

## ***The Wire* and *Borgen* as Auteur Series**

Danish Adam Price and American David Simon Created  
TV Dramas that Became Classics

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<p>Sammandrag:</p> <p>TV/VOD-produktioner bygger på samarbete. Vilka specifika drag går att finna i erkända s.k. "auteur-seriers" arbetsprocesser? Mitt examensarbete har sökt svar genom att analysera processerna bakom de första säsongerna i David Simons HBO-dramaserie <i>The Wire</i> (2002-2008) och Adam Prices <i>Borgen</i> (2010-2013) producerad av Danmarks public service-bolag DR. Min metod är en litteraturgenomgång. Martha Nochimsons och Eva Novrup Redvalls verk gav mig amerikanska och danska branschperspektiv, också på hur filmregissörerna David Lynch och Lars von Trier byggde broar mellan de två ländernas film- och TV-branscher. Som en blivande manusförfattare-regissör är jag speciellt intresserad av serieskaparnas egna perspektiv. Jag har studerat Simons och Prices reflektioner i digitala mästerklasser samt i böcker skrivna av deras medarbetare.</p> <p>The <i>Wire</i> och <i>Borgen</i> har kallats tidiga auteur-verk i dramaseriernas "guldålder". Efter att amerikanska strömningstjänster nått ut globalt har både serieproduktionen och den internationella samfinansieringen ökat betydligt. Författarrum (writers' room) har importerats från USA till Europa och med dem nya arbetstitlar som <i>creator</i> och <i>showrunner</i>, vilka jag definierat. Perspektiv på hur auteur-begreppet nått serievärlden, fick jag genom studier av filmens tidiga auteur-teori, dagens rön om auteur TV och DR:s <i>one vision</i> -strategi. Inom filmen har auteur -begreppet länge kritiserats för dess fokus på regissören i en teamprocess. Då långa kvalitetsserier har flera regissörer, förväntas huvudförfattaren försäkra att seriens vision består under hela produktionen, vilket Simon gjorde som showrunner och Price som en del av den showrunner-duo han bildade med producent Camilla Hammerich. Vid jämförelse uppvisade Simons och Prices processer intressanta likheter. Bägge serieskapare har mångsidiga professionella bakgrunder, men ingen formell film- eller TV-utbildning. De var starkt engagerade i sina teman, gjorde en grundlig research och fick team att känna ägarskap av visionen. Relationen till beställarna (HBO, DR) och medarbetarna präglades av långvarighet och tillit. Mitt examensarbete gav viktiga insikter i utvecklingprocessen, men påvisade också behovet av mer forskning kring skapandet av unika dramaserier – oberoende av om dessa kallas <i>one vision</i> serier, <i>auteur</i> verk eller något annat.</p>	
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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>TV/VOD-productions are built on collaboration. Which distinctive features can be found in the working processes behind acknowledged “auteur series”? My study researches the processes behind David Simon’s HBO drama series <i>The Wire</i> (2002-2008) and Adam Price’s <i>Borgen</i> (2010-2013) produced by Danish pubcaster DR. My research method is a literature review. Martha Nochimson’s and Eva Novrup Redvall’s analyses gave me American and Danish industry perspectives, also on how film directors David Lynch and Lars von Trier built bridges between the two countries’ film and series industries. As an upcoming writer-director, I especially value the series maker’s experience as conveyed in Simon’s and Price’s digital master classes and in books written by their co-workers.</p> <p><i>The Wire</i> and <i>Borgen</i> have been called early auteur works in the “golden age” of drama series. Since US streaming services reached global audiences, there has been a significant increase in series production and international co-production. Writers’ rooms have been imported from the USA to Europe together with new working titles such as <i>showrunner</i> and <i>creator</i>, which I have defined. To better understand the <i>auteur series</i> concept, I studied the early film auteur theory, current writings on auteur TV and Danish pubcaster DR:s <i>one vision</i> strategy. In film, the auteur concept has long been criticized for focusing on the director in a collaborative process. In multi-seasonal quality series with many directors, the main writer usually keeps the vision intact during the production. Simon did this as a showrunner and Price as part of his and producer Camilla Hammerich’s showrunner duo. When compared, Simon’s and Price’s processes displayed interesting similarities. Both creators have rich professional backgrounds, but no formal film or TV education. They showed a deep theme engagement, did in-depth research and shared vision ownership with teams. Their relationships with commissioners (HBO, DR) and core co-workers were trustful and long-lasting. My study gave vital knowledge on series writing, and recognized a need for more research on the creation of unique series, regardless of whether they are called <i>one vision</i> series, <i>auteur</i> works or something else.</p>	
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<p>Tiivistelmä:</p> <p>TV/VOD-ala perustuu yhteistyöhön. Mitkä työprosessien erityispiirteet mahdollistavat arvostettujen, ns. ”auteur-sarjojen” luomisen? Olen etsinyt vastauksia tutkimalla David Simonin työtä amerikkalaisen HBO:n tilaamassa draamasarjassa <i>The Wire</i> (2002-2008) ja Adam Pricen työtä sarjassa <i>Borgen</i> (2010-2013), jonka Tanskan yleisradioyhtiö DR tuotti. Menetelmäni on kirjallisuuskatsaus. Martha Nochimsonin ja Eva Novrup Redvallin analyysit toivat alan amerikkalaista ja tanskalaista perspektiiviä, myös siltoihin, joita ohjaajat David Lynch ja Lars von Trier rakensivat näiden maiden TV- ja sarja-alojen välille. Tulevana käsikirjoittaja-ohjaajana sain arvokasta tietoa Simonin ja Pricen digitaalisista mestariluokista, sekä myös heidän työtovereidensa teosten kautta.</p> <p><i>The Wire</i> ja <i>Borgen</i> -sarjoja voidaan pitää aikaisina draamasarjojen ns. kultakauden auteur-teoksina. Amerikkalaisten suoratoistopalveluiden vallattua muita mantereita, sarjojen ja kansainvälisten yhteistuotantojen määrät ovat kasvaneet merkittävästi. Eurooppaan on tuotu amerikkalaisia työmenetelmiä, kuten kirjoittajahuoneet (writers’ room) työnimikkeineen <i>showrunner</i> ja <i>creator</i>, joita määrittelen. Käsitettä <i>auteur-sarja</i> olen avannut tutkimalla alkuperäistä auteur-elokuvateoriaa, nykypäivän auteur TV-ajatuksia ja DR:n <i>one vision</i> strategiaa. Elokuva-alan käsitettä auteur-ohjaaja on kauan pidetty liian yksilökeskeisenä alalla, joka perustuu yhteistyöhön. Pitkät laatusarjat tarvitsevat useita ohjaajia ja niissä pääkäsikirjoittaja valvoo, että teoksen visio pysyy tuotannon läpi, kuten Simon teki sarjansa showrunnerina ja Price yhteistyössä tuottaja Camilla Hammerichin kanssa. Simonin ja Pricen työprosessien vertailu toi esiin kiinnostavia yhtäläisyyksiä. Heillä on monipuoliset ammattitaustat, mutta ei alan koulutusta. He omistautuivat vahvasti teemoihinsa, tekivät syvää ennako-tutkimusta ja innostivat työryhmiä. Suhteet tilaajiin (HBO, DR) ja työtovereihin olivat luottavaiset ja pitkäkestoiset. Työni on antanut tärkeää tietoa sarjakirjoittamisesta, mutta myös osoittanut, että tarvitaan lisää tutkimusta omaperästen sarjojen kehittelystä – olkoon sellaisen määritelmä sitten <i>auteur</i> teos, <i>one vision</i> sarja tai jokin muu.</p>	
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# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background and Personal Motivation

The first inspiration for this work came to me at the French series drama festival *Série Series* in July 2019. On many stages and also outside them, a recurring theme was the international media industry's growing need for unique high-end series. Since then, I've come across the same theme at other industry events. In 2020, I worked on two projects that both dealt with creative series writing. My research for the Copenhagen TV Festival Masterclass focused on a film auteur's road to creating series. When editing videos on former Helsinki Script speakers, most of whom are internationally acknowledged series creators, the commissioning angle presented itself. Some creators spoke about co-developing with global streaming services, others had worked closely with broadcasters.

This study focuses on the creation of David Simon's series *The Wire*, commissioned by American HBO/Warner Media and Adam Price's *Borgen*, produced by the Danish broadcaster DR. My aim is to shed light on how a personal writer's vision is kept in a complex, quality series. Today such works are sometimes called *auteur series*. These are the kind of stories I wish to create or take part in creating, when entering the professional industry as a scriptwriter and director in 2021. I recently received development funding for my first professional drama series, which gives added personal research motivation.

## 1.2 Research Objective and Industry Context

This study compares routes to writing auteur series in Denmark and in the USA. The two countries are quite different in size, and they have different production traditions. The US industry is private based, and the Danish one partly subsidized by public means. My research objective is to analyse how two globally acknowledged multi-seasonal drama series came to be in two different production cultures and within eight years. Both series deal with power structures in modern society. They made an impact when they first aired and they can today be called *classics*, a term I will define in chapter 2.2.

This study focuses on the opening seasons of the series. David Simon created his first season of *The Wire* (2002-2008) in the USA, some years before Adam Price started his route to the political drama series *Borgen* (2010-2013). These two high-end series came to life under contrasting circumstances. The Danish public service company Danmarks Radio (DR) commissioned the first three ten-hour seasons of *Borgen*. The five season long sixty-episode series *The Wire* was commissioned by the American cable service HBO, before the company's streaming era began. In one country a small public service department was in charge and in the other, a big private player. Both series have touched hearts around the world.

My research question is: What was distinctive in the writing processes of the two series? Are there similarities to be found despite different production surroundings? What enabled the long-lasting impact of two series that still are watched all over, though viewers today have more access to new series than ever before? I will not compare the production cultures of Denmark and USA as such. However, I will consider national circumstances and the development of the global series industry in general. It is vital to acknowledge that both *Borgen* and *The Wire* were early representatives of the so called "golden age of drama series". This era was caused by a paradigm shift in the global film and series landscape. With US streaming services entering first European and then other markets, the need for quality series has grown rapidly.

In recent years the lively series market has attracted a growing number of film talents to the series industry. Such bridges were built early in the USA and Denmark. It was not that "comme il faut" for Danish film artists to create TV series, when Lars von Trier first premiered his hospital-mystery series *The Kingdom* (1994-1997). Luckily for the series industry, von Trier has never cared too much about public opinion. The same can be said about the American writer-director David Lynch. His mystery-detective series *Twin Peaks I-II* (1990–1991) brought new life to the American series industry.

This study compares the development processes of *Borgen* and *The Wire*, considering the impact of the earlier series by Lynch and von Trier. When Lynch released his third *Twin Peak's* season in 2017, it landed in quite a different media landscape than the se-

ries' opening 27 years earlier. In 2021 von Trier directs *The Kingdom's* third season 27 years after its opening built a Danish bridge from film to TV.

### 1.3 Why Study Auteur Series Writing?

The Göteborg Film Festival yearly publishes its *Nostradamus* report on upcoming industry trends. The 2020 report argues that the global streaming services have caused a move from the “mainstream” to more unique content by financing local auteurs: “They have provided individual auteurs with hands-off funding, often with excellent artistic results. They are training audiences in enjoying narratively complex, often original IP, as well as in reading subtitles” (Koljonen, 2020, s.34).

A growing number of series are produced both domestically and internationally. In 2019 the French national centre for cinema CNC published a report that compares drama series production in the USA and in France. The researcher, producer Alex Berger uses his own success series *The Bureau / Le Bureau des légendes* (2016-2020) as a case study. His experience is that when global platforms control the whole creative chain, prices go up and so does the need for new talent.

Platforms (Netflix, Amazon, Apple, Hulu, Facebook, YouTube...) are outshining the studios through the enhanced integration of the whole creative chain, from production to exploitation. However, this concentration and vertical integration comes at a price, talent, ideas and series exploitation cost money. Long-term rights windows are very expensive. The market is enormous and insatiable. Star talent must be paid for, and new talent must be discovered... lots of it. (Berger, 2019, s. 18)

The international competition has generated a market for unique series that brand their commissioners. Such series are often called *auteur series* as they are considered to be created by writers with personal voices. Today many celebrated Nordic writer talents are hired directly by global streaming services such as HBO or Netflix. The CEO of the Danish Film Institute, Claus Ladegaard, has reported on a lack of creative talent still working in Denmark (Abend, 2019). There seems to be an urgent need to nourish new voices in the Nordics. Film writing has long been taught in all Nordic film schools, but series writing education that long ago landed in Denmark, is rarer. Danish film professor Eva Novrup Redvall has wished for more research on television writing and production (Redvall, 2013, s. 21). All these issues add to the relevance of my study.

## 1.4 Method and Material

My research method is a thematic literature review as explained by Arlene Fink. I use multiple sources relevant to my subject to shed light on my research problem and to demonstrate how my research fits a larger field of study (Fink, 2014). I study the working processes of Adam Price and David Simon through analyses found in literature, in the writers' master classes and in online publications. When comparing their processes that resulted in unique series, I consider auteur theory aspects and earlier drama series created by film auteurs. Various online publications provide updates on the fast-changing media industry and access to older journalistic and scientific articles.

My main literature sources are American PhD Martha Nochimson's book *Television Rewired: The Rise of the Auteur Series* (2019) and Danish professor Eva Novrup Redvall's research book *Writing and Producing Television Drama in Denmark – From the Kingdom to the Killing* (2013). Nochimson puts special focus on three US series that in her opinion, changed the American drama series landscape and which she calls *auteur series*: David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, David Chase's *Sopranos* and David Simon's *The Wire*. Redvall analyses the strategically driven transformation in Denmark that caused the rise of the Danish series quality and enabled series like *Borgen*.

As someone just entering the industry, I see the value of combining the analyst's angle with statements by the professionals involved in the productions. In March 2021, I was invited to the webinar *Master Class with Adam Price* arranged by Série Series, which I recorded and transcribed for this research (Price 2021). *Borgen* producer Camilla Hammerich's book *The Borgen Experience* (2015) also gives valuable information on the Danish series' working processes. My main source on David Simon's creative methods is Simon's co-writer Rafael Alvarez' book *The Wire, Truth Be Told* (2009) and especially its long introduction written by Simon himself. Producer Alex Berger's analysis for CNC is of special interest as he knows the industry from inside (Berger, 2019). Among my online sources, I want to mention the French Centre Pompidou's *Master Class with David Simon* (2020) published on YouTube.

## 2 DEFINITIONS OF ARTISTIC AND PROFESSIONAL ROLES

### 2.1 Head Writers, Creators and Showrunners

New series writing methods and professions have been actively imported from the USA to Europe since the early 2010s. Eight years ago Redvall described writers' rooms as environments in which multiple writers produce volume series together under the supervision of a *showrunner*. At the time this collective writing method was limited in Europe (Redvall, 2013, s. 131). Since then, American practices have continued to be both debated and adapted in Europe.

I define a *head writer* as a writer, who has the main responsibility for writing a series and for managing the writers' room. Head writers, who thereupon have come up with the concepts themselves or created them on basis of a play, book, comic book, game or other IP (intellectual property), I define as *creators*. The term *showrunner* is trickier to define. The American use of the term combines creative and financial tasks. In 2021, due to the current pandemic, a member statement at the WGAW (Writers Guild of America West) home page mentions health issues upon other responsibilities:

In television, the Showrunner is responsible for overseeing the writing, directing, producing and post-production of their television series. We are also the liaison between the production and the network/studio, and the hub through which issues of health and safety run. (WGAW, 2021)

The term *showrunner* is used today in Europe in various ways. Sometimes only to indicate that the main writer participates in casting and editing processes. Alex Berger describes three French showrunner criteria: Firstly, the showrunner is the creative force, who acts as a “guardian of the vision”. Secondly, he/she should understand and participate in financing, production and distribution. Thirdly, the showrunner manages all artistic decisions and acts as the primary contact for production and broadcast. (Berger, 2019, s. 33-34). Spanish media researchers Alberich-Pascual, Gómez-Pérez and Higuera-Ruiz recognize varying uses of the term: “...the novelty and complexity of the concept might still cause certain unknowns with the regard to the showrunner's position”. A showrunner should combine business, creative and social leadership skills with a capability to “imprint a cinematic style on TV series” (Alberich-Pascual et al., 2018, s. 102). The *showrunner* term is not an official title. In series credits, it is mostly replaced

by producer credits as the Spanish study states: "Currently the professional profile associated with the emergent concept of a showrunner has its closest precedent in the title of executive producer" (Alberich-Pascual et al., 2018, s. 97).

My conclusion is that a *showrunner* carries financial responsibility and therefore is credited both as a *head writer* or *creator* and as an *executive producer*. David Simon is credited both as *creator* and *executive producer* in 52 of 60 episodes of *The Wire*. Creator Adam Price does not have this double crediting, but as a former Head of Drama at TV2 Denmark, he understood budgeting and production from before. DR-producer Camilla Hammerich and Price formed a showrunner duo, which she calls the *writer/producer duo* (Hammerich 2015, s. 25). Redvall uses the term *twin vision* to describe writer-producer collaborations throughout a DR series' production (Redvall, 2013, s. 109).

## 2.2 Auteur Writers and Classic Series

My two main sources Nochimson and Redvall use the term *auteur* when studying the ways and works of main series writers. Under the heading *Writers, Showrunners and Television Auteurs: Ideas of One Vision*, Redvall explains how the strategic efforts by Danish public broadcaster DR enabled the rise of quality series in Denmark. Inspired by US models, the drama department built its *one vision* policy: "Despite the widespread agreement about television writing being a highly collective process, the concept of one vision in the DR production dogmas singles out the head writer as the one person with the vision for what is to be produced from start to finish." (Redvall, 2013, s. 103).

Nochimson has a background as a film teacher, film critic, but also as a script writer of what she calls *formulaic* series. Her long discussions with multiple "auteur writers" have enabled her "escape from an obstructive discourse about television". She also refers to the initial paradox of introducing the auteur concept in the collaborative media industry: "I found in that powerful and communicative sense of presence a way to understand how it is possible for there to be such a thing as auteur television when the medium is so collaborative" (Nochimson, 2019, s. 32 - 33). To fit her *auteur* criteria, a series should be *nonformulaic*, a quality that she links to the way modernistic literature renewed storytelling. Such quality series form "an organic link between the history of

modern literature and mass media”. Nonformulaic series are, not only “nuanced and complex”, but also “culturally connected” (Nochimson, 2019, s. 66).

This work looks at the first seasons of *Twin Peaks* (1990), *The Kingdom* (1994), *The Wire* (2002) and *Borgen* (2008). All four can be defined as both *auteur series* and *classics*. My definition of a classic is partly subjective. I was born in 1996 and have grown up with an increasing amount of high-end drama series available online 24/7. *Twin Peaks* and *The Kingdom* premiered before I was born and *The Wire* and *Borgen*, when I was a kid. Out of the series volumes produced today, with close to 500 new high-end series seasons opening yearly only in Europe (Jiméz Pumares, 2020), very few are such “must see” titles for me as those four old ones are. Another way to motivate the term is that all four have won multiple awards, and are still discussed by professionals, studied by cultural and media researchers and watched by audiences on multiple continents.

In the age of increasing VOD (video on demand) and other online viewing, I find the term *drama series* more appropriate than *TV series*, which I mainly use when referring to older titles that actually premiered on linear TV. I don’t make a distinction between *series* and *serials*, the uses of which varies. In my vocabulary, they are all *series*.

### 3 THE AUTEUR THEORY IN FILM AND SERIES

#### 3.1 The Original Auteur Theory

To shed light on the *auteur* term that today is exported from the film industry to the series industry, we need to go back in time. In 1948 French film critic and upcoming documentary director Alexandre Astruc introduced the term *caméra-stylo* (camera pen) as the director’s tool to create cinematic feature films.

This of course implies that the scriptwriter directs his own scripts; or rather, that the scriptwriter ceases to exist, for in this kind of film-making the distinction between author and director loses all meaning. Direction is no longer a means of illustrating or presenting a scene, but a true act of writing. The filmmaker/author writes with his camera as a writer writes with his pen. (Astruc, 1948)

The *auteur* concept was developed by Astruc, André Bazin and other French film critics connected to the magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma*, to promote the director's personal vision and film as an art of its own "cinema as such" (Buckland, 2003, s. 76). The first short film by New Wave director François Truffaut premiered in 1955. The year before, as 21 years old, he coined the concept *la politique des auteurs* in his article *Une certaine tendance du cinéma français / A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema* (Truffaut, 1954). Truffaut disapproved of French films that were adaptations of novels and praised directors with a true cinematic approach, which as he noted, coincided with writing their dialogue. Most of the directors he praised are today part of our European film history:

Il s'agit de Jean Renoir, Robert Bresson, Jacques Becker, Abel Gance, Max Ophuls, Jacques Tati, Roger Leenhardt; ce sont pourtant des cinéastes français et il se trouve curieuse coïncidence que ce sont des auteurs qui écrivent souvent leur dialogue et quelquesuns inventent euxmêmes les histoires qu'ils mettent en scène. (Truffaut, 1954)

This is about Jean Renoir, Robert Bresson, Jacques Becker, Abel Gance, Max Ophuls, Jacques Tati, Roger Leenhardt; all of whom, however, are French filmmakers, and by a curious coincidence, they are also auteurs who write their own dialogues or in some cases invent the stories they direct themselves. (own translation)

In the preface of his book based on his long interviews with Alfred Hitchcock in 1962, Truffaut compares the film art of Hitchcock to the literature art of Poe, Kafka and Dostoevsky (Truffaut, 1968, s. 17). Hitchcock was in the younger director's view an auteur though he hardly ever wrote his scripts, out of which many are adaptations of novels. Walter Raubicheck and Walter Srebnic point out that Hitchcock, however, controlled the writing process:

He worked closely with the screenwriter in adapting the source and developing the story and characters, and then at a certain point he would ask the writer to go home and produce a first draft. When this was submitted, Hitchcock again took complete control. (Raubicheck & Srebnic, 2011, s. 55)

The *auteur* term became an international concept in the early 1960s, when American film critic Andrew Sarris took the discussion to the USA. Instead of using the French term *auteur policy*, Sarris chose an expression that avoided political connotations. He coined the term *auteur theory* and introduced three auteur criteria. The director needs to have *technical competence*, a *distinguishable personality* and a capability to communi-

cate *inner meaning* (Sarris, 1962). In short, the auteur directs technically competent and meaningful films in a personal style that is recognisable from one work to another.

Since the early days of the *auteur* concept, film professionals and scholars have criticized the concept for being too focused on one individual in the collaborative film process (Tregde, 2013). J. Dudley Andrew has noted that the *auteur theory* is the most famous film theory, even though it is not a real theory, but rather a quality check system (Andrew, 1976, s. 4). Fifty years after the concept was born, Truffaut's New Wave colleague Jean-Luc Godard rejected its later emphasis on theory and the individual: "...it was transformed into a cult of the author instead of a cult of the author's work" (Tirard, 2002, s. 214). Today the term *auteur* is sometimes, and in my view wrongly, used as a synonym for *art house*. To challenge this thinking, Professor of Philosophy Jesse J. Prinz has raised the question whether works by popular auteur directors like Hitchcock should be defined as *art films* (Prinz, 2010).

The article collection *The Global Auteur* (2016) reinvestigates the auteur concept from political and global angles, presenting *world cinema auteurs*. In many of the book's articles the arthouse label is strongly present. In their introduction, editors Seung-hoon Jeong and Jeremi Szaniawski list previous auteur research approaches to illustrate the many different scientific angles, from multiple outward analysis methods to deconstructions of auteur films:

The triangular frame of semiotics, psychoanalysis, and Marxism set up the common view of subjectivity as inherently split and complexly constructed, paving the way for feminism and postcolonialism, cultural studies and identity politics in contextualizing films and auteurs. Thirdly, contrary to these two outward directions, there was another, inward one, which highlighted "deconstructive intertexts". (Jeong & Szaniawski, 2016, s. 3)

For this study such theoretical views are less vital. It is the original notion of an auteur overseeing the whole creative process, from the story to the finished product, that mirrors current discussions in the series industry. In my view, the auteur concept is about having a vision that is strong enough to engage and inspire fellow creatives in all areas of the production to strengthen it with their own particular talent, skill and authorship. The one vision should be shared by the whole team. Thus, the auteur has the control of the vision, but in collaboration with others. Today when some film experts predict its

death, the auteur concept is welcomed by drama series professionals as a means to make the scriptwriter's vision come true in a collaborative way.

### 3.2 The Brand Value of a Personal Voice

At today's crowded film and series markets, a work must stand out to be noticed. Jeong and Szaniawski recognize a brand value in labelling a film director an auteur:

The auteur is now a critical concept indispensable to distribution and marketing purposes, i.e. social interactions in a political economy beyond textual interpretation. Hollywood auteurs are strategic commercial agents endorsed by mass audience, like "brand names" that guide and stimulate their consumption. (Jeong & Szaniawski, 2016, s. 4)

The same marketing point of view can be adopted to the drama series industry. Series brands don't need to be "block busters", but they do need to create noise, a "buzz", at least at festivals. In Europe brands are often launched and hyped at international series industry events such as MIPCOM in Cannes, C21 in London or Series Mania in Lille. According to Alberich-Pascual, Gómez-Pérez and Higuera-Ruiz outstanding executive producers brought the auteur thinking to the TV industry. The showrunner is today expected to promote his series to keep up a series brand image:

The showrunner's activity for the promotion and marketing strategies, the relationships with the audience through social networks and transmedia options, and the TV channel intervention in the creation of a brand image have a notable influence on the social and cultural configuration of fiction TV series as a quality product. (Alberich-Pascual et al., 2019, s. 91-92)

### 3.3 From Auteur Film Directors to Auteur Series Writers

During the rather short history of drama series, film auteurs have occasionally worked for TV, mostly creating limited series or collection series, which both are based on one arc stories, as most feature films are. Hitchcock's 1950s TV show was multi-seasonal, but it presented short films in what could be called a collection or an anthology series. Polish auteur director Krzysztof Kieslowski's 10-part series *Dekalog* (1989-1990) is united by its commandment theme, but its form is still a collection of short films. The Swedish film auteur Ingmar Bergman's TV titles *Scenes from a Marriage* (1972), *Fanny and Alexander* (1983) and *The Best Intentions* (1991) are all limited series and have been distributed in the feature film format too. The German auteur Rainer Fassbinder's

5-part series *Eight Hours Don't Make a Day* (1972-1973) and 13-part series *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980) are limited one season series. (Balló & Pérez, 2015). Only, in recent years, film writer-directors have been drawn to multi-seasonal series. Filmmaker Jane Campion who created the series *Top of the Lake* (2013-2017) is one such example.

Keeping the auteur voice in a multi-seasonal series is especially challenging. The bigger the volume, the more talents are involved in the creative process and the more demanding it is to communicate the *one vision* so all can feel ownership for it. Truffaut expected a strong director involvement in the script process to create truly cinematic stories. As long series require more than one director, it is expected of the head writer to keep his or her vision intact during the whole production process. The main writer decides on the visual style, mainly in collaboration with the *conceptual director*, who direct the first episode(s). Thomas Schatz sums up the different authorships in films and series:

Film scholars continue to focus authorship studies on the director, a work role that is rarely even mentioned, let alone seriously considered, in discussions of TV series authorship. Television scholars, meanwhile, tend to gauge authorship in terms of the producer or the writer - or both in the case of the showrunner. (Schatz, T, 2014, s. 41)

Alberich-Pascual et al. conclude that an effective collaborative working process actually benefits from the person with the vision being in charge and thus managing the many creatives involved:

It is essential that this vision is not distorted by the members of each department, which is especially important in TV series production because they are composed of several episodes written and directed by different professionals. Therefore, the showrunner, whether creating the original idea or not, has to maintain this concept in order to have a positive impact on the quality of the product. (Alberich-Pascual et al., 2019, s. 91)

I agree with these conclusions. My experiences from international series events also suggest that series creators with personal voices are highly needed in Europe today. Nochimson makes a distinction between auteur series writers and other creators of quality series. Those that she calls auteurs have some things in common:

Their commonalities have to do with their rejection of laying train tracks or pipe or making sausage and the standard hero. They have to do with the breadth of the vision that they each brought into creating a series: individual vision, auteur vision, a counterforce to the business of storytelling. They each understood the protagonist as a figure in a large landscape, a large universe that he or she could neither control nor understand. (Nochimson, 2019, s. 32)

To my understanding Nochimson's "large landscape" is a complex, fictional universe that expands beyond such ordinary story worlds that present themselves as controllable by for example the protagonist's actions. I will come back to Nochimson's *auteur writer* criteria in the next chapter. Apart from hers, I have not found *auteur series writer* definitions comparable with how Andrew Sarris defined the *auteur director*. A creator's various series might differ in tone and quality. To be "recognizable" the writer's *auteur* voice should, in my view, be present in more than one collaboratively produced work. Adam Price's personal voice comes at least true in his series *Borgen* and *Ride Upon the Storm* (2017-2018), and David Simon's in *The Wire* and in *Treme* (2010-2013).

## 4 FILM AUTEURS BUILDING BRIDGES TO TV

### 4.1 First Came *Twin Peaks* (1990) by David Lynch

Martha Nochimson states that the history of the *auteur series writer* began with the launch of film *auteur* David Lynch's first season of the mystery series *Twin Peaks* (1990). "To speak of art television is to begin a conversation with unlimited ways of focusing on the *auteur* television that Lynch inaugurated" (Nochimson, s. 9). Her statement seems to suggest a connection between "art television" and "auteur television". In my reading *art* refers to *quality*, the way Hitchcock films have *auteur* quality, without belonging to the *arthouse* genre. Here I also refer to Kristen Thompson's remark that art films can combine art quality with audience appeal. (Thompson, 2013, s. 108).

As a film critic, university lecturer and writer Nochimson studied Lynch's works long before *Twin Peaks*. The *auteur's* first drama series was a big event among her students:

Towards the end of 1989 American film schools were ablaze with the news that David Lynch, already known as an independent filmmaker, was about to make his television debut. I was teaching at the Tisch School of Arts at the New York University. Because of a provocative lecture I had given on *Blue Velvet*, students pulled me aside regularly to tell me about the imminent arrival of *Twin Peaks*. They felt that something new was on the horizon. And they were right. (Nochimson, 2019, s. 36)

Today Nochimson describes Lynch as “the father of nonformulaic American television”. She sees that the universe of a *nonformulaic auteur series* is unlimited and cannot be controlled by perfect heroes, anti-heroes or villains.

Nonformulaic TV, the main subject of our voyage, has no perfect heroes or villains and no anti-heroes. Rather the protagonists conceived of by television auteurs are beset by an enormous limitless world where the signposts are unclear and are always subjects to the contexts bigger than themselves. (Nochimson, 2019, s. 16)

On a plot level the first season of *Twin Peaks* deals with how young Laura Palmer’s death and the murder investigation that follows affect the community in a small town. The series’ friendly and complex protagonist Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) comes from FBI to solve the murder, but he is not a traditional detective character. The non-perfect hero Cooper sends voice messages on his findings to someone called Diana, whom we never see. He is in contact with messengers from other realities and receives clues from an extradimensional Red Room and his own dreams. And in the end, he does not control his case.

All high-end, complex and personal series don’t fit Nochimson’s auteur definition. The eccentric hero Fox Mulder in Chris Carter’s *The X-files*, (1983-2018) breaks the mould of a flawless hero, but still has the powers of a formulaic hero. The more or less corrupt anti-heroes in David Milch’s *Deadwood* (2002-2005), in Vincent Gilligan’s *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013) and in Peter Nowalk’s *How to Get away with Murder* (2014-2020) all control their universes. Thus, these works don’t fit her definition of auteur series writing. (Nochimson, 2019, s. 218-219).

Lynch has a background as a painter and his strong visual thinking is present in his film and series scripts. Nochimson shows how repetitious displays of visual elements like dead animals or activities like dancing sequences are part of his auteur voice. She analyses in length how Lynch, by giving presence to two everyday objects, a fan and a phone cord, deepens *Twin Peaks*’ inner drama. (Nochimson, 2019, s. 43-44). It seems logical that a rich inner private universe enables personal storytelling. From her many discussions with Lynch, Nochimson lists other artists that inspire him. Those mentioned are visual artists Francis Bacon, Jackson Pollock and Edward Hopper and film directors Orson Welles, Federico Fellini, Billy Wilder and Alfred Hitchcock. Other, even more

important sources are Lynch's interest in and research into quantum mechanics and the Vedic worldview (Nochimson, 2019, s. 41).

Lynch is reconfiguring the universe of action, context, and human interiority in television storytelling. What do we gain from all this? A sense that every action, every live and every death, is part of the All, not an atomized event to which Sherlock can put a period. We expand!  
(Nochimson, 2019, s. 48)

An auteur series fictional universe should be beyond control, but in real life an auteur writer needs to control *how* the vision is performed. To illustrate what this means, Nochimsson gives an example where this did not happen. Lynch and Frost are both credited as creators of the first 8-episode *Twin Peaks* season (1990) and also of the second 22-episode season (1990-1991). After discussions with both Lynch and Frost, Nochimson concludes that Frost to a great length, took over the responsibility in season two (due to Lynch's film work) and almost turned *Twin Peaks* into a formulaic show. When Lynch came back to direct the finale, he was faced with a "perfect hero, a perfect plot and standardized image and sound". Having read the original script that Frost and the co-writers handed to Lynch, Nochimson praises the auteur for not using it. "As written, the *Twin Peaks* finale would have deflated and trivialized the early promises of the show". She sees that Lynch's rewrite escaped a formulaic conclusion and instead sought "beyond" to the "uncontrollable". (Nochimson, 2019, s. 61-66).

*Twin Peaks* paved the way for other high-end series. The series' first seasons were commissioned by ABC, which today is owned by The Walt Disney Company. Soon to follow was the prequel film *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* (1992) produced by the French company CIBYpictures. The series' third 18-episode season *Twin Peaks* (2017) premiered 27 years after the series opening at Showtime, a network which today is part of CBS/Viacom. Between the second and the third seasons companies have fused, markets expanded, and the industry become more global. In this new landscape Martha Nochimson sees that Lynch is stronger than ever as an auteur series writer:

The 2017 series does not just repeat David Lynch's challenge to formulaic storytelling. It performs modernist magic in its expansion of the connotation of the word "sequel", which has historically had deeply formulaic, linear applications. Simple linearity has no bearing on Lynch's return to *Twin Peaks*.  
(Nochimson, 2019, s. 243-244)

## 4.2 Then Came *The Kingdom* (1994) by Lars von Trier

Eva Novrup Redvall's note on the Danish reaction to Lars von Trier's series debut might sound more laconic than Nochimson commenting on Lynch going into series writing, but both declare a new turn in the series industry: "It was somewhat surprising when a mini-series by the art house director Lars von Trier came to screen in 1994 with an appeal to viewers and public alike." (Redvall, 2013, s. 56). It seems that von Trier built, not only a bridge between film and TV, but also a bridge to new audiences. The horror-mystery-hospital series *The Kingdom* was commissioned by the Danish Public service broadcaster DR and produced by Zentropa, a production company co-owned by von Trier. Redvall sees how pragmatic realities affected von Trier's concept.

*The Kingdom* was unlike anything previously produced for Danish television in its mystical content, its dark humorous tone and its imagery and sound. To a large extent, the special look of the series was based on pragmatic production decisions. (Redvall, 2013, s. 57)

Natural light was used except in scenes with ghosts, handheld camera work created a reportage look and jump cut editing added to the personal style (Redvall, 2013, s. 58). Nils Thorsen's biography on von Trier is based on multiple interviews with the auteur. In line with Redvall's notion Thorsen describes how von Trier wanted to finish the series quickly and move on to work on his next movie. During the development process von Trier and his co-writer Niels Vørsel decided that "all ideas were good", and that characters should be based on people they both knew to save time. The structuring of many episodes was made with the help of multiple plotlines, a method von Trier describes as a "fun" card game, that made things "easy". The narration smoothly switched from one plot to another by just letting the camera leave one character in a corridor and start following another. In *The Kingdom's* first season we are introduced to spiritualist patient Mrs Druse seeking the hospital's ghost little Mary, the neurosurgeon Moesgaard trying to please everyone, choleric Swedish surgeon pleasing only himself and pathologist Bondo implanting a cancerous liver in his own body. Other plotlines deal with a medical student attracted to a nurse, a ghostlike ambulance and doctors dealing with black market suppliers. According to Thorsen, watching *Twin Peaks* gave von Trier inspiration to add a ghost to the story. (Thorsen, 2013, s. 213-214).

Four years after the launch of *Twin Peaks*, von Trier made a leap from film to TV in Denmark. *The Kingdom*'s first two seasons (1994 and 1999) have all together eight episodes. The mini-series universe fits Nochimson's auteur definition of an unlimited world inhabited with non-perfect characters. Questions are left open in the first season, but instead of delivering answers, season two poses more questions. It remains to be seen if any answers are given in the series third season *The Kingdom Exodus*, currently in production 27 years after the launch of the series. The links to *Twin Peaks* are many.

Lynch's mystery story took place within the limits of a small-town and von Trier's in one big building, the Copenhagen hospital Rigshospitalet, called *Riget (Kingdom)*. Both use disturbing imagery, awkward language, unexpected music and personal humour. They mix the familiar, the melodramatic and the supernatural. Both directors brought new visual thinking to the series industry. *The Kingdom* had less financial resource but limitations in time and money seem to have incited von Trier to create something new.

...*The Kingdom* (1994) was an important source of inspiration to people in the film and television industry and brought the two worlds closer together by marrying cinematic imagery with episodic storytelling and by showing that one could create productions that were eclectic as well as popular for the small screen. (Redvall, 2013, s. 55)

UK magazine *The Independent* quotes a discussion with von Trier on how *The Kingdom* was inspired by *Twin Peaks*, a work, "...which brought out in David Lynch, in von Trier's judgement, qualities missing from his movies." (Mars-Jones, 2011). The creators seem to share a certain bold attitude with which they entered a medium new to them, breaking down fourth walls and creating meta levels to their narrations. Two young dishwashers with Down syndrome comment on the events in *The Kingdom*. Lynch filmed new monologues with his truth-teller *Log Lady* character (Catherine Coulson) for the 1993 Bravo broadcasting of *Twin Peaks*' first seasons (King, M, 1993). As Nochimson notes, the lady's comments might seem humoristic, but they actually invite the viewer to a larger context (Nochimson, 2019, s. 43). A smart sense of humour is also present in both series. *The Kingdom*'s meta level monologues present von Trier with devil horns talking directly to the viewers the way Hitchcock did in his 1950s TV show. Apparently, the inspirational bridges between US and Denmark go both ways. While recovering in a hospital, American horror writer Steven King saw *The Kingdom* and decided to write a remake of it. His series *The Kingdom Hospital* opened in 2004 in the

USA (Brooks & Marsh, 2007, s. 1330). Despite similarities in narration and a shared bold or “teasing” attitude, the series by Lynch and von Trier are very different from one another, and personal in their own unique ways. In a recent video, made for the Danish *Louisiana Channel*, von Trier comments on the element of teasing in *Twin Peaks*:

It’s based on the assumption that you expect all these peculiar things happening at the end will lead to a greater meaning. He never intended that. Lynch tried to finish it both with a feature film and another series, but it was never his intention. He’s made it a point that it doesn’t come together in the end. The funniest thing is to tease and not reach a conclusion. (von Trier, 2020)

## 5 CREATING SEASON ONE OF *THE WIRE*

### 5.1 The Reason and the Research behind *The Wire*

Martha Nochimson uses the expression the “David effect” to describe how the new series quality inaugurated by David Lynch was followed by David Chase creating *The Sopranos* and David Simon creating *The Wire*, all three building a “new mass-media connection to a high-culture literary modernism” (Nochimson, 2019, s. 13). She calls *The Wire* (2002-2008) “television’s first nonformulaic police show”, saying that it presents an “interplay of racial, political and sociological forces” earlier absent in drama series:

On the rare occasions when such issues are raised, one carefully limited social element is isolated and one “right” perspective is established. Not so in *The Wire*. Simon’s first nonformulaic foray as a storyteller is an auteur series filled with collisions among multiple issues tangled around the drug problem in Baltimore. (Nochimson, 2019, s. 97)

The first season of *The Wire* has 13 hour-long episodes. In chapter 3.3. I motivated why Simon as the writer of multiple personal series is my American example of what Nochimson calls a “post-Peaks” auteur writer. Danish associate professor Mikkel Jensen avoids using the term *auteur*, arguing that it suggests “hierarchical canonization”. He, however, says that Simon’s role as a creator adds to his showrunner authorship.

It is therefore particularly important that Simon has consistently been a cradle-to-grave showrunner as he has both conceived a vision for these shows and has been involved in developing and administering the execution of the initial idea. This makes his role more central and adds weight to the rationale of viewing his productions in relation to each other. (Jensen, 2017, s. 36)

Out of the four writers, whose work I look into, only Lars von Trier has a formal film education. David Lynch studied art and Adam Price law before switching to fiction. David Simon has a background in journalism and especially in writing crime stories. A profound research is vital in all his professions. He has worked as a journalist for the Baltimore Sun (1982-95) and published factual books. When his book *Homicide: A Year on the Killing Streets* (1991) was fictionalized to the NBC series *Homicide: Life on the Street* (1993-99) Simon's career as a script writer started. Redvall mentions that von Trier was inspired by the series when creating the reportage look for *The Kingdom* (Redvall, 2013, s. 58).

I have studied *The Wire* in books and articles and watched interviews and master classes with David Simon, without finding much material on his writing methods. His industry talks tend to turn into engaging reflections on severe and structural problems in the American society. Through his constant research he knows the things he talks and writes about. Simon had lived and worked a great part of his life in Baltimore when the city's drug scene became one of the arenas in *The Wire*. In September 2003, Washington Post invited its readers to a live chat with Simon on his new series. I find his answers especially enlightening as the ongoing *The Wire* had not been much discussed yet at the time. Simon states the importance of research, also in creating characters:

In 1988, I took a leave to spend a year with the homicide unit and was able to learn more about the police culture. In 1993, with Ed Burns, my co-writer on *The Wire* and a former homicide detective, I went to the corner of Fayette and Monroe streets in West Baltimore and spent a year following people in the drug culture. (-) In short, I guess, the research is really, really important to me and I wouldn't dare try to write characters I didn't think I knew well enough. (The Post, 2002)

In Alvarez' book on *The Wire*, Simon introduces his fellow writers by referring to their engagement and life experience outside the industry. "None of us is from Hollywood; soundstages and backlots and studio commissaries are not our natural habitats." He mentions that Ed Burns had been a long-time Baltimore detective, George Pelicanos had "sold shoes and tended bar", Rafael Alvarez had worked as "an ordinary seaman on a cable-laying ship", Richard Price had spent "day after day in Jersey housing projects to find his lost and tragic voices", Dennis Lehane brought with him "the working-class

fight and hunger” and Bill Zorzi “spent years covering the smokey backrooms of Baltimore politics”. (Alvarez & Simon, 2009, s. 11).

Multiple sources suggest a sense of shared ownership within Simon’s teams. Simon and *The Wire* producer Nina K. Noble have worked together since their Emmy-winning HBO mini-series *The Corner* (2000), which Simon wrote together with *The Wire* co-writer Ed Burns. In an ATX TV 2018 panel celebrating the 20 years of Simon’s and Noble’s production company *Blown Deadline Productions*, the company is described as a “collective” and a “family”. Noble, who has a background in film, says that she and Simon made their own rules, like avoiding traditional writers’ rooms in the safe “bubble” of a long relationship with HBO. (ATX TV, 2018). Simon calls HBO’s few notes on *The Wire*’s script “gentle and discerning” (Alvarez & Simon, 2009, s. 22).

Dominique Fishback, who is a writer herself, has acted in several of Simon’s series. She says “I know that girl” when describing how truly Simon’s dialogue depicts the lives of black women like her and her mother (ATX TV, 2018). From the point of view of today’s film representation discourse, Simon was asked by French scholars about creating black arenas as a white man. In his answer Simon declared his support to all groups underrepresented in storytelling, but also defended the freedom of writers choosing their subjects, taking the question back to research:

Writers talk about the *impostor syndrome*: ‘What gave me the right to come to the campfire with that story?’ (-) At any given moment anyone can say: ‘You’re an impostor, I lived that life, and you are an impostor.’ And the only thing that protects you is did you do enough research? Did you capture the voice? Was what you had to say worth saying about that world? You just have to be judged on the merits or discarded on it. (Simon, 2019)

## 5.2 Showing Society’s Complexity through Collage Narration

In the introduction to the book on *The Wire*, David Simon points out which parts of Baltimore and thus which US social classes the series covers and which not.

*The Wire* is certainly not about what has been salvaged or exalted in America. It is instead of that part of the country that we have discarded, and at what cost to our national psyche we have done so. It is, in its larger themes, a television show about politics and sociology, and, at the risk of boring viewers with the very notion: about macroeconomics. (Alvarez & Simon, 2009, s. 10)

In his analysis of social and economic structures Simon focuses on those who were left behind in the post-industrial USA. This is the poorer part with more broken families and more drugs and with fewer jobs. This chapter will not try to analyse all quality features of *The Wire*. The subject is well covered, to the extent that Jensen fears the attention risks to diminish the status of Simon's other series.

For one cannot ignore how canonized *The Wire* has become. It has been the subject of several monographs, special issues of journals, and several anthologies alongside an ever-growing list of journal articles. *The Wire* thus takes a central place in the canon of complex television. (Jensen, 2017)

The special feature I want to look closer at, is the structure that adds to the complexity of the series' multi-angled sociopolitical theme. Nochimson calls Simon's dramaturgy *collage narration*. She explains that season one does not introduce us to a "forward-moving formula plot about people determined to do something about a well-defined problem". (Nochimson, 2019, 101). We meet multiple plots and arenas, illegal drug trading, victims and dealers, a police department fighting the hopeless drug war while trying to keep up an appearance, a city government marked by corruption and bureaucracy, betrayed classes, unfunctional school systems and news media in crises. To be able to keep all angels true to Baltimore, Simon renewed the series form:

He needed to invent a narrative that would reflect the "tangle" of people and systems that he saw with his own eyes and would take us into the city at the end of the mind. (-) He had to invent a nonformulaic narrative that would reject false, simplistic answers that had no bearing on the immediacy of the city. He evolved collage narrative. (Nochimson, 2019, s. 99-100)

Simon's collage narrative goes deep by telling a story from various points of views. Nochimson describes the series structure as a "bubbling, steaming stew flavored with many races and ethnicities". Conflicting disconnects between life and social systems cause clashes and misconceptions. The white cop McNulty tries to get to those in charge of the drug trade. He is a central character, but Simon rejected the idea of making him central to the series. "Instead, *The Wire* dramatizes the always compelling McNulty as one element of a big collage composed of juxtaposed stories and points of view" (Nochimson, 2019, s. 101). One of the black characters that might come close to a perfect hero/anti-hero, is the intelligent, gay stick-up man Omar Little (Michael Kenneth Williams). He steals from drug dealers and seems invincible until he is killed by a

young kid. Today Omar is also known as President Obama's favorite character in his favorite series (Alvarez & Simon, 2019, s. 41). Omar is based on a real-life former drug-dealer, who is alive and active in anti-drugs campaigns today. Would the fictional character's survival have turned him into a perfect hero?

### 5.3 The Personal Voice Goes Beyond Writing

As we have seen, David Simon's experience of journalistic research came to full use during *The Wire*'s development process. The showrunner trade he had to learn by doing. Simon says that working on the (today 122-episode long) series *Homicide: Life on the Street* (1993-1999) based on his book taught him writing and producing. His mentor, executive producer Tom Fontana could "stretch the boundaries of the show" and inspire the creativity of the writers, while still knowing how to bring people back after each commercial and each episode (Writer Magazine, 2018). After the opening of the first season of *The Wire*, Simon explained to his viewers:

In TV the writer-producer controls the product. We write, cast, pick directors, go to set, edit and have the final say over the final cut. It has to be that way because of continuity issues in television drama. The directors come and go with every episode and the actors are dependent on a continuing story. (The Post, 2002)

Together with *The Wire*'s first director of photography Uta Briesewitz, Nochimson analyses Simon's aesthetic views and the series' "kaleidoscopic collage narrative". According to Briesewitz, Simon was "adamant and vocal" about how he wanted Baltimore to be filmed to give the viewers a feeling of being "present". Their mutual "cinematic voyage of discovery", avoiding "grandiose" images, created the style that Nochimson calls "modernist". Scenes could be shot in one-takes, as neither Simon nor Briesewitz wanted to cut up a scene that was "moving along nicely". Nochimson quotes Simon's principles that the camera "cannot know everything". He did not want it to predict who is going to speak but rather turn with a delay towards the speaker. After Briesewitz left the series, another photographer made a scene look "too grandiose". Simon darkened the image in the postproduction as he could not afford to reshoot it. (Nochimson, 2019, s. 122-125).

During the Centre Pompidou masterclass Simon confirmed that he has the final cut in all his series. To him editing “is very much about pace” (Simon, 2019). The way he talks about the camera as a narrator, brings to mind Astruc’s *camera stylo*. Simon is, however, clear about not having the means to direct. He talks about the “nuanced” and “delicate” way a director is able to make use of the camera, while he “does not know shot” himself. Simon’s interest is in how the camera serves the story: “If you want to protect the writing you need to get to the set. You’ve got to stand behind the director” (Simon, 2019). During the first seasons of *The Wire* Simon explained that the camera “was being too smart” to photographer Ed Bianci, who started to laugh:

I said, what ‘Am I funny?’. He said “No, no. You’re trying, without having a language you just explained the motivation of the camera from the Truffaut-Hitchcock interviews. You just did that without any film vocabulary at all. You basically said where the camera had to go”. So, I went out and read all that stuff for the first time, and so I went ‘Oh, so you guys knew this already’.  
(Simon, 2019)

Through Simon’s relationship to the camera, I have described one of his ways of going beyond the writer’s role in creating a series, where all the elements form an organic work. Much more could be discussed, like his casting of fresh actors, or use of diegetic music. I agree with Nochimson that an auteur series must be nonformulaic and say something about the world, but I would especially underline Simon’s unique personal voice that keeps through all seasons of *The Wire*. His vision is born from an urge to tell a complex story and his story is based on profound research. He has the capability to inspire team members to co-create and thus to share the vision. A series that deals with tough problems might get too dark to hook, but Simon also has a clear view on how to balance between light and shadow, as TV critic Alan Sepinwall shows when quoting Simon:

Without the humor, it would have been unbearable. Without an acknowledgement of the humanity of the characters, despite all their flaws, their vanities, their absurdities -- if on some level, you can't make people care about the characters, you've got a problem no matter what you're doing. We had some obligations to people if they wanted to watch, but a happy ending was not among the list of obligations.  
(Sepinwall, 2008)

## 6 CREATING SEASON ONE OF *BORGEN*

### 6.1 The Reason and the Research Behind *Borgen*

Adam Price has studied law but is self-taught as a writer. Together with his musician brother James, he runs a humorous cooking show *Spise med Price (Eating with the Price Brothers)* for Danish pubcaster DR. He has written food reviews, sketch shows, musicals and stage dramas. Price's leap into drama series happened when he was invited to the writers' room of the DR series *Taxa/Taxi* (1997-1999). The popular Danish 56-episode drama soap series about a small taxi company fostered many Danish talents (Redvall, 2013, s. 113). Price defines the series' personal and national impact:

The turning point actually came when DR wanted to do a new show. They wanted to do this show that ended up being *Taxa*. A very important show if you look at the short history of television fiction in Denmark because it was a turning point series for DR and I was invited on the team of writers there. And it ended up being an on-going masterclass with Stig Thorsboe, who is the real godfather of Danish TV drama. (Price, 2021)

Price's gratitude to *Taxa* head writer Stig Thorsboe is comparable with how Simon referred to Tom Fontana as his showrunner mentor in the *Homicide* writers' room. In the 1990s DR built a new model for its drama series, but the term *creator* was not yet in active use. When Price came up with the idea for the *Emmy*-winning series *Nikolaj and Julie* (2002-2003) his *Taxa* fellow writer Søren Sveistrup became the series head writer. Price worked as an episode writer for *Taxa* and other series before becoming Head of Drama (2000-2004) at Danish TV2, a position he left to head write the TV2 crime series *Anna Pihl* (2006-2008). Price's sic-sacking between jobs and Denmark's two main broadcasters, pubcaster DR and private TV2, prepared him to create DR's political drama series *Borgen*. The first season, which had ten one hour-long episodes, opened in 2010.

When Price pitched *Borgen* to DR, Sveistrup's *Forbrydelsen/The Killing* (2007 - 2012) and other Nordic crime series had started to travel internationally, and the genre *Nordic noir* was soon to be coined in the UK. Price went against the genre hype and created a political series, motivated by his own interest in politics:

I would never have started out writing a political show if I hadn't been interested in politics as a start. I've always been very interested in the power play and also the structure of parliament. I'm also a law student as you know, so actually the building stones of society and laws, and how they get to be, was something I actually knew a little about. (Price, 2021)

In her book on the first three seasons of *Borgen* (2010-2013) series producer Camilla Hammerich illustrates Price's long-time interest in politics by mentioning how he "devoured political speeches from Caesar to Churchill and John F. Kennedy" and "loves to quote historical persons" (Hammerich, 2015, s. 41). Price says that belonging to a non-political Danish generation and witnessing general dissatisfaction with politicians, he wanted to make politics compelling. Hammerich quotes the showrunner duo's early vision: "The series will be a tribute to democracy. In a captivating way, the story will portray the political decision-making processes in society" (Hammerich, 2015, s. 29).

In *Borgen's* first season the series' main character, centrist politician Birgitte Nyborg (Sidse Babett Knudsen) becomes Denmark's first female prime minister. Hammerich names the series three fictional universes "the political, the journalistic and the domestic one". (Hammerich, 2015, s. 193). Upon the main political arena, plot lines are built around Nyborg's family and private life and around a national TV studio covering political news. Side by side with the political and media suspense lines, viewers follow how the minister's career threatens her family life. The main character's inner dilemma is described in *Borgen's* premise: "Is it possible to maintain power and stay true to yourself" (Hammerich, 2015, s. 57).

In his spring 2021 masterclass Price stressed that research broadens "the level of choice" and gives the characters "better wings to fly". He sees that research is crucial when creating characters – a notion he shares with Simon. Exemplifying with a butcher character, Price describes how the writer, who skips research, will create cliché persons and introduce his butcher chopping up meat. Price says that he needs to understand his main character's inner conflicts on a personal level. Nyborg's ambition is to be a good wife and a good mother and a good minister. When diving into her inner dilemma, Price uses his own struggle to find the right life-work balance. He compares this process to method acting, calling it *method writing*. (Price, 2021).

I'll always say that the most important choices, they have to be choices that are true life dilemmas. And you need to write something that is true. It does not have to be true in a kind of reductionistic view on the word 'truth', but it needs to be emotionally true for the character. (Price, 2021)

Authenticity matters to both Simon and Price. Simon had studied the crime arenas of *The Wire* for years. Hammerich describes Price's intense research process while developing *Borgen's* format: "Adam plunges into research and speaks with civil servants, politicians, spin-doctors and journalists. He wants to get a good sense of the current Danish political landscape". (Hammerich, 2015, s. 41). Price remembers how the research continued during the whole production. "Every single episode of *Borgen* was read through by, if not politicians, by political commentators at the news departments of DR. And we had so many research people around the show, at all times" (Price, 2021).

As discussed earlier, the *Borgen* showrunner model relied on the creator and the main producer sharing the vision and running the show together. Hammerich mentions the *writer/producer duo* as a successful Danish collaboration model. (Hammerich, 2015, s. 25). As a producer she decides on the budget and to ensure that it best serves the series, she needs to be close to "the writer's vision":

A producer's job is to approve everything from the manuscript and casting of actors to the building of set, choice of location, episode editing, post-production sound work and use of computer effects. (-). There is no manual, which is why it is important for the producer to be intimately connected to the writer's vision. It is crucial that the two functions serve the same goal. (Hammerich, 2015, s. 26).

Main creative players need a mutual goal but also the right chemistry, as Redvall points out: "In terms of collaboration, all writers and producers continuously stress the importance of having the right 'chemistry' for the process." (Redvall, 2013, s. 189). Hammerich and Price had tested their collaboration skills long before *Borgen*. In the DR series *Taxa*, Hammerich worked as a line producer when Price was a staff writer. Later they worked together on multiple productions for TV2, the biggest competitor to DR. In 2005 Hammerich succeeded Price as TV2 Head of Drama, when he returned to writing.

When DR Head of Drama Ingolf Gabold headhunted Hammerich to produce *Borgen*, she knew that the series on the (not very popular) subject of Danish coalition politics

was expected to reach “at least one million viewers, which is equivalent of about a sixth of the population” (Hammerich, 2015, s. 24). She could not refuse the challenge:

I accept his offer and a significant reduction in pay compared to TV2. I am unable to turn down the opportunity to produce an 8 p.m. Sunday-night series with Adam as a head writer. Adam and I have reached a place in our lives where we can – and need to – use everything we have learned professionally and privately. (Hammerich, 2015, s 22)

An early task was to find good writers who could share and develop the vision and appreciate the relevance of the theme. The young writers Jeppe Gjervig Gram and Tobias Lindholm had been hired as episode writers for the DR series *Sommer / The Summers* (2008-2009) two days after they finished film school. Hammerich knew that both were interested in politics. The chemistry between them and Price worked, and thus they became *co-writers* of the first two seasons of *Borgen*. (Hammerich, 2015, s. 37 - 38). Gram and Lindholm took part in developing the general series concept and wrote individual episodes. When reading Redvall’s reflections on the *Borgen* writers’ room, I find her observations on shared ownership especially important.

In the *Borgen* room there is a sense of having complementary skills with Price constantly driving the process forward and the other writers questioning the many ideas before they settle on a decision, which all writers are in favour of. The three writers all have a positive reception of the process, and they all feel a strong sense of ownership. (Redvall, 2013, s. 155)

Simon gathered experienced talents outside the industry, while Price wrote with newcomers who just had finished the formal education that he did not have himself. Both writers’ rooms were very male. As a non-writer in *Borgen*’s development team, Hammerich’s represented the “ordinary viewer” and also the “career woman” with children. (Hammerich, 2015, s. 78). Her female perspective was especially important during the first two seasons. Even though *Borgen*’s main character is female, the show’s first female writers only arrived for season three. When Tobias Lindblom left to focus on his films, Maja Jul Larsen, Märtha Louise Käehne, and Jannik Tai Mosholt joined Price and Gram in the writers’ room (Hammerich, 2015, s. 296).

## 6.2 A Double Vision Story on Coalition Politics

DR Drama's strategy to raise the drama quality started in the late 1980s. The broadcaster's drama department sought inspiration for new working methods in the USA. DR installed, what Price calls "a diminished version of the American system" (Price, 2021). During Ingolf Gabold's time as Head of Drama (1999-2012) 15 dogmas were implemented as internal working principles. One major dogma was that the broadcaster should respect the creator's *one vision*. DR leaders should be "not in control – but in charge" and "consensus decisions" should not be encouraged. Another dogma stated the public service company's demand for a series' *double vision*. (Redvall, 2013, s. 69).

When retiring from DR at 70 years, Gabold summed up the *double vision*: "DR's status as a public service institution requires that the drama series in addition to the 'good' story must contain an overarching plot or theme with ethical or social connotations". (Dam, 2012). Hammerich quotes almost the same sentence in her book. She remembers how Gabold referred to the public service license to motivate the vision.

Viewers must learn something about themselves or the societies in which they live. Fiction needs to be more than a mindless waste of time and DR drama has an obligation to both entertain and be informative. A thrilling series about Danish democracy fits that definition perfectly. (Hammerich, 2015, s. 29)

When pitching *Borgen* to DR, Price had already proven he could create "good stories" and his political theme suited DR's *double vision* thinking. The series was, however, not an easy pitch at DR. It had to be greenlit at the top director level. The final, greenlit version of the series' premise is clear and catchy: "Is it possible to maintain power and stay true to yourself" (Hammerich, 2015, s. 57). I find the earlier, less catchy premise politically more interesting: "Is it possible to stay true to one's ideological 'purity' and political and personal morality – and maintain power at the same time?". In the end, a public service broadcaster's financing is connected to those in power and DR wanted to stay as politically neutral as possible. Once greenlit, it was decided that the series could not use any existing political party names. The team invented fictional parties instead, which according to Camilla Hammerich, added to the creative freedom. She stresses that "*Borgen* is not a *roman à clef*". (Hammerich 2015, s. 43). Despite all things considered in advance, a lot of political debates were to follow the series.

Even though DR Drama was beginning to be an internationally successful series producer, DR did not believe that a series on Danish coalition politics would travel. This meant that the *Borgen* team's only focus was on the domestic audience. According to Price this strengthened the vision:

The drama boss at that time, Head of Drama Ingolf Gabold, a great guy, actually said; 'You have to know this thing that *Borgen* will probably air in Sweden and Norway out of brotherly love and that will be it. Because who would ever want to see a Danish show about coalition politics?' (-) And that was very important for the vision because we were not at all focused on getting a world audience in any way. We were basically just, we were told, nobody wants to see this, guys, so just try to make it happen as well as you possibly can for your vision of a local Danish show. (Price, 2021)

At the international series events I've visited, one mantra seems to be that the most local is the most global. Today the truly domestic, political series from a country of less than 6 million people has travelled to more than 80 countries (Duff, 2015).

### 6.3 The Personal Voice Goes Beyond Writing

Adam Price worked with his showrunner partner Camilla Hammerich, to create a trustful and sharing atmosphere for collaborative creating. Redvall recognized a mood of unity in the writers' room: "There has been a sense of a shared mission statement from the outset as well as a musketeer oath about the collaboration. (-) The writers and the producer of *Borgen* describe the series as being grounded in Price's vision, but they all feel as cherished co-creators" (Redvall, 2013, s.156-157). Price defines the two-folded creator dilemma of listening and being in charge:

I think it is super important that you keep an open mind, but still have a very clear vision of where you want to go. And these two elements need to be beside each other at all times. (-) But if you are at the final stages, if you are too democratic, then you will lose the grip of the show. And if you are a dictator then you'll lose your friends and your colleagues. And, basically you will also lose sight of what is important because power will maybe be more important to you, maybe more important than the story. (Price, 2019)

The way Price describes keeping this balance, mirrors on a meta level *Borgen's* theme of power. When discussing team unity, Hammerich stresses the importance of the first crew meeting. It was vital that everyone in the 37-person crew introduced themselves to the others. (Hammerich, 2015, s. 175). Together with the series conceptual director

Søren Kragh-Jacobsen, Price and Hammerich formed a smaller team that chose the conceptual functions (photographer, production designer, editor and composer). Kragh-Jacobsen was in charge of directing and casting the first episodes, which turned out to be a lengthy process. (Hammerich, 2015, s. 193). Sidse Babett Knudsen was mostly known as a film comedian, when casting director Christian Grønwall, invited her to a casting session for *Borgen's* main character. Hammerich describes how, after the casting situation, she, Price, Kragh-Jacobsen and Gabold agreed that Grønwall's surprising suggestion was exactly the right choice (Hammerich, 2015, s. 105-106). Simon refers to a similar situation, when casting *The Wire's* lead: "Only the role of McNulty gave us fits". When Simon and his core team, including executive producer Robert F. Colesberry and pilot director Clark Johnson, saw Dominic West's unique and partly comic casting tape, they unanimously agreed on hiring him (Alvarez & Simon, 2009, s. 21).

## 7 WORKING FOR PRIVATE VS PUBLIC COMMISSIONERS

### 7.1 *The Wire* / HBO in the Fast-changing Series Landscape

Today's digital technology enables self-financed films, some of which occasionally are seen in cinemas, but I have not yet seen professionally distributed self-financed drama series. To make series happen, they need to be commissioned by a network, broadcaster, streaming service or any other industry platform. In this chapter I look at how HBO and DR enabled *The Wire* and *Borgen* and how the global commissioning landscape has changed since.

When *The Wire* was commissioned by the subscription service HBO (Home Box Office), the cable company had a tradition of producing uncensored and commercial-free movies. In the 1990s HBO's involvement in producing quality drama series increased. (Gregersen, 2021). This is when *The Wire* and *Sopranos*, both defined as *auteur series* by Nochimson, were commissioned. According to *Sopranos* creator David Chase, his idea was turned down by "all other networks" before HBO enabled him to fulfil his writer's vision (Milner, 2020). Simon compares HBO to the Medici family, saying that

the company's big shows, like *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019) enable series with lower rating expectations (Simon, 2020). Simon draws parallels to public service thinking:

I was like the public broadcasting part of HBO. They were like: 'He doesn't bring us views and he doesn't bring us prizes but they argue about him in the New York Times, so let's keep him on. He is part of our brand.' I've rode that horse as hard I could for 20 years now. It's been quite a ride. And I am very grateful because I'm existing in an industry that usually doesn't value that.  
(Simon, 2020)

The International Movie Database lists the awards of *The Wire*: "Nominated for 2 Primetime Emmys. Another 16 wins & 52 nominations" and of *Treme*: "Won 1 Primetime Emmy. Another 5 wins & 47 nominations" (Imdb, 2021). Simon's experience of not bringing enough prizes to HBO, indicates how competitive the US market is.

*The Wire* and *Treme* are multi-seasonal series with limited narratives. Their character and story arcs are written to reach a certain point during a certain number of episodes. Simon dislikes the industry's habit of stretching series due to high ratings. He says: "I don't need to do the same dance twice", when explaining how he protects a series vision proactively by writing the last scene first (Simon, 2020). But not even a "public service branch" is fully protected from viewing expectations. With a peak audience of 4 million viewers *The Wire* was not considered a big audience success at its time (Jones, 2018). Due to dropping ratings, HBO shortened the last season of *The Wire* from 12 to 10 episodes. When *Treme*'s ratings dropped, HBO wanted to cancel the fourth and last season. Imagine an artist who is forced to leave one fourth of a canvas unpainted or a novelist who has to fill the last quarter of a book with empty pages. Simon understood HBO's worry but could not accept the decision as the narrative arcs needed to be finished:

And HBO was like 'We love you, but we are really dying here on Sunday night'. So, it was a negotiation. You've got to let me finish. You've got to let me turn these characters. I've got to have the last piece where we speak at what's at stake and the characters finish their arcs.  
(Simon, 2020)

After negotiations Simon managed to get four of *Treme*'s ten planned episodes greenlit. Simon thanks HBO for listening and describes their attitude as unique. He sees that the subscription system allowed HBO to reconsider: "they did not have to sell my stuff to advertisers". In the end, he got five final episodes through re-budgeting and paying part of the costs himself. (Simon, 2020).

In 2010 HBO evolved from an American subscription cable channel to an international streaming service. HBO titles had been created without considering commercial breaks in their dramaturgy, which suited the new VOD market well. Today streaming services have a wide international reach, which enables a variety of series. A title that earlier would have been too niche might today collect a wide enough total audience globally. Broadcasters and streaming services alike need large catalogues (series libraries) available online as the competition between all players get tougher. In June 2018 the AT&T conglomerate bought Warner Media (HBO included). Less than 2 years later, in May 2021, AT&T merged with media company Discovery, thus forming a global media giant (Vincent, 2021). Writer brands still matter. In March 2021, HBO announced Simon's new limited Baltimore series *We Own This City*, based on journalist Justin Fenton's book on police corruption (Porter, 2021).

## **7.2 *Borgen* / DR in the Fast-changing Series Landscape**

The first internationally successful Danish drama series were produced "inhouse" by DR, following the drama department's strategy of combining domestic versions of US development methods with its own pubcaster principles. DR dogmas were set to protect the writer's *one vision* and to ensure the broadcaster's *double vision* demand. When comparing US and Danish development systems, Redvall describes the DR writer rooms as "thought communities" with "surprisingly little sense of competition" (Redvall, 2013, s. 188). Small writers' rooms (with 3-4 writers) and restricted working hours added to the good result (Redvall, 2013, s. 149). Price sees that the Danish writing system is less hierarchic than the US one: "It's very democratic and basically you have a round table discussion of a storyline and it should always be the best argument that wins the day" (Price, 2021).

As earlier discussed, *Borgen* was expected to reach a rating of at least one million in a country with 5,5 million inhabitants. The first season reached 1,48 million domestic viewers in average per episode (Hammerich, 2013, s. 267). Due to the good ratings, a third ten-episode season was commissioned. The Danish 30-episode format has been a trademark of other successful DR inhouse series such as *The Killing* (2007-2012), *The*

*Legacy* (2014-2017) and *Follow the Money* (2016-2019); while the famous Swedish-Danish co-production *The Bridge* (2011-2018) was stretched to four seasons. When comparing the American and European systems, Alex Berger sees a connection between the British and Scandinavian pubcasters' high audience shares and drama quality.

The striking fact is that the European countries whose series have had the most impact in the global market in the last decade - the UK and the Scandinavian countries - have public service channels which are both powerful and editorial *leaders* in their respective markets.  
(Berger, 2019, s. 14)

Redvall argues that the DR public service system, should not be underestimated. She sees that even though ratings matter more than in earlier years, the strong obligation to produce “a variety of stories in national languages” has stayed. (Redvall, 2013, s. 39). I have earlier quoted Price on DR's over-pessimistic prediction that *Borgen* would only travel to Scandinavia “out of brotherly love”. This trust in the other Nordic pubcasters was based on the broadcasters' long co-producing tradition under the *Nordvision* partnership, founded in 1959 (Nordvision, 2021). Redvall sees that *Borgen* opened a new door: “Only crime series have enjoyed substantial interest from non-Nordic viewers until the political and personal dramas of *Borgen* found wider international audiences” (Redvall, 2013, s. 53). Hammerich and Price, teamed up again for the 20-episode DR series on a priest family, *Ride Upon the Storm* (2017). The new series theme on religion/belief took the market by surprise, as *Borgen's* political theme had done earlier. The series was widely exported, and the role of the protagonist priest brought an Emmy to actor Lars Mikkelsen. Price's choice of personal and uncommercial themes that matter to him add, in my view, to his authorship.

Today global VOD companies have an especially high penetration in the Nordic region. According to the European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO) 85% of the Danish households had access to streaming services in 2019. EAO also notes that Nordic pubcasters have strengthened their Nordvision collaboration under the umbrella *Nordic12*, co-producing twelve drama series yearly (Jiménez Pumares, 2019). The lively market means tougher audience competition for broadcasters and more work opportunities for writers. In 2014 Price co-founded the talent-based production company *Sam Productions* together with his former *Taxa* colleague Søren Sveistrup, former Zentropa producer Meta Louise Foldager Sørensen and the French partner StudioCanal. The homepage

of *Sam Productions* lists Price's works, among them the Norwegian based Netflix fantasy series *Ragnarok* (2020-) "available on Netflix in over 190 countries" (Sam Productions. 2021). In 2021 Price is developing the fourth season of *Borgen* as a co-production between Sam Productions, Netflix and DR.

## 8 AUTEUR SERIES WRITING: PROCESSES AND CRITERIA

### 8.1 Two Processes: Similarities and Differences

When comparing the processes of the US drama series *The Wire* and the Danish series *Borgen*, my focus is on aspects that stick out as distinctive from any ordinary series development process. As stated in earlier chapters, creators Simon and Price joined the drama series industry from the outside with fresh eyes, as did writer-directors Lynch and von Trier when they entered the TV industry as visionary filmmakers.

By trying out their auteur visions in the series format, Lynch and von Trier brought new visual and audio expressions to the industry. Lynch's use of close-ups of objects as part of the narration and his stylish mix of realistic and dream worlds were among the first steps to the visually ambitious storytelling of today's high-end series, while von Trier brought playful thinking with his natural lighting, fearless camera use and jump cut editing. Both auteurs introduced new sorts of series universes to an industry dominated by formulaic mainstream storytelling. The uniqueness of Lynch and von Trier who both play around with supernatural levels in their stories, might be easier to spot than that of Simon and Price who are more at home in realistic fictional universes.

How is my society run? This is a question that Simon deals with in the USA and Price in Denmark. As writers they share a deep engagement in urgent political themes. A thorough research is a trademark of *The Wire* and it was crucial for the development of *Borgen*. Both creators learnt scriptwriting as staff writers in writers' rooms managed by others, which might add to their humble attitudes when leading collaborative processes. Price has been thanked for giving co-workers ownership and Simon's production company has been called a "family" by co-workers. Both creators seem to be able to listen,

to lead an to give others ownership. When Adam delivers his last creator's version of a script to the writers' room, he recalls his own staff writer experiences: "Aaah, they didn't keep my great line, idiots, and I really did love that line so much" (Price, 2021). Neither Price nor Simon summoned co-writers with long series expertise to their rooms. Simon co-wrote *The Wire* with novelists and other life-experienced talents from his own generation and Price co-wrote *Borgen* with upcoming talents, newly educated in script-writing.

Redvall has commented on the positive mood in the *Borgen* writers' room, exemplifying with how Price agreed to "teach upcoming head writer Jeppe Gjervig Gram as much about the head writer job as possible" (Redvall, 2013, s. 188). Today Price's earlier co-writer Gram is the celebrated creator of *Follow the Money* and Tobias Lindholm of several films, among them recent Oscar-winner *Another Round* (2020). Maja Jul Larsen, who replaced Lindholm, is the awarded creator of the *Cry Wolf* series (2020). Simon's fellow writers tend to work with him over and over again, which I see as a sign of trust. A fresh example of this is Simon's upcoming Baltimore series, which is his fourth collaboration with co-writer George Pelecanos (Porter, 2021).

Professional experiences outside the drama series industry seem to have benefited both creators' writing processes. Simon's exceptionally strong Baltimore knowledge stems from his time as a crime journalist and author of factual books. Having done amounts of research on structural poverty and on the lack of social justice for his prose, I can imagine how absurd it would have been to create a lead character who "solves" the problems. He could naturally not turn detective McNulty into the central character. Instead, he invented collage dramaturgy. Price's storytelling is more traditional than Simon's. *Borgen* focuses on one main character and her inner conflicts. Price's combination of law studies, department heading and writing theatre characters must have benefited the creation of *Borgen's* complex and likeable characters in power. At a time when TV fiction mostly made fun of politicians, outside of *The West Wing* (1999-2006), Price wanted to investigate the inner world of a more humane politician. Price has a special skill in balancing serious layers with humour, light and warmth. I expect that his background as a comedy writer plays in here.

Price learnt where to put the money in a script when heading a drama department. Simon trained his showrunner skills as a staff writer. Apart from writer's duties, executive producer Tom Fontana gave Simon casting, production planning, crew management, editing and other production tasks, for a good reason: "You become a producer to protect your writing" (Alvarez & Simon, 2009, s. 16). Price protected his view by forming a showrunner duo with producer Camilla Hammerich, with whom he shared a long working history. *The Wire* producer Nina K. Noble and Simon are long-time business associates. It is not unusual for auteur creators to form long-running working relationships with co-workers that they collaborate well with. Together with their producers, both creators inspired creatives and production teams to strengthen the series vision through their various expert skills.

Both creators seemed to have good, long-term relationships with their commissioners. DR trusted Price to develop a series on the challenging subject "politics" for a slot with high rating demands. Getting *Borgen* greenlit took time, but once done, the broadcaster was clear about respecting the writer's vision. Hammerich sees that DR's model of self-financing up to 90% of the production, enabled a smooth and effective process: "At DR, the head writer, the producer and the head of drama make all the important decisions" (Hammerich, 2015, s. 24). Simon had to push HBO to greenlight *The Wire*, and the way he did it shows that he had a direct line to the HBO top management. In 2001 he sent a letter to HBO's then CEO Chris Albrecht and then President Carolyn Strauss to convince them that *The Wire* would not be any ordinary "network cop show", but a smart series for HBO's brave brand.

Police work is at time marginal and incompetent. Criminals are neither stupid nor cartoonish, and neither are they all sociopathic. And the idea – as yet unspoken on American TV - that no one in authority has any reason to care what happens in an American ghetto as long as it stays in the ghetto, is brought into the open. (-) This would be a remarkable journey and a brave one for HBO. (Alvarez & Simon, 2009, s.35-36)

When the drama series were running, one part of the commissioner dialogue dealt with viewing numbers. Good ratings gave *Borgen* its third season, while low ratings cut *The Wire*'s last season short. Now Simon is writing a mini-series for HBO. I imagine that the short, limited format suits Simon, who prefers to write his last scene first. Mirrored against Simon's thoughts on how market demands should not extend series, one might

question why the fourth season of *Borgen* now is produced after such a long break. Price has a clear motivation for the return. He is worried about the future of our modern democracies, a theme that also Simon constantly raises:

The core elements of our society and our political system are under attack from so many different angles, and I think more and more we need to discuss democracy, and we need to make the political discussions in our societies free and inclusive of as many people as possible and therefore I really think that if there is a time for political drama it is now, more than ever. (Price, 2021)

*Borgen IV* has quite different production circumstances than the series' first seasons. It is not a DR inhouse series but a co-production between DR, Netflix and Sam Productions. Price tries to forget that the international expectations are present from start: "I try to whip myself into not being too conscious of it." When he says that the premise will be the same: "Can you remain in power and still remain true to yourself?", it is also a reminder that successful writers must stay true to their inner voices despite successes.

## 8.2 Auteur Series Criteria

When defining auteur series writers, I looked for general industry definitions without finding any, though the concept is not totally new. Eleven years ago, film journalist Tim Molloy noted that HBO and ABC were commissioning "auteur TV". Molloy describes auteur series as products with a potential to "score big" thanks to the new freedom creators are given (Molloy, 2010). Redvall does not define auteur series as a concept distinctive from other quality drama series. Martha Nochimson's definitions are content-based and connect auteur series to modernist culture. She speaks of auteur series as "art", without narrowing them down to the "arthouse" genre. Many of my sources mention Hitchcock, who is an auteur, but not an arthouse director. Kent Jones, director of the *Hitchcock/Truffaut* (2015) documentary, sees that if Hitchcock had waved "the flag of artistry" in front of the studio heads his career "would have been over in milliseconds" (Dinsmore, 2015). Nochimson discusses the authorship of Lynch in a way that pictures Hitchcock as an auteur, but a lesser one than Franz Kafka:

I once claimed the mantel of Alfred Hitchcock to Lynch. *Twin Peaks* (2017) suggests that I underestimated him. Perhaps it is the mantel of James Joyce, William Faulkner and, even more to the point, Franz Kafka that now belongs to Lynch for his transformation of American television into a medium that can provide both the humanizing influence on modern art and its mind-expanding visions. (Nochimson, 2019, s. 274)

Almost sixty years before Nochimson's comparison Truffaut compared Hitchcock to Kafka as well as to the non-modernist writers Poe and Dostoevsky, which leaves us Kafka as a common denominator. I have studied the original auteur concept, to shed light on auteur series writers of today. In my view, the three auteur criteria that Andrew Sarris listed in 1962, could be adapted to a series context: *technical competence*, *distinguishable personality* and *inner meaning*. Sarris' short definition of the first one is: "Technique is simply the ability to put together the film with some clarity and coherence" (Sarris, 1962, s. 562-563). Adapted to a series writing process, this could mean that the creator must be able to construct a narrative with a clear multiple-episode structure. This Simon and Price have done more than once. Both have also shown their personal voices in multiple series. Sarris third, and in my view most interesting, criteria is the capability to create *inner meaning*, which according to Sarris, stems from the tension between the auteur's personality and the auteur's material. I have observed Sarris' and Price's in panels and in masterclasses. Both are very passionate speakers, but in different ways. Simon's constant analysis of society brings to mind his complex collage narrative, while Price's interest in people shows in his character-driven series. Thus, I see that the personalities of Simon and Price are strongly reflected in their series.

Nochimson's auteur criteria is a bit more complicated to implement as it is based on a content analysis. I define *Borgen* as an auteur series, but Nochimson might not. When defining *Borgen*'s early goal, Hammerich seems to describe a world that is too controllable for Nochimson's definitions: "Adam wants to make politics more sexy and compelling for ordinary viewers. The series will be a tribute to democracy." (Hammerich, 2015, s. 29). When this kind of trust in the Danish society is compared to Simon's distrust in the US system, the difference in attitude is apparent, but one should remember that they are also discussing two rather different types of Western societies.

Nochimson sees that *Twin Peaks* changed the American TV landscape in 1990, by putting an end to the "total domination" of formulaic narratives. (Nochimson, 2019, s. 8), thus paving way for *The Wire* and other auteur series, but she seems sceptic about the future of auteur television: "Television art is not the goal of most of those who control mass media. Nor is art the preoccupation of the vast percentage of the mass audience"

(Nochimson, 2019, s. 273). Nochimson does not discuss how the current changes in the global media landscape might affect the financing and thus the future of auteur series. In our “golden era of drama series” I am a bit more optimistic than Nochimson. On the other hand, my definition of an auteur is not as strict as hers. In my view *auteur series* are personal high-end drama series that have something essential to tell us about the world. The global market seems to have an increasing demand for such quality series, to the extent that Price warns upcoming writers of trying to please international audiences:

Now when we are living in the age of streaming services and Netflix will come and buy a show and it will be out in 192 countries from the opening day you contend, as a young writer, you contend to focus too much on: ‘Oh my God, will this say anything to people in France, will this say anything to people in South Korea? Maybe not North Korea, but South Korea’. You will be focused on so many places in this world that you might not have visited, and you will lose sight of your vision, because you’ll be like ‘Oh no, I have to broaden the scope, at all times I have to broaden my vision’, and then you end up actually watering the soup that you intended to make. (Price, 2021)

## 9 CONCLUSION: AUTEUR SERIES 2030?

When choosing my research question, I narrowed it down to something concrete. I wanted to understand what was distinctive in the working processes behind the first seasons of Adam Price’s *Borgen* and David Simon’s *The Wire*, two series that I define as auteur series. As the term “auteur” has evoked negative reactions since Truffaut coined it in 1954, I have demonstrated its many uses now that it enters the series industry. Through comparing the drama series by David Lynch and Lars von Trier, I saw how film auteurs can renew the series industry. *Twin Peaks* and *The Kingdom* challenged narrative traditions and introduced a new quality thinking. Without succeeding I tried to discover a method or criteria to define *auteur series writing*. The only series-based definition system I found, was that of Martha Nochimson’s. I appreciate that it puts the evaluation bar high, but also consider it a bit too restrictive in its focus on modernism.

Maybe new terms to describe personal quality series will be created, beside the debated *auteur* term and the Danish *one vision* term. Regardless of definitions, my main aim has been to understand how the writers Adam Price and David Simon managed to create works that today are part of the drama series history. Even though *The Wire* was commissioned by the big US subscription service HBO and *Borgen* by the small Danish

pubcaster DR the first seasons’ processes showed surprisingly many similarities. My key findings on the most distinctive features that Simon and Price shared and the benefits that followed, are listed below:

DISTINCTIVE SHARED FEATURES	BENEFITS
A professional life outside the series industry	Special knowledge that supports the writing
Learning writing / showrunning by doing. No formal film education.	Practical understanding of industry tasks
Personal engagement in the series theme	Motivates research and inspires writing
Thorough, in-depth research	Strengthens storytelling and character creation and improves the overall authenticity
A capability to inspire a team to share the vision and to feel ownership for it	Enables that all involved work for the same goal
Long-lasting relationships with core co-workers	Makes team building and communication easier
A trustful and direct dialogue with commissioners	Ensures mutual goals, minimizes conflicts

Through this study I have gained a better understanding of *auteur writing* and also noted the commissioner’s significance in the process. The DR dogmas protected Price’s *one vision* and required him to ensure a *double vision*, that is to create a “good” story with “ethical and social connotations”. HBO would not commission any ordinary “cop show”. Only after Simon managed to convince the company’s CEO that *The Wire* would dig deep into power structures in new ways, the show was greenlit, after which he only received “gentle” notes. Even when *The Wire* was shortened due to ratings Simon understood HBO’s point of view. The attitude of HBO, that for Simon represented public service thinking, was ambitious and supportive. Both creators seem to have enjoyed a highly professional and trust building commissioner support.

The USA of the *The Wire* is very different from the Denmark of *Borgen*. Price’s story is a more traditional character-driven story. To be able to express the complexity of Baltimore’s problems Simon invented his own collage dramaturgy. He refused to name one central character, while Price built his character driven story around the quest of a female prime minister, the inner dilemma of whom he could identify with. Simon’s analyses of the American society’s structural classism and racism seem dark, while Price’s take on the Danish democracy is rather hopeful. When now planning season four of

*Borgen*, Price sounds a bit more pessimistic. An interpretation could be that the negative power structures that *The Wire* analyses, are reaching our Nordic welfare societies.

In his industry report for the French cinema centre, producer Alex Berger concludes: “Make no mistake, this demand for quality is here to stay” (Berger, 2019, s. 15). I agree. At today’s lively markets international and domestic players share a need for personal writer voices. New global co-production models are created to keep the quality high. Bridges are built between private and public players and between Europe and the USA. Nordic public services co-produce internationally. Former cable service HBO and DVD distributor Netflix offer global online services. The fourth season of *The Kingdom* is co-produced by von Trier’s company Zentropa, the Nordic streaming service Viaplay and Danish pubcaster DR, while Price’s company Sam Productions, Netflix and DR co-produce *Borgen IV*. The HBO *Simon* now writes for is owned by a global media giant.

In the harsh competition international players need to keep their brands strong, and the value of a series brand might thus overrule rating expectations. Would *The Wire* and *Treme* have been cut short today when quality series might find enough devoted viewers on a global scale? Streaming services are criticized for not publishing their ratings. On the other hand, keeping them classified gives freedom to define success by other parameters than numbers. In a way, the VOD players have successfully adapted the former ways of traditional broadcasters. They work closely with the talents developing stories they finance and distribute themselves, like DR did with *Borgen*. And maybe the creative dialogue with the writer will not start by defining target groups.

From my perspective, for someone entering the industry today, the national and international options are numerous, but many commissioning doors look similar. A question for the future is: To what extent will the global competition to create a buzz and to attract viewers result in an increase in genuinely original auteur series? Will international co-financing models enable such supportive commissioner processes that helped Simon and Price create the today classic series *The Wire* and *Borgen*? This question is important to keep studying. As are the development and production processes behind unique drama series - regardless, if one wants to call them *auteur* series, *one vision* works or something else.

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## **Films and Series**

*Another Round*. 2020. (Film) Director: Thomas Winterberg. Denmark: Zentropa.

*Anna Pihl*. 2006-2008 (Series) Creator: Adam Price. Denmark: Cosmo Films & TV2.

*Bedraget / Follow the Money*. 2016-2019. (Series). Creator: Jeppe Gjervig Gram. Denmark. DR.

*Borgen I-III*. 2010-2013. (Series) Creator: Adam Price. Denmark: DR Drama.

*Borgen IV*. In production. (Series) Creator: Adam Price. Denmark: Sam Productions. Netflix. DR Drama.

*Cry Wolf/Ulven kommer*. 2020-. (Series) Creator: Maja Jul Larsen. Denmark: DR Drama.

*Game of Thrones*. 2011-2019. (Series) Main Writers: David Benioff & D.B. Weiss. USA: HBO.

*Hitchcock/Truffaut*. 2015. (Documentary) Writer-Director: Kent Jones. France & USA: Artline Films & Cohen Media Group.

*Homicide: Life on the Street*. 1993-1999. (Series). Creator: Paul Attanasio. Main Writers / Executive Producer: Tom Fontana. USA: Baltimore Pictures & NBC.

*Taxi/Taxa*. 1997-1999 (Series) Main Writer: Stig Thorsboe. Denmark. DR Drama.

*The Bridge/Bron/Broen*. 2011-2018. (Series) Main Writers: Hans Rosenfeldt & Camilla Ahlgren. Sweden/Denmark: Filmlance, Nimbus Film, SVT & DR.

*The Bureau/Le Bureau des Légendes*. 2015-. (Series) Creator: Eric Rochant. France: Federation Entertainment & The Oligarchs Productions.

*The Corner*. 2000. (Series) Main Writers: David Simon & Ed Burns. USA: Blown Deadline Productions. HBO.

*The Killing/Forbrydelsen*. 2007-2012. (Series) Creator: Søren Sveistrup. Denmark. DR Drama.

*The Kingdom/Riget*. 1994-1997. (Series) Creator: Lars von Trier. Denmark. DR Drama.

*The Kingdom Exodus/Riget Exodus*. In production. (Series) Creator: Lars von Trier. Denmark. Zentropa, DR Drama & NENT.

*The Legacy/Arvingerne*. 2014-2017. (Series) Creator: Maja Ilse. Denmark. DR.

*The West Wing*. 1999-2006. (Series) Creator: Aaron Sorkin. USA: John Wells Productions, NBC.

*The Wire*. 2002-2008. (Series) Creator: David Simon. USA: Blown Deadline Productions & HBO Entertainment.

*Top of the Lake*. 2013-2017. Series. Creator: Jane Campion. Australia: See-Saw Films.

*Treme*. 2010 - 2013. (Series) Creator: David Simon, creator. USA: Blown Deadline Productions & HBO.

*Twin Peaks I-II*. 1990-1991. (Series) Creator: David Lynch. USA: ABC.

*Twin Peaks III*. 2017. (Series) Creator: David Lynch. USA: Showtime.

*Twin Peaks – Fire Walk With Me*. 1992. (Film) Creator: David Lynch. France: CIBY-Pictures.

## Appendix: Summary in Swedish

*The Wire* och *Borgen* som auteur-serier – hur danska Adam Price och amerikanska David Simon skapade tv-dramer som blev klassiker

Min första inspiration till detta examensarbete fick jag på den franska seriedramafestivalen Série Series där jag jobbade som volontär år 2019. Ett återkommande tema i olika sessioner var bristen på unika röster inom seriedramaindustrin. Samma tema har jag sedan mött under andra internationella evenemang jag jobbat för (Helsinki Script, Copenhagen TV Festival). Min research har visat att det behövs mer utbildning i serieskrivande och mer forskning om seriers arbetsprocesser. När jag i vår fick finansiering för att skriva min första egna professionella dramaserie, blev jag ytterligare motiverad att förstå mer om kvalitetsseriers utvecklingsprocesser.

Efter att internationella strömningstjänster som Netflix, HBO och Amazon har erövrat film- och speciellt seriemarknader i Europa, har konkurrensen om både publiken och talangen ökat också i Norden. Först köpte de amerikanska bolagen färdiga filmer och serier till dina SVOD-bibliotek (subscription video on demand). Idag samarbetar de direkt med nationella manusförfattare och produktionsbolag. I en tid när det produceras mer dramaserier än någonsin, lyckas bara de mest personliga kvalitetsserierna höja sig ovanför marknadssorlet. Jag undersöker hur en bransch där varje produkt är ett resultat av en kollektiv process, kan odla unika berättarröster. Vad möjliggör så kallade auteur-serier?

Min undersökning fokuserar på processerna bakom de första säsongerna i David Simons dramaserie *The Wire* (2002) som gjordes för det amerikanska privata bolaget HBO och Adam Prices *Borgen* (2010) som producerades av Danmarks public service-bolag DR. Den amerikanska serien är en djupdykning i de politiskt-sociala problemen i staden Baltimore. Den danska serien undersöker hur en kvinnlig premiärminister balanserar det politiska och det privata under premissen: ”Är det möjligt att hållas vid makten och för-

bli sann mot sig själv?”. Min konkreta forskningsfråga är: **Vilka gemensamma drag går att finna i de två seriernas arbetsprocesser?** Vad förenande författarna och deras arbete i två länder som är så olika i storlek och som har så olika slags audiovisuella produktionskulturer? Den amerikanska branschen är privat styrd och den danska delvis finansierad med publika medel. Jag söker svar genom en litteraturgenomgång enligt hur Arlene Fink beskriver metoden.

Bland mina källor finns litterära verk, internet-artiklar och digitala diskussioner med Simon och Price. Mina litterära huvudkällor, Martha Nochimsons *Television Rewired: The Rise of the Auteur Series* (2019) och Eva Novrup Redvalls *Writing and Producing Television Drama in Denmark – From the Kingdom to the Killing* (2013) ger amerikanska och danska branschperspektiv. Bägge författare nämner ordet *auteur* i samband med kvalitetsserier. Som en blivande manusförfattare-regissör, intresserar jag mig speciellt för serieskaparnas egna erfarenheter. Jag beaktar därför också Simons och Prices reflektioner i deras mästarclasser samt i böcker skrivna av deras medarbetare.

Serierna *The Wire* och *Borgen* kan anses vara tidiga auteur-verk i dramaseriens så kallade ”guldålder”. I takt med en hårdare konkurrens har också behovet av kvalitetsserier i flera säsonger ökat. Författarrum (writers’ room) har importerats från USA till Europa och med dem nya arbetstitlar som *creator* och *showrunner*, vilka jag definierar. Eftersom Simon och Price som huvudförfattare utvecklade sina manuskript på basen av egna idéer är de *creators* (skapare). Simon som också krediterades som *executive producer* (ansvarig producent) har jag definierat som *showrunner*, medan jag ser att Price bildade en *showrunner-duo* tillsammans med producent Camilla Hammerich. Denna uppfattning stöds av Redvall och också av Hammerich själv i hennes bok *The Borgen Experience* (2015).

Både Nochimson och Redvall tar upp en intressant auteur-aspekt som är speciell för just USA och Danmark. Nochimson ser att auteur-seriernas era inleddes i USA när David Lynch lanserade sin första säsong av *Twin Peaks* (1990). Redvall ser att Lars von Triers *Riket* (1994) byggde en bro mellan film- och TV-industrin i Danmark. I mitt arbete jämför jag dessa två tidiga auteur-serier och visar hur von Trier inspirerades av Lynch. Jag drar också slutsatser om vad de två auteur-regissörerna hämtade med sig till seriebran-

schen. Som en slags TV-industrins outsiders blandade de fritt gamla seriegenrer i sina manus. De två skrivande regissörernas seriemanus innehöll också starka visuella berättarelement. Blandad genre och visuella manus, återkommer i många kvalitetsserier som sprids internationellt idag.

Nochimson jämför uppkomsten av *auteur*-serier med hur modernismen förnyade andra konstarter och speciellt litteraturen. Hon ser att auteur-seriernas mångbottnade, fiktiva världar inte skall kunna gå att förklara. Världarna är inte konstruerade för att möjliggöra att protagonister eller antagonister når vissa mål som i de formbundna (formulaic) serier som dominerar marknaden och som Nochimson själv tidigare arbetat som manusförfattare för. Samma mönster återkommer också i sådana serier som enligt Nochimson har ”*post-Peak*” kvalitet utan att vara auteur-serier. Hennes auteur-seriers hjältar och anti-hjältar måste vara ”icke-perfekta” (non perfect), vilket betyder att de inte kan behärska de komplicerade universum de verkar i. Hon konstaterar kvaliteterna i till exempel Vincent Gilligans serie *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013), men säger att den inte är en auteur-serie eftersom huvudpersonen Walter White oftast suveränt behärskar seriens fiktiva universum.

Min danska källa Redvall beskriver hur public service-bolaget DR:s dramastrategi bidrog till att göra danska serier världsberömda. Under sent 1980-tal sökte DR inspiration från USA för att höja på sina seriers nivå. Man inrättade författarrum (writers' rooms) som med sina 3-4 författare var betydligt mindre än de amerikanska förebildernas. DR lanserade också egna arbetsprinciper eller dogmer som placerade manusförfattaren i fokus. Alla skulle jobba för samma vision och därmed stöda huvudförfattarens *one vision*. Endast manus med en dubbelvision (*double vision*) skulle finansieras med skattebetalarnas pengar. DR:s dubbelvision kombinerar en ”god” historia med ”etiska och samhällsreliga konnotationer”, vilket innebär att manuset skall säga någonting relevant om människan och vår värld.

För att synliggöra vad auteur-serier är, beaktar mitt arbete också den klassiska auteur-teorin. Inom filmen har teorin debatterats och kritiserats sedan den utvecklades i Frankrike på 1950-talet. En stor del av kritiken har handlat om att auteur-begreppet fokuserar för mycket på regissörens arbete i en teamprocess. Många har också dragit paralleller

mellan auteurfilm och arthouse film, vilket jag inte gör. För min analys av begreppet *auteur-serie*, har jag jämfört tidiga auteur-definitioner med dagens rön om auteur TV. François Truffaut och andra kritiker/regissörer kopplade till filmtidningen *Cahiers du Cinéma* utvecklade auteur-begreppet för att betona filmen som en egen konstform i en tid då den franska filmkulturen till stor del byggde på romanadaptationer. År 1962 gjorde Truffaut en lång och grundlig intervju med Alfred Hitchcock som han beundrade som film-auteur. Samma år spred den amerikanska journalisten Andrew Sarris auteur-termen till USA. Sarris ersatte Truffauts franska uttryck "la politique des auteur" med den engelska termen "auteur-theory". När auteur-begreppet nu tagits i användning inom seriedramat, har fokus flyttats från regissören till manusförfattaren. Då långa dramaserier har flera regissörer, förväntas huvudförfattaren försäkra att seriens vision består under hela produktionen, vilket Simon gjorde som *showrunner* och Price som en del av den *showrunner-duo* han bildade med *Borgens* producent Hammerich.

Sarris tre auteur-krav är att en auteur skall uppvisa teknisk kompetens, d.v.s. behärska hantverket, ha en personlig röst och kunna kommunicera en inre mening. Enligt Sarris föds den inre meningen i spänningen mellan regissörens person och material. Både Simons och Prices författarskap i *The Wire* och *Borgen* passar in på Sarris' definitioner. Under min research sökte jag en egen definition för auteur-serieförfattandet, utan att hitta någon slutgiltig. Jag uppskattar Nochimsons innehållsfokus, men upplever också att hennes krav på en modernistisk, obegriplig värld kan bli väl uteslutande. Det är osäkert om *Borgen* ryms inom hennes definition på en auteur-serie.

Min huvudsakliga forskningsfråga granskar hur Price och Simon lyckades skapa serier som, enligt mig, är en del av seriedramats historia och kan kallas auteur-verk. Trots att seriernas förutsättningar verkade vara rätt olika då *The Wire* beställdes av det privata bolaget HBO och *Borgen* producerades internt (inhouse) på DR, fann jag överraskande många likheter. Viktiga faktorer var Simons och Prices personliga engagemang i seriernas samhälleliga tematik och också deras grundliga researcharbete. Bägge hade lärt sig skriva manus som episodförfattare. De var självlärda och hade erfarenhet av andra jobb inom branschen samt arbetserfarenhet utanför TV-industrin. Som journalist hade Simon granskat problemen i Baltimore i årtal och ur många vinklar. Price som har studerat juridik och arbetat som dramachef hade perspektiv på en makthavares dilemman. Enligt

mina källor hade båda huvudförfattare raka och tillitsfulla relationer till sina beställare och till sina team. Här finns mina jämförelseresultat listade:

GEMENSAMMA DRAG	POSITIVA FÖLJDER
Professionella erfarenheter utanför serieskrivandet	Specialkunskap som stöder manuskripten
Learning-by-doing: blev manusförfattare / showrunner genom eget arbete. Ingen formell film- eller TV-utbildning.	En praktisk förståelse för olika arbetsuppgifter
Personligt engagemang i seriernas tematik	Motiverar research och inspirerar skrivandet
Grundlig research som gick på djupet	Stärker berättandet och skapandet av karaktärer samt autenticiteten i allmänhet
Kapacitet att inspirera ett team att dela visionen och uppleva ägarskap i den	Möjliggör att alla i teamet arbetar för samma mål
Långa arbetsrelationer med centrala medarbetare	Förenklar kommunikation och byggandet av team
En direkt och tillitsfull dialog med beställare	Garanterar ömsesidiga mål, minimerar konflikter

Intressant nog steg beställarens roll tydligt fram i bägge processer. DR Dramas principer att stöda författarens vision och att beställa serier med etiskt-samhälleliga konnotationer bidrog till *Brons* kvalitet. Också HBO ställde ambitiösa innehållskrav och ville inte beställa någon typisk polisserie. Först när Simon övertygade bolagets CEO om att *The Wire* skulle förnya genren samt undersöka maktstrukturer på djupet, fick serien grönt ljus. Ett gemensamt drag var också att processerna styrdes av små team. Price och Hammerich fattade *Borgens* viktiga beslut tillsammans med DR:s dramachef Ingolf Gabold. Simon kommunicerade direkt med HBO:s högsta ledning och hans manus fick sedan endast milda ("gentle") läsarkommentarer. Samtidigt var tittarsiffrorna viktiga både för DR och för HBO. Tack vare goda siffror fick *Borgen* en tredje säsong, medan *The Wires* femte och sista säsong kortades ner från tolv till tio avsnitt. Om Simons goda relation till HBO, vittnar det att han fortfarande idag har en förståelse för beslutet. I en mästartklass i Frankrike år 2020 kallar han sig HBO:s "public service-gren". Han såg att HBO:s ambitiösa innehåll var möjligt p.g.a. att bolaget finansieras av tittarnas beställningar och inte av reklam. År 2021 har HBO, som idag är en internationell SVOD-service, beställt en serie av Simon om poliskorruptionen i Baltimore, men den nya serien är en mini-serie i en säsong.

Trots likheterna är *The Wire* och *Borgen* olika som serier. Simon uppfann, enligt Nochimson, en ny slags “kollagedramaturgi” (collage dramaturgy) för att beskriva Baltimores sociala problem ur många perspektiv. Simon ville inte ha en central karaktär, medan Price använder sig av en mer traditionell, karaktärsdriven dramaturgi. *Borgens* ton är ljusare än den i *The Wire*. För att motivera att han nu efter så många år skriver *Borgens* fjärde säsong, hänvisar Price i en färsk, digital mästartklass (25.03.2021) till dagens hårda politiska klimat som hotar demokratin. En tolkning kan vara att de negativa maktstrukturer som *The Wire* analyserar, håller på att nå våra nordiska välfärds-samhällen. *Borgens* fjärde säsong produceras inte av DR Drama, utan av Prices eget produktionsbolag och den finansieras av både DR och Netflix. Det blir intressant att se hur den nya beställarstrukturen påverkar serien.

För oss som i år börjar våra professionella banor, är det positivt att beställardörrarna är många. Finns det ändå en risk för att den internationella konkurrensen om tittare leder till att dörrarna börjar påminna om varann? Alla vill ha kvalitetsserier som märks, men betyder det också att vi kommer att få mer genuint personliga serier som kan kallas auteur-serier? Var finns idag sådana beställarfunktioner som hjälpte Simon and Price skapa *The Wire* och *Borgen*? Mitt examensarbete har gett mig viktiga insikter i auteur-serier, men också visat att det finns ett behov av mer forskning i hur unika serier utvecklas och produceras – oavsett om man väljer att kalla dem *auteur-serier*, *one vision* verk eller något annat.