



Towards the World of a New Narrative: A Discussion on a Few TV and Web Series

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Abstract

It is imperative to understand the nature of civilization in order to recognise the idea of the deconstruction of humans as the unitary being. Freud with the three divisions of mind: Id, Ego, Super Ego, corollary to Unconscious, Subconscious, Conscious disorganised the notions of any full-fledged system that could exist in or outside the text. Along with the unitariness, the 'totalitarian' concepts of all kinds of organic wholesomeness are bound to crumble. In this scenario, accommodating the various significances of a major cultural event in the 21st century becomes problematic at the very onset. One could see the idea of the proscenium theatre and how it evolved coming to the modern scenario, the film and so on and what it conveys through performance -the whole on stage/ on screen issue involving the notion of storytelling till today -has developed and most rapidly one would say, in the last few decades. The concept of visualizing a narrative has been one of the most fascinating events that influenced human mind, and in greater perspective socio-cultural complex gauntness. In this paper we are going to discuss a few web and TV series that deal not only with the deconstruction of time-honoured designs concerning good-bad, ethical-unethical or moral-immoral but also how they provide with a more different narrative: a narrative that inclines on quote-unquote violation of norms, be that societal, moral or legal.

Keywords: Unconscious, Totalitarian, Narrative, TV series, Metanarrative.

The idea of the unitary being was deconstructed primarily by the very 1859 book of Darwin. Freud with the three divisions of mind: Id, Ego, Super Ego, corollary to Unconscious, Subconscious, Conscious disorganised the notions of any full-fledged system that could exist in or outside the text. Along with the unitariness, the 'totalitarian' concepts of all kinds of organic wholesomeness are bound to crumble. The post-war world where, *God is Dead* (Zarathustra, 2010) (as Nietzsche put it much earlier) and even the *Death of the Author*, (as Roland Barthes later proclaimed) the completeness of the 'human' thus has gradually wiped out from the face of the earth. Along with that the idea of a world of justice has also metamorphosed. The hitherto known age-old concepts of truth, trust, and even the basic coherence of such notions of wisdom and justification were put to questions since the philosophical renderings of Heidegger. In this context a sense of loss of the primordial sagacity of law and order in association with an inherent sense of good and evil, in a post-globalised world with a vignette multiplicity is evident.

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In this scenario, accommodating the various significances of a major cultural event in the 21st century becomes problematic at the very onset. Beginning from the proscenium, the idea of theatre, film and so on and what it conveys through performance -the whole on stage/ on screen issue involving the notion of storytelling till today-has evolved and most rapidly one would say, in the last few decades. The concept of visualizing a narrative has been one of the most fascinating events that influenced human mind, behaviour and in greater perspective socio-cultural complex angularities. In this paper we are going to discuss a few web and TV series that deal not only with the deconstruction of time-honoured designs concerning good-bad, ethical-unethical or moral-immoral but also how they provide with a more different narrative: a narrative that inclines on quote-unquote violation of norms, be that societal, moral or legal. Yet, the characters involving these occurrences are gaining sympathy and support from the audience worldwide. The moot point of discussion would be the idea around which the logic of the new-narrative world instead of the meta-narrative one is establishing itself so firmly creating a cultural phenomenon even, in specific cases.

The awareness of evil in every culture has its own flavour. But one singular thread that remains almost common in every story is the angle of rebelliousness. Be it biblical or Greek, the idea of oppression on part of the monarch, God, deity in short the authoritative figure and so on, plays a crucial role in understanding the receiver's situation and their actions in accordance with it. It is here, David Émile Durkheim's theory of deviance comes to play. In plain words, deviance is a sort of deviation or strongly speaking a violation of social norms that dictates and regulates the system inside it. According to Durkheim, it fundamentally is a behavioural disposition that defies institutional system with imposing conformity associated with it.

The first TV series, we would discuss is *Hannibal*, an American psychological thriller based loosely on Thomas Harris' novel's character. Releasing in 2013 this three season series is actually a psychological roller-coaster ride for the competent audience. A serial killer with an enormously enthralled mind for high culture and knowledge, the wealthy Dr. Hannibal Lecter, plays the role of a forensic psychiatrist with the FBI. He is a gourmand and that is the key to understanding one of the major features of his character. His murderous cannibalism is heightened to the level of art. The elite presentation of cooked human flesh, the detailed analyses of different foreign recipes concocting man's gut, or tongue or liver show not only Hannibal's depth of indulgence in violating what is presumed by the society as human and lust for crime but at the same time it denotes a real idealism, a steadfast love and respect for what he does, however gore.

The series portrays a peculiar bromance of Hannibal with another FBI profiler Will Graham whom he curiously enough frames first for crimes done by him and then very slowly Graham and Hannibal gets closer. An intriguing love-hate amorphousness clouds their relationship. What makes the whole storyline really interesting is the attraction of the people who are watching it towards the bloody violence that abides by the whole series. Neither broad sexuality nor so called thrilling elements but subtly crude and pure spine-chilling bone-curdling banquet metaphors have proven to be really empathizing with the audience's idea of deviance. What Hannibal is doing is pulling dust to the eyes of the great minds of the FBI, and quiet successfully one may say. His cunning affair with Will's lady-love Alana is not only immoral but illogical too. Despite that he steals the sympathy of the audience with his magnificent attributes and a probing interest in Will. He wants to consume him in every sense of the term. As a voracious lover Hannibal's ideal is to be one with his beloved. And he goes to greatest lengths in order to prove his point.

Finally his self-produced arrest too becomes a sight for showing his passion towards his boy-love Will Graham. That is precisely the point from which the line of good and bad begins to get blurred. Instead of being a single individual, Hannibal becomes a sight for superhuman antipathy against the mundane probability that runs through a profane system. It is proven that the system cannot catch this person, until and unless he is willing to surrender. The portrayal of violating the law gets involved with the question of artistic values of seeing what he estimates to be 'life'. The weird notion of beauty and affection (verging on affectation) in Hannibal gets juxtaposed with his way of expressing passion to Will whom he has hurt in every possible way just to make him a part of his own being. His desire to become one, the wish for a wholesome co-existence finds its cryptic mode through homicidal violation and apparent betrayal. Yes, it sounds pretty much a John Donne poem. Now, the concept of exposing the passionate side of the criminal, injustices mated out to him, (one may refer to the fact of the childhood trauma when he had to presumably witness the murder of his sister Misha and to consume her in their childhood place Lithuania) are very crucial to understanding the careful construction of empathy in order to justify his later deeds, so much that his murders and other heinous activities become a carnival of deviating the custom, one that cherishes at the destruction of life itself. Sometimes it is for the sake of beauty, sometimes for the sake of survival. Hannibal gradually became a social media spectacle: T-shirts, banquets and his impressive three-piece-suits progressively developed a style statement. The Fannibals (as they call themselves) are the key to apprehend the fundamental question: the perception of breaking the rules successfully obviously brings up a few more interesting points: the epitome that Hannibal follows is not made by the social order. It is not given to him. He is conditioned to it all by himself. It is purely circumstantial. His way of doing things is principally a charter of an ostracised man of power who is capable of bending the regulation at his own will. Hannibal has a conscience of his own that propagates from a peculiar sense of duty and love for order and aesthetics as we see him helping Will's previous beloved Alana Bloomlater in the narrative saying that he will take the responsibility for another murder, a death that would save Alana and a few others from a lot of trouble. It will make no new difference as he is already deemed by the system as an extremely violent person. In answer to Alana's curious question whether she can at all understand him, his answer in negative becomes the crux of the argument. It is this willpower alongside the magnetic masculine personality that drives the audience crazy reminding them probably of the numerous socio-political-economical injustices -their daily bread. A wild desire to become shackle-free, to see the unbecoming of a generalised graduated self-fitted soul in the timid scale of the society is the driving force of deviance. What one sees in Hannibal is the desolate rough self, a wishful mirror-image, if one pleases that leads to enable them live in a world of emancipation however 'criminalistically' made-believe.

While replying to Bruntière, the following lines are Durkheim's reaction to an ill-fated society and its fatally compromised norms,

The human person, whose definition serves as the touchstone according to which good must be distinguished from evil, is considered as sacred, in what one might call the ritual sense of the word. It has something of that transcendental majesty which the churches of all times have given to their Gods. It is conceived as being invested with that mysterious property which creates an empty space around holy objects, which keeps them away from profane contacts... Whoever makes an attempt on a man's life, on a man's liberty, on a man's honour inspires us with a feeling of horror in every way analogous to that which the believer experiences when he sees his idol profaned. (Durkheim, 2012).

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The next in discussion is a web series named *Lucifer*. Released in 2016, *Lucifer* can be designated as an urban fantasy that deals with a curious perspective: the role of a 'moral' Satan. Lucifer has been referred to as Samael, the left hand of God, in the context of servitude obviously. But what makes the series more interesting is its inquisitive narrative pattern: Satan takes a leave from hell and comes to earth in order to have freedom from his hallowed father's imposed duties. His father's representative Amenadiel, the great powerful angel comes again and again in order to bring Lucifer back to Hell. To make him fit into the compartment that he is supposed to be. So that the system set up by God Almighty runs smoothly as usual. Amenadiel's scheming nature is pitted against the new-born conscientious Satan, who finds the human more fascinating than the angelic orderliness and his so called throne and power associated with it. It is interesting to note how the idea of power is reversed and the metaphor of heavenly aura is subverted. Lucifer is shown to begin to feel the eternal and elemental human emotion, love: and the moment he begins to feel for others, the moment he involves himself in achieving justice in a world of deceit, covetousness and savagery, he instantly begins to become vulnerable. In order to save a priest, a person who stands against everything Lucifer stands for; Lucifer goes through great troubles and eventually fails. It is then he poses the eternal question to his ultimate adversary, God: how much relevance of being good is there in a world of cruel wretchedness? In spite of following the path of light, the priest died showing once again the futility of a failing system. Lucifer questions the definitive intention of the father who is there, accused of being witness to everything a blind one! And these extreme outbursts eventually show Lucifer's 'humanitarian' side: the loser one! Lucifer epitomises the age-old suspicion that the good ones at the end of the day are the vulnerable ones. As the show puts it, he becomes mortal losing his immortal angelic feature and yet we have a very dramatized glimpse of his insurrection (after knowing that he has weakened) when he burns his angelic wings (a gift from God, his father as a memoir to his positional superiority) that stands for the wholesome supremacy and control that Satan used to possess one upon a time. Irony proliferates as the key to Lucifer's freedom is portrayed to be achieved only by destroying his wings of power and glory!

The ultimate metaphor of freedom is subverted as a golden chain, as the wings were a gift from God and with that magnificently gorgeous potent gift, Lucifer was given a lot of crucial responsibility of punishing numerous souls and revelling in the darkness for eons. This avatar of Lucifer is a carousing mockery on the face of a stipulated idea of the devil and evil that the devil possesses. The notion of God attached with the very concept of good is shifted to that of authority and structure that is to be violated in order to produce a different narrative other than the already given one. The idea of making Satan, a protagonist subverts the sense of belief in the age old construction, be it biblical or social. Here we might sight one comment of a viewer (the language is hers, as she commented on internet) just to understand the actual impression of the whole theme on people, especially the believers:

I might give a different perspective... Have been a Christian for 45 years and a Preacher's wife for 26 years. So I'm familiar with the doctrines and concepts. A person, I just met, asked me while I was watching your show –didn't find it a conflict to open myself up to things not of God? I didn't hesitate to reply. First I'm sound in my faith that throughout the episodes you actually find powerful moments that scripture is applied or comments made that causes you to re-examine your belief system- wondering how many times we have entertained angles without knowing...(Lucifer)

The extraordinary ideal of something different changing and breaking the suppressing norms

of a corroded society can have different vents as one can see.

Our last series in discussion is a non-English one. In Spanish it is called *La Casa De papel* and in English the world knows the series today as *Money Heist*. Released in 2017, the series gained its exponential popularity in later years. Originally considered as a two season series *Money Heist* has become a cultural phenomenon awaiting its fifth season in the coming year. The story deals with a gang of robbers with different expertise who are assembled by the mastermind, who goes by the name Professor. The name has a certain tinge of the intellectual as anyone can see. But, that is just the beginning: this Professor takes class of his students who, in his version are a group of scums whom he is trying to give a life in a very unique way to fulfil not his, but his father's dream. The heist members wear a red jumpsuit and a Salvador Dali mask to cover their faces during the time of heist in the Royal Mint of Spain. The Professor remains outside controlling the main operation as the brain. It is impossible to overlook the connotation of Dali and his long association with rebelling and joining protests and marching against the system itself for which he could not even complete his graduation and was expelled twice from Royal Academy of Fine Arts Saint-Ferdinand. The surrealist painter of *The Persistence of Memory* (1931) is an ever-present symbol of resistance in *Money Heist*. It is later revealed that the Professor was a sick child back and his father was penniless; in order to cure his son in a cruel and unhelping world, the desperate father decided to rob a bank. But he failed and died in the attempt. This present heist is to honour a father's failing memory.

The Professor as the mastermind lives up to his name in the truest sense of the term: a rule-oriented tidy man of demeanour, reaching forty and yet getting more handsome with a semi-narcissistic social ineptness, he is never seen by the audience as a criminal. So far as the other characters are concerned, they are given city names for use instead of their real names. The Professor also set some rules in order to get through the whole process (such as no personal details, no relationships, complete solidarity to the cause etc.) a lot of which is going to be broken in course of the story as one can anticipate as a result of a criss-cross narrative. But surprisingly enough the twists are never what the audience expect. The motto was made clear-cut by the Professor: they needed to have public sympathy on their side which will be done in simple steps. The first of which is to just open the dirty vaults of the state viz-a-viz, the system the people are so stressed of. The heist has a higher purpose that is gradually revealed in a dramatic situation when the Professor caught his new-found love in his lonely life who happens to be the inspector in charge of tackling the heist. In all chivalry he could never think of torturing or killing or even detaining the woman for long. In this context one must note that the Professor's plan was a completely bloodless one. No killing was one of the most important rules. Because his brother tried to break the rule, he punished him dearly by exposing him to the police. But to keep his flawless plan intact, when it came to manage and handle the only rift in an otherwise perfect design, the Professor fell by breaking one of his primary rules: no relationships. In the warehouse where the inspector is held captive by the Professor we have the most important conversation pointing out the discursive fruition of purpose held by them. The Professor talks about the cosmopolitan society and its capital based nexus that kills the general people while showering benevolence on the rich men. According to him they are not stealing anybody's money as they are printing their own instead of taking the stack that was already there in the mint. He cites examples of the government while talking about the liquidity injection in the previous years, a state-sponsored thievery that made the rich richer and the poor poorer. The cause of insurgency goes deeper alongside the ideal of love and integrity. According to him what he does is the same thing but in the real economy: one might recall the Robin Hood syndrome and everything. And here comes the

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moot point: the love and admiration of people cascades on them as the ultimate rebels defying the authority to pave the way for guerrilla warfare against a faulty and fraudulent societal structure. The heightened idealism comes to its full when the anti-fascist folksong Bella Chao is playing at the background of the scene of professor's dying brother. Dali Mask and Red Jump suits are significant enough to understand the notion of staunch idealism and camaraderie that is present throughout the narrative. The bond among the criminals, their ideals, their personal passion and emotion are shown in such a manner that it becomes almost impossible to keep a calm, poised and neutral perspective and to view both the police and the thieves on the same plane. The autocratic system falls in the eyes of every person as they delve deep into the romanticised view of passion for a good cause which gets intensified with the tragic loss of lives of four most loved heist men and women. It seems ever after Jimmy Porter that if a good cause is not left to us, we can create our own to go on! The theory of Deviance comes to its ultimate twist when Dali mask and red jump suit became occurrences in protests world-wide, in Lebanon, Kenya, Libia, Cuba and so on. But, at the same time one must keep in mind that the same suits and masks are being used for actual robbery! Irony abounds!

It is interesting to note that in ancient times edible mushrooms were called the food of the God! The reason was that they were expensive, hence out of reach of the poor. One can suddenly have the epiphany with this single fact how the notion of an institution named God is shown and seen. The signifier commemorates the signified! God paradoxically enough, is entangled with something materially precious! The biggest ever philosophical, moral, ethical, theistic and psychologically fulfilling metanarrative thus comes down to mere mundane exquisiteness! Out of reach and craving are two sides of the same depraved soul! One can see the bubbling irony at the very centre!

However, keeping on track without digressing anymore, we once again would come back to the same discussion: the change in performance narrative. Instead of a meta-narrative it seems that we have entered a New-narrative world: an alternative one where so called outcasts are gaining weight. The concept of the voiceless getting power in a cryptic fashion becomes evident. One question of criminality and its spreading in a celebratory fashion gives birth to a hydra-headed questionnaire deploring the debatable authoritative role of the state, the deceitful norms of the society and the cruel callousness of a handful of people in it. Thus for the sake of life, liberty and honour, an absolutely radical fraternity is rising and rising throughout the post globalised world of post truth, changing the nature of truth itself!

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