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## Dialects of nostalgia: *Downton Abbey* and English identity

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This article explores both Englishness and nostalgia in the period drama, *Downton Abbey* (Julian Fellowes, ITV, 2010–). The story of the Earl of Grantham and his family engage the viewer's emotions by recreating a by-gone era, which could actually stir an acute reflexive nostalgia. Given its popularity, we will explore the ideological use of nostalgia for this contemporary performance of Englishness. Through a close narrative analysis, we will further analyse the meanings of both English estates and social class in the series. Thus, we will see how instances of collective nostalgia may reveal underlying cultural values.

**Keywords:** *Downton Abbey*; Englishness; nostalgia; identity; emotions; TV series; visual narrative; popular culture

The Englishman feels very deeply and reasons very little. (Ford Maddox Ford, *The Spirit of the People*, 1907 – quoted in Giles & Middleton, 1995, p. 46)

So I grew to feel that the grandeur belonged to the past;

that I had come to England at the wrong time;

that I had come too late to find the England...

I had created in my fantasy. (Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival*, 1988, p. 130)

This article explores the idea of Englishness and the relevance of nostalgia in the highly successful period drama, *Downton Abbey* (Julian Fellowes, ITV, 2010). *Downton Abbey* illustrates, through rich dialogue and sumptuous settings, very classical meanings of Englishness. Indeed, its popular success – with more than 10 million viewers in the UK during the first season – calls us to analyse the elements that have led to that popularity, as well as the ideological function it may perform. Specifically, we suggest that Julian Fellowes' deployment of nostalgia as a form of Englishness epitomized by the country estate produces the kind of narrative that simultaneously evokes an idealized past and challenges our contemporary collective memory of that period.

This story of love, money and Englishness is articulated as a serial narrative, in the form of a historical or costume drama, a genre that has produced some of the most prestigious outputs of British television: 'they sell well internationally, with large audiences at home, and ... attract co-finance from abroad' (Bennett, Boyd-Dowman, Mercer, & Woollacott, 1981, p. 285). This costume drama, a big-budget, sumptuous

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production, has reached critical success, with millions of faithful viewers in Britain and worldwide and many prestigious awards in tow. The popularity of this show might be directly related to its success in fostering a particular kind of nostalgia in its British viewers and its wider international following. To discuss this, we will focus on the representation of the Crawley family's efforts to preserve their home, Downton Abbey, and on the upheaval of social class this requires, both on a textual level (for the characters) and on an extratextual level (for the viewers).

As Colin McArthur argues, 'all television (including drama) fulfils an ideological function and there will be a relationship between the popularity of a programme and the extent to which it reinforces the ideological position of the majority of audience' (1981, p. 288). *Downton Abbey* arguably furthers the narrative portrayal of a form of Englishness popular in British television since the mid-1960s. Many of those TV series have been pivotal in shaping English notions about itself and projecting them to the world. The history of British television series includes successful and long-running shows such as *Coronation Street* (Granada, 1970–), *Eastenders* (BBC, 1985–), *The Last of Summer Wine* (BBC, 1973–2010) or the more recent *Lark Rise to Candleford* (BBC, 2008–2011), among others. In the 1970s, the extraordinarily popular television series *Upstairs, Downstairs* (LWT, 1971–1975) initiated a tradition of glamorous portrayals of the English. This show might be considered an immediate predecessor to *Downton Abbey*, both in its general plotline and because of its popularity in Britain and abroad. As Carl Freedman (1990–1991) explains, *Upstairs, Downstairs* created a powerful effect of historical and social reality that was perhaps unprecedented in original TV drama because it gratified an intense English nostalgia: *Upstairs* projected 'a mythic image of an idealized Edwardian and post-Edwardian England' (p. 82). Further, he notes that:

the choice of an Edwardian setting is by no means an accident. For that era, as the *tempus classicum* of liberal England – with its refined elegance, its unbounded self-confidence, its apparently secure global centrality, its middle-class prosperity with all the attendant visual sumptuousness – provides precisely the raw materials needed to construct the abstractly attractive image of Englishness. (Freedman, 1990–1991, p. 101)

*Downton* can be considered as one of those 'classy serials [that] tend to project a National Trust image of England and Englishness' (Brandt 4). In its plot and stylized representation, it appears more similar to literary adaptations such as the highly successful series *Jewel in the Crown* (Granada, January to April, 1984) or *Brideshead Revisited* (Granada, October to December, 1981). It certainly shares many characteristics of the heritage film. In Andrew Higson's discussion of British heritage films of the 1980s, such as *Chariots of Fire* (1981), *Another Country* (1984), *A Passage to India* (1985) and *A Room with a View* (1986), he argues that they constitute a cycle of films which are essentially conservative and nostalgic in their mode of address:

The heritage films ... provide a very different response to developments in Thatcherite Britain. By turning their backs to the industrialized, chaotic present, they nostalgically reconstruct an imperialist and upper-class Britain. ... The films thus offer apparently more settled and visually splendid manifestations of an essentially pastoral national identity and authentic culture. 'Englishness' as an ancient and natural inheritance, Great Britain, the United Kingdom. (Higson, 1993, p. 110)

*Brideshead* and *Jewel*, as Charlotte Brundson argues, are uncontroversial signifiers of quality mainly because they incorporate already established taste codes of literature, theatre, interior decoration, interpersonal relationships and nature: 'Formally unchallenging, [...] they produce a certain image of England and Englishness which is untroubled by contemporary division and guaranteed aesthetic legitimacy' (Brundson, 1990, p. 86). In a similar way, Freedman argues that heritage films like *A Room with a View*, display:

an image of splendid Englishness that offers all the ruling-class elegance and beauty of the Edwardian age cleansed of the socialist, feminist, and other unpleasantnesses of Edwardian politics and society. In that image, the English Imaginary achieves an almost unambiguous triumph. (1990–1991, p. 103)

Considering the cultural work of TV series today, it seems relevant to analyse the use of nostalgia in these performances of Englishness. Nostalgia can be considered both a cultural phenomenon and a personally subjective experience, thus operating in both a public and private domain (Wilson, 2005 pp. 30–31). Specifically, collective nostalgia can promote a feeling of community that works to downplay or deflect potentially divisive social differences (class, race, gender and so on), even if only temporarily (Bennett, 1996, p. 5). When nostalgia is produced and experienced collectively, it can promote a sense of 'we', thus serving the purpose of forging a national identity (Wilson, p. 31); collective nostalgia recognizes something (a person, a time period, an event, a cultural object, etc.) as *good* and worthy of emotional investment and, in that recognition, positively evaluates the past. Indeed, nostalgia is really less about the past than it is about the present; in this regard, Benedict Anderson's pivotal work that explains how narrative is related to national identity and nationalism in *Imagined communities* (1983) could help us frame the past as *Downton Abbey* imagines it, idealized through memory and desire. Though nostalgia depends on the irrecoverable nature of the past for its emotional impact and appeal, its affective power derives from its quality to transform the idealized (and therefore always absent) past into a site of immediacy, presence and authenticity (Hutcheon, 2000, p. 195).

Nostalgia is a very frequent trope in contemporary English literary and cultural production. Further, much English social criticism, both radical and conservative, has been couched in a complex discourse of nostalgia, articulated within a dichotomy of the country versus the city, or analogically, of the past against the present (Baucom, p. 175–176). Specifically, as Christine Berberich argues, Englishness and nostalgia are two associated concepts, as 'Englishness inevitably appears tinged with nostalgia and consistently evokes pictures of an older, more tranquil England, an England of times gone by' (2006, 207). It does not seem surprising, therefore, that *Downton Abbey* gained its popularity at a time when the English sense of ethnicity suffers from a 'loss and mourning for the cultural unity and centrality they once had' (Hutcheon, 2000, p. 202). Moreover, following Svetlana Boym's (2001) distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia, *Downton Abbey* seems to promote the latter type. Its emphasis is not placed on an evocation of a national past and future, but on individual and cultural memory. Reflective nostalgia does not pretend to rebuild the mythical place called home (Boym, 2001, p. 50): 'it is enamored of distance, not of the referent itself' (Stewart, 1984, p. 145). It does take itself too seriously (as restorative nostalgia does), so it can be ironic and humorous. As we will see later, some of the characters in *Downton Abbey* perform this ironic function regarding a nostalgic view of English national culture.

Understanding national identity as an image shaped by emotions, rather than as an objective reality, narratives provide a particularly suitable vehicle for both its creation and expression; as Ian Baucom argues, ‘a sense of collective identity rarely, if ever, proceeds from stipulation. It is, instead, an affective condition’ (p. 12). In this regard, the mass media are especially apt to help create imagined communities through usually targeting a mass audience or generalizing and addressing citizens as the public (see Anderson, 1983). As Jeffrey Richards explains:

Cinema and latterly television have played a vital role in defining, mythifying and disseminating national identity ... By the 1960s, television had definitively taken over from the cinema as the mass medium and it is to television and thenceforth that we must look for projections of the national image. (1997, xii, p. 353)

It is significant that *Downton Abbey* opens just before the Great War, a time which proved to be a major turning point in the development of the concept of Englishness. Though emotional restraint is stereotypically considered part of the national temperament – as opposed to emotional and sentimental ways attributed to Americans or continental Europeans – the English are especially apt at creating narratives that stir and elicit emotions associated with the nation’s past. As Kate Fox puts it, the English are ‘chronically nostalgic’ (2005, p. 210). Social and cultural phenomena such as the Raj revival, country house fetishism (Baucom, 1999, p. 19) and ‘Victoriana’ (Kaplan, 2007, p. 5) serve the purpose of providing an emotional response to a generalized need.

In what follows, we will analyse how this is represented in *Downton* characters. Within the tradition of television studies, there are four distinct, but often interrelated methods of study, including textual analysis, audience reception studies, institutional analysis and historical analysis (Creeber, 2006; McKee, 2003). The present analysis is textual and specifically relies on narrative theory to uncover the work that *Downton Abbey* does in establishing a living dialogue on national identity. As Mittell also explains, narrative theory is a flexible tool, useful for analysing elements of story-telling across a wide range of media (2007, p. 156). In this regard, we make a close reading of the story, basing our comments and conclusions on the transcript.

The narrative of *Downton Abbey* centres on the Crawleys, a wealthy, aristocratic English family and their experiences in the first decades of the twentieth century. The story opens in 1912 with the sinking of the Titanic, on which the heir of Downton Abbey dies. Because the Earl of Grantham, Robert (Hugh Bonneville) and his wife Cora (Elizabeth McGovern) have no sons (they have three daughters whose love lives are integral to the story), they find that the next male heir is a distant cousin, a middle-class lawyer named Matthew Crawley (Dan Stevens). The plot revolves around the themes of love and money, through stories of marriage, social class, a myriad of characters and rich family life. The sinking of the Titanic, set at the beginning of the story, symbolizes the disappearance of an old way of life. The episodes in the series depict the reconfiguration of the English aristocracy, its relationships with bourgeois values and what it meant for the people whose lives were structured by it. With the old way of life dying, a new one rises up: modernity enters Downton Abbey (in the form of electricity and telephones), the house serves as a hospital during the War, and the Crawley daughters find their choices widening.

The Downton Abbey estate itself, the heart of the story, serves an especially important role in this analysis. As Anderson (1983) argues, what we traditionally think of as national communities are in reality imagined communities not based on territory but

rather on mental constructs. The English estate, 'a man's castle', is a powerful, omnipresent mental construct and a symbol of the English national heritage. Indeed, *Downton*'s very existence and future are important catalysts for the conflicts and relationships in the plot. The series certainly epitomizes the 'cult of the country house', as David Cannadine (1989) puts it. If an Englishman's home is his castle, then the possibility of losing *Downton* implies more than merely the loss of property: it becomes a threat to personal identity. The Crawley family has owned this Yorkshire estate for generations; Lord Grantham's own sense of the world is closely linked to the place and property he has inherited and will pass on to his heir.

This intense identification can be best understood in a larger cultural context, where locale makes nostalgic discourse on English national identity possible by making the past visible, rendering it present. Specific settings such as the country house effectively serve as sites in which the present re-creates the past, 'as a "contact zone" in which succeeding generations serially destabilize the nation's acts of collective remembrance' (Baucom, p. 5). Moreover, the country house as a nostalgic symbol has been a constant feature in English narratives. The genre of country house novels attest to it: from Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, E.M. Forster's *Howard's End* or Darlington Hall in Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (up to the contemporary success of many popular novelists, such as Kate Morton, who feature the historic English houses, among others), the country house has been associated with the English character and sense of identity. Indeed, much tourism revenue has been generated in recent years by opening up large English estates to the public (Fox, p. 210).

*Downton Abbey* plays upon this fascination by giving viewers a look into one such estate, only that in this case viewers are also transported into a story with its proper ethos. Such a journey may have a powerful influence on the process of re-imagining Englishness, as *Downton* becomes one of those places where 'an identity-preserving, identity-enchanting, and identity-transforming aura lingers ... places in which England can locate and secure its identity' (Baucom, p. 19). In this context, *Downton Abbey* stands as a very powerful symbol of nationality and a heritage worth sacrificing for and preserving.

The visual beauty displayed around *Downton* may also stir acute feelings of nostalgia among its viewers. *Downton* stands as a visual construction of an image of Englishness composed of numerous non-verbal signifiers: clothing (for all characters), lawns, furniture, tableware, linens, crystal lamps, etc., as well as exquisite social manners or the beauty of the English landscape on which the camera lingers so lovingly and effectively. As Freedman explains regarding visual exquisiteness in *A Room with a View*:

Each signifier is primarily a sensual experience, to seduce and absorb the viewer in delighted contemplation of visual gorgeousness rather than to provoke thought or questioning; yet at the same time it contains just enough cognitive substance to convey the idea of England, England in an earlier and probably happier era. (1990–1991, p. 99)

All the regular characters seem to be devoted to the high standards that this beauty demands, from the cleanliness and innumerable rules of protocol and decoration on the part of the downstairs servants or in the clothing that has to be chosen for each time of the day by the members of the Crawley family.

In fact, the storylines for each episode revolve around the *Downton* household and their relationships, both upstairs and downstairs. This grand estate is inhabited by two different social classes, masters and servants, who are portrayed, not without social



controversy, as living in peaceful coexistence. As a contributor to *Forbes Magazine* explains, 'To portray Lord and Lady Grantham as anything other than drunks, fools, hypocrites or either sexpots or sexual glaciers ... is itself an act of cultural rebellion' (Bowyer, 2013). Even in similar series such as *Upstairs, Downstairs*, the aristocrats were shown more morally ambiguous than the entirely sympathetic members of the Crawley family. In order to analyse in what ways this visual narrative enacts any kind of rebellion, we need to explore the portrayal of social class in the series.

The primary crisis in the plot is provoked by the fact that Downton cannot be inherited by a woman because of an entail in the will set up by the Earl of Grantham's father. This entail was set up before Cora had passed her child-bearing years, when she was expected to bear a son. She did not, however, and so the estate had to be passed to the closest male heir, a cousin named Patrick. Mary Crawley (Michelle Dockery), the eldest daughter, was meant to marry the future heir, to preserve the estate and satisfy all parties. With Patrick's death, much dialogue is dedicated to finding a way out of the entail and passing the estate directly to Mary.

The Dowager Countess, Lord Grantham's mother (Maggie Smith), supposedly the upholder of tradition, rebels against the entail and complains of how absurd it is for a woman in 'this day and age' to be robbed of her property. Lady Violet is, in fact, one of the most attractive characters in the series. She is surprisingly modern and able to adapt when the situation requires it. Moreover, the fact that she is played by Maggie Smith is a key paratextual strategy. Since she is so well known in the UK, we see Maggie Smith actually playing a role. Through the humorous tone she adds to the situations, the audience is able to also perceive an ironic tinge in the upholding of the supposedly old British ways. Some of her classist comments refer to the servants: 'It always happens when you give these little people power, it goes to their heads like strong drink'. Mostly, she is loved by the audience for her witty comments on most dramatic situations. When she is told the Turk diplomat had died in Downton, she says: 'Last night! He looked so well. Of course it would happen to a foreigner. No Englishman would dream of dying in someone else's house'. Moreover, she voices the social resistant to women's enrolment in professions. When Sybil tries to get permission to train as a nurse, she readily comments on it:

Lady Grantham: 'Why would you want to go to a real school? You're not a doctor's daughter'.

Sybil: 'Nobody learns anything from a governess, apart from French and how to curtsy'.

Lady Grantham: 'What else do you need? Are you thinking of a career in banking?'

Mary, the oldest daughter, has a very prominent position in the series as well. Seeing that the entail cannot be broken, the next heir, the lawyer Matthew Crawley, is positioned as the next logical marriage partner for Mary, setting up the first and most prominent love story and conflict. Mary's love-hate relationship with Matthew structures the first two seasons of the series, allowing *Downton Abbey* to combine the exquisite aesthetics of a good film with a popular narrative storyline. Mary's ambivalent ambition makes her the focal point of the analysis of women in *Downton Abbey*. She is very clearly on the hunt for a husband, but at the same time recognizes the cruelties of the life that awaits her. She says, 'Women like me don't have a life. We choose clothes and pay calls and work for

charity and do the Season. But really we're stuck in a waiting room until we marry' (1.4). The following dialogue seems also quite telling in this context:

Lady Mary: 'How many times am I to be ordered to marry the man sitting next to me at dinner?'

Lady Grantham: 'As many times as it takes'. (1.5)

Marriage is often referred to in the show as a woman's only choice, but yet there is a certain awareness that the world is changing. A conversation between Lady Mary and her grandmother illustrates this nicely:

Lady Mary: 'I was only going to say that Sybil is entitled to her opinions'.

Lady Violet Crawley, the Dowager Countess: 'No, she isn't until she is married – then her husband will tell her what her opinions are'. (1.6)

The three daughters are indeed caught between two worlds – a world that is passing, where women had little decision-making power, and a new world that is not really quite open to them yet.

The youngest sister, Sybil (Jessica Brown Findlay), is especially relevant in this regard. A sweet-natured young woman, she becomes interested in the women's suffrage and socialist political movements of the time. Her budding activism culminates in a wonderfully funny scene in which she shocks her entire household, including her grandmother, when she arrives at dinner in her new 'frock', flowing silk trousers. The Great War catapults her into a world of useful work in a way that does not create conflict with her family. At one point, Downton Abbey becomes a temporary military hospital for wounded officers, and as part of the 'war effort', Sybil is allowed to train as a nurse. Sybil finally marries the Irish revolutionary chauffeur for love, scandalizing her family and breaking several rules along the way, but is ultimately forgiven by all. She epitomizes the drastic change in gender roles that took place in Edwardian England.

The middle sister, Edith (Laura Carmichael), appears the most trapped in the changing times. Expected by her parents to stay home and care for them in their old age, she desperately struggles against that destiny. Unlike Mary and Sybil, Edith is consistently unlucky with men. She spends her time falling for most of the men she meets, putting herself in positions that only lead to rejection. She tried to make herself useful when Downton became a hospital, but does not ultimately follow that path. Unable to break with old ways, unable to move on to new ways of life, Edith seems to embody the frustration of many women's prospects at the time. Later in the series, she achieves some success as a writer for a newspaper, also highlighting the issue of women's work in the series.

Moreover, Cora's American identity and money complicates references to Englishness in the story. Downton Abbey was almost lost by Lord Grantham's father through gambling in an unstable market. To redeem it, Lord Grantham went hunting for a rich heiress and found Cora, a young woman from New York with an enormous inheritance. Thus, Lord Grantham made a 'deal with the devil', marrying a foreigner, to maintain his house and his Englishness, while Cora traded money for a title. Although it is clear that the couple eventually fell in love and made a happy marriage, Cora's American origins contrasts in key ways with the notion of Englishness embodied by her family. The



preservation of a particular kind of Englishness is further highlighted when Sybil marries a poor Irishman. Englishness in the series is marked by the contrast with both Irish and American characters. Another projection of Englishness is also favoured by the presence of different British accents, which, in turn also reinforce the English class divide; the Received Pronunciation of the Crawley family marks a harsh contrast with the servants' accents: from Alfred's Yorkshire accent, Mrs. Hughes's West Scot twang, to the Glaswegian Miss Shore or the Irish Miss O'Brien.

Another way in which the modern world challenges this traditional English lifestyle is through Matthew Crawley, the middle-class lawyer, who serves as the average viewer's access to this idealized world. The introduction of this character as the legal heir to Downton recreates the rags-to-riches story, opening up possibilities for a democratization of the upper classes. Because they identify with him and his widowed mother, the determined and kind Isobel, average viewers can imagine themselves entering the world of Downton and, eventually, belonging to it. Matthew's access to this world, his acceptance of their ways while maintaining his own personality, convinces viewers of the value and inherent goodness of the Downton way of life. When he first arrives to Downton, Matthew is clearly out of place. He dismisses his valet, Joseph Molesley, telling him, 'Surely you have better things to do'. When Molesley replies sheepishly that he is doing his job, Matthew notes insensitively, 'It seems a very silly occupation for a grown man' (1.2). Lord Grantham needs to make the value of their way of life explicit to Matthew:

Is that quite fair to deprive a man of his livelihood when he's done nothing wrong? Your mother derives some satisfaction from her work at the hospital, I think, some sense of self-worth? Would you really deny the same to poor old Molesley? And when you are master here, is the butler to be dismissed? Or the footmen? How many maids or kitchen staff will be allowed to stay, or must everyone be driven out? We all have different parts to play, and we must all be allowed to play them. (1.2)

Matthew, as well as the viewer, is provided with an alternative worldview that seems quite convincing, even if quite opposed to prevalent politically correct notions of social class, thus performing the ideological function of legitimizing the old English ways of life.

As Matthew serves his own tea, talks of money in polite company, insists that he will continue working (because, in his view, the care of the house cannot possibly be a full-time job), he generally offends the sensibilities of his aristocratic counterpoints. He is eventually won over, however, and convinced of the nobility and value of a way of life he once saw as obsolete and largely useless. As Lord Grantham tells Matthew:

Lord Grantham: 'You do not love the place yet'.

Matthew Crawley: 'Well, obviously, it's...'

Lord Grantham: 'No, you don't love it. You see a million bricks that may crumble, a thousand gutters and pipes that may block and leak, and stone that will crack in the frost'.

Matthew Crawley: 'But you don't?'

Lord Grantham: 'I see my life's work'. (1.2)

Then again, discussing the entail of his estate, Lord Grantham says:

My fortune is the work of others, who labored to build a great dynasty. Do I have the right to destroy their work, or impoverish that dynasty? I am a custodian, my dear, not an owner. I must strive to be worthy of the task I have been set. (1.4)

And just as Matthew begins to accept his position at Downton, not just as a step up in the world, but as a legitimate calling, the viewer concedes the validity of the life at Downton – not just for the aristocrats but also for the tenants and servants.

The experiences of the domestic service are as much a part of the plot of the series as the lives of the Downton family. The plot is equally shared by the preoccupations, worries and dealings of the butler, Mr. Carson, of Mrs. Hughes, the housekeeper and all those under their charge. This seems fitting given the fact that the role of servants in the house seems to be presented as part of the English national heritage. Since their presence makes this lifestyle possible and keeps a house like Downton running, the characters, along with the viewer, may recognize their contribution as something dignified and worth giving themselves to.

Interestingly, the character of Mr. Carson embodies one of the strongest tendencies towards maintaining the status quo, as he resists change as much as Lord Crawley does. He cares deeply for the family and all that Downton Abbey represents. Aware of what Downton has given him – he is deeply ashamed that, as a young man, he worked on the stage in dance halls – he is fiercely loyal to the family and particularly fond of Mary. Mr. Carson, as with most of the other employees at Downton, does not question the social stratification, considering their occupations as dignified work, much like another very English butler, Stevens in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*.

Overall, the story shows a very conservative view of a rather coherent world in which everyone knew their place. Episode after episode, the viewer gets the sense of an idealization of the past, together with the evocation of feelings of nostalgia for this constructed, edenic and very English, world. Aristocratic and rather elitist views are redeemed by the portrayal of human beings who, titled as they may be, seem to be well-meaning employers for a large number of servants. They live in a beautiful domestic scene, love their family and defend it well. The overall mood of the series is thus one of celebration where at least regular characters seem to know their place and accept it, reinforcing a rather nostalgic view of an English past heritage.

In conclusion, as we have seen, the evocation of nostalgia accounts for the series' success and its cultural work. The discourse of nostalgia in *Downton Abbey* allows us to analyse how an emotion may become a relevant parameter for cultural analysis. By analysing the narrative and emotional elements of this popular drama, we can make connections with broader social concerns related to national and cultural identities. As Rodríguez Salazar argues, emotions reveal cultural values, as they may point out the kind of meanings that really operate in everyday life (2008, p. 156). In this regard, popular narratives of nation in the mainstream media are relevant indicators (as well as powerful promoters) of contemporary concerns. All of this points to the fact that in our flexible modern environment, with all its attending fragmentation, we see an increasing reliance on popular media narratives for negotiating our social and cultural identities.

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