

# The TV Series as a Fairy Tale: Archetypes, Narrative Structure, and Cultural Resonance

## Abstract:

This paper examines the connection between fairy tales and television, positioning TV series as a modern equivalent of fairy tales in today's digital age. These series affect viewers similarly to traditional fairy tales, providing fresh insights into the significance of cultural and narrative stereotypes in contemporary society. Stereotypes, as a part of everyday consciousness, accumulate a standardized collective experience, helping individuals navigate life. By analyzing character archetypes, narrative structures, and themes, this study highlights the ways in which TV series reinterpret traditional fairy tales to explore universal human experiences and societal issues. This research contributes to the interdisciplinary field of media studies by defining the TV series as a contemporary fairy tale—a fairy tale of the 21st century.

**Keywords:** TV series, fairy tale, archetypes, narrative structure, cultural resonance, modern media

The concept of a series has existed since ancient times. A prime example can be found in the Persian fairy tale anthology "One Thousand and One Nights," where the wise Scheherazade captivates her audience by interrupting her storytelling at the most thrilling moments. This technique allows her to branch out her narrative without concluding a story. Inspired by Scheherazade, the idea of ending a tale at a point that leaves the reader eagerly awaiting resolution emerges. This approach creates suspense and serves a practical purpose for the queen, as she extends her life by enchanting the king with her stories until sunrise. She promises him an even more exciting tale each night than the last, maintaining his interest and anticipation for the following night.

The American writer and philosopher Terence McKenna refers to the serial genre as "the new novel." He observes that, much like fish in water, people from different cultures exist within the nearly invisible environment of culturally sanctioned yet artificial states of consciousness. Viewers often engage with the characters from these series as if they are friends or family members—they become an integral part of their lives. Take, for example, Dr. House. Although he is constructed almost like a comic book character, the peculiarities of Dr. House enhance his sense of reality through subtle details. His cane, wrinkled shirt, two-day stubble, and addiction all contribute to a superhero-like image. However, other aspects of Dr. House's character reveal that he is relatable—he lounges on the couch, shops at the store, eats in the cafeteria, and is often unable to control the circumstances around him.

According to David Bushman, an American television editor and programming director, the art of American TV series, like any form of art, "does not reflect reality but rather preserves

38 it."<sup>1</sup> He emphasizes that "life on the small screen does not need to resemble real life; however, it  
39 must align with the idea of the ideal."<sup>2</sup> This may be why one of the easiest ways to gain insight  
40 into the soul of America is through its favorite television series.

41 It is interesting how quickly some viewers switch from one series to another. They  
42 "consume" five series a week without truly focusing—merely following the plot twists. Did Don  
43 Draper get divorced? Is Walter White still alive? They exit one storyline and instantly immerse  
44 themselves in another. Series are discussed on public transport, at work, at home, and in  
45 restaurants. Viewers often equate their life experiences with those portrayed on the television  
46 screen. "When one of the characters died," recalls German film and TV producer Sabine  
47 Eckhard, "people called the TV station asking if they could rent his apartment."<sup>3</sup>

48 In fairy tales, characters often embody archetypes. According to American author,  
49 lecturer, and story consultant Robert McKee, "Cinema should tell archetypal stories about  
50 archetypal characters."<sup>4</sup> He emphasized that "realism depends on deviating from various types  
51 and stereotypes, as well as on developing the complexity of characters based on archetypes."<sup>5</sup>  
52 Citing McKee, finding an engaging archetypal main character is crucial for the success of a  
53 series. What truly matters is the presence of archetypality rather than stereotypicality—  
54 commonplace traits that fail to capture the audience's interest. To clarify, an archetype (from the  
55 ancient Greek words "arche," meaning beginning or principle, and "typos," meaning imprint,  
56 form, or model) is a fundamental image or original pattern. Archetypes are universal symbols  
57 that have endured through myths, folklore, and culture, passed down from generation to  
58 generation. They have been present in literature and folklore for millennia.

59 In the 20th century, Carl Gustav Jung, the founder of analytical psychology, defined  
60 archetypes as the components of the collective unconscious. These images and figures can enter  
61 people's consciousness uncontrollably through dreams, fantasies, and hallucinations or be  
62 projected onto external objects. Fairy tales and magical narratives influence a person's emotional  
63 state by tapping into these archetypes within the collective unconscious, thus accessing the vast  
64 hidden "energetic" resources they offer. According to Jung, archetypes manifest in a captivating  
65 and enchanting manner, unlocking consciousness, logical thinking, and common sense.

#### 66 Key Archetypes and Their Functionality:

##### 67 Masculine and Feminine Principles

68 Popular culture often exploits archetypes that correspond to masculine and feminine  
69 energies. These archetypes shape narratives around gender roles, love, and relationships,  
70 significantly influencing character dynamics and plotlines.

##### 71 The Hero

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<sup>1</sup>Genis, Alexandar, Iskustvo Amerikanskovo Seriala, Radio Svoboda, 02.10.2001

<http://www.svoboda.org/content/transcript/24200433.html>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Tsirkun, N. Nezamainlennai vzgliad na „mailo”// Iskustvo Kino – 1999, No5

<sup>4</sup> McKee R. Story. Substance, structure, style, and the principles of screenwriting. NY., Methuen, 1999,  
p.4.

<sup>5</sup> McKee R. Interview. Cinemotion, 2012.<http://platfor.ma/articles/robert-mckee/>

72 The Hero archetype embodies positive action and ambition, with themes that include  
73 overcoming obstacles, achieving success, engaging in challenges, offering protection, exhibiting  
74 confidence, competing, and ultimately attaining victory. A hero is not necessarily moral; rather,  
75 they are characterized by their active and assertive nature. This is why antiheroes, often found in  
76 American action films and post-socialist "gangster" series, resonate with mass audiences.

#### 77 The Journey

78 This archetype symbolizes change and the exploration of the unknown. It encompasses  
79 themes of travel, adventure, and fantasy, representing a quest or voyage—both physical and  
80 spiritual—that drives narratives focused on discovery and transformation.

#### 81 Destruction

82 The Destruction archetype revolves around themes including fatal secrets, foreign  
83 mystical worlds, crime, drugs, destiny, danger, and mysticism. It examines the allure of the  
84 forbidden, the struggle between light and darkness, and the attraction to danger and the  
85 unknown.

#### 86 Death and Rebirth

87 This archetype explores themes of ultimate transformation and renewal, depicting the  
88 destruction of one form and the rebirth into a new existence. Such transformations are frequently  
89 explored through melodrama, where characters undergo profound emotional or existential  
90 changes.

#### 91 The Trickster

92 The Trickster is a cunning archetype, often portrayed as a cheerful liar, jester, or double. Ancient  
93 and perpetually youthful, this archetype symbolizes mischief, humor, and the subversion of  
94 societal norms. The Trickster challenges the status quo, frequently introducing chaos that leads  
95 to unexpected growth or insight.

96 The classification above illustrates that archetypes in literature, cinema, and television  
97 represent characters that effectively convey the essence of human nature, transcending individual  
98 personalities and national cultures. The archetypal hero makes stories engaging and relatable to  
99 audiences everywhere. For instance, the character of Betty from the series "Ugly Betty,"  
100 originally titled "Yo Soy Betty, La Fea," received a warm reception in countries such as  
101 Germany, Russia, India, the USA, and China, among others. This character was created by a  
102 Colombian author and is based on the Cinderella archetype.

103 Television spectacles, characterized by repetition and the use of masks, engage cognitive  
104 mechanisms in viewers that resemble those found in folkloric and mythological thought. In  
105 literature, and subsequently in cinema and television series, this engagement necessitates a stable  
106 structure— as described by Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp— that enables endless variations  
107 of plots, motifs, and character types. In this way, television, regardless of how individuals  
108 perceive it, cultivates a distinct collective viewing experience.

109 The rapid and prolonged engagement of a global audience with certain characters—  
110 specifically archetypes like those in "Dr. House" and "Sex and the City"—demonstrates the  
111 validity of the archetypal hero theory in television series. Viewers can even empathize with

112 negative characters when the narrative presents an ordinary person in challenging situations,  
113 such as that of a rejected outlaw. This connection is often facilitated by a simple suggestion:  
114 "This could happen to me too." However, this approach highlights some negative aspects of the  
115 television and film industry. A popular archetypal character can be exploited for as long as  
116 possible, which may not always benefit other storytelling elements—such as the originality of  
117 the plot, the development of events, the quality of dialogue, and the detail given to secondary  
118 characters.

119 Exploiting archetypal elements and sociocultural stereotypes is a technique commonly  
120 found in mass culture (from the Latin \*massa\*, meaning "piece," and \*cultura\*, meaning  
121 "cultivation," "education," or "development"). Mass culture exists as an autonomous entity, often  
122 disconnected from its content, contrasting sharply with the elitist approach seen in literature,  
123 auteur cinema, and other art forms. Since the 1980s, the term "mass culture" has been used less  
124 frequently due to its negative connotations. Today, it is often replaced by terms like "pop  
125 culture" or "show business." However, altering the terminology does not change the underlying  
126 essence of the concept. Show business is fundamentally a business, which means its primary goal  
127 is profit and sales rather than high artistic achievement. According to Russian theorist and  
128 director Vyacheslav Karp, "Show business is entirely controlled by a group of individuals  
129 involved in the arts, including business representatives, art gallery owners, and well-  
130 compensated critics. This group establishes conventional value standards in mass culture and sets  
131 unwritten rules. Within this artistic environment, strategies for festivals, exhibitions, and  
132 promotions are developed; certain figures from non-artistic backgrounds are endorsed; stars are  
133 created; and the market policies of mass culture are influenced."<sup>6</sup>

134 Aldous Leonard Huxley, an English writer and philosopher, analyzes mass culture as an  
135 aesthetic phenomenon and highlights its popularity, attributing it to its "recognizability and  
136 accessibility."<sup>7</sup> He explains that society requires constant reaffirmation of fundamental truths,  
137 even though mass culture conveys these truths at a superficial level and with poor taste.

138 The language of television series serves as an analogy for everyday interpersonal  
139 communication. Simultaneously, it acts as a platform for expressing and sharing important  
140 sociocultural concepts. Although TV series vary widely, the realities they portray often consist of  
141 straightforward actions viewed from a close perspective. However, these "everyday actions" are  
142 intertwined with exceptional events and fascinating mechanisms of interpersonal interaction.

143 The attraction to compelling stories is explored by folklore expert V. Ya. Propp in his  
144 book "Folklore and Reality." He discusses how the key features of narrative folklore transition  
145 into the aesthetics of realism, illustrating how fairy tale narratives can become reality. Propp  
146 emphasizes a crucial characteristic of fairy tales, which also contributes to the success of  
147 television series: the extraordinary dynamism of action. He observes that "the storyteller or  
148 singer, as well as the listener, are primarily interested in the action itself, rather than in any

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<sup>6</sup> Karp V. I fondamenti della regia. Un'introduzione alla teoria della regia. Ubu libri Edizioni, Milano, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Hugsley, A. (1958) *Brave New World Revisited*. Harper Perennial Modern Classics

149 particular details." For instance, they do not focus on the setting of the action or the physical  
150 appearance of the characters. Narrative and epic genres do not engage in the art of portraiture;  
151 for example, while a queen must be beautiful, the storyteller does not provide a detailed  
152 description—she is simply referred to as "fairy-tale beautiful."<sup>8</sup>

153 Another key feature is the non-essential nature of external motivations. While the  
154 randomness of events is often seen as a flaw in the aesthetics of realism, in folklore, it is  
155 considered a norm rather than a defect. The focus is on action itself, rather than its cause. This  
156 principle also applies to screen folklore. Viewers typically show little interest in the material  
157 environment, visual style, or techniques employed. For instance, the seemingly ordinary yet  
158 relevant Parisian backdrop in "Fantômas," crafted by the skilled camera work of director André  
159 Hunebelle, is nearly indistinguishable in quality from the semi-amateurish but deeply poignant  
160 Mexican series "Yesenia" (1971). Ultimately, the artistic quality of the image is not what matters  
161 to the viewer.

162 People exist not only in reality but also in myth. Each person perceives the world based  
163 on their own preparations and beliefs. There are both personal myths and collective myths shared  
164 by groups or societies. When considering mass perception, we come across a corresponding  
165 mythology—those beliefs that the audience unconsciously accepts as normal and acceptable. The  
166 success of a television plot with audiences largely depends on how well the narrative aligns with  
167 the desires of the mass consciousness.

168 The world depicted in the TV series captivates viewers by addressing profound themes  
169 surrounding human existence—life, death, and love—through transparent storytelling and  
170 timeless narratives. These themes resonate with audiences regardless of the era or setting of the  
171 series. They can be analyzed using Jung's classic archetypes, such as the "Hero" and "Shadow,"  
172 as well as the "Anima" and "Animus." In narrative terms, these archetypes represent the  
173 relationships between the Hero and the Antihero, as well as between Man and Woman.

174 The mythological plots primarily utilized in TV series are limited yet profoundly  
175 impactful. Among the extensive array of narratives, three central meta-plots are frequently  
176 adapted: Cinderella—depicting a heroine who, after enduring significant hardships, ultimately  
177 discovers happiness with a charming prince; Robin Hood—a tale of a hero who restores social  
178 justice by redistributing wealth acquired through unjust means; and The Rich Also Cry—a  
179 narrative illustrating that everyday struggles, envy, and aggression are not confined to the lower  
180 classes but are also prevalent among the wealthy.

181 This model of perception forms the basis of mythological thinking, which Carl Jung  
182 connects with archetypes, while Vladimir Propp links it to folklore narratives. Fairy tales serve  
183 as archetypal bridges, transporting viewers into a parallel world that is distinct enough to provide  
184 an escape from reality yet familiar enough to evoke emotional relatability. In this context, naive  
185 perception should not be seen as a lack of intelligence; rather, it reflects a desire for complete  
186 immersion. The viewer accepts the narrative uncritically, without distinguishing between

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<sup>8</sup> Prop V. B. Folklor i deistvitel'nost. Izbrani statii. Izdatel'stvo „Nauka“, M., 1976, c. 91  
[http://vk.com/doc6752525\\_146205822](http://vk.com/doc6752525_146205822)

187 structure (“how”) and content (“what”). This creates a magical space where characters, plots, and  
188 worlds exist as mythological realities. Aesthetic pleasure plays a crucial role in this experience,  
189 arising from the richness of colors, emotions, and plot twists that deliver an intense sensory  
190 experience. The aim is not realism; instead, it is to present an idealized version of the world,  
191 where conflicts are more dramatic and emotions are heightened. However, the narrative cannot  
192 be entirely divorced from reality. This is why the "bridges" between reality and fantasy are so  
193 important—they establish a contact zone where viewers can relate the characters' emotional  
194 experiences to their own lives without disrupting the magic of the “other” world. This is why the  
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197 magic of the “other” world.

198 In her research article, Russian journalist and TV presenter Kira Bogoslovskaya argues  
199 that fairy-tale stories, in the literal sense, are rare on television. She explains that serial "fairy  
200 tales" are not based on fantastical elements but rather on real or quasi-documentary material that  
201 aligns with both the conscious and unconscious desires of viewers. Additionally, she points out  
202 that viewers define a "fairy tale" not as something magical or mystical, but as the ideal and  
203 proper unfolding of real-life plots—essentially the fulfillment of dreams. These stories reflect  
204 romantic and emotional desires that may be difficult to achieve in everyday life. People want to  
205 envision "the prince on a white horse,"<sup>9</sup> see themselves as a princess, and aspire to a fulfilled life  
206 filled with beautiful journeys, loyal love, a happy family, and a successful career. However,  
207 these aspirations are not depicted in an overly sweet manner; instead, they are balanced with the  
208 realities of life to prevent overwhelming the audience.

209 In a 2019 study conducted in Russia, researchers analyzed viewers' perceptions of a  
210 specific TV series plot. The storyline revolves around a heroine who escapes domestic violence,  
211 as she is a victim of her husband's physical abuse. Desperate and unsure of what to do, she  
212 struggles with the added challenge of having a young child and no family or place to turn to for  
213 support. After facing numerous obstacles, she encounters individuals who provide her with  
214 opportunities to start a new life. Along the way, she discovers her own talents and, after  
215 overcoming her difficulties, decides to launch a project aimed at helping other women begin  
216 anew. The story concludes with a beautifully crafted ending that highlights her success.

217 The authors of the study point out that the topic is relevant to Russia, but they predict  
218 moderate popularity due to its association with social drama. While domestic violence is a reality  
219 that many people experience, there is resistance to depicting it on-screen. When audiences do  
220 want to see such themes, they often prefer them presented in a more palatable, fairy-tale format.  
221 This means that villains should be portrayed as "symbolic" characters—archetypes rather than  
222 resembling actual neighbors—and they should face just punishment in the end. Moreover, all the  
223 essential elements must be included: a beautiful love story and a suspenseful, dynamic plot. It's  
224 important to note that socially significant themes typically attract only a limited audience. This

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<sup>9</sup> Bogoslovskaya K. Seriali: welcome v mir inoi. Iskustvo Kino, 2007, N. 9.

225 principle applies specifically to mass culture products, including television series, rather than to  
226 cinema, which is inherently an auteur art form, or to examples of high literature.

227 Many people go to the movies and watch television primarily for pleasure; other  
228 motivations are not as common. This pleasure often stems from the (often subconscious)  
229 reinforcement that their views on life are valid. This confirmation gives them a sense of security  
230 and reassures them that they are living correctly and that challenges can be overcome. It fosters  
231 the belief that "everything is fine" or "it will be fine."

232 Meaningful messages such as "Doctors do not always save their patients," "Drugs are  
233 widespread," or "Children abandon their parents," when presented without a convincing  
234 resolution or treated in a sensationalized manner, can undermine the audience's sense of security.  
235 They communicate a feeling of "things shouldn't be this way" or "everything is wrong," which  
236 can trigger fundamental anxiety among viewers. As a result, people often change the channel.  
237 This is simply a reflection of human nature—people typically don't want to focus on tragedies  
238 and illnesses while seeking entertainment.

239 Mass mythology plays a significant role in shaping male-female relationships and  
240 influencing perceptions of appropriate behavior. However, it often only addresses superficial  
241 ideas—such as the beliefs that "everything will be okay," that kindness and love will prevail, and  
242 that justice will always be served. Referring back to the previously mentioned storyline, it could  
243 be argued that the narrative about a heroine who escapes domestic violence would be more  
244 successful if it concluded with her finding happiness in a new family, ideally with a wealthy  
245 partner. This happy ending would serve as a reward for all the suffering she endured.

246 When the belief that "everything will be all right" is shattered—particularly regarding  
247 significant and unresolved issues—a television series often experiences a decline in popularity.  
248 Viewers find it uncomfortable and painful to watch when they are confronted with "unprocessed"  
249 or "raw" problems that lack resolutions that meet their expectations. As a result, this discomfort  
250 leads to a drop in ratings.

251 The perception of male characters is shaped by certain mythological themes: qualities  
252 like manliness and honesty lead to victory, while criminals and "bad guys" face punishment.  
253 Audience expectations dictate that narratives should be straightforward, polished, and somewhat  
254 unrealistic. The most commercially successful films and series often draw from lower forms of  
255 culture, such as folklore and popular genres. Furthermore, the more traditional and folklore-  
256 based the source material of a film or series, the higher the likelihood of its mass appeal.

257 Research indicates that mass success in film is driven by several key features. A  
258 successful film typically includes a traditional plot structure, which consists of exposition,  
259 climax, and resolution. It should present an engaging, action-oriented intrigue and conclude with  
260 a "closed" ending that provides a clear resolution and an unambiguous message. Moreover, the  
261 main character should not be an ordinary person dealing with mundane life issues. The actors in  
262 leading roles should be popular and well-liked by the audience. The plot should also incorporate  
263 a romantic element. Setting the intrigue in a distant or exotic location can enhance the story, and

264 the genre should maintain a "pure" and vivid tone—either fully comedic or entirely dramatic.  
265 Finally, the cinematic form should be canonical and familiar to viewers.

266 Television possesses an extraordinary hypnotic power, and the suggestibility of the  
267 audience can even influence those who create the shows. Analyzing this phenomenon is quite  
268 fascinating. One notable example is the murder of actress Daniella Perez by actor Guilherme de  
269 Pádua, whose sense of reality became blurred. There are other instances as well. For example,  
270 Linda Evans, who portrayed Krystle Carrington on the TV series “Dynasty”, became so  
271 engrossed in her role as a "rich lady" that she expressed a desire to purchase a large diamond ring  
272 owned by Elizabeth Taylor. Similarly, David Duchovny, who played Fox Mulder in “The X-  
273 Files”, began giving his wife "X-themed" gifts in real life, such as a mysterious piece of  
274 meteorite, a jar of sand from Mars, and a rare photo of a UFO. He believed in the authenticity of  
275 these items wholeheartedly, unlike his wife.

276 The expectations of television audiences lead to what is known as the "double bind  
277 phenomenon." According to film researcher Bogoslovskaya (2013), "The mass audience desires  
278 to see more authentic portrayals of real life. However, they simultaneously want to avoid feelings  
279 of anxiety and hopelessness. These desires are contradictory. They want realistic  
280 representations—lifelike characters in genuine situations—but without highlighting problems, as  
281 these evoke unpleasant feelings and fear."<sup>10</sup>

282 In the article "Series: Welcome to Another World," Bogoslovskaya (2013) argues that  
283 there is a paradox in viewers' desires. On one hand, they wish to relax and escape into a fairy  
284 tale, but on the other hand, they also want to see reflections of their contemporary reality on  
285 screen. It is easy to observe that the real aspects of life do not align with the idea of a "fairy tale"  
286 and are unlikely to provide anyone with the comfort they seek while watching. Additionally, she  
287 states that the fundamental metaphors of a successful series must resonate with the prevailing  
288 cultural and social sentiments in society. However, they should not mirror these sentiments too  
289 directly. Instead, they should create an experience in which viewers feel a sense of symbolic  
290 safety while watching. This ensures that their personal safety, worldview, values, and identity  
291 remain unthreatened during the viewing process.

292 The double bind theory, introduced by American anthropologist Gregory Bateson,  
293 describes a situation in which a person receives two contradictory messages at the same time. For  
294 instance, the phrase "I love you" might be accompanied by an indifferent facial expression and  
295 physical withdrawal, creating confusion about the true sentiment. Another example is when a  
296 character states, "True friendship is the most important thing in the world," while the  
297 surrounding environment features leather armchairs and expensive cars, suggesting that money  
298 and status are actually the main priorities.

299 Gregory Bateson explains that if an experimenter trains a dog to bark in one way when  
300 shown a circle and differently when shown an ellipse and then gradually alters the shapes to  
301 make them more similar, the dog's ability to distinguish between the two will eventually falter.  
302 This could result in the dog barking excessively and possibly even biting the experimenter,

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<sup>10</sup> Bogoslovskaya. K. Dvoynoi kapkan. „Lovushka” zritelskoe vospiyatie. Iskustvo kino, 2013, No 4.



303 showing signs of acute neurosis. In contrast, when presented with the same shapes, a dog that has  
304 not undergone this training does not develop neurosis. When we think about perceiving a TV  
305 series, we can draw a parallel to Bateson's dog. Viewers, much like the dog, have already been  
306 trained to hold firm and ingrained beliefs about good and evil. Their understanding is shaped by  
307 learned behaviors, habits, and sociocultural clichés. These elements serve as guiding principles  
308 for what people want to see in order to experience pleasure and fulfillment. When there is a  
309 mismatch between their values and their unmet sociocultural expectations, it leads to irritation  
310 and can even result in neurosis—similar to what Bateson's dog experiences. Therefore, creating a  
311 TV series that disregards these established mythologies is often futile and counterproductive.  
312 Instead, mythology should be used skillfully, which is precisely what successful TV series  
313 achieve. While experimenting with mythology, making unexpected shifts, and presenting new  
314 challenges is the realm of high art—particularly auteur cinema—this approach is fundamentally  
315 different in philosophy and impact from mass cultural products.

316 It is well known that when choosing between a "realistic" and a "fairy-tale" presentation  
317 of the plot, the mass audience tends to prefer the "fairy-tale" version, which features beautiful  
318 interiors, characters elevated above everyday life, and happy resolutions to the most complex  
319 situations.

320 In a study comparing audience perceptions of two TV series plots featuring heroines  
321 navigating divorce and trying to rebuild their lives, Bogoslovskaya (2013) describes the first  
322 story as "realistic." In this narrative, the heroine is left by her husband because, at 45, she  
323 becomes perceived as unattractive and becomes an ordinary housewife in a bathrobe. The  
324 character takes steps that many female viewers would find relatable: she takes care of herself,  
325 secures a job as a secretary, starts going to the gym, goes on dates, and addresses her ex-  
326 husband's obligation for child support. Ultimately, the heroine finds a modest but kind,  
327 intelligent, and considerate partner with whom she forms a positive relationship, including her  
328 ex-husband and children.

329 The second plot, reminiscent of a fairy tale, revolves around a heroine who is a devoted  
330 housewife and mother of two. She is abandoned by her husband, a wealthy businessman, and  
331 though she was once a television host, she remains beautiful and well-groomed, residing in a  
332 luxurious mansion. Her husband leaves her for a young, attractive blonde who cleverly takes  
333 control of the entire business during the division of assets, leaving the heroine with just a  
334 struggling bread factory. Despite these obstacles, she proves to be talented and hardworking,  
335 successfully revitalizing the factory and steadfastly resisting her husband's attempts to seize it  
336 from her. Ultimately, she discovers happiness with her husband's former business partner, who  
337 has been a supportive ally throughout her trials.

338 At the conclusion of the study, a viewer survey was conducted, and the results clearly  
339 indicated a preference for the second plot – the "fairy-tale" one.

340 These character preferences lead to what can be termed "winning" characters in  
341 dramaturgical contexts. These characters are often portrayed with exaggerated traits: the  
342 unfaithful husband is depicted as profoundly cynical, cruel, and indifferent, while the object of

343 infidelity is often characterized as a long-legged, predatory blonde. In contrast, the main heroine  
344 embodies softness, kindness, and love. This sharp typification and polarization of characters,  
345 coupled with the intricately crafted intrigue of infidelity, effectively capture and maintain the  
346 viewers' attention. This vivid portrayal enables female viewers to readily recognize that they are  
347 engaging with a fairy tale, suggesting that a happy ending is inevitable. They can indulge in  
348 dreams and fleeting moments of fear without experiencing profound anxiety or reliving traumas  
349 associated with divorce or loneliness.

350 In contrast, a "realistic" plot draws viewers back to the harsh realities of modern life.  
351 When the heroine—especially if portrayed by a skilled actress—is unloved, impoverished,  
352 neglects her appearance, or suffers from depression, it triggers a deep-seated anxiety: "This could  
353 happen to me, too." Such portrayals can be frightening, prompting heavy thoughts about past  
354 failures or unpaid bills. A cramped two-room apartment and dark streets in the storyline evoke a  
355 typical reaction: "I recognize this bleakness and unfulfilled relationships—why would I want to  
356 watch them on TV, too?" This is why the "packaging" and context in which events are presented  
357 in a series are critical and often decisive elements in its creation.

358 The renowned Russian screenwriter and director Alexander Mitta, known for both feature  
359 films and TV series, observes the following: "When it comes to TV series, you must appeal not  
360 to the jury at the Cannes Festival but to a broad audience. The essence of a series is not simpler;  
361 it is simplified. Like Chekhov's work, simplicity can be profound, as it addresses fundamental  
362 life issues. However, what is simplified tends to resemble serialized content. Series often avoid  
363 tackling major, complex dilemmas and instead focus on more convenient, 'instant' problems,  
364 where conflicts are crafted for easy consumption, even during commercial breaks. In these  
365 narratives, someone commits a crime, and someone investigates it—this straightforward premise  
366 is easy for viewers to remember. The questions posed are simple, and so are the answers. The  
367 story reduces the world to semi-animal emotions, humanized through abundant dialogue."<sup>11</sup>

368 The mass audience primarily seeks content that inspires hope and enthusiasm. Viewers  
369 generally expect narratives that convey the truth while providing the strength to endure it. They  
370 are not interested in stories that reflect their everyday struggles unless those stories culminate in  
371 a significant victory for truth that resonates with their own experiences. This sentiment can be  
372 summarized as: "I am an average person, but I desire a celebration." This preference stems from  
373 the fact that individuals often feel a loss of identity and personal dignity in their daily lives.

374 David Simon, the creator of one of the greatest masterpieces of the last century—the  
375 television series *The Wire*—also addresses this topic. In an interview that effectively illustrates  
376 audience expectations and the narrative rules they impose, he states:

377 Simon: "Now, the thing that has been exalted and the thing that American entertainment  
378 is consumed with is the individual being bigger than the institution. How many frickin' times are  
379 we gonna watch a story where somebody..."

380 Interviewer: "***Rises up against the odds?***"

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<sup>11</sup> Mitta A.: Kino + TV = Telefilm? „Kino – raskas vizualnai Serial – verbalnai”. Iskustvo kino. Art of Cinema/Archive/2006, No10, <http://kinoart.ru/en/archive/2006/10/n10> article18

381 Simon: *You can't do that.* "Yes, I can." "No, you can't." "I'll show you, see?" And in  
382 the end he's recognized as just a goodhearted rebel with right on his side, and eventually the  
383 town realizes that dancing's not so bad. I can make up a million of 'em. That's the story we want  
384 to be told over and over again. And you know why? Because in our heart of hearts what we know  
385 about the 21st century is that every day we're going to be worth less and less, not more and  
386 more.

387 Interviewer: **Worth less and less as people, you mean?**

388 Simon: *As human beings. Some of us are going to get more money and be worth more.*  
389 *There are some people who are destined for celebrity or wealth or power, but by and large, the*  
390 *average American, the average person in the world on planet earth, is worth less and less.*  
391 *That's the triumph of capital, and that is the problem. You look at that, and you think that's what*  
392 *we've come to and that's where we're going and it's like, "Can you tell me another bedtime*  
393 *story about how people are special and every one of us matters? Can you tell me that shit?" or*  
394 *"Tell me again about that boxer who came out of the ghetto and became the champ." "And what*  
395 *about that musician whose genius was never recognized? What about him? And, oh yeah,*  
396 *somebody else overcame addiction. That's great. Tell me that one again." Listen, I don't mind a*  
397 *victory if it's earned. But if all you do is victory, if that's your whole dramatic construct and*  
398 *that's 90 percent of American television."*<sup>12</sup>

399 The need for archetypal characters to achieve mass appeal can also be linked to the  
400 necessity of archetypal situations in which these characters operate. As Karp (2010) points out in  
401 his study, "Culture is always a complex of different layers. These layers are interconnected but  
402 not unified; they each retain their originality. There is a 'higher layer' characterized by the works  
403 of prominent poets, thinkers, and great literature. In contrast, another form of verbal art—  
404 whether oral or written—emerges from the lower layers. High culture, which is intellectualized  
405 and refined, varies each time it appears. However, its anonymous foundation, from which it  
406 undoubtedly draws certain impulses, conceptual clichés, and traditions, exhibits remarkable  
407 resilience. Consequently, we can identify relatively stable, recurring, and timeless phenomena  
408 across different cultures, akin to matrices of consciousness and behavior."<sup>13</sup>

409 The mass audience often responds to specific "static, timeless, and repetitive structures"  
410 that can be identified as matrices or archetypes of perception. These structures typically take the  
411 form of familiar, stereotypical plots that consistently engage the sympathy and interest of  
412 viewers. A notable example can be found in fairy tales, where narratives such as the struggles of  
413 abandoned children resonate profoundly. This particular storyline boasts a rich pre-literary  
414 heritage, originating from ancient folklore and carrying inherent emotional and moral lessons  
415 with it. As it evolves through various forms of storytelling, including literature, theater, and  
416 cinema, it continues to capture the imagination. Despite changes in setting, character roles, and  
417 visual presentation, the essence of this archetypal tale remains universal. It conveys enduring

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<sup>12</sup> David Simon interview with Vice Magazine <https://www.youmightfindyourself.com/post/297094905/david-simon-interview-with-vice-magazine>

<sup>13</sup> Karp. V. I fundamenti della regia. Un'introduzione alla teoria della regia. Ubulibri Edizioni, Milano, 2010.

418 themes of loss, resilience, and hope, making it a story that transcends cultural boundaries and  
419 resonates across generations.

420 Well-crafted, structured narratives with distinct "rhythms" or patterns—such as the  
421 repetitive knots in weaving—are often the most cherished by audiences. These stories present a  
422 reality that feels "regulated," aesthetically pleasing, and adapted to dramatic twists. They  
423 typically require minimal innovation, relying instead on familiar elements that are colorful,  
424 vivid, and sentimental. However, this creativity must remain within moderate limits to avoid  
425 descending into prolonged melodrama. Such melodrama often loses its impact when the  
426 audience anticipates a happy ending, even during the most intense situations in the plot.

427 Art critics emphasize the importance of a standardized dramatic structure for a series to  
428 be successful, in addition to featuring archetypal characters and dynamic action. For example,  
429 Russian film scholar Zorkaya notes, "Among the 'topoi' and artistic stereotypes, one can  
430 recognize the effective impact of recurring plot situations supported by both external and internal  
431 mechanisms of seriality. This is particularly evident in detective and adventure plots." Zorkaya  
432 also presents a framework developed by the renowned Russian screenwriter Viktor Shklovsky,  
433 who worked in the 1930s. She states, "We are dealing with a classic intellectual detective plot in  
434 which the primary narrative tools are the detective's observations and reflections. The plot can  
435 possess an unpredictable sense of freedom and spontaneity." In "The Tale of Secrets," Shklovsky  
436 offers a refined and precise model of the serial "unit," drawing from Conan Doyle's Sherlock  
437 Holmes stories.

438 "I. Expectation, conversation about past events, analysis.

439 II. The appearance of a client. The business part of the story.

440 III. Clues presented in the narrative. The most important are the secondary details, placed  
441 so the reader does not notice them. False leads are also provided.

442 IV. Watson gives a false interpretation of the clues.

443 V. Going to the crime scene, which often has not been committed yet, creates a duality in  
444 the narrative and blends the crime novel with the detective novel. The clues are in place.

445 VI. The state detective presents a false version; if there is no such standard detective, the  
446 newspaper, the victim, or Sherlock Holmes himself gives the false version.

447 VII. The interval is filled with Watson's reflections, as he does not understand what is  
448 happening. Sherlock Holmes smokes or plays music. Sometimes, he groups the facts without  
449 concluding.

450 VIII. The resolution, preferably unexpected. Very often, an attempted crime is used for  
451 the resolution."<sup>14</sup>

452 This scheme, as defined by Shklovsky and summarized in a brief page of literary  
453 analysis, illustrates the structure of what is referred to as the "tale of secrets."<sup>15</sup> The careful  
454 attention and precision with which the structure of the work—and even more so, the series—is

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<sup>14</sup> Shklovski, V. *Teoria Proza*. Jrug. M.–J., 1975, c. 110-111. Tsitat po: Zorkaya N.M. *Unikalnae i tiravirovannae: sredstva massavai informatsii i reproduktirovannae iskusstva*. M., Iskustvo, 1981, c. 79.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p.79-80

455 identified can serve as an excellent model, guiding viewers through the vast sea of multi-episode  
456 productions.

457 In conclusion, Zorkaya observes that: “If we shift our focus from the detective genre to  
458 the more nuanced and intimate realms of fictional and cinematic works, such as romantic  
459 adventure novels or psychological dramas—under which early cinema grouped hundreds of  
460 love-themed films—we will encounter equally structured mechanisms, the same rigid  
461 frameworks, and a consistent tendency toward uniformity and repetition of plot elements.”<sup>16</sup>

462 As a modern fairy tale, the TV series reflects a dynamic evolution of a timeless  
463 storytelling tradition. By adapting narrative structures, archetypes, and themes to suit  
464 contemporary media, these series continue to fulfill the fundamental purposes of fairy tales: to  
465 entertain, educate, and inspire. They serve as a cultural mirror, reflecting societal hopes, fears,  
466 and values while providing an escape from reality and offering moral guidance. This study  
467 highlights the importance of recognizing TV series as a legitimate and powerful medium for  
468 preserving and transforming fairy tales, ensuring their relevance for future generations.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.80