



Université Jean Jaurès (Toulouse II)  
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# *Scandal:*

## Depiction and Perception of Contemporary American Politics

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## Introduction

“Of course, Hollywood insists that it is in the entertainment business and vehemently denies that the industry has anything to do with politics. There is a certain amount of truth in the assertion but it is not the whole story.” - Ernest Giglio<sup>1</sup>

On the evening of April 5<sup>th</sup> 2012, Shonda Rhimes' (at the time soon-to-be) hit show *Scandal* aired for the first time on ABC. Whether thanks to its catchy title or to the popularity of Shonda Rhimes' productions, it attracted a fairly good amount of spectators for its first night on TV.<sup>2</sup> Since *Scandal* is the object of the study that is to be developed here, I shall sum up the content of the show before defining the concepts of perception and depiction evoked in the title of this dissertation.

The show under study has for main character Olivia Pope, the leader of a team of crisis managers whose job is to fix scandalous problems that are more or less directly related to politicians and their reputation. The fictional character was not simply made up from nothing. In fact, it is a real life crisis manager, Judy Smith,<sup>3</sup> who was the inspiration for Pope and who also works as an advisor behind the scenes of *Scandal*. The first season of the show introduced the viewers to the characters and the dynamic of the show. At first, the White House looks like the big enemy but then the spectators soon understand the real dynamic between Olivia Pope, the main character, and the White House: she was part of it and helped the President, Fitzgerald Thomas Grant, with his campaign. The episodes of the season develop a main arc that is a sex scandal turning into a murder case towards the second half. In the second season, there are more shenanigans revealed, which are less sex-related scandals compared to the previous season, which dealt a lot with morality and the fact that there's no such thing as privacy for politicians. I chose to work on the second because it shows a wider political spectrum: it's not just about the White House as a whole - since the illusion of unity got destroyed at the end of season one, revealing that the sex scandal the President was involved in was just a big set-up planned by the VP's

- 1 Ernest Giglio. *Here's Looking at You: Hollywood, Film and Politics*. (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc, 2010) 1.
- 2 Mitovich, Matt W. "Ratings: Scandal Opens Solidly on Super-Soft Night, as 11 Shows See Declines." *TVLine*. TV Line Media, LLC., 06 Apr. 2012. Web. 29 Dec. 2015. <<http://tvline.com/2012/04/06/ratings-scandal-premiere-person-of-interest/>>
- 3 For more information on Judy Smith, here is her official website: Charlotte's Web Studios, L.L.C. *Judy Smith | Crisis Management Expert*. Smith and Company, n.d. <<http://www.judysmith.com/>> and an article about her being the inspiration for Olivia Pope in *The Washington Post*: The Reliable Source. "Judy Smith, the inspiration for Olivia Pope, talks about life Amid 'Scandal'" *The Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2013. Web. 17 Feb. 2015. <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/reliable-source/wp/2013/12/09/judy-smith-the-inspiration-for-olivia-pope-talks-about-life-amid-scandal/>>

Chief of Staff. It's about all those more or less in-the-shadow White House aids, doing their best to work their way up to be as important and powerful as possible. This season also digs deeper into party ideology by gathering characters filling the political spectrum from extreme left to extreme right in one administration and therefore brings more depth to the question of depiction and perception of American politics. While portraying such an eclectic administration, the narrative and the narration of the show displays and reminds of some American political icons and historical events, which left a trace in the collective knowledge and therefore influences the way we, as a society, tackle and apprehend the delicate subject that is politics.

*Scandal*, being a rather recent show, hasn't been much studied except in media articles whether it be in the form of reviews, or a study of the songs used in the show, as Mike Ayers' "The Soul of 'Scandal': How Shonda Rhimes Uses Music for TV's Most Dramatic Show" in the *Hollywood Reporter*.<sup>4</sup> However the question of the depiction of politics in films – not much on the TV show format unfortunately – has interested quite a lot of scholars such as Ian Scott who wrote *American Politics in Hollywood Film*<sup>5</sup>, or Mark Sachleben and Kevan M. Tenerall's *Seeing the Bigger Picture: American and International Politics in Film and Popular Culture*.<sup>6</sup> Both studies focus on several films and popular culture productions which allow for an overview of many different representations and perspective of the American contemporary political landscape.

Does *Scandal*, by depicting American politics through "scandals" as its title claims, actually mirror how Hollywood and the media have been representing American politics more than political behavior itself? Is this depiction a reflection on and criticism of people's perception of politics in the United States?

But what do the concepts of depiction and perception mean? In short, perception is defined, in philosophy, as the way we become aware of an object primarily thanks to our five senses. To that interpretation of the concept of perception, the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty adds two other parameters that are to be taken into account when someone perceives.<sup>7</sup> First, he draws attention to the different perspectives, each non exhaustive, from which we perceive an "object", creating a whole

4 Ayers, Mike. "The Soul of 'Scandal': How Shonda Rhimes Uses Music for TV's Most Dramatic Show". *The Hollywood Reporter*. The Hollywood Reporter, 17 April 2014. Web. 15 Sept. 2015.

5 Ian Scott. *American Politics in Hollywood Film*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000)

6 Mark Sachleben and Kevan M. Tenerall. *Seeing the Bigger Picture: American and International Politics in Film and Popular Culture*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2012.

7 Maurice Merleau-Ponty. *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History, and Politics*. Trans. James M. Edie. (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964)

that is not the entire truth. He translates this phenomenon by saying: the “object [is] given to me in a “deformed” way, from the point of view [*place*] which I occupy”. Following this reasoning, he affirms that one does not perceive an object the same way someone else will. The second element that he wishes to put forward while defining the complexity of perception is the influence of our own experience as perceiver and our knowledge which themselves bring about more perspectives from which we perceive the “object”. Naturally, depiction, which is quite self explaining, takes part in one's perception of an object. Depiction is defined as “the way that something is represented or shown” in the online Cambridge Dictionary.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the way an object is depicted provides a perspective from which people perceive the object that is represented. But the perspective itself can be perceived differently depending on the personal experience and knowledge of the perceiver.

To better study the case of *Scandal*, its links to the political history of the United States must be studied starting with the past occupants of the Oval Office that seem to appear in the fictional president's complex characterization in terms of partisan identity. Carrying on with the study of partisan identity and ideologies, the characters surrounding the president will also be analyzed from a social, political, and historical point of view. This approach is meant to get a first look at the depiction the show makes of politics on the surface, to then analyze the perception the spectators have of the particular perspective they are provided with, thanks to comments from viewers collected on the Internet. It is important to keep in mind that the show willingly provides a particular perspective for the spectators to react to it. There is thus an intent behind such a depiction of politics that is an explicit as well as implicit criticism towards politics and its depiction and the perception that it triggers.

Such criticism can be found in Hollywood ever since the disillusion caused by 1970s events that gave way to distrust and paranoia towards the US government, which seems to be *Scandal's* main critique focus. The second half of this dissertation will therefore focus on the treatment of paranoia since it is inherent to the depiction and perception of contemporary American politics. With this part I wish to highlight two different instances involving paranoia: the paranoia caused by political behavior and major events involving politics, and the paranoia originating from the curiosity of the people and consequently of the media that seek the information for the public. Even though the show seems to be very critical about paranoia, to complete this study and make a thorough analysis of the object under study, it seems essential to also examine the way the show uses paranoia for its narration. For this purpose, I propose to focus on two episodes that present paranoia in two seemingly conflicting ways in

8 “Depiction” *Cambridge Dictionary Online*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) Web. 31 May 2016.

order to draw a comparison between the two. The first one “Hunting Season” seems to mock paranoia while the other 'One for the Dog’ tends to endorse and use it.

## **I. A Historically Multi-Shaded Administration: Liberal Right or Conservative Left**

“Given the extraordinary geographic, ethnic, religious and social diversity of the United States, it is something of a puzzle that the country has only ever had two main political parties”<sup>9</sup>

Washington D.C. has welcomed a lot of very polarized politicians after the very first government whose once unified leadership met with disagreement over the fundamental question of how the new country was to be ruled. This disagreement split America's first Cabinet into two parties: the Federalists who believed in a strong central government and the Republicans who thought that such a government would be too similar to a monarchy and preferred a strong power at a state level, which would allow the citizens to choose their own government. That Republican Party led by Jefferson, officially called Democratic-Republican Party in 1798, gradually took over after Jefferson's election in 1800 as he made sure there were more Republicans than Federalists in Congress during his presidency. After Jefferson renounced running for a third term, the party that was united under his leadership started showing signs of splitting while the Federalist Party was slowly losing representation, eventually making America a one-party country in 1820. However, this situation didn't last. The 1824 election brought many candidates running for presidency and eventually saw John Quincy Adams chosen by the House of Representatives (since the majority electoral votes required hadn't been reached), even though Jackson was the one who had initially won the most votes. This event unsurprisingly led to a conflict, and a new split divided the party into two by 1832. On one side, supporters of Quincy Adams called themselves the National Republicans (that later on changed into the Whigs Party to then disappear), and on the other side, Andrew Jackson led the soon-to-be-called Democratic Party whose name hasn't changed since then. The unity of the latter was challenged once again with the question of slavery that gave way to the creation of a new Republican party (from which the current one finds its roots), followed by the Republicans success over the Democrats with the election of Lincoln. When the Civil War broke out, he received great support from Democrats, proof of a decline of the Democratic party which failed to get back in the White House (except for Cleveland's two non-consecutive terms) until the election of Woodrow Wilson in 1912, taking advantage of a conflict within the Republican party.<sup>10</sup> Ever since, Republicans and Democrats have been taking and handing over the White House as workers take shifts,

9 David McKay. *American Politics and Society*. 8th ed. (Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013)

10 Heather Lehr Wagner. *The History of the Democratic Party*. (New York: Chelsea House, 2007)

while third parties hardly get representation because of the Electoral College system. The United States' two-party system is therefore undeniable, which tricks people into thinking in a binary way. Republican or Democrat, conservative or liberal. The United States' political past cannot be looked at from this angle since it witnessed a wide range of presidents, administrations and politicians with policies that went beyond binary partisan identity as the history of both parties show.

From George Washington to the latest presidential candidates through Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Reagan, the United States' political history has proven that parties gather many ideologies from one politician to the other. Nevertheless, in the contemporary American political landscape, the idea of a binary partisan identity seems to be more significant than ever as the two major parties tend to drastically draw further apart from one another and become more radical. This sharp polarization is the result F. D. Roosevelt's presidency which paved the way for Reagan's New Right in the 1980s as stated in *From the New Deal to the New Right: Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism*.<sup>11</sup> According to the author, F. D. Roosevelt redefined the Democratic party liberalism called “progressive liberalism” by supporters of the New Deal, as opposed to the “conservative liberalism” which had sunk the party before. With the New Deal and the new ideology it carried, Lowndes affirms, the Democratic party, whose principal source of support until then was the Southern Democrats, gained support from other different groups whose life had improved with Roosevelt's policy. The support of the African-Americans particularly triggered a shift in the electorate, as the question of racial equality came along, eventually leading the parties to take their own stance on the matter and on many future human rights related concerns that are still part of today's political debates and controversies. As McKay explains in *American Politics and Society* “today, the two political parties are deeply divided over such questions as civil liberties, abortion, the US role abroad, the role of the family in society and the redistributive role of federal taxation”.<sup>12</sup>

This contemporary divide and polarization seems to be overlooked in the way *Scandal* depicts its incumbent politicians: the supposed-to-be Republican administration doesn't reflect the radical stance over concerns pointed out by McKay that can be witnessed nowadays. Instead, it mirrors a wide range of political ideologies, within the same administration. The characters are the vectors of the wide range of ideologies by either reminding of actual politicians or of recent and current issues such as Civil Rights, abortion or gay marriage. How does the show carry this wide political spectrum? Is this

11 Joseph E. Lowndes. *From the New Deal to the New Right: Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008)

12 David McKay, 107.

depiction a way to mirror the 21<sup>st</sup> century political behavior? Does this unusual treatment of partisan identities make the show a caricature/satire and criticism of the political past of the United States or does it on the contrary attempt to celebrate the divergence in opinions and to encourage a blending of several policies for the future political landscape?

### ***A- Fitzgerald Grant: A Fictional President Sending Mixed Signals.***

From hero to villain through plain irresponsible, presidential characters on screen have received all sorts of treatment. Up until the 1990s, the American presidency was depicted mostly as heroic, exposing a positive image of the office to the public.<sup>13</sup> Then, years of political disillusion caused by the Vietnam war followed by the Watergate Scandal and the release of the Pentagon Papers backlashed, leading to a binary depiction of presidents in movies, as Ian Scott writes:

Hollywood's treatment of politics has long reflected a nagging suspicion about the integrity of institutions [...] but its attention, the need for dramatic structure, has always seemingly dragged filmmakers towards the prevailing battles between good and evil [...]<sup>14</sup>

He then quotes Rob Lurie according to whom this binary depiction of Presidents from Hollywood was inspired by the well-known presidential TV debates between Kennedy and Nixon. Between good or evil. This theory hardly applies to the depiction of *Scandal's* President.

#### ***1) A Kennedy-like President On the Surface...***

Let us start this character analysis with his name: Fitzgerald Thomas Grant III. It seems to draw a parallel with Kennedy whose middle name was Fitzgerald. This echo to the infamous president's name could have been silent if only it hadn't been Grant's first name. Making all of his acquaintances call him "Fitz" is obviously a way of associating him with the remembrance of Kennedy's presidency. Now, building on the "III" at the end of his name and carrying on this Kennedy-like part of the fictional president another Grant must be analyzed: his father. The second season introduces this new character depicting him as overly controlling, having a lot of influence, pushing his son to become President. This character was probably meant to remind of Kennedy's father pulling strings to get his son elected president, which his fortune helped him with.<sup>15</sup> Grant's father also shows a lack of faith in his son's

13 Mark Sachleben and Kevan M. Tenerall, 2012.

14 Ian Scott, 19.

15 History.com Staff. "John F. Kennedy". *History.com*. A+E Network, 2009. Web. 9 Oct. 2015.

<<http://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/john-f-kennedy>>

potential which might also echo the fact that Kennedy's election as president was initially “the destiny once intended for Joe Jr.” (History.com Staff, “John F. Kennedy”). However, Kennedy's father, contrary to the fictional president's, did support his son according to the website of the JFK Presidential Library and Museum.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to all of these storyline choices, like the Kennedys, the fictional first family uses the press a lot, working hard on their image, to create and maintain the illusion of a happy family to gain popularity. This topic was dealt a lot in season one with the flashback scenes showing the campaign and how their image helped to get “them” elected. In season two, this *mise-en-scène* is still important in order to not lose popularity and get a reelection after the first term. The scene which illustrates best this deceiving use of the media shows President Grant, the First Lady and their new born son doing a photoshoot while discussing the baby's name they haven't decided on yet.<sup>17</sup> The aforesaid scene opens with an extreme close-up on the photographer's camera followed by several consecutive brief static shots of the presidential couple and their baby.



Figure 1 (1'05'')



Figure 2 (1'12'')

The colors of these shots are intensified (cf Figure 1 below) so that they look like photographs. Their being consecutive shots highlights the importance of their body language while they're almost literally under the spotlights (cf Figure 2) facing the photographer, two media agents (left and right) and a White House aid. It looks like a play: Mellie and Fitzgerald Grant, on whom the focus is, are acting in front of an audience of four, who will report what they witnessed to the American people.<sup>18</sup> The end of

16 “Life of John F. Kennedy.” *JFK Presidential Library and Museum*. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, n.d. Web. 20 October 2015. <<http://www.jfklibrary.org/JFK/Life-of-John-F-Kennedy.aspx>>

17 “Nobody Likes Babies” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Mark Wilding. Dir. Tom Verica. ABC, 2012. DVD.

18 This shot holds great meaning contrary to the previous one. The spectator can see both the presidential couple dressed in color and “the audience of four” dressed in black. This difference in color creates a distance between the two and makes

this “act” they put up for everyone to see is marked by the photograph turning off the lights on his way out and Mellie calling for the nurse (Figure 3). The characters go back to their real selves highlighted by the physical distance between the two. The long shot, still taken from behind the sofa, creates an emphasis on their real emotional distance: In Figures 1 and 2, their bodies visually occupy the entire length of the object, leaving no space between them which seems to be keeping them close together as one unit. Now, in Figure 4 we see that the characters moved away from the camera whereas the piece of furniture is still in the foreground of the shot, appearing huge, materializing the distance between the characters and making it look bigger. This emotional distance is also displayed before as the shot-reverse shot technique is repeated four times with medium shots of the characters (Figures 5A and 5B).



*Figure 3 (1'37'')*



*Figure 4 (1'55'')*



*Figure 5A (1'47'')*



*Figure 5B(1'48'')*

During most of these shots, they are filmed either from a side-view, looking away, or with their backs turned to the camera; this way of filming the two characters creates even more emotional distance as it

the couple look more visible, just as actors on stage who are under the spotlights while the audience is in the dark. This, added to the focus effect and the lights under the photography umbrellas, makes the impression of *mise-en-scène* clear to the viewer in a subtle way.

shows that they don't even face each other while speaking. As for the content, the second part of the scene is about divorcing so that Fitz can marry his mistress. Talking about mistresses, isn't it something he also shares with JFK? The answer is, not exactly, or rather, not exclusively.

## **2) ... *Hiding Other Presidents.***

As I affirmed previously, Fitzgerald Grant's depiction doesn't fit with Rob Lurie's analysis according to which presidents are depicted either as Kennedy or as Nixon which respectively represent good and evil.<sup>19</sup> The parallel that I drew between Fitz and Kennedy already confirms this since the former is said to be a Republican and the latter a Democrat. Here, Fitz's representation as Kennedy-like already questions his partisan identity, however this is not the only characteristic that does. Going back to his name, we must now pay attention to the fictional president's last name: Grant probably hinting to Ulysses S. Grant. The real Grant was a General who fought for the Union during the Civil War and gained great notoriety thanks to his numerous victories against the Confederates. He aligned with the Republican party and was elected President in 1868. Let us not forget that at the time, the Civil War had just recently ended and the Republicans were slowly integrating African-Americans in society and in the political sphere. The Democratic party then refused such advance in black people's lives and vividly showed their discontentment in various ways. McFeely wrote in his biography of Grant that they made up the rumor that the president had an interracial daughter which is an interesting detail considering the fictional Grant's affair with Olivia Pope. The author also recounts that he was said to be a “black Republican”, a “nigger lover”, adjectives which he then describes as somewhat true since “Black Africans needed someone in the White House who would, if not love them, at least act to protect their persons and rights”. This echo to Ulysses S. Grant was probably made to remind the viewers of the roots of the Republican party that was once the party of the minorities whereas nowadays it is paradoxically “identified as the party of the rich, rural areas and older white Americans while the Democrats [are] identified with city dwellers, women and ethnic minorities” as stated in McKay's book.<sup>20</sup>

Some parts of the character's storyline do remind of JFK but they also hint, sometimes even more so, to other past presidents. The first season of the show was articulated around a sex scandal, the plot revolving around finding out whether it was true or not. This storyline had Lewinskygate written all over it: the woman involved, called Amanda Tanner, was a White House aid who said that she had had

<sup>19</sup> Scott, 19.

<sup>20</sup> McKay, 95.

an affair with the President and even stalked him.<sup>21</sup> Since the first season is not the season under study here, I will not further analyze this detail but it is important to keep in mind that the depiction made of Amanda Tanner as a persecuted and rejected Monica Lewinsky, who believed her relationship with the President was more than a temporary affair, causes the audience to dislike the President since the main character, Olivia Pope, sides with the mistress just as Judy Smith sided with Lewinsky. Though, the audience leaning on Olivia Pope probably has to do with her being betrayed by this affair. The parallels might be more subtle than with the previous mistress but one is particularly redundant in the second season: the late night phone calls Lewinsky and Clinton also shared.<sup>22</sup> This leading the audience to dislike for the President doesn't last since at the end of the first season, the audience realizes that Amanda Tanner was part of a plan to bring down the president. In the end this Clinton-like side of the fictional president only gets him the sympathy of the audience because of the love plot between Olivia Pope and himself.<sup>23</sup> Apart from these affairs, there is one plot in season two that does remind of two past presidents: the assassination attempt.<sup>24</sup> The first name that come to mind to most people when talking about assassination attempts targeting presidents may be JFK, since his tragic death profoundly shocked America on November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1963. At first, the fictional assassination attempt looks a lot like this one, primarily because of the presence of the First Lady (cf. Figure 8) - whose forearm bears her husband's blood, reminding of Jackie Kennedy who sat beside the president when he got shot in the head, causing the blood to stain her clothes, hands and face – but also because, as JFK, Grant received a long distance shot in the head. Moreover, the title of the episode following and developing the assassination attempt scene is “Happy Birthday Mr. President”<sup>25</sup> referring to Monroe's song to JFK. Although, the scene under analysis contains meaningful hints pointing to JFK's assassination, it visually parallels more accurately Reagan's assassination attempt by Hinkley Jr. (cf. Figures 9 and 10). The images go really fast, causing some blur on screen, lacking focus, looking like the tape that was shot on March 30<sup>th</sup> 1981. Both in the fictional and real attempts the president was hurried in the car by agents (cf. Figures 6, 7, 9 and 10). Even “collateral damages”, causing three other people to be injured including Reagan's press secretary (severely which caused him to be disabled) and two of his secret

21 Monica Lewinsky was seen as a stalker and shamed for her affair with the President.

22 BLACK WAAT3R. "20/20 Monica Lewinsky Interview (March 3, 1999)". *YouTube*. YouTube, 8 Oct. 2014. Web. 4 May 2015. <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AB2\\_HKREoVo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AB2_HKREoVo)>

23 I will analyze this relationship further in the next subpart to explain how this relationship influences in challenging partisan identity.

24 “Defiance” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Peter Noah. Dir. Tom Verica. ABC, 2012. DVD.

25 “Happy Birthday Mr President” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes. Dir. Oliver Bokelberg. ABC, 2012. DVD.

service agents, are paralleled. In Grant's assassination attempt, the press secretary is also injured (and died) along with one of his secret service agents.



Figure 6 (0'45'')



Figure 7 (0'50'')



Figure 8 (0'59'')



Figure 9



Figure 10

Moreover the media coverage depicted in the episode resembles that of Reagan's assassination attempt. Indeed, after the shooting the media affirmed the President had not been harmed and it's only later on

the same day that the misinformation was corrected stating that the President had been shot in the left chest but was stable.<sup>26</sup> This apparent misinformation in the media coverage of Reagan's assassination attempt is reflected in “Happy Birthday Mr President” through the journalist's confused ramblings upon saying whether President Grant was injured or not during the attack.

Overall, this storyline reminding of several presidents makes the fictional one look weak in this second season compared to the beginning of the first one when the audience was led to believe he was powerful and up to no good. But the way the audience perceives him solely based on his personal storyline is not enough to analyze the way partisan identity is dealt with in the show.

### ***B- The President's (so-called) allies***

The meaning of partisan identity is not challenged only by the fictional president. His administration is to be analyzed too, for the people it is composed of have a huge influence on someone who's supposed to be “the most powerful man in the world”. I'll call these people his “allies”, even though it is not the absolute truth, since an ally is what the administration is supposed to be for the President. The characters composing his administration also play a great role in contrasting with Hollywood's habit of drawing a binary depiction of politicians. I divided these characters into two categories: the more conservative ones and the more liberal ones. Though, it is important to keep in mind that this dividing up does not mean that the ones in the second category are liberal per say, which is why I entitled this subpart “liberalish” allies.

#### ***1) The Conservative (supposed-to-be) Allies***

The principal goal of all presidents during their term probably is keeping the majority in the Congress so that they can enforce their policy without too much trouble along the way. It is no secret that the relationship between the executive and the legislative branches is far from being thriving, especially when the majority in Congress doesn't match the president's partisanship. Hence, the Presidential administration is bound to gather politicians who belong to the same “side” of the political spectrum, in order to keep some kind of order among White House officials. For instance, Presidents have always chosen Vice-Presidents among their party. Keeping in mind that the VP also presides the Senate and therefore gets a vote to break a tie if needed, it can only benefit the President if his VP

<sup>26</sup> Many videos of the media coverage can be found on youtube and a series of videos displays the entire coverage from all networks (11 parts): Parker, Bob. "President Reagan Shot Assassination Attempt Part 1." *YouTube*. YouTube, 15 May 2009. Web. 3 May 2015. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BakY2SFPLoQ>>

shares the same ideology, be it liberal or conservative. In this respect, *Scandal* depicts a rather accurate picture as both characters belong to the right wing and both are Republicans. Though, they don't share the same conservative ideas. The show surely reminds people of the 2008 presidential campaign that saw McCain and Palin unite under the same ticket. Sally Langston, whom the audience saw running against Fitzgerald Grant during the primaries before joining his ticket, has a lot in common with Sarah Palin who joined the Tea Party after its creation<sup>27</sup>. First of all, her very conservative<sup>28</sup> ideas on social issues (such as immigration, abortion and gay marriage) complemented by the stereotypical conservative social profile: “older, white, middle class and often religious”, the last characteristic being amplified in season one as she often refers to the Bible and in season two while she opposes a left-wing politician who will be dealt with in the “*liberalish* allies” subpart.

As the president's policy is rather silenced by his allies' deeds, the ideological gap between the VP and the president's ex-campaign advisors progressively seems to enlarge. This phenomenon is particularly visible after the assassination attempt when Sally Langston, being acting President, launches the attack on East Sudan that Grant had never approved of. The United States has fought a lot of conflicts in the world under different presidents, but Bush Jr's presidency is particularly remembered for his bold military actions in the Middle East, triggered by the tragic 9/11 attacks. This offensive foreign policy is described in *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy* as something Bush had already planned back when he was campaigning for presidency, and 9/11 as the means to put this plan into action.<sup>29</sup> Considering that the attack on East Sudan had already been discussed in the show since the very first episode of season two, Sally Langston's deed seems quite similar to Bush's bold move to engage in long conflicts in the Middle East. In addition, the same book also lists beliefs as to why this attack was put together in the first place. As for instance: “an American unbound should use its strength to change the status quo in the world. [...] The Bush philosophy [...] argued that the United States should aggressively go abroad searching for monsters to destroy. That was the logic behind the Iraq War, and it animated the administration's efforts to deal with other rogue states”.<sup>30</sup> This quote is the perfect illustration of the American Supremacy. This belief that America has the authority

27 The Tea Party was created in 2009 in response to an economic move from the Obama administration with which the Republican House Representatives didn't agree but, which was nevertheless backed up by Republican Senators, provoking an outrage among the Republican Party. (McKay, 106)

28 “What distinguishes Tea Party supporters more precisely are their very right-wing political views, even compared to other conservatives.” Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson. *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) 26.

29 Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay. *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*. (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 2003) 13-14.

30 Daalder and Lindsay, 14.

to take action in the name of world peace thanks to its wide military resources, is displayed through this fictional East Sudan conflict: the East Sudanese state is going rogue, Langston played the card of prevention both for the country and for the world's sake, like Bush. Moreover, to justify her trying to be the acting president she affirms that “the country needs leadership, the *world* needs leadership”<sup>31</sup>.

But what does that say about partisan identity? According to “commentators across the political spectrum” this offensive way of dealing with policy was the neoconservatives' idea.<sup>32</sup> Then Sally Langston might as well be the embodiment of the neoconservative movement that developed within the GOP. This aspect doesn't fit with her Sarah Palin-like depiction however. According to a scholarly paper, Tea Partiers disagreed with the neoconservatives' foreign policy applied after 9/11.<sup>33</sup> The VP's deed is more about showing her as bold as Bush Jr and his neoconservative advisors who encouraged and developed the bold military actions. This use of the military strategy card after a traumatic event reflects how the White House reacts and handles paranoia, which will be dealt with in the next part of this dissertation. To build on the aftermath of the assassination attempt and VP Langston's role in it; her occupying the Oval Office creates tensions within the administration between herself and the president's staff. During the campaign gathering McCain and Palin, there was tension too between McCain's campaign advisors and the more conservative Tea Party leader described as rambunctious.<sup>34</sup> The fictional president's advisors and White House officials reject Sally Langston whom they cannot control. In the episode “Happy Birthday Mr. President”, she occupies the oval office as if she were the acting president refusing to follow security orders ignoring the process provided for by the 25<sup>th</sup> amendment dealing with the replacement of the President.<sup>35</sup>

One of the president's officials however, called Hollis Doyle, alternates between the president's side and the VP's side depending on which way the wind blows. His depiction too is very stereotypical: He is a Texan (even his accent is very sharp) rich oil and energy company owner who doesn't mind a war with the middle east which would be good for his business. Like Sally Langston he doesn't mind going rogue to get what he wants, that is more power which makes him the center of another major plot

31 “Happy Birthday Mr President” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes. Dir. Oliver Bokelberg. ABC, 2012. DVD.

32 Daalder and Lindsay, 14.

33 Nicol Rae. *The Return of Conservative Populism: The Rise of the Tea Party and Its Impact on American Politics*. (Florida: Florida International University, 2011) 16.

34 Skocpol and Williamson, 6.

35 It states that the vice president becomes president in case of the president's death, resignation or removal from office. The vice president becomes acting President if the president himself declares he is unable to resume his functions or if the vice president and a majority of executive officers declare so. (US Const. Amend. XXV Sect. 1, 3 & 4)

in this second season: the election rigging. He is the symbol of temptation for politicians to take their “White Hat”<sup>36</sup> off to reach power as he orchestrates the election rigging himself, asking the others to either agree or disagree. He is even referred to as “the devil” by one of Pope's associates, because of his numerous crimes that were consequences of the election rigging. Not only is he referred to that way, he also is depicted as the evil character who is the instigator of everything (or so is the audience led to think) that goes wrong around the White House in this season; at least, until the seventeenth episode<sup>37</sup>, if not after his “good” counterpart (Verna Thornton) is found guilty of the assassination attempt she accused him of. He and Sally Langston are both very radical politicians because they are stereotypes of conservatives. Being radical, contrary to the President, makes them seem, ideologically speaking, closer to the current politicians and their partisan identity. Also, they both show the ideological divides that can be found in parties. It is especially true for the character of Sally Langston who both hints to a Tea Party icon and to neo-conservatives' deeds, even though the two groups are opposite on matters such as foreign military actions. This radical tendency is not only reflected through those two rather conservative characters, as stated earlier, they have their own liberal “opposites”.

## **2) *The Liberal(ish) Figures***

The most surprising and most liberal character among the campaign advisors, even though she is not part of the presidential administration contrary to the others dealt with here, cannot be ignored. Verna Thornton may not be working in the White House but her role is important in this analysis of partisan identity since she was appointed Supreme Court Justice by President Grant at the beginning of his term. The president appointing a Supreme Court Justice, which is part of the checks and balances system, is very important for the president since this power he has over the Judicial system if a seat is left vacant during his term ensures his policy to last even after his term. Thornton's profile is very similar to that of a current Supreme Court Justice who was appointed by Clinton early during his first term: she is a woman, rather old and liberal. Logically presidents appoint Justices who share the same political beliefs and ideology, Ruth Bader Ginsburg is no exception. Indeed, her reputation as liberal Justice precedes her, qualified as “a liberal champion” in an article from *The Guardian* she is praised

36 This expression is often used in the show by Olivia Pope about using the right means to win.

37 “Snake in the Garden” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Raamla Mohamed. Dir. Ron Underwood. ABC, 2012. DVD. - In this episode Hollis Doyle becomes Pope's client because of his daughter's kidnapping. With such an episode the audience is introduced to his weak side, even though not right from the beginning since he doesn't believe in the kidnapping (which was, in the end planned by his daughter herself to get money from him).

for her defense of same-sex marriage recognition during the *United States v. Windsor case*;<sup>38</sup> moreover, she is pro-choice and before being Justice she wrote several essays on gender equality. Verna Thorton's liberalism is highlighted by her hateful relationship with Sally Langston who describes her as follows:

[The nomination of a Supreme Court Justice] was promised to me during the campaign, it is mine, and I mean to have it, and for someone other than a left-wing baby-killing homosexual-loving godless creature such as yourself.<sup>39</sup>

This quotation only emphasizes the quaint depiction of Grant's presidency gathering two extremes of the political spectrum. The other major characters' depiction is less stereotypical and therefore brings more contrast to the point that the definition partisan identity seems blurred.

Most female characters in the show are very strong figures. That is part of Shonda Rhimes' works, depicting women as powerful and central. Wanting political power as a woman could be considered as feminist activism. Though, are Republican women to be called feminist just because they are involved in politics? This is a question that is dealt with in an essay entitled "Political Feminism and the Problem of Sarah Palin" and part of the analysis put an emphasis on Palin's own identification as feminist.<sup>40</sup> Yet, the fictional First Lady is not much of a Sarah Palin the way Sally Langston is. In fact, she could be called "the Republican Hillary Clinton". Putting aside the extra-marital affairs of President Grant, and the obvious First Lady parallel between Mellie Grant and Hillary Clinton, the former's will to be involved in politics and to "be at the adults' table"<sup>41</sup> points to the actual ex-First Lady who, once again<sup>42</sup>, announced she would be running for president for the 2016 election. Mellie's thirst for power and will to lead is seemingly more acute than her husband's: she often takes matters in her own hands, no matter whether Grant agrees or not. She doesn't act so much as a First Lady who, according to the fictional president, is "ornamental, not functional".<sup>43</sup> Whereas Mellie Grant says "I want to be heard"<sup>44</sup> three episodes later. But isn't she actually acting as a First Lady? Surely, her behavior doesn't fit with

38 Dan Roberts. "Ruth Bader Ginsburg eviscerates same-sex marriage opponents in court" *The Guardian*. The Guardian, 28 April 2015. Web. 15 May 2015.

39 "Blown Away" *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Mark Wilding. Dir. Jessica Yu. ABC, 2012. DVD. (15'38")

40 Catherine E. Rymph. "Political Feminism and the Problem of Sarah Palin" in Liette Gidlow ed., *Obama, Clinton, Palin: Making History in Election 2008*. (Urbana, Chicago, Springfield: Illinois University Press, 2011) 137-147

41 "Beltway Unbuckled" *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Mark Fish. Dir. Mark Tinker. ABC, 2012. DVD.

42 Hillary Clinton first ran for president in the 2008 election but was defeated during the primaries.

43 "White Hat's Off" *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Jenna Bans. Dir. Tom Verica. ABC, 2012. DVD.

44 "Beltway Unbuckled" *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Mark Fish. Dir. Mark Tinker. ABC, 2012. DVD.

the “traditional” role that was that of the very first First Ladies who were in fact more ornamental than functional<sup>45</sup> but that doesn't make her less of a First Lady. It actually makes her a First Lady of today. Her resemblance with Hillary Clinton perfectly fits with that idea and might even be a reflection on the rather loose boundaries of the role of First Lady that were particularly discussed in the media during the Clinton administration.<sup>46</sup>

In “Beltway Unbuckled” the reason why she asks to be at “the adults' table” is because she hates dealing with the health and education subjects, which are social concerns. According to McKay, “social and economic” concerns are typically concerns of the left. Indeed, he says that, from 1933 to 1968 “almost all of the social and economic reforms [...] were initiated by Democratic administrations.”<sup>47</sup> Following this link between the left and social concerns, the First Lady seems to be more conservative and even more “presidential” than the president himself, whose first concerns, as he takes office, are immigration and education, while she focuses on foreign affairs.<sup>48</sup> Given this characterization, comparing it to that of the president, Mellie Grant is a critique of the American political system and, like Hillary Clinton's candidacy for president, she “reminds us that American women have still not caught up to the political advancement of women in other nations”, even though they are as capable as their male counterparts.<sup>49</sup> The *National First Ladies Library* website describes Hillary Clinton as a politically involved First Lady who kept an office in the West Wing and whom the president “consulted before making a decision”, even though they used to disagree.<sup>50</sup> This fact about Clinton's First Lady days, is yet another similarity between the two fictional and non fictional First Ladies. Only, the fictional one is not encouraged to participate in the president's policy the way Hillary Clinton

45 Houchin Winfield, Betty. “The First Lady, Political Power, and the Media: Who Elected Her Anyway.” in Pippa Norris ed., *Women, Media, and Politics*. (New York: Oxford UP, 1997.) 166-79.

Betty Houchin Winfield enumerates the 4 roles that were traditionally allocated to First Ladies by the media: the “escort role”, the “protocol role”, the “noblesse oblige role” and the “policy role; each referring to their following their husband during travels, to their assisting ceremonies and such other official events, to their “natural extension of women's volunteer work in the community” and lastly to their influence concerning “public policy issues”. The author adds that the last two roles represent a significant change in the definition of the role of First Ladies in the twentieth century. (p.167)

46 Houchin Winfield, 178.

47 McKay, 98.

48 She demonstrated that concern several times: the first time in “White Hat's Off” pushing the president to declare war on East Sudan disguising her intervention as a mother being concerned by the Sudanese children's fate, when she actually saw it as a way to gain popularity. Later on in “Beltway Unbuckled” involving the murder of a young woman by a man with diplomatic immunity, she takes a stand to get justice for the victim and by doing so she gets involved in foreign politics but still disguising it as a motherly gesture to the public: “I'm not here as First Lady, I'm here as a mom”.

49 Susan M. Hartmann. “Hillary Clinton's Candidacy in Historical and Global Context”, in Liette Gidlow ed., *Obama, Clinton, Palin: Making History in Election 2008*. (Urbana, Chicago, Springfield: Illinois University Press, 2011)86

50 “First Lady Biography: Hillary Clinton.” *The National First Ladies Library*. Museum/Saxton McKinley House and Education and Research Center, 23 Feb. 1998. Web. 23 May 2015.

<http://www.firstladies.org/biographies/firstladies.aspx?biography=43>

apparently was. Does this difference have to do with their different partisan identities? It could be interpreted that way when Cyrus Beene, the Chief of Staff, lets it be understood that, as long as she plays the good motherly wife, her job is done:

“Put your feet up, you've got your big Kimberly Mitchell thing tonight. You and that belly have done enough for Fitz's reelection chances already.”<sup>51</sup>

But this character refuses to be only “the good political wife with the perfect marriage to the perfect man.”<sup>52</sup> and she intends to show it, even if it means going behind her husband's back with the help of his mistress. Here is the exchange between the president and his chief of staff after Mellie and Olivia won their case against a matter of diplomatic immunity in “Beltway Unbuckled”:

F. Grant: “The woman is a political genius.”

C. Beene: “Which one? Mellie or Liv?”

F. Grant: “Both. They both are.”

[...]

F. Grant: “I am the leader of the free world, I'm arguably the most powerful man on the planet and I've been brought to knees by my wife and Olivia Pope.”

We could go beyond the angle of partisan identity and study this character from the perspective of women's inclusion in the political sphere. Women had to fight hard to get involved in politics, starting not with the right to vote that was granted in 1920, but with the election of the first woman Representative Jeanette Rankin in 1916, according to the CAWP (Center for American Women and Politics).<sup>53</sup> Their website provides an informative page about the current statistics concerning representation of women in Congress: “In 2015, 104 (76D,28R) women seat in the United States Congress, comprising 19,4% of the 535 members”. Those numbers manifest a very low representation of women in the legislative branch, however, past numbers reveal a slight change for the better: from 2001 to 2003, there were 13,6% of women in the Congress as written in *Women's Voices, Feminist Vision: Classic and Contemporary Readings*<sup>54</sup> whose authors got the numbers from the same source. Looking at the other statistics in the CAWP website, we can observe a contrast between the number of

51 “White Hat's Off” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Jenna Bans. Dir. Tom Verica. ABC, 2012. DVD.

52 “Any Questions?” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Matt Byrne. Dir. Mark Tinker. ABC, 2012. DVD.

53 “Women in U.S. Congress 2015” *CAWP*. Eagleton Institute of Politics, n.d. Web. 12 Oct. 2015. <<http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/women-us-congress-2015>>

54 Susan M. Shaw and Janet Lee. *Women's Voices and Feminists Visions: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004) 467.

Democratic and the number of Republican women (198D, 109R) who have served in the U.S. Congress: almost two thirds of them were Democrats. The question these numbers raise is whether they are the result of a lack of identification of women with the Republican party and its main ideologies or the result of a better inclusion of women in the Democratic part of the spectrum.

### **3) Including Minorities**

It is no accident that the main character of the show is a woman, a black one above all, who comes as a powerful figure of the show. This combination of characteristics does not only empower women but also black people. First of all, having a woman as main character can be seen a feminist stand even more so as Olivia Pope is the fictional alter ego of the real crisis management expert, Judy Smith. Indeed, in *Feminist Film Studies*, Karen Hollinger discusses the status of women in film and explains how, most times, the main characters are men. Focusing on the case of the biopic, the author affirms that the genre has been characterized as “one of the most male-oriented film forms”.<sup>55</sup> Even though *Scandal* cannot be defined as a biopic, it is quite close in its essence because of its link to Judy Smith. Looking at it from the political point of view now, one needs to look no further than the 2008 campaign to acknowledge that sexism is still very anchored in society. Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin were themselves victims of gender discrimination at different levels. Indeed, as stated in Susan M. Hartmann's essay, Clinton was more exposed to this phenomenon than the soon-to-be Tea Party icon who might have been protected by her opposition to most of the feminist agenda.<sup>56</sup> This campaign also attracted racism in its most outdated form. When talking about Michelle Obama, the media portrayed her with “deep-seated stereotypes of African American women – the domineering “mammy”, the hyper-sexualized “jezebel,” the more recently minted “angry black woman” - and used them to construct an unappealing and even threatening image of the candidate's wife.” according to Mitch Kachun.<sup>57</sup> Prejudice involving race was addressed briefly in the episode “Top of the Hour” when Pope meets her client with two of her associates, Harrison and Abby (white woman). As soon as they arrive, the client assumes that Abby is the Olivia Pope she's been waiting for to solve her problems.<sup>58</sup> Contrary to the other characters, Olivia's partisan identity is not explicit, she claims to be apolitical, that's to say

55 Karen Hollinger. *Feminist Film Studies*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012)

56 Susan M. Hartmann. “Hillary Clinton's Candidacy in Historical and Global Context”, in Liette Gidlow ed., *Obama, Clinton, Palin: Making History in Election 2008*. (Urbana, Chicago, Springfield: Illinois University Press, 2011) 87-88.

57 Mitch Kachun. “Michelle Obama, the Media Circus and America's Racial Obsession”, in Liette Gidlow ed., *Obama, Clinton, Palin: Making History in Election 2008*. (Urbana, Chicago, Springfield: Illinois University Press, 2011) 39-40.

58 “Top of the Hour” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Heather Mitchell. Dir. Steve Robin. ABC, 2012. DVD.

politically neutral. Though, she is most likely to be a liberal figure. Cyrus even comments on the fact that, as a woman, a pro-choice one, she has to identify as leaning towards the liberal side of the political spectrum: “Is your vagina apolitical?”.<sup>59</sup> This remark coming from Cyrus gives the feeling that he accuses her of being unable to think past her sexual parts, in other words, she is incapable of being impartial as a woman. Through this exchange between the two characters, we are presented with a non binary possibility that is not common in American politics since most American people are very much attached to partisanship.<sup>60</sup>

Olivia's political neutrality however doesn't prevent her from having a solid stance on social issues such as abortion, gay rights, women's rights and so on... Going beyond women's right to choose on the matter of abortion, the character is the advocate of women's freedom to own every aspect of their body and not be shamed for it. This is actually something that is quite recurrent in Shonda Rhimes' shows and probably is the result of the anti “slut-shaming” third-wave feminist movement. This movement was initially created to fight against the rape culture which consists in blaming the victim instead of the rapist based on apparel. It also celebrates women's “sexuality and agency”, denouncing the shaming of women whose sexual behavior is considered too active when reaching a certain number of sexual partners. The actions of the movement are very wide and vary depending on the country, as explained in the paper entitled ““No Shaming this Slut”: Strategic Frame Adaptation and North American Slutwalk Campaigns”.<sup>61</sup> As already stated in the first subpart, not only was Pope one of the president's campaign advisors, she was – and still is at times – also his mistress. Through this relationship, the show tackles what has been – and still is considering the recent riots that occurred in Ferguson and Baltimore<sup>62</sup> – a very sensitive subject in the United States that is the question of race. From the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is the Democrats, starting with Kennedy and Johnson, who gave a louder political voice to the Civil Rights movement while the southern conservative states tried to keep segregation

59 Context: Olivia is going against his will when she takes on a sex scandal case involving a Supreme Court nominee She is defending the woman with whom the nominee had an affair. Cyrus accuses her of doing this because “[the nominee] is anti-choice. That is when she declares that she is apolitical, and to that Cyrus responds “Is your vagina apolitical”. “Top of the Hour” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Heather Mitchell. Dir. Steve Robin. ABC, 2012. DVD.

60 McKay, 107.

61 Kelly Birch Maginot and Soma Chaudhuri. ““No Shaming This Slut”: Strategic Frame Adaptation and Other American Slutwalk Campaigns”. in Patrick G. Coy. ed. *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*. 38 (2015): 137-71. *Google Books*. Web. 24 Jan. 2016.

62 Further reading on the matter: Carrie Dann and NBC News. “Baltimore Riots: Poll Finds 96% Expect More Racially-Charged Unrest Nationwide.” *NBC News*. NBC News, May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2015. Web. 15 June 2015. <<http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/baltimore-unrest/poll-96-expect-more-racially-charged-unrest-nationwide-summer-n352276>>

legal. The question that the presence of Olivia Pope raises is whether the ideological radicalization of the GOP made the conservative party less friendly to minorities than before Reagan's presidency. In *From the New Deal to the New Right*, Lowndes explains that the lowering of the GOP's credibility, induced by the Watergate scandal, was Reagan's cue to introduce that ideological shift from the past moderate policy to his “hard new conservatism”.<sup>63</sup> His campaign was built on this new conservatism, as the author reports:

[During his 1980 campaign kick-off], Reagan pointedly assured supporters that he, like them, believed in “states' rights”. Reagan could now seamlessly combine conservatism, racism, and anti-government populism in a majoritarian discourse – and with it founded the modern Republican regime.<sup>64</sup>

His being opposed to a strong national government suggests that he agrees with states deciding individually on social matters such as Civil Rights, since the movement's hey day and the negative reaction it received were rather recent. However going so far as saying that the GOP is a racist party would be ignoring the facts: President Barack Obama might be the first, most emblematic name that comes to mind when thinking about African Americans in the White House but we must not forget that a republican administration was the first to appoint African Americans in “key positions”:

To be sure, the Republican Party has gone to great lengths in recent years to distance itself from the taint of racism. George W. Bush is the first president to place African Americans in such key White House positions such as Secretary of State and National Security Adviser. But it has not been easy for the GOP to shed its racial legacy because the party became dominant through racially inflected positions on poverty, crime, affirmative action, and government assistance. However, the GOP mostly embraces a politics of “colorblindness”, and many conservatives promote policies that are claimed with non racist intent.<sup>65</sup>

Interestingly enough, Judy Smith worked for this administration as Press Secretary, a position that her fictional alter ego was supposed to occupy until the latter resigned. Through this narrative detail, we are subtly shown that Republicanism does not equal racism or rejection of minorities. Looking back at Obama's election it seems to me that, for the GOP to survive today, colorblindness must be accompanied by “racial inclusiveness” in politics. According to Lowndes, this inclusiveness is the party

63 Lowndes Joseph E. *From the New Deal to the New Right: Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism*. (London: Yale University Press, 2008) 154.

64 Lowndes, 160.

65 Lowndes, 2.

leaders' own work to build a modern conservatism that tries to progressively let go of its racist ties.<sup>66</sup> The racial inclusiveness is in fact the party's hidden strength, its “shed racial legacy” as Lowndes says, that could be used by the GOP to gain voters, African-American ones particularly because, after all, the party did abolish slavery to start welcoming freed slaves into society. Moreover, in the quotation above, Lowndes mentions the GOP's “politics of “colorblindness”” which might paradoxically be their weakness on the race question and their will to detach from the “racist” label. Contrary to racial inclusiveness, colorblindness suggests forgetting about race, not paying attention to the impact of skin color but the issue of this method is that it means forgetting about racism and black people's past. What the GOP really needs is to speak about the race question so that the party can lose the racist label that was put on it after southerners moved from being Democrats to being Republicans. At least, that is the argument used in the show when President Grant wants to divorce his wife to then welcome Pope in the White House as First Lady:

Grant: “America will love her and let's be honest my relationship with Olivia is going to spark a real dialogue about race in the country and it's going to blow the Republican Party wide open and let the light and air in the places that haven't seen change in far too long so the party will love her.”<sup>67</sup>

Colorblindness prevents from “spark[ing] a real dialogue about race” that can only be done *thoroughly* (as emphasized with “real”) with racial inclusiveness; to then “let the light and air in places that haven't seen change for too long”, allowing the GOP to rediscover its own History and to take back what is theirs.

What about the party's stance on another Civil Rights matter that is represented through the last member of the “Defiance partners”, Cyrus Beene, who is also the President's Chief of Staff? Not only is the character pro-gay, he is gay himself and was, at one point, torn between his partisan identity and his own self as this quote from a flashback to the first moments in the White House shows:

Cyrus: “I am a leader of the Republican Party, it's complicated.”  
Olivia: “It's not. You want to be with the man you love. Be with him.”<sup>68</sup>

In those flashbacks, Olivia (and the audience) overhears Cyrus explain that he doesn't want to expose

66 Lowndes, 7.

67 “White Hat's Back On” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes. Dir. Tom Verica. ABC, 2012. DVD.

68 “Happy Birthday Mr President” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes. Dir. Oliver Bokelberg. ABC, 2012. DVD.

his relationship to the public because “[he is] traditional”. The show acknowledges the paradox that his sexual orientation and his partisan identity seem to create by making this character insecure and secretive about his relationship with a man in flashbacks to the inaugural ball after Grant took office. Since the first season, when it comes to politicians' popularity and election, the emphasis has been made on family. Using the word “traditional” in this scene so as to explain Cyrus' reluctance to be publicly embracing his homosexuality, significantly refers to the idea of “traditional family”, which is central in most Republican policies. Hence, among others, the recurrent pro-life policy on abortion or the opposition to same sex marriage and adoption by same sex couples since “traditional family” calls for “traditional marriage”. As stated in a *Wall Street Journal* article from 1994, the reason behind the conservative anti-gay policy is their “traditional family” ideology. Though this opposition towards a gay-inclusive social policy is far from unanimous within the Republican party according to that article.<sup>69</sup> Indeed pro-gay and pro-family Republicans don't attach much importance to that “traditional family”, composed of heterosexual (white ones before interracial marriage was legalized) parents with children. Instead they support family values while rejecting intolerance as quoted in the article:

We believe that marriage and fidelity are crucial social institutions that channel lust into love and caprice into commitment. We believe faithful relationships are not only good for children but help keep men settled and help keep the burdens of caring for one another off society's shoulders. And we support extending these norms to all Americans, gay and straight. (Rauch)

Jonathan Rauch draws a parallel with the Civil Rights movement that forced the party to be more inclusive after it failed to be on the right side of history. Today, the advancement of gay rights is more visible than ever thanks to the legalization of same-sex marriage by the Supreme Court in June 2015. However, some states are menacing to take a slight step backwards – the way southern states did during the first Civil Rights movement that witnessed the abusive Jim Crow Laws – by preparing bills that would allow discrimination of LGBT people based on religious belief.<sup>70</sup> Bill Clinton was the first President to really try to make a change on this particular issue that is gay rights but, when met with strong opposition from the Congress, he took a step back and put compromises together. Thus introducing the “Don't Ask, Don't Tell” policy in the military along with the DOMA (Defense of

69 Jonathan Rauch. “A Pro-Gay, Pro Family Policy.” *The Wall Street Journal* . November 29 1994: A24. Web. 25 May 2015. <[http://fpparchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/A-Pro-Gay-Pro-Family-Policy\\_Jonathan-Rauch\\_Nov-29-1994\\_The-Wall-street-Journal.pdf](http://fpparchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/A-Pro-Gay-Pro-Family-Policy_Jonathan-Rauch_Nov-29-1994_The-Wall-street-Journal.pdf)>

70 Emma Green. “Can States Protect LGBT Rights Without Compromising Religious Freedom?” *The Atlantic*. The Atlantic, January 6<sup>th</sup> 2016. Web. 24 Jan. 2016.

Marriage Act), infuriating the advocates for gay rights in the process.<sup>71</sup> Both those measures were taken down by the Obama administration which marked a real progress for gay rights.

Those last two characters represent minorities which have suffered from strong discrimination and still do. They represent current issues that are intertwined: while the United States witnessed a revival of the Civil Rights Movement in the 60s after the first had died down at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>72</sup> the sexual revolution encouraged the lifting of taboos towards sexual orientation and practices. Nowadays, many use the improvement that has been made ever since for African Americans' inclusion in society, as an example to be followed in the fight of what is called Gay Civil Rights. Likewise, a parallel is drawn in the show between Olivia Pope and Cyrus Beene's, when the former cannot and the latter refuses to risk the public knowing about their respective relationships. The reason seems clear for both of them : avoiding attention and probable shame because of that “traditional family” policy and family values defended by Republicans.

### ***C- Sympathy for the Devil***

Gathering such very politically diverse characters is somewhat confusing for the audience. Especially when the most seemingly apolitical character is, in the end, the President. What impact does this have on the audience's perception of partisan identity? How does these opposite sides of the same coin make the spectator react? Why build the fictional president around those two usually opposed figures?

#### ***1) The Product of Corruption***

The audience's perception of the character revolves around the central one, Olivia Pope, because of the dynamic that was settled in the first season, as described by a critic below:

*Scandal*, at least at the outset, works hard to convince us that its Pope is a saint, that Olivia is a tough, valuable crisis manager in a scandal-ridden capital who somehow only manages

71 “Gays and Lesbians.” *Civil Rights.org*. The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights & The Leadership Conference Education Fund, 2015. Web. May 29 2015.

<<http://www.civilrights.org/resources/civilrights101/sexualorientation.html>>

72 The first Civil Rights movement started with the Civil War allowing the abolition of slavery but because of the Jim Crow Laws (designed to circumvent federal amendments), African Americans were still considered as subhumans and deprived of some rights they had acquired thanks to the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments.

Chapman Smith, V. “American Anti-Slavery and Civil Rights Timeline.” *Ushistory.org*. Independence Hall Association, n.d. Web. 25 Jan. 2016.

to manage the scandals of people who are innocent.<sup>73</sup>

Poniewozick points out a key narrative scheme by saying that, in the first season, Olivia Pope only had to manage the reputation of innocent clients: it puts her on the right side before everything starts to go wrong in season 2, bringing along her flaws. But it is too late, having such a perfect depiction of that character in the first season forces the spectators to side with and somehow rely on her. In the following season, she becomes more of an antihero as the audience discovers the hidden truth coming to the surface from the first episode – whose title “White Hat's Off”<sup>74</sup> foreshadows her downfall – with one of her associates being put on trial as one of the consequences of the election rigging. *Projecting Politics* comments on this kind of portrayal linking it to movies from the 70s which “marked a change in the way movies portrayed politics” by shifting from the depiction of heroes and heroines to characters corrupted by power and going evil after World War II. According to the author, just like Olivia Pope, those characters “had to walk away from politics to preserve their honor”.<sup>75</sup> This “walking away from politics” is the reason why the spectators sided with her in the first place. In the first season, viewers are lured into thinking that she had left the White House (which is presented as the enemy) before it could corrupt her: she is a hero who resisted the temptation of power and evil. But in the second season, the viewers are provided with the whole truth: Olivia had actually been corrupted in her way to the White House by the election rigging. She then “saved her honor” when she resigned from her position in the White House. Contrary to her, the other characters never went away from politics and still appear as corrupted power-driven beings. However the spectator still has sympathy for some of those characters like Cyrus Beene, Verna Thornton and the First Lady as opposed to Sally Langston and Hollis Doyle.

The first three perfectly illustrate how Olivia Pope influences the way they are perceived: the public never thought Verna Thornton was a cold blooded killer like Hollis Doyle, but she did try to have Grant assassinated and then framed Hollis Doyle. She's the most scheming of them all but was presented as the less evil during the first half of the season. The way her storyline is designed makes her look harmless, weak, even vulnerable: spectators don't expect an old woman with cancer to be a threat, instead they tend to feel empathy for her. That depiction is brought by following Olivia Pope since, at

73 James Poniewozik. “TV Tonight: Scandal.” Rev. of *Scandal*, creat. Shonda Rhimes. *Time* 5 April 2012. Web. 20 April 2015. <<http://entertainment.time.com/2012/04/05/tv-tonight-scandal/>>

74 “White Hat's Off” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Jenna Bans. Dir. Tom Verica. ABC, 2012. DVD.

75 Terry Christensen and Peter J. Haas. *Projecting Politics: Political Messages in American Film*. (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2005.) 151.

the beginning, she's the only one who is aware of her illness and covers for her. On the other hand, Cyrus Beene is not presented as harmless but his friendship with Olivia does play a great role in the way spectators react to this character: he openly claims that he is a “political animal”, he has probably done as much harm as Doyle has. The difference between the two, apart from Olivia's support, is the many scenes that put him in a sentimental frame mostly caused by his sexual orientation throughout the second season. It is presented as a fatality which at the end makes him a little bit vulnerable and weak since it prevents him from being more than chief of staff. As some comments on a *The Guardian* review of *Scandal* and other sources online prove, his character as much as Mellie Grant's make the spectators face a dilemma upon deciding whether they are good guys or bad guys.

“Olivia's speciality is heading off or eliminating crises for the rich, famous and powerful, but Rhimes is smart enough to know that her particular brand of soap doesn't work without underdogs to root for and secret crushes that occasionally make these tough characters seem vulnerable (if only for half a second).”<sup>76</sup>

“The first lady is someone you feel you should hate, yet you do have sympathy for where she is coming from and boy do not get in her way, as she will do anything to keep her agenda moving forward.

Cyrus the White House chief spinner is in many ways evil yet I understand why he's doing what he's doing.”<sup>77</sup>

“Of course the Cyrus character is the best one. I swear every episode I think to myself “he's gonna have a heart attack and die from the BS he deals with from everyone” and Mellie makes me want to slap her but still she is a good, driven character.”<sup>78</sup>

“My favorite character by far is Mellie. On the one hand she is very conniving, selfish, and always looking for a way to further her career and status. On the other hand she is very human. We see her in pain throughout the show. Sometimes she even seems to truly love her husband and want to work on their relationship. Then she does something and her true motivations come to light. Even so I really like her.”<sup>79</sup>

76 Maureen Ryan. “*Scandal* Review: An Efficient Political Soap Opera From *Grey's Anatomy* Creator.” *The Huffington Post*. The Huffington Post. May 4<sup>th</sup> 2012. Web. March 7<sup>th</sup> 2015.

77 RationalPlan, comment on Sarah Hughes. “*Scandal*- box set review.” *The Guardian*, The Guardian, October 17<sup>th</sup> 2013. entry 17 Oct. 2013. Web. March 7<sup>th</sup> 2015. <<http://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2013/oct/17/scandal-box-set-review>>

78 champjohnson29. “Great Series. I Hope it Lasts.” Rev. of *Scandal*, by Shonda Rhimes. *IMDb*. IMDb, 4 June 2013. Web. March 7<sup>th</sup> 2015.

79 bashleyf2000-604-821567. “Seriously Addicting.” Rev. of *Scandal*, by Shonda Rhimes. *IMDb*. IMDb, 24 Feb. 2014. Web. March 7<sup>th</sup> 2015.

“Best of all is the First Lady, whose every gleefully manipulative move to improve her/his husband's position is great fun to watch, whilst being incredibly cynical. In fact, that cynicism permeates through its entire portrayal of the American political system, which is pretty refreshing to see, and it manages to show a black woman, a middle aged gay man, and the First Lady as essentially those with the real power in the country.”<sup>80</sup>

Those comments are particularly interesting in the way that they describe Olivia, Mellie and Cyrus by enhancing what seems to be weakening characteristics – as I demonstrated earlier in that particular Administration – and the inevitable empathy they induce despite their wrong doings. The other parameter to be taken into account is the depiction of those characters while they go through painful moments: the First Lady knows her husband cheats on her, Cyrus Beene's hunger for power backfires when his husband, who is a journalist, finds out about Defiance and as for Olivia, apart from the “White Hat” illusion, she cannot be with the man she loves no matter how hard she tries. This parameter could also apply to Hollis Doyle as he faces his daughter's treason. Though it seems to have a lesser impact in his case – proving that the characters' depiction has a great influence on the viewers' perception of those – as minimal as it is, the influence of Olivia Pope's words<sup>81</sup> and Doyle's depiction as the victim in “Snake in the Garden” ask for pity from the viewer. This depiction of Doyle shows how quickly figures of power can be weakened on screen.

## ***2) Weakening The Most Powerful***

If a theme was to be given to this season in terms of narration, it would probably be something along the lines of “the weakening” or “the downfall” of characters. While they all seemed powerful in season one, fighting against each other, season two sees the show's characters swallowed by the consequences of said power. Most of the weakening happens because of Defiance. Morality: Stealing power and lying only brings trouble. Interestingly enough the only important character who is not weakened is Sally Langston. The only character who played by the rules. The weakening is the direct consequence of the narration: The characters who are the least weakened by their wrongdoings will attract less sympathy than those who are the most weakened. For instance: Doyle is the least weakened, he is the one with whom the viewer sympathizes the least. That, of course is based on my own perception of the season but given that he is a very “extreme”, shameless and pitiless character depicted

80 nametag, comment on Sarah Hughes. “*Scandal*- box set review.” *The Guardian*, The Guardian, October 17<sup>th</sup> 2013. entry 17 Oct. 2013. Web. March 7<sup>th</sup> 2015.

81 Harrison: “Why is the devil our client?” / Pope: “Because even the devil loves his child.”

as the bad guy, I do think that most viewers have this perception. At least, the person behind the pseudonym “Andreadamery” who wrote the comment below did see the extremes in the two characters and especially the contrast that it creates with the President:

“Getting over the fact that the President's first name is Fitz, we are supposed to swallow the idea that he's, as the show put it, a conservative in name only, a "good" man, who surrounds himself with all the stereotypical caricatures of the right: first and worst of all, the Big bad EVIL oil tycoon who speaks extinct cowboy slang fluently, a VP who the POTUS himself tags as a "right wing crazy" who, like big oil, flaunts a southern accent and bible thumping persona and most importantly, the prez's chief of staff who is a gay man but proud Republican.”<sup>82</sup>

The most paradoxically weak character is the President. Though he is said to be “the most powerful man on earth”, he seems rather passive on policy making. From the beginning of the season this paradox is stressed. For instance, on making decision about international policy, the President is rather passive while the First Lady, his Chief of Staff, Hollis Doyle and the CIA (with the help of a photoshopped picture supposed to represent a genocide of children ordered by the government of East Sudan in the second episode<sup>83</sup>) try to push him to declare war on East Sudan. This pressure makes him look weak. In the first episode of the season<sup>84</sup> a phone call scene between the President and Olivia Pope visually highlights his weakness. Figure 11 was taken from the phone call scene (26:19 – 29:54) at a moment when the President can't decide whether he should invade East Sudan or not, whereas his wife expressed her wish to stop the genocide in East Sudan a couple of scenes before. The high angle shot makes the President look very small in between the giant-looking flags which make this office look bigger than with a close up or medium shot. The symbol it sends is that he cannot handle the responsibilities relative to his presidential position. The next scene with the President gives even more power to this camera shot. At the end of the phone call, Pope gives him a piece of advice concerning his dilemma which will empower him in his next scene:

Olivia Pope: “There's only one leader of the armed forces and his name is Fitzgerald Grant. If you go to war, it's because *you* want to go to war.”

82 Andreadamery. “New Idea; Ruined by Politics.” Rev. of *Scandal*, by Shonda Rhimes. *IMDB*. IMDB, 8 Sept 2014. Web. March 7<sup>th</sup> 2015.

83 “The Other Woman” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Heather Mitchell. Dir. Stephen Cragg. ABC, 2012. DVD.

84 “White Hat's Off” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Jenna Bans. Dir. Tom Verica. ABC, 2012. DVD.



*Figure 11 (28:18)*

*Figure 12 (36:07)*



*Figure 13 (36:44)*

In Figure 12, the medium shot makes the flag look smaller than in Figure 11, moreover, the flag is folded in such a way that we can read the word “president” right above his head. Finally the scene composition of the last shot (Figure 13) places the portrait of George Washington on the central vertical axis of the frame, catching the attention of the viewer. The protagonists are on each side of the portrait but the important detail here is that Washington's portrait is looking towards Fitzgerald Grant. Considering that Washington was the first President of the United States, he is the ultimate symbol of the country and of the presidency. All of these signals put together indicate that, in contrast to the first shot (Figure 11), the President took his power back, ready to take on his role of Commander in Chief. However, in his Farewell Address to the nation in 1796, Washington informs the future leaders of the country about foreign policy and the importance of remaining neutral and not making any alliance.<sup>85</sup> The scenes seems quite ironic when we associate it to this part of the Farewell Address: it's almost as if we had a projection of the first president of the united states which points to all the foreign policies that

<sup>85</sup> Steve Jones. “US Foreign Policy: Early Federal Period.” *About.com*. About Inc, n.d. Web 28 Jan. 2016.

have led to Grant's presidency. Washington also warns about the divide into parties highlighting the spirit of competition for domination that comes along, as well as the “spirit of revenge, natural to party dissension” as he himself puts it.<sup>86</sup> It turns out that his second warning is closely linked to the first as the initial split between the Confederates and the Republicans started with disagreement regarding foreign policy. Seeing how characters from the same party in the show spend their time bickering in the White House, it is quite ironical having the portrait of Washington “looking” in the direction of Grant as if History was repeating itself. In that sense, associating Grant with Washington highlights his being in the middle of his own administration and appearing as apolitical once more.

One last point links Olivia to his being apolitical as she gives him Eisenhower's pin as a gift, to celebrate his victory. To understand this detail, we must keep in mind that when Eisenhower became President, both parties were in the middle of the shift triggered by the New Deal policies. Daniel J. Galvin goes as far as saying that Eisenhower was apolitical because of those blurred boundaries between the two major political parties.<sup>87</sup> He also writes that “policy debates were heated, but they often divided the parties internally”:<sup>88</sup> this is exactly what happens in the show. The administration portrays a wide range of ideologies that don't seem to fit together. At last, it is interesting that, of all the characters surrounding Grant, Olivia is the one that inspires him to be Washington-like and Eisenhower-like. Moreover, he represents the race question which seems to be the common factor of every political shift.

According to this analysis, Olivia Pope plays a great role in the way the president and the other characters are seen. Whether it be about being weak, or attracting sympathy despite wrongdoings, the perception the viewers get of the characters mostly depends on the relationship they have with the main character, Olivia Pope, an antihero trying to redeem herself. For instance, the viewers might loathe or sympathize with Mellie, the First Lady, because of the love triangle between herself, the President and Olivia. Those White House relationships accompanied by the scheming can give the audience pause on whether this depiction is exaggerated or not. After all, the show recalls major events that have defined contemporary American politics, be it Civil Rights, scandals, election rigging or assassination attempts. As for the question of partisan identity, this part revealed some ambiguities that seem to have originated from a shift between parties on the question of race that comes back quite often. Those shifts

86 “Washington's Farewell Address 1796.” *Avalon Project*. Lilian Goldman Law Library, n.d. Web. 28 Jan. 2016.

87 Daniel J. Galvin. “Presidential Partisanship Reconsidered: Eisenhower, Nixon, Ford and the Rise of Polarized Politics” *Political Research Quarterly* 66.1 (March 2013): 46-60. *JSTOR*. Web. 28 Jan. 2016.

88 Galvin, 50.

bring the parties closer for a certain amount of time depending on how they react to the change in regard to public policy. One viewer highlights how the show made him “empathise – even sympathise – with Republicans”:

“The neat trick they pulled off is making viewers empathise - even sympathise - with Republicans.”<sup>89</sup>

This reaction betrays today's very polarized political parties to the point that people are surprised when they actually identify with fictional characters whose partisan identity is opposite to theirs.

The show also itself depicts and arouses public curiosity, which is part of politics nowadays, through Olivia Pope and Associates and some camera angles that suggest surveillance cameras. The latter suggests voyeurism that is shown with the depiction of the media which investigates for and reports to the people. This endless thirst for information might be what the show really is about, rather than being strictly political. This behavior is mocked by the show through its use of and at the same time cynicism over paranoia.

89 Pagey, comment on Sarah Hughes. “*Scandal*- box set review.” *The Guardian*, The Guardian, October 17<sup>th</sup> 2013. entry 17 Oct. 2013. Web. March 7<sup>th</sup> 2015.

## II. Paranoia Induced and (Over)Used

As already commented on in this dissertation, the people's trust in federal government is lower than it was before Johnson's management of the Vietnam War, followed by the very controversial presidency of Nixon. A recent research published online found out that “only 19% of Americans trust the government in Washington”.<sup>90</sup> This distrust has led to an environment of paranoia that is acutely visible in movies from the 70s on.<sup>91</sup> *Scandal* is no exception to that representation of the paranoia style and gathers all those major events that are anchored in people's memories. The question is, in what way does it display those major events? What place does the show grant to paranoia? Was it essential in the building of the plot?

In order to answer these interrogations, it is compulsory to look further into those events that caused the people to grow disillusioned. This part will foremost be built from a historical angle in order to be better aware of the context surrounding paranoia. The focus will first be directed towards the White House and its numerous agencies, the nature of their power and why they are a source of paranoia. In order to produce a thorough study of that paranoia atmosphere, we must keep in mind that it is inherent to people's distrust in federal government. This distrust leads them to seek information which itself can be the product of a biased point of view or of an incomplete investigation. Where do they seek the information? In the newspapers, on TV, on the internet and so on and so forth. Hence, the second parameter to be examined in this case study is the media. Is there a limit to what is called the fourth branch of government? The study of these two subjects will be completed with an analysis of the way the show deals with paranoia both as a way to denounce it and as a user of the paranoia style.

While there is a “paranoia style” (over)used by Hollywood, Richard Hofstadter studies what he calls the “paranoid style” observed in American politics.<sup>92</sup> His study demonstrates that the paranoid style is not a contemporary way of making politics but a habit that has gone on for centuries. Hofstadter defines the “paranoid style” as “a way of seeing the world and of expressing oneself” with “qualities of heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspirational fantasy”, not only targeting an “individual victim” but “millions of others”. He also emphasizes how such an attitude makes a politician seem

90 “Public Trust in Government: 1958-2015” *Pew Research Center: U.S. Politics and Policy*. Pew Research Center. 23 Nov. 2015. Web. 6 Feb. 2016.

91 Ian Scott explains that the paranoia style that historically settled in the 70s was only a “re-emergence of a current theme”, result of “America's past[...] littered with the debris of conspiracy scenarios”. Scott, 119-120.

92 Richard Hofstadter. *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965)

“unselfish and patriotic”.<sup>93</sup> For instance he uses manuscripts from the 18<sup>th</sup> century as well as the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to enhance his study and demonstrate with certitude that this phenomenon is not only contemporary and was not brought by controversial contemporary events. Those proofs of that style over the centuries show that it has always been brought by moral principles, prejudices and ways of life belonging to each period of time. Nowadays, this style is not only used by politicians for their movements however big they may be but also by newspapers, whether they be more right-wing or left-wing inclined. It is, however, important to note that Hofstadter insists that in the 60s (period of publication) the particular style was very used by the extreme right-wing movement. Since the object under study here is a TV show taking place in present times, in order to be on point with the object and subject of my study, I will carry on focusing on the contemporary times in the United States.

### ***A- Paranoia and Politics***

“One may object that there *are* conspirational acts in history, and there is nothing paranoid about taking note of them. This is true. All political behavior requires strategy, many strategic acts depend for their effect upon a period of secrecy, and anything that is secret may be described, often with but little exaggeration, as conspirational”.<sup>94</sup>

Politicians have long used the paranoid style to attract people's attention using their fear of whatever taints the history of the period they live in. But, in his book on conspiracy and paranoia, Timothy Melley seems to be isolating the paranoia style of our contemporary period as a post-war phenomenon.<sup>95</sup> He locates the beginning of this paranoia environment in 1950s that can be found in the work of many writers from this period on, such as Burroughs or Don DeLillo. Now, focusing back on the object under study, from beginning to end, this season of *Scandal* has displayed political paranoia from within the White House and without. The apparent issue the show deals with is whether the power is granted or stolen. Gradually the paranoia environment that came from deep inside the White House with Defiance shifts as the narration introduces plots involving terrorism, which are frequent plots in nowadays' Hollywood productions.

93 Hofstadter, 3-4.

94 Hofstadter, 19.

95 Timothy Melley. *Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America*. (New York: Cornell University Press, 2000)vii. *Google Books*. Web. 8 March 2015.

## 1) *Bureaucracy Secrecy*

Agencies and bureaucracy are part of the executive branch. Finding scholarly work on the organization of bureaucracy and agencies felt like a challenge: in the end, the system is so complex that from an outsider's point of view, it is hard to really understand how it works. Scholarly work on the matter is hard to find but not inexistent. Starting with a Bush administration-centered study of the war on terrorism, Richard S. Conley commented the changes brought by the creation of Homeland Security.<sup>96</sup> In the introduction he explains that the President and Congress manage the federal bureaucracy together<sup>97</sup> which is one of the rules of the checks-and-balances system. The problem raised by this co-management is the relationship between the executive and legislative branches when the President loses majority in the Congress, making it harder for presidents to reorganize the executive departments. As McKay asserts in his chapter on bureaucratic power, “successive presidents have worked hard to reduce the number of departments” in order to “facilitate smooth policy making”, therefore gaining control and oversight. Unfortunately, the fragmentation of the American government over the years makes bureaucracy less “amenable to central direction and control” according to him.<sup>98</sup> McKay concludes that the lack of agreement between the legislative and executive branches prevented them from ““downsiz[ing]” the federal bureaucracy”. However the author expresses reservations as to whether downsizing would make bureaucracy more efficient and raise the people's trust. After all, secrecy looks a lot like conspiracy and when suspicion arises, paranoia is never far down the road.

The representation of bureaucracy in the show is mostly that of a rogue governmental entity, especially when the B613 plot is introduced in the episode “Spies Like Us”<sup>99</sup>. B613 is presented as an independent, secret (and fictional) CIA program hiring and making “trained killer spies” in the name of national security. Above all, one of Pope's associates, Huck, who was part of this program says they “were the bad guys”. Apart from them being killers, this episode doesn't give much information on this CIA unit nobody knows about except those who are part of it and manage it. Towards the end of the season the viewers start to know more about the secret B613 through flashbacks of Huck's life. There is another negative depiction of the bureaucratic power in this season and this time, contrary to the secret

96 Richard S. Conley. *The War on Terrorism and Homeland Security: Presidential and Congressional Challenges*.

Assessing the Presidency of George W. Bush at Midpoint: Political, Ethical and Historical Considerations, University of Southern Mississippi, Nov. 22-23 2002. Unpublished paper. University of Florida, Gainesville. Web. 12 August 2015.

97 Except for organizational purpose within the executive branch which is allowed through executive order. (McKay, 273)

98 McKay, 267.

99 “Spies Like Us” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Chris Van Dusen. Dir. Bethany Rooney. ABC, 2012. DVD.

B613 program, the executive branch *is* aware of the deeds (various “interrogation techniques” or in other words, torture) which imply the violation of the *habeas corpus*. This depiction doesn't involve the creation of a fictional program compared to the previous one. However, the two negative representations of the bureaucratic power seem to collide and disturbingly resemble the events of a rather recent scandal, when looking at the details. Under the Bush Jr. administration, in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks many bold measures were taken as the war on terror started. Among those measures: Guantanamo Bay. According to an article on *National Journal*, published after the release of the Senate's investigation report, it all began in 2002, away from people's sight but also away from the control of those who were supposed to be in charge: The President and the Senate Intelligence Committee. In April 2006 only, the President got directly briefed by the CIA. As for the Intelligence Committee, they were told about the program on September, “hours before the program was publicly disclosed by President Bush”.<sup>100</sup> Using the Senate Committee on Intelligence's report<sup>101</sup>, many connections can be made between the show's representation and what happened at Guantanamo Bay:

- “CIA personnel, aided by two outside contractors, decided to initiate a program of indefinite secret detention and the use of brutal interrogation techniques in violation of U.S. law, treaty obligation, and our values.” (U.S. Sen. Comm. On Intelligence) This quotation fits with the B613 plot. First of all, the obvious comparison is that of the “indefinite secret” program. In the episode “Spies Like Us” it is made explicit that nobody exterior to the program is aware of it. The second obvious comparison is that of the “brutal interrogation techniques” which are used by members of B613. Multiple scenes show Huck using such “enhanced interrogation techniques”, as they call it, especially in the episode centered on his character.<sup>102</sup> Now the part that requires a little interpretation is the “detention” part. In the report it concerns presumed terrorists held captive. In the show, the detention is that of the “killer spies”. The flashbacks to Huck's job interview already foreshadow that as Figure 14 and 15 show: Huck, who is sitting on the chair, is in between two B613 agents, one of whom is guarding the door. On Figure 12, the said agent is ready to pull out his gun after Huck is asked whether or not he will accept the job.

100 Dustin Volz. “Senate Releases Historic CIA Torture Report Condemning Bush-Era Detainee Treatment.” *National Journal*. National Journal, December 9<sup>th</sup> 2014. Web. 11 April 2015. <<http://www.nationaljournal.com/congress/senate-releases-historic-cia-torture-report-condemning-bush-era-detainee-treatment-20141209>>

101 For full report: The Associated Press. “The CIA Torture Report: The Full Text of the Senate Investigation.” *National Post*. National Post, December 9<sup>th</sup> 2014. Web. 11 April 2015. <<http://news.nationalpost.com/news/the-cia-torture-report-the-full-text-of-the-senate-investigation>>

102 “Seven Fifty-Two” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Mark Fish. Dir. Allison Liddi-Brown. ABC, 2012. DVD.

Visually they surround him. In the following flashback, the agent who stood by the door explains the job description to Huck which involves killing people. Huck's reaction is followed by this line: "I see you look at the door, that's a normal reaction. But there are no outs here my friend. No take backs. You signed a contract with the U.S. government" ("Seven Fifty-Two" 10'26" to 13'39"). "There are no outs" surely sound like detention. Worse, he lost his freedom and free will as is emphasized by the expression "no take backs". The detention does not remain symbolic though since as soon as Huck is found "defective" because of his family, he is thrown in a hole for months. Isolation in a confined space was one of the many torture techniques – or, as the CIA called it, "enhanced interrogation techniques" - used by the CIA.



Figure 14 (6:08)



Figure 15 (8:02)

- “inhumane physical or psychological techniques are counterproductive because they do not produce intelligence and will probably result in false answers.” (U.S. Sen. Comm. On Intelligence). This second quotation could be associated to the second negative depiction of bureaucracy. It is the Pentagon that is targeted by the show this time which is not a very surprising choice. In fact, according to a *Washington Post* article, the CIA and the Pentagon seemed to have been working together on “enhancing” their interrogation techniques.<sup>103</sup> The episode denouncing these “counterproductive” and “inhumane” acts is entitled “One for the Dog”.<sup>104</sup> It displays the waterboarding technique and physical abuse. There are fifty-five stances of “waterboarding” in the Senate Committee of Intelligence report. The viewers are aware that Huck is not responsible for the attempted assassination of the President, hence my connecting

103 Joby Warrick. “CIA Played Larger Role in Advising Pentagon.” *The Washington Post*. The Washington Post, June 18<sup>th</sup> 2008. Web. 11 April 2015.

104 “One for the Dog” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Heather Mitchell. Dir. Steve Robin. ABC, 2012. DVD.

this narration with the term “counterproductive”. I intend to also make a connection with the expression “false answers” since the viewers inevitably wonder whether Huck will break under the repeated, “inhumane” torture even though he is innocent. Showing Huck in such a situation is a way to denounce the dangerous power of measures, such as the Patriot Act, that ignore the *habeas corpus* and thus, cause a high risk of innocent people being held under terrorist suspicion without any trial.

- “I represent the CIA, the department of Homeland Security, the Patriot Act [...]. We're not on American soil. This is not America. This is the Pentagon. And that is an enemy combatant. [...] You're a guest here. Shut your mouth.” (“One For the Dog” 1'08” - 2'39”) This line, from a CIA operative to the U.S. Attorney David Rosen, immediately made me think of Guantanamo Bay. Indeed, the fact that Guantanamo is not on American soil, the Constitution doesn't apply there, therefore they didn't need to respect the *habeas corpus*. The scene under study however, holds a greater meaning. It depicts the Pentagon as an institution that is above the Constitution. A rogue one. Moreover, in the show, David Rosen represents justice so, being told to “shut [his] mouth” by this CIA operative shows that justice is completely ignored and overruled when it comes to the war on terror. Looking back on the Guantanamo Bay scandal, the CIA did, with the help of the Pentagon and the encouragement of the President, consider itself above the Constitution (and therefore above justice) when they chose Guantanamo in order to avoid the limitations granted by the Constitution of the United States.<sup>105</sup>
- Huck's strange behavior itself is a reference to the wrongdoings of the CIA and Pentagon. The Committee on Intelligence report mentions “psychological and behavioral issues” observed as a consequence of the physical and psychological torture. Huck is probably the character possessing the least social skills, the flashbacks from the nineteenth episode of the season show that this is the consequence of his isolation. This phenomenon is dealt with in the report which confirms that “the lack of human contact experienced by detainees is a cause of psychiatric problems.” (U.S. Sen. Comm. on Intelligence) Five episodes after the waterboarding scene in “One For the Dog” he goes through a PTSD phase during which he cannot stand water anymore.<sup>106</sup>

105 Joby Warrick. “CIA Played Larger Role in Advising Pentagon.”

106 “Boom Goes the Dynamite” Scandal: The Complete Second Season. Writ. Shonda Rhimes, Jenna Bans and Matt Byrne Dir. Randall Zisk. ABC, 2012. DVD.

This representation of an almost almighty bureaucracy that echoes historical facts, denounces an abusive use of the executive power accentuated by the worse case scenario: the victim of this abuse is innocent. Towards the end of the episode the viewers can hear Sally Langston's televised announcement of the resolve of the President's assassination case, as we see Huck whose face is full of bruises coming back to P&A's office. As this scene unfolds, a tension can be perceived since Langston's works don't fit with Huck's condition:

“Let us show the best of our nature. [...] All those who seek to harm our leadership or our fellow citizens should remember that at the foundation of America is a resolve for justice. [...] Thank you, good night and God bless America.”

While the acting president assures the people that they are safe, we see the consequences of the means used to make America safe which are *not* “the best of [America's] nature” as she puts it. The leadership itself agrees with harming “fellow citizens” while, contrary to what Langston says, breaking the “foundation of America” by ignoring justice and human rights. This paradoxical association of image and diegetic sound shows signs of criticism of the means used in the war on terror endorsed by the executive branch from the Oval Office to intelligence agencies. But the show goes further while dealing with agencies by making all Americans victims of the next abuse: a matter of espionage within the country.

## 2) *Big Brother*

Many measures have been authorized in the name of the war on terror ever since 9/11. In 2013, people were told that the NSA had been “spying” on them which, unsurprisingly, became viral and controversial in the whole world. Thomas Bausardo describes this reaction as hypocritical and stresses the misuse of the word “revelation” given that the very nature of the NSA is intelligence which implies spying.<sup>107</sup> Everybody suspected – if not knew – about it. The show itself is proof of that awareness: The plot of the third episode of the season involves an NSA program called Thorngate whose use is to spy on citizens including politicians through their electronic devices cameras.<sup>108</sup> The portrayal however cannot be based on the spying program scandal since Snowden leaked it on June 2013 whereas the episode aired on October 2012. This somehow foreshadowing of the NSA scandal demonstrates that the paranoia culture surrounding the American intelligence secret processes as well as points out the hypocrisy Bausardo wrote about in his paper. As he says on the subject of the spying program:

107 Thomas Bausardo. “Quel passé pour Prism et Snowden ?”. *Vacarme* 1/2014 (N° 66): 142-157.

108 “Hunting Season” Scandal: The Complete Second Season. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Matt Byrne. Dir. Ron Underwood. ABC, 2012. DVD.

“They've always done it and will keep on doing it.”<sup>109</sup> (Bausardo 145) Finding information about this program has been tricky for different reasons. The first and most conspicuous reason is that most of the information is kept secret so that it remains efficient. There has been no Senate report on the matter yet, so the only information comes from what conclusions the media drew from Snowden's stolen secret information from the NSA. Given the paranoia that can appear in the media for the sake of the exclusive information and breakthrough Woodward-and-Berstein<sup>110</sup> style – which is something I will discuss in the next subpart - I would rather not rely too much on newspaper articles that are more emotional than factual on the issue. For instance, *The Guardian's* dossier on the matter directly involves the reader in the report.<sup>111</sup> The second title itself “talks” to the reader by using the pronoun “you” in “What the revelations mean for you”. It also uses a novel-like narration: the first sentence “When Edward Snowden met journalists in his cramped room in Hong Kong's Mira hotel in June, his mission was ambitious. Amid the clutter of laundry, meal trays and his four laptops, he wanted to start a debate about mass surveillance” could have been phrased that way instead: “In June, Edward Snowden met journalists in Hong Kong to start a debate about mass surveillance”. The adjectives or descriptive details, that I simply took out are meant to stimulate the reader's imagination so that they are “caught” by the story and their emotions. Except for counter-terrorism, the means and reasons for collecting information on people all over the world from the Internet or from phone calls are not known. How do they use the data they collect? How do they study it? We might never know – and it may even be a good thing. The question that my research raises – which was also Ian Scott's interest in his study of politics in Hollywood film (Ian Scott 120) – is the following: Is it possible that the Hollywood paranoia style made the reaction to the real spying program worse, with people drawing unjustified conclusions driven by paranoia? I will also build on this question and try to give as much elements as possible to answer it in the third part.

### 3) *Political Animals*

*Abby: “I think conspiracy is a strong word.”*<sup>112</sup>

109 Translation of “Ils l'ont toujours fait – et continueront de le faire.”

110 Woodward and Bernstein were the journalists who revealed the Watergate scandal connecting Nixon to a spying operation targeting the Democratic National Committee. cf. “Watergate Scandal”. *History.com*. A.E. Networks. n.d. Web. 11 Feb. 2016.

111 Ewen Macaskill and Gabriel Dance. “NSA Files Decoded: What the Revelations Mean for You”. *The Guardian*. The Guardian. 1 Nov. 2013. Web. 11 Feb. 2016.

112 “Beltway Unbuckled” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Mark Fish. Dir. Mark Tinker. ABC, 2012. DVD.

The White House-oriented paranoia displayed in the show does not only emanate from the people's distrust towards the government. And it is worth noting since the plot I will allude to here includes the election rigging. The palpable paranoia comes from those who committed the treason, not from those who were betrayed, which seems unconventional. The election rigging referred as Defiance, the main plot of this second season, is introduced at the end of the fourth episode (“Beltway Unbuckled”) as the former Attorney general, David Rosen, exposes to Abby his suspicions regarding the outcome of Quinn's trial. It's only at the end of the episode that the spectator is introduced with Defiance which is implicitly linked to the trial through a parallel editing. This plot lasts until the very last episode of the season. Expanding such a plot throughout an entire season creates suspense, especially when the plot everyone thought buried comes back to the surface. Saying paranoia only comes from the “Defiance group” would actually be untrue since David Rosen talked himself of conspiracy which is a part of the political paranoid style according to Hofstadter.<sup>113</sup> His paranoia is very apparent on screen when the viewers discover – what I call – his “conspiracy wall”. It resembles that of a serial killer as displayed in crime TV shows as the following figures illustrate. Figure 16A and 16C show David's wall, figure 16B is taken from an episode of the crime TV show *Castle*<sup>114</sup> dealing with a serial killer who attempts to kill one of the main characters<sup>115</sup>, figure 16D is from the same TV show but this time it deals with a conspiracy whose outcome in the long run is WWII.<sup>116</sup>

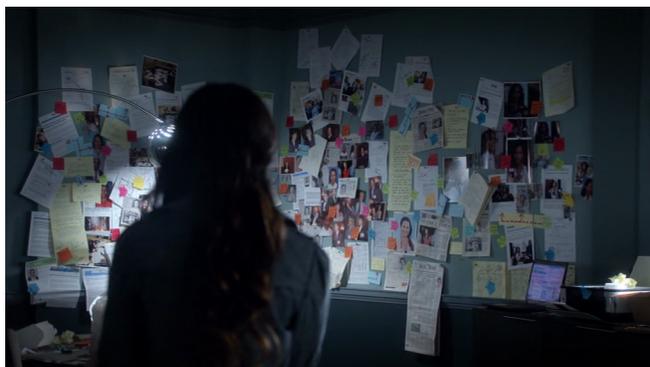


Figure 16 A



Figure 16 B

113 “In the paranoid style, as I conceive it, the feeling of persecution is central, and it is indeed systematized in grandiose theories of conspiracy.” (Hofstadter, 4)

114 Studying the conspiracy-wall motif, conspiracy walls displayed in this show immediately came to mind, which is why I chose this example even though there could be many others. Moreover the show often deals with conspiracies and since I have seen the episodes of *Castle* quite a lot, making parallels with this show naturally occurred to me. These are not the only allusions to the Crime TV show in this work.

115 “Boom!” *Castle: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Andrew W. Marlowe and Elizabeth Beall. Dir. John Terlesky. ABC, 2009. DVD.

116 “Linchpin” *Castle: The Complete Fourth Season*. Writ. Andrew W. Marlowe. Dir. Rob Bowman. ABC, 2009. DVD.

The conspiracy wall shown here links many past and present conflicts around the world as elements of a conspiracy whose outcome in the long run is WWII. In this scene, the characters discover that WWII is one conflict away from breaking out. Those walls full of papers, pictures and sometimes strings, are very much used in popular culture and even literature as shows an article on a wiki called *TVTropes* displays a list of examples of works that involve a conspiracy wall including a brief summary of the context for each example.<sup>117</sup> Given the length of the non-exhaustive list (25 TV shows, 3 books, 10 films, 8 video games among other categories), we can say that the link that we make between walls full of papers and conspiracy walls is part of our collective psyche. Given that conspiracy theories and paranoia are closely linked, as a study on actual subjects reveals,<sup>118</sup> the aim of displaying a conspiracy wall probably is a way to wake a paranoid sentiment in the audience. Having David Rosen try to uncover a conspiracy shows that he is one of the good guys. However it also displays him as a threat to Olivia.



Figure 16C



Figure 16D

Figure 16B shows a scene of *Castle* where Kate Beckett, one of the main characters, finds out that she is the target of the serial killer she investigates on. In the episode “Beltway Unbuckled” Abby discovers David's conspiracy wall which is presented in a similar way to the killer's wall: with a target in the middle. This particular focus on the pictures of Olivia while there are many others, betrays the will to make her the target and thus the possible “victim” of David's investigation. Showing her as a target

117 “String Theory”. *TVTropes*. TVTropes, n.d. Web. 11 Feb. 2016.

<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/StringTheory>

118 Hannah Darwin, Nick Neaves and Joni Holmes. “Belief in Conspiracy Theories: The Role of Paranormal Belief, Paranoid Ideation and Schizotypy”. *Personality and Individual Differences* 50.8 (June 2011): 1292-1293. *ResearchGate*. Web. 11 Feb. 2016.

before introducing the Defiance plot to the spectators might be a way to influence them so that they side with Olivia and therefore the Defiance group (still except for Doyle who committed murder to bury Defiance while Olivia tried her best to avoid such radical “fixing”) even though we, as citizens, may not endorse Defiance itself. Ironically, the episode which introduces Defiance is also the one that makes Governor Reston, the Democratic candidate who lost because of Defiance, a murderer as he kills his wife's lover *and* frames her for it in the process. That makes Defiance look a little less bad since it prevented a man capable of cold blooded murder from becoming the most powerful man in the world.

Overall, the President's decisions are not depicted as the bad ones. His VP's, however, are depicted with great negativity. Comparing their handling of intelligence matters, when Grant faces the leak of Thorngate, he asks to go “nuclear”, using any mean possible: Artie turning out to be the bad guy stealing Thorngate for his own glory and not the victim leaking Thorngate for the greater good, doesn't make the President look bad in the end since he didn't fight against an innocent man. When Sally Langston deals with intelligence the same way Grant did, encouraging the use of any means granted by intelligence programs, she looks evil since the viewers know that Huck is innocent. The criticism of the means used in the war on terror is extremely vivid as the most *evilized* characters of the administration (Sally Langston and Hollis Doyle) encourage torture on a man (Huck) who is in fact innocent. The criticism increases as the acting president plans to announce that the captive is guilty, even though he still hadn't confessed. One might think that, regarding the decline in public trust towards the government, and the paranoia it induced, the media benefitted from denouncing the scandals and wrongdoings happening behind people's back. But, despite the successful moments of counter-power the press proved capable of, the public opinion has shown a decline in confidence from the 70s on.<sup>119</sup> But in “a country where 'federal government' and 'bureaucracy' often hold negative connotations”,<sup>120</sup> it seems only natural for the people to seek information from the counter-power of the media which has been efficient in the past.

### ***B- Paranoia in the Media***

“Would you rather break this story or would you rather own this story?”<sup>121</sup> is probably the line from *Scandal* that introduces best this part. The primary goal of any information medium, any

119 McKay, 152.

120 McKay, 265.

121 “Boom Goes the Dynamite” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Jenna Bans. Dir. Randall Zisk. ABC, 2012. DVD.

journalist, is to inform the people. Doing so, the media insure the freedom of the press as well as the freedom of speech both granted by the first amendment to the Constitution which are one of the features of democracy. However, there is a fine line between helpful important information or information about a threat hovering over the well-being of democracy, and tabloids. This race for information as counter-power has been emphasized in the show multiple times through the character of James. At first, he is displayed as a very ambitious journalist who seeks information for the sake of his career advancement. For instance he quotes his husband's at-home confessions and gossip about Hollis Doyle in an article (“on the front page, above the fold”) from which he gets notoriety as the editor asks for more articles.<sup>122</sup> While in this episode he feels like he is Woodward and Bernstein, the traces of his ambition are still too prominent in the way he talks: He repeats four times the sentence “front page, above the fold” when he breaks the news to Cyrus, but when the latter gets mad at him for writing about the White House official, he doesn't highlight or defend the people's right to know and only talks about how the article benefitted him. Throughout the season, this character goes back and forth from the success-driven to the scandal-revealing journalist. Overall, it is undeniable that journalism is vital to the well being of a democracy. Historical events (or scandals) prove that journalism is a form of counter-power: without it, Watergate would have remained unrevealed, people wouldn't have seen the disastrous impact of the Vietnam War, the Guantanamo Bay problem wouldn't have been denounced and so on and so forth. Simply put: People wouldn't be able to see different sides of one story. Though this counter-power has proved to be very useful as a way for the people to be aware and therefore have power over the government's deeds, this use and abuse of counter-power by the media (and ultimately the people) has also been problematic.

### ***1) Blindsiding and Blindsided Media***

“A good deal of attention has been paid to the part played by the media, and especially television, in stirring up political conflict and helping keep it stirred up. Within the past decades the American networks have been charged with fostering political division by seeking out controversy and emphasizing confrontation.”<sup>123</sup>

Many newspapers follow the binary political system. By that I mean that they often tend to be either liberal or conservative. The problem of this bias is the way it influences the information,

122 “Spies Like Us” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Chris Van Dusen. Dir. Bethany Rooney. ABC, 2012. DVD.

123 Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang. *Television and Politics*. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002) 151.

inducing a report that is built from a particular perspective which is therefore non-exhaustive and sometimes betrays a partisan leaning. Now, this doesn't mean that they induce a big change of people's opinion since, as highlighted by McKay, people read papers that tend to share their partisan identity. Hence, what newspapers really do is “reinforce [people's political views]”.<sup>124</sup> Thus, they do not only follow the binary system, they reinforce it by increasing the differences between the liberal and conservative ideologies and, in the meantime, by feeding on the political paranoid style studied in the previous subpart. The second issue regarding the media's involvement in politics is the race for information that is, according to McKay, motivated by commercialization. As he puts it:

“With increasing commercialization, networks compete furiously for what is a declining market. As a result they opt for sound bite, market-driven journalism and have reduced the time devoted to the analysis of news.”<sup>125</sup>

This issue is shown in an episode I have already evoked in the first part: “Top of the Hour”.<sup>126</sup> Many episodes denounce the omnipresence of the media but in this episode the issue is explicit. In the scene under study Olivia Pope and two of her associates are in front of the client's house, waiting for the “top of the hour” - which designates the beginning of an hour and is especially used for media broadcast - to get out of the car and enter through the back entrance. The viewers can see fifteen reporters (according to one of the associates) each standing in front of filming equipment lined up on the house lawn in the dark (Figure 17), and Pope and associates watching said journalists (figure 18).



Figure 17



Figure 18

Once the “top of the hour” is reached, the spotlights are instantly switched on (Figure 19) lighting up

<sup>124</sup>McKay, 151.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> “Top of the Hour” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Heather Mitchell. Dir. Steve Robin. ABC, 2012. DVD.

the scene, the reporters, and their crews. Having all the journalist start reporting precisely “at the top of the hour” betrays some kind of conformist behavior coming from the journalists. This shot being taken from behind the windshield – that’s to say from the fixer and her associates’ point of view – adds some cynicism to the scene. Indeed, those who usually watch (the journalists) are being watched by Pope’s team. However this is not the first time this role shift occurs in the show since, regularly, the four television screens in Pope and Associates’ office are on, so that they can keep an eye on the news and on the way their clients are depicted to handle their cases better (Figure 22 from the fourth episode of the season)<sup>127</sup>. Hence, in Figures 20 and 21 while the journalists from various networks are too busy breaking the news, they don’t see Olivia Pope and her associates sneaking their way to the back of the house. It shows how – figuratively *and* literally – blindsided the reporters are when it comes to the race for information and commercialization.



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22 (“Beltway Unbuckled” 6:09)

127“Beltway Unbuckled” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Mark Fish. Dir. Mark Tinker. ABC, 2012. DVD.

This contrast between the two sides (reporters/Pope and Associates) also demonstrates that the journalists can be used as puppets. The shot where the journalists are all perfectly lined up gives the impression of discipline, the way soldiers are in the army. As the camera goes from one journalist to the next until the last one, we can hear fragments of each report which, together, sum up the story reinforcing the impression of conformism induced by a media driven by exclusive report of sex scandals (or even tabloids).

## ***2) A Fine Line Between Political Puppets and Woodward and Bernstein***

In Melley's study on the "*Empire of Conspiracy*", it is emphasized that mass media made paranoia worse than it was before to the point that it became part of nowadays culture.<sup>128</sup> He says that "People now assume that [conspiracies reflected in postwar films, television shows, and other media] are not only possible, but operative and determining forces in their own lives". Hofstadter's study acknowledges that "important changes may be traced to the effects of the mass media" in respect to paranoia. Though, as cited earlier on, he does not imply that there is no political secrecy or conspiracy, he does not imply that secrets are always kept for the greater good either<sup>129</sup>. What is really key in those studies is the omnipresence of the media and their increasing paranoia amongst people. In one scene of the episode entitled "Boom Goes the Dynamite" this side of the mass media effect is denounced. The scene takes place in the White House, with several White House operatives including the President, his Chief of Staff, the First Lady and intelligence operatives. An emergency meeting between the President and intelligence operatives, trying to find a way to solve a hostage situation, is interrupted by the Chief of Staff transitioning with a cut to the scene under study here. The scene opens with a TV screen showing the news followed by shots – reverse shots between the TV screen and the characters watching it. The presence of the First Lady by the President is quite surprising since she usually is not present when intelligence operatives appear on screen except for this one. That is because she represents the families, the people whose job doesn't involve managing war on terror matters contrary to those of the other people on screen. There is, at the beginning of the same episode (3'22"), a scene between her and her husband talking about the hostages, where she's the one who thinks about the families. Even though she knows more than them, she represents the ordinary people that were not prepared to seeing such

128 Melley, Timothy. *Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America*. (New York: Cornell University Press, 2000) vii.

129 "One may object that there are conspiratorial acts in history. and there is nothing paranoid about taking note of them. [...]All political behavior requires strategy. many strategic acts depend for their effect upon a period of secrecy." (Hofstadter, 19)

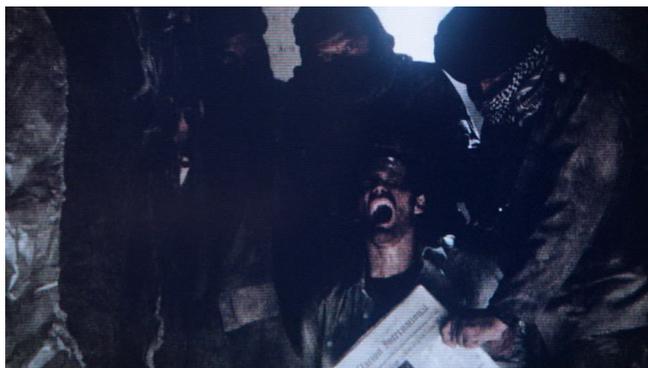
violent and frightening images in the news (Figure 25) where a man is beheaded. To emphasize the violence, the execution is not shown to the spectator who, instead, gets a shot of the First Lady's reaction (fig. 26A) and then of the White House operatives' reactions (fig.26B).



*Figure 23 (14:00)*



*Figure 24 (14:08)*



*Figure 25 (14:24)*



*Figure 26 A (14:31)*



*Figure 26 B(14:33)*

Considering that violent content has been displayed before on *Scandal* and many times in the next seasons,<sup>130</sup> this editing of the scene is quite meaningful. In the interpretation I make of it appears the lack of decency coming from the news broadcast. It is collective knowledge that such acts have happened ever since the war on terror started. Acts that were filmed and willingly exposed for the world to see. In 2002 a *Wall Street Journal* reporter, Daniel Pearl, was kidnapped and executed. His colleague and friend wrote an article about him twelve years later where she writes about the video of his beheading:<sup>131</sup>

“Clearly, it was meant for the world to see—and after jihadis circulated it online and CBS News aired parts on its evening broadcast, millions did.”

Her statement emphasizes the spreading of paranoia, which is the goal of terrorism, relayed by CBS News. In the article she also describes the scene showing her colleague's beheading introducing it by saying: “Not in our worst nightmares could we have imagined what happened after [receiving pictures of his kidnapping]”. This particular sentence reflects the lack of decency I wrote about earlier on as an interpretation of the scene editing. To some level, the media becomes an accomplice of what Brigitte L. Nacos calls the “mass-mediated terrorism”.<sup>132</sup> When we think about the censorship concerning programs that have to do with sexuality – which is brought up in the episode “Top of the Hour” – it seems rather ironic that such violence found its way into TV screens.<sup>133134</sup> Overall the study of this scene backs up Melley's and Hofstadter's theories according to which media serves paranoia. In this particular case, the news broadcast becomes a tool as it is used by terrorism and more broadly by anyone who wishes to spread paranoia. In that sense, the media is not in control anymore, which doesn't only happen when paranoia is involved. Indeed in *Scandal*, the President and the First Lady often use the media, the same way the Kennedys used the press, to maintain their reputation and keep the people “close to them”.

130 For instance in season 4 episode 16 “It's Good to be Kink”, a comparable violent act is shown as Huck cuts the throat of a protagonist. - “It's Good to be Kink” *Scandal: Fourth Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Matt Byrne. Dir. Paul McCrane. ABC, 2012.

131 Asra Q. Nomani. “Danny Pearl's Final Story” *The Washingtonian*. The Washingtonian, nd. Web. 28 June 2015. <<http://www.washingtonian.com/projects/KSM/>>

132 Nacos, Brigitte L. “Terrorism as Breaking News: Attack on America.” *Political Science Quarterly* 118.1 (2003): 23-52. *JSTOR*. Web. 12 Feb. 2016.

133 For further information on this subject, here is a documentary on film ratings in the U.S.: *This Film is Not Yet Rated*. Dir. Kirby Dick. 2006. Independent Film Channel, 2007. DVD.

134 Cyrus suggests leaking e-mail correspondence involving inappropriate-for-tv sex talk, to which one of his White House aids answers: “We can't say this stuff on TV CY”.

“Top of the Hour” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Heather Mitchell. Dir. Steve Robin. ABC, 2012. DVD.

Politicians' dirty laundry was the main interest of the first season. In this second season, there are still some “dirty-laundry” centered episodes but they become rare since the main plots of the seasons don't leave much time for “dirty-laundry” cases. Those particular episodes, however, do tell a lot about how much control people have over the politicians they elect and how much politicians need to look “clean”. Being a perfect family-drawn politician is what seems to work best; Mellie and Fitzgerald Grant are the reminder of that need for the perfect first family. The country leaders must be stainless to be trusted and appreciated by the people as the Kennedy family's reputation shows. Jacqueline Kennedy was very popular. She and her husband appeared on a lot of magazine covers, especially in *Life Magazine*. The Kennedys understood that the best and easiest way to create such a link with the people was through the media. Though the Kennedys are well-known for their very neat image and multiple family pictures, they were not the first to use the media for popularity. Indeed F.D. Roosevelt led this use of new technology when he started addressing the population on radio which, according to Jennifer Latson writing for *Time*, had a real soothing effect in times of great economic crisis.<sup>135</sup> In the show, the President and the First Lady mostly use television as their means to “bond” through stories about their love life. In an article entitled “The White House and the News Media: The Phases of Their Relationship”, two scholars argued that there are three different phases to the relationship between the media and the White House: the alliance phase, the competition phase, and the detachment phase.<sup>136</sup> All of those phases are displayed throughout the season but the one I am interested in here, to stress the use of the media as puppets, is the first phase, described as follows in the article:

The most newsworthy person in the new administration is the president himself. Reporters are interested in three types of stories about the chief executive: human interest stories about the man himself and the people closest to him; stories about the president as policymaker, focusing on the way he conducts himself while making up his mind as to which policy positions he will choose and emphasize; and stories about the goals that he hopes to achieve and the plans he is formulating to attain them. All three types of stories are likely to be presented to the public in a manner that is favorable to the president in large part because of the habits and traditions of

135 Jennifer Latson. “How FDR's Radio Voice Solved a Banking Crisis.” *Time*. Time, March 12<sup>th</sup> 2015. Web. 14 August 2015. <<http://time.com/3731744/fdr-fireside-chat-banking/>>

136 Michael B. Grossman and Martha J. Kumar. "The White House and the News Media: The Phases of Their Relationship." *Political Science Quarterly* 94.1 (Spring, 1979): 37-53. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 Feb. 2015.

The second phase corresponds to the moment when “reporters become interested in news stories that emphasize the administration's involvement in controversies and conflicts among personalities and over policies”. (Grossman and Kumar, 43) During the third phase, which is the natural continuation of the competition phase, “the relationship is carried on in a more structured, and almost formal, manner than in the previous periods”. (Grossman and Kumar, 49)

reporters in dealing with what they consider to be newsworthy items at this time.<sup>137</sup>

I already alluded to this subject in the first part as I commented on the Kennedy-like representation of the fictional President. Their every intervention is rehearsed and very fake and it has been going that way since the first season. In 1980, Ignacio Ramonet already affirmed that political communication relies on the art of acting, of putting on a show which is of course the starting point of making one's image neat and reassuring.<sup>138</sup> Doing so, politicians allegedly use the media to look good and gain publicity, especially when the intervention is less about politics and more about “the man himself and the people closest to him”.<sup>139</sup> This use of the media as a way to spread good publicity is blatantly shown – even to the point of exaggeration – through the presidential couple who go as far as making up the story of how they met to the point of “giving good fairytale”, as Cyrus puts it. The lie is emphasized with Olivia watching the “show” from her apartment, symbolizing the truth behind the scenes (literally during the campaign flashbacks as she stages everything herself). The staging and editing themselves show Olivia behind the scenes (Figure 27) displays the presidential couple from afar, behind the scene. This shot is really similar to that showing Olivia watching the show from her living-room (figure 28). Olivia and the camera man are both in the foreground in each shot while the presidential couple is in the background. This editing emphasizes the staging of Mellie and Grant's fake love story. Moreover, I wish to draw a parallel between the pairs of armchair in Olivia's living room and in the Oval Office: they seem to be oriented the same way in both rooms (figures 28, 29, 30), even the colors and the stripes almost match. Finally, the shot with the first screen confuses the viewer as they are led to think it is Olivia's television until the camera turns and progressively discloses the Oval Office. This staging and editing virtually places her behind the scenes, echoing to the time when she was the person staging their TV appearances. This reference to old times enhances her loneliness as she is watching the show, alone, in her living room. In addition, there is an effect of frame within the frame (figure 28) which shows the Presidential couple and their act inside the secondary frame and Olivia in the primary frame. The secondary frame formed by Olivia's television displays the limited point of view while the primary frame showing Olivia, the hidden mistress who is not shown to the public.

137 Grossman and Kumar, 41.

138 Ignacio Ramonet. “États-Unis : l'image d'un président.” *Le Monde Diplomatique* Novembre 1980: 16. *Le Monde Diplomatique*. Web. 14 August 2015.

139 Grossman and Kumar, 41.



Figure 27 (15:42)



Figure 28 (15:53)



Figure 29 (16:11)



Figure 30 (17:02)

Journalists and the people are fooled by these interventions, unaware of the secret that has been hiding behind the scenes since season 1.

The couple Politician/Journalist that the Chief of Staff and his husband (James) form represents the different sides of the relationship between the media and politics. When Cyrus doesn't try to prevent James from publishing stories that could harm the credibility of the White House, he deliberately *gives* him a story that will eventually help him get what he wants. For instance in the episode “Happy Birthday, Mr. President”, the flashbacks show Cyrus leaking the name of the Supreme Court nominee so that James can investigate and publish dirt on the nominee.<sup>140</sup> That way, the nominee who was chosen by the VP (as arranged when she joined Grant's ticket) cannot be appointed Supreme Court Justice, allowing Verna Thornton to become the new S.C. Justice (as promised during the election rigging). With this story, we get the two sides of the media: on the one hand the side that can ruin a

140 “Happy Birthday Mr President” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes. Dir. Oliver Bokelberg. ABC, 2012. DVD.

career and on the other hand, the “puppet” side which doesn't have full control over a report and is therefore used, as demonstrated above, for such things as spreading paranoia or maintaining politicians' reputation. Another journalist, who appears quite often throughout the season, named Kimberly Mitchell, is accused of being the “seething mouthpiece of the government's propaganda machine” by the very paranoid-behaving Artie Hornbacher in “Hunting Season”. Like James she plays both the adversary and the ally of the White House. The show's look on the media is rather “general” as it keeps aside partisan leaning which can be of great influence in a report. This character appears in the beginning of “Hunting Season” as she hosts a debate between a Democrat and a Republican on television (introducing Olivia's Democratic ex-boyfriend) which seems to be pointing out the constant bickering between the two parties based on clichés and paranoia.<sup>141</sup> This exchange does point out a big issue that is lobbying. Lobbying can be a way to bring people's voice to Capitol Hill where laws are made. Although, lobbying has its dark side: The big corporations. The issue that comes with big corporations is that they don't lobby for the greater good but for their own profit as McKay affirms when he writes that “most major corporations now have Washington offices and employ professional lobbyists to advance and protect their interests”.<sup>142</sup> In the show, Hollis Doyle embodies this other power that only benefits a minority and increases capitalism. As soon as the first episode, a criticism of this kind of lobbying is staged. Here is the dialogue where Hollis tries to way in on foreign policy by bringing up his own interests:

Hollis: Is the President close to pulling the trigger on East Sudan?

Cyrus: He's carefully weighing options.

Hollis: Breaks your heart reading what's going on over there. Assure the President that, if in his wisdom he does take us to war, he won't have to worry about any disruptions in the foreign energy market. No short falls or gas lines. Grandma won't even shiver. You got my word.

[...]

Mellie (after Hollis's departure): What did he want now?

Cyrus: To pledge that his company's fully prepared to realize even-more-obscene-than-usual profits should we go to war.

Towards the end of the episode, when the President claims his Commander-in-Chief position back, the criticism carries on as he stresses that among other people, oil lobbyists will *not* tell him “when to

141 Senator Davis, alluding to Hollis Doyle's presence in the White House, points out the big corporations and lobbies influencing politics (clichés) and insists that the President was about to push the red button (paranoia).

142 McKay, 293.

take this great nation to war".<sup>143</sup> This line from the first episode invalidates Senator Davis's intervention concerning lobbying in the third episode only which, therefore, should be seen as criticism towards the idea that all the politicians of a same party support the same ideas. As to the question whether the presence of Kimberley Mitchell has meaning: it might be a way to stress that she is neutral, which her willingness to bring down Thorngate also proved earlier on contrary to the accusations of Artie Hornbacher.

### 3) *Voyeurism*

The media is probably the best way for the public to get an oversight on their government. After all "democracy" means that the power belongs to the people. Politicians also find some good advantage in it when it comes to publicity and to achieving some goals. The problem is that this oversight the people get on the government through the media, has seemingly grown into something that they consider owed to them. In consequence, this oversight interferes with the politicians' freedom and privacy. That is when the need of the people to have some oversight on the government becomes a little unhealthy and the media's power comparable to tabloids. This other poisonous side of the coin is not left aside in the show.

According to a *New York Times* article written by Matt Bai, the sex scandal that led the media onto this tabloid-like information is that of Gary Hart, a promising politician whose career was cut short after photos of his yacht escapade with his mistress became public.<sup>144</sup> This article describes the way journalists proceeded to get their story. It can all be summed up with one word: Harassment. Said journalists watched his every move the night Hart's mistress came to visit him.<sup>145</sup> They went undercover and spied on him until the politician realized that he was spied on. The way this part is told in the article perspires with paranoia. Here is a passage:

He was certain he was being watched but mystified as to who might be watching. He peered out of his second-floor kitchen window and surveyed Sixth Street, S.E. Hart was by no means an expert in counterintelligence, but he

143 "White Hat's Off" *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Jenna Bans. Dir. Tom Verica. ABC, 2012. DVD.

144 Matt Bai. "How Gary Hart's Downfall Forever Changed American Politics". *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 18 Sept. 2014. Web. 10 Aug. 2015.

145 To get a better "taste" of this scandal, here is the original article written by the journalists who investigated on the matter: Jim McGee, Tom Fiedler and James Savage. "From the Herald Archives: The Gary Hart Story: How It Happened." *Miami Herald*. Miami Herald, 10 May 1987. Web. 10 Aug. 2015.

had traveled behind the Iron Curtain, where Americans were routinely tracked by government agents, and he had spent considerable time in the protection of Secret Service agents who were always scanning the periphery for threats.[...] He thought perhaps they were reporters, but how could he be sure? Maybe they worked for another campaign or for the Republicans.<sup>146</sup>

Is a cheating suspicion really worth spying on a politician and ruining his (or her) career? If cheating made him a bad husband, did it really make him a bad politician? Can unveiling sex scandals be considered as an act of counter-power? How does the show discuss this issue? It exposes the issue with an impossible love. A doomed love. The love plot is the common plot in all seasons so far. Needless to say that the importance it holds is huge. Towards the end of the second season, the First Lady reveals that the President has been cheating on her but doesn't give any name hoping he will choose her over Olivia and come back eventually to maximize his chances to get a second term.<sup>147</sup> The episode that deals with the media's reaction to the revelation is the penultimate of the season. This sole episode counts seven press conferences. Considering that the average episode length is forty two minutes, it makes one conference every six minutes.<sup>148</sup> This abundance of press conferences gives a feeling of harassment and obsession. The only difference with Hart's story is that Grant basically triggered the scandal. Based on this feeling of harassment and Grant's punch line – “My marriage is none of your business” (“Any Questions”) – during his press conference at the end of the episode, it seems clear that making a big deal of such stories is disproportionate. The best way to see how disproportionate the reaction is, is to compare to another big event: the assassination attempt. The two episodes (“Happy Birthday Mr. President” and “Blown Away”) following the assassination attempt (“Defiance”) display only three press conferences, which makes an average of one conference every twenty eight minutes.<sup>149</sup>

The media creates a fragile link between the people and the government because of the phases the relation between the media and the government goes through. Moreover, as we know perception depends on our experience, ideas and knowledge, the media itself can be biased even though this issue does not seem to be addressed in this season of the show. The Langs affirm that “studies showed that individual responses to particular messages transmitted by the mass media were shaped by personal

146 Matt Bai. “How Gary Hart's Downfall Forever Changed American Politics”.

147 “A Woman Scorned” *Scandal: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Shonda Rhimes and Zahir McGhee. Dir. Tony Goldwyn. ABC, 2012. DVD.

148 Approximate episode length / Number of conferences =  $42/7 = 6$

149 Approximate total length / number of conferences =  $(24*2)/3 = 28$

dispositions and competing influences”<sup>150</sup>. Therefore, the information provided by the media goes through two perspectives and two different ways of perceiving: it first goes through the perception of the person who investigates and produces a report and then through the perception of viewers or readers of said report. The same goes when one watches *Scandal*: the show displays someone's perspective on politics to which the response will be different depending on the viewer's perspective.

### ***C- Case study of “Hunting Season” and “One for the Dog”***

Hollywood has always been very receptive to politics, policies, and political landmark events that make History. Throughout the history of Hollywood, movies have dealt with subjects inducing paranoia, as Emilia Bakola explains when studying *Birth of a Nation*, *The Truman Show* and *Rear Window*. Three movies, three concerns belonging to distinct times.<sup>151</sup> As commented on before, *Scandal* is very aware of the paranoia environment played with by Hollywood. Not only is paranoia inherent – according to Ian Scott - to the subject of the show, which is politics, but *Scandal* also points out how paranoia is vehicled and increased by its own type of medium: TV. In this subpart I intend to demonstrate the paradoxical way *Scandal* deals with paranoia with the study of two episodes: the first one being “Hunting Season”, the third episode of the second season, and the other being “One For the Dog” the tenth of this season. Whereas at times the two episodes are very alike, overall they really don't have the same meaning nor the same approach of the subject. I mean to focus on *Scandal's* treatment of the Hollywood paranoia style whether it uses it or denounces it and the way it is conveyed in the two episodes, which seemingly hold two opposite depictions of paranoia. In order to do so, I will focus on narration - its inherent plot twists and the spectators' involvement it all creates - as well as on the tone of the episodes - brought by the composition of the moving image and the editing. For a better understanding of this part, we must keep in mind that the paranoid style refer to the way the feeling of paranoia is vehicled.

#### ***1) Storytelling and Mise en abyme***

Plot twists are very important in narration in order to catch the spectators' attention, keep them interested and, in the case of TV shows, to keep a loyal audience. *Scandal* is no exception: the two episodes under study use plot twists in their narratives as a means to wrap their respective plots. Not

150 K. Lang, and G. E. Lang, 13.

151 Emilia Bakola. *The Paranoiacs Who Knew Too Much: Postmodern Knowledge and Hollywood Cinema*. (Ann Arbor: ProQuestLLC, 2009) 46-48.

only do those plot twists help in solving said plots, they are also used as a way to criticize paranoia. Given that they occur in every episode of the second season, we could say that they are part of the formula in *Scandal* – that's to say its pattern, the equation upon which each episode of the show is built – providing an element of surprise in each episode. In that sense, the sole element of plot twist cannot be interpreted as criticism without looking at the context leading to it and the way it is all presented. In the two episodes under study, the plot twist actively and vividly provides the spectator with a particular *mise en abyme*. I allude here, as I use the expression “*mise en abyme*”, to the way the show makes the spectators aware of their feeding on the Hollywood paranoia style and their sharpened paranoia towards politics in general through its plot-twists. The “*mise en abyme*” I describe here is abstract per say making it a subtle tool for criticism and cynicism.

The plot twist revealed in the third episode of the season can be interpreted as criticism of paranoia, distrust towards the government, and paranoia as displayed by Hollywood and the media. The episode plays with three concerns of our times: new technology, nuclear weapons and espionage. Indeed, in the episode, the NSA uses very personal devices such as cellphones and computers to spy on people. Artie Hornbacher comes to see Olivia Pope to become her client because he thinks he is followed by the NSA from which he stole classified information regarding espionage. From the beginning on, the purpose of the episode is somehow revealed as it opens on a scene displaying a debate between a Democratic senator and a Republican senator on a TV show where the former, sen. Davis, accuses the president of being on the verge of pushing the “big red scary as hell button” is evoked. A sole “red button” would have sufficed to point out the call for paranoia, but the addition of the adjectives “big” and “scary as hell” just makes it bigger. Having this character use such adjectives makes the paranoia criticism of the scene all the more obvious. But foremost Davis points out the presence of the “oil tycoon” Hollis Doyle in the White House. These concerns trigger cultural paranoia since, as Emilia Bakola recalls, cultural paranoia is a response to major events – such as the Watergate, Kennedy's assassination, 9/11 and we could add the more recent NSA scandal to those – which brought about a “growing mistrust of the government and its agencies as well as the intense anxiety over powerful corporations”. (Bakola, 4) Introducing this episode with such a scene in addition to the “Artie Hornbacher plot”<sup>152</sup> brings forward the excessive use of the paranoid style in our society. This becomes particularly true when it turns out that Artie Hornbacher manipulated Olivia – making her the paranoid

152 Artie Hornbacher is a seemingly over-paranoid character who stole a spying program from the NSA. Olivia Pope takes him on as her new client in order to help him reveal the secret program only to find out that, in the end, he stole the program for his own benefit, not for the greater good

character the second he alludes to the “late night phone calls from the West Wing” involving the president's extramarital affair with her – to then be able to sell Thorngate. This plot twist in the narration forces the spectators to look back at their own bias, at their own paranoia. This arc also lets it be understood that, in the end, it might be safer for everyone if classified information stayed classified so that it doesn't backfire, highlighting the importance of secrecy. All of this, however, doesn't mean that there is no criticism of agencies and secrets. The name of the spying program, Thorn**gate**, itself carries cynicism: ever since the Watergate, all scandals have been designated by using the suffix “gate” (for example: the Lewinskygate, the Irangate *or* Contragate, the ongoing Panamagate...). Hence, this script choice leaves room for interpretation but, considering that the show depicts politicians as manipulative beings, a plausible interpretation would be that politicians willingly create scandals to the point that they could even give is a name ending with -gate. Another interpretation would simply be that of agencies often being involved in scandals such as the Iran-Contra Affair or the very complicated matter of Guantanamo and so on.

The other episode under study also displays paranoia in multiple ways because of its quite complex structure putting together different plots, including various complications. This time, paranoia is not as subject to criticism as in “Hunting Season”, it is rather used to develop a “classical conspiracy narrative” which is defined by Fenster as “best recognized as putting forth a particular narrative logic that organizes disparate events within a mechanistic, tragic framework”.<sup>153</sup> Since this episode develops two complex unfinished arcs of this second season – the Defiance arc and the assassination attempt arc including the problem of the fake letter of reinstatement – it perfectly fits the definition Fenster makes of this narrative concept. In the case of the assassination attempt arc, there are three developments: The first one involving Huck's detention grants the spectators more knowledge inducing a reversal of roles since they know more than Olivia does until halfway through the episode when David Rosen tells her where Huck is. Usually, the spectators discover elements of the storyline gradually through Olivia. The associates however still know less than their boss since they still don't know about Defiance. So, through this arc, the viewers get a new point of view: while they are lesser “victims” of the “classical conspiracy narrative” – which I will explain further down – (as compared to the characters who know less), they can now watch the characters as they walk in the viewers' shoes, creating a *mise en abyme*. The second development – which also creates a link with the Defiance arc - exposes Hollis Doyle as the planner of the assassination attempt. Contrary to the first one, that development doesn't provide the

<sup>153</sup> Fenster, Mark. *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999) 111.

viewers with extra-knowledge: they are on the same level as Olivia but still know more than the associates who only get to watch the bigger picture that is the assassination attempt of the president. This lack of involvement of the associates only emphasizes the *mise en abyme* of how paranoia works on those who are kept aside, as this line confirms:

Harrison: This is next level stuff, Grassy Knoll stuff. There's a whole other layer of DC, you know, where real politics happens where decisions are made, not about democracy or the flag, about power. This is about things that go bumping the night stuff, that regular Americans never hear about, this is the real deal. We don't question Liv on this.

The amount of knowledge provided to the viewers, who literally see what happens “underground”, in the Pentagon, only makes this line resonate better. Now, if we isolated this line from the storyline, it would seem out of proportion and even more paranoid than Artie Hornbacher who was depicted and seen as crazy. Especially because it refers to a pending theory leading back to Kennedy's assassination, with the expression “Grassy Knoll”, used as an adjective to the unknown governmental “stuff” Harrison alludes to. According to this theory, a man other than Oswald, shot Kennedy from the grassy knoll, hidden behind a fence.<sup>154</sup> Apart from the theory of the grassy knoll, many conspiracies have originated from the Zapruder film that displays the infamous images of Kennedy's assassination and the surroundings of the scene according to Jean-Baptiste Thoret.<sup>155</sup> The author of *26 Secondes: l'Amérique éclaboussée* also affirms that Kennedy's assassination has had a great impact on movies. Considering that here Harrison's line fits with the narration (but also with the tone, which will be dealt with in the next subpart), those conspiracy theories around Kennedy's assassination are used for the sake of paranoia. Since it is part of the narration, paranoia doesn't backfire the way it did in the first episode under study through a plot twist. However, at one point, the editing tends to manipulate the spectators into making false assumptions. Everything is made so that the spectators link Hollis Doyle to the assassination of the President (him being presented as the bad guy from the beginning helps the spectators give in this assumption, as explained in the first part). A transition between scenes towards the end of the episode carries this suspicion.

154 Jerry Organ. ““Smoke” on the Grassy Knoll”. *The Kennedy Assassination*. John McAdams, 1995-2016. Web. 20 June 2016.

155 Jean-Baptiste Thoret. *26 Secondes: L'Amérique éclaboussée. L'assassinat de JFK et le cinéma américain*. (Pertuis: Rouge Profond, 2003) 23.



*Figure 31 (30:10)*



*Figure 32 (30:26)*

Figure 31 is a shot of the end of a scene between acting President Langston and Hollis Doyle who tells her that “Something has got to be done. [...] [He is] handling it” about the President presumably being awake and soon to be reinstated. A cut transition with a panning camera – moving the camera lens from left to right or right to left - (making the transition smoother) then leads to the next scene displaying the hired shooter who tried to kill the President on the phone with her contractor, apparently talking about the President being moved to Camp David – the spectators take this guess thanks to the sound of the news in the background. This sole cut leads to a plot twist three episodes later revealing who ordered the failed assassination of Grant, that is Verna Thornton, one of the “good guys”, making yet another Democrat a rather “bad guy” in the show. This plot twist strikes the spectators as they realize that they were fooled by characterization, by their identifying with the main character and her distrust towards Doyle, but also by the paranoid style used by Supreme Court Justice who accused him of being the one who planned the assassination attempt. The third complication is that of the forged letter of reinstatement which puts the viewers, Olivia and her associates on the same level. Even though the associates still miss some details regarding the Doyle problem, they participate in maintaining the lie by taking advantage of the media. The Defiance participants – except Doyle since he is, as the suspect of the assassination attempt, still the cause of paranoia: the viewers still don't know that Verna Thornton, who is not involved in the letter matter, framed Doyle – are the ones over whom paranoia hovers: if the truth comes out, the group could be put under investigation for illegal and unconstitutional behavior and Defiance could be revealed. The paranoid style is particularly palpable as Mellie Grant defends her deciding to write and sign the letter of reinstatement:

“Someone shot Fitz three times, someone shot Hal, they killed Britta Kagan and Hollis

orchestrated it. And now he's sitting pretty in the White House at the right hand of Her Majesty Sally Langston whispering his dirt into her ears. That is not okay. And because we let that snake Hollis play in our garden for so long, we can't turn him in to the feds or turn him over to the cops or to the courts and wait for justice to be served because we have to protect Fitz, we have to protect secrets. We all got in bed with the devil together and nobody wants to go to federal prison so I wrote a letter and I signed it. I broke the law, I broke the Constitution and I would do it again.”

According to Hofstadter, “[the paranoid spokesman's] sense that his political passions are unselfish and patriotic, in fact, goes far to intensify his feeling of righteousness and his moral indignation”, which perfectly fits with the quotation above. While Hofstadter affirms that the political paranoid style “has a greater affinity for bad causes than good”, the “paranoid style of filmmaking”<sup>156</sup> doesn't work that way. In an article from *The Atlantic*, Ross Douthat depicts the latter as a vector of patriotic stories that originate from pessimism, such as heroes taking down a rogue CIA or more or less ordinary Americans fighting against enemies of the country and so on. *Scandal* makes the use of the paranoid style of filmmaking seem unusual compared to the other episodes in the plots involving Defiance by playing with the notion of patriotism while the deeds of the characters are unpatriotic. This particular use of this style reflects a retrospective reaction to the Bush administration's War on Terror that ended up being very controversial though it was first perceived as reassuring (as discussed earlier). In the end, the complex composition of this tenth episode tends to convey several perspectives that seem paradoxical: the plot involving Huck clearly uses a very Manichean point of view whereas the plots involving Hollis Doyle and the letter of reinstatement are Manichean on the surface only – since we see Hollis Doyle as the absolute worst of the bad guys and Olivia Pope as one of the good ones – to then develop a seemingly patriotic conspiracy (fake letter of reinstatement) in order to stop another conspiracy that was in fact only speculation (Hollis Doyle suspected of trying to get Grant killed), all because of a core conspiracy (Verna Thornton framing Hollis Doyle for the assassination she planned herself). Paranoia is inherent to the composition of this episode but one question remains hard to answer: Isn't this accumulation of (sometimes only suspected) conspiracies a subtle way to denounce paranoia while using it for the plot? One of the characters from the first episode embodies this dual and paradoxical use of paranoia in *Scandal* and renders the cynicism quite explicit: Senator Davis uses the political paranoid style while accusing the president of being on the verge of pushing the red button but then,

156 Ross Douthat. “The Return of the Paranoid Style”. *The Atlantic*. The Atlantic, April 2008. Web. 1 May 2016. <<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/04/the-return-of-the-paranoid-style/306733/>>

later on in the episode, the character is in on the government's secret spying program, making him a part of the conspiracy, part of the paranoia. Such a depiction of this character is made to denounce very explicitly the paranoid style of politics as being hypocritical and simple political talk through the narration.

## **2) *Creating the Tone: Image and Sound***

Just as narration, image and sound can make very explicit the denunciation of paranoia. In *Scandal* the image really needs a bit of decrypting for someone to understand and perceive details that add deeper meaning to the narration, either to support it or to contradict it. Take for instance an editing technique I commented on while studying the narration: the cut transition in “One for the Dog” backed the storyline making Hollis Doyle seemingly guilty of hiring someone to shoot the president. Because most cuts in *Scandal* are quite clear visually but also audibly,<sup>157</sup> that particular “smoother” transition influences the viewers all the more. It backed up the narration, denouncing the way people jump to conclusions according to what they see in the media, and according to how people and events are depicted by others.

### ***a. Frames Within Frames***

Throughout the show, image editing often supports the critical intent of the narration, but not necessarily the narrative itself. For instance, there is a particular editing of the shots showing Pope and Associates as they are investigating one of their cases; the image is blurred, as if taken from behind the (thick) glass windows or doors that basically replace walls in the P&A quarters. This creative choice is not comfortable for the viewers as it doesn't always show the characters as the camera moves, the audience cannot see the whole picture, the whole scene, they seem to be excluded from it. There is a paradox in these blurred shots since they show a thickness preventing the audience from seeing the exact “truth”, while hinting to windows which are supposedly transparent. Here is a set of blurred shots from both episodes, the first four were taken from “Hunting Season” and the last ones from “One for the Dog”. I chose the first two to clearly show how the blur effect obstructs the eyesight while P&A investigate on Artie at the beginning of the episode: everyone (the spectators as well as the protagonists) is learning about the paranoid character, however we do not know his true motivations. Olivia understands them towards the end of the episode as the plot unfolds: In the last two shots

<sup>157</sup> The cut between two distinct scenes with no apparent link is emphasized with several shots of monuments and memorials of Washington D.C accompanied by numerous clinking shutter noises.

(Figures 35 and 36) blur is not as apparent as in the first two shots (Figures 33 and 34), which announces the outcome of the plot revealing the truth about Artie's intentions. The spectators are no longer blindsided, neither are Pope and Associates, which causes the disappearance of the blur effect.



*Figure 33 (5'56")*



*Figure 34 (5'58")*



*Figure 35 (30'34")*



*Figure 36 (30'44")*

The intensity of the blur effect in “One for the Dog” shows less contrast than in “Hunting Season”, which might be because, at the end of the episode, the viewers still don't have the pieces of the puzzle, so there is no real need to show a difference in the intensity of the blur throughout the episode. The other reason might also be that the focus really is on Grant and the forged letter of reinstatement. The blur of this episode does advocate that, what Verna says, is only the emerged part of the iceberg while there is much to be known under water. All that is left concerning this plot is the transition commented on before, influencing the viewers into thinking that Hollis Doyle is the contractor of the assassination attempt.



Figure 37 (3'10")



Figure 38 (3'45")

The blurred shots somehow create an implicit frame within the frame: We don't see it but it is suggested that we see the scene from behind one of the windows we have seen multiple times, the window being the implicit frame. In an article entitled “Frames Within Frames – Windows and doors”, Andreas Treske says that:

“Setting up a window or frame you will always have to deal with the energy to the frame, from the frame, inside and outside of the frame. With energy I mean the relation of the objects, their sizes, forms, shapes and tones to each other, their distances, closeness, the graphical or visual tension built through this.”<sup>158</sup>

Pushing the interpretation further, this implicit frame induced by the blurred effect, virtually “includes” the viewers in an imaginary bigger frame that goes beyond the limits of the screen.<sup>159</sup> Therefore, even though it visually prevents the spectators from getting a clear view, it also reduces the gap between what's inside the frame (the shot and its implicit frame – “the microcosm of the picture” according to André Bazin) and what's outside (the spectator's reality – “the macrocosm of the natural world” as André Bazin designates<sup>160</sup>). The macrocosm and the microcosm interact, allowing the microcosm to denounce something that happens in the macrocosm: we, as viewers, see and learn something from someone's point of view and consider that since we see what is inside this particular “frame”, it must be true, and some of us ignore what is outside that frame, that is the other potential perspectives. This is how the paranoid style and paranoia in the media works and it is thereby denounced by the show with this “imaginary frame” and the inclusion of the viewers in the main frame. This is the energy Treske

158 Andreas Treske. “Frames within Frames – Windows and Doors”. *Video Vortex Reader II*. (INC Amsterdam, 2010).

*Academia.edu*. Web. 1 May 2016. [https://www.academia.edu/4673037/Frames\\_within\\_Frames\\_-\\_Windows\\_and\\_Doors](https://www.academia.edu/4673037/Frames_within_Frames_-_Windows_and_Doors)

159 It is important to keep in mind the virtual aspect of the imaginary main frame.

160 Bazin, André. *What Is Cinema?* Vol. 1. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) 165.

talks about: in short, the blur effect adds unusual shapes, giving a sense of irregularity, uncertainty, with close shots of the characters. It creates a paradox: We are sometimes close but it still is an unnatural point of view as the blur creates distance. The energy emanates from and goes beyond the window/implicit frame to include the viewers' condition and their society into the bigger imaginary frame. There is in the end a real connection between the inside and the outside of the frame that Treske rightfully calls “energy”. This effect fits with the narration as the viewers follow Olivia Pope's point of view and then realize that it was not the right one when P&A find out the truth. The “real” technique of putting a frame within the frame is used in both episodes and also holds a great meaning as to denouncing the relationship between the people and paranoia these days. Let's take another scene from “Hunting Season”, also featuring this technique. Figure 39A shows a shot of Huck trying to decrypt Thorngate as if the screen were transparent, meaning that technology is transparent, easily accessible to him or people who are trained in computer science. Other shows use this type of editing, especially while dealing with the FBI and the CIA, giving the impression of “super intelligence”. For instance, during an investigation with the FBI in *Castle*, the characters are often shown through giant computer screens (Figure 39B) while investigating suspects.<sup>161</sup>

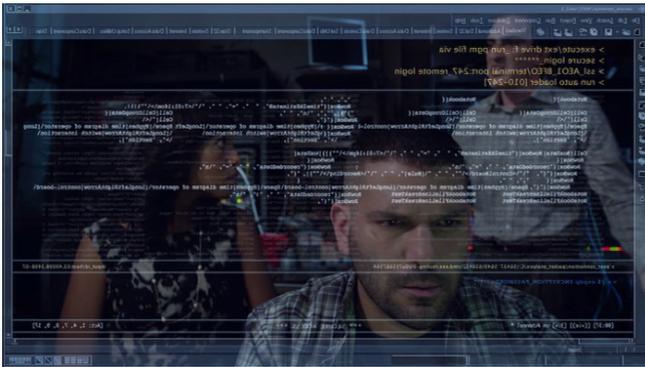


Figure 39A (6'14")



Figure 39B

The decrypting of Thorngate then leads to the use of a spying program, which allows Pope and associate to see through anyone's electronic device, including those inside the West Wing (Figure 40A/B). This intrusion is displayed with a visible frame within the frame this time showing two characters (Cyrus and Hollis) who are having a conversation in the West Wing. The two shots of those characters are rather quaint, especially the tilted low-angle shot of Hollis (Fig. 40B) indicating that we

161 “Tick, Tick, Tick...” *Castle: The Complete Second Season*. Writ. Andrew Marlowe and Moira Kirland. Dir. Bryan Spicer. ABC, 2009. DVD.

watch from his cellphone. Moreover, the character looks at the camera but cannot see that he is watched, just like suspects in precinct interrogation rooms. It points out the fact that, with this type of spying program, anyone can be treated as a suspect without even being given notice of it, which highlights that the Miranda Rights granted by the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment are completely ignored. Towards the end of the scene Olivia Pope gets nervous and asks Huck to “shut it down”.<sup>162</sup> While this episode comes before the explicit start of the Defiance arc, knowing about said arc adds deeper meaning: Pope reacts that way because any conversation between Hollis and Doyle could bring up Defiance and therefore incriminate her and the other accomplices. This other level of meaning – which is a consequence of the classical narration used by Hollywood – can be spotted only when rewatching the season increasing the idea that the spectator is blindsided at first.



*Figure 40A (9'36")*



*Figure 40B (10'04")*



*Figure 41 (29'22")*

<sup>162</sup> The right to remain silent while in police custody, which protects suspects from self-incrimination. (U.S. Const. Am. V.)

Apart from the “suspect's rights” side of the spying program, the show also displays a more voyeuristic use of the frame within the frame. Figure 41 shows Olivia Pope standing beside four TV screens: one showing Huck and the three others showing a woman at home taking care of her baby and talking on the phone about her private life with her husband, who is the director of the network which Olivia intends to use to leak Thorngate. Now, we could ask: why choose to show a woman and not a man at home in this context? Given the history of women as displayed by Hollywood, it may not be an innocent staging. Mainstream cinema has for a long time, and still does, displayed women for their looks as a way to enhance men's masculinity as Mulvey highlights in her article entitled “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”.<sup>163</sup> As we have seen before, *Scandal* is miles away from picturing women that way and prefers showing strong independent women. So, the aim of this scene might not be just to denounce the voyeuristic side of a potential spying program but also to denounce the way Hollywood makes women victims of voyeurism. Besides, it is important to highlight that during this scene, the wife who is spied on is talking about her husband's physical shape and about their personal life as a couple: there is an intent (coming from the narration) to ridicule that character which then enables Olivia to make him yield to her wish, therefore empowering women.

In “One for the Dog”, the scene showing Huck being tortured also displays a frame within the frame as the US attorney witnesses the deed done to the prisoner.



Figure 42 (22'04")



Figure 43 (2'40")

Figure 42 shows a shot of the torture scene happening behind a one-way mirror. While David Rosen can see the inside of the small room, those who are in said room cannot see the outside through the one-way mirror. But that is not all there is to see in that secondary frame since there is also the

<sup>163</sup> Laura Mulvey. “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”. *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. Eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 833-44.

reflection of the characters who are watching the scene from the outside – that is the primary frame – as if their ghostly figures were inside with Huck and his assailants. The meaning of this particular shot might be that those watching, or those aware of the torture without stopping it, are as much guilty as those physically doing the deeds. This shot backs the narration of the episode that denounces the violation of basic human rights as discussed earlier in the part entitled “Bureaucracy Secrecy”. Those watching the scene represent all those who condone this violation by giving orders or just letting it happen. However, the U.S. attorney doesn't condone the brutal detention which might be the reason why his “ghostly figure” gets more contrasts than the other watchers' and therefore seems more present. The close up of David Rosen's reflection supports this theory by creating a sort of intimacy between the character and the viewers. The article “Towards a Psychological Theory of Close-ups”, which studies the different meanings of close ups, theorizes that the facial close-up helps the spectator to “get psychologically intimate” with the character.<sup>164</sup> It doesn't come as a surprise that the face creates affect since it is the most expressive part of the human body because of its micro expressions which were closely studied by psychologist Paul Ekman.<sup>165</sup> As human beings, we naturally and unconsciously rely on facial expressions to find out whether someone feels fine or not. If one is not completely “affection-proof”, it seems clear from figure 43 that the character is not at ease. Watching the scene, the only interpretation that is left is that the character feels shocked and extremely helpless since even his position as law enforcement official seems useless against the deeds of the Pentagon. The spectator cannot help but sympathize with this “good” character because of this close-up that brings about empathy from the viewer.

### ***b. Ain't No Sunshine for Conspiracy***

“That is the least safe safe house I've ever heard of. Windows?!” Artie says when he arrives in the basement P&A decided to hide him in (Fig 44). What better way to show the idea of secrecy than with a basement without windows to let the light in?

164 Per Persson. “Towards a Psychological Theory of Close-ups.” *Kinema: A Journal for Film and Audiovisual Media*. University of Waterloo, n.d. Web 4 May 2016.

165 For more information about his research: “Paul Ekman.” *Paul Ekman Group*. Paul Ekman Group LLC, n.d. Web. 17 June 2016. <<http://www.paulekman.com/paul-ekman/>>



*Figure 44 (9'18")*

First, what effect does darkness have upon an individual while he/she is confronted to it? A psychological study on nyctophobia reveals that nearly everyone experiences the fear of the dark at one point in their life.<sup>166</sup> Moreover, the same study affirms that most people associate darkness with non salubrious threats such as assault, murder, rape and so on.<sup>167</sup> Therefore, showing unlit places on screen is a great way to vehicle a sense of paranoia as it reminds us of all those negative connotations. Because of these fears associated to darkness, the first appearance of Artie, who is hiding in the back of Olivia's car in the dark (Fig. 45), makes him look like a psychopath. Especially when he specifically affirms that he made sure no camera could record him meeting with Olivia in the dark underground parking lot. The irony of the scene is that, right from the beginning, it already exposes him as a threat, which he turns out to be at the end of the episode. The character seems all but credible: he lacks self control and seems overly paranoid in addition to his being introduced as a psychopath. Despite this first negative glimpse at Artie's character, the spectators still are caught by the sense of paranoia he reinforces when he evokes the late night phone calls, as discussed previously.

166 Eric Johnson. "A Phenomenological Investigation of Fear of the Dark". *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 19.2 (Fall 1988): 179-194. *ProQuest*. Web. 18 June 2016.

167 Johnson, 181.



Figure 45 (2'24")



Figure 46 (2'53")

In *Latent Destinies*, O'Donnell wonders “by what scale [we could] measure [how paranoid we are]”. He then argues that “the more we parody paranoia, the more we combat it; but it can be easily seen the degree to which such parodizations offer an enjoyment of and symbolic investment in the paranoias they hypervisualize and mock”.<sup>168</sup> His stance on the parodization of paranoia reveals a possible paradox between intent and reception of said parodization: when watching a production (whether it be a TV show or a film) that carries the parody of paranoia, the viewers are often somehow caught in the narrative thread, which O'Donnell alludes to when talking about the “enjoyment” and “symbolic investment” whereas such parodization primarily intends to “hypervisualizes and mocks” the paranoias. In the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the word “parody” is defined as a piece of work which “imitates the style of someone or something else in an amusing way”.<sup>169</sup> This particular representation of paranoia O'Donnell studies leads to a particular *mise-en-scène* which *Scandal* was not first to use when dealing with a conspirational narrative: filming in an underground parking garage.

There seems to be a motif of the underground parking lots bringing paranoia in popular culture: this *mise-en-scène* was used in *All the President's Men*<sup>170</sup>, a film based on Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward's book about their investigation of the Watergate scandal.

168 Patrick O' Donnell. *Latent Destinies: Cultural Paranoia and Contemporary U.S. Narrative*. (Duke Press University, 2000)X. *Google Books*. Web. 5 June 2015.

169 “parody” *Merriam-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster, 2011. Web. 18 June 2016.

170 *All the President's Men*. Dir. Alan J. Pakula. Perf. Dustin Hoffman, Robert Redford. Warner Bros, 1976. DVD.



Figure 47



Figure 48



Figure 49



Figure 50

In the movie, Bob Woodward meets with the whistleblower, known only as Deep Throat for a while, in an unlit parking garage as figures 47, 48 and 49 show.<sup>171</sup> Looking at the first two shots taken from *All the President's Men* – showing the character of Woodward on the first and Deep Throat on the other – and comparing them to figure 45 – taken from *Scandal*, displaying the meeting of Artie and Olivia – Shonda Rhimes' show seems to use the process of intertextuality. Indeed in *All the President's Men*, the spectators can clearly see Woodward's face while the whistleblower's is barely lit, the same goes with the first shot of *Scandal*: the viewers get a good look at Olivia but not at the whistleblower, Artie, because of the lack of light. To support this theory about unlit parking lots in popular culture as vectors of paranoia and motif of conspiracy, I chose to add a snapshot of another *Castle* episode showing yet again the parking lot motif (Figure 50).<sup>172</sup> Once again one of the main characters, Castle (right), meets

171 Shots taken from a youtube video: Gansle, Daniel. "All the President's Men/Deep Throat: The Outer Edges." Online video clip. *Youtube*. Youtube, 13 June 2008. Web. 18 June 2016.

172 "Dial M for Murder" *Castle: The Complete Season Four*. Writ. Andrew Marlowe and Christine Boylan. Dir. Kate Woods. ABC, 2009. DVD.

with a whistleblower, Mr Smith (left) in an underground parking lot. While the whistleblowers in *All of the President's Men* are rather serious, mysterious, composed characters, Artie is quite the contrary as he sounds and looks agitated, talking very fast and making nervous gestures with his hands. He seems less credible than the two others and increases the feeling of paranoia, as discussed previously, when he evokes the late night phone calls. We have here an example of the hypervisualization of paranoia O'Donnell alludes to, which occurs in the process of parodization. This hypervisualization, as it uses a *mise en scène* that is recurrent in conspiracy narratives, leads the viewers to enjoy and symbolically invest in the paranoia that is parodied, using O'Donnell's words. This sole scene from “Hunting Season” itself contains this intent/reception paradox which is then highlighted with the plot twist revealing Artie's true intentions towards the end of the episode.

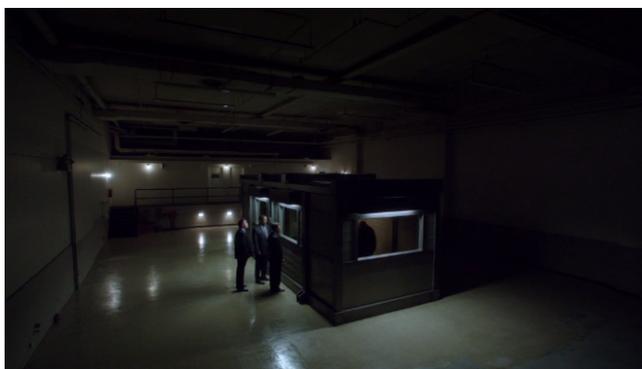


Figure 51

In the other episode, the barely lit underground facility makes the tone still more serious, imprinting it with paranoia which is used to denounce the Patriot Act through Huck's detention and suffering. In this episode, the image as well as the narration show that the use of paranoia is purely for enjoyment since the criticism is directed towards the abuse of power from the government. Figure 51 shows an establishing shot revealing a smaller room inside the Pentagon's barely lit underground facility – which also reminds of the underground parking garage motif – reinforcing the secrecy and the inaccessibility of the place along with the sense of paranoia. Only wrongdoings need as many walls and as much darkness which is highlighted by the “least safe safe house” in which P&A worked for the greater good in “Hunting Season”. After all, Artie probably didn't want windows because what he really intended to do was for his own benefit. Artie, being the real threat, somehow belongs to the dark. When one has nothing to hide, one should not fear or be paranoid about the outside which could be linked to people's distrust in intelligence. Overall, the framing and the image editing of the two episodes reveal a

use of paranoia for the viewers' enjoyment. However, the case of "Hunting Season" is more complex: looking at both the narration and the framing, it actually seems to parody the occurrence of paranoia in popular culture. One last factor need to be taken into account in this study of the use of paranoia: the sound editing.

### ***c. If Music Be the Food of Cynicism, Play On.***

Sound editing is more explicit in terms of criticism than the moving image in *Scandal*: it often radically sets a cynical tone thanks to the soundtrack choices. Funky, very cheerful songs from the 60's and 70's play in twenty out of the twenty-two episodes, from the funniest to the saddest and most serious one. In an article from *The Hollywood Reporter*, producer Rhimes and music supervisor Alexandra Patsavas explain why they chose to use soul and funk music in *Scandal*.<sup>173</sup> While they explain that sometimes a song just perfectly fits with a moment and emphasizes an emotion, there is a big part of cynicism in that choice overall. This soundtrack mostly plays while Pope and Associates are investigating and/or trying to fix their case. The two episodes under study both play such songs but with a different impact. The first song playing in "Hunting Season" is "Car Wash"<sup>174</sup> by Rose Royce (1976) while Pope and Associates meet and investigate on Artie Hornbacher, the second is "Don't Push It, Don't Force It"<sup>175</sup> by Leon Haywood (1980) as Olivia works with reporter Kimberly Mitchell on revealing Thorngate and Huck tries to retrieve the proof Artie stole. In "One for the Dog" the song "M'Lady"<sup>176</sup> by Sly and the Family Stone (1968) plays while, once again, P&A use the media for their case. Overall the three songs send us back to an era remembered as challenging, revolutionary and associated to disillusion, as stated in the article from *The Hollywood Reporter*; "[it's] not a mistake [the music is from] the decade that Watergate happened and America lost its innocence of what politics is". It only increases the feeling of cynicism primarily brought about by the narration. This similitude, however, does not grant a similar tone to both episodes: the first doesn't use paranoia as much as the other being less dark and serious. This difference is also enhanced with the way music is edited in both episodes. When "M'lady" starts playing in "One for the Dog", it lightens the serious tone of the episode along with the narration displaying very cocky characters manipulating the media and even the government. Given the situation, Grant still being in a coma, choosing such a cheerful, upbeat song

173 Mike Ayers. "The Soul of 'Scandal': How Shonda Rhimes Uses Music for TV's Most Dramatic Show". *The Hollywood Reporter*. The Hollywood Reporter, 17 April 2014. Web. 15 Sept. 2015. <<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/soul-scandal-how-shonda-rhimes-697228>>

174 Rose Royce. "Car Wash." *Car Wash*. MCA, 1976. CD.

175 Leon Haywood. "Don't Push It, Don't Force It." *Naturally*. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Record., 1980.

176 Sly and the Family Stone. "M'Lady." *Life*. Epic, 1968.

creates a contrast probably intending to mock the media. Moreover the way the song stops is made very abrupt as it is immediately followed by the bipping sound coming from Grant's cardiac monitor. This transition sound-wise and narration-wise – having Olivia visit Grant, involving the love triangle in the dramatic plot – only makes the tone more tragic. Paranoia and this tragic tone seem to be blended as they come up one after the other all along the episode, completely fitting with the narration and plot. Only the media is the target of cynicism, thanks to the music which also serves to lighten the mood for a short amount of time, making the tone all the more serious after it stops.

While “Car Wash” and “M'Lady” are not relevant lyrics-wise, “Don't Push It, Don't Force It” seems pretty ironic looking at the lyrics that say “Don't push it/ Don't force it/ Let it happen naturally/ It will surely happen/ If it was meant to be”. Even after an injunction meant to prevent the media from divulging anything, Olivia keeps on battling until Artie gets away with Thorngate and leaves her with nothing; No need to “push it” nor “force it” since it “was *not* meant to be” as the song informed. Overall, it is Olivia who is subject to mockery and cynicism through this song because of her will to “save” everyone when Artie was actually playing her all along. It puts her back in the antihero category she finds herself in during this second season as her “White Hat's Off” (which is the title of the first episode). Contrary to “M'Lady”, “Car Wash” is used to ridicule Artie who goes from psychopath to overly paranoid. Knowing that in the end the client played the whole team, the question is: Is the use of this song only meant to mock Artie's paranoia or does it also mock P&A who are fooled by appearances? Watching for the first time, it is most definitely intended to create cynicism and mock the client who, despite his rather common life, paranoia, and lack of self control, intends to trap the NSA.

Studying the narration of both episodes highlighted elements of cynicism towards paranoia and elements of a paranoid style by forcing the viewers to be aware of the way the classical conspiracy narrative (and more broadly TV, Hollywood, the media) influences people. However, “One for the Dog” does not use a cynical tone when it comes to paranoia since it really is part of the narration and plot, as well as of the tragic and serious tone that comes along with it. The only trace of cynicism goes towards the media in this episode, thanks both to the narration and the soundtrack choices but still enhancing the palpable serious tone. As for “Hunting Season”, it looks like a parody of popular culture works and, going further, scenes of the socio-political environment that display and use paranoia.

## Conclusion

“Every new President stands here vowing that things will be different and nothing changes. So listen to me carefully now. This time *will* be different.” - Fitzgerald Grant, “Happy Birthday Mr President” *Scandal* (2012)

This line is pronounced by Fitzgerald Grant during the flashback of his first State of the Union in episode 9 of this second season entitled “Happy Birthday Mr President”. This line itself is quite ironic given the way the characters and plots of the show hint to various icons and events that shaped the History of the United States regardless of political alignment. It is *not* different in the end. This promise probably sounds like a *déjà-vu* to many citizens coming from politicians running for whichever position they want to reach. Technically one presidential term is never the same as another, first because of the wide range of ideologies in political parties: two politicians from the same party rarely defend the exact same set of ideas, and second, because of the events one term has to face such as terrorist attacks, economic crises, natural disasters and so on and so forth. Similarities can be found in the way politicians handle political matters they are accountable for (ie: foreign affairs, economy, education, immigration etc...). The interaction of the characters in *Scandal* embody the two sides of the coin while showing the spectators that their own biases as to partisan identity: race, sexual orientation, gender or age do not define partisan identity though they might influence someone's alignment. As demonstrated, the show also criticizes the inflexibility and judgmental behavior of the extremes of both ends of the political spectrum with characters such as Sally Langston, Hollis Doyle, Senator Davis and Verna Thornton who look like caricatures. But, overall, the show seems to tar everyone with the same brush as James Poniewozick argues in this quote:

There are even the occasional political stances expressed, as when one character argues against Don't Ask, Don't Tell or another decries how the Republican Party has pushed out moderates. But the politics are scene-setting for a drama that is about power and how it is threatened by personal indiscretions that originate below the belt, not in the Beltway. “Screwing around,” it notes, in what could be the show's motto, “seems to be a bipartisan effort.”<sup>177</sup>

Now, we could wonder to what extent a term can be seen as different from others according to people's perspective. We could also wonder what minorities and women bring to the conservative party

177 James Poniewozick. “TV Tonight: Scandal.” Rev. of *Scandal*, creat. Shonda Rhimes. *Time* 5 April 2012. Web. 20 April 2015. <<http://entertainment.time.com/2012/04/05/tv-tonight-scandal/>>

of the United States since such association still sounds very paradoxical to many. The question of how moderate politicians have dealt with both parties could also shed a new light on the question of partisan identity.

The cynicism of the show is very palpable and easily perceived thanks to the film editing that is applied to it. But this cynicism is built through many layers, some more explicit or more obvious than others that need more decrypting and more thinking. Those are often not visible while watching the show for the first time since, as viewers, we tend to primarily follow the narration to enjoy it fully, creating the paradox O'Donnell alludes to in his study. Noticing all the layers of parodization also requires some knowledge of American politics and history, otherwise many allusions remain silent when it comes to cynicism and criticism. This intent-reception paradox poses the question of whether viewers really decipher the criticism that is made of their own perception of things, or do they above all see the criticism that is made of the political world? Because, in the end, *Scandal* seems to encourage and/or lead the viewers to question their own bias, that of the media and the political paranoid style that uses said bias, while at the same time pointing out elements of the past and tackling vivid social concerns that are part of our current political context.

In an attempt to get a broader analysis of the depiction and perception of US politics we could also wonder how other genres (ie: sitcoms, sci-fi, crime TV shows...) tackle the subject of politics. A similar approach could be used to study the treatment of the media on screen. Or, in order to examine further the subject of espionage and bureaucracy in terms of depiction and perception, a study of their glorification in films (superhero movies for example) or TV shows could provide another perspective on the matter whose reception could be discussed and compared to that of a critical and cynical depiction.

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