COMING OUT OF THE CONFUSION: REPRESENTATION OF FRENCH JUSTICE THROUGH
SPIRAL (ENGRENAGES SEASON 4)

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Over the past twenty years, the French have acquired a legal culture through imported American television series like Law & Order, Ally McBeal or Damages. This has led to a major confusion as to how their own system works and what their own legal professions are like. The first attempts to produce national legal fictions did not remedy this problem. In 2005, Canal Plus also tried its hand at a national crime/law series, called Engrenages (Spiral on British television). For whatever British television critics saw in it, it failed miserably at providing a viable alternative to an erroneous image of the French criminal justice system. Three seasons and several scriptwriters later, season four of Engrenages finally tells a story of crime and justice in France, without traditional ridicule, but with realism, compassion and efficient intrigue, meeting with critical acclaim, and not the least important, much judicial approval.