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ILUMINACE

SPECIAL ISSUE:
**PANDEMIC TELEVISION.
TELEVISION INDUSTRIES IN THE MIDST OF COVID-19**
Guest Editor:
Jana Jedličková (Palacký University Olomouc)

OBSAH

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Jana Jedličková   (Palacký University Olomouc)

Pandemic Television

Television Industries in the Midst of COVID-19

The Covid pandemic is probably one of the events that most of us would like to forget, or at least not revisit. Although it has been largely framed by the media as an epidemiological problem and a health threat, from the point of view of the media industries, and the culture as a whole, it is a very unique and, in its own novel way, fascinating situation. Therefore, this special issue of *Iluminace* is dedicated to television, which was one of the few media in the period in question to experience a rise in viewership, a growth in public trust in many parts of the world and, as a result of unexpected socio-economic factors, was also forced to transform the industrial strategies for the production and distribution of television content. And because television cannot be separated from its socio-cultural context and from its audiences, there have been changes in viewing practices and programme preferences. It is not possible to say at this point how permanent these changes will be. However, we know from research and analysis of media landscapes already underway that changes are indeed taking place to a greater or lesser extent, and that the probability of linear and non-linear television returning to pre-pandemic strategies is becoming less and less likely.

At the same time, there is a natural need in society to start again, better, without the pandemic constraints of everyday life. This tendency is doubly true in the field of live culture, which has been looking for alternative ways of existing during 2020–2022. Among other things, for example, by hybridizing with television, which has helped many cultural projects to bridge the multiple lockdowns and limitations of public life. The impression is therefore that we should turn our attention to those areas of culture that could not be realised during the pandemic in the forms to which we were accustomed. This issue therefore represents a targeted effort to record the processes affecting a medium that has seemingly not suffered particularly, although it has been affected by COVID-19 in a major way. In doing so, we deliberately present examples of local strategies of national television cop-

ing with a global event. These case studies and analyses of television broadcasting, its production and distribution, are firmly anchored in a specific temporal-geographical framework, but they nevertheless reveal how flexible television as a medium can be, and how crucial its capacity to adapt is for engaging with television audiences.

News themes and framing of the COVID are explored in *Framing Pandemic News. Empirical Research on COVID-19 Representation in the Italian TV News* by Andrea Miconi, Simona Pezzano and Elisabetta Risi. In addition to focusing on the framing and content of news coverage, they also note the socio-political context of the course of the covid pandemic in Italy, one of the most affected countries in Europe at the time. Fact-making and fictional programmes are the focus of the Spanish-Israeli comparative study *#QuedateEn-Casa: How Did the Argentine and Spanish TV Industries React to the Outbreak of the COVID Pandemic in 2020?* by Concepción Cascajos Virina and Pablo Mendez Shiff. Both authors discuss the similarities and differences between the Argentine and Spanish television industries, which, despite similar cultural aspects, approached the representation of the pandemic in different ways. Tatiana Hidalgo-Marí and Patricia Sanchez also explore the representation of covid-19 in Spanish fictional TV production. In an article entitled *Spanish TV Fiction in Times of Pandemic: Nuclear and Transversal Stories about COVID-19*, she discusses in detail the thematic-content structure of Spanish series thematizing the pandemic and their relation to ongoing events. Florian Krauß's latest contribution also focuses on content trends and production-distribution aspects. In a case study of the German series *Drinnen*, he presents the adaptation mechanisms of the German television and film industry in the early days of the pandemic. The paper *Fictionalizing the COVID-19 Pandemic "Instantly": A Case Study of the German Comedy Drama Drinnen — Im Internet sind alle gleich* demonstrates the necessity of media adaptability in times of societal crisis and the ingenuity with which audiovisual professionals can solve seemingly intractable situations.

The COVID-19 pandemic seems to be over, but its impact on the cultural and creative industries is immeasurable. Naturally, it also affects television, and it would be a shame to ignore it. That is why we also consider it necessary to note and remind ourselves of the ways in which the media relate to our everyday reality in times of crisis, how they represent it and how they communicate these circumstances to us.

Florian Krauß   (University of Siegen)

Fictionalizing the COVID-19 Pandemic "Instantly"

A Case Study of the German Comedy Drama Drinnen — Im Internet sind alle gleich

Abstract

Based on interviews with production members and trade magazine articles, the paper discusses how the German comedy drama *Drinnen — Im Internet sind alle gleich* (2020) dealt with COVID-19 in its production. The series — whose title translates to "Inside — On the Internet All Are Equal" — is obviously about the pandemic: it tells the story of Charlotte, who is planning to quit her job and leave her marriage when she suddenly has to self-isolate and communicate with others only online. Not only Charlotte's fictional life but also the show's real-life production was very much affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. All crew members worked from home, due to Germany's contact restrictions in early 2020. For a fictional production, *Drinnen* was developed and shot in an extremely fast way — even more so when one considers its public-service context, usually accompanied by complicated bureaucratic structures. The speed and flexibility of the project-based making of *Drinnen* points to wider changes within its broadcaster, the public-service ZDF — Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (Second German Television), as well as in German drama production in general. Already before the emergence of COVID-19, attempts had been made to produce serial fiction more quickly, flexibly, and cheaply; under the pandemic, these approaches intensified. While *Drinnen* is often regarded as an innovative role model in this context, such "instant" drama productions also require critical examination. For the practitioners involved in producing *Drinnen*, the race to quickly fictionalize the COVID-19 pandemic meant immense pressure.

Introduction

In Germany, as in many other countries, fiction series are usually developed and produced in project networks. Writers, directors, and providers of artistic and technical media services (e.g., studio technology) as well as representatives from the broadcaster or platform and production companies (all of which have lately multiplied and diversified through increased digitalization and transnationalization)[1] usually come together on only a temporary, project-defined basis.[2] Alongside the current project, practices and relationships from previous collaborations play an important role — particularly for freelance creatives, who usually pursue "portfolio careers."[3] They depend on successful projects in order to obtain new contracts. For many participants of project networks, the temporary nature of the work can be quite precarious.[4] This insecurity was even more pronounced in 2020, when an additional instability factor arose: the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic interrupted the "precarious cycle"[5] described by Willemien Sanders and Anna Zoellner: "production companies generally depend on several projects being in production simultaneously to fund ongoing costs and the development of future projects". COVID-19 complicated, and even killed off project networks in Germany's TV fiction industry and almost came to be an "additional actor" alongside the different trades and organizations in the project-based collaborations.

However, the virus and its linked restrictions didn't only cause delays and cancellations: it, in fact, became the genesis of some shows in and beyond Germany.[6] One such example is *Drinnen — Im Internet sind alle gleich* (2020), with which the public broadcaster ZDF — Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (Second German Television) and the two responsible production companies reacted to the pandemic, through both the show's production modes and its content. The comedy drama, whose title can be translated to "Inside — On the Internet All Are Equal," personalized the COVID-19 pandemic through the protagonist, Charlotte. This woman in her mid-thirties is planning to quit both her job and her marriage when she suddenly has to self-isolate and communicate with others only online. Not only Charlotte's fictional life but also the real-life production process were very much affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. All crew members worked from home, due to Germany's contact restrictions in early 2020. This article discusses in greater detail how *Drin-*

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1) See, e.g., Lothar Mikos, "TV Drama Series Production in Germany and the Digital Television Landscape," in *A European Television Fiction Renaissance: Premium Production Models and Transnational Circulation*, eds. Luca Barra and Massimo Scaglioni (London: Routledge, 2021), 177–190.

2) Arnold Windeler and Jörg Sydow, "Project Networks and Changing Industry Practices Collaborative Content Production in the German Television Industry," *Organization Studies* 22, no. 6 (2001).

3) Angela McRobbie, "From Holloway to Hollywood: Happiness at Work in the New Cultural Economy?," in *Cultural Economy: Cultural Analysis and Commercial Life*, ed. Paul Du Gay (London: Sage, 2006), 111.

4) E.g. Rosalind Gill, "'Life Is a Pitch': Managing the Self in New Media Work," in *Managing Media Work*, ed. Mark Deuze (Los Angeles: Sage, 2011).

5) Willemien Sanders and Anna Zoellner, "'We're in This Together' — but Not in the Same Way: Institutional Responses to the COVID-19 Production Stop in the British and Dutch Film and Television Industries," in *Documentary in the Age of COVID*, eds. Dafydd Sills-Jones and Pietari Kääpä (Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, New York, and Wien: Peter Lang, 2023), 202.

6) See Gabriele Dietze, "Quarantäne Als Therapie: Corona-Miniserien," in *Das Virus im Netz medialer Diskurse*, eds. Angela Krewani and Peter Zimmermann (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2022).

nen dealt with the pandemic in its production process. I argue that *Drinnen*, as a very specific production made within a crisis situation for both society at large and the TV and film industry specifically, points to broader changes in TV fiction production in Germany, which were advanced through the COVID-19 pandemic.

This article is based mainly on two interviews with "exclusive informants"[7] — two ZDF commissioning editors responsible for *Drinnen*. I also use some textual analysis of the show, to interpret the interviewee's statements, and refer to articles on *DWDL.de*, a crucial online trade magazine for the German television industry. Beyond articles on *Drinnen*, fifty search results on *DWDL.de* for "Corona" (the common, informal term for the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in German) were screened and categorized. Because trade magazines mostly serve marketing and managerial purposes, they publish only official "trade stories";[8] nevertheless, these sources can provide certain information on a basic mood, important topics, and discourses within their target industry.

My analysis of the trade articles and interviews focused primarily on two closely related models: the *project network*, already outlined above, and the *screen idea work group*. Ian Macdonald defines the latter as "flexibly constructed work group organized around the development and production of a screen idea".[9] The parallels to the project network are quite obvious. However, the screen idea work group is more about individuals and creativity than the project network, which is more interested in institutions, and considers the writing and production of films or television drama to begin with individuals and their screen ideas.[10]

In *Drinnen*, the screen idea work group and the project network came together in a very limited time frame to portray and fictionalize the COVID-19 pandemic "instantly." Before describing the content and aesthetic linked to this almost "real-time" approach and the show's production process, including the formation of its screen idea work group and project network, this article first provides a brief overview of Germany's TV industry under the COVID-19 pandemic. How did the pandemic affect the local industry, and how was is negotiated?

Germany's TV industry in the time of COVID-19

The analysis of *DWDL.de* articles (most from the pandemic's first year, 2020) shows that the industry discourse on the impacts of COVID-19 focused particularly on economic challenges — much more so than on other issues such as ideological controversies (e.g.,

7) Hanne Bruun, "The Qualitative Interview in Media Production Studies," in *Advancing Media Production Research: Shifting Sites, Methods, and Politics*, ed. Chris Paterson et al. (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 139.

8) John Thornton Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 37.

9) Ian Macdonald, "'…So It's Not Surprising I'm Neurotic': The Screenwriter and the Screen Idea Work Group," *Journal of Screenwriting* 1, no. 1 (2010), 47.

10) See Eva Novrup Redvall, *Writing and Producing Television Drama in Denmark: From the Kingdom to the Killing* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 29.

COVID-19 deniers, anti-vaxxers), which partly arose within the industry when several prominent actors criticized Germany's contact regulations as being excessive in controversial, supposedly satirical, video statements.[11] Even discussion on the increased television and streaming use under the pandemic, due to more people being at home, was not as visible as economic questions on *DWDL.de*. In a statement on *DWDL.de*, Oliver Castendyk by Allianz Deutscher Produzenten — Film & Fernsehen (Alliance of German Producers — Film & TV; short name: Produzentenallianz) divided COVID-19's economic impact on the television industry into two main categories: first, the costs of COVID-related shooting cancellations and postponements; secondly, the more difficult production conditions, longer production times and thus increased production costs due to the strict pandemic regulations.[12]

Such economic challenges, negotiated by both practitioners and trade journalists, are closely linked to the flexible organization of work in project networks. Especially in TV fiction, which has less consistent and shorter commissions than non-fiction shows accompanied by high expenditures, many production companies can hardly create a reserve fund as they proceed from one project to the next, as producers highlighted on *DWDL.de*.[13]

For freelancers, the situation is very similar. However, some trades were affected more or differently than others by the restrictions under the pandemic. For example whereas actors — a particularly visible and prominent trade — often claimed on *DWDL.de* and in other media to have lost all their work,[14] writers pointed out how they were used to working at home and individually.[15] Still, neither group's future income was necessarily guaranteed during the beginning of the pandemic, as several projects faced insecure futures.

Referring to the insecure economic landscape, the producer Hana Geißendörfer, of Geißendörfer Film- und Fernsehproduktion (a production company particularly well known for the long-running weekly soap *Lindenstraße* [1985–2020, ARD/WDR], that was canceled in 2020), also discussed a psychological burden in February–March 2021, a time when most shops and other public places were still closed and contact regulations affected multiple work sectors.

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11) Thomas Lückerath, "#allesdichtmachen: 53 Schauspieler*innen outen sich als Populisten: Zynische Aktion sorgt für Empörung," *DWDL.de*, April 24, 2021, accessed September 13, 2022, https://www.dwdl.de/meinungen/82473/allesdichtmachen_53_schauspielerinnen_outen_sich_als_populisten/.

12) Timo Niemeier, "Viele Produzenten sehen ihre Existenz durch Corona bedroht: Herbstumfrage der Produzentenallianz," *DWDL.de*, December 18, 2020, accessed September 13, 2022, https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/80801/viele_produzenten_sehen_ihre_existenz_durch_corona_bedroht/.

13) Timo Niemeier, "Produzenten zwischen Solidarität und staatlichen Hilfen: Corona ist für viele existenzbedrohend," *DWDL.de*, April 2, 2020, accessed September 13, 2022, https://www.dwdl.de/magazin/77008/produzenten_zwischen_solidaritaet_und_staatlichen_hilfen/page_1.html. See also Sanders and Zoellner, "'We're in This Together' — but Not in the Same Way."

14) Jan Freitag, "Corona trifft Schauspiel: 'Wir sind halt nicht systemrelevant': Schauspielerinnen und Schauspieler in der Krise," *DWDL.de*, March 30, 2020, accessed September 13, 2022, https://www.dwdl.de/magazin/76973/corona_trifft_schauspiel_wir_sind_halt_nicht_systemrelevant/.

15) Senta Krasser, "Preisgekrönt und auftragslos? Kreative in der Corona-Krise: Start einer dreiteiligen Reihe," *DWDL.de*, April 6, 2020, accessed September 13, 2022, https://www.dwdl.de/magazin/77118/preisgekroent_und_auftragslos_kreative_in_der_coronakrise/.

In 2020 and 2021, the TV industry in Germany also had to move to solo work from home and strictly digital interaction in many contexts. In the negotiation of such work, TV professionals cited on *DWDL.de* touched on the topic of the project network, arguing that the practicability and intensity of such digital cooperation differs according to each individual project and its production areas (e.g., daily soap, high-end miniseries, TV film). Correspondingly, in a qualitative survey among producers in April 2020, Joachim Kosack, managing director of the UFA Group, claimed that UFA — one of the biggest production companies in Germany and part of the Bertelsmann conglomerate — decided how to deal with the pandemic and the linked contact regulations on a project-by-project basis.[16] Opinions on the increased work from home, including exchange through videoconferencing, differed: some practitioners regarded such a digital work as quite constructive, after brief struggles at the beginning,[17] whereas others criticized a detrimental effect on creative exchange.[18]

The assessment of the economic situation was also ambivalent. Besides the pitfalls resulting from the nature of project-based work, some practitioners also pointed out on *DWDL.de* that the television industry in Germany was, compared to other countries, secure in this crisis situation, thanks to state funding for film and media (which increasingly supports TV and streaming drama), pandemic-specific government aid measures, such as the short-term working benefit (*Kurzarbeitergeld*) for companies and their employees, and the steady stream of revenue received by strong public broadcasters. Again and again, the practitioners' negotiations focused on to what extent public broadcasters and other commissioners, including transnational streaming services, could cover the financial losses and additional costs incurred by the production companies under the pandemic.[19] The strong protection of producers in Germany as compared to in other countries resulted from production companies' high dependency on commissioners, some practitioners argued, referring to the long-standing tendency toward the model of 100 per cent financing by the commissioner and the so-called total buyout in German TV fiction.[20] This tendency has long shaped the collaborative work in German TV series project networks — evident, for example, in how commissioning editors have an important say in script development — and has met immense criticism for supposedly weakening the position of both production companies and writers.[21] During the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the traditional power of the broadcaster was arguably a plus for producers, as they could rely on these commissioners to absorb a great part of any financial losses and additional costs.

16) Niemeier, "Produzenten zwischen Solidarität und staatlichen Hilfen."

17) See e.g. ibid.

18) See e.g. Alexander Krei, "'Die Anforderungen an die Kreativen sind extrem gestiegen': Eyes & Ears of Europe Wird 25," *DWDL.de*, November 23, 2021, accessed September 13, 2022, https://www.dwdl.de/interviews/85374/die_anforderungen_an_die_kreativen_sind_extrem_gestiegen/.

19) See e.g. Niemeier, "Viele Produzenten sehen ihre Existenz durch Corona bedroht."

20) See Timo Niemeier, "'Im Moment mache ich mir schon ein bisschen Sorgen,': NdF-Geschäftsführer Eric Welbers im Interview," *DWDL.de*, June 16, 2020, accessed September 13, 2022, https://www.dwdl.de/interviews/77899/im_moment_mache_ich_mir_schon_ein_bisschen_sorgen/.

21) See Kerstin Fröhlich, "Die Innovationslogik der deutschen TV-Unterhaltungsproduktion," *in Handbuch Unterhaltungsproduktion: Beschaffung und Produktion von Fernsehunterhaltung*, eds. Katja Lantzsch, Klaus-Dieter Altmeppen, and Andreas Will (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010), 123.

Much less frequently than economic issues and the linked interplay in project networks, the analyzed articles on *DWDL.de* negotiated the issue of how German TV fiction could and should reflect the COVID-19 pandemic content-wise. Journalist Peer Schader criticized the majority of fiction shows for not portraying any signs of COVID-19, such as face masks, and noted a large gap between the reality of life (in Germany in March 2021) and fictional media images.[22] Still, some German TV dramas integrated COVID-19 into their narratives, to varying degrees. For instance, in the TV film *Für immer Sommer 90* (Forever Summer 90, 2020, ARD) — also distributed as a miniseries through the online service of the public broadcaster ARD — Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten (Consortium of the Public-Service Broadcasting Institutions), which besides ZDF is the most important public broadcaster in Germany — the COVID-19 pandemic is omnipresent, as protagonist Andy gets caught up in his past and sets out to clear his name of accusations made against him during a road trip through Germany. An upcoming project titled *Der Dschungel* (The Jungle) for the German pay TV provider WarnerTV Serie plans to portray the pandemic "in the microcosm of a meat factory,"[23] a setting that increasingly appeared in the German news media in 2020 due to many COVID outbreaks there and the problematic conditions of foreign seasonal workers. Already in May 2020, the drama anthology *Liebe. Jetzt!* (Love. Now!, 2020, ZDFneo) narrated stories of personal relationships in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Drinnen — Im Internet sind alle gleich* — this paper's case study — was released even earlier. In the following section, I describe this particular fictionalizing of the pandemic in greater detail, looking at the aesthetic and content strategies behind *Drinnen*.

Aesthetic and narrative strategies of the COVID-19 comedy drama *Drinnen*

"ZDF Starts a New Daily Series — Namely, Today" read a headline on *DWLD.de* on April 3, 2020,[24] *Drinnen*'s premiere date. ZDF had pulled off a coup: launching a fictional series that reacted to the pandemic so quickly and aired when COVID-19 was still a very new issue and dominating the news. *Drinnen* consists of fifteen approximately ten-minute episodes, which were released on an almost daily basis on ZDF's online service and in a weekly compilation on Tuesday nights on ZDFneo, ZDF's linear-programmed TV channel for an audience aged twenty-five to forty-nine (significantly younger than the viewership of ZDF's main channel). Thereby, *Drinnen* contains a linear and an online version, similar to some previous series, such as *SKAM* (Shame, 2015–2017, NRK) and parts of its German adaptation *DRUCK* (2018–, Funk/ZDF). Like these predecessor (which point to new dis-

22) Peer Schader, "Corona als blinder Fleck in der deutschen Fiction: Tragt endlich Maske! Peer Schaders Hauptstadtstudio," *DWDL.de*, March 14, 2021, accessed September 13, 2022, https://www.dwdl.de/hauptstadtstudio/81912/corona_als_blinder_fleck_in_der_deutschen_fiction_tragt_endlich_maske/.

23) Jörg Winger, quoted in Thomas Lückerath, "Wozu die Gründung von Big Window Productions, Herr Winger? DWDL.De-Interview zur neuen Produktionsfirma," *DWDL.de*, July 27, 2020, accessed July 28, 2020, https://www.dwdl.de/interviews/78652/wozu_die_gruendung_von_big_window_productions_herr_winger/.

24) Thomas Lückerath, "ZDF startet eine neue tägliche Serie — und zwar heute: Zwei 'Neoriginals' mit Premiere in der Mediathek," *DWDL.de*, April 3, 2020, accessed September 13, 2022, https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/77041/zdf_startet_eine_neue_taegliche_serie__und_zwar_heute/.

tribution and production ways in public-service drama), the online release had priority, why *Drinnen* can be categorized as a webseries.[25]

Protagonist Charlotte, played by Lavinia Wilson (possibly known to non-German viewers through her involvement in *Deutschland 86* and *89* [2018, 2020, Amazon Prime Video]), is shown working from home, in what came to be known as a *homeoffice* in German ("Homeoffice" was the initial title of *Drinnen*). In front of her computer, Charlotte struggles with her professional and private life. After she supposedly infects her boss, Veronika, with COVID-19, Charlotte becomes responsible for running her employer, an ad agency. In addition to a pitch for an important customer, her new responsibilities include dismissing a colleague. Privately, Charlotte also plans to dismiss her husband, Markus (played by Wilson's real-life partner, Barnaby Metschurat), whom she has been cheating on for some time with various Tinder dates. Charlotte forces Markus to stay in the countryside in Brandenburg, where he is on a short vacation with their two children, because she increasingly believes she has gotten COVID-19. In addition, she worries about her parents, who don't take the pandemic seriously. Her mother attends secret Pilates classes, and her father starts smoking again, although he suffers from asthma, increasing his coronavirus risk along with his advanced age. Charlotte's younger sister, Constanze, stranded in Thailand, scatterbrained and unreliable, is hardly of any help. A serial, cross-episode storyline centered on a family secret also gradually emerges, when we witness Charlotte leaving WhatsApp voice messages to a person who never responds: it is her sister who died in a car accident, and Charlotte blames herself for her death, having denied her sibling a lift, we eventually learn.

Drinnen uses a particular narrative format to portray Charlotte's work, love, and family struggles in the face of the pandemic: the chamber play, or *Kammerspiel*. Due to the restrictions on gatherings, primarily in 2020, other productions also similarly showed actors in their own homes, performing on their own or with their real-life partners and roommates: for example, the miniseries *Liebe. Jetzt!* and *Ausgebremst* (Thwarted, 2020–2021, Warner TV Serie), about a desperate driving instructor chatting to strangers in a driving simulator or, in the UK, the comedy *Staged* (2020–2021, BBC), on two actors rehearsing a theatre play through a series of video calls during the lockdown.[26] What distinguishes *Drinnen* to most TV dramas on COVID 19 is its general restriction to only two views. In the first, we see an extract of Charlotte's/Lavinia Wilson's apartment and the protagonist acting in it: a static webcam setting that is also shown to the outer world, or more precisely to other people likewise inside (*drinnen*) their homes. Whenever Charlotte sits at her computer or uses her smartphone, a specific section of her home is visible, including a child's chair at the dining table and a pinboard with children's drawings and a child's photo — all clear hints at her family [illustration 1: screenshot]. In the second view, we again and again see Charlotte's computer screen and her different digital practices there [illustration 2: screenshot].

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25) On the term "webseries" and German examples see Markus Kuhn, "Die WG im Netz: Deutschsprachige Webserien-Genres im Spannungsfeld kultureller und medialer Transformationsprozess," in *Transmediale Genre-Passagen: Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven*, eds. Ivo Ritzer and Peter W. Schulze (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2016).

26) See Jessica C. Molano, "Theatre as a Means of "Interpreting" Lockdown: The Case of Staged," in *Theater(s) and Public Sphere in a Global and Digital Society*, Volume 1, ed. Ilaria Riccioni (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 177–185.

Illustration 1: Charlotte at her computer and in her living-room, screenshot from episode 6
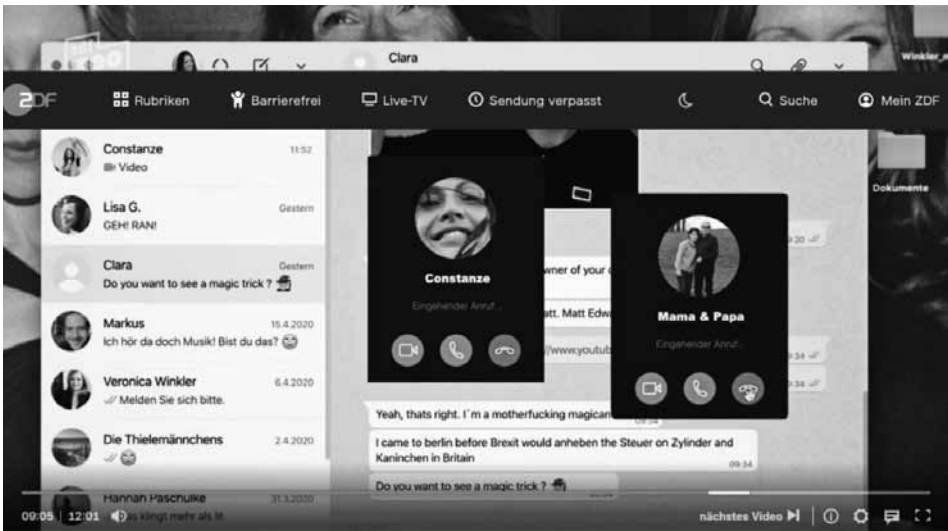
Illustration 2: Digital practices on Charlotte's computer screen, screenshot from episode 15

In one shot, Charlotte's face is reflected on her computer screen. Lavinia Wilson described the aesthetic-formal approach of *Drinnen* in an interview with *DWDL.de* as "exactly one room, with exactly one window to the world, namely the screen of her [Charlotte's] laptop computer."[27] Lucia Haslauer, one of two responsible commissioning editors

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27) Jan Freitag, "'Spontanität mitnehmen, Produktionsbedingungen nicht': Lavinia Wilson im DWDL-Interview," *DWDL.de*, April 8, 2020, accessed September 8, 2022, https://www.dwdl.de/interviews/77142/spontaneitaet_mitnehmen_produktionsbedingungen_nicht/.

at ZDF, spoke of a "screen-only format." In contrast to some live comedy sketch shows on German television that were quickly developed during COVID-19 and its contact restrictions — such as *Die Sat.1 Comedy Konferenz — Promis in Quarantäne* (The Sat.1 Comedy Conference — Celebrities in Quarantine, 2020, Sat.1) — *Drinnen* did not use actual online-conferencing platforms, thereby avoiding poor image quality, as a first review of the series on *DWDL.de* highlighted.[28] In this respect, an "instant" fiction production seems to be superior to a live comedy approach, which has less time for image editing or postproduction.

Through the view on Charlotte's screen, *Drinnen* focuses intensely on the protagonist's digitalized perspective and puts Wilson's acting into a limited frame, which sometimes approaches stand-up comedy in presentation. Clearly, this fictionalizing of the COVID-19 pandemic takes place within the comedy genre. This comedic approach and the ironic stance (which also characterized other TV dramas on the pandemic[29]) become apparent in, for example, the protagonist's somewhat hypochondriacal and exaggerated fear of infection and an overblown portrayal of the daily COVID-19 situation in the spring of 2020. For instance, when Charlotte calls a COVID-19 hotline, she is on hold for seventeen hours. The staff answers right at the moment she is away from her computer and phone to take a shower.

A comedic approach also characterized other COVID-19 series,[30] as well as various viral videos shared through social media and instant-messaging platforms in early 2020, such as several clips on the toilet paper shortage in Germany. Very likely, comedy was a way for many people to deal with the often stressful and worrisome situation during lockdowns, contact restrictions, and alarming news. Given this tendency, *Drinnen*'s genre choice is no surprise. Haslauer, the commissioning editor, described the goal as offering a fictional character through whom to narrate the pandemic "also with a wink."

However, in our interview, Haslauer also stressed an aim to avoid any cynicism in the comedic take. The cross-episode storyline around Charlotte grieving for her dead sister and blaming herself, in particular, possibly worked against any potential cynicism around a difficult situation for society. This strand of the plot is more subdued than Charlotte's hectic online life and adds a more serious tone, through which *Drinnen* approaches drama or dramedy (a mixture with comedy).

The never-read WhatsApp voice notes, from Charlotte to her dead sister, not only work as a secret confessional, through which the viewer gets closer to the protagonist, but also take up the broader topic of *Drinnen*: beyond — and even more than — the pandemic, the series is about communication and its frequent failure, especially in today's society and in the eponymic "inside," the internet. Through Charlotte's use of various platforms and apps, private and professional life flow together. The heroine is permanently distracted and overwhelmed by the different communication channels, including newsfeeds on the pandemic.

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28) Lückerath, "ZDF startet eine neue tägliche Serie — und zwar heute."
29) See Dietze, "Quarantäne Als Therapie," 83.
30) Dietze, "Quarantäne Als Therapie," 87.

For the depiction of the crucial topic of digital communication and its linked stress and struggles, the particular form of *Drinnen* — the "screen-only format" (Haslauer) — is once again decisive. Through the protagonist's screen and from her perspective, we see a quick and seemingly unorganized montage of different images, windows, apps, messages, notes, and memories popping up. This montage represents an aesthetic approach to representing "the internet," which is closely linked to the show's main topic of communication and clearly visible in its ironic subhead, *Im Internet sind alle gleich* (On the Internet All Are Equal).

The show's portrayal of the internet includes several real-life online services, especially from major tech companies, wherein we can see a further "platformisation of public service broadcasting."[31] Such a platformization had previously been discussed primarily in respect to distribution, whereas *Drinnen* mainly characterized its content and aesthetic. The interviewed editor Haslauer justified the visibility of real-life platforms, devices, and brands with the limited production time (in which making dummy apps was hardly possible) and with the goal of authenticity. She highlighted the aim of depicting the "whole range of tools and the trouble with these tools" and getting close to the viewers' own multifaceted digital and internet use.

The taking up of current social media phenomena likewise aimed at proximity to viewers' own lives. Very recent posts popping up on Charlotte's screen suggested that she was using the same or similar media almost simultaneously with the audience, reminiscent of "real-time" approaches in earlier television series, for instance, in the Norwegian transmedia youth drama *SKAM*.[32] In *Drinnen*, the temporal locating achieved through social media content also served to portray the pandemic at a very specific time.

With her extensive and up-to-date online practices, Charlotte is situated as part of a specific age group, so-called digital natives, and to a particular class that can work from home and online, and therefore still receive an income and be comparatively safe during a threatening pandemic. In the *DWDL.de* interview, Wilson reflected on the social status of her character, stating that "many people in the country and around the world" were more severely affected by the pandemic and its restrictions than Charlotte, who has a large apartment and too much work rather than too little.[33] Haslauer, the editor, also referred to social inequalities when arguing, that the producers of *Drinnen* tried to not only represent "the privileged of society" through Charlotte and her ad agency colleagues. Haslauer emphasized in particular the minor character of Lisa, a nurse who briefly but repeatedly reports to her friend Charlotte from her stressful hospital workplace, thus stopping "the fun factor," as Haslauer put it. According to Haslauer, an overly light and cheerful narration of the early COVID-19 days was also avoided through other characters such as Charlotte's boss, who is actually suffering a COVID-19 infection. But, in the end, *Drinnen* narrates

31) Sven Stollfuß, "The Platformisation of Public Service Broadcasting in Germany: The Network 'Funk' and the Case of Druck/Skam Germany," *Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies* 16, no. 2 (2021).

32) Vilde S. Sundet, "From 'Secret' Online Teen Drama to International Cult Phenomenon: The Global Expansion of SKAM and Its Public Service Mission," *Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies* 15, no. 1 (2020).

33) Freitag, "'Spontanität mitnehmen, Produktionsbedingungen nicht.'"

the pandemic primarily from a very privileged point of view, as the minor characters and subplots from perspectives other than that of the digitally adept ad woman Charlotte remain quite sketchy.

Haslauer confessed that the show narrates in a "fragmentary" way in general. "We don't go into depth for any characters or elaborate conflicts, but only touch on many things," is how she described the narrative strategy, which, obviously, resulted from a very quick development and shooting timeline. Time pressure, in general, characterized the making of *Drinnen* and its production strategies in fictionalizing the COVID-19 pandemic.

Building a project network in the face of the pandemic

Two main issues were decisive for the emergence of *Drinnen*, Haslauer's retrospection suggests: first, ZDF's desire to give producers security and work, in light of the many canceled shoots in 2020, and, secondly, an aim to touch upon "contemporary issues and crisis" in fiction in such a way that they serve "a basic social mood."

According to Haslauer, the initial idea to fictionalize the COVID-19 pandemic very quickly and by focusing on the computer screen of a person working from home came from Frank Zervos, head of one of ZDF's two fiction departments (Hauptredaktion Fernsehfilm/Serie I). It might be argued that Haslauer, through these references to her superior and her employer, portrayed both in a positive way and attributed creativity and innovation to the public broadcaster ZDF against the backdrop of "self-interest, promotion, and spin,"[34] which generally characterizes interview statements by television and film professionals, according to scholar John Thornton Caldwell. In German fiction, however, it quite often happens that the idea generation, as the foundation for later screen idea work groups and project networks, first occurs within the broadcaster and its editorial departments.[35] Screenwriters, however, have repeatedly criticized script initiation by producers and commissioning editors, saying that too little thought is given to the narrative itself and too much to program schemes and themes.

For *Drinnen*, Haslauer's interview suggests, the creative professionals still had great freedom to elaborate the plot, as the idea by ZDF for a quick, personalized "screen narration" on digital work-from-home life during the pandemic was vague. Furthermore, it could be said that the strong institutional rooting of *Drinnen* provided a crucial basis to enable the quick production, distribution, and decision-making. Multiple times, Haslauer emphasized that the support of principal people and departments at ZDF, especially the editorial team and head programming director, helped to speed up the broadcaster's ordinary process, whereby the responsible editor has to collect "many small green cards" before production can start.

From a rough idea, an entire project network had to be founded to realize *Drinnen*. First, a specific production context within ZDF was selected: the editorial department *Das*

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34) Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 14.
35) See Florian Krauß, "From 'Redakteursfernsehen' to 'Showrunners': Commissioning Editors and Changing Project Networks in TV Fiction from Germany," *Journal of Popular Television* 8, no. 2 (2020).

kleine Fernsehspiel (The Little Television Play). It traditionally focuses on "auteur" and debut films,[36] with rather low budgets, which is why practitioners have associated it with both artistic freedom and precarious labor conditions. In recent years, *Das kleine Fernsehspiel* has increasingly opened up to miniseries, such as the political satire *Eichwald, MdB* (2014/2019, ZDF), often through its subdepartment Quantum. Quantum, according to the ZDF site, is a "format lab" in which single films, web series, and multimedia projects that "explore new avenues in content, technique, or form" are developed.[37] *Drinnen*, in the view of Haslauer, fit Quantum's lab approach very well, as the show pursued an experimental goal, namely, a quick fictional response to current events.

Due to *Drinnen*'s placement with Quantum, Haslauer and her colleague Max Fraenkel (now a producer for the production company Studio Zentral, a subsidiary of ZDF) became the responsible commissioning editors. Through Fraenkel, there was also a personal link to Funk, the online media service of ZDF and ARD for adolescents and young adults aged fourteen to twenty-nine. Having already supervised the German *SKAM* adaption, *DRUCK*, Fraenkel brought a particular expertise in online distribution to the *Drinnen* project. The third editor, Sarah Flasch, came from ZDF's department for nonfiction entertainment, including live shows, and this is why, according to Haslauer, Flasch was much better trained in responding quickly to current events.

The question then became: Which producers were capable of realizing the "screen-only format" in a limited time frame and with all the challenges of technical logistics and postproduction being further complicated by COVID-19 regulations? Haslauer's retrospection made clear that this issue was decisive for the selection of the production company — a next, crucial step in creating the project network. It is well-known from studies on TV series production in project networks that, besides expertise in the planned content, management skills are a crucial criterion when selecting the producer.[38] For *Drinnen*, where both the aesthetic approach (described above) and the shooting procedure under the pandemic required a lot of technical equipment and skill, competency in leading a project network became even more important. According to Haslauer, the production company, btf — bildundtonfabrik (image and audio factory) convinced ZDF that they were the right choice not only through a brief pitch on the story by Philipp Käßbohrer (one of bft's two CEOs and later an executive producer on *Drinnen*) but also through their concept for production under the pandemic contact restrictions. Very likely, experiences and competences in nonfiction productions, which have quicker production processes, as well as the online orientation of such shows' content, promotion, and distribution, also helped bft win the contract for *Drinnen*. The Cologne-based production company is known especially for Jan Böhmermann's satirical late-night show *Neo Magazin Royale*

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36) See e.g. Knut Hickethier, "Das Fernsehspiel oder der Kunstanspruch der Erzählmaschine Fernsehen," in *Das Fernsehen und die Künste*, eds. Helmut Schanze, Bernhard Zimmermann, and Helmut Kreuzer (Munich: Fink, 1994), 333–335.

37) ZDF, "Quantum — Das Formatlabor," *ZDF.de*, accessed September 15, 2022, https://www.zdf.de/filme/das-kleine-fernsehspiel/quantum-das-formatlabor-des-kleinen-fernsehspiels-serien-100.html.

38) See Arnold Windeler, Anja Lutz, and Carsten Wirth, "Netzwerksteuerung durch Selektion: Die Produktion von Fernsehserien in Projektnetzwerken," *montage AV* 10, no. 1 (2001), 103, https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/94.

(2013–2019, ZDFneo). bft increasingly added fiction to its production portfolio, such as the Netflix teen dramedy *How to Sell Drugs Online (Fast)* (2019–), and now also represents comparably young players in TV fiction production in Germany.

The other production company on *Drinnen*, eitelsonnenschein, focuses on fictional comedy with a high degree of improvisation, particularly through its head, the director Lutz Heineking Jr. He and his company thus brought further "on the fly" competence to the emerging *Drinnen* project network, enabling its fast production. Heineking, who had already closely cooperated with lead actor Lavinia Wilson (for the mockumentary *Andere Eltern* [Other Parents, 2019–2020, TNT Serie]), also directed *Drinnen*.

When deciding whether to join the project network, several production members regarded experiences from past cooperation and the resulting mutual trust as crucial,[39] corresponding to the well-known feature of TV series production of building on former project networks.[40] Under the COVID-19 regulations, previous teamwork and the reliability it engenders became even more important, as all production members were spatially separated. They could only communicate with each other online — just like *Drinnen*'s protagonist Charlotte and her colleagues. In such a situation it helps to already know each other from previous face to face exchange.

The collaborative screenwriting of *Drinnen*

Given the still new scenario of the digital workplace and the time pressure, stakeholders in the *Drinnen* project network had to reach decisions very quickly under difficult communication processes. Haslauer stated that roughly three weeks after the pitch paper submission by bft and Philipp Käßbohrer, *Drinnen* was green-lighted and production began. Under the tight schedule, editorial supervision differed from the usual processes. According to Haslauer, the editors' dramaturgical supervision of the screenwriting, or their "content support," was significantly lower than in other projects. Instead, Haslauer and her two co-editors dealt more with the "whole administration of the project management" within ZDF, including technical, distribution, and certification issues, to make the show's "instant" production and release possible.

In general, many processes were less subdivided and run in parallel. According to Haslauer's report, this was also true of the screenwriting process: the editors (from the commissioner) and the producers (from the production company) did not give notes separately, step by step, as it is the common practice, but rather collaboratively in a Google Doc shared by the four screenwriters. The writers informed the supervisors, through Slack or similar tools, when new content was added to the Google Doc. Digital techniques and practices clearly shaped *Drinnen* screenwriting process, as Haslauer's description confirms.

Through the short timeline and collaborative Google Doc, the note-giving producers and editors partly became creative idea generators, too, as they contributed concrete ide-

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39) See e.g. Freitag, "'Spontanität mitnehmen, Produktionsbedingungen nicht.'"
40) See e.g. McRobbie, "From Holloway to Hollywood," 111.

as where they were not satisfied with the emerging script. Haslauer summed up this collaborative screenwriting process as "just very, very forward" and emphasized the mutual trust.

Collaborative traits of script development within the screen idea work group also emerged through there being four writers. All had worked for projects by the leading production company bft, three for the above-mentioned satirical late-night show *Neo Magazin Royale*. Therefore, the writers had particular experience in comedy writing, including for nonfiction shows, but less for drama serials. To fill this expertise gap, the ZDF editors considered adding an accomplished drama writer to the team. In the end, they decided against adding a supplementary writer, as they feared "smash[ing] the group dynamics," as Haslauer put it.

Getting the recruiting right is generally an important step and challenge in building writing teams or writers' rooms, and even more so if the exchange can be only digital, as during the height of the pandemic. Recruiting is linked to the question of which people and institutions have a say in the selection. For *Drinnen*, it took place primarily within the production company bft and their networks, through Max Bierhals, who became the head writer, as well as through the creator and bft head Philipp Käßbohrer, who, according to Haslauer, constantly gave input and made the crucial decisions. Here, clear hierarchies become visible. They point to recent approaches to the showrunner in the German TV industry[41] and arguably were necessary to enable the very quick, digital-based production under the COVID-19 regulations in the spring of 2020.

When the rapid collaborative screenwriting process began — and, according to Haslauer, even when the first episode was already online — the narration around Charlotte's messages to her dead sister was not yet fixed. In contrast to other serials, there was simply not enough time to elaborate the story arc for the whole series and season first, before writing the episode scripts. Thus, only a vague, fragmentary foundation undergirded the collaborative script development. The cross-episode storylines also were a challenge, as the writers were mostly not highly trained or experienced in this narrative style, due to their previous focus on comedy shows. Against this background, Haslauer described herself and her co-editor as the team members most well-versed in fiction.

Despite the involvement of director Lutz Heineking Jr. and his eitelsonnenschein production company (both well-known for highly improvised series), all of *Drinnen*'s dialogue was scripted, Haslauer reported. She attributed the low degree of improvisation to the show's comedy genre, where timing of punchlines is crucial. Very likely, the low improvisation also resulted from the production team's digital-only exchange, through which varying acting and directing approaches became more complicated, and from the immense time pressure. Often, scripts were finished only one day before shooting, and hence only one or two days before online release.[42] Even though a few breaks occurred amid the

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41) See Florian Krauß, "Writers' Room and Showrunner: Discourses and Practices in the German TV Industry," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Script Development*, eds. Craig Batty and Stacy Taylor (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

42) Freitag, "'Spontanität mitnehmen, Produktionsbedingungen nicht.'"

otherwise daily broadcast of the fifteen episodes, thus providing a one-day head start, the script work, as well production and distribution, were very closely timed.

Production and distribution under time pressure and contact restrictions

The shooting of *Drinnen*, during the height of the pandemic, was shaped by not only the immense time pressure but also the digital exchange from people's various homes and an increased flexibility. Makeup and costuming, for instance, became additional tasks of the actors. Likewise, the show's main setting was not found by a contracted location scout but simply was main actor Lavinia Wilson's own living room. The secondary setting, the country house where Charlotte's husband is staying with the children, also belonged to Wilson and her family.[43] While only selected sections of these locations were shown in *Drinnen*, the border between production work and private life nevertheless became blurred in the shooting of *Drinnen* — reminiscent of the work situation of many people, from all kinds of industries, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Shooting in Wilson's homes required new filming techniques, making *Drinnen*'s entire production a highly digitalized process. The editor Haslauer also brought up such techniques when she highlighted postproduction as being highly crucial for the "screen-only format." The increased relevance of postproduction is also indicated through the relatively high number of team members with the title "editor," among them Julian Schleef, head of postproduction. Haslauer attributed a certain authorship to Schleef by pointing to all the information visible on Charlotte's computer screen and "screen gimmicks" not included in the scripts but rather contributed by Schleef. Given this late content-related work, Schleef — the central figure in postproduction and, according to Haslauer, "a creative head" — can be seen as part of the screen idea work group for *Drinnen*.

Like the editing and script work, different production phases often flowed together for the quickly realized series. For instance, Patrick Stenzel, one of the writers, also contributed to promoting and distributing *Drinnen* on social media platforms. In doing so, he often cooperated with Max Fraenkel, the editor with connections to the Funk platform. Fraenkel, however, stated that hardly any time was available to develop an elaborate distribution strategy for *Drinnen*, in contrast to other ZDF fiction productions. Still, a certain distribution approach naturally emerged through the producers' rapid reaction to the pandemic: the story of Charlotte isolated at home took place at the exact moment when many viewers were experiencing a similar work and life situation, and so we might attribute a kind of "real-time approach" to the show's distribution. Fraenkel described how this immediate release helped gain visibility for *Drinnen* in the German television landscape very quickly.

Drinnen's rapid production and distribution translated into an immense workload for all actors in the show's project network, especially during the COVID-19 restrictions in March and April 2020, the time of the development and production. Since schools and kindergartens were closed, several production members were additionally responsible for domestic care work during this time. In retrospect, Haslauer evaluated the production of

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43) See ibid.

Drinnen quite ambivalently: on the one hand, she attributed "a lot of fun and a great energy" to the project; on the other, she stated that such a quick and flexible production process is only possible "at the expense of people" and "eats up substance," and so it can only be an exception.

In the light of such an ambiguous assessment, we can say that Haslauer was partly critical of the "instant" series, which can be considered a new ZDF drama format established through *Drinnen*. The goal of instant drama is to fictionalize contemporary issues very quickly, with no more than six months from script development to distribution. Already before the breakout of COVID-19, attempts had been made to produce serial fiction more quickly, flexibly, and cheaply, especially in approaches to teen TV drama[44] and with the involvement of emerging creatives. But the pandemic intensified this transformation of public-service drama in Germany. Thus, *Drinnen*, with the speed and flexibility of its project-based making, points to broader changes not only for the public broadcaster ZDF but also German drama production in general. While *Drinnen* is often regarded as an innovative role model in this context, we must also look critically at such "instant" productions. For the involved practitioners, both the push to fictionalize COVID-19 very quickly and to produce under the tight pandemic restrictions meant immense pressure.

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44) See Florian Krauß and Moritz Stock, "Youthification of Television Through Online Media: Production Strategies and Narrative Choices in DRUCK/SKAM Germany," *Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies* 16, no. 4 (2021).

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Spanish TV Fiction in Times of Pandemic

Nuclear and Transversal Stories About COVID-19

Abstract

2020 marked an unprecedented change in the world population, social relationships, and cultural consumption itself. The outbreak of COVID-19 not only distanced people, families, and countries but also had many consequences on how we relate to each other. In this context, television was one of the sources of communication, entertainment, and bonding that resonated the most in times of crisis.

 This research aims to provide an in-depth study of the Spanish TV and VOD series born in the context of the pandemic to show how the discourse of COVID-19 has gone through the ways of consumption and entertainment and also through the fictional narratives. A content analysis of the series released since the beginning of the health crisis in March 2020 is carried out in order to establish formal, narrative, and other aspects of pandemic stories. The study intends to demonstrate that COVID-19 has become a discernible theme in Spanish television, both as a narrative core and as a transversal motif in subsequent productions.

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Introduction

During the hard times of lockdown, hundreds of series, movies, and television programs were allies of the desperation and ignorance of the population. In the midst of this lockdown situation, television became an escape route from the moments of tension experi-

enced. During the more than three months of the state of alarm in Spain, television consumption evolved from 325 minutes of television in the first seven days to 221 minutes per person per day in the last week.[1] The lockdown period witnessed a record consumption with an average of 284 minutes of daily viewing per person per day. The increase was 40% over the month prior to the pandemic.[2] During this period, television became the main medium used by the audience for both information and entertainment.[3] Moreover, in this context, on-demand television platforms gained a relevant role, helping and encouraging the entertainment of thousands of people who, isolated at home, turned to the small screen as a way of escaping the situation.[4]

At the time of writing, the situation appears to have improved, and sanitary measures and restrictions have been considerably reduced. However, the mark left by the COVID-19 health crisis must be understood as a historical and social milestone with consequences that have made a dent not only in our way of relating and communicating but also in the ways of consuming cultural products and in the social treatment of audiovisual stories. This paper aims to conduct an in-depth study that exposes the thematic treatment of the health crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic in Spanish television fiction. For this purpose, the series premiered after the beginning of the health crisis have been considered and subjected to content analysis to detect trends and stories linked to the phenomenon.

Review of Literature on Television Fiction

Television fiction must be conceived as a portrait of society that, due to the great impact of its discourse, acquires a significant value in the construction of knowledge and understanding of reality. It plays a determining role in the configuration of collective identity since it is a cultural device that presents models of identification that reproduce values, beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes adopted by a broad and heterogeneous audience.[5] Moreover, it can also be used for guidance as a resource to assimilate situations and models of conduct in certain conditions.

1) "Anuario de audiencias de TV del año 2020," *Kantar Media*, 2021, accessed December 20, 2022, https://www.kantar.com/es/campaigns/anuario-audiencias-tv-2020.
2) "Análisis mensual del comportamiento de la audiencia TV: Marzo 2020," *Barlovento Comunicación*, 2020, accessed December 20, 2022, https://www.reasonwhy.es/media/library/barlovento-analisis-audiencias-marzo2020.pdf, 4.
3) Reinald Besalú, "Pandemia y medios de comunicación convencionales," in *Comunicación política en tiempos de coronavirus*, eds. Antoni Gutiérrez and Carles Pont (Barcelona: Cátedra Ideograma UPF de Comunicación política y democracia, 2020), 106. Mireia Montaña Blasco, Candela Ollé Castellà, and Montse Lavilla Raso, "Impacto de la pandemia de Covid-19 en el consumo de medios en España," *Revista latina de comunicación social*, no. 78 (2020), 155–167.
4) Patricia Palomares-Sánchez, Tatiana Hidalgo-Marí, and Jesús Segarra-Saavedra, *Las series españolas en 2021: I Informe Anual de Teletropías: Observatorio del discurso televisivo* (Alicante: Colección Mundo Digital, 2022), accessed December 20, 2022, https://rua.ua.es/dspace/handle/10045/121607.
5) Anna Tous-Rovirosa, "Paleotelevisión, neotelevisión y metatelevisión en las series dramáticas estadounidenses," *Comunicar: Revista Científica de Comunicación y Educación* 17, no. 33 (2009), 175–183. Elena Galán-Fajardo, "Construcción de género y ficción televisiva en España," *Comunicar: Revista científica de comunicación y educación* 14, no. 28 (2007), 229–236.

In this sense, fiction incorporates a set of symbols and values with which the recipients are linked in the configuration of their own identity, coming to see them as symbolic spaces of great richness through which they can construct numerous meanings to be used in their personal experience.[6] However, identity is not something unique and immutable, but is in continuous evolution and makes use of the potential of television discourses as an ideal resource for constructing, deconstructing, and modifying itself.[7] Thus, we observe that television fiction encompasses discourses of reality and reproduces lifestyles, values, and behavioral patterns that show a portrait of society and present symbolic resources with which to identify and value individual and collective experiences. According to Buckingham,[8] the media in general, and television in particular, help to shape our vision of reality and provide us with the necessary tools to interpret it.

Although television fiction is identified with evasion and entertainment, its possibilities go beyond this, to the point of being a documentary and constructive resource for the society that sustains it.[9] The fact is that the concept of agenda setting, which has been so frequently talked about in the news, also has a presence, albeit tangential, in fiction products.[10] This phenomenon leads us to understand television fiction as a portrait of society and that this portrait transfers to the television story beliefs, dogmas and opinion speeches, as well as attitudes and positions before certain situations or topics.[11]

Background to the Study of Television and COVID-19

In the context of the global pandemic, many scientific studies have addressed its consequences in the media from different perspectives. Most works have focused on the study of news from general perspectives[12] or the role of public television.[13] However, while

6)   Julián Pindado, "Los medios de comunicación y la construcción de la identidad adolescente," *Revista Zer Comunicación*, no. 21 (2006), 19.

7)   Chris Barker, *Televisión, globalización e identidades culturales* (Barcelona: Paidós, 2003), 20.

8)   David Buckingham, "La educación en medios de comunicación y el fin del consumidor crítico," *Monografías virtuales: Ciudadanía, democracia y valores en sociedades plurales*, no. 1 (2003), n.p.

9)   Charo Lacalle, *Jóvenes y ficción televisiva: Construcción de identidad y transmedialidad* (Cataluña: UOC-Press, 2013). Manuel Palacio, *Historia de la televisión en España* (España: Editorial Gedisa, 2020).

10) Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1972), 176–187. Maxwell McCombs, "A look at Agenda-setting: past, present and future," *Journalism Studies* 6, no. 4 (2005), 543–557. Kaye Sweetser, Guy Golan, and Wayne Wanta, "Intermedia Agenda Setting in Television, Advertising, and Blogs During the 2004 Election," *Mass Communication and Society* 11, no. 2 (2008), 197–216.

11) Galán-Fajardo, "Construcción de género y ficción televisiva en España."

12) Eduardo Villena-Alarcón and Lidia Caballero-Galeote, "COVID-19 Media Coverage on Spanish Public TV," *Trípodos* 2, no. 47 (2020), 103–126. Antonio Sanjuán Pérez, Sandra Martínez-Costa, José-Juan Videla-Rodríguez, and Teresa Nozal-Cantarero, "Información sobre coronavirus y Covid-19 en las principales cadenas españolas de TV en el período previo al confinamiento," *Profesional de la Información* 29, no. 6 (2020), accessed December 20, 2022, https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2020.nov.11.

13) Miguel Túñez-López, Martín Vaz-Álvarez, and César Fieiras-Ceide, "Covid-19 y medios de servicio público: impacto de la pandemia en la televisión pública en Europa," *Profesional de la Información* 29, no. 5 (2020), accessed December 20, 2022, https://revista.profesionaldelainformacion.com/index.php/EPI/article/view/81201.

there have been numerous studies on television in the two years following the pandemic both at the academic level[14] and through reports and opinions,[15] studies on television fiction have not been so frequent, at least thus far.

The few previous articles on the role of fiction in the context of pandemics analyze works from the Italian context,[16] the German context,[17] or from countries such as Belgium, France, and Switzerland.[18] Also noteworthy is an approach by Formoso Barro[19] centered on the European scenario and the transformations undergone. In the Spanish context, a work by Mateos-Pérez[20] stands out, confirming that Spanish research of the pandemic focused primarily on the news genre, even though, considering the short time window, it has occasionally dealt with issues related to entertainment programming as well. The author himself describes a characteristic function of pandemic productions by indicating that:

> [Fiction,] on the one hand, contributes to the construction of the collective imaginary, following the concept proposed by Morin (1965). Fiction series, conveyed through television, identified as consumer products and containers of media personalities, feed society with symbolic material through stories, images, ideas, or myths […]. That is to say, from the fictional television story, a common memory is built, and consistency is given to the shared memories of society as a whole.[21]

In the Spanish scenario, other studies have focused on the production and reception context of television works created during the pandemic[22] or on newly emerged narrative

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14) Mireia Montaña Blasco, Candela Ollé Castellà, and Montse Lavilla Raso, "Impacto de la pandemia de Covid-19 en el consumo de medios en España," *Revista latina de comunicación social*, no. 78 (2020), 155–167. Túñez-López, Vaz-Álvarez, and Fieiras-Ceide, "Covid-19 y medios de servicio público."

15) "2021 Análisis de la industria televisiva audiovisual," *Barlovento Comunicación*, 2022, accessed December 20, 2022, https://barloventocomunicacion.es/audiencias-anuales/2021-analisis-de-la-industria-televisiva-audiovisual/. Palomares-Sánchez, Hidalgo-Marí, and Segarra-Saavedra, *Las series españolas en 2021*. "Anuario de audiencias de TV del año 2020," *Kantar Media*, 2021, accessed December 20, 2022, https://www.kantar.com/es/campaigns/anuario-audiencias-tv-2020.

16) Valentina Boursier, Alessandro Musetti, Francesca Gioia, Maèva Flayelle, Joël Billieux, and Adriano Schimmenti, "Is Watching TV Series an Adaptive Coping Strategy During the COVID-19 Pandemic? Insights From an Italian Community Sample," *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, April 21, 2021, accessed December 20, 2022, https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyt.2021.599859/full.

17) Lothar Mikos, "Film and Television Production and Consumption in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic — The Case of Germany," *Baltic Screen Media Review*, no. 8 (2020), 30–34.

18) Vera Sigre-Leirós, Joël Billieux, Christine Mohr, Pierre Maurage, Daniel King, Adriano Schimmenti, and Maèva Flayelle, "Binge-watching in times of COVID-19: A longitudinal examination of changes in affect and TV series consumption patterns during lockdown," *Psychology of Popular Media* 12, no. 2 (2022), 173–185.

19) María Josefa Formoso Barro, "Transformación de los sistemas de producción audiovisual tras la pandemia: Estudio del caso de España en el contexto europeo," *Palabra Clave* 25, no. 3 (2022), accessed December 20, 2022, https://doi.org/10.5294/pacla.2022.25.3.7.

20) Javier Mateos-Pérez, "Narrativas televisivas en contexto de crisis: El COVID-19 en las series de ficción televisiva española," *IC Revista Científica de Información y Comunicación*, no. 18 (2021), 131–153.

21) Ibid., 152.

22) Mar Chicharro-Merayo, Fátima Gil-Gascón, and Sergio García, "Narrativas de ficción para relatar una pandemia: Análisis y recepción de Diarios de la cuarentena (Televisión Española, 2020)," *Estudios sobre el mensaje*

and discursive strategies in the British context.[23] Furthermore, research is beginning to develop on viruses, pandemics, and global epidemics (real or dystopian) in fiction prior to the COVID-19 crisis.[24]

In this context, our paper aims to provide a significant advance in the studies on television fiction framed by the pandemic, with the goal of bringing together the different perspectives addressed so far and documenting the treatment of the health crisis by Spanish fiction in a diegetic way.

Objectives and Methodology

The work presented here aims to find out how the COVID-19 health crisis has been represented in Spanish-produced TV series. To this end, the following specific objectives are proposed:

- (SO1) Documenting the pandemic discourse through its appearance in Spanish television series. The present objective responds to the research question: How has the issue of the COVID-19 pandemic been covered in Spanish television fiction?
- (SO2) Analyzing the narrative role of the coronavirus pandemic in Spanish fictional series. This objective responds to the research question: How has the Spanish TV fiction incorporated the pandemic for narrative purposes?
- (SO3) Detecting genre and formal trends in the treatment of the coronavirus pandemic in Spanish fiction. This objective responds to the research question: What are the characteristics of Spanish television fiction that have dealt with the pandemic?

To address these questions, we have taken into account the totality of Spanish fiction series production broadcast both on generalist channels of national and regional scope and on video-on-demand platforms operating in Spain. We have considered a sample of all series and miniseries that premiered from March 2020 (when the state of health emergency was declared) until the end of 2022. Our methodology combines content analysis with narrative ethnography, an approach that highlights how the production of narratives always depends on a specific sociocultural context.[25] To design this methodology, we considered the principles of discourse analysis developed by Walter Lippman.[26] Firstly, a literature review was carried out to know the state of the art in studies on television and health crisis, with a special interest in studies on fiction. Once we have identified the series

periodístico, no. 28 (2022), 293–304. Rut Martínez-Borda, Alba García Vega, and Pilar Lacasa Díaz, "Series de TV y escenarios digitales en tiempos de pandemia: La casa de papel," in *Comunicación en la era postcovid, medios audiovisuales y análisis*, eds. Jesús Díaz-Campo and Luz Martínez-Martínez (Madrid: Dykinson, 2021), 246–255.

23) Rodrigo Urcid Puga, "La pandemia como recurso narrativo: Análisis de contenido y discurso de dos audiovisuales," *Revista panamericana de comunicación* 4, no. 1 (2022), 45–55.

24) Laura Hernández-García and María del Mar Pérez-Segura, "Epidemias, pandemias y virus, desde la ficción a la realidad," *Revista Espanola de Comunicacion en Salud* 12, no. 2 (2021), accessed December 20, 2022, https://doi.org/10.20318/recs.2021.6128.

25) Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein, "Narrative Ethnography," in *Handbook of Emergent Methods*, eds. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy (New York: Guilford Publications, 2008), 241–264.

26) Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2004).

and miniseries that have dealt with the pandemic in some of their episodes or in the entire narrative, we have classified the samples from two perspectives. The first one groups together those series developed in the context of the health crisis and whose narrative is entirely centered on the pandemic discourse (coding level 1). The second perspective includes those fictions that have integrated the pandemic narrative in a contextual way, updating their diegesis and alluding to the situation with a merely updating or testimonial purpose (coding level 2). This second perspective has made it possible to detect a third form of appearance of the pandemic story, derived from those fictions that have already emerged during the pandemic and, in search of the topical discourse, considered it as another element of the narrative (coding level 3). This third level includes those series conceived in a context marked by the health crisis, and their need for narrative topicality has conditioned the presence of the pandemic in the story. The final analysis sample comprises the series and miniseries that have, directly or indirectly, dealt with the health crisis in their diegesis (see Table 1).

Table 1: Sample Analysis

Premiere	Title	Channel	Genre	Treatment	Coding level
06/04/2020	*Jo Tambe em Quedo a Casa*	TV3	Dramedy	Pandemic story	Level 1
07/04/2020	*Diarios de la Cuarentena*	TVE	Comedy	Pandemic story	Level 1
03/06/2020	*En Casa*	HBO	Dramedy	Pandemic story	Level 1
03/07/2020	*Relatos Con-fi-na-dos*	Amazon Prime Video	Dramedy	Pandemic story	Level 1
26/03/2021	*Besos al Aire*	Disney+	Romantic comedy	Pandemic story	Level 1
14/01/2021	*Cuéntame Cómo Pasó*	TVE	Dramedy	Pandemic update	Level 2
21/10/2021	*HIT*	TVE	Teen drama	Pandemic update	Level 2
23/09/2021	*Madres*	Amazon Prime Video	Drama	Pandemic update	Level 2
26/04/2021	*Señoras del (h) AMPA*	Amazon Prime Video	Comedy	Pandemic update	Level 2
16/01/2022	*Express*	Starzplay	Thriller	Pandemic update	Level 3
26/10/2021	*Todo lo Otro*	HBO Max	Dramedy	Post-pandemic	Level 3
22/04/2022	*Días Mejores*	Amazon Prime Video	Drama	Post-pandemic	Level 3

Source: own elaboration

Spanish Fiction in the Context of the Pandemic: An In-depth Study

Before the coronavirus hit the world's population, fiction told stories of viruses, epidemics, and other dystopias capable of wiping out humanity, even the planet. All of these dystopias came to the fore with the advent of COVID-19 and shook the world's social, political, and economic structures.

However, while the recreation of apocalyptic worlds has been a constant trend in the global audiovisual and cultural offer practically since its origins (cinema, TV series, literature, etc.), the discourses that have introduced these narratives after March 2020 must assume a specific paradigm shift: fiction, as experience in recent years has shown, can be based on reality. Some products — such as the American series *Station Eleven* (HBO Max, 2021), which recreates a desolate society after the swine flu just one year after the pandemic began in the world — respond to this pattern in which reality has surpassed fiction and apocalyptic worlds have recent historical documentation to look back on. Other cases were almost providential; for example, the Spanish fiction *The Barrier* (Atresplayer, 2020), which premiered months before the pandemic, narrated the story of a virus that kept the Spanish health system collapsed, a situation that seemed dystopian in January 2020 and that weeks later became a global reality.

Since the pandemic began and the state of alarm was decreed on March 15, 2020, until the end of 2022, 68 fiction series have been released in Spain, including series, miniseries, and soap operas, regardless of the genre to which they belong. As evidenced by the First Annual Report of the Television Discourse Observatory,[27] the production of series and miniseries was maintained in Spain during 2021 despite the pandemic. In other words, even though in the months of extreme lockdown, there may have been a slowdown in premieres, the truth is that we cannot speak of a decrease in production or in the number of premieres, something that is led by the productions of video on demand platforms.[28]

In the specific case of fictional works that have addressed the pandemic discourse, we find that the most numerous are those corresponding to coding level 1 (5 cases), followed by those identified with coding level 2 (4 cases) and, finally, those identified with coding level 3 (3 cases). Next, we proceed to analyze the narrative discourse of each coding block and the fictions that support it.

Level 1: Representation of the Pandemic

After analyzing the totality of television fiction that has dealt with the pandemic narrative, we find that only five fiction products have been produced whose stories focus on the representation of the health crisis. Despite this scarcity, we can say that in general terms, they are products subscribing to the health/pandemic genre, something that gives them a certain hegemonic character compared to the rest of the fiction produced.

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27) Palomares-Sánchez, Hidalgo-Marí, and Segarra-Saavedra, *Las series españolas en 2021*.
28) Ibid.

The first fiction that focused on lockdown premiered on April 1, 2020, less than a month after the declaration of COVID-19 as a pandemic in Spain. It is the Catalan series *Jo També em Quedo a Casa* (I Stay Home Too; TV3, 2020), a dramedy of twenty 15-minute episodes broadcast in a daily format that emphasizes the importance of social networks as forms of communication during the lockdown. The plot revolves around the main characters, who, like a large part of society at the time of broadcast, are not allowed to go out on the streets. For this reason, they have to deal with different personal situations, such as family conflicts and love relationships or friendships from a distance through digital communication.

Jo També em Quedo a Casa is a product created ad hoc during the pandemic that used the resources available at the time to reflect, through an innovative form of a video call, a highly topical issue while complying with the strict security measures required by the Spanish government. Finally, the series ended its broadcast after a month on the air, during which the difficulties in filming and editing the episodes were increased by the tightening of the lockdown measures in Spain.

A week later, on April 7, 2020, the series *Diarios de la Cuarentena* (Lockdown Diaries; TVE, 2020) arrived on our screens on Spanish public television. The television fiction recreates in a humorous tone the life of several people in their homes and the domestic problems that take place during the lockdown. Over the course of eight 30-minute episodes, *Diarios de la Cuarentena* uses short comedy scenes, i.e., sketches, to intersperse the different stories that take place in a total of 10 houses. The series offers a realistic and intimate representation of the issues encountered during this period, such as teleworking and its limitations, living together in small spaces, or the loneliness of the population (particularly the elderly). Moreover, like the series *Jo També em Quedo a casa*, it reflects the importance of using technology to remain connected to society and cope with the situation in the best possible way. As for the filming, since the actors also had to adapt to the exceptional situation in which the country found itself, they were provided with a basic filming kit to carry out the filming from their own homes.

A different case is presented by *En Casa* (At Home; HBO, 2020), an anthology miniseries of five 30-minute episodes that portray lockdown from different perspectives. Through the viewpoint of five Spanish film and television directors (Elena Martin, Rodrigo Sorogoyen, Paula Ortiz, Leticia Dolera, and Carlos Maques-Marcet), each episode tells an independent story that mixes comedy, drama, or even fantasy. With the quarantine caused by the coronavirus as the main thread, the stories develop in a self-conclusive manner and deal with the unusual questions of coexistence raised by the creators. As for the filming, the miniseries was shot on a mobile phone without leaving the house, as if it were an amateur production. In this sense, the quality of the productions varies depending on how the directors decide how to play with the existing limitations in order to present their genuine vision of COVID-19.

In a format remarkably similar to *En Casa*, the summer of 2020 saw the premiere of the miniseries *Relatos Con-fin-a-dos* (Lockdown Stories; Amazon Prime Video, 2020). The fiction is an anthology made up of 5 self-conclusive 15–20-minute episodes written and directed by different screenwriters and directors (Fernando Colomo, David Marqués, Miguel Bardem, Álvaro Fernández Armero, and Juan Diego Botto). With the lockdown as

a backdrop, *Relatos Con-fin-a-dos* covers various genres ranging from romantic comedy to horror, drama, or thriller to approach the lived reality and the process of adapting to the new situation. On this occasion, the fiction was also filmed entirely in lockdown by the actors and actresses who starred in it.

Finally, the romantic comedy *Besos al Aire* (Blowing Kisses; Disney+, 2021) was the fiction with the latest premiere (in early 2021) that focused on the coronavirus. Set during the first wave of the coronavirus, the miniseries of only two 80-minute episodes tells the story of eight strangers who cross paths during the pandemic. With an optimistic and humorous tone, the series connects the main story, set in a hospital where a nurse's aide falls in love with a doctor, with other stories. These subplots deal with everything from the co-existence of a rebellious teenager with her grandparents to the "loving" relationship between a supermarket cashier and her neighbor. Although the fiction gives significant weight to COVID-19 and focuses on its most critical stage, *Besos al Aire* tells these dramatic stories from an emotional, respectful, and positive point of view.

Level 2: The Updating of the Story into a Pandemic Context

Although it is true that the creation of stories primarily focused on the pandemic has been scarce in the Spanish production context, we must highlight how other fictions, which already existed with the arrival of the health crisis, have made narrative efforts to update their plots. They have done so by including secondary, specific, or transversal stories that have dealt with the pandemic in the fictional diegesis.

This is the case of *Cuéntame Cómo Pasó* (Remember When…; TVE, 2001), the long-running Spanish public television series that included a plot about the coronavirus in its 21st season, premiered in early 2021. The series is characterized by a journey through the most relevant socio-political events of recent Spanish history through the experiences of the Alcántara family. Even though the new season was planned to be set in 1992, with the arrival of the coronavirus in Spain, the scriptwriters decided, for the first time in the history of the series, to develop a new parallel timeline in the present that would reflect the events marked by the pandemic.

In this way, *Cuéntame Cómo Pasó* breaks the format of the story and makes a temporal leap to the closest and most unusual reality. Through the main characters, different perspectives of the pandemic are shown. On the one hand, María's character works in a hospital with her husband Jorge, also a doctor, and shows the intensity and harshness of the situation faced by the health workers, who were on the front line facing the disease. The fiction highlights the work of the doctors, exposes the lack of resources and personnel they had, and reflects on some of the gestures carried out by the Spanish population, such as the applause at 8:00 pm, through which many people from their homes thanked and paid tribute to this work. On the other hand, we see other realities such as that of Toni, who is worried about the possibility of infection and is extremely cautious about the measures established to avoid it; and Inés, who is abroad and cannot return to Spain with her family because of the restrictions. The most shocking plot line, however, involves the father of the family, Antonio Alcántara. The series shows how Antonio becomes infected

with COVID-19 and is admitted to the hospital with the disease. Despite being in a serious state of health, Antonio manages to get better and overcome the disease, but only for a short time — he eventually dies from the after-effects of COVID-19. Thus, fiction represents different viewpoints of the same event, reflecting the different realities experienced by society.

While *Cuéntame Cómo Pasó* integrates the health crisis as a significant theme, other Spanish TV fictions have opted for a more superficial adaptation to the coronavirus context. Thus, in the second season of the teen series *HIT* (TVE, 2020–), which premiered at the end of 2021, the pandemic has been over for two years, something that had evidently not happened in reality. The fiction contextualizes the story in a world in which the pandemic has been overcome, but not its economic and psychological consequences. Both the young protagonists and their families suffer a situation of economic instability and uncertainty due to job layoffs and the crisis caused by the closure of companies because of the coronavirus. However, although the story is set in a post-pandemic context, it is mentioned without going into it in any depth.

Similarly, the third season of *Madres* (Mothers; Amazon Prime Video, 2020–) premiered in September 2021 and incorporated some pointed references to the coronavirus through flashbacks. In this sense, it is curious how, once again, Spanish fiction portrays the pandemic as a past event in the lives of the characters, but it is broadcast when the coronavirus still marks the viewers' present. As its creators state, the reason why these scenes refer to the past and not to the present or future is because they were written in the summer of 2020, when the pandemic was believed to last only a few months. Another fiction that fleetingly incorporates dialogue about the coronavirus is the second season of *Señoras del (h)AMPA* (Ladies of the PTA; Amazon Prime Video, 2019–2021). The series was filmed before and after the lockdown and, despite mentioning the pandemic, does not emphasize it in its plot.

Level 3: Post-pandemic Series as Certifiers of the Pandemic

We have also detected the production of fictions that, despite not being originally developed with a concern for the pandemic, have been created and premiered during the health crisis and have introduced references to it into their narratives to a greater or lesser extent. These are, therefore, the series that we have classified as post-pandemic, not because we consider that they were born when the pandemic had ended, but because they were conceived in a context marked by the health crisis and their need for a topical narrative has conditioned the presence of the pandemic in the story.

Thus, *Express* (Starzplay, 2022–), the first Spanish production for the US platform Starzplay, is set in Madrid after the coronavirus pandemic. While it is true that COVID-19 is not given significant weight in the story, it serves as a plot support to justify the increase in fear and the increasingly noticeable difference between the various social classes in Spanish society.

On the other hand, the first Spanish production for HBO Max, *Todo lo Otro* (Everything else; HBO Max, 2021), includes a dialogue referring to the coronavirus in its nar-

rative. In this case, the fiction develops its episodes in a context prior to the pandemic, in which it is not mentioned since it has not occurred yet. However, in the last episode, the voice-over narrating the series tells us that the main characters will have to be confined together because of the pandemic.

Similarly, *Días Mejores* (Better Days; Amazon Prime Video, 2022–) is a series that deals with mental health, loss, and the grieving process of a group of people attending therapy in a pre-pandemic timeframe. Although the fiction takes place outside the existence of the coronavirus, it includes a reference to this story in its final minutes. The series shows how some of the characters see the President of the Spanish Government on television announcing the holding of an extraordinary Council of Ministers to decree a state of alarm in Spain for 15 days to deal with the COVID-19 crisis. Finally, the plot jumps forward in time to show the group in therapy once again and mentions the harsh and terrible situation they all experienced due to the coronavirus.

Discussion

Cabello stated in a study on Chilean television fiction that: "Television fiction is increasingly coming closer to representing political events of the present and reactivating a memory of recent history."[29] In our study, we have been able to confirm that the weight of documentation of recent history in terms of the pandemic is scarce, at least in the Spanish contribution to fiction. However, a little more time may be needed to generate new fictional products that serve as a testimony to what was experienced in the times of COVID-19.

Despite the three dimensions of inclusion of the pandemic story in fiction that we have detected, we confirm that, as Mateos-Pérez stated in a previous study, the pandemic in Spanish television fiction appears "as a frivolous, innocuous, and uncommitted patina."[30] Thus, its inclusion in the stories is more akin to a need for artistic expression, a catharsis, as the aforementioned author argues, than an intention to document recent history through television fiction.

Unlike American series that opted for integrating the pandemic story in fiction, especially in those dealing with health issues, Spanish fiction has barely involved the story of the health crisis in its narratives beyond the cases analyzed above. While American fiction has been committed to the hyperrealism of contemporary medical drama for years[31] and has continued with that narrative strategy in the months in which the pandemic has hit the world hard, we can affirm that Spanish fiction has acquired a much more conservative role, characterized by the search for the contextual actuality of the diegesis, but distancing itself from the documentary and historical power that fiction contributes to the audiovisual discourse per se.[32]

29) Cristian Cabello, "Cuando la ficción anticipa la realidad: Ficción televisiva en Chile (2012–2018)," *Series-International Journal of TV Serial Narratives* 7, no. 2 (2021), 69.

30) Mateos-Pérez, "Narrativas televisivas en contexto de crisis," 152.

31) Charo Lacalle, "Los médicos en la ficción televisiva," *Quaderns del CAC*, no. 30 (2008), 55–65.

32) Cabello, "Cuando la ficción anticipa la realidad."

In this sense, we could highlight the American series *The Good Doctor* as one of the pioneering series in representing the health crisis as such, with its uncertainty and scarcity of medical resources. In the Spanish TV context, this theme has been largely absent, thereby denying us any reflection of the health crisis as it has been suffered by the healthcare workers, staff, population, victims, families, and others.

Nevertheless, including anecdotal allusions can be an intermediate solution to bring a smile to the audience's face through a reality we have all lived through, without hammering on a subject we often want to escape from. After all, this is what Eco defended when he said that comedy is presented as subversive because it allows those who have assumed the rules as inviolable to violate them.[33]

Conclusion

The taxonomy of series that have involved the pandemic discourse in one way or another allows us to affirm that the treatment of the pandemic story has not been the same in all the productions recorded. We have been able to confirm that there are three essential ways of introducing the pandemic in Spanish television fiction, at least up to now. These three ways of narrating recent history, as we have seen, comprise:

1) Series whose narrative axis is the pandemic itself;
2) Series that adapted their stories to the existence of the pandemic and included occasional references to it;
3) Series that were conceived when the pandemic was already a reality and, due to the need for topicality in their stories, harmoniously and naturally introduced references to the pandemic into the stories.

The series created amid the pandemic, in which lockdown was the narrative vehicle of the fiction, have, on the one hand, provided the possibility of de-dramatizing the situation, something that was well received by audiences, taking into account the unprecedented consumption of television products. However, as has been observed, most Spanish series continue to recreate "old" normality and have neither dealt with the situation nor included it in their stories.

Spanish fiction has been characterized by the fact that, in general terms, it has avoided the coronavirus, as shown by the few fictions premiered in the period with such treatment. The inclusion of COVID-19-related plots into series whose main story was not directly related to the crisis is circumstantial, but it is evidence of an interest in reflecting reality and the current context in the stories.

In any case, after analyzing the stories that make up this work, we can affirm that, although we must closely follow the upcoming Spanish fiction premieres, everything seems to point to the fact that the coronavirus crisis will pass as a marginal story — at least for now— in the series produced in Spain. After all, imagining a fiction with social distancing and masks could be discouraging for a viewer looking for entertainment.

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33) Umberto Eco, *Lo cómico y la regla: La estrategia de la ilusión* (Buenos Aires: Lumen, 1987).

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TV Series

Besos al Aire (Disney+, 2021)
Cuéntame Cómo Pasó (TVE, 2021)
Diarios de la Cuarentena (TVE, 2020)
Días Mejores (Amazon Prime Video, 2022)
En Casa (HBO, 2020)
Express (Starzplay, 2022)
HIT (TVE, 2021)
Jo també em quedo a casa (TV3, 2020)
Madres (Amazon Prime Video, 2021)
Relatos Con-fi-na-dos (Amazon Prime Video, 2020)
Señoras del (h)AMPA (Amazon Prime Video, 2021)
Todo lo Otro (HBO Max, 2021)

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#QuedateEnCasa

*How did the Argentine and Spanish TV Industries React
to the Outbreak of the COVID Pandemic in 2020?*

Abstract

In March 2020, when the coronavirus pandemic hit the world, television industries had to rapidly adapt to the circumstances. While a substantial number of people were able to spend more time in front of their TVs, the executives had to make choices: should they tell stories about what was going on or should they try to create escapism? This article compares the responses given to these challenging times by the Argentine and Spanish television industries. Whereas both countries have long-standing cultural and economic ties, they differed in the length of their respective lockdowns, and this had an impact on the televisual answer to the crisis. In the case of Spain, commercial and public broadcasters and video-on-demand platforms produced half a dozen fiction series about the lockdown, focusing on the consequences of isolation and new social habits brought about by it. On the entertainment side, gossip talk-show *Sálvame* started to include public-service content in a remarkable transformation. Argentine free-to-air channels decided to re-run old *telenovelas* and focus on game and cooking adaptations of American and British formats (*Family Feud*, *Masterchef*, *Bake Off*). The public channel made just one online series about the "new normal" that had little success. By combining production studies with textual analysis, we hope to shed light on the responses given to the coronavirus crisis in two of the most important TV industries of the Spanish-speaking world on both sides of the Atlantic.

Keywords
COVID-19, pandemic, media industries, television industry, Spanish TV, Argentine TV

Introduction

March 2020 was a watershed moment in recent history. It was the time when the world seemed to pause, in fear of an unknown virus and in the context of an hypermediated reality. As the outside world became a threat to public and personal safety, millions of people stayed home due to government regulations. This forced domesticity changed everyday life in society: houses and apartments became the place for working, studying, and socializing, accelerating the adoption of "smart home" technologies, but people also turned back to their TV systems. Whereas more people were slouching through their sofas to watch audio-visual content, TV executives faced the challenge of producing topical shows with the restrictions imposed to every sector of the economy. In this article, we will focus on the responses given on both sides of the Atlantic by the Spanish and Argentine television systems during 2020.

The aim of this article is to trace a comparison between two Spanish-speaking television industries that have a shared heritage and yet different scales of production. Our analysis about these two countries, one situated in the very south of Latin America and the other one in Southern Europe, will shed new lights on the dynamics of contemporary television in times of crisis. When the events unfolded, both Argentina and Spain were governed by a center-left coalition (Frente de Todos in the former, PSOE and Unidas Podemos in the latter). Both governments used the catchphrase and hashtag #QuedateEnCasa (#StayHome) to promote the benefits of lockdown to prevent a public health catastrophe. With different accents of the same language (in Spain there is a stress on the E of Quédate, whereas in Argentina the stress is on the pronunciation of the A) on two opposite sides of the world, the TV executives faced the same questions: what do people want to watch during lockdown? A ceaseless flow of news? Escapist entertainment? Fictionalization of the drama which turned their lives upside down? The answers, as we will see, coincided, and differed in major aspects.

The Madrid-Buenos Aires connection

The relationship between Spain and Latin America started back in 1492 with the landing (for some, "a discovery," for others "an invasion") of Christopher Columbus into the "New World." The colonies got their independence from the Kingdom of Spain in the 19th century, and despite tensions and discontinuities, the ties remained tight throughout time. In present times, there are still public differences and controversies about this foundational issue. For instance, Spain celebrates its national holiday on October 12, commemorating Columbus and Hispanic Day, whereas Argentina, since 2010, chooses to call it the Day of Respect for Cultural Diversity, acknowledging the preexisting indigenous communities that were inhabiting the land and as part of the transformations on the local discourses of race and nation.

Despite these historical and rhetorical differences, both countries have a similar population (Argentina has forty-five million and Spain forty-seven million), share a language and belong to common political, industrial and cultural institutions. Approved in the Ibe-

ro-American Summit of 1995, the Ibermedia program is formed by twenty-six countries of Latin America, Spain and Portugal to promote co-productions of feature films and documentaries amongst its members. Over time, it has invested one hundred and eighteen million dollars for three thousand and three hundreds audiovisual projects. In her case study about the star of the Argentine-Spanish films co-produced with the support of Ibermedia, Ricardo Darín, Clara Garavelli points out the recent migration flows that created a sense of "a common, mixed sense of imaginary community" and therefore reenhanced the networks between the two audiovisual industries:

> The exodus caused by the various dictatorships throughout Latin America during the twentieth century was followed by the incorporation of Spain into the European Union in the mid-1980s, with the subsequent freedom of movement of European citizens. The Argentine crisis of 2001 also played an important part in this equation, bringing hundreds of Argentines to the country.[1]

And beyond these institutional frameworks and migration flows, there are some invisible connections between the two industries. After its military dictatorship of 1976–1983, Argentina reprivatized one free-to-air channel in 1984 and the remaining two in 1989. And Spain ended the monopoly of the state-run RTVE in the same decade, first with the start of broadcasting of regional channels, in 1982, and then with the licensing of three commercial channels, in 1989. On both shores, new private players came to the field at the same time. The newly formed Telefe, previously called Canal 11 in Argentina, signed deals with the newly formed Antena 3 of Spain- before and after being controlled by Telefónica de España between 1999 and 2016. And, during the era of the super formats, Spain adapted them first to cater local audiences and later trained their Argentine colleagues to do so in Latin America.[2] But the global disparities between the European Union and the Mercosur also must be taken into consideration: whereas Spanish TV industries circulate amongst Europe and enjoy a central position in the Netflix universe,[3] Argentina is currently in a more isolated position and has not yet achieved the role of prominent transnational production hub. Yet, from transnational acting influence[4] to a shared film culture,[5] the connections between Madrid and Buenos Aires are multiple and provide a rich prospect for future research in the field.

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1) Clara Garavelli, "Conquering the Conquerors: Ricardo Darín's Rise to Stardom in Spanish Film Culture," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 92, no. 4 (2015), 411–428.

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3) Michael L. Wayne and Deborah Castro, "SVOD Global Expansion in Cross-National Comparative Perspective: Netflix in Israel and Spain," *Television & New Media* 22, no. 8 (2021), 896–913.

4) Carmen Ciller, "The Influence of Argentinian Acting Schools in Spain from the 1980s," in *Performance and Spanish Film*, eds. Dean Allbritton, Alejandro Melero, and Tom Whittaker (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 110–121.

5) Esmeralda Broullón Acuña, "La representación de la emigración, el exilio y el retorno en la cultura visual hispanoargentina contemporánea," *Naveg@ mérica: Revista Electrónica Editada por la Asociación Española de Americanistas*, no. 7 (2011).

Literature review and methodology

The growing literature review of the effect of COVID-19 on TV presents at least two distinct trends. It is noteworthy how, during the COVID-19 lockdown, television was reinforced in a complementary way in the two main types of consumption identified by the theories of uses and gratifications: information and entertainment.[6] The first trend explored the effect of the pandemic specifically on TV news, showing a widespread increase in production and consumption during the first months of the pandemic.[7] News kept citizens attached to the crisis and in touch with the official messages (although resistance existed in the form of alternative media and the rise of fake news[8]). The second trend broadened its focus to other types of programming, such as reality shows, music programmes and drama, in order to frame its consumption within the need for escapism and to find shared experiences during the months of social isolation.[9] According to Annabell Halfmann and Leonard Reinecke, "media users engage in escapist entertainment use to distance themselves from a stressor (i.e., avoidance coping) and to reduce negative affective states that are associated with the stressor (i.e., emotion focused coping)."[10] Shared viewing through apps or social networks gave binge-watching a more benign meaning during lockdown:

> Against an image of the binge watcher as a solitary figure huddled over a smart device, COVID-19 illuminated the profoundly social properties of binge-watching in the streaming era through the inventive ways in which people used technologies and platforms to negotiate new forms of digital intimacy and to find ways to watch together while physically apart.[11]

With this article, we hope to contribute to the ongoing debates about the effects that the pandemic had in different countries. The impact that the pandemic in Hollywood has been studied by Kate Fortmueller,[12] whereas John Ellis looked at the ways in which the crisis gave a boost to the life of broadcast television in the United Kingdom.[13] Nishu Aye-

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6) Alan M. Rubin, "Television Uses and Gratifications: The Interactions of Viewing Patterns and Motivations," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 27, no. 1 (1983), 37–51.

7) Peter Van Aelst et al., "Does a Crisis Change News Habits? A Comparative Study of the Effects of COVID-19 on News Media Use in 17 European Countries," *Digital Journalism* 9, no. 9 (2021), 1208–1238.

8) Carlos Elías and Daniel Catalan-Matamoros, "Coronavirus in Spain: Fear of 'official' fake news boosts WhatsApp and alternative sources," *Media and Communication* 8, no. 2 (2020), 462–466.

9) Gwendelyn S. Nisbett, Stephanie Schartel Dunn, and Newly Paul, "The Escapism and Social Bond of Pandemic Binge Watching," in *Persevering During the Pandemic: Stories of Resilience, Creativity, and Connection*, eds. Deborah A. Macey, Michelle Napierski-Prancl, and David Staton (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022), 225–227.

10) Annabell Halfmann and Leonard Reinecke, "Binge-Watching as Case of Escapist Entertainment Use," *The Oxford Handbook of Entertainment Theory*, eds. Peter Vorderer and Christoph Klimmt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 196.

11) Tanya Horeck, "Netflix and Heal": The Shifting Meanings of Binge-Watching during the COVID-19 Crisis," *Film Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (2021), 35–36.

12) Kate Fortmueller, *Hollywood Shutdown: Production, Distribution and Exhibition in the Time of Covid* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2021).

13) John Ellis, "Provocations, I: What do we need in a crisis? Broadcast TV!," *Critical Studies in Television* 15, no. 4 (2020), 393–398.

dee and Sanjay Manocha, in turn, showed that TV was a beneficial force in times of a mental health crisis in India,[14] while Massimiliano Scopelliti, Maria Giuseppina Pacilli and Antonio Aquino explored how exposure to TV news and discussions about COVID-19 and the perception of social initiatives of prevention increased healthier behaviors in the use of public spaces in Italy during the early onset of the pandemic.[15] In Germany, Lothar Mikos showed how the crisis attracted younger audiences to TV news, while at the same time cooking, shopping, dating, and traveling programmes reached higher viewing numbers.[16] In a study conducted in the same country, Tim Wulf, Johannes Breuer and Josephine B. Schmitt analyzed how media-induced nostalgia functioned as a resource to cope with social stress and fear of isolation during the lockdown.[17]

In this article, we will use a comparative perspective to trace the similarities and differences of the effect of the COVID-19 crisis in the television industries of two countries belonging to different continents but linked by close cultural ties. We will also analyze the public policies towards the audiovisual industry and, in particular, the filming protocols that strongly conditioned the productivity of the sector alongside the rest of the economy. And we will also use textual analysis tool to examine some specific television texts, especially in the case of the fictions that dramatized the crisis. The time span of the research goes from March 2020, when the global emergency was declared, until December 2020, when the end of the year gave way to a new stage of the crisis. To give clarity to our work and due to space limitations, we decided to focus solely on 2020. It is the year that marked the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, with its forced last-minute adaptations and changes in the television industry. Despite the occasional lockdowns and new variants of the virus, after the start of vaccination programmes in December 2020, citizens gradually began to return to normal life. And the television industry began to strike a balance between speeding up production and following safety measures with COVID protocols. Drama series production resumed in full and entertainment programmes were able to regain their scale and live audience. Except for occasional interruptions due to the quarantine of a host, television in general adapted quickly in 2021 to the "new normal" of COVID-19. Therefore, we will keep our analysis to 2020.

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14) Nishu Ayedee and Sanjay Manocha, "Role of media (Television) in creating positive atmosphere in CO-VID-19 during lockdown in India", *Asian Journal of Management* 11, no. 4 (2020), 370–378.

15) Massimiliano Scopelliti, Maria Giuseppina Pacilli, and Antonio Aquino, "TV News and COVID-19: Media Influence on Healthy Behavior in Public Spaces," *International journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 4 (2021), 1879.

16) Lothar Mikos, "Film and Television Production and Consumption in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic — The Case of Germany," *Baltic Screen Media Review* 8, no. 1 (2020), 30–34.

17) Tim Wulf, Johannes Breuer, and Josephine B. Schmitt, "Escaping the Pandemic Present: The Relationship Between Nostalgic Media Use, Escapism, and Well-being During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Psychology of Popular Media* 11, no. 3 (2022), 258–265.

Spain

On March 13, socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez appeared on TV to announce the declaration of a state of alarm the following day. TV channels began to broadcast press conferences and public statements, using reruns of comedy and entertainment programs, forbidding live audiences, and mixing on-site and at-home participants in live content.[18] The state of alarm decree published the following day in the Official State Bulletin included an article stating that public and privately owned media outlets were obliged to insert messages, announcements and communications that the competent delegated authorities, as well as regional and local administrations, deem necessary to broadcast (Article 19 of Royal Decree 463/2020).[19] Pedro Sánchez's presence in the programming would be particularly intense: between the announcement of the State of Alarm and 2 May, when he announced the start of the de-escalation, Pedro Sánchez made 11 television speeches.[20] The work of the media workers was recognised as essential in Royal Decree-Law 10/2020 along with health care professionals, policemen and other workers who had to maintain the minimum of social functioning during the hardest weeks of lockdown, during which up to 1000 deaths per day were caused by COVID-19.[21]

At that time, the television industry was in a process of fragmentation between channels due to the implementation of Digital Terrestrial Television, but at the same time of concentration between two large commercial business groups, Atresmedia (Antena 3, La Sexta, Nova, Neox, Mega, Atreseries…) and Mediaset (Telecinco, Cuatro, Factoría de Ficción, Boing, Divinity, Energy…). That year, Telecinco was the most watched channel due to its entertainment and gossip programming full of celebrities, while Antena 3 stuck to a family-oriented programming strategy that would pay off later. Within the public-service media, RTVE (La 1, La 2, Teledeporte, Canal 24H, Clan) remained as a national entity, co-existing with more than a dozen regional public media (TV3 in Catalonia, Canal Sur in Andalusia, TVG in Galicia…). In the pay-TV market, the Movistar+ platform, owned by Telefónica, maintained a hegemonic position, although the market had been altered since 2015 by the arrival of Netflix, which was soon followed by other transnational video-on-demand services such as Amazon Prime Video and HBO. In fact, Disney+ arrived in Spain on 31 March 2020, in the middle of the strictest period of lockdown.

In the case of drama, broadcast channels opted for not premiering new series in prime time, while in the case of daytime series such as *Amar es para siempre* (Loving is forever), the amount of footage shot, remote editing and the cut of shorter episodes allowed the broadcast to be maintained without too many alterations.[22] In total, twenty-eight series shoots

18) Ceide Cé, Miguel Túñez López, and Martín Vaz Álvarez, "Impacto del COVID-19 en la televisión en España: contenidos, audiencias, soportes y estrategias de producción," *Revista Ibérica de Sistemas e Tecnologias de Informação*, (September 2020), 572–585.

19) Available at: https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2020-3692.

20) Manuel Marraco, "La guerra de Sánchez en 70.000 palabras," *El Mundo*, May 13, 2020, accessed September 30, 2022, https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2020/05/12/5eb94f14fdddff7b9e8b45ed.html.

21) Available at: https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2020-4166.

22) RedacciónAV451, "Las series diarias se organizan: cómo continuar su emisión con los platós cerrados," *Audiovisual 451*, April 20, 2020, accessed September 30, 2022, https://www.audiovisual451.com/las-series-dia-rias-se-organizan-como-continuar-su-emision-con-los-platos-cerrados/.

were paralysed with the start of the lockdown.[23] However, with a large production backlog, the pay-TV platform Movistar+ and the VOD service Netflix did take advantage of the captive audience at home. And with good results: *La línea invisible* (The Invisible Line) became Movistar+'s most watched original content to date after its first 25 days on the platform.[24] But filming, both of fiction series and of movies and advertising, would not restart until almost the summer, when the regulations aimed at organising economic and social life after the end of the strictest stage of lockdown began to be published. The Order SND/399/2020 of the Ministry of Health, published on 9 May, included the directives that were to guide filming, including cleanliness, reduced crews, supervision by occupational risk teams, special signaling and social distancing between performers (articles 29, 30, 31 and 32).[25]

In April 9 Televisión Española, the public national broadcaster premiered the first series about the crisis, *Diarios de la cuarentena* (Quarantine Diaries). Produced by Morena Films, creators Álvaro Fernández-Armero and David Marqués, both recognized filmmakers, wrote the scripts and used telematic communications to direct the actors, who shot themselves at home using equipment provided by the production company. The episodes of *Diarios de la cuarentena* were between 25 and 29 minutes long, and were based on an ensemble group, with 15 characters. There was a connection between them that was gradually through video calls: they were fathers and sons, brothers, co-workers, friends or had business relationships.

In *Diarios de la cuarentena* there was a notable absence of diversity: all the characters were in heterosexual relationships and seemed to belong to a privileged stratum. Even delaying the payment of rent in one episode was more as an example of picaresque than a necessity. No woman in the series lived alone or presented autonomy beyond a romantic relationship. The three older characters were in permanent connection with their respective children, a further example of how the series avoided essential concerns during lockdown. But closer to a shared experience, the series incorporated, especially in the early episodes, one of the shared rituals during the first weeks of lockdown: the 8 PM applause from windows and balconies in support of health workers. At the beginning of each episode, a banner displayed two messages: the series was produced without anyone leaving their homes (the hashtag #QuedateEnCasa was added) and it was dedicated "to the professionals who work every day for us." By then, the country was already going through an acrimonious political confrontation, which the series was part of. Its comedic tone made it an object of criticism by groups opposed to the government, such as the far-right party Vox, whose leader Santiago Abascal denounced it in parliament as a comedy "about the imprisonment of Spaniards."[26] In fact, in response to a question posed by representatives of the conserv-

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23) Redacción, "Todas las series que han suspendido sus rodajes en España y Estados Unidos por la crisis del coronavirus," *Vertele*, March 15, 2020, accessed September 30, 2022, https://vertele.eldiario.es/noticias/to-das-series-suspendidas-canceladas-coronavirus-espana-estados-unidos-usa_1_7410303.html.

24) RedacciónAV451, "*La línea invisible*, un fenómeno de audiencias en Movistar+," *Audiovisual 451*, May 11, 2020, accessed September 30, 2022, https://www.audiovisual451.com/la-linea-invisible-un-fenomeno-de-audiencias-en-movistar/.

25) Available at: https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2020/05/09/pdfs/BOE-A-2020-4911.pdf

26) Berto Molina, "'Maldita la gracia': Abascal (Vox) carga contra la serie cómica de TVE sobre coronavirus," *El Confidencial*, April 9, 2020, accessed September 30, 2022, https://www.elconfidencial.com/television/series-tv/2020-04-09/abascal-vox-tve-diarios-cuarentena-critica_2542083/.

ative Partido Popular, the administrator of RTVE explained that the sole purpose of the series was "to entertain."[27] But this lack of relevance, beyond the political conflict, had its consequences in terms of audience size, which remained at a average of 6.9% of share.

En casa (At home), produced for HBO Spain, premiered on 3 June, arrived when a large part of Spain was already in a situation of attenuated lockdown. The approach of *En casa* was quite different from that of *Diarios de la cuarentena*: it offered 5 independent stories with a length of between 20 and 50 minutes. Produced by Warner Bros. and Caballo Films, *En casa* was in continuity with HBO Spain's commitment to *auteur* fiction, such as its series created by Isabel Coixet (*Foodie Love*) and Álex de la Iglesia (*30 monedas*). The episodes of *En casa* were directed by Rodrigo Sorogoyen, Leticia Dolera, Paula Ortiz, Elena Martín and Carlos Marqués-Marcet. All five were examples of Spanish auteur cinema without necessarily being on the margins, and with clear links to serialized fiction: Sorogoyen, Dolera, Martín and Marqués-Marcet had recently directed or had series in the pipeline on the pay-TV service Movistar+. *En casa* belonged to a hybrid territory between cinema and television: an anthology series that, due to the decision to release all its instalments simultaneously, could also be an anthology film. Two aspects of *En casa* stand out. One is the generic, tonal, and aesthetic variety, which allows the episodes to move between fantasy, drama and comedy. But the stories explored the theme of affective relationships of 30-something people, whether to reflect on mourning after a break-up (Marqués-Marcet), the transition from friendship to love (Ortiz), the crisis of a couple (Sorogoyen), the recognition of being in a toxic relationship (Dolera) and alternative family models (Martín). There are more points in common: the constant exploration of the ritual of the 8 PM applause and the incorporation of real footage from of the lockdown, including press conferences of Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez to the videos disseminated on social media. For the critic Antonio Rivera (2020), the main quality of the series was "a syncretic and common discourse on audiovisual work itself in extreme conditions."[28]

The third relevant drama produced during the period of lockdown was *Relatos con-fin-a-dos* (Lockdown stories), premiered on 3 July on Amazon Prime Video. The project had clear links with *Diarios de la cuarentena* from a production point of view, although in this case, like *En casa*, it was an anthology series. Two of its episodes were directed by the creative directors of *Diarios de la cuarentena* (Álvaro Fernández Armero and David Marqués), while Fernando Colomo (an actor in the TVE series), Miguel Bardem and Juan Diego Botto were responsible for the other three. The series itself was a hybrid product between film and television- internationally it was distributed by Latido Films as an episodic film under the title of *Tales of the Lockdown*.[29] According to Macarro, even though *Di-*

27) Martín Izaguirre, "La polémica comedia *Diarios de la cuarentena* costó 273.400 euros a RTVE," *La Política*, June 1, 2020, accessed September 30, 2022, https://www.lapoliticaonline.es/nota/84631-la-polemica-comedia-diarios-de-la-cuarentena-costo-273-400-euros-a-rtve/.

28) Antonio Rivera, "*En casa*, una visión de autor y de trinchera sobre la COVID-19," *Fuera de Series*, June 3, 2020, accessed September 30, 2022, https://fueradeseries.com/critica-en-casa-hbo-espana-serie-antologia-confinamiento-dc1848b75ec0.

29) Emiliano de Pablos, "Latido Nabs World Sales Rights to Morena's *Tales of the Lockdown*," *Variety*, June 22, 2020, accessed September 30, 2022, https://variety.com/2020/film/global/latido-sells-morenas-tales-of-lockdown-1234643867/.

arios de la cuarentena, *En casa* y *Relatos con-fin-a-dos* had many differences, offered a central concept:

> Subject to a particular process of immediacy typical of the press and journalistic re-
> ports, the different creations have been able to gather reliable witness of a surround-
> ing reality, crude and desolate, to launch a message of collectivity based on identifi-
> cation with others.[30]

As noted previously, television schedules remained pretty much the same in Spanish television, with programs taking different measures to remain active during the lockdown. Talk-shows were produced with both the host and the guests connecting from home. *Late Motiv*, the talk-show hosted by Andreu Buenafuente, became *Late Motiv en casa* (Late Motiv at Home), while *Lo de Évole*, the interview program with Jordi Évole, labelled the episodes shot using telematic means as "Lo de #QuédateEnCasa." One relevant exception was *Cuarto Milenio*, the mystery program directed and hosted by journalist Iker Jiménez. Accused of giving space to conspiracy theories, ufology and anti-scientific thinking, the program was suddenly taken off the air at the end of March, sparking rumors that its content, in the context of the health crisis, had been deemed too controversial for the network. Although rumors of censorship were always denied by both the channel and Iker Jiménez, its return in September 2020 was devoted to a series of specials on the origin of the COVID-19 virus that encouraged some conspiracy theories.[31]

Sálvame (Save Me) was the most relevant programme during the COVID-19 lockdown in Spain. Hosted by Jorge Javier Vázquez, *Sálvame* premiered in 2009 on Telecinco, the main channel of Mediaset España and quickly became labelled as trash TV.[32] A talk-show based on gossip and panelists in never-ending feuds and shouting matches, it occupied the slot between 4 PM and 9 PM, with a special edition on Saturday prime time, *Sálvame Deluxe*. After the start of the health crisis, politicians and doctors began to sit alongside the usual panelists with surprising ease to convey calm and messages of responsibility. A new section was introduced for experts to answer viewers' questions and at 8 p.m. there was a pause for the panelists to join in the collective applause in recognition of health workers fighting the spread of COVID-19. Journalist Natalia Marcos linked this content to the program's audience and highlighted the way in which it separated the expert voices authorized to give messages about the coronavirus and the program's regular contributors:

> The audience of *Sálvame*, a good percentage of whom are pensioners or people in at-
> risk groups, have been aware of the symptoms of the virus and have learnt how to

30) Jordi Macarro, "Relatos con-fin-a-dos de una «cuarentena» en casa," *VISUAL REVIEW: International Visual Culture Review* 8, no. 2 (2021), 191–202.

31) Borja Terán, "Cuarto Mileni' y la conspiración," *La Información*, September 5, 2020, accessed September 30, 2022, https://www.lainformacion.com/opinion/borja-teran/cuarto-milenio-y-la-conspiracion/2814106/.

32) Frederic Guerrero-Solé, Besalú Reinald, and Hibai López-González, "Save me, save them! Trash talk shows and the third-person effect," *Communications* 39, no. 2 (2014), 193–214.
Natalia Marcos, "'Sálvame,' un inesperado referente informativo," *El País*, March 18, 2020, accessed September 30, 2022, https://elpais.com/television/2020-03-17/salvame-un-inesperado-referente-informativo.html.

wash their hands properly and how to respect the one meter safety distance. On so-
cial media, many viewers of the program have praised the didactic way in which the
program has tackled the issue, without scaremongering but firmly, and reminding
them of the importance of staying at home. Some of the regular contributors to the
program are also present at these tables, although only as representatives of the pop-
ulation. Information is left to the experts.[33]

The program's central strip, entitled *Sálvame Naranja*, went from two million viewers
on 9 March to 2.9 million on 16 March (the first broadcast after the declaration of the State
of Alert). Later, *Sálvame* focused on attacking alt-right journalist Alfonso Merlos, whose
infidelity to a former *Big Brother* contestant was revealed during a live broadcast on You-
tube. The humorously named "Merlos Place" (a humoristic reference to popular nineties
prime time soap opera *Melrose Place*) also exemplified how *Sálvame* entered the contro-
versy surrounding the political management of the health crisis. Jorge Javier Vázquez, a
declared Socialist Party voter, stated live that *Sálvame* was for "reds and queers," and de-
fended the government of Pedro Sánchez in a public discussion with the most famous
panelist of the show, Belén Esteban (known as the "People's Princess")[34].

The Spanish television industry responded to this unprecedented crisis in two impor-
tant ways. First, it started to dramatize the emergency in a number of series, both in broad-
cast TV and streaming platforms. The year ended with 50 fiction series premieres com-
pared to 42 in 2019, indicating that the COVID-19 crisis found the fiction industry in a
production boom.[35] The fact that many drama series were produced for transnational vid-
eo-on-demand services was an incentive for their release during the period of confine-
ment, which allowed Spanish titles to be among the most watched worldwide.[36] And sec-
ond, the entertainment programming incorporated public interest content, symbolized by
the hit gossip talk show *Sálvame* (Save Me) and its multiple ramifications. Upbeat in the
face of an unimaginable crisis and in permanent fight with itself, *Sálvame* perfectly em-
bodied Spanish identity during the lockdown.

Argentina

The first Argentine lockdown started five days later than the Spanish one, on 20 March
2020. But, on this side of the Atlantic, it lasted longer, and it affected a television industry
that was already in a worse shape than its Spanish counterpart. By the beginning of the

33) Natalia Marcos, "'Sálvame,' un inesperado referente informativo," *El País*, March 18, 2020, accessed Septem-
ber 30, 2022, https://elpais.com/television/2020-03-17/salvame-un-inesperado-referente-informativo.html.

34) Paloma Rando, "Cuando *Sálvame* volvió a dejar de ser (solo) de rojos y maricones," *Vanity Fair*, June 21,
2020, accessed September 30, 2022, https://www.revistavanityfair.es/cultura/entretenimiento/articulos/bel-
en-esteban-jorge-javier-enfrentamiento-salvame-politica/45580.

35) Javier Mateos-Pérez and Rebeca Sirera-Blanco, "Taxonomía de las series de televisión españolas en la era
digital (2000–2020)," *El Profesional de la Información* 30, no. 6 (2021), 1–15.

36) Álvaro Ruiz de Elvira, "La pandemia aúpa las series españolas entre lo más visto en todo el mundo," *El País*,
April 26, 2020, accessed September 30, 2022, https://elpais.com/television/2020-04-25/la-pandemia-aupa-
las-series-espanolas-entre-lo-mas-visto-en-todo-el-mundo.html.

lockdown, there was just one fictional series being shot and broadcast on free-to-air TV. The shooting of this series was disrupted and a few days later it went off air without an actual ending. And this was not the only adjustment that Argentine TV had to deal with during the turbulent months of 2020. The restrictions imposed by an executive order of President Alberto Fernández in March were labelled as a "social, preventive and compulsory isolation" period that started as a temporary measure of two weeks. However, amid the uncertainties around the virus and the bad news coming from the European winter, these measures were extended in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires on several occasions until 6 November. The President announced these extensions himself in speeches broadcast live on TV and radio. These speeches, accompanied by slides and figures, were broadcast live by most free-to-air channels and cable news channels, though it was not compulsory to do so as in the last government of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. As a way of differentiating from his mentor and vice president, Fernández chose not to recur to the *cadena nacional* (national broadcast) that was a hallmark of Kirchner's second administration.[37]

The free-to-air TV is formed by one state-run channel, currently called La Televisión Pública, and five private stations. The most popular ones are Telefe, controlled since 2016 by the American corporation Viacom, and El Trece, controlled by the biggest national media conglomerate of the country, Grupo Clarín[38]. The other players are Canal Nueve, controlled by the leader of a trade union that has connections with the ruling party; América, controlled by a group of companies with interests in the energy sector and the private health sector; and NET, run between a print media company, Perfil, and a TV production company, Kuarzo. The public sector has two streaming platforms associated with it, Cine-Ar and Contar, and the private streaming platforms that operate in the country are Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, HBO Max, Disney+, Star+ and Paramount+, the latter one directly associated with Viacom's Telefe.

The audiovisual industry, and the free-to-air TV channels, faced a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, there was a peak in the demand for content since more people were spending time in their homes.[39] With millions of people not being able to travel for work, the measures taken to tackle the virus coined added terms. "Public health protocol" and its shorter version "protocol" became everyday words, used either for entering a shop or for establishing a way to film in a set. And "essential" became the shortcut to refer to the people who were performing "essential duties" during the emergency. The executive order establishing the lockdown included twenty-four exempted professions that were allowed to leave their homes. These "essential" workers were the members of the security forces, hospitals, and clinics, and those working on "audiovisual, radial and graphic media,"

37) Ezequiel Rivero, "Una batería de anuncios: atributos de las cadenas nacionales de Cristina Kirchner en la cobertura online de Clarín, La Nación, y Página/12 (2011–2015)," *Intersecciones en Comunicación* 1, no. 12 (2018), 75–100.

38) Guillermo Mastrini, Martín Becerra, and Ana Bizberge, *Grupo Clarín: From Argentine Newspaper to Convergent Media Conglomerate* (London: Routledge, 2021).

39) Santiago Marino, "ASPO, rating y clics: más ruido que nueces en el primer trimestre de pandemia," *Letra P*, July, 2020, accessed October 8, 2022, https://www.letrap.com.ar/nota/2020-7-7-12-59-0-aspo-rating-y-clics-mas-ruido-que-nueces-en-el-primer-trimestre-de-pandemia.

amongst others[40]. The use of the word "essential" sparked controversy on social media and newspapers. What did it mean to be essential? Did the term refer to the fact that escaping from reality was key for society, and therefore TV had a role to play? Or did it mean that people working on TV didn't have to follow the same rules as their fellow citizens?[41]

Despite TV being "essential," filming fiction was not. The protocol for filming fictions for TV, cinema and streaming services, did not come until 7 August (Protocol for filming, 2020). This protocol was a "guide of good practices" negotiated between the Ministry of Culture, the Audiovisual Institute, the board representing the main producers and the trade union of the sector. Due to a combination of all these factors, 2020 was the year that marked a historical record. According to data processed by the Ibero-American Observatory of Television Fiction (OBITEL, for its acronym in Spanish), there were just sixty-one hours of new Argentine fictional productions and 1 coproduction. These sixty-one hours represent 5% of the total amount of broadcast fiction during this period.

By the time of the establishment of the first lockdown, there was only one fiction shot and broadcast, *Separadas* (Separated). It was an ensemble dramedy, what would be called a *tira diaria* (daily strip) in Spanish, about seven women who had recently been scammed and had therefore been separated from the routines of their daily lives. Forced to reinvent themselves and create networks of solidarity, they started running a cafe. The show premiered on January 20 with local celebrities in the leading roles. The formulaic storyline was proving well with ratings but the filming had to stop. As a way of engaging into transmedia storytelling, the official announcement was made on March 20 in the Instagram account of the show, @separadas, where the authors combined the aesthetic of the fictional cafe with the speech that was starting to circulate socially: "Dear clients and partners, we will be following the sanitary protocols so you can feel safe. That is why Cafe Rivero will keep CLOSED from today until further notice. Let's take care and stay home." What was first conceived as a temporary pause until filming could be resumed proved to be, some days later, the actual end of the show. On 12 May, it was finally announced that the program wouldn't return "due to economic reasons."[42] The series did not have a closing episode conceived as such. It just stopped being broadcast on episode 36, out of an expected total of 120, and with every storyline open. In the era of social distancing, how can you shoot a telenovela? The shooting protocol had not yet been discussed and there were little clues on which was the best way to proceed.

The Public Channel scheduled three local productions. Two of them were filmed before the pandemic: *La persuasión* (The Persuasion), a political dramedy that premiered on 20 July and was also scheduled after the midnight news edition; and the third season of *Si solo si* (If Only If), a story about disabled people that includes them as part of the cast. However, the only new production filmed during 2020 was *Terapia de cuarentena* (Quar-

40) Argentine Presidency, Executive Order 297/2020, March 19, 2020, acccessed October 8, 2022, https://www.argentina.gob.ar/normativa/nacional/335741/texto.

41) Emanuel Respighi, "La 'esencialidad' de la TV," *Página/12*, July 15, 2020, accessed October 8, 2022, https://www.pagina12.com.ar/278479-la-esencialidad-de-la-tv.

42) Pablo Montagna, "TV: Separadas no regresará a la pantalla de eltrece," *La Nación*, May 12, 2020, accessed October 8, 2022, https://www.lanacion.com.ar/espectaculos/personajes/separadas-no-regresara-pantalla-trece-nid2364251.

antine Therapy), made by a production company called NOS, with experience in the advertising field. It was, again, scheduled after midnight and premiered on 2 August, after streaming in the public online platform Contar in May. The miniseries, originally produced for the web, consisted of eight episodes of less than twenty minutes each, where three patients expressed their concerns about various aspects of lockdown to an psychoanalyst. With similarities to the Spanish *Diarios de la cuarentena* and the Chilean *Historias de cuarentena*, this show focused on the therapy sessions held via Zoom by different people who did not know each other. The protagonist was Anita, the psychoanalysis (Carola Reyna), who was seen struggling with the fact that her house had also become her office and dealing with the problems of her patients as well as with her own. The author, Marcelo Camaño, said that he came up with the idea of the show when he found himself tired of the endless stream of Zoom calls that had become the everyday landscape of the pandemic. He had also written the adaptation of the bestseller book *Historias de diván* (Couch Stories), written by psychologist Gabriel Rolón and adapted for Telefe in 2013.[43]

Partly due to the short length of the story, there was little room for the characters of *Terapia en cuarentena* to grow. The patients were Rosario, a working mother tired of dealing with her children and her work in the same confined space (Mercedes Funes); Julio, a 60-year old man living temporarily with his mother and having his therapy session in the only place with a certain amount of privacy, the bathroom (Coco Sily); Malena, a young doctor who is targeted as a threat to the safety of her building because she is in the front line of the pandemic (Violeta Urtizberea); and Diego, a 45-year old gay man, who is desperate for going back to his sexual life against the advice of his therapist (Luciano Cáceres). This last storyline was too solemn for a fiction trying to dramatize the period under a comic and cathartic lens, because the answer from the therapist was the same as the one from the Ministry of Health: in times of emergency, sex can wait.

América's motto was "la vida en vivo" (life in real time) because the channel did not produce any fiction in the last decade, focusing instead on live discussion shows, both on politics and on gossip about the show business. 2020 was not the exemption. During the reign of the Mexican mogul Ángel González González, Channel 9 had broadcast several imported telenovelas that belonged to his conglomerate, Grupo Albavisión. In 2020, instead, they adopted a schedule similar to that of América, its main competitor for the third pole in the ratings, and it didn't broadcast any fiction at all. Net TV broadcast eight imported telenovelas of Mexico and Colombia that had already been aired.[44] Re-runs of local and imported productions was a strategy followed by most channels. Telefe, with the excuse of its 30th anniversary, scheduled special emissions of selected episodes of its most successful telenovelas. One of them, *Educando a Nina* (Educating Nina), from 2016, was re-run against *Argentina, tierra de amor y venganza* (*Argentina, land of love and vengeance*),

43) Infobae, "Terapia en cuarentena: cómo es la serie argentina que se está filmando durante el aislamiento," *Infobae*, May 7, 2020, accessed October 8, 2022, https://www.infobae.com/cultura/2020/05/07/terapia-en-cuarentena-como-es-la-serie-argentina-que-se-esta-filmando-durante-el-aislamiento/.

44) Mónica Kirchheimer and Ezequiel Rivero, "Argentina: pandemia, aislamiento y paralización de la producción audiovisual," in Vasallo de Lopes, Maria Immaculata (coord), *Anuario Obitel 2021: Ficción Televisiva en Tiempos de Pandemia* (2021), Ediciones UC, 65–99, accessed October 8, 2022, https://obitel.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/anuario2021/pdf/Obitel21ARG_s.pdf.

from 2019 and made by Channel 13. Both leading channels re-run other telenovelas of their own archive and from Turkey and Brazil.

Besides the limited production of new fictionalized content, the broadcasting schedule of Argentine free-to-air television in 2020 was made up of two other components: news and magazine shows, and competition programs, both in the traditional way and reality shows. The thrive to be following up the latest events about the unknown virus sparked interest in news shows, especially during the first weeks of lockdown.[45] In a media landscape that has been increasingly polarised since 2008,[46] Carboni and Marino argue that there was a "temporary truce" in the relationship between the government and the media conglomerates.[47] President Fernández, as head of a center-left coalition, gave interviews to different factions of the political spectrum, emphasizing the importance of lockdown for preventing a major disaster in the health system. This truce was temporary, the authors say, and lasted just a month. After that, the narrative of mainstream media centered on critiques of Fernández, who claimed that restrictions had to continue because it was not possible to make a choice between preserving the economy and preserving public health.

The mediatic truce gained its momentum on 5 April, when the six channels joined to produce and broadcast a simultaneous telethon called *Unidos por Argentina* (United for Argentina). Made under the auspices of the first lady Fabiola Yáñez, it gathered some of the most popular hosts of the Argentine star-system in a show that combined information with entertainment. Live interviews via Zoom with different artists and advice on how to take care during the pandemic were mixed with the aim of raising funds for the Red Cross. "Aseptic, the show was a succession of announcements, fortunately without political manipulations, but without emotion," wrote the TV critic Pablo Sirvén in *La Nación*.[48] After the truce ended, polarization got back in the game. In this context, where most news programs were heavily editorialized, there were two opposing cases that deserve further attention. Jorge Rial and Viviana Canosa, journalists that started their respective careers as gossip columnists, talking about the private lives of celebrities, took a leading role during this crisis. Rial was celebrating the 20th anniversary of his show *Intrusos en el espectáculo* (Intruders in showbusiness), broadcast in América and usually dedicated to frivolous aspects, though it had already fostered debates around social issues such as the legalization of abortion. In this case, with the pandemic as the main topic, Rial and his team used the *spectacularization techniques* to talk about public health and raise awareness on the importance of staying home.[49] One leading case was the one involving doctor Rubén Mülh-

45) Agustín Espada, "Medios en cuarentena," *Letra P*, March 24, 2020, accessed September 30, 2022, https://www.letrap.com.ar/nota/2020-3-24-14-50-0-medios-en-cuarentena.

46) Philip Kitzberger and Germán Lodola, "Politización y confianza en los medios de comunicación: Argentina durante el kirchnerismo," *Revista de Ciencia Política* 37, no. 3 (2017), 635–658.

47) Ornela Carboni and Santiago Marino, "De la tregua a la guerra, el road media presidencial en la pantalla cuarentenada," *Letra P*, April 29, 2020, accessed September 30, 2022, https://www.letrap.com.ar/nota/2020-4-29-10-49-0-de-la-tregua-a-la-guerra-el-road-media-presidencial-en-la-pantalla-cuarentenada.

48) Pablo Sirvén, "*En Unidos por Argentina* la política quedó afuera," *La Nación*, April 5, 2020, accessed September 10, 2022, https://www.lanacion.com.ar/espectaculos/television/en-unidos-argentina-politica-quedo-afuera-nid2351147.

49) Pablo Méndez Shiff, "Los sanitaristas del espectáculo," *Espoiler*, June 8, 2020, accessed September 30, 2022, http://espoiler.sociales.uba.ar/2020/06/08/los-sanitaristas-del-espectaculo.

berger, a plastic surgeon working with many celebrities who had promoted an illegal pill to "cure" coronavirus. His professional and personal scandals were discussed on several editions of the program, while framing it into a broader context of a social problem. In other editions of the show, *Intrusos* even included an interview with the minister of Health. On the other hand, Viviana Canosa followed the radicalization of some of her male colleagues and found a place in the fringes of the mainstream. Using her platform as the host of a political late-night show in Canal 9, *Nada Personal* (Nothing Personal), she drank from a bottle that was allegedly containing a miraculous cure for the virus and interviewed people claiming the disease was not real.[50] Both these shows were successful not only in terms of traditional rating, they were also heavily discussed on social media and between journalists.

The main figures of the Argentine star system took a year off screen. Mirtha Legrand, considered "the queen of TV," is an actress born in 1927 who has been hosting her interview show, *Almorzando con Mirtha Legrand* (Having lunch with Mirtha Legrand), since 1968.[51] Due to her age and following the official guidelines, she made a "royal" move and handed the baton of her show to her granddaughter, Juana Viale, who hosted it on her behalf. Susana Giménez, who has hosted a competition and interview show since 1987, also took a step year. The difference is that she took a more active role in opposing the lockdown and moved to Uruguay in May 2020, after flying in a private jet in the middle of the lockdown.

Guido Kaczka was hosting a competition show called *Bienvenidos a Bordo* (Welcome on Board) when the pandemic struck. Instead of going off air, he changed the patterns and decided that, during those months, the only participants able to compete would be doctors, nurses and taxi drivers, some of the most affected by the crisis. As Jordana Timerman pointed out: "It has survived — and thrived — because it's been able to adapt to the COVID-19 landscape: contestants compete on an open-air stage, and their only interaction with the host is on a Zoom-style screen."[52] The show, broadcast on Channel 13 primetime, found a unique blend of escapism with social awareness of the unfolding events.

Another surprising competition filling the TV with good ratings was the local edition of *Bake Off*. Shot in 2019 but not broadcast until 2020, it became a social phenomenon. Millions of people were re-discovering the perks and perils of domestic life and cooking became a global topic of conversation, so the show was a perfect fit for those months. Even though it was shot before the pandemic (or maybe because of that), it proved to be a welcomed form of escapism. *Bake Off,* broadcast on Sunday nights in Telefe, from April to July, was an unexpected success. And it was the decisive factor in bringing *MasterChef Celebrity Argentina* (Celebrity MasterChef) to the same channel in November that same year. In this case, it was shot during the pandemic, and with health protocols in shape (it was usual to see people with face masks and the distance between the kitchen counters was

50) Sebastián Robles and Nicolás Mavrakis, "Una diva trash," *Crisis*, October 1, 2020, accessed September 16, 2022, https://revistacrisis.com.ar/notas/una-diva-trash.

51) Libertad Borda and Pablo Méndez Shiff, "De Mirtha Legrand a la Chiqui: apuntes sobre una figura única," *Revista de Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad de Buenos Aires*, no. 90 (2016), 108–115.

52) Jordana Timerman, "Argentine TV's New Normal," *American Quarterly*, October 28, 2020, accessed September 30, 2022, https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/argentine-tvs-new-normal/.

long enough). A combination of reduced budgets and a desire to combine escapism with social awareness were the principles of non-scripted television in the times of coronavirus and polarization in 2020 Argentina.

Conclusions

The same catastrophe was perceived differently on each side of the Atlantic. Before the first lockdown, Spain, at a more comfortable place in the world economy, was producing around forty series. Argentina was broadcasting only one, with some more announced for the coming months that could not be shot during 2020. The economic consequences of the pandemic and lockdowns were not the same because the countries were already at a different scale of production. Spain produced three fictional series about the ongoing crisis for national channels and video-on-demand platforms, and one of them was targeted by the far-right party, which accused it of doing propaganda. Argentina just produced one series about the pandemic, which was made by the public channel and with little repercussion either in the press or in social media.

Argentine screens were flooded with news shows, which come in the way of commented news, and the return of reality shows. The rise of cooking shows, especially *Bake Off* and *MasterChef*, reinvigorated the ratings of the free-to-air channel by providing a topical issue, homemade food in times of lockdown and isolation, and escapism at the same time. It is worth noting, as an example of the multiple ties between Argentina and Spain, that the producing company making *MasterChef* in South America was the same producing *Bake Off* in the Iberian Peninsula. Gossip talk shows were also protagonists on both shores during these times. While Spain experienced the expansion of *Sálvame* in multiple time slots, Argentina had in *Intrusos* the main version of this combination of political, health and show business news. These shows are not only cheap to produce, but they also know how to cater to local audiences- and this national component proves to be of maximum importance in times of catastrophe. Plus, the spectacularization of the public discussions says a lot about the current state of affairs in the public arena.

The hault in the filming of fictional series, the little success of the dramatization of the crisis, the return of cooking shows and the domination of gossip programs were key elements of Spanish and Argentine TV channels during 2020. A shared language and several cultural affinities produced comparable results. They differentiated themselves mostly due to their respective scaled of production that has to do with the broader panorama of the world economy and the place in which country is located. Once again, this comparison allows us to see that television is not only still alive, but it is also deeply rooted to society, both in a transnational and in a national level.

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Argentina, land of love and vengeance (Argentina, tierra de Amor y Venganza; PolKa, 2019)

At Évole (Lo de Évole; Producciones del Barrio, 2020–)

At Home (En casa; Warner Bros./Caballo Films, 2020)

Bake Off (Bake Off: El gran pastelero; Turner Latin America, 2020)

Couch stories (Historias de diván; Yair Dori and Canal 10 of Uruguay, 2013)

Educating Nina (Educando a Nina; Underground, 2016)

Foodie Love (Foodie Love; Miss Wasabi, 2019)

Fourth Millenia (Cuarto Milenio; Plural, 2005–)

Having Lunch with Mirtha Legrand (Almorzando con Mirtha Legrand; Storylab, 1968–)

If Only If (Si Solo Si; Manada de Dos, 2016–2020)

In Treatment (En Terapia; Dori Media, 2012–2014)

Intruders in show business (Intrusos en el espectáculo; América, 2001–)

Late Motiv (Late Motiv; Movistar+, 2016–2021)

Lockdown stories (Relatos con-fin-a-dos; Morena Films, 2020)

Loving is for ever (Amar es para siempre; Diagonal TV, 2013–)

Masterchef Celebrity (BoxFish, 2020)
Nothing Personal (Nada Personal; GM Producción, 2020)
Quarantine Diaries (Diarios de la cuarentena; Morena Films, 2020)
Quarantine Stories (Historias de la Cuarentena; Mega, 2020)
Save Me (Sálvame; La Fábrica de la Tele, 2009–)
Separated (Separadas; PolKa Producciones, 2020)
The Invisible Line (La línea invisible; MOD Producciones, 2020)
The Persuation (La Persuasión; El Buey Solo, 2020)
Therapy in Quarantine (Terapia en Cuarentena; NOS, 2020)
United for Argentina (Unidos por Argentina; Joint production of six channels, 2020)
Welcome on Board (Bienvenidos a Bordo; Kuarzo, 2020–)

Biographies

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Framing Pandemic News

*Empirical Research on COVID-19 Representation
in the Italian TV News*

Abstract

The article contributes to the vast literature on the media representation of COVID-19, by exposing the results of a quantitative and qualitative analysis of Covid-19 media coverage in Italy, run on the full archive of prime-time TV news — Tg1, Tg2, Tg3, Tg4, Tg5, Studio Aperto, Tg La7 — between February 28, 2020, and February 27, 2021. All verbal contents of TV news have been analyzed, based on a sample of 2,555 news shows and 14,304 news stories related to the epidemic, for a total of 1.6 million words. By applying the media framing models, we realized a two-step work: a mapping of TV coverage across one year; and an in-depth investigation on the most relevant keywords, *gathering* and *variant*. The main results show how the different Italian television news broadcast the pandemic "waves", paying attention to issues considered as emergencies. Through a cluster analysis, we found some recurring and absent narratives of the media representation on COVID19. Along with the reflection on the framing of the pandemic, we will come out with some insights into the blaming strategies put in motion by the TV news.

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1. Background

The role of information in shaping the perception of Sars-Cov-2 is a widely discussed issue and the literature analyzing the media representation of COVID-19 is currently very extensive. So it's difficult to reconstruct a global overview of how the pandemic has been

treated in the media ecosystem, since various studies have analyzed the media coverage of this phenomenon, with different backgrounds and methodologies.

Most research deal with on-line discussion and the so-called *infodemic*: a sort of parallel epidemic, already defined as a main threat by both national institutions and the WHO[1]. All in all, the idea is that of a "co-evolution" between the spread of the contagion and its social media coverage, likely to jeopardize the implementation of public health policies[2]. Social media infodemic and misinformation campaigns have drawn the attention of quantitative analysists[3], with a focus on the coordinated activity of social media (as Twitter, Facebook, Youtube and Reddit) vested with some formal credibility, but also active in the production of such fake news[4]. In some analysis, the emphasis has been placed on the integration between old and new channels: so that the on-line Covid-related news increases and decreases in time according to the TV coverage of the epidemic, rather than to its actual evolution[5]. The excessive accessibility to sources of information — *infodemia* — can also be modulated by "how" the phenomenon is described by the journalists[6]. In empirical studies relating to COVID-19 and social media during the first outbreak of 2020, themes concerning the role of online platforms focused on: identifying infodemics, surveying public attitudes, assessing mental health, detecting or predicting COVID-19 cases, analysing government responses to the pandemic, and evaluating the quality of health information in prevention education videos[7].

In Europe and UK, a specific body of research focused on the role and power of journalism and news media as such, with a critical approach[8]. The Italian case was an excellent case study to analyze the role of the news making during the pandemic, because it represents an example of a "polarized pluralist" model of journalism, characterized by high levels of politicization and where this "service role" of journalism is not commonly exercised. The analysis of the press in the management of the COVID-19 emergency

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7) Tsao et al., "What social media told us in the time of COVID-19: a scoping review."

8) E.g.: for Spain, Carlos Elías and Daniel Catalan-Matamoros, "Coronavirus in Spain: Fear of ' Official' fake News Boosts WhatsApp and Alternative Sources," *Media and Communication* 8, no. 2 (2020), 462–466; for Italy, Andrea Miconi, *Epidemia e controllo sociale* (Roma: manifestolibri, 2020); for the UK, David Seedhouse, *The Case for Democracy in the Covid-19 Pandemic* (London: Sage, 2020); for France, Barbara Stiegler, *De la démocratie en pandémie: Santé, recherche, éducation* (Paris: Gallimard, 2021).

showed its contribution to the spread of the policies implemented by the Government to fight the virus[9]. Several studies have analyzed the role of news media, press, and online newspapers, showing metaphors, rhetoric, and narratives used, as well as their role in creating a social representation of the Covid phenomenon[10]. Some research has also dealt with the television news coverage of COVID-19, critically analyzing the role and power of the broadcasting system in representing and promoting certain behaviours in support of government responses to the pandemic[11].

Sol Hart, Chinn and Soroka observed the coverage of the first month of the epidemic in the US and found a difference between newspapers and TV news: with the first more inclined to politicization, and the second giving more space to health specialists. Both media systems, in any case, reveal a tendency towards the polarization of the debate[12]. Villena-Alarcón and Caballero-Galeote released a quantitative assessment of 2,620 news broadcasted by the Spanish TV channel TVE1, between February and March 2020. The emerging pattern distinguishes between four stages: an uncertain period, with TVE1 trying to "separate" the Spanish case from the global trend; the alert stage; the depression stage; the acceptance of the emergence as a state of fact[13]. More general results are highlighted by Garfin, Silver and Holman[14], while reflecting on the overestimation of the epidemic risk due to information overload, fueled at the same time by news media and social media.

It is more difficult to assess the work of the Ningxia Chinese-based group, focused on the importance of media coverage for the correct implementation of quarantine and stay-at-home orders[15]. That media would play a main role, though, has been confirmed by a survey on 9,000 people, living in 771 rural counties of the US. It appears how the adoption

9)   Marco Mazzoni, Susanna Pagiotti, Anna Stanziano, Roberto Mincigrucci, and Sofia Verza, "La rappresentazione del Covid-19 in un sistema mediale polarizzato: Un'analisi del ruolo dei media in tempo di pandemia," *Comunicazione politica*, no. 3 (2021), 413–436, doi: 10.3270/102419.

10) Lucia Busso and Ottavia Tordini, "How do media talk about the Covid-19 pandemic? Metaphorical thematic clustering in Italian online newspapers," *arXiv*, 2022, accessed May 20, 2023, https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2204.02106; Jorge Milan Fitera, Natalia Abuín-Vences, and Javiér Sierra Sánchez, "The coronavirus pandemic narratives in Italian digital media," *JCOM* 20, no. 2 (2021), A07, accessed May 20, 2023, https://doi.org/10.22323/2.20020207.

11) Oberiri Destiny Apuke and Bahiyah Omar, "Television News Coverage of COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria: Missed Opportunities to Promote Health Due to Ownership and Politics," *SAGE Open*, July 15, 2021, accessed May 20, 2023, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/21582440211032675; Endah Saptorini, Xin Zhao, and Daniel Jackson, "Place, Power and the Pandemic: The Disrupted Material Settings of Television News Making During Covid-19 in an Indonesian Broadcaster," *Journalism Studies* 23, no. 5–6 (2021), 611–628.

12) P. Sol Art, Sedona Chinn, and Stuart Soroka, "Politicization and Polarization in COVID-19 News Coverage," *Science Communication* 42, no. 5 (2020), 679–697.

13) Eduardo Villena-Alarcón and Lidia Caballero-Galeote, "COVID-19 media coverage in Spanish public TV," *Tripodos* 2, no. 47 (2020), 103–125.

14) Dana Rose Garfin, Roxane Cohen Silver, and E. Alison Holman, "The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak: Amplification of public health consequences by media exposure," *Health Psychology* 39, no. 5 (2020), 355–357.

15) LI-Xiang Feng et al., "Modelling the effects of media coverage and quarantine on the COVID-19 infections in the UK," *Mathematical Bioscience and Engineering* 17, no. 4 (2020), 3618–3636; Ahmed A Mohsen et al., "Global stability of COVID-19 model involving the quarantine strategy and media coverage effects," *AIMS Public Health* 7, no. 3 (2020), 587–605.

of social distancing rules were more frequent in the areas characterized by a strong TV and media consumption, rather than in those characterized by a higher risk of contagion. Far from being part of a systematic inquiry on the role of news media, these studies reveal a quite fragmented scenario.

Starting with these premises, our analysis on media framing is to be intended as being complementary to those focusing on Italian on-line news and press, instead deepening the coverage of the TV broadcast media on the pandemic. As detailed in the methodological section, we took into consideration the contents of prime-time TV news, transmitted by the Italian national broadcasters from February 28, 2020, to February 27, 2021. More precisely, the sample includes three Italian public TV news — TG1, TG2, and TG3 — and the main four private TV news: TG4, TG5, Studio Aperto, La7 TG.

The overarching reason is to come to terms with the centrality of TV, often overlooked in the age of social media — which is the most relevant in the specific case of Italy, for both high illiteracy rates and demographic composition. Needless to say, more advanced research will be necessary for a complete analysis of the integrated media ecosystem, based on the "agenda-melding" principle[16].

We draw the research on the backdrop of *framing* models. The theoretical scheme is that provided by Goffman, with the frame being defined as the pre-understanding structure, able to make meaning of out the material sequence of plain events. In its turn, media coverage feeds the public's perception of reality, providing people with categories through which to elaborate on the experience and to answer to the question "what is going on here"[17]. The case of *fabrication* is also possible, according to Goffman, which is based on one or more individuals providing a false understanding of the events: so that only actors standing on the right side are aware of the existence of the frame itself. Even though Goffman puts little attention on the media, the power imbalance between journalists and readers may well fit this specific case.

According to Goffman, framing also requires the so-called "keying" operations put in place by social actors involved in a given situation — in our case, an *information* situation. Frames become properly effective, in other words, when "a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else"[18].

With this respect, the concept of keying takes together the *negotiation* nature of social construction of meaning, and the *unbalanced* power relation among the players involved in the process: to the point that, for most citizens, such negotiation is nothing but the adaptation of available definitions to their own life, which are provided by more influential actors. By means of this, the framing process refers to the adding (or elimination) of frames to the reality in order to produce a different reality, and to replacing a shared interpretation with a new one. The crisis due to both COVID-19 outbreak and related govern-

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16) Donald L. Shaw, Maxwell McCombs, David H. Weaver, and Bradley J. Hamm, "Individuals, groups, and agenda melding: A theory of social dissonance," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 11, no. 1 (1999), 2–24.

17) Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essays on the Organization of Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 7.

18) Ibid., 44.

ment measures, in this sense, has made it necessary an unprecedented reinterpretation of daily situations or a continuous re-framing of the experience[19].

The way in which the news media frame information can influence audiences' perceptions of public issues and, therefore, the development of public debates on such issues. This effect can be magnified in the face of health crises, such as pandemics, because people turn more to the media when faced with unknown issues, related to their safety, and where multiple perspectives coexist. Some studies give an account of the informative framing of the news coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic during the stage of increased transmission on national newscasts[20] and the powerful role of these *fabricated* frames to influence public perceptions and real-world behaviours during public health crises[21].

In our empirical study we try to sort out the role of national TV newscasts in a framing process based on a content analysis of news making during COVID-19 pandemic.

The importation of the *frame* analysis into communication research is often limited to a terminological adaption, with the notion itself easily overlapping with more vague categories: with applications ranging from the case of immigrants[22] to the anthropology of the body[23]. For what concerns the operational definition, we therefore need to stick to Entman's basic and widely cited formula:

> to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation[24].

By drawing on the multi-faceted nature of frame analysis, a research path can be identified, which involves the breakdown of the main issues into some sub-issues. Here the theoretical pattern perfectly overlaps with the Italian TV narrative, as COVID-19 appears to be a "meta-argument" occasionally splitting into more specific sub-sets: for instance, economic recovery after COVID; tourism in the age of Covid; and so forth. Media framing can be defined here as an organizing principle establishing the salience of news, by means of such steps as selection, highlighting, exclusion, and elaboration[25]. Similarities

19) Angelina Parfenova, "Will you shake my hand? Factors of noncompliance with COVID-19 behavioral rules in the framework of enforced social isolation in Russia," *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 40, no. 9–10 (2020), 1–15; Vincenzo Romania, "Interactional Anomie? Imaging Social Distance after COVID-19: A Goffmanian Perspective," *Sociologica* 14, no. 1 (2020), 51–66.

20) Frida V. Rodelo, "El framing sobre la pandemia de Covid-19 y sus factores indicadores organizacionales," *Cuadernos.info*, no. 50 (2021), 91–112.

21) Yotam Ophir, Dror Walter, Daniel Arnon, Ayse Lokmanoglu, Michele Tizzoni, Jöelle Carota, Lorenzo D'Antiga, and Emanuele Nicastro, "The Framing of COVID-19 in Italian Media and Its Relationship with Community Mobility: A Mixed-Method Approach," *Journal of Health Communication* 26, no. 3 (2021), 161–173.

22) Alessando Dal Lago, *Non-persone: L'esclusione dei migranti in una società globale* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1999).

23) Frederico Boni, *Il corpo mediale del leader: Rituali del potere e sacralità del corpo nell'epoca della comunicazione globale* (Roma: Meltemi, 2002), 191–193.

24) Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993), 52.

25) James Tankard et al., "Media Frames: Approaches to Conceptualisation and Measurement, Association in Journalism and Mass Communication," *BibSonomy*, 1991, accessed May 20, 2023, https://www.bibsonomy.org/bibtex/2c6fbe56eeb1b608b80953f996229089d/vanatteveldt.

between the framing model and the agenda-setting theory are quite evident, in particular in the case of the so-called "second-level agenda"[26], focusing on the specific tones taken on by news reporting. As we know, the idea goes that media have little effect on people's opinions, while having a strong impact on the centrality and salience of the discussion issues. In other words, media do not tell people *what* to think but *what to think about*[27]. Agenda-setting is not a common variant of framing, but it requires a specific pattern: the convergence of different media frames towards the same representation of reality, as affirmed by Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann in her call for a new *powerful media* protocol[28]. Homogeneity in Italian TV coverage will therefore be addressed, with attention placed on the practices of *labeling* and *blaming*, and with the individuation of scapegoats.

The idea of labeling was originally used for instance in the sociology of deviance, with Goffman providing again the ideal synthesis in his theory of *stigma*[29]. Goffman's theoretical relevance has to do with the stigma being a social artifact: a "virtual identity" capable of anticipating and even erasing the individual identity. In other words, Goffman shows how the contingent features of stigmatized figures are way less important than the very *social process* by which the stigma is created and reinforced.

As to media studies, in the other way, labeling is often used with no reference made to its sociological implication. This notwithstanding, a few interesting research can be traced, which deal with media labeling of several stigmatized identities: the political enemy[30]; the terrorist[31]; the Muslim[32]. This is partially due to TV formats themselves, which favor the exaggeration of emotional aspects and the over-simplification of complicated issues in terms of stereotypes. As to TV news, which will be studied here, their narrative structure easily produces well-rounded and unproblematized characters — the victim; the executioner; the corrupt — which play a main part in their social effects[33].

By drawing on this, blaming processes can easily be detected in media discourses: for instance, Ittefaq and others[34] studied social representations of COVID-19 in mainstream newspapers in three countries (China, the US, and the UK), and they have revealed a *pan-*

26) Maxwell McCombs and Salma I. Ghanem, "The Convergence of Agenda Setting and Framing," in *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*, eds. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy, and August E. Grant (Manwah and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2021), 67–81.

27) Donald L. Shaw and Maxwell E. McCombs, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1972), 176–187.

28) Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann and R. Mathes, "The 'Events as Event' and the 'Event as News': The Significance of 'Consonance' for Media Effects Research," *European Journal of Communication*, no. 1 (1987), 391–414.

29) Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1963).

30) Robert M. Eisinger, Loring R. Veenstra, and John P. Koehm, "What Media Bias? Conservative and Liberal Labeling in Major U.S. Newspapers," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 12, no. 1 (2007), 17–36.

31) Matthew J. Dolliver and Erin M. Keans, "Is it Terrorism? Public Perceptions, Media and Labeling the Las Vegas Shooting," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 45, no. 1 (2022), 1–19.

32) Keon West and Joda Loyd, "The Role of Labeling and Bias in the Portrayal of Acts of 'Terrorism': Media Representations of Muslims vs. Non-Muslims," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 37, no. 2 (2017), 1–12.

33) David L. Altheide, "The News Media, the Problem Frame, and the Production of Fear," *Sociological Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (1997), 647–668.

34) Muhammad Ittefaq, Mauryne Abwao, Annalise Baines, Genelle Belmas, Shafiq Ahmad Kamboh, and Ever Josue Figueroa, "A pandemic of hate: Social representations of COVID-19 in the media," *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 22, no. 1 (2022), 225–252.

demic of hate in terms of the racialization of COVID-19 and speculative solutions to end discrimination against Asians. This phenomenon can also be seen in the Italian media, which alternatively point to the most disparate directions: runners; those not using masks[35]; protesters; the stereotyped and unifying label of "No-Vax" which enclosed dissidents towards the dreaded common war against the virus, *stigmatized* leveraging on known sociological processes. As it is often the case, categories are used in an improper way: exactly as the stigma of potential terrorist has been applied to all Muslims; that of criminal to all migrants; or that of deviant to youngsters as such. It seems that a similar labeling operation has been set in motion here, with the definition of *denialist* being used for all or anti-government opinions rather than for expressing its original meaning — literally, those who doubt the existence of Sars-Cov-2 diffusion, which do not have any space in Italian mainstream media discourse.

2. Methodological design

The main research questions are "what were the recurring themes in the Italian television news during the period between February 28, 2020 and February 27, 2021? What differences emerge longitudinally and between the various broadcasters? Can the narratives that emerge be traced back to a frame constructed by the news media?".

The dataset includes the full transcription of verbal contents of 2,555 TV news — the prime-time TV news of Rai 1, Rai 2, Rai 3, Rete 4, Canale 5, Italia Uno, and La7 — whose average duration is 35 minutes. The analysis will deal with all segments containing the "COVID" and "epidemic" keywords, for a total of 12,578 entries[36].

The study took place in two phases by means of automatic and semi-automatic text analysis techniques:

1. First, we conducted an analysis on the entire database from the news archive of the Pavia Observatory[37]. This phase aims to deduce the issues most related to the media representation of COVID-19, through a *topic detection analysis*[38]. The investigation was

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35) Federico Boni, "Frammenti di un discorso virale: Le cornici del coronavirus," *MediaScapes Journal*, no. 15 (2020), 1–12.

36) This is an *example of a news segment* of a TV news broadcast on 3/21/2020 on Rai 1 (translated in English by authors): "A new ordinance said the governor of the Lombardy Region Fontana dictated by the worsening situation, which will be in force until April 15th. Some details: first of all, the closure of construction sites, except for those related to the emergency, the suspension of the activities of public offices and professional studios, the closure of hotels except those related to the emergency, and fines of up to 5,000 euros for any gathering who does not keep the distances required by the Prime Minister's Decree. The ban on entry and exit from the Region is also reaffirmed, except for urgent and indifferent reasons".

37) The Pavia Observatory (Italy) carries out several studies related to issues of social, political and economic interest. Thanks to these long-term activities this observatory has gained credit at national and international level as a centre in the field of media, democracy, and pluralism (https://www.osservatorio.it/en/).

38) In communication studies, text and content analysis has established since the 1950s (Berelson, 1952): it is a set of methods aimed at verifying certain hypotheses on elements of media communication through the analytical decomposition and classification of texts. In this study, both the „first type" content analysis — in which the units of analysis are the elements of the linguistic structure (words, phrases) — and the "second type" content analysis — in which the units of analysis don't have linguistic recognition as signifiers but have

able to bring out both general trends and some specificities that emerged with a longitudinal inquiry focused on the different TV channels.

2. In addition to a descriptive analysis, we secondly made a qualitative-quantitative content analysis focus useful for reflecting on some important and recurring themes. This paper shows also the findings of the semantic association's analysis relating to an emblematic keyword of the pandemic: *gathering*.

3. Findings

3.1 Pandemic waves and different TV coverages

The position of a news item and the breadth of a topic on a newscast are both indicators of so-called media coverage. The news "agenda" is connected to the aforementioned agenda-setting phenomenon[39]. We have found that the position of the news dedicated to the COVID-19 issue during the news, and the number of words of the extracted news segments, are significantly different[40] among the broadcasters.

During the observation period, the news related to the COVID-19 pandemic assumed the top positions on all the news broadcasts[41]. However, it was found that Rai1 sometimes covered the top news space with other topics, while Rete4 — after the summer of 2020 — chose not to dedicate the first news to the health crisis, instead broadcasting pandemic news subsequently to other contingent issues. These same broadcasters, together with Rai3, are also those for which the length of the news segment was significantly shorter than the TV news of the other channels.

As other studies have also tried to do[42], we investigate the day-wise distribution of news over some sub-periods as well as the distribution of the COVID-19 daily new cases in Italy in the same period.

An interesting result is related to the longitudinal analysis of the news media coverage of COVID-19. Chart 1 illustrates the trend in the number of segments of news on the pandemic crisis during the considered period: media attention on Covid-related themes grows in correspondence to the period immediately preceding the so-called second phase or wave of the pandemic infectious disease in Italy. This was the peak moment of the absolute number of infections in 2020, to the point that the subsequent Prime Minister's Decree would divide Italy into "zones" of different colors, depending on the social and travel

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high relevance as meanings (topic or key characters) — were used (Rositi, 1988). Text analysis software was T-lab, Orange, and Phyton, and they were used to build unsupervised topic models and clustering algorithms.

39) Shaw and McCombs, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media".

40) The position index is automatically assigned by the Pavia Observatory. It is a number ranging from 1 to N, which is smaller when the news segment is present at the beginning of the broadcast, and larger when it is at the end of the TV news. The difference between broadcasters was significant with Anova and Kruskal-Wallis statistical tests ($H(6)=402.1$, $p<0.0005$).

41) By dichotomising the variable relating to the position of the news in a newscast, a significant relationship between it and the broadcaster was also found. Canale5, Italia1, La7, and Rai2 broadcast news on Covid significantly more in the first half of the TV news.

42) Massimo Aria, Corrado Cuccurullo, Luca D'Aniello, Michelangelo Misuraca, and Maria Spano, "Thematic Analysis as a New Culturomic Tool: The Social Media Coverage on COVID-19 Pandemic in Italy," *Sustainability* 14, no. 6 (2022), 3643. MDPI AG.

Chart 1. Number of news on COVID-19 per month
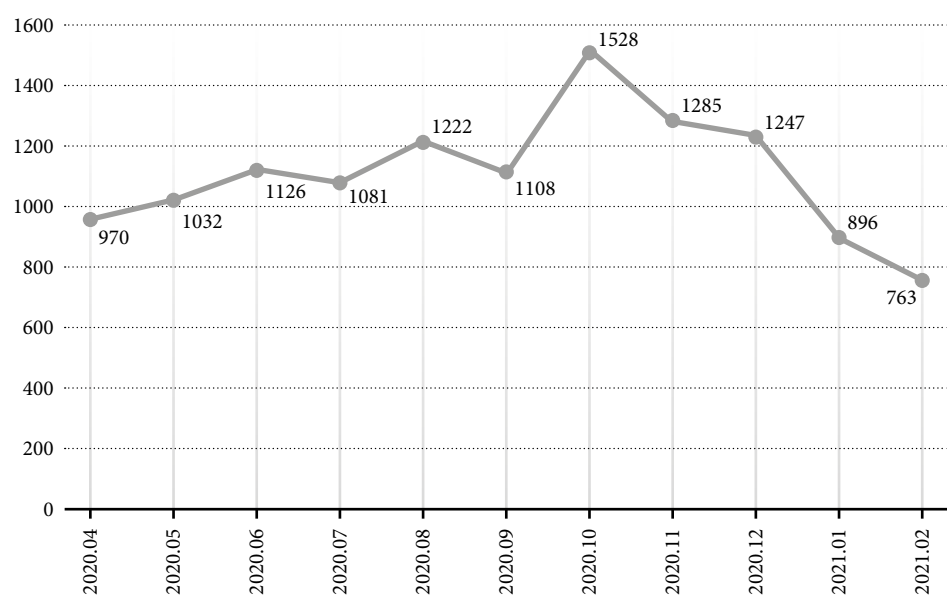
restitutions. The volume of television news on COVID-19 was therefore greater in October 2020, anticipating the national peak of infections that occurred the following month.

We can note that TV played a dual role: on the one hand, it constituted powerful control tools through a narrative aimed at informing about the limits and behaviors required of citizens oriented toward containing the spread of the virus; on the other hand, they represented a source for the construction of frames of meaning. The interpretative hypothesis that we can support is that the more television images that circulate on a topic, the more the audience will configure a certain phenomenon as something salient and to deal with/concern about (resuming the theory of agenda setting[43]).

3.2 Media representation of COVID-19: recurring and absent narratives

The representation of COVID-19 was reconstructed through the textual analysis of the TV news verbal contents, excluding the analysis of images, which will be interesting to carry out as a future qualitative study. Through multivariate text analysis techniques, we were able to put together the characteristic and significantly different words[44] that connoted the narration of:

- the "first wave" of virus spread versus the "second wave" and subsequent ones (before and after September 2020);
- prime time news programs of the seven television stations included in our sample.

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43) McCombs and Ghanem, "Convergence of Agenda Setting and Framing".
44) Only words with a Chi-square significance <.005 are considered.

The results suggest important differences in media narratives. The first phase is mainly focused on issues related to the virus itself, on fast growing deaths and on PPE (personal protective equipment). This was the period of explosion of the health crisis in the regions of Northern Italy, in the weekend that preceded the closure of schools in Lombardy (February 24, 2020), then followed by the so-called "phase 1" and the national lockdown period. The more frequent words in the TV narrative were, for example: coronavirus; contagion; virus; emergency; crisis; outbreak; deaths; Lombardy; hit; people; mask. The second period placed more attention on government policies, on the vaccination campaign at the start, and on the spread of variants. The words that are significantly associated with the second phase (from September 2020) were, for example: Government; "red zone"; measure; school; Conte (Prime Minister); Speranza (Minister of Health); anti (Covid); vaccine; campaign; variant.

Starting from these results, we longitudinally analyzed the presence of three keywords as recurring and therefore characteristics of the media representation of COVID-19: mask; vaccine and variant.

As can be seen in the graph, the constant appeal of the media to wear masks started in March 2020, and it became a leitmotiv from April to October 2020. From November 2020 the issue related to vaccines took over, modifying the prevention narrative (focused solely on the restricted actions of Italian citizens): from the obligation to wear facemasks to the exhortation to get the jab. From late 2020 on, the TV agenda brought to the attention of

Chart 2. Monthly trend of the words *mascherina* (mask), *vaccino* (vaccine), and *variante* (variant) in the observation period
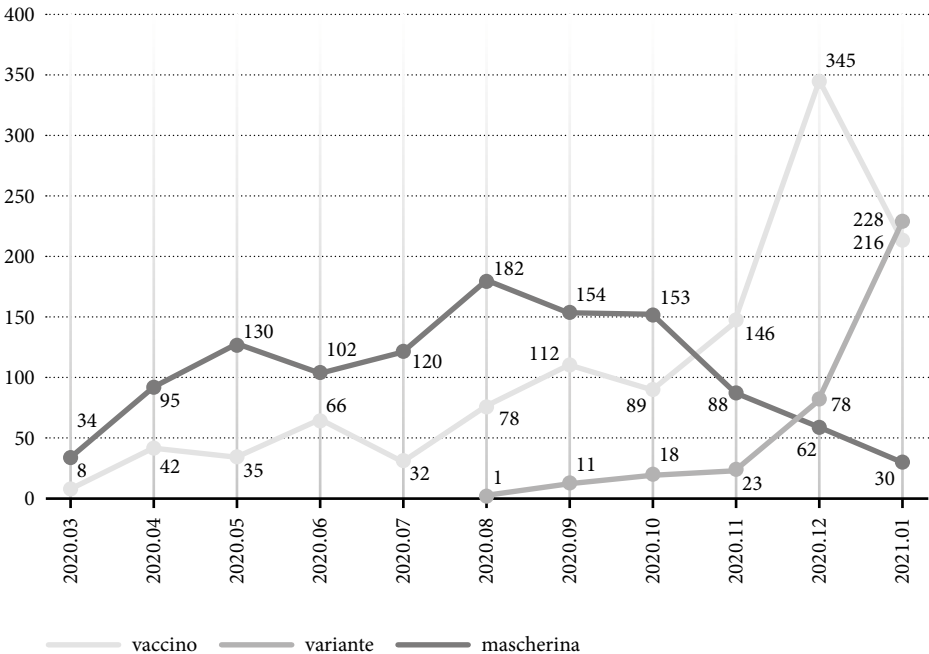
the citizens a new alarm: the spread of variants of the virus. In January 2020 this topic even exceeds, in terms of occurrences, the mentions related to vaccines.

We analyzed the differences among the prime-time news of seven Italian broadcasters by extracting the characteristic words of each news program.

The results show that Rai1 news flow was significantly characterized by the citation of political actors and the issuance of decrees and laws. This confirms the role of broadcasting media in support of government responses to the pandemic[45] and therefore sounding boards of government emanations. This has arguably to do with the institutional nature of Rai1, which was the first Tv channel in Italian history, and it is commonly perceived as a Public Service Medium. The news on this channel, together with those of Rai 3, were also characterized by narratives that we can consider as "micro stories of pain". We found a set of characteristic words for example: "face", "pain", "patient", "hospitalize", "Bergamo" (Italy's first outbreak city), "son", "ward", "rescue", "elderly", "dead", "life". Accounts of death and grief were largely homogenous in news[46] and presented as a series of tragedies, and there was limited practical advice about what to do if a loved one became seriously ill or died.

As mentioned, Rai 3 media coverage of COVID-19 has grown after the second wave and in the prime-time news we found "vaccines" and "variants" as characteristic words. The same words also appeared in the Canale5 newscasts, where, however, attention is focused on reports, data and comparisons with foreign countries. Significant lemmas are in fact "millions", "cases", "America", "Trump", "record", "daily".

The news flow of LA7 also had significantly typical lemmas relating to numbers and data, but with fewer international references. The characteristic words focused precisely on "region", "Lombardy", "today", "number", "positive", "tampons", "situation", and "Milan".

Italia 1 and Rete 4 are the broadcasters in which the news programs presented a more emergency narrative, especially through the voice of "experts" or medical celebrities ("professor", "medical executive", "virologist"). We found three significantly characteristic words (also in terms of occurrences): "problem", "alarm", and the verb "to worry".

In the Italia 1 news, the alarm was generated by the sociality of people and by their alleged irresponsibility: alongside the words related to "worry", we found in a significant way such terms as "celebrate", "desire", "tourists", "Christmas", "Vacation", "young", "people".

For Rete 4, the issues concerning worries were economic aspects: similarly, to Rai 2 characteristic words were "money", "taxes", "expense", "Recovery", "measure", and "fund". Rai 2, however, was also connoted for the narrative relating to the migration issue, the possible COVID-19 cases among immigrants who landed in Lampedusa at the end of August 2020, and the political debate generated thereafter.

Faced with the multiplicity and diversity of the emerged topics, we analyzed some key issues that have thematized a possible dominant discourse. In order to synthesize the corpus of textual data, we therefore carried out a *cluster analysis*,[47] which made it possible to

45) Apuke and Omar, "Television News Coverage of COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria"; Saptorini, Zhao, and Jackson, "Place, Power and the Pandemic".

46) Ryann Sowden, Erica Borgstrom, Lucy E Selman, "'It's like being in a war with an invisible enemy': A document analysis of bereavement due to COVID-19 in UK newspapers," *PLoS ONE* 16, no. 3 (2021).

47) This statistical technique is the *clustering bisecting k means,* which uses a non-hierarchical cluster algorithm, useful in the analysis of unlabelled texts.

locate six significantly distinct groups on two Cartesian axes. These groups gravitate around what in statistics are called *centroids*, which can be conceptually considered as the media macro-narratives of COVID-19. As seen in Chart 3, we have identified the clusters referring to the following six themes: 1) politics; 2) economy; 3) data; 4) health; 5) sociability; 6) vaccine. These macro narratives have also been found in other research[48], thus showing the insistence and rebound of the same topics in the media ecosystem.

These clusters represent the macro-themes on which television programs have focused much of their discursive production through the news. The first cluster contains the narrative of politics, often concerning the actions and statements of the leaders who have appeared on the media stage, following the personalization style of contemporary politics.

The second cluster refers to economic issues, and we find here all the narratives relating to the effects of the lockdown: such as layoffs, bonuses offered by the government, and the so-called Recovery Fund.

The third cluster concerns the discourse on the pandemic data: in Italy there was a specific ritual, that is the 6.00 pm live "bulletin" during which the government, through the TV channels, updated the population on the data relating to the infections. It's important to take into consideration how political leaders have set the master-frame for the representation of the virus and the related crisis. Some studies[49] analyzed presidential speeches in different countries — including Italy — and showed the similarity of the speeches and the war rhetoric used in them.

This information then bounced between mainstream media and social media: it refers to all numbers on tampons, virus-positive people, deaths, and ICU places. This cluster contains the narrative that was used by public institutions to justify political actions such as in a war period[50]: they were promoted "on the basis of numbers", with respect to which a faithful positivist obedience of citizens was required.

The fourth cluster is the most numerous — in terms of occurrences — as it is related to the whole health discourse that has fueled most of the media narratives. They contain all those media representations of doctors and nurses represented both as heroes and as victims during the first months of the spread of COVID-19[51].

Our data seem to confirm that ideological discourses of individual heroics have been deployed, to patch up the damage done to neoliberal reforms, particularly in terms of access to healthcare and financial inequality.

As other studies on news[52] have shown, the rhetorical framing of frontline workers

48) Fitera, Abuín-Vences, and Sierra Sánchez, "The coronavirus pandemic narratives in Italian digital media."

49) José Manuel Pérez Tornero, Carles Marín Lladó, and Laura Cervi, "Pandemic and war: crisis narrative and leadership: Analysis of the presidential speeches at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic," *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, no. 79 (2021), 1–21.

50) Lorenzo Donghi, Andrea Miconi, and Simona Pezzano, "Para bellum: Use and abuse of military rhetoric in communicating the pandemic in Italy," in *(S)comunicazione e pandemia: Ricategorizzazioni e contrapposizioni di un'emergenza infinita*, eds. Maria Angela Polesana and Elisabetta Risi (Milano: Mimesis Editore, 2023).

51) Annamaria Bagnasco, Gianluca Catania, Ann Gallagher, and Georgina Morley, "Media representations of nurses in the pandemic: Just doing our job?" *Nursing Ethics* 27, no. 4 (2020), 901–905; G. Petti, "From heroes to no-vax: Sanitary demons and punitive sanity," in *(S)comunicazione e Pandemia*, eds. Polesana and Risi.

52) Ben A. Lohmeyer and Nik Taylor, "War, heroes and sacrifice: Masking neoliberal violence during the COVID-19 pandemic," *Critical Sociology* 47, no. 4–5 (2021), 625–639; N. S. Dankova and E. V. Krekhtunova,

during the COVID-19 pandemic covered themes about 'personal sacrifice' and 'the heroes of war'.

The news related to health discourse mainly concerned also doctors or hospital chiefs, who were told as spokespersons of the epidemiological emergency, so that, some of them have become so-called *medical celebrities*. We can consider how the media representation of the pandemic has been completely focused on health and hospitalization rather than on responsible prevention. We have therefore detected a media (and political) discourse based on the imaginary of an endless *emergency*[53] and not rather on the *health crisis*, which are two very different concepts in public health programs.

The fifth group contains the narratives concerning sociality and the moments of aggregation that were demonized by the televised discourse. The dominant themes do not seem to concern the conditions and consequences of the lockdown and forced domestic confinement; the news rarely dealt with the exacerbation of social inequalities and the difficulties of citizens, whether economic or relational. Instead, in the corpus of the analyzed text we found a negative meaning of the media narrative relating to social aggregation — with words such as party, holidays, and beaches. *People* as a collective name — concerning small or large groups of individuals — as well as that of the youngster, seem to have represented the scapegoats against which to vent the public resentment. A rhetoric that we can hypothesize has been used to conceal the lack, in this period, of specific public policies for the benefit of the younger sections of the population.

The last cluster, also in chronological order, concerns the narration on the vaccination campaign: in the analyzed period, the news focuses on the experimental phases and the start of the large-scale distribution of vaccines. The theme of variants is also significantly associated with this group: announcements of new variants of the virus were then added to the succession of a new flow of data on the administration of vaccines, to feed the media agenda.

The results show that on the one hand, the COVID-19 narrative presents some specific theming, distinguished according to the different broadcasters and the stages of the spread of the virus (first and second wave); on the other hand, the media narrative has generated a cohesive representation of people's responsibility, characterized by the attributes of consonance and repetition that can somehow be found in the hypotheses on the *strong effects of the media*[54]. We can therefore assume that this is a rare — but possible — case, where the mainstream media adopt the same ideological bent obscuring all that is not broadcast, which is absorbed by the so-called *spiral of silence*[55].

"Media Representation of the Pandemic: a Metaphorical Image of War (based on American Newspapers)," *Nauchnyi dialog*, no. 8 (2023), 69–83.

53) Maria Angela Polesana and Elisabetta Risi, *(S)comunicazione e pandemia: Ricategorizzazioni e contrapposizioni di un'emergenza infinita* (Milano: Mimesis Edizioni, 2021); Andrea Miconi, "The time of variations, or the re-framing of infinite emergence," March 27, 2021, accessed May 20, 2023, https://www.fondazione-hume.it/societa/il-tempo-delle-varianti-o-il-re-framing-dellemergenza-infinita.

54) Mauro Wolf, *Gli effetti sociali dei media* (Milan: Bompiani, 1992), 48–57.

55) Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, "Mass Media and Social Change in Developed Socities," in *Mass Media and Social Change*, eds. Elihu Katz and Tamás Sczcskö (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1981), 137–165; Noelle-Neumann and Mathes, "The 'Events as Event' and the 'Event as News.'"

Chart 3. The six clusters in the COVID-19 television macro-theming: politics; economy; data; health; sociality; vaccine
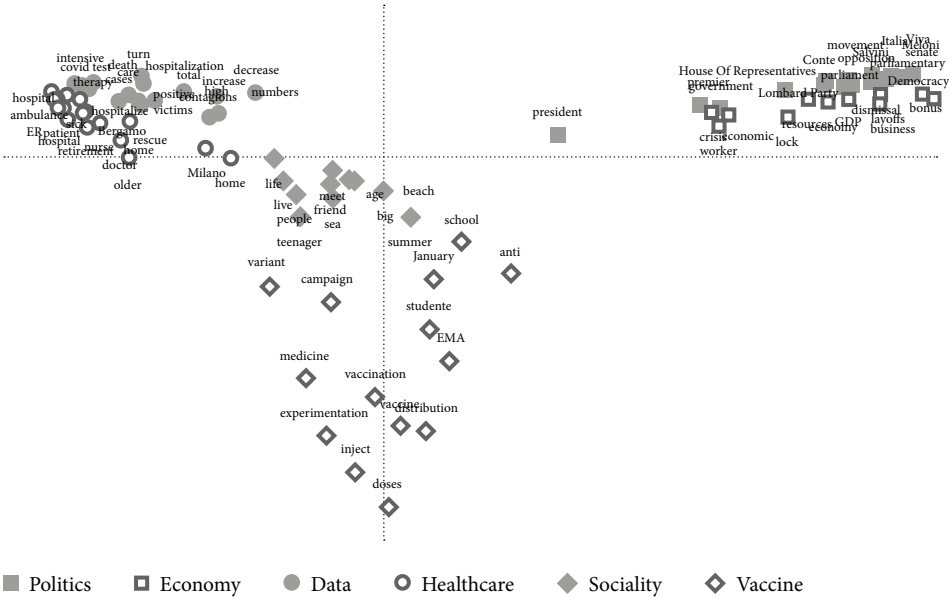
On the other hand, it must be also considered that the different frames are interconnected and reflect the relationship between media and Government/politicians…

4. From framing to blaming: gatherings

The recurrence of the word (both singular and plural) *gathering/gatherings* offers interesting information, as seen on Chart 4.

Firstly, it is evident how this term wasn't relevant in ordinary language, so much so that it never appears in the first months of 2020, not even after the Prime Ministerial Decree dated March 8, which introduced it in the history of the country. It raised during May, in correspondence with the first weekends following mass surveillance containment — those of May 23–24 and 30–31, 2020 — as could be expected. From that time on, however, it follows an irregular trend: it disappears *de facto* in the Summer of 2020, for emerging again from the second half of August, and then occupying the debate between October and November. Interestingly enough since it is quite unlikely, in terms of news reports, that outdoor gatherings were more common in Autumn than in Summer.

If in July 2020 we count 93 segments of TV news on this issue, in October 166, and in November 133, it means that it is not a matter of *real* gatherings here — since, for climate reasons, we saw many more so-called-gatherings in July than in autumn. After the frame opening moment at the end of May, the peaks of occurrence of the term coincides with mostly "anonymous" dates (except for Christmas shopping, which explains the 15 cases of December 19).

In other words, it seems that, under the narrative of gatherings, transpires the epidemic *tout-court*: an indication that the term is used as a metonymy for any contagion situations, for carrying out a specific framing, together with all the attribution of responsibility which derives from it.

A rhetorical pressure based on the oldest technique in the world — *repetition*[56] — which takes away from any other counter-reasoning, including the relative contagiousness of outdoor situations, which, for some reasons, the State decided to prevent rather than favor. As Summer begins — in correspondence with the curve of Chart 4 — the term disappears completely. It is not by chance that the periodic return of the word — with the latent period in Summer and the peak in Autumn — follows the same trend as the epidemic curve, as to suggest a cause-effect relationship between the two.

Among other things, we bring to an end with a trivial remark: among so many recommendations to avoid gatherings, in the 1742 related newscast segments, no one *has ever explained* what a gathering is.

As for the language and its power of framing, such a line of reasoning can be made for the other dominant 2020 symbolic labeling, namely *distancing*.[57] Whether it was a conscious decision or not — as similarly, Barbara Stiegler[58] wonders for France — 149 times in the newscasts has been used "social distancing" instead of the most correct "physical distancing" (only 11 times). What it seems here at work is something more elusive, such as the questioning of rules of conduct we were accustomed to.

Chart 4. Recurrence of the word *gathering* in prime time newscasts

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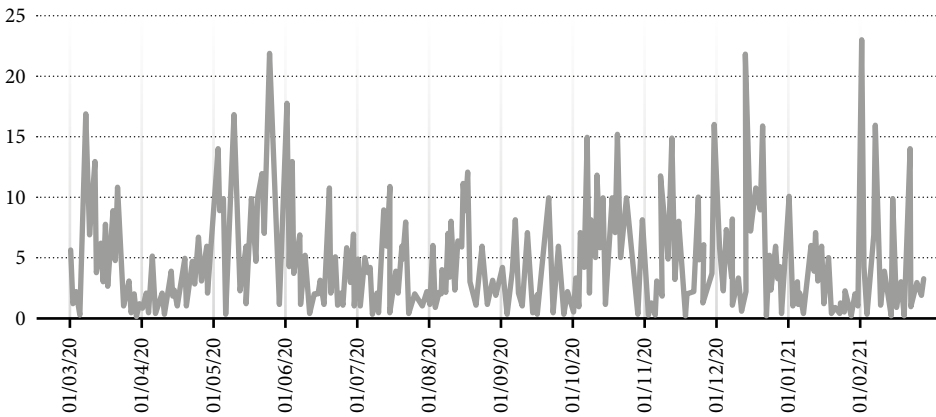
56) See Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman, "A Theory of Framing and Opinion Formation in Competitive Elite Environments," *Journal of Communication* 57, no. 1 (2007), 108–112.

57) *Distanza* e *distanziamento* (distance and distancing) have different meanings. The word *distanza* refers to an external physical factor, that is "the space that separates two places, two objects, two people" (Devoto-Oli dictionary, 2020) and it is attested in the Italian language starting from the XIV century. *Distanziamento* dates back to 1892, and is instead the result of an action, distancing, and indicates "separation, departure" (Di Valvasone, 2021).

58) Stiegler, De la démocratie en pandémie, 40.

To get deeper, concerning the evidence of the recurrences, we took into consideration a specific topic of the journalistic reports. We focus our analysis on the recurrence of the word *gathering* during May 2020. At this time the term has become commonly used, in parallel with the so-called "Phase 2", when people have taken back the streets emptied from home confinement, returning to make cities the place of sociality instead of a misunderstanding purification, described by media through the rhetorical figure of "nature has retaken its spaces"[59].

The term has been used in a generic way in the relative majority of cases: whether it is a question of remembering the prohibition of gatherings, their dangerousness, or the need to stay away from them. What is interesting is that the most reported situation is the *outdoor* walks — as in the 2020 archetypal image, the photo of the Navigli (Milan's canals and the district named after them) shot using a telephoto lens which compresses space and distances — which is, as far as is known, the *least dangerous* situation in terms of transmission.
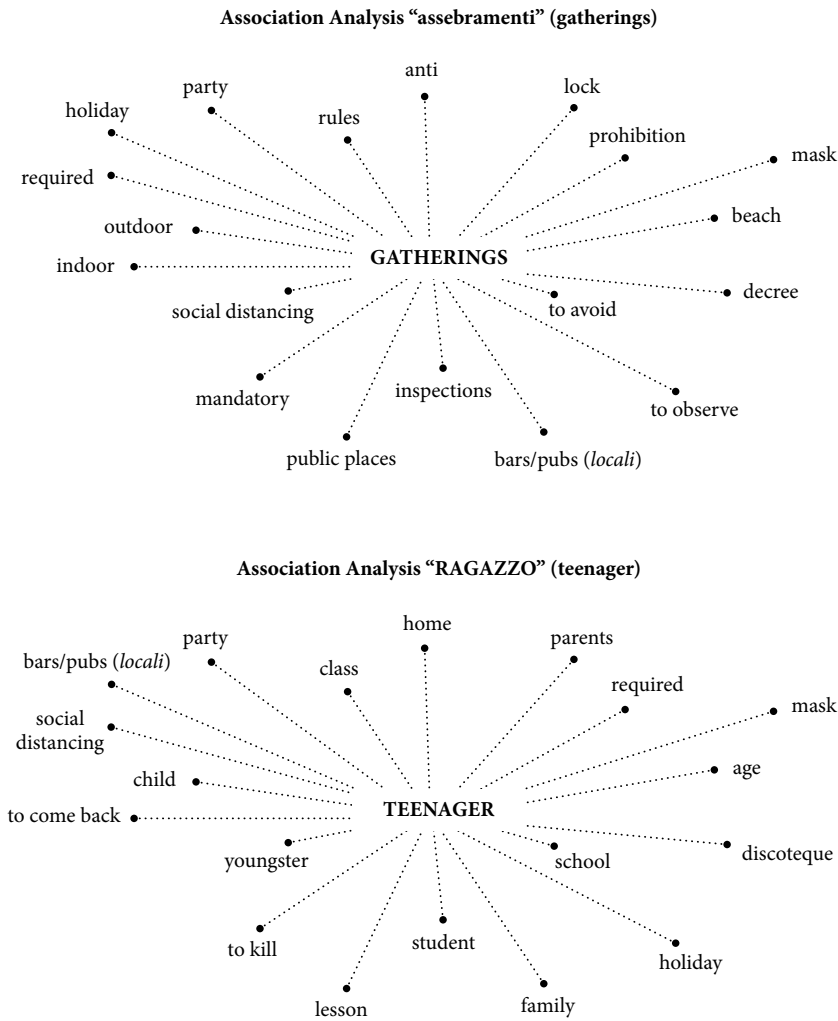

The impression that the media have worked on a strategy for making citizens feel guilty — already from the month in which the framing of the story took shape[60] — seems here confirmed. It will therefore come as no surprise that in May 2020 the most quoted non-auxiliary verb is *to avoid*, with 94 occurrences: that's like saying that dangerous gatherings are those that depend on the choices of individuals (which, precisely for this, can be avoided), and not those people are *subjected to* on the bus or in the factory.

Similar suggestions come from lexical distances (Chart 5), which give a complete measure of the blaming strategy put in place by the media. The presence of two *topos* of summer fun — beach and party (*spiagge* and *feste*) — in gatherings is emblematic, espe-

59) Alessandro Ricci, *Spazi d'eccezione: Riflessioni geografiche sul virus e il "nuovo odine spaziale"*, (Roma: Castelvecchi, 2021), 36–40.

60) Matthew Flinders, "Democracy and the Politics of Coronavirus: Trust, Blame and Understanding," *Parliamentary Affairs* 74, no. 2 (2021), 483–502.

Chart 5. Representation of lexical distances (analysis of significant associations) of "gatherings" and "teenagers"

Association Analysis "assebramenti" (gatherings)

anti

party

holiday   rules   lock

prohibition

required   mask

outdoor   beach

indoor   **GATHERINGS**

social distancing   decree

to avoid

mandatory   inspections   to observe

public places   bars/pubs (*locali*)

Association Analysis "RAGAZZO" (teenager)

home

party   parents

bars/pubs (*locali*)   class   required

social   mask
distancing

child   age

to come back   **TEENAGER**

discoteque

youngster   school

to kill   student   holiday

lesson   family

cially since the former evokes a situation with a very low-risk of contagion. Equally meaningful is that there are no indicative terms for *high* transmission risk places: buses, factories, warehouses. Once again, newscasts insist on individual responsibility, placing the infections followed by spontaneous aggregations at the center of the debate, and not those caused by situations of forced space sharing, which implies some responsibility of the ruling class (i.e., the reorganization of public transport). So it can not really be surprising that the most used verb associated with "gathering" is consistent with the general tone of paternalism and blaming of citizens — *to avoid* —, nor that it is the same verb used in the 2020 Prime Ministerial Decrees.

Finally, it must surprise that one of the most often associated verbs with the term *youngster or teenager* is "to kill": a cruel manifestation of those *blaming* strategies which the more emphasized are, the more evident the failure of public health measures is — as Flinders pointed out in the English case[61]. And hence perhaps the extreme example, and the most incredible headline (published in one of the most read Italian newspapers): "Young people who have an aperitivo outdoor are murderers[62]".

6. Discussion and conclusion

The media reflect and reinforce cultural conventions and sense-making, offering a lens that shapes personal experiences and attitudes. Our research aims at filling a hole in current studies on *infodemic*, which are mostly dedicated to the case, undoubtedly relevant, of on-line media coverage. The proposed results come from a content analysis of the representation of COVID-19 in Italian prime-time TV news.

We draw on the idea of media framing, to split the COVID-19 narrative into more granular parts. As a result of the text analysis, six main clusters have emerged, which describe the main associations used for framing the public understanding of the COVID crisis: politics; economics; statistics; health issues; social life; vaccines. Findings show also a marked blaming attitude, with different social figures being stigmatized as possible spreaders. In terms of Goffman's keying, hyperbolic tones have always been used, thus imposing the frame of *emergency* suggesting the management of uncertainty and fear via prediction of the future through data and calls for behavior change, imposed with the use of war metaphors. The limitations of this study have to be laid out as well, which are related to three main aspects. Firstly, we have only worked — and intentionally so — on mainstream communication, by analyzing the prime-time TV shows offered by the seven national channels. In this way, we took out of the picture not only the bottom-up communication and the social media discussion but also all the contents that are disseminated in the long-tail of media distribution — ranging from minor broadcasters to local networks, to independent sources. Secondly, and due to the extension of the sample, we inferred the framing strategies from the *quantitative* recurrencies of the keywords, while other approaches to media framing are possible, which deal with the qualitative analysis of how the narratives are built. Additionally, we could not consider the visual dimension of TV-news, which, by definition, is of paramount importance in the representation of reality as portrayed by the audiovisual media. Finally, we need to remark that our work is focused on media discourse, and — as is almost inevitable in content analysis — it cannot scale into a general evaluation of the public narrative related to the Sars-Cov-2 epidemic. In particular, it is the political institution that have adopted a military language since the beginning of the sanitary crisis, as highlighted by several studies[63]. In the other way, though, that the media

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61) Matthew Flinders, "Gotcha! Coronavirus, Crisis and the Politics of Blame Game," *Political Insight* 11, no. 2 (2020), 22–25.

62) Antonio Sechi, Italian hospital chief (San Raffaele Hospital of Milano), "Young people who have an aperitif in the square are murderers," *Corriere della Sera*, May 22, 2020.

63) Ilona Frances Walker, "Beyond the Military Metaphor: Comparing antimicrobial resistance and the

would follow the thematization of the crisis put forward by the governments, may well be considered as a main acquisition of the research.

With all this in mind, we do believe that the unusual extension of the sample we have come to analyze — more than 14,000 news stories and 1.6 million words — allows for some reliable considerations about the media representation of the Sars-CoV-2 epidemic in Italy. Based on our data, the major indication — as already anticipated — is that the Italian broadcasters have endorsed the point of view of the State authorities, with the media coverage basically being in line with the decisions taken by the government over the first year of the sanitary crisis. If we put this in Stanley Cohen's words, we can add that the media have been acting as "moral entrepreneurs", in both meanings of the expression. In one way, the Tv reporting has ignited something similar to a *moral panic*; in the other way, the media have also adopted the most productive frame in terms of audience reaching: whether we refer to it as the spectacularization of the disease, as the "distant suffering" of the watchers[64], or as the so-called mechanism of "fear arousing appeal".

That the mainstream media have reinforced the perspective of political authorities, what is more, is consistent with the findings coming from other studies. An analogous media framing has been unraveled in the United Kingdom by David Seedhouse, with a focus on the distorted accounting of the epidemic risk and the lethality rate[65]. As to the English media, Flinders[66] also detected the role of the mainstream outlets in amplifying the strategies of blaming and scapegoating, as put in place by the government and by the medical institutions. Fazi and Green[67], from a global perspective, analyzed the convergence of authorities and media towards a shared interpretation and framing of reality, also implying the blacklisting of alternative sources and their indiscriminate labeling as disinformation. Consistently, the investigation of the media coverage of COVID-19 in Australia shows the adoption of the ideological frames established by the Chinese government at the early stage of the crisis and embraced also by local authorities[68]. Media biases in favor of the extremization of the epidemic risk can also be indirectly inferred by the work of Riehm and others[69] on the people's perception in the United States: showing how those who were

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COVID-19 pandemic in the United Kingdom," *Medicine Anthropology Today* 7, no. 2 (2020), as UK case; Benjamin R. Bates, "The (In)Appropriateness of the WAR Metaphor in Response to SARS-COV-2: A Rapid Analysis of Donald J. Trump's Rhetoric," *Frontiers in Communication* 5, June (2020); Connor M. Chapman and DeMond Shondell Miller, "From metaphor to militarized response: the social implications of 'we are at war with COVID-19' — crisis, disasters, and pandemics yet to come," *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 40, no. 9–10 (2020), 1107–1124 as USA study; Charlotte Brives, "The politics of Amphibiosis: the war against viruses will not take place," *Somatosphère: Science, Medicine, and Anthropology*, April 4, 2020, as analysis of Macron's style in addressing the French population.

64) Luc Boltanski, "The legitimacy of humanitarian actions and their media representation: The case of France," *Ethical Perspectives* 7, no. 1 (2000), 3–16.

65) Seedhouse, "The Case for Democracy in the Covid-19 Pandemic," 22–27.

66) Flinders, "Gotcha! Coronavirus, Crisis and the Politics of Blame Game," 22–25; Flinders, "Democracy and the Politics of Coronavirus," 483–502.

67) Thomas Fazi and Toby Green, *The Covid Consensus: The Global Assault to Democracy and the Poor — A Critique from the Left* (London: Hurst, 2023), 157–162.

68) Wanning Sun, "The virus of fear and anxiety: China, COVID-19, and the Australian Media," *Global Media and China* 6, no. 1 (2021), 24–39.

69) Kira E. Riehm et al., "Associations Between Media Exposure and Mental Distress Among U. S. Adults at the Beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 59, no. 5 (2020), 630–638.

more exposed to the TV news, statistically speaking, were also more likely to develop mental distress of different types. Similarly, Sacerdote, Sehgal, and Cook[70] measured a bias in American media coverage, with attention always placed on the most negative tones, and positive news being generally sidelined or taken out of the discourse. These findings would be also coupled with the evidence of a particularly intense use of the war metaphor, detected by Jaworska[71] in her comparative scrutiny of the newspaper's coverage of the coronavirus in the UK, Germany, and USA; and in the case of Italian mainstream media[72]. The alignment of media narratives to the government's position has been also denounced by an eminent epidemiologist, John Ioannidis, pointing to the discrepancy between the actual state of the medical debate and its representation in public communication[73].

It makes sense to recall, in conclusion, that a major corpus of scientific research is devoted to the representation of the epidemic crisis in social media, which cannot be addressed in this article. As already stated, this also caused some under-estimation of the role played by the legacy media in the covering of the events, in their framing, and in the imposition of a particular angle. There is little doubt that future research will have to consider the combination between the two — the top-down communication of traditional outlets, and the shared discourse in social media — or what we also define the agenda-melding of contemporary public opinion.

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70) Bruce Sacerdote, Ranjan Sehgal, and Molly Cook, "Why Is All Covid-19 News Bad News?," *NBER Working Paper Series*, no. 28110, November 2020, Cambridge, National Bureau of Economic Research.
71) Sylvia Jaworska, "Investigating media representations of the coronavirus in the UK, USA and Germany: What can a comparative corpus-based discourse analysis contribute to our understanding of the Covid-19 pandemic?," in *Viral Discourse: Elements in Applied Linguistic*, ed. Rodney H. Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 26–37.
72) Lorenzo Donghi, Andrea Miconi, and Simona Pezzano, "Uno studio sulla metafora bellica nel racconto del Sars-Cov-2," *Studi Culturali*, in press.
73) Eran Bendavid, Christopher Oh, Jay Bhattacharya, and John P A Ioannidis, "Assessing mandatory stay-at-home and business closure effects on the spread of COVID-19," *European journal of clinical investigation* 51, no. 4 (2021), e13484; John P. Ioannidis, Alangoya Tezel, and Reshma Jagsi, "Overall and COVID-19 specific citation impact of highly visible COVID-19 media experts: Bibliometric analysis," *British Medical Journal* 11, no. 10 (2021), e052856.

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Biographies

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Ghosts On and Off Screen

An Interview with Helen Wheatley

In the following interview, Professor Helen Wheatley discusses her past and current research. She is Director of Film and Television Studies at the University of Warwick. She is also co-founder of the Centre for Television Histories at the University of Warwick. Wheatley is the author of the monographs *Gothic Television* (2006) and *Spectacular Television: Exploring Televisual Pleasure* (2016), which won the BAFTSS Award for Monograph of the Year in 2017. She is currently working on a forthcoming book, *Television/Death*, and is the primary investigator of the research project *Ghost Town: Civic Television and the Haunting of Coventry*, which were the main topics of discussion.

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You're currently writing a book about television and death. And considering that television is such a conservative medium, and because of its self-regulation, these might seem like incompatible topics. So, what is the relationship between death and television? And what's the role of death on television?

I think the best way to answer that question is to explain a bit about the structure of the book. The first part of the book is about the representation of death and dying on television. The first chapter of the book looks at the representation of death and dying in archive television, and documentaries made about what I call the 'auto/pathography': people telling their own stories of their dying experiences, or their experience of bereavement. Then the second chapter of that section looks at the way that television has handled the difficult topic of assisted dying. It deals with questions of how documentary filmmakers can represent a process which is already ethically fraught: the requesting of an assisted death. That chapter looks at historical documentaries on this but also at more contemporary documentaries from around the world. I've also interviewed some programme makers who've

worked in that area and talk to them about the process of making their documentaries as a process of caring for the subject of the documentary but also the viewer. The subject of death at the beginning of the book is very much wrapped up in issues relating to public service broadcasting and about death education as a public service. I've been tracking through these documentaries how documentary programme makers take care of their audiences and envisage their audiences as receiving representation of death and dying. And then the final chapter of that section thinks about how death appears in mainly contemporary American television drama. When you talk about television as an inherently 'conservative' medium, I think there has also always been an anxiety about the representation of death, particularly in American fictional programming. In the early 1950s, in Britain in relation to the coming of American television programming to Britain through broadcasts on the new commercial television channel in the mid-1950s, there was this anxiety that children were going to see lots of people being killed in Westerns or cop shows. There has been this continual worry and concern about the fictional representation of death. I track some of those critical concerns and the discursive contexts that circulated around the representation of death in fictional programming. Later, I look at some contemporary television programmes that represent the process of death and dying — for example, *Six Feet Under*, which is a landmark in death representation in American television — but the chapter ranges across a variety of different programmes, and thinks about television afterlives, too. So that's section one, death and dying on television. Section two is about how television works through and represents grief and bereavement, as well as death-related trauma. The first chapter of that section looks at what I've been calling dramas of grief. I noted, just in my own viewing for pleasure, that a lot of the programmes that I was watching were dealing with people who had been recently bereaved, or who were working through the trauma of grief in some way. From big family sagas like *This Is Us* to *The Leftovers*, which deals with grief from a slightly different perspective, in relation to disappearance, which is also imagined as a death, and also the programmes that handle recovery from grief, things like *Sorry for Your Loss*, which is a programme made for Facebook Watch. It's a poignant study of grief and bereavement and lots of other things as well. Then the second chapter in that section looks at the ghost drama and the way that ghost drama relates to some of the earlier work that I've done on hauntings and the ghost on television. It looks again at contemporary television drama to think about how hauntings work through the trauma of grief across a range of UK programming from recent years, including *The Living and the Dead*, *Marchlands*, *Lightfields* and *Remember Me.* There's a whole series of short ghost serials in which bereavement trauma is worked through. And then, in the American context, I'm looking at some new Netflix serial dramas like *The Haunting of Hill House* and *Archive 81* to think about how they are really dramas of grief and trauma, as much as they are ghost stories. Then the final section of the book thinks about how television works as a posthumous medium. This might be through broadcast television and thinking about how we encounter the dead on TV: how television allows us access to people who have already died and what it means to watch them on TV. That chapter draws on a recent case study I had published in the *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* about the serial rapist and TV presenter Jimmy Saville, and thinks about what the encounter with his spectre on television is like. And then the final chapter of that section looks at an archive

project I've been running, which has been to take programmes made in and about Coventry out of the archive and rescreen them around the city. This is a way to create encounters with the dead and with the past more broadly and to talk to people about their experiences of that in the context of a particular place, a particular city. These discussions of posthumous images therefore tie back to the beginning of the book and think about television as a medium that captures life before death.

We will go back to ghosts and the haunting of the city. But I would like to stay on the topic of death on TV. In one of your recent papers, you talk about how we are more distanced from death nowadays than we were in the past, when people were dying in their homes instead of hospitals. But how do you think the recent situations with COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine is affecting our relationship with the death through television?

That's a good question. And I think I've pondered on that question quite a lot over the last year or so. I think in a way, it's slightly misleading to say that we have become unfamiliar with death, although death and dying experiences now usually take place in a hospital or outside of the home. This is a significant cultural shift, which is acknowledged by a lot of people, that has affected our relationship with death. But television has always provided access to stories of death and dying. And, as you say, whether it's an international crisis like COVID or in relation to a war, news reporting, documentary reporting, and current affairs television have always provided us access to sometimes quite stark and difficult to deal with stories of death and bereavement. I was interviewing someone a couple of weeks ago who made a documentary about the death of her husband in the mid-1970s and asking her about her experience of making the programmes that she made for the BBC in the mid-1970s. I asked whether she watched other people's documentaries about death and dying, thinking about other auto-pathographies, and her answer was that she didn't really, but the real context for her at that time in the mid-1970s was the Troubles in Northern Ireland. They were the deaths that she was seeing on a regular basis on TV. That was how death was very present in her living room at that time. And, sadly, there have always been events happening in the world that mean that we are brought up close to dead bodies in our living rooms, in front of our TV sets. I remember as a child in the mid-1980s the real poignancy and horror of seeing people dying of famine in Ethiopia. I remember vividly the experience of seeing dead bodies on the television news in relation to that humanitarian crisis. And I guess we all have moments like this. So, I've tried to think through this and write through this a bit in the introduction of the book. We all have moments that stick in our minds where television brings us up close to death. And it might not be as intentional as "Oh, I'm going to watch a documentary about death this evening." But it might be that we've just switched on the news, or looked at our social media feeds and there is a dead body there in front of us. And how do we deal with this? I think quite a lot of the literature on death on screen has been in relation to film, and there has been some brilliant writing on the topic, including by my colleague here at Warwick, Michele Aaron, whose book *Death and the Moving Image: Ideology, Iconography and I* has been really formative for me. But that work doesn't really get to grips with the ways in which television allows us access to death in a different, sometimes quite jarring, unexpected, and disturbing way, or at other times in a quieter, contemplative and meditative way. I'm also trying to write not

just about those moments where we might expect to see the dead. There are also those moments that punctuate all kinds of different live television, where unexpected death takes place: people who die unexpectedly on screen, people who might die during the process of a sport match or race, but there has also been a series of shocking murders and suicides, as well as more mundane, everyday kind of deaths that have taken place on broadcast live television. So, there's something about the liveness of television that always carries within it the potentiality for death.

It makes me think of the film Network *written by Paddy Chayefsky where a reporter, who is going to be fired, announces during a news report that he's going to kill himself on live TV. And I've read that it was inspired by real instance when a news reporter shot herself on live television. How can you escape that?*

That reporter was Christine Chubbuck. A number of films have been made about her death, and I write about this at the beginning of my book. Some archive footage turned up on YouTube relatively recently purporting to be the footage of her suicide, but there's some uncertainty about whether it actually is this or whether it's faked archival footage of her suicide on screen. But Chubbock's death is a poignant illustration of the fact that live television always carries with it the potential of death. On YouTube, you can see lots of live deaths on TV; YouTube users seem to have constructed endless compilation films that bring them all together, some of which include the purported footage of Chubbuck's suicide or another news reporter being murdered during a news report, and so on. There are lots of those compilations, but the one I found most difficult to watch was called something like 'heart attacks on television', and it's just a compilation of people in the middle of television programs, news reporters, sports reporters, and so on, and it's just endless footage of people slumping forward whilst performing on TV. Obviously, a death from a heart attack is not a 'big' or 'spectacular' death, so this compilation is just repeated footage of television performers stopping speaking and falling forward. This compilation plays this moment seemingly endlessly, on a loop. A good deal of the programming that I've watched for this book has been quite hard to take. And that was the hardest. It was just kind of relentless death, death as it happens unspectacularly on this spectacular medium.

Let's move on to fictional death on television, because I want to speak a little bit about the horror genre that you've been interested in for some time now. And death is obviously a big part of the genre. So, how does it fit into televisual horror? Or do you think there's been a change in representation, not only of the death, but television horror itself?

As somebody who teaches and researches television horror, I think that's quite a broad category. I write a little bit about this, both in *Spectacular Television*, and in the new book. There are clearly elements of television horror that aesthetize the dead body, and in which the display of the dead body is really part of the visual pleasure of the programme. Stacey Abbott and Simon Brown have written interestingly about this in relation to *Dexter*. But you can also see this in *Hannibal*, for example. There are several shows now in which a really critical part of the team is the art director who every week produces a new presentation of the flayed or rearranged corpse, and *Hannibal* takes it to a crazy extreme. Where I started out with this project on death in *Spectacular Television* is in thinking about the

spectacular presentation of the heavily mutilated dead body in television horror as being a new thing. Horror was pushing the television boundaries of what could be shown in a new era of cable and subscription channels, which could cater for niche television audiences who really wanted to see all of that stuff. And that's taken to real extremes in niche horror and things like *Masters of Horror*. For example, I've taught for a couple of years with the *Masters of Horror* episode by Takahashi Miike, 'Imprint', which you could call the zenith body horror on television; it's a bit much. But that represents something about television that's being freed from the structures of broadcast or network television and being able to do new spectacular things with the dead body. So, there's that whole branch of spectacular television horror, but alongside that there is another branch of horror, which is kind of more serious, perhaps more contemplative, which is not necessarily as focused on the spectacular display of the dead body, but rather on working through the emotional experiences of death and dying. Again, Stacey Abbott has written about this in an edited collection about emotion on television. She writes about the returning dead and zombies, ghosts and vampires, in relation to grief and bereavement. I've sort of partly taken some lead from Stacey's work, and have been thinking through how ghost dramas, for example, depict the long-term emotional impact of dealing with grief. The outstretching of trauma through families, for example, or inherited familial grief-related trauma is something that's been really featured recently in ghost dramas. So, television horror doesn't have a singular approach relation to the representation of death. It both shows the bodily impacts of death, but also its emotional impacts, and sometimes it does both.

Let's talk some more about ghosts, because you recently wrote about the cycle of ghost dramas on the UK television. So, what do you think is representative of today's ghost dramas in the UK?

   One of the things that I was really interested in when I was writing about the UK ghost dramas was the ways in which haunting is written onto landscape. Not just exterior landscapes, because also the haunted house continues to be central to exploring ghosts and the fears or griefs or traumas that are attached to them. However, I really noticed that there was a whole cycle of television dramas, from the mid-2010s onwards, I would say, that used woodlands, moorlands, seascapes and seaside, pastoral land and farmlands to manifest haunting through the representation of 'troubled land' in some way: mist-covered moors, or darkened woods, and so on. I've been really interested in exploring how landscape can be marked by trauma and grief. In some ways, this relates to my *Spectacular Television* work because often these are quite beautiful, but melancholy, landscapes. In relation to this, I use Jackie Bowring's idea of the melancholy landscape (Bowring is a cultural geographer and she writes about melancholy landscapes in relation to lots of different *real* landscapes, rather than landscapes on film and television). For me, it's a useful concept to consider. The spaces that characters traverse and the journey that they must go on is not necessarily confined to the haunted house: often the house will lead a character out into a field or under the ground into a mine or into a lake or whatever it is. So, there's this relationship between interior and exterior in the contemporary British ghost television drama that I found really interesting and resonant.

   Also, what the other dramas that I've written about for *Television/Death* do well is treat narrative time as quite volatile. I think this is true of the UK ghost dramas I discuss, as well

as the American Netflix dramas. Characters often find themselves between times or skipping back and forth in time. The haunting isn't simply a spooky figure from the past turning up in the present; somebody from the past might be haunted by a figure from the present/future in many contemporary television and ghost dramas. And I think Mittell's idea of narrative complexity works particularly well in relation to the Gothic and to the ghost drama. The Gothic as a genre is narratively complex to start with, but in contemporary television, this narrative complexity is amplified in some ways: skipping back and forth between times, uncertainty about which timeframe characters might find themselves in, are characteristic both of contemporary television and the ghost drama. Often at the start of such dramas, we are shown montages of images or sounds that we don't quite understand — we don't know where or when they're from and what they mean. And then, gradually, the unravelling of narrative time allows us to understand the significance of a particular image or sound or word, even. You don't always love the things that you study, and I haven't always loved some of the programmes that I've watched for this latest book, but I think the ghost dramas in particular have been very engrossing, and I've been very caught by their complexity. It provides a satisfying pay off for the very engaged viewer.

Since we are talking about hauntings… You are a principal investigator on the research project, Ghost Town: Civic Television and the Haunting of Coventry. *Can you introduce the project and explain the idea about the city as a haunted place?*

The Ghost Town project has been about taking programmes made in and about the city of Coventry out of the archive and rescreening them around the city. This is based on the idea that cities are haunted places, that they are haunted by people who once lived there and no longer remain, but also buildings that once stood and have disappeared, or businesses that ran in the city, or ideas that circulated in the city. So, I'm taking death and the posthumous experience of the city here with quite broad strokes: the posthumous doesn't just relate to human being after death, but also more refers to our experience more broadly of things that have passed. My argument is that the traces of those things can be found in the television archive. If we think of the television archive like a kind of mausoleum which houses the dead, and if we think of television as a posthumous medium which captures liveliness at a particular moment in time, a person on the street who's interviewed in the city of Coventry about their life at a moment in the past might be there in that moment but gone tomorrow, their image and their voice, their thoughts and feelings captured forever in the television archive. So, my idea was to inhabit this haunted place, this haunted city, with these ghosts from the archive, to take these ghosts out of the archive, and to see what happened if they were brought back to their place of inception. Subsequently, we've done a whole number of things throughout this project, which has been running for four years We've run pop-up exhibitions in cultural spaces in the city; for example, a week-long exhibition with a four-hour reel of television programming made in and about the city running, and the opportunity for people of the city to come in and watch it and tell us their thoughts and feelings about what they've seen, which was one of the richest spaces to talk about that material. We've also screened things in museums. We've had a big collaboration with Coventry Cathedral and have shown programming both in the new cathedral and in the ruins of the old cathedral. We've also worked with various special interest

groups in the city, from the city's trade unions to charities that protect the city's built her-
itage, and everything else in between. We've taken every opportunity we've had to take
something out of the archive and make it accessible for the people of Coventry, and then
talk to them about those hauntings and their encounters with their dead, or those things
that have passed. It has been really fascinating. To give an example, we had people coming
into our exhibition, because they knew that their father or grandfather had made an ap-
pearance in one of the programmes that we were showing in the exhibition. I had the ex-
perience of sitting with a woman who was probably in her 80s, and her daughter who was
maybe in her 60s, and they were talking to their dead relatives through the screen. Their
father/grandfather was in a section of programming about a factory in Coventry, part of a
documentary film (*Coventry Kids,* 1960) made by the documentarist Philip Donnellan.
And the younger of these two women called out "Turn around, granddad!" when he was
on screen, and then, talking afterwards about having seen him again, and having experi-
enced him posthumously, through the archives, both women talked about the experience
'bringing him back from the dead'. They came in because they knew that their relative had
taken part in a television programme, but also, we've had experiences of people seeing
people they weren't expecting to see again, or even themselves when they were young, by
accident. It's been quite an emotional experience. I've sat with people while they've cried.
It's been quite a journey. What I have realized through the course of this research is that a
television archive isn't just a collection of a city's or a country's history. It isn't just a collec-
tion of the great works of great television directors, writers, producers. A television ar-
chive is also, for some people, a family album, or a family archive. And so, I've been really
interested to talk to the people for whom those encounters have been countered with a
particularly poignant death, or a sometimes difficult past. There's a film historian in the
United States called Rick Prelinger who runs the brilliant Lost Landscapes project, which
is a similar project to the Ghost Town project. Prelinger does a similar thing, in that he
takes films, usually amateur films made in a particular place and screens them around the
country in that particular place and invites people along to respond, to contextualise, to
talk to him about those films and those places that are represented on screen. His work is
interesting in relation to how those audiences manage the contested history of the city. He
has experienced in audiences that are lively, disruptive and argumentative and that have
different perspectives on a place-specific past. His work is particularly interesting about
different racial perspectives on the city and how those are enacted through people's re-
sponses in his archive screenings. The Ghost Town project has been a little quieter than
Prelinger's Lost Landscapes series. I don't know if that's a national difference. We've made
lots of cups of tea — and I don't think Prelinger is chatting to people over cups of tea —
but we've tried to create sort of domesticated spaces within our screening spaces and cre-
ate the space for people to not shout at the screen necessarily, or argue with somebody else
in the screening room, but have a quiet word with each other, and also with us as research-
ers. So, they've been, I think, quieter, more emotional responses to Coventry as it has been
passed on through the television archive. Not that everybody's going to be fascinated by
the Coventry project. Of course, I think Coventry is a fascinating place, but I have specif-
ic, local interest. But I hope that that this project provides a kind of template that other
people can borrow and copy in different places and think about the relationship between

people place, television archive, memory, and the posthumous image in different settings. So, it's really… it's a template for collaborative work between media historians, archives, and local cultural organisations for other people then to take away and do whatever they like with it.

It sounds very fascinating, and it makes me wonder how it would work in the Czech Republic because I think it could be traumatic for lots of people, as a lot of the archival material would be heavily ideological. It would be probably not taken very well by everyone.

That's a good point because we've had to deal with some quite traumatic stories and histories that are gathered in the archive of this city. Coventry, particularly in the 1980s, experienced really problematic and difficult race relations. In 1981, the murder of Satnam Singh Gill, a young Asian man who lived in the city, led to protests and rioting both by anti-fascist protesters and counter protests, by the British National Front and others. So, the city's history has not always been an easy history. Its history is also a story of unemployment, and a boom-and-bust economy. Therefore, some of the histories we've taken out of the archive have been difficult ones. When I first started doing this project, I think I was a bit naive about how hard it was going to be for some people to watch some of the footage that we were showing. Initially, I just put it out there and didn't really contextualize it much and just said, 'Here's the city's history, tell me what you think'. And people had some quite difficult and challenging stuff to confront about racism, and poverty or unemployment in the city. I remember I took a reel that was about the city's industrial history to a meeting of the Trade Union Council and showed it there. There were people in the room who recognized people on screen; there were old comrades and colleagues laughing about this encounter and laughing at the television reporting and how biased it was, and so on. After the screening finished, however, a local counsellor, a woman called Kindy Sandhu, was visibly angry with me. She very firmly said, 'This is not the full story'. She said her parents had been active British Asian trade unionists at the time, and they were completely absent from the news archive that I had showed and material that I brought out of the archive. Her position was that I was just replicating the overwhelming whiteness of television news reporting in the 1970s and '80s by bringing this back out of the archive again. Again, this had contributed to these histories being hidden, and she understandably felt really aggrieved about that. And she was right to be. This experience really made me think about how I talk to people about the gaps and absences in this archive, as well as show them what's there. I've been much more sensitive, I think, since that evening, constantly framing archive screenings as "Not the whole story". I have taken care to remind visitors to Ghost Town events that that the story that's there isn't necessarily completely objective and impartial, and have asked the following: Tell me what's missing. Tell me who you don't see on screen. What are what are the difficulties in encountering this posthumous archive? What are the moments that make you sad or angry? Learning to have difficult conversations around and about the archive has been one of the biggest things I've taken away from the Ghost Town project. I think I was a little naive when I started it. I think I'm probably less so now.

That's interesting. It makes me think about how reruns sometimes literally bring out ghosts on TV. It reminds me of your article about Jimmy Savile and how sometimes television can broadcast things without considering the new contexts in which they are shown. For example, when there is a broadcast of an old show or a movie and there are outdated representations. How do we watch it in this new era? How do we watch it in this new context? And again, it's a big part of television because it relies so much on the archives.

I think the archive in those contexts becomes a real problem for broadcasters. I wrote about this in relation to the Savile case. There's a drive from the BBC to want to work through a really problematic part of their institutional past, so they facilitate that by working through and constantly going back and revisiting archived footage, often recontextualizing it. The BBC will make a documentary that includes extracts from the archive that show Savile's face, his spectral presence, as I've argued, but then when they're broadcasting reruns of programmes in which he was a presenter (for example, *Top of the Pops*), episodes that are presented by him are not shown, or Savile's image is not shown again because it is problematic in that context in which we might stumble upon it. The BBC both goes back to its archive and works over and works through this archive again and again, in relation to its own institutional trauma, but then also has an ethical duty to not have Savile pop up every five minutes on reruns of old programmes that are not recontextualized. This is the problem of posthumous archive. When the story about Savile's crimes first broke, journalists scoured the archive for evidence of him on screen being sleazy, or abusive towards young women on screen, and there were a couple of examples of that which were uncovered by journalists. This is using the archive to show the institution's complicity in his crimes, and it exposes the fact that the broadcaster let this abuse go on right in front of our very eyes. But then one of the arguments that I make in the article, and which will be expanded upon in my book, is there is a very real impact for Savile's victims of his face reappearing on their screens. Even if it's in these newly recontextualized moments: news stories, documentaries, even dramatizations of Savile's crimes or Savile-like characters. Those moments for people who either experienced abuse at his hands, or even for people who have experienced abuse by others, could be very difficult bits of television to see. In the documentaries about Savile, we see his victims talking about the fact that television constantly reinvigorated their trauma by bringing him back to life, or back to the public sphere: he was there again and again and again. Television's repetitiveness, its constant return to its own archive, facilitates those secondary traumas, those reencounters, happening again.

Maybe we can focus on something a little bit lighter. So, you were talking a lot about television archives. I would like to know what the challenges are. Because, as you well know, a lot of things don't exist anymore because television networks weren't archiving it, or they were erasing it. So, how can we do work on television history when it's missing?

I'll talk about the UK context, because that's the context that I know best. At the moment, there are archivists who are really committed to making as wide as possible access to the archived programming that is there. That has been a big shift, and this shift is continuing for television historians in the UK, because for a long time we weren't aware of what programming still existed, or we had no access to it even if we were aware of it. I

think there are some really committed archivists who are working in collaboration with academics and others to rectify that situation in the UK. More of television's past existed than we knew, say twenty-five years ago when I began my academic career, and there is certainly more historic programme available to view now than we had access to then. So, it's an exciting moment for broadcasts historians in that sense. But how do we critically reconstruct programs that aren't there? There are all sorts of methods to use and do this. Oftentimes, this can be an exciting puzzle for the media historian, like a detective story, to study a programme that you're certain beyond any reasonable doubt has been wiped or never recorded in the first place. What do we do about that? Well, in this country, we're very lucky, certainly in relation to the BBC, that we have the Written Archive Centre. We have production notes and personnel files and so on that exist. They are a rich source for research in this country, but they only tell part of the story because they only cover the BBC, and only up to a certain period. So, people have got creative about drawing on other sources to reconstruct this history. I've just read a really interesting PhD thesis by Diane Charlesworth at the University of Lincoln which uses children's novels about television in the 1940s and '50s to think about what television looked, sounded, and felt like through the fictionalization of a television world that's very similar to the actual television world. That's a canny way of using quite an unusual paratext to tell this story, and to think about what specific genres might have been like in that moment, and programming that doesn't exist anymore. So yes, we must get clever and resourceful with our sources, drawing on reviews and previews of programming, for example. I think there's still quite an untapped wealth of contemporary writing about television in the UK in the mid-20th century, not just in the broadsheet press, but there's also some interesting writing about television and early television reviewing in the local, regional press. There are also viewers letters in these and other publications, as well as audience research reports compiled by broadcasters. It's about cobbling together this history, constructing a jigsaw, via a whole series of paratexts and intertexts. There is nothing like being able to sit down and watch a piece of historic broadcast television, but sometimes when that's not possible, you just have to get creative.

Since we're talking about television history, and you're a co-founder of the Centre for Television Histories, I have provocative question. Recently, I was reading Greg M. Smith's Beautiful TV*, and he makes an interesting note in the introduction about how television scholars are often latching on to the newest thing. He argues that even writing on a TV series that recently ended is not fashionable. So, when considering this idea, how do you view the study of television history? What would you say is a reason that we need to study television history?*

I think if you're interested in television aesthetics, and how television has developed, if you want to know where the television you watched came from, you need to. You could similarly ask why study film history, or why study literary history. We study television history for similar reasons: that sometimes what we want to understand is how certain programmes or genres or styles or forms of making of television came about. Sometimes we want to understand our personal relationships with television, how television was viewed, how television was integrated into the home. And these are all still pertinent questions for today: What does television look and sound like? What do people do with television? Why do we need television? What do we stand to lose if our government dismantles public ser-

vice broadcasting? We cannot ask or answer those questions without television history. It's interesting in the UK now, because we have a Conservative government who would really like to get rid of public service broadcasting, and who are trying to do serious damage to the funding of publicly funded television. I see the arguments that are made by certain politicians about an open market. According to them, we've got to look to Netflix as the model that's going to bring us the great and the good of television. Those things are said from a position of such complete ignorance, and a total lack of understanding of what we stand to lose if we dismantle the television licence fee and the way that public service broadcasting is funded here in the UK. This is done without any care and attention to television history. And so, without television historians, we don't have the counterexamples to say to people 'This is what you stand to lose'. Going back to *Television/Death*, death and dying is something that comes to all of us. It's something we all need to understand and get our heads around. The best and most sensitive, most poignant, most lyrical, most meditative and contemplative television about death is made — not just in the UK but all around the world — by public service broadcasters. And so that's why I think we need television history; we need to understand what we stand to lose, as well as how things came about, why audiences behave in certain ways or how certain genres are produced. There's a real political reason to understand television history.

I need to get better at banging those drums. Often when journalists say the Conservative Party is planning to do this, and what do you think about this? And can you give us a historical perspective? Since I'm busy in my work, I often feel that I haven't really got time to undertake those interviews or make those arguments. But it's important that historians take part in in the public debate about contemporary television and what's happening in television today. I really should get better at saying yes to those interviews!

I'm glad you mentioned the licence fee because it is such important topic right now. It is resonating around the world. There's often a doubt whether we need public service television. But especially with the war in Ukraine and COVID, we can see how important public service broadcasters are. People will seek them out if there's a crisis, but we still have these debates.

Yes, and you know, Netflix is not providing our daily local news or special interest programming or our minority language programming. It's not ever going to do that. It's not going to be commercially viable for them to do that. The question really is, do you want those things to be delivered or not? I can see the reasons why right-wing governments might not want minority interests to be met by television. So, it's no surprise that that there are governments all over the world who are trying to erode that form of broadcasting, but also, that's every reason to hold on to it.

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Fenomén Krumbachová: Strůjkyně filmových obrazů

Archiv Ester Krumbachové 2022–2023, https://esterkrumbachova.org/.
Jan Bernard, ed., *5 ½ scénáře Ester Krumbachové* (Praha: Nakladatelství AMU, 2021).
Ester Krumbachová, Dům umění města Brna, 24. 11. 2021 – 6. 3. 2022,
kurátorky Edith Jeřábková a Kateřina Svatoňová
Edith Jeřábková – Kateřina Svatoňová, eds., *Ester Krumbachová*
(Praha: Vysoká škola uměleckoprůmyslová – Are, 2021).

„Jak jsem se stala majitelkou bordelu? SERU na UMĚNÍ, protože bordel, to je umění." Takto nadepsala filmová, televizní a divadelní výtvarnice, scenáristka a příležitostná režisérka Ester Krumbachová (1923–1996) jednu ze složek textů ve svém osobním archivu.[1] Uvedený nápis měla už od mládí nad stolem: „Moc mi to pomohlo, zbavila jsem se strachu, že musím dělat umění, a dělala jsem všechno tak, jak jsem to cítila, myslela, formulovala."[2] Při vší nadsázce to lze vnímat jako svého druhu manifest nekonformní solitérky, která se hlásí k svobodnému, podvratnému, jadrnému přístupu k tvorbě, v níž se u Krumbachové spojuje rafinovaná intelektuální hra s rozpustilou provokací bez pravidel, fantazie s matérií, slovo s obrazem. Svoji profesi viděla především ve filmu. V bilančním dopise příteli divadelníkovi Ivanu Vyskočilovi z roku 1994 se označila za „strůjce obrazů filmu", který „výtvarně pomáhal na nohy" nové vlně 60. let. Načež tato „múza nové vlny" dodala: „Mně osobně může celá nová vlna políbit prdel. Tam se udělalo tolik polosraček, že nemá cenu o tom mluvit."[3]

Citované dokumenty jsou součástí unikátní, do nedávna neznámé pozůstalosti Ester Krumbachové, jejíž poskytnutí vyvolalo soustředěný badatelský zájem a přineslo hned několik mimořádných výstupů: otevřený online archiv, výstavu v brněnském Domě umění a kolektivní monografii, o než se zasloužily Edith Jeřábková a Kateřina Svatoňová, a edici scénářů vzniklou péčí Jana Bernarda. Jde o koncepční, vzájemně se doplňující počiny, které systematickou prací s archivními prameny — jejich prezentací, interpretací a kontextualizací — objevují dílo Ester Krumbachové v nových rozměrech a souvislostech.

Díky tomu se ukazuje nejen členitost, intenzita a energie Krumbachové tvorby, ale také bezprostřední sepětí tvorby s životem. S tím zřejmě souvisí i příznak fragmentárnosti a nezavršenosti, daný jak narušenou kariérou v dusivém období tzv. normalizace, tak odstředivým temperamentem autorky. Patrné je to především v její scénáristické tvorbě, která je až překvapivě obsáhlá, většina projektů však nedospěla do fáze scénáře, případně nebyla natočena.

1)   Edith Jeřábková – Kateřina Svatoňová, eds., *Ester Krumbachová* (Praha: Vysoká škola uměleckoprůmyslová – Are, 2021), 199.
2)   Tamtéž, 252. Citace pochází z dopisu Ester Krumbachové Josefu Lustigovi z roku 1994.
3)   Tamtéž, 203.

Scénáře a fragmenty: Od *Sedmikrásek* po Voničku z domova

Scenáristickou prací pro film a televizi se důkladně zabývá Jan Bernard v knižní edici nazvané *5 ½ scénáře Ester Krumbachové*. Výchozí rámec výkladu poskytuje celková filmografie, která čítá více než sto třicet titulů, z nichž bezmála polovina spadá do stěžejního období 60. let, a která vyniká širokým rozptylem — od celovečerních uměleckých a žánrových filmů přes televizní hudební a dramatické pořady, krátké animované pohádky a dokumenty až po hudební klipy. Krumbachová se na nich většinou podílela jako návrhářka kostýmů nebo výtvarnice. Jako autorka námětu, scenáristka či spoluscenáristka je podepsána pod čtyřiceti tituly, k nimž můžeme připočítat dalších téměř padesát projektů nerealizovaných, respektive nedokončených. V úhrnu jde o rozsáhlý a především různorodý korpus námětů, synopsí, filmových povídek či literárních scénářů.

Do vlastní edice se dostalo šest hraných filmů: největší podíl zastupují práce s Janem Němcem — krimikomedie *Čtyřlístek pro štěstí* (synopse 1966), komerční zahraniční zakázka *Tři bratři a zázračný pramen* (námět 1966) a *První skici k Rubínu* (bodový scénář 1993), z nichž se posléze vyvinul film *Jméno kódu Rubín* (1996). Dále jsou to groteskní morality s Věrou Chytilovou — *Sedmikrásky* (literární scénář 1965, realizováno 1966) a *Sedmikrásky II* (bodový scénář 1990). A jako ukázka samostatné práce je zařazen nerealizovaný „návrh scénáře" *Vstupné* z roku 1974, existenciální alegorie z lázeňského městečka, která byla určená pro západoněmeckou veřejnoprávní televizi ARD. Vybraný soubor není přesněji odůvodněn, nicméně byl zřejmě motivován snahou ukázat těžiště Krumbachové tvorby v modernistické poetice 60. let. Možná stálo za úvahu zvolit pestřejší spektrum, které by jednak lépe odpovídalo autorčině rejstříku, jednak by revidovalo tradiční obraz Krumbachové spojený právě s Chytilovou a Němcem. Přidanou hodnotou je půvabný paradox: zatímco editor zdůraznil novovlnnou příslušnost, autorka dospěla k novovlnnému odstupu, jak bylo citováno výše.

Edici předcházejí dvě rozsáhlé přehledové studie, které faktograficky popisují celkovou scenáristickou tvorbu pro film (přesněji pro hraný film) a pro televizi (spoluautorkou televizní kapitoly je Kristýna Vaňková) a poskytují tak informační zázemí. Výklad kombinuje tematické a chronologické hledisko a primárně sleduje vývoj jednotlivých projektů a metody tvůrčí práce a spolupráce. V tomto ohledu patří mezi nejpozoruhodnější kapitola o *Sedmikráskách*, které prošly složitým vývojem s různými zápletkami. Jedna z nich stála hned na počátku: Chytilová totiž použila skutečný příběh své přítelkyně a spolupracovnice, studentky herectví DAMU Helgy Čočkové, a to bez jejího vědomí. Jde o známou věc, Bernardovi se ale podařilo získat obsáhlé vyjádření dotčené strany, v němž Čočková vysvětluje, jak došlo k „velkému konfliktu" s Chytilovou, která na výhrady ohledně svého „neetického počinu" reagovala tím, že jako umělkyně má právo použít cokoli a jakkoli.[4] Jak plyne z dalších pasáží, spolupráce s Chytilovou byla trvale konfliktní i pro Krumbachovou, a to až do posledního případu — pokračování *Dědictví aneb Kurvahošigutntág* v roce 1993 —, k čemuž si Krumbachová zapsala do Diáře: „Odřekla [jsem] *Dědictví*. Je to hnusná, ponižující věc a navíc je Věra zákeřná a hraje svou hru nefér.".[5] Naopak spolupráce s Němcem svědčí o přátelské synergii, v níž se mísily umělecky náročné ambice se zájmem o divácký film i komerční zahraniční zakázky, jakou byla kriminální komedie pro Carla Pontiho *Tři bratři a zázračný pramen*. Na tomto příkladu Bernard také ukazuje autorský vývoj

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4)   Jan Bernard, ed., *5 ½ scénáře Ester Krumbachové* (Praha: Nakladatelství AMU, 2021), 48–50.
5)   Tamtéž, 74–75.

Krumbachové od „moralit, absurdního dramatu a poetických hříček ke komedii až frašce s bohatým využitím prvků tzv. pokleslé literatury".[6]

Vedle spolupráce s Chytilovou a Němcem je samostatně shrnuta mezinárodní spolupráce s Michaelem Havasem, jejíž součástí byla bizarní novozélandská epizoda s filmem *Strata* (1983), o němž Krumbachová prohlásila: „Bylo mi skoro do breku. Producent s režisérem chtěli vyrobit western. Tak nechápu, proč se obrátili zrovna na mě?" A Havas dodal: „Ten film vstoupil do dějin novozélandské kinematografie jako dílo, o němž nikdo neví, o čem je."[7]

Zbylá filmová tvorba je pojednána vesměs stručně, což zřejmě souvisí s nedostatkem pramenů. I tak má tato kapitola objevný potenciál. K nejpřínosnějším, a také nejpodrobněji zpracovaným, patří část věnovaná polistopadovému projektu adaptace románu Zdeny Škvorecké *Honzlová*, jehož výsledkem byl literární scénář. Realizace ztroskotala v nestabilních podmínkách tehdejší transformace (původním výrobcem měl být Krátký film, posléze tu byl „pokus" ze strany České televize) a projekt tak současně vypovídá o ekonomické a institucionální krizi dobového filmového průmyslu.

Vedle filmové tvorby, která byla nesporně hlavním polem umělecké seberealizace, měla práce Krumbachové pro televizi „spíše marginální charakter".[8] Možná by ale bylo přesnější vnímat ji jako zajímavou alternativu, která v 60. letech poskytovala příležitost pro inovace v rozvíjejícím se masovém médiu a lákala spojením uměleckého experimentu s diváckým dosahem. Později pak „sloužila především k obživě",[9] i když ani v tomto případě to asi nebude platit doslova, jak lze například soudit z případu „filmové fantazie" *O Janáčkových lašských tancích* (1988/1991) pro ostravský cyklus Vonička z domova, na němž Krumbachová pracovala jako spoluscénáristka (a zřejmě i jako výtvarnice) se zjevným zaujetím. Ambivalenci televizní práce formuluje i sama Krumbachová:

> Vymyslela jsem […] takový pojem: jsem klavíristka, budu si zkoušet a zdokonalovat prstoklad. […] Tato zdánlivě bezvýznamná práce mi přinesla spoustu užitku. Vymyslela jsem řadu věcí, které bych za boha nevymyslela, kdyby šlo o práci, které bych si vážila. Hrála jsem si. Přesouvala jsem různé elementární prvky filmu na nemožná místa — a ono to vyšlo už proto, že to nikdo nečekal.[10]

Důležitou součástí knihy jsou doprovodné archivní dokumenty, zvláště pak obsáhlý dopis Josefu Lustigovi z roku 1994 editorem nazvaný „Tvorba scénáře",[11] který ukazuje, jak se u Krumbachové doplňovala spontánní kreativita se systematickou reflexí. V této metodické bilanci pro Lustigovy americké studenty nelze přitom přehlédnout pozoruhodný obrat, totiž že Krumbachová klade důraz nejen na autorskou autenticitu a osobní étos, jak bychom přirozeně čekali, ale také na pragmatickou zásadu, že scénárista musí brát zřetel na realizovatelnost díla.

5 ½ scénáře Ester Krumbachové je práce cenná především informačním a pramenným obsahem, což odpovídá povaze primární edice založené na původním archivním výzkumu v dosud málo probádané oblasti. Důraz se klade na kritickou edici pramenů a příslušný servis. Úvodní studie se drží po-

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6) Tamtéž, 31.
7) Tamtéž, 111.
8) Tamtéž, 150.
9) Tamtéž.
10) Tamtéž.
11) Tamtéž, 439–451; zde se nachází přepis celého dopisu. Kopie originálu je zastoupena in Jeřábková – Svatoňová, eds., *Ester Krumbachová*, 246–255.

pisné přehledové formy a plní především podpůrnou kontextovou funkci; její standard ovšem kolísá, a to v závislosti na rozsahu zdrojů — u některých děl je popis stručný až na úroveň rešeršního záznamu,[12] jinde se zachází do zbytných detailů,[13] místy se nadužívá dlouhých citací, které by se hodilo krátit, respektive cíleněji tematicky strukturovat a zapojit do výkladu.[14] Ku prospěchu by také byla celkově dbalejší redakce a šikovnější grafická úprava, v knize je opravdu hodně elementárních edičních vad (špatně zalomená sazba, nesjednocené názvy, nepřehledná filmografie bez potřebných specifikací).[15] Tato nevyrovnanost ale nic nemění na průkopnickém přínosu této práce, která může sloužit jako základní orientace v díle Ester Krumbachové i jako podnět pro další badatelské a analytické úsilí. Uvedenými parametry zapadá kniha o Krumbachové do Bernardovy koncepční práce v oblasti archivního výzkumu méně známých či okrajových jevů, jehož výsledky jsou obdobně koncipované pramenné edice *Václav Havel a film. Scénáře, analýzy a úvahy z let 1957–1989*[16] nebo *Filmaři disentu: Michal Hýbek v paměti archivů a přátel.*[17]

Tvořit mnoha směry: Magie předmětu, obrazu a slova

Zatímco Bernardova kniha je zacílena na specifickou dílčí výseč scenáristické tvorby, práce Edith Jeřábkové a Kateřiny Svatoňové je koncipována jako panoramatický průřez celou tvorbou, respektive celým archivem. Kniha, nazvaná stejně jako výstava snad až příliš stroze *Ester Krumbachová*, tak funguje dílem jako výstavní (archivní) katalog, dílem jako kolektivní mezioborová monografie. Tento široký záběr a víceúčelový formát aspiruje na komplexní výklad, složený z dílčích témat a průhledů a rámovaný koncepty nové filmové historie či feministických, genderových a mediálních teorií. Editorky se v inspiraci Gillesem Deleuzem hlásí k „rhizomatické struktuře", která nejlépe odpovídá „oddenkovitému a asociativnímu" způsobu myšlení Ester Krumbachové.[18]

 Úvodní část knihy obstarává soubor studií zaměřených na jednotlivé oblasti působnosti (divadelní scénografie, filmové kostýmy a výtvarnictví nebo televizní revue, recitály a videoklipy), nebo na jednotlivá díla (*Sedmikrásky* a *Vražda ing. Čerta*). Přesvědčivě se v nich demonstruje, proč Krumbachové uhranul právě film: protože jej vnímala jako syntetické umění, jako „svého druhu Gesamtkunstwerk,

12) Týká se to speciálně nerealizovaných projektů ze 70. a 80. let: *Tábor pro cizince* (s. 77), *Stéblo trávy*, *Autostop* a *Lékařská pomoc* (s. 92–93).

13) Například na straně 15 (pozn. 5) dostáváme informaci, že se Ester Krumbachová v Českých Budějovicích spřátelila s filmovým historikem Borisem Jachninem. Samozřejmě nezpochybňuji, že sítě mezilidských vztahů jsou důležitým tématem, zde se ale tato informace objevuje izolovaně bez jakékoli souvislosti a návaznosti.

14) Zejména v citacemi oplývající kapitole „Spolupráce s Janem Němcem", v níž autor mohl bohatě těžit ze své práce na monografii o Janu Němcovi.

15) Špatně zalomená sazba (s. 32–33), předlouhé odstavce — někdy roztažené až na tři strany (například s. 86–88, 142–144), nesjednocené názvy — například titul *O Janáčkových lašských tancích* (s. 129) se objevuje v několika dalších verzích: *Filmová fantazie, vytvořená na Lašské tance Leoše Janáčka* (s. 129), *Filmová fantazie o Janáčkových Lašských tancích* (s. 129), *Lašské tance* (s. 131), *Lašské tance Leoše Janáčka* (s. 518). Filmografie má nepřehlednou strukturu a postrádá specifikace, především stopáž u filmů, respektive stránkový rozsah u textů nerealizovaných projektů, což jsou, zvlášť při tak nesourodé kolekci, klíčové údaje. Částečně tento deficit u textů napravuje ediční poznámka, kde jsou výchozí archivní zdroje publikovaných scénářů řádně popsány.

16) Jan Bernard, *Václav Havel a film: Scénáře, analýzy a úvahy z let 1957–1989* (Praha: Knihovna Václava Havla – NFA, 2018).

17) Jan Bernard, *Filmaři disentu: Michal Hýbek v paměti archivů a přátel* (Praha: NAMU, 2020).

18) Jeřábková – Svatoňová, eds., *Ester Krumbachová*, 9, 190.

který jí dovoloval propojit výtvarné umění, slovo a pohyb s kompozicí barev".[19] S tím souvisí organická prostupnost a přesah rolí: servisní role kostýmní návrhářky přerůstá v jejím podání do spoluautorské role výtvarnice a scenáristky. Krumbachové vliv tak byl obvykle větší a komplexnější, než by odpovídalo formální pozici.

Specifickým syntetickým průnikem jejích praxí se stal výtvarný či barevný scénář, vytvořený například pro *Všechny dobré rodáky*; škoda, že tomuto tématu není věnována přiměřená pozornost. Podobně je tomu u méně známých součástí Krumbachové díla, jakými jsou například normalizační *Dny zrady* Otakara Vávry. Jádrem výkladu zůstala klíčová díla 60. let a v tomto ohledu je celkový obraz poněkud redukovaný. Nelze se přitom ubránit pocitu, že schází větší kritický a analytický odstup, což se projevuje i v rétorické rovině obdivnými až vzletnými výroky stran archivu („obsahuje tajemnou, fascinující sbírku roztrhaných dopisů") nebo stran díla („tento text je věnován našemu oblíbenému filmu").[20] Ve výsledku se tak víceméně setrvává v ustálené podobě legendy o nadáním oplývající rebelce, zatímco na strukturovanější a problematizující výklady se nedostává. Přitom sama Krumbachová, jak dokládají také texty v její pozůstalosti, vládla nadhledem, který se legendarizaci vzpírá.

Nápadnou mezeru ve výkladu představuje normalizační období, kdy Krumbachová pracovala pro Krátký film, zlínský Kudlov, ostravské studio České televize nebo Laternu magiku. O této etapě se příliš nedozvíme. Navíc se v daných souvislostech používá zkreslující zkratka, totiž že se Krumbachová po roce 1968 ocitla z politických důvodů „na indexu".[21] Tuto představu ale vyvrací jak prostý pohled na filmografii, tak kapitola Lukáše Skupy „Strůjkyně filmových obrazů: Filmová výtvarnice Ester Krumbachová a její stopa v české kinematografii". Autor v ní upřesňuje, že „zákaz" se týkal „jen" Barrandova (a ani v tomto případě to neplatilo absolutně)[22] a že nešlo přímo o zákaz, ale — aspoň částečně — o osobní rozhodnutí.[23] V té souvislosti je citován Krumbachové dopis Otakaru Vávrovi ze září 1972: „Není to — prosím Vás — fráze: já už na Barrandově nebudu dělat, nemám k tomu důvod. A Vy jste jeden z těch spojujících článků celého procesu, který mi prozrazuje, že SMÍM dělat, ale MUSÍM přijmout podmínky jako trest. To mě ovšem ani nenapadne."[24]

Knihu provází i další historické a interpretační nesrovnalosti, které jdou k tíži jak autorské kompetenci, tak editorské nedůkladnosti. Například v kapitole opatřené matoucím názvem „Agitace" je hned několik chyb: především se tu sugeruje bezprostřední kauzální a časová souvislost mezi problémy kolem *Sedmikrásek* a *O slavnosti a hostech* v roce 1967 a „zákazem" Krumbachové, respektive emigrací Jana Němce.[25] Krumbachová přitom ještě v roce 1970 natočila svou režijní prvotinu *Vražda ing. Čerta*, která zůstala v distribuční nabídce až do roku 1974, což byl současně rok Němcova odchodu do exilu. Tamtéž je poslanec Pružinec, který přednesl památnou interpelaci proti „antisocialistickým" filmovým „zmetkům" nové vlny, mylně označen za „člena vlády".[26] Vadné je také ztotožnění pojmu

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19) Lukáš Skupa, „Strůjkyně filmových obrazů: Filmová výtvarnice Ester Krumbachová a její stopa v české kinematografii", in *Ester Krumbachová*, eds. Jeřábková – Svatoňová, 37.

20) Tamtéž, 16, 52.

21) Tamtéž, 12, 17 a jinde. Tuto legendu používá i Jan Bernard in *5 ½ scénáře Ester Krumbachové*, který píše o „letech vynuceného odmlčení" (s. 129).

22) Dokládá to především, ale nikoli výhradně, *Faunovo velmi pozdní odpoledne* (1983).

23) Skupa, „Strůjkyně filmových obrazů", 45.

24) Tamtéž.

25) Francis McKee, „Agitace", in *Ester Krumbachová*, eds. Jeřábková – Svatoňová, 17.

26) Tamtéž, 16.

„podzemní univerzita" se jménem Barbara Dayef[27] — jistě se míní Barbara Day, která byla s tímto fenoménem spojena jednak prakticky, jednak o tom napsala knihu *Sametoví filozofové*.[28] V kapitole „Esteřiny vraždy: Normalizační fuj, čistě ženský film a banalizovaná karikatura" se zase „nadinterpretačně" odkazuje k *Audienci* Václava Havla, přičemž se tvrdí, že postava Ferdinanda Vaňka „opakovaně slibuje" přivést „Bohdalku";[29] Vaněk ale na opilecký nátlak Sládka odpovídá naopak vyhýbavě a neurčitě, typicky „Hm".[30] Dobrou službu nedělají ani jazykové chyby, zejména při stupňování (typu „více stylizované" nebo „nejvíce nápadná").[31]

Hlavní část knihy nese název Archiv: pozůstalost Ester Krumbachové, je tu uspořádána do tematických či formálních sérií, provázených krátkým komentářem a nazvaných například „Magie, obrazy, amulety", „Kostým, scénář" nebo „Láska, erotika, sexík". Série obsahují různé druhy osobních a uměleckých dokumentů — fotografie, kostýmní návrhy, barevné koncepce, výtvarné studie, kresby, amulety, šperky, ukázky z literárních a výtvarných scénářů, synopsí a explikací, deníkové záznamy, dopisy, úvahy, drobné prózy, černé pohádky, písňové texty, básně nebo kuchařské recepty.[32] Mezi množstvím rukopisných či strojopisných textů vyniká dvaadvacetistránkový vzpomínkový fragment „Povolání" (zřejmě z 80. let), v němž Krumbachová líčí svůj dobrovolný šumavský exil po roce 1948. Text je podivuhodně nevýstřední, niterný, prodchnutý zvláštním mixem drsné reality a svobodné romantiky života na okraji, fyzické práce a kontaktu s přírodou: „Do pohraničí jsem odjížděla s úmyslem spáchat někde v klidu a bez křiku sebevraždu, […] ale postupně mě ovládly lesy a louky, které se zrána třpytily rosou jako diamantová plocha mých dětských představ a pohádek, až jsem se na to rozhodnutí […] načisto vysrala."[33]

Výpravná a výtvarná publikace působí velmi efektně a konceptuálně, po pravdě se ale o něco lépe prohlíží, než čte, což souvisí jak s oscilací na pomezí vědy a umění, která má ve výsledku blíže k uměleckému katalogu než k historické monografii a kritické edici pramenů, tak s grafickou úpravou, která dbá více na vizuální design než na zprostředkování obsahů. Obdobný problém se týkal i výstavy: oslnila velkorysou architekturou celku, ale ten zůstal jaksi nezabydlený, ačkoli měl vyjadřovat překypující světy Ester Krumbachové. Nabízely se různorodé podněty a předměty, ale navrstvená fragmentární kompozice prakticky znemožňovala prohlížet jednotlivé exponáty, natož ocenit jejich jedinečnost, neřkuli zvládnout volně napojené současné umělecké intervence.

Shrnuto: archivní, výstavní i oba knižní projekty spojené s výzkumem pozůstalosti Ester Krumbachové jsou ukázkou objevné a invenční práce s vysokou historickou a kulturní hodnotou. V případě knih lze mít dílčí výhrady k reduktivnímu a nedostatečně kritickému přístupu, který je ale vyvážen původními výsledky pramenné studie a edice. Projekt působivě vyvedl Ester Krumbachovou ze stínu polozapomenuté či nedoceněné umělkyně a ukázal ji jako svébytnou kreativní osobnost se silným charakterem a výrazným otiskem v dějinách české kinematografie 60. let. Jak napsal režisér Vojtěch Jasný

27) Tamtéž, 17.

28) Barbara Day, *Sametoví filozofové* (Brno: Doplněk, 1999).

29) Libuše Heczková – Kateřina Svatoňová, „Esteřiny vraždy: Normalizační fuj, čistě ženský film a banalizovaná karikatura", in *Ester Krumbachová*, eds. Jeřábková – Svatoňová, 60, pozn. 49.

30) Václav Havel, „Audience", in *Hry: Soubor her z let 1963–1988* (Praha: Lidové noviny, 1992), 212, 218.

31) Jeřábková – Svatoňová, eds., *Ester Krumbachová*, 135, 57.

32) Řada jednotlivých archiválií bohužel postrádá náležitý editorský aparát – konkrétně datace a další technické či kontextové specifikace. Někde není sjednocené pojmenování: dopis Josefu Lustigovi je jednou nazván „O psaní scénáře" (s. 132), podruhé „Přednáška o scénáři ve formě dopisu Josefu Lustigovi" (s. 246).

33) Tamtéž, 217.

ve svém Diáři 1968 během spolupráce na *Všech dobrých rodácích*: „Je to fenomén přes barvy. Je vynikající. Setkání s ní je pro inspiraci v barevném filmu nutné a její přínos neocenitelný. A líbí se mi její povaha.“[34]

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Jeřábková, Edith – Kateřina Svatoňová, eds. *Ester Krumbachová* (Praha: Vysoká škola uměleckoprůmyslová – Are, 2021).

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34) Archiv Vojtěcha Jasného, Diář 15. 1. 1968 (archiv je ve správě autora).

Skrze ambiguitu zachránit celek

Jan Bierhanzl, *Estetika ambiguity* (Praha: Nakladatelství Karolinum, 2021).

S určitou mírou zjednodušení lze tvrdit, že způsoby, jakými současná filmová studia uchopují kinematografii či obecněji audiovizualitu, směřují od zájmu o celistvost ke stratifikaci vrstev. Tento pohyb znamená, že dějiny myšlení o audiovizuálních médiích v důsledku opouštějí snahu o vytváření teoretických konstruktů, které by film vysvětlily „coby celek" — nikoli ve smyslu uzavřené totality, nýbrž coby neredukovatelnost, úplnost prožitku uměleckého díla. Zájem směřuje spíše k formulování metodologických os, jež budou schopny popsat více či méně izolované vrstvy, případně napětí mezi několika úzce souvisejícími straty, jež utvářejí uzavřené systémové spoje. V tomto duchu se zpracovávají dějiny vyprávění, dějiny stylu, dějiny afektivního působení, dějiny kinematografie coby instituce, ekonomické dějiny atd. Přestože opuštění všezahrnujících teoretických narativů vyvedlo filmová studia ze situace, kdy bylo zkoumané médium podřízeno jedné „velké" tezi (typicky například psychoanalýze či obecněji aparátové teorii), tak akceptování oné „ztráty celku" může mít za důsledek fakt, že složitost, která filmovým médiem prostupuje, je potlačena ve prospěch vymezení dílčích, mnohdy až radikálně fragmentárních badatelských linií. Tento problém přitom není exkluzivně filmovědným nebo uměnovědným; v současném akademickém bádání se stále častěji klade otázka, zda fragmentarizace výzkumu či příliš specificky vymezené badatelské osy nevedou k zastření celkového smyslu, který by bylo možné vtělit do původnějších či klasičtějších otázek vztahu situace člověka a toho, co zkoumá. Nestává se humanitní výzkum pouze mechanickým sběrem dat izolovaných od širšího kulturního či společenského kontextu a odtržených od způsobů, jakými je vnímáme? A neztrácí bádání ze zřetele otázku, proč by mělo být důležité se těmito „daty" vůbec zabývat?

Přestože se kniha českého filozofa Jana Bierhanzla explicitně nevztahuje ani ke slovníku, ani k tématům současných filmových či audiovizuálních studií, může představovat inspirativní impulz nikoli snad k řešení, ale alespoň k reflexi výše nastíněného problému; minimálně v tom, že onen problém, zdá se, alespoň registruje. Titul *Estetika ambiguity* totiž ukazuje, že otázka celku nemusí být pro audiovizuální teoretiky zcela ztracená nebo minimálně odepsaná. Zároveň však nesměřuje k formulování další velké, všeintegrující, filmovědné teorie všeho. Tato konfigurace může být pro filmová studia pozitivní už proto, že moderní filmová teorie — minimálně od impulzu nové filmové historie v 80. letech — jako by myšlení celku zapovídala; její různé proudy či směry by totiž vždy bylo možné číst mj. coby kritiku oněch velkých teorií. Důsledkem těchto dlouhodobých trendů může být, že ona snaha *myslet celek* bude vždy v teoretickém prostředí filmových studií vnímána coby sen o renesanci přístupu, jenž byl

považován za překonaný. Z druhé strany lze však říci, že tato situace staví filmová studia před jinou výzvu: pokusit se *myslet celek*, aniž by teoretik padal do pasti další velké filmové teorie. Jinak řešeno: uvažování v horizontu celku nemusí být nutně pokládáno za zapovězené a nemožné.

Setrvání v ambiguitě coby zachování sporu

Východisko *Estetiky ambiguity* Jan Bierhanzl formuluje takto: současná estetická bádání zaujímají buď estetická, nebo politická paradigmata. V úplném úvodu své práce je charakterizuje ostře polarizovaným způsobem:

> Umělecké dílo jako odraz vládnoucích poměrů, nebo jako vytváření nové, ryze estetické zkušenosti neredukovatelné na historická a sociální určení. […] Literatura jako nositelka ideologie, nebo jako rozkoš z textu. Hudba jako fragment budoucí utopické totality, nebo jako událost kontaminující veškeré celky. Dokumentární video jako eticko-politický, nebo politicko-estetický postoj. […] Takové jsou některé ambiguity, které charakterizují současnou filozofickou estetiku. (9)

Přestože Bierhanzl své úvahy situuje do opozice klasických filozofických disciplín — estetiky (oblasti orientované na smyslové prožitky, ony rozkoše z pociťování rozmanitých textů či materiálů) a etiky (sféry politiky, praktického jednání, případně „správnosti" či „odpovědnosti") —, způsob, jakým problém klade, není vzdálený „esteticko-ideologickému sporu", který lze sledovat ve filmových studiích. Rovněž zde se badatelé střetávají nad otázkou: mají být audiovizuální díla popisovaná coby materiality či struktury, které vytvářejí smyslové prožitky, nebo spíše jako místa, v nichž se ukazují společensko-politické dynamiky historických okamžiků, v nichž sledovaná díla vznikala, respektive coby texty, které k těmto společensko-politickým okamžikům nabízí přístup?

Z jedné strany může být problematické, že Bierhanzl problém současné filozofické estetiky klade natolik polarizujícím způsobem: buď estetika, anebo etika. Pro připomenutí zopakujme jeho slova: dokumentární video[1] jako eticko-politický, nebo politicko-estetický postoj. Nakonec ani analogicky nelze natolik jednoznačně či radikálně tvrdit, že by filmovědný prostor obývaly pouze estetická či pouze ideologická čtení audiovizuálních materiálů. Ze strany druhé ale platí, že Bierhanzlův postřeh, že jedna perspektiva povětšinou získává dominanci nad druhou, je inspirativním východiskem, které může být přínosné sledovat (bez potřeby jej dále ověřovat). Český filozof tak v důsledku nerovnou hierarchii — dominanci jednoho nad druhým — nahrazuje ambiguitou, tedy snahou o rovnocenné uchopení jednoho a druhého. Konkrétně Bierhanzl uvádí, že cílem monografie je „ukázat, že setrvání v ambiguitě tvoří specifičnost naší zkušenosti s uměleckými díly. Ambiguitou přitom nemíníme ani tak skutečnost, že něco má více než jeden význam nebo interpretaci, spíše povahu toho, co spadá pod alespoň dvě různé kategorie" (9). Jinými slovy, setrvání v ambiguitě může být odpovědí na problém, který jsem postuloval v úvodu: jak udržet celistvost uměleckého díla (a našeho prožitku z něj) a nepropadat úzkosti členit díla do stratifikovaných řezů či os.

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1) Pro přesnost je dobré dodat, že Bierhanzlův výraz „dokumentární video" není v audiovizuálních studiích zavedený. Jeho užití pojmu se zdá být spíše intuitivním. Zobecněním by šlo říci, že dokumentárním videem Bierhanzl myslí video-eseje, jejichž důležitým rysem je materiální sebereflexivita.

Podle Bierhanzla platí, že je to právě ohled k ambiguitám, který by nám mohl otevřít cestu ke komplexnější reflexi umění a estetické zkušenosti. Problém dle českého badatele nelze řešit jednou velkou tezí; je třeba vzít v ohled sváry či spory, ve kterých se např. umělecká díla coby události vystavené vnímání nacházejí. Přestože se výklad knihy neobrací k myšlení Jeana-Francoise Lyotarda, tak se zdá, že jeho klíčovou knihou *Rozepře*[2] může být silně ovlivněn: spor nemá být vyřešen (protože něco takového dá vždy prioritu jedné straně), nýbrž zachován coby stále aktuální a živá dynamika. Přeneseno na reflexi uměleckých děl: teoretik či kritik se nemá přiklonit ani stranu estetického, ani etického postoje, má mít ohled k obojímu zároveň — jazykem českého autora: setrvat v ambiguitě. Jiný francouzský filozof, Jacques Derrida, jenž se v Bierhanzlově knize v daných souvislostech rovněž neobjevuje, hovořil o postoji nerozhodnutelnosti: zůstaňme stále váhajícími, rozpolcenými, schizofrenně rozdělenými mezi obě strany. Příklon k jedné či druhé dle Derridy znamená provedení aktu násilí; jak ale následující výklad ozřejmí, tak pro Derridu je toto násilí nevyhnutelné, zatímco z Bierhanzlova psaní vyplývá, že je možné se mu skrze empatický postoj vyhnout. Navzdory tomuto rozporu je však zjevné, že jeho psaní obsahuje cosi fundamentálně derridovského: snahu integrovat vzájemně rozporné. „Zarámování" recenze právě derridovskou perspektivou umožní vsadit Bierhanzlův text do konkrétnějšího horizontu moderního francouzského myšlení o ambiguitě. Recenzovaný text se sice k francouzským autorům často obrací, ale spíše coby k jistým analogiím či nástrojům. Konkrétně Derrida, který mnohokrát argumentoval pro metafyziku nerozhodnutelného, může napomoci chápat ambiguitu v širších souvislostech.

Bierhanzlovo psaní rezonuje například s Derridovou esejí „La pharmacie de Platon" (Platónova lékárna)[3] z knihy *La dissémination*. V něm se Derrida zabývá pojmem farmakonu, jež v antickém myšlení neznamená pouze lék, nýbrž rovněž jed. Francouzský filozof zdůrazňuje, že následující dějiny myšlení význam farmakonu konzervovaly ve smyslu léku, čímž vymazaly jeho druhý smysl. Tento příklad Derrida volí k ilustraci dějinné konstituce významu coby aktu stírání stopy. V identitě každé věci je vždy obsažena rovněž věc protilehlá v podobě tzv. diferentní stopy. Chceme-li umělecká díla vnímat jakožto celky, je naším úkolem, podle Derridy a dost možná též podle Bierhanzla, zachránit stopu, jež byla v procesu utvoření významu zahlazena; zde však připomeňme: nejedná se o celek strukturální, nýbrž spíše prožitkový. V kontextu *Estetiky ambiguity* to může znamenat následující: estetická rovina díla v sobě nese coby onu diferentní stopu taktéž rovinu estetickou. Důležité je, že danou dynamiku by šlo vyjádřit rovněž opačným způsobem: etické je prostoupeno estetickým. Je-li Bierhanzl ovlivněn Derridou, tak minimálně do té míry, že odmítá díla vnímat ve vymezených identitách svých významů nebo v kategoriích; vždy si je vědom oné „aktivní druhé vrstvy".

Úkol badatele: Jak přistoupit k ambiguitě

Pokud píšeme, že předestřený problém Bierhanzl neřeší, ale pouze reflektuje, poukazujeme na to, že jeho kniha nenabízí žádnou ambiciózní teorii, která by mohla bádání nad uměním vyvézt z pasti fragmentárních či stratifikovaných tematických os. Kdyby něco takového udělal, dost možná by připojil pouze další osu metodologické fragmentarizace a padl by do stejné pasti, jež se svým přístupem pokouší překonat. Respekt k ambiguitě se nikdy nemůže stát metodologií, nýbrž vůči takovému postupování představuje spíše rezistenci. Český badatel tedy žádnou vyloženě svébytnou teorii neformuluje,

2)   Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Rozepře* (Praha: Filosofia, 1998), 27–69.
3)   Jacques Derrida, „La farmacie de Platon", in *La dissémination* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972), 78–213.

spíše si v několika izolovaných (ale stále vzájemně rezonujících) kapitolách, vždy v souvislosti s kon-
krétními uměleckými díly,[4] všímá, že estetická a etická rovina sledovaných děl je od sebe zcela neod-
lučitelná; případně ukazuje, že podřízení reflexe pouze jedné z nich nutně vede k násilné redukci, tedy
ke ztrátě širšího celku. Jeho konkrétní analýzy pak směřují k zachycení onoho fundamentálního zaple-
tení či vzájemného podmínění estetických a etických rovin. Tvrzení, že je-li dílo politickým gestem, tak
zároveň může být i krásné, pochopitelně není příliš překvapivé; impulz k zachycení obou rovin coby
zcela neredukovatelných je však směrodatný, zejména v kontextu soudobých badatelských trendů.

Že Bierhanzlovo psaní nepředstavuje ucelenou teorii, není jeho slabinou, nýbrž silnou stránkou.
Pokud by naopak nějakou opakovatelnou metodu nabízel, tak by mohl dospět k něčemu, co by se vůči
jeho uvažování zdálo být kontrastním, tedy k teoretickým redukcím, na něž by byla sledovaná díla
v důsledku omezována na pouhé reprezentace volených metod, paradigmat či teoretických aparátů.
Tímto problémem filmová studia trpí např. v souvislosti s hlavně v minulosti velmi vlivným přístupem
neoformalistické analýzy. Ta představuje soubor metod, pojmů a nástrojů, který předpokládá možnost
rozebírat jakékoli filmové dílo, ovšem díky partikularistickému upřednostňování formální a stylistické
stránky má tendenci redukovat studované filmové objekty a hlavně celistvost setkávání se s nimi na re-
prezentace předem známých výkladových potenciálů a referenčních konceptů. Filmy se tak stávají
pouze prostředkem, skrze něž neoformalistické analýzy odhalují své možnosti a limity. Jen těžko lze
totiž v klasickém hollywoodském filmu zahlédnout např. ustavující záběr, pokud nejste neoformalis-
tický analytik či pokud vaše myšlení o filmu není přednastaveno na chápání díla výhradně prizmatem
neoformalistických pojmů. Zároveň ale platí, že tento problém není platný pouze pro neoformalistic-
kou analýzu; naopak se týká aplikací všech tzv. opakovatelných metod či vzorců. Aplikace paradigma-
tu je vždy vystavením, případně v lepším případě ověřením jeho explanačních možností než analýzou
díla samotného. To, co paradigmatu uniká, ale v díle je přítomno, je vyloučeno coby nepodstatné; vy-
jádřeno slovníkem raného Derridy: jedná se o setřenou či potlačenou stopu myšlení a bytí samotného.
Francouzský filozof představuje cennou alternativu vůči strukturalistické naratologii, jež se pokouší
textualitu děl uspořádat do schematických vzorců či modelů. Například v eseji „La dissémination"[5]
ukázal, že budeme-li sledovat dráhy textuality, tak nikdy nebudeme směřovat do strukturně vymezitel-
ných center, nýbrž budeme pozorovat, jak se text rozptyluje do krajů. Je to, jako když foukneme do
chmýří: jednotlivá semena se rozletí a již je nikdy zpětně nesložíme. Vytváření narativních modelů je
pak aktivním násilím na těchto krajích (margins). Rovněž Jan Bierhanzl se zřejmě snaží sledovat „drá-
hy" děl místo toho, aby se je pokoušel podřizovat jakékoliv předchůdné metodologii a jejím předpo-
kládaným závěrům.

Tvrdíme-li, že Bierhanzl neformuluje nové paradigma, tak je na místě se ptát, s čím jeho kniha
vlastně přichází. To, co se český badatel napříč textem pokouší představit, je spíše postoj. Jako by nabí-
zel způsob, jak umělecké texty nikoli pronikat, ovládat či se jich metodologicky či paradigmaticky
zmocňovat. Agresivita analytiků jako by zde byla nahrazena ohledem či respektem etiků. Na pozadí
jeho psaní lze cítit silné Deleuzovo diktum: naším úkolem je, abychom byli hodni událostem, které se
nám dějí. Těch se přitom nemáme zmocnit, nýbrž hledat k nim přístup coby k tzv. jinému.[6]

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4)   V jednotlivých kapitolách se Jan Bierhanzl zabývá výtvarnými pracemi Adrieny Šimotové, texty katolického
     spisovatele Léona Bloye, atonální a dodekafonickou hudbou Arnolda Schönberga, dokumentárními videi Hito
     Steyerl a fotografií Alexandera Gardnera.
5)   Jacques Derrida, „La dissémination", in *La dissémination*, 348–445.
6)   Tuto pozici Deleuze nejpůsobivěji vyložil v knize *Logika smyslu*, zejména v kapitolách věnovaných pojetí udá-
     losti samotné. Gilles Deleuze, *Logika smyslu* (Praha: Nakladatelství Karolinum, 2013), 159–165.

Estetika ambiguity vysílá cenný apel: pokusme se být citliví vůči vzájemně nesouměřitelným vrstvám děl; nepodřizujme tuto nesouměřitelnost vyšší či zastřešující teorii, hledejme cestu k jejich uchopení. Tato výzva přitom není omezená pouze na ohled k estetickému a etickému hledisku; její platnost se zdá být mnohem širší, směřující k ambiguitám jakéhokoliv druhu. Přestože Bierhanzl deklaruje, že jeho kniha je reflexí způsobu, jakým se setkáváme s uměleckými díly, tak jeho apel se může vztahovat šířeji k setkávání se se světem samotným; v návaznosti na výše uvedený odkaz na Gillesa Deleuze: zkusme být hodni tohoto světa, událostí, které se nám v něm dějí, zkusme tento svět afirmovat, spíše než abychom jej hodnotili předem připravenými kritérii, metodami, parametry či dokonce jazykovými reprezentacemi. Jak je z dosavadního výkladu, zejména z odkazů k Derridovi, zcela zjevné, hledání postoje k ambiguitám se stalo důležitým tématem moderní či postmoderní francouzské filozofie, která daný problém vtělila do výrazu „ohledu k jinému". Zajímá-li se Bierhanzl o místo, z něhož lze k jinému přistoupit, nebo o způsob, jakým exponovat ambiguity konkrétních děl, tak je logické, že se obrací především ke zmíněné francouzské filozofii druhé poloviny 20. století, případně k její americké extenzi či reflexi. Proto není překvapivé, že český badatel diskutuje vybrané pasáže z Emmanuela Lévinase, Michela Foucaulta, Rolanda Barthesa nebo Judith Butler, které pokaždé jiným způsobem ukazují ambiguitu estetického a etického coby zcela neredukovatelný prostor estetické zkušenosti. Bierhanzl pak předvádí způsoby, jakými lze tento prostor zabydlet či jak se v něm pohybovat.

Podstatné přitom je, že Bierhanzlovy kapitoly se nezajímají pouze o jeden umělecký druh, naopak ambiguitu rozvíjejí v souvislosti s několika disciplínami; badatel píše o výtvarném umění, experimentální hudbě, literatuře, nebo audiovizualitě, resp. experimentální dokumentární praxi. Tato širší rozkročenost Bierhanzlovi umožňuje ukázat, že ambiguita není exkluzivním rysem specifických uměleckých artefaktů, nýbrž že je integrována do zkušenosti s uměleckými díly v mnohem obecnějším rámci. Zároveň však Bierhanzl netvrdí — a netvrdí to ani autor této recenze —, že je nutné ambiguity apriori objevovat ve veškerých dílech. *Estetika ambiguity* spíše vede k tomu, že pokud se ambiguita objeví — v jakékoliv podobě nesouladných vrstev či perspektiv —, tak je výzvou pokusit se ji integrovat, nikoli ji zahladit, případně jednu její stranu nechat výrazněji dominovat nad stranou druhou. Důležité je rovněž zmínit, že Bierhanzl ani tak neposkytuje návod k identifikování nebo pociťování zmíněných ambiguit. Jeho projekt se zdá být mnohem skromnější: pokud ambiguitu zaregistruje, pokusí se ji uchovat stále živou a působící. V tomto ohledu pak Bierhanzlova předpokládaná inspirace Derridou končí. Zatímco český filozof je přesvědčen, že v ambiguitě, svého druhu schizofrenii, setrvat lze, tak francouzský autor je k takovému projektu mnohem skeptičtější: z již zmíněné eseje „La pharmacie de Platon" vyplývá: chceme-li věcem přikládat významy, tak je nevyhnutelné, abychom na bytí vyvinuli násilí a onu diferentní stopu jiného potlačili. Zatímco Derridova skepse vychází z toho, že text sám je natolik nepoddajný, že je vždy nutné jej nějakým způsobem krotit či ovládat, tak Bierhanzl se spokojí s vírou v empatický postoj. Je-li Derridovo myšlení známé coby akt truchlení nad nutnou ztrátou jiného, tak Bierhanzlova ambiguita se naopak zdá být do jisté míry radostná: vede nás mimo sféru násilí. Opět zde platí: místo toho, abychom prověřovali udržitelnost Bierhanzlova pojetí, je inspirativní pokusit se jej následovat v určitém postoji k umění a rovněž životu obecně.

Still life Emanuela Lévinase: Odsouzení ke strnulé kráse

Bierhanzl estetiku ambiguity na rozdíl od Derridy nikdy neobjevuje coby jakousi v hloubce děl integrovanou dynamiku nebo strukturu, jež by bylo třeba vyzvednout, nýbrž spíše jakožto sílu, která působí ve smyslovém a významovém poli sledovaných artefaktů. V logice tohoto předpokladu si pak k vlastním analýzám vybírá spíše díla, ve kterých ambiguity není těžké rozeznat, jsou zcela zjevné. Výzvou se pak stává spíše otázka, jak s nimi naložit; tedy jak je uchopit a zachovat coby ambiguity. Pro filmová, mediální nebo audiovizuální bádání pak může být inspirativní především způsob, jakým komentuje dokumentární videa umělkyně Hito Steyerl. Jedno z nich traktuje na pozadí dvojího — zcela ambiguitního — výkladu pojmu pravdy.

> Podle první interpretace sama díla nic ve vlastním smyslu netvoří, ale podílí se na určité politice pravdy tím, že vyjadřují či odráží mocenské vládnoucí poměry. Podle druhé interpretace však umělecká díla sama o sobě představují politické činy, což také znamená, že mohou představovat odpor vůči těmto poměrům (93).

Přestože tyto dvě interpretace Bierhanzl označuje za odlišné, ba dokonce protichůdné, tak se v poznámkách k performativní přednášce *Is the Museum a Battlefield?* Hito Steyerl pokouší ukázat, jak jedna může prostupovat druhou; to znamená, že obě mohou být v díle přítomné právě ve vztahu ambiguity. V přednášce si německá filmařka a teoretička klade otázku, zda může být muzeum nějakým způsobem provázané s bitevním polem. Steyerl zajímala souvislost mezi svou přítomností na akci, jež byla sponzorována tureckou zbrojařskou firmou, a kulkou, která v minulosti zabila její blízkou přítelkyni. Otázka se zpřítomní v okamžiku, kdy Steyerl v projekčním prostoru začne sledovat stopu prázdného pláště kulky, který byl nalezen v oblasti pravděpodobného masového hrobu její přítelkyně. Podle Bierhanzla toto gesto „představuje odvážnou praxi odporu, který v tomto případě spočívá v odmítnutí být určitým způsobem ovládána mocným zbrojařským průmyslem, který je zároveň významným mecenášem umění" (98–99). Český badatel tímto komentářem zdůrazňuje, že místa, kde bývají vystavována umělecká díla, tedy kde publikum zažívá smyslové/estetické prožitky, jsou zároveň místy, ve kterých svou moc uplatňují politické síly. Děje se tak minimálně do té míry, že ony estetické prožitky jsou závislé na politických intervencích, např. způsobech financování.

Tato souvislost či podmíněnost otevírá otázku, zda za estetické prožitky ti, kteří je zakouší, nejsou ochotni zaplatit příliš vysokou cenu. Pokud však Bierhanzl uvádí, že v estetice ambiguity vždy platí, že „estetický postoj zaměřený na krásno je ve větší či menší míře v napětí s postoji etickými a politickými" (115), jeho zájem nesměřuje primárně k institucionálním podmínkám umělecké praxe, tak jak je tomu u Hito Steyerl, nýbrž spíše k pociťování obsahových — etických a estetických — ambiguit. Pro českého badatele proto není důležitý ani tak celkový rámec videa *Is the Museum a Battlefield?*, ale jeho úplný závěr, v němž umělkyně a teoretička mezi prsty uchopí obraz/odraz kulky na projekčním plátně, přičemž zároveň naznačí možnost změny jejího směru; jako by bylo možné výstřel vyslat zpět do auditoria, čímž by se z muzea, místa estetických prožitků, alespoň v symbolické rovině stalo bitevní pole. Daný akt je nejen působivý, avšak nese v sobě také silný kritický potenciál, jejž Bierhanzl komentuje takto: „Jde o to, přerušit či přesměrovat smrtící smyčku trajektorie kulky z bitevního pole do muzea a z muzea na bitevní pole" (101).

Pro českého autora není důležitý pouze význam daného okamžiku, ale rovněž jeho smyslové či estetické působení. Právě to se ve svém psaní pokouší zdůraznit. Pro estetiku ambiguity totiž není podstatný pouze ideologický rozměr (svého druhu foucaultovské-butlerovské gesto rezistence vůči mocenským poměrům[7]), nýbrž rovněž rovina estetická. Obraz, ve kterém žena, ve zpřítomněných politických a ideologických konotacích, drží mezi prsty stín kulky, je mimořádně účinný a mrazivý coby estetická událost. K povaze této působivosti lze, dle Bierhanzla, proniknout příklonem k lévinasovskému tzv. estetickému exotismu. „Podle Lévinase totiž krásno vždy nějakým způsobem odkazuje ke strnulému okamžiku bez budoucnosti, k zátiší" (112). Za obzvláště výstižný příklad takové působivosti volí slavnou fotografii Alexandera Gardnera *Lewis Payne.* Na ní je vyfotografován mladý muž, který čeká na popravu oběšením. Bierhanzl v její souvislosti odkazuje k analýze Rolanda Barthesa z knihy *Světlá komora,* podle níž je působivost daného snímku spojena především s předznamenáním budoucnosti: mladý muž zemře.[8] Český badatel však uvádí, že tímto důrazem Barthes opomenul druhý důležitý rozměr diskutované fotografie: „Fotografie Lewise Payna v tomto ohledu tvoří statický obraz zamrzlý v jakémsi mezičase. Pěkný chlapec na fotografii je odsouzen nikoliv k smrti, nýbrž ke krásnu v lévinasovském smyslu: k nekonečnému opakování onoho okamžiku předcházejícího popravě. Nikdy nezemře" (112). Tímto gestem Bierhanzl vystihuje inspirativnost Lévinasova přístupu: nabízí možnost zpětného vepsání dříve potlačené ambiguity.

Nyní se můžeme ještě naposledy vrátit ke zmíněnému okamžiku z performativní přednášky *Is the Museum a Battlefield?.* Tok daného obrazu představuje, v odkazu na Judith Butler, akt truchlení za zabitou přítelkyni Hito Steyerl; dojde-li však k zastavení obrazu, přerušení tohoto toku, jež je sám spojen s ideologickou podmíněností audiovizuálního média, objeví se lévinasovské krásno. Dané mediální působení Bierhanzl popisuje takto: „Toto lévinasovské still life tvoří především závěrečné odstoupení umělkyně-přednášející od projekčního plátna a její názorné předvedení, jak poeticky zachytit a zneškodnit onu smrtící kulku cirkulující v nekonečné smyčce mezi bitevním polem, muzeem a nazpátek" (114). Z této interpretace lze možná získat ještě další závěr, jež by bylo podnětné ověřit jiným textem: přístup k ambiguitám může přinést zastavení časového toku. Jako by Bierhanzl kladl otázku: není čas právě tím, co nás nutí provádět násilí na jiném? Není čas onou silou, jež stírá stopu? Není etický postoj předurčen vystupováním z času? V lévinasovské rovině by mohla být tato hypotéza platná, v rovině derridovské již méně.

Jak bylo uvedeno v první části textu: *Estetika ambiguity* Jana Bierhanzla není metodou navrženou k opakování ani pracovním postupem jiného druhu. Představuje spíše impulz nebo dost možná pobídku k větší citlivosti: působí-li na nás obrazy nějakým svým rozměrem, neměli bychom zapomínat, že tento rozměr nemusí být jediný; nebo na to, že jednu perspektivu bychom hierarchicky neměli klást nad druhou, nýbrž bychom se je měli pokusit uvést do rovnováhy. Jsou-li obrazy krásné, neznamená to, že jejich produkce není spojena s ideologickým pozadím; toto pozadí však zároveň nevylučuje jejich krásno. Toto zjištění samozřejmě není žádným způsobem nové nebo dokonce převratné. Dost možná ale platí — což není názor Jana Bierhanzla, jež se situací ve filmových studiích nezabývá, nýbrž postoj autora této recenze —, že filmoví badatelé pro jedno nevidí druhé, nebo si spíše vedeni vytváře-

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7) Pro rozšíření doplňme, jak daný princip odporu Bierhanzl definuje: „Judith Butler ukazuje, že i když fotografie může být pořízena pouze v určitých předem daných rámcích, jež tvoří například i státní a vojenské způsoby regulace obrazu, některé fotografie mohou přesto zobrazit ony samotné regulující rámy a odhalit tak samotný mechanismus oné restrikce" (94).

8) Roland Barthes, *Světlá komora — poznámka k fotografii* (Praha: Fra, 2005), 84.

ním fragmentárních řezů navykli jedno překrývat druhým, opomíjet jej a v konečném důsledku zcela potlačit. Kniha Jana Bierhanzla přitom ukazuje, že uchovat tento celek nemusí v konečném důsledku znamenat návrat k velkým teoriím filmového všeho, nýbrž že úkolem filmových teoretiků a analytiků je spíše snaha o zachování estetiky ambiguity.

Benjamin Slavík (Univerzita Karlova)

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VÝZVA K AUTORSKÉ SPOLUPRÁCI

NA MONOTEMATICKÝCH BLOCÍCH DALŠÍCH ČÍSEL

Prostřednictvím monotematických bloků se *Iluminace* snaží podpořit koncentrovanější diskusi uvnitř oboru, vytvořit operativní prostředek dialogu s jinými obory a usnadnit zapojení zahraničních přispěvatelů. Témata jsou vybírána tak, aby korespondovala s aktuálním vývojem filmové historie a teorie ve světě a aby současně umožňovala otevírat specifické domácí otázky (revidovat problémy dějin českého filmu, zabývat se dosud nevyužitými prameny). Zájemcům může redakce poskytnout výběrové bibliografie k jednotlivým tématům. **Každé z uvedených čísel bude mít rezervován dostatek prostoru i pro texty s tématem nijak nesouvisející.**
S nabídkami příspěvků (studií, recenzí, glos, rozhovorů) se obracejte na adresu: lucie.cesalkova@nfa.cz.
V nabídce stručně popište koncepci textu; u původních studií se předpokládá délka 15–35 normostran. Podrobné pokyny pro bibliografické citace lze nalézt na webových stránkách časopisu: www.iluminace.cz, v položce Redakce/kontakty.

(Eco)Traumatic Landscapes in Contemporary Audiovisual Culture

(Deadline: September 30, 2022)

Guest editor: Bori Máté

The advent of the Anthropocene epoch is marked by the emergence of so-called (eco)traumatic landscapes, which bear the tragic consequences of human intervention in the ecosystem. These landscapes are essentially defined by "hyperobjects," a concept by which Timothy Morton refers to those human-manufactured things "that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans" and are directly responsible for "the end of the world."[1] In geographical areas such as Chernobyl, Fukushima, or "Mar de plástico" in Almería (southern Spain), long-life plastic or nuclear materials exert long-term harmful effects not only on the surrounding primal, natural elements (like water, soil, air) but also on human and nonhuman life forms around. The damage played out by invisible nuclear, plastic, or agrochemical "perpetrators" over years and generations is a typical example of "slow violence," a usual consequence of so-called "toxic geographies."[2] Rob Nixon's idea of this specific form of violence associated with capitalism and industrialization calls our attention to the social consequences and human suffering present in these areas and environments; at the same time, slow violence broadens our traditional ideas of spatiotemporality and provokes artistic and theoretical questions about representation, visibility, medium specificity, but also agency and affectivity. Similarly to Nixon's concept, Jennifer Gabrys points out that forests themselves become "planetary media" by recording, registering, and operationalizing collective amassings of carbon and heat, the results of global warming.[3] Thus, the ways ecology-related traumatic events register in nonhuman agents can be considered as both planetary and medial events. See, for example, the camera-less Japanese experimental film, *Sound of a Million Insects, Light of a Thousand Stars* (Tomonari Nishikawa, 2014), which was created by burying a 100-foot-long 35mm negative film under fallen leaves approximately 25 km away from the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Station. The soil, the insects inhabiting that soil, the air that carries radioactive molecules are the planetary media that then imprint themselves into the film's body — another organic material — that does not only function as another (planetary) medium but makes visible the local manifestation of a hyperobject called radiation.

Certain experimental films and documentaries that Scott MacDonald theorizes as "ecocinema" suggest that it is not the undertaking of such cinematic works to create "pro-environmental narratives shot in a conventional Hollywood manner […] or even in a conventional documentary manner." Their task lies in providing "new kinds of film experience" that pose "an alternative to conventional media-spectatorship and to help nurture a more environmentally

1) Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

2) Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2011).

3) Jennifer Gabrys, "Becoming Planetary," *e-flux*, October 2018, accessed June 30, 2022, https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/accumulation/217051/becoming-planetary/.

progressive mindset."[4] MacDonald primarily emphasizes cinematic works that produce "visual/auditory training in appreciating the experience of an immersion within natural processes" and offer viewers "a depiction of the natural world within a cinematic experience that models patience and mindfulness."[5] Instead, we propose to open up his original category towards audiovisual works that might not focus (or at least not quite unequivocally) on the aspects of patience and deep appreciation of nature, yet foster the development of a more environmentally progressive mindset by creating a sensory experience of hyperobjects (global warming, radiation, the long-lasting effects of pollution and the extraction of raw materials, etc.).

This issue was inspired by the observation that certain photographic works, experimental films, and expanded cinema pieces, among other audiovisual practices that follow distinctive formal strategies, confront us with the challenges of documenting slow violence in audiovisual arts. Thus, we aim to address the modes by which artistic practices place and configure human agency in relation to traumatic events and the role of technology and materiality in translating trauma to sensual artworks. We would like to point out how the trauma discourses of such photographic and filmic documents take a stand on the politics of visibility/audibility and the possibilities of artistic expression in the Anthropocene.

For this issue, we welcome proposals on the following topics or others considered pertinent in the context of this call within the fields of cinema, photography, and other visual arts:

- Landscapes of social and ecological traumas
- Landscapes as emotional archives
- Re-conceptualization of the representation of (eco)trauma
- Affect theory and (film) phenomenology in (audio) visual "representations" of (eco)trauma
- "New materialist" and non-linear approaches to agential matter
- Human and non-human agency
- Decolonial theory and trauma
- Artistic vs political images
- Conflicts of trauma representations and documentations
- Personal and collective consequences of (eco)trauma
- Photographing and filming hyperobjects

Abstracts of the proposed studies of up to 200 words together with a short biography should be sent by **September 30**, **2022**, to lucie.cesalkova@nfa.cz and barbatrukk1@gmail.com. The authors will be informed of the decision by **October 21, 2022**. The deadline for submission of final studies is **January 31, 2023**.

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4) Scott MacDonald, "The Ecocinema Experience," in *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*, eds. Sean Cubitt, Salma Monani, and Stephen Rust (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 20.

5) Ibid., 19.

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ILUMINACE

je recenzovaný časopis pro vědeckou reflexi kinematografie a příbuzných problémů. Byla založena v roce 1989 jako půlletník. Od svého pátého ročníku přešla na čtvrtletní periodicitu a při té příležitosti se rozšířil její rozsah i formát. Od roku 2004 je v každém čísle vyhrazen prostor pro monotematický blok textů. Od roku 2005 jsou některé monotematické bloky připravovány ve spolupráci s hostujícími editory. Iluminace přináší především původní teoretické a historické studie o filmu a dalších audiovizuálních médiích. Každé číslo obsahuje rovněž překlady zahraničních textů, jež přibližují současné badatelské trendy nebo splácejí překladatelské dluhy z minulosti. Velký prostor je v Iluminaci věnován kritickým edicím primárních písemných pramenů k dějinám kinematografie, stejně jako rozhovorům s významnými tvůrci a badateli. Zvláštní rubriky poskytují prostor k prezentaci probíhajících výzkumných projektů a nově zpracovaných archivních fondů. Jako každý akademický časopis i Iluminace obsahuje rubriku vyhrazenou recenzím domácí a zahraniční odborné literatury, zprávám z konferencí a dalším aktualitám z dění v oboru filmových a mediálních studií.

POKYNY PRO AUTORY:

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Knihovna Národního filmového archivu nabízí zahraniční filmové databáze

https://nfa.cz/cz/knihovna/licencovane-databaze/

Ve studovně Knihovny NFA (KNFA) jsou v roce 2020 uživatelům (pro registrované uživatele i ve vzdáleném přístupu) k dispozici pro náš obor vybrané elektronické informační zdroje (EIZ). Kromě původních databází NFA (Filmový přehled, Digitální knihovna NFA, Online katalog Knihovny NFA), jsou to licencované elektronické zdroje (mediální databáze, zahraniční filmové databáze). Konkrétně v případě zahraničních filmových databází se jedná v rámci České republiky o jedinečnou kombinaci EIZ, která bude navíc našim čtenářům dostupná až do roku 2022.

Zahraniční filmové databáze v Knihovně NFA:

1. **Screen Studies Collection** (dříve FIO — Film Indexes Online)
   nabízí komplexní nástroj pro přístup k aktuálním publikacím zaměřeným na filmovou vědu spolu s podrobnými a rozsáhlými filmografiemi.
   Kolekce zahrnuje indexy a filmografie
   a) American Film Institute (AFI) Catalog
   b) Film Index International (FII)
   c) FIAF International Index to Film Periodicals

   a) **American Film Institute (AFI) Catalog**
   Filmografická databáze zaměřená na americkou produkci poskytující podrobné informace o dlouhometrážních hraných filmech vyrobených na území USA nebo financovaných americkými produkčními společnostmi v období 1893–1972. Databáze obsahuje více než 48000 záznamů filmů s produkčními informacemi, technickými údaji, údaji o tvůrcích, hereckém obsazení a ztvárněných postavách; dále záznamy obsahují podrobný obsah filmu, poznámkový aparát, žánrové zařazení filmu a citační odkazy. Nové údaje jsou vkládány dvakrát ročně. Klíčový zdroj doporučený pro výuku, výzkum a studium filmového umění.

   b) **Film Index International (FII)**
   Filmografický informační zdroj vytvářený British Film Institute (BFI). Představuje světově nejrozsáhlejší profesionálně budovanou filmovou knihovnu s více než 100000 podrobných záznamů o filmech ze 170 zemí od prvních němých film-ů do současnosti s více než miliónem odkazů na herecké obsazení a technické údaje. Dále 500000 odkazů na bibliografické citace k jednotlivým filmům a filmovým tvůrcům, 40000 profesních profilů filmových tvůrců, informace o získaných cenách na prestižních filmových festivalech.

c) **FIAF International Index to Film Periodicals**

Databáze obsahuje více než 230 000 záznamů o článcích s filmovou tematikou od roku 1972 do současnosti z více než 345 filmových akademických i populárních periodik z celého světa. Roční přírůstek činí 12000 záznamů. Každý záznam sestává z bibliografických údajů, abstraktu a záhlaví (jména autorů, filmové tituly, předmětová hesla). Databáze obsahuje také záznamy o televizi od roku 1979 (cca 50000 záznamů), od roku 2000 se omezila na články s televizní tematikou pouze z filmových periodik.

2. **JSTOR**

zkratka z anglického Journal Storage (úložiště časopisů)

Digitální knihovna pro studenty a výzkumníky poskytující přístup k více než 12 milionům akademických článků, knih a primárním zdrojům z mnoha disciplín včetně filmu.

Představuje špičkovou on-line databázi digitalizovaných plných textů z více než 2000 vědeckých časopisů. Každý časopis je plně digitalizován od prvního čísla prvního ročníku až po pohyblivou hranici (moving wall), což je obvykle „tři až pět let od současnosti".

3. **EBSCO**

Megazdroj vědeckých informací pro společenské a humanitní obory.

Databáze EBSCO vychází vstříc požadavkům všech výzkumníků a nabízí elektronickou knihovnu obsahující desítky tisíc časopisů, magazínů a reportů a mnoha dalších publikací v plném textu.

EBSCOHost je jednotné rozhraní umožňující přístup k vybraným bibliografickým a plnotextovým databázím.

V Knihovně NFA jsou k dispozici dvě databáze megazdroje EBSCO:

a) **Academic Search Ultimate**

Databáze byla vytvořena v reakci na zvyšující se nároky akademické komunity a nabízí nejširší kolekci recenzovaných plnotextových časopisů, včetně mnoha časopisů indexovaných v předních citačních indexech. Obsahuje tisíce plnotextových časopisů v angličtině i jiných jazycích, publikovaných na severoamerickém kontinentu, v Asii, Africe, Oceánii, Evropě a Latinské Americe, a nabízí tím pádem jedinečné regionální pokrytí. Databáze integruje lokální obsah předních územně specifických zdrojů z celého světa a umožňuje tak studentům pohled na jejich studium a výzkum z globální perspektivy. Cennou součástí obsahu je i kolekce videozáznamů (více než 74000) od agentury Associated Press. Při vyhledávání se na seznamu výsledků zobrazují v karuselu relevantní videa. Databáze obsahuje videa předních zpravodajských agentur publikovaná od roku 1930 do současnosti a je aktualizována každý měsíc.

b) **Film and Television Literature Index with Fulltext**

Online nástroj pro výzkum v oblasti televize a filmu. Databáze pokrývá problematiku filmové a televizní teorie, uchovávání a restaurování, produkce, kinematografie, technických aspektů a recenzí. Obsahuje kompletní indexování a abstrakty 380 publikací (a selektivní pokrytí téměř 300 publikací), dále plné texty více než 100 časopisů a 100 knih. Databáze Film & Television Literature Index with Fulltext navíc obsahuje i filmové recenze z předního zdroje Variety, datované od roku 1914 do současnosti, a více než 36 300 obrázků z archivu MPTV Image Archive.

Zpracovala: Božena Vašíčková

Databáze Evropské audiovizuální observatoře
(European audiovisual observatory)

O Evropské audiovizuální observatoři

Evropská audiovizuální observatoř (EAO) vznikla roku 1992 jako následnická organizace Eureka Audiovisuel, jejím sídlem je Štrasburk. Činnost této instituce spočívá ve sběru a šíření informací o audiovizuálním průmyslu v Evropě. V současné době sdružuje 41 členských států a Evropskou unii, zastoupenou Evropskou komisí. Je financována přímými příspěvky členských zemí a příjmy z prodeje svých produktů a služeb.

Posláním EAO je poskytovat informace profesionálům v oblasti audiovize a tím také přispívat k větší transparentnosti audiovizuálního sektoru v Evropě. EAO sleduje všechny oblasti audiovizuálního průmyslu: film, televizní vysílání, video/DVD a nová média. O každé z těchto oblastí poskytuje informace ve sféře trhu a statistiky, legislativy a financování výroby audiovizuálních děl. EAO sleduje a podrobně analyzuje vývoj audiovizuálního sektoru v členských státech.

Působí v právním rámci Rady Evropy a spolupracuje s řadou partnerských a profesních organizací z oboru a se sítí korespondentů. Kromě příspěvků na konference jsou dalšími hlavními činnostmi vydávání ročenky, zpravodaje a zprávy, kompilace a správa databází a poskytování informací prostřednictvím internetových stránek observatoře (http://www.obs.coe.int).

Česká republika je členem EAO od roku 1994.

LUMIERE VOD je adresář evropských filmů dostupných na vyžádání v Evropě. Najděte služby a země, kde je film uveden na VOD, a zkombinujte vyhledávací kritéria a vytvořte seznam dostupných filmů podle režiséra, země nebo roku výroby.

Prezentační video je k dispozici https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wxp_SwD3BZg.

Tento projekt, spravovaný Evropskou audiovizuální observatoří, je podporován programem CREATIVE EUROPE Evropské unie.

LUMIERE VOD je databáze evropských filmů dostupných na placených videích na vyžádání (transakční a předplatné VOD). Poskytuje seznam filmů dostupných v daném okamžiku ze vzorku služeb na vyžádání působících v Evropské unii.

LUMIERE VOD je primárně určen pro profesionály v audiovizuálním průmyslu : autory, producenty, distributory, filmové fondy a regulátory, aby jim pomohl sledovat využití filmů na VOD a posoudit složení katalogů VOD. Účelem není usnadnit pronájem nebo nákup filmů ani předplatné služby.

LUMIERE VOD řídí Evropská audiovizuální observatoř na základě maximálního úsilí. Adresář je aktuálně v beta verzi a obsahuje asi 300 katalogů VOD. Počet sledovaných katalogů a frekvence aktualizací se bude postupně zvyšovat.

Poskytnuté informace

Databáze je prohledávatelná podle řady kritérií. Upozorňujeme, že:
- všechna metadata jsou poskytována s maximálním úsilím;
- zahrnuli jsme možnost vyhledávat filmy podle originálních nebo alternativních titulů. Na stránkách výsledků se zobrazí pouze původní název;
- země produkce uvádějí různé země podílející se na výrobě filmu. Země produkce uvedená na

prvním místě označuje zemi, která údajně nejvíce přispěla k financování filmu. Nejedná se o oficiální státní příslušnost filmu, jak je posouzeno národním filmovým fondem nebo národním regulátorem.

I když byla věnována maximální pozornost zajištění přesnosti, není poskytována žádná záruka, že materiál neobsahuje chyby nebo opomenutí. Naším cílem je udržovat tyto informace aktuální a přesné. Pokud budeme upozorněni na chyby, pokusíme se je vyřešit. Můžete nás kontaktovat ohledně jakýchkoli technických informací v adresáři pomocí kontaktního formuláře.

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EAO vydává Statistickou ročenku, měsíčník IRIS se speciálními suplementy (v tištěné i elektronické podobě), účastní se různých konferencí a workshopů. Na webových stránkách EAO jsou veřejnosti dostupné tyto informační databáze: LUMIERE (obsahuje údaje o sledovanosti filmů distribuovaných v evropských kinech), IRIS MERLIN (informace o legislativě upravující audiovizuální sektor v Evropě), databáze poskytovatelů AVMS. Informace o provozování televizního vysílání v členských státech obsahuje databáze MAVISE. Všechny tyto informace jsou poskytovány v angličtině, francouzštině a němčině.

Nejvyšším orgánem EAO je Výkonná rada, v jejímž předsednictví se každý rok střídají jednotlivé členské země.

Národní
filmový
archiv

Národní filmový archiv

Sbírka orální historie
v Národním filmovém archivu

NFA pečuje o nejrůznější typy dokumentů se vztahem k historii českého filmovnictví včetně zvukových a zvukově-obrazových nahrávek.

Vlastníte-li takové typy materiálů (rozhovory, záznamy událostí či jiné druhy audiozáznamů, eventuálně audiovizuálních záznamů rozhovorů, vztahující se k tématu české kinematografie, a to z jakéhokoliv období), a máte zájem o jejich bezpečné uchování, nabízíme vám bezplatné uložení v depozitářích NFA.

NFA splňuje všechny podmínky, které zaručují nejvyšší možnou kvalitu archivace.

Jakékoliv obohacení naší sbírky z vašich zdrojů je cenným příspěvkem k rozšíření povědomí o minulosti českého filmu a současně i naší kulturní historie.

Kontakt: kurátorka sbírky Marie Barešová
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Filmový přehled, databáze Národního filmového archivu

Objemná filmografická databáze *Filmový přehled* Národního filmového archivu přináší rozsáhlá, ověřená a doposud dohledatelná data a filmografické údaje od počátků české kinematografie. Aktualizuje a nahrazuje tak informace, které byly dříve vydány v katalozích *Český hraný film I–VI* a *Český animovaný film I*. Uživatel tak nalezne především údaje o českých **hraných** (všechny od roku 1898), **dokumentárních** (prozatím výběrově 1898–1991, všechny od 1992) i **animovaných** (všechny 1922–1945 a od 1992, prozatím výběrově 1946–1991), studentských, dlouhých i krátkých filmech, jež byly uvedeny v kinech. Databáze je pravidelně aktualizována a stále doplňována.

Údaje o filmech: filmografická (všichni tvůrci, členové výrobního štábu, herecké obsazení a další), produkční (výrobci, všechny názvy, žánry, první a poslední natáčecí den, datum cenzury, schválení literárního a technického scénáře, první kopie a celého filmu, ateliéry, lokace a další), distribuční (předpremiéry, distribuční, slavnostní, festivalové premiéry, popřípadě obnovené premiéry, distribuční slogany nebo premiérová kina) a technická (distribuční nosič, poměr stran, barva, zvuk, mluveno, jazyková verze, podtitulky, mezititulky, úvodní/závěrečné titulky, animační technika, minutáž, původní metráž) data, anotace, obsahy, zajímavosti, fotografie i plakáty.

Údaje o osobnostech a společnostech: filmografie, profese, zjištěná data i místa narození a úmrtí, alternativní jména, životopisy, fotografie.

Údaje o ocenění a dotacích: česká ocenění, festivaly a přehlídky, zahraniční ocenění udělená českým filmům. Plánováno je též zveřejnění filmových dotací za léta 1992–2022.

https://www.filmovyprehled.cz/cs/databaze

Rešerše ve sbírce
Národního filmového archivu

Odborné i laické veřejnosti nabízíme možnost **vypracování tematických rešerší** ve sbírce Národního filmového archivu. S žádostmi o ně se prosím obracejte na e-mailovou adresu **reserse@nfa.cz**.

Podrobnější informace viz

https://nfa.cz/cz/sbirky/reserse/.

Přehled jednotlivých částí sbírky Národního filmového archivu viz

https://nfa.cz/cz/sbirky/sbirky-a-fondy/.

Národní
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ILUMINACE

Časopis pro teorii, historii
a estetiku filmu

The Journal of Film Theory, History,
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