

A Semio-Ethics of the Rough Hero

“Where vicious manners are described, without being marked with the proper characters of blame and disapprobation; this must be allowed to disfigure the poem, and to be a real deformity. [...] We are not interested in the fortunes and sentiments of such *rough heroes*: We are displeased to find the limits of vice and virtue so much confounded: And whatever indulgence we may give to the writer on account of his prejudices, we cannot prevail on ourselves to enter into his sentiments, or bear an affection to characters, which we plainly discover to be blameable.”

David Hume, *Of the Standard of Taste* (1760)

In the last two decades TV series have proposed to the audience atypical and quite peculiar protagonists, far from the traditional ones. At first we were offered real anti-heroes, that is to say characters where the heroic traits were partially subverted, we can call them ‘imperfect good heroes’, like for example, Gregory House. In a second time we have witnessed the emergence of true *rough heroes*, really bad protagonists, the first of whom was Tony Soprano.

TV series scholars have observed this change in characterization and have joined a larger debate on ethics and aesthetics in narrative forms (see Carroll, Eaton, Smith, Mittell, Vaage), particularly rich in two main theoretical perspectives, *Cognitive Media Theory* and *Cultural Studies*. However, the ethically bad protagonist has a long textual tradition born well ahead TV series, it has always been present in drama (let’s think about MacBeth, or Richard III), in literature (Faust, Dracula, Mr. Hyde, Stavrogin, Humbert Humbert), in cinema (Norman Bates, Hannibal Lecter), and in graphic novel (Rorschach e The Comedian in *Watchmen*, V in *V for Vendetta*, Deadpool).

Therefore, we can say that there is a general question posed through different narrative forms: how can we love or be empathic with a character which has been build to result hateful? How can spectators be interested in the life of a serial killer, a drug dealer or a corrupted policeman, when in real life they would make us horrify?

And what can semiotics say about this and add to the debate? What can offer a methodology that has avoided to discuss ethical issues, but that in this case would be used to face a borderline area between ethics, narratology and aesthetics? Can we imagine a new hybrid area of research that we define as semio-ethics of narration?

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Deadlines

1. Invio degli abstracts: **31 Gennaio 2017**/Abstract proposals due: January 31, 2017;
2. Valutazione degli abstracts: **28 Febbraio 2017**/Abstracts acceptance notification: February 28, 2017;
3. Consegna testi definitivi: **31 Maggio 2017**/Final papers due: May 31, 2017
4. Pubblicazione on line: **30 Settembre 2017**/On line publication: September 30, 2017.

Inviare l'abstract con nome, cognome e affiliazione accademica a/Send your abstract with name, lastname and academic affiliation to: andrea.bernardelli@unipg.it; gianfranco.marrone@unipa.it.

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