DHQ: Digital Humanities Quarterly
2021
Volume 15 Number 1

German Narratives in International Television Format Adaptations: Comparing *Du und Ich* (ZDF 2002) with *Un Gars*, *Une Fille* (Quebec 1997-2002)

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Abstract

This article cross-culturally compares the German remake of the Quebec sketch comedy/sitcom series *Un Gars, Une Fille* ("A Guy and a Girl") the the original version by correlating quantitative data derived from the Adobe Premiere Pro annotation function on the duration of narrative segments and incorporating these data into a an interpretation of family conflict management strategies, gender roles and conflicts between the mother-in-law and the the young 30-something couple as protagonists. The article examines a scene in which the daughter confronts her mother's trauma-inducing behavior on her as a young girl, and the boyfriend confronts the mother-in-law's animosity toward him. The article delves into the background for the transactional, belligerent, and obligational thinking behind the family relationship of the German couple compared to the more affectionate and conciliatory relationship in all other versions. The investigation postulates that the family relationships in the German context must be seen within the context of the *Inability to Mourn*, a major psychological study by Margarete and Alexander Mitscherlich in the 1960s of politically salient post World War 2 trauma among a large variety of social groups in West (and East) Germany. The emotional repression as a result of various forms of guilt, which never explicitly surfaced in the confrontations, was passed down from generation to generation, while this same, or similar social psychological contexts was seemingly not a factor in other countries, many of which had also experienced repressive dictatorships during World War 2 and afterwards, in which adaptations of these series were produced. Further collaborative investigations would be required to uncover the reasons for this discrepancy.

The proliferation of global television formats since the 1950s, particularly those of scripted fictional narratives and their local adaptations, raise important questions about the nature and content of global culture and discourses, and the local contributions to those discourses. Each iteration is the result of cultural, historical, political, technical, and economic conditions specific to each country, and help determine how culturally, aesthetically, and discursively proxemic local narratives are created. German producers have long participated in the global format trade, both officially and “inofficially.” The German adaptation of the US crime series *Dragnet* in the 1950s, known as *Stahlnetz*, became paradigmatic for a long tradition of German crime shows currently still popular, such as the West German *Tatort* (ARD from 1971), and the East German *Polizeiruf 110*, and the plethora of similar shows currently on both public service broadcasters ARD and ZDF, as well as their private broadcasting counterparts. Some of the more successful and popular ones, such as *Ein Herz und eine Seele* (1973-1976), a loose adaptation of the British series *Till Death Us Do Part* (BBC1 1965-1975), may not be immediately recognizable as an adaptation, and some of them, such as *Lindenstrasse* (ARD 1985-2020) or *Gute Zeiten Schlechte Zeiten* RTL 1992-) may have long surpassed the broadcast period of the original and therefore have become shows in their own right.

Number	Country	Date of First Broadcast
1	Canada	1 May 1997
2	Belgium	August 1998
3	France	11 October 1999
4	Sweden	November 1999
5	Portugal	May 2000
6	Greece	Autumn 2000
7	Spain	22 September 2000
8	Bulgaria	2002
9	Hungary	2002
10	Netherlands	2002
11	Israel	9 July 2002
12	English Canada	September 2002
13	Poland	3 September 2002
14	Germany	13 October 2002
15	Mexico	31 July 2003
16	Russia	20 September 2003
17	Italy	15 December 2004
18	Ukraine	14 January 2005
19	Lebanon	27 February 2006
20	Latvia	20 October 2006
21	Lithuania	29 August 2007
22	Turkey	2 October 2008
23	Cyprus	8 October 2010
24	Kazakhstan	8 October 2012
25	Abu Dabi	July 2013
26	Czech Republic	10 September 2013
27	Serbia and Montenegro	5 October 2015
28	Slovenia	6 March 2016
29	French Africa	13 November 2017

Figure 1. List of different versions of *Un Gars, Une Fille* and the dates of their first broadcast. Table courtesy of Avanti Cine Group.

Some of the more recent prominent adaptations in German television like *Verliebt in Berlin* (ZDF 2006-2008), adapted from the Colombian telenovela *Yo soy Betty, la fea* (RCN 1999-2001), or *Stromberg* (ProSieben 2004-2012), adapted from the Ricky Gervais/Steve Merchant UK mockumentary comedy *The Office* (BBC2 2001-2003), are more or less recognizable adaptations of the originals. With the popularity and expansion of particular genres such as doctor and hospital dramas and comedies, it is sometimes difficult to determine if a series such as *In aller Freundschaft-Die jungen Ärzte* (ARD 2015-) is an adaptation of the US *Grey's Anatomy* (ABC 2005) as is the clearly identifiable Turkish series *Doktorlar* (Show TV 2006-2011) of the Colombian *El Corazon Abierto* (RCN 2010-2011). 2

Less successful adaptations have also been attempted on German television. The UK doctor series *Doc Martin* (ITV 2004 -), adapted for German television as *Doktor Martin* (ZDF 2006-2009) starring Axel Milberg, was cancelled after two seasons, while the US sitcom *Married with Children* (Fox 1987-1997), known in its German adaptation *Hilfe, meine Familie spinnt* (1993), was less successful and unable to achieve the success of adaptations or the original in other markets such as the Russian, Argentinian, Chilean, or Colombian. Among the less successfully adapted series on German television was the adaptation of the Quebec series *Un Gars, Une Fille* (Radio Canada 1997-2002). Since the series went on to be successfully adapted in a wide variety of other markets up to the present, I believe it warrants a comparative investigation into factors which may or may not have contributed to its lack of success. The series started out in Quebec as a 6-10 minute stopgap sketch comedy show between primary half-hour or hour-long shows. Later, it was transformed into a half-hour sitcom-like comedy incorporating the separate sketch segments. While the French, Italian, and Spanish adaptations retain the same or similar sketch comedy length, most of the other adaptations, including the German, incorporate three such sketches to create a half-hour sitcom-like structure. In the twenty-year 3

history of adapting the format (see Table 1 for the official versions), it has undergone some changes, but still retains its basic structure and sequencing.

The current study will investigate adaptations from the standpoint of creating the content and structure of the adaptation as a hybrid narrative subject to analytical deconstruction and reconstruction by means of computer annotation software. For the purposes of the analysis in this study, Chalaby's definition of a television format will be used, which, even though he applies it to reality and other non-scripted series, can also be applied to scripted dramas and comedies such as *Un Gars, Une Fille*. Chalaby (2011) defines a format as "a show that can generate a distinctive narrative and is licensed outside its country of origin in order to be adapted to local audiences" [Chalaby 2011, 296]. Chalaby's definition includes also a narrative component and he refers to the concept used by the Format Recognition and Protection Association (FRAPA) that includes "a distinctive narrative progression" [Chalaby 2011, 294], "dramatic arcs," "storylines," and "trigger moments" [Chalaby 2011, 295]. Chalaby cites Michel Rodrigue, one of the driving forces behind the international distribution of *Un Gars, Une Fille*, who Chalaby also calls "one of the industry's founding fathers" to highlight the inherently transnational nature of formats. According to Rodrigue, a series becomes a format "only once it is adopted outside its country of origin" [Chalaby 2011, 295]. A format entails "a transfer of expertise" (Page 3 Top) contained in a set of rules of international and local knowledge passed down to the producers in a "bible." Therefore, formats are hybrid and function as bridges to "take viewers through a succession of emotional states."

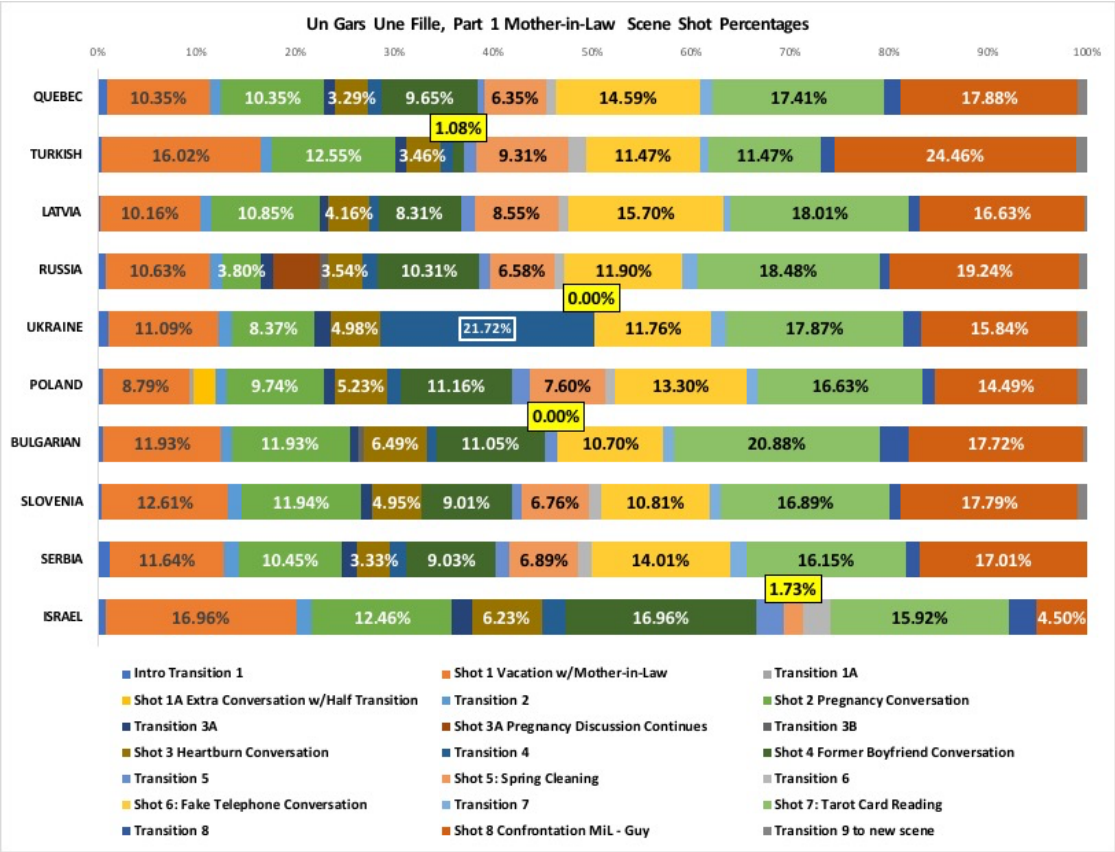

Figure 2. Bar graph of Part 1 of the Mother-in-Law scene illustrating shot length (in percentage) of the scene, with the smaller blue-colored fields indicating the transitions between the shots. The longest segments in most versions is the last light-brown colored segment which is the confrontation between the boyfriend and the mother-in-law. That has been excluded from the German version.

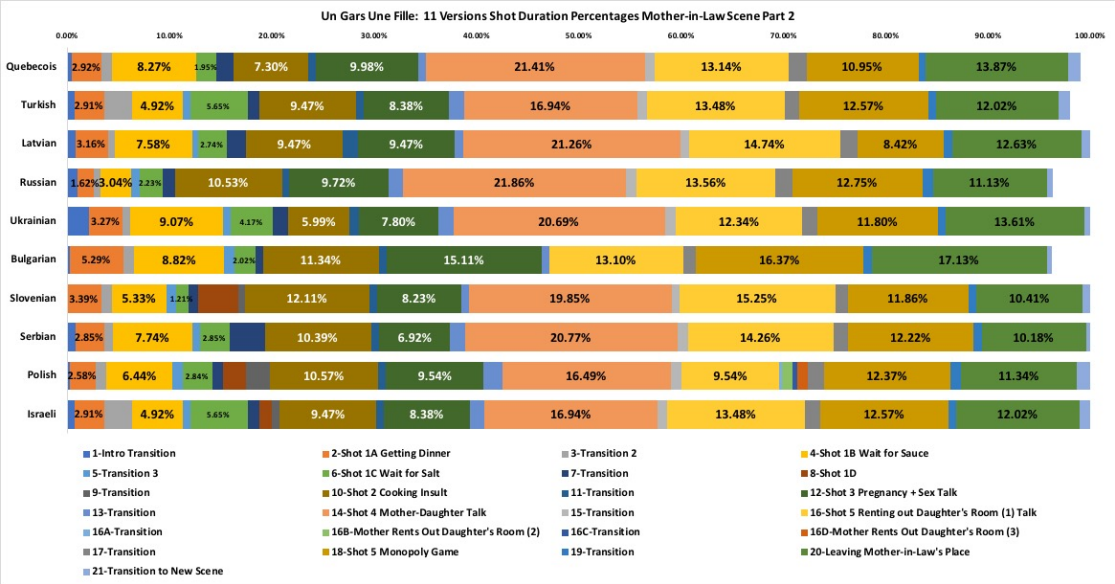

Figure 3. Bar graph of Part 2 of the Mother-in-Law scene showing the longest shot to be the mother-daughter talk about trauma, a segment which has been excluded from the German version.

There are digital instruments available for measuring shot length (www.cinemetrics.lv) recognizing facial characteristics such that male and female characters may be distinguished and their screen times measured (http://neurotechnology.com). There are also digital instruments, both commercial (Atlas.ti and MMA Video) and open source (ELAN, Anvil), which assist in the measurement of different kinds of segments to reveal specific localization strategies underlying success or lack thereof. The current project uses Adobe Premiere and Final Cut to multimodally compare the German *Du und ich* with the Quebecois original and counterpart *Un Gars, Une Fille*. The bar graph for Part 1 and Part 2 of the mother-in-law scene were developed using the annotation function of Adobe Premiere Pro, the results of which were tables of segment lengths after exporting to Microsoft Excel. In Excel, the tables were transformed into bar graphs that are displayed here. 5

A multimodal investigation is appropriate since the entire range of modes of communication may be deployed in culturally salient ways in order to achieve what I am calling, with Uribe-Jungbloed and Medina (2014), discursive proximity. Multimodal scholar Kay O'Halloran was a leading figure in the development of the video annotation software MMA-Image and MMA-Video. The software was developed at the Multimodal Analysis Lab in the Interactive and Digital Media Institute at the National University of Singapore and was designed to use a "multimodal digital semiotics approach involving the development of interactive software with functionalities for systematic multimodal analysis of text, images, and videos" [O'Halloran et al. 2016, 387]. In asserting that transcription is transduction, Flewitt et al (2013: 52), point to the challenge of balancing "the accurate notation of events," the "clear description for the research 'reader,' and the transcription format adequate for the research purpose while doing justice to the type of data collected" [Flewitt et al. 2013, 50]. According to them, the use of annotation software results in "reduced versions of observed reality, where some details are prioritized and others are left out" [Flewitt et al. 2013, 50]. Television scholar Jeremy Butler, whose book employs a narratological approach to the study of televisual texts, investigated the use of digitally generated statistical data to study the editing style of the sitcom *Happy Days* (1974-1984) with the online Shot Logger software www.shotlogger.org to measure and compare cutting rates of season 1 and season 2 to determine a statistically significant difference between them due to the switch from a single to a multiple camera production [Butler 2014]. 6

Versons	Total Length of Episode(s) mm:ss		Total Length both Episodes mm:ss	Length of Mother-in-Law Visit(s) mm:ss	Proportion of Mother-in-Law Visit Segments to Episodes	Previsit Segment Lengths mm:ss	Proportion of Pre-Visit Scene(s) to Visit Scene(s)
German	**24:01**			**08:14**	**34.3%**	**07:41**	**93.3%**
	Part 1	**Part 2**					
Quebec	23:24	22:50	46:14	14:20	31.0%	00:59	6.9%
Israeli	23:45	24:34	48:19	14:31	30.0%	00:51	5.9%
Bulgarian	23:14	25:21	48:35	15:55	32.8%	01:04	6.7%
Slovenian	27:24	27:26	54:50	14:17	26.0%	01:11	8.3%
Turkish	24:50	27:30	52:20	15:44	30.1%	01:25	9.0%
Ukrainian	25:04	27:58	53:02	16:26	31.0%	01:07	6.8%
Russian	22:07	21:37	43:44	14:53	34.0%	01:12	8.1%
Serbian	26:19	26:07	52:26	11:05	21.1%	01:10	10.5%
Latvian	21:09	23:06	44:15	15:12	34.4%	00:55	6.0%
Polish	21:38	21:30	43:08	14:39	34.0%	01:09	7.8%
English Canada	23:00	23:00	46:00	14:07	30.7%	00:53	6.3%

Figure 4. Illustration of the anomalous characteristics of the German version: Notice only one part of the Mother-in-Law visit scene instead of the two parts of the other versions. It is also little more than half the length of the longer pre-visit segments.

Relevant approaches to cross-cultural and critical study of multimodality in my own work use concepts of Jewitt (2016) for understanding general principles of multimodality in their interaction with each other in multimodal ensembles which are intentionally selected and configured for particular — and in our case cross-culturally salient — types of meaning making [Jewitt 2016, 15], especially the interaction of image and writing [Jewitt 2016, 13]. Bateman and Schmidt (2011) are pertinent for cross- cultural film and television studies, since — derived from Metz, Bordwell, and others — they explicate the importance of and expound upon the notions of shots, scenes, spatiality, temporality and sequentiality underlying cross-cultural film and television analyses which include qualitative and quantitative data. Finally, Machin (2013) assists in developing a methodology for cross-cultural multimodal critical discourse analysis. For him, critical discourse studies represent not only “a kind of knowledge about what goes on in a particular social practice, ideas about why it is the way it is and what is to be done,” but also reveal “models of the world and why these are legitimate and reasonable ways of acting in the world” [Machin 2013, 352]. I am therefore multimodally extending the notion of cultural proximity proposed by Straubhaar and La Pastina (2005) which is “at work at multiple levels due to peoples’ complex identities beyond linguistic, religious, geographic or other group cultures based on dress, ethnicity, gestures, humor etc.” [Machin 2013, 274], whereby audiences will prefer television programs that are “most proximate or most directly relevant to them in cultural and linguistic terms” [Machin 2013, 273]. Van Keulen (2016) introduces the notion of aesthetic proximity to address the fact that certain technologically- based aesthetic components of audiovisual texts go beyond the linguistic and cultural systematic patterns to encompass the entire range of modes of communication in the adaptation process.

Figure 5. Screen shot of video clips of nine different versions of *Un Gars Une Fille* (l to r, upper to lower: Quebec, Serb, Israeli, Polish, Ukrainian, Turkish, Latvian, Russian, Bulgarian) showing the use of the same music segment at different points in the narrative of the crucial confrontation scene between the boyfriend and the mother-in-law. The music indicates sympathy for the different characters in or outside the frame in the confrontation. The music cue therefore complete changes the focus of identification purely by its insertion at different times during the shot.

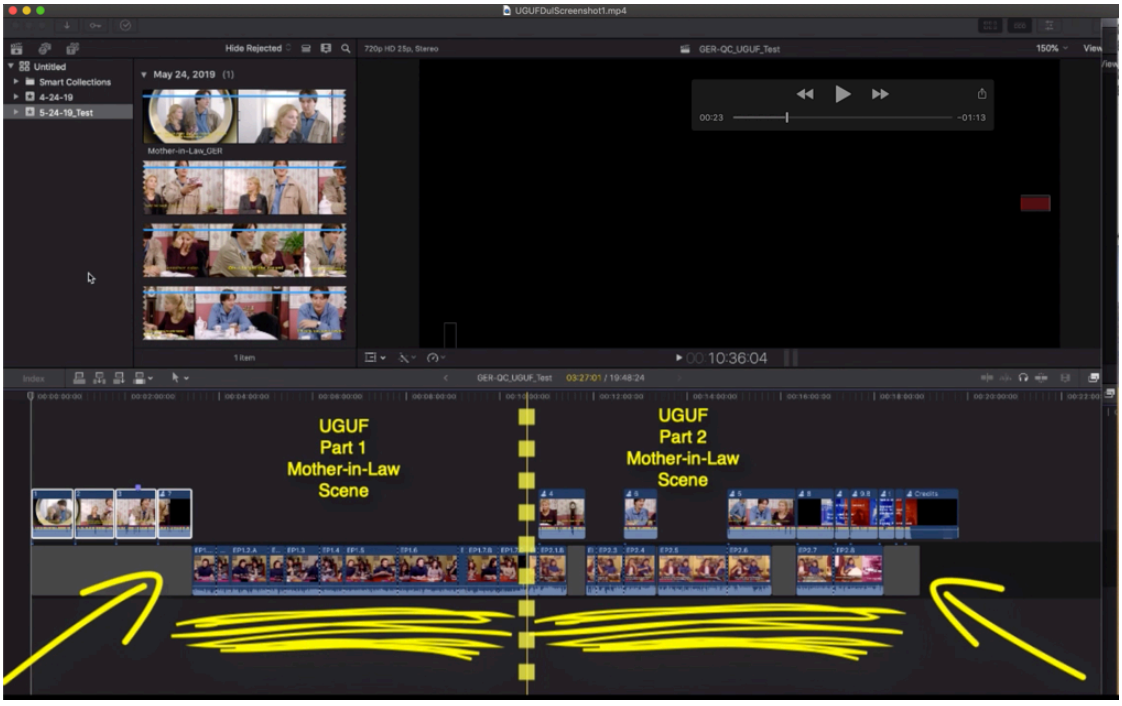

Figure 6. Screen shot of Final Cut Pro timeline with the Mother-in-Law scene(s) of the one-part German series *Du und ich* on top, and the two-part Quebec series scenes in *Un Gars, Une Fille* on the bottom.

Figure 7. Final Cut Pro timeline with Mother-in-Law scene(s) showing exploded view of the German series *Du und ich* lined up with the corresponding segments in *Un Gars, Une Fille*.

The confluence of cross-culturality, multimodality and narratology is evident in Jeremy Butler's characterization of the televisual text as polysemic, but he states the televisual text "does not present all meanings equally positively" and explains that meanings are adjusted differently "through dialogue, acting styles, music, and other attributes of the text" [Butler 2007, 10]. Butler also points out that the televisual text is implicitly structured in a pattern to be polysemic but reflects and supports those in a position of political power while allowing space for alternative or contested meanings [Butler 2007, 11]. Multimodal research aims for systematic interpretative analysis of televisual and filmic texts by "finding systems of contrasts that organize and pre-structure filmic devices" [Bateman and Schmidt 2011]. The assumption underlying the research comparing the German *Du und ich* with *Un Gars, Une Fille* is that different modes and complexes of modes of communication are interculturally salient and are the component of a multimodal cross-cultural critical analysis. 8

My own previous cross-cultural comparative research has identified different types of adaptation based on similarities and differences in narrative structure, content, and sequencing [Larkey et al. 2016] of various adaptations, including *Verliebt in Berlin* (2009a) and *Stromberg* (2009b), and other versions of *Un Gars, Une Fille*. This research created a typology of adaptations which measured proximity to, or distancing from, the narrative structure, content, and sequencing of the original or many other adaptations. 9

In a study entitled "Narrative as a Mode of Communication: Comparing TV Format Adaptations with Multimodal and Narratological Approaches," (2019) in a volume edited by Wildfeuer, Pflaeging, Bateman, Tseng and Seizov (Eds.) entitled *Multimodality. Towards a New Discipline*, I argue for incorporating quantitative and qualitative narratological data on the content, structure and sequencing into multimodal analyses of television format adaptations, using the example of the mother-in-law scenes in *Un Gars, Une Fille*, in order to supplement multimodal hermeneutic interpretative analyses as an extra dimension. For this current study, I completed bar graphs (see Figures 2 and 3) of 10 different versions which illustrated the relative lengths and durations of shots in percentages of total length of episodes to register culturally specific additions, deletions, and modifications made to the different versions to accommodate cultural proximity. 10

Figure 8. Final Cut Pro timeline illustrating the gaps in the German series *Du und ich* indicating the exclusion of segments included in the Quebec original version, *Un Gars, Une Fille*.

Figure 9. Final Cut Pro timeline showing how the additional segments thee German series *Du und ich* line up with the Quebec original version of that series *Un Gars, Une Fille*.

Figure 10. Screen shot of the pre-visit decision in *Une Gars, Une Fille* to visit the Mother-in-Law just before the seduction of the boyfriend. The intimate and endearing seduction takes place in the couple's bathroom.

Figure 11. Screen shot of the pre-visit decision to visit the mother-in-law (*Du und ich*) to get financial support for payment of a tax debt. The decision takes place in the kitchen and the couple displays less affection than the encounter in the Quebec version.

One of the unsolved challenges I encountered when presenting knowledge gained from this methodology was the inability of current computer visualizations based on graphics, tables, and charts derived from Microsoft Excel to adequately display the complex relationships of multimodal knowledge at the heart of audiovisual texts in general, and different television format adaptations in particular. 11

In recent multimodal research on the same mother-in-law scenes [Larkey 2019a], I compared different versions of *Un Gars, Une Fille* and the role of music to guide the empathy of the viewer toward or away from different characters in culturally specific ways by slightly adjusting length and position of a particular segment of sad music in the audiovisual text to that particular character. These findings were placed within the context of gender role depictions and applied the dual-concern model of family conflict management strategies in the mother-in-law scenes of the different versions. It was thus possible to determine whether, in the different versions, different family members deployed yielding, problem-solving, contending, or inaction strategies toward the other members of the family in culturally specific ways, whether it be the mother-in-law, the daughter, or the male protagonist. This is illustrated in the video clip in which the same music segment is deployed in different positions of the shot to guide sympathy or empathy with a different character. 12

The "story" of *Un Gars, Une Fille* revolves around the relationship and domestic lives of a heterosexual, non-married and childless 30-something couple, who has been together for at least 15 years. Because of its sketch comedy heritage, most adaptation contain three scenes of approximately 7-8 minutes during which the couple is engaged in activities and conversations about themselves, friends, and relatives in a variety of spaces, including domestic spaces at home (kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, living room) and public spaces (shopping centers, restaurants, bars, art exhibits, in a car, at a police station, etc.). The scene at the heart of the current investigation occurs at the apartment of the female's mother, the mother-in-law of the male partner. The scene is divided into two parts in most of the versions except the German, and each shot or topic of conversation is divided by a distinctive transition which is comprised of music and graphics. The scene is usually monospatial, i.e., it takes place in the dining room of the mother-in-law only, with a stationary and largely point-of-view camera in which the mother is, to varying extents, outside of the frame. The visit to the mother-in-law is instigated by a sex scene during which the daughter has to convince the partner to go with her to her mother's, and the scene ends when the couple leaves the apartment of the mother-in-law with leftovers. 13

The German Version's Anomalous Narrative Structure and Content: Transactional Relationships

All of my above-mentioned investigations excluded deeper comparisons with the German version, for the most part, due to the anomalous nature of the German version. The chart in Figure 4 illustrates that the German version of the pre-visit scene, in which the visit to the mother-in-law is anticipated, is more the twice as long as all other versions at 8:14, while the visit itself, divided into two separate episodes in most other versions, is put into one episode in the German version, and is thus half the length of the others. The anomalous character of the narrative sequencing and structure of the German version can be seen not only in the Figure, but also when the German version is lined up with the Quebec version on a Final Cut Pro timeline as in the four illustrations (Figures 5-8). 14

This is one of several structural, content, and sequence modifications in the German adaptation which give an indication of the radically different historical and political context of family and gender discourses in that country compared to others. In most of the other versions, the motivation to visit the mother-in-law can be traced back to the daughter's affection and emotional bond with her mother. In order to convince her boyfriend/husband to visit her mother, who hates him and likewise hates the mother-in-law, the female partner seduces him with oral sex, filmed tightly-framed in a bathroom while he is shaving, brushing his teeth, or cutting the hair in his nose. The shot takes approximately two minutes and is usually done in a comical, yet intimately positive manner highlighting the affection between them. This can be seen in the screen shot of the Quebec version in Figure 10. 15

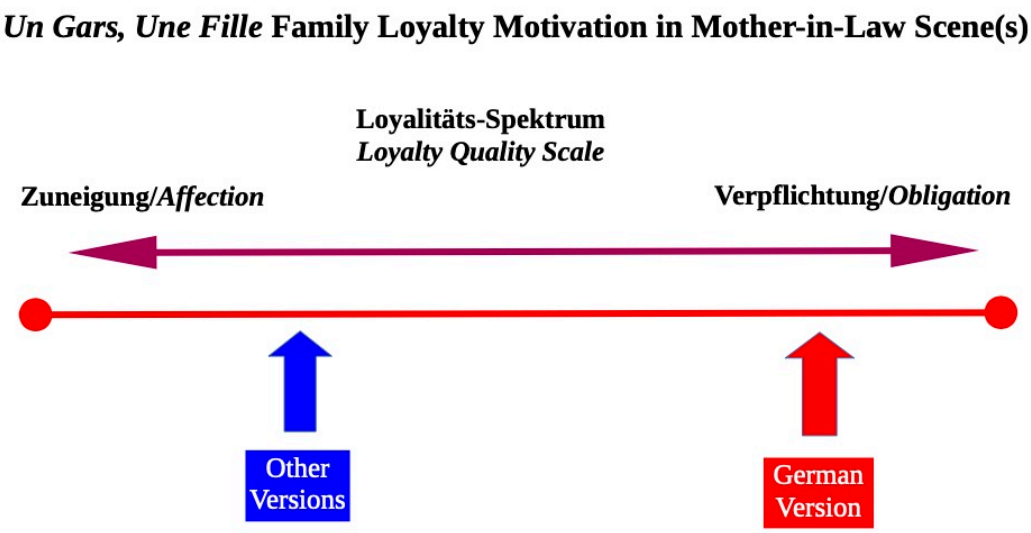

Figure 12. Loyalty quality of German version with a primarily obligation-oriented relationship motivation vs. other versions with a more affection- oriented motivation to visit the mother of the daughter.

16 In the German version, on the other hand, the visit to the mother-in-law is motivated by an effort to get money from the mother to pay back a tax debt discovered after the female protagonist discarded her partner's receipts needed to take deductions. She suggests a visit to her mother to see if the mother can "help them out." This transactional instrumentalization of personal and family relationships stands in sharp contrast to the justification for visiting the mother-in-law in all other versions. This story line also forms the narrative arc for the visit in the German version since at the end of the visit the mother-in-law merely hands the couple an envelope upon which the address of her ex-husband's tax attorney is attached so that they might consult with him later. Even though the transactional nature of the relationship seems to be discredited and reproached, the disappointed expectation of financial support casts the mother as calculatingly miserly and selfish, which resignifies both the mother-daughter relationship and the couple's relationship to the mother as instrumentalized and transactional. This both legitimizes the skepticism of the male character while simultaneously revealing traces of affection between the mother and the daughter during the exchange. The screen shot of the German version (Figure 11) illustrates the difference in atmosphere by the change in location (the kitchen), the topic of conversation (tax debt vs mother), and the physical distance between the two during the conversation (close vs. distanced).

Obligatory vs. Affectionate Loyalty

17 *Family loyalty* is at the root of the visit in all versions, but the German version portrays this loyalty largely as an obligation, whereas the other versions foreground affection and the empathetic emotional bond between mother and daughter, even though the male character is sidelined in many of the shots. Psychologist Müller-Hohagen (1994) defines loyalty as a "system of structured ethical demands and expectations" internalized unconsciously as a family obligation by the child which guides it throughout its life [Müller-Hohagen 1994, 48]. The chart (Figure 12) illustrates the dual nature of loyalty - incorporating aspects of obligation as well as affection and emotion - as it is realized in the different versions of the series. In the face of the lighthearted and ironically comical, and, for the male partner, self-deprecating reason to visit the mother (he states that "men have no principles" when the opportunity for oral sex arises), the German version closes with a confrontation and argument between the couple about how the male partner refuses to take money from the mother. The sequence after that shows the couple in front of the mother's apartment door, with the (out of frame) mother looking through the peep hole in a point-of-view shot, listening to the couple continue the argument about not taking money from the mother. There is a noticeable lack of warmth and intimacy between the couple in the German version compared to others, and this behavior is continued throughout the visit, during which irreconcilable differences between the male partner and the mother generate confrontation and derisive comments from

both of them. It is interesting to note that important sequences in the other versions are excluded in the German version. In these sequences, the male partner exhibits compassion and understanding for the mother or the daughter in spite of their differences.

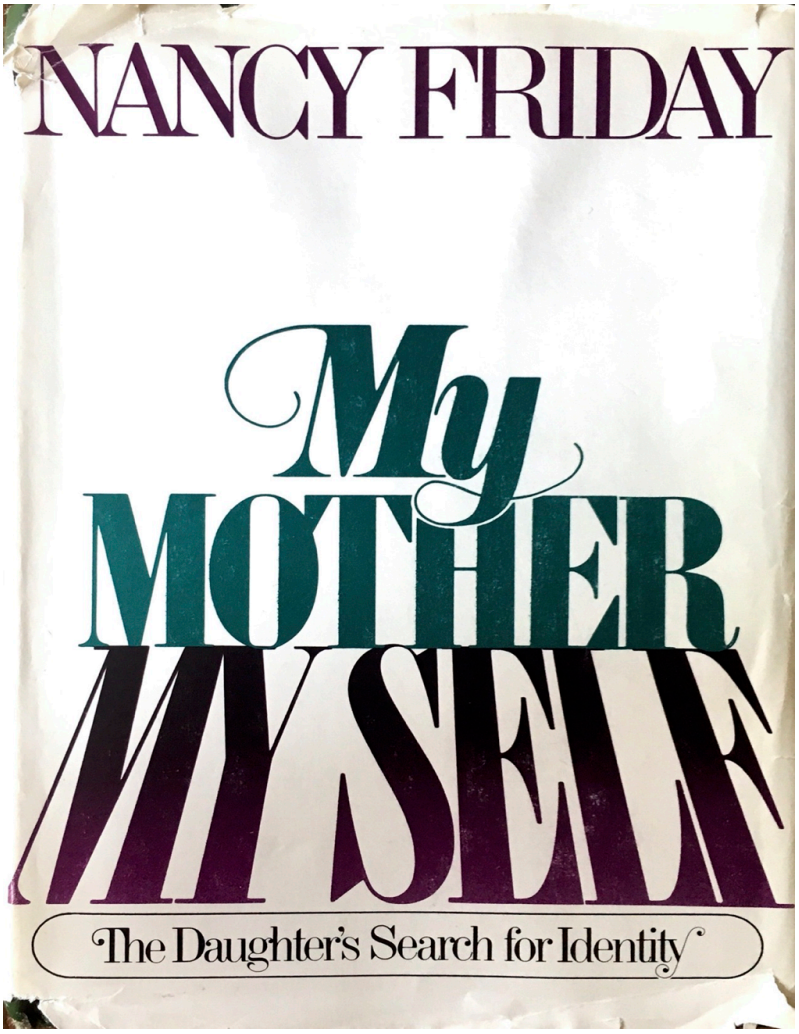

Figure 13. The cover of the original US-version of the book by Nancy Friday, to which different local versions of *Un Gars, Une Fille* made explicit reference in many local versions, excluding the German *Du und ich*.

Figure 14. The German edition of the Nancy Friday book, references to which were excluded in the German *Du und ich*.

Finally, instances of physical contact between the male and female partners - all of which are included in the other versions - are likewise not as prevalent in the German version. One of the excluded segments in the German version is a discussion introduced by the daughter about the Nancy Friday book *My Mother, My Self*, also published in Germany as *Wie meine Mutter* (*Like My Mother*) *My Mother My Self*. The daughter in the other versions uses this book to introduce the notion of trauma perpetrated upon the daughter by the mother, and engage the mother in a discussion about how the mother traumatized her in childhood. While there are variations on the activities created the trauma in the different versions - washing a beloved teddy bear in bleach by accident, refusing to let the daughter take a bath with the father, not giving porridge to the daughter before the father receives his own portion during a meal - it is significant that the notion of trauma in these versions is an individual psychological condition inflicted on the daughter by the mother with no further social consequences whatsoever and no trace of political or historical contextualization. In all other versions, the family relationship is depicted as a purely mother-daughter problem. 18

This stands in sharp contrast to notions of trauma at the heart of psychoanalytical practice in Germany, as well as to notions of trauma at the heart of social and political discourse in Germany as a result of World War II and the Nazi period. The lack of mention of trauma in the German version is glaring due to its prominent role in German historical and psychoanalytic discourse. This was intitiated by Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich with their 1967 book *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern* (*The Inability to Mourn*) and led to a broad array of subsequent investigations and publications of psychoanalytic practice into the role and effects of trauma in the transgenerational transmission of historical experiences in postwar German society since the 1940s. In comparing the German version of *Un Gars, Une Fille* with any one of the other versions, particularly those from countries whose populations were drastically affected by World 19

War 2 such as France, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Greece, Israel, and Italy, the political consequences of the psychological issues should be incorporated into the analysis. This would necessitate a much longer analysis than can be accomplished here.

The Political Roots of German Psychological Trauma

Generic concepts of trauma and traumatization focus on individual experiences considered potentially life-threatening. These are combined with overwhelming feelings of fear and helplessness, and processing is hindered by a lack of physical and mental or emotional resources [Hantke and Gorges 2012, 54]. Traumatization emerges after a particular event or series of events which are prevented from further processing and social or physical-psychological integration by the individual in its aftermath [Hantke and Gorges 2012, 56]. In the German context, trauma discourse has been applied to the postwar experiences of both victims and perpetrators of the Nazi period and entails a social and historical, transgenerational component that is intertwined with the individual experiences of the traumatized and their second and third generation offspring. Psychoanalysts in Germany, Israel and other countries have grappled with trauma among the victims and perpetrators. 20

Hondrich (2011) asserts that 55 to 60% of the German civilian population during the war had traumatic experiences, while approximately 30% were traumatized. In addition, Hondrich advocates including all European societies in the analysis of postwar trauma because according to him these societies also experienced trauma but there was no effort made to speak about the trauma nor engage in therapies to treat it, even though it deeply penetrated the personal biographies of many members of most of these other European societies. For this reason, the methodology employed in this comparative study, which investigates the intimate trauma-affected interconnection and layering of the personal and the political at the root of the encounter of the mother-in-law with the couple, could be paradigmatic for comparing other versions of this television format in other countries, particularly in light of the fact that other versions make explicit reference to trauma within the framework of Nancy Friday's book *My Mother, My Self*. The book, while it does not focus on trauma, still discusses the non-verbal transgenerational transmission of the contradictory sexual identities of being a sexual woman and partner to a male spouse on the one hand, and a non-sexual nurturer and provider of emotional security and love to all family members on the other. The nonverbal or paralinguistic transmission of these ambivalent identities participates in the same socialization and internalization processes as the traumatic experiences of the wartime and postwar generations. 21

In spite of its lack of its explicit mention in the German version, there are several signals of transgenerational trauma transmission in the mother-in-law scene. The first evidence is the shock of the mother upon hearing that the daughter has visited a psychologist, an event that would explicitly and implicitly violate the efforts to keep silent about family trauma and its transmission to further generations observed in patients of German psychoanalytic practitioners (A and M Mitcherlich, Haarmann, Müller-Hohagen, Bode, and a plethora of others). In addition to showing and admitting fear, such visits would reveal the de-coupling of fright from the traumatic experiences among the mother's post-war generation so repressed and denied by the subsequent generation [Bohleber 2011]. 22

The second piece of evidence is the response of the daughter to her mother that the two of them "never spoke about anything" in the family. This is a reference to what psychologists Frick-Baer and Baer (2015) and others point to as "keeping silent" about crimes of the Nazis and other forms of war-induced trauma. They concluded that this "speechlessness" facilitated the transmission of feelings of guilt to the second generation, who may not have directly experienced the cause of trauma, but were affected by its aftermath through the silence of the perpetrator generation [Baer and Frick-Baer 2015]. 23

The third indicator is the aforementioned transactional nature of the family relationship foregrounded for motivating the visit in which there is a noticeable deficit of affection between the couple. According to Gesine Schwan (72) and others, "Beschweigen" or "keeping silent" about the extent of culpability in the participation of Nazi atrocities, as well as about the trauma as a result of the wartime experiences such as expulsion, bombings, hunger, fear, rape, death, and atrocities against others affects the ability to feel and express empathy in political and personal life, develop trust in oneself and strangers, and accept responsibility for one's own life. Schwan speaks of *Gefühlskälte* (coldness of feeling), i.e., a lack 24

of emotional warmth and a sign of a damaged personality which seemed to prevail in many German families of the postwar period. Traditional pre-Nazi and Nazi varieties of masculine virtues as “hardness” (*Härte*), fulfillment of duty, self- sacrifice, and refusal of empathy were passed on to the postwar generation, which learned to hide their pain, but perpetuated the emotional emptiness induced by that behavior in interpersonal and social relationships practiced by their parents, which in turn was compensated for by the following generation in obsessions about work and pursuing a consumer lifestyle as a “new utopia” [Moser 1993] inherent in the “Stunde Null” or “Zero Hour” myth of the beginning of the German economic “miracle.”

25 One shot in the German version is shared among all other versions in almost unmodified form, and epitomizes the transactional instrumentalization of relationships characterizing that version to a greater extent than all others. In all versions, the mother is playing the board game *Monopoly* with the daughter and the daughter’s boyfriend, and the boyfriend is the first loser in the game and is thus the first to exit. This prompts the mother to mercilessly gloat about beating the male protagonist, while the daughter offers to bail out her partner, an impossibility since she has insufficient funds to do so. Still, the mother strenuously objects to the daughter’s bail-out attempt by claiming “winner’s rights” and displays a coarse ruthlessness towards the other two. The daughter vehemently protests to no avail, while her boyfriend is more than happy to put an end to his participation in the game. While the aggressive ruthlessness of the mother’s gaming strategy in the German version is framed as just one more aspect of the transactional and emotionally distanced relationship between the mother and the couple, in the other versions this kind of behavior is mitigated by other shots in which the mother and daughter are shown emotionally bonding over photographs, a shot that is missing in the German version. In addition, a further segment in the other versions features the boyfriend agreeing with the mother that she should rent out the daughter’s former room in the house/apartment, while the German version modifies the debate such that the mother appears to prefer the money to maintaining the daughter’s legacy in the house.

26 All of the above-mentioned indicators point to the disturbed dialog between the generations, a dialog which Schwan (1997: 126) considers crucial for the basic consensus of society about values and transgenerational relationships. Müller-Hohagen (1994: 45) emphasizes that the dialog between the generations was impaired by the war experiences of the perpetrator generation, their denial, guilt and silence such that the trust and loyalty in families, which are otherwise imbued in the child before its conscious awareness, are undermined by the contradiction that the parents are both the child’s enablers and protectors, but were also culpable in the crimes of the Nazis. Tilman Moser (1993) underscores the collusionary culpability of second generation children in creating what he calls the “contract” between the generations based on the de-realized ideal of child innocence at the core of parental silence. Through identification with the parental generation, the next generation learned to hide pain and fear. The children spared their parents from embarrassing and revelatory questions about their participation in the Nazi period in order to uphold the myth of the new beginning. Moser asserts that many of the repressed, denied, and manipulated experiences and values upheld by the Nazi regime were incorporated into the minds and behaviors of the war and postwar generations, but they were also transgenerationally transmitted to the third generations, something which he states is becoming harder and harder to recognize, especially since much of the transference of this influence is unconscious due to the fact that the children of the perpetrators, the passive supporters and victims kept silent and remained emotionally damaged instead of working through their trauma.

The Mother-Boyfriend Relationship: Adversarial Animosity vs Begrudging Competition

27 One of the most important segments in all other versions of *Un Gars, Une Fille* is the confrontation between the mother-in-law and the boyfriend. This segment is excluded from the German version with serious consequences for the narrative. In all other versions with the exception of the German, the adversarial relationship, mentioned in the pre-visit segment as the crucial reason the boyfriend needs extra persuasion to go along, is the topic of conversation between the mother-in-law and the boyfriend in the last shot before the end of the scene in the first part of the meeting, and helps reveal the reason for the animosity on the part of the mother. In this segment, the daughter, who is about to go to the toilet, admonishes both her mother and her boyfriend to behave themselves and not fight with each other during her absence. In most versions, the boyfriend then challenges the mother to state the reasons why she doesn’t like him. The

mother replies that the boyfriend looks dishonest and untrustworthy, and looks “like a polygamist.” This statement undermines the credibility and justification for her animosity toward the boyfriend since she uses an obsolete term for her prejudice that the boyfriend is unfaithful to the daughter and has affairs on the side. In addition, the term polygamy is a legal term that is invoked when a couple is married, which is not the case with the relationship between the boyfriend and the daughter. Finally, the couple has been together for more than five, and in most cases for seven years in most of the versions, including the German, so the couple is clearly in a long-term, committed, and stable family-like relationship that the mother is obviously unable to accept because they are not officially married.

28 In the German version of this series, the reason for the animosity between the mother and the boyfriend is never directly revealed nor resolved in an open conflict between the two. Compared to the other versions, in which there are several segments in which the two are able to treat each other with more magnanimity, the relationship between them in the German version is more adversarial and uncompromising, with merely a statement by the boyfriend stating to the daughter that her mother doesn’t like him because they are not married, but the mother herself never reveals the real reason for her hatred of the boyfriend and the needlessly destructive adversarial relationship between them is left unexplained. This could be interpreted as a further sign of “keeping silent” that characterizes the war-time and the postwar generation to which the mother belongs.

29 If one were to classify the mother as a member of the postwar generation, i.e., the second generation of wartime parents, she displays a need for maintaining the value of a traditional, conventional marriage in which a child is produced and she becomes a grandmother. Even though she herself is a divorcee whose doctor husband has left her, she still has no tolerance for ambiguities in the relationship between her daughter and her boyfriend. The fact that she is divorced, a status unique to the German version since in all other versions the father has died, signals that she is at least somewhat culpable in her — seemingly — “defective” (in her eyes) status, while the death of the father/husband would absolve her of any culpability. Perhaps she is trying to overcompensate her guilt and culpability in the divorce from her husband by displaying her belligerence to the boyfriend, to whom she is projecting her distrust of men in general.

30 This interpretation could be buttressed by the fact that another conversation in all other versions is omitted in the German, which is a discussion between the mother and her daughter about a former boyfriend. While the topic is unpleasant for the daughter since the relationship between her and the former boyfriend was years in the past, the mother still insists on pursuing it in the presence of her current partner, who has obviously been witness to this topic on previous occasions. He comments (ironically) to both that the old boyfriend must be gay because he maintains a Christmas-card correspondence with the mother throughout the years. Even though the mother’s remarks are directed against the current boyfriend, it provides a hint that perhaps not all men in general are questionable partners.

31 It is unclear if the mother adheres to a relationship with her daughter that could be what Bohleber (2011) considers to be “narcissistic,” one which egotistically instrumentalizes the children to satisfy the needs of the parent and not guide the children to be loving, self-sufficient, and independent personalities with their own identities. Psychologist Claudia Haarman, citing Diane Poole, explains several different types of narcissistic relationships between mothers and daughters, but it is ultimately unclear in the series if they have a “disorienting,” an “avoiding,” or an “ambivalent” relationship based on the depictions in the various shots of the mother-in-law scene in the German version. On the other hand, the mother seems less emotionally available to the daughter than in other versions: The German version eliminates the segment in which both mother and daughter enjoy looking at old family photographs together, which marginalizes and ignores the boyfriend. It also excluded a segment in which the mother mentions that either an aunt or a family friend has been injured in a car accident, a segment that is in all other versions. In some situations, the mother seems to be emotionally “available” to the daughter and exhibits a semblance of the nurturing role that typifies the role of the mother throughout childhood, while in other situations such as the monopoly game, she appears distant.

32 One particular instance in which the mother appears most distant is when the mother announces that she will be renting out the daughter’s former bedroom and requests that the daughter retrieve her belongings from the mother’s apartment. In all other versions of the series, the boyfriend agrees that the mother has the prerogative to undertake this step toward loosening relationship of both of them and letting go. In the German version of this series, however, the boyfriend

supports his girlfriend's protest against the mother's efforts at removing the daughter's cherished memorabilia from where she had grown up. The German version combines into one segment two different segments of the other versions with the result that the mother is depicted as emotionally unavailable to the daughter.

33 The aforementioned segment in the German version is a combination of a discussion in all other versions about the mother-daughter relationship initiated with the mention of the Nancy Friday book, a discussion which results in the daughter in tears because of the mother's insensitivity (and seeming emotional unavailability) to the mother-induced trauma. In several of the versions, the boyfriend consoles the daughter and is (falsely) accused by the mother of causing the daughter's distress, something which is plainly not the case. Because of the elimination of the confrontation between the boyfriend and the mother in the German version, this is the only instance of him consoling the daughter.

34 Still, if one were to take a comprehensive look at the relationships in the mother-in-law segment of the German version and compare these with other versions, it seems that in all versions the mother is irritated by the ambivalent nature of the relationship of her daughter with the boyfriend. If this were a traditional and conventional relationship of a married couple with a child, the mother would relinquish her role as nurturer to the boyfriend and evolve into a more equal partner with her daughter, in accordance with Nancy Friday's characterization of these types of mother-daughter relationships. Because of the non-traditional nature of her daughter's relationship with her boyfriend, however, the mother seems at times to be in competition with the boyfriend for the nurturing of the daughter. Friday asserts that the mother will lose this struggle due to the dual role of the daughter's male partner as both a nurturer (in place of the mother) and as sexual partner (which the mother is unable to fulfill). Friday emphasizes that both partners see in each other "an escape from the mother's rules, dependence, and control" [Friday 1977, 252]. While this is more prominent in the other versions — the consolation segment with regard to the non-pregnancy in the conflict scene between the mother and the boyfriend prompts a snide remark by the mother that it is hard to watch them embrace and be intimate with each other. In these other versions, the daughter becomes most upset with the mother in the face of trying to determine whether the mother wants to be "a friend" or a — nurturing "mother" to the daughter.

Contribution to Digital Humanities

35 Measuring the length and duration of the narrative structure, content, and sequencing of all different adaptations enables a means of precisely determining the additions, modifications, and deletions when making cross- cultural comparisons of various versions of television formats. As shown above, it is possible to identify those segments and frame these within global socio-cultural and political discourses — in this case about gender roles and identities and family conflict management strategies — operating in each local society and cross-culturally compare these with each other. This kind of methodology represents a multimodal critical discourse analysis of different versions which may be applied to a cross-cultural analysis. This kind of quantitative data represents an additional dimension of analysis which may be used to identify complex multimodal relationships that may be culturally determined, and contributes to revealing culturally, aesthetically, or discursively proximate multimodal patterns and interrelationships that would otherwise not be visible.

36 This study comprises a contribution to digital humanities that applies "computation to the disciplines of the humanities" [Berry and Fagerjord 2017, 3]. It opens new questions and comparative forms of analysis of societies and cultures by using computation to gather and compare data otherwise unavailable to hermeneutic processing and interpretation. The computer-derived quantitative multimodal data on the conflict between the mother-in-law and the boyfriend allows us to register culturally significant, yet quantitatively slight shifts in the placement of musical cues in the shots of both characters, which otherwise would not be immediately revealed in a comparative analysis.

37 From a narratological standpoint, drawing on computer-derived quantitative and qualitative data on the durations of multimodal narrative segments allows a more precise determination of narrative components explained by Jeremy Butler, such as the protagonist and antagonist and the amount of screen time devoted to them. For Butler (2012: 25), the protagonist of a film is a central character around which the story revolves and with whom an audience can identify. Especially in a case where the roles of protagonists may change and shift within a series or scene, placing a quantitative value on screen time may assist in defining the prominence of certain types of gender-specific roles,

relationships, and power distribution between the characters. The narrative enigma or dilemma [Butler 2012, 26], which represents the explicit or implicit question in a drama in the series *Un Gars, Une Fille*, revolves, in this scene, around the problematic mother-couple relationship. We used digital quantitative means for analyses to help decide if and how the conflictual relationship is resolved in the scene. Even though the German version varies substantially from the other versions in this respect, in none of the versions is the conflict definitively resolved. However, on the basis of different complexes of multimodal discursive components the empathy of the audience is directed to different characters on the basis of their identities and behaviors within the particular culturally specific narrative of the version.

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