
Abstract

In US-American cultural productions, TV-series have become one of the major sites of contestation in negotiating gender relations as social practices. Transgressive series like Jil Soloway’s *Transparent* (2014—) and *I love Dick* (2016—17) for Amazon as well as more conventionally framed but women-centered formats like *Big Little Lies* (HBO, 2017—), which brings in independent director Andrea Arnold for its second season, explore the much-cited precariousness of the white middle-class male. In turn, other shows revert to established genre conventions to form a line of defense (if not of backlash) of traditional masculinity reacting to a sense of middle class precariousness: crime series and police procedurals such as *Ray Donovan* (Showtime, 2013—) or *Bosch* (Prime Video, 2014—) reference urban noir traditions for hybrid adaptations of masculinity marked by “cold intimacy” (Illouz) and an emotional economy of disaffectedness.

Within the spectrum of recent shows that reflect an intersectional engagement with issues of class and gender, this talk focuses on the emergence of serial narratives that use rural social landscapes to stage alternate models of performative and emotionally complex masculinity. Urban settings such as New York City, Chicago, Miami, and especially LA have long provided strongholds and sometimes the sole sites of dominant masculinity, whereas *Breaking Bad’s* New Mexico (AMC, 2008—13), *Sneaky Pete’s* (Amazon, 2015—) Connecticut, or *Ozarks* (Netflix, 2017—) mark an interest in social microcosms that diverge from established locales. Far from idealizing an idyllic rurality, their “ peripheral” scenarios and alternative social economies enable a creative decentering of the heroic male.