



From Heaven to Hell. Aspects of American Self-Perception in 21st Century Broadcast Television: On the basis of the series 24, 7th Heaven, and The O.C.

Olivia Benkovic

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Seminar paper from the year 2013 in the subject American Studies - Culture and Applied Geography, grade: A, University of Innsbruck (Translation Studies), course: Looking at America: Inside and Outside Perceptions, language: English, abstract: 21st century American broadcast television series are, of course, works of fiction and thus not subject to an accurate depiction of American reality. However, regardless of its fictional elements, every series conveys values and ideals which reflect real-life value propositions that are essential to American identity in the 21st century. Furthermore, the key elements of American self-perception can be inferred by examining the self-portrayal of Americans in American television series.

Therefore, this paper seeks to inquire how central aspects of American self-perception are addressed in various successful television series and whether traditional American values have been preserved. It will focus on the following three series: "24", "7th Heaven", and "The O.C.", as each of them is exemplary for a different facet of American self-perception. Crime drama series "24" provides a detailed discourse on exceptionalism and the role it plays with regard to patriotism as well as an elaborate account of the discrepancy between the two different faces of America. Family drama series "7th Heaven" draws on Puritan values and emphasizes their applicability in the United States of the 21st century. Teenage drama series "The O.C." addresses the preservation of a class system and class divisions in modern-day American society as opposed to the notion of classlessness.

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