

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

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

## Keywords

*Sherlock*

TV Series

Cultural Encounters

Europeanness

Britishness

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## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

## 'EUROPEANNESS' AND CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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



## SHERLOCK AND EUROPEANNESS

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

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



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

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

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

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





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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

## ITALIAN CIRCULATION AND CRITICAL RECEPTION

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

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

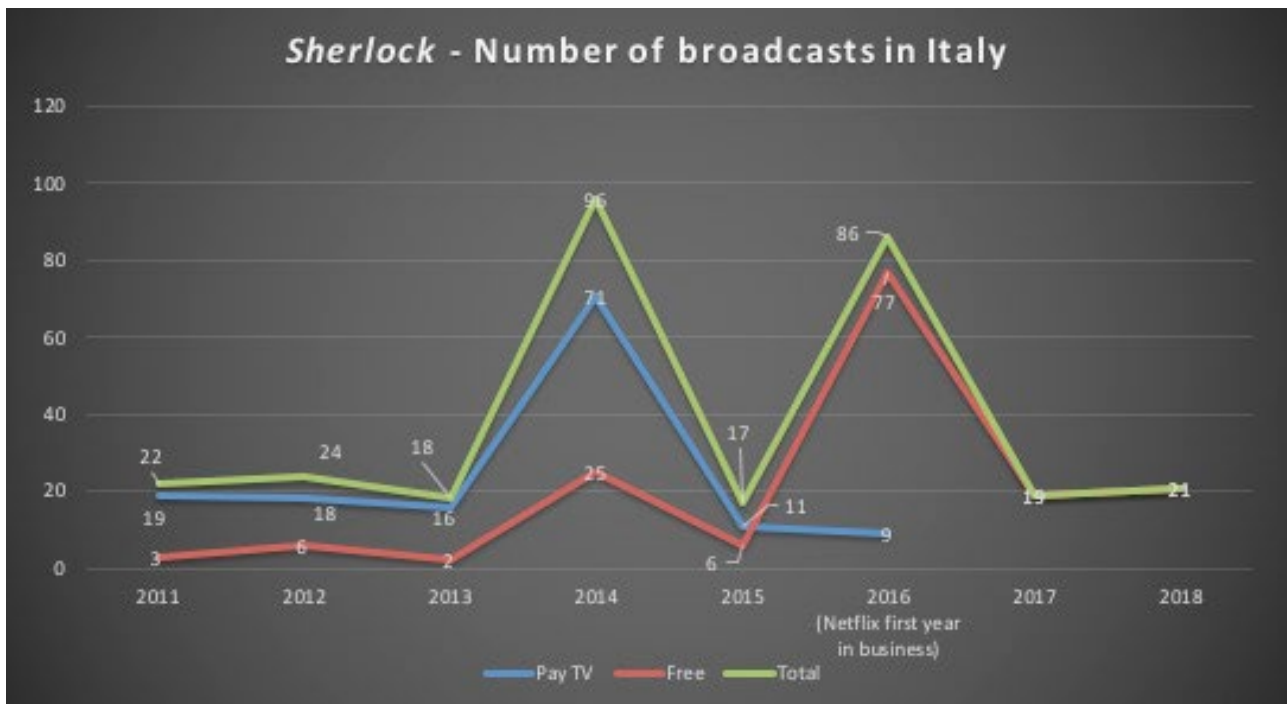
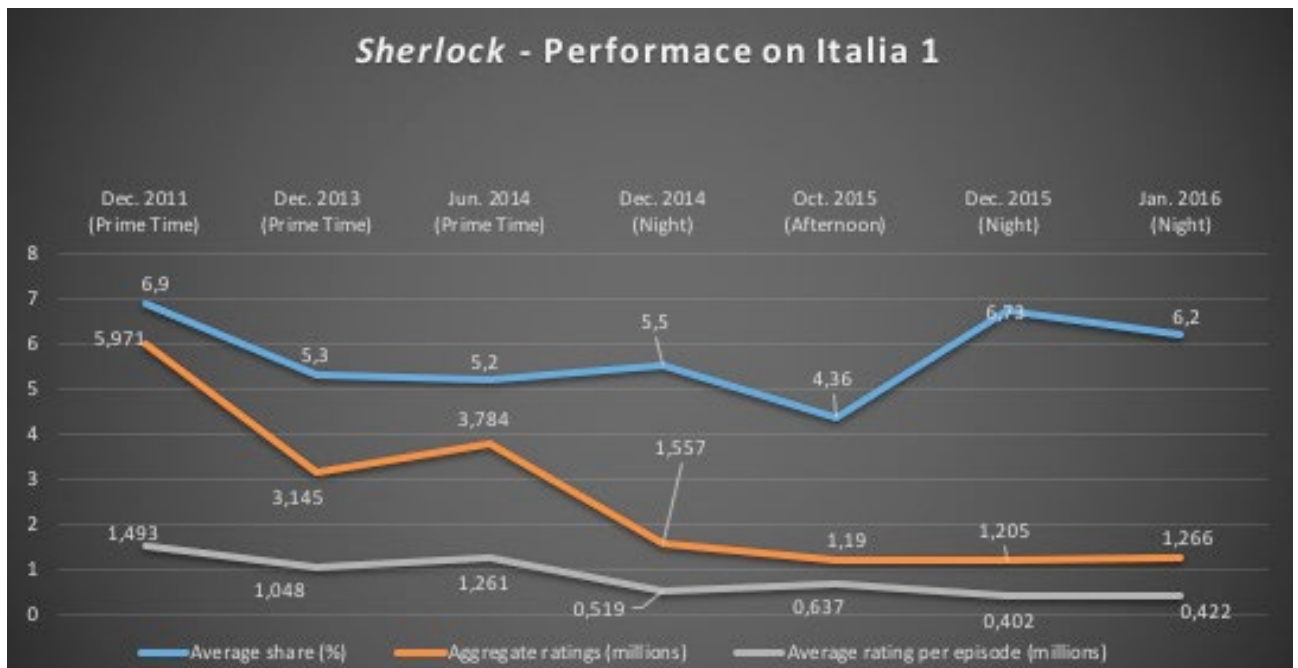


Fig. 1: Number of broadcasts of *Sherlock* on free-to-air and pay TV channels 2009–18 (Source: Auditel ratings data from [www.auditel.it](http://www.auditel.it), elaboration added).

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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





## CONCLUSION

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

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

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



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



# Notes

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

<sup>2</sup> Bonnie Brennen, *Qualitative Research Methods for Media Studies* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 204.

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>8</sup> Brexit won supporters only among people aged 55+. The 65+ turnout was around 90%. See John Curtice, 'The vote to leave the EU: Litmus test or lightning rod,' in *British Social Attitudes: The 34th Report*, ed. Elizabeth Clery, John Curtice and Roger Harding (London, UK: Natcen Social Research, 2016), pp. 1–24. Available at: [https://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39149/bsa34\\_brexit\\_final.pdf](https://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39149/bsa34_brexit_final.pdf).

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

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

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

<sup>12</sup> Luca Barra, *Palinsesto* (Roma: Laterza 2015); John Ellis, 'Scheduling: The Last Creative Act In



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

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

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

<sup>15</sup> Fligstein, *Euroclash*.

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

<sup>17</sup> Eder, 'Remembering National Memories Together', p. 209.

<sup>18</sup> Eder, p. 219.

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

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

<sup>21</sup> Weissman, p. 131.

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

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

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

<sup>25</sup> Bondebjerg, 'Bridging Cultures', p. 222.

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

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



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

<sup>28</sup> Bondebjerg *et al.*, p. 167.

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>35</sup> Creeber, 'Sherlock', p. 25.

<sup>36</sup> Evans, 'Shaping Sherlocks', p. 115.

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>42</sup> Gilroy, p. 162.

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



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

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

<sup>46</sup> Antonella Gullotti and Daniela Assorati, 'Holmes perde la pipa ma guadagna il GPS', *Sette TV*, 4 Gennaio 2013.

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

<sup>48</sup> [Our translation]. 'Sherlock viaggia nel tempo'. Renato Franco, 'Sherlock viaggia nel tempo e oggi indaga con lo smartphone', *Corriere della Sera*, February 2011, [http://www.mediaset.it/binary/98.\\$plit/C\\_22\\_rubrica\\_qm\\_210\\_grpspladx\\_gruppoallegati\\_1stAllegati\\_allegato\\_0\\_upfAllegato.pdf](http://www.mediaset.it/binary/98.$plit/C_22_rubrica_qm_210_grpspladx_gruppoallegati_1stAllegati_allegato_0_upfAllegato.pdf). See also Renato Franco, 'I Classici Stravolti dai Serial TV', *Corriere della Sera*, 23 Ottobre 2012.

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

<sup>50</sup> Franco, 'Sherlock viaggia nel tempo.'

<sup>51</sup> Giovanna Branca, 'Il detective vittoriano nella Londra di Oggi', *Il Manifesto*, 12 Gennaio 2016.

<sup>52</sup> [Our translation]. 'Tutti in ginocchio da Benedict'. Francesca D'Angelo, 'Tutti in ginocchio da Benedict', *Liberio*, 3 April 2014.

<sup>53</sup> [Our translation]. 'Gli anti-mondiali in serie'. Antonio Dipollina, 'Gli Anti-mondiali in serie', *La Repubblica*, 20 Giugno 2014.

<sup>54</sup> 'Italians lose wars as if they were football matches, and football matches as if they were wars' (Winston Churchill).

<sup>55</sup> [Our translation]. Or. Text: 'Sherlock è riuscito a diventare un classico. Uno degli esempi migliori della nuova serialità. Un modo intelligente di scrivere e reimmaginare. [...] Decisamente tra le più importanti [serie] dei primi venti anni del 2000. [...] Qualcosa di intimamente nuovo.' Gianmaria Tammaro, 'Sherlock, dieci anni fa la serie con Cumberbatch', *La Repubblica*, 27 Luglio 2020. [https://www.repubblica.it/serietv/netflix/2020/07/27/news/sherlock\\_10\\_anni-262928059/](https://www.repubblica.it/serietv/netflix/2020/07/27/news/sherlock_10_anni-262928059/) [accessed 27 November 2020].

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

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

<sup>58</sup> Roberta Pearson, 'A Case of Identity', p. 139.

<sup>59</sup> Fligstein, *Euroclash*.

<sup>60</sup> Schlesinger, 'Europeanness,' p. 17.