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Between Stereotypes, Awkwardness, and Queer Utopia: Serial Uncertainty and Adolescence^{*}

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Television series provide a rich terrain for exploring the complexities of adolescence as a transitional period, especially because of the uncertainty they are made of, and because they are able to create what I call “minor passions.” This paper aims to contribute to an “affective turn” in television studies by tackling the ways TV fiction portrays the paradoxical moment of adolescence—when one is no longer a child and not yet an adult—through both stereotypes and alternatives to conventional gender expectations. Queer theory helps us frame this process not as a linear one, but as a constant transition made of multiple, minor passions. These include frustration, injustice, and boredom, which are not simplistically resolved. Instead, they become intertwined with characters’ everyday lives, challenging the societal imperative of “growing up well,” as well as the injunction to “happiness”—the idea that everything is in place for anyone to thrive (Ahmed 2010). This paper focuses on the awkwardness tied to gender expression and identity, highlighting characters who challenge binary norms and confront embarrassing or painful scenarios, in the course of their “sideways growth” (Bond Stockton 2009). The case study is the French series *Chair Tendre* (2022), available on France Télévisions’ Slash platform. Launched in 2018, the platform targets high-school students and young professionals. It seeks to foster a deeper and more nuanced understanding of sexuality and gender by challenging stereotypes and offering viewers alternative models of development and self-understanding. By proposing alternatives to conventional expectations and linear developmental paths, *Chair Tendre* stands out as an intriguing project. While it may not be a “successful” series in traditional terms—and perhaps precisely because of this—it allows us to engage with dissonant emotions and uncertainties that mark both adolescence and serial narratives.

Keywords: Television series, adolescence, queer, *Chair Tendre*, minor passions, chrononormativity.

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“Queer theory allows me to look at the world and say: they
are wrong about me”
(Owen, 2020, p. 2)

Introduction

A sunbathed schoolyard during recess: a long-haired, sullen teenager, on the first day in a new school, ears plugged with headphones, seems to be searching for a quiet place to be alone. Her subsequent, successful integration into school life, marked by raw, snarky exchanges with her peers, only partially conceals the sense that something is off, that a difficult past lies just out of sight. At home, the adults are busy and preoccupied with their own issues, and struggle to adapt to the protagonist’s need to be referred to with female pronouns—let alone support her through her hormone replacement therapy.

The French miniseries *About Sasha* (original title *Chair Tendre* [tender flesh] 2022) tells the story of a 17-year-old who was born intersex and raised as a boy, and who struggles for acceptance in her everyday life against the backdrop of a traumatic past. Throughout the series, the situations Sasha encounters evoke awkwardness, the hardship of accumulating labels, gazes and forms of address (ranging from compassionate to mistaken, disciplinary, or brutal), but also moments of sheer euphoria that are typical of teenagers. *About Sasha* is produced and distributed by Slash, France Télévisions’ digital platform aimed at attracting young viewers.

What feelings this miniseries displays, through its narrative and audiovisual elements, and how do these intersect with more classic tropes of adolescent representation? More broadly, this case study tackles the potential of digital platforms’ short-form storytelling to depict marginal characters and convey the uncomfortable emotions typical of adolescence. First, we will outline the context of the depiction of teenagers on television. Then, we will define the theoretical framework of this article. After describing the methodology, we will discuss the case study, followed by the conclusions.

Television and Adolescence

Adolescence, defined by Owen (2020) as “the moment that gendered becoming occurs,” is a period of profound social and psychological transformation during which individuals begin to challenge the societal norms and expectations that define their gender. In fiction, adolescence is often portrayed as a period of uncertainty preceding the establishment of a stable life and fulfillment in adulthood.

Whereas depictions of childhood has historically been characterized by notions of purity and innocence, often associated with a nostalgic dimension (Kearney 2002, Wesseling 2017), adolescence has come to be understood as a time of rebellion against authority. It is often framed as a space of negation—a refusal to grow up “properly” and to become

productive, reproductive adults—thus crystallizing parental and societal anxieties surrounding subjects who refuse to commit to a “reproductive future” (Edelman, 2005).

Television, as a disseminator of cultural models, plays an instrumental role in shaping these perceptions. In the last years, the teen drama genre has flourished, with prestige shows increasingly incorporating stories of adolescents that were once considered to be only intended for young audiences. More recently, the techniques of complex narrative (Mittell, 2015), combined with the short-form formats that have emerged with digital platforms, have enabled serial storytelling to focus on small yet meaningful singularities. Contemporary narratives facilitate greater diversification, a multiplication of choices, and a renewed attention to detail, including local realities and marginal subjectivities (Sarkissian 2014; Marghitu 2021; Jenner 2021; Barra et al. 2026; Horeck 2025). The representation of teenagers is now a key topic in a television landscape where terms such as “authenticity,” “diversity,” and “queerness” occupy a central place (Asmar et al., 2023).

This is particularly relevant, since television has always had the capacity to negotiate innovation and normativity. It does so by building its narratives on stereotypes while at the same time discretely offering audiences glimpses of utopian, queer futures through its polysemic messages (Joyrich, 2001, 2014).

Above all, television is a medium that evokes feelings, allowing viewers to engage affectively with the realities it represents (Ames, 2020). While it function as a normative force, television is also a space for imagining alternatives to mainstream models, exploring representations of vulnerability, uncertainty, and awkwardness, and narrating the unease of subjects who struggle or refuse to fit in, such as queer or adolescent subjects (Boni, 2023).

This paper situates itself at the intersection of television studies and affect theory. I argue that, by creating an uncomfortable space for discomfort, vulnerability, and utopia, outside spectacular or romanticized tropes (through what I call “minor passions”), serial narratives offer compelling ways to experience the change and transformation typical of the teenage years. With a specific focus on queer affects, the paper asks how serial narratives can help us better understand, attune ourselves to, and create space for alternative paths to resilience in queer adolescence today.

What can serial narratives do to queer adolescence?

TV can be a congenial medium for queering the idea of adolescence. The term *queer* should not be thought of here as an identity category, but as a way of seeing the world. It is a perspective shaped by a crooked gaze, one that resists straight lines, normative rules, and binary oppositions.

This oblique way of looking—and of being in the world—reveals what is marginalized and yet politically significant. It involves paying attention to the multiple, everyday forms of unease, friction, and failure, and considering such discomfort as an inevitable force that molds individuals and relationships (Love 2009; Ahmed 2006). TV series are inherently

aligned with a queer orientation, understood as the experience of inhabiting a world in which one does not fit (Ahmed 2006, 2015).

My analysis is centered not only on representations, but also on the emotions and atmospheres associated with it (Brennan 2004; Ahmed 2015; Cvetkovich 2003): a circulating set of affects that are also political, since they define ways of looking at objects and individuals. What this perspective can reveal is a set of uncomfortable, “minor passions” lived by the series’ protagonists and transmitted to viewers: I borrow from Cathy Park Hong’s “minor feelings” with particular attention paid to feelings that can be considered marginal, unimportant, or futile, experienced by marginal subjects, that highlight structural injustices (Hong 2020: 56). These are also typical of queer teens, and serial narrative are well suited to display them.

Exploring minor passions also means engaging with dysphoric, melancholic, or depressed atmospheres. These may reactivate queer viewers’ memories, fears, and anxieties, as well as negative emotions associated with vulnerability, loss, damage, and trauma, what Love (Love, 2009) calls “backward feelings”.

These experiences can also be reparative and healing, for example when they show that negation stems from a revolt against injustice, and from acts of resistance expressed through community support, compassionate care, and the building of utopias (Muñoz, 2009). Notably, the act of engaging with television shows—including their role in our daily lives and their capacity to tell ordinary stories—can serve as a significant resource for queer individuals. In this regard, Andre Cavalcante emphasizes the importance for queer people of the everyday affects represented in television texts: such narratives help them bridge the gap between being queer—or trans specifically—and living an ordinary life (Cavalcante, 2018). I also draw on Hill Malatino’s interest in the network of “side affects” endured by trans people throughout their lives which, beyond burnout, fatigue, and rage, also include healing (Malatino 2022).

Moreover, television series are particularly interesting spaces for exploring the complexities of queer time, a departure from conventional, heteronormative timelines (Halberstam 2005), as they both challenge and rely on stereotypes, gender expectations, and the linear unfolding of time that follows regular, predictable paths, what Elisabeth Freeman calls chrononormativity (Freeman 2010). This concept critiques the conventional structuring of time through socially sanctioned milestones (education, career, marriage), which are geared toward maximizing productivity. Freeman’s argument posits that resisting chrononormativity is essential to queer politics, emphasizing the significance of failure, deviation, and repetition. Similarly, adolescents may temporarily deviate from the conventional linear trajectory of adulthood, opting for a less structured and more unconventional path, characterized as “sideways” progress (Stockton 2009). From this perspective, the pain of the past is not necessarily resolved in adulthood (Love, 2009).

Television’s structure invites delay, contradiction, multiplicity, and repetition, and they constantly suspend resolution. Series that unfold over time (across episodes, or even seasons) confirm, enhance, and transform public emotions, also through their constitutive repetition (Lécossais 2020). Their gaps foster waiting time, delay, and uncertainty (Boni, 2023), contributing to an overall polysemy and affective ambiguity.

It is noteworthy that the experimental narratives characteristic of short-form series on streaming platforms, with their inherent vulnerability due to constrained budgets, limited target audiences, and opportunities for emerging talent, offer new ways of conceptualizing life paths that diverge from the conventional, linear, and structured models.

Consequently, such serial comedies and dramas circulate emotions and affects, including guilt, frustration, and a sense of being out of place in ways that may resonate with viewers' everyday lives. And at the same time, they have the potential to enable alternative forms of growth.

Methodology

In order to provide a nuanced analysis of the series, the article first considers the context in which the series was produced and disseminated, followed by a detailed examination of its content. It combines close reading with affective analysis, focusing on selected sequences that have been deemed relevant—with a degree of subjectivity—because they exemplify a broader trend: the exploration of delicate, ordinary moments marked by discomfort and evocations of trauma, while simultaneously outlining the possibility of euphoria, community, and utopia. I examine how the case study presents a set of uncomfortable and awkward sequences, as well as the ways it constructs a utopian future by revealing instants of beauty. Descriptions of the images are accompanied by interpretations in light of the theoretical framework of “minor passions.” This approach allows for a comprehensive evaluation of the series' contribution to the intricate international landscape of teen series.

Case Study

About Sasha is a coming-of-age series created and directed by Yaël Langmann and co-directed by Jérémy Mainguy. It is composed of 10 episodes, each running between 21 and 27 minutes.

The series is distributed on Slash, France Télévisions' public-service platform, which launched in 2018 and targets a young audience (primarily aged 18–34). Fully digital and centered on relatable stories, niche themes, and an explicit display of sexuality, France.tv Slash was designed to “reconquer” an audience less and less interested in traditional television.¹ The channel's launch was tied to the hit youth drama *Skam France* (2018-2023), which achieved notable popularity (5-6 million views according to Slash). By 2019, *Skam France* had accumulated over 70–80 million views across its first four seasons, a testament to Slash's ability to attract a large youth audience online. Some of Slash's content was also broadcast in primetime on the linear channel France 5 following France Télévisions's creation of a Monday evening slot for young adults, inaugurated by the Irish drama *Normal People* in 2022.

Slash experiments with different formats developed specifically for digital distribution and on-demand streaming. For instance, episodes are usually shorter than those of traditional TV, often ranging from 10 to 20 minutes. Additionally, some projects explore vertical video and social media storytelling for smartphone viewing. Its original productions, created by emerging writers and filmmakers, are innovative in their treatment of sexuality and gender. *Océan* (2019) is a documentary series that follows a trans artist, while *Sexy Soucis* (2018-2021) is a variety program which addressing themes linked to sexuality. These productions feature teenagers or young adults as protagonists and propose alternative models of growth and self-understanding. As Ceuterick and Malet note, however, these representations are not uniformly received in a French context marked by the rise of conservatism (Ceuterick & Malet, 2024).

In 2022, *About Sasha* was integrated into France Télévisions' overall content strategy. The unique theme of this series—a little-known reality, told from the point of view of a teenager and carefully researched by its creators²—perfectly fits with the channel's editorial direction. However, it is also a starting point for delving into the more universal concerns implied by any representation of teenagers (CNC, 2022). As Yaël Langmann states in an interview, the series talks about adolescence and its desires:

First and foremost, Sasha is a teenager. She is no stranger to the problems of puberty that all teenagers her age experience. We wanted to talk about identity formation, which at that age is largely driven by desire. Do I define myself through my sexuality? That's where the whole story starts. We didn't want to make a medical drama or documentary. Sasha should be seen as a metaphor for identity formation in adolescence, which can quickly become a dizzying experience of loneliness. Because we all have this need to belong, and at the same time, we all think we're monsters to others... In reality, this series is a great story of reconciliation. Sasha is our central character, but she is surrounded by a whole group of young people. They each have their own issues, which are very different from Sasha's, but which are essentially the same: they all want to be accepted, to be "normal." This series talks a lot about the norm and the need to break free from it.³

The director's statement, which is interwoven with promotional objectives in this interview released during the Festival Series Mania, seeks to establish a connection between the show and the lived experience of intersex individuals. It also stresses that the series touches upon more universally applicable symbolic concerns related to the process of coming of age and the embodiment of a particular gender identity. The show is thus promoted through a strategic compromise between the need to create space for diversity in a highly fragmented market and to find its audience without excluding too many viewers.

Let's consider the series' official synopsis:

After moving out, Sasha just arrived in a new high school. Mysterious and charismatic, she leaves a strong impression on anyone she meets. And, like any self-respecting teenager, making new friendships, flirting with boys and fighting with her parents are part and parcel of her everyday life. Except, until two weeks ago, Sasha was still considered a boy. Born with an intersex condition, she has now decided to embrace her female side. But her secret must remain hidden! (Unifrance, 2022)

At the 2022 Séries Mania festival, the series won the Best Series award in the French Competition.⁴ French media described it as a moving and eye-opening coming-of-age tale. *Télérama* praised it as “a subtle and vibrant chronicle” of an intersex teen, a story “whose depth is moving and whose inventiveness delights.”⁵ On the platform, the series has reached 2.6M views.⁶ The linear airing further boosted the show’s profile, with France 5 emphasizing the originality of subject matter. The channel referred to it as “l’âge tendre de Sasha, adolescente intersexe” (“*the tender age of Sasha, an intersex teenager*”⁷). A social media campaign accompanied the release through posts on the official Slash account, the actors’ personal accounts, and through media outlets targeting young audiences. Overall, the series benefits from a strategic positioning at a time when notions such as diversity and “queer” are fundamental.

Let us now move on to the analysis to address the following question: what effects are conveyed through the series’ audiovisual elements, and how do these intersect with more classic tropes of adolescent representation?

The Series’ Structure and Main Themes

The setting is a nameless seaside town in southern France, to which Sasha and her family the family recently moved. The calm space is saturated with the warm, dull colors of an impending autumn.

Across the episodes, the main focus is almost exclusively on Sasha. Introverted and brash, her dominant mood is anger, which actor Adèle Metzger conveys through a constant frown, rare smiles, wary glances, and frequent outbursts of rage. The camera follows her closely, framing her walks in a nondescript context, her interactions at school, her conflicts, and her moments of affection with her sister and parents. The series frames awkwardness as Sasha’s primary mode of being rather than as a phase to be overcome.

The narrative is structured around two main strands through which Sasha’s emotional journey unfolds: her growing awareness of her condition and the developing of her friendships and romantic interests. To illustrate the many complexities of adolescence, the series also develops a secondary but related storyline centered on Sasha’s younger sister (Saul Benchétrit).

The series’ narrative complexity also appears through flashbacks that offer glimpses of past events and that convey Sasha’s emotional state. Each episode opens with a brief flashback sequence, approximately two minutes long, preceding the opening credits. The flashbacks show episodes of violence at Sasha’s former high school, moments from her childhood in medical settings—such as past surgeries or meetings with a psychologist—or family conversations charged with anxiety and anger. Clearly displaying a struggle to break free from the past, such sequences set the primary tone of the series, which can be read through the lens of Heather Love’s “backwardness,” a constellation of affects associated with queer experiences: “shyness, ambivalence, failure, melancholia, loneliness, regression, victimhood, heartbreak, antimodernism, immaturity, self-hatred, despair, shame” (Love, 2009, p. 146). Sasha’s encounters with family, peers, and medical institutions are marked

by a discomfort that resists resolution. The fatigue and burnout felt by queer subjects (Malatino, 2022), are also evident here. She bears the weight of a traumatic past and a secret in the present, while looking forward to a future that may be uncertain but remains hers to define.

While depicting a very specific story, allowing the viewers to witness Sasha's memories of medical violence or peer assault she underwent as a young child with their disturbing, traumatic effect, the series revolves around teen drama tropes. The school environment and her relationships with other teens are at the core of her social life. Friendship is portrayed as a space marked by tensions and ruptures, yet it remains constant and adaptable, capable of enduring any storm. It also serves as the setting for dramatic plot developments, as Sasha forms attachments that push her outside her comfort zone. For example, the story briefly takes a dramatic turn when Sasha starts receiving anonymous text messages and a photograph of her genitalia is circulated within the community, evoking the clichéd *Pretty Little Liars* (Freeform, 2010-2017) model. Interestingly, the series does not use this moment as an opportunity for dramatic escalation. Instead, it chooses to leave it simply as an element that adversely affects Sasha's mood.

Awkwardness and Trauma

In the Episode 2, titled "L'impératrice donne son aval," Sasha drags herself to the local club where the town's teenagers gather, followed by her little sister. After a moment of hesitation, during which she adjusts uneasily to her surroundings, she ends up dancing with Alex (played by Marin Judas), who appears particularly interested in her. As they move closer to each other on the dance floor, the camera closes in on their faces while the Louisahh's song "Change" plays in the background. The song evokes sultry connections and untold, shameful secrets (consider the verse "Gotta Obscene unseen parts of me/Creeping in the darkness/Cut me and its light I bleed /Be easy in your harness"). The room is bathed in a glowing pink light. Alex stands before Sasha, cigarette in hand; with each drag, he moves closer to her face, his gaze honing in on her lips, as the scene unfolds through shot-reverse shot editing. Despite the sensual attraction, we sense Sasha's unease as she turns her head away from him. The editing inserts rapid shots of colorful, undersea, worm-like creatures that evoke a hidden organic dimension of which only Sasha seems aware. A longer shot captures Sasha's uncomfortable, focused expression. Noticing her distraction, Alex asks, "Are you with me?"

This difficulty in establishing intimate connections while burdened by overwhelming thoughts and emotions reappears in Episode 3, "Ennui lycéen," when Sasha has her first experience with a girl. In her bedroom, Sasha spends time with Anna (played by Paola Locatelli), the self-appointed "queen" of the friend group, who has openly asserted herself her desire to get to know Sasha better. The two lie down in Sasha's room, where Sasha has laid out a mattress for her guest. Framed through tight shot-reverse shots and close-ups in the dim light of the room, they share stories of loneliness and very personal memories. Anna speaks about her sexual experiences and the shame that accompanied them. Sasha, in

turn, appears ready to open up about her reality. Before she can do so, however, Anna moves closer and kisses her. A short sequence of another sexual encounter interrupts the scene. Moments later, Sasha recoils and asks Anna to leave.

A subsequent moment, one that also reappears later in the series, shows Sasha lying on her side on the bed, gazing inward. The camera shows an anatomical picture of female genitalia hanging on the wall, then pans toward the bed. Sasha stretches her right arm behind her, touching the old floral wallpaper, and searches for a crack in it. She begins to torment the wallpaper as if seeking pleasure. The frame isolates her hand, her finger probing the fissure. The analogy is clear, perhaps too much so, and is further emphasized by Sasha's voice-over, lamenting her fear of being rejected because of her anatomy.

The series' dominant atmospheres converge toward a general unease and a network of negative affects. Sasha's attempts to find her place within both adolescent social life and her family are marked by a desire for recognition, as well as by the burden of navigating the widespread ignorance surrounding her experiences and the reality of violent homo- and intersexphobic violence. The series thus creates a space in which viewers can engage with dissonant emotions and uncertainties, frustration, injustice, and boredom, which are not resolved simplistically. Such minor passions are woven into the fabric of the characters' everyday lives, challenging the societal imperative to "grow up well" as well as the injunction to "happiness"—the idea that everything is in place for anyone to thrive (Ahmed 2010). In the series, stereotypes and minor passions articulate a form of queer "sideways growth," highlighting the emotional ambivalence and discomfort that is often associated with coming of age and that frequently characterizes the queer experience.

Care and Healing: Community and a New Future

At other times, the dynamics portrayed in the series seem more ambivalent or inconsistent with an interpretation based solely on discomfort. This opens up the range of affects that can be included within the category of "minor passions."

Adolescents often harbor heroic visions and explore different possible selves, before it becomes "too late." This can be a response to a limiting or even violent environment. As José Esteban Muñoz writes:

The present is not enough. It is impoverished and toxic for queers and other people who do not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging, normative tastes, and rational expectations (Muñoz, 2009, p. 27).

In this regard, some episodes of *About Sasha* stress the tension between trauma and utopia. For example, Episode 5, "Voir un lever de terre," ("To see the Earth rise," a reference to a utopian dream shared by the group of friends), opens with a traumatic flashback in which viewers witness a painful exchange between Sasha and her parents, taking place shortly after events leading up to their move.

Later in the episode, however, a euphoric montage presents a set of more blissful moments. Sasha is shown taking her hormones each morning, eating a quick breakfast,

riding her bike to school, and meeting her friends (Alex, Anna, Meeva, and Sam) near the water after class.

The central scene of the episode takes place when they are all resting on a dock on a sunny afternoon. Lying in a star formation, the group touches one another's shoulders and shares substances and thoughts about their lives after high school. Each expresses a desire for freedom, emancipation, and a new life. Moving between joking and sincerity, they make a promise to one another: to live long enough to watch the Earth rise from space—a testament to their friendship.

The group then takes LSD, and Sasha, who is unfamiliar with it, participates. Hallucinations appear quickly. Stunned, Sasha watches Alex's head morph into a kind of long penis composed of floral textures, moss, and organic matter, while Anna's head transforms into an ornamental mask whose shape and colors vaguely resemble female genitalia. These grotesque yet playful apparitions provoke Sasha's laughter, reinforcing the sense of well-being she is experiencing. While symbolically confronting Sasha with a set of binary options (man or woman, gay or straight), this moment also stresses the affects linked to teenage years, as a time of experimentation and ongoing discovery, open to absurdity silliness. This resonates with the need to find different ways of being in the world described by Halberstam:

To live is to fail, to bungle, to disappoint, and ultimately to die; rather than searching for ways around death and disappointment, the queer art of failure involves the acceptance of the finite, the embrace of the absurd, the silly, and the hopelessly goofy. ((Halberstam, 2011, p. 187).

The creators do not shy away from experimenting with the flexibility of the platform's format, as seen in these dreamlike sequences and in moment when characters look directly into the camera.

The series' last sequence, in Episode 10, "Grand oral," stresses a more serious, utopian longing. In her final oral examination, Sasha faces the camera and addresses the viewer with a long monologue expressing her hope, desires, and newfound sense of pride. She states: "I am neither a girl nor a boy. I'm neither of the two, I'm a little of both [...] I haven't decided yet."

By centering awkwardness, dissonance, and ambiguity, the sequence—which can appear unsettling due to its frontal approach—challenges dominant expectations surrounding gender, maturity, and success. In other words, the unsettling affects represented in *About Sasha* clash with society's injunction to happiness—the idea that all the conditions for thriving are already in place (Ahmed 2010).

More specifically, the series does not frame coming of age as a defined moment in which sexuality, identity, and a clear vision of the future converge. Rather than presenting growth as triumphant or redemptive, the series proposes a queer temporality: identity unfolds through pauses, detours, and ruptures, resisting both chrononormativity and the cultural imperative to "grow up well" (Ahmed, 2010). Sasha's queer utopia emerges a space rich in contradiction and potential, one that resists the normative coupling of "growing up" with "coming out," and instead allows for greater complexity.⁸

Conclusions

Situated in a TV panorama where “authenticity” and “diversity” were considered as useful strategies for conquering young audiences, also informed by a successful amount of LBGTQIA+ representations on global platforms, *About Sasha*, the story of an intersex teenager, contributed to the launch of the public-service platform Slash in the French landscape.

This case study confirms that short-form, on-demand series have the potential to tackle such marginal themes while also creating a sense of uncertainty through discontinuity and temporal fragmentation, thereby allowing for a more authentic representation of marginal realities. To queer means to exist in a constant state of transformation. This is why a queer approach helped us unpack and challenge teleology and binaries often embedded in representations of teenagers and in the process of growing up. The series invites viewers to “feel” adolescence outside normative frameworks, also making viewer perceive that growth is shaped by structural pressures of conformity, productivity, and normative performance. The articulation of minor passions is pivotal in this process, as it resonates with the inherent uncertainties and social awkwardness experienced by adolescent and queer subjects.

Creators pursue innovation in the subject matter while also exploring expressive strategies that emphasize sincerity and the portrayal of relatable, recognizable moments (friendship, conflict, love, sexuality, arguments with parents). Such nods to familiar teen drama tropes—specific locations, character types, and recurring situations are necessary, and, at the same time, they make the subject matter recognizable, and they underscore the expected “logics” of adolescence (Owen 2020). As the tropes of teen series are both respected and reworked, the intimate portrayals provided by *About Sasha*, the close attention to the everyday life of the protagonist and her family, the oneiric, utopian moments are marked by a profound uncertainty that allows for an affective immersion. The bluntness of the theme and any potential naivety are all part of this format. In some cases, they may open up new ways of connecting with viewers.

While its success is certainly limited to a relatively small group of viewers, this public-service series confirms the need to innovate and experiment with teen drama as an area for exploring new themes and forms. The short format, digital distribution and targeting of young audiences enables the exploration of delicate subjects, marginal perspectives, and more experimental narrative forms, which also influences the construction of subtle, intimate forms of affectivity that have an important role in shaping collective representations.

Biographical Note

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Notes

¹ <https://www.eric32.fr/non-classe/slash-la-tele-pour-les-jeunes-qui-cartonne-sans-tele/#:~:text=Des%20programmes%20cibl%C3%A9s>

² Langmann wanted to make sure that she was telling the story right and called on Loé Petit, president and founder of the Collectif Intersexe Activiste (Activist Intersex Collective), to work as a consultant. In the series, Loé (played by Lysandre Nury) is a counsellor for Sasha. “The important thing for me was not to betray the intersex community,” Langmann says. “To prepare the project, I also read a lot of books and articles about intersexuality. I met with doctors, intersex people and parents of intersex children.” (Barleycorn, 2022)

³ Our translation of: Avant toute chose, Sasha est une adolescente. Elle n’est pas étrangère à ces problèmes de puberté que tous les ados de son âge connaissent. On avait, du coup, envie de parler de la construction de l’identité, qui transite beaucoup, à cet âge, par le désir. Est-ce que je me définis à travers ma sexualité ? Toute l’histoire part de là. On n’avait pas pour idée de faire une série médicale ou documentaire. Il faut voir Sasha comme une métaphore de la construction identitaire à l’adolescence, qui peut vite être un vertige de

solitude. Parce qu'on a tous ce besoin d'appartenance et en même temps, on pense tous être le monstre de l'autre... En réalité, cette série est une grande histoire de réconciliation. Sasha est notre point central, mais on a toute une bande de jeunes autour d'elle. Ils ont chacun leurs problématiques, qui sont très différentes de celles de Sasha, mais qui sont les mêmes au fond : ils veulent tous être acceptés, êtres « *normaux* ». Cette série parle beaucoup de la norme et du besoin de s'en émanciper. https://www.cnc.fr/series-tv/actualites/chair-tendre--une-serie-sur--la-construction-de-lidentite_1806077

⁴ <https://www.screendaily.com/news/le-monde-de-demain-chair-tendre-among-series-mania-2022-winners/5169040.article#:~:text=In%20the%20French%20Competition%20it,France%20TV%20Distribution%20handles%20sales>

⁵ <https://television.telarama.fr/tele/serie/chair-tendre-1-228983353-saison1.php#:~:text=%E2%80%9CChair%20tendre%E2%80%9D%C2%A0%3A%20I%E2%80%99%C3%A9mouvant%20r%C3%A9cit%20initiatique,d%E2%80%99une%20ado%20intersexu%C3%A9>

⁶ <https://www.francetvpub.fr/audiences-2022-france-televvisions-1er-media-des-francais/#:~:text=,jeunes%20ultramarins%20en%20r%C3%A9gion%20parisienne>

⁷ https://www.lemonde.fr/culture/article/2022/09/23/chair-tendre-sur-france-5-l-age-tendre-de-sasha-adolescente-intersexe_6142941_3246.html#:~:text=,traitement%20documentaire%2C%20Ya%C3%ABl%20Langmann