

SHOWS THAT ONE CAN “WATCH WHILE FOLDING LAUNDRY”?

MINOR PASSIONS AND TELEVISUAL LUKEWARMNESS IN NETFLIX’S *THE LEOPARD*

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Abstract: This paper seeks to highlight the link between some current televisual forms and the contradictions of our relationship to digital platforms. Many shows today aim to create ‘comfortable’, soothing experiences, which spell the end of riskier and more original narratives in TV production. I will map the circulation of feelings that indicate ‘lukewarmness’, comfort, and that set TV fictions far from the initial expectations, raised years ago, about the medium as newly important. Whereas these critical commentaries and theorisations concern primarily US television, I will describe the intertwining of forms and representations in a global market, focusing on a European show: the Netflix remake of *The Leopard* (2025). Through the analysis of the show and discourse about mid-TV, boredom, fatigue and casual viewing, the routine of TV consumption emerges as characterized by the perpetually renewed hope or promise of finding pleasure and meaning in gratifying forms of entertainment. How does this paradoxical relationship with television shape, and is shaped by television forms? What kind of affects circulate in this contemporary economy, across technologies, forms, narratives, and subjects?

Keywords: audiences, European television, minor passions, Netflix, scripted television, streaming fatigue, structure of feeling

I’m willing to give this one a shot, of course, but somehow everything Netflix does still end up feeling like “TV” no matter how much money they throw at it.¹

1 Introduction

Contemporary streaming platforms demonstrate a continuous investment in European transnational co-productions and local originals. This trend can be traced back to the ‘European Television Fiction Renaissance’ (2008–2020), a

period of abundance marked by the emergence of a model centered on quality and prestige². Yet, a closer look on the commentary and criticism – especially after the COVID-19 pandemic – reveals a general waning in the initial excitement for streaming services and a sense of fatigue. The era is marked by a disruption of the sociality of life and of production practices³. Increasingly, logics of capitalism and platformisation keep encouraging us to consume more.⁴ This is evident in the streaming video landscape, where habit plays an important role in creating a sense of satisfaction with the available content, and in motivating consumers to maintain their subscriptions.⁵ In this paper, I will explore the divergence between early – and persistent – enthusiasm and a set of **minor passions**: mild fatigue, discomfort, and the pursuit of relaxation.

First, I will examine this general trend and attempt a theorisation of streaming fatigue and casual viewing within the current ‘structure of feeling’, a term I borrow from Raymond Williams⁶ which describes a shared affective trend, manifesting itself across discourses, emotions, and cultural works. Following this framework, it is possible to highlight a ‘structure of feeling’ marked by uncertainty, and to focus on the emotional dimension of our relationship with streaming platforms, for example by exploring ways to use content to regulate our mood or seek comfort, as Lotz et al. also point out.⁷

Within such a landscape, I will analyse some of the ways in which affects toward streaming services are expressed and registered online, through a Reddit ethnography and a study of some critics’ discourses. Let’s note that, although streaming platforms offer television, movies, and other forms of media (such as video games and music), this paper will focus primarily on observations related to television. This will allow us to highlight shifts in certain rhetorical strategies and discourses, particularly as they relate to specific ways in which programs are used to address emotional needs. To this end, I will present a revealing case study of what I term **patrimonial lukewarmness**, or a strategic deployment of prestige (budgetary, aesthetic, and discursive) in television aiming to generate works that are stable, respectable, and broadly legible, yet affectively muted and narratively risk-averse. Such content, which is meant to age well, circulate widely, and offend no one, prioritises heritage value and long-term legitimacy over intensity, experimentation, or strong affective commitment, encouraging a mode of spectating marked by ambiguity between quality and withdrawal, comfort and discomfort, boredom and nostalgia.

This study aims to define and analyse specific reactions among audiences to contemporary streaming services, thereby contributing to our collective understanding of the evolving global and European streaming landscape. I am using the idea that emotions, charged with power, are linked to the cultures they are generated from and circulate among objects and people.⁸ I will embrace the ambiguity and the fragility that characterize this affective landscape, since ‘social media is the stuff of minor excitements’.⁹ This is evident in users’ reactions regarding streaming services. These are not profound, dramatic or spectacular emotions, yet they manifest in daily life and gradually accumulate over time. In my view, within a structure of feeling of uncertainty, the ‘minor passions’ such as the search for comfort as in the case of patrimonial lukewarmness might be useful as tools to find shelter from the menace of a permanent crisis.

2 From European Renaissance to Casual Viewing

Discourses on quality were fundamental in determining the legitimacy of streaming services during a period of great transformation—ten-fifteen years ago—and were dominated by the general idea that ‘TV Got Better’.¹⁰ At first, users, marketing rhetoric, and journalistic critiques alike stressed the potential for innovation and the excitement for the abundant offerings. Consider the celebrated ‘narrative complexity’¹¹ that peaked with cable and platforms originals. Scholars describe complex TV as an engaged experience, based on key elements, visual style, and groundbreaking stories. The term **hypercognitive** spectatorship emerges.¹²

In the European landscape, a premium model emerged over the years 2008–2020. Content from small markets gained global success, as in the case of Nordic noir. Such titles circulated across countries with the label of quality

products. The period saw an increase in investments on European scripted content, which led to the age of what Barra and Scaglioni called a ‘European Television Fiction Renaissance’¹³. Features can traverse national boundaries, increasing diversity and evoking prevalent stereotypes, thus rendering small countries recognizable. Cultures and ideas travel better thanks to transnational coproductions.¹⁴ Even today, watching foreign series is almost automatically synonymous with ‘quality’ watching.

This “foreignness” is not just a backdrop but a key component that elevates the series’ uniqueness and appeal, distinguishing them from domestic productions and situating them within a cosmopolitan framework. It seems to add a layer of exoticism and cultural richness, making these series relatable through universal themes while intriguing due to their distinct cultural contexts.¹⁵

Netflix, for example, which has effectively instigated disruptive approaches based on the subscription model instead of a conceptualisation of audiences in national terms¹⁶, has largely invested in transnational coproductions, following a strategy aimed at both Europeans and global audiences.¹⁷ According to the European Audiovisual Observatory, the total platform spending in 2023 amounts to 22 billion euros, which proves a growing trend since the pandemic.¹⁸

We can also mention the flourishing trend of European adaptations, which plays a role in sustaining a certain idea of *quality* and cultivating a link with local culture and history. Such an interest in the telling of stories about the past takes the form of biopics, such as *The Crown* (Netflix 2016–2023) or *The Law According to Lidia Poët* (*La legge di Lidia Poët*, Netflix 2023—); of period pieces, such as *Cable Girls* (*Las chicas del cable*, Netflix 2017–2020); and adaptations, such as *The Lions of Sicily* (*I Leoni di Sicilia*, Disney+ 2023) and the show we will focus on in this paper, *The Leopard* (Netflix 2025). The taste for period pieces can be traced back to Netflix’s global megahit *Bridgerton* (Netflix 2020–), as well as the celebrated *Downton Abbey* (ITV 2010–2015). The genre plays an important role in legitimising streaming services thanks to a certain idea of **quality** and **prestige**. Yet, we also witness fatigue, frustration, or boredom in the reception of these shows. The new trend is marked by ambiguity between the fascination with the production design and the realisation that the aesthetic and narrative lack depth.

Today, streaming services promote and catalyse forms of emotional engagement that differ radically from those associated with the beginning of the streaming era. Often, we observe a quest for comfort, a network of frustrations and boredom, and a pervasive sense of weariness, rather than fascination and enthusiasm. The search for ‘good-enough’ content has emerged as a prominent trend, intersecting with discourses surrounding quality and prestige. This can also mean appropriating European cinematic heritage in order to produce unchallenging media material to satisfy a global demand.

3 A Typology of Comfort Viewing

Recently, scholarly thoughts on the television experience have highlighted the need to study the manifold reasons and motives that push viewers towards television and streaming media.¹⁹ Among these, we can find ‘filling time’ and ‘mood regulation’. The latter includes ‘to seek comfort’, ‘to seek companionship’, ‘to seek escape’, ‘to energize oneself’, and ‘to chill out’.²⁰

Let us consider this common situation: facing our TV screen or laptop, we are trying to choose a show among the overwhelming number available on the many streaming services. The process can last several minutes or even the whole evening. Perhaps we become disenchanted by the volume of titles, crestfallen at the sight of boundless predictable synopses, and anxious because of the sum we have already paid for all our subscriptions. So we opt for simplicity: we pick a reassuring episode of an old sitcom or switch off the TV altogether and just scroll through Instagram reels.

With such comforting experiences that Caetlin Benson-Allott aptly defined as ‘the ennui of the scroll’,²¹ long gone is the emotional intensity that was associated with the beginning of the streaming era. Today, it is possible to highlight an inversion of the trend – or more to the point – the rise of another stream of critical and affective discourses, focusing on a very different set of expectations and judgments about quality. When looking at online comments and journalistic reviews, a phenomenon emerges: a widespread mode of creating and consuming content that prioritises soft attention and routine consumption.

In the pandemic context, boredom, self-care, and binge-watching have taken on new significance, playing a fundamental role in managing life’s new rhythms, forced intimacy, and isolation.²² From this perspective, we can link this phenomenon to the historical role of media as a means of self-regulation and as a form of protection.²³ In the face of uncertainty, comfort viewing can serve as a useful form of shelter. Instead of the spectacular emotions facing prestige shows, such tepid affective experiences might act as reassuring places of compromise in a world of repeated crises. The experience of streaming media and of some contemporary series offers viewers a respite from the demands of daily life.²⁴

Let us think of the rise of endearing, messy dramedies such as *Pernille* (Norway, Viaplay, TV3 [2021–2022], Netflix [2024–2025]), which soothe through predictability and emotional safety. We can also mention all the forms of ‘Lean-back TV’. Think of repeated, well-known content on FAST (Free Ad-Supported Television) channels, which evokes the ‘flow’ typical of linear television, and which can be played in the background. This is often consumed passively, in striking contrast to the idea of lean-forward, engaged viewing that initial discourses about media highlighted.²⁵

The concept of **casual viewing** gained traction in 2024.²⁶ The term describes a relaxed way of experiencing TV content and covers shows ‘to watch while folding laundry’, with redundant dialogue and predictable storylines. For example, Tavlin mentions the presence of self-explanatory titles, targeting a highly fragmented audience of taste clusters; over-explanation of situations through predictable dialogue; a visual flattening (‘terrible lighting’, ‘both oversaturated and flat’); standardised frames (a ‘preponderance of drone shots’); and a ‘vacuous’ use of music. The article explains Netflix’s formal features in terms of its goal of working with viewers with short attention spans who are usually doing something else in the background. Similarly, on *Medium*, an author lamented the lack of characters that we can relate to, blaming streaming services that ‘eagerly throw every IP they can get their hands on against the wall to see what sticks’.²⁷

Although these critiques are mainly negative, they bring up two ideas: the lowering expectations toward streaming media and the development of a more relaxed mode of viewing. Already in 2019, a *Wired* article underlined that the trend for streaming platforms was to develop ‘just ok TV’:²⁸ content that is not innovative, but that is also not unwatchable. The objective of such a trend in streaming media is not to transform audiovisual storytelling or to elicit a profound life change in the viewer; rather, its primary aim is to fill the vast catalogues of streaming platforms.²⁹ The trend, however, does not necessarily indicate a decrease in the investments: production design and budgets are substantial. Thinking of the Apple original *Palm Royale*, *Harper Bazaar*’s critic Louis Staples mentions its predictability, but also its good standards:

These shows aren’t aspiring to be the pinnacle of high art, but there’s nothing guilty about their pleasures, either. In fact, they’re firmly above average—even if they’re not exactly driving social media discourse or cleaning up during award season like their prestige peers.³⁰

These titles are just not exceptional. They do not raise strong emotions or elicit excitement on social media. Let us consider *The New York Times* critic James Poniewozik’s description, which points out the narrative and industrial features of what he calls *Mid TV*:

What we have now is a profusion of well-cast, sleekly produced competence. We have tasteful remakes of familiar titles. We have the evidence of healthy budgets spent on impressive locations. We have good-enough new shows that resemble great old ones.³¹

The concept he articulates as ‘the comfortable problem of Mid-TV’ is an ambivalent affective experience, evoking a sense of both comfort and discomfort. It is a trend in scripting and producing series that maintains the quality of previous productions, and even tries to look like them, albeit in an extremely standardised manner. The critic draws parallels with the style of Airbnb, which, while perhaps impeccable, is strikingly flattened, normalised. Mid TV, designed to meet all the criteria of a ‘good’ standard, with the aim of reassuring its paying audience through familiarity and lack of surprise, will not be remembered for its originality or avant-garde style: it serves a practical purpose.

This phenomenon can provide an opportunity to study the soothing effects of form and content that precisely do not surprise, but which offer a conventional view of the world, for example by confirming a set of expectations about gender, relationships, and style. This is similar to what Karen Tongson notes in her book-length analysis of ‘norm porn’, including NBC’s family melodrama *This Is Us*.³² Tongson, a queer viewer, notes the surprising effects of relaxation and calm that emerge from her experience of an impressive display of sentimentality with fictional characters. Rather than causing discomfort, the standard image of an American, heteronormative family becomes a place for elaborating upon painful real-life memories. Comfort viewing fits within an overwhelming life, providing a soothing effect.

The spectrum under focus in this article encompasses shows of variable quality, ranging from low-key involvement to series that meet a more-than-satisfactory standard. The shift in expectations for television and streaming media is indicative of a transition from the notion of ‘quality’ to a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and benefits associated with these services.³³ I argue that such a circulation of non-**important** commodities, and of plain ‘ordinariness’, resonates with the contemporary general uncertainty.³⁴

Following the idea of ‘Mid TV’, I would now like to explore the idea that these relaxed pleasures of viewing can fit in with some formal features of a show in the case of **patrimonial lukewarmness**.

4 Exploring Patrimonial Lukewarmness

Telling stories of the past plays an important role in building the diversity and the local originality that streaming services look for in a landscape of transnational coproductions. Indeed,

Europeans telling each other their past is a mechanism of identity construction (. . .) Collective identity (. . .) is a learning process in terms of narrating each other’s particular past and to this extent creating a common ground in which to see each other as particular others.³⁵

In a context marked by the trend to retell stories about the past of singular European countries, and to coproduce transnationally, we witness the appearance of shows that elicit gentle disappointment and affective stagnation. Such productions might have the benefit of a good budget, and might have also found their sources in revered stories from a local culture, but they also foster low-intensity, ambiguous attachments.

Let’s consider a Netflix original, *The Leopard*, an Italian and British co-production (Indiana Productions and Moonage Pictures) directed by Tom Shankland, Giuseppe Capotondi, and Laura Luchetti. The miniseries is an adaptation of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa’s novel (1959) and Luchino Visconti’s movie (1963) of the same name. The 6-episode limited series tells the story of a noble Sicilian family during the pivotal uprisings leading to the creation of the kingdom of Italy in 1860. The main character, Don Fabrizio, Prince of Salina – called the Leopard – represents the traditional ruling class and the Old World, which trembles when the new sociopolitical order imposes itself. Filmed on location in Sicily, the series boasts gorgeous wild landscapes, frames opulent interiors in historical palaces, and orchestrates a cast of good-looking talent (mostly from Italy).

To make sense of this phenomenon, I explored *The Leopard*'s 'affective formation'. This is a set of discourses, intertwining with the original televisual text, in which affective modes shape – and are shaped by – formats, narrative structures of current TV texts, and promotional rhetoric.³⁶ I carried out digital ethnography of online spaces – centred on ordinary affects in the lived experience of TV³⁷ – and professional reviews. I will especially turn to discourses from audiences found on Reddit, an arena for discourse among fans and ordinary viewers, where several types of internet users come together around specific themes and opinions. I will then merge some thoughts coming from the perspective of film critics, namely the aesthetic judgment about some serial fictions and thoughts about the uses of television and streaming media from the perspective of Reddit users.

According to *Variety*, ‘Within five days of its release, *The Leopard* had been viewed over 3 million times, making the Netflix Top 10 in over 30 countries’.³⁸ Certified ‘fresh’ on Rotten Tomatoes with a 73% critics’ score and a 76% audience’s score, the series has raised mixed reviews. Some journalists also use expressions such as *Trip-Advisor-ready* and *postcard-like* (*‘Sicilia da cartolina e storia rimasticata’*), which highlight a more complex feeling. With a budget of over 40 million pounds,³⁹ the series manages to create an experience that critics define as *glossy*, *stunning*, and *lavish*. Decor and costumes, as well as camera movements, convey the mastery of a complex, exquisite craftsmanship.

We can describe it as having a **lukewarm patrimonial** nature due to its aesthetic **competence** and respectability, marked by luxury and standardisation, and its lack of innovation. This is also evident in the reception, where mild enthusiasm and tepid frustration overlap. Consider this Reddit comment:

This is definitely worth the watch, and I am surprised that Netflix is just digging out these old films that no one expects them to remake and actually does a really good job of recreating them. While I have been in a slump with Netflix at the moment, this is definitely a show that’s worth the watch.⁴⁰

While dissatisfied with the streaming service, the user finds pleasure and interest in the ‘remake’ of an ‘old film’. We do not know whether or not the person was a fan of Visconti’s film, but we witness an affective optimism towards what is felt as a comforting value, a dependable intellectual property. Because the miniseries is considered ‘worth the watch’, it becomes a ‘happy object’.

In comparison, *The Guardian* strikes a diplomatic balance between praising the production design and the format, while acknowledging that the show is merely entertaining rather than a masterpiece. It describes it as ‘a steamy, sumptuous treat that’s packed with nice food’, but adds a remark on the lack of the artistic dimension: ‘Despite all its aesthetic loveliness, this new Leopard feels visually prosaic in comparison [to Visconti’s film]; a pretty streaming series rather than a veritable work of art. (. . .)’. And yet it stresses its accessibility, adapted to the contemporary time: ‘The advantage is that this version is more coherent and watchable, without ever being sugary or simplistic’.⁴¹

5 Ambiguous Affects in the Reception

In the comments and in the professional reviews alike, affects are smaller and harder to define than the clear-cut, strong emotions of love and hate often found as reactions to spectacular, tragic, or disrupting forms of entertainment. They are often marked by a fundamental ambiguity⁴². On Reddit, we found 11 threads on r/PeriodDramas specifically on *The Leopard*, as well as 5 on r/Netflix and other subreddits with less interaction. Overall, comments display enthusiasm for the show. We can find praise for the beautiful landscapes and locations, appreciation for the cast performances, and notes on the historical accuracy. Users post positive feedback on the story, considering it engaging, with deep, universal themes such as love and death, the objectification of women, forgiveness, etc. Viewers who have watched Visconti’s film either praise the adaptation or underline what is missing. We can also find enthusiastic comments from audiences who did not know the original novel, film, or the Italian actors.

A superb adaptation that is different and yet similar to the 1963 movie. This series will stay with you. A contemporary masterpiece. The reputation of this production will grow over time. Bravissimo.⁴³
 I am rationing myself to a single episode per watch. It's a gorgeous visual feast.⁴⁴
 Holy smokers, just finished the first two episodes and I'm hooked. Great scenery, costumes and acting. I like the Italian flare to the period drama and I don't mind reading subtitles. Recommended!⁴⁵

Some users employ the vocabulary of desire and lust to describe both the series' aesthetics and the actors, as in the following comments, relating to *The Guardian's* review:

It's fine but the prince has no charm. It's hard to find his appeal after Burt Lancaster chewed up every scene he was in.
 Speak for yourself, I found him very appealing. Yum.⁴⁶
 It's so so sooo good I'm obsessed. Like the most luscious sumptuous costume scenery porn with actual decent acting.⁴⁷

Italian journalists tend to be negative in their critiques. The comparison to Visconti's film creates an inevitable hierarchy: most reviews focus on pointing out inadequacies in the adaptation, such as artificial acting.

According to *Wired Italia*,⁴⁸ we are facing a shallow adaptation of a masterpiece. The series depends too much on the need to check all the boxes to appeal to a general, global audience. The journalist states that, even if the quality of the production is truly excellent, the effect is one of a clunky, heavy-handed, flat work. Characters' looks and language disappoint, since their acting and dialogue sound like they are from the 21st century, maybe in the hope of addressing a 'young' target. According to the article, the series is made according to precise algorithmic calculations. 'A soap opera in a new dress', the series is considered too similar to other Netflix period series, such as *Bridgerton*, with little complexity or ambiguity.

We can see here many elements of Poniewozik's definition of Mid TV: mediocrity, lack of complexity and depth. Praise for production design is accompanied by the typical critique of cultural industries: standardisation. In adapting the novel and the movie, the screenwriters – who came from crime dramas – decided to add more details to under-explored characters and to work with different rhythms, adding cliffhangers in order to attract younger audiences.⁴⁹

The quality of the product does not disappoint. In fact, a YouTuber compares it to 'an expensive work of art', and defines it as 'ambitious, elegant, and visually beautiful'.⁵⁰

Yet, the problem seems to be in a lack of complexity, sophistication, and depth. Mike Hale, a *New York Times* critic, echoes Poniewozik's arguments:

So if you have seen and loved the film, you might want to pass on this somewhat monotonous but perfectly unobjectionable Italian-language series. That might also be the case if you have read the novel by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa on which both are based; in its second half the show's plot diverges from the book's in some predictably melodramatic ways. On the other hand, if you are a fan of conventional, handsomely appointed costume dramas, made with a degree of finesse and intelligence and with picture-postcard cinematography—shot on Sicilian locations, the series is very pretty to look at—then have a look at it. Just don't expect any of the poetry that has graced this story in the past.⁵¹

Despite the absence of prestige compared to the original film, the miniseries seems to be a sufficient product but not more, missing a 'cinematographic aura'. Another review stresses Netflix's editorial choice to sketch a simplistic adaptation of the story, losing its original **epic** dimension in order to address a potentially distracted audience generally more drawn to romance.⁵² We can find an echo of such negative reviews in another film magazine, *Sentieri Selvaggi*:⁵³ the series lacks vision, has no *raison d'être*, and is a mere exploitation of Italian intellectual property.

6 The Waltz Sequence: From Nostalgia to . . . ‘Cosplay’?

In the miniseries, the classic waltz sequence between Don Fabrizio and Angelica boasts long, slow camera movements panning around the dancing couple. Some complementary shots render the rest of the big ballroom, with an audience filled of guests in awe, conveying a sense of luxury, grace, and nostalgia. A shot reveals that Don Fabrizio is dreaming of another dance with his wife in the past.

The cinephile might experience a similar nostalgia in recalling the dance between Burt Lancaster and Claudia Cardinale



Video 1. Fabrizio and Angelica's dance scene in *The Leopard*, 3:08. Screenshot from YouTube.⁵⁴



Video 2. Burt Lancaster and Claudia Cardinale's iconic dance in *The Leopard*. Screenshot from YouTube.⁵⁵

The novel used the dance to focus on Don Fabrizio's interiority as he studied the fall of his era and the rise of a new generation. In Visconti's film, the lengthy ballroom sequence, spanning one third of the film, played a pivotal role in redefining all the social dynamics and Don Fabrizio's place in a transformed political landscape. There was a significant amount of dialogue that helped outline the relationships between the characters (Don Fabrizio, Angelica, Tancredi, Don Calogero Sedara) and the connections between the guests in the ballroom. In contrast, the Netflix

series focuses more on Fabrizio’s internal world, individualising his experience to the point of neglecting the larger historical transformation.

Netflix’s decision to prioritize Don Fabrizio’s personal and private struggles, while avoiding both the novel’s and film’s fundamental political and social themes is a notable departure from the original. The need to attract a global audience results in a dominant **sentimentality** – which resonates with an unwillingness to burrow into history and ideas.⁵⁶

According to Netflix’s strategy to first appeal to a global audience, the series adopts choices typical of the streaming era, namely a ‘liberal humanism’ able to transcend borders:

Netflix’s self-produced originals aim to be transnational from the outset, rather than to operate in one domestic market before being exported. They may not aim to address all cultural spheres to the same extent, but as becomes obvious on a certain level, they heavily emphasize a certain level of ‘universality’.⁵⁷

For example, the series imbues the character of Don Fabrizio’s daughter, Concetta, with a fresh dimension, positioning her as something close to a protagonist. According to the French magazine *Télérama*, by doing so the series rewrites the place of women, using a good dose of feminism.⁵⁸ Yet, Reddit users discuss the characters of Concetta as well as Angelica, raising questions about the conservative nature of their trajectories, which seem fixed in the Madonna/Whore paradox, forcing women with only apparent agency into losing power struggles with men.⁵⁹ This goes with the absence of concern for a broader depiction of ideological or political events.⁶⁰

Accordingly, a diffuse frustration focuses on costumes and atmospheres, which critics describe as historically **right** but **empty**. Beloved Sicily becomes no more than an advertisement or cliché.

Some Reddit users adopt the same position in their comments, adding to the quintessential postmodern posture of *ironic, distanced viewing*, an engagement through a mix of enjoyment and critique:

Looks like cosplay.

It’s basically a fan fiction. And I say this in a complimentary way, I think competing with Visconti would have been a bad choice. Don’t measure them against each other, they really are intended to be two different things.⁶¹

Yet, the Italian online magazine *Serial Minds* notes that the series ‘could have gone way worse’. The journalist underlines some good choices but the tendency to aim at a different public than the novel and the film.⁶² The comparison creates mildly negative affects, such as frustration:

I’m half an episode in, and I’m already frustrated about the altering of personalities, events, and relationships from the book. Doesn’t seem like it’s headed for anything good.
Just finished the miniseries. It was meh. . . Should I read the book? ⁶³

The ambivalence also drifts toward boredom. For some, the show offers a light and entertaining experience, but it can also be rather flabby: ‘I found myself sometimes sleepy, sometimes attentive, but mostly disengaged. Shouldn’t this series—based on a highly acclaimed novel by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa—be more emotionally potent, more blisteringly passionate?’⁶⁴

According to *Decider*, the series is not worth the viewer’s time:

The Leopard is boring, with a large ensemble that blends into the background, except for the three main characters. It’s definitely a show about a part of history most people outside Europe know little about, and the show’s dullness will make it hard for people to connect to that story.⁶⁵

7 Conclusions: Yes, But Can I Fold Laundry While Watching The Leopard?

Professional reviews and Reddit posts reveal a trend of ambiguous forms of attachment to Netflix's *The Leopard*. This attachment alternates between a form of fascination or nostalgia, due to its **patrimonial** nature, and the observation of a lack. The series has the standard high quality, a certain appeal for those who might be interested in European cultures, and possesses the predictability of Poniewozik's Mid TV. It was made with a big budget, in alignment with Netflix's strategic objective of entering transnational markets with prestige productions able to maintain subscription revenues while retaining a sense of local culture and history, and appealing globally.

The miniseries taps into Italian local culture by reimagining the story, characters, and atmosphere of a beloved modern classic. However, it stumbles in many details that experts pinpoint, though these details do not seem to alienate other clusters of viewers. It maintains a global market orientation through its emphasis on individual trajectories, a new focus on women, and the choice of sentimentalism over political discourse. Yet, the miniseries does not fit Tavlin's definition of casual viewing. This is primarily due to its foreign-language nature for non-Italian viewers: the aura of quality and prestige that comes from local coproduction in the current landscape remains, even if the content appears dull or even conservative. Also, the need to read subtitles - if the viewer has not chosen the dubbed version - prevents them from 'folding laundry' while watching it.

Such practices reveal a double orientation, as well as a coexistence of modalities and motives to watch.⁶⁶ Viewers may choose *The Leopard* hoping for a satisfying, maybe instructive, patrimonial show. They may then find themselves in the self-recognition of a viewer who experiences weariness, and even contempt, which can extend to Netflix and the streaming experience in general. The circulation of minor passions is less about strong allegiance or clear-cut emotions than about the production of a shared affective field in which cultural belonging, taste, pleasure, and the need for comfort intertwine.

The legitimisation of television studies, especially within the field of film studies, has only recently been achieved through an emphasis on quality, complexity, and 'cinematographic' aesthetics. However, it is once again time to turn our attention to the plain repetition and prosaic nature of television. Television was a casual medium by design. In 2021, David Arditi wrote 'Television is no longer something we watch as mindless entertainment'.⁶⁷

And yet, today, in a media culture structured by algorithmic abundance, choice fatigue, and a diffuse sense of discontent, the lukewarm, relaxed nature of shows that create non-committal moments have an important, much needed soothing value. Digital platforms casualize film and television content even more. And, even if this experience comes with an uncomfortable feeling that something is off, for example when patrimonial works get misappropriated by unsophisticated, artificial content aiming for a global market, the minor passions that circulate around these 'lukewarm' programs can be valuable especially in times of crisis when alternatives to grand narratives are needed.

Notes

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Biography

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