual gifts and helpful local volunteers are, however, widespread realisations from on location television production in peripheral Danish areas. In the public invitation to the *Hvide Sande* premiere event, it was stressed how the final premiere of *Hvide Sande* shows that 'Western Jutland equals a vigorous drive and the art of pulling together', which is a sense of community that reverberates through many local Danish television productions.

COMPARING ITALIAN AND DANISH PERIPHERIES

Despite obvious differences in the institutional histories of Rai and TV 2, and the apparent variations in Danish and Italian demographics and topographies notwithstanding, it becomes clear from the above that there are striking similarities between Italian and Danish location strategies in crime series produced by or for the PSBs. Although no direct collaboration between the two broadcasters or between production companies in the two countries has appeared, we see highly noticeable parallels between the stylistic and narrative results in the series produced as well as in the *raison d'être* behind the production and location strategies for the series presented above. Rooted in PSB obligations to represent the entire composition of the nation, both Rai and TV 2 have purposefully motivated serial content in the peripheries of the countries, resulting in an increasingly multi-faceted and varied location awareness in representing rural and urban areas. Here, the indicative point is that the lack of direct co-production links between Italy and Denmark points towards a more general movement especially in TV crime series, but also in TV serial content in general.

The representational intention in using peripheral locations in TV series is often flanked by two additional and associated motivations embedded in the location strategies. On the one hand, producers often express a wish to avoid stereotypical portrayals of the series' settings and in this way circumvent the heavy connotations often tied to the production hubs of the productions cultures through years of utilizing the same locations, cities and settings for TV content. On the other hand, creatives regularly reveal an experience of 'freshness' tied to new, fallow locations, which for them — and intentionally also for audiences — results in an ambient sense of authenticity. In this way, producers and creatives establish a sharp distinction between the originality and authenticity of peripheral locations *and* the stereotypical character of conventional and mundane drama settings. Essentially, this is both a neutral way to describe the ambience of the location strategies behind contemporary TV series as well as a salient part of outspoken branding strategies behind the exposure of the series, including the cultural and economic conditions behind the production.

Depicting the local colour of a specific location has, conceptually, been closely entangled in this contradistinction between showcasing something real(istic) and authentic, on the one hand, and the stereotypical pitfalls of turning places into commodities, on the other.[45] Wedged between these assumptions regarding peripheral locations, we need to pose an obvious question regarding the authenticity claim: What happens to authenticity when otherwise unassociated productions exploit peripheral locations in such a similar manner? As the stylistic treatment of the locations are very much alike, such artistic creations of authenticity give the clear impression of moving towards stereotypical or formulaic representations of peripheries in Italy, Denmark and elsewhere. Is it, then, possible to maintain the authenticity claim when 'authentic' seems to become a translocal conventional style?

This is, in fact, a very complex question that needs to be untangled in two stages. Firstly, we need to stress that the 'freshness' often mentioned by creatives refers to the unmediated places, i.e. the new locations discovered as untainted by mediation. In other words, the authenticity claim maintains newness based on the places' lack of mediation, which then embraces an intricate idea about how mediation may tamper with authenticity. Secondly, what we notice in the Italian and Danish examples (as well as other European examples) is that it is not the places *per se* that are caught in this complex web of authenticity and mediation; rather, it is the *way* that a place is stylistically treated, e.g. the overall impact of Nordic Noir stylistics on European television crime series. In this way, the translocal vocabulary of television style becomes a common, transcultural language, establishing an international way to tell stories about very different places from the cold North to the warm South.

PERIPHERAL LOCATIONS IN EUROPEAN TV CRIME SERIES

Despite media systemic differences and maybe through very similar location strategies, places in Italy and Denmark rarely used for large scale international co-productions are now to a greater and greater extent supplementing the production hubs, as local production of television crime series appears to be a trend across Europe. As we suggested throughout the article, this European tendency may be interpreted at two distinct and yet deeply interrelated levels.

At the level of production strategies, and besides the well-researched positive impact (both in social and economic terms) of audiovisual productions on territories, the increasingly important role of regional funds and independent producers (and their international networks)[46] must be stressed. As Barra punctually observes about current trends in Italy, 'the producer takes a share of the business risk, develops ideas, submits them to its partners, acquires intellectual properties and collaborates with top authors, showrunners, head writers, directors and actors. The broadcaster relinquishes part of the control and acts as project and team leader.'[47] Something very similar characterizes the circumstances around series production for TV 2 in Denmark. Represented by the Italian and Danish cases above, this increasingly dynamic audiovisual landscape connecting the national with the regional (and the international) may be extended across the continent. At the same time, the PSBs' utilization of expertise and creative skills from a stimulated media industry may also have an aesthetic impact, promoting the above mentioned 'televisual Europe of regions' associated with a shared, translocal place imagery.

Perceivably, such a locally and internationally rich dialectic may also prevent the shared, translocal TV aesthetics from becoming a formulaic translocal style and may even foster a perceived sense of authenticity. In this respect, the cooperation between national and regional players may reinforce the relationship between fresh visual identities, innovative narratives and complex story-worlds, which are genuinely grounded — rather than merely situated — in peripheral locations. Most importantly, this rich cooperation may also facilitate a conceptual transition from a 'glocal' to a 'translocal' perspective. Where glocalisation predominantly refers to the localization process in format trade,[48] translocalism may suggest a different strategy where stories originate from the distinctive features of their settings (stories from below), while still succeeding in circulating internationally, thanks to the familiar and recognizable frames represented by popular genres (and especially the crime genre).

Given its popular and engaging plots, the crime genre may also strengthen the social, economic and political implications of placing stories in peripheral locations. At the same time, such processes foster

stories that are also about *being* in the periphery with particular reference to experiencing borders, i.e. what we have previously termed 'external liminality'. In this regard, the European dimension becomes even more relevant. In many cases, peripheral areas (with relation to the nation's both geographical and symbolic centre) are also border areas, close to the frontiers between two states: In all these cases, the cultural representation of internal marginality corresponds to a tentative opening towards external areas. The story of *Rocco Schiavone*, for instance, unfolds in the Aosta Valley region, bordering with France to the West and Switzerland to the North; *La porta rossa* is set in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region, sharing a frontier with Austria to the North and Slovenia to the East. In both cases, the cross-border dimension is thematized in the plot.

Other examples engage more strongly and directly with borderline issues and tensions, thus stressing the continental (more than national) negotiation of peripherality and demonstrating that the double marginality of peripheral locations can resonate further on a continental (and even trans-continental) scale, and may represent a challenge in the European audiovisual sector. The Finnish crime drama *Sorjonen*, for instance, set in the city of Lappeenranta, focuses on Russian border, the Spanish-French crime series *Hierro* (Moviestar+/ARTE, 2019-) deals with the geopolitical complexities of crime and immigration on the Canaries outside the African coast, and the Polish series *Wataha* tackles the issue of Eastern European migrants into Poland through a setting at the Ukrainian border. Other cases, although not specifically set on the boundary between national states, use peripheral locations to elaborate on the geopolitical role of Europe. The Icelandic tv series *Ófærð*, for instance, negotiates the island's intermediary Atlantic position between Europe and North America, while the Belgian series *La trêve*, filmed in the Ardennes and set in the imaginary small town of Heiderfeld, addresses the relationship between Europe and immigration through the investigation on the death of Driss Assani, a young African football player in the local team.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we have understood *peripheral locations* as a creative stimulation of stories about internal and external liminality as well as a practical decision to produce television series in the periphery away from the geographic and symbolic centre of the nation. Through analyses of two otherwise directly unassociated production environments, i.e. Italian and Danish television industries, we have emphasized an increasing attention towards producing television crime series not only away from the production hubs but in the literal peripheries. By creatives, the result is often referred to as 'fresh' locations and as a way to gain access to new and untold stories. In other words, we see a new creative stimulation through

the liminality of the practical locations for the specific television series.

The choice to analyse Rai in Italy and TV 2 in Denmark, respectively, has been to uncover very similar trends in television industries, despite the fact that we have not yet seen direct collaboration or co-production of television fiction between neither the two broadcasters nor the two countries. However, this article clearly shows that the two production environments share an aesthetic vocabulary as well as an interest in perceived authentic, local stories about crime and regional cultures.

At the same time, our research for this article indicates that the similarities between localisation processes in Italy and Denmark allude to a general tendency in European television crime series. At a time marked by 'too much TV',[49] new stories springing from new peripheral places contribute to a differentiation process on a potentially saturated marketplace for television drama. Popular television drama in general and crime series in particular appear to be mapping Europe by scrutinizing and recording unheeded stories from places that rarely get the screen time that they may deserve.

Notes

[1] The research presented here has been financed by the research project *DETECt — Detecting Transcultural Identity in European Popular Crime Narratives* (Horizon 2020, 2018–2021) [Grant agreement number 770151]. While working in close collaboration on all aspects of the present article, the two authors divided the work as follows: Kim Toft Hansen wrote the introduction and sections 2, 4, 6 and 7; Valentina Re wrote sections 1, 3, 5, 8 and the conclusion.

[2] Massimiliano Coviello, Valentina Re and Luca Barra, 'Innovative Use of Peripheral Locations in Italian Crime Narratives: The Case of *La porta rossa*', in *Location Marketing and Cultural Tourism: Crime Narratives as Destination Branding*, ed. by Cathrin Bengesser, Kim Toft Hansen and Lynge Stegger Gemzøe (DETECt Horizon 2020 research report, 2020, pp. 59-64) https://www.detect-project.eu/deliverables/ [accessed 9 February 2021]; Massimiliano Coviello and Valentina Re, 'Translocal Landscapes: *La Porta Rossa* and the Use of Peripheral Locations in Contemporary Italian Tv Crime Drama', *Academic Quarter*, 22 (2021), pp. 1–19.

[3] *Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*, ed. by Setha M. Low and D. Lawrence-Zúñiga (Hoboken: Wiley, 2003). Setha M. Low, *Spatializing Culture: The Ethnography of Space and Place* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).

[4] Robert A. Saunders, *Geopolitics, Northern Europe, and Nordic Noir: What Television Series Tells Us about World Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2020).

[5] Kim Toft Hansen and Anne Marit Waade, *Locating Nordic Noir: From Beck to The Bridge* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

[6] Pei-Sze Chow and Stine Agnete Sand, 'Regional Screen Ecosystems at the Peripheries: Production and Talent Development in Tromsø and Aarhus', *Journal of Scandinavian Cinema*, 10.2 (2020), pp. 169–189 (p. 170). Regarding relationships between audiovisual production and economic development in smaller Italian regions, most research focus on the film sector, e.g. Marco Cucco and Giuseppe Richeri, *Il mercato delle location cinematografiche* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2013) and Giulia Lavarone, *Cinema, media e turismo* (Padova: Padova University Press, 2016).

[7] Sue Turnbull and Marion McCutcheon, 'Quality vs Value: The Case of *The Kettering Incident*', in *A companion to Australian cinema*, ed. by Felicity Collins, Jane Landman and Susan Bye (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2019), pp. 391–415 (p. 206).

[8] Saunders, p. 104.

[9] Anne Marit Waade, 'Screening the West Coast: Developing New Nordic Noir Tourism in Denmark and Using the Actual Places As Full-Scale Visual Mood Boards for the Scriptwriting Process', in *Locating Imagination. Popular Culture, Tourism and Belonging*, ed. by Nicky van Es, Stijn Reijnders, Leonieke Bolderman and Abby Waydorf (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), pp. 99–117. For an overview about the relationships between Italian landscapes and television dramas, see *Geo-fiction. Il volto televisivo del Belpaese*, ed. by Teresa Graziano and Enrico Nicosia (Roma: Aracne, 2017).

[10] Kim Toft Hansen and Jørgen Riber R. Christensen, 'Local Noir and Local Identity: *Norskov* and the Spatial Implications of Branded Content', in *European Television Crime Drama and Beyond*, ed. by Kim Toft Hansen, Sue Turnbull and Steven Peacock (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 213–231. Most research in Italy focus on the relationship between national and regional identities and on the film sector, see for instance *Cinema e identità italiana*, ed. by Stefania Parigi, Christian Uva and Vito Zagarrio (Roma: RomaTrEPRESS, 2019). A general overview related to Italian TV dramas is provided in Milly Buonanno, *La fiction italiana. Narrazioni televisive e identità nazionale* (Roma-Bari:

Laterza, 2012). Further specific insights can be found in Luca Barra and Marco Cucco, 'Tra "orribile pubblicità" e attenzione globale. Gomorra – *La serie e il rapporto problematico con il territorio*', in *Universo Gomorra. Da libro e film, da film a serie*, ed. by Michele Guerra, Sara Martin and Stefania Rimini (Milano-Udine: Mimesis, 2018), pp. 67–80; and *Cinergie, Global Italy: rappresentazioni transmediali dell'italianità*, ed. by Giuliana Benvenuti, Giacomo Manzoli and Rita Monticelli, 18 (2020).

[11] S Giorgio Avezzù, 'Italian Fiction as Viewed from a Distance: Anomalies in the Correlation Between National and Regional Success', *Series*, 6.1 (2020), pp. 91–106.

[12] Saunders, p. 114.

[13] For an overall population of almost six millions people, approximately ten Danish seasons of TV series are produced each year, while for a population of sixty millions people, around forty seasons are produced for Italian audiences. Source: Gilles Fontaine, Marta Jiminez Pumares and Christian Grece (2018): *The production and circulation of TV fiction in the EU28. Television and VOD*. European Audiovisual Observatory, p. 19. https://rm.coe.int/the-production-and-circulation-of-tv-fiction-in-the-eu28-television-an/1680946229 [accessed 20 April 2021].

[14] In 2019, the overall Italian audience share was 35,7% for Rai, 31,6% for Mediaset and 7,2% for Sky Italy. The three main players represented the 85% of the total revenues in the Italian TV sector. Source: AGCOM, *Relazione annuale 2020*, pp. 137 and 134, https://www.agcom.it/documents/10179/4707592/Allegato+6-7-2020/983e88a4-16cf-48b7-b618-f3c9ae06fa2b?version=1.1 [accessed 7 May 2021]. In the same year, the overall Danish audience share was 36% for DR, 40% for TV 2 and 10% for the commercial NENT group. In Denmark this means 76% public service based broadcasting, including TV 2's all-commercial activities. Source: *TV 2 Danmark – Public Service Redegørelse* https://slks.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/SLKS/Omraader/Medier/Tv/Landsdaekkende_tv/Public_Service_redegoerelser_2019/Public_service-redegoerelse_2019.pdf [accessed April 20 2021].

[15] Quotes about the legal obligations for TV 2 are taken from *Tilladelse til TV 2 DANMARK A/S til at udøve public service-programvirksomhed 2019-2023*, pp. 3–4, https://slks.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/SLKS/Omraader/Medier/Tv/Landsdaekkende_tv/Public_service-tv/TV_2/Public_service-tilladelse_2019-2023_-1.pdf [accessed 22 April 2021]. The quote about Rai has been translated from Italian and taken from *Separate and Consolidated Interim Financial Statements as at 30 June 2020*, p. 18, https://www.rai.it/dl/doc/1608662040653_Rai%20-%20RFS%202020%20UK.pdf [accessed 7 May 2021]. See also *Nessuno escluso* http://www.rai.it/portale/Nessuno-escluso-86dc82f3-3f7a-4f7a-9b06-bf21e4185832.html [accessed 9 February 2021]. For the term BVOD (broadcaster video on demand) see Christian Grece, *Trends in the VOD market in EU28*, European Audiovisual Observatory 2021 https://rm.coe.int/trends-in-the-vod-market-in-eu28-final-version/1680a1511a [accessed 7 May 2021].

[16] The most recent documents regulating the relationship between Rai and the Italian government are: *Affidamento in concessione del servizio pubblico radiofonico, televisivo e multimediale ed approvazione dell'annesso schema di convenzione*, 2017 http://www.rai.it/dl/doc/1544541789953_GU%20Concessione_170525.pdf [accessed 9 February 2021] and *Contratto di servizio 2018-2022* http://www.rai.it/dl/doc/1607970429668_Contratto%20di%20servizio%202018-2022.pdf [accessed 13 June 2021].

[17] See APA (Associazione Produttori Audiovisivi), *2° rapporto sulla produzione audiovisiva nazionale*, 2020 https://ricerche.apaonline.it/ricerca/la-produzione-audiovisiva-nazionale-valori-economici-tendenze-e-sfide-di-un-settore-in-rapido-sviluppo-2020/ [accessed 9 February 2021].

[18] Luca Barra, 'Commissari, camorristi, e poi ancora commissari. Modelli produttivi e distributivi della fiction italiana crime contemporanea', in *Sulle tracce del crimine. Viaggio nel giallo e nero Rai*,

ed. by Maria Pia Ammirati and Peppino Ortoleva (Roma: Rai Libri, 2020), pp. 177–188 (p. 186) (the quote has been translated from Italian).

[19] *Nessuno escluso* http://www.rai.it/portale/Nessuno-escluso-86dc82f3-3f7a-4f7a-9b06-bf21e4185832.html [accessed 9 February 2021] (the quote has been translated from Italian).

[20] Fabio Guarnaccia, 'Intervista a Eleonora Andreatta', *Link*, 23 (2018), pp. 15–24 (pp. 19–20) (the quote has been translated from Italian).

[21] TV 2, 'Tilladelse til TV 2 DANMARK A/S til at udøve public service-programvirksomhed 2019-2023', (2018), p. 3, https://slks.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/SLKS/Omraader/Medier/Tv/Landsdaekkende_tv/Public_service-tv/TV_2/Public_service-tilladelse_2019-2023_-1.pdf [accessed 9 February 2021].

[22] TV 2 2020, p. 4.

[23] Kim Toft Hansen, 'Glocal Perspectives on Danish Television Series: Co-producing Crime Narratives for Commercial Public Service', in *Danish Television Drama: Global Lessons from a Small Nation*, ed. by Anne Marit Waade, Eva Novrup Redvall and Pia Majbritt Jensen (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. 83–101.

[24] Vogelsang, Katrine. Interview conducted by Kim Toft Hansen (the quote has been translated from Danish). TV 2, Copenhagen, 4 November 2015.

[25] All series mentioned in this section have been broadcasted by a Rai channel.

[26] See Avezzù, p. 92.

[27] Rigosi, Giampiero. Interview conducted by Luca Bara, Federico Pagello and Valentina Re. Bologna, 7 May 2019. Balanzone is a *Commedia dell'Arte* regional 'mask' (the quote has been translated from Italian). A special thanks for his support to Federico Poillucci, head of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Film Commission.

[28] Manetti, Antonio and Marco. Interview conducted by Monica Dall'Asta, Federico Pagello and Valentina Re. Bologna, 29 August 2019 (the quotes have been translated from Italian).

[29] Carmine, Elia. Interview conducted by Massimiliano Coviello. Siena, 19 January 2020 (the quote has been translated from Italian).

[30] Tini, Maurizio. Interview conducted by Massimiliano Coviello and Valentina Re. Roma, 14 May 2019 (the quote has been translated from Italian).

[31] See the Facebook private group 'Fan della porta Rossa' https://www.facebook.com/groups/715798332149168/ [accessed 9 February 2021].

[32] Available on RaiPlay [accessed 9 February 2021].

[33] Gravino, Filippo. Online interview conducted by M. Elena D'Amelio and Valentina Re, 24 November 2020 (the quote has been translated from Italian). A special thanks for their support to Karen Hassan and Giada Giannecchini from Cattleya.

[34] Molaioli, Andrea. Online interview conducted by M. Elena D'Amelio and Valentina Re, 8 December 2020 (the quote has been translated from Italian).

[35] Cotta Ramosino, Laura. Online interview conducted by M. Elena D'Amelio and Valentina Re, 15 December 2020 (the quote has been translated from Italian).

[36] All series mentioned in this section have been broadcasted by a TV 2 channel.

[37] Undated concept leaflet for the *Dicte series*, courtesy of Miso Film.

[38] Christensen, Pernille Bech. Interview conducted by Kim Toft Hansen, Anne Marit Waade and Vilde Schanke Sundet (the quote has been translated from Danish). TV 2, Copenhagen, 24 September 2018.

[39] Radoor, Thomas and Trin Hjortkær Thomsen. Interview conducted by Kim Toft Hansen (the quote has been translated from Danish). Nordisk Film, Valby, 2 November 2018.

[40] Quote taken from an internal development document entitled 'Arenas Hvide Sande', courtesy of

Michael Rasmussen, Deluca Film. The quote has been translated from Danish.

[41] Kim Toft Hansen and Jørgen Riber Christensen, '*Norskov* and the Logic of Place: The Soft Effect of Local Danish Tv Drama Production', *Series: International Journal of TV Serial Narratives*, 3.1 (2017), pp. 11-26 (p. 14).

[42] Lone Leth-Larsen, 'Vestkysten danner rammen om TV 2s nye krimiserie "Hvide Sande"', https://omtv2.tv2.dk/nyheder/2020/06/vestkysten-danner-rammen-om-tv-2s-nye-krimiserie-hvide-sande/ [accessed 9 February 2021].

[43] Jensen, Dunja Gry. Interview conducted by Kim Toft Hansen and Jørgen Riber Christensen. Nørresundby, 16 September 2015. Klarlund, Anders. Interview conducted by Kim Toft Hansen, online, 12 February 2021.

[44] Jørgen Riber Christensen and Kim Toft Hansen, 'Territorial Stigmatisation and the Negotiation of Place: Tainted Locations in Danish Television Documentary', *Academic Quarter*, 17 (2019), pp. 10–22.

[45] See *Locating Nordic Noir* (pp. 30–32) for the complex genealogy of local colour.

[46] See Cineregio (European network of regional film funds), https://www.cineregio.org/; CEPI (European audiovisual production association), https://www.cepi-producers.eu/ [accessed 9 February 2021].

[47] Barra, p. 186.

[48] This is a point raised in Elke Weissmann, 'Local, National, Transnational: *Y Gwyll/Hinterland* as Crime of/for All Places' in *European Television Crime Drama and Beyond*, ed. by Kim Toft Hansen, Sue Turnbull and Steven Peacock (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 119–37. However, see Hansen pp. 85–88 for a further development of glocalisation as a concept for researching international TV series.

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Away from London: Crime and Regional Film Commissions in the UK

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The purpose of this essay is to investigate the role played by regional film agencies in the new Millenium production of TV crime drama in the UK by looking in particular at the portfolio of Screen Yorkshire. The recent development of production hubs and the global competition for studio spaces, location, and facilities, led to increased importance of regional settings and support for the screen industries which is evident in the activities of national and regional agencies in the UK. After an overview of the location market in the UK and the production support available at the regional level, the essay will address the crime narratives set in local settings, and the role played by the film agencies, in particular Screen Yorkshire. Screen Yorkshire since its establishment in 2002 proved successful in developing the growth of screen industries in the area, thanks to its specialisation in commercial content investment and the introduction of the Yorkshire Content Fund (YCF). The essay will engage with the different supporting mechanisms available in the areas, through the analysis of the crime productions to reveal how matters of location and heritage play a role in the crime narratives.

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INTRODUCTION[1]

The British film and television industry is the fastest-growing sector within the UK. According to the British Film Institute, the production volume in the UK accounted for £1.9 billion in 2017, an all-time high which signifies a 125% increase within the previous ten years, stimulated primarily by inward investment from US studios.[2] Even though Covid-19 put a stop to most productions in 2020 and the effects of Brexit for the industry are as of now hard to predict,[3] the latest numbers from 2019 saw a staggering £3.616 as combined total spend on film and high-end TV production in the UK.[4] Britain's and Northern Ireland's film and TV studios are struggling to cope with the demand. A recent study by Lambert, Smith, & Hampton about the UK's property markets estimates that there are up to 1.9 million sq. ft. of new studio space necessary to accommodate the rising demand.[5] Film franchises such as Marvel, *Star Wars*, to the *Harry Potter* spin-offs, have been a key driver of this development, but high-end TV (HETV, productions

costing more than £1 million per episode), has been equally impressive. According to the BFI, the total UK production spend on HETV was £938 millions in 2017, which is the highest recorded number since the HETV-tax relief came into effect in 2013.[6]

Crime, as a genre, plays a strong role within the production ecosystem in the UK. While 'Nordic Noir' reigns supreme, British crime productions such as *Broadchurch*, *Luther*, *Hinterland*, *Marcella* or *Gangs of London* are more popular than ever and with the growing demand, production space becomes scarcer. Since the UK's significant advantage is its pool of highly skilled specialist labour, which means that most productions can be crewed locally, international productions, attracted by localised tax incentives, choose London's renowned production facilities.[7] The studio infrastructure boasts big names such as Pinewood, Leavesden, Ealing, Elstree and Twickenham, which have an outstanding reputation in servicing international productions. However, even the executive chairman of London Film, Adrian Wootton, admits that the success of London, 'breeds increased demand, and while our overriding message is 'always busy, never full' there is a rising demand for additional studio space.'[8]

Regional production hubs have never been more important for the UK and regional film agencies play an important role in this development. Within the framework of the economic and cultural imperatives of British politics and policies that have lastingly reshaped the British film industry since the late 1990s, this contribution aims to examine the significance of these regional agencies for the British film industry in general and the crime genre in particular.

This essay will examine the policies of the last thirty years that have given rise to the regional screen agencies whilst drawing on quantitative data from the British Film Institute, Ofcom, Oxford Economics, ONS, and others to verify the economic impact and viability of these strategies. The essay will engage with the different supporting mechanisms available in the Yorkshire region, home to the most successful screen agency in the UK outside of London and analyse its mission statements. As the aforementioned policies combine economic and cultural goals, the importance of crime fiction productions within this framework will be evaluated and a case study of *The ABC Murders*, a prototypical production for Screen Yorkshire will discuss the importance of location, heritage, and regional diversity for production hubs outside of London.

FILM AND TELEVISION PRODUCTION IN THE UK

According to a report by Oxford Economics, three-quarters of the jobs in the core UK film industry were based in London and the South East in 2010. London alone claimed 26,300 jobs (including employees & self-employed), or 55% of the total number. There is, however, a significant number of

employees throughout the UK, i.e., 2,200 jobs in the South West and 2,100 jobs in the North West. The report indicates that there is a trend for the UK core film industry to become less 'London-centric' over time, with more production shifting to areas outside of London. Interestingly, these shifts are primarily attributed to the growing demand for TV production employment rather than film. The report argues that increases in regional funding for both TV and film production over the past decade have made locations outside London and the South East viable bases for media firms in the UK.[9] Furthermore, the quotas set for Public Service Broadcasters (PBS, namely BBC, Channel 3 services, Channel 4 and Channel 5) by Ofcom ensure that a sizeable proportion of their network programmes are made outside of the M25. To qualify as a regional production, the PBS need to meet at least two of these three criteria: the production company must have a substantive business and production base in the UK outside of London, 70% or more of the production budget) must be spent outside of London, and at 50% of the crew must consist of local talent whose employment is not registered in London.[10]

And while Channel 4's relocating to Leeds 'undoubtedly marks a significant step in turning the tide of London-centrism within the UK,'[11] the British capital remains the powerhouse for film studios and TV production in the UK. Soho itself is the centre of London's production industry, with major players such as Working Title, Number 9 Films, Potboiler Films and Gorgeous Enterprises based there, along with post-production houses like De Lane Lea, Prime Focus and DNeg, and a huge variety of agents and casting directors on tap. Elstree, Leavesden and Shepperton are film studios within touching distance of London's centre, all equipped with a range of stages, backlots and even underwater filming facilities.

London, however, is by no means the only place ready to host film and TV productions; the 'rest of England' is catching up. Major production companies are spread throughout the country. The Bottle Yard Studios in Bristol have become a thriving hub over the last few years, hosting a wide range of productions from feature films to crime shows such as *Broadchurch*. Glasgow's STV productions have been operating since 2008 and are home to Ian Rankin's highly popular *Rebus* adaptions for television and also for *Taggart*, the longest-running Scottish crime show. Northern Ireland boasts three major production companies in Belfast: The Paint Hall, Titanic Studios, and The Belfast Harbour Studios. Productions such as *Game of Thrones* and *The Fall* have turned Belfast into a major player and there is a major rise in productions and interest from all over the world. *The Doctor Who* franchise has completely transformed film and TV production in Wales and the region remains attractive for films and television shows. Pinewood Studio Wales in Cardiff is the largest complex of its kind ever built in Wales. In 2016, part of the internationally successful show, *Sherlock*, was shot here.

The most striking example of the rise of regional production hubs outside

of London is the growing popularity of Yorkshire. In 2018, Screen Yorkshire's contribution to the creative industries was recognised by the BFI following the aforementioned study of EU Funding of the UK screen sectors between 2007–2017. The report showed how EU funding had enabled the screen sector and the economy to grow, attract investment, and generate jobs. Screen Yorkshire – through its Yorkshire Content Fund – was cited as having delivered unprecedented growth in turnover and employment in the screen industries, delivering high-end television and film productions across the region such as *Peaky Blinders* and *The Great Train Robbery*.[12]

THE RISE OF REGIONAL PRODUCTION HUBS

While London is an internationally recognised capital of filmmaking with 54.6% of UK firms in the sector and more than 80% of their turnover (BFI, 2015b), the upward trajectory of regional production hubs outside of London is undeniable. This corresponds with the regionalisation of media and film policies in the last 20 years in the United Kingdom and, simultaneously, with a 'hybridisation of British film with the US.'[13]

Ever since the 1920s, concerns about the dominance of Hollywood, Americanisation, and, subsequently, 'the erosion of British culture'[14] have played a key role in the UK's film policies. Until the mid-80s, the UK's film policies attempted to bolster the national industry by applying protectionist measures imposed on distributors and exhibitors alike, and subsidy of the National Film Finance Corporation (NFFC) which was supposed to be 'an economic and ideological imperative to foster an alternative to Hollywood.'[15]

However, until the 2000s, all attempts to bolster the UK film industry has not succeeded in creating a strong alternative to the US, hence, leaving the production sites in a 'corporately-dispersed' state. As Margarete Dickinson and Sylvia Harvey point out, for the longest time, UK films had to find a way to co-exist with Hollywood, which led to collusion rather than competition,[16] as the local industry remained strongly dependent on Hollywood financing and had to work within a distribution system and exhibition market which was essentially shaped by Hollywood too.[17]

One important factor that altered the UK's production landscape thoroughly was the New Labour government (1997–2010): 'two key elements – cultural nationalism and economic intervention –[were] at the heart of the UK government's "creative economy" policy.'[18] To warrant their interests, the UK government created the Film Council as a body in 2000: the UK Film Council (UKFC) was a non-departmental public body to boost UK films on the level of production and distribution. Constituted as a private company and owned by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, it was funded from various sources including the National Lottery.

Following the 1997 election victory, New Labour's first Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, announced the 're-branding UK' cultural project, designed

to transform its cultural image from a national heritage culture to what was termed 'Cool Britannia.' This marked the monetisation of the UK's creative sector and an increasingly economic dimension in how culture was perceived.[19] The UKFC, 'an iconic New Labour creation,'[20] was primarily designed to adjust the UK's film policies and production infrastructure to conform to the commercial orientations of the Hollywood studio system.

Following a major review of the film infrastructure in England from April to September 2000, the UKFC set up nine Regional Screen Agencies for each of the regions of England, to deliver support for filmmaking, related media activities, and to foster the 'wealth of talent and ambition in the regions.'[21] While the economic motivations of the UKFC are undeniable, the report emphasises the cultural importance of film as the single most important source of education and information and links this with each region's capacity to determine its own cultural priorities.[22] The report makes repeated mention of the cultural impact of these regional production funds: they will aim to 'produce innovative work, provide opportunities for creative risk-taking, bring new voices and new visions to the screen;'[23] 'cultural and ethnic diversity and countering social exclusion will be central to the fund;'[24] the funds will be used to aggressively promote cultural imperatives;[25] will reflect the rich cultural diversity of the UK;[26] take account of differing regional characteristics.[27]

This is noteworthy as it signified a rhetoric shift: The tension between film *culture* and film *industry* has not been dissolved during the New Labour years, but the semantics certainly changed, promoting the cultural worth of film for the British identity.[28] Hence, promoting a culturally diverse Britain and all the various iterations of 'Britishness'[29] was at the very core of how this new shift was communicated and 'education, heritage and cultural exhibition' took the centre stage not only on a national but also a regional level.[30]

These imperatives also have implications for the crime genre which 'is clearly the most popular genre across Europe' for novels, television series, and films and crime fiction productions are in high demand in most European countries.[31] Within the policy framework above, crime has an important role to play as it not only one of the 'most popular genres for European audiences' but also 'arguably also the most culturally sensitive and nuanced.'[32] As the UKFC encourages and supports productions that 'make contributions to the creation of community and identity within their regional context,'[33] this should lead to more localised crime fiction in the UK. As crime fiction is often described as a mirror of society,[34] crime is the ideal vehicle for introducing this regionalism to a wider audience. This illustrates that the trend for crime fiction to shift away from criminal activity towards highlighting the spatial setting of the crime which often includes the characters' attachment to it has been an essential part of crime fiction from its very inception.[35] Crime fiction has, since the second half of the 20th century, given increasing importance to specific local and regional settings

as crime provides a framework for a wider interrogation of society.[36] This heightened interest in localism and regionalism makes the crime genre a tool for regional value creation at a time when both regionalism and the creative industries moved up the political agenda.[37] In a globalised world is more important than ever for regions and cities to evoke a sense of geographical distinctiveness:

> *Today's film viewers maybe tomorrow's tourists, investors or economic migrants. The pop culture of moving images defines places; be it Guernsey in Bergerac, Dorset in* The French Lieutenant's Woman *or the streets of Gateshead in* Get Carter*. The national campaign currently led by some* Gateshead *residents and enthusiasts to save the multi-storey car park featured in the film is a testament to the power of the moving image to define places and create local pride.*[38]

With the popularity of the genre and the various funding mechanisms in place in the UK's different regions, crime stories that explore local societies and promote the locations where they are made are to be expected.

In that sense, a significant part of this initiative was to deal with problems many of the English regions outside of London were facing, such as a disparity of funding for culture (Stark *et al.*, 2013) and a shortage of cultural productions which limited cultural discourses associated with these regions and their image.[39] While almost every board member of the UKFC did stem from 'a London-centric and transatlantic orientated elite'[40] the funds correctly identified that talents and skills pivotal for a thriving industry could be groomed all over the UK. This development is

> *emblematic of a broader move in the entertainment industry to shift production out of London, which has long hogged the industry's attention, talent and resources. The goal: to spread the wealth and identify new stories and new voices from parts of the U.K., including Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, which have historically been overshadowed by the British capital.*[41]

The nine regional screen agencies were: Screen East (East of England), EM Media (East Midlands), Film London (Greater London), Northern Film and Media (North East England), Vision+Media (North West England), Screen South (South East England), South West Screen (South West England), Screen West Midlands (West Midlands), Screen Yorkshire (Yorkshire and the Humber).

These regional screen agencies had to fulfil a variety of cultural, economic and social objectives. They were responsible for the use of public funds (National Lottery funding and the Regional Investment Fund for England) in the support of production and project development, and for encouraging investment from the private sector; the promotion of crews

and facilities within their respective regions to producers nationally and internationally; working with regional development agencies to guarantee sustainable growth; providing supervision, training and funds for regional talents; dissemination data on the film sector at the regional level and coordinating the activities of other organisations, both private and public; educational activities on film and film culture within the community and educational institutions; support of emerging filmmakers; organising of local film-festivals; establishing archives for the audio-visual heritage of the UK regions; providing financial support to bring under-represented communities into the regional cinemas. The agencies had to promote the uniqueness of their locations: 'RSAs promote the landscapes and urban environments that can be used for location filming, stressing the uniqueness of each region and the diversity which is to be found within it.'[42] To attract producers, the screen agencies created a network of local businesses within the audio-visual sector and by fostering a highly skilled workforce that could take over various steps of the production process.[43]

The regional screen agency network was closed very hastily and surprisingly in 2011,[44] with several services consolidated into Creative England and the majority of screen agencies dissolved. While the main goal of the UKFC was 'to unify the previously diffuse elements of UK film production, it re-emerged as fragmented.'[45] However, even though most regional agencies were stripped of their autonomy, a few continued to thrive, most notably Film London and Screen Yorkshire.

SCREEN YORKSHIRE

Screen Yorkshire is one of nine regional screen agencies by the UK Film Council in 2002 and launched their first production fund in 2003 which went on to invest in prestigious films such as the BAFTA-award-winning *This is England* (director and date). Unlike most other screen agencies, Screen Yorkshire became a stand-alone private company specialising in commercial content investment. Since its launch in February 2012, the Yorkshire Content Fund, with backing from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), has invested in more than forty film & TV projects including many crime films and shows such as *Official Secrets*, *Yardie*, *The Great Train Robbery*, *Unforgiven*, *Black Work* (BBC, 2015), *Exhibit A*, *Kill List*, *This Is England*, *This Is England '86* (Channel 4, 2010), '71, and *Peaky Blinders*.

In June 2017, Screen Yorkshire announced figures from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) that revealed that the growth of Yorkshire creative industries performed better than any other region in the UK, including the South East (ONS 2017). The figures showed that between 2009–2015, Yorkshire's Film & TV Industries generated an annual turnover of £424m (an increase of 247% against the UK average of 118%). The ONS data also

showed that the number of business units across Yorkshire and Humber grew 57% vs a UK average of 47%, while employment across the film and TV industries in the region grew 88% against a UK average of 32%.[46]

According to Sally Joynson, chief executive at Screen Yorkshire, the Yorkshire Content Fund was the main driver for the success of the agency. As of 2019, the fund brought £157 millions of new business to the region through its investment activities:

> *That production and activity have been growing for several years now and a lot of that growth is off the back of Screen Yorkshire activities and the Yorkshire Content Fund. It allows us to part-finance film and television. That has been a really important factor, particularly in drama, and it's drama where you get these big international sales; they are high profile and big budget.*[47]

Either producers based in Yorkshire or producers planning to film or establish a base in the region are eligible to apply for the fund. Managed by Screen Yorkshire, the fund can contribute from £10,000 to £500,000 to an individual film or TV production — as long as there is equal private backing available. Investment returns will be reinvested in the fund to ensure sustainability and allowing for continued long term support of content development and production in the region:

> *The fund exists to address the issue of a lack of access to capital for screen industries companies that need to part-finance the production of projects. It aims to make a return on its investment to be able to continue to support these industries within the region. It also aims to create jobs and increase the GVA (Gross Value Added) of successful applicant companies. Job creation and regional spend will be monitored throughout the project.*[48]

When the fund launched in 2012, the first script they received, and later funded was *Peaky Blinders*, productions like *Downton Abbey* and *Gentleman Jack* quickly followed, raising the profile of production in Yorkshire and the reputation of Yorkshire 'as a very serious place to do production business' and the Yorkshire Content Fund is by now 'the largest regional fund in Britain.'[49] To further the attractiveness of the region, Screen Yorkshire set up an adapted film studio. The studios encompass three former RAF hangars spanning 440 acres midway between Leeds and York and hosts facilities such as offices, garages, and workshops. According to Sally Joynson, the opening of the studios has been made possible by the success of the Yorkshire Content Fund and presents a 'significant landmark for the UK film and TV industry.' And while the fund brought many projects 'that have made great use of our existing portfolio of studio space' to the region, a 'lack of a larger-scale production facility, however, has prevented many

major long-term film and TV productions from basing themselves here.'[50]

With almost twenty years of managing investment funds and coordinating the creative industries within the region, Screen Yorkshire offers a wide range of support for producers: if there is a need for studios, locations, crew, facilities, office space, or other suppliers, Screen Yorkshire will help source these or put the producers in touch with someone who can. The agency's portfolio features many testimonials from people who have used their services. One example is *Official Secrets* (Gavin Hood, 2019). The true-life story as journalist Katharine Gun, who leaked a top-secret National Security Agency memo was produced by Raindog Films and ran into production problems after a previous version of the film came undone during pre-production. This left Raindog films with budgetary restraints, making it financially unfeasible to shoot on location in Cheltenham and London. After getting in touch with Screen Yorkshire, they secured funding from the Yorkshire Content Fund, were put in touch with local crews and location scouts, and within days, it became clear that the locations in Yorkshire could easily double for Cheltenham and London,[51] but at a fraction of the cost.

Especially Hull's Old Town, which is home to many listed buildings, real ale pubs and the period cobbled streets and alleyways that make it a perfect double for Dickensian London has become a popular area for filming. Harriet Lawrence, the supervising location manager of *The Personal History of David Copperfield* (Armando Iannucci, 2020) reports similar experiences with Screen Yorkshire:

> *Hull is an astonishing gem of an old city and filming* David Copperfield *there was an absolute pleasure. Our director and production designer were impressed and inspired by the extensive range of period architecture in Hull's Old Town - particularly the network of numerous historic cobbled streets which allowed us to recreate 19th century Dickensian London.*[52]

Screen Yorkshire's reputation as being incredibly 'film-maker friendly' is expressed by many filmmakers. Filmmakers are impressed with the freedoms granted to them to film within a city, the city councils provide affordable logistical support which is 'vital when persuading producers that travelling out of the capital will offer a really viable option.'[53]

CASE STUDY: *THE ABC MURDERS* (2018)

The ABC Murders is a very specific drama that, since it is an adaptation of Agatha Christie's 1936 novel of the same name set in London, and one could immediately argue that it is difficult to see the cultural diversity of the region on the screen. That, however, is quite fitting as this is quite often the case. The most prestigious project of Screen Yorkshire, *Peaky Blinders*, is

famously set in Birmingham and the fact that Screen Yorkshire prominently uses these two series to showcase their achievements is quite telling on what kind of productions they are trying to attract. Other, less noticeable crime productions, such as Netflix's *Residue* (dte) and the Channel 4 mini-series *National Treasure* (date) are also primarily set in London.

A show that does illustrate the cultural diversity of the Region, BBC's *Happy Valley*, was shot in Yorkshire in locations such as Todmorden, Luddenden, Mytholmroyd, Bradford, Keighley, Sowerby Bridge, Hebden Bridge, and Heptonstall. Huddersfield, Halifax, Bradford, Leeds and other West Yorkshire cities are actively mentioned even though no actual filming took place here.[54] This 'true Yorkshire' crime drama was realised without any involvement from Screen Yorkshire which means that within their portfolio, the aforementioned cultural diversity is scarce.

The *ABC Murders* is a 2018 BBC One mystery-thriller television mini-series adapted by Sarah Phelps and directed by Alex Gabassi and broadcast December 26–28, 2018 in three instalments. Driven by the star power of John Malkovich as Hercule Poirot, Rupert Grint of *Harry Potter* fame as Inspector Crome, and Andrew Buchan, Tara Fitzgerald and Shirley Henderson in supporting roles, this prestige project is the fourth Agatha Christie adaptation produced by Mammoth Screen and Agatha Christie Limited for BBC One. The prior adaptations, however, *And Then There Were None*, *Witness for the Prosecution* and *Ordeal by Innocence* are standalone mysteries, *The ABC Murders* is the first to feature Agatha Christie's most beloved detective, Hercule Poirot.

BAFTA-nominated writer Sarah Phelps explores the 20th Century through Christie's work, originally published in 1936. Set in the 1930s, a time when fascism and xenophobic sentiments are on the rise. In these challenging times, Poirot has to track a serial killer known as A.B.C. Poirot receives letters signed with A.B.C. which foreshadow crimes that will soon be committed. More letters soon arrive at Poirot's London flat, each shortly followed by a murder being carried out by A.B.C. and committed in alphabetical order. First, the killer strikes in Andover, then Bexhill. As the murder count rises, the only clue is the copy of The ABC Railway Guide at each crime scene.

While the plot is set in London and nearby parts of Southern England, the mini-series was filmed at the Prime Studios in Leeds. *The ABC Murders* filmed extensively in Yorkshire over three months during summer 2018 and features a range of period Yorkshire locations, doubling for 1930's London and its surroundings, including; Leeds City Varieties Music Hall, Leeds Town Hall, Quebecs Hotel, Leeds, The Queens Hotel, Leeds, Victoria Leeds, Bradford City Hall, Ripon Spa Baths, Keighley and Worth Valley Railway, Embsay Historic Railway and St John's Square Wakefield, Little Germany in Bradford, Saltaire Village, North Yorkshire Moors Railway, Newby Hall and Allerton Castle. (Fig. 1)

Charlie Thompson, the location manager of *The ABC Murders*, is full

Fig. 1: Clockwise from top left: Allerton Castle, Bradford City Hall, Leeds City Varieties Music Hall, Leeds Town Hall.

of praise for the work done and support provided by Screen Yorkshire: 'Yorkshire offered us the perfect base for *The ABC Murders*. We had a wealth of period locations at our fingertips all within easy reach, including doubles for 1920s London. Couple that with a film-friendly environment, Yorkshire is one of the best places for location filming in the U.K.'[55]

Economically speaking, as an HETV production that costs at least £1 million and is backed by a PBS, the *ABC Murders* certainly qualifies as the kind of project that sits well within the Screen Yorkshire portfolio. The market value, recoupment position, distribution deals, broadcaster commission, and 'star-studded' cast all make this mini-series a prestigious project for the region that also benefitted in a broader sense as the production spend within the region, of course, contributes to the overall growth of Yorkshire and Humber.

The cultural contribution, a pillar purpose of the original regional screen agencies, deserves some attention too. It is hard to understate the importance of Agatha Christie: 'For many, Agatha Christie is as quintessentially English as queueing for Pimm's at Wimbledon. But as the best-selling novelist in history, her reputation goes far beyond the UK.'[56] Christie is one of the world's best-selling novelists with sales estimated ranging between two and four billion sold copies. Spanning sixty-six detective novels and fourteen short stories have been translated into over a hundred languages and her readership is thought to be around half a billion. Christie is one of the most translated authors worldwide and a large number of people are learning English by reading her novels and are also introduced to English culture by proxy. Her mass popularity often overshadows the fact that she was published by The Bodley Head, 'a publisher known for its support of the avant-garde and experimental highbrow works.'[57]

Given this context, it would be difficult to argue that Christie qualifies

as a 'new voice' or that her work presents audiences with 'a new vision.' However, *The ABC Murders* writer Sarah Phelps' script takes some liberties which are noteworthy:

> *One of the themes that the series brings up, which is not so prominent in the book, is the rise of fascism in 1933 England. From the start, the series points to posters with slogans such as "March for England. We must stem the alien tide." The Belgian Poirot is faced with this growing nationalism in which a train ticket inspector drops his ticket on the floor after hearing his accent. The connection with today's Britain and Brexit is flagrant and obviously deliberate… While the posters may not exist in Christie's book, the animosity toward Poirot because he is from Belgium does appear in the letters in Christie's original story.*[58]

There is undoubtedly cultural merit in this production and as it examines today's British society through the lens of a crime novel published between the two World Wars. The aspect of regionality, however, remains muddled. Screen Yorkshire goes at great length to make a connection between the crime author and the location hub used for this production: 'Agatha Christie once ran away to Harrogate, so it's fitting that filming came to Yorkshire for *The ABC Murders*' (Screen Yorkshire 2020). This link is somewhat weak. It is true that Christie famously disappeared in 1926 which caused one of the biggest national manhunts the country had ever seen, with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Dorothy L. Sayers involved in the search. After eleven days, Christie resurfaced at the Swan Hydropathic Hotel in Harrogate. Yet, Harrogate has never fully capitalised on its close association with Agatha Christie in terms of tourism marketing and it has never had any lasting effect on the regional identity.[59]

Speaking of (screen-)tourism, it is noteworthy that being a stand-in for another location can still benefit a region and its cultural heritage. *Broadchurch* is set in a fictional town, however, the real location Dorset capitalised on the huge success of the ITV crime show by using *Broadchurch* to leverage both landscapes and small towns as perfect tourism destinations. Shot across the South West in Clevedon, North Somerset, Yate in South Gloucestershire, and West Bay and Bridport in West Dorset, *Broadchurch* is set in an area traditionally dominated by literary tours following the footsteps of Jane Austen and Mary Anning along the Jurassic Coast. It is fair to say that especially the cliffs that are omnipresent in Broadchurch qualify as a tourist attraction. Even though *Broadchurch* is a purely fictional location, the show goes at great length to illustrate the significance of the specific locality, which in turn created touristic interest for the region.[60]

The same does not ring true for *The ABC Murders*: Yorkshire, as a region, is neither culturally present nor represented in this television production. Few people will look up where Poirot's London flat actually is or whether

this is the real King's Cross that they get to see in *The ABC Murders*. The production brings prestige and economic benefits to the region but in turn, does not do much to publicly reflect the rich cultural heritage of Yorkshire.

CONCLUSION

While London will remain the centre of film and television productions, creative hubs away from London are thriving, partly because of the steadily growing availability of film crews and facilities, but also because of the touristic appeal of the regions. Regional film agencies such as Yorkshire Screen play an important role in attracting producers by offering highly skilled workforces, significant funding opportunities, a rich portfolio of unique urban and rural locations. Facilitating shooting on location is only one of the many support mechanisms and one of the most potent tools the regional agency has to 'develop the identity of their region by connecting it with national audiences.'[61]

This tension between 'industrial and a cultural remit'[62] has always characterised the UK's film industry. The audio-visual sector is both part of an industry and a cultural practice[63] and the film policies of the new millennium acknowledge film as 'a complex combination of industry and culture. Common to both are creativity and commerce. [...] we assume that industry and culture are inextricably linked.'[64] All attempts of the UKFC to combine 'cutting edge' neoliberal economic policies with cultural approaches have tended to fail or, eventually, reveal their true priorities. In his article, 'British film policy in an age of austerity,' Jack Newsinger rightly states that the UKFC failed to make a case cultural diversity or regional heritage, as the criteria for funding and support were primarily commercial.[65] The UKFC and the bodies that absorbed it when it was dissolved 'attempted to develop a form of state subsidy that could nurture and promote industrial growth as well as further social agendas of cultural value, diversity and equality of opportunity, provided that such societal imperatives did not supersede the overriding economic agendas.'[66]

London still attracts the biggest projects and global competition for studio spaces, location, and facilities, make regional production hubs and supporting regional screen agencies a necessity to ensure the UK's standing as a competitive production market.[67] The main effect, as this article attempted to show, is that the regional hubs mainly act as stand-ins for London — and effectively pitch themselves as cheaper placeholders. Productions that struggle to book studios or afford on-location shoots in the capital will find cheaper alternatives in the northern parts of the UK and boost the local economies. The new voices, the regional stories, and the cultural diversity that was an integral part of how this shift towards regions outside of London has been communicated in the respective policies remain at the fringes of the UK's film production. The regions

might host the actual productions, but the stories remain a lot more London-centric than the success of an agency such as Screen Yorkshire might indicate.

Notes

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Paths to Quality Television in Eastern Europe. Where Do Hungarian and Romanian HBO Series Come From?

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This article provides an overview of HBO television series in Hungary and Romania, highlighting their relation to film traditions in each country. While it might seem surprising that HBO helped create original series in countries without a long-standing tradition in quality television, the roots for this 'wave' of Eastern European shows can actually be traced in local film production tradition. For these shows, HBO has worked to make regional voices heard internationally. These two Eastern European neighbours belong to the same categories in terms of cinema and television production in that they represent small markets with potential for development under the support of Western media. Yet this article shows how cultural differences surface when comparing these two countries' filmic traditions, authorial perspectives, international recognition of professionals, and domestic audiences. In Hungary, prestigious directors, as well as new television professionals and 'outsiders' from other fields, play significant roles in HBO projects. Together, they develop a relatively wide range of genres that target a broad spectrum of audience demographics. In the case of Romania, there exists a certain continuity with New Romanian Cinema in the HBO series. The Romanian productions attempt to attract larger numbers among domestic viewers in addition to international audiences. The emergent quality television in both countries demonstrates a reliance on the small cinema tradition, while capitalizing on the success of certain academic directions and the success independent film enjoyed in Europe. Given the lack of cooperation in Eastern Europe across numerous cultural and creative industries following 1989, this article examines how HBO acts as a catalyst for Hungarian and Romanian creativity. By bringing together local resources and using its legitimacy as a major player in international television, HBO empowers local professionals to upgrade the quality of their televised content.

Keywords
Eastern European television series
Professionalization in television
HBO quality principles
Filmic tradition
Directorial choices
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INTRODUCTION[1]

As Time Warner has demonstrated an inclination for convergent and transatlantic media, HBO Europe proposed a new production model, particularly among TV series in Eastern and South-Eastern European countries. In a region where quality television has not been a focus of the media, transnational circulation has lacked, and regional cooperation has been scarce[2], locally-produced HBO shows have mobilized a multitude

of creative resources, in turn responding to at least three necessities of the television market: the creators' need to reach both local and wider European demographics, the local audiences' desire for high quality series made in their home countries, and the European viewers' curiosity for discovering through serialized fiction a different part of the world, one that has been traditionally underrepresented on the small screen. This last market necessity had already been achieved through the circulation of "small cinema" productions, including prestigious Hungarian films and works of New Romanian Cinema. Because HBO lessened the gap between television and cinema[3] in terms of quality and production strategies, we argue that the positioning of Eastern European series under the label of the international broadcasting giant conscientiously evokes some effects of the film tradition in these countries. On the multinational entertainment arena, HBO 'imposes a vision of an élite TV culture on the field',[4] and this strategy has influenced the structure of series made in the Eastern Europe. Moreover, Hungary and Romania were among the first Eastern European countries involved in HBO projects whose adaptations of international formats paved the way for the creation of original series. In this sense, we observe how Hungarian and Romanian HBO series are reminiscent of an apparent paradox foregrounded in the reception of small cinema productions:

> *These films offer a window to the social and geographical reality but they are not 'about' them, they treat geographical space as a backdrop only for more general explorations of human responsibility and emotions. Nevertheless, such films are usually described in the context of 'origin'. Where they come from is as important as what they deal with. The two areas seem irrevocably connected.*[5]

This excerpt from a study (Desser, Falkowska, Giukin, 2015) exploring the concept of 'small cinemas' points out how Czech, Hungarian, Russian, and Polish cinema are inextricably linked to their original socio-geographical circumstances. Despite being involved in a transnational chain of production and distribution, the Hungarian and Romanian series discussed in this article are primarily the result of already extant, domestic filmic traditions. These pre-existent domestic cinematic heritages then come to be reshaped with international resources made accessible by HBO and influences of newcomers in TV production.

Scholarship acknowledging Eastern Europe's role as a participant in global cultural exchanges after 1989 has long been focused on its consumer status. In his seminal work *The Cultural Industries*, David Hesmondhalgh not only draws attention towards the 'unfettered marketisation'[6] of culture and the media in the post-communist age, but also questions the 'optimistic projections of benign globalization'.[7] The emergence of original, Eastern European serialized television circulated on a transnational

scale marks the redefining of positions and expectations in the field of television production. Such shifts in standards and aims ought to be considered through certain derivations of Bourdieu's sociological analysis of the field of cultural production, especially when it comes to recent reinterpretations in media studies.[8] In any case, HBO's initiatives in the field of Eastern European television series can be regarded as a significant factor in redefining the regional 'space of possibles',[9] to put it in Bourdieu's terms. Although the French theorist's influential work is most frequently applied to study national, social spaces (and not multinational media enterprises),[10] some of the concepts developed in his work prove to be useful when approximating the positions of agents in recent Eastern television production. Therefore, references to the concept of *small cinema* as a formative influence and Bourdieusian ideas related to cultural production underpin our overview of HBO Hungarian and Romanian TV series. While this is not an attempt at designing a possible model for the structure of cinema and television cultural spheres in Hungary and Romania, we contest that instrumentalizing readings of Bourdieu help delineate both the trajectory of the power relations and capital dynamics developed before and after HBO's presence as a major stakeholder interacting with the local Romanian and Hungarian talents.

CHANGES IN HUNGARIAN TELEVISION AND CINEMA CULTURE AFTER 1989

In 1991, HBO becomes the first foreign cable television company to broadcast in Hungary. However, it is not until 2007 that HBO's role extended beyond a content provider. Only in the second half of the 1990s the broadcasting group starts to invest in the production of original Hungarian content.[11] The steps taken by HBO in developing local creative entreprises typically include an initial test run of original scripted content, a later production of transnational formats, and a subsequent return to the original scripted content. This development involves a smooth process of cultural imperialism and gradual localization combined with hybridization of formats, audiovisual language, and talent development.[12] While the strategy employed by the company can be either criticized as a form of cultural hegemony[13] or praised as an emancipatory process of serial audiovisual content creation,[14] we must acknowledge that the implementation of the quality TV format in the local market was a risky dealing and entailed systematic creative labor, as well as an understanding of local market dynamics, audiences, and production principles of other cultural industries. Balázs Varga comments on transformations in Eastern European television culture after the fall of socialist regimes framed according to a master narrative that he summarises as follows: 'the direction of change leads

from imported content to original domestic production'.[15] Yet Varga claims that this process of change does not unfold linearly or coherently. From the point of view of production, HBO responded to double standards generated by the attempt to reconcile different intentions: preserving the traits of the HBO brand image, discovering a unique path in integrating local knowledge into international generic formats, and appeasing the expectations of local audiences.[16] In such a way, the creation of HBO television series in Hungary synthesized the influences of three cultural industries with strong local traditions: the domestic movie industry, the Hungarian theatrical culture, and more broadly, the local television production enterprise. Given the scope of this claim, this article focuses on the influences of local movie making on HBO Hungarian series and leaves the question concerning theatrical and televisual influences to be a potential area for further investigation.

During the three decades since the launch of HBO in Hungary, the domestic movie industry was marked by the reorganization of the studio system and the setup of a predominately politically-controlled state funding system.[17] By the same token, the arrival of commercial cable TV companies,[18] which had a major impact on the screen culture of local audiences, largely influenced this process. Before the regime change, the official Hungarian movie scene was dominated by censored filmic content, excluding two kinds of movie formats: on the one hand, auteur films involving socio-political-cultural criticism and targeting elite audience groups (cf. the internationally recognized Hungarian filmmakers, Béla Tarr, Miklós Jancsó, István Szabó, Károly Makk, Márta Mészáros, etc.), and on the other, popular generic blockbuster movies aimed at mass audiences. After the regime change, redefining popular film content became a significant trend that surfaced through the creation of popular comedies and midcult heritage films, e.g., works by directors like Róbert Koltai, András Kern, Gábor Herendi, Gergely Fonyó, Péter Rudolf, etc.. Similarly, the auteur tradition played a major role in reorganizing cinema studies at the University of Theater and Film Arts in Budapest (UTFA) focusing on preparing directors for experimenting with art film. This tendency is well-represented by the members of the so-called 'Young Hungarian Cinema' (Ferenc Török, György Pálfi, Szabolcs Hajdu, Dániel Erdélyi, and Gábor Fischer). All of whom were affiliates of the same promotion stature at the University of Theater and Film Arts. In order to accurately sum up the achievements of the last three decades, it is necessary to note that Hungarian small cinema[19] garnered key international recognition, culminating in László Nemes Jeles's Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film in 2016. In Hungary, the local response to small cinema production was moderate: not as consequential as in the Czech Republic and not as insignificant as in Romania.[20] Besides the stakeholders encouraging popular movie formats and the young auteur filmmakers cultivating directorial styles acquired at the university, a new generation of so-called outsiders also appeared on the scene. These newcomers were influenced by international drama formats and dramatic

storytelling (Benedek Fliegauf, Zsombor Dyga, etc.).[21] A Bourdieusian conceptualization of the Hungarian movie industry of the period reveals that the above mentioned tendencies can actually be categorized according to the four poles of Bourdieu's autonomous fields of artistic creation, the critically acclaimed avant-garde (some of the young Hungarian filmmakers and members of the auteur tradition), movies with strong cultural publicity (award-winning movies made by directors descending from the auteur tradition), mass productions (directors interested in comedies or other popular generic formats), and the outcasts.[22] HBO's talent seeking activity was met by representatives of all these local traditions and newly formed professional groups.[23]

COMPARING APPLES TO ORANGES. FROM ORIGINAL DOMESTIC PRODUCTION TO ORIGINALLY IMPORTED CONTENT CREATION

From the perspective of production strategies, the difficulty with the aforementioned four filmic categories lies in the fact that the field has had to reconcile the HBO brand with its own avant-garde position in serialized tv creation.[24] At the end of the 1990s, this position had not yet appeared in Eastern Europe because, as Varga stated, HBO's history in the region as a content provider cemented the public's perception of the company as a premium cable service, and not as a producer of quality TV series.[25] HBO's choice to work with representatives of 'young Hungarian cinema'[26] for the first locally produced and original television series attempts at negotiating instances of avant-garde from two different cultural contexts: the domestic cinematic milieu and the international network background attached to HBO's presence. An overview of the team involved in the creation of *Született lúzer* ("Born Losers", 2007-2008) reveals that directors who were UTFA[27] alumni had a strong predisposition for experimenting and maintaining control over the creative process. In fact, they conceived the unusual structure of the morbid anthology series, which consisted of a number of 12-minute episodes, screened in pairs during primetime on Sundays. These series, governed by the aesthetics of a rural freak show, follow the lives of peasant characters who find themselves in absurd, morbid, and ridiculous situations. In this first example of original content production, HBO remained practically insignificant in terms of creative control. Considering both its production and development, *Született lúzer* presents itself to be much more closely aligned to the standards and production culture of the Hungarian film industry at the time than to HBO's production model.[28] There are, however, some of the thematic elements in the show, namely its curiosity for the figure of the freak, that associate it with one of HBO's most controversial productions, *Carnivàle* (2003-2005).

Even though *Born Loser* is regarded as a failure, it remains significant in that its creators later became important personalities in Hungary's television industry. Their careers went from an avant-garde position to acquiring strong cultural publicity.

After its poorly received sketch of the rural Hungarian landscape in *Született lúzer*, HBO struck gold with *Társas játék* (an adaptation of the Israeli format *Matay nitnashek*, 2007), released in 2011. Following the satiric depiction of rural Hungarian realities dealing with poverty, marginality, and liminality, HBO relocates to Budapest where a large number typical HBO consumers live, namely cultural creatives and the representatives of urban upper-middle-class. The production of the series adopts a novel regional approach in lieu of a country-specific strategy of HBO, in particular the adoption of transnational formats. This moment represents the turning point of HBO's local strategy marked by the creative control over the domestic production manifested by format adaptations and transmission of the productional prowess of the media powerhouse.[29] The series was also adopted by the channel in Romania and in the Czech Republic. Before *Társas játék*, Gábor Herendi and Gergely Fonyó direct domestic box-office hits in 2002, 2004, 2008 and 2009.[30] The majority of their filmography represents the tradition of the Hungarian popular comedy, with one exception only: Herendi's *Magyar vándor*, a historical comedy that pokes fun at elements of popular nationalism and national mythology. Herendi's experience further includes a television series production that precedes his collaboration with HBO: between 2002-2003, Herendi directs the Hungarian sitcom *Tea*, and over the following years, he continues to work with the genres of romance, comedy, and dramedy in serial or feature film formats. While 'from the perspective and standards of quality television, it could have seemed strange and improper that HBO chose a romantic comedy as its first local adaptation',[31] the reception of the series underscores the professionalism and the higher quality of the production compared to other domestic romance TV shows in terms of dialogue, acting performances, locations, and storyline.[32]

For the two successive format adaptations, *Terápia* (In Treatment) and *Aranyélet* (Golden Life), HBO selects directors with strong cultural and public ties (for *Terápia*, the local adaptation of the Israeli format *BeTipul/ In Treatment*, 2012-2017) and representatives of the outsider perspective with proven skill in independent and low-budget filmmaking/ production (for *Aranyélet*, a loose remake of the Finnish series *Helppo elämä*, distributed internationally with the title *Golden Life*, 2015-2018). The second adaptation of an Israeli format after *When Shall We Kiss*, *Terápia* is marked by the contribution of directors presenting the established legacy of the prestigious Hungarian school of filmmaking. Four directors contributed to the series: Ildikó Enyedi, Attila Gigor, Orsi Nagypál and Mihály Schwechtje (for one episode). In this instance, the influence of the UTFA school is obviously present—Enyedi, Gigor, and Schwechtje are both

alumni and current teachers at the university. Yet, the new dynamics of the Hungarian movie industry are particularly formative in Orsi Nagypál's career, in that she earned a degree from the London Film School[33] after quitting advertising. Given the adaptation of *Terápia* was produced in all the four Eastern European countries on the HBO map at that time (Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Hungary), the series tackles questions of cultural proximity in the case of transnational formats[34] and shows how critically acclaimed domestic directorial practices translate into format-guided logic. The fact that Enyedi, a sort of *grande dame* of contemporary Hungarian cinema, plays a decisive role in the creation of the series, is in itself a guarantee of the show's quality.[35] Issues of psychology, treatment, therapy, the representations of psychoanalysis in Central and Eastern Europe were formerly present in Enyedi's work, choosing her as director has a strong rationale.[36] The works of all four directors discuss the inquiry on mental well-being, the psychological implications of ordinary conversations, investigating codes of normality, the socio-cultural contexts of anxiety. The filmic language of Enyedi's film, *On Body and Soul* (2017),[37] directed at the same time as the third season of *Terápia*, displays a corresponding artful interest in human gestures, faces, and nonverbal signs, which have consistently characterized Enyedi's work. The actual therapy scenes and the representations of behavioural disorders in both the movie and the series illustrate how the TV show contributes to the discursive implementation of the therapeutical metaphor as a social, cultural construct in Enyedi's filmic language. The series and the movie present a wide range of therapists, from the series main character played by Pál Mácsai to the superficial and pedantic yet frivolous female psychologist from *On Body and Soul*, played by Réka Tenki. Through the collaboration between highly prestigious actors, directors and screenwriters, *Terápia* works to bring about the cultural relocation of therapy itself.

HBO's Hungarian-made shows play an important role in the transnational and cultural circulation of trends in the Hungarian film industry. *Golden Life* gives rise to the recognition of a new directorial generation—Zsombor Dyga and Áron Mátyássy—that had previously been limited to low budget formats. The professional paths of these two directors turn out to be fairly different: Mátyássy emerges from the UTFA as a member of the second Simó-class while Dyga starts off as an independent outsider without a degree in filmmaking.[38] Nonetheless, both directors begin their HBO collaboration with a degree of familiarity for low budget solutions, an interest in generic formats, and previous work experience in TV. The work of these two directors is significant in that it evidences a process of professionalization in TV series creation that culminates in the hybridization of audio-visual and cultural formats. In such cases, Bourdieu's categories are not applicable because we observe a mix of strategies and an attraction between the different poles of the industry's subfield of cultural creation. That is, the creators can be assimilated into the avant-garde current (cf. Mátyássy's

debut movie, *Utolsó idők* – 2009, or Dyga's numerous experiments in film genre[39]), but still maintain their status as culturally acclaimed directors with a recognizable filmic language. In this way, it is precisely because of their experience in TV series production and their experimentation that the commercial mass movie production does not appear foreign to them. When analysing Dyga's career, it is clear that Dyga's ability to overcome his position as an outsider proves to be instrumental. Moreover, if we consider film categories, the never too sharp, yet persistent distinction between auteur cinema and genre-oriented movies reveals itself to be outdated, as *Golden Life* mixes thriller, crime, action, and even chamber drama. In fact, the series has been compared to *Breaking Bad*, *The Sopranos* in addition to film noir and a well-known Hungarian crime drama from 1982, *Dögkeselyű* (directed by Ferenc András).[40] Such comparisons reaffirm *Golden Life* as an example of transnational and transcultural hybridity, mixing humor, action, and drama in order to depict the moral inconsistencies of contemporary Hungarian society.

It should be noted that this article's overview of filmic influences in Hungarian-HBO productions overlooks the role of showrunners and scriptwriters in the content creation. Nevertheless, the role of a showrunner, like Gábor Krigler, the creative producer of HBO Hungary and co-creator of *Született lúzer*, *Terápia*, and *Golden Life* or the impact of a head writer like István Tasnádi (*Terápia*, *Golden Life*) illustrate the sociological complexities of a creative industry undergoing a complete restructuring process.

FROM THE NEW WAVE IN ROMANIAN CINEMA TO HBO ROMANIAN TELEVISION SERIES: AN ATTEMPT AT REGAINING LOST DOMESTIC AUDIENCES

The lack of a long-standing tradition in the production of Romanian television series targeting either domestic or transnational audiences has triggered Romanian directors' and production companies' eagerness to collaborate with Western European or American professionals in order to acquire new skills, to adapt to more demanding and diverse audiences, as well as build confidence in locally developed film techniques. After 1989 and the fall of the Iron Curtain, Romanian audiences, witnessing the liberalization of the media culture, become increasingly inclined to prefer Western media productions over local ones. This tendency is a consequence of the collapse in audiences' support to the national media which had been employed as a vehicle of the political power during the socialist period. Over three decades later, locally produced, quality television is still developing rather slowly. In fact, the majority of the television series made in Romania

are mainstream comedies or soap opera romances with a specific, localized target audience. Romanian audiences' preference for American films and television series is a well-known characteristic of media consumption in the country, thus marking a difference from the inclinations of viewers in other Central and Eastern European countries, such as Hungary, the Czech Republic, or Poland, where the interest for national cinema and television shows is more developed.

Though HBO first becomes available in Romania in 1998, the company does not invest in local production until over a decade later, preferring to broadcast international blockbuster films. The promotional offer that first appears with the launch of HBO in Romania features a film selection that is eloquent for (eloquent for does not make sense here, perhaps 'indicative of') the expectations the giant broadcaster had about the tastes of an audience in a post-socialist country: *Dirty Dancing* (dir. Emile Ardolino, 1987), *Disclosure* (dir. Barry Levinson, 1992), *Batman Returns* (dir. Tim Burton, 1992), Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* (1992), *Johnny Mnemonic* (dir. Robert Longo, 1995), as well as pop music concerts such as the Spice Girls' *Live in Istanbul* (1997). Sensationalism,[41] highly imaginative popular productions, special effects, narrative twists, science-fiction or horror movie tropes – all approached with technical professionalism and visual sophistication – are among the elements in these films that had been absent from Romanian cinema and television not only during the socialist era, but also amidst the economically harsh years of transition to capitalism and democracy. Therefore, this preference for American movies stems from the deprivation of cultural capital and the desire for unrestricted consumption of commodities that had for many years symbolized the 'forbidden fruit'. This steady fixation for American mainstream culture, entertainment, and lifestyle becomes an integrated part of a rapidly emerging post-1989 social habitus.[42] It even surfaces in institutional positions of a 'national' habitus: the Romanian President himself officially welcomed pop superstar Michael Jackson to the country in 1992 and attended the inauguration of McDonald's in Bucharest in 1995. These signs of cultural import and 'self-inflicted imperialism'[43] add to a more general and pervasive change in public policies, as Romania made efforts to join Western-led international structures and organizations, to assert its kinship to the Western world, and distance itself from the former Soviet domination and its cultural legacy.

Despite this massive enthusiasm for embracing American popular culture and entertainment, Romanian cinema and television series did not start to imitate structures and strategies of the American productions (or if they did, the enterprise was never managed very successfully, due to the lack of financial means and dearth of experienced and talented professionals who might have been interested in such endeavours).

In terms of fictional serial production and television drama, Romania evolves quite differently than other Central and Eastern European countries,

such as Poland, where the explosion of domestic TV series is understood to be a response to the influence of conventional American storytelling and aesthetics.[44] Instead, film directors begin to cultivate their attachment to the values of realism, minimalism (especially, in terms of technical means of cinematography), and the rhetorics of critical interrogation focused on the post-communist transition. These directions occur in fictional constructions inclined towards social critique, reflexivity, and discrete uses of allegory.[45] These tendencies lead to a flourishing trend known as New Romanian Cinema (NRC) or New Romanian Wave, a phenomenon which brings international recognition for several productions and their creators. The success of NRC is mainly reflected in the prestigious European prizes awarded to its films (see Appendix). Therefore, while fictional television production does not change significantly upon the arrival of HBO in Romania until 2010, the first decade of the new milennium is defined by the ascension of Romanian cinema and its young representatives. Some of the directors who are labeled as New Wave filmmakers include: Cristi Puiu, Cristian Mungiu, Corneliu Porumboiu, Radu Muntean, Tudor Giurgiu, who would soon be followed by new names earning praise at international festivals since 2001.

These directors went from the status of outsiders (most of them educated in Western universities and virtually unknown in their home country) struggling to finance their projects independently on low budgets to critically acclaimed professionals. This change of status has had many consequences on the development of Romanian film, among which is the development of new projects and financing sources,[46] as young Romanian directors founded their own production companies: Cristian Mungiu is the director of Mobra Films, Cristi Puiu's films are produced by his own company Mandragora, Tudor Giurgiu leads LibraFilm and is also the founder of Transilvania International Film Festival (TIFF). Since 2018, Mobra Films has been the main Romanian partner for the production of HBO series made in the country: this collaboration shows that the achievements of the New Romanian Cinema have a long-lasting impact and can lead to structural transformations in domestic production and multinational creative projects.

The international recognition of Romanian directors has created a new impetus in the field and became part of an alternative path to 'Americanization' in the post-socialist phase of the professionalization of Romanian television and film production. Therefore, co-productions such as *Hackerville* (2018) or *Tuff Money* (*Bani negri*, 2020) capitalize on the experience and techniques of the New Romanian Wave, even though script, storytelling, and marketing strategies are different: the HBO series are more focused on local narratives, on using locations in historically diverse regions (i.e. Timișoara, Piatra-Neamț) while bringing into play the transnational circulation of forms and hybridization of genres. *Shadows* (*Umbre*, 2014-2019), *The Silent Valley* (*Valea Mută*, 2018), *Hackerville*, and

Tuff Money (*Bani negri*) are all based on plotlines typical of crime fiction or noir, but each one develops, on the side, a particular mix of stylistic/generic elements, such as comedy, dark/absurd humor, cybersecurity-themed speculative fiction, realist portrayals of post-communist trauma, commentary on gender awareness and its empowerment in highly conservative, patriarchal communities. One may grasp a certain continuity with tendencies present in Romanian New Wave classics such as *Stuff and Dough* (*Marfa și banii*, Cristi Puiu, 2001), *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu* (*Moartea domnului Lăzărescu*, Cristi Puiu, 2005), *The Paper Will Be Blue* (*Hârtia va fi albastră*, Radu Muntean, 2006), *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* (*4 luni, 3 săptămâni și 2 zile*, Cristian Mungiu, 2007), *Aurora* (Cristi Puiu, 2013), which propose a cinematic language that relies on detailed accuracy, camera angles that hint at a questioning of the nature of truth and knowledge, and a refusal of post-communist transition stereotypes and nostalgic biased views. As director Cristi Puiu claimed, the purpose of his films was to 'erase the boundary between documentary and fiction, by reconciling spectatorial and creator positions'.[47] But despite this statement, it can be argued that some features of the Romanian New Wave have found common territories with the realm of crime fiction series: dark humor, a bleak view on society as a whole and on individuals themselves, the shadow of corruption lurking over the individual. Additionally, the topics of discrimination and abuse have also been included in films by Cristian Mungiu, Corneliu Porumboiu, and Cristi Puiu as well as in the general outline of recent series produced by HBO in Romania. The messages that the films and the series convey bring to mind some remarks about small cinemas, in that the message sent by TV series produced in Eastern Europe seem to develop connections with the films of the region:

> *In the 1990s and 2000s, small cinemas coming from various countries, often underprivileged ones or the countries under oppression, give spectators a privileged look into the lives of other people and other cultures. The directors of these films present reality in their countries in an unbiased way and give access to the nitty-gritty elements of their existence.*[48]

Therefore, it is interesting to note that by the time HBO decided to initiate the production of television series in Romania, the New Wave had changed its position within the field: most directors had moved from being independent and underfunded to critically acclaimed filmmakers with prestigious international prizes and had therefore become part of a consecrated avant-garde, to cite Bourdieu again.

In hindsight, some of the key topics or cinematic stylistic traits in the films of the Romanian New Wave had been to some degree employed previously by directors in the 1970s and 1980s, in an era where censorship would eradicate any type of realist approach other than socialist realism fueled by the ideological constraints imposed by the ruling Party and by dictator

Nicolae Ceaușescu. Even under these circumstances, films by Lucian Pintilie (*Reconstituirea*, 1968), Alexandru Tatos (*Secvențe*, 1982), Dan Pița (*Concurs*, 1982) managed to develop a subtly metaphorical realism which seemed tolerable for the authorities but engaging enough for the audience to decode political irony and contemplate absurd or tragic events set against the background of daily life in a socialist country. However, this descent did not make New Wave films very popular among Romanian audiences, who remained faithful to Hollywood productions during the 1990s. In a 2003 short article, Cristi Puiu eloquently summarizes the factors contributing to Romanians' choice of films to watch:

> *In Romania, going to the cinema costs more than a citizen with an average income can afford, and when one eventually does go out to see a movie, they will definitely choose an American production. If by any chance they go to a Romanian film and they do not fall asleep in their seats, they will leave the theatre dissatisfied and outraged. Paying a ticket in order to watch a Romanian film is either a display of one's prosperity, a whim, or even an evidence of masochism.*[49]

These claims may seem drastic, but they do reflect Romanian social realities of the 2000s from an economic perspective. The remarks are also accurate in encapsulating the perception that, for the average Romanian viewer, television as well as cinema have been since 1989 the epitome of difference and alterity: movie watching comprised the need to participate, through the audiovisual experience, in 'something else' beyond an artistic expression of their day-to-day reality. Under such circumstances, realism in Romanian art cinema became an avant-garde enterprise, in the sense that it was regarded as eccentric in relation to the preferences of average viewers. Puiu's opinion is echoed in Romanian critic Doru Pop's analysis of the psychological impact of these films: 'Romanian New Wave cinema has built its identity, by replicating a traumatic world and a traumatic experience, by projecting onto the screen a masochistic desire for reliving pain. [...] [T]he New Wave films bring us again and again in front of a reality which otherwise we might choose to avoid'.[50]

Pop's interpretation, however, seems to be founded on the implicit postulate that the aesthetic experience involves, on the one hand, 're-living' events, and on the other hand, that the realities familiar to the viewer (because they are more or less part of a generic, commonplace Romanian experience of reality) can be avoided. Both sets of remarks are based on the assumption that the Romanian audience has difficulties in discerning between perceived reality and an artistic representation of reality. The belief that the national audience is not very educated is a rather widespread perspective. Bogdan Mirică (director of *Shadows* and of the 2016 feature film Dogs – original title:*Câini*) was part of creative teams in original projects made for the national television market as well

as in international productions. He asserts that the slow development of Romanian serial productions has to do with the condescending views that many professionals in the industry hold about the public:

> *To be honest, I have not really seen many Romanian impressive series. Except for those produced by HBO, where quality always comes first, the others seem to prioritize quantity and the audience. To me it seems that they always start with the wrong assumption that the audience is not educated and therefore they must be provided with frivolous TV series: simplistic narrative structures, simple language, no production value — how would Romanians know what that means? But things could not be more different than this view. Romanians do watch international series. With the era of easy Internet access came the massive openness and curiosity towards everything, including pop culture. You cannot trick your audience. [...] Romanian television series can evolve only if producers start to treat their audience respectfully and to invest more in quality screenwriting and production strategies.*[51]

The major role of HBO as an agent promoting quality shows in areas where the concept was absent from the industry's praxis is thus revealed by professionals themselves. The international broadcasting company challenged the local *habitus* by proposing different approaches to seriality than those recurring in mainstream domestic production.

ROMANIAN HBO SERIES AND THEIR DIRECTORS: THE TRANSFER OF EXPERTISE AS SYMBOLIC CAPITAL

Despite shortcomings such as those mentioned by Mirică, Romania was the first among Eastern European countries to develop a locally produced HBO series. *În derivă* (2010-2012)[52] was the Romanian adaptation of the famous Israeli show *BeTipul/In Treatment*. The series was directed by three experienced filmmakers, Constantin Popescu, Adrian Sitaru, and Titus Muntean. Although it featured famous Romanian actors (for example, the protagonist, psychotherapist Andrei Poenaru, was played by Marcel Iureș, famous and appreciated by the local audience for starring in Hollywood films), the series was considered a disappointment because its representations of relationships seemed somehow disconnected from Romanian social realities. *În derivă* was regarded as excessively complacent in imitating the Israeli and American versions. Even though the topic of psychotherapy was familiar to urban upper-middle class and the script lacked authenticity in terms of narrative and expressive choices, *În derivă* was remarkable for its visual and marketing quality, as well as

innovative in proposing a new dramatic format and dynamic dialogues. Therefore, it functioned as a sign that such endeavours were possible with locally produced series, and that the industry was prepared to take a step forward.

This step was followed by the adaptation of another Israeli series, *Matay nitnashek* (also adapted in Hungary as *Társas játék*): *Rămâi cu mine kept* Constantin Popescu on board as director. Mihai Bauman, the co-director, previously made a documentary film (*Groapa – The Pit*, 2001), some short films, worked as a casting director in Romania and abroad, and directed TV series for commercial television. Constantin Popescu already directed not only *Terápia*, the first HBO adaptation series in Romania, but also two critically acclaimed feature films, *Principles of Life* (*Principii de viață*, 2010) and *The portrait of the Fighter as a Young Man* (*Portretul luptătorului la tinerețe*, 2010). Furthermore, he had co-directed *Tales from the Golden Age* (*Amintiri din comunism*, 2009), a series of stories about the Communist era in Romania. The first two Romanian HBO series were relatively well received by domestic audiences.

Things changed with the next fictional production HBO developed in Romania. *Shadows*, another adaptation based on an Australian show *Small Time Gangster* (2011). In this case, the series' take on the original show was focused on changing its genre conventions, switching from comedy and soap opera conventions to 'a mix of crime, social realism and irony'.[53] The directors collaborating on the first part of this project were Bogdan Mirică and Igor Cobileanski, and after the second season, *Shadows* was directed by Mirică alone, as Cobileanski's creative input migrated towards another HBO Romanian series, *Hackerville*.

Mirică started his career as a screenwriter (he collaborated on the script for a popular comedy show, *Las Fierbinți*, 2012-) and a director of short films (*Bora Bora*, 2011), thereby obtaining independent production experience in mainstream television. His position seems similar to those of Hungarian directors trying to explore several subfields of the industry. Igor Cobileanschi brought on screen humoristic as well as gloomy and absurd perspectives in stories set in the Republic of Moldova, his native country with strong ties to not only Romanian culture, but also to Russian influences. *Eastern Business* (2013), his most famous film before becoming involved in HBO projects, is a comedy depicting the desperate attempts of a music teacher and his friends to overcome poverty through illegal business. With the attempts gone awry, the main character contemplates his dramatic fate in prison, as bitter humor permeates the end of the film.

Mirică and Cobileanschi's collaboration on *Shadows* features gloomy characters, shocking violence, and a witty use of coarse language. Cobileanschi's ties to the New Romanian Cinema is reflected in his 2016 collaboration with Corneliu Porumboiu, whose script idea and characters lie at the core of *The Unsaved* (*Limita de jos a cerului*). Between the two seasons of the HBO show, Mirică directs *Dogs*, a thriller granted the FIPRESCI award

at the 69th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in 2016. The film echoes Mirică's spatial mannerisms in that settings in *Bora Bora*, *Câini* along with in some key scenes in *Shadows* are shot in immense desolate plains, which create strong contrasts with the tensions of the human clashes, chases, and crimes crossing those territories; this type of perspective offers the viewer a chance to explore a meditation on violence, corruption as well as atavic attachment to rural land. Mirică and Cobileanschi's recent works indirectly show that not only does Shadows foster a different atmosphere, a greater level of authenticity, and connection to the Romanian audience, but it also opens new possibilities for its directors, giving them the opportunity to consolidate their positions within the artistic field.

Another noteworthy HBO series within the context of this article is *The Silent Valley* (*Valea Mută*, 2016), based on the Norwegian thriller show *Øyevitne* (2014). The director of this project, Marian Crișan, is best known for *Megatron*, which gained the Palme d'Or award for short film at the Cannes Film Festival in 2008. A representative of New Romanian Cinema, Crișan's filmography often handles the topics of marginality, migration, and addiction. In light of this, it makes sense Crișan ends up directing a series that challenges stereotypes related to homosexuality, gender roles, and ethnicity issues.

Through elements such as directorial choices, co-production services, thematic areas, and stylistic choices, Romanian HBO series reveal how the local industry benefits greatly from the expertise and recognition of the New Romanian Wave. Professionals' resentment and frustration with domestic audiences preferring American movies transforms into a creative formatting that blends the high-quality standards promoted by HBO with the interest for local stories that recall the realist, critical, and sometimes dark turn in New Romanian Cinema.

CONCLUSION

HBO Eastern European productions from Hungary and Romania are strongly related to the traditions and country-specific circumstances after 1989. For Hungary, in particular, the Bourdieusian model to approach the field of cultural production theory seems to adequately explain the predilections of film directors in terms of why they adopt specific artistic styles and how they treat specific genres. In fact, such openness towards artistic experimentation is rather significant in a domestic industry where post-socialist freedom of expression has been thoroughly explored in theatrical, cinematic, and television works. Accordingly, HBO projects could benefit from this interest in professionalization and international recognition that had already been formed. In Romania, the absence of quality television was contrasted by the international success gained by Romanian New Wave film directors who ironically were not very popular

among Romanian audiences. HBO initiatives established a connection to the achievements in the domestic field of cinematic production and have so far contributed to further change in Eastern European creative industries. Further research on the topic of Eastern European TV series and their integration into transnational circuits could elaborate on the structure of the local fields of cultural production and show in detail how the national and regional industries interact with the globally dominant players of the television market.

Notes

[1] The research presented here has been financed by the research project *DETECt — Detecting Transcultural Identity in European Popular Crime Narratives* (Horizon 2020, 2018–2021) [Grant agreement number 770151].

[2] See Dona Kolar-Panov, 'Television and cultural cooperation in Southeastern Europe' in *The Emerging Creative Industries in Southeastern Europe*, ed. By Nada Švob-Đokić, (Zagreb: Institute for International Relations, 2005), p. 71: 'Co-production of television programs with a cultural content does not happen very often in SEE, and there is no established protocol for exchange of cultural programs, with very few cultural events shown outside their country of origin'.

[3] See *The Essential HBO Reader*, ed. by Gary R. Edgerton and Jeffrey P. Jones (Lexington: Kentucky University Press 2008).

[4] In the same vein, Janet McCabe and Kim Akass argue that 'HBO structures a particular restricted field of cultural TV production, set against the mainstream network model – driven as it is by advertising revenue and ratings – which has, in turn, not only normalised what we've come to think of as important television work (critical acclaim, nominations and awards), but also kept these beliefs and practices of TV in circulation', in their article 'HBO and the Aristocracy of Contemporary TV Culture: affiliations and legitimatising television culture, post-2007', in *Mise au point*, no. 10/2018, Online since 15 January 2018, connection on 6 May 2021. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/map/2472; DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/map.2472.

[5] *Small Cinemas in Global Markets. Genres, Identities, Narratives*, ed. by David Desser, Janina Falkowska, Lenuta Giukin (Lanham and London: Lexington Books, 2015), p. XI.

[6] David Hesmondhalgh, *The Cultural Industries*, Third Edition (London: SAGE, 2013), pp. 147-149.

[7] *Ibidem*.

[8] Janet McCabe and Kim Akass list a comprehensive set of recent perspectives on Bourdieu in the article cited above.

[9] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 64.

[10] See David Hesmondhalgh, 'Bourdieu, the media and cultural production', in *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 28(2), 2006, p.222: 'A related problem in *The Rules of Art* is that Bourdieu has nothing to say about the domination of cultural production by multinational entertainment corporations across all cultural industries'.

[11] The first Hungarian HBO production is a television series *Született lúzer*, (2007–2009). The show qualifies as a failure and, in fact, is not even included in the HBO library. The year 2009 sees the first Hungarian HBO documentary, *Miss Plastic*. This work, directed by Dávid Sáh, documents the beauty contest of plastic surgery obsessed women. The second decade of the new millennium brings continuity to fictional and documentary content creation. This article focuses on fictionalized serial contents. HBO Hungary subsequently produced the following series: *Társas játék* (2011–2013), based on *When Will We Kiss/Matay Nitnashek* (Israel 10, 2007–2008), *Terápia* (2012–2017), based on In *Treatment/Be tipul* (JCS, Scheleg, 2005–2008), *Golden Life/Aranyélet* (2015–2017), based on *Easy Living/Helppo elämä* (Moskito Television, 2009–2011). In the following the titles of the series will be quoted in Hungarian when there is no international circulation, in English and Hungarian for cases of international circulation and in Hungarian when the English title is the same for various franchised national versions.

APPENDIX:
The following table lists the awards received by Hungarian and Romanian directors involved in HBO series.

DIRECTOR	HBO SERIES DIRECTED OR WRITTEN BY	FEATURE FILM PROJECTS DEVELOPED IN THE SAME PERIOD	SHORT FILM PROJECTS DEVELOPED IN THE SAME PERIOD
Péter Bartos	Született lúzer, 2007–2009		Ólomidő, 2005–
Márton Szirmai	Született lúzer, 2007		Summertime, 2009; A süllyedő falu, 2007; Every Day a New Challenge, 2006; Szalontüdő, 2006.
Barnabás Tóth	Született lúzer, 2007	Camembert Rose, 2009	Meglepetés, 2007; Egy szavazat, 2006;
Gábor Fischer	Született lúzer, 2008–2009	Montecarlo!, 2004	
György Pálfi	Született lúzer, 2008	Taxidermia, 2006; Nem vagyok a barátod, 2009	Nem leszek a barátod, 2009
Márton Vécsei	Született lúzer, 2008–2009	Diamond Club, 2011	Farkasember, 2008
Dániel Erdélyi	Született lúzer, 2009		411-Z, 2007, Magasfeszültség, 2010.
Gábor Herendi	Társas játék, 2011–2013	Valami Amerika 2., 2008	
Gergely Fonyó	Társas játék, 2011–2012	Made in Hungaria, 2009	A látogató, 2013
Péter Fazakas	Társas játék, 2013		Mélylevegő, 2012
Ildikó Enyedi	Terápia, 2012–2017	Testről s lélekről, 2017	
Attila Gigor	Terápia, 2012–2017	Kút, 2016	
Orsi Nagypál	Terápia, 2014–2017	Nyitva, 2018	
Mihály Schwechtje	Terápia, 2017	Remélem legközelebb sikerül meghalnod, 2018	Aki bújt, aki nem, 2018
Zsombor Dyga	Golden Life, 2015–2018	Coach surf, 2014–	
Áron Mátyássy	Golden Life, 2015–2018	The Transmissioner – 2016 Víkend - 2015	The Master of Light – 2019
Adrian Sitaru	În derivă, 2010-2012	Pescuit sportiv (Hooked), 2008; Din dragoste cu cele mai bune intenții (Best Intentions), 2011; Domestic, 2012; Ilegitim, 2016.	Valuri, 2007; Colivia, 2010; Artă, 2014; Excursia, 2014; Counterpart (in English), 2014
Bogdan Mirică	Shadows (Umbre), 2014-	Câini (Dogs), 2016	Bora Bora, 2011
Igor Cobileanschi	Shadows (Umbre), Seasons 1 and 2, 2014-2017; Hackerville, 2018	La limita de jos a cerului (The Unsaved), 2013; Afacerea Est (Eastern Business), 2016.	Colecția de arome (The Flavors Collection), 2013.
Marian Crișan	Valea Mută (The Silent Valley), 2016	Morgen, 2010; Rocker, 2012; Orizont (Horizon), 2015, Berliner, 2020.	Megatron, 2008
Anca Miruna Lăzărescu	Hackerville, 2018	La drum cu tata (Die Reise mit Vater), 2016; Glück ist was für Weicheier (Happiness Sucks), 2018.	Apele tac (Silent River), 2010
Daniel Sandu	Hackerville, 2018 (writer); Bani negri (Tuff Money), 2019-2020	Un pas în urma serafimilor (One Step Behind the Seraphim), 2017	Cai putere (Horse Power), 2014

The data reveal how previous experience and recognition contributed to the involvement in projects produced by HBO Europe, as well as how such collaboration strongly influenced the career paths of these professionals.

OTHER TV PROJECTS DEVELOPED IN THE SAME PERIOD	AWARDS RECEIVED IN THE SAME PERIOD	OTHER MENTIONS
		Credits in Camera and Electrical Department
	Szalontüdő – Valladolid International Film Festival – Audience Award, 2007.	
	Egy szavazat – Silver Busho Winner, 2007	
	Taxidermia –Silver Hugo, Best Feature Film, 2006; Don Quixote Award, 2006, Fantasporto, Audience Jury Award, 2006; Hungarian Film Week, Grand Prize, 2006; Transilvania International Film Festival, Best Direction, 2006	
Beugró (TV2, 2007-)		
		Producer for several projects in 2009
Hajónapló (M1, 2010); Matula kalandpark (M1, 2011); Karádysokk (Duna Televízió, 2011); Hacktion (M1, 2012–2014)	Granada International Festival of Young Filmmakers, Audience Award, Best Feature Film, 2009 – Made in Hungaria,	
Szabadság különjárat (Szupermodern Stúdió, 2013); Fapad (Magyar Televízió, 2014–2015)		
	Berlin International Film Festival, Golden Berlin Bear, Winner, Prize of the Ecumenical Jury, Winner - 2017; Hungarian Film Week, Grand Prize, Best Director, Best Screenplay – 2018 – Testről s lélektől	
		Cinematic trailers for video games
Tóth János (Megafilm, 2017); Csak színház és más semmi (Duna Televízió, 2016)		
Egynyári kaland (MTVA, 2015–2019); Jófiúk (RTL Klub, 2019)		
Mintaapák (TV2, 2019-2020)		
	Valuri, 2007 - The Golden Leopard (Pardo d'Oro) for short film at the Locarno Film Festival, 2007; Jury Award for Best Cinematography, Aspen Shortsfest, 2008; BAFTA Certificate of Excellence, 2008, Best Short Film at the Sarajevo Film Festival, 2007; Pescuit sportiv (Hooked), 2008: New Voices/ New Visions Grand Jury Prize at Palm Springs International Film Festival, 2009; Colivia, 2010: DAAD Short Film Award, Golden Bear – Berlin – Nominee, 2010; Best Intentions, 2011: Golden Leopard at the Locarno Film Festival – for Best Director and Best Actor (Bogdan Dumitrache); Best Central&Eastern European Film at the Cleveland International Film Festival, 2012; Ilegitim, 2016: C.I.C.A.E. Award, Berlinale Forum, 2016; Prix Sauvage at L'Europe autour de l'Europe Film Festival, 2016.	
	Bora Bora, 2011: Best European Short Film at the Premiers Plans Festival, Angers, 2011; Dogs, 2016: FIPRESCI Award, Prix Un Certain Regard, Cannes Film Festival, 2016; Transylvania Trophy at the Transylvania International Film Festival, 2016.	
	The Unsaved, 2013: FIPRESCI Prize for Best Debut at the Cottbus Film Festival of Young East European Cinema; Eastern Business, 2016: Best Script and Best Actor at the Talinn Black Nights Film Festival, 2016;	
	Megatron, 2008: Palme d'Or for Best Short Film, Cannes Film Festival, 2008; Morgen, 2010: Special Jury Prize, Locarno Film Festival, 2010; Best Director and FIPRESCI Award, Thessaloniki Film Festival.	
Wir sind die Welle (We Are the Wave), 2019, Netflix	Apele tac (Silent River), 2010: Nomination for Best Short Film, Golden Bear Award, Berlin International Film Festival, 2011; Audience Award, Angers European First Film Festival, 2012; Short Award, Berlin Interfilm Festival, 2011; Best Film, Brussels Short Film Festival, 2011; Grand Prix, Brest European Short Film Festival, 2011; Grand Prize, Mediawave, Hungary, 2012, and others; Die Reise mit Vater, 2016: One Future Prize, Honorable Mention, Munich Film Festival;	The Secret of Deva, 2007, documentary film on Romanian gymnastics.
	One Step Behind the Seraphim, 2017: Best Picture, Athens International Film Festival, 2018; Best Screenplay, Bucharest International Film Festival, 2018.	Had previously collaborated in a domestic popular TV series (national broadcast only) directing and writing La Bloc (2005, 2006).

[12] The dynamics of cultural imperialism and localization/hybridization constitute a well-known process and appeared in the previous phases of transnational television development. Cf. Joseph D. Straubhaar – Luiz G. Duarte, 'Adapting US Transnational Television Channels to a Complex World: From Cultural Imperialism to Localization to Hybridization', in *Transnational Television Worldwide: Towards a New Media Order*, ed. by Jean K. Chalaby (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), pp. 216–254.

[13] Anikó Imre, 'HBO's e-EUtopia' *Media Studies*, 5.2 (2018), 50-68; Anikó Imre, 'Streaming Freedom in Illiberal Eastern Europe', *Critical Studies in Television*, 2 (2019), 170–186.

[14] Anna Bátori, 'The Birth of the Post-Socialist Eastern European Televisual Collectivehood: Crime and Patriarchy in *Umbre*, 2014–', *AM Journal of Art and Media Studies*, 17 (2018), 37–48.

[15] Balázs Varga, 'Familiar, much too familiar... HBO's Hungarian original productions and the questions of cultural proximity', in A *European Television Fiction Renaissance*, ed. by Luca Barra and Massimo Scaglioni (London-New York: Routledge, 2021), pp. 275–294 (p. 276).

[16] Kim Toft Hansen, Anna Keszeg and Sándor Kálai, 'From Remade Drama to Original Crime: HBO Europe's Original Television Productions', *European Review, August* (2020); Varga, p. 277–279; Petr Szczepanik: 'http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=YxABEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT239&dq=info:xf07zjJmrZQJ:scholar.google.com&ots=Ur__K0H5qE&sig=vTuiGtP0pHD5q3Oo0mAGZl6uqno', in *A European Television Fiction Renaissance*, ed. by Luca Barra and Massimo Scaglioni (London-New York: Routledge, 2021).

[17] Balázs Varga, *Filmrendszerváltások* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2016), p. 137–144; Gábor Gelencsér, *Magyar film 1.0*. (Budapest: Holnap Kiadó, 2017), p. 231–243.

[18] In 1997, within a gap of three days, the two major commercial TV broadcasters started their activity on Hungarian soil. TV2, owned at the time by the German company, ProSiebenSat1, currently owned by Hungarian TV2 Média Csoport Zrt., and RTLKlub, owned by RTL Group Central & Eastern Europe GmbH from Luxembourg.

[19] The concept of small cinemas applies ambiguously to the case of Romania and Hungary. The term is more adequate in the case of Hungary where the decrease in the number of annually produced films accommodates with regard to the average numbers of small-scale markets. On the Eastern European movie cultures and the concept of small cinema cf. *Small Cinemas in Global Markets. Genres, Identities, Narratives*, ed. by Lenuta Giukin, Janina Falkowska and David Desser (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015); *European Visions. Small Cinemas in Transition*, ed. By Janelle Blankenship and Tobias Nagl (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2012). In the relation to this concept in the cases of Romania and Hungary cf. Andrea Virginás, 'A kis mozik fogalma: román és magyar gyártási példák', *Filmszem*, IV/3. Autumn (2014), 56–67.

[20] Regarding the movie-going practices of Central and Eastern European countries, there are two extremes. On one end, in the Czech Republic, local interest in homeland productions is very important. Czech movies are largely viewed by domestic audiences. At the other end of the spectrum, in Romania, where the international prestige of the Romanian movies translates into a large number of awards and festival recognition, the local interest in Romanian movies is quite insignificant within the confines of the EU. Cf. Susanne Nikoltchev, *Yearbook 2018/2019. Key Trends. Television, cinema, video and on-demand audiovisual services. The Pan-European Picture* (European Audiovisual Observatory, Council of Europe, 2019) https://rm.coe.int/yearbook-keytrends-2018-2019-en/1680938f8e [accessed 30 October 2020]; Marzia Bona, 'European cinema-going habits vary significantly: a look at the current divide between Western and Eastern Europe', *Filmrendszerváltások*, p. 20–21, https://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Areas/Europe/Europeans-at-the-cinema-from-East-to-West-186036 [accessed 30 October 2020].

[21] As a conclusion to an analysis concerning the trends in the Hungarian cinema post-socialism, Balázs Varga states the following: 'If we want an answer to the question who made the most movies in Hungary in the last two and a half decades, than, following our data, and slightly oversimplifying the facts, we can argue that [they are] those who dared to begin without any financial background, those who produced movies for the masses, those who had a canonic, prestigious oeuvre and those young directors who were welcomed at foreign film festivals', Varga, *Filmrendszerváltások*, p.144.

[22] Gábor Erőss, 'A magyar film emancipációja', *2000*, Special Issue (2004), 25–40 (p. 25).

[23] For a better understanding of the relation between the directors' work for HBO and their access to international recognition see the appendix. It details how these processes have been mutually interdependent.

[24] Janet McCabe and Akass Kim, 'It's Not TV, It's HBO's Original Programming: Producing Quality TV', in *It's Not TV: Watching HBO in the Post-Television Era*, ed. by Marc Leverette, Brian L. Ott and Cara Louise Buckley (New York: Routledge 2008), pp. 83–94.

[25] Varga, 'Familiar, much too familiar... HBO's Hungarian original productions and the questions of cultural proximity', p. 279.

[26] The directors labeled with this name had a quasi-synchronous apparition in a symbolic year, in 2000. Cf. Varga, *Filmrendszerváltások* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2016) p. 145–146.

[27] Three of the directors involved in the creation of *Született lúzer* were members of the famous Simó-class (Dániel Erdélyi, Gábor Fisher, György Pálfi): a UTFA class coordinated by Sándor Simó, director of the Hunnia Studio who proved to be a very efficient teacher in talent development. The members of his first class set the tone for 'Young Hungarian Cinema' due to their famous coming-of-age movies (*Moszkva square*, Ferenc Török, 2001; *Macerás ügyek*, Szabolcs Hajdu, 2001; Előre! Dániel Erdélyi, 2002). The story of the second Simó-class was marked by Simó's death after the first academic year. However, the members of the class had a quasi-similar, yet not as strong as the members of the first class. From this second generation, HBO worked with Attila Gigor (*Terápia*) and Áron Mátyássy (*Golden life*). Curiously, even though Simó's strategy was marked by the coming-of-age story, the directors who worked for HBO experimented with genre formats. Cf. György Pálfi whose first international success was an experimental crime thriller, *Hukkle* (2002)., Fisher's first movie was a comedy (*Montecarlo!*, 2004) and Gigor's debut film was a crime drama (*A nyomozó*, 2008). For the history of the Simó classes see Klára Buzogány, 'Így jöttek...', *Korunk*, February (2002) https://epa.oszk.hu/00400/00458/00134/buzoganyk.html [accessed 30 October 2020]. On Simó's impact on his students career cf. Interview with Áron Mátyássy made by Ferenc Varga and Lili Mesterházy. *Filmklub Podcast*, 8 January 2013; Interview with Attila Gigor made by Ferenc Varga and Lili Mesterházy, *Filmklub Podcast*, 28 February 2019.

[28] Varga, 'Familiar, much too familiar... HBO's Hungarian original productions and the questions of cultural proximity', p. 280.

[29] Petr Szczepanik, 'Transnational Crews and Postsocialist Precarity: Globalizing Screen Media Labor in Prague', in *Precarious Creativity: Global Media, Local Labor*, ed. by Michael Curtin and Kevin Sanson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), pp. 88–103; Varga, 'Familiar, much too familiar... HBO's Hungarian original productions and the questions of cultural proximity', p. 282.

[30] 2002: *Valami Amerika* (Gábor Herendi, 526,000 admissions); 2004: *Magyar Vándor* (Gábor Herendi, 456,000 admissions); 2008: *Valami Amerika 2* (Gábor Herendi, 428,000 admissions) ; 2009: *Made in Hungaria* (Gergely Fonyó, 225,000 admissions).

[31] Varga, 'Familiar, much too familiar... HBO's Hungarian original productions and the questions of cultural proximity', p. 285.

[32] Gusztáv Schubert 'Az HBO első magyar tévésorozatával is a minőségi szórakoztatást képviseli a bulvárcsatornák ellenében', *Filmvilág*, 3. (2012) 47.

[33] In a discussion of her career path, Orsi Nagypál acknowledges that she is an outsider amongst Hungarian directors because of her different education. Though she admits that a degree offered by the UTFA ensures a precious social network in Hungary, she also affirms that working with HBO made it possible for her to collaborate equally with two of the main personalities of the university. Cf. Interview with Orsi Nagypál made by Bálint Horváth and Janka Pozsonyi, *Filmhu Podcast*, 15 July 2018. On the working methods of Ildikó Enyedi, many of her collaborators acknowledged that she is a pro? seasoned in of a soft? working culture where safety and personal expression are core values. Cf. Interview with Attila Gigor made by Ferenc Varga and Lili Mesterházy, *Filmklub Podcast*, 28 February 2019.

[34] Cf. the analysis of the show in Varga, 'Familiar, much too familiar... HBO's Hungarian original productions and the questions of cultural proximity', pp. 286–287.

[35] Anikó Imre, 'Minőség és televízió', *Apertúra*, tavasz (2018) https://uj.apertura.hu/2018/tavasz/imre-minoseg-es-televizio/ [accessed 30 October 2020].

[36] Cathrin Portuges, 'Central European Twins: Psychoanalysis and Cinema in Ildikó Enyedi's *My Twentieth Century', Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 27:4 (2007), 525-539, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/07351690701484675.

[37] This movie received 17 international awards.

[38] On the career paths of the directors cf. Interview with Zsombor Dyga made by Dénes Varga and Janka Pozsonyi, *Filmhu Podcast*, 28 September 2018. Interview with Áron Mátyássy made by Ferenc Varga and Lili Mesterházy. *Filmklub Podcast*, 8 January 2013.

[39] Zsombor Dyga's first movie was celebrated because it was received as 'finding its way between adapting current Hollywood genres and actual cult movies.' Lóránt Stőhr, 'A meglelt haza. Dyga Zsombor Tesó', *Filmvilág*, 4 (2003), 52–53 (p. 52).

[40] Tamás Dénes Soós, 'Aranyélet - Jobban teljesít', *Filmvilág* 2 (2016), 34–35.

[41] See Adina Schneeweis, 'To Be Romanian in Post-Communist Romania. Entertainment Television and Patriotism in Popular Discourse, in *Popular Television in Eastern Europe During and Since Socialism*, ed. by Timothy Havens, Aniko Imre, Katalin Lustyik (New York-London, Routledge, 2013), p. 143: 'Content-wise, television production in particular has shifted to a focus on entertainment and sensationalism, on both public and private stations, having to cope with new market demands and competition from imported content. The bulk of the programming in the last 22 years (films, dramas, situation comedies, and soap operas, as well as successful formats for television talk shows, game shows, reality and news shows) has been imported mostly from Western countries, mainly from the U.S.; and yet local production is certainly on the rise'

[42] Norbert Elias, 'Changes in the We-I Balance', in *The Society of Individuals* (Oxford, UK-Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1991), argues that: 'The social habitus, and therefore the layer of habitus forming the national character, is certainly not an enigma. As a social formation, it is (...) flexible and far from immutable. It is, in fact, always in flux. (...) the changing power relationships, both within and between states, influence the formation of feelings in this area', p. 211.

[43] Jérôme Bourdon, 'Self-Inflicted Imperialism? On the Americanizations of Television in Europe', in *We Europeans? Media, Representations, Identities*, ed. by William Uricchio (Bristol-Chicago: Intellect, 2009), pp. 93-109.

[44] See Sylvia Szostak, 'Immitation, Borrowing, Recycling. American Models and Polish Domestic

Drama', in *Cinéma& Cie*, vol. XII, no. 19, Fall 2012: "The dramatic growth of the Polish television market and production sector now allows Polish producers to engage with, and respond to, viewers' expectations by producing original Polish drama that emulates American visual style and its production value", p. 87.

[45] See Andrea Virginás, 'New Filmic Waves in Hungarian and Romanian Cinema: Allegories or Stories about Flesh?', in *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae*, Film and Media Studies, 4, pp.131-141.

[46] See Anikó Imre, *A Companion to Eastern European Cinema* (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2012), p. 14: 'they have been able to carve out a financing structure within and between the complicated schemes of state and European funding and public and private enterprise'.

[47] Cristi Puiu, 'Șansa', in *Dilema Veche*, 23.01.2001 (my translation). The director recalls his university years at at École Supérieure d'Art Visuel in Geneva and writing his dissertation on realism in film. Upon returning to Romania, his project was to apply these ideas in order to make cinema that would be 'like Godard said: *la vérité vingt quatre fois par seconde*'. The article is available in Romanian here: https://newskeeper.ro/articol?id=6C15F049E868B2834DB0896B4B60444D&data=2001-02-23

[48] *Small Cinemas in Global Markets. Genres, Identities, Narratives*, ed. by David Desser, Janina Falkowska and Lenuta Giukin (Lanham-London: Lexington Books, 2015), p. X

[49] Cristi Puiu, 'Despre contribuția regizorilor la betesugul cinematografiei', *Dilema*, no. 540, 8 – 14 August 2003, available online in Romanian: https://dilemaveche.ro/sectiune/dileme-on-line/articol/despre-contributia-regizorilor-la-betesugul-cinematografiei [accessed 5 January 2021] (my translation for the quoted excerpt).

[50] Doru Pop, *Romanian New Wave Cinema. An Introduction* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2014), p. 111

[51] Bogdan Mirică, in an interview for the press agency News.ro, edited by Patricia Marinescu, 11 November 2017, available on: https://www.news.ro/cultura-media/interviu-regizorul-bogdan-mirica-despre-noul-sezon-umbre-vecinul-tau-e-mafiot-vrei-sa-stii-cum-e-viata-lui-1922403011002017111017382542 [accessed 31 January 2021]. My translation from Romanian.

[52] In this section of the article, television shows produced in Romania are referenced with their original titles, i.e. in Romanian only if they have not circulated internationally. Otherwise, their titles are mentioned in English as well as in Romanian.

[53] Anna Bátori, 'The Birth of the Post-Socialist Eastern European Televisual Collectivehood: Crime and Patriarchy in *Shadows* (Umbre, 2014-)', in *AM Journal of Art and Media Studies*, No. 17, 2018, p. 40.

Constructing Ethnic Minority Detectives in French and German Crime Television Series

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This article examines and compares the representation of ethnic minority lead investigators in the television crime series, *Tatort Hamburg* (ARD, 2008-2012 season), *Cherif* (France 2, 2013-2019), *Last Panthers* (Canal+, 2015), and *Dogs of Berlin* (Netflix, 2018). It suggests a typology of the figure of the ethnic minority detective based on representational patterns shared by the series and other literary and television narratives, which is discussed and contextualized within the ideological and commercial limitations of French and German television cultures. The last section assesses the series' potential to depict 'postmigrant societies' founded on and influenced by social plurality and former and ongoing migration movements. In so doing, the study highlights role of typologies and narrative tropes in the portrayal of ethnic minorities in crime television and insists, despite the shortcomings of some series' representational strategies, on the value of figures of identification for minority and majority audiences that attest to a shifting understanding of 'us' and 'others' in contemporary European societies.

Keywords
European crime fiction
Ethnic minority detectives
Postmigration
Crime television series
Representation of minorities
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INTRODUCTION[1]

In 2011 it was estimated that racialized minorities born in Europe roughly number ten million people, a figure that marks every single EU nation's experience and imagination.[2] Yet, for the last three decades, media scholars have stressed that compared to white Europeans, ethnic minorities and immigrants are largely underrepresented in television.[3] One genre that arguably escapes this rule is crime fiction, which traditionally incorporates and foregrounds the social margins, immigrants, the disenfranchized, and the post-industrial blight.[4] [5] Indeed, as early as in the 1970s and 1980s, crime series like *Tatort* (1970-) in Germany or *Série noire* (1984-1991) in France featured ethnic minority characters, a trend that continues to this day. Their inclusion, however, is not exempted from representational issues, and must be analysed critically to study ways in which European crime narratives react to and reflect upon cultural diversity.

Literature scholars such as Stephen Soitos or Axel Stähler have suggested the existence of 'ethnic crime fiction' as a subgenre that focuses

on questions of race and ethnicity.[6] [7] Exploring ethnic crime novels by both authors of colour and white authors, Stähler argues that by centring their plots on experiences of marginalized subjects, they offer a subversive space that challenges the political, social, and cultural hegemonies.[8] Scholarship focusing on racialized minorities in European crime fiction is sporadic and tends to discuss it in relation to other minority literary traditions. Stephen Knight, for example, analyses Mike Philips's British black detective, Sam Dean, as a local figure dealing with a wide range of crimes that contrasts the detection in African American crime fiction, which he claims, often centres on racial oppression.[9] Sylvie Dumerlat's study of Lakhdar Belaïd's novels argues for a 'Franco-Maghrebi *noir*' subgenre, which she defines as a hybrid form that combines aspects of the Franco-Maghrebi literary tradition (such as auto-ethnographic practices, multilingualism, historical rewriting, and peri-urban spaces) with conventions of the French *noir* genre.[10]

Television research largely avoids the ethnic crime fiction label and focuses instead on investigating the representation of minority characters in crime series. The few North American studies explicitly addressing television 'ethnic detectives' describe them as 'native informants'[11] who explore cultural differences and make links between minority and mainstream cultures.[12] French media studies mentioning detectives of colour tend to centre on broad discussions of ethnic diversity in television.[13] Ginette Vincendeau notes that the crime genre has launched the careers of many black and Maghrebi French actors who are typecast as drug dealers, petty criminals, or gang members.[14] She also points to a gradual shift towards more positive roles since the 1990s but admits that they remain subservient to white heroes.[15] Similar developments in German media have been documented, such as Michelle Mattson's comparative study of 1980s and 1990s *Tatort* seasons, which notices 'remarkable changes' in the representation of ethnic diversity in German society that detach from malicious portrayals of foreigners, but also acknowledges the overrepresentation of foreign criminal figures.[16]

Despite the growing and continued presence of characters of colour in global crime fiction, there are only a few studies comparing their representation across cultures. The available comparative research focuses primarily on literary narratives and examines them through a transnational or postcolonial lens. For example, Vera Alexander's analysis of Romesh Gunesekera's *The Sandglass* (1998), which centres on Sri Lankan British characters, considers the novel to be part of 'diasporic literature' because it emphasizes the latency and awareness of sociocultural borders tracing back to the colonial period.[17] Although the concept of diaspora allows to identify historical and transcultural legacies in European literature, it may also separate crime fiction about ethnic minorities from European popular culture, national borders, history, and literary traditions.

The limited engagement of European criticism with discussions on ethnic

crime fiction as a category might be partially explained by contemporary scholarship on European identity and crime literature. According to Kerry Dune, European crime fiction is thought to be concerned with the relation of local and regional identities, mainly as a reaction to globalization and the complex reality of national, regional, and local alliances within the continent.[18] This conception proposes that identity in contemporary Europe is constructed as 'an amalgam of provincial and urban, or local and global characteristics that are deployed and subverted simultaneously.'[19] Studying ethnic crime fiction globally, Monika Mueller and Dorothea Fischer-Hornung suggest that studies on European crime fiction focusing exclusively on race and ethnicity may face limited interpretations. Indeed, they argue that in contrast to the North American situation where ethnicity is primarily associated with skin colour, in Europe, language, regional dialects, or local customs can play a critical and at times more significant role than race.[20] This could apply well to Brigitte Roüan's crime telefilm *Le débarcadère des anges* (France 2, 2009), whose black detective, Corbucci, does not face racial discrimination possibly due to his status as a Marseilles local who speaks in the regional accent and whose late father was a local white police officer. Hence, studies of European ethnic minority detectives must also attend to the interactions between race, ethnicity, and other equally potent markers such as social class, regional identity, and history.

By stressing the importance and necessity to study and compare European crime fiction within its own cultural contexts, in this article I examine the representation of ethnic minority lead investigators in the television crime series, *Tatort* Hamburg (ARD, 2008-2012 season), *Cherif* (France 2, 2013-2019), *Last Panthers* (Canal +, 2015), and *Dogs of Berlin* (Netflix, 2018), which feature detectives pertaining to the Maghrebi minority in France and the Turkish minority in Germany. It suggests a typology of the figure of the ethnic minority detective based on representational patterns shared by the series and other literary and television narratives. This intermedial approach aims to demonstrate the strong links between crime television series and literature but I will also contextualize the patterns within the ideological and commercial limitations of French and German television cultures. The last section assesses the series' potential to present postmigrant societies founded on and influenced by social plurality and former and ongoing migration movements.[21] In so doing, I suggest that comparative studies of French and German ethnic minority detectives can offer powerful insights on how contemporary European television cultures represent difference, diversity, and more broadly, crime and justice.

ETHNIC MINORITY DETECTIVES IN A COLOUR-BLIND CONTINENT?

The selection of the series for comparison is not solely based on their protagonists' ethnic background, but also on their potential to illustrate similarities and differences in the construction of detectives of colour across France and Germany. What is more, the four series inscribe in a trend of 2010s television productions to diversify images of France and Germany at the national and international level. The 2008-2012 *Tatort* Hamburg seasons feature its first regular Turkish German detective in Germany's most popular and influential mainstream crime television series.[22] Although the first Franco-Maghrebi television detectives appeared in the 1990s and early 2000s with the young and cool-headed detective, Selim Rey (Kader Boukhanef) of *Le Lyonnais* (Antenne 2/France 2, 1990-1992) and the comic police captain, Mohammed 'Mo' Loumani (Smaïn) of *Commissaire Bastille* (TF1, 2001-2002), *Cherif* is the longest-running crime series featuring a Franco-Maghrebi protagonist. Moreover, as the series co-creator, Lionel Olenga notes, by the 2010s there was a lack of diversity in French crime television that the series tried to redress:

> *We wanted to bring a new type of cop. The profile of a gloomy, introvert, and depressive policeman already existed. We needed a character that we weren't used to see on French TV: the cop of Maghrebi descent [...] This choice allowed us to turn our attention to some clichés, to point at racist attitudes or prejudice without falling into activism or that the series centred there. Our goal was to entertain with a mix of a cool cop and serious investigations.*[23]

The series *The Last Panthers* and *Dogs of Berlin*, focusing on an ex-convict Franco-Maghrebi and a queer Turkish German detective respectively, also represent a deliberate departure from classic European crime television series. While it could be objected that none of the series depicts a female protagonist, it is noteworthy that they inscribe in the male focus of the crime genre and highlight the marginalization of ethnic minority women in European television[24] who are more than often limited to supporting roles, namely as sisters, co-workers, and mothers.

Although each of the selected series offers a unique story of a European detective belonging to an ethnic minority, they all recount in their own terms a story of a presumed asymmetry between non-white detectives' ethnicity and values of law and order. For example, in the first episode of *Cherif*,[25] upon seeing a hooded dark-skinned man breaking into an apartment, the newly transferred white police captain Adeline Briard (Carole Bianic) rapidly arrests him. While taking him towards the detention cells, the police chief informs her that her detainee is, in fact, her new partner, Captain Kader

Cherif (Abdelhafid Metalsi). In a subsequent scene, Cherif admits that the incident was a 'very tempting' prank, to which Adeline, irritated, replies:

Adeline: *'An Arab wearing a hoodie breaking into an apartment through the window, no offense, is rarely a policeman going home, you know?'*
Cherif: *[quietly surprised] 'Oh…I see…'*
Adeline: *'I mean… you know what I mean.' [emphasis added]*

This association of ethnic minorities to crime is also echoed on the first episode of *Tatort* featuring Cenk Batu (Mehmet Kurtuluş).[26] While undercover a white Federal officer interrogates him after he tried to catch the attacker of a Turkish German gang ringleader's nephew at the hospital:

Officer: *'He bails out and you follow him down the stairs. Why?'*
Batu: *[chuckling] 'What do you mean, why?'*
Officer: *'I'm wondering, that's all… I mean, you had nothing to do with it. Allegedly.'*
Batu: *'Wait a minute, don't you guys ask for moral courage?'*
Officer: *'That's true. But it's strange, nonetheless … as soon as you show up here, a compatriot of yours gets attacked, but you save him despite your appendicitis.'*

Though succinct, *Cherif* and *Tatort*'s depiction of ethnic profiling undermine colour-blind policies and egalitarian models customarily followed in French and German media, political discourse, and the justice system, which prohibit the distinction between citizens based on race, ethnicity, national origin, or religion.[27] As Fatima El-Tayeb puts it, such daring scenes focusing on race and ethnicity in Europe challenge the powerful universalist narrative of Europe as a colour-blind continent that presents mobilizations of race as exclusively associated to so-called 'racialized' nations like the U.S.[28] In the selected crime series, such pretences are challenged through the representation of ethnoracial difference as a very local issue affecting the lives of men racialized as 'Arab' in France or 'Turk' in Germany.

If ethnic minority detectives across German and French crime narratives are subject to cultural asymmetries, stereotypes, and mechanisms of social exclusion, their representation can differ markedly from series to series and at different moments within the story. From observing the characterization of the television detectives Kader Cherif, Cenk Batu, Erol Birkan and Khalil Rachedi, I would like to suggest a typology of the figure of the European ethnic minority detective. Based on observations of representational patterns, I classify three categories: one that incarnates discourse on acculturation, another that follows a hybrid cultural belonging, and finally, one that is deliberately detached from the nation majority's mores. Together, these categories put into question the progressive pretensions of the series and expose major challenges in the representation of ethnicity in European crime fiction.

THE ACCULTURATED DETECTIVE

A prominent characterization of European ethnic minority detectives follows the figure of a citizen with strong codes of ethics who is highly acculturated in the dominant group at the expense of the minority culture. A prime example of this type of detective is the German undercover agent Cenk Batu. The series opens with a mission in which he infiltrates the circles of Germany's biggest money launderer as a French entrepreneur. When Batu is put face-to-face with this leader, however, he fails to follow his superior's order to execute him and is subsequently placed on a six-moth probation. As a remedial assignment, he is requested to go undercover as a Turkish ex-convict to investigate a local Turkish criminal ring that his superior notes, cannot be done by a 'blond Hans.'

Although the federal police reasoning to send Batu to an ethnic enclave suggests that Batu has an insider's understanding, it takes just a few scenes to see that aside from his appearance, he holds little attachment to received ideas of the Turkish German community. Indeed, unlike the rest of the Turkish German characters in the series who are predominantly linked to criminal activities and poverty, he does not speak Turkish fluently, is not familiar with Turkish food, nor follows Islamic customs as he drinks alcohol and is oblivious to the daily prayers when asked by a local visiting his simulated Turkish apartment. Moreover, as a secret police agent, Batu not only lives in an isolated and modern apartment complex far from the ethnic enclave, but he also works exclusively with white colleagues and the series only portrays him dating white women. Perhaps the major exceptions to his lack of contact with Turkish culture or stereotypes thereof, are Batu's regular chess games with his father that he does in standard German over the phone nearing the end of the episodes.

If Batu's representation strongly avoids markers of Turkish identity and follows an unquestionable integration into German dominant culture, it does not ignore how ethnicity intersects the character's daily experiences. In fact, Batu's assignment to incarnate a former convict living at an ethnic enclave serves both as a narrative device that simultaneously challenges stereotyped images of 'thug masculinities'[29] attributed to men of colour in Germany and denounces ethnic discrimination. At another interrogation with Batu, the duo of white detectives, still unaware of his secret mission, profile him as a Turkish assassin as one promptly exclaims: 'You'd even kill your sisters if they fool around with Germans, right?' By featuring ethnic prejudice within the police force, the series thus renders a critique of a German justice system that would discriminate their suspects on the basis of ethnic origin. In her study of Batu, Katharina Hall adds that his position as an undercover agent limits significantly his authority in the series and places him in an 'insider-outsider' role that is invisible to the public within the narrative and in an isolated position within the police structure

represented by his white German chief and colleagues.[30]

A similar representation can be found in the German television series *Sinan Toprak ist der Unbestechliche* (RTL/ORF 1, 1999, 2001-2002) whose eponymous Turkish German detective (Erol Sander) has been analysed as showing very few references to his ethnic background to the extent that actor himself commented that he had played 'more German than the Germans.'[31] Michele Mattson's analysis of *Tatort*'s first Yugoslavia-born German detective, Ivo Batic, also notes that his depiction as a blue eyed detective with an impeccable Bavarian accent and complete integration into German culture detached him significantly for the foreign criminals he chased and concluded that '"ethnicity" (however problematic the term) is allowed only insofar as it does not go beyond this secondary, well-circumscribed limit.'[32] A more recent example can be *Tatort* Kiel's Turkish German detective Mila Sahin (Almila Bagriacik), whose ethnicity and family background are unaddressed in the series aside from her name and in the actress's interviews mentioning her character's Turkish ethnicity. In German literature, Jakob Arjourni's private investigator Kemal Kayankaya could be considered an acculturated detective as he was adopted by a white family and consequently, lacks a connection to Turkish culture other than his race. By relying on Stephen Soitos's definition of the 'ethnic detective' as one marked by ethnoracial tropes,[33] Sandra Beck goes as far as calling Kayankaya an 'inadequate representative of the ethnic detective.' However, she admits that Kayankaya does possess a 'double consciousness detection,' which emphasizes the character's dissociation from both German and Turkish cultures.[34] Similar detectives are also present in French crime fiction. For example, Hassiba Lassoued qualified Mo Loumani, the Franco-Maghrebi protagonist of *Commissaire Bastille* as 'a whitewashed character who had no remaining trace of his Maghrebi cultural heritage.'[35] It could be suggested that the detective Lila Gloanec (Nozha Khouadra) of the series *Sur le fil* (France 2, 2007-2010) also downplays her Maghrebi culture with the exception of her son who joins a radical Islamic group. Novelist Jean-Christophe Grange's Franco-Maghrebi detective, Karim Abdouf, parallels Kayankaya since he was raised in an orphanage and consequently has no attachment to Maghrebi culture. While these characters defy stereotypes and assumptions about ethnic minorities, their representation also exposes the importance of representing cultural markers falling outside of dominant codes.

THE CULTURALLY HYBRID DETECTIVE

Other ethnic minority detectives can appear as having strong cultural connections to their minority culture while still being integrated into their nation's majority culture. A pertinent example of this type of detective is Kader Cherif. In contrast to Cenk Batu, Cherif is a Lyons local and captain

of a police squad who speaks fluent in Algerian Arabic (although he only speaks it briefly while singing at home and other succinct scenes). He is also very close to his mother, who frequently calls him over the phone in an accented standard French and frequently sends him Algerian dishes. Cherif's house is carefully decorated with Maghrebi paintings and often drinks Oriental tea with his guests. When in duty, he holds a strong sense of ethnics and, unlike his white partner, he rarely carries a gun. He also has a friendly relation with his Jewish ex-wife and is a carrying father of his teenage daughter.

Later in the series, it is revealed that he joined the police force partly because he wanted to be different from his convicted money counterfeiter father, but also because he was an avid fan of American crime series such as *Columbo* and *Kojak*. It is noteworthy that on nearly every episode, Cherif makes direct references to American ethnic crime fiction such as the poster of *Shaft* that decorates his office, illustrating further his hybrid culture. The series even includes a crossover episode[36] in which Cherif meets *Starsky & Hutch*'s African American detective Huggy Bear (Antonio Fargas). These connections to American ethnic crime fiction may reflect the attested inclination of French racialized minorities to look towards Anglophone popular culture to compensate for the limited cultural diversity in French television.[37]

Cherif's cultural hybridity has also been subject to critique. Annabelle Laurent criticized his characterization by comparing him to the black British detective Luther (Idris Elba) whose ethnicity is minimally discussed aside of a set of clichés.[38] In his review of the series, Franco-Maghrebi journalist Redwane Telha notes that while he was happy to finally see a French TV series character who 'looks like him,' he did not feel as connected as he would be with American minority characters:

> *There's something that bothers me about the character. I talked to my friends –Arabs and non-Arabs – who had the same impression. In fact, we don't believe in this Arab cop. He is not realistic enough to represent anything. And this lack of realism I find it unfortunately in every Arab character on French TV.*[39]

This interpretation emphasizes that although the representation of Cherif includes more cultural traits than the proposed acculturated detective, viewers may still find him unrealistic or even insensitive to experiences of the Maghrebi minority in France. Yet, some considerations should be made when drawing conclusions about hybrid detectives because their hybrid character development can be modifiable. In the case of *Cherif*, it must be acknowledged that as the series unfolded into later seasons, the protagonist's ethnicity and family history are further explored. For example, the fourth season's episode 'La Mort de Kader Cherif,' directed by Franco-Algerian filmmaker Akim Isker, centres on a fantastic storyline that is ignited by the ghost of one of Cherif's Amazigh ancestors. Similarly, since

the fifth season, his mother stops being simply a voice on the phone as Cenk Batu's father and becomes the recurring character of Salima Cherif (Tassadit Mandi). Such changes in the series might suggest that longevity could help solve some representational issues of hybrid detectives.

In German television, the detective Sibel (Sibel Kekilli) from *Bruder-Schwarze Macht* (ZDF, 2017) follows a similar hybrid representation. Indeed, she is a successful police officer who is able to maintain her links to Turkish culture as she occasionally speaks in Turkish to her daughter, practices Islam and wears an Islamic headscarf in several scenes at a mosque or in a funeral. It is noteworthy that the series contrasts Sibel with her young brother who is involved in a radical Islamic group, arguably positioning her as a model minority. In German literature, this type of detective resonates well with Su Turhan's Turkish German detective Zeki Demirbilek who is presented as perfectly integrated into German dominant culture, while also speaking Turkish fluently and being well acquainted with both cultures. Demirbilek has been analysed as an idealized characterization of Turkish German detective because he only embraces aspects of Turkish culture that are not threatening to the dominant culture.[40] It thus sets this type of detective as a model of successful hybridity and cultural integration whilst demonstrating the limits of representing cultural difference in European crime narratives.

THE UNORTHODOX DETECTIVE

A third variation of the European ethnic minority detective are those who do not strictly follow dominant culture's codes and instead, decide to play by their own set of rules. Such characterizations tend to occur when the investigators challenge their justice system because they deem it corrupt or unfair. One of such characters is the Turkish German detective Erol Birkan (Fahri Yardım) from *Dogs of Berlin* who is an openly gay police investigator from the Berlin's drug squad. In a similar scenario to Cenk Batu's undercover investigation, Birkan is assigned the investigation of the murder of a Turkish German football player because the homicide unit needs a 'Turk' for communication purposes. Birkan initially rejects the assignment because he prefers to investigate a drug trafficking ring affecting the marginalized community where he grew up. As the story unfolds, it is revealed that Birkan grew up in the ethnic enclave where the Tarik-Amir mafia operates and was bullied as a child by its members. As soon as the mafia murders his life mentor and is beaten by a group of men who he thinks are from that mafia, Birkan agrees to join the police squad, thereby holding a personal motive to carry the investigation.

Contrary to Batu or the short scenes of Cherif speaking Arabic, Birkan speaks Turkish fluently in several scenes and is well known in the Turkish German neighbourhood. While his work ethics and moral codes are

generally strong, he falls from protocol when he tracks the phone of a teenager who befriends the mafia, and ultimately, accepts a deal with his unethical white partner to break his official police oath and not denounce a Neo-Nazi leader so that he and his partner could receive federal funds to combat Berlin's organised crime.

Another character fitting this type of detective is the Franco-Maghrebi detective Khalil Rachedi (Tahar Rahim) from the Franco-British series *The Last Panthers*. Like Birkan, Rachedi is assigned to investigate an international diamond heist because he is a former petty criminal hailing from a Marseilles ethnic enclave. Similarly, the detective is teamed with a corrupt white chief investigator who removes him from the assignment as soon as he tracks relevant information about the crime. Working against the system, Rachedi conducts a counter investigation along with his criminal brother Mokhtar. With Mokhtar, he intimidates criminals in order to expose his partner's corruption. However, his unorthodox strategy crumbles when his colleague is murdered and learns that his brother was also collaborating with the crime ring. At the end of the series, Rachedi breaks his ties with his brother, signalling his choice of moral duty over personal agendas.

Other representations of unconventional detectives can be found in novelist Lakhdar Belaïd's Franco-Maghrebi detective duo of Lieutenant Bensalem and journalist Karim Khoja who, against the white anti-terrorist police's orders, launch their own investigation on a local terrorist cell. The tenth season of *Profilage* (TF1, 2009-) depicts the unorthodox lead investigator of colour, Elisa Bergman (Tamara Marthe), who in a theft gone wrong is mistaken for a criminal psychologist at the police station where her uncle happens to be the police chief. Bergman's detection is characterized precisely by her disobedience of orders.

The unorthodox ethnic minority detective is also prominent in comic crime fiction. We may think, for example, of the foolish and inept detective, lieutenant Khalid Belkacem (Booder), in Djamel Bensalah's comic crime film *Beur sur la ville* (2011) who is assigned a major homicide investigation simply because of a new affirmative action initiative at the national police level. His incompetence prevents him to follow orders, but ultimately his ruses help solve the major crime. In British crime fiction, Stephen Knight sees a similar comic unorthodox detective in Joe Sixsmith, who he considers to be more of a comic character narrating lower-middle-class life than a crime-focused detective of multiracial Britain.[41] All these characters counter the previous representational types discussed with regard to their relation to dominant culture while simultaneously criticize justice systems and occasionally, the crime genre itself.

SHAPING THE EUROPEAN ETHNIC MINORITY DETECTIVE

In addition to the proposed typology, the four characters share several storylines and visual imagery that problematize further what it means to be a detective of colour in French and German television. The existence of such patterns hints that even though crime series have opened new roles to minorities in these European television cultures, they are still confronted to forms of typecasting, stereotypes, and tropes that continue to evolve into new representational processes.

In her analysis of Cenk Batu, Berna Gueneli notes that the recurrence of shower scenes exposing the character's athletic naked body function as exoticizing and eroticizing moments of voyeurism directed at the ethnic Other.[42] This eroticized ethnicization, she argues, puts into question the perceived social progress in casting ethnic minorities in lead investigator roles. The characterization of the Cherif who frequently flirts with most female characters also seems to follow such a sexualization as seen in a series review: '[...] he is a charming charmer, charmed by his strict partner, who is also attracted to him.'[43]

Family links to criminality and violence are widely recurrent among the studied French and German ethnic minority detectives. With the exception of Batu, in whose case little is known about his family, all the selected detectives have an explicitly criminal or violent male parent. Cherif's father and Khalil's brother are unemployed former convicts who, in the course of the series, betray the protagonists, while Birkan's father is a practicing Muslim homophobe estranged from his family. As previously noted, the German series *Bruder-Schwarze Macht* and *Sur le fil* also include stories of women detectives of colour with a relative who joins a radical Islamic group. *Profilage*'s Elisa Bergman is also haunted by her criminal past and her convicted ex-lover. The majority of the series studied, then, seem to ultimately embrace a narrative of reformed exceptional minorities-within-minorities saved by the justice system.

It is noteworthy that the displayed romantic relations of all ethnic minority detectives studied as well as those in the series *Sinan Tropak*, *Profilages*, *Bruder-Schwarze Macht* and *Sur Le fil* are exclusively with white characters belonging to the nation majority's culture. I must stress that in the mixed-couple scenes, ethnic difference is seldom evoked, thus putting into question the series' active engagement with discourse on race and multiculturalism. According to Catherine Squires, interracial couples in television have the potential to function as a post-racial aesthetic device that integrates a cast and brings racial controversy and difference to the small screens, but often do so by disregarding institutionalized racist regimes.[44] This trend could also be understood as forms of 'symbolic multiculturalism,' which consists of strategic content diversification in

order to satisfy inclusion demands while preserving the cultural hegemony of the dominant cultural group.[45]

The presence of all these representational patterns in the selected series is a complex issue, and one which is bounded by competing factors. Certainly, it cannot be overlooked that biased representations relate to racist violence of early and recent European history. As Tore Björgo and Rob Witte note, since the 1980s, Europe has seen increased waves of nationalism, ethnocentrism, and racism, which has influenced the representation of non-white minorities in public discourse and media as threats and causes of socio-economic problems and crime.[46] Studies on German media and crime fiction indeed confirm that ethnic minority characters, and especially Turkish Germans, are often presented as foreigners[47], immigrants[48], thugs[49] and terrorists in post-11 September media.[50] Angela Kimyongür also relates negative representations of ethnic and religious minorities in French crime literature and media to pervasive colonial literary tropes.[51]

Without minimising the role of racism and colonial heritage in the representation of detectives of colour, I believe it is important to address some patterns from other perspectives that account for the complexity of the audio-visual medium. For example, one dynamic that could partially explain constructions such as the acculturated detective or the series' reluctance to represent prominent markers of ethnicity or superficial representations of interethnic couples, is indeed the imprint of the European pretence of colour-blind citizenship. Here, such a narrative and aesthetic strategy, although far from unproblematic, could be alleged to be in place in order to eschew communitarian structures and promote social equality within the characters and among viewers.

Beyond ideological considerations, broader discussions of commercial trends in French and German mainstream television should also be considered. The observed erotization imposed to the detectives of colour, for instance, correlates with studies showing the over-sexualization of ethnic minorities in both television cultures.[52] Mainstream viewer's preferences have also been evoked in the discussion of the absence of 'foreign-sounding' titles of French crime television series. Screenwriter Luc Fouliard notes that marketing strategies of French productions seem to favour titles that include either common or familiar names and words, such as *Navarro* (one of the five most common surnames in French Algeria), *Julie Lescaut* (echoing the classic novel, *Manon Lescaut*) or *Falco* (echoing the French word for falcon), and systematically discourage non-European names because they are deemed 'divisive.'[53] He links this practice to the naming of the crime series *Commissariat Bastille* [Bastille Police Station] which features a Franco-Maghrebi detective, but also of Cherif, which he associates with the English term 'sheriff.'[54]

Other representational patterns might be better explained by considering broadcasting limitations and concerns of European mass media. For

example, studies on European television have previously attributed the avoidance, or at least the moderation of scenes of racial intolerance, as an effort to prevent viewer emulation.[55] Within the context of Western European broadcasters, the series' limited engagement with discussions of race and ethnicity could also reflect European hesitations to follow formats imported from American series featuring ethnic minorities.[56] Such a practice could thus constitute a way to avoid the Americanization of content, which is a matter of constant debate in European media policies against cultural homogenization.[57]

When considering all these commercial and ideological limitations together, the figure of the European detective of colour becomes that of a character closely intertwined with societal discourse and audio-visual conventions. If in literature John Ball defines the ethnic detective as 'someone who appears as a minority representative in the eyes of the reader,'[58] in television, it could be argued that it is also a representative of national, regional, and global discussions about diversity, which are constantly evolving. Indeed, the four detectives studied are heroes whose representation is inherently unstable and unfinished, and inevitably, conjure issues of authenticity. By 'authentic' I am referring to the subjective standards by which minority or mainstream viewers may measure the characters' ethnicity or their detective status itself. Whether German or French, the European detective of colour seems to be a catalyst for societal debate but also full of representational possibilities.

TOWARDS A NARRATIVE OF A POSTMIGRANT EUROPE?

Although the studied detectives embody stereotypes and biases, there are aspects in the series that point towards the weakening and overcoming of othering categories of French and German societies. Such subversive moments do not embrace post-racial ideologies or symbolic multicultural policies, but rather a postmigrant perspective that describes a historical condition in which migration and social plurality are central to everyday life in Europe. The concept of Postmigration describes a new type of society that emerges when dominant narratives acknowledge the reality of being a site of migration rooted in social diversity.[59] Here, migration becomes a twofold trigger concept that simultaneously conveys a metanarrative of social division as well as acts as currency of social diversity, which emphasizes the heterogeneity of individuals as an essential condition.[60] It stresses, above all, that such a society as a whole has and continues to experience migration, not only those who have actually migrated. As a result, its members are said to be no longer predominantly defined by 'native-migrant' binaries or by race and ethnicity, but rather, by political

attitudes and ideologies towards plurality, heterogeneity, migration, and diversity. Far from being a utopia, postmigrant societies are characterized by multiple conflicts, debates, and negotiations that arise as societies struggle with coming into terms with social plurality.[61]

If I resort to the concept of postmigrant societies to analyse the European series, it is because they all evoke two central questions of Postmigration. First, a theoretical one, about how to think of the ambivalences and ambiguities on national identity in societies where migration is no longer regarded as an exceptional event;[62] and second, the practical one of how cultural artifacts can contribute to a better understanding of sociomaterial transformations brought about by former and ongoing migrations.[63] Certainly, the scenes of discrimination against the detectives of colour as well as the controversies surrounding their representation remind us of the social struggles taking place in France and Germany, but they can also reflect broader issues of contemporary Europe. In fact, they can also be analysed as narratives of European societies fraught with challenges and exchanges that occur upon the recognition of the evolvement of cultural diversity in society. After all, although the series present their protagonists' identity as unbalanced, they do so without putting into question their belonging to their national cultures.

It is notable that the crime series' inclusion of ethnic minority lead detectives in their thirties and forties also shows a clear change from 1980s and 1990s French and German crime fiction, which had predominantly centred on younger or immigrant minority characters. Similarly, none of the detectives seem to be confronted with tropes of 'culture of solidarity' with other minorities nor live in societies without ethnic conflict. All the protagonists face complex relations with their ethnic community as seen in Birkan's conflict with the local mafia or Rachedi's rejection of his criminal brother. The white majority society is also represented as heterogenous, especially in regard to accepting cultural diversity. European whites include on the one hand, the protagonists' lovers, friends, and colleagues who accept plurality in their European societies, but on the other, the Berlin Neo-Nazis or the soldier who tells Cherif that if French politicians would have 'left the army's hands free' during the French-Algerian War, 'he would be playing less smart.'[64] The crime series show precisely contradictory societies that at times reject and accept plurality.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I have highlighted the role that typologies and narrative tropes play in the representation of ethnic minorities in a selection of French and German crime television series. More specifically, I showed that despite the presence of lead investigators of colour, they remain marked by known stereotypes and *topoi* that have been used to portray

ethnic minorities. Thorough reflections of ethnic difference continue to be limited in these television cultures, an aspect that casts doubt on the effectiveness of the productions' diversity initiatives. Despite these issues, the progress that the characters bring to European screens cannot be underestimated: they offer identificatory figures for minority and majority audiences and attests changes between the 'us' and 'the others' that have long defined Europe's self-understanding.

The representational shortcomings and arguable successes of the selected series propose that it is through processes of cultural negotiation, hybridity, and conflict that new understandings of Europe and Europeans can emerge. But my study also contributes to the bigger question of how crime fiction scholarship can partake in the processes of social transformation that characterize postmigrant societies. As Regina Römhild pointedly notes, critical migration research has been traditionally understood as 'research about migrants, which has produced a 'migrantology' that is capable of little more than illustrating othering ascriptions.[65] She suggests to shift our perspectives towards 'demigrantising' migration research while 'migrantising' research into culture and society.[66] Although critical studies on the so-called ethnic detective have been invaluable to identify representational patterns across the European series, they also forge a 'migrantological' approach that places the detectives at the margins of European crime fiction. By analysing the protagonists of *Cherif*, *Dogs of Berlin*, *The Last Panthers*, and *Tatort* Hambourg as French or German detectives whose representation and stories inscribe in major dynamics of their respective European television and literary cultures, this study stresses how crime series offer a rich field for critical examinations of the ambivalences and changes of European postmigrant societies.

Notes

[1] The research presented here has been financed by the research project *DETECt — Detecting Transcultural Identity in European Popular Crime Narratives* (Horizon 2020, 2018–2021) [Grant agreement number 770151].

[2] Fatima El Tayeb, European *Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. xxvii.

[3] Cf. Alec Hargreaves and Antonio Perotti, 'The representation on French television of immigrants and ethnic minorities of third World origin', *New Community*, 19.2 (1993), 251–261; Jessika Ter Wal, 'Introduction', in *Racism and Cultural Diversity in the Mass Media* (Vienna: European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2002), pp.11–26; Jakob-Moritz Eberl *et al.*, 'The European Media Discourse on Immigration and its Effects: a Literature Review', *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 42.3 (2018), 207–223; Katharina Hall, *Crime Fiction in German: Der Krimi* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016).

[4] Sylvie Dumerlat, 'The Algerian War and its Afterlives Painted Noir in *Sérail Killers* by Lakhdar Belaïd: *Beur Literature or Roman Noir?', Expressions Maghrébines*, 7.1 (2008), 148–158, (p. 142–143).

[5] Claire Gorrara, *The Roman Noir in Post-War French Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 92.

[6] Stephen Soitos, Blues Detective: *A Study of African American Detective Fiction* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), p. 33.

[7] Axel Stähler, 'Screaming "Black" Murder: Crime Fiction and the Construction of Ethnic Identities', *English Studies*, 100.1 (2019), 43–62 (p. 43).

[8] *Ivi*, p. 60.

[9] Stephen Knight, *Crime Fiction 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), p. 187.

[10] Durmelat, p.156.

[11] Novotny Lawrence, *Blaxploitation Films of the 1970s: Blackness and Genre* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 29.

[12] Gina Macdonald and Andrew Macdonald, 'Ethnic Detectives in Popular Fiction: New Directions for an American Genre', in *Multicultural Detective Fiction: Murder from the "Other" Side*, ed. by Adrienne Johnson Gosselin (New York: Garland, 1999), p. 60.

[13] Cf. Sam Neath, 'Loftier Ideals? France, Big Brother, and the Banlieues', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 8.2 (2004), 13541; Éric Macé, 'La Fiction télévisuelle française au miroir de The Wire', *Réseaux*, 5.1 (2013) 179–204.

[14] Ginette Vincendeau, 'From the Margins to the Center: French Stardom and Ethnicty', in *A Companion to Contemporary French Cinema*, ed. by Alistair Fox, Michel Marie and Raphaëlle Moine (Chichester: John Willey & Sons, 2015), pp. 1279–1334, (p. 1291).

[15] Ibidem.

[16] Michelle Mattson, 'Tatort: The Generation of Public Identity in a German Crime Series', *New German Critique*, 78.1 (1999), 161–81, (p. 169).

[17] Vera Alexander, 'Investigating the Motif of Crime as Transcultural Border Crossing: *Cinnamon Gardens and The Sand Glass*', in *Postcolonial Postmortems: Crime Fiction from a Transcultural Perspective*, ed. by Christine Matzke and Susanne Muehleisen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), pp.139–160, (p. 142).

[18] Kerry Dune, 'Detecting Identity: Reading the Clues in German Language Crime Fiction by Klüpfel and Kobr and Steinfest', in *Detectives, Dystopias, and Poplit: Studies in Modern German Genre Fiction*, ed. by Bruce P. Campbell and Allison Guenther-Pal (New York: Camden House, 2014), p. 154.

[19] Ivi, p. 159.

[20] Monika Mueller and Dorothea Fischer-Hornung, *Sleuthing Ethnicity: The Detective in Multiethnic Crime Fiction* (London: Associated University Press, 2003), p. 299.

[21] Naika Foroutan, 'The Post-migrant Paradigm', in *Refugees Welcome: Difference and Diversity in a Changing Germany*, ed. by Jan-Jonathan Bock and Sharon Macdonald (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019), pp. 142–170.

[22] Claudia Breger,'Hardboiled Performance and Affective Intimacy: Remediations of Racism in the Cenk Batu Tatorte', *Transit*, 9.2 (2014), 1–19.

[23] Anon.,'Un Chérif parmi les flics', *Le Parisien*, 13 October 2013, https://www.leparisien.fr/culture-loisirs/un-cherif-parmi-les-flics-25-10-2013-3257207.php [accessed 10 January 2021].

[24] Jakob-Moritz Eberl et al., 'The European Media Discourse on Immigration and its Effects: ALiterature Review', *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 42.3, (2018), 207–223.

[25] "Les Liens du Sang", *Cherif*, S01xE01 (directed by Vincent Giovanni, 2013).

[26] Auf der Sonnenseite, *Tatort Hamburg*, E708, (directed by Richard Huber, 2008).

[27] Cf. Katelyn E. Knox, *Race on Display in 20th and 21st Century France* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), p. 14; Boulou Ebanda de B'beri and Fethi Mansouri, 'Contextualising Multiculturalism in the Twenty-First Century', in *Global Perspectives on the Politics of Multiculturalism in the 21st Century* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 2.

[28] Fatima El Tayeb, European *Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), pp. xv-xxix.

[29] Arlene Teraoka, 'Detecting Ethnicity: Jakob Arjouni and the Case of the Missing German Detective Novel', *The German Quarterly*, 72.3, (1999), 265–289, (p.270).

[30] Katharina Hall, *Crime Fiction in German: Der Krimi* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016), p.136.

[31] Cf. Monika Mueller and Dorothea Fischer-Hornung, 'Introduction', in *Sleuthing Ethnicity: The Detective in Multiethnic Crime Fiction*, (London: Associated University Press, 2003), pp. xvii-xxii.

[32] Michelle Mattson, 'Tatort: The Generation of Public Identity in a German Crime Series', *New German Critique*, 78.1 (1999), 161–81, (p. 172).

[33] Soitos suggests four tropes prominent in the representation of African American detection: a black detective persona socially and politically aware of racial prejudice, double-consciousness detection, the presence of vernaculars and ethnic signfiers such as hoodoo. Cf. Stephen Soitos, *Blues Detective: A Study of African American Detective Fiction* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996).

[34] Sandra Beck, 'Blood, Sweat, and Fears: Investigation the Other in *Contemporary German Crime Fiction*', in Contemporary German Crime Fiction, ed. by Thomas W. Kniesche (Boston: De Gruyter, 2019), pp. 197–198.

[35] Hassiba Lassoued, 'Le Français d'origine maghrébine face au prisme médiatique', *Présence Francophone*, 65.1 (2005), 150–167, (p. 159).

[36] "Quand Cherif rencontre Huggy", *Cherif*, S05xE07 (directed by Karim Ouaret, 2018).

[37] Kathryn Kleppinger and Laura Reeck, *Post-Migratory Cultures in Postcolonial France* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018), p. 6.

[38] Annabelle Laurent, 'Chérif, le nouveau flic "cool" de France 2', *20 Minutes*, 22 October 2013, https://www.20minutes.fr/television/1240163-20131022-20131022-cherif-nouveau-flic-cool-

france-2 [accessed 20 February 2021]

[39] Telha Redwane, 'Cherif, fais-moi beur', *France Inter*, 5 January 2018, https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/capture-d-ecrans/capture-d-ecrans-05-janvier-2018 [accessed 20 January 2021].

[40] Katharina Hall, *Crime Fiction in German: Der Krimi*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016), p. 100.

[41] Stephen Knight, *Crime Fiction 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), p. 187.

[42] Berna Gueneli, 'Mehmet Kurtulus and Birol Ünel: Sexualized Masculinities, Normalized Ethnicities', in *Turkish German Cinema in the New Millennium: Sites, Sounds, and Screens*, ed. by Sabine Hake and Barbara Mennel, (New York: Berghahn, 2012), p.136–148, (p. 136).

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European Neurodivergent Detectives and the Politics of Autism Representation

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One of the most original, recent contributions of contemporary European seriality to the crime genre has been the introduction of a notable number of detectives repeatedly diagnosed as autistic by autistic online communities. Titles such as the *Millennium* saga, *Sherlock*, *Forbrydelsen*, *Bron/Broen*, and, more recently, *Astrid et Raphaëlle*, are all widely debated within autistic online communities. This article investigates the unique critical perspective brought by the autistic parlance on these popular products, through a survey of blogs, social networks, fanfiction, and videos, in English and French. The analysis of this material reveals that there is a whole spectrum of different opinions among autists when it comes to their approval, or disapproval, of media representations of neurodiversity, oscillating between complaints for the persistence of the 'savant autist' stereotype and a grateful appreciation of the effort to portray the condition in positive and empowering ways. Most of the comments reflect the stances of the neurodiversity movement and the complex context of autism advocacy, by which autistic individuals reclaim the right to speak for themselves and stand up to fight for a more inclusive society.

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Autism representation in the media
Autistic female detectives
Autistic fandom
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INTRODUCTION[1]

The trope of the autistic detective has become so widespread in TV seriality over the last few years that it deserves to be regarded as a major feature of contemporary popular culture. In a way, it all started off with Sherlock Holmes and his eccentric oddities, like 'his little monograph on the ashes of 140 different varieties of pipe, cigar and cigarette tobacco, his clear powers of observation and deduction, unclouded by the emotions of everyday people, and the extreme unconventionality'[2] of his investigative methods. And yet it is important to note that the association of fictional detectives with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) could only emerged as a product of reception, for of course, at the time when Conan Doyle published his stories, the autism diagnostic label was still far from being around.[3]

Initiated by psychiatrists and neuroscientists looking for representations to help the public understand the 'autism enigma', the debate around the neurodiverse characteristics of many a fictional detective has now become

ubiquitous in the context of autistic forums and fan communities, serving as a means to not only make meaning of the condition in empowering ways, but also question and debate the stereotypes continuously surfacing in contemporary media representations and the cultural discourse at large.

This article presents an analysis of the reception of a few extremely popular recent European TV dramas—*Sherlock* (United Kingdom, 2010-2017), *Bron/Broen* (Sweden-Denmark 2011-2018), *Forbrydelsen* (Denmark 2007-2012), and *Astrid* et *Raphaëlle* (France-Belgium 2019-)—revolving around eccentric figures of (often female) detectives that have been repeatedly diagnosed by fans as autistic or neurodivergent. The autistic audience's response to these shows is examined through a survey of online forums, fanfiction portals, blogs and social networks, with the purpose to identify the recurrent motifs and motivations that lie behind the appraisal, either positive or negative, of the representation strategies used to design and perform autistic characters onscreen. The positions thus identified are confronted with those expressed in the frame of autism advocacy and, wherever available, critical literature from disability and feminist/queer studies, to both help with the analysis and show how several issues raised in the social discourse are also topics of scholarly study.

The first paragraph introduces a few notions concerning the history of autism as a psychiatric label, which are needed to understand the stakes of the current—extremely lively and sometimes vehement—debates about the products of popular culture within the autistic community. The second paragraph moves on to examine the reception of *Sherlock*, on the background of the heated controversy about the stereotypical representation of autistic characters as individuals affected by the so-called 'savant syndrome'. The following paragraph focuses on Nordic noir's original introduction of the trope of the *female* autistic sleuth, presenting and discussing the different interpretations it has been given, particularly in a feminist context. The final paragraph deals in some more detail with *Astrid* et *Raphaëlle* as a case study. This time the focus is on the queer, or rather neuroqueer discourse that the show has inspired, at the intersection between autistic fandom and autistic advocacy.

In the following, I will be using Identity-First Language (e.g. 'autistic people' or 'autists') instead of Person-First Language (e. g. 'persons with autism'), out of the respect for what I have learned during this research from the people, activists and advocates that support this use.[4]

DIAGNOSING SHERLOCK HOLMES

Autism is currently defined as a neurodevelopmental condition characterized by impairments in social interactions, communication and behavioural flexibility. The history of autism as a diagnostic label can be described as curious at the very least, reflecting the enigmatic character

of a condition that is still to be fully understood. While the use of the term in psychiatric literature is documented as early as the beginning of the 20th century, in the context of research on infantile schizophrenia,[5] the origins of the notion are most commonly referred to Leo Kanner and Hans Asperger's studies, first published, respectively, in 1943 in English and 1944 in German.[6] First introduced in the inaugural edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) in 1952, the term acquired an autonomous status as a diagnostic label, for children up to 30 months, after the publication of DSM-III in 1980, when six broad criteria (including pervasive lack of social responsiveness, severe impairments in communication and bizarre responses to the environment) were finally defined, the last of which (absence of delusions and hallucinations) meant to serve as a differential diagnosis with schizophrenia. At this stage, the condition was still believed to be an almost exclusively male condition.

The recognition that many autistic children showed enhanced mental abilities (such as a phenomenal memory and precise recollection of complex patterns and sequences) led to the formulation of Asperger's syndrome in 1994 in DSM-IV, to discriminate between these cases and a more severe, low-functioning form of autism characterized by intellectual impairment.[7]

The notion of 'Autism *spectrum* disorder', introduced in 2013 in DSM-5 to account for the notion that autistic symptoms appear on a scale at different degrees of severity, spurred a wide debate and generated controversy, both within the medical profession and the autistic community. In particular, the decision to remove Asperger's Syndrome as a separate diagnosis and conflate it within the 'spectrum' as a mild (or high-functioning) form of autism found many people formerly diagnosed as Asperger's complaining 'about a threat to [their] 'Aspie' identity', which 'they felt engendered a strong sense of belonging [that] had been particularly helpful to them on their personal journeys'.[8] In fact, depending on the point of view, the new diagnostic criteria in DSM-5 (now cut down to just two: social communication problems and restricted interests/repetitive behaviours, but with the specification that both issues must be present since early childhood) have been criticized for being either too broad or too stringent—too broad from the angle of low-functioning individuals (for example, non-verbal people), whose advocates support the definition of much more specific descriptors of the condition; too stringent from the angle of high-functioning, 'Aspie' individuals, who fear to 'lose' their diagnosis and, with it, not only a defining aspect of their identity but also the right to access social and medical services.

The choice to describe autism as a spectrum should be seen in the contest of the exceptional increase in the number of diagnoses recorded in many countries in a short period of time. According to data collected by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention of the United States, the prevalence of autism has increased of 178% since 2000, with 1 in 54 children (1 out of 37 boys and 1 out of 151 girls) now diagnosed in the United States.[9] While not

as dramatically as in the US, the prevalence of autism has been steadily increasing in all European countries, with cases said to be 'skyrocketing' in Northern Ireland since 2014 and a figure of 1 child out of 87 recently estimated in Italy.[10] Despite worries that up to 40% of affected children may escape detection, the notion that the condition occurs on a spectrum is consistent with the idea that autism traits are actually 'distributed' across the population and may be responsible for minor troubles. In any case, and contrary to the fears expressed by Asperger's communities that the new diagnostic criteria might restrict the number of people who qualify for social care, the last couple of decades have witnessed a steep growth in autism diagnoses.

All these issues are widely, and sometimes wildly debated within online autistic communities, in discussions that often show the existence of heated contrasts between opposite stances. Two topics of dissent in particular emerge that are of interest for this study. On the one hand, within autistic forums, users generally regard the polemics against the merging of Asperger's diagnosis with ASD as an expression of an elitist attitude known as 'aspie supremacy'. Popularized during the 2000s through blogs and websites, 'Aspie supremacy is an ideology followed by a fraction of adults diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome [who] emphasize evolutionary superiority over individuals diagnosed with Autistic disorder' as well as 'over neurotypicals'.[11] Aspie supremacists believe that individuals with Asperger's do not really suffer any significant impairment and are instead endowed with special powers, which are not recognized as such just because of the social prejudice against their different way of thinking. In the effort to distance themselves from autism, aspie supremacists have often claimed 'that those who have it are sub-human, or at least a burden on society', while characterizing Asperger's individuals as the 'next step' in human evolution.[12] These positions have provoked strong reactions, especially from the proponents of the emergent neurodiversity paradigm.[13] As we will see, neurodiversity activists question the media stereotype of the 'savant' autist, seen as a kind of role model for aspie supremacists, while the same time refusing to frame autism as a pathology.

On the other hand, together with the boost of online tests, the introduction of the notion of autistic spectrum has triggered a new phenomenon, encouraging a growing number of adult individuals to seek a diagnosis, or even a self-diagnosis. This is related to a widespread perception that many people had their autism go unnoticed in the past because of a lack of awareness about the condition, which is particularly true for the female population, still largely believed to be disproportionally affected by autism symptoms. One characteristic aspect of the current debate, both among specialists and within online autistic communities, has to do with the experiences of many girls and women who feel their struggles have gone unrecognized because of the male-bias that dominates in autism clinical practice and research studies.[14] Several recent studies have challenged

the Extremely Male Brain (EMB) theory of autism and have provided hints to recognize the specific presentation of the condition in female subjects.

In this context, the spread of the neurodiversity movement has marked lines of divisions in a field once occupied exclusively by the parents of autistic children and their medical counsellors. Once grown up, some of those children have taken stance against the types of treatment they were given during their infancy to 'cure' their condition and started to advocate for the rights of low-functioning autists on a militant base. Under the motto 'nothing for us without us', a growing movement of autism self-advocacy has emerged that questions and dispute the right of neurotypical parents to choose treatments for their children that the neurodiversity movement deems to be both abusive and degrading. On the other side of the barricade, parents' associations argue that those who reclaim for themselves the role of autistic advocates are too high-functioning to really understand the challenges and drama experienced by the families dealing with low-functioning, sometimes cognitively delayed, children. The discursive arena of autism's public sphere appears today as a site of profound controversy and conflict, marked by distinct, opposing positions with regard to the politics of autism representation.

Aspects of this intense debate surface clearly in the autistic fan communities' reaction to the products of popular culture and, more specifically, European crime television series.

NEUROQUEER FANS, ANTI-ABLEISM AND THE 'AUTISTIC SHERLOCK HEADCANONS'

No popular culture artifact has ever been responsible of such a deluge of social discourses about the representation of autism as that which followed the release of BBC's *Sherlock*. The title character played by Benedict Cumberbatch has come to occupy the centre of a debate focusing on the adequacy vs dangers of media representation of autism as a form of savantism.[15] In December 2013, taking side with the opinions of many aspies, even the British National Autistic Society recognized that the character showed obvious symptoms of autism, citing his 'ability to concentrate' and memorize and link clues 'in quite a unique way'.[16] While the show, like its later American counterpart, *Elementary* (US, 2012-2019), does not explicitly confirm this theory, writer Stephen Moffat and Cumberbatch himself have flirted with this reading in different ways. For example, episode 2x2 has John Watson mention Asperger's openly during a conversation with Lestrade about his friend.[17] The comments posted by various users below the Youtube clip of this scene reveal the sense of pride that many aspie viewers take in recognizing Sherlock as one of them.[18]

- *I fully agree with that Sherlock is autistic, I've read many comments from autistic people which can identify with him.*
- *Seeing someone that extreme have a successful career, make friends, have people love him [...] is a confidence boost I think all people with Aspergers really need.*

Other users call for the diagnosis to be made explicit:

- *I kind of hoped the show would be more clear [sic] about Sherlock's aspergers, though, because so many people don't understand it.*
- *I have minor asbergers [sic], not quite as bad as some people and definitely Sherlock, but I did relate to him a bit. It would be great to have it actually confirmed.*

More comments in the page show how eager autistic subjects are for this kind of empowering representations:

- *Back in the day when I liked this show [the original poster writes], as an autistic person I felt seen because I had already felt connected to the character and that made it really special to me, to see any form of representation, especially in a character I actually liked (my mom called me Sheldon[19] for several years...). That's why I originally posted this video, to share with other autistic people who also connected with the character to see representation with that.*

Clearly, autistic viewers perceive themselves as a minority group that is often misrepresented, and they voice a strong desire for validating renditions of their experiences in TV fictions. However, not everyone in this YouTube forum agree that *Sherlock* does a good service to the cause of an adequate representation of autism.

- *The idea that BBC Sherlock is on the spectrum is insulting to people on the spectrum and it's also used as a sort of functioning label, which isn't good and most of the autistic community disagrees with.*
- *So called after a NAZI.*[20]

An article by autistic disability scholar Anna N. de Hooge helps shed light on the political motivations behind such severe readings. According to Hooge, BBC's Sherlock is an emblematic example of how current media products tend to portray autism in terms of Asperger's supremacy. '

- *He may not be properly plugged into the symbolic network (and is therefore attributed inhuman, robotic qualities), but he acknowledges it, observing the occurring interactions from a bird's-eye-view. Even without ticking all symbolic boxes of humanhood, he corresponds exceptionally well with human (white, male) normativity'.*[21]

In other words, 'he is not portrayed as someone with a divergent neurotype, but as the extreme version of an entitled, allistic,[22] white man', that is,

'a high-functioning jerk' who does not behave 'like a common autistic'. Hooge's thesis is that Sherlock is shaped after an ableist model, one that conceives of the condition of Asperger's subjects as out of the ordinary only because of their exceptional skills and talents, not because they are disabled in any way. For example, she writes, Sherlock 'does not stim'. Furthermore, the character illustrates a classical vision of autism as the product of an Extreme Male Brain, a theory coined by Hans Asperger and later popularized by Simon Baron-Cohen,[23] according to which the autistic personality is merely 'an extreme variant of male intelligence'. Criticizing Sherlock is then to unmake a patriarchal notion of autism in which 'the superiority of [white, cisgender] men is naturalized and reinforced, and the Aspie, with his Extreme Male Brain, stands at the top of this pecking order'.[24]

Interesting attempts to make up for the ableist, patriarchal and virtually racist biases in the representation of Sherlock Holmes can be found in the domain of autistic fanfiction. The 'Autistic Sherlock headcanons' are narrative artifacts that re-imagine the famous sleuth as an autistic person. The term 'headcanon', a recurrent definition in fanfiction slang, is suggestive of the subjective attitude that the writers take in creating their stories—they reinvent Sherlock Holmes' canon literally 'within their heads'. At the time of this writing, using the keyword 'Autistic Sherlock' on the most popular fanfiction archive, *Archiveofourown*, allows to retrieve up to 263 items.[25] Building on the fans' affective relation with their favourite character, these stories offer alternative representations that describe Sherlock's presumed autism through the filter of the writers' intimate experience. While the sentiment of 'aspie pride' is not totally absent, surfacing from time to time in both the narratives and the community's comments, the fics are definitely more interested in exploring Sherlock's inner experience as a disabled person.

For example, the two authors of, respectively, *Fresher* and *When Boys Fall in Love*, explain that their depictions of the character's quirks and social struggles reflect their own lived experience:

- *Due to us both being autistic, I treat Sherlock how others tend to treat me;*[26]
- *As someone who is autistic themselves I do love a good representation of Sherlock this way! I already connect so much with him in the show—this was just a little bit of projecting and indulging for me.*[27]

The aim is generally to foreground those particular behaviours that conventional representations of Sherlock as a high-functioning subject tend to omit, thus delivering a false understanding of what being autistic is actually like. Contrary to Hooge's description of the character in the BBC's adaptation, 'stimming'—that is, a kind of self-stimulating behaviour, usually involving repetitive movements such as spinning, rocking or hand flapping—is ubiquitous in fanfiction's Sherlocks.

- *I don't know what stim Sherlock would find the most pleasing or would be the most commonly used, I tried to base it off of body movements observed in the BBC's version of Sherlock in addition to knowing personally which stims cause me, as an autistic person, to feel the happiest.*[28]

Many of the stories are conceived as retrospective narratives of the character's childhood, working at once as attempts to explain the roots of his psychology and opportunities to explore the specific aspects and social upshot of autism as a neurodevelopmental condition. Other stories, however, offer more complex as well as more provocative insights into these characters' adult lives. Often Mycroft and John are also portrayed as autistic, and often their relation with Sherlock is imagined along queer lines. Although the representation of Holmes as an asexual person is well rooted into Conan Doyle's original canon, the bending of this trait within the framework of queer affectivity, and even atypical sexuality, is by all means an invention of fanfiction writers. A look at the keywords used to tag the Autistic Sherlock works shows the extent and variety of these variations on asexual romance: Sherlock's relationship with John is said to be 'fluffy', 'pre-slash', 'platonic' or 'queerplatonic'; he is represented as being a 'virgin' or 'demisexual'. Elsewhere the references to queer sexuality are more downright, with tags like 'Gender Dysphoria', 'Bisexuality', 'Pansexuality', 'Gay', 'Trans' or 'Genderqueer', but also fancier keywords like 'Lesbian Femlock', 'Lesbian John Watson', 'Harry Watson is now Hareem Watson but she's still a lesbian', 'Sharing a Bed', and even 'all of them are the "opposite" gender here'.

According to Scott Folsom, by representing 'Autistic-friendly' sex scenes—which favour 'specific sensory descriptors, such as the texture and temperature of John's lips, or the feeling of scar tissue'—autistic fanfiction offers an opportunity to counter current

> *insufficient notions of Autistic sexuality [...]. One could reasonably argue that fan texts [...] operate as a sort of instruction manual for sexuality for Autistic people (and anyone else befuddled by the sensory experience of sexual activity)', therefore filling 'a teaching role left vacant by a popular media that erases Autistic sexuality'.*[29]

Of course, queer narrative imagination is all but not exclusive of autistic fanfiction. The practice of 'slash', a genre of fan-written stories focusing on the representation (often in very explicit terms) of same-sex relationships between popular fictional heroes, has been around since at least the first attempts at creating alternative scenarios involving *Star Trek* characters in the early 1990s, 'where a slash between the names 'Kirk' and 'Spock' denoted sexual content, while an ampersand denoted simple friendship'.[30] In the case of autistic narratives, however, it takes up a particular relevance

because of the 'significant over-representation of queer, trans, and otherwise gender variant individuals among autistics'. In fact, 'partly because of this overlap, some autistic people refer to themselves as "neuroqueer"'.[31]

In line with a neuroqueer approach, Hooge notices a similitude between the 'conversion therapies' meant to 'cure' homosexuality and the controversial Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA), which is today considered 'the gold standard for autism treatment. ABA and similar interventionist programs aimed at autistics never lost their anti-queer roots; social skills-training is still used to enforce gender roles in autistic subjects'.[32] Interestingly, autistic fanfiction often takes stance against both conversion therapy and ABA. In *The Rainbow Connection*, Sherlock and John—now a homosexual adult couple—open up to one another about their earlier dire experiences as autistic boys enrolled into ABA therapy.

- *I know ABA therapy and conversion therapy is not the same, Sherlock says, but the toll emotionally for people who are different is hard.*

He then goes on recalling how treatment involved five hours a day after school and having his hands tapped when he didn't listen.

- *The clinic was tedious at best and hateful at worst. ABA highlights the worst things about a person.*[33]

The Struggles of Living in a World of Neuro-typicals has a whole chapter centred on Autism Speaks, a US-based organization that is a major supporter of ABA and generally of a notion of autism as a (quite horrible) illness to be cured. In contrast, neurodivergent, neuroqueer fanfiction authors espouse a vision of autism as just an expression of the natural diversity of human minds, which should be respected and accepted for what it is, rather than cured. John Watson voices fiercely this point of view in a scene in which he rips an Autism Speaks poster from a wall, addressing Greg Lestrade with these words:

- *'Autism Speaks is a HATE organization, thay are trying to find ways to 'cure autism' and detect if a baby is going to be autistic before it's even born, so that people can ABORT it!' He yelled and ripped the poster in two.*[34]

All this demonstrates the reciprocal permeation between the worlds of autistic fandom and autistic self-advocacy. On the side of fanfiction, the critique of aspie supremacy, with its corollary of internalized ableism, is translated into narratives that often take side with the political stances of the neurodiversity movement. On the side of the self-advocacy community, examples taken from popular TV shows are often used to illustrate and condemn the simplistic stereotypes that prevent a complex understanding of the experiences of autistic and, more generally, disabled people.

FEMALE DETECTIVES ON THE SPECTRUM

If the stereotype of the eccentric, quirky detective has been with us since the invention of Sherlock Holmes, its representation as an autistic-coded character is a more recent phenomenon. In parallel with the growth of online autistic communities and their debates about popular media products, the last fifteen years or so have seen writers and screenwriters play increasingly with their expectations, 'penning eccentric characters whose quirks would seem to align with typical characteristics of ASD'.[35] While the trend finds several examples in the US,[36] European popular narratives seem to have been on the forefront of this movement, offering ever more original versions of the figure of the eccentric detective as an autistic-coded figure.

Although a number of these characters follow in Holmes's steps in portraying the socially awkward, but ultra-intelligent sleuth as male,[37] in a way that can remind us of the EMB theory, the most original contribution of European crime fiction (both in print and onscreen) to this development, enrichment as well as destabilization of the Sherlockian legacy was the introduction of a few, particularly engaging figures of female neurodivergent detectives.

More precisely, this move away from a traditionally masculine representation of ASD is one of the most remarkable contributions of Nordic noir to the European crime genre. There is general agreement that the first character of this kind to appear in popular fiction was Lisbeth Salander, the dark anti-heroine of Stieg Larsson's *Millennium* trilogy. An intriguing, mesmerizing figure, Salander is a brilliant computer hacker with a troubled childhood history. She ends up pairing with journalist Mikael Blomkvist to help him investigate about the disappearance of his younger sister forty years earlier, which uncovers a series of murders committed by Blomkvist's own brother. Intermingled with this storyline is the grim, merciless revenge meticulously planned and executed by Salander on her rapist and appointed guardian. Androgynous, bisexual and cold-minded, she is at least in part the blueprint for two more Nordic anti-heroines, Saga Norén of *Bron/Broen/The Bridge*, a Danish-Swedish television coproduction that ran four seasons and 38 episodes between 2011 and 2019, and Sarah Lund of *Forbrydelsen*, another lenghty Danish TV serial, broadcast in 40 episodes between 2007 and 2012. Interestingly, 2007 is the year when the Swedish public television broadcaster, SVT, made an agreement with the Swedish Disability Federation, aimed 'to promote a shift in the televised representations of persons with disability from [...] prevalent psychiatric perspective to a more emancipatory human right perspective, and to improve on the number of characters with disability portrayed and the way they are framed; from heroes or victims to multifaced, real-life people'.[38]

While both Sarah Lund and Saga Norén are police officials who work within the boundaries of the law, their psychological as well as behavioural

characterization is clearly reminiscent of Salander. Solitary, unemotional, obsessively attached to their job, entirely absorbed in the details of the murder cases they investigate, they are mostly unable to meet social expectations or interact with others in reciprocal ways. But apart from this character type, there are other important elements that bring these titles together. Firstly, they have all originated complex transnational franchises that have further popularized the trope of the female autistic sleuth across Europe and beyond.[39] Secondly, both the originals and their sequels/adaptations/remakes have been met by both an exceptional critical and academic consideration and by an eruption of social discourse in online forums, blogs and social networks. Practically the entirety of this material deals in one way or another with the heroines' autistic personality, with various interventions aimed at making meaning of these works' engagement with ASD from a feminist angle. The intersection of autism, feminism and crime plots in this wave of serial narratives has thus proved 'to be particularly amenable to cultural exchange'[40] and 'cultural shareability [... of] common values, images, archetypes and themes'.[41] In this way, these traveling figures have contributed to shape a widespread transcultural conversation about the representation of female autism, imbued with a cosmopolitan ethos. Finally, all these products result from a complex integration of a traditionally masculine genre like crime with the more 'feminine' appeals of serial melodrama, as proved by their 'focus on emotion, relationships, and open-ended seriality'.[42] Kathleen McHugh discusses this point by elaborating on Jason Mittell's observations about the 'gender inversions' found in so much contemporary 'complex TV', well exemplified by the recent, prolific wave of female-led crime serials. These shows, Mittell's argues, use their melodramatic emphasis on 'moral legibility, narrative drive, and emotionally resonant characterization' to generate a sense of a 'shared felt good'. Yet in fact 'crime serials with gendered look and subject matter (gender-based violence)' McHugh contends, 'possibly shade complex TV's appeal of a "shared felt good" into a form of critical "felt knowledge" [...] central to what could be called the complex feminism that arises from these shows'.[43]

Nevertheless, whether the character type at the centre of these stories may represent a feminist icon or not is a matter of disagreement. For example, in their article 'The Female Detective as the Child Who Needs to Know', Camilla Schwartz and E. Ann Kaplan argue that 'unlike the female detectives in the film and TV versions of the Scandinavian femi-crime wave such as *Anna Pihl* (DK), *Dicte* (DK), *Modus* (S) and *Fjällbacka Murders*', Saga Norén embodies 'an otherwise typically masculine genre ideal'.[44] In fact, not only 'she is not torn between family life and career [...] and she shares the traditional male detective's inability to sustain and nourish a normal family life';[45] and not only she looks 'almost inhuman because of her rational, slightly robotic ways of thinking'; in addition, she is 'depicted as a child who [because of her autism] has not learned (or cannot) learn the

social order of things or who does not [...] understand the demands of the Other'.[46] According to this reading, since Saga is only seen through the gaze of her male colleagues, who giggle, laugh or gasp whenever she fails to fulfil the social codes, 'her performance appears comical and embarrassing', creating an impression of a 'shameful dysfunctionality'.[47] While conceding that Saga represents a departure from the classic representation of the female character as a sexualized figure, since she seems 'uninterested in attracting the "male gaze"',[48] the article is quite stern in concluding that, as a 'dysfunctional detective [she] is certainly not understood as "the maker of meaning" (Mulvey)', nor as 'a potent performer of "female masculinity" (Halberstam)', or '"the subject who is supposed to know" (Zizek)', but simply as 'the passive bearer of meaning [...] or the subject who needs to know'.[49] This is reinforced through a comparison with the blueprint of all neuroatypical detectives, Sherlock Holmes. Although Saga is said to be 'a female version of Sherlock Holmes since she is hyper intelligent and extremely skilled',[50] the reactions she elicits from the other characters regularly put her in an inferior position. 'While Watson is addressing Holmes with an admiring and impressive gaze, Saga's partner Martin looks at her [... with] an indulgent and loving gaze that actually [...] puts the female detective in the child's position'.[51] As a result, the authors contend, 'the dysfunctional female detective does not appeal to female identification and she therefore does not function as a feminist icon'.[52]

It seems fair to say that this reading does not make good service to the cause of autistic women. Although it concedes, in just a few lines at the end of the article, that 'for women (or men) diagnosed with autism the recognition process of course is suspected [courtesy the authors] to be rather different',[53] the whole analysis is obviously delivered from a neurotypical standpoint that does not take into account any different possible subject positions. The hurried, last-minute addition, to an otherwise considerably lengthy discussion, that autistic women 'recognize aspects of themselves in Saga' and 'welcome her high-profile role'[54] comes as a somewhat unexpected surprise at the end of an article that, despite references to queer studies, appears fundamentally allegiant to the perspective of second-wave feminism. For example, there is no acknowledgment that, just like autism, feminism is today better understood as a spectrum across different stances, positionalities and theories, so much that it is now more common to speak of feminisms, not feminism. It follows that the notion of 'feminist icon' is too overly generic to be convincing, especially in a context where the concept of recognition/identification is referred to a specific character type defined by an intersection of *both* gender and neurodivergence.

Interestingly, the issue of the comedic effects of Saga's behaviour has been read along very different lines by authors working in the field of disability studies. Asking whether 'laughing at neurodivergence [could] be reconcilable with an agenda of propagating greater understanding,

recognition and acceptance of variations in human functioning [...] without echoing a discriminatory past',[55] Danielson and Kemani argue that the answer lies with our willingness to acknowledge Saga's 'discursive position and endorse our own laughter not as an expression of superiority, but as a journey into the liminal space' between neurotypicality and neurodivergence, 'where new insights are made, prejudices are scattered, and normalcy is challenged'.[56] Once this stance is taken we realize that, in the world of *Bron/Broen*, laughter is more likely to be 'generated by the incongruency between the two moral perspectives represented by the neurotypical Martin and the neurodivergent Sara, not as right and wrong, but rather as interacting fields between which moral considerations are negotiated and molded'.[57] While the series 'still contains stereotypical features and still denies Saga's neurodivergence the full status of normal variation', for we still laugh at times at her 'deviations from what is perceived as normal behaviour', it nonetheless indicates that 'popular culture is moving away from a ridiculing humour informed by a superiority-inferiority discourse',[58] reaching out to embrace acceptance and accommodation of difference.

Furthermore, the feminist perspective deployed in these works cannot be reduced to the characterization of the female detective's personality and should rather be seen as a function of the peculiar realism of their melodramatic structure. As Janet McCabe suggests in a poignant analysis, it is exactly in the contradiction at the heart of these characters—the conflict between their potency, talents, skills, and the limitations or expectations posed upon them by the social rules of a neurotypical world—that 'the new politics of feminism(s)' are made visible, allowing the identification of 'new sites of struggle and possible strategies of resistance (however limited)'.[59] While no doubt their physical appearance represents 'the contemporary state of the feminine ideal' and speaks to the neoliberal democratization of beauty 'exported globally as aspiration',[60] their investigative style in dealing with 'gruesome cases [...] involving sex crimes and brutal murders, most commonly of women (often at the social margins, immigrants, prostitutes)' ends up challenging 'beliefs and attitudes towards representing the feminine in terms of (in)equalities and (in)justice'.[61] It is actually through their unbiased autistic *stare*—rather than *gaze*—that the burden of injustice behind the murders, the violence, the abuses is revealed to the viewer with the strength of an intolerable objectivity, as a 'felt knowledge'. In contrast to the.

> *troubling erotic of male investigators' visual exploration of female corpses [...] in series where the chief investigator is female, this stare is often framed as empathetic [...]. However, where the female detective is neurodivergent, the stare acquires added critical and possibly political functions. [...] These protagonists often invite stares rather than gazes, perplexity rather than desire. At the same time, they themselves mobilize the stare as central agents within visual fields organized by their forensic look.*[62]

This kind of impassive, unprejudiced way of observing the crime scene, from the same neutral position she holds in front of regular social interactions, is consistent with 'a character able to deliver equality and social justice precisely because she can do so without recourse to difference, including gender': 'her so-called disability allows Norén to travel beyond the ambiguity of difference and adhere without sentiment to [...] universal standards of human rights and democratic values'.[63]

Similarly, speaking of the *Millennium* trilogy, genderqueer writer and journalist S. E. Smith also emphasizes the 'social commentary'—embedded in the novels through Lisbeth Salander's own perception—on the abuse still suffered by many autists all over the world. Again, stereotyping is noted as a problematic issue: 'Salander is, of course, depicted as the Good Autistic. She is hyperfocused, resourceful, intelligent, driven. She turns her neuroatypicality to her advantage and doesn't do *scary* autistic things [...] there's a lot to discuss about how she falls into some Autism In Fiction Stereotypes'.[64] But Smith points to yet another aspect of Salander's characterization that has generally passed unnoticed, despite what she calls its important 'feminist implications': her institutionalization in a mental health facility at a very young age, 'for absolutely no reason'.

> *All of the reviews focus on her autistic behaviours. No one talks about the fact that institutionalisation, sexual assault, and social control are experienced by people with autism. It's all about how her [...] autism influences her ability to do things like being a brilliant computer programmer, not how [...] the books are a pretty condemning indictment of the guardianship system and of the belief that institutionalisation is always in the best interests of the patient. Salanders exist all over the world. People all over the world are sexually abused by their 'guardians'.*[65]

A similar point is made by Caroline Narby:

> *disabled people are far more likely than non-disabled people to be victims of violence and sexual assault. Lisbeth is not just acting against the violent force of misogyny, but against ableism and homophobia. Her interactions with her odious financial guardian demonstrate the intersection of those two forces: he makes it clear that her same-sex relationships are part of her overall inability to function like a 'normal' person. For a woman who is disabled or otherwise deemed 'unsound', non-heterosexual and/or non gender-normative behavior is considered part of her pathology. The very fact that she is considered mentally unfit and is therefore a ward of the state goes from being a plot device [...] to being 'too real.' It becomes a commentary on the systemic denial of disabled people's agency and autonomy.*[66]

Despite a widespread preoccupation with the number of stereotypes that still characterize these fictional figures, autistic women have generally reacted very positively to the new European vague of female autistic sleuths. The mere opportunity to recognize autistic traits in a fictional heroine is received as a refreshing novelty that helps dispel the notion of ASD as a purely male condition. 'I saw myself in Lisbeth Salander', says Leah Jane on her blog, *The Quixotic Autistic*.

> *Like Salander, I've experienced hardships in my life and abuse at the hands of parental and authority figures [... She] will change the way neurotypical authors portray autistic women [...]. Very rarely do neurotypicals take responsibility for isolating us, bullying us, abusing us, or turning us into pariahs for the crime of being different. But Larsson savages this illusion.*[67]

In her article in *The Art of Autism* online magazine, Stephenie Thorne argues that 'more autistic women on the screen could mean real changes in how autistic women are viewed',[68] spreading awareness that the gender ratio for ASD is not as disparate as was once believed. In fact, she writes, 'the lack of autistic women on TV only helps reinforce the narrative that autism is a disorder for men [...] if all the characters we see on TV are autistic men and never women, we might conclude that autistic women either do not exist or are a rarity. But we do exist'.[69] Indeed, the new visibility of female autism in the products of popular culture has come in parallel with a novel wave of research studies that have started to dismantle the idea that ASD is just another word for an 'extreme male brain'. There is also growing recognition that the autistic phenotype may present differently in women: they seem to be less impaired in terms of communication abilities and more likely to camouflage or 'mask' their symptoms, which 'may contribute to the under recognition, and diagnostic delay, of ASD in females compared to males'.[70] As a consequence, the number of adult women who seek, but struggle to get, a diagnosis has been steadily increasing. The notion that an autism diagnosis may be seen by many as an object of desire may strike neurotypical minds as a nonsense; however, it is not difficult to understand how a diagnosis, or even a self-diagnosis, can bring about an important sense of validation in terms of personal identity, both as an explanation for a pervasive feeling of not belonging and as a tool towards achieving self-acceptance of individual limitations.

Speaking of Saga Norén and other popular female autistic icons, Thorne reflects that more visibility for this character type would allow

> *more women seeing themselves in autistic characters and realizing they themselves might be on the spectrum. [...] It is crucial that autistic women see characters like themselves on TV, because it can affect how they see themselves. If young autistic girls saw more women on TV like themselves they might receive a boost in confidence and realize they are not*

alone. Furthermore, if these autistic characters are portrayed achieving success and making a difference in the world, it will show young girls on the spectrum that they too can accomplish great things. This sort of representation is crucial to helping young girls and women on the spectrum understand they are valued and able to succeed.[71]

NEUROQUEER 'SHIPPING' AND ASTRID ET RAPHAËLLE

McCabe's description of the female autistic sleuth as a travelling representational type found new evidence in Europe with the release in the spring of 2020 of the first season of *Astrid et Raphaëlle*, a mystery series co-produced by France Télévisions and the francophone branches of the Belgian and Swiss national public broadcaster. The show (which was also seen in Italy, Spain, Portugal, and even reached English-speaking audience niches thanks to the work of an active subtitling community), was confirmed for a second season, aired on France 2 from 21 May to 11 June 2021.

When compared to the Nordic examples discussed above, *Astrid et Raphaëlle* presents with a few striking aspects, which prompted a rich debate in the francophone autistic community. To begin with, it must be noted that in terms of generic models *Astrid et Raphaëlle* is a much more conventional product than its Nordic counterparts. It would be hard to deny that, with its masterful combination of multi-layered long-running plots, its cold landscapes and dark imagination, Nordic noir has truly represented an aesthetic turning point for European television, marking in a way its coming of age. In comparison, the aesthetics of Astrid et Raphaëlle, its narrative structure and screenwriting style are more allegiant to the form of a traditional procedural, with single cases that come to solution at the end of each episode and a running plot centred on the recurrent characters' private lives and relationships. However, when it comes to the portrayal of autism, there are a few important departures from previous examples that deserve in-depth consideration.

Firstly, this is the first crime series featuring an overtly diagnosed leading character. This is an important point to be noted, since there is generally an ambiguity from writers, actors and directors as to their intention to really portray ASD. While they play with autistic audiences by disseminating clues through the narratives, when questioned in interviews they regularly deny that this was actually a strategy. As has been suggested, 'being vague means that writers have less of a duty towards accurate portrayal'[72], which takes away the social responsibility that overtly mentioning autism would inevitably imply. The lack of diagnosis is also preferred because 'it allows other characters to poke fun, and create comedy', without putting the show

at stake of receiving criticism and lose ratings. This latter idea, expressed for example by *Bones*' creator Hart Hanson, 'is concerning, and supports the notion that whilst much work has been done to increase awareness and understanding of ASD, widespread stigmatisation continues to exist, or at least is perceived to do so by television executives'.[73]

This is not the case with *Astrid et Raphaëlle*. Astrid Nielsen, a documentalist at the criminal investigation department of Paris police, played by Sara Mortensen, is explicitly autistic. She is terribly shy, has strong sensory issues (she has to wear headphones to avoid experiencing extreme confusion—meltdowns—in noisy places) and self-stimulating behaviours: she rocks, moves her hands in funny ways, takes strange postures, and so on. She also has a phenomenal memory: she is able to recall even the smallest piece of information in every single document in the archive and has extensive factual knowledge on the most improbable topics. Moreover, she is very detail-oriented and has a systemizing, hyper-logical style of reasoning.

A second original aspect of this series is the choice to have the female autistic character flanked not by a male, but by another female character. When chief inspector Raphaëlle Coste (Lola Dewaere) approaches her to ask for help in investigating a case of apparent suicide, the two forge what is going to become something more than a long-term collaboration—a devoted, affectionate friendship. Raphaëlle's personality could not be more different than Astrid's: she is a strong, determined woman with a leading position in the police department, where she is in command of several male colleagues. She is very empathic, good-hearted, and somewhat maternal. Together, Astrid and Raphaëlle form an odd, definitely atypical, and yet extremely efficient, duo, with Astrid providing Raphaëlle with the rational methodology and the data needed to solve the cases, and Raphaëlle helping Astrid cope in social situations, go through the elaboration of her traumatic childhood and build up the self-confidence she lacks. The special relationship between the two characters has been met enthusiastically by many female viewers. Queer viewers, in particular, have been attracted by what they have read as obvious allusions to a burgeoning erotic desire between the two heroines, which they have addressed and developed in different ways through practices of 'textual poaching'.[74]

Thirdly, a mention must be made to the involvement of autistic advocates in the series' development. Alexandre de Seguins, who co-authored the concept with Laurent Burtin, refers to have been researching the issue of female autism extensively while elaborating the script since 2017. This process, triggered by the reading of Temple Grandin's books,[75] continued through conversations with French autistic authors and advocates Joseph Schovanec and Natalia Pedemonte and even involved passing on the scripts for revision to members of autistic associations.[76] The authors' engagement with the community resulted, among other things, in the inclusion in the narrative of a 'groupe de parole', that is, a self-support group for autistic

adults whose meetings Astrid is seen attending in a few episodes.

Finally, and connected to the latter point, the series also cast a few autistic persons. Some participants in the support group are actually autists—among them Lizzy Brynn, a youtuber and the author of a self-published novel featuring a lesbian romance between two adolescent girls, which also touches upon the issue of disability.[77] Hugo Horiot, an autistic advocate, a comedian, a playright and an essayist, is cast in the role of a medical doctor who is the brother of the support group's animator, William.[78] There's enough to say that *Astrid et Raphaëlle* is quite a unique case.

However, looking into its reception within the community reveals a mixed reaction. Not surprisingly, despite Sara Mortensen's hard work to offer a sensitive rendition of her character, her performance is targeted as a major source of dissatisfaction. In her interviews, Mortensen recounts how attentively she observed the people in the 'groupe de parole'—their gestures, their use of language, their intonation—and how she went on using this inspiration to create her character.[79] Still, comments in the *Asperansa* forum, the main online francophone community for autistic people, are often very critical. A few comments in the dedicated thread read as follows:

- *'The way she moves, she speaks, super quick and jerky all the time, the way she rocks, nothing is credible (#16).*
- *I had the impression to be watching an accumulation of single traits, which do not work together. She definitely does too much, [...] it seems mechanical and really unnatural' (#24).*

While concurring that her character comes across as 'rough, exaggerated, a caricature' (#47), other users are more accommodating. There's a recognition that some of the scenes 'show a real knowledge of autism and an effort to portray it in all of its aspects' (#20), proving that 'the creators have really researched the subject' (#46). Many users even declare to have been unexpectedly pleased with the representation:

- *'To my great surprise, I was moved, and it was totally unexpected (#47).*
- *This series really 'spoke' to me (#50).*
- *It made me smile, since I recognized myself in certain situations (#28).*
- *Certain moments looked very familiar, as taken from my daily life' (#2).*
- *I really found myself reflected in certain aspects' (#55).*

The presence of real autistic people in the cast is particularly appreciated (to be able to see autistic adults 'who work, communicate, have different profiles', #47), as is the relationship between Astrid and Raphaëlle:

- *'You can add among the plus the representation of a female autistic profile (#19).*
- *I can't remember anything alike on French television (#2).*
- *It's fun that Astrid et Raphaëlle have become two gay icon on social networks'(#50).*

Unsurprisingly, the affectionate friendship that builds up between the two characters throughout the episodes has inspired a variety of lesbian fan 'shipping' content, which the show has obliquely encouraged. 'Shipping' is the term used by fans to define the different creative practices (fanfiction, memes, videos, gifs) through which they express their desire that their favourite characters get involved in a romantic relationship. Despite Lola Deawere's declaration that the presumed lesbian subtext identified by many fans was in no way intended by either the writers or the actresses, a dialogue in episode 5 of the second season hints openly to the fans' readings. At one point in the narrative, Raphaëlle congratulates Astrid on the new investigative success of 'Astraëlle'. Astrid is puzzled, so Raphaëlle explains: 'This is how everyone calls us in the team. Don't you know? [...] There are even some who think that the two of us [...] are a couple'. Here Raphaëlle is clearly referring to the tag #astraelle that queer fans had launched in the wake of season 1 as a tool to enable the retrieval of lesbian transformative works on the web. Searching #astraelle on the web digs up a wealth of fan content that unveils the neuroqueer quality of the desire elicited by the series. Given the higher prevalence of gender-diverse people among autistics as compared to the general population, this may not come as a surprise.

As in the case of Astrid's autistic characterization, the covert, coded allusions to a romantic interest between the two heroines has also spurred controversial opinions. In the lesbian forum *The L Chat*, some users complain that their love relationship is confined to a mere subtext, presenting as a typical case of 'queerbaiting':

- *Two girls close/kinda flirting but nothing will happen between them (#14).*
- *Seems like we still haven't learned any lessons from all the previous experiences. I would rather watch a 100% hetero show (#17).*
- *Writers and crew of the show are 90% men and they want you to know once and for all Astrid and Raphaelle are just friends! (#72).*
- *However, most of the users find the subtext extremely engaging.*
- *'I'm not really one to get hung up on whether things are or aren't 'queerbaiting' I'm just gonna enjoy their relationship, but interesting to know that the writers do explicitly know people are shipping them and to have the characters outright reference it (#71).*
- *I came into the show expecting it to be just two friends, but this show really hits you in the face/heart with the bond between them, and it stands out all the more juxtaposed with how not-hetero they are in their interaction with men' (#38).*
- *I did'nt expect much, but I was hooked right away. The show isn't*

that subtle for me. Maybe the straights won't get the heart eyes Raphaëlle gives to Astrid or why she kissed Astrid on the cheek but it was all gay for me' (#44).

- *I am so overwhelmingly happy with this show. I didn't expect anything more than subtext, but wow this season really delivered on everything I could hope for in a sweet blossoming romance' (#54).*[80]

Astraëlle videos on YouTube play with this subtext to create lyric montages in which the two characters appear to actually be in love, as the titles anticipate: *Hungry Eyes*, *The Kiss*, *Crazy in Love*, and so on. As is customary in this genre of fan videos, the soundtrack makes use of love songs to better highlight the romantic theme, while the editing plays astutely with the actresses' close-ups, their gazes and smiles, to create evocative situations that were only partially there in the original. More 'shipping' content is found on fanfiction sites. At the time of this writing, the tag #astraelle retrieves 12 titles on *Archiveofourown*, some of which cross-tagged with keywords like 'Friends to Lovers', 'Slow burn', 'Fluff', 'Domestic Fluff', 'Pre-relationship', and so on.[81] The representation of same-sex attraction is given a further queer twist through the description of Astrid's peculiarities, struggles and special needs. What emerges is a very delicate type of sexuality, with excitement arising as the result of a profound trust and mutual understanding. *Trying is Caring* describes the romantic involvement of the two characters as an exciting process of discovery of their reciprocal differences:

> *Sometimes, Astrid would talk Raphaëlle's ears off about puzzles and the brunette would happily listen to her passionately ramble on and on until the blonde was yawning every few words. Sometimes, Raphaëlle would just go and on about 'neurotypical nonsense' as Astrid had once put it with a teasing smile. It was a great opportunity for them to learn about each other, to bond and just openly communicate. It also greatly benefited their relationship since, without really noticing it, it helped them apprehend Astrid's autism and Raphaëlle's neurotypicality.*[82]

Interestingly, the stories emphasize the points of intersection between ASD and queerness, actually presenting autism as a kind of neuroqueerness. In *Notes of Love*, the author has Astrid reject gender identification:

> *One uneventful day, after finishing her tasks, Astrid decided she was ready to begin her quest for a potential partner. She remembered William mention a forum where autistic people could interact. Creating a profile appeared to be an easy process until she was asked to specify her sexual orientation. She had read plenty of articles on this topic, but never once did she stop to ask herself who she was attracted to. Astrid refused to decide on the spot. Since she only wanted someone to talk to at first, under the 'Interested in…' line, she chose to select the box that said, 'Not specified'.*[83]

In *Astraëlle*, Astrid muses about queer sexuality in terms of a spectrum

> *She had never thought about it. The possibility of Raphaëlle and her, being more than friends. Or had she? She sure knew about people like that. She read about them. People could be on one end or the other of the spectrum. She was familiar with the concept of a spectrum. But that is what it was, a spectrum. It was not black or white … gay or straight. The animal realm was filled with examples. She just had not thought about it for her.*[84]

Yet, Raphaëlle's caring attitude towards Astrid is also made the target of severe criticism. Autistic fans express a concern that her caring, supportive behaviour is just a front to hide her true, manipulative purposes. Comment #2 in the above mentioned *Asperansa* thread explains this clearly:

:

- *The series' overall message is very disturbing […]. It makes it appear acceptable that an autistic person is manipulated to have they do what she [Raphaëlle] wants (it's literally said by one of the characters: 'Autists have a weakness—their special interest. You can have them do anything you want by drawing on their special interest').*

This point, along with many others, is further discussed in two video reviews by autistic youtuber Angie Breshka. Her channel is an interesting site to explore for researching female autistic advocacy on the French-speaking web.[85] Breshka is a brilliant young woman whose mission is to 'debunk' widespread myths about autistic people that are detrimental to their social inclusion, to denounce abuses, mistreatments and misrepresentations and educate her audience on the neurodiversity paradigm. She has strong opinions that she exposes in typical autistic style, by analytically deconstructing the views she opposes by means of logical, data-driven argumentations. Her videos receive numerous comments and prompt debate, such as when her theses are countered in lengthy notes that sometimes take up the form of short essays. Her two videos on *Astrid et Raphaëlle*, in which she targets what she considers to be the series's flawed treatment flaws in the series' treatment of autism, are no exception.

Published in April 2019, the first video offers a harsh review of the pilot episode, just recently broadcast on France 2 to test the audience's response before putting the show in production.[86] Some of Bershka's observations reiterate the criticism against Mortensen's performance (e.g. her way to avert the gaze appears innatural) and the inconsistencies in the script (e.g. Astrid is seen to go all of a sudden from a shutdown that makes it impossible for her to speak to an unhampered conversation with Raphaëlle, or being able to tolerate noisy environments—which is inconsistent, Bershka contends, with her wearing noise canceling headphones in other scenes). The main point, however, has to do with what she considers to be an inadequate involvement of the autistic community. Despite commending

the insertion of the 'groupe de parole' in the narrative as a 'super positive' initiative, one that draws autists from their invisibility and helps disclose the diversity of their individual profiles, she still contends that in the end the series comes across as 'made by neurotypicals to take advantage of our handicap to make spectacle'. Even the names of autistic advocates and associations credited in the end titles are turned down as problematic. Natalia Pedemonte, a legal expert and the founder of Juris Handicap Autisme,[87] gets criticized because of her dismissive attitude toward the increasing number of high-functioning people seeking a diagnosis or self-diagnosing for purely 'identitarian' reasons.[88] Her claim that 'anorexia is no more common among autists than across the general population' leads Barshka to provide a number of links below her video with specific information about female autism and its relation to anorexia nervosa. Most of these links are to the Association Francophone de Femmes Autistiques website[89] and in her introduction Bershka explicitly invites producers at France 2 to get in touch with this organization, since 'they know what it means to be both autistics and women, which obviously is not the case neither of your screenwriters, nor of your actress, nor of the people from the autistic world that you have consulted'. The only association mentioned in the pilot's end credit is indeed another target of Bershka's complaint. Like Autism Speaks in the US, Vaincre l'autisme is constituted mainly by parents of autistic children and medical experts. Many French autistic advocates have openly criticized its emphasis on the need to 'treat' autism, espousing a militant agenda in accordance with the principles of the disability movement and bringing to the fore the need to fight for a more accepting and inclusive societal attitude. Bershka finds a clue of the series' allegiance with the perspective of Autism Speaks ('this association that excludes autistic people') in the choice to have Astrid wear exclusively blue clothes—the colour adopted by the association as a symbol to wear on the occasion of the World Autism Awareness Day (2 April each year) to support the battle to 'win' the condition. For Bershka, the choice of blue is yet another sign that speaks of the dangerous belief that autism is merely, or at least predominantly, a male condition.

Most of these criticisms are dropped in the second review, posted after the end of season.[90] Bershka recognizes that the script has improved in several respects and even makes room for an ironic cameo intervention of a supporter of the series, Lyzzy Brin, who, as an autistic person involved as a figurant in the 'group the parole' scenes, expresses her unconditional gratitude for what she characterizes as 'the quintessence of entertainment'. Interestingly, Bershka declares to have been reached out by the production team in the wake of her first video. Apparently her criticism hit home, for neither Vaincre l'autisme, nor Natalia Pedemonte are now mentioned in the series end credits. Instead, a mention is made of the Collective pour la Libre Expression des Autistes, an association 'steered by autists of all profiles'[91] that Bershka promotes on her channel. Among other initiatives,

CLE-Autistes has supported the #Redinstead campaign to declare April to be Autism Acceptance—not Awareness—month.[92] Yet, despite recognizing a number of improvements, Bershka is still unhappy with Mortensen's performance. Although several of her subscribers express a different opinion, she insists that the only way to achieve credible performances is to have autistic characters played by autistic actors. Similarly, she argues, involving autistic creatives in the writing process would result in more interesting storylines. For example, after demolishing episode 7—in which Astrid's mother reveals that her own little autistic brother was killed by their mother (an incident that Breshka dismisses as undeveloped and too dramatic to be superficially treated as in this episode)—she comes up with 'an alternative scenario' in which Astrid's mum goes on discovering her own autism, 'something that occurs frequently to the mothers of autistic children'. Regretting not having been able been able to discuss this idea with the writing team before they finished the script, she argues that the story of a woman who finds out to be neurodivergent as an adult would have turned out to be ways more socially helpful than the current episodic plot, for 'there's a lack of this kind of representations'.

'Rien pour nous sans nous'—nothing for us without us—is thus the final message that this young female autistic advocate is proudly delivering across the French-speaking web through her acute, intelligent analyses of popular media products.

CONCLUSIONS

Studying the autistic reception of a few European crime TV series involving the character type of the neurodivergent detective has shown how widely issues of representations are debated within both the Anglophone and the Francophone autistic online communities. Autistic viewers express a complex, articulated desire of recognizing themselves in onscreen fictional figures, onscreen fictional figures, portrayed as round, layered characters endowed with distinct personalities, which they believe can help validate their own individual experiences. At the same time they reject the stereotypes that still bias media representations of their struggles, needs and diverse personalities. Their online critical interventions address directly the shows' production and creative teams, calling for more subtle, complex renditions of both their intimate and social experiences. Thankfully, there is also an increasing awareness among producers and creatives about the need to take into account the sensibilities of these growing audience niches, which show to at least partially overlap with queer niches. The neuroqueer intersection of autism and LGBTIA+-inflected storylines appears to have a particular appeal on these atypical viewers. Yet concerns remain that the use of autistic-coded characters is only aimed to make spectacle out of their disabilities, in the same way as queerbaiting profits

of gay figures and themes merely as a marketing strategy. While there is an appreciation of the steps forward made by some productions to offer nuanced representations of autism—including female autism, an area in which European productions have marked a considerable development in recent years—autistic communities are calling for more creative effort and more concrete inclusion, even in terms of their active involvement in the production process.

This survey has also shown that there is a whole spectrum of different opinions among autists when it comes to their approval, or disapproval, of media representations of neurodiversity. This reflects the complex context of autism advocacy, by which autistic individuals reclaim the right to speak for themselves and stand up to fight for their own rights. Controversial topics that are intensely debated in generalist autistic forums—such as whether or not ASD should be considered as an illness to be cured; or how to react to the tensions that threaten to divide the community between 'high' vs 'low-functional' people; or how to promote awareness of the unique struggles faced by autistic women—also surface in the discussion threads, blog articles, fanfictions and videos specifically devoted to reflecting and commenting upon the representation strategies of European crime TV dramas. In this way, the autistic reception of popular European narratives featuring autistic or autistic-coded characters can be said to be actively contributing to the circulation and development of an empowering autistic culture.

Notes

[1] The research presented here has been financed by the research project *DETECt — Detecting Transcultural Identity in European Popular Crime Narratives* (Horizon 2020, 2018–2021) [Grant agreement number 770151.

[2] Uta Frith, *Autism: Explaining the Enigma* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 23-24; see also Eric L. Altschuler, 'Asperger's in the Holmes Family', *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 43.9 (2013).

[3] Loftis, Sonya Freeman, 'The Autistic Detective: Sherlock Holmes and his Legacy', *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 34.4 (2014).

[4] 'Both person-first and identity-first approaches to language are designed to respect disabled persons; In person-first language, the person is emphasized, not the individual's disabling or chronic condition (e.g., use 'a person with paraplegia' and 'a youth with epilepsy' rather than 'a paraplegic' or 'an epileptic'). In identity-first language, the disability becomes the focus, which allows the individual to claim the disability and choose their identity rather than permitting others (e.g., authors, educators, researchers) to name it or to select terms with negative implications [...]. Identity-first language is often used as an expression of cultural pride and a reclamation of a disability that once conferred a negative identity'. American Psychological Association, 'Disability' https://Apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/disability [accessed 26 May 2021].

[5] The term was coined around 1910 by Eugen Bleuler, who had already introduced the concept of schizophrenia in 1908. See Berend Verhoeff, 'Autism in Flux: A History of the Concept from Leo Kanner to DSM-5', *History of Psychiatry*, 24.4 (2013), pp. 442-458. See also the 'History of autism' project (University of Oregon), https://blogs.uoregon.edu/autismhistoryproject/timeline/ [accessed 9 June 2021]. Generally uncredited in the history of psychiatry is the use of the term by Grunya Efimovna Sukhareva, a Russian child psychiatrist who described a set of clinical features closely resembling those reported in DSM-5 for ASD as early as 1926. First appeared in German, her article 'Die schizoiden Psychopathien im Kindesalter' is speculated to have been a major source for Leo Kanner's later work. See Irina Manouilenko, Susanne Bejerot, 'Sukhareva-Prior to Asperger and Kanner', *Nordic Journal of Psychiatry*, 69.6 (2015), pp. 1761-1764. DOI: 10.3109/08039488.2015.1005022.

[6] Leo Kanner, 'Autistic Disturbances of Affective Contact', *Nervous Child*, 2 (1943), pp. 242-243. http://Neurodiversity.com/library_kanner_1943.pdf [accessed 26 May 2021].

[7] The term was proposed by Lorna Wing in her article 'Asperger Syndrome?: A Clinical Account', *Psychological Medicine*, 11.1 (1981), pp. 115–129. DOI: 10.1017/S0033291700053332. Hans Asperger's article, 'Autistic Psychopathy' in Childhood', was first published in English in *Autism and Asperger syndrome*, ed. by Uta Frith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 37–92. For a reconstruction of the label's vicissitudes from its inclusion in DSM-IV to its disappearance in DSM-5, see J. B. Barahona-Corrêa and Carlos N. Filipe, 'A Concise History of Asperger's Syndrome: The Short Reign of a Troublesome Diagnosis', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6 (2015). DOI 10.3389/fpsyg.2015.02024.

[8] Bethan Chambers and others, '"Sometimes Labels Need to Exist": Exploring How Young Adults with Asperger's Syndrome Perceive its Removal from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition', *Disability & Society*, 35.4 (2019), pp. 589-608. DOI: 10.1080/09687599.2019.1649121.

[9] See data in The Autism Community in Action website, https://TACAnow.org/autism-statistics. Source: Center for Disease Control (the US national health agency) [accessed 26 May 2021].

[10] John Monaghan, 'Autism Diagnoses in NI Children up by More than 100%', *BBC News*, 21 February 2019 https://BBC.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-47028502; Antonio Narzisi and others, 'Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder in a Large Italian Catchment Area: A School-based Population Study within the ASDEU Project', *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences*, 29.5 (2018). DOI: 10.1017/S2045796018000483.

[11] Cf. the well documented article on the 'Rational Wiki' website, https://Rationalwiki.org/wiki/Aspie_supremacy. [accessed 26 May 2021].

[12] Ibidem.

[13] For an introduction to the neurodiversity concept and movement, see Steve Silberman, *NeuroTribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity* (New York: Penguin Random, 2015).

[14] Kate Seers, Rachel C. Hogg, '"You Don't Look Autistic": A Qualitative Exploration of Women's Experiences of Being the "Autistic Other"', *Autism: The International Journal of Research and Practice* (15 March 2021). DOI: 10.1177/1362361321993722.

[15] As Stuart Murray writes in *Representing Autism. Culture, Narrative, Fascination* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008, pp. 65-66), 'when seen through the contemporary lens of popular representation, autism and savantism appear to have become almost synonymous. [...] Savant skills excite in the ways in which they represent seemingly impossible capabilities and talents; they are exceptional and 'beyond' that which is considered normal human performance. [...] The degree of awe savant talents produce is matched by the idea that these skills act to compensate the disability with which they are associated. Hence the common attachment of the word 'idiot' to 'savant', to designate this double aspect of ability and impairment'. See also Christina Belcher, Kimberly Maich, 'Autism Spectrum Disorder in Popular Media: Storied Reflections of Societal Views', *Brock Education*, 23.2 (2014), pp. 97-115.

[16] Harley Dixon, 'Sherlock Holmes is Autistic, Leading Charity Claims', *Telegraph*, 16 December 2013, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/10521128/Sherlock-Holmes-is-autistic-leading-charity-claims.html [accessed 26 May 2021].

[17] *The Hounds of Baskerville*, first aired in the UK on January 8, 2012. For an introduction to the phenomenon of autistic fandom, see Scott D. Folsom, 'Autistic Self-Advocacy and Activism on the World Wide Web: Frontiers of Digito-Neural Subject Formation', *Autonomy, the Critical Journal of Interdisciplinary Autism Studies*, 1.5 (2017). Another useful source is the 'Autism and Fandom' article on the Fanlore web portal https://Fanlore.org/wiki/Autism_and_Fandom [accessed 26 May 2021].

[18] *John Watson says Sherlock has Aspergers*, Youtube https://Youtube.com/watch?v=lllm5MyZTlM [accessed 26 May 2021].

[19] The reference is to Sheldon Cooper, a fictional character in *The Big Bang Theory* (USA, 2007-2019) that many believe to be the portrayal of an autistic person.

[20] Asperger's collaboration with the Nazi regime has been extensively documented in numerous recent studies. See Herwig Czech, 'Hans Asperger, National Socialism, and 'Race Hygiene' in Nazi-Era Vienna', *Molecular Autism*, 9.29 (2018). DOI: 10.1186/s13229-018-0208-6.

[21] Anna N. de Hooge, 'Binary Boys: Autism, Aspie Supremacy and Post/Humanist Normativity', *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 39.1 (2019). DOI: 10.18061/dsq.v39i1.6461.

[22] 'Allistic' is a neologism coined within the neurodiversity movement, meaning 'not autistic'.

[23] Cf. Simon Baron-Cohen, 'The Extreme Male Brain Theory of Autism', *Trends in Cognitive Science*, 6.6 (2002), pp. 248-254. DOI: 10.1016/s1364-6613(02)01904-6.

[24] Hooge, 'Binary Boys'.

[25] 'Autistic Sherlock', *Archiveofourown* web portal https://Archiveofourown.org/tags/Autistic%20

Sherlock%20Holmes/works [accessed 26 May 2021].

[26] Orphan_account, *Fresher*, comment section, *Archiveofourown* web portal https://archiveofourown.org/works/17439941?show_comments=true&view_full_work=true#comments [accessed 26 May 2021].

[27] ZuccaFireTrash, *When Boys Fall in Love*, comment section, *Archiveofourown* web portal https://archiveofourown.org/works/18330593?show_comments=true#comments [accessed 26 May 2021].

[28] Goldenheartedrose, *Enraptured*, comment section, *Archiveofourown* web portal https://archiveofourown.org/works/382089?show_comments=true#comments [accessed 26 May 2021].

[29] Scott D. Folsom, 'Sleuthing and Stimming: Autistic!Sherlock Headcanons and the Cultural Politics of Autism', paper presented at Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association National Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, 4 April 2015. https://Academia.edu/11390453 [accessed 26 May 2021].

[30] Ibidem.

[31] Hooge, 'Binary Boys'. The notion of 'neuroqueerness' has been proposed by Melanie Yergeau, *Authoring Autism On Rhetoric and Neurological Queerness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

[32] Ibidem.

[33] Honeybee_motorcycles, *The Rainbow Connection*, Chapter 6, *Archiveofourown* web portal https://archiveofourown.org/works/26986852 [accessed 26 May 2021].

[34] Xenay, *The Struggles of Living in a World of Neuro-typicals*, Chapter 11, *Archiveofourown* web portal https://archiveofourown.org/works/18384842 [accessed 26 May 2021].

[35] Nick Patch, 'Characters with Autism Getting Prime Spots on Major TV Series', *Globe and Mail*, 27 December 2012. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/health-and-fitness/health/conditions/characters-with-autism-getting-prime-spots-on-major-tv-series/article6744446/ [accessed 26 May 2021].

[36] A few characters in American crime TV dramas that are widely held to be autistic by their fans are Inspector Monk of the eponymous series (USA 2002-09), Spencer Reid of *Criminal Minds* (USA 2005-20), Sherlock Holmes (and his girlfried Fiona Helbron) of *Elementary* (USA 2012-19); among the women, Carrie Mathison of *Homeland* (USA 2011-2020) and, more recently, Holly Gibney of *The Outsider* (USA 2021), a mini-series adapted from a novel by Stephen King. None of these characters, however, hold a diagnosis in the fiction. Sometimes cited is also Temperance Brennan of *Bones* (USA 2005-2012), another character with a literary origin—she's the heroine of a long series of novels by Kathy Reichs. For more general information about the portrayal of autistic in American primetime television, see Phillip S. Poe, Maxwell C. Moseley, 'She's a Little Different: Autism-Spectrum Disorders in Primetime TV Dramas', *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*, 73.4 (2016) https://www.thefreelibrary.com/SHE%27S+A+LITTLE+DIFFERENT%22%3A+AUTISM-SPECTRUM+DISORDERS+IN+PRIMETIME+TV...-a0562370462 [accessed 9 June 2021].

[37] In addition to BBC's *Sherlock*, other dysfunctional European male detectives in the Holmes tradition, often diagnosed as autistic by their audience, are Endeavour Morse of *Inspector Morse* (United Kingdom 1987-1993), Sean Stone of *Chasing Shadows* (United Kingdom 2014), the protagonists of the two versions of *Professor T* (Belgium 2015-2018; Germany 2017-2020), and Dimitris Lainis of the *Eteros Ego* (Greece 2019-). In the literary field, it is worth recalling the hugely successful mystery novel by Mark Haddon, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2013) and Sandrone Dazieri's Italian trilogy about the investigative duo Colomba and Dante (*Uccidi il padre*, 2017; *L'angelo*, 2018; *Il re di denari*, 2019). The two detectives have been said to be 'neurodivergent' by the author himself, in an interview in which he also reclaimed the label for himself. See Berna

González Harbour. 'Sandrone Dazieri: "Yo soy neurodiverso, como mi personaje"', *País*. 5 May 2017. https://elpais.com/cultura/2017/05/05/elemental/1493962980_795296.html [accessed 9 June 2021].

[38] Magnus Danielson, Mike Kemani, 'When Saga Norén Meets Neurotypicality. A Liminal Encounter along *The Bridge*', in *Normalizing Mental Illness and Neurodiversity in Enternanment Media*, edited by Malynnda Johnson, Christopher J. Olson (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), p. 96.

[39] Stieg Larsson's *Millennium* book trilogy (2005-2007) was adapted for the big screen both in Sweden and in the US (respectively three feature films in 2009 and two in 2011 and 2018). A TV series based on the first novel, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, is currently in production at Netflix. *Bron/Broen/The Bridge* has been adapted in five different versions, through co-production ventures between, respectively, the UK and France (2013-2017), the US and Mexico (2013-2014), Estonia and Russia (2018-), Malaysia and Singapore (2018-). *Forbrydelsen* has been remade as *The Killing* in the US in 2011.

[40] Janet McCabe, 'Disconnected Heroines, Icy Intelligence: Reframing Feminism(s) and Feminist Identities at the Borders', in *Feminisms: Diversity, Difference and Multiplicity in Contemporary Film Cultures*, edited by Laura Mulvey, Anna Backman Rogers (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), p. 24.

[41] Joseph Straubhaar, quoted in McCabe, p. 24.

[42] Kathleen McHugh, 'The Female Detective, Neurodiversity, and Felt Knowledge in *Engrenages* and *Bron/Broen*'. *Television & New Media* 19.6 (2018), pp. 538.

[43] Ibidem.

[44] Camilla Schwartz, E. Ann Kaplan, 'The Female Detective as the Child Who Needs to Know. Saga Norén as an Example of Potent yet Dysfunctional Female Detectives in Contemporary Nordic Noir', *European Journal of Scandinavian Studies*, 48.2 (2018), p. 216.

[45] Ibidem.

[46] Ivi, pp. 226 and 223.

[47] Ivi, p. 220.

[48] Ivi, p. 217.

[49] Ivi, p. 227.

[50] Ivi, p. 216.

[51] Ivi, p. 225.

[52] Ivi, p. 228.

[53] Ivi, p. 227.

[54] Ibidem.

[55] Danielson and Kemani, p. 99.

[56] Ibidem.

[57] Ivi, p. 103.

[58] Ivi, p. 107.

[59] McCabe, p. 32.

[60] Ivi, p. 34.

[61] Ivi, p. 23.

[62] McHugh, p. 542.

[63] McCabe, p. 41.

[64] S. E. Smith, 'Lisbeth Salander and Social Perceptions', *This Ain't Living*. Blog article. http://meloukhia.net/2010/05/lisbeth_salander_and_social_perceptions/ [accessed 9 June 2021].

[65] Ibidem.

[66] Caroline Narby, 'Double Rainbow: On Lisbeth Salander', *Bitchmedia*, 5 January 2021 https://www.bitchmedia.org/post/double-rainbow-on-lisbeth-salander-feminism-autism-millennium-trilogy. [accessed 9 June 2021].

[67] Leah Jane, 'Fröken Salander & Me: How a Misanthropic Computer Hacker Will Change Autism in Literature and life', *The Quixotic Autistic*, 6 June 2010 http://quixoticautistic.blogspot.com/2010/06/froken-salander-me-how-misanthropic.html [accessed 9 June 2021].

[68] Stephenie Thorne, 'We Need More Autistic Women on TV And Here's Why', *The Art of Autism*, 18 September 2019. https://the-art-of-autism.com/we-need-more-autistic-women-on-tv-and-heres-why/ [accessed 9 June 2021].

[69] Ibidem.

[70] Rebecca Tharian Priyanka and others, 'Characters with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Fiction: Where are the women and girls?', *Advances in Autism*. 5.1 (2019), pp. 50-63. DOI: 10.1108/AIA-09-2018-0037. See also J. R. Thorpe, 'Why Are There So Few Women With Autism On TV?', *Bustle*, 1 August, 2017 https://www.bustle.com/p/why-are-there-so-few-women-with-autism-on-tv-71248 Accessed 9 June 2021.

[71] See the following threads in online web forums: 'Are series and movies representation of autism realistic?', *Autismforums* https://Autismforums.com/threads/27454/; 'Female Characters With Asperger's Syndrome?', *Wrongplanet*https://Wrongplanet.net/forums/viewtopic.php?f=27&t=223356; 'How Many of You Are Autistic?' *Singletrackworld* https://Singletrackworld.com/forum/topic/how-many-of-you-are-autistic/. Accessed 9 June 2021.

[72] Priyanka, 'Characters with Autism Spectrum Disorder'.

[73] Ibidem.

[74] The notion of 'textual poaching', or the transformative appropriation of the products of popular culture by fans, resulting in different types of artifacts, was introduced by Michael De Certeau in his *Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) and later developed by Henry Jenkins in *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge: 1992).

[75] Temple Grandin. *The Autistic Brain: Thinking Across the Spectrum* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013).

[76] Julia Fernandez. 'Astrid et Raphaëlle sur France 2. "La complexité de l'autisme est une grande richesse dramaturgique"', *Allociné*, 21 May 2021 https://Allocine.fr/article/fichearticle_gen_carticle=18699631.html [accessed 9 June 2021].

[77] See her interview in the *Petitesattentions* website https://Petitesattentions.wixsite.com/petitesattentions/post/interview-avec-lizzy-brynn-actrice-youtubeuse-et-autrice [accessed 23 August 2021].

[78] Hugo Horiot. *Autisme: j'accuse!* (Paris: Iconoclaste, 2018) [accessed 9 June 2021].

[79] https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/10521128/Sherlock-Holmes-is-autistic-leading-charity-claims.html Stéphanie Gorlin. 'Astrid et Raphaëlle (France 2): pourquoi Astrid boîte-t-elle ? La réponse de Sara Mortensen', *ProgrammeTV*, 4 June 2021. https://www.Programme-tv.net/news/series-tv/277390-astrid-et-raphaelle-pourquoi-astrid-boite-t-elle-la-reponse-de-sara-mortensen/ [accessed 9 June 2021].

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[81] 'Astrid et Raphaelle', *Archiveofourown* web portal https://Archiveofourown.org/tags/Astrid%20et%20Raphaëlle%20(TV)/works [accessed 9 June 2021].

[82] Zakary_little_lion, Trying Is Caring, *Archiveofourown* web portal https://archiveofourown.org/works/24796378 [accessed 9 June 2021].

[83] Heartunderfire, *Notes of Love*, chapter 1, Archiveofourown web portal. https://archiveofourown.org/works/26092453/chapters/63466939 [accessed 9 June 2021].

[84] 4AlarmFirecracker, *Astraëlle, Archiveofourown* web portal https://archiveofourown.org/works/31030739 [accessed 9 June 2021].

[85] *Angie Breshka*, Youtube channel https://www.youtube.com/c/AngieBreshka/videos [accessed 9 June 2021].

[86] *Astrid et Raphaëlle: episode pilote* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQtFzM8CvDU [accessed 9 June 2021].

[87] *Juris Handicap Autisme*, website www.Jurishandicapautisme.org [accessed 9 June 2021].

[88] A similar claim from Joseph Schovenec has caused huge indignation from a part of the autistic community. Bershka has polemically commented his argument in one of her videos, *Attention aux faux autistes! (Et au complotisme aussi…)* Youtube https://Youtube.com/watch?v=e9WkdvXSHpM [accessed 9 June 2021]. See also Pedemonte's statements on female autism: Jean Vinçot, 'La diversité dans l'autisme. Interviews de J. Schovenec et N. Pedemonte', 16 September 2018 https://blogs.mediapart.fr/jean-vincot/blog/150918/la-diversite-dans-l-autisme-2809-interviews-de-j-schovanec-et-n-pedemonte [accessed 9 June 2021].

[89] Association Francophone des *Femmes Autistiques*, website https://Femmesautistesfrancophones.com [accessed 9 June 2021].

[90] *Astrid et Raphaëlle: le retour* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTnZRZ2uwSg&t=18s [accessed 23 August 2021].

[91] *CLE-Autistes*, website. https://Asso.cle-autistes.fr [accessed 9 June 2021].

[92] 'En avril tous en rouge ou or pour l'acceptation', *CLE-Autistes* website https://CLE-autistes.fr/en-avril-tous-en-rouge-ou-or-pour-lacceptation [accessed 9 June 2021].

BEYOND CINEMA

Between Visibility and Media Performativity. The Role of Interface and Gesturality in Desktop Cinema

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This article aims to investigate desktop films as 'meta-media' audiovisual forms and to analyse their aesthetics and their meta-reflective potential in the broader framework of contemporary visual and media culture. Screens and interfaces, re-mediated into these films, constitute a second-level media space into the filmic space. They are the only space visually accessible to the spectator, whereby the characters' gesturality emerges as a form of performing relationship with digital technology, as a posture or a more general engagement with the (media) environment, as an 'operational trace' on the screen. Resulting from this visual and narrative structure is the centrality of 'media performativity', a concept that will be widely problematized in this article on a theoretical level and analysed as a behavioural pattern that characterizes our daily interaction with the screens surrounding us, as a part of an eco-media system in which action (of the user) and reaction (of the interface) are intervolved and entangled. The concept of media performativity relies on the idea that the individual is no longer separate from the medium throughout the mediation process but is instead deeply and radically involved in the medium itself.

Keywords
Desktop film
Media performativity
Interface
Screen culture
Media ecosystem
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INTRODUCTION: VISUAL AND FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE DESKTOP FILM

David Kim is a man in his forties living alone with his daughter Margot, following the premature death of his wife due to a lymphoma. One evening, Margot tells her father she would sleep over at a girlfriend's house, but then she disappears in the middle of the night, after having tried repeatedly to call Kim as he was asleep. With the help of detective Rosemary Vick, Kim starts ceaselessly looking for Margot,in the attempt to find out what happened. After having thought of a voluntary escape, they realize that a kidnapping – if not even a murder –are much more likely hypothesis. Kim finds thus himself trapped in a mirror maze: he needs to solve the enigma to find a way out.

This simple and brief account of the plot of *Searching* (Aneesh Chaganty, 2018) may give the idea of a regular thriller movie, revolving around a

complex, intriguing detective story. We may say it is, indeed. Nevertheless, if we widen our perspective and shift from the narrative thread to the film's visual structure, it becomes certainly harder – and misleading – to define this movie merely a 'thriller'. *Searching* is, in fact, an example of desktop film, namely a movie that only takes place on the screens of the protagonist's digital devices. Laptop, smartphone, tablet, are here the only environments where the protagonist's actions and those of the characters he interacts with take place.

From start to finish, the film shows nothing else than the screens Kim interacts with. His investigation does not occur in real, 'physical' environments, but mostly follows the traces that his daughter has left across the social media accounts or chatrooms she habitually uses. Even Kim's interaction with other characters is always mediated by digital devices: it occurs through FaceTime, Facebook Messenger, and Gmail.

These are our starting questions: what does the formal system of a desktop film tell us about visibility? As a product fully embedded within contemporary visual culture, what does its meta-reflexive operation suggest us about this visual culture, or – more broadly –about contemporary media culture in general? In this paper, I will attempt to answer these questions by elaborating some reflection and, at the same time, by identifying some recurring features in this contemporary film category. I will make reference to a few films to analyse some transversal theoretical nodes, though fully acknowledging the interesting differences distinguishing each example – in terms of both aesthetics and narration.[1]

Historically, cinema has brought multiple realities to the screen, adapting them to the nature of the screen itself by means of the 'specificity' of film language. In the case of desktop films, cinema brings to the screen a reality that is already 'screenic' in itself. Thus, the aim of desktop film directors is not to replicate events taking place in a 'real' setting, but to stage and narrativize the screens themselves (which already intrinsically mediate the reality of events within the film, on a diegetic level), starting with their tangible operation that is activated by a complex performance taking place before the viewer's eyes. This is done through a specific set of media-related actions that – as we shall see – are actorial and authorial at the same time.

FROM VISIBILITY TO PERFORMATIVITY: VISUAL CULTURE AND GESTURALITY

Let us therefore move on from the matter of visibility, and return – on the basis of a sheer conditioning that lies behind the questions we initially asked ourselves – to some of the considerations developed by Béla Balázs in the 1920s. His theories encompass a number of aspects which may prove functional to our discussion, namely a certain conception of visual culture

that is strictly related to the visibility of a body moving in space.

The visibility of the body and the gesture were two theoretical issues treated in Balázs' reflection, revolving around the idea of a newfound visibility of man (*Der sichtbare Mensch*, 'The Visibile Man', is indeed the title of his most renowned publication) made possible by the reproductive-projective action of cinema. The passage from a textual to a visual culture – that, according to Balázs, the moving image seemed to make possible – rested upon this.

Balázs was not interested in the purely artistic-expressive gesture (that of the performer or the dancer, for instance), which is truly comprehensible only by a select few and ascribable to a 'high-culture' or 'elite' ideal of artistic value. Nor was he focused on strongly coded gestures, such as those related to sign language, whereby an expressive motion of the body corresponds to a single conceptual meaning (Balázs seems to implicitly state that in this case the gesture ends up being, though useful and unavoidable, a surrogate of the word). The gesture he was interested in – for the purposes of *a true cultural analysis* – is the everyday, commonplace gesture:

> *Not culture in the sense of the beautiful poses of statues in art galleries, but the gait and the everyday gestures of people in the street or at their work. Culture means the penetration of the ordinary material of life by the human spirit, and a visual culture must surely provide us with new and different expressive forms for our daily intercourse with one another. The art of dance cannot do this; it is a task that will be accomplished only by film.*[2]

The specific idea of 'gesture' that vigorously emerges from Balázs' reflection transcends that which we may define a formal concept of gesturality, and rather defines a form of *engagement with the world*. Besides, film may distance itself from the high level of formalization and coding of gestures that is represented by other forms of artistic expression, and may narrate or *document* a certain way of existing in the world: a certain way of experiencing the ordinary space.[3]

It is clear that the analysis of forms of interaction with other people and the surrounding environment today cannot disregard the many forms of interaction with the media devices inhabiting our everyday spaces and structuring our everyday practices and gesturality. The settings we regularly move around are distinguished by a substantial presence of technological media with which (or should we say, more precisely, *within*, or *through* which) our daily gesturality interacts and by which is partially reshaped. This is an aspect that has reached its extreme consequences throughout the COVID-19 pandemic,[4] as a growing number of everyday practices has been relocated to online environments and mediated by screens and interfaces, whereby an increasingly large number of interpersonal actions

and interactions have taken shape. Our gesturality has systematically materialized – in part as the gesturality of a body filmed by the recording systems embedded in our computers and mobile devices; in part as a *trace* of our interaction with screen interfaces, which gets visible not only on our screens, but also on those of our interlocutors.

If Balázs' reflection brings to the table the emergence of a visual culture in contrast with a written culture that had marked and nearly monopolized communication forms ever since the invention of the printing press, we should ask ourselves what the concept of 'visual culture' refers to today, and how it finds its own peculiar position within contemporary media culture, where the link between visuality and gesturality must be reinterpreted even starting from the interaction between the contemporary media user and the 'new' digital media that increasingly appear as *mixed media*, in the definition provided by William J. Thomas Mitchell[5]. It thus seems impossible to exclude from a reflection whose aim is to identify the 'cultural symptoms'[6] that emerge in the media-based transformation of our everyday areas of activity the behavioural patterns that characterize our daily interaction with the screens surrounding us. We shall refer to such behavioural patterns as *media performativity*.

The centrality of these forms of operation clearly emerges even in the 'media ecology' concept discussed by Matthew Fuller, in which the attention towards objects appears to be replaced by the attention towards media 'practices' and 'processes', to the point objects themselves are perceived as processes:

> *Objects here should also be understood to mean processes embodied as objects, as elements in a composition. [...] Ecologists focus rather more on dynamic systems in which any one part is always multiply connected, acting by virtue of those connections, and always variable, such that it can be regarded as a pattern rather than simply as an object.*[7]

The operation we are discussing seems thus to represent a key element, even for a reinterpretation of the idea of visual culture.[8] At a closer look, the visual dimension is no longer exclusive or predominant in our daily relationship with the screens around us,[9] although the latter still represent a fundamental component for the analysis of contemporary visual culture. Vision is increasingly analysed as part of a significantly broader sensory experience that – referring to U.S. psychologist James J. Gibson's definition of the term in the late 1970s – we may define an 'ecological relationship'.[10] The body as a whole takes on – in our modern interaction with screens – a progressively more central role, and for this reason a cultural analysis of contemporary screens becomes more and more an investigation on our actions on and inside such screens.[11]

Pietro Montani explained this concept extremely clearly: while defining the notion of *digital sensorium* as 'a way that sensitivity (*aisthesis*) is

intimately *embodied in a technology*', he reiterates the centrality of the use of screen, its capability to trigger production-communication practices based upon the interaction or the inseparability of text and images, starting with the 'atypical performances assigned to the fingertips' that allow the occurrence of 'a sensitive, specifically technical performance'.[12] Even more radically, we may state – again inspired by Montani's reflections – that the centrality taken on by media performativity in modern times redefines and qualifies the perception of (and relationship with) the surrounding world very specifically.

The concept of *media performativity* thus relies on the idea that the individual is no longer separate from the medium throughout the mediation process but is deeply and radically involved in the medium itself.[13] We shall see shortly how the concept of 'interface' turns out to be a decisive element to understand and analyse the peculiar relationship which gets established between body, gesture, and technological device.

For now, we shall highlight how – in the scope indicated by Montani – the screen is no longer a 'filter' through which we observe reality, but a technical element contributing to its very assessment and an orientation of the individual within it. Gesturality accompanies such forms of performing relationships with digital technology, in terms of a posture or a more general engagement with the surrounding environment, which growingly attracts the interest of contemporary films and series. The 'narrativization' of such mechanisms quite openly reveals that which we might define the 'dual nature' of modern digital media: on one hand, they emerge as essential components of a hypermediated environment; on the other hand, they are environments in themselves, in which we move and interact with numerous media objects and other people.[14] Desktop films appear to focus, in particular, on this second aspect.

WHAT DO DESKTOP FILMS (REALLY) TELL US?

In the perspective illustrated thus far, the desktop film represents a particularly interesting case study, due indeed to its ability to place media performativity at the centre of attention, assigning it the role as true driveshaft of the narration, whether fictional or documentary. This aspect does not only materialize in the aforementioned *Searching*, but even in other fiction desktop films such as *Noah* (Patrick Cederberg, Walter Woodman, 2013), *Unfriended* (Levan Gabriadze, 2014) or *Unfriended: Dark Web* (Stephen Susco, 2018), just to mention a few particularly significant titles in a growingly vast constellation of works, or desktop documentaries such as *Transformers: The Premake* (Kevin B. Lee, 2014) and *Watching the Pain of Others* (Chloé Galibert-Laîné, 2019).[15]

Evocatively, one might claim that this film category has picked up the legacy of Balázs' reflection, by identifying traces (disseminated within

screen-based interfaces) of a new media gesturality, finding in them a number of implications that significantly affect the twentyfirst century visual and media culture. Namely, they gather the passage from visibility to performativity that we have highlighted in the previous paragraph.

The central role and exposure (or the *documentation*) of media performativity clearly emerges in fictional desktop films as much as it does in desktop documentaries. Whilst in the fictional desktop film, as we have seen, this performativity rests upon – on the diegetic level – the characters, in the desktop documentary the gesture at the centre of attention is the creative one performed by the director him/herself who, time after time, acts upon the windows of the screen interface, and establishes relationships between the materials it presents to the spectator.

This is what occurs, for instance, in the desktop documentary *Transformers: The Premake* by Kevin B. Lee, where the act of directing corresponds with the research action the director performs on the interfaces and folders 'coming to life' on his desktop. On the one hand, Kevin B. Lee 'delegates' the image production to the hundreds of prosumers who shared an endless number of amateur videos created during the filming of *Transformers: Age of Extinction* (Michael Bay, 2014) online; on the other hand, he builds his narrative by offering to the spectator a footage of contents configured on the basis of the interaction between the director and his PC interfaces.

In this scope, we have a found footage film in which the archival images retrieved online by Lee intertwine with his gesturality: the content of such images is animated by the director's actions, as he explores the web platforms on which the images circulate and are made available to users.

What the director thus stages in his film is a topological narration[16]

Fig. 1: *Transformers: The Premake* (Kevin B. Lee, 2014).

of viral marketing that he places in media environments, in which this complex phenomenon comes to life, first of all, through sharing of images and videos by fans of the great contemporary blockbusters.

In her introduction to a video dedicated to the desktop documentaries by Kevin B. Lee, the scholar Catherine Grant has made particularly interesting considerations that may help us define the use of screens and interfaces made by the director in his movie:

> *[Desktop documentary] uses screen capture technology to treat the computer screen as both a camera lens and a canvas. [It] seeks both to depict and question the ways we explore the world through the computer screen.*[17]

Therefore, both in fictional desktop film and in desktop documentaries, the media environment is not only the film setting, but even its very production location. In fictional desktop films, character's mediation is an added element. The latter's media gesturality essentially corresponds to the gestures used by the director to create the movie, as explained thoroughly by Patrick Cederberg and Walter Woodman, directors of the teen-drama desktop film *Noah* (2014):

> *It was an interesting challenge for us to tell this story without breaking free from the box of this "image-space". A lot of conversations happened while we were developing the idea about leaving the computer screen, but as we crafted the visual components we realized that in our execution we managed to create and explore a character in a way we hadn't seen before; by observing his interfacing and manipulation of the* image space*. The most bizarre aspect of this idea, that didn't really hit us until after we'd finished the film, is that we* performed *as all the characters. Our actors were only involved for the video segments (Skype, Chatroulette). So in watching it, it didn't register clearly that there is a real disconnect between this presence and the imagery of the actors themselves.*[18]

The re-mediation of the interface within the film occurs on an eminently operative basis, thus not purely a representative one. This operative dimension hatches thanks to a 'double level of mediation' that distinguishes desktop films. In fact, if it is true that the relationship between the cinema spectator and a film character is never a direct interaction, in that it is always mediated by the action of the filming device, in this case we may affirm that we witness a *second-level mediation*, given that the action of the protagonists and the relationships developing between the same within their real environment becomes accessible to the spectator only through the filter of the numerous devices relocated[19] across the cinematic space.

Indeed, as is well-known, the term 'relocation' aims to identify the elements that allow a definition of the cinematographic experience beyond the technical specificity of the medium and the function of a *dispositif*

founded on the shot-projection binomial. In this sense, the term sets out to offer a theoretical-interpretation framework for the analysis of cinema dispersion and migration across fruition spaces other than the movie theatre and within several digital devices. The desktop film thus appears to stage a kind of *inverse relocation*, inasmuch as the film appears as an audio-visual space that welcomes the replacement of new digital media in order to reconfigure on the screen certain peculiar traits of the experience deriving from their use.

It may thus be claimed that the film itself becomes an interface capable of generating a complex interaction between cinema and digital media, accessing a definition of the very concept of interface: one that might broaden its sense. In his groundbreaking work dedicated to interface operation, Alexander Galloway consistently reiterates the need to not consider the interface as a thing, but an effect, and adds: 'it is always a process or a translation'.[20] In particular, it is interesting to consider that which Galloway defines an 'intraface', meaning 'an interface internal to the interface', described by the author as an imaginary dialogue between the workable and the unworkable or – explicitly referencing Gerard Genette's reflection on the concept of 'threshold' – as 'a zone of indecision between inside and outside' or – in the end – as the relationship between *the edge* and *the center*.

As stated above, desktop film in the capacity of a threshold works as an interface that generates a substantial redefinition of media devices that *remediate*[21] within it, making them unworkable for the spectator, who is pushed to delegate the condition of media-users to the characters. On the basis of this process, it is easily understandable how much the screens of computers and mobile devices are more 'suitable' for desktop film vision: not only because the films find their 'natural habitat' in their interfaces, but also because the screens have a greater ability to place the viewer before the inoperativeness of such interfaces (this effect tends to greatly scale down when the films are watched 'at a distance' on a TV or cinema screen).

In such films, the transparency distinguishing the interfaces of contemporary screens and granting them maximum efficiency in terms of accessibility to digital content become the *opacity*[22] of the intrafaces acted upon by the cinematographic medium. And it is this opacity that guarantees the fundamental shift from a 'direct' topological narrative – based on the interactivity of the contemporary media user – to an 'indirect' (non-interactive) topological narrative that turns into a meta-narrative of media performativity (the one performed by the characters or the directors mediating our relationship with the interfaces of devices in the movies).

In this sense, the desktop film becomes the medium[23] for contemporary media gesturality: not as an interactive technological device, but as an aesthetic and narrative apparatus allowing a dynamic documentation of media gesturality while maintaining its inscription within the borders of its (media) ecosystem of origin untarnished.

The metareflective operation that such films are based upon thus becomes the main narrative driveshaft of the films themselves, and exploits the opportunities (even in terms of *affordances*) granted by screen interfaces as well as the constitutive (but constructive) instability[24] of the digital mediascapes configured in the same. The magnitude of gesturality narrated in desktop films certainly requires a placement within the screens reproducing its effects.

This aspect may be identified clearly in the documentary *Flânerie 2.0* by Chloé Galibert-Laîné. The director combined the desktop film, found footage, and documentary formats to give the viewer an experience of the modern city as an intrinsically hybrid and blended experience occurring in the urban and explorable environments within our mobile device screens. As long as it is filmed from the outside only, the media gesturality represented in the film does not offer the sense of operations performed by people shot by the director: each of them holds a smartphone in their hands, tapping the screen with their thumbs.

From the position we are in – an 'external' position that places us before these people, and makes the screens of their smartphones inaccessible – we may consider their gestures essentially identical. Their actions have a very limited (or nearly inexistent) impact on the 'real' surrounding space. They might offer us a sense of habit or of the actors' *distracted experience* of the surrounding itself, but not the ultimate sense of hybridization that the film sets out to narrate. It is only when the director changes perspective – bringing us spectators inside the *screens* – that the underlying sense of the film's aesthetic operation fully acquires an explanation and reveals the processes of anticipation of the real experience that materializes as a

Fig. 2: *Flânerie 2.0* (Chloé Galibert-Laîné, 2018).

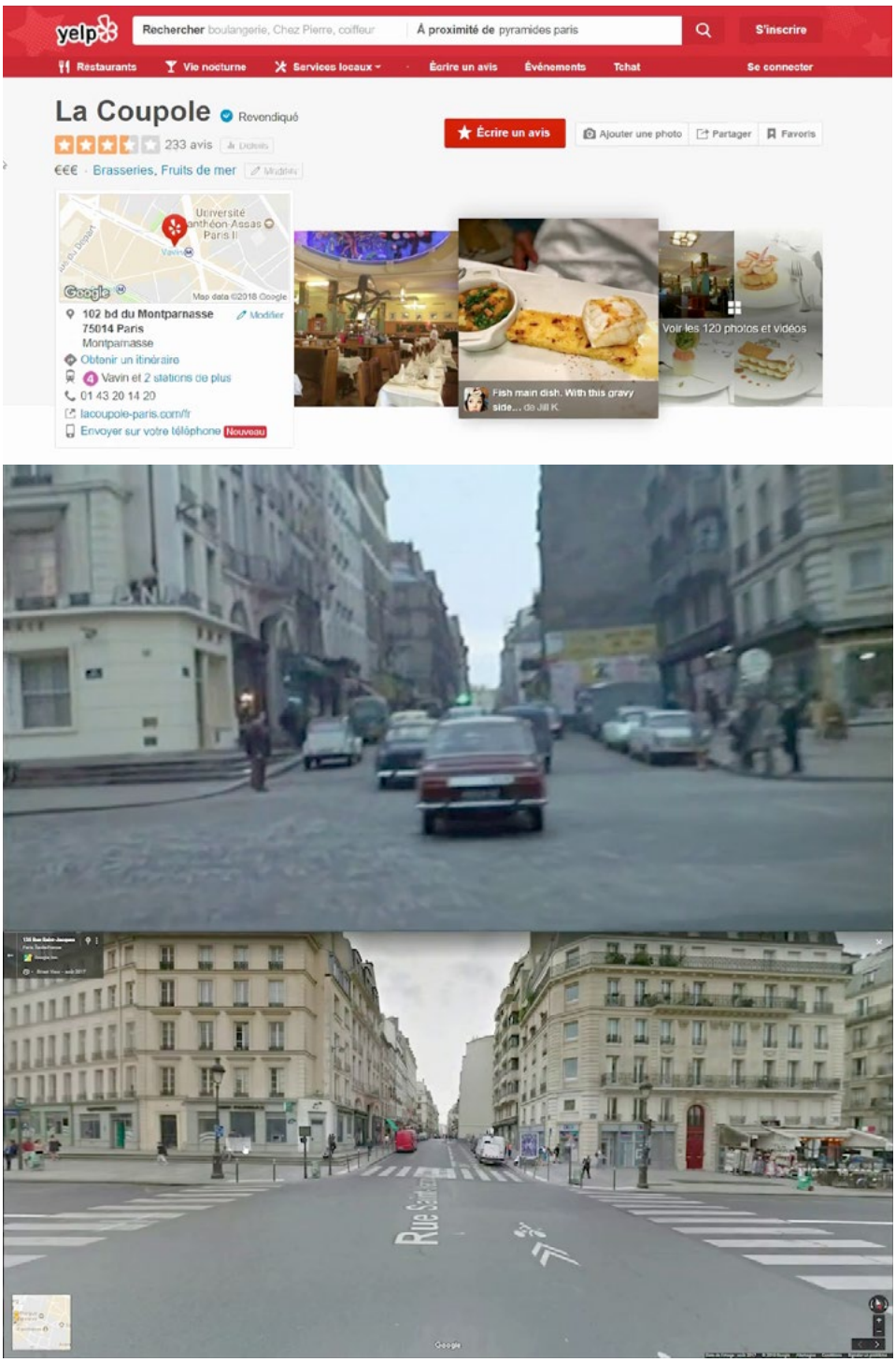

Fig. 3-4 *Flânerie 2.0* (Chloé Galibert-Laîné, 2018).

result of the online research performed or the screenic virtualization of our motion – at times simultaneous – in the urban space.

Therefore, our perspective change corresponds to a different understanding of the characters' gesturality, which leads us to identify how deeply different the repercussions of that *pressing* or that *swiping* of the thumbs on the screen can be. Such consequences may be observable not only if we catch a glimpse of the individuals' gestures, but if we see the *effects* that the same have on the screens: the traces of the gestures we discussed shortly before.

It is indeed such traces that allow a *qualification* of the gestures and their comprehension as parts of a broader relationship between the body and technology. The distinctive features of such gestures thus place them in a particular space-time dimension that is inferable and practicable only within the screen-environments – distinguished, as said, by specific affordances and, consequently, a specific range of actions made possible by the structure of each interface.

In theoretical terms, what originates from this example is the concept of *ecomedia*. The prefix (*eco*-) itself refers to the 'environmental' dimension of the issue in play. What environment are we talking about?[25] As highlighted by Francesco Parisi, when we talk about ecomedia the environment that we identify is 'not merely the media space we inhabit, but may also mean the ability that media have to build up as independent environments that encapsulate us and *model our practices*'.[26]

Besides, it is not arduous to play the game of finding 'real-life equivalents' of the situations that take shape in certain desktop films. In the short film *Noah*, for example, the protagonist enters his girlfriend's Facebook page using her credentials and accesses the different *areas* of her private account (messages, diary, notification list) in search for clues to confirm his suspects that she is cheating on him. He indeed explores a series of rooms represented by certain areas with specific functions within a private space. The protagonist's actions do not appear very distant from an equivalent situation in a thriller movie in which the character enters – in such case using a set of keys snatched by way of deceit – the house of another character, and opens drawers and closet doors, peeps in the most hidden corners and – why not? – flips through the pages of a secret diary. These are environment exploration actions taking place in a media space – in the former case – or in a physical-material space – in the latter case – notwithstanding that the distinction between the two categories of 'spaces' is not excessively simplistic.

Hence, there exists a media-related action that cinema may keep a watchful eye on to weave increasingly complex storylines: the plot of *Noah* (which is also a short) is essential and linear, as is – essentially – that of *Unfriended*, based upon the traditional mechanisms of a revenge movie, whilst the plots of more recent desktop films such as *Searching* and *Unfriended: Dark Web* turn out to be definitely more intricated. This is an interesting aspect, because it shows how an initial phase of pure fascination before this original desktop film setting – and the purely attractional function of the interfaces included in the same – is being followed by a phase in which the narrative articulation of the stories is taking on a greater and greater role.

A FEW FINAL REMARKS: FROM THE PERFORMATIVITY OF MEDIA-USERS TO THE INTERFACE PERFORMANCE

In conclusion of this article, it is perhaps appropriate to attempt to grasp what value the actions of these films' characters truly take on, and what is the role played by interfaces in structuring and defining rules for the environments wherein they materialize. This is clearly a complex issue which will have to be further developed at a later time.

The interfaces re-mediated within the movie cause the existence of a media environment that welcomes the characters' actions, it orients their intentions in a new (or at least different) way compared to what occurs in the 'real world', and finally affects the viewer's narrative experience deeply, despite the stories told in such films – including the formal structure by means of which they are conveyed – may turn out to be easily positioned within the limits of certain greatly canonical cinema and television genres: horror, in the case of *Unfriended*; teen drama for *Noah*; family sit-com for the *Connection Lost* (S06xE16, 2015) episode of the TV series *Modern Family* (ABC, 2009-2020); thriller in the case of *Searching* and *Unfriended: Dark Web*; documentary in the case of *Transformers: The Premake*; just to mention a few. The subjectivity of the spectator watching these films meets the subjectivity of the various characters in a land we may define – according to Galloway – 'threshold', given that the action takes place in part on the basis of a pure succession of events (namely the film storyline as we have described for *Searching* at the beginning of this paper), and in part due to the characters' constant status of media-users. In doing so, it establishes a relationship with the surrounding world and the other characters that is driven by the exhibited structure of the interfaces with which the subjects interact, and which plays out an intradiegetic *media subjectivation* process.

If it is true that in the desktop film the visibility of the gesture is strongly depowered and marginalized (as in the case of *Searching* and – especially – *Noah*) in favour of *performativity of the trace*, or the effect of the gesture on the media environment, then we may state that the performance in play becomes – at intervals – a full *performance of the interface itself*.

In this sense, the desktop film hatches a feature of the mechanisms distinguishing contemporary interfaces that may be clearly inferred from Branden Hookway's reflections. The theorist – with the aim of elaborating a complex cultural theory of the interface – rediscovers the meaning that this concept had in nineteenth-century fluid dynamics, thus highlighting its ability to separate and – at the same time – establish a relationship and potential 'work' between two fluids comprising a system. This is how the

interface *acts* to create a form of interaction.

To recover this 'scientific' sense of the interface does not have – according to Hookway – a purely etymological meaning, but rather a conceptual significance. His underlying idea rests upon, in fact, the belief that the interface shall not be investigated as a technological element per se, but as the element capable of generating a relationship between the user and the technological device or – in his own words – 'as a site of contestation between human and machine'.[27] On the basis of this, Hookway expresses the need to read the interface structuring in unavoidably dynamic and process-based terms, 'more as a *forming* and less as a *form*',[28] and to give maximum value to the action, the procedure, and the performance by means of which the relationship fully materializes:

> *While the interface operates in space and time, and on occasion may be described as a site or an event, it also governs the production of sites and events; it describes the site or moment in which the full operation and apparatus of systems, networks, hierarchies, and material flows are distilled into concrete action.*[29]

An action on the interface – or through the interface – is thus a (re)action *by* the interface on the media-user. Therefore, the re-mediation occurring in desktop films cannot and shall not be considered a simple re-mediation of a peculiar 'visual structure' that characterizes media environments configured within contemporary digital screens, but the re-mediation of a *proceduralism* born out of the interaction with such structures. A re-mediation with the power to highlight and document the *practicability* of those very structures, and to narrativize the complex system of *actions* (by the subject) and *reactions* (by the interface) that only when considered as a system may account for the overall meaning of the media performativity in contemporary culture.

The metareflective dimension of the desktop films we have analysed in this paper – by building on the intraface theory by Alexander Galloway – becomes a tool in the hands of directors to narrate the fundamental indissolubility of visuality and gesturality as parts of the complex form of media performativity characterising the contemporary visual culture. Moreover, it may promote a view *from inside* that fully reveals the environmental influence potential of the contemporary media in which we act and move every day.

Notes

[1] For an analysis of the desktop film *Unfriended* (Levan Gabriadze, 2014) and the *Bottle Songs* series of desktop documentaries (Chloé Galibert-Laîné, Kevin B. Lee, 2018), see: Shane Denson, *Discorrelated Images* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020). For an analysis of the short desktop film *Noah*, see Lydia Tuan, 'Screening Screens: Cinematic Spectatorship in the Desktop Film Noah', *Cinéma & Cie. International Film Studies Journal*, 20.34 (Spring 2020), pp. 117 – 32. For a comparative analysis of the desktop films *Unfriended*, *Noah*, and *Searching*, I recommend my article 'Spazio filmico e spazio mediale nel computer screen film', in *Re-directing. La regia nello spettacolo del XXI secolo*, ed. by Luca Bandirali, Daniela Castaldo, Francesco Ceraolo (Lecce: Università del Salento, 2020), pp. 143–52.

[2] Béla Balázs, *Der sichtbare Mensch oder die Kultur des Films* [1924], English translation in *Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory:* Visible Man *and* The Spirit of Film, edited by Erica Carter (New York: Berghahn Book, 2010), p. 13.

[3] For a vast and multi-faceted reflection on the relationship between gesture and moving image (cinema, contemporary visual arts, and new digital media) that transcends the specific definition we are considering here, see the special issue *#Gesture*, ed. by Miriam De Rosa, *NECSUS. European Journal of Media Studies*, 2 (Autumn 2019).

[4] See, for example: *Pandemic Media. Preliminary Notes Toward an Inventory*, ed. by Philipp Dominik Keidl, Vinzenz Hediger, Laliv Melamed, Antonio Somaini (Lüneburg: Meson Press, 2020). See also *Virale. Il presente al tempo della pandemia*, ed. by Roberto De Gaetano, Angela Maiello (Cosenza: Pellegrini, 2020).

[5] William J. Thomas Mitchell, 'There Are No Visual Media', *Journal of Visual Culture*, 4.2 (August 2005), 257–66.

[6] We hereby borrow an evocative definition by Patricia Pisters, who uses it in her analysis of *Michael Clayton* (Tony Gilroy, 2007), to introduce a more general account of contemporary screen culture. Patricia Pisters, *The Neuro-Image. A Deleuzian Film-Philosophy of Digital Screen Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

[7] Matthew Fuller, *Media Ecologies: Materialist Energies in Art and Technoculture* (London, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005), p. 4. Peppino Ortoleva also seems to take the direction of a (con) fusion of objects and practices in an ecological perspective in his definition of 'online iconosphere'. See: Peppino Ortoleva, 'YouTube e l'iconosfera online', in *Estetica dei media e della comunicazione*, ed. by Antonio Somaini, Roberto Diodato (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), pp. 295–312.

[8] This aspect may also be inferred from Asbjørn Grønstad, Henrik Gustafsson and Øyvind Vågnes' reflection. The three authors – as the name of their text suggests – set out to combine the topic of gesturality and the act of seeing, and conclude by honouring contemporary media culture with a space where their interdependence, if not even their deep mutual penetration, firmly emerges. See: *Gestures of Seeing in Film, Video and Drawing*, ed. by Asbjørn Grønstad, Henrik Gustafsson, Øyvind Vågnes (New York, London: Routledge, 2016). See, in particular, 'Gestures of Seeing', the introductory essay by the editors, pp. 17–27.

[9] For a literature review on the concept of 'screen' that takes into account even the contemporary function of screens for the purpose of composing a broader epistemological framework in terms of aesthetics, history, and archaeology, see, most importantly: *Screen Genealogies: From Optical Devices to Environmental Medium*, ed. by Craig Buckley, Rüdiger Campe, Francesco Casetti

(Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019); Erkki Huhtamo, 'Elements of Screenology: Toward an Archaeology of the Screen', *ICONICS: International Studies of the Modern Image*, 7 (2006), 31–82; Mauro Carbone, *Philosophie-écrans: Du cinéma à la révolution numérique* (Paris: Vrin, 2016).

[10] James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979).

[11] We may find a setup of this kind even in the aforementioned neuro-philosophical proposal by Patricia Pisters who, in her analysis of the film *Michael Clayton*, and lingering on the screens and monitors that literally envelop the protagonist, states: '[these screens] are the markers of both a typical twenty-first-century media city and the *practices of everyday media use*'. Pisters, p. 2 [emphasis added].

[12] Pietro Montani, *Emozioni dell'intelligenza. Un percorso nel sensorio digitale* (Milan: Meltemi, 2020), p. 71.

[13] Cf. Richard Grusin, 'Radical mediation', *Critical Inquiry*, 42.1 (Autumn 2015), pp. 124–48.

[14] See, most importantly, Francesco Casetti, 'Mediascapes: A Decalogue', *Perspecta. The Yale Architectural Journal*, 51, (2017), pp. 21–43; Andrea Pinotti, Antonio Somaini, *Cultura visuale* (Turin: Einaudi, 2016); *Ambienti mediali*, ed. by Pietro Montani, Dario Cecchi, Martino Feyles (Milan: Meltemi, 2018).

[15] 'Desktop documentary' is a definition coined by Kevin B. Lee and other filmmakers at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. See, on this topic, Luka Bešlagić, 'Computer Interface as Film: Postmedia Aesthetics of Desktop Documentary', *AM Journal*, 20 (2019), 51–60. See also Wanda Strauven, 'The Screenic Image: Between Verticality and Horizontality, Viewing and Touching, Displaying and Playing', in *Screens: From Materiality to Spectatorship: A Historical and Theoretical Reassessment*, ed. by Dominique Chateau and José Moure (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), pp. 143–56; Miriam De Rosa, Wanda Strauven, 'Screenic (Re)Orientations: Desktop, Tabletop, Tablet, Booklet', *Touchscreen*, Etc., in *Screen Space Reconfigured*, ed. by Susanne Ø. Sæther, Synne T. Bull (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), pp. 231–62. De Rosa and Strauven chose to speak – more broadly – of 'desktop cinema', preferring this definition to that of 'desktop documentary'.

[16] On the concept of 'topological narration', I shall take the liberty of recommending my paper 'Exploring Media Space in a Narrative Way. The Ongoing Desktop Narration Between New Digital Media and Contemporary Cinema', *Imago. Studi di cinema e media*, 22 (forthcoming 2021).

[17] Catherine Grant, 'Reframe Conversation. Kevin B. Lee', https://filmstudiesforfree.blogspot.com/2015/04/on-desktop-documentary-or-kevin-b-lee.html [accessed 10 September 2021].

[18] Unpublished interview to Walter Woodman and Patrick Cederberg performed by the author on 13 March 2015.

[19] Francesco Casetti, *The Lumière Galaxy: Seven Key Words for the Cinema to Come*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

[20] Alexander Galloway, *The Interface Effect* (Cambridge, UK, Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2012).

[21] In Galloway's reflection, the concept of remediation directly derives from another reflection by Marshall McLuhan. In this paper, I prefer to make reference to the reinterpretation made in the late-90s by David Bolter and Richard Grusin in their book *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).

[22] The correlation between opacity and metareflection dimension seems to be implicit even in Galloway's observations. It is no coincidence that in mentioning a series of cases in which the unworkable state of the intraface emerges he also references art cinema or Brecht's alienation-effect. All such practices leverage an awareness by the viewer of the processes lying behind the representation. See: A. Galloway, op. cit., pp. 40–42.

[23] On the relationship between the image and the documentation of the gesture, also see the reflections by Giorgio Agamben in 'Notes on Gesture', in Id., *Infancy and history: essays on the destruction of experience* (London: Verso, 1993), pp- 133–39.

[24] Upon discussing 'constructive instability', we explicitly refer to the definition presented by Thomas Elsaesser. On this topic, see Thomas Elsaesser, '"Constructive Instability", or: The Life of Things as the Cinema's Afterlife', in *Video Vortex Reader. Responses to YouTube*, ed. by Geert Lovink, Sabine Niederer (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2008), pp. 13–31. Also see Thomas Elsaesser, 'Tales of Epiphany and Entropy: Around the Worlds in Eighty Clicks', in *The YouTube Reader*, ed. by Pelle Snickars, Patrick Vonderau (Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, 2009), pp. 166–86.

[25] See Ursula Heise, 'Unnatural Ecologies: The Metaphor of the Environment in Media Theory', *Configurations*, 10.1 (November 2002), 149–68.

[26] Francesco Parisi, *La tecnologia che siamo* (Turin: Codice, 2019), pp. 23–24.

[27] Branden Hookway, *Interface* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2014), p. 130.

[28] Ivi, p. 62 [emphasis added].

[29] Ivi, p. 5.

REVIEWS/COMPTES-RENDUS

Sulle tracce del crimine. Viaggio nel giallo e nero Rai

Hot on the Heels of Crime. A Journey into the World of Detectives on Rai

(Roma, Museo di Roma in Trastevere, October 7, 2020 – March 31, 2021) Exhibition and Catalogue Roma: RaiLibri, 2020

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The Italian Giallo and the noir: these are not merely two (of the best known) types, two possibilities among the various forms of that macro-genre that today is often labelled *crime*, which features gothic atmospheres or detection, legal cases or conspiracy theories, seductive criminals or sprawling mafia intrigues. The terms also denote a forcefield that stretches between the two extremes of escapist and subversive power; to quote two famous reflections, they intercept, on the one hand, that naive amusement, that 'fresh and straightforward impressionism' that Antonio Gramsci envied in his friend's reading of GK Chesterton's novels, but also, on the other, that 'curious and nonconformist' style, as radically modernist as the avant-garde, of 1940s film noir, which fascinated Marcel Duhamel and the French surrealists.[1]

The itinerary of the exhibition *Hot on the Heels of Crime* offers a similar experience. It leads through the multiple formulas of crimes and investigations that television has been able to create, activating the same emotional and intellectual dialectic: the pleasure of recognizing and rediscovering what is familiar, together with the amazement at seeing well-known icons in an unexpected way. The exhibition unveils and investigates Rai's extraordinary television production, proposing various chapters of this history: the halls of the exhibition accommodate different sections devoted to figures, trends and forms of crime. This includes 'Gothic', 'Laura Storm and Other Female Detectives', 'Detectives Stories Meet Noir' and 'The Dark Heart of Italy'. Meanwhile — following the narrative of the genre itself — this tour of 'detection' leads the visitor to different, possible cross-roads, thanks to the strong multi-sensorial dimension of the exhibition: our attention is suddenly called to a noise or to the cover of a book, to the sound of music or to press clippings. Thus, we find ourselves bewitched by a monitor, eye-to-eye with Alida Valli and enchanted by her plea to have her son returned to her, trying to tell reality from fiction (*I figli di Medea*, Anton Giulio Majano, 1959). Or we can take a detour, attracted to the aural evidence of shots and screeching tires, whispers and creaks, screams and verbal orders emanating from the installations, acknowledging the sound of TV crime and its dialogue with cinema, as well as with radio broadcasts, comics and animation. We can also find pages of literature written by Carlo Emilio Gadda but also try to detect Ingravallo in Flavio Bucci's countenance (*Quer pasticciaccio brutto de*

via Merulana, P. Schivazzappa 1983), or investigate Dürrenmatt in Paolo Stoppa's role as chief of police Bärlach (*Il sospetto*, Daniele D'Anza, 1972). A map on the wall allows us to identify several secret and unusual corners of Rome, made famous by *Il segno del comando* (Daniele D'Anza, 1971), or we can be carried away by 'The Rhythm of a Thriller' room and its famous crime drama theme tunes (from those of *Le temps file ses jours* by Luigi Tenco and *Le nuove inchieste del commissario Maigret*, 1964, to the sound of trumpets by Nicola Piovani for *Linda e il brigadiere*, 1997). Finally, we can be tempted to decipher the contents of the glass cases — excerpts of minutes, judgements, renowned front pages of newspapers, and so forth, together with scripts and props — to try to understand more about 'Shadows and Mysteries in Italy' in this final room creating connections between reality, its narration and fiction.

A collaboration with the Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori and the Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA), the 'synaesthetic and multi-sensorial' Rai exhibition — to borrow Peppino Ortoleva's definition of the 2000s thriller in the exhibition catalogue[2] — offers rich intermediality, as TV dialogues with radio, the print and recording industries, *loisir* and visual cultures, along with fashion and geography, in Italy and abroad. What emerges is the absolutely central role played by television in reworking and confirming the plural expressions of crime fiction, in the rich array of inspired and multimedia detectives, including Sheridan (Ubaldo Lay) and Nero Wolfe (Tino Buazzelli), De Luca (Alessandro Preziosi) and Don Matteo (Terence Hill).

Not only do the iconographic and audiovisual resources presented here offer a precious moment 'of synthesis, collection, an overall glance'[3] at crime narratives and at the priceless heritage of the Teche Rai archives, the exhibition also provides evidence of their wealth of implications. The large number of on-set photographs — selected by Stefano Nespolesi — capture a relevant snapshot of past technologies and, above all, at TV production, something that is constantly central — as Emiliano Morreale and Luca Barra recall in their essays in the catalogue — to a full understanding of television crime fiction. At the same time, the exhibition and catalogue also provide many lessons in visual culture: the pictures of the New Millennium crime hero force us to reflect on this icon and its actions, just as how 'the revolver which becomes in his hands an almost intellectual weapon, the argument that dumbfounds', as André Bazin wrote of Humphrey Bogart.[4] Thus, the exhibition offers further insights into how 'the immanence of death, its imminence as well' is epitomized by police chief Cattani (Michele Placido) or inspector Coliandro (Giampaolo Morelli), by the 'hunter' judge (Francesco Montanari) or the cop Rocco Schiavone (Marco Giallini).

Hot on the Heels of Crime provides many attractions for the visitor as well as for readers and passionate scholars: the journey through detective stories is intertwined with an important piece of national/television history; it presents its wounds and the different ways of fixing or shunning them. As writers and showrunners such as Carlo Lucarelli (*Blu notte*, *Inspector Coliandro*) and Giancarlo De Cataldo (*Crimini*, *Romanzo criminale*) recall in the catalogue, crime fiction certainly does not provide a superficial mirroring of the times. Rather, as stated above, the giallo gives shape to the complexity of the contemporary world, and it tends, even metaphorically, to 'go on the road',[5] and — as in exhibited film stills — to reread and rewrite national geography. As Todorov pointed out, detective fiction always invokes a question about time: the past (the resolution of a past crime is typical of the whodunit), the present (the thriller where everything is potentially about to happen) and finally the future (the curiosity

about the events which will take place after the discovery of the truth, as is typical of suspense).[6] Here, the journey into crime interacts with Italian socio-cultural history and its narration, stimulating questions and traversing different time frames. It does all of this without ever betraying the desire and the memory that make every piece of evidence, every element of suspense, every sound and every television frame and film still in the exhibition 'the stuff that dreams are made of', as Humphrey Bogart defined *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1946).

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Notes

[1] See Marcel Duhamel's preface to Raymond Borde and Etienne Chaumeton, *Panorama du film noir américain 1941-1953* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1955), first publ. *A Panorama of American Film Noir. 1941-1953* (San Francisco: City Lights Book, 2002), pp. XXIII-XXV. See also James Namemore's introduction to the English edition 'A Season in Hell or the Snows of Yesteryear?', pp. VII-XXII.

[2] Peppino Ortoleva, 'La morte, il mistero, la poltrona: i segreti del giallo televisivo', in *Sulle tracce del crimine. Viaggio nel giallo e nero Rai. Il catalogo*, ed. by Maria Pia Ammirati and Peppino Ortoleva (Roma: Rai Libri, 2020), pp. 17-34 (p. 21).

[3] Maria Pia Ammirati. Rai Teche Director, 'La storia del giallo Rai come archeologia della serialità moderna', in *Sulle tracce del crimine*, pp. 12-14 (p. 13).

[4] André Bazin, 'The Death of Humphrey Bogart [1957]', in *Cahiers du cinéma. The 1950s. Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*, ed. by Jim Hillier (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1986).

[5] Maurizio De Giovanni, 'Nella pelle dell'assassino', in *Sulle tracce del crimine*, pp. 51-60 (p. 53).

[6] Tsvetan Todorov, *The Typology of Detective Fiction* [1966], in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. by David Lodge (London and New York: Longman, 1999), pp. 137-144.

Daniela Treveri Gennari, Catherine O'Rawe, Danielle Hipkins, Silvia Dibeltulo, and Sarah Culhane

Italian Cinema Audiences: Histories and Memories of Cinemagoing in Post-War Italy

New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020, pp. 240

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Italian Cinema Audiences: Histories and Memories of Cinemagoing in Post-War Italy is the fruit of a wide-ranging study funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council on Italian film audiences in the 1950s.

The volume is underpinned by a meticulous reconstruction of the debate and a research approach that interweaves various sources: a field study using questionnaires and video interviews with spectators from the period; analyses of the specialist and mainstream media from that period; a comparison with previous studies and data on cinema attendance during the decade.

The book consists of three sections, reflecting and exploring the authors' different interests and perspectives.

The first outlines the practice of moviegoing. It foregrounds the forms of cinema experience in its various consumption contexts with reference to geographical location, urban vs rural environments, and types of movie theatres, classified simply, yet effectively, as first-, second- and third-run cinemas. Within this section, chapter 2, in particular, focuses on the role of cinemas as 'activators of memory' and drivers of the discovery and appropriation of public space, making productive use of a model with an illustrious history: from Douglas Gomery to Annette Kuhn. There is also an anticipation of analysis of cinema's ability to shape identity that forms the centrepiece of the third section. Chapter 3 broadens the concept of the viewing experience to include non-cinematographic practices such as reading illustrated current-affairs magazines or film journals. It reveals cinema's scope as a generator of imaginaries and shared repertories of knowledge, lifestyles and ideals that are also accessible outside of cinemas and, ultimately, in their absence. The study also draws attention to the web of associations that connect cinema with other social and recreational activities (like football), underlining its importance for Italians in their everyday life and leisure time. This well-delineated scenario produces some particularly original insights. This includes the accounts of getting into cinemas for free or cheaply, referred to by interviewees as *portoghesismo*. This is a neologism based on the colloquial Italian expression '*fare il portoghese*' (literally 'doing it the Portuguese way'), attempting — sometimes

successfully, often not — to avoid paying for something (p. 32). Then there are the unwritten rules of cinema etiquette (p. 59). This vivid portrait of film-theatre behaviour includes a delightful passage about the social acceptability (or otherwise) of asking the person in the neighbouring seat for a match in order to smoke. It confirms the cinema's heterotopic nature as a public space where some conventions can be waived or amended. Another aspect still is the synaesthesia of collective memory about movie theatres. Recollections of movies or, more often, movie genres mingle with a more complex bodily memory — often neglected in the literature — made of smells, flavours and even tactile sensations, such as touching the seat upholstery. These all become defining features of cinemas and their place in audiences' geographies of experience.

Part two offers a new discussion of various data and sources to illuminate the relationship between audiences and film genres. Chapter 4 gathers memories of popular genres, pointing to the gap between moviegoers' stories and the institutional discourse by the film industry and critics (p. 79), probing and highlighting the diversity of audience experiences. Melodrama, for example, emerges as an important arena for young people's romantic education after the war: a manual of seduction and racy escapades for male viewers (melodrama as the genre of excess, to quote Linda Williams) and an appeal to family values and the ethic of sacrifice for women and girls. Chapter 5 spotlights audiences' ambivalence towards neorealism at the time. The authors identify two conflicting experiences: that of viewers with direct memory of the conflict and the civil war who felt uncomfortable watching neorealist content; and that of audiences without those memories, for whom neorealist films constituted a 'prosthetic memory' (p. 101) that helped them feel closer, more empathetic and understanding towards the previous generation.

The third part of the book spotlights cinema's role in identity-building processes, teasing out the plurality of forms that the viewing experience took in those years. The analysis concentrates mainly on the male-female dialectic, reflected and brought into focus both in moviegoing practices (especially in the actual likelihood of getting in to watch a film) and more broadly in the cinema experience. The section has three chapters. The first pieces together cinema memories of girls and young women, highlighting its inherent tension, imbued with frustrated desire and often prohibition (the film theatre as an inappropriate place to visit alone). The next chapter discusses fandom and its practices, based on Jackie Stacey's now-classic taxonomy. The image emerges of a new generation of women struggling to relate to the opulent forms and decadent melodrama of Silvana Pampanini, finding their bearings instead in the spirit and verve of Sophia Loren, the svelte modern elegance of Catherine Spaak and Audrey Hepburn, and the offbeat beauty of Anna Magnani and Giulietta Masina. The last chapter is about male filmgoers and their idols. It reveals the inextricable link between the Hollywood hero (Marlon Brandon and James Dean) and its Italian counterpart (primarily Amedeo Nazzari), laying bare the contradictions of a masculinity that the next decade would go on to pick apart, as Giacomo Manzoli has so clearly shown. In this section, the authors use Graham Dawson's concept of *composure* to explain the connection between the memory of past events and the subject's (actual or desired) role in their social milieu (p. 155). The analysis of queer subjectivity and cinema (pp. 170-171) is especially original. The theme has hitherto been explored partly in reference to the politics of representation but virtually ignored in relation to moviegoing. The discussion therefore offers an original contribution to the history of Italian cinema

audiences and their experiences.

All told, *Italian Cinema Audiences* is an important milestone that orders and formalizes a body of research on Italian film audiences that has grown significantly over the last two decades, adding further value and legitimacy. The work has four particular merits.

First, it makes effective use of the new cinema history paradigm formalized by Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst and Philippe Meers, a recent and mature result of the pivotal historiographical impulse provided by the Brighton Conference. The volume draws on that paradigm in leveraging the complexity of the empirical data and taking the courage to reckon with that complexity, which cannot and must not be shoehorned into a simplistic reading. This is a rare quality, one that also shines through in the way the *triangulation* technique is applied: not as a tool for cross-checking sources (as in many historical and social studies) but rather as an opportunity to acquire additional viewpoints and reflect the rich diversity of film audiences' experiences.

The work's second key strength is the care and sensitivity with which it examines oral sources, recognizing their layered meanings and the evolving nature of the remembered narrative, which reconsiders the past in light of the present. This powerful perspective decisively transcends the sterile issue of the objectivity of the oral sources, making a crucial contribution to answering the question 'what did cinema mean to post-war Italians?'

A third factor is the vivid, richly detailed depiction of what moviegoing was like, in relation to the theatres, films, genres and actors. This achievement is not to be taken for granted. It reflects a careful historiographical effort, an ability to listen to the sources, and a rapport with the subjects that I would go so far as to term *affectionate*.

Finally, the authors have chosen to publish the book in a Bloomsbury Academic series called *Topics and Issues in National Cinema*. This is not without significance, as audience studies were long deemed ancillary to cinema history and trifling in their contribution to identifying specific national traits. This editorial choice, therefore, indicates a decisive change, validating the importance of audience studies in Italian cultural and cinema history.

A final thought. The book has emerged in the midst of a pandemic that has taken a ferocious toll in particular on the generation whose youth or childhood coincided with the post-war years. The memories collected in these pages not only enrich the knowledge available to scholars of Italian cinema and its audiences, they also offer us the precious opportunity to see these men and women in a different light from that in which the events of the last year have forcibly cast them. This is another excellent reason to read this book.

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Film and Domestic Space: Architectures, Representations, Dispositif

Edited by Stefano Baschiera and Miriam De Rosa

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As Atxu Amann Y Alcocer and Flavio Martella have highlighted in *The Architectural Review*, by having the public space become a synonym of danger and harm to public health, the Covid-19 pandemic has led us to rediscover the home as a central place in our lives, 'a crucial structure from which to weather the crisis'.[7] Suddenly, our houses have had to become at the same time the only appointed place for labour, leisure and personal life. The theme around which Stefano Baschiera and Miriam De Rosa's edited collection revolves is thus today more topical than ever. Indeed, *Film and Domestic Space: Architectures, Representations, Dispositif* contributes to the growing literature addressing spatiality and cinema by attempting to foreground the complex and multifaceted — yet still understudied — relationship between domesticity and film. As they state in the introduction, with this collection Baschiera and De Rosa aim to show the various ways in which one can represent and conceive of 'domestic space as an architecture, that is, a place to be practised, inhabited, built by a spectator who will feel and acknowledge her/his empowerment towards spatiality' (p. 6).

This objective is achieved through a selection of essays that look at domesticity within a rich array of audiovisual works. From horror films to female-fronted biopics, from road movies to essay films, each chapter investigates the broader topic of domestic space and cinema in relationship to a different film genre. However, rather than considering more broadly the chosen cinematic form, most chapters adopt a case study formula and offer close readings of a few individual titles. An exception is Iain Robert Smith's essay 'What Is Cult When It's at Home? Reframing Cult Cinema in Relation to Domestic Space'. Indeed, Smith not only looks broadly at cult cinema, but also does not discuss the representation of domestic space in these works. It examines, instead, domestic space as the place of home viewing, in order to show how fruition in this context can impact on how cult cinema is understood and theorized. In terms of geographical contexts, too, some variety can be identified in the range of filmic texts discussed in Baschiera's and De Rosa's collection, even if the focus of most chapters tends to be either on American or European productions. For instance, the chapter by Lukas Brašiškis and Nerijus Milerius addresses the less explored Baltic cinema, while De Rosa's own essay looks at the most recent works of a filmmaker of non-Euro-American origins, namely the Israeli Amos Gitai Weinraub.

Finally, richness and variety can be identified in *Film and Domestic Space* also at the level of the points of view adopted to explore

domesticity within the various contributions. For instance, we can find chapters that embrace an architectural angle and thus consider the home as the house. This is the case for John David Rhodes's essay, wherein the representation of the Colonial Revival house is discussed by looking at an array of US audiovisual productions ranging from the wartime comedy *Christmas in Connection* (Peter Godfrey, 1945) to the sitcom *Father Knows Best* (1954-60). Another example is the chapter by Laura Rascaroli, who, focusing on two essay films that comment on the house and its structuring function — namely *Barbicania* (Ila Bêka and Louise Lemoine, 2014) and *No Home Movie* (Chantal Akerman, 2015) — discusses how the medium of cinema can frame images of the house/home.

Various are, however, also the chapters that look at the domestic space from the perspective of gender, going at times beyond the clichéd binomial of domesticity and the feminine. Anna Backman Rogers' chapter on *Carol* (Todd Haynes, 2015) is emblematic in this sense, arguing that lesbian desire in this film is figured as 'an affective and emotional history that plays out in liminal spaces between the social and domestic stratifications determined by patriarchal law' (p. 72).

Finally, in *Film and Domestic Space*, one can even find audience-oriented approaches, as in the aforementioned essay by Robert Smith or in the one by Beth Carroll, which analyses the domestic soundscape of those haunted-house horror films like *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980) and *Paranormal Activity* (Oren Peli, 2007) that problematize the idea of the home as a safe space.

If a criticism can be moved to Baschiera and De Rosa's collection it is that, despite their intention to create 'a bridge between the representational reading of domestic space that is at the heart of the existing scholarship with that centred on the idea of dispositif' (p. 6), the notion of domestic space as *dispositif* ultimately remains mostly an undercurrent. Only in a couple of chapters it is actually foregrounded, one of them being De Rosa's essay, in which the work of Amos Gitai Weinraub becomes the point of departure for showing how the space of the installation can return a sense of home.

Overall, however, *Film and Domestic Space* is a rich and thought-provoking edited collection that successfully manages to show how domestic space is far from being a stable concept. It also makes apparent how a full understanding of the interplaying of domesticity and cinema necessitates the dialogue between a set of different conceptual and methodological approaches. Baschiera and De Rosa's volume will thus likely trigger further developments in this emerging sub-field of spatiality and cinema, especially in the wake of the centrality that the Covid-19 crisis has brought the house to acquire in our lives.

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Notes

[7] Atxu Amann Y Alcocer and Flavio Martella, 'Public House: The City Folds into the Space of the Home', *The Architectural Review*, 4 June 2020, https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/public-house-the-city-folds-into-the-space-of-the-home [accessed 2 July 2021].

PROJECTS & ABSTRACTS

Helena Lumbreras et le *Colectivo de Cine de Clase* : une pratique cinématographique militante à la fin du franquisme et durant la transition en Espagne

Elena Blázquez / Ph.D. Thesis Abstract[1]
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Ce travail de recherche se propose de faire une analyse poussée de l'œuvre d'Helena Lumbreras, indéniable pionnière du cinéma militant espagnol s'étant notamment illustrée au sein du groupe cinématographique *Colectivo de Cine de Clase*, dans ce contexte particulier qui s'étend de la fin du franquisme au début de la transition en Espagne. Son œuvre, Lumbreras lui a donné de multiples dimensions, et c'est à un niveau tout autant individuel que collectif qu'elle lui a donné forme et profondeur. Il s'agit de la première étude académique proposant un examen minutieux de l'œuvre de cette cinéaste et de son Collectif — raison pour laquelle ce travail se présente comme une étude panoramique, étant donné qu'il cherche, par la compilation et l'analyse de documents nombreux, et parfois inédits, et par une étude approfondie de sources variées portant sur Lumbreras et sur le Collectif, à apporter une lumière différente, tout autant que pertinente, sur cette œuvre d'une grande richesse. Ce qu'il convient d'abord de souligner, c'est que le cinéma, auquel s'est adonné Lumbreras avec passion, n'a occupé, en réalité, qu'un temps de sa vie, un temps parmi d'autres, puisqu'elle s'est par ailleurs consacrée à des activités non directement liées au cinéma : nous songeons notamment à la peinture, à l'enseignement, mais aussi au militantisme politique — autant de facettes qui constituent, chez Lumbreras, une figure à la fois multiple et profondément cohérente. Pour elle, le cinéma n'était certes pas un monde « à part », détaché des vicissitudes du monde : bien au contraire, il était un moyen, parmi d'autres, de comprendre la société, et d'en dénoncer les abus. Analyser, par le cinéma, le fonctionnement des conditions socio-politiques de son temps, et suggérer d'autres ouvertures possibles, d'autres inscriptions humaines possibles dans la société, telle était son ambition. Le présent travail aspire donc à retracer, le plus finement possible, le parcours de cette cinéaste. Par sa structure même, notre étude se veut la trace, précise, d'un parcours de vie qui englobe et dépasse nécessairement la seule œuvre cinématographique. Nous l'avons dit, le cinéma fut un moment, certes crucial, de sa vie, mais pas toute sa vie. Cependant, pour Lumbreras, faire du cinéma allait bel et bien de pair avec un engagement que l'on pourrait qualifier de vital. Les bornes temporelles que nous avons

choisies, à savoir, 1968-1978, correspondent à la période au cours de laquelle Helena Lumbreras a pu réaliser ses cinq principaux documentaires, ceux qui forment, pour ainsi dire, le noyau de sa filmographie. Autour de ces bornes temporelles, ce sont tous les autres événements, antérieurs et postérieurs, qui gravitent — événements qui trouveront leur place dans notre étude, au sens où ils ont donné aux travaux de Lumbreras et du *Colectivo de Clase* une originalité et un rayonnement qui leur sont propres.

Dans le cadre d'une ligne historiographique ayant étudié le cinéma de Lumbreras selon une lecture féministe, on pourrait alléguer que son cinéma offre non seulement une position politique de classe, mais également, de manière intersectionnelle, de genre. Le cinéma de Lumbreras est, sans nul doute, un cinéma contestataire, non seulement dans sa substance, mais aussi parce que c'est l'œuvre d'une femme, dans une société patriarcale. De même, c'est bien son engagement dans un cinéma collectif qui lui a permis de conférer à son cinéma une perspective de genre, présente non seulement dans le contenu — ayant à cœur d'attester le rôle de premier plan des femmes dans les luttes ouvrières — mais également dans l'expérimentation relationnelle, telle que le *Colectivo de Cine de Clase* l'a mise en pratique. Ce projet, éminemment collectif, a donné lieu à un espace permettant de subvertir les rôles de genre traditionnels, par le biais d'une proposition horizontale cherchant justement à s'extraire des rapports de domination, que l'on trouvait également reproduits dans le domaine du cinéma alternatif. Parallèlement, la tendance permanente de Lumbreras à filmer des femmes doit faire l'objet d'une réflexion. C'est, en effet, une chose à laquelle la cinéaste est attentive, et que le spectateur perçoit effectivement comme une préoccupation majeure dans ses films. Lumbreras cherche à comprendre et à analyser comment, concrètement, les femmes vivent les conflits. Elle se positionne donc, et ce, dès ses premiers travaux, avec un regard soucieux de revendiquer le rôle de la femme en tant que canalisateur de nouveaux processus de devenir. L'innovation de ce nouveau regard consiste à repenser à nouveaux frais le rôle historique et social de la femme — alors même que les inerties du contexte, propres à chaque société, et en l'occurrence à celle-ci, auraient très facilement pu induire un relatif oubli de la place des femmes dans ce devenir commun qu'est l'Histoire en train de se faire. Et c'est parce que Lumbreras a cet autre regard, un regard scrutateur et critique, tout en étant innovant, que son rôle est, pourrait-on dire, capital. Elle interroge en effet la place dévolue aux femmes, non seulement dans la société, mais aussi dans le cinéma lui-même : traditionnellement, les femmes avaient eu leur place devant la caméra, elles étaient objets, pour ainsi dire, du regard. Mais elles n'étaient pas, traditionnellement, derrière la caméra, pour filmer, pour créer et inventer. Or c'est un point absolument central, pour comprendre l'importance de Lumbreras dans le cinéma de son temps : non seulement parce que la réalisatrice est, certes, une femme qui regarde, mais surtout parce que, il convient de le souligner, c'est une femme qui regarde les femmes, réprouvant ainsi l'aveuglement historique qui a ignoré le regard féminin[2]. En outre, le rejet du système patriarcal est d'autant plus décisif que Lumbreras invite et fait place à une véritable pluralité de femmes : des paysannes, des ouvrières, des syndiquées, qui font connaître et dénoncent, face à la caméra, leur situation professionnelle et sociale. Comme le souligne justement Laura Mulvey, l'un des sujets primordiaux du discours féministe, contre la stratégie de représentation patriarcale, centrée, quant à elle, sur une dichotomie des visions allant de pair avec une double polarité faite d'inégalité, est la déconstruction de la

représentation des femmes comme objets[3]. Partant de ces postulats, on peut, ainsi, dire que Lumbreras prend position en faveur d'un discours féministe qu'elle met inlassablement en œuvre, de façon concrète, dans et par son travail cinématographique.

Notes

[1] Directeur de thèse Prof. Jacques Terrasa. Pour plus d'information : Elena.Blazquez@uclm.es

[2] Viviane Forrester a dénoncé en 1974 l'absence de la vision des femmes au cinéma comme un aveuglement. À cet égard, elle a écrit : « Le regard des femmes, on ne le connaît pas. Que voit-il ? Comment découpe-t-il, invente-t-il, déchiffre-t-il le monde ? Je ne sais pas. Je connais mon regard, le regard d'une femme, mais le monde vu par d'autres, je connais celui des hommes seulement ». Viviene Forrester, « Le Regard des femmes » (1974), dans Collectif des femmes de Musidora, *Paroles... elles tournent !* Paris, Des Femmes, 1976, p. 12.

[3] Laura Mulvey, « Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema » (1973), dans Leo Braudy et Marshall Cohen (dir.), *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, New York, Oxford UP, 1999, pp. 833–844.

DETECt – Detecting Transcultural Identity in European Popular Crime Narratives

Federico Pagello / Horizon 2020 Research Project[1]
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DETECt was funded by the Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme to explore the ways in which popular narratives can contribute to give expression to a new, shared European cultural identity. The project was launched on April 1, 2018 and will come to a close on October 31, 2021. It has been coordinated by Professor Monica Dall'Asta and the University of Bologna in collaboration with 17 other institutions, both public and private, based in 10 European countries. The academic partners also include Rome's Link Campus University from Italy, the Universities of Limoges and Paris West-Nanterre from France, the Universities of Aalborg and Aarhus from Denmark, Queen's University Belfast from the UK, KU Leuven from Belgium, the University of Umea from Sweden, the University of Bucharest from Romania, the University of Debrecen from Hungary and the University of Ioannina from Greece. The non-academic partners are Paris' Bibliothèque de Litterature Policières from France, the Deutsche Film und Fernsehakademie Berlin from Germany the public broadcaster TV2, the film and television company Miso Film and the public tourism organization Visit Aarhus from Denmark.

DETECt responded to a specific call released in the framework of H2020 Societal Challenges — Europe in a Changing World programme, which looked for innovative approaches to the study, teaching and dissemination of contemporary artistic and creative practices across Europe. The consortium decided to focus on crime narratives because of their ability to circulate widely across borders, eliciting collaboration among producers and making cultural exchanges among citizens all over the continent. The scholars involved in the project are from a varied disciplinary background, allowing them to engage with different media, focusing particularly on literary fiction, film and television. Through a mix of literary, film and media studies, cultural studies, cultural history, sociology and Digital Humanities, DETECt has examined the creation and transnational circulation of popular narratives in all their key aspects: the production strategies; the modes of distribution; the role of reception; and the central issue of representation of European cultural identities in the specific case of crime narratives.

DETECt's research started from the study of the industrial strategies and public policies that in the last few years have led to an increasing ability of European crime narratives to circulate internationally. Quantitative and qualitative methods have been adopted to understand how the recent changes in the media market, particular in the

television sector, have both encouraged the implementation of transnational funding and distribution practices and made more visible the persistence imbalance among different countries and regions on the European level. The results of this research have been presented in several conference papers, research reports (see in particular Location Marketing and Cultural Tourism, eds. Cathrin Bengesser, Kim Toft Hansen, Lynge Stegger Gemzøe) as well as two special issues of peer-review journals: the one you are reading, focused on TV crime series, and one devoted to the production and distribution of European crime films, to appear in *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media* and edited by Stefano Baschiera and Markus Schleich.

Research on the reception of European crime narratives have allowed to compare and contrast how the consumption of this genre, and TV crime series in particular, show some significant continental trends — such as the role of OTT services and pay-per-view channels — as well as the existence of obvious differences in the ways Europeans engage with non-domestic shows depending of the country or are of origin. An online survey with more than 1,200 respondents has also collected and analyzed quantitive data. The results, first presented in a confidential research report (eds. Federico Pagello, Markus Schleich), will be published soon in a series of articles.

The main strand of research in DETECt concerned the representation of European cultural identity as a set of transcultural identities, expressing the complexity and diversity of European society and history and promoting a greater mutual understanding among the citizens of the European Union. DETECt scholars have therefore developed in-depth analyses of the multiple ways in which crime narratives have indeed been able to offer a more and more diverse image of the human geographical across the continent, while showing how the stories and characters depicted often still fit into some established stereotypes or tend to adopt a sensationalist approach, which reduced their cultural significance. Many conferences papers have been devoted to these topics and two research reports have been completed. Most importantly, the research findings are being published through a series of publications, including special issues of *European Review* (eds. Jan Baetens, Fred Truyen, Ana Schultze), *Academic Quarter* (eds. Monica Dall'Asta, Natacha Levet, Federico Pagello), *Journal of European Popular Culture* (eds. Valentina Re, Thomas Morsch), as well as the publication you are reading. An edited collection entitled *Contemporary European Crime Fiction: Representing History and Politics* (eds. Monica Dall'Asta, Jacques Migozzi, Federico Pagello, Andrew Pepper) will be published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2022.

As per the requests of the programme to which it was responding, DETECt has put as much emphasis on the research activities as on the transferring and co-creation of knowledge through the implementation of a variety of innovative teaching and dissemination activities, including the creation of digital tools and resources. In addition to including the topics and methodologies adopted in the research in their university courses, DETECt scholars experimented with new learning methods involving the realization of video essays and the writing of Wikipedia pages. Interaction among students from different countries has been promoted not only through the coordination of courses completing similar activities (such as the editing of Wikipedia entries) but also through the creation of a series of learning material to be delivered through a dedicated MOODLE. Learning material have also been designed for non-university students: members of DETECt delivered lectures and workshop addressed to high-school students; in-person and online conferences and masterclasses,

also involving professionals such as writers, screenwriters and directors were organized by many partners institutions; and an Open Massive Online Course entitled Euro Noir: Cultural Identity in European Popular Crime Narratives was made freely accessible on the Internet. Two additional key digital outputs for the dissemination of the project findings are also available to scholars, students and the general public: the DETECt Atlas of European Crime Narratives, showing the continental dimension of the genre, and the DETECt app, offering walking tours on the locations of crime in Aarhus and, in the next months, in Bologna. A range of dissemination activities addressed at the general public have also been completed, including the creation of an exhibition (*L'Europe du polar*, held in Paris in 2020 and now online: https://europedupolar.paris.fr), the organisation of a screenwriting contest accompanied by a webinar on how to write a crime series, and the written and audiovisual contributions of many DETECt scholars to print media, radio programmes, as well as literary, film and TV festivals.

Notes

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