

**Michael P. Young**

*University of Reading, Berkshire, United Kingdom*

## **Such *Schadenfreude* – Unpacking The Medley of Caustic Humor and Politics in *Veep***

**Abstract:** This paper discusses the intersection of humor and politics from a media perspective, particularly through the lens of television aesthetics. As a growing branch of television studies, television aesthetics tends to refer to stylistic analysis but also, more rarely, to an interest in philosophical aesthetics as applied to television (Butler, 2010; Cardwell, 2013). I will focus on the genre of political satire and identify the critically acclaimed television series *Veep* (HBO, 2012–2019) as a program which exemplifies the expression and underlying values of a contemporary strain of aesthetic sensibility – *schadenfreude* – that runs through its axes of coarse disempowering humor and the portrayal of politics. Specifically, the paper explores how *Veep*'s affective reception results from humorously overlapping two of the more problematic aspects that persist in the political landscape, namely, self-interest and ineptitude.

This paper begins by reflecting on the universal prevalence of *schadenfreude*. The first section briefly traces key historical instantiations of political satire, understood as a genre that humorously derides the shortcomings and dissonances of a prevailing political milieu. The second section conceptualizes *schadenfreude* in satirical terms and underlies its philosophical foundations. The third section elaborates on the novelty of *Veep* by highlighting its gendered position as the first comedic fictional television program of a female president and outlines how its satirical modality depends on its coarse writing style and depiction of antiheroism to make the problematic political milieu pleasurable to viewers whose normative experience of politics is frequently negative. The final section considers the 'real world' implications of *Veep* as a social commentary on unsavory political personas and perspectives.

**Keywords:** humor; political satire; *schadenfreude*; television aesthetics; *Veep*.

### **Introduction**

Having lobbied tirelessly for a recount in Nevada to solidify her residency of the White House, crass president-by-default Selina Meyer of *Veep* (HBO, 2012–2019) finds herself winning the popular vote in the US presidential elections but ultimately losing to her opponent, the winsome Laura Montez. Her electoral legacy dashed, her defeat is compounded by the fact that she is beaten by another woman whose genuinely sweet and shrewdness of character contrasts so sharply with her own acerbic and

ineffectual managerial style. Yet we cannot help but laugh when, in a cruel twist of fate, Montez is also awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for freeing Tibet, a political event Selina herself maneuvered.

Such sentiment is not uncommon. Though the specific circumstances themselves vary, pleasure at the misfortune of others is something we all indulge in. This is even more pronounced when the butt of the joke happens to be someone whom we don't find particularly likable or whose opinions, beliefs or actions we disagree with. When the figure is a prominent and political one, the fall from grace – even if only temporary – assumes almost mythic proportions of satisfaction as the chastened one is stripped of their lofty patina of infallibility and reduced to their most vulnerable humanity. While such scenes are privately played out the world over amongst intimates *ad infinitum*, this paper will explore media instantiations of this decidedly disdainful sensibility.

I will suggest that the enactment of derisive sentiment regarding the governing political body, institutions or figures therein has become commonplace because criticism of their competence, necessity or tradition is exempt from ameliorative practical discourse or radical reconstructive agency. Thus, contemporary satirical narratives become a pathetic proxy for the popular expression of discontent, with creative producers (showrunners, actors, cinematographers, etc.) acting as collaborating avatars for the sustained sublimation of frustrated thoughts and feelings. As a cognitive process, *schadenfreude* actuates political satire via a discounting mechanism whereby our perceived impotence is counteracted by a performative aesthetic inversion of the political milieu that crystallizes into satirical television programs as alternative potentialities.

## A brief history of political satire

Derived from the from Latin *satura lanx* for 'medley or dish of colorful fruits,'<sup>1</sup> satire is comprehended as a didactic rhetorical (and moral) device that primarily uses the techniques of hyperbole, ridicule, irony, and derision to draw attention to and criticize prevailing socio-cultural shortcomings or individual follies and abuses of power.<sup>2</sup> Satire has been around since antiquity; from the sarcastic *Satire of the Trades* (c. 1700 BC) out of Ancient Egypt to the epicurean *Satyricon* (c. 50) by Gaius Petronius in Ancient Rome to Chaucer's sardonic *The Canterbury Tales* (1387), satire became defined as a narrative mode of exaggerated parodic commentary expressed at the expense of the powerful to effect some change in its recipients.

<sup>1</sup> There is still considerable etymological debate as to whether satire is derived from the Roman *satyr*, causing a great deal of confusion and leading Elliott to observe 'satura (which had had no verbal, adverbial, or adjectival forms) was immediately broadened by appropriation from the Greek *satyros* and its derivatives. The odd result is that the English satire comes from the Latin *satura*; but *satirize*, *satiric*, etc., are of Greek origin. By about the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD the writer of satires came to be known as *satyricus*; St. Jerome, for example, was called by one of his enemies 'a satirist in prose' (*satyricus scriptor in prosa*). Subsequent orthographic modifications obscured the Latin origin of the word satire: *satura* becomes *satyra*, and in England, by the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it was written 'satyre'. Robert C. Elliot, "Satire," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2004, <https://www.britannica.com/art/satire>, acc. May 20, 2019, 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, satire had become popular in the media, performance and the graphic arts as an artistic license to challenge political hypocrisy and institutional malfeasance without the existential threat of sedition or treason and the accompanying lengthy prison sentences that such charges would entail. As a memetic genre, satire has proven to be problematically promiscuous as it hybridizes whatever form it assimilates to produce a complex of “inquiry and provocation, play and display”<sup>3</sup> that entertains as well as edifies. Since popular political satire can vary wildly in theme, it is helpful to conceive of it as bound between tonal extremities on a continuum: *horatian* (which deploys humor to mimic comedy and illicit optimistic laughter) and *juvenalian* (which uses critique in mimesis of tragedy to illicit pessimistic indignation).<sup>4</sup> This operational characterization has been translated into film. Arguably, the most critically acclaimed and popular political satire of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – *Dr. Strangelove* (Kubrick, 1963) – was surreptitiously shot as such since director Stanley Kubrick could not escape the persistent comedic overtones of the prevailing political calamities.<sup>5</sup>

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the British political satire *In the Loop* (2009, Iannucci) follows in the horatian vein with its portrayal of “the bumbling, mendacity and self-hating subservience”<sup>6</sup> of the British political class. A docufiction filmed in cinéma vérité style, its key narrative features – rapid-fire insults, offensive obscenities and a procession of unrelentingly self-serving characters – pointedly articulates the inherently counterproductive “pettiness of democratic governance impelled by careerism, vanity and moral compromise”<sup>7</sup> Its camera motion is deliberately jerky and inelegant to cast the blithely insouciant world of politics as dirty, deceitful and down-right dangerous to the citizens it is supposedly beholden to.

Juvenalian satire does exist but has been mostly relegated to television shows that have the luxury of time to develop the complexion of their satirical signature.<sup>8</sup> ‘Real’ programs like *The Daily Show* and *Saturday Night Live* must carefully straddle the intersection of entertainment, legal liability and bitter, open-faced contempt given the litigious reactions of their invariably thin-skinned targets. Cue UK’s feeble response to EU Commission President Donald Tusk’s comment about a ‘special place in hell’ for unprepared Brexiters fulminating not because the sentiment was false but because his critique was unhelpful to negotiations.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Dustin Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Introduction* (Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 1994), 4.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire: Toward a Stylistic Model of Satirical Humour* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Norman Kagan, *The Cinema of Stanley Kubrick* (Brighton: Roundhouse Group, 1989).

<sup>6</sup> Peter Bradshaw, “In the Loop,” *The Guardian*, February 17, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> A. O. Scott, “War of Words, Misspoken and Spun,” *The New York Times*, July 24, 2009, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Juvenalian films are much rarer given the rhetorical skill needed to pull them off. Noteworthy (but not necessarily commercially successful) examples include *Animal Farm* (Stephenson, 1999) and *1984* (Radford, 1984), both adaptations of George Orwell’s or Kubrick’s *A Clockwork Orange* (1971).

<sup>9</sup> Eline Schaart, “Donald Tusk: ‘Special place in hell’ for those who backed Brexit with no plan,” *Politico*, February 6, 2019, [https://www.politico.eu/article/\\_\\_\\_trashed-21/](https://www.politico.eu/article/___trashed-21/), acc. May 20, 2019.

## Comprehending *Schadenfreude*

The term *schadenfreude* is a borrowing from the German compound *Schaden* 'misfortune or damage' and *Freude* 'joy', first attested to in the satirical *Biblia Parellelo Harmonico Exegetica*<sup>10</sup> and again in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.<sup>11</sup> In these texts, *schadenfreude* is understood as 'malicious enjoyment derived from observing someone else's misfortune' (OED), though it did not enter the English lexicon until 1852 in the philological treatise *Study of Words* (Trench). *Schadenfreude* has a rarely uttered direct English equivalent – *epicaricacy* – which is attested to by Aristotle but only first appears in English in the 20<sup>th</sup> century from the Greek compound ἐπιχαίρεκακία (*epichairekakia*), from ἐπί ἐπι 'upon,' χαρά *chara* 'joy' and κακόν *kakon* 'evil'.<sup>12</sup>

The philosophical underpinnings of *schadenfreude* are as unsavory as its definition suggests. Trench first lamented that *schadenfreude* "reflects a degraded moral interiority"<sup>13</sup> and indeed, the compound word represents a metaphysical ontology that is as negative and it is universal. Extant research suggests the predisposition of low self-esteem increases the experience of *schadenfreude* when mediated by a high-achiever and attenuated by the opportunity to self-affirm one's beliefs and views.<sup>14</sup> However, a mirthful mood, feelings of strong intergroup identification and the persuaded exclusion of outliers,<sup>15</sup> envy<sup>16</sup> and a complex sense of justice entailing subjective concepts of deservingness, hypocrisy, and positive self-evaluation<sup>17</sup> complicate the experience of *schadenfreude*.

---

<sup>10</sup> Christian Friedrich Wilisch, *Biblia Parellelo Harmonico Exegetica: that is, the Whole Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments, which agrees with itself and declares itself self-explanatory* (Freiburg: Christian Mattai, 1742). Full title: *Biblia Paralela-Harmonico-Exegetica, that is: the whole Holy Scriptures Old and New Testament, which agree with themselves, and self-explanatory: After the most accurate examples of the German translation of Blessed D. Martin Luther, With its prefaces and marginal notes, Further With correct divisions of each book and chapter, also short biographies of each Biblical Scripture, Especially with printed parallels and instruction Their harmony and agreement, more clearly Indication of the examples of Christ, many uses, including the chronology, description of the countries and cities, their people and their families, also some to explain the salvation.*

<sup>11</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (Berlin: Johann Friedrich Unger, 1795).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Peter Novobatsky, and Shea Ammon, *Depraved and Insulting English* (Orlando: Harcourt Books, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> Jane Hu, "A Joyful & Malicious History Of 'Schadenfreude,'" *The Awl*, October 20, 2011, <https://www.theawl.com/2011/10/a-joyful-malicious-history-of-schadenfreude/>, acc. August 29, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Wilco W. Dijk, Guido M. van Koningsbruggen, Jaap W. Ouwerkerk, Yoka M. Wesseling, "Self-Esteem, Self-Affirmation, and Schadenfreude," *Emotion* 11, 6 (2011): 1445–49.

<sup>15</sup> Mina Cikara, "Intergroup Schadenfreude: Motivating Participation in Collective Violence," *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences* 3 (2015): 12–17.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Richard Smith, Terence Turner, Ron Garonzik, Colin Leach, Vanessa Urch-Druskat, and Christine Weston, "Envy and Schadenfreude," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 22, 2 (1996): 158–68.

<sup>17</sup> Wilco W. Dijk and Jaap W. Ouwerkerk, eds., *Schadenfreude: Understanding Pleasure at the Misfortune of Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

## Veep

One current political satire on television that demonstrates that the values of *schadenfreude* are alive and active in political satire. *Veep* (HBO, 2012–2019) is an American television series Iannucci developed as an adaptation of his British sitcom *The Thick of It* (BBC, 2005–2012). It stars Julia Louis-Dreyfus as vice president (and later president) of the United States Selina Meyer.<sup>18</sup> The series follows Selina and her staff as they try to navigate the political system without getting entangled in the brinkmanship of the US government.

Perhaps the most salient feature of *Veep*'s style that contributes to its critical reception is its acidic and vulgar writing style. Iannucci, whose point of view was informed by his extensive research on erstwhile president Lyndon Johnson, remarks that "once he becomes VP, he's sort of sitting in his office waiting for a phone call. [...] That's what makes the vice presidency interesting from a comedy point of view."<sup>19</sup> These combine to create early Selina as a character who spends most episodes waiting around to speak to the President and transcending of the traditional joke format to condense as many crude insults as possible to her colleagues and underlings into thirty minutes.

*Veep* mockingly satirizes the desire of the American populace to believe that they still live in a democracy and that the 'American Dream' – the idea that through hard work and perseverance, equality of opportunity to prosper and pursue their own happiness – is still a realistic proposition. Even despite the inconvenient facts of unequal wealth distribution, corporate welfare and personhood, disenfranchisement, election buyouts and systemic discrimination. But why do they believe this? Selina says 'you know why? Because they're ignorant and they're dumb as shit. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is a democracy.'

Protagonist Selina is especially engaging because she convincingly assumes the mantle of the antiheroine. Being disgusted by the working class, baldly unethical and unapologetically narcissistic makes her extremely unlikeable but also supremely entertaining to watch because we are not used to seeing a woman in a such a powerful position who repeated fails due to her poor judgment without it being considered representative of actual female leadership. Selina is obsessed with consolidating power and advancing her own career to the detriment of everyone else and she is not above resorting to corruption to achieve her ambitions to control public perception and establish her legacy.

<sup>18</sup> While I would love to say that my own taste is sufficient justification to include *Veep* here, in fact the show is immensely successful, having been nominated six years in a row for the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Comedy Series, winning the award for its fourth, fifth, and sixth seasons. A long-standing comedic veteran especially known for her work on *Seinfeld* (NBC, 1989–1998), lead actress Louis-Dreyfus has won a record-breaking six consecutive Primetime Emmy Awards (that's one for every year since the programme debuted, three Screen Actors Guild Awards, two Critics' Choice Television Awards, a Television Critics Association Award, and five consecutive Golden Globe nominations. Moreover, in 2018 she received America's highest comedy honour, the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor.

<sup>19</sup> Meredith Blake, "Armando Iannucci talks political satire and new HBO series 'Veep,'" *LA Times*, April 20, 2012. <https://latimesblogs.latimes.com/showtracker/2012/04/armando-ianucci-hbos-veep.html>, acc. May 20, 2019, 11.

Because she is so opportunistic, Selina is not above using her sexuality against her opponents, making all sorts of unsavory deals (e.g. assuaging the oil lobby to get her clean environment initiative passed) or leveraging her connections and wealth to exempt her from responsibility for actions that would have us 'normal' people thrown in jail. As such, Selina is not a product of her gender, nor are female leaders portrayed as incompetent due to their femaleness. Female characters within the *Veep* storyworld are afforded the same opportunities as men. They can be corrupt, indifferent, calculating or noble; their gender does not determine their path in life or in politics. Instead, they are rendered as multifaceted and interesting, if terrible people.

## Discussion

*Veep* is therefore significant for a medley of reasons. In the first instance, the show may be considered historical because it is the first comedic television portrayal of a female US president. It is necessary to qualify both comedic and television because there have been other female presidents in television dramas *House of Cards* (2011–2018), *Commander in Chief* (ABC, 2005–2006) and *Quantico* (CBS, 2015–2018), to name a few) and there have been two female presidents in comedic films – *Mars Attacks!* (Tim Burton, 1996) and *Mafia!* (Jim Abrams, 1998). What is most interesting is in all these cases, either the programs are short-lived (one season) once the woman becomes POTUS or is simply considered a commercial or ratings failure by the production company. It is only with *Veep* that we get a sustained, entertaining and commercially viable lead female protagonist who is as comic as she is believable, and which is rendered legible by a postfeminist ideology that no longer conceives of occupations in terms of traditional gender roles but merely one's ability (or lack thereof in *Veep*) to perform its functions.

Further, we may say that our reading of *Veep* is premised on a novel aesthetic conceit of claustrophobic intimacy in as much as the show only has one main character. Moreover, the dialogue generally occurs in whispers, hushed tones, close-ups and oblique medium shots and usually in the walk and talk exposition technique that emphasizes its proximate and frenetic pacing. The theme "going around in circles" is played out throughout the series to exemplify that people don't change even when it would be 'good' for them and takes a 'dim view of government, depicting it as a place where nothing, but nothing gets done, or can get done ... because of the incessant interruptions from the people, and the media that the government is governing."<sup>20</sup>

Since caustic and offensive insults from Selina are so common throughout the show, the style can be described as a fast-paced layered satire only lightly steeped in realism and topped with heaving dollop of farce. It arcs at least three incidental plots simultaneously, effectively leaving the audience with barely any time to catch their

<sup>20</sup> Guy Jackson and Michael Ferris, "Spec Writing Roadmap for VEEP," *Screenplay.com*, [https://www.screenplay.com/mferris\\_TV\\_veep](https://www.screenplay.com/mferris_TV_veep), par. 9, acc. August 29, 2019.

breath let alone become distracted. Indeed, one of the wittiest aspects of *Veep*'s writing is that in exacting revenge on the incompetent political powers that be, it also takes aim at an enabling public (i.e. viewers) that repeatedly fails to hold our elected officials into account for undoubtedly stupid and lazy reasons. So while it is uncertain whether we as viewers get all the jokes, it is guaranteed that *Veep* is always poking fun at us.

## Conclusion

When *Veep* first aired in 2012 we were initially afforded the chance to laugh at the inane workings and missteps of a warped version of the American body politic with a casual and dismissive cheekiness. The show was funny because things couldn't really that bad in Washington, so it was ok to laugh at the foibles of the characters who were running the country. Yet, since the election of Donald Trump in 2016, the shambolic policies and behaviors of the government are displayed daily. We never know what rambling tweet will next come from a president who appears to be as out of touch with reality as one can be without being declared legally insane. In this current state of affairs, *Veep* simultaneously functions as parody since the president and his administration have made it difficult to differentiate reality from fiction. This raises an existential question: what becomes of political satire when the real-world situation it is based on is no longer funny? Tragic events such as ripping children from their parents and throwing them in cages, comfortably consorting with murderous authoritarian regimes or referring to neo-nazis as 'good people' exempt themselves from humor for all but the cruelest and soulless persons. Perhaps it is no surprise then that that *Veep* has decided its next season will be its last as it cannot sustain its fictional conceit in such a fraught political climate.

Although other stylistic elements compound its affectivity, *Veep* works because it fuses the comedy of horatian satire with the overt criticism of juvenelian satire as a hybrid genre that uses sardonic self-reflexivity to tap into and reflect the national mood. While its cynical tone and political commentary entail generous farce, its dependence on form and structure rather than plot renders *Veep* as a menippean satire that mixes distinct comedic traditions, embodies America's venal political cluelessness and compels us to seriously questions the political milieu. Perhaps more importantly, it shows that good jokes have a punchline but the best jokes have us as the punchline.

## References

- Blake, Meredith. "Armando Iannucci talks political satire and new HBO series 'Veep.'" *LA Times*, April 20, 2012. <https://latimesblogs.latimes.com/showtracker/2012/04/armando-ianucci-hbos-veep.html>. Accessed May 20, 2019.
- Bradshaw, Peter. "In the Loop." *The Guardian*, February 17, 2009.
- Cardwell, Sarah. "Television Aesthetics: Stylistic Analysis and Beyond." In *Television Aesthetics and Style*, edited by J. Jacobs and S. Peacock, 23–44. New York and London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. New York: Penguin Books, 2005 [1387].
- Cikara, Mina. "Intergroup Schadenfreude: Motivating Participation in Collective Violence." *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences* 3 (2015): 12–17. doi: 10.1016/j.cobeha.2014.12.007
- Dijk, Wilco W. and Jaap W. Ouwerkerk, eds. *Schadenfreude: Understanding Pleasure at the Misfortune of Others*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Elliot, Robert C. "Satire." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2004. <https://www.britannica.com/art/satire>. Accessed May 20, 2019.
- von Goethe, Johann Wolfgang. *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. Berlin: Johann Friedrich Unger, 1795.
- Griffin, Dustin. *Satire: A Critical Introduction*. Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 1994.
- Hu, Jane. "A Joyful & Malicious History Of 'Schadenfreude'." *The Awl*, October 20, 2011. <https://www.theawl.com/2011/10/a-joyful-malicious-history-of-schadenfreude/>. Accessed August 29, 2019.
- Jackson, Guy and Ferris, Michael. "Spec Writing Roadmap for VEEP." *Screenplay.com*. [https://www.screenplay.com/mferris\\_TV\\_veep](https://www.screenplay.com/mferris_TV_veep). Accessed August 29, 2019.
- Kagan, Norman. *The Cinema of Stanley Kubrick*. Brighton: Roundhouse Group, 1989.
- LaMarre, Heather L., Kristen D. Landreville, Dannagal Young, Nathan Gilkerson. "Humor Works in Funny Ways: Examining Satirical Tone as a Key Determinant in Political Humor Message Processing." *Mass Communication and Society*, 17, 3 (2014): 400–23. doi: 10.1080/15205436.2014.891137
- Wilsch, Cristian Friedrich. *Biblia Parelela Harmonico Exegetica: that is, the Whole Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments, which agrees with itself and declares itself self-explanatory*. Freiburg: Christian Mattai, 1742.
- Novobatsky, Peter and Ammon Shea. *Depraved and Insulting English*. Orlando: Harcourt Books, 2001.
- Petronius. *The Satyricon*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2012.
- Satire of the Trades*. Transliteration after Hans-Wolfgang Helck. *Die Lehre des Dw' -Htjj*. Wiesbaden. 1790 [c. 1700 BC].
- Schaart, Eline. "Donald Tusk: 'Special place in hell' for those who backed Brexit with no plan." *Politico*, February 6, 2019. [https://www.politico.eu/article/\\_trashed-21/](https://www.politico.eu/article/_trashed-21/). Accessed May 20, 2019

*Schadenfreude*. Oxford English Dictionary. <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/schadenfreude>. Accessed May 20, 2019.

Scott, A. O. "War of Words, Misspoken and Spun." *The New York Times*, July 24, 2009.

Simpson, Paul. *On the Discourse of Satire: Toward a Stylistic Model of Satirical Humour*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2003.

Smith, Richard, Terence Turner, Ron Garonzik, Colin Leach, Vanessa Urch-Druskat, and Christine Weston. "Envy and Schadenfreude." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 22, 2 (1996): 158–68.

van Dijk, Wilco W., Guido M. van Koningsbruggen, Jaap W. Ouwerkerk, Yoka M. Wesseling. "Self-Esteem, Self-Affirmation, and Schadenfreude." *Emotion* 11, 6 (2011): 1445–49. doi: 10.1037/a0026331

## Film and Television References

*Commander in Chief*. Created by Rod Lurie. Burbank: Touchstone Television, 2005–2006.

*The Daily Show*. Created by Madeleine Smithberg and Lizz Winstead. New York City: NEP Studio 52, 1999 – present.

*Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*. Directed by Stanley Kubrick. London: Hawk Films, 1964.

*House of Cards*. Created by Beau Willimon. Beverley Hills: Media Rights Capital, 2013–2018.

*In the Loop*. Directed by Armando Iannucci. London: BBC Films, 2009.

*Mafia!* Directed by Jim Abrahams. Burbank, Touchstone Pictures, 1998.

*Mars Attacks!* Directed by Tim Burton. Burbank: Warner Bros., 1996.

*Quantico*. Created by Joshua Safran. Burbank: ABC Studios, 2015–2018.

*Saturday Night Live*. Created by Lorne Michaels. New York City: Broadway Video, 1981 – present.

*Seinfeld*. Created by Larry David and Jerry Seinfeld. Los Angeles: Castle Rock Entertainment, 1989–1998.

*The Thick of It*. Created by Armando Iannucci. London: BBC Four, 2005–2012.

*Veep*. Created by Armando Iannucci. New York City: HBO, 2012–2019.

Article received: May 10, 2019

Article accepted: July 6, 2019

Original scholarly article