

BADA BING! THE SOPRANOS AND QUIXOTIC REALISMAugust Braddock¹**ABSTRACT**

Often considered the television series that brought about the second golden age of television, *The Sopranos* can be viewed as a quixotic narrative. This is especially true when looking at the sixth and final season of the series, with particular focus on the final sequence of the series finale, titled “Made in America.” Not only is the entire series quixotic through its acknowledgement of the impact of real-life East coast Italian-American mafia families and previous cinematic portrayals of mob life, the most noteworthy being *The Godfather* trilogy and *Goodfellas*, but also through its Byronic hero, Anthony “Tony” Soprano. Furthermore, the series finale of *The Sopranos* invites audience participation through the act of leaving the narrative open – no member of the audience knows exactly what happened to their beloved Byronic hero and are left to their own devices to craft an individual conclusion. Through the acts of calling back to the nonfictional and cinematic renditions of mobster life and culture, including a Byronic hero as the series’ protagonist, and through the act of inviting audience participation to conclude the much beloved series, *The Sopranos* proves itself to be a modern quixotic mobster crime drama.

KEYWORDS: *The Sopranos*; Quixotic; DeCavelcante; Byronic Hero.

BADA BING! THE SOPRANOS E REALISMO QUIXÓTICO**RESUMO**

Considerada muitas vezes a série de televisão responsável pela segunda era dourada da televisão, *The Sopranos* pode ser lida como uma narrativa quixotesca. Isso é especialmente verdade no que toca à última temporada da série, em especial a sequência final do final da série, intitulada “Made in America”. A série inteira não é apenas quixotesca pelo reconhecimento do verdadeiro impacto das famílias mafiosas italo-americanas da costa leste (dos Estados Unidos) nem por anteriores retratos cinematográficos do crime organizado, sendo os mais notáveis a trilogia *The Godfather* e *Goodfellas*, mas também por meio de seu herói bironyano, Anthony “Tony” Soprano. Além disso, o final da série de *The Sopranos* convida a participação do público uma vez que deixa a narrativa em aberto –nenhum membro do público sabe

¹ August Braddock is a second-year MA student at San Francisco State University with hopes of attending a PhD program in the fall of 2020. She works primarily with queer Modernist fiction, the representation of crime in Victorian social realist novels, and the interdisciplinary relationships between television, film, and literature. She is currently working on her thesis, titled “The Puer Aeternus in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*” which is a psychoanalytic feminist reading of Molly Bloom.

exatamente o que aconteceu com seu herói byroniano predileto e, como tal, terá de gerar as suas próprias conclusões. Pelo facto de explorar interpretações não-ficcionais e cinematográficas da vida e cultura dos mafiosos, incluindo o herói byroniano como protagonista da série, e pelo facto de convidar os espectadores a “participar” na última série, *The Sopranos* prova ser uma série dramática, moderno-quixotesca sobre crime organizado.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *The Sopranos*; quixotesco; DeCavelcante; herói byroniano.

“My father was in it. My uncle was in it. Maybe I was too lazy to think for myself.”²

One can look at *The Sopranos* as mobster fan-fiction that is aware of itself. By recognizing and directly acknowledging the fictional and nonfictional mafia stories that predated it, *The Sopranos* takes on the role of the modern mafia drama. Because of this recognition and its deviation from what was considered the standard mobster portrayal, *The Sopranos* brought about a new era of the mafia genre that was still one of violence and excess, but also more simple, realistic, and accurate to day-to-day life (VON LAMPE, 2006, p. 108). Before *The Sopranos*, audiences would not have expected to see the head of a New Jersey crime family regularly attend therapy, walk down his driveway in a bathrobe and boxer shorts to pick up the morning paper,³ or get violent food poisoning after eating at a bad restaurant; audiences were used to seeing mob life as a life of brutality and excess, they were not accustomed to viewing mafia life as one that could also be ordinary and suburban.

Show creator David Chase has fully admitted that he created the much beloved series due to his life-long adoration for the mobster genre and fascination with mob culture. This can be interpreted as Chase writing fan fiction that was inspired by the films and real-life gangsters that he found so interesting.

Tony Soprano can be read as a Byronic hero. The Byronic hero is a form of anti-hero created by Lord Byron, seen in his literature and public persona. Greatly inspired by John Milton’s Satan from *Paradise Lost*, Byron created a hero that was bad, mad,

² Spoken by Anthony “Tony” Soprano in season 1, episode 5 (“College”) of *The Sopranos*.

³ While Tony’s robed walk down his driveway is often considered unique to *The Sopranos*, it is important to note that it can be seen as a reference to the final scene of *Goodfellas*. This suburban routine in both *The Sopranos* and *Goodfellas* illustrates how the golden age of organized crime has ended.

and was dangerous to know. Byronic heroes are rebellious, often arrogant and anti-social, and are attractive in a darkly enticing manner. Usually young or middle-aged, the Byronic hero is often mournful and depressed, often feeling as if they had been wronged by society or are living in the aftermath of a tragic mistake.

Life imitates art and art imitates life. *The Sopranos* can be seen as fan fiction of the nonfictional mobster organization, the DeCavalcante family. The DeCavalcante crime family is, like that of the Soprano family, an organized crime family that operates out of New Jersey and has ties to what are considered the Five Families of New York (VON LAMPE, 2006, p. 108). John “The Eagle” Riggi, the former head of the DeCavalcante family, is considered by many to be the direct inspiration for Tony Soprano (WILLIAMSON). Like Riggi, Tony Soprano became head of the family when an old school “Don” died and he made his money through labour racketeering throughout New Jersey (WILLIAMSON). As *The Sopranos* is incredibly life-like, it is not difficult to believe that actual mafiosos, or “made men,” inspired the creation of prominent characters and central ideals to mafia life and culture.

Despite their numerous similarities, John Riggi and Tony Soprano have their differences. Riggi is considered an old school “Don,” while Tony is, at times, incredibly modern. Riggi and Tony both enacted classic iconic mafia elements, such as the use of initiation rituals, collecting money from local businesses, and avoiding the sale of hard drugs. Unlike Riggi, Tony moved away from the classical “Don” by accepting and working with a variety of groups of people, including women and members of the LGBTQ+ community. Tony received backlash for working with people deemed incapable or unworthy by his peers, but continued to do business with them until business was no longer profitable. Tony can be seen as attempting to emulate his predecessors while being confronted with the need to be more modern in order to keep his family, both personal and mafia, secure and successful. Tony is aware that he must be modern and that the age of the old school “Don” has passed, stating in the pilot episode of the series that “it’s good to be in something from the ground floor. I came too late for that and I know. But lately, I’m getting the feeling that I came in at the end. The best is over” (“Pilot”). Also, unlike Riggi, Tony never faced serious prison time, which can be viewed as a result to his precautions and the changes brought about in

order to modernize his crime family. Because he is aware that the age of the mobster is ending, Tony altered the persona of the “Don” in order to fit his modern day, a decision that brought about controversy within his world, but ultimately kept him and his crime and personal family safe from persecution and/or harm for the most part.

There is what appears to be a never-ending list of direct and indirect references *The Sopranos* makes to precious cinematic portrayals of mob life, a majority of which come from *The Godfather* trilogy. Much like *The Sopranos*, *The Godfather* trilogy added to and altered the mobster film genre. By adding what can be seen as a Byronic hero as the protagonist, *The Godfather* elevated the genre from what it had been in film before. By making the previously unsympathetic role of a mobster into one of a romanticized tragic hero, *The Godfather* trilogy allowed audiences to identify with someone who they would have simply seen as a villain before (COPPOLA). *The Godfather* also introduced referring to mafia groups as “the family,” which had not been done in cinema before. Both of these innovations to genre are apparent in every single episode of *The Sopranos*.

The Sopranos furthers its relationship with its most notable predecessor through the use of famous dialogue from *The Godfather* trilogy. Famous dialogue from the trilogy, such as “I’m gonna make him an offer he can’t refuse” and “just when I thought I was out, they pulled me back in” are used in reference to mob activity in *The Sopranos*, seen through the blackmailing of Tony’s daughter, Meadow’s, soccer coach and spoken by Silvio Dante when admiring his classic mobster appearance in the mirror (COPPOLA, “Boca”). Through these direct quotations, *The Sopranos* is not only exploring its roots, but is also evaluating how the romanticized image of mafiosos affects other mafiosos. This in turn makes the characters a meta version of themselves.

The Sopranos furthers its relationship with its predecessors through its cinematography. By directly mirroring shots from *The Godfather* trilogy, *The Sopranos* recognizes that it is another portrayal of mob life and uses this to grow into something new. Scenes such as Tony holding the carton of orange juice and then being shot at by rival gangsters parallels the numerous scenes with oranges used as an omen for bad luck throughout *The Godfather* trilogy, most notably the scene in which Vito Corleone is

assassinated while holding a basket of oranges (see photograph one) (“Isabella,” COPPOLA).



Photograph One: Vito Corleone, from *The Godfather* part 1, is assassinated while holding a basket of oranges. Oranges are used as an omen for bad luck throughout mafia based cinema.

The Sopranos is a modern mobster drama that continuously takes from its predecessors, who were revolutionary in their own right when they first were released. Like how Don Quixote grew and borrowed from the chivalric tales of the past in order to become his own version of a knight errant, Tony Soprano and the creators of *The Sopranos* used the mobster genre as a tool to show mafia life in a way that had never been seen before and to expand on the genre as a whole.

The Sopranos continued to recognize the previous pioneers of the mafia genre directly through its casting. Many of the pivotal cast members were also in earlier mafia dramas, including *The Godfather* trilogy and *Goodfellas*. A total of 27 actors from *Goodfellas* appear in *The Sopranos*, including Lorraine Bracco, who played Dr. Jennifer Melfi in *The Sopranos* and Karen Hill in *Goodfellas*, Michael Imperioli, who played Christopher Moltisanti in *The Sopranos* and Spider in *Goodfellas*, and Tony Sirico, who played Paulie Gualtieri in *The Sopranos* and Tony Stacks in *Goodfellas*. The television series also shared a number of cast members with *The Godfather* trilogy. Most notably, both *The Sopranos* and *The Godfather: Part II* share the actor Dominic Chianese, who played Junior Soprano and Johnny Ola. While this could possibly be due to the lack of

Italian-American actors in the film and television industries, it can also be seen as David Chase and his fellow show runners borrowing more than just dialogue and cinematography from the films that inspired them. By using the actors who have previously elevated the mafia genre, Chase and his fellow creators used their actors' status as mafia genre veterans to further the realism of the series. These actors had already embodied a role that in some way tied to mafia life and culture and were able to use the previous experience to add to their ability to perform. Fans of the mobster drama would also recognize these actors and compare them to the rolls they had previously embodied.

The series finale also has quixotic qualities. Dana B. Polan, in her text *The Sopranos*, states that “the fans wanted to know what happened to fictional characters they were treating as if real, but they were accepting that revelations about that reality could come from outside: from the creative artists who had made the fiction” (POLAN, 2009, p. 5). Polan goes on to state that:

this [the relationship between the fans and the series and creators] was a confusion of narrative levels - the fiction versus its fabrication and its narration - that are actually separate. To put it bluntly, Tony Soprano and *The Sopranos* creators exist in different worlds, with different claims on reality. If viewers want Tony to be a real person to whom the real things can happen, they can't ask the show's creators, in the narrational frame around Tony's universe, to magically put revelatory clues about Tony's fate, denying that he exists inside a fictional context that has creators behind it (POLAN, 2009, p. 5).

Tony Soprano is fictional, yet some audience members saw him as a living breathing human being; the creators of *The Sopranos* crafted a character that seemed so real that audience members refused to see him as nonfiction until the series had been completed and they wanted definite answers on his fate.

The audience's relationship to Tony can also be seen as quixotic. “Series creator David Chase takes his audience through the lives of complicated characters in a manner so compelling that they are giving much greater importance than those of the average television drama” (VINCENT, 2008, p. 7). Because of the hyper-realism of the series, fictional Tony Soprano became real to many fans. Tony Soprano is very much a fictional creation, but his presentation throughout the series makes him seem incredibly real; the viewer sees so much of Tony's life, whether the moments be good, or (more

typically) bad, that it is a challenge to not see his life as real. The series and Tony's realism furthers its quixotic nature through its tie to Romanticism. The series ties itself to Romanticism through its portrayal of mafia life and culture and also through the portrayal of Tony as a Byronic hero.

Tony Soprano is considered by many to be the televised Byronic hero that brought about the age of the anti-hero in television (VAAGE, 2015, p. 96). As a member of the audience, one sees Tony consistently commit violent and immoral acts, from killing his closest friends on multiple occasions to cheating on his wife with a never-ending flow of different women. Despite this, Tony is still the hero to root for. In the essay "The Byronic Hero, Theatricality and Leadership" by Gabriele Poole, Poole states that:

the identification of an original nobility is fundamental to the hero's character – is reinforced by the reader's realisation [realization] that the extent of his crimes is actually fairly limited, especially when contrasted with the behaviour [behavior] of his antagonists, who are usually far more despotic and cruel than he is (POOLE, 2010, p. 12).

Tony is an anti-hero and commits heinous acts. Yet, his enemies are portrayed as more violent and evil than he is. Despite the viewer's knowledge that Tony Soprano is not a good man, there is still an overwhelming desire to root for him and hope that his life will not be ruined by some outside force. In Margrethe Bruun Vaage's book, *The Antihero in American Television*, Vaage states that "the spectator enjoys the antihero's [in this case, the Byronic hero's] transgressions through low-level bodily mechanisms and moral intuitions..." (VAAGE, 2015, p. 96). In *The Sopranos* by Dana B. Polan, Polan reminds the audience that "...over the years, we had seen Tony Soprano do horrible things, and yet, it is so easy to worry about him... Hadn't he been through enough? Isn't it good that, whatever else, there is family?" (POLAN, 2009, p. 122). The audience has, over the years, seen Tony Soprano do disgusting and violent things, yet they had also seen moments where he was vulnerable. Viewers had seen him be a kind and loving father to his two children, how his mother's treatment of him throughout his life impacted his psyche, how his mother and uncle plotted to kill him and what effect that had on him emotionally, as well as numerous other moments that made one feel *for* Tony. All viewers had seen moments in which Tony Soprano was not a criminal, but a man with his own individual problems that impacted him physically and emotionally.

Because of these moments, the viewer, despite also seeing the wrongs he had committed, wanted Tony to be okay - the viewer wanted these past and current traumas to end or go away so that Tony could, for the first time in his life, be truly happy.

Tony furthers his tie to the Byronic hero through his individual appearance. In *The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes* by Peter Larsen Thorslev, Thorslev states that the Byronic hero and the rebel heroes that predated it, such as the Gothic villain and Noble Outlaw, are “always striking and frequently handsome. Of about middle age or somewhat younger, he has a tall, manly, stalwart physique, with brown hair and brows frequently set off by a pale and ascetic complexion” (THORSLEV, 1962, p. 53). Tony Soprano, a large Italian-American dad who is pale with dark hair and eyes, fits this description almost perfectly. While he is not by any means traditionally attractive, he is seen as attractive by many men and women in and outside of the show’s universe. This is most likely due to the power that he embodies as the leader of his gang and his confidence in his sexuality and ability to perform.

Is Tony Soprano a Byronic hero? According to Atara Stein, author of *The Byronic Hero in Film, Fiction, and Television*, the Byronic hero is:

an outlaw and an outsider who defines his own moral code, often defying oppressive institution authority, and is able to do so because of his superhuman or supernatural powers, his self-sufficiency and independence, and his egotistical sense of his own superiority. He essentially defines and creates himself... (STEIN, 2004, p. 8).

As the leader of a mob family, Tony is very much an outlaw and an outsider to society. Because of his position and ability to defy the law, Tony believes himself to be superior to the average man. Tony’s ability to enact violence and defy the law also satisfies the viewer’s urge to be rebellious and/or powerful, which is also a characteristic of the Byronic hero. Stein states that Byron created “a hero who satisfies his readers’ desire vicariously to identify with a powerful and autonomous individual who successfully defies authority and convention to forge his own path of assertive individualism...” (STEIN, 2004, p. 13). Stein also states that “creators of texts with heroes who rebel against governmental authority and corporate or institutional power wish to *satisfy* the audience’s own rebellious urges...” (STEIN, 2004, p. 36). This can be seen to enact audience participation through the use of a Byronic hero; the

viewer watches Tony Soprano do whatever he pleases, yet they know that, in their lives, they would never be able to act the same way. In this way, Tony Soprano can be seen as wish fulfillment to the audience.

Tony's unique relationship with his subordinates and rival gang members furthers the establishment of him being a Byronic hero. Tony is close to everyone in his gang and their family members - of course favoring some more than others. Despite this, he has doubts on whether these men and their families actually like him as a person, or if they feel they have to pretend to enjoy his company because of his position. In the 13th episode of season 5, titled "All Due Respect," Tony tells one of his associates that they "got no fucking idea what it's like to be Number One. Every decision you make affects every facet of every other fucking thing. It's too much to deal with almost. And in the end you're completely alone with it all" ("All Due Respect"). Tony feels isolated at the top; he believes that no one can understand the weight and importance of his position. This feeling is typical of Byronic heroes; Stein states that the standard Byronic hero "is a loner who often displays a quick temper or a brooding angst, or both, and he lacks the ability to relate to others" (STEIN, 2004, p. 8). Does this not sound familiar? Stein's description of the demeanor and inner feelings of a Byronic hero align with that of Tony Soprano.

Tony Soprano is a modern portrayal of the famous archetype of the mob boss. Previously in cinematic portrayals of the Italian-American mobster, the protagonist is either from Italy, referred to as "the old country," or is the child of Italian immigrants. Tony is neither and is distinctly American. This American identity isolates him from many of the mob leaders that predated him, which adds to his already existing isolation, hostility, and anger at the world; he is different than those that came before him and that difference is not necessarily seen as a good thing in his profession. Poole states that:

the hero's introversion and his hostility to the world, his isolation and his lack of intimacy with others is sometimes presented as a reaction to the injustice of society, as well as a result of his superior nature and consequent contempt for humanity at large (POOLE, 2010, p. 15).

Despite these feelings, it is undeniable that Tony Soprano believes that he is a much better gangster than many of his contemporaries due to his ability to maintain his position and remain alive and out of any form of imprisonment.

Because Tony does not feel as if he can always connect with his fellow mobsters, he often feels isolated and depressed. Tony's panic attacks and lifelong battle with depression are the factors in which the audience first encounters him on more than a superficial level - when seeing Tony Soprano in therapy, the audience gets to see how he actually feels. This is different than the persona the viewer sees outside of therapy, it is more open and more emotional. The viewer gets to see how Tony's lack of intimacy with his friends, due to his position, actually affects him. His desire to keep his need for therapy a secret further isolates him from his companions. Poole states that:

...the idealisation [idealization] of a leader is precisely a consequence of his lack of intimacy with his followers, of his reserved, strict, 'majestic' bearing" and that the "emotional distance between the hero and his followers makes possible the idealisation [idealization]... seen here [in Childe Harold's Pilgrimage by Lord Byron] in the 'awe; and 'fear' felt by the followers (POOLE, 2010, p. 16).

Tony is reserved when it comes to certain matters of business and he is strict, wanting all jobs to be done without mistake or misfortune. His colleagues absolutely fear him, as he has beaten and punished all members for a variety of their mistakes. Punishments ranged from having to bring in more money on a weekly basis to assassination and no one could be considered safe. Tony even shot his best friend for being a rat [an FBI informant]; everyone could be a victim of Tony Soprano's sense of justice. Despite their fear, Tony's gang is in awe of him and would follow him to their deaths, which many did. He was both loved and feared.

Through the act of watching a hyper-realistic, all while romantic, series about the leader of a mafia family, the viewer puts themselves into Tony's world. While watching the series, one might find themselves imagining themselves in the role of Tony Soprano or another character from *The Sopranos*. This act of imagining oneself in the role of Tony Soprano is very much a quality shared by numerous Byronic heroes. Stein states that:

The hero's superhuman abilities, defiance of institutional authority, and declared autonomy all provoke the audience's awe and admiration. But, however much the audience wants to share those qualities, they know they cannot live independently of other people and institutions. And the hero's human aspirations remind the audience that he is not a role model to emulate or imitate (STEIN, 2004, p. 36).

To imagine oneself in the role of an Italian-American mobster is fine, yet the reality of it is deeply dark and dangerous. *The Sopranos* constantly reminds the viewer that mafia life is not romantic and that it is deeply traumatic for those who actually live it. Despite this, one still has the desire to be a Byronic hero. The viewer recognizes that Tony Soprano is neither a good man nor a good role model, yet the desire to be bad, mad, and dangerous is still there.

Ending a series of any length brings about its own unique and individual challenges. But do show runners have to end a series with the final season, or is the narrative allowed to continue? In the case of *The Sopranos*, the show has ended, yet the story has not. Dana B. Polan states that "as a television series, *The Sopranos* has ended. What hadn't ended at that moment [the series finale] was the narrative of the characters within the fictional world of the series...." (POLAN, 2009, p. 3). Because of this, audiences were invited to continue the story on after the abrupt eight second cut to black that shocked so many viewers on the night that "Made in America" premiered.

By not completing the narrative of *The Sopranos*, audiences can craft their own conclusions. Christopher J. Vincent, author of *Paying Respect to The Sopranos: A Psychosocial Analysis*, claims that "there is realism in its [the series finale] uncertainty. Not every thread of real life is neatly tied up. There are not always concrete endings" (VINCENT, 2008, p. 168). Polan states that:

The suspense of the scene [the final sequence of the series] - created formally by cuts between Tony and his family and those potentially menacing figures all around - is also the final demonstration of the show's ability to make the viewer feel with Tony *and* feel for Tony (POLAN, 2009, p. 122).

What happened to Tony Soprano? Was he killed at the diner by the man in the Member's Only jacket who left the bar to get to the restroom, paralleling Tony's favorite scene from his favorite film - where Michael Corleone kills rival gangster Sollozzo after obtaining a hidden gun from the restaurant's bathroom in *The Godfather*?

(See photographs two and three). The connection between the two scenes is furthered as Tony had just made a truce with a rival family after a bloody war and Michael Corleone was at the restaurant under the guise of making peace.



Photograph Two: Michael Corleone obtains a hidden gun in a restaurant bathroom in *The Godfather*. He will kill Sollozzo, a rival gangster.



Photograph Three. Anthony Jr. enters the restaurant in which his father is already sitting at a booth. He is following the unknown possible killer, the man in the member's only jacket.

But could it be that Tony simply enjoyed a meal with his family? Are the consistent cuts to other people at the diner simply intending to show other people enjoying a night out? Is one of them Tony's killer? Or are they shown as future witnesses of a mob hit? Could something else have occurred? And what does it mean that the audience is seeing certain individual's through Tony's eyes, shown through the point of view camera shots on the door? Is he simply paranoid? Or is he about to die?

The eight second cut to black that concluded *The Sopranos* has already been much discussed among fans and academics. A different and interesting interpretation of the final cut to black is that it is not the death of Tony or any member of the Soprano family, but the death of the viewer. The audience does not see Tony's fate because they are no longer welcome into his life and his story. For years, the viewer was a voyeur, meticulously monitoring his life and actions, just like the FBI agents who had Tony under surveillance throughout the series. This death of the viewer can be seen as no longer being allowed access into Tony's world.

With the final sequence of *The Sopranos*, spectators attempt to find a concrete conclusion. Polan states that "... the desperate fans took any and every detail from the final sequence of *The Sopranos* as potentially revelatory of narrative things to come" (POLAN, 2009, p. 5). Despite the ending being unknown, series creator David Chase has claimed that everything the audience needs is inside the episode. Viewers believed that anything in the episode could answer the question the show runners deliberately hid or did not provide. Vincent states that "the cut to black allows each viewer to fill in the ending that suits them" (VINCENT, 2008, p. 168). What happens to Tony, the Soprano family, and his mobster colleagues and rivals is left to each individual audience member to decide - they are able, and encouraged, to continue the narrative in their minds and to construct one that they deem worthy and acceptable.

Throughout the entire run of *The Sopranos* and especially in the series finale, audiences were encouraged to interact with the story. Polan states that "there could be no satisfaction in any ending to the fictional story. Instead of choosing, then, a narrative ending, ironic or not, the creators behind *The Sopranos* opted, instead, for a greater irony: admitting that the show was just a constructed bit of entertainment and not giving in to the audience's desire to imagine that its functions could have a real-life closure to

them” (POLAN, 2009, p. 7). By not providing closure to the audience, show creators further pushed the idea that the series, while being incredibly realistic, was in fact fiction.

Throughout its eight-year run on HBO, *The Sopranos* pushed boundaries and expanded the mobster genre, all while being quixotic. Through its direct and indirect acknowledgments of the previous cinematic pioneers in the genre, *The Sopranos* recognized the stories that had formerly shaped the genre and used this to create something new. The series indirect inspiration, the DeCavalcante crime family, further illustrates that the series is one of quixotic realism. Like how Don Quixote turned his cherished stories of knights from long ago into adventures that he could create and partake in, *The Sopranos* used nonfictional events and people, and previous cinematic portrayals of mafia life and culture to elevate its own status as the show to watch. Like Don Quixote, Tony Soprano and show creators, including series creator David Chase, used the image of mob culture as something to pull inspiration from and to emulate. Byronic hero Tony Soprano, like the more recent portrayals of mafia leaders, challenged the audience by consistently committing immoral acts, all while being the man to root for. The series finale further labeled the television show as a quixotic narrative through its forceful push for audience participation. The series ended over a decade ago, but the fiction is kept alive through fans attempting to know what happened to Tony Soprano.

REFERENCES

“All Due Respect.” **The Sopranos**, David Chase, HBO, 6 June 2004.

“Boca.” **The Sopranos**, David Chase, HBO, 7 Mar. 1999.

COPPOLA, Francis Ford. **The Godfather Trilogy**. Paramount Pictures. 1972-1990.

EDGERTON, Gary R. **The Sopranos**. Detroit: Wayne State U.P., 2013.

“Isabella.” **The Sopranos**, David Chase, HBO, 28 Mar. 1999.

LAVERY, DAVID. **This Thing of Ours**. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

“Made in America.” **The Sopranos**, David Chase, HBO, 10 June 2007.

“Pilot.” **The Sopranos**, David Chase, HBO, 10 Jan. 1999.

POLAN, Dana B. **The Sopranos**. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.

POOLE, Gabriele. **The Byronic Hero, Theatricality and Leadership**. *The Byron Journal*, v. 38, n. 1, p. 7-18, 2010.

SCORSESE, Martin. **Goodfellas**. Astoria: Warner Brothers, 1990.

The Sopranos. *In*: [s.l.]: HBO, 1999.

STEIN, Atara. **The Byronic Hero in Film, Fiction, and Television**. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009.

THORSLEV, Peter Larsen. **The Byronic hero**. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1965.

VAAGE, Margrethe Bruun. **The Antihero in American Television**. New York: Routledge, 2015.

VINCENT, Christopher J. **Paying Respect to The Sopranos**. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2008.

VON LAMPE, Klaus. **Made Men**: The true rise-and-fall-story of a New Jersey mob family. *Trends in Organized Crime*, v. 10, n. 2, p. 108-109, 2006.

WILLIAMSON, Marcus. **John Riggi**: Leader of the DeCavalcante Crime Family – the Notorious Real-Life Inspiration for 'The Sopranos'. *The Independent*. Disponível em: <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/john-riggi-leader-of-the-decavalcante-crime-family-the-notorious-real-life-inspiration-for-the-10446466.html>>. Acesso em: 26 fev. 2020.

Recebido em 16 de julho de 2019

Aprovado em 29 de fevereiro de 2020