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The Role of Films in Politics: The Representation of Boris Johnson in 'This England' TV Series*

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Abstract

Television series serve as tools for propaganda and influence, allowing political figures to manipulate public opinion and control how they are perceived. One notable example of this phenomenon can be seen in the representation of Boris Johnson in the TV series 'This England'. The representation of Johnson in the midst of scandals like Party Gate and the mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic tainted his public image as a reliable leader and a dependable Prime Minister. The resulting backlash against him was so severe that he was called to testify in the official COVID-19 inquiry (2023) following his compelled resignation. The filming of the 'This England' during his time in office and its airing just 22 days after his departure, appeared as an effort to repair his damaged image. The significance of this study resides in its contribution to our comprehension of the multifaceted ways in which television series can shape public perception of political leadership and contribute to broader societal and political discourse. Utilizing qualitative content analysis and drawing on Stuart Hall's theory of representation, this paper explores the nuanced depiction of Johnson's leadership and contributes to our understanding of how television series can shape political narratives.

Keywords: Boris Johnson, Britain, COVID-19 Pandemic, Representation, This England

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1. Introduction

The tradition of political cinema began in the early 20th century with silent films like D.W. Griffith's "The Birth of a Nation" (1915), which, despite its controversial and racist content, was one of the first films to depict political themes such as the Civil War and Reconstruction. Political films have since evolved to cover a wide range of subjects, from biopics of political leaders to dramatizations of historical events and explorations of political ideologies. During the post-World War II and Cold War era, political films and series became more prominent. Movies like "All the President's Men" (1976) about the Watergate scandal and "Dr. Strangelove" (1964), a satirical take on Cold War anxieties, directed by Stanley Kubrick, highlighted the complexities and often the absurdities of political life. Technological advancements in filmmaking and distribution have also broadened the reach and impact of political films and series. Streaming platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Hulu have made it easier for global audiences to access these productions, fostering a more interconnected and informed public. This increased accessibility has democratized the consumption of political media, allowing diverse voices and stories to reach a wider audience.

Political films and series play a significant role in shaping public discourse about governance, ethics, and specific impacts of political decisions on a given society. In the modern era, political films and series have diversified in terms of both content and perspective. Television series such as "The West Wing" (1999-2006) offered an idealized view of American politics, emphasizing the importance of democratic values and ethical leadership. Conversely, "House of Cards" (2013-2018) provided a more cynical and dark portrayal of political machinations, reflecting

growing public disenchantment with political institutions. These political films and series educate audiences about historical events, political systems, and the lives of political figures. For example, "John Adams" (2008) offers insights into the American Revolution and the early years of the United States, while "Lincoln" (2012) provides a deep dive into Abraham Lincoln's presidency and the abolition of slavery. These dramatizations help viewers understand complex political and historical contexts in an engaging and accessible manner. The modern landscape of political films and series has transformed television shows and movies into tools of power and influence through the fusion of entertainment and political commentary. This tradition is not exclusive to the US, as countries like the UK also boast a rich history of politically themed films and series such as "Yes Minister" (1980), "A Very British Coup" (1988), and "The Crown" (2016-2023). One of the latest examples of this tradition is the "This England" TV series, which presents a picture where politics and history mix, focusing on a key figure during the pandemic – the ex-Prime Minister of Britain, Boris Johnson. "This England" navigates the complexities of the British society and its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a particular focus on the portrayal of the former British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson.

The above historical overview sets the stage for understanding the evolution and significance of political films and series in shaping public discourse and awareness. The central case study in this paper, the "This England" TV series, represents a contemporary example of the rich tradition of politically themed films and series. This specific case study connects to the historical overview by demonstrating the ongoing influence of television shows and movies as tools of power and influence, particularly in

their portrayal of political figures and events. By referencing "This England," the paper illustrates the way in which this tradition has persisted into the modern era. It highlights how contemporary productions continue to delve into political narratives, often focusing on key figures and significant events, such as the portrayal of Boris Johnson amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This connection emphasizes the enduring impact and relevance of political films and series in shaping public perceptions and understanding of political and historical contexts and figures (Zachariah, 2011).

Boris Johnson's tenure as Prime Minister was marked by significant challenges, including allegations of racism that cast a shadow over his leadership (Woodcock, 2019). However, among the myriad hurdles that he faced, the 'Partygate' scandal and his handling of the COVID-19 crisis stood out prominently. In April 2022, senior Conservative MP Mark Harper publicly declared that Boris Johnson was no longer fit to serve as Prime Minister following the "Partygate" scandal, in which Johnson was fined for attending a birthday party at No 10 during strict COVID-19 restrictions. Harper criticized Johnson for violating the laws he had imposed on the public, and for not being straightforward about his actions. Harper emphasized the need for a leader who exemplifies the values advocated by the government, particularly in times of international crisis, such as the conflict in Ukraine. This sentiment reflects a significant discontent within the Conservative Party, highlighting the ethical and leadership challenges facing Johnson amidst ongoing scrutiny and public backlash (Hancock & Atkinson, 2022). The filming of the 'This England' TV series (2022) during his time in office appeared to be an effort to repair his damaged image. The production of the 'This England' TV series

in 2022 during his premiership seemingly aimed at rehabilitating his tarnished image.

"This England", a six-part drama series produced by Sky, depicts the initial period of Boris Johnson's tenure as UK Prime Minister, focusing particularly on his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. Created by Michael Winterbottom and Kieran Quirke, the series features Kenneth Branagh, whose remarkable transformation into Johnson has gotten significant attention. The cast also includes Andrew Buchan as Matt Hancock, Ophelia Lovibond as Carrie Johnson, and Simon Paisley-Day as Dominic Cummings. The narrative covers Johnson's contentious leadership and his personal battle with the coronavirus, while highlighting the relentless efforts of scientists, nurses, and doctors during the crisis. "This England" was set to premiere on Sky Atlantic and NowTV on September 21, 2022, offering an in-depth exploration of this pivotal chapter in the British history (Cook, 2022, p. 1).

The series not only dramatizes the political and public health challenges faced during the pandemic, but also delves into the personal lives of those at the heart of the government. Kenneth Branagh's portrayal of Boris Johnson is anticipated to provide a nuanced view of the Prime Minister, showcasing both his public persona and private struggles (Cook, 2022, p. 1).

This study aims to understand the way in which Boris Johnson's time as Prime Minister is shown in the series, looking at how his leadership is portrayed visually and in ideas. Understanding the essence of the series involves looking at how it portrays Boris Johnson. Johnson's character is shown in a detailed way, depicting his journey from being a regular person to becoming a leader. His appearances in the series are not frequent, making viewers think

and reflect, showing that this was intentional. It highlights how he serves as a lens, through which viewers see not only the pandemic's impact, but also the broader picture of British leadership. In short, "This England" mixes its cinematic storytelling with layers of historical and political importance, showing how leadership, governance, and significant events shape an era.

The research question guiding this study is 'How is Boris Johnson's premiership represented in this series?', as well as "What is the importance of the Coronavirus mis/management in the representation of Boris Johnson?" Through these research questions, the study seeks to explore the connections between television series, culture, and society. The study employs a qualitative approach in order to answer these questions. The data collected from a comprehensive sample of episodes from the series, using a coding scheme developed specifically for this study. The findings of this study will be of interest to scholars in media studies, sociology, and cultural studies, as well as to practitioners in the television industry. By examining the themes, characters, and storylines in a systematic way, this study contributes to our understanding of the ways in which television series create and shape political narratives and practices.

2. Series Overview

"This England" looks at the way in which the British government dealt with the health crisis following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and Boris Johnson's early days as Prime Minister. This drama gives a different view of how the government managed the pandemic, mixing stories of regular people with politics (Keller, 2023, p. 1). The series shines because of Sir Kenneth Branagh's

performance as Boris Johnson. Even though it is difficult to capture all of Johnson's quirks and unique way of talking, Branagh does a great job, including his funny jokes and quotes from Shakespeare. But the series also admits that it does not reveal a significant amount of new information about the real person behind the public figure. Still, as the story goes on, we hope to see a deeper look into Johnson's character. The series starts with scenes of Boris Johnson becoming Prime Minister and meeting Queen Elizabeth II. We also get glimpses of his then-fiancée, Carrie Symonds, adding a personal touch to the story (Keller, 2023, p. 1).

Alongside the political interest, "This England" also highlights the experiences of ordinary people battling the virus and, at times, succumbing to it. The series presents intense snapshots of their lives, adding emotional depth to the overall storyline. Impersonations of key figures, such as Carrie Symonds (played by Ophelia Lovibond), Matt Hancock (portrayed by Andrew Buchan), and Rishi Sunak (played by Shri Patel), contribute to the series' entertainment value. However, the series falls short in creating a truly compelling villain. Dominic Cummings is depicted as a monomaniacal strategist focused on winning at all costs, while other key figures appear more glib than malicious. Nevertheless, the real power lies in the portrayal of the victims—the elderly residents of care homes, the dedicated care workers, and ailing individuals and families affected by the pandemic. Their stories evoke empathy and provide a hard reminder of the human toll of the crisis.

The series incorporates comic touches, such as Boris Johnson's phone calls to his numerous children, and stylized nightmares that add depth to the character's psyche. The persistent drumming on the soundtrack attempts to heighten tension, but there is no clear

crisis or resolution in sight, as the series acknowledges the ongoing nature of the pandemic and concludes with factual information about the number of infections and deaths in the UK by May 2020, along with footage of the real-life Cummings expressing his opinions on the government's response. While the series could have taken a more forensic approach, the events depicted serve as a reminder of the need for further examination and accountability. For those seeking a fully-fledged documentary or a scathing political satire, it successfully captures the essence of the crisis and its impact on both the political landscape and the lives of ordinary people. With outstanding performances, thought-provoking storytelling, and a blend of fact and fiction, "This England" offers a compelling portrayal of a critical period in recent history (Keller, 2023, p. 1).

At the heart of the series is Sir Kenneth Branagh's outstanding performance as Boris Johnson. Branagh effortlessly embodies Johnson's quirks and mannerisms, from his distinctive speech patterns to his theatrical presence. While the portrayal may not reveal much new information about the real Johnson, Branagh's interpretation adds depth and authenticity to the character, allowing viewers to engage with the complexities of his role during a challenging time. It should be mentioned that the series shines in its ability to weave together the political landscape and the experiences of ordinary people. By interconnecting government offices, health bodies, and the lives of individuals affected by the crisis, the series provides a comprehensive view of the pandemic's impact on the society. From the initial reports of a "Sars-like virus" in Wuhan to the development of a COVID vaccine, the narrative unfolds with a sense of urgency, drawing viewers into the unfolding events.

As the series progresses, it successfully integrates moments of levity and comic relief, providing a balanced emotional experience. These touches, along with a persistent drumming on the soundtrack, effectively build tension and heighten the sense of urgency throughout the narrative. In its final moments, "This England" concludes with factual information about the impact of the pandemic in the UK and a real-life footage of Cummings expressing his views on the government's response. While the series could have taken a more forensic approach to dissecting the events, these closing moments serve as a catalyst for further examination and reflection.

3. Hypothesis

The portrayal of political figures in television series and movies aims to influence public perception and political outcomes. The representation of Boris Johnson in the TV series 'This England' (2022) during his tenure as Prime Minister, amidst scandals such as the Party Gate and the mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic, aims to repair his public image. This study hypothesizes that media representations, when aligned with critical events and controversies, can either rehabilitate or further damage the perceived credibility and leadership qualities of political figures. This hypothesis suggests that the depiction of Boris Johnson in 'This England' can influence the public perception of his leadership qualities. The hypothesis implies that media representations play a significant role in shaping political narratives and public opinion, which can have tangible consequences for political figures.

4. Conceptual Framework

This paper based its theoretical framework on cultural studies and representation theory, with a specific focus on the contributions of Hall. Hall's work (1980) with the Open University cultural studies team in the 1990s offers a profound framework for understanding representational practices, illuminating how representation both shapes and is shaped by the surrounding world. Hall's insights into representation are critical, providing a nuanced lens through which one can investigate the processes that it influences. This conceptual framework introduces culture as a dynamic representational system, urging readers to grasp the complexity of culturalism and structuralism. Hall's theory of representation (1997) is a significant concept in cultural studies, which focuses on the way in which meaning is constructed and conveyed through various forms of representation such as language, images, symbols, and media. In simple terms, the representation is not simply a reflection of reality, but rather a complex process of encoding and decoding meaning. In this regard, meanings are not fixed, but are shaped by society, culture, and power dynamics. It scrutinizes the dynamic nature of meaning production, with language serving as a central medium.

Representation is intricately linked to notions of a pre-existing reality, the functions assigned by producers, and the dual role of constructing and being constructed by language. This dynamic interplay highlights that representation can emphasize certain meanings while suppressing others either constraining or expanding the spectrum of possible interpretations. The meaning derived from any representation is inherently unstable, perpetually evolving, and interwoven with a myriad of potential meanings (Leve, 2012).

The text probes the intricate facets of representation,

distinguishing between mental and material representation, and elucidating the influence of social institutions on various forms of representation (Karamollahi & Dehghani, 1393 [2015 A.D.]). The creation of textual representations involves numerous contributing roles: producers, creators, actors, models, fund providers, instigators, consumers, onlookers, researchers, potential customers, and passers-by. These representations and the meanings they carry are pervasive, constantly bombarding us. The endeavour to create and anchor specific messages or meanings to representations is crucial for those tasked with constructing and preserving the value of a commodity. This underscores the integral role of representation in the commodification process (Leve, 2012, p. 2).

Hall's theory also emphasizes the role of ideology, stereotypes, and cultural norms in shaping our understanding of the world through representations. Hall emphasizes the role of ideology in shaping representations. Ideology refers to the beliefs, values, and norms that underpin social structures and institutions. Representations often reflect and reinforce dominant ideologies, influencing the ways in which we perceive and understand the world. Hall also explores how representations can be used as a tool of power and control. Dominant groups in society often have the power to shape representations in ways that maintain their privilege and authority, while marginalized groups may struggle to have their voices heard or represented accurately. Representation extends beyond mere depiction and enters the realm of influence, where it actively shapes and is shaped by societal norms, power structures, and ideologies. This dynamic nature means that representation can reinforce or challenge existing power relations, making it a powerful tool in both maintaining and transforming social constructs. For instance, media representation of gender roles can

either perpetuate stereotypes or contribute to their dismantling, influencing public perceptions and individual self-concepts. Moreover, the role of representation in education is particularly significant. It affects the ways in which educational content is delivered and received, impacting students' understanding of the world and their place within it. By critically examining how different groups and ideas are represented in educational materials, educators and policymakers can work towards more inclusive and accurate portrayals, thereby fostering a more equitable learning environment (Leve, 2012, p. 8).

Hall also introduces the concept of encoding and decoding in the process of representation. Encoding refers to the ways in which messages are constructed by producers of media or culture, while decoding refers to how audiences interpret and make sense of these messages. He highlights that different social groups may decode representations in various ways due to their unique cultural backgrounds and experiences. Overall, Hall's theory of representation invites us to critically analyse and question the ways in which meaning is created and communicated in society, highlighting the complexities and power dynamics inherent in processes of representation (Hall, 1997). The impact of representation is also evident in the arts and literature, where it can shape cultural narratives and collective memory. Artists and writers often engage with representation to comment on social issues, challenge dominant paradigms, and offer alternative perspectives. This creative engagement not only reflects, but also influences societal attitudes and beliefs, highlighting the reciprocal relationship between representation and reality. Representation is a multifaceted and dynamic process that plays a crucial role in the construction and interpretation of meanings (Leve, 2012).

By analysing representations critically and recognizing the complexities of meaning-making processes, Hall's theory provides a framework for understanding how culture, media, and language shape our perceptions and beliefs. It encourages us to interrogate the underlying assumptions and power dynamics embedded in representations and to consider how meaning is constructed and contested in society. It is to this extent that this paper, by adopting Hall's theory, decodes the representation of Boris Johnson in 'This England' TV series and sheds light on the different aspects of portrayal of his leadership amidst COVID-19 era.

5. Methodology

The method for data collection and data analysis was qualitative content analysis—the research approach that is among the most applicable in film critique (Bryman, 2012). Content analysis emerges as a crucial research technique in social sciences, involving the analysis of both material events and symbolic phenomena without disrupting social reality (Krippendorff, 1980). Qualitative content analysis is described as a common approach to qualitative document analysis, emphasizing the researcher's role in constructing meaning from the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This method provides a unique perspective, focusing on the process of data analysis and symbolic scenes rather than the traditional meaning of the message. Content analysis is a tool for inferring repeatability and validity, emphasizing its role in processing scientific data and providing new insights into reality. The application of content analysis extends to TV series analysis, proving relevant for unravelling patterns, themes, and social-cultural phenomena within this medium. This paper employed

qualitative content analysis to analyse the way in which Boris Johnson's premiership is portrayed in the era of COVID-19 pandemic and in the UK political landscape. To this end, different characters, dialogues, scenes, and moments of these series were coded. Coding and analysing processes were carried out through initial and axial coding processes based on Grounded Theory's analytical guidelines. More specifically, the coding process started with *open/initial coding*, which offered initial categories and concepts such as 'victimising Boris Johnson' and 'family man'. This stage was rather descriptive, in which we identify, label and to some extent interpret the characters, dialogues, scenes, and moments, which stand for a specific concept. In the next stage, the axial coding was carried out in order to identify the relationship between different categories and develop them into conceptual families (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These conceptual families, as the most important categories and findings of this paper, are explained in the next section. At the end, through selective coding, the relationships between different conceptual families were developed.

To illustrate the coding process, in the initial coding stage, data such as characters, dialogues, scenes, and moments were systematically labelled and categorized into preliminary concepts such as 'victimizing Boris Johnson' and 'a man of family'. These initial codes provided a descriptive foundation for identifying and interpreting recurring themes and character traits. Subsequently, axial coding was conducted to establish relationships between the initial categories and develop them into conceptual families or themes. This stage aimed to uncover deeper connections and patterns within the data, facilitating a more nuanced understanding of how Boris Johnson's portrayal evolved throughout the series.

The resulting conceptual families represent the core findings of the study, highlighting significant aspects of Johnson's character and leadership depicted in "This England". Lastly, selective coding involved refining and solidifying the relationships between the conceptual families identified through axial coding. This stage further synthesized the data to elucidate overarching themes and their implications, ultimately contributing to a comprehensive analysis of Johnson's portrayal in relation to political leadership and public perception.

6. Findings: Humanizing Johnson's Leadership and Advocating for Empathy

The qualitative content analysis of the 'This England' TV series indicates that through intricate character development and a compelling portrayal of Boris Johnson's leadership evolution, his actions and decisions were portrayed in a more humane light, ultimately fostering a sense of empathy. The key character portrayals identified include an emotional Boris Johnson, Johnson as a figure of victimhood, drawing inspiration from Shakespearean motifs, conveying a sense of guilt, depicting Johnson's role in social media, portraying him as a family man, and presenting him as a responsible leader.

6. 1. Emotional Boris Johnson

In Season 1 Episode 6, "A Nation in Flux" (01:01:03), Boris Johnson's emotional return to Downing Street serves as an intense reflection of leadership amidst hardship. The episode portrays Johnson's inner confusion and achievement with a depth that resonates with viewers, offering insights into the human experience

behind the political face. Through masterful storytelling and nuanced character development, the series invites viewers to empathize with Johnson's journey, navigating the complexities of leadership in a raging world. The camera captures the weight of responsibility cut on Johnson's face as he grapples with the horrifying task of leading a nation through crisis. His moments of vulnerability are set with scenes of resilience, showcasing the multifaceted nature of leadership. In addition, the episode offers glimpses into Johnson's interactions with his inner circle, revealing the complex dynamics of political relationships during times of crisis. Viewers witness moments of fellowship and tension as Johnson consults with advisors and colleagues, highlighting the collaborative nature of decision-making in government. These behind-the-scenes insights provide a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by leaders as they navigate competing interests and diverse perspectives. As the episode unfolds, viewers are drawn into Johnson's emotional landscape, experiencing the highs and lows alongside him. The cheers of his supporters serve as a reminder of the public scrutiny and expectations placed upon him, while his private moments reveal the personal toll of leadership. These intimate glimpses into Johnson's inner world humanize him, transcending the political divide to evoke empathy and understanding from viewers.

Moreover, the episode prompts reflection on the broader themes of leadership and resilience in the face of hardship. Johnson's journey serves as a micro world of the challenges faced by leaders around the world, highlighting the importance of emotional intelligence and steadfast resolve in times of crisis. By delving into Johnson's emotional depth, the series elevates the discourse surrounding leadership, encouraging viewers to consider the

personal sacrifices and struggles that accompany positions of power. In essence, Season 1 Episode 6 of "A Nation in Flux" offers a compelling portrayal of leadership in tumultuous times, shedding light on the human side of political figures. Through its exploration of Johnson's emotional journey, the series promotes empathy and introspection, challenging viewers to consider the complexities of leadership and the resilience required to navigate uncertain land. Furthermore, the episode serves as a reminder of the connectedness between personal emotions and political decisions. Johnson's internal conflicts and moments of doubt underscore the profound impact of leadership on individuals' lives, as well as the broader societal implications of governmental actions. By making up together the personal and political dimensions of Johnson's story, the series prompts viewers to consider the human cost of leadership decisions and the importance of empathy in shaping effective governance. In doing so, "A Nation in Flux" transcends its role as simple entertainment, becoming a thought-bothering exploration of the complexity of leadership and the human experience in times of crisis.

6. 2. Johnson as Victim

Episode 5, "In Sickness and in Scandal", provides a compelling narrative of Boris Johnson's battle with COVID-19. This episode offers a nuanced portrayal of the Prime Minister's struggle, shedding light on the physical and emotional toll of the disease. Set against the backdrop of St. Thomas' Hospital, viewers witness Johnson's raw confrontation with the realities of the pandemic, empty of the typical mask of political authority. Beyond the personal struggles depicted, the episode highlights the ripple effects of his illness on governmental decision-making and public trust.

Johnson's condition not only affects his ability to lead, but also raises concerns about the stability of leadership during a crisis. This portrayal prompts viewers to consider the resilience of democratic institutions and the importance of contingency planning in ensuring continuity of governance. By exploring the intersection of personal health and political leadership, the episode sparks critical conversations about the fragility of power and the necessity of effective leadership in times of uncertainty.

By portraying Johnson as a victim of the virus, the series humanizes him, eliciting empathy from viewers and breaking down barriers between a leader and the audience. This portrayal serves as an intense reminder that even the most powerful figures are susceptible to hardship, promoting a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in leadership roles. This episode offers a glimpse into the human side of Boris Johnson's leadership amidst hardship. Beyond the political ramifications of his illness, the episode reveals Johnson's vulnerability and the emotional toll of his health struggles. Viewers witness the Prime Minister grappling with fear, uncertainty, and the weight of responsibility, humanizing him in a way that transcends supporter divides. This portrayal can promote empathy and understanding among viewers, reminding them that leaders, too, are subject to the same trials and tribulations as ordinary individuals. By portraying Johnson's journey with authenticity and compassion, the episode serves as an intense reminder of the shared humanity that unites us all, irrespective of political differences. Furthermore, Episode 5 prompts reflection on the broader implications of Johnson's illness. Beyond his personal struggles, the episode underscores the impact of his health on national governance and public perception. Johnson's battle with COVID-19 serves as a hard reminder of the vulnerability of

leadership in the face of a global crisis, raising questions about the continuity of government and the resilience of political institutions. Through this lens, viewers are encouraged to consider the connectedness of personal health and public leadership, prompting discourse on the role of transparency and accountability in times of uncertainty.

6. 3. Shakespearean Inspirations

The series hints at Boris Johnson's complex identity and his connections to important figures like Winston Churchill and Shakespeare, suggesting a thematic depth that goes beyond simple politics. By drawing on Shakespearean influences, the show promises moments of heightened drama, intricate character interactions, and thematic richness reminiscent of classic plays. Johnson's literary ties are expected to infuse the narrative with symbolic significance, whether through stirring speeches echoing Shakespearean rhetoric, political movement mirroring the complexities of Shakespearean tragedy or subtle references to iconic characters. This hints at a narrative that transcends contemporary politics, delving into timeless themes that resonate across centuries. Moreover, the exploration of Shakespearean inspirations offers a framework for interpreting Johnson's actions and decisions within the series. Themes of power, ambition, and the human condition are mixed into the narrative, improving the storytelling and inviting audiences to engage with the series at a deeper, more symbolic level. By incorporating these literary elements, the series elevates itself beyond a mere retelling of political events, offering a nuanced exploration of leadership and morality.

Viewers can anticipate moments of profound self-questioning as

Johnson grapples with the weight of his decisions against the backdrop of Shakespearean themes. Through this approach, the series not only entertains, but also prompts reflection on the complexities of leadership and the timeless questions of morality and ambition. Furthermore, by making up Shakespearean inspirations into the fabric of the narrative, the series creates a sense of universality that transcends the political context. Audiences from diverse backgrounds can find common ground in the themes explored, promoting a deeper connection to the characters and their struggles. This broad appeal ensures that the series resonates with viewers on a personal level, sparking conversations and contemplation long after the credits rotate. Ultimately, the incorporation of literary elements elevates the series to a level of artistic sophistication, establishing it as a compelling exploration of both political interest and timeless human puzzle.

Additionally, the incorporation of Shakespearean elements serves to contextualize Boris Johnson's actions within a broader cultural and historical framework. By drawing parallels between Johnson's leadership and the timeless themes explored in Shakespeare's works, the series prompts viewers to consider the enduring relevance of literature in understanding contemporary events. This interplay between past and present invites audiences to reflect on the cyclical nature of history and the ways in which human behaviour transcends worldly boundaries. Through this lens, Johnson's character becomes not just a political figure, but also a symbol of larger societal forces at play, adding depth and nuance to the narrative. Thus, the addition of Shakespearean inspirations not only improves the storytelling, but also enhances the series' capacity to provoke thought and inspire meaningful dialogue about the intersection of literature, politics, and culture. In

conclusion, the series' utilization of Shakespearean influences adds depth and complexity to its storytelling, offering audiences a rich and multifaceted narrative experience. Through its exploration of Johnson's literary connections, the series transcends its political backdrop, inviting viewers to engage with themes of power, ambition, and morality in a way that goes beyond the confines of contemporary politics.

6. 4. A Sense of Guilt

Boris Johnson's vulnerable moments during the COVID-19 pandemic suggest a profound sense of guilt, intricately woven into the narrative. This theme is poised to unfold as a nuanced exploration of the consequences of Johnson's decisions, both on a personal and political level. The series is expected to navigate the complexity of guilt, presenting it as a complex emotion that adds depth to the character. Viewers may be taken on a journey through Johnson's internal confusion, witnessing moments of reflection, regret, and a deep sense of accountability. In Episode 5 (minute 20:07), the inclusion of dream sequences that magnify the weight of guilt further emphasizes the depth and self-questioning in Johnson's character during these challenging times. The series, in its exploration of guilt, challenges simplistic narratives surrounding political figures, opting to showcase the internal struggles inherent in leadership and highlighting the moral ambiguity associated with decision-making in times of crisis. This multi-layered portrayal invites audiences to grapple with the complexities of guilt within the context of political leadership.

Expanding on this theme, the series delves into the origins of Johnson's guilt, exploring the pivotal moments and decisions that contributed to his internal conflict. Viewers could gain insight into

the moral puzzle faced by Johnson as he navigates the challenges of governing during a global pandemic. Through flashbacks or introverted monologues, the series could provide a deeper understanding of the psychological toll of leadership and the weight of responsibility on Johnson's shoulders. Moreover, the portrayal of guilt in the series could extend beyond Johnson himself to surround the broader societal implications of his actions. Viewers may witness the ripple effects of his decisions on the lives of ordinary citizens, highlighting the ethical considerations involved in governance. By examining the connectedness of individual and collective guilt, the series adds layers of complexity to its narrative, prompting viewers to reflect on their own roles and responsibilities within the society.

Furthermore, the exploration of guilt offers opportunities for character development and redemption arcs within the series. As Johnson confronts his past mistakes and seizes the consequences of his actions, viewers may witness his development as a leader and as a human being. This journey of self-discovery adds depth to the narrative and allows for a nuanced portrayal of growth and resilience in the face of hardship. By portraying Johnson's internal conflict and accountability, the series invites viewers to confront their own ethical considerations and responsibilities within their communities. This parallelism between Johnson's personal struggles and the collective conscience of society underscores the universal nature of guilt and the complexities of human behaviour in navigating difficult decisions. Through this lens, the series transcends its portrayal of a single individual and becomes a narration on the human condition, prompting viewers to introspect and engage in meaningful discourse about the moral fabric of society. Thus, the exploration of guilt not only adds depth to

Johnson's character, but also promotes a deeper understanding of the ethical challenges inherent in governance and leadership. In conclusion, the exploration of guilt in the series provides an emotional and thematic depth, inviting viewers to engage with the complex questions of morality and accountability. Through its portrayal of Johnson's internal struggles and the broader societal implications of his decisions, the series challenges simplistic narratives and offers a thought-bothering exploration of the complexities of leadership in times of crisis.

6. 5. Johnson as a Man of Social Media

In the context of Johnson's engagement with social media, the narrative unfolds as a dynamic exploration of his role in the digital age. The series delves into Johnson's adept use of platforms like Instagram, X, and other social media channels as tools for political communication and image management. Viewers witness Johnson actively engaging with the public through video messages, utilizing social media as a primary medium to report on government initiatives, share critical updates, and connect with colleagues and the wider population. At minute 41:48, an instance shows Boris talking online with the British people, while having COVID-19, emphasizing his reliance on digital communication during the pandemic. The series offers glimpses into the behind-the-scenes efforts of Johnson's communication team, illustrating how carefully video messages on platforms like Instagram contribute to the construction and maintenance of his public image. Whether addressing the nation about pandemic-related policies, sharing insights into the government's decision-making processes, or providing a more personal look into his daily life, Johnson's use of social media becomes a central element in shaping the narrative of

his leadership during unprecedented times. Furthermore, the exploration of Johnson as the man of social media delves into the challenges and nuances of using digital platforms for political communication, including instances of public backlash, controversies sparked by his online presence, and the impact of viral moments, adding layers to the narrative and inviting audiences to reflect on the intersection of political leadership, digital communication, and the unique challenges posed by the pandemic.

Furthermore, the series delves into the impact of Johnson's social media presence on public perception and political discourse. By analysing the reception of Johnson's posts, tweets, and videos, the narrative could explore how social media shape public opinion and influences the political landscape. Instances of viral content, trending hashtags, and online debates sparked by Johnson's digital interactions provide insights into the power dynamics at play in the digital age. Moreover, the series highlights the role of social media in developing certain narratives, disseminating misinformation, and shaping the agenda of public discourse. The series offers deeper insights into the strategies employed by Johnson's communication team to optimize his social media presence. Viewers might gain a behind-the-scenes look at the brainstorming sessions, content creation processes, and analytics assessments that inform Johnson's online interactions. By showcasing the strict planning and execution involved in crafting Johnson's digital persona, the series provides a nuanced understanding of the complexities of modern political communication.

As Johnson navigates comments, questions, and criticisms from online users, the series explores the ways in which social media platforms have transformed the dynamics of public discourse and accountability in governance. From live Q&A sessions to

interactive polls and surveys, Johnson's engagement with the online community offers a window into the evolving role of technology in shaping political participation and accountability. Through these interactions, the series underscores the importance of transparency, accessibility, and responsiveness in modern political leadership, prompting viewers to consider the implications of digital democracy in an increasingly interconnected world.

6. 6. A Man of Family

'This England' delves into Boris Johnson's personal struggles during the COVID-19 pandemic and presents, at the same time, an intense exploration of his role as a family man. As the series delves into his relationships, viewers are presented with a more intimate portrayal of Johnson beyond his political persona. Moments such as urging him to seek hospitalization and efforts to connect with his family underscore a narrative that transcends the political sphere. The series navigates the delicate balance between public and private life, portraying Johnson not only as a leader, but as an individual navigating the challenges of family dynamics amidst a crisis. By making up personal relationships into the narrative, the series provides a holistic and empathetic view of Boris Johnson, allowing audiences to connect with the man behind the political figure. At minute 47:23, an instance shows Boris calling his children for a party, but they do not answer, highlighting the complexities of his familial relationships during trying times. The exploration of Johnson's familial dynamics may unfold in layers, revealing the tensions, sacrifices, and moments of vulnerability that characterize his role as a family man. As the series peels back the layers of his personal life, viewers may find themselves emotionally invested in the human aspects of leadership, transcending the political narrative to reveal the complexities of a

man navigating the intersection of family and crisis. Additionally, moments like Kerry and Boris hosting a baby shower at the iconic Checkers offer a brief respite, but the gravity of the situation is reflected in the government's increasingly severe response, including travel bans, underscoring the urgency of containing the disease's spread.

Furthermore, the portrayal of Boris Johnson's family life offers a glimpse into the challenges faced by leaders in balancing their personal and professional responsibilities. The series delves into the pressures placed on Johnson as he seizes with the demands of leadership while also trying to be present for his loved ones. From missed family gatherings to late-night phone calls with loved ones, the narrative humanizes Johnson's experience, depicting the toll of leadership on his personal relationships. Through these intimate moments, the series provide deeper understanding of the sacrifices made by public figures (especially Johnson) in service of their roles, promoting empathy and appreciation for the complexities of leadership. The exploration of Boris Johnson's familial dynamics serves as a reflection of broader societal trends and values. The series contextualizes Johnson's experiences within the context of contemporary family life, exploring themes such as work-life balance, generational differences, and the developing nature of parenthood. By situating Johnson's family within the larger societal framework, the narrative offers a narration on the challenges faced by individuals and families in navigating the complexities of modern life.

6. 7. A Responsible Leader

In the 5th episode, Johnson's vulnerability is obvious as he seizes with the gravity of the pandemic and its impact on both personal and political levels. Scenes portraying his moments of self-

questioning and uncertainty are set with the relentless demands of leadership, highlighting the complexity of his role in navigating unprecedented challenges. By humanizing Johnson's experience, the series invites viewers to empathize with the pressures and responsibilities inherent in leadership positions, transcending supporter divides to reveal the shared humanity of those during times of crisis. Dominic Cummings's downfall becomes a symbolic reflection of the ruthless nature of British politics, showcased through media exposure. His public unravelling serves as a cautionary tale of the consequences of hubris and unchecked power, resonating with broader themes of accountability and integrity within government institutions. Through Cummings's arc, the series explores the ethical implications of political movement and the delicate balance between personal ambition and public duty, offering a normal narration on the state of contemporary governance.

The sixth episode masterfully captures Johnson's stress and remote work situation, portraying him as a national hero facing a formidable crisis. Johnson's identification with historical figures, symbolized by his commissioning of a Greek Pericles statue, reveals his aspiration to project strength and resilience. However, internal conflicts within the government, particularly with Dominic Cummings, lay bare the fragility of Johnson's administration. As mounting public pressure and a series of crises unfold, Johnson's leadership undergoes a rigorous test, prompting significant changes in his political trajectory. The episode skilfully portrays Johnson's struggles to maintain control amidst the pandemic, especially when confronted with rising deaths and criticism of his government's crisis management. Cummings' departure, marked by conflicting views and Johnson's acknowledgment of his own shortcomings,

accentuates the vulnerability of Johnson's identity as a leader. The series delves into the harsh reality of the pandemic, revealing England's high death toll and the government's attempts to shape public perception. Despite Johnson's efforts to project strength, the glaring contrast between his promises and the pandemic's harsh reality erodes public confidence, ultimately culminating in the end of his tenure as Prime Minister.

Moreover, the episode serves as a narration on the broader themes of leadership, crisis management, and accountability. Johnson's struggles to navigate the complexities of the pandemic highlight the challenges faced by leaders in times of crisis, as well as the importance of effective communication and decision-making. The portrayal of internal conflicts within the government underscores the fragility of political alliances and the need for cohesive leadership in times of hardship. Johnson's attempts to balance public health concerns with economic imperatives reflect the difficult trade-offs inherent in crisis management. As the pandemic unfolds, viewers can witness the challenges of navigating conflicting advice from experts, managing public expectations and making difficult decisions with far-reaching consequences. The episode provides insights into the complexity of policymaking during a crisis, offering a nuanced portrayal of the pressures faced by political leaders and the complexities of balancing competing interests.

7. Conclusion

The public perception of Boris Johnson and the effectiveness of his leadership were significantly undermined during his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. The PartyGate scandal further exacerbated

the situation and ultimately led to his resignation. The airing of the 'This England' TV series, which presented Boris Johnson's government response to the pandemic during his troubled times, holds significant importance. The qualitative content analysis of the 'This England' TV series unveiled a nuanced and multifaceted portrayal of Boris Johnson's leadership evolution. Through its intricate character development, the 'This England' series presents a captivating depiction of Boris Johnson's leadership odyssey, delving into themes of emotional vulnerability, moral uncertainty, and the intricacies of governance. The exploration of Boris Johnson's leadership, as well as his personal evolution across the episodes, unfold a multifaceted portrayal of a figure grappling with the challenges of governance amidst unprecedented circumstances. From instances of emotional openness to the complex interplay of political decision-making, the series portrays a humanized perspective of Boris Johnson, encouraging viewers to empathize with the trials and triumphs of his leadership.

One significant facet of this humanization process was the depiction of an emotional Boris Johnson, showcasing moments of vulnerability, passion, and introspection. By revealing the personal struggles and emotional complexities of Johnson, the series painted a more relatable picture of the leader, transcending the political facade. Furthermore, by presenting Johnson as a figure of victimhood, the narrative engendered empathy towards his challenges and setbacks. Through this lens, viewers were invited to empathize with the burdens of leadership and the personal toll that it takes on individuals in the public eye. Drawing inspiration from Shakespearean storytelling devices, the series weaved a rich tapestry of thematic elements, adding depth and complexity to Johnson's character arc. This interplay of classic literary motifs

brought a timeless quality to the portrayal, inviting viewers to contemplate the intricacies of power, ambition, and moral dilemmas. Moreover, the representation of a sense of guilt in Johnson's decisions and actions added a layer of moral reflection to his leadership narrative. By exploring the consequences of his choices and their impact on others, the series encouraged introspection and critical engagement with the complexities of leadership in times of crisis. Additionally, the portrayal of Johnson as a man of social media highlighted the modern challenges and opportunities of leadership in the digital age. Navigating the realms of online communication and public perception, Johnson's portrayal underscored the evolving nature of leadership in a hyperconnected world.

By showcasing Johnson as a family man, the series humanized his personal life and relationships, shedding light on the private dimensions of his public persona. Through moments of tenderness, humour, and vulnerability within his familial context, viewers were offered a glimpse into the multi-faceted identity of the leader beyond his political endeavours. Finally, presenting Johnson as a responsible leader underscored his commitment to governance and public service, emphasizing qualities of accountability, decisiveness, and duty. This portrayal contributed to a more holistic understanding of Johnson's leadership style and approach to governance. In essence, the 'This England' TV series offered a rich and textured exploration of Boris Johnson's leadership journey, inviting viewers to engage with the complexities of leadership, power, and empathy in a nuanced and compelling narrative framework.

As a final point to be made, "This England" transcends its status as a political drama to an exploration of the human condition. The

series invites viewers to engage with timeless themes of power, ambition, and morality, while also promoting a deeper understanding of the complexities of leadership in times of crisis. As Boris Johnson's journey unfolds on screen, audiences are reminded of the shared humanity that binds them together regardless of their political differences, fostering sympathy towards Johnson. As a final note on the significance and relevance of political films and series, it must be emphasized that they have become integral to the political and social fabric of the 21st century. By educating viewers, providing critical perspectives, and influencing public discourse, these forms of media continue to play a pivotal role in the ways in which a society perceives and interacts with politics and political figures. Their evolution mirrors shifts in societal attitudes and technological progress, guaranteeing their ongoing importance and influence. This tradition persists to this day, with media outlets around the world, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom, continuing to produce films and series like "Theodore Roosevelt" (TV Mini Series 2022) and the upcoming movie "Reagan" (2024). This ongoing trend demonstrates its enduring relevance. It collects a dedicated audience and remains a compelling subject for enthusiasts. The tradition of political films and series continues to be a vital aspect of media culture. By educating, critiquing, and shaping political realities, these media forms contribute significantly to public discourse and opinion, while shaping the collective understanding of political history and current affairs. As technology and society evolve, so will the methods and impacts of political storytelling, ensuring that this tradition remains a dynamic and influential force in the cultural and political landscape.

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