

Lauren Goodman

Independent Study & Mentorship

Mr. Speice 4A

16 September 2016

**Research Assessment #3**

**Date:** Sept., 16, 2016

**Subject:** Television vs. Film

**MLA Citations:**

Maerz, Melissa, and Chris Nashawaty. "Great Debates: Are TV Shows Better than Movies Right Now?" *Entertainment Weekly's EW.com*. 11 Sept. 2015. Web. 16 Sept. 2016.

Singer, Matt. "The Critical Debate Over Film Versus Television Rages On." *IndieWire*. 06 Apr. 2012. Web. 16 Sept. 2016.

Wolcott, James. "Movies vs. TV: Which Is the Medium to Watch?" *HWD*. 07 Feb. 2014. Web. 16 Sept. 2016.

**Assessment:**

A few decades ago, working in the film industry was considered a much more glamorous field to have a job in as opposed to working in television. To critics, a television show was not nearly considered as artsy, creatively-developed, or even as significant as a movie. In fact, the Academy Awards had been around for twenty years before the Emmy Awards were even put into fruition in the 1950s. In recent years, this common opinion has been changing, so much so that many now consider television to be a more popular and trending form of media than film. As a student studying film and video production, my area of study in ISM should not only apply to

movies, but it should also pertain to television as well. It is important to look at the creative differences between the two categories. I also want to find out which media outlet my strengths are in and maybe take some qualities from both television and film and apply that to my own creations.

In the first article, "Movies or TV: Which Is the Medium to Watch?" discusses possible reasons why TV has "creatively dethroned the movies". One reason is that people think since television shows have multiple episodes and seasons, storylines and characters are always evolving. Not to mention that these storylines are edgier, more action-packed, and current. Shows such as *The Walking Dead* and *Pretty Little Liars* are pop-culture sensations that are well-known and watched by mass audiences. Television shows are able to get a lot more hype through social media than movies. Meanwhile, movies these days seem to be getting too factionalized and less appealing to a young adult audience. A lot of movies are now based on a true story, meaning they can be periodic and have less action. Older adults are more attracted to these kinds of movies more than teens are. I somewhat agree with this public opinion based on how popular shows have gotten on streaming services and how television shows are what everyone is talking about nowadays. Movies are attracting less and less of a younger audience and I believe that this trend needs to change. This article points out important strategies on how people in the business can make changes to the films to improve the public opinion. By creating more movies with original storylines, artistic shots, and edgy characters, a younger audience will show interest once again in movies. In addition, movies that can gain more hype on social media will most likely attain more success in ticket sales. I know now that I really need to spread the word about my productions on my social media accounts and to my followers. The audience for my work is usually teenagers, so it is a perfect way to promote and reach out to the crowd while being pretty much completely free.

The second article, “The Critical Debate Over Film Versus Television Rages On” talks about how television shows are slowly transforming into films by combining elements from movies into their TV shows such as artful camera work, complex story, and intricate characters. This allows television network companies to be able to capture and reel a younger audience into watching their shows. The drama as well as fast-paced plotting is able to attract an easily-distracted young audience. A good example that was not mentioned in the article, but I thought of was Shonda Rhimes. One of her most-famous shows, *Grey’s Anatomy*, gained such a young and dedicated fan-base in the beginning of the series that they now are watching other shows she has produced like *Scandal* and *How To Get Away With Murder*. Ultimately, her following has been a powerful and profitable success for the network. I thought that it was extremely fascinating when the article mentions that TV “...owns the cultural conversation”. I had never thought of it like that before, but it makes perfect sense. People tweet out their opinions on Twitter, have watch parties for their favorite shows, recap and review TV shows online, and use hundreds of hashtags mostly to emphasize shocking moments from popular television shows. The article really brought to my attention the importance of having a lot of content within a video. I plan on taking my time when working on new projects so I can develop a strong and well-thought out storyline and script. This way I can assure the quality of my work and retain the attention of multiple age groups.

The third article, “Great Debates: Are TV Shows Better than Movies Right Now?” compares the advantages of movies and television. Maerz says that while television shows are riskier to produce than movies since the entire series could possibly flop, she seems to favor television shows over movies, discussing how the audience gets to know and connect with characters on an emotional level on a show, something people rarely experience when watching characters in movies. She also defends her stance by also talking about how story arcs can be grown and take place over

a sequence of episodes in contrast to a movie arc's story arc takes place within 90 minutes.

Nashawaty disagrees with Maerz opinion. He believes that while there are great shows out there, many shows are just renewed over and over again to fill out a programming schedule and retain the same predictable viewership. I agree with parts of both arguments. I believe that there are only a handful of television shows that are considered exceptional because it connects with people on a more emotional level over a period of time. And usually when television shows are considered compelling to audiences, it is because they have cinematic elements and feel like a movie. This is very interesting to me and it highlights certain elements I need to implement into my future productions. I need to make sure that I work on my technical skills and make my films and video seem more "like a movie" with fancy camera work and quality editing.

Movies need a more refreshing and hip point-of-view that can reach younger audiences. These movies can't just be adapted from YA novels, they need to feel stylish, cool, and modern. Not necessarily that the film has to take place within this current time period, but they need to be more inventive. In addition, some television shows needs to incorporate more cinematic elements from films, not just procedural and sitcom series with zero to little character development. From this point on, I will be combining features from both media outlets when working on different video projects. This includes casting strong actors, taking more time to develop a script, and also storyboarding possible shots that could be used. Another item that could help me with my creations would be analyzing other people's work to see what they did to be successful and writing about it. This will help me in laying the groundwork for my creations.

1. Maerz, Melissa, and Chris Nashawaty. "Great Debates: Are TV Shows Better than Movies Right Now?" *Entertainment Weekly's EW.com*. 11 Sept. 2015. Web. 16 Sept. 2016.

NEWS | QUESTION EVERYTHING

# Great Debates: Are TV shows better than movies right now?

BY MELISSA MAERZ CHRIS NASHAWATY

*"Question Everything" opens the floor for debate of pop culture topics—serious to whimsical, sublime to ridiculous—that have no right or wrong answers but certainly elicit a wide spectrum of intense opinions. Hopefully reading these different perspectives will open minds, challenge thinking and maybe even provoke a change in what you believe. Let's discuss!*

## Should You Watch TV or Go to the Movies? EW's Critics Make Their Cases

### Melissa Maerz says:

Do we really have to argue that television is better than film? Can't we just agree that this is a golden age for both? The gap is closing between the two. Both are driven by at-home, on-demand viewing on an actual television set or online. Some of the best filmmakers are directing episodes of prestige cable dramas. Some of the best TV writers go on to draft screenplays for major franchise films. Even run-time is an increasingly irrelevant distinction between media. You want to watch a broad comedy that's less than a half-hour long? Try a Pixar short. You want a suspenseful 90-minute drama? Watch BBC's *Sherlock* pilot. Creatively, though, television still enjoys a few advantages over movies. Long-form narratives offer more nuanced storytelling, allowing viewers to get to know characters on an emotional level that your average feature-length movie can't sustain. With people like Matt Weiner, Jenji Kohan, Vince Gilligan, and Jill Soloway steering the TV industry, showrunners are the real stars, not directors, which means that unlike the film industry, strong writing is just as important as the spectacle of how things look on screen.

TV series can afford to take more risks, too, since one experimental episode won't ruin a network like one failed blockbuster can ruin a studio. And it's easier for TV to stay relevant: Whereas movies take at least a year or two to hit theaters after production wraps, television has a relatively quick turnaround, so when something happens in real

Lauren Goodman 12/16/2016 1:08 PM

**Comment [1]:** Completely agree with this statement, I rarely feel connected with characters in movies than as I feel connected with characters in TV. That's what makes TV more attractive.

Lauren Goodman 12/16/2016 1:08 PM

**Comment [2]:** In this industry, you have to take risks in order to be successful, but I agree that a lot more is riding on your reputation in television.

life that might affect how a story is received, a series can adapt with a timeliness that movies can't. Most important, movies just aren't provoking the same level of passionate discourse that TV shows do every single night of the week on social media, where conversations start with niggling disagreements over plot points and grow into epic discussions about morality and diversity and other big questions that deal less with entertainment than with life itself. Still not convinced that TV is better? Consider that we live in the age of what FX President John Landgraf called "peak TV," with more than 370 scripted series appearing on television last year, and more than 400 expected by the end of 2015. If the show you're watching isn't better than a movie, well, there's always something else on.

**Chris Nashawaty says:**

I know everyone is all whipped into a tizzy about how we're living in The Golden Age of Television what with *The Americans* and *Game of Thrones* and *Mr. Robot*. Yes, these truly are miraculous times to be alive. Or at least as miraculous as the last time someone declared that we were living in The Golden Age of Television, which was what, three years ago? And three years before that? This 24-karat superlative seems to get pronounced from the recap-culture hilltop so frequently that the phrase "The Golden Age of Television" has almost lost whatever currency it once had. Plus, any era in which bread-and-circus junk like *America's Got Talent* and wheezy sitcoms like *The Exes* can not only exist, but get renewed over and over again just because some programming executive needs to fill out their weekly bingo card, forfeits its right to be called anything better than Bronze.

I agree that there are some great shows on TV right now. I watch a bunch of them. But I also look around and I don't see a lot of *Breaking Bads* or *Mad Men* or *Sopranos*. To me, the closest thing was Netflix's *Bloodline*. And what made that show so compelling and addictive (aside from Ben Mendelsohn) is how cinematic it is in both its look and in its storytelling. But there's the problem: when folks try to explain what they love about a particular show that they're hooked on, what they inevitably say is how cinematic it is. In other words, how much like a movie it is. But you know what's exactly as cinematic as a movie? A movie! Check out *Mad Max: Fury Road*, or *Inside Out*, or Denis Villeneuve's upcoming drug-world thriller *Sicario*, and tell me I'm wrong.

Lauren Goodman 12/16/2016 1:08 PM

**Comment [3]:** Television needs to incorporate more features from film in order for viewers to appreciate the art of television more. It shouldn't be made just for money purposes.

2. Singer, Matt. "The Critical Debate Over Film Versus Television Rages On." *IndieWire*. 06 Apr. 2012. Web. 16 Sept. 2016.

## The Critical Debate Over Film Versus Television Rages On

*The Critical Debate Over Film Versus Television Rages On*

**Matt Singer**

Apr 6, 2012 9:10 am

@mattsinger

My college major was something called "Television, Radio, Film." I vividly remember the first time I told one of my relatives I was taking a class on the history of television. He chuckled and groaned "Really?" as if I'd just announced I was taking a class on the history of hopscotch or bubble gum — something frivolous and childish and altogether unimportant. Why would anyone study television? The conversation moved on and a few minutes later it circled around to interesting developments in the world of popular culture. "Hey, by the way," he asked "have you heard about this new gangster show on HBO? I think it's called 'The Sopranos?'"

Thanks to those Sopranos and the earth-shattering changes they brought to their medium, studying television doesn't seem like such a dumb idea anymore. In fact, the whole media hierarchy of my old college degree has been reversed. When I was in school, studying film was cool; studying television was a chore. Electives in single camera film production and screenwriting were in high demand; electives in multicamera production were avoided by all but the most serious TV careerists. The general feeling amongst my college peers, at least as I perceived it, was that film was the dream job and television was the backup plan in case the dream job never came to fruition. I don't hang around college campuses much these days, not since that damn restraining order anyway, but I have to imagine the next generation of media makers are as or more interested in making and studying television as they are in movies. Why wouldn't they be? As improbable as it seemed less than fifteen years ago, TV is just plain *sexier* than movies.

For proof of this drastic shift in perceptions, one need only look to [wave uponwave](#) of recent articles hailing the rise of television and the decline of film. The latest was sparked by [James Wolcott](#)'s recent piece in the pages of *Vanity Fair*, which is technically titled "Prime Time's Graduation," but which is referred to in *VF*'s Most Popular widget as "Television Has Officially Surpassed the Movies." Wolcott's "official" judgement has a few underlying arguments, including the damning (and accurate) one that the whole experience of going to the movies has become hopelessly

Lauren Goodman 12/16/2016 1:06 PM

**Comment [4]:** This is the common opinion of television these days. Some television shows' appeal is that they are sexier and edgier than others.

debased by rude, cell phone obsessed audience members. But the content of movies, Wolcott says, has degenerated just as rapidly as the environment around them:

*“Like ‘Twin Peaks,’ ‘24,’ ‘Mad Men,’ and ‘The Sopranos’ before it, ‘Downton Abbey’ enriches the iconography and collective lore of pop culture. It replenishes the stream. (It also provides the perfect layup for PBS’s next prestige import, starting in April: the BBC adaptation of Sebastian Faulks’s best-selling novel ‘Birdsong,’ which will once again elegantly chuck us into the W.W. I trenches.) By contrast: for those of us who have fallen out of romance with movies, its franchise blockbusters seem to be leeching off the legacy of pop culture and cinema history, squandering the inheritance with endless superhero sequels and video-game emulations that digitize action stars into avatars and motion-capture figures, a mutant species with an emotive range running strictly in shades of bold. And those films that aren’t aiming for an opening-weekend monster kill seem to dwell solely within a realm of discourse dominated by film bloggers and Twitter twitchers, these configurations of loyalists and lost-causers adopting a film that they fell for at some festival and cradling it like a football as they chug downfield in a deserted stadium. ‘Margaret,’ ‘Bellflower,’ ‘Martha Marcy May Marlene,’ ‘The Future,’ ‘Shame,’ ‘Take Shelter’—these are quality titles (so I assume, I haven’t seen most of them, I shall Netflix them in the fullness of time) that become objects of obsession for a few but float in limbo for those not on screening or “screener” lists... Arty entries may accrue a cult status over time that collects more disciples into the fold, but they lose the catalytic moment to set the culture humming.”*

This is an interesting point: television circa 2012 adds to the culture while movies circa 2012 simply suck culture dry like media vampires. And, of course, television’s biggest indisputable advantage over movies — length, and thus the potential for depth and intricacy — comes into play here as well. Television introduces us to amazing characters — Tony Soprano, Don Draper, Coach Eric Taylor — then explores their lives and minds for dozens of hours. The longer their shows go, the richer their characters become. Movies, on the other hand, introduce us to characters for 90 minutes, and after that they’re gone forever. On the off chance they’re popular enough to warrant a sequel, their quirks and charms are often smoothed over and made more accessible, because sequels are driven by the search for financial gain, not probing emotional insights. Where television shows like “The Sopranos” or “The Wire” welcome the complexity that comes with age, movie franchises tend to favor accessibility, and they often reboot bankable properties after just two or three installments. When we meet Peter Parker in “The Amazing Spider-Man” this summer, it will not be the Peter Parker we’d come to know in three previous movies by Sam Raimi. This Peter will be a blank slate, the better to attract an easily distracted young audience.

Lauren Goodman 12/16/2016 1:06 PM

**Comment [5]:** Supports reason why people are more dedicated to TV shows than movies: it creates a large and passionate viewership following.

Lauren Goodman 12/16/2016 1:07 PM

**Comment [6]:** Movie sequels are mainly produced because of the first movie’s success. In TV shows, directors are really allowed to see what potential possibilities there are to better themselves.

With all of those concessions to Wolcott's good points, though, things may yet prove more complicated than a simple "TV > Movies" mathematical formula. For one thing, even as he denigrates the state of modern cinema, he concedes that he hasn't seen recent films like "Margaret," "Bellflower," and "Take Shelter," remarkable works that possess many of the same pleasures — depth of character, acting, and narrative — that Wolcott finds in good television. If I wrote a response to Wolcott's piece entitled "Why Film Is Still Better Than Television" and I sang the praises of "Take Shelter" and "The Cabin in the Woods" and "Undeclared" and listed eight different reasons why movies are still a better medium for visual and non-fiction storytelling, but I noted that I was making that argument without having watched "Breaking Bad," "Game of Thrones" and "Justified," would you take my opinion seriously? Probably not.

In my mind, there's no question that television is on the rise. In my mind, there's no question that television owns the cultural conversation. In my mind, there's no question that television is better suited to take advantage of the pleasures of social media, if only because when you take advantage of the pleasures of social media in a movie theater you get scolded by [James Wolcott](#) and Matt Singer (and then Matt Singer talks about himself in the third person). But while I don't think quality television is going anywhere, I do wonder whether this trend is a sustainable sea change or a fad buoyed by a fortuitous confluence of events. As good television shows and the networks that produce and air them grow more powerful and more profitable, will the demands of big business force the medium back towards the mainstream? As TV creators like David Simon — one of the patron saints of this new era of good television — [come out publicly against](#) the world of online TV consumption, dissection, and recapping, will websites rethink their coverage strategies? Simon's comments were needlessly petty and grumpy, but they also hinted at the possibility that many people are writing about television right now specifically because it *is* cool — and if more producers like Simon denounce their work, it may not seem quite so cool for very long.

Wolcott credits the Internet with helping fuel television's rise; everyone watches the same episode of "Mad Men" at the same time on Sunday, and everyone can participate in the same post-show conversation on Twitter. Cool arthouse movies like "Martha Marcy May Marlene" tour the country incrementally, limiting their audience and their possibilities for large-scale conversations. But the way in which movies resist instant gratification speaks to one of the things that still makes cinephilia special in the age of telemania: *it's harder to be a movie lover than a TV lover*. Compare the amount of legwork required to see an underground arthouse hit like "Martha Marcy May Marlene" — following it from Sundance to acquisition to distribution to its opening at your local art house — with setting your DVR box to record an episode of "Luck" after someone recommends the show to you.

In this age of streaming video, movies on demand, and instantaneous choice, there's something pure, and maybe even a little beautiful, about having to work at a pop culture obsession. Maybe television is better than film, maybe TV is the new cinema. Maybe TV will become the dominant mainstream medium. And maybe that is the best thing that could ever happen to film. If TV takes over the mainstream, then film can expand into the margins, where it's not such a bad thing to be treasured like a football carried downfield by an unstoppable running back. The only difference is, in this case, the stadium isn't empty. It's just a little bit smaller than it used to be.

Lauren Goodman 12/16/2016 1:07 PM

**Comment [7]:** This is so true. TV is mainstream and a large form of entertainment, but it can make movies even more special and an experience.

3. Wolcott, James. "Movies vs. TV: Which Is the Medium to Watch?" *HWD*. 07 Feb. 2014. Web. 16 Sept. 2016.

**Everyone Back to the Cineplex!**

In May 2012, a certain culture critic boldly proclaimed that TV had creatively dethroned the movies. Given the past year's cinematic dazzle, must he now admit he was wrong?

Could I have been wrong? Blushingly mistaken? In the May 2012 issue of this magazine ("Prime Time's Graduation"), I mustered the argument with as much muster as I could scrape up that TV—since its inception derided as an idiot box, a vast wasteland, a glass teat, a cheap babysitter, a nurse for shut-ins, and a night-light for the lonely—had creatively matured and muscled up, pinning the movies to the mat of popular culture. Movies had become too factionalized in their appeal, with the blockbuster summer franchises pulling in the Comic-Con legions while the smaller, valiant, depresso indie films and latest epistles from auteurist darlings kept the candles burning in the shrinking parishes of cinephilia. It was now *Mad Men*, *Downton Abbey*, *Breaking Bad*, *Homeland*, *Game of Thrones*, *The Walking Dead*, *Boardwalk Empire*, and other potent spells, amplified by Twitter, Facebook, and voluminous recaps, that transfixed fans and turned critics into evangelicals. For depth and psychodynamics of characterization, ingenious knife twist of storytelling, jaw-dropping sequences (the *Challenger*-like explosion and shower of debris witnessed from the backyard pool in *Breaking Bad*), and nutritious roles for women, TV had left the movies behind to play with their giant robots. The hearth fire of the H.D. flat screen had displaced the multiplex. Not everyone conceded this shift in pop-culture primacy. Some dissenters rebutted the column thoughtfully; others said mean things about me on the Internet, where lacy manners and the minuet won't be making a revival anytime soon. But in 2013 doubts of my own began to creep in. It looked as if the pendulum had swung back in the movies' favor, setting the stage for a rematch, or at least a rethink.

That the movies enjoyed a pennant-winning season is indisputable. Even those screening-weary critics who compile their annual best-of lists as if dragging their tails through the Stations of the Cross basked in their Tiny Tim blessings. So many goodies under the tree!

Juiced-up spectacles such as Martin Scorsese's *The Wolf of Wall Street*, whose grotesque, overgrown frat-rat carnival of greed and debauchery made the Felliniesque hedonism of Paolo Sorrentino's *The Great Beauty* (one of the year's best foreign imports) look bittersweet and pie-crust-ed.

Harrowing immersions into history and injustice such as Steve McQueen's *12 Years a Slave*; contemporary tragedies such as *Fruitvale Station* and *Blue Caprice*; and small-scale, minutely drawn character studies of losers, left-behinds, craggy survivors, besotted romantics, and deluded souls such as the Coen brothers' *Inside Llewyn Davis* (the Greenwich Village tale of a folkie unable to corral a cat), Alexander Payne's *Nebraska* (Bruce Dern having a bad-hair century), Spike

Lauren Goodman 12/16/2016 1:04 PM

**Comment [8]:** I agree with this statement. It seems that the trend nowadays is that movies are mostly nonfiction. When they are occasionally fictional, they are often from comic books or adapted from YA novels.

Jonze's *Her* (Joaquin Phoenix soaking up sunsets to the sweet nothings of Scarlett Johansson's etherealized voice), J. C. Chandor's *All Is Lost* (Robert Redford rugging it out against the doomy elements and implacable fate), and Woody Allen's *Blue Jasmine* (Cate Blanchett as a former socialite riding a San Francisco streetcar named desire downhill to Desolation Row).

Hodgepodge time machines such as *Lee Daniels' The Butler*, saved from solemnity by Oprah Winfrey and Terrence Howard, and David O. Russell's roller-curved, disco-dandified *American Hustle*, whose phenomenal quintet—Christian Bale, Amy Adams, Jennifer Lawrence, Bradley Cooper, Jeremy Renner—elevated the 70s cosplay into the prom night of the gods. (Lawrence also scored a stupendous success behind the archery bow in *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*.)

Slapstick comedies such as the easily-mistaken-for-each-other *This Is the End* (Hollywood bros fending off the apocalypse) and *The World's End* (re-uniting the *Shaun of the Dead* crew), and the coming-of-age romance *Blue Is the Warmest Color* that made reviewers of all ages wish they were winsome girls again.

Even movies that missed at the box office, such as Ron Howard's critically praised *Rush*, a true-life drama about Formula One racing, spewed fumes redolent of the glory days of 70s filmmaking.

Meanwhile, we conscientious TV layabouts began to lose some of that lovin' feelin'. After five seasons of ticking-bomb gamesmanship, *Breaking Bad* bid farewell to Walter White's lacerated heart and the meth labs that functioned as alchemist man caves to this Faust of the southwestern suburban tract. Its departure left a mournful hole in Sunday nights that couldn't be plugged by grim, grinding demonstrations of seasonal affective disorder such as *Low Winter Sun*. (And there are doubts among the laity that the announced *Breaking Bad* prequel, *Better Call Saul*, can possibly measure up to the original, though in Vince Gilligan I trust.) Reaching the burnout phase of the 60s, *Mad Men* appeared to have lost the tiger in its tank, the *Weltschmerz* of Don Draper loosening its hold on our imaginations as a compelling inscape of lunar shadow; there was a desultory bounce to his bed-hopping, and everybody else's. *The Walking Dead*, an indestructible ratings monster, seemed to be churning through the death loam, to borrow a phrase from Leon Wieseltier, unable to regain traction, and Season Three of *Homeland* left a lot of its homeys dissatisfied, judging by the crab-fests that took place Sunday nights on Twitter. The ratings for *Downton Abbey* also continue to billow. The series remained a popular preservation site for nostalgic eyeballers feasting on period costumes, milky complexions, cathedral interiors, and drappings of fine English mist as an armchair vacation from the slobdom of the present. But even its most avid devotees might admit that, drama-wise, the series has become an intermittent drip; too many wax figures posing as characters clogging up the action and lovers clumsily brought together or separated as if creator Julian Fellowes were trying out a new pair of tongs. *The Killing* dissolved into hysterical, waterlogged improbability, and the psycho-thriller drama *Dexter* ended its series run with an unsatisfying thud.

Lauren Goodman 12/16/2016 1:05 PM

**Comment [9]:** TV series that have dominated pop-culture have been so successful because of the edgy plotting and complex storylines.

It wasn't that TV entirely failed to hold its own. HBO's brawny franchise *Game of Thrones* hosted the wedding of the year, lavishly done up in gore; Netflix drew a pair of aces with its original series *House of Cards* and *Orange Is the New Black*; the debut season of *The Americans* got more knot-tightening as it went along; *Scandal* and *The Good Wife* built upon their strengths, upped their games, and became social-media sensations; and Hayden Panettiere's unstoppable country songbird, Juliette Barnes, on *Nashville*, my own personal-favorite low-down, no-good, bad-girl firecracker, proved that there's still plenty of life left in the valley of the dolls. And a number of the movies in 2013 that had the medal of masterpiece prematurely hung on them are the sort of earnestly constructed scarecrows and gravitas vehicles that make critics and viewers feel virtuous, but then, after the red carpets have been rolled up, fade into the amnesiac fog where the dim outlines of former prizewinners such as *Shine*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, *Crash*, *Slumdog Millionaire*, and *Black Swan* can be spied, movies that none but a masochist would voluntarily watch again.

It isn't pre-eminence that the movies regained in their recent upswing but pop-culture parity, as all of the entertainment hierarchies get smushed together by the convergence of digital technology and the multiplicity of delivery systems, running the gamut from iPad to Imax. Audiences are less and less choosy about which size screen they see something on, though some of them still want to be awed and won't settle for streaming movies on their Dick Tracy wristwatches, and still crave a spired spectacle. What concerns me is that a different sort of convergence is placing TV in danger of becoming as art-conscious, casually sadistic, and miserabilist as cinema at its most penitential. Bad enough is the influence of gloomy-weather Nordic noir on British and American detective drama, which has been a bane and a curse. If TV's top show-runners succumb to larger delusions of grandeur, the medium could start to petrify from pretension and gnomonic introspection, the Terrence Malick syndrome. I've seen episodes of FX's biker drama *Sons of Anarchy* that seemed wreathed with Miltonic majesty even as guys were getting their skulls melon-crushed or rib cages shivved. Spare us the solemnities.

Lauren Goodman 12/16/2016 1:05 PM

**Comment [10]:** The success of the television industry is largely due to streaming services. It made networks up their games and made television more mainstream.