

Research Article

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Black Earth Rising and *Queen Sono*: A Critical Decolonial Analysis

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Abstract: In this article two series are analyzed: *Black Earth Rising* (a BBC/Netflix production) and *Queen Sono* (the first African Netflix original series), shows that are about African realities from an African perspective (Rwanda in *Black Earth Rising* and South Africa in *Queen Sono*). The findings in this article show that both series address social and political issues such as neocolonialism, neoextractivism, internal colonialism, racism, inequality, justice, self-determination, corruption, violence, peace, memory, necropolitics, mental health, and decoloniality. I also argue that the shows could be used as pedagogical tools to raise critical consciousness in a wide public regarding the social and political issues addressed. The research in this article has been conducted with a qualitative methodology, using both shows as case studies and using content analysis and bibliographical research. The analysis of the series is based in the discussion of critical theory and decoloniality approaches and authors, especially from Latin America and Africa. Furthermore, the analysis of popular media (such as series) is a relevant effort to decolonize knowledge, using alternative and non-academic sources to produce and socialize knowledge.

Keywords: decoloniality, Africa, neocolonialism, shows, Rwanda, South Africa

1 Theoretical discussion: Critical theory and decoloniality

The popularity and accessibility, as well as the amount and variety in series/shows has been increasing in the last few years due to the creation and dispersion of streaming platforms, which make them interesting study cases regarding the social and political issues they address.

The theoretical base of the analysis and discussion of the two shows in this research is based mostly on critical theory and decolonial authors, stemming from different disciplines and interdisciplinary fields, understanding that the analysis of social issues and problematics cannot be limited to the narrow limits of one discipline, but rather must be interdisciplinary to understand the different approaches and realities of the issues.

To begin with, the discussion is relevant to address critical theory. Critical theory is committed to building an understanding of the world (especially the marginalized world or “developing world”) that promotes emancipatory change, in the political, economic, and social spheres.¹ Moreover, according to Cox,² critical theory analyzes how the power relations and institutions in which theory is based came to be: it focuses on the context in which the situations and theory are presented and the possible change in the future. Along these lines, Farias³ argues that critical theory seeks to expose and criticize oppressive

¹ Jones, “Message in a Bottle?”

² Cox, “Social Forces, States and World Orders.”

³ Farias Ferreira, “Critical Theory.”

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relations and to analyze alternative ideas that have been historically marginalized. On the other hand, critical theory acknowledges that western science has been universalized and imposed around the world, including the forms of producing and legitimating knowledge and the asymmetric power relations implied to it.⁴ Along these lines, Adorno argues that the goal of philosophy and theory is not to reduce the situations and contexts analyzed to an abstract formula, as it is not “reducing it to prefabricated categories.”⁵

However, there is still eurocentrism in some western authors. For example, Foucault argues that resistance movements that are born in the power centers are more effective than resistance movements from other places.⁶ This idea implies that resistance movements that are born in western countries are more effective and important than resistance movements in the “Global South.” As such, there have been resistance movements in western countries that have achieved better life conditions for the citizens of the country, but do not help or care for the suffering and the struggles of the resistance movements in the “Global South,” such as the labor movements in western countries, that haven’t supported labor movements in the “Global South.”⁷ Another argument of western critical theory is poised by Marcuse. He argues that the western idea of freedom is just another form of domination, where you are only free inside the frame of the capitalist system as long as the benefits for the owners of the capital are maintained and improved, where the majority of people are subjects—objects of work, not really free individuals; a system that has been imposed and perpetuated by western countries.⁸ However, Marcuse is also western centered in his alternative to our current system, which he bases on the technological restructuration of the western countries. He argues that the alternative would mean the restoration of nature after the destruction that capitalism has caused and the restructuration of the cities. However, he generalizes this alternative to “highly developed sectors and in the parts of the third world engaged in liberation struggles,”⁹ which are very different realities and cannot be homogenized. Moreover, as will be analyzed with the series in this article, struggles against the ruling group can be seen as liberation or terrorism, depending on the interests of the western powers on the perpetuation of the *status quo* or to impose elites that are more convenient for them, as is shown in both shows.

As a critique of colonialism and of western imposition of a “universal knowledge,” decoloniality is born. Decoloniality explains different forms of colonial oppression and challenges them, like coloniality of power, coloniality of knowing, coloniality of being, and coloniality of mother nature. Coloniality of power refers to the structure imposed by the western colonialism in which a hierarchization based on race and ethnic groups dominates the institutions and is perpetuated by the State. Coloniality of knowing refers to the western forms of science and knowledge imposed in the “Global South” that marginalized any other forms of science and *saberes*¹⁰ that don’t comply with western terms. Coloniality of being refers to the dehumanization of all people that are different to the image of the western colonial “modernity” imposed and considers them inferior, which is clearly linked with the coloniality of power. Finally, the coloniality of mother nature refers to the ethno- and anthropocentric idea that western colonialism imposed, where humans are considered superior, appropriate, and destroy and privatize all life on the planet (animals, plants, oceans, rivers, mountains, forests, jungles, etc.).¹¹ It is important to highlight that I use the term decoloniality, instead of postcolonialism or anti-colonialism due to the following reasons: (A) while post-colonialism is a theoretical approach that surged in Europe and focuses on the assimilation of migrants and

4 Foucault, “On Popular Justice,” 66, 69.

5 Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 1:24, 52.

6 Foucault, “Power and Strategies,” 142.

7 Sarkar and Kuruvilla, “Constructing Transnational Solidarity.”

8 Marcuse, *Five Lectures*, 2, 5.

9 Ibid., 67, 75.

10 *Saberes* refer to the thought of groups that are composed of decolonial knowledge, of experiences, of ancient philosophies and in the relation with all life in the world through a coherent world view. Due to that and to the marginalization that *saberes* have suffered by coloniality of knowledge, *saberes* have to be differentiated from western knowledge.

11 Cajigas-Rotundo, “La Biocolonialidad Del Poder. Amazonía, Biodiversidad y Ecocapitalismo;” Delgado and Rist, “Las Ciencias Desde La Perspectiva Del Diálogo de Saberes, La Transdisciplinariedad y El Diálogo Intercentífico;” Ferrão Candau, “Educación Intercultural En América Latina;” Walsh, “Interculturalidad y Colonialidad Del Poder. Un Pensamiento y Posicionamiento ‘Otro’ Desde La Diferencia Colonial;” Walsh, “Interculturalidad, Plurinacionalidad y Decolonialidad;” and Walsh, *Pedagogías Decoloniales*.

some minorities in Europe and more recently in the US, it doesn't address the root of the structural problems, which is the colonial oppressive system, imposed since the European colonial invasion around the world, and doesn't focus on a real structural change and dismantling of the colonial oppressive institutions like neoliberal capitalism, liberal democracy, the colonial international institutions and on the reparations that need to be executed toward the oppressed groups of the "Global South." (B) Anti-colonialism is an ideological stance rather than a process, which is important and necessary but by using the prefix -anti- it can fall in the risk of negating colonialism, when it is crucial to recognize and acknowledge all the forms of oppression and the consequences of colonialism in order to advance to build structures, institutions, and societies that are more fair, inclusive and less oppressive. (C) Decoloniality is a constant process rather than a stance or a moment, and it departs from the recognition and acknowledgment of the colonial invasion and the establishment of the oppressive structures to advance to the emancipation of the colonial oppression, in order to build more inclusive and fair societies, while taking advantage of the positive aspects and advances that have been surging in the colonial structures.

One main difference between decolonial authors from the "Global South" is that they use both praxis and abstract thought together, building theory from praxis. One of the most prominent decolonial thinkers from Latin America is Enrique Dussel. Dussel¹² claims that a dialectic comprehension is needed to understand reality, which according to him it is about the understanding that passes through "the other"; he furthermore argues that there cannot be an absolute universal understanding of the world or a speculative intuition model that can be used to abstractly analyze situations with a formula; understanding is a dialectic relation that varies depending on each individual. Dussel's argument about the dialectic aspect of understanding and generating knowledge is relevant to this article, since the shows could be the channel in which spectators understand "the other" by seeing it in the screen as a visual narrative.

Another decolonial approach is poised by Boaventura de S. Santos.¹³ He argues that the goal of this approach is to produce and validate knowledge clustered in the resistance experiences of all social groups that have been systematically oppressed, caused by capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchies mainly. One of the main points of the decolonial approach is decolonizing knowledge, which uses the process of epistemic disobedience that refers to delinking from the so-called "universal" and "objective" knowledge. This decolonial alternative, on the one hand departs from the idea that the caring, preservation, and regeneration of life is more important than capitalist production and on the other hand departs from the principle that decolonizing knowledge is about challenging the oppression imposed by colonial structures and about using alternative forms, models, and tools to generate and socialize knowledge (where series and films could be analyzed as an alternative tool or channel). The idea of decolonizing knowledge is also poised by Walter Mignolo, a decolonial thinker from Latin America, who coined the term epistemic disobedience, which criticizes western colonization of knowledge, including western critical theorists that still center in the universality of the West's particular ontology of history, presupposing "that all on the planet is posthuman when, in reality, modernity has reduced the majority of the population to quasi-human."¹⁴ The criticism of the imposition of western knowledge as universal is also pushed by other decolonial authors.¹⁵

Decoloniality is not only a theoretical and methodological approach, but also an epistemic and even an ontological movement, which challenges the colonization of knowledge and proposes alternative ways of knowing and understanding, including alternative sources to knowledge and to produce and learn *saberes*. Decolonial ways of knowing and understanding go further than pure academic sources, recognizing and

¹² Dussel, *Para Una Ética de La Liberación Latinoamericana*, 56, 57.

¹³ Santos, "Epistemologías Del Sur."

¹⁴ Mignolo, "What Does It Mean to Decolonize," 119; Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom."

¹⁵ Castellanos, "La Corrupción Intelectual;" Castro-Gómez, "Decolonizar La Universidad. La Hybris Del Punto Cero y El Diálogo de Saberes;" Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel, "Giro Decolonial, Teoría Crítica y Pensamiento Heterárquico;" Grosfoguel, "Descolonizando Los Universalismos Occidentales;" Mbembé, "Necropolitics;" Sandoval and Capera Figueroa, "El Giro Decolonial En El Estudio de Las Vibraciones Políticas Del Movimiento Indígena En América Latina;" and Wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind*.

analyzing cosmovision of indigenous people and of other oppressed groups, which are not only researched by written documents, but also by the very rich oral tradition of these groups, their non-academic literature, poetry, theatre, music, and rituals.¹⁶

Another relevant decolonial approach to discuss is what González Casanova¹⁷ has defined as internal colonialism. He argues that the elites have imposed and perpetuated the system that benefits them more by concentrating power and wealth. This system is not only imposed economically (could be in a capitalist economy or not) but also culturally, where the elites determine what is acceptable and what is not, justifying all the decisions as necessary for modernity and progress; everything that doesn't comply with their idea of what is needed is considered inferior or primitive. The elites use propaganda and mass media to make people interiorize it, so there is minimal or no resistance. In internal colonialism, the elites in colonized countries act as an intermediary of the western elites; they only seek to serve the perpetuation of the oppressive system that is manifested currently as neocolonialism.¹⁸

For this article, it is also worth discussing theoretical approaches about peace, violence, and the colonial system. Bolívar Echeverría,¹⁹ argues that in an oppressive society generalized peace is impossible, because the elites impose a distributive injustice that uses violence to impose it to the oppressed groups, maintaining a pacified zone for the elites and using propaganda to manipulate the oppressed into accepting this violence. It is also argued that in a colonial capitalist system, inequality is inherent; in order to control the oppressed groups and maintain the power and resources control of the elites a repression and control apparatus composed of policing and mass incarceration was imposed. The authors also argue that this is a racist system, where the non-white population is abused, profiled, and imprisoned because it is considered as “unruly” (BIPOC [Black, Indigenous and People of Color]).²⁰ Moreover, according to Mbembé²¹ the necropolitical system refers to the system in which the life of people is assigned a value by the elites which assume power over life and based on that value calculation they decide which life is worthy and which is not. According to him, the necropolitical system was imposed by the colonial regimes with slavery and the imposition of the coloniality of being (discussed above). The necropolitical system uses violence to control the colonized people and utilizes media to perpetuate coloniality by portraying the image of the “hero” as a white heterosexual man, who “triumphs” over the individuals and groups considered “inferior” by the elites (colonized BIPOC),²² which also manifests in our times with the white-savior image. The discussion of violence, repression, control, and necropolitics from a decolonial approach is relevant to this article because in both television shows analyzed, these issues are addressed showing the necropolitics of the colonial system and challenging it by centering the plots on black Africans and evidencing the oppression imposed by the West that is perpetuated in forms of neocolonialism structured with an internal colonialism.

Finally, critical consciousness is crucial for this article due to the analysis of the potential of shows to foster critical consciousness. The pioneer of critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire²³ argued that in order to achieve emancipation, it is necessary to develop *concientização*, which can be translated as critical consciousness.

¹⁶ Arévalo, “Reportando Desde Un Frente Decolonial;” Cano, “Sentidos y Saberes En Procesos de Educación Ambiental Intercultural En Contextos Nahuas de La Sierra de Zongolica;” Hassan, “Revitalizing African Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Knowledge Production;” León Portilla, *La Filosofía Náhuatl*; Maldonado Rivera and del Valle Rojas, “Episteme Decolonial En Dos Obras Del Pensamiento Mapuche;” Martínez, “Tradición Oral Nahua Contemporánea y Mapas Coloniales;” Mulundwe and Tshahwa, “Mito, Mitología e Filosofía Africana;” Nájera Castellanos, “De Boca a Oído;” Rýser, “The Anahuac Knowledge System;” Santiago, “Sabiduría/Conocimientos Nahuas y Contenidos Escolares de Patrimonio Cultural. Educación Intercultural en Cuestión;” Wa Thiong’o, *Decolonising the Mind*; and Walsh, “On Decolonial Dangers, Decolonial Cracks, and Decolonial Pedagogies Rising.”

¹⁷ González Casanova, “Colonialismo Interno (Una Redefinición).”

¹⁸ Fanon, *Los Condenados de La Tierra*, 76, 86.

¹⁹ Echeverría, “Modernidad y Capitalismo (15 Tesis).”

²⁰ Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*; Feeley and Simon, “The New Penology;” Wacquant, “Crafting the Neoliberal State Workfare, Prisonfare and Social Insecurity;” and Whalley and Hackett, “Carceral Feminisms.”

²¹ Mbembé, “Necropolitics,” 22, 25.

²² Valencia and Sepúlveda, “Del Fascinante Fascismo a La Fascinante Violencia,” 80.

²³ Freire, *Pedagogia Do Oprimido*.

This is the process in which each oppressed individual realizes the structure of the oppressing system in which he/she is inserted so he/she can take action to liberate him/herself.

Freire²⁴ considered active pedagogic methods to foster critical consciousness, where this is developed through collective dialogue, discussion, and defying situations. The role of the educator in these situations is a dialectical and dialogical role. In line with this point, Rockwell²⁵ argues that critical consciousness is developed as a result of the previous processes that people have experienced and their cognitive structures, which along with the external perspectives and knowledge, help to build learning on the individuals. Critical consciousness then, is not an entirely cognitive process, it is also a cultural practice that varies depending on each context, that is why it cannot only be considered in a formal education scenario, but can also be developed in alternative spaces, with alternative tools. What Freire and Rockwell argue is important for this discussion since series can be used both in formal and non-formal education as these defying scenarios that foster discussion and dialogue to help the oppressed develop critical consciousness. However, it is worth noting that the oppressed individuals are the ones that develop critical consciousness by themselves according to their own understanding, experiences, and knowledge; tools like media are contributory. The development of critical consciousness is the base to advance to emancipation.

2 Media and political theory

In political theory, television shows and films are valuable to analyze because they enable the socio-political concepts and actions to be more easily visible and understood. Moreover, these media are discussed in daily life.²⁶ Streaming platforms like Netflix are investing more and more in co-production with other networks, an example is *Black Earth Rising*, which is a co-production between the BBC and Netflix. Co-productions are used by Netflix because it decreases costs and allows them to learn more about the creative processes of other networks.²⁷

Panagia, on the other hand, argues that these media are relevant to analyze because they foster the visualization of social and political issues and can lead to alternative ways of resistance. For him, it is also a way to make political theory more accessible and interesting, challenging political theory's narrative centrism which refers to the consideration that written sources are the only ones valuable, and every other source (like mass media, oral stories, theatre, music) is inferior, which is also an elitist notion.²⁸

Other theorists have highlighted the usefulness of media in political thinking; for Shapiro, it encourages political thinking; Benjamin considered that it could promote "a new realm of consciousness" in the minds of the masses; for Badiou, it allows us to visualize and try to understand the "other," the people that have been historically marginalized and hidden; for Kristeva, it fosters the capability to criticize in the masses; and for Fraser it can be used to show the oppressions people face in their respective societies and the hope that they can overcome them, fostering a critical stance against the *status quo*.²⁹

Media can be a useful tool to open critical discussions in education and challenge the so-called neutrality of academia; critical thought should be central in the academic discussion.³⁰ It is worth noting that both series analyzed in this article are available through the streaming platform "Netflix" internationally.

On the other hand, media can also be used to perpetuate the *status quo* and the oppressive structures that have been in society; it is argued that culture has been transformed into a private industry, which

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Rockwell, "Historical Consciousness and Critical Thinking."

²⁶ Godmer, "Political Science and Film," 1, 5.

²⁷ Hidalgo, "Netflix Como Productor Audiovisual."

²⁸ Panagia, "Why Film Matters to Political Theory."

²⁹ Fraser, *Political Theory and Film*, 2, 42, 99, 142, 175.

³⁰ Marcuse, *Five Lectures*, 88.

manifests in the entertainment industry: “Entertainment is the prolongation of work under late capitalism. It is sought by those who want to escape the mechanized labor process so that they can cope with it again.”³¹ The authors also argue that the entertainment industry loses its essence as culture and art by being a commodity. The criticism to mass media is also poised by Sartori³² who argues that mass media (focusing on television, due to the time he wrote “Homo Videns”) is used to spread disinformation, which according to him is a distortion of information to manipulate the public.

Finally, there are other authors that have a more complex understanding of the possible effect of mass media in the viewers; Tambiah³³ argues that every spectacle or show (in any type of media) have different meanings and interpretations for each actor that participates, either acting or watching the spectacle. This idea is along the lines of what Goffman³⁴ has presented as the “social establishment,” where media establishes the frame and/or margins of what is acceptable or not, and what can be demanded by people in society and what cannot.

The authors discussed in this section show different perspectives; on the one hand, the usefulness of media to foster political thinking and the development of critical consciousness, but on the other hand, the use of mass media by the elites to perpetuate the *status quo*. There is also a third perspective that highlights that the perceptions and interpretation of the messages of mass media depend on the viewers and can vary from viewer to viewer. These perspectives show that the effects of mass media are not dichotomic (just positive or negative) but are varied and complex as will be addressed in the next pages.

3 Black Earth Rising

Before beginning with the analysis of the series, it is important to highlight that the methodology used for this article consists of a qualitative approach to two specific case studies.³⁵ Moreover, content analysis of both the *Black Earth Rising* and *Queen Sono* shows was conducted³⁶ to analyze the social and political issues addressed and to discuss the specific scenes in which these are shown.

3.1 The plot

Black Earth Rising is a British series (thriller-drama) made in conjunction by the BBC and Netflix and is based on real-life events. The show was premiered in January 2019 in the UK, but it wasn't made internationally available on Netflix until late 2020. The series features Kate Ashby, a Rwandan-born investigator, adopted when she was a child by Eve Ashby, a British human rights lawyer and her involvement as an investigator for different cases in the International Criminal Court (ICC), in French courts and in Rwandan courts of former military leaders that were involved in the Rwandan genocide (in which around 800,000 Tutsis were massacred by the Hutu government and militias), which are the characters of Simon Nyamoya, one of the former leaders of the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF), Alice Munezero, another of the former leaders of the RPF and Patrice Ganimana, who was one of the military Hutu commanders that perpetrated the genocide of Tutsis in Rwanda and escaped to Congo after the RPF took control of the government in 1994. Other important characters are Michel Ennis, a British lawyer for whom Kate works; Eunice Clayton,

³¹ Adorno and Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry,” 109.

³² Sartori, *Homo Videns*.

³³ Tambiah, *A Performative Approach to Ritual*.

³⁴ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*.

³⁵ Creswell, *Research Design*; and Sartori, “Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics.”

³⁶ Potter and Riddle, “A Content Analysis of the Media Effects Literature.”

the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs; David Runihura, special advisor to the President of Rwanda and Bibi Mundanzi, the President of Rwanda.

This show is an interesting approach to a complex problem that has issues of colonialism (both neocolonialism and internal colonialism) in Africa, where most of the people judged in the ICC have been from. The show is also useful to highlight the complexities of the essence of justice according to the West and according to the African countries that were invaded and colonized by European empires.

The show is based on the consequences of the Rwandan genocide. The Rwandan genocide was the massacre of around 800,000 Tutsis over a period of 100 days in 1994 at the hands of the Hutu's government and militias. However, the genocide cannot be attributed just to an internal ethnic conflict, but rather the consequences of the colonial period in which Rwanda was invaded and controlled by Germany and Belgium; before the end of colonization there was no story of war between Hutu and Tutsis in Rwanda.³⁷ Rwanda was invaded and controlled by Germany in 1897, and by Belgium after World War I, when Germany lost. Both Germans and Belgians imposed their agents in the courts of the Rwandan Tutsi monarchy, effectively controlling Rwanda, relegating the Tutsi monarch to a symbolic role, imposing cash taxes and forced labor, and profiting from colonialism and extractivism. Moreover, the *Bazungu* (a word used in the Kinyarwanda language to refer to white Europeans) imposed an ethnic colonial system, which regarded Tutsis as superior to Hutus because they were considered more convenient for European interests than Hutus, who were also considered more "ethnically" close to Europeans, allowing only Tutsis to hold power.³⁸ With the "decolonization" of Rwanda at the end of the 50s by Belgium, the Hutus began to rebel against the Tutsi monarchy (and with the approval of the Belgians), killing thousands of Tutsis and officially taking power in 1961 with the victory of the Parmehutu political party. This replaced the monarchy with a presidential regime, which led to around 100,000 Tutsi fleeing the country and organizing guerrillas to try and retake power unsuccessfully.³⁹ The Hutu government suffered from intense economic crises during the 80s and from pressure of the international community to democratize the authoritarian regime that they held, allowing other parties to compete for power in 1990. These two factors along with the invasion of the northern part of the country by the RPF (which was mostly composed of descendants of the Tutsis that fled the country when Hutus seized power) made the Hutu government feel threatened, leading it to revive the ethnic hatred against Tutsis imposed since the colonial period. This strategy ultimately resulted in the Rwandan genocide, using as an excuse the attack on Habyarimana's plane which caused his death (Habyarimana was the leader of the Hutu government), attributed to the Tutsis without proof.⁴⁰

3.2 Analysis: Neocolonialism, mental health, decoloniality, justice, and memory

To begin with the analysis, it is worth noting that even if *Black Earth Rising* had been a show praised by critics, it is also accused of perpetuating negative stereotypes against black Africans,⁴¹ along with telling the story from a white-savior complex narrative. The fact that this is a British series is not a coincidence, because while highlighting the extremely harmful neocolonial involvement of the French in the Rwandan genocide, it doesn't address the neocolonial role of the British in the conflict. However, it does address the involvement of the wife of the attorney general of United Kingdom (UK) in corruption schemes and neoextractivism projects within Rwanda, which is one of the reasons why the UK government doesn't want to prosecute Patrice Ganimana.⁴²

³⁷ Uvin, "Prejudice, Crisis, and Genocide in Rwanda," 93.

³⁸ Ibid., 95.

³⁹ Ibid., 96.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 108, 109.

⁴¹ Major, "Cloak and Dagger."

⁴² Blick, "The Forviging Earth."

One of the central social and political issues addressed in the show is neocolonialism (composed of foreign colonialism, neoextractivism, and internal colonialism). Neocolonialism is mainly addressed by three aspects: the supposed moral authority and legitimacy of Europeans to judge Africans by the ICC and other legal spaces against the self-determination of African countries; the intervention of the French fostering the genocide; and the neoextractivism of foreign mining companies, which in the show is Kromin; a transnational mining industry exploiting coltan in several parts of Africa.

The first aspect of neocolonialism addressed is the struggle between the European supposed moral authority and legitimacy to judge Africans. This aspect of neocolonialism is presented in *Black Earth Rising* as a two-sided coin: the desire to make justice but also an attack on the self-determination of African people. Self-determination refers to the right that a group has to freely determine their own form of government, executing it by self-governing and to achieve the ways of life and wellbeing they consider better.⁴³ In this sense, self-determination also includes the right to act by the legal and judicial system and processes they consider better; in the series this controversy is constantly depicted, especially by the trial against Simon Nyamoya, who even if he was considered one of the heroes that stopped the Rwandan genocide, was accused in the ICC of organized crime, as well as leading a militia that trafficked “blood” diamonds. This accusation was questioned by several people from Rwanda, arguing that there were still war criminals at large who led the genocide and asking why not judge them?⁴⁴

This controversy of justice vs self-determination can be analyzed through a decolonial lens, which on the one hand shows that Europeans still have the sense that they have the moral superiority to judge Africans, perpetuating a coloniality of power and of being.⁴⁵ On the other hand, it can also be analyzed as a way of controlling the population considered inferior through the police-judicial colonial apparatus, which is not only used by foreign colonizers but also by the local elites structuring it into internal colonialism. This is shown by how the French government, through the influence of Clement Barré, tried to use their judicial apparatus against Alice Munezero⁴⁶ and is also shown in the way that Mundanzi uses the military and police forces of Rwanda to maintain power and imprison everyone who represents a threat against her government’s power.⁴⁷ From a decolonial lens this is an indicator of necropolitics and violence, that is used to maintain a colonial capitalist system.⁴⁸

The second aspect of neocolonialism addressed is the intervention of the French in fostering the Rwandan genocide in 1994. This is shown throughout the trail of Alice Munezero, accused of war crimes by French authorities, specifically of killing a French priest in Rwanda in 1994 who was involved in the massacre of more than 200 Tutsis in a church. Kate serves as investigator for the defense of Alice, led by Michael Ennis; her investigation unveils the involvement of Clement Barré, the owner of mining and agricultural complexes in Rwanda, and the French military in fabricating the false accusation of Munezero and in helping and training the Hutu military and government, because it was convenient for the French economic interest that the Hutu government stayed in power. Kate’s investigation leads to the dismissal of all charges against Munezero because the French priest was alive in France and means that both Barré and members of the French military are issued with arrest orders.⁴⁹ Through a decolonial approach this is an indicator of coloniality of power, where the institutional structure imposed by the colonial system continues to perpetuate and continues to be used by the West to control the “Global South” to prolong their interests.⁵⁰

⁴³ United Nations General Assembly, *United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

⁴⁴ Blick, “The Past Will Not Remain Hidden.”

⁴⁵ Quijano, “Colonialidad Del Poder y Clasificación Social;” Walsh, “Interculturalidad y Colonialidad Del Poder. Un Pensamiento y Posicionamiento ‘Otro’ Desde La Diferencia Colonial;” and Walsh, “Interculturalidad, Plurinacionalidad y Decolonialidad.”

⁴⁶ Blick, “Who Is Bobby Fischer?”

⁴⁷ Blick, “Who Is about to Meet Their Doom?”

⁴⁸ Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*; Mbembé, “Necropolitics;” Valencia and Sepúlveda, “Del Fascinante Fascismo a La Fascinante Violencia;” and Wacquant, “Crafting the Neoliberal State Workfare, Prisonfare and Social Insecurity.”

⁴⁹ Blick, “Can Michael Be Trusted?;” Blick, “Who Is Bobby Fischer?”

⁵⁰ Quijano, “Colonialidad Del Poder y Clasificación Social;” Walsh, “Interculturalidad y Colonialidad Del Poder. Un Pensamiento y Posicionamiento ‘Otro’ Desde La Diferencia Colonial.”

The third aspect of neocolonialism addressed in the show is neoextractivism, which is shown through the plan of the transnational mining company Kromin, together with David Runihura, to do everything they can in order to have the concession for the first refinery in Rwanda, as evidenced by Michael and Kate's investigation. Their investigation shows how Kromin, in order to have immense profits from their mines in Congo and to seal the deal for the refinery in Rwanda, paid (through David Runihura) the militia of Patrice Ganimana, to not attack the mines, protect them, and get rid of any threats to their interests; killing Eve Ashby, Peter Nyamoya, and even Eve Ashby's former boss who had files that incriminated Ganimana and others. They also tried to kill Alice Munezero and Kate by poisoning them, without success.⁵¹ In several African countries neoextractivism manifests in the mining sector, extracting diamonds, coltan, and other rare minerals that are required for the technological products that are most profitable around the world (the products that use microchips). Neoextractivism is the contemporary form of extractivism, established since the invasion and establishment of colonies around the world by European imperialist countries. This shifted with the independence of these countries from the colonial states to the transnational companies that continue to profit from the natural resources of the former colonized countries; paying little for the resources whilst receiving enormous profits, allowing by conjunction very cheap labor, inhuman working conditions, repression of labor movements, racism, and inequality.⁵²

These three aspects of neocolonialism addressed in the show are connected and are a powerful way to foster awareness and critical consciousness of the colonial oppression that is still suffered in Africa, as well as other parts of the "Global South," showing that colonialism, capitalism, racism, and environmental exploitation are part of a colonial process that benefits the elites by exploiting the oppressed, economically, socially, and by a necropolitical regime.

A different complex issue addressed in the show is mental health; Kate Ashby (the protagonist) suffers from chronic depression; it is implied in the plot that she attempted suicide and is on medication for her depression. Moreover, mental health issues are addressed as part of the consequences of the Rwandan genocide and civil war in survivors. This can be appreciated in one of Alice Munezero's lines; "In my country, we all are traumatized."⁵³ The devastating consequences of conflict on the survivors' mental health is also shown in the scene where Juliana Kabanga gives her testimony to Michael and Kate. Juliana is one of the survivors of the genocide, she witnessed the massacre of more than 200 Tutsis in the church where her family was also killed. This trauma caused her to lose the capability to speak ever since, giving her testimony in sign language.⁵⁴ The issue of mental health is also addressed in Queen Sono's show, where the protagonist suffers from depression and anxiety attacks caused by witnessing the assassination of her mother.⁵⁵ Negative effects on mental health due to armed conflicts are a pervasive reality; violence and war not only get people killed, but also leave scars on the health of survivors, both physical and mental, as Frantz Fanon⁵⁶ shown with his research on a psychiatric facility for soldiers involved in the independence war in Algeria. The issue of the mental health consequences of war and incarceration have also been discussed by Foucault.⁵⁷

Another decolonial aspect of the show is the use of proverbs and stories throughout the series, which is part of the oral tradition of African societies. The story addressed is the drongo and the cuckoo story told by Runihura to Michael: There was a little drongo bird in its nest, then a cuckoo bird was left in its nest and

⁵¹ Blick, "Deep into the Abyss;" Blick, "The Arrival of the Guardian Angel;" and Blick, "The Past Will Not Remain Hidden."

⁵² Cajigas-Rotundo, "La Biocolonialidad Del Poder. Amazonía, Biodiversidad y Ecocapitalismo;" Carr et al., "Pedagogías Contra El Despojo;" Cortez Lara, "Elementos de Conflicto Socioambiental: la Cervecería Constellation Brands y el Agua de Mexicali;" López Bárcenas, "Pueblos Indígenas y Megaproyectos En México;" Mignolo, "The Invention of the Human and the Three Pillars of the Colonial Matrix of Power;" Picq, "Self-Determination as Anti-Extractivism: How Indigenous Resistance Challenges World Politics."

⁵³ Blick, "Deep into the Abyss."

⁵⁴ Blick, "Can Michael Be Trusted?"

⁵⁵ Lediga, "Sugar Water."

⁵⁶ Fanon, *Los Condenados de La Tierra*.

⁵⁷ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

attacked the drongo bird since it's bigger, leaving the drongo outside of the nest, hurt. Once outside the nest, the drongo searched the soil for the most poisonous worm which it gave to the cuckoo to eat and die, recovering the control of the nest. When Runihura tells the story, he says that Alice is the drongo, Bibi is the cuckoo and Michael is the poisonous worm, however in the last chapter Runihura tells Bibi that the cuckoo was Alice and that he gave the worm to Alice to make Mundanzi (drongo) keep the control of the nest.⁵⁸ Using oral stories, such as proverbs, are very powerful to share complex ideas and have takeaways that are understandable for children and young viewers, and are decolonial ways of fostering political analysis and the development of critical consciousness, going past narrative centrism.

A final issue addressed is the complexity of the Rwandan genocide and the consequences of it in the region. The main consequence addressed is the posterior assassination of Hutu refugees in Congo in 1997 and the covering of it, not only by the Tutsi government but also the international community because it was convenient politically for them. The British government, pressed by Michael, negotiated with Runihura for Alice to be liberated from jail (she has been held as a political prisoner by Mundanzi), that the Constitution was changed, and that the truth was told to the Rwandan people about the 1997 assassination of 50,000 Hutus in Congo, where Kate was the only survivor, revealing at the end that she was Hutu, not Tutsi.⁵⁹ This complex issue speaks about the very delicate balance between justice, memory, peace, and stability in countries like Rwanda and Congo, that have suffered from armed conflicts, wars, and genocide. Memory and justice are intimately connected, but do not always go hand by hand, depending on the notion of justice for a particular situation or group. This is clear with the controversy between monuments and counter-monuments, which try to expose hidden or forgotten truths that can be considered to challenge memory.⁶⁰ In the show, Alice believes that the only way to achieve real peace and justice is by exposing the massacre of the Hutu refugees of 1997, however for Mundanzi's government this is inciting racial division, instability, and even insurrection, which is inconvenient for her government but also for the international community. This is shown in the series by the inaction of the British, French, and United States governments when Alice is taken as a political prisoner by Mundanzi's government.⁶¹ One important point to note regarding this topic is that western countries preach that the wars and conflicts in Africa are due to their ethnic and tribal internal conflicts, however, there has been research to show that multiethnicity is not sufficient to cause armed conflicts.⁶² Ethnic conflicts in African countries, like Rwanda, are caused by the imposed colonial system that categorizes peoples as superior and inferior based on the western idea of racial superiority imposed by the colonial matrix.

Considering the aspects discussed in the previous paragraphs, this show can be used as a tool to raise awareness and critical consciousness about the issues of conflict, peace, corruption, internal colonialism, neocolonialism, memory, and necropolitics in an accessible and entertaining way, having the possibility to reach a large audience. This could be used in both formal education scenarios and non-formal education scenarios to illustrate the social and political issues mentioned. The education and empowering potential of this show (specifically for black people) in topics such as colonialism and racism are addressed in other academic papers.⁶³ As well as the specific usefulness to foster critical consciousness and a humanistic view in lawyers.⁶⁴ However, as discussed, it is important to bear in mind that it is a British show, that perpetuates to some extent the white-savior complex, where the institutional structure and legitimacy of the ICC and of the British legal system is not questioned, but rather is implying that there are some corrupt individuals, but that in general the system is "fair."

⁵⁸ Blick, "Who Is about to Meet Their Doom?;" and Blick, "It Has Been a Grim Pleasure."

⁵⁹ Blick, "It Has Been a Grim Pleasure;" and Blick, "Who Is about to Meet Their Doom?"

⁶⁰ Osborne, "Counter-Monumentality and the Vulnerability of Memory."

⁶¹ Blick, "Who Is about to Meet Their Doom?"

⁶² Cederman et al., "Horizontal Inequalities and Ethnonationalist Civil War;" Cunningham and Lemke, "Combining Civil and Interstate Wars;" Fearon and Laitin, "Explaining Interethnic Cooperation;" Fearon and Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War;" Jackson, "Constructivism and Conflict."

⁶³ Fernandes de Souza et al., "Cultura Popular Negra."

⁶⁴ Manley, "Hugo Blick (Directed and Screenplay), Michaela Coel and John Goodman (Actors), Black Earth Rising."

4 Queen Sono

4.1 The plot

Queen Sono is the first original African Netflix series production, premiered internationally in 2020. The production of original series based in the “Global South” and portraying stories with black African talent starring from their own perspective can be seen as an investment on diversity, which is a strategy that media companies have been adopting more and more,⁶⁵ and is an investment to enter and be the leader of streaming platforms in Africa. By February 2020 there were only 1.5 million Netflix subscribers in Sub-Saharan Africa but it is estimated that by 2024 the streaming market in Sub-Saharan Africa will have a value of more than 1 billion USD.⁶⁶ *Queen Sono* is a relevant fiction series (action-drama) that, in a popular frame, visualizes and exhibits several issues of African nations realities, such as colonialism (including neocolonialism, neoextractivism, and internal colonialism), violence, inequality, racism, and corruption.⁶⁷ It is worth noting that the show has been more popular (in order of popularity) in South Africa, Germany, France, and Russia in the last months, and in the US and the UK the popularity has been average.⁶⁸

The plot focuses on Queen Sono and the Special Operations Group (SOG), a secret spying agency within the South African government. The scenes develop around the countries of South Africa, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Kenya, where Queen’s missions are based. During her missions, Queen unveils a neocolonial corruption scheme involving the South African president and his cabinet, the transnational company “Superior Solutions,” the armed group “Watu Wema,” South African elites and other actors, while trying to discover who assassinated her mother, Safiya Sono, who was the most prominent leader of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa.⁶⁹ The other leading characters in the show are Shandu Johnson, the leaders of Watu Wema and former SOG agent; Miri Dube, administrative chief of the SOG; Sid Isaacs, who is in charge of the SOG and Ekaterina Gromova, the CEO of Superior Solutions.

The show focuses on the reality of post-apartheid South Africa and the consequences of the apartheid regime, due to this, is important to briefly discuss the segregation and the apartheid regimes in the country. The segregation and apartheid regimes were imposed since the invasion and colonization of the region by the Dutch in the seventeenth century and of the British from the early nineteenth century, both the Dutch and the British imposed slavery on the Bantu (African) population and imposed a colonial racial system in which white Europeans were considered superior and received the power and economic resources.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, racism, segregation, and forced cheap labor continued after the independence of South Africa in 1910; during the first half of the twentieth century segregation was enacted by law, such as the Native Land Act of 1913 that established “reserves,” limited zones in which African people were available to live and own land only.⁷¹ The apartheid regime began in 1948 when the Nationalist Party won the election, establishing a system of racism and repression against non-whites that not only entailed segregation but a whole apparatus of armed repression and institutionalized economic inequality in favor of whites and against non-whites (including African and descendants of Indian people) which established lower wages for non-whites for the same jobs, the prohibition of organizing for non-whites, the continuation and intensification of segregation policies.⁷² The apartheid came to an end in 1994 when Nelson Mandela was elected president; he was the first democratically elected president of South Africa, however, the consequences of the apartheid regime still continue today.

⁶⁵ Siqueira Venanzoni, “Diversidade Em Plataformas Globais De Distribuição.”

⁶⁶ Cascais, “Netflix.”

⁶⁷ Márquez Duarte, “Opinion|Queen Sono and the Decolonialism.”

⁶⁸ Parrot Analytics, “Queen Sono (Netflix).”

⁶⁹ Márquez Duarte, “Opinion|Queen Sono and the Decolonialism.”

⁷⁰ South African History Online, “History of Slavery and Early Colonisation in South Africa.”

⁷¹ Wolpe, “Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in South Africa,” 436.

⁷² Ibid., 446, 447.

4.2 Analysis: Neocolonialism, violence, necropolitics, racism, corruption, inequality

The series, as mentioned before, addresses issues such as colonialism, violence, inequality, racism, and corruption in South Africa. Besides the topics addressed, the series by itself is a decolonial effort because it portrays an African story told and produced by Africans, using not only English but also African languages like Zulu and Swahili, to mention a few.⁷³ The use of African languages is also seen in *Black Earth Rising*, where the characters speak in the Kinyarwanda language, however to a lesser extent than in *Queen Sono*.

In *Queen Sono*, the colonial oppression from the western elites is intertwined with internal colonialism, where the local elites have preached that they have liberated their people from western colonialism by independence and by the anti-apartheid movement. However, these local elites have allied themselves with western transnational companies to keep stealing natural resources from the African nations, receiving thousands of millions of dollars in businesses with the African governments through bribes and corruption.⁷⁴ With these neocolonial schemes they have further perpetuated poverty, inequality, racism, corruption, and oppression of the African people, all of which are central elements of internal colonialism.⁷⁵ One scene that shows this is when Malunga was vice-president and received bribes from two European companies for the concession of a nuclear plant in the country, which the SOG had proof.⁷⁶ Another storyline that shows the internal colonialism suffered in South Africa is the last scene of the first season; Nana, who is one of the most prominent business leaders of South Africa, harnessed her economic power due to her political power in the dominating party, implying that there was corruption in her businesses.⁷⁷ Moreover, in the last scene it is implied that she is behind the murder of Safiya Sono, and that she wants to get rid of Queen because she has become a threat to her interests.⁷⁸

On the other hand, neocolonialism perpetuated by International Organizations (IOs) is also addressed when Queen meets Nova (the girlfriend of her best friend William); Nova tells Queen that she works at the World Bank and Queen says “Oh! Drowning Africa in debt.”⁷⁹ This issue is also addressed in the scene where Ekaterina is giving a talk at the African Security Summit and a woman from the NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) sector accuses her company, as well as other transnational companies and IOs, of being neo-colonialists, stating that they think they know better what to do in Africa than the Africans.⁸⁰ Another issue addressed in the show is religion as a form of neocolonialism. Shandu, the leader of Watu Wema appears in a Christian church in Zimbabwe and exposes the pastor of fraud, telling the people to not let the religion of the West steal their money. Shandu then makes the pastor return all the money collected from the members of the church, for having taken advantage of their faith.⁸¹ This is related to coloniality of knowledge, which demonized the ancient cosmovision, knowledge and beliefs of the colonized people, trying to erase it and impose their religion, which in South Africa was Christianity (imposed by the western colonizers).⁸² Coloniality of knowledge is also used by IOs to decide for the “Global South” what is best for them, instead of recognizing the right to self-determination and recognizing

⁷³ Márquez Duarte, “Opinion|Queen Sono and the Decolonialism.”

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Fanon, *Los Condenados de La Tierra*, 55, 76; González Casanova, “Colonialismo Interno (Una Redefinición);” Martínez Andrade, “Marxismo e Indigenismo Según José Carlos Mariátegui;” Talamante Dominguez, *Cocopah Identity Survival*, 41; and Wa Thiong’o, *Decolonising the Mind*, 21.

⁷⁶ Lediga, “Rookie.”

⁷⁷ Lediga, “Dying Is Sore.”

⁷⁸ Lediga, “State of Emergency.”

⁷⁹ Lediga, “I Am Queen Sono.”

⁸⁰ Lediga, “The Devil’s Toys.”

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² De la Serna, *Tratado de Las Idolatrías, Supersticiones, Dioses, Ritos, Hechicerías y Otras Costumbres Gentílicas de Las Razas Aborígenes de México*; De Sahagún, *Historia General de Las Cosas de Nueva España*; Grosfoguel, “Descolonizando Los Universalismos Occidentales;” López Austin, *Hombre-Dios*; López Austin, “Fray Bernardino de Sahagún Frente a Los Mitos Indígenas;” Mignolo, “El Pensamiento Des-Colonial, Desprendimiento y Apertura;” and León Portilla, *Visión de Los Vencidos*.

that only people who live the reality of each country every day probably know best how to solve their issues.⁸³

A last relevant issue portrayed in *Queen Sono* is neocolonial violence and necropolitics, especially with the relation of “Watu Wema” and the security company “Superior Solutions,” which create a “fake” security problem by the attacks conducted by Watu Wema, allowing the security company to appear as savior; this is illustrated by what Ekaterina says to Shandu “So let Watu Wema continue to burn this continent down and Superior Solutions will extinguish the flames.”⁸⁴ Watu Wema’s attacks create collective hysteria in the people, as is shown through the Metro terrorist attack and the attempted terrorist attack on the stadium in Johannesburg, allowing Superior Solutions to supply the government security forces when a state of emergency is declared.⁸⁵⁻⁸⁶ The fact that both Watu Wema and Superior Solutions are willing to deliberately end the lives of thousands of people for profit and power is a necropolitical stance that is inherent in a colonial capitalist system, where the lives of people are valued according to economic calculations, which then allows them to categorize lives in hierarchies. They can then “sacrifice” or literally end lives that are considered less valuable, which Shandu points out to Ekaterina more than once,⁸⁷ but continues to work with her nonetheless.⁸⁸ Moreover, the system imposed in the country has perpetuated inequality, which in order for the elites to maintain their profits and power creates violence and poverty, leaving the oppressed people to survive however they can, including illegal activities, justifying the securitization of society and the profiling and brutality of police against the groups considered “dangerous,” which are always oppressed groups (BIPOC).⁸⁹

One important difference between both shows is that *Queen Sono* implies a critique not only to corruption and neocolonialism in the face of individual businesspeople and politicians, but rather criticizes the whole institutional structure that was imposed by the colonial invasion and implies that institutional change to dismantle the colonial institutions is needed. This can be appreciated with the arguments that Shandu poises throughout the series and the truth unveiled by Queen about the nature and beginnings of the SOG; critique that is not seen in *Black Earth Rising*. The fact that *Queen Sono* is an African series and *Black Earth Rising* is a European show can be used to explain this difference.

Series like *Queen Sono* can be very useful for visualizing social and political issues in a popular way, so that a large audience can be exposed to them and could lead them to foster critical consciousness and rethink their reality.⁹⁰ There are guides to use the show as a pedagogical tool, such as the “Screen Worlds” toolkit about African films and series to challenge western centrism in Film Studies at university level, which leads to discussions such as: How do the directors in question choose to represent African citizens and places? What do these filmmakers envisage for the future of Africa? Just to mention a few.⁹¹ Finally, *Queen Sono* is an empowering channel through which African people see themselves and recognize

⁸³ Bárcenas, *Legislación y Derechos Indígenas En México*; Boisier, “Desarrollo Endógeno;” Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL)/Fondo para el Desarrollo de los and Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina y el Caribe (FILAC), “Los Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina – Abya Yala y La Agenda 2030 Para El Desarrollo Sostenible;” Duarte, “Knowledge, Technology, and the Pragmatic Dimensions of Self-Determination;” Merry and Wood, “Quantification and the Paradox of Measurement;” Ojeda Medina and Villareal Villamar, *Pensamiento Crítico Latinoamericano Sobre Desarrollo*; Szanton, *The Politics of Knowledge*; Vázquez Correa, “Representación Política y Acciones Afirmativas Indígenas;” and Woons, “Introduction.”

⁸⁴ Lediga, “Dying Is Sore.”

⁸⁵ Lediga, “State of Emergency.”

⁸⁶ Márquez Duarte, “Opinion|Queen Sono and the Decolonialism.”

⁸⁷ Lediga, “Dying Is Sore.”

⁸⁸ Márquez Duarte, “La Necropolítica de La Violencia Policiaca;” Mbembé, “Necropolitics;” Sánchez-Antonio, “Tanato-Política, Esclavitud, Capitalismo Colonial y Racismo Epistémico En La Invasión Genocida de América;” and Valencia and Sepúlveda, “Del Fascinante Fascismo a La Fascinante Violencia.”

⁸⁹ Dussel, *Carta a los Indignados*; Echeverría, “Modernidad y Capitalismo (15 Tesis);” Goldstein, “Citizen Security and Human Security in Latin America;” González Casanova, “Colonialismo Interno (Una Redefinición);” Herz, “Concepts of Security in South America;” and Tickner, “Securitization and the Limits of Democratic Security.”

⁹⁰ Márquez Duarte, “Opinion|Queen Sono and the Decolonialism.”

⁹¹ Jackson, “An Introduction to Decolonising Netflix, Youtube and Vimeo.”

themselves as the main actors of their realities, breaking with the western cultural imposition. However, it is also important to recognize that the show can also perpetuate exoticism and othering of African bodies and lives, by portraying Queen as a *femme fatale*, perpetuating the negative stereotype of black women as hyper-sexualized.

5 Conclusion

The analysis of *Black Earth Rising* and *Queen Sono* conducted through this article has centered on the political and social issues addressed in both shows, such as neocolonialism, neoextractivism, internal colonialism, racism, inequality, justice, self-determination, corruption, violence, peace, memory, necropolitics, mental health, and decoloniality.

The issues that have been addressed in both *Black Earth Rising* and *Queen Sono* are the internal colonialism that was imposed and has perpetuated on Africa, where local elites have been involved with western elites to further perpetuate the colonial oppression by the colonial matrix. Other issues addressed in both shows are neocolonialism and neoextractivism with Superior Solutions in *Queen Sono* and with Kromin in *Black Earth Rising*. Moreover, neocolonialism is addressed in both series in different ways such as the European idea that they have the moral superiority to decide what is better for African countries instead of African people exercising self-determination. Mental health is also addressed in both shows, especially negative mental health repercussions due to experiencing and surviving conflict and violence. A final issue addressed on both shows is decoloniality by recognizing and using the languages and oral stories tradition of African societies.

Moreover, content analysis of both series has shown that they could be potentially useful and accessible tools to raise awareness and even foster critical consciousness in a wider public regarding the social and political issues addressed. This also speaks to the potential of using these types of series as decolonial pedagogical tools for students to have exposure to alternative sources that could be useful for them to illustrate and understand complex social and political issues, that are not as accessible from purely academic spaces and sources. Throughout the article I discussed examples of how these series have been used to foster critical consciousness in Law students and Film students, however I consider that these series can be used in a broader range of disciplines, as well as in interdisciplinary studies, such as in Political Science, International Relations, Sociology, Anthropology, Philosophy, Ethnic studies, and Cultural studies.

Nonetheless, it is important to take into account that these series are not perfect, and can perpetuate neocolonial ideas and assumptions, such as the moral and institutional superiority of the West, and/or the exoticism of African bodies, especially women. A relevant way to prevent these potential negative effects is by acknowledging these aspects inserted in the narrative of the shows in the analysis with students, so that they are aware of them and form their own judgment about it, while taking advantage of the potential to foster the development of critical consciousness regarding the topics that both shows address, which are important and necessary.

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