

AFECCA Conference, Bordeaux, 6th-8th July 2016
Follow-ups : remakes, franchises, filiations

KIM: First of all thank you for inviting us to speak at this conference. And in particular we would like to extend our gratitude to Jean-François and the organising committee for arranging our trip and making us feel so welcome. It is always a great pleasure to come to France, particularly after the disastrous referendum result on 23rd June. What can we say? We would just like to say that we hope that our intellectual *entente cordiale* will continue despite the political ramifications in our country.

Merci beaucoup.

JANET: In its commitment, as **Jeff Bewkes**, former CEO of HBO put it, to '*produce bold, really distinctive television*', the premiere US, pay-TV cable company HBO has done more than any other to define what 'original programming might mean and look like in the contemporary TV age of international television flow, of global trends and local adaptations.

This keynote seeks to explore what lessons we can learn from HBO, and how the company functions as a cultural site as it systematically sets about legitimatizing a discourse of television as art. So successful has HBO been in creating a particular restricted field of cultural TV production, set outside the mainstream TV networks—driven as they are by advertising revenue and ratings—**and explains how HBO has incorporated artistic norms and principles of evaluation as their main model**; and one which has had a profound and lasting impact on ways of thinking and doing television in the marketplace. In short we

want to “follow up” on the legacy, of how the HBO brand has legitimized television.

Central to our thesis is the idea of HBO as a recognisable brand label — of cultural value and exclusivity, of a particular approach to TV style and aesthetics, narrative and storytelling, as well as a particular way of thinking about television differently.

And taking this idea of HBO as brand, and understanding the implications of its transnational appeal gives us the opportunity to speak to the themes of this conference – of what motivates re-makes and serial practices at this particular historical moment. Our keynote seeks to shed light on what HBO can teach us about the complex interaction between culture, globalisation and commerce — an attempt to tease out the implications for producing contemporary original drama series and serials — and how, in turn, the aesthetics, style and storytelling practices developed at HBO have been adapted in and through other TV institutional contexts across the globe.

Put simply, it is not about merely listing features of serial storytelling that could be defined as original and innovative, as much as it is about searching out the very site on which this kind of television is made possible in the first place: to establish a common ground, as it were.

[SLIDE 2] It is, to quote **Foucault**, *‘the language that silently pre-exists within a discourse’*.

We elaborate on the ways in which HBO adds value and functions as an influential, if restricted, site of cultural legitimization in defining television seriality as art.

Our thinking about HBO is set against a climate of neoliberalism and cultures of globalisation where, since the late 1980s, TV markets have been increasingly de-regulated and technologies have revolutionised flows of production and distribution. Audiences continue to fragment within the technologies of delivery, to re-calibrate and re-imagine the viewing experience. Digitalisation, video on demand, TiVo, the DVD and box set, time-shifting, catch-up TV, binge-viewing, Internet TV, multiplatform viewing – laptops, tablets and smart phones etc: the TV viewer has been re-made within these technologies. **[SLIDE 3]** If, as Pierre Bourdieu writes, ‘A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which is encoded’, then we would extend such thinking to argue how the technology of HBO embeds its viewers into a way of thinking as discerning consumers of television culture (more of which later).

Furthermore, in how it has gone about producing television defined as original, and adding to the volume and complexity of international flows, HBO is deepening media globalisation on several counts.

KIM: At this point it is worth pausing, and taking an ever so brief look at the history of HBO to see how, since its launch as one of the first non-terrestrial cable networks (and becoming in 1975 the first to broadcast via satellite communications) has been defined by a series of ‘firsts’. Because across its history HBO has repeatedly been able to push the boundaries of the medium – in terms of delivery, form and content.

HBO started as a small enterprise situated at the very fringes of the US TV industry. **[SLIDE 4]** The channel first transmitted a Vancouver-New York hockey game to 365 homes in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania on 8 November 1972. Today, it reaches about 28million US homes (about one-third of the TV households in America). It has thus gone from a

small, almost regional service into global brand and internationally networked business. And it is this sense of connectivity, connectedness and networks, of distribution and flows of culture, ideas and the production of taste and cultural value, which we'd like to explore in relation to contemporary trends in TV seriality.

In 1986, HBO became the first broadcaster to encrypt its signal to combat piracy, thus setting itself apart from the network and basic cable competition – it sold itself as something not available elsewhere on the entire US television landscape. From early on then, the cable company placed a high premium on selling itself as something worth paying for each and every month, something that subscribers could not get elsewhere.

[SLIDE 5] The company has actively created an exclusive domain, branding itself as producing television for anyone with discriminating cultural taste; or, as **Amanda Lotz** put it: *'HBO thrives by defying program standards that appeal to the mass audience, and succeeds by exploiting the limited access as a means of acceptance as high (or at least higher) elite art.'*

In order to understand this idea of limited access and élite art we need to think about how HBO turned commercial disadvantages, i.e. its restricted availability and additional cost, into cultural capital.

Until the mid-1990s, HBO busied itself establishing a coherent and highly visible brand identity, offering exclusive access to what couldn't be seen on either free TV or basic cable (e.g. uncut first run Hollywood movies and exclusive sporting events like boxing matches).

Post 1996 marked a shift, partly because the HBO brand had become established, and partly because the media landscape was changing. So, when **Jeff Bewkes** succeeded as president and CEO in 1995, he introduced a different concept of creative control. His idea was to create a more intense and long lasting relationship between HBO subscribers and the HBO brand by **producing original series**.

What distinguished HBO from its cable rivals at this time was how it shifted from a buyer of content to setting up its own in-house production of original series for its own channel. Rather than relying solely on uncut Hollywood films or producing one-off Pay-Per-View TV events to fill its broadcast hours, it moved into the production of programmes in the name of quality. Of course, there is nothing new in this practice, as witnessed by NBC in the 1950s, when the network shifted from full to participating sponsorship across the decade. Still, here is an example of re-cycling and re-visiting of an institutional practice, where a new enterprise first relies on established content and practices before regaining control over production.

JANET: The way in which HBO branded its original series was not only about an exclusive viewing experience (a gated community through subscriptions), but also about how shows had a distinct cultural value – which, in turn, helped HBO transform itself from occasional use into a truly cultural phenomenon.

[SLIDE 6] Central to HBO's success has been its audacious marketing claim: 'It's Not TV. It's HBO'. Introduced in 1996, the slogan proved a smart way of differentiating its programmes from the competition, distinguishing its original series from standard broadcast network fare. It was a way, argues **Amanda Lotz**, for HBO to distance its content from [quote] '*stereotypic notions of television as "low art"*.' HBO thus

promised exclusivity in the field of cultural production. The two subfields should not be taken as fixed categories—mainstream broadcast network television and restricted small-scale cultural production – but instead seen as the poles on a sliding scale, each characterised by a different set of hierarchies: the autonomous principle for restricted production and the heterogeneous principle of large-scale production.

Our discussion will turn to the work of French sociologist **Pierre Bourdieu** and using his key concepts--field, culture and habitus. What we explore next will be divided into three sections, as a way of helping us explain the role of HBO in legitimising television as an art form. So successful has it been in this enterprise that its models of production have been appropriated and adapted within other television landscapes only, in turn, to sustain HBO's culture of legitimisation when it comes to talking about serial drama as art.

[SLIDE 7]

KIM: This leads to our first point about the US commercial TV industry, which as a field of cultural production, consisting of individual companies and networks with similar features, but also a shared set of rules, values and principles. Within this broader field, HBO represents a restricted and small-scale production with a degree of autonomy. Unlike larger networks like NBC, where a mass audience is targeted and profitability typically outweighs aesthetic considerations, HBO invites viewers to approach the original series with a particular sensibility. Namely, for everyone to think about its programmes – from its miniseries like *Angels in America*, *John Adams* and *Mildred Peirce* to its serial dramas like *The Sopranos*, *The Wire*, *True Detective* and *Game of Thrones* – as works of 'high' TV art.

The perceived cultural cachet of HBO as a haven of creative integrity is constantly reasserted, in and through the company's self-promotion and waged in aggressive marketing campaigns. Implanted in its original programming philosophy, and made intelligible in each and every new series, HBO has fostered a particular notion of television culture.

Rebelling against the structural subordination related to the demands of advertising and regulation, HBO has sought to free itself from dependence on commercial advertisers and its value hinges on the recognition of television as art. HBO instead emphasise a notion of TV art made with a pure concern for aesthetic style and a strong authorial voice. This notion of art has informed the norms and principles driving the new conventions for defining what contemporary television serial fiction looks like.

And what defines these new norms?

[SLIDE 8] – CULTURAL FORMS

GENRE

JANET: Firstly, evoking valorised literary and dramatic forms to set its original drama series apart from regular television helps to position the HBO series as an art form and aligned to particular forms of cultural capital, with ample attention to the aesthetic quality of the programme. It is as if reputable associations are essential before a discourse of what constitutes originality in television series and serials can be articulated and/or accepted. HBO may tell us that *The Sopranos* is not television, but it does so based on established values and cultural assumptions of what that might mean and how that feeds into an idea of a restricted field of cultural production.

It is worth noting that HBO's most successful originals are more often than not rooted in 'classic' US generic forms: the western, the gangster,

the rom-com, horror and fantasy. Appropriating classic US cultural traditions – literary, theatrical and performative—and ones that enjoy a privileged canonical place within the US cultural imagination, means that the HBO original series can determine their own cultural cache and value. Put another way, it is when one of the original series inhabits a particular privileged generic form and appropriates past generic conventions that HBO is better able to promote its prestige, establish markers for cultural value and advance its market position.

What we are witnessing here is a familiar practice. Something that we have seen before in film for example, whereby, the film artist subverts genre, parodies conventions or takes a genre into unexpected directions. HBO has in part advanced its reputation by creating new generic cycles through transforming existing ones, to suggest that they are daring to do something innovative with the form. Put simply: the HBO original series need strict generic rules to establish televisual uniqueness, as it seeks to structure its own restricted field of cultural production.

To give an example: *Deadwood*, begins in 1876 and textually entangles myth and cultural memory with history. Re-telling the story of the American frontier is, in part, about a nostalgic yearning at the heart of the *Deadwood* text, for stories that make sense of American identity, history and character now.

As for *Sex and the City*, the fantasy of happy-ever-after with Mr Right is rooted in its use of screwball traditions and the *mise-en-scene* of New York as a romantic playground of fun and possibility. Despite Carrie Bradshaw welcoming us to the age of (un)innocence where romance has flown the coop, the form and *mise-en-scene* of the series compels us to think differently and yearn for the possibility promised by the

classic Hollywood romance. In so doing there is an idea of quality based on shared cultural heritage and its importance for the nation and national identity. It is about what a particular nation values in terms of storytelling and the stories that it wants to tell itself and illustrates the importance of quality in establishing a national television identity, a narrative for a nation.

AUTHORIAL VOICE

KIM: Central to HBO's definition of its original series is its promotion of the TV *auteur*, foregrounding showrunners such as **Darren Starr, David Chase** and **Alan Ball**. This reliance on a strong authorial voice behind each original series finds a high premium placed on the kind of authorship associated with a liberal enlightenment. Writers, producers and directors endlessly talk about the creative freedoms enjoyed at HBO. Latitude to tell stories differently, creative personnel given the autonomy to work with minimal interference without compromise, has become the HBO trademark. It is how critics and cultural gatekeepers talk about them; how HBO sell themselves and how customers have come to understand what they are subscribing to each and every month.

Long has it been known that commercial US television likes to minimise risk; but what we see at HBO is a variation on that. While the channel doesn't replicate successful series (these are originals, after all), the company does give its *auteurs* an opportunity to tell new stories and allow them to tell those stories in and through a strong authorial voice. Again this is a variation on what network TV has already done but HBO have embedded this practice into its restrictive field of cultural production.

We are not suggesting for one moment that the *auteur* guarantees the best television, but that the *auteur* as discourse carries important cultural and creative meaning that helps establish a reputation for a series — particularly for HBO where their series are sold as originals.

Just as **Bourdieu** analysed the historical formation of a bohemian artistic identity, showing how the archetype of the poor artist dedicated to his or her craft was created in the nineteenth century, HBO adapts this Romantic idea to define the TV *auteur* as exceptionally gifted, as someone having particular sensitivities and operating in a magical-like sphere that remains untouched by mundane, commercial concerns.

Note, for example, how HBO waited for the storied mind of **David Chase** to find creative inspiration for another series of *The Sopranos*; or the myths surrounding the creative failures of **David Milch**. Known for his cerebral and unorthodox approach to writing, for the profanity of his dialogue and the precision of his plots, **Milch** is positioned at HBO as elevating the very possibilities of the medium in which he works – a reputation only enhanced by his creative failures—*John of Cincinnati* and *Luck*.

Put another way authorship is a structuring device that helps organise meaning and value within this restricted field of cultural production.

It is worth saying here that it seems no small coincidence that the resurgence of interest in television as an art form coincides with how HBO financially supports (and, more importantly, celebrates) the autonomy of its *auteur* and their writing teams. Implied here is an idea of the original tele-literary product that places emphasis on smart writing, compelling stories told in innovative ways, and a unique, creative vision behind each project. Reliance on an idea of a single

artistic vision finds HBO placing a high premium on the kind of authorship associated with more traditional art forms – the author as brand label associated with international Art Cinema, for example. Which in turn takes us to what is arguably **Bourdieu's** best-known concept, 'capital'.

JANET: At the heart of **Bourdieu's** sociology is the idea that every social agent is driven by individual gain and, in particular, a desire to take up the best position in their field. To this end, agents comply with the rules, discourses and institutions of the field in which they exist and strive to accumulate particular forms of capital that will enable them to advance their standing.

For **Bourdieu** there are different types of capital: economic, social, cultural and symbolic. For our purposes here we highlight cultural capital as that which is determined by a person's social status (and class) in society, and is informed by knowledge, skills, education, attitudes and taste. HBO in particular exploits a **particular** form of cultural capital that it believes it's selling to subscribers. **[SLIDE 10]** If, as **Avi Santo** writes: '*In Distinction: A Social Critique of Judgment, Pierre Bourdieu argues that cultural capital grants its owners access and knowledge that enables them to distinguish themselves and gain elevated status in society*', then it is through being granted membership to the self-selecting HBO community that viewers come to define their tastes. 'Taste classifies,' **Bourdieu** writes, 'and it classifies the classifier ... social subjects ... distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed and betrayed.' (*Distinctions*, 1984: 6). What **Bourdieu** considers 'legitimate' culture and art is not defined by some universal and pure form of truth, but rather as a way of seeing the world that is

based on education, class and social position. Taste is deeply embedded with and formed through these distinctions— and HBO exploits the taste codes of this particular social group within and through its serial dramas.

As such, HBO initiates a meaningful discourse around television culture and society through the programmes that they commission and schedule. Viewers take in these meanings, meaning which are articulated in broader publics (i.e. cultural commentaries, interviews and journalism), contextualised within longer literary and media traditions (i.e. scholars and public intellectuals), and gauged by others outside the subscriber base who will pay to see these shows (i.e. buyers of box sets, TV buyers and distributors with syndication to other channels both in the US and abroad).

The other form of capital is symbolic, which relates to prestige, awards and recognition. It is not too surprising that HBO has emerged as one of the largest supporters of niche cultural film festivals, often community-based ones designed for specific communities (LGBT, racial and ethnic-based festivals). This is where HBO acquires further symbolic capital, as do the filmmakers from participating. One bestows prestige on the other, and vice versa. HBO has actively given shape to a film culture, to see the value and relevance of a multi-cultural and independent cinema that registers HBO's own structures of taste and resonates beyond its own institutional networks and affiliations. Such festivals include:

[SLIDE 11]:

- American Black Film Festival, which is an annual festival held in Miami during July

- [NY International Latino Film Festival](#), which takes place annually in August and is considered one of the top festivals for Latino filmmakers. HBO sponsors the [Short Film Script Competition](#) and the winner receives a production budget and licensing deal valued at \$15,000, along with multiple screenings during the festival.
- Philadelphia Asian Film Festival is scheduled in late October, with its mission to celebrate and elevate the Asian American experience.
- [Miami Gay & Lesbian Film Festival](#) seeks to bring the very best LGBT films in the world to the Miami festival. The annual 11-day festival takes place in late April / early May, and screens feature and short films from around the globe. HBO is the Awards sponsor for Best Narrative, Best Documentary and Best Short Film.

The HBO stamp of approval has become a 'best of' indicator for the quality of creative talent. The company plays a significant role in providing filmmakers with recognition, as well as supporting diverse cultures and cultural representations. For filmmakers, an HBO Award offers meaningful industry credibility, an opportunity to showcase their film on the premiere-pay channel, revenue from award prizes and licensing deals to begin their next project, and direct access to acquisitions and development executives. But, in turn, this confers cultural legitimization for a different cinematic language which might otherwise be marginalised within the larger studio system and prevailing film industries.

HBO also canvasses the festivals to acquire LGBT, Asian, Latino, and African American films to provide diverse programming for a variety of channels including HBO on Demand, HBO GO, HBO Latino that have

proven to be profitable for the network. Put simply, HBO converts the symbolic capital acquired at film festivals into economic capital as it distributes these films across its global platform.

[SLIDE 12]

Aesthetics

KIM: The strength of the HBO original series draw on aesthetic qualities more commonly associated with film; and this is fostered by the fact that many renowned independent film directors like **Susan Seidelman**, **Allison Anders** and **Rodrigo Garcia** (son of **Gabriel Garcia Marquez**), **Martin Scorsese** and **Todd Haynes** have taken the directing helm. Not only does movement between film and television say something important about the complex cross-media relationship that exists between contemporary film and television production, and, in particular, those associated with American Independent Cinema working in close association with a studio and its television arm. But also the presence of high-profile individuals associated with high-profile Independent film productions that bring a particular cultural capital with them (and in the case of **Alan Ball** the prestigious clout of an Oscar winning screenwriter). This filmic sensibility is associated with certain artistic and aesthetic values, of a symbolic capital and cultural value – the author as brand label.

Innovations in production techniques and film technologies have allowed TV series to produce similar visual effects and high production values once the sole preserve of Hollywood feature films. It also bridges the divide between restricted production and large scale production which **Bourdieu** argues are two sub-fields [SLIDE 13]: ‘The cultural (literary, artistic, etc.) field exists in a subordinate or dominated position within the field of power, whose principle of legitimacy is based on possession of economic or political capital’ (15).

While the production of original series, for HBO, is primarily for the purpose of economic capital this need is subsumed, made invisible, within HBO's promotion of its cultural cache and by associating itself with classic literary traditions, an art-house sensibility, valorisation of the auteur and filmic aesthetics and conventions made visible by its association with film festivals and Independent art house cinema.

HBO and Habitus [SLIDE 14]

JANET: Where we want to conclude is with an understanding of the habitus in which HBO operates — not only as an important site of cultural legitimization but its role as gatekeeper in the field of restrictive cultural production. HBO acts as a cultivator of taste but it is supported by the role of experts to consecrate that position. And it is this idea that has travelled far beyond the traditional subscriber base of HBO.

Because of the work of HBO, certain aesthetic dispositions regarding television art are continually confirmed and thus the programme makers are predisposed to producing television in particular traditions and for the television circuit. Furthermore viewers are incessantly encouraged to appreciate television as an art form and develop more refined preferences than are associated with mainstream commercial fare. HBO does this by cultivating certain tastes and values, which, in turn, have circulated far and wide.

Despite HBO belonging to world's largest media conglomerate, Time Warner, and commercially underpinned by billions of dollars, the cable channel is strategically positioned as a purveyor of TV creativity. It may brand itself as being free from the constraints of the market and, to an extent, rebelling against the mainstream, but the HBO strategy has created a space for the celebration of television as artistic achievement. It is a space where television is not simply offered as cheap

entertainment but instead showcased and judged on aesthetic merits. In its branding HBO has invented a notion of television art that is made with a pure concern for high-end aesthetics and a strong authorial voice, which, in turn, has become the norm within this restricted field of cultural production.

What we are arguing is that HBO is more than its series, but understanding habitus explains the dynamics between seriality, tastemaking and branding channels. This concept of HBO encompasses the way its norms influence ways of making and thinking about television—it contributes to the largely unconscious function of rules, categories and values in television production. It makes sense of what HBO does and how they understand themselves and their field, as the company competes for, and takes up, positions, not only in and through the institutional structures of global television, but also the incorporated structures (**the habitus**), which allows them to participate in the first place. But this is 'made' and not 'given' and we can see the precariousness of such a process as witnessed in 2005 with TV professionals and critics withdrawing their support from HBO. Suffering fatigue and in the face of growing scepticism, the subsequent withdrawal of critical validation gave rise to a notion that HBO was in decline.

Still, HBO has continued to win awards and cultural consecration continues leading to a common sense notion of contemporary television art—its aesthetic values, an autonomous and strong authorial voice, complex storyworlds, long narrative arcs and high production values — is, in fact, a set of arrangements held up by the beliefs and practices of the TV business | critics and audiences.

Bourdieu offers us a starting point, understanding the power relations and principles in this cultural field.

Conclusion

And as we work towards the conclusion we would like to tease out some possible implications for further research.

KIM:

1. Against the hegemony of HBO.

Long have we understood that critically acclaimed original series afford cable/satellite services a way of recruiting viewers and differentiating broadcasters in a highly competitive multimedia TV market. For example, BBC4, a small digital platform has been doing rather well of late with its European TV imports. Foreign language television hasn't always found sustained distribution in the UK, but this current crop of series, starting in 2006 with the French crime series, [Spiral](#), produced by the French HBO – Canal Plus - means that BBC4 is slowly but quietly establishing something of a cult reputation for itself with these European crime dramas— *Wallander*, *Forbrydelsen*, *Ófærð (Trapped)*, *Borgen*, *Broen*, *Les Revenants* and *Disparue*.

Underlying the cultural rise of the European crime imports into the UK is the fact that it might not have happened at all if Sky Atlantic had not purchased all UK broadcasting rights to series produced by HBO (its back catalogue as well as future productions). As astounding as is the spending capacity of BSkyB, with Sky Atlantic holding sway over the transmission of HBO originals like *Boardwalk Empire* (2009-14), *Game of Thrones* (2011-present) and *Girls* (2012-present), what has happened is that HBO has been absorbed into the commercial domain of large scale production in the UK. With the result that BBC Four, a small niche digital platform, has become the restricted field of cultural

production, conceived of as another kind of exclusive cultural domain. Out of commercial necessity for sure, but BBC Four still promises exclusivity. This is achieved not through exploiting limited access by virtue of a paid membership to a distinct viewing community, but instead by granting open, public access to an exclusive cultural experience more commonly associated with high (or at least higher) elite art forms such as international (primarily European) art cinema and literature.

At a time of 'voracious competition' and 'pronounced entrepreneurialism' within UK Public Service Broadcasting Culture (Born and Prosser 2001, 668), this kind of free-to-air minority programming buys into, as it revises, core Reithian values 'of serving and stimulating the audience, justifying the licence fee, and quality and integrity of output' (ibid, 669). Thus it may be argued that what the BBC believes it is delivering to its discerning audience with these European Crime Series like *Wallander* and *Forbrydelsen* is a cosmopolitan cultural experience involving global media flows and exclusive contra-flows as a form of cultural capital.

JANET:

2. HBO and its approach to Public Service Broadcasting

So prestigious is this idea of public service that HBO finds itself drawn to working with other national public service broadcasters. What HBO has done is invest in local writers as seen with its relationship with the Danish public service broadcaster DR (hiring the writer of *Forbrydelsen* to come up with an idea for HBO).

The HBO model has been strategically exported into other TV markets facing similar challenges. For example public service broadcasters in the small nations with limited resources have imported the HBO model

for series production to build a national TV identity. In small nations like Belgium, Czech Republic and Denmark, the HBO strategies which foreground a strong authorial voice and television style have become absorbed into local production environments, hinged on the recognition as television as art.

HBO maybe a global idea but it must operate on a local level.

HBO as a new form of cultural imperialism has pervaded the forms and style of the television series and seriality that is now being endlessly recycled and re-visited within definitions of quality Television and quality on Television.

extracts

KIM: It would seem that we are entering an era in which adaptation and re-makes, franchises and formats dominate the global television trade.

Because of various delivery methods, and in particular the illegal streaming sites, it is now possible to view all HBO series instantaneously and without payment. What status then is the potential loss of 'aura' of these originals? Is it reimagined for another audience, adept at circumventing HBO's encryption strategies as a way of marketing their new series, attracting that upscale demographic that will be part of its new viewing audience? In this way HBO remain as gatekeepers, stewards of the next generation of storytelling. Thus HBO has set about creating and expanding taste, televisual sensibilities, ways of storytelling as a way to dynamically make and re-make our aesthetic social and cultural values through the stories they bring to our television screens.