

**Banishing the Expectations of Television Drama: Temporal Constraints Set Loose
on Sundance Channel's *Rectify* and Showtime's *Twin Peaks: The Return***

Name: Ioannis Chiras

Leiden University

Master Thesis in Film and Photographic Studies

Name of Instructors:

Dr. J.J.M. Houwen

Dr. Y. Horsman

May 2019

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Chapter I	10
Reconciling Narrative and Real-Time in Sundance Channel's <i>Rectify</i>	10
1.1 Slowness as an Exciting Virtue	12
1.2 It is not TV, it is... Art Cinema: Realism, Authority and Ambiguity.....	16
1.3 The Unconscious Matters	19
Chapter II	24
The Eternal Return: <i>Twin Peaks: The Return</i> and the Fragmentation of Time	24
2.1 Affecting Temporality	26
2.2 Narrative Complexity	32
Conclusion	37
Illustrations.....	40
Bibliography.....	52

Introduction

Television studies have diachronically been coalescing with the shifts taking place in television formats. Taking as a starting point the programming development of prime time television in the *Golden Age of Television* in the 1950s, when anthology programming transitioned into continuing character series,¹ to the advent of the satellite cable services in the mid-1970s and the parallel rise of the *British Golden Age of Television*,² television scholars have meticulously reflected on the ways television drama has undergone changes in production, distribution and – more importantly – narrative structures.³ A crucial breaking point when examining the entrance to what has infamously been hailed as the *New Golden Age of Television* is the premiere of the prison drama *Oz* (1997-2003) in HBO (Home Box Office), which chronicled the daily lives and struggles of the inmates of a US prison facility.⁴ By that time, HBO had already dived into the arena of original programming, with shows such as the Canadian sketch comedy *The Kids in the Hall* (1988-1994) and the influential sitcom *The Larry Sanders Show* (1992-1998). Though the aforementioned shows suffered from the unbalanced scheduling format of early premium cable programming,⁵ they still managed to remain on the air for several seasons, contributing to the channel's boost of prestige with its early success in original programming and the yearly award circuit (Primetime Emmy Awards, Peabody Awards, Writers Guild Awards, etc).

With the case of *Oz*, however, HBO and consequently cable television in total found a template of a hybrid form of serial drama that championed flexible narrative structure over the filmic determinacy of the *single-play*, a crucial term in the lexicon of television scholars that presupposes a radical nature in the heart of the audiovisual text.⁶ *Oz's* paradigmatic *complexity* regarding issues of characterization, narrative fluidity and *mise en scène* paved the way for the production of subsequent dramas that encapsulated a more self-contained and episodic structure, in contrast to a unified narrative development. In short, what I shall define as *episodic television* took a precedence over season-focused arcs. In this regard, I am not in any way

¹ The Golden Age of Television in US television is still considered to be the 1950s, yet this term has been used quite arbitrarily as of lately

² Viewed as a radical reactionary response to Margaret Thatcher's prime ministry in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, BBC and Channel 4's programming constituted what is termed today as the British Golden Age of Television

³ A good starting point to disentangle those developments are the recent writings of contemporary television scholars Amy Holdsworth, Glen Creeber and Jason Mittell

⁴ <http://www.hbo.com/oz>

⁵ Until the premiere of the first season of *The Sopranos*, HBO, and in general premium cable shows were not following a strict episodic structure of, let us say, 8, 10 or 13 episodes, as seen today

⁶ Mainly deriving from the socially conscious British single-plays by filmmakers of the likes of Mike Leigh, Alan Clarke and Ken Loach

neglecting a focus of season-by-season development of characters and stories, yet what is of utmost importance for subsequent cable dramas like *The Sopranos* (1999-2006), *Six Feet Under* (2001-2005), *The Wire* (2002-2008), *Mad Men* (2007-2015), *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013) and *In Treatment* (2008-2010) is the three-act narrative insertion in one-hour episodic forms, that simultaneously highlights the building-block attributes of individual episodes leading to a potential climax at the end of each season, and the rising cinematic tools these shows employed in terms of storytelling and direction.⁷

What becomes interesting is the discrepancy of approaches between television scholars and professional television critics regarding the roots of such a *quality turn* in television drama from the turn of the century onwards. Renowned television critics like Alan Sepinwall, Matt Zoller Seitz and Maureen Ryan focus on the notion of the *New Golden Age of Television*, of which early roots can be located back to the creative minds of the network broadcast shows *Hill Street Blues* (1981-1987) and *NYPD Blue* (1993-2005), and also the basic cable vampire teen show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003).⁸ This new era fully traces its origin back to the pilot of *The Sopranos* (January 10, 1999), which was written and directed by the creator of the show David Chase, and arguably reaches its climax with the final seasons of the AMC produced shows *Breaking Bad* and *Mad Men* in 2013 and 2015 respectively. In his book, *The Revolution Was Televised*, Sepinwall argues in favor of such a trajectory by providing a dozen shows for consideration.⁹ Retrospectively, it can be argued that television criticism's inclination towards such a categorization foreshadowed what is acknowledged today as the *Peak Television* era, a term that encapsulates the ever-growing landscape of television in quantitative terms.¹⁰

In a chronologically parallel manner, television scholars seem to pinpoint to the same television dramas hailed as the pinnacle of quality television, yet the focus here lies on an implicit dependence of television to cinematic tools, for an ultimate comparison between television and cinema seems to flatter or even empower the former. Indicatively, the scholarly contributions of Amy Holdsworth, Glen Creeber and

⁷ Of course, the transition of a film director and/or writer to television was firstly encountered back in the 1950s with Alfred Hitchcock's show, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (1955-1962). Today, with the advent of limited series we see several authors taking the leap to transition to the flexible structure of television storytelling

⁸ Namely, David Milch, Steven Bochco and Joss Whedon

⁹ The shows he chooses are: *Oz* (1997-2003), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003), *The Sopranos* (1999-2006), *24* (2001-2010), *The Wire* (2002-2008), *The Shield* (2002-2008), *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009), *Deadwood* (2004-2006), *Lost* (2004-2010), *Friday Night Lights* (2006-2011), *Mad Men* (2007-2015), and *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013)

¹⁰ In an interesting statement that introduced the term "Peak Television" the president of the FX basic cable network, John Landgraf argued that "there is simply too much television". Over 400 shows were produced in 2015, and the number is still growing. See <http://variety.com/2015/tv/news/tca-fx-networks-john-landgraf-wall-street-1201559191/>

Jason Mittell do not deviate from film theory, yet still correlate with television and media studies. What has been defined as “megamovies” is the characterization of quality television dramas that showcase narrative complexity and aesthetic appeal that is reminiscent of an art film production, to which an undisputed quality has been - quite arbitrarily - attributed.¹¹ In his book, *Serial Television*, Glen Creeber argues in favor of a hybrid form of television that wavers between the serial and the series modes.¹² This merging of structures, according to him, unavoidably depends on a comparison to art cinema tropes of storytelling and auteuristic control from the part of the series' creator. Moreover, in her book *Television, Memory and Nostalgia*, Amy Holdsworth employs memory studies to argue in favor of highlighting the role of memory “in the operation of specific television cultures.”¹³ Her intention here is to reexamine the ways television is seen by its respective field, and for doing so she relates television production with complexity and “different versions of temporality.”¹⁴

The various methodologies employed by television scholars provide us with noteworthy approaches regarding the contemporary television drama. *Narrative complexity* implies a merging of tropes, structures and genres that lead to endless semiosis, what Roland Barthes would call “writerly texts”.¹⁵ If we ask ourselves for instance who Tony Soprano (James Gandolfini) or Walter White (Bryan Cranston) really are, or what is the ultimate effect of the narrative density of *Hannibal* (2013-2015), then the answers can vary, if not extinct. The diversity of meanings that the term narrative complexity implies brings light to the plurality of such complexity in character(s), meanings in story, the ultimate effect to the viewer, or, as this thesis eventually will focus on, the temporal implications of the stories. This heterogeneous nature of contemporary television drama is supported by scholars, for an ultimate inquiry, both in terms of the characters and the way time is dealt with, reflects on the ongoing debate surrounding the politics of the personal and the evolution of realism itself.¹⁶ Therefore, a more self-reflexive and subjective form of

¹¹ It is interesting to note that most of the comparisons made between cinema and television, implicitly or explicitly define television in subservient terms in relation to cinema

¹² In his book, *Serial Television: Big Drama on the Small Screen*, Creeber makes a distinction of several modes of television production

¹³ Holdsworth, 2011, 2

¹⁴ Holdsworth, 2011, 8

¹⁵ In his book, *S/Z* (1970), Roland Barthes showcased two different types of literary text, the readerly and writerly ones. According to him, a readerly text is one that presents a world of easily identifiable characters and events and one in which the characters and their actions are understandable. Furthermore, writerly texts, are self-consciously literary works characterized by an emphasis on the elaborate use of language.

¹⁶ Most of the writings of such a ‘realism turn’ are encountered in the film discourse of 1980s British cinema, where the traditional socially conscious text of the 1950s kitchen sink drama was replaced by a focus on the private life of the working-class individual.

narratives, as signaled by the protagonists and main supporting characters of the aforementioned television dramas, offers an introspective view into the politics of self-identity and a proliferation of multiple perspectives rooted in larger social conditions.

Furthermore, the emerging implications of the aforementioned developments can be also located in the way certain televisual texts can be read against the background of iconoclasm; independent voices that found their place within the broad context of digital television production have created works that amplify the deferral to usual rendering of temporality.¹⁷ This is certainly the case with the new season of *Twin Peaks: The Return* (2017), twenty six years after its cancellation in broadcast television (ABC Network). David Lynch's directorial approach and way of storytelling reached the depths of technical innovation never seen before on television and could be retrospectively evaluated as an act of iconoclasm.¹⁸ What is of interest on the scope of this thesis is the way *Twin Peaks: The Return* banishes expectations in regards to the way time is experienced within television narrative structures and also the viewing experience of the spectator.¹⁹

Moving on, and with regards to the narrative complexity evident in recent 'quality dramas' on television, we can detect the way dramaturgy is more and more based on the self-questioning and ambiguity of the subject (thus, protagonists). For instance, it is in this manner that the audience witnesses Tony Soprano, a successful modern Mafia boss, having his sessions with his therapist (Loraine Bracco) and then gradually spiraling into self-hatred. Or, in the case of *Mad Men*, Don Draper (Jon Hamm), a hotshot marketing executive, facing his traumatic past through his cautious *returns* to the haunting moments of his childhood. Or, lastly, in the case of *Rectify* (2013-2016), the other case study of this thesis, facing the fascinating enigma Daniel Holden (Aden Young) is, after serving nineteen years on death row and then abruptly placed back into society. The dive into the complex psyche of the fictional drama subject

¹⁷ This is more related to the ways cable networks relay their distribution strategies to several available platforms such as streaming services. (see Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, etc) In the case of *Twin Peaks: The Return*, David Lynch worked closely with Showtime and David Nevins (CEO) in maintaining the show's singularity in all aspects. For that reason, the avant-premiere of the show took place in the Cannes Film Festival (May 2017), days before its official premiere

¹⁸ See for instance episode 308 ('Gotta Light?') and the complete reversal of expectations by David Lynch and the production team in terms of narrative fluidity (in relation to what preceded and then came after that episode) and special effects. Critics pointed out the importance and, at the same time, stand-alone quality of the episode. See <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2017/jun/26/twin-peaks-recap-episode-eight-the-most-mind-melting-majestic-outing-yet>

¹⁹ Showtime's way of handling the scheduling of the show was mystical enough to create, or even subvert the expectations of the audience. Specifically, no promotional material was made available to the audience before the start, or even in midst of the season. The streaming opportunities for the online subscribers were also limited in the sense that the show was put off the official streaming service only a month after the completion of the season

presupposes an interdisciplinary methodology, for a retreat to psychoanalysis, media and memory studies are useful for an understanding of the subject of a given audiovisual text. The outcome that rises is the way in which this complexity concerning the characters influences the storytelling of *Rectify*, and more specifically in the way time is experienced by both characters and spectators of the show.

By invoking the question of the way *Rectify* and *Twin Peaks: The Return* set temporal constraints loose in their complex and challenging narratives, I intend to focus on a way of television production that is both unique and subversive in terms of the way time is rendered. More specifically, *Rectify* and *Twin Peaks: The Return* will be read on the basis of an episodic structure, an approach that will emphasize the importance and proliferation of episodic television. In the manner of episodic analysis, I will argue that the space those shows create, in temporal terms, for both their characters and audiences, is noteworthy and of importance to today's television field. The articulation of that space is not necessarily dependent on the platform these productions derive from (albeit the cable and/or streaming channels indeed constitute a respectable factor), but the metaphorical locus and amalgamation of their artistic vision.

Specifically, in the first chapter I will create the necessary space for the examination of the repercussions of *Rectify's* unique pace and associations with time and memory. By employing film and memory studies, the crucial elements of the narrative and mise en scène of selected episodes of the show will be pointed out in order to provide the basis of the temporal peculiarity that is experienced for both characters and audience. The show's timeline is dealing with almost six months of our characters' lives, which means that narrative time is stretched out to the point that is inclined towards the rhythm of the real one. This evident slowness will be read against the background of what has been defined as 'slow cinema', for which contemporary film studies has associated itself with. For this, film scholar's Song Hwee Lim's contribution to the field of film studies will be of assistance. Subsequently, the focus will lie on the inclination of *Rectify's* narrative to art cinema tropes, for which seminal scholars David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson's literature will be employed. In addition to that, a comparison between *Rectify* and other contemporary television shows that seem to also be inclined towards art cinema tropes [see Cinemax's *The Knick* (2014-2015) and FX's *Fargo* (2014-)] will be made. Conclusively, the third section of this chapter will focus on the relation of the narrative structure of the show with matters of memory and the unconscious. Indicatively, Henri Bergson's contribution to the literature of time will be of assistance. The choice of using Bergson as the theoretical framework of this section is mainly deriving from his everlasting influence on the field, but also by the fact that his idea fit to the sensibilities of the show. In his book *Matter and Memory* (2004, originally 1896), the metaphysical inquiry in terms of the relation of the subject with memory will be

connected to the narrative structure of the show, where the use of flashbacks and monologues proposes introspection as not only part of characterization, but a narrative tool as well. In addition to Bergson's philosophy, Glen Creeber's scholarly contribution to television studies will be employed, for a point of comparison between *Rectify's* narrative rhythm and the way serial dramas of this century have expanded their structures in terms of narrative and aesthetics.

Respectively, in the second chapter and the case of *Twin Peaks: The Return*, I intend to approach and comment on the overarching theme of time from two different focal points, namely the affective operations at play and the evident (and even exaggerated) narrative complexity of the show. As audiences and the scholarly literature is aware of, the original version of *Twin Peaks* offered a fruitful ground of discussion and analysis when it was examined against the background of postmodernism, pastiche, cultural studies and the politics of the body. Especially in the case of the latter, interesting results can be extracted when analyzed in relation to the academic turn in film studies, from the psychoanalytic approach of the 1960s and 1970s (termed as Theory), to the emergence of Post-Theory, a more cognitivist and historicist approach that deviated from the Lacanian one. The original show remains a fertile ground of analysis when viewed as a reconciliation factor between the aforementioned approaches, as its associations with the corporeality of the body opens up the possibility of a transmedia discourse towards the theory of affect. When viewed in relation to narratology, a focus on affect raises questions in relation to both its potential receiver (could be the audience, but also the fictional characters within the text) and site. In that respect, of importance for this chapter is firstly a focus on the existing theories on affect. For that matter, Lisa Cartwright's theorization of affect and spectatorship in her book *Moral Spectatorship* (2008), where she raises moral questions about the place of the spectator, will be employed. Moreover, for a deeper understanding of the role affect can have on the body and consequently its importance in film studies, Steven Shaviro's *The Cinematic Body* (1993), and especially Eugenie Brinkema's *The Forms of Affect* (2014) and José Gils' article 'Paradoxical Body' will provide the necessary theoretical basis on which *Twin Peaks: The Return's* affective status will be examined in its repercussions to temporality. Consequently, in the second section of this chapter, I will focus on the role narrative complexity plays in the defiance of any temporal constraints within the text. Through the episodic approach that will be followed, we will see for instance how Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan), the protagonist of the show, is never present in the text until the sixteenth episode, and by that point we are not even sure if he is part of the intradiegetic timeline. Or, on a similar note and of utmost importance, whether any kind of linear intradiegetic timeline exists at all. The sense of time, in between the episodes, is rendered more and more loose, to the point where characters

seem to jump out of their 'assigned roles' in the diegesis and partaking the role of the spectator. This unavoidably results into a narrative complexity not seen before on contemporary television drama.

In an attempt to compare the results extracted from the first two chapters, that is the role of slowness and narrative introspection in the case of *Rectify*, and the double synthesis that is created in *Twin Peaks: The Return* when affect and narrative complexity are read against the background of temporality, this thesis will draw a conclusion by providing an insight into the role and potential importance of those shows and specific narratives in the contemporary television field. Viewed under the microscope of temporality, *Rectify* and *Twin Peaks: The Return* are dealt as exceptions to the standards of television storytelling in the era of "Peak Television".

Chapter I

Reconciling Narrative and Real-Time in Sundance Channel's *Rectify*

Daniel Holden: Now that I'm here in this world where everything's marked by hours or dates or events, I find myself in a state of constant anticipation. What it is I'm anticipating, I'm not always sure, nor is it necessarily a pleasant feeling. But in the case of the inevitable rain and thunder which I am sure to experience, thanks to you Tawney, I am very much looking forward to that.

Tawney Talbot: It will be glorious, Daniel. You won't be disappointed.

Episode 102, 'Sexual Peeling'

Rectify, the first original scripted show of Sundance Channel, revolves around the life of Daniel Holden right after his release from death row, where he spent nineteen years of his life secluded from any contact with the real world. Daniel was convicted of murdering Hanna Dean (-), his high school sweetheart, a crime for which he plead guilty, yet new DNA evidence called his conviction into question. For four years in a row, *Rectify* gathered universal acclaim by television critics.²⁰ Subsequently, comparisons to television shows like *The Wire* in the one hand foreshadow the lasting cultural impact the show can have in the future, but on the other also consolidate what I call a *retrospective rectification* from the part of television criticism that failed to acknowledge such little-viewed shows in their prime and tend to fall into nostalgic retrospection.²¹ In all fairness, such remarks do not pertain a catalytic meaning when we analyze the potential impact of *Rectify*, and should be taken into consideration for their direct confrontation with the singularity or even weirdness of this show. For it to manage and stay in the air for four consecutive years is surely an exception of the unwritten rules of television, where shows with much higher ratings struggle to stay on air after their

²⁰ The fourth and final season scored a 99 out of 100 in the critics' website Metacritic. This is the second highest grade ever for a television show in the site. <http://www.metacritic.com/tv/rectify/season-4> All three previous seasons were acknowledged by the majority of television critics and critic awards circles.

²¹ This is evident in the way *The Wire* has been transformed into an important cultural product, and its effects can be seen in multiple fields outside the one of television. The impact television criticism has on both a potential renewal and the awards circuit is also apt for a conscious approach from the part of the television critic, through the means of think pieces for a specific episode of a show or even campaigning. Other shows that somehow got a recent "revival" within the television discourse are *Firefly* (2002-2003), the HBO short-lived *Enlightened* (2011-2013) and *Terriers* (2010)

first season. Nevertheless, Sundance Channel's president Charlie Collier wholeheartedly showed his support to creator Ray McKinnon (1957-) and his vision for the story of Daniel Holden.

Rectify's peculiar structure in terms of temporality can be detected on a first note when we examine its season-by-season construction: The first one, which premiered in the spring of 2013, consists of six episodes, each of them narrating a day of Daniel's life; the pilot is focused on the day of his release and the rest of the season highlights his coming to his hometown and what this entails for both himself and the people around him. Religious allusions are evident all over the visual and textual palette, with the notions of rebirth, baptism, the revelation of nature and the juxtaposition of evil and catharsis being inserted into the narrative. The second season of the show, which consists of ten episodes, signals the somewhat adolescent step for Daniel, who is now more aware of his (non)place in society, yet adolescence also implies immaturity and compulsion. The third and fourth seasons of the show, which consist of six and eight episodes respectively, constitute a crucial turn for Daniel who is now aware of the radical reverberations his arrival induced for everyone around him. A step towards adulthood is necessary and which is furthermore elaborated by the trajectory of the narrative. The show progresses into a sober meditation of forgiveness, faith and existentialism without ever succumbing into narrative devices evident in the quality television dramas of the last twenty years, namely a cathartic coda for the character (*Mad Men*, *Breaking Bad*), or a climactic peak (*The Sopranos*, *Six Feet Under*) that encapsulates the essence of the show before it all ends. In contrast, the show's anticlimactic ending does not give answers about whether Daniel is guilty or not, or any clear indication for the future of the characters; with only 105000 viewers tuning in, the show's second least watchable episode, the series finale operates as an utter defiance of expectations.

In the world of the show, time is seen as *malleable*. As an audience, we get a glimpse of six consecutive months of the characters' lives, whereas the show lasted for four years and thirty episodes. *Rectify*, naturally and foremost a contemplative family drama, shows a predilection towards the notions of time and memory. What makes it differ from other similar genre pieces such as *Thirtysomething* (1987-1991), *Once and Again* (1999-2002), and *Six Feet Under* (2001-2005) is the ways this contemplative nature is reflected in the so-called narrative space. According to literary theorist Stephen Heath, the narrative space of a given text creates an internal space within the intradiegetic world that, in turn, creates a space for engagement from the audience's part.²² Specifically, as internal space is meant the image that is posed by the audiovisual text; this is not an immediate, or neutral one, but posed and framed, which in turn

²² Indicatively, see his article 'Narrative Space', published in 1976

place the spectator in a central position. Hence, as the story unfolds in front of our eyes, we follow it naturally, creating our own interpretive schemata.

In the case of *Rectify*, we are put in the position of onlookers, coming into the world of the characters and sitting next to them, experiencing their trajectories in time as if we are experiencing them ourselves. Indicatively, episode 105 (Drip, Drip) constitutes a fair example of such a narrative structure that deals with temporality in a *real-time* fashion. It begins with an ambiguous journey for Daniel in the middle of the night, accompanied by a mysterious man (played by veteran character actor, W. Earl Brown, and listed as Goat Man in the credits), who guides him to a spring pasture field where the goats are fed. There, they proceed into a hand-to-hand fight, right before they stumble upon a statue, with the Goat Man abruptly saying: “It's the beauty, not the ugly, that hurts the most.” (See Figure 1) At the end of this episode, which takes place within the span of a day, Daniel takes the decision to baptize himself as a way of finding his way into what is, for him, an unknown world. It is this episode that the line between reality, time and memory is blurred; we have indeed experienced, as an audience, a full day in the life of Daniel, yet the allusions at play are deeper and more complex than that. The sequence taking place at the spring pasture can be interpreted as a dream sequence, or one that is not bound to reality. Even in the intradiegetic world, the protagonist mumbles to the Goat Man: “Are you real?” The narratological elements at play in the span of the episode will be further elaborated in this chapter, though it is of importance to highlight the fact that narrative here is dealt as a site of meditation.

This chapter will explore the ways *Rectify's* narrative structure offers ways to associate intra- and extradiegetic world in terms of temporality; for this matter, a theoretical relation to the term ‘slow cinema’ will be made, one that also connects the show’s inclination towards tropes of art cinema and authorial vision. Eventually, Henri Bergson’s philosophy will be used as the theoretical framework consolidating the focus of this chapter.

1.1 Slowness as an Exciting Virtue

“In existential mathematics that experience takes the form of two basic equations: The degree of slowness is directly proportional to the intensity of memory; the degree of speed is directly proportional to the intensity of forgetting.”

Milan Kundera, *Slowness* (1995)

Slowness provokes attention. In defying the assumption that slowness also implies inaction, for an implicit relation between rhythm and agency could be made, the characters and story of *Rectify* are both filled with motivation and a sense of destination even if they are not necessarily aware of that. In the first episode of the show for instance, we are discreetly being put in the position of onlookers; ones not in a voyeuristic sense, but one that highlights our parallel movement with the characters and their inner journeys. Our instant reaction towards the characters can vary from one of expectations about the solution of the mystery, deriving from our desire to know whether Daniel Holden is innocent or not of the murder of Hanna Dean. Concurrently, the narratological elements presuppose a tendency towards the field of literature, with a predilection towards the past being evident as well.²³ In this section, I propose that the impact of such a diversity in relation to narrative development results to a proliferation of slowness as an integral part of authorial vision.²⁴

In her book *Television, Memory and Nostalgia*, television scholar Amy Holdsworth tackles the notions of memory and nostalgia in television production, for which she seems to be a firm advocate. An appropriate and fitting point of hers to which *Rectify* certainly adheres to, is the idea that the fascination of television with the themes of memory, nostalgia and history results to what she defines as “slow television.”²⁵ Holdsworth’s insightfulness in this statement is the fact that with the choice of this term, she consequently detects a self-reflexive element within the narrative of such ‘products’, namely the characters themselves being assigned as “objects of nostalgia.”²⁶ Creating a line in relation to the dramaturgy of *Rectify*, we can certainly also detect a certain sense of nostalgia and memory erupting out of our characters, all of them capable of withholding these characteristics. The evident weight of such a characterization, not only seen in the psyche of our main protagonist but also all over the characters surrounding him, does indeed provoke a sense of slowness evident in both the visual palette and the pace assigned in the editing room. Since Holdsworth’s account seems biased in favor of shows being more inclined to such visual and temporal standards, (she specifically praises and draws upon the work of British playwright Stephen Poliakoff), she also argues against characterizations that state that “television has often been characterized

²³ Literary time can provide a fruitful site of examination in the way many of its genres differ in the way temporality is experienced; see for instance the structural differences between a novella and a tale. In *Rectify*, slowness implies a linear development yet it could be argued that the perpetual *returns* of the main protagonist to his traumatic past offers an equilibrium of time.

²⁴ It is in this manner that the works of Kelly Reichardt and Tsai Ming-liang become relevant points of comparison

²⁵ Holdsworth, 2011, 114

²⁶ Holdsworth, 2011, 114

by its 'transience', 'ephemerality', 'forgettability' and even more seriously, it is seen as an 'amnesiac', responsible for the 'undermining of memory'.²⁷ She claims that the heritage of quality drama shows from the last twenty years with protagonists who suffer in the present because of their traumatic past is one of a mnemonic nature. Holdsworth's account is crucial here in the way she connects issues of truth in memory, repression and false memories the effect such procedures have on the subject with the notion of slowness, and more specifically with an artistic freedom stemming from the creative mind behind such creations. Indicatively, she argues that "... a continued preoccupation with certain stylistic and thematic concerns might be seen to exhibit a form of authored art television which is not only slowed down, but which has also become stuck in a quagmire of memory and the nostalgia."²⁸ In an exemplary sequence on episode 201 (Running With The Bull) that showcases the way the show approaches the aforementioned issues, Daniel investigates the depths of his unconscious while in coma.²⁹ (See Figure 2) In the familiar setting of the pasture field, he meets his best friend, Kerwin (Johnny Ray Gill) and discuss about his willingness and worthiness of being alive: 'am I worthy of living, or is it worth living' are the questions that rise from the sequence, and they are imbued with reverberations of returns to the traumatic past of the hero. Here, the excavation of an objective truth about his involvement to the murder of his high school girlfriend is not of importance; rather unapologetically, the narrative dives into the depths of fragmentation in time. We are – in short – transported through time, while delving into depth (unconscious). The way the scene is shot and periodically edited throughout the episode showcases and reaffirms Holdsworth's attribution of the term 'slow television', for which the association with the recently invigorated sub-field of slow cinema cannot be neglected.

In his book *Tsai Ming-liang and a Cinema of Slowness*, cultural scholar Song Hwee Lim argues in favor of a cinema that proposes a slower narrative progression that does not solely reflect on the pace the story progresses, but also on the way the directorial vision is rendered through mise en scène, cinematography, and in general the technical departments surrounding the development of a film. As a building block of his argumentation, Lim broadens his scope to societal and economic issues constituting the experience of the subject in today's world. More specifically, he argues that "within this discourse on slowness, globalization is seen to be having a particularly homogenizing effect on culture, leading to the McDonaldization of society, in which both food and people have become supersized."³⁰ In contrast, what he

²⁷ Holdsworth, 2011, 1

²⁸ Holdsworth, 2011, 117

²⁹ See 1.3 for the underlying implications of the episode

³⁰ Lim, 2014, 3

terms as the 'Slow Movement', advocates in favor of downsizing, to the level of organic origins, artisanal processes and ethical products. Relating this to art forms guided by narrative, the ubiquity of speed and acceleration, the anathema of slowness, passes as the natural.³¹

The emergence of modernism in the first half of the twentieth century only pinpoints to this emergence of speed in art. Indicatively, in his book *The Speed Handbook: Velocity, Pleasure, Modernism*, cultural theorist Enda Duffy argues that the era of modernism is characterized by a speed madness.³² Almost a century later, speed has gained an ideological weight that normalizes its proliferation into the domain of art, and excludes slowness as something reactionary or out of date. Attempting to contextualize this fetishization of speed to the field of television studies and specifically to the case of *Rectify*, it is of usage to examine the show in its association to slowness and how it relates to the aforementioned societal and economic factors of speed. For a political reading of the show is not necessarily mistaken, yet the narratological elements at play mainly focus on the literary and psychological aspects of the story. This is indicative in the first season of the show, when we are still in early connection with the characters. Ray McKinnon, creator of the show and an aficionado of Southern Gothic literary influences, marks time as still; we as an audience feel that nothing happens in the present, which marks an internal inquiry about the nature of stillness (and the present). Lim has posited such stillness and silence as the "defining features of slowness."³³ By stillness, he refers to "the use of a static rather than mobile camera and of long takes for shots that typically comprise stillness of diegetic action i.e., very little happening)."³⁴ Furthermore, by silence he means "concomitant privileging of silence and abstinence of sonic elements usually heard on film, such as diegetic and non-diegetic music, dialogue, and voiceover."³⁵ Cutting to *Rectify*, in a crucial scene that marks the first connection of Daniel with his now step-brother Teddy (Clayne Crawford), they both have lunch in a catering brunch without talking to each other, or in this case have any kind of interaction for several minutes. The juxtaposition of stillness, which in this sequence takes the form of silence, slow to zero camera movement and lack of lens focus to the actors, with the underlying narrative progression in terms of characterization (that is, in this case, the way Daniel feels in complete awe and

³¹ Of course, these notions of speed and acceleration have also been treated as solutions or ways of emancipation from the restraints of capitalism. See for instance the theory of Accelerationism, one that is bound to the rhetoric of supporting neoliberal policies in order to resolve class conflicts. In short, radical social change would emerge from the expansion of the prevailing system.

³² Duffy, 2009, 263

³³ Lim, 2014, 10

³⁴ Lim, 2014, 10

³⁵ Lim, 2014, 10

distance to the 'real world', and that of Teddy not being able of creating any kind of meaningful bridge between them) creates a unique spectrum of temporal fluidity. For a focus on stillness and the implications on the narrative fluidity can also be applied to television structures, especially when examining the inclination of contemporary television dramas to art cinema tropes. Lim's application of those terms is inextricably connected to the cinema of Tsai Ming-liang, a representative of the current wave of slow art cinema. It is in this manner that the eminent reconciliation of narrative with real-time finds a fruitful site of expression to the eloquent terminology and theory of art cinema, to which *Rectify* can be related to.

1.2 It is not TV, it is... Art Cinema: Realism, Authority and Ambiguity

Borrowing the now famous quote of contemporary television criticism, that is the 'it is not TV, it is HBO', we now encounter an interesting shift in television cable programming, where the 'quality turn' in terms of budget, distribution and authorial vision pinpoints to the broader shifts taking place in independent cinema.³⁶ For an obvious association between film and television is now easier than ever, yet this development, I propose, should not only be seen in comparative terms. A potential synthesis of narrative and technical tools both embedded in television and cinema offer invigorating results. As already mentioned, Ray McKinnon may be far from being considered a film auteur, a term that in general is problematic to begin with in its selection and attribution. Additionally, alongside the scripts he solely wrote for the show, he only directed three episodes. Authorial vision, then, in the case of television production, is expanded and reinforced, as the creator of a given show has a certain degree of control over his creation.³⁷ Detecting the degree of authorship when examining *Rectify*, it is of assistance to read the show against the rising contemporary television dramas that incline themselves to art cinema sensibilities, but also keeping in mind the overarching umbrella of temporality that distinguishes it from them.

³⁶ More specifically, of importance and relevant to the transition of film directors to television is the focus to American cinema. An elaborate examination of the (several) transitions the American Independent scene encountered throughout the past three decades is Anna Backman Rogers' book *American Independent Cinema: Rites of Passage and the Crisis Image* (2015). This publication explores the ways independent filmmakers found a way to subvert a general crisis (as per the author) in cinema by employing tools relevant and familiar to the discourse of art cinema, already at play in Europe in the 1950s.

³⁷ What we see on broadcast television production is the differentiation between the creator of the show and the one who manages it in the microlevel (showrunner). Conversely, what we now encounter more and more on cable television is an inclination from platform executives (for Sundance Channel, see Charlie Collier) to fully offer the creative torch to the creator himself. In that sense, we now see seasons comprised of less or more episodes than the previous ones', or storylines completely changing over the arch of one or two years. [See for instance *Hap and Leonard* (2016-)]

In mapping the temporal implications stemming from the narrative stillness of the show, fruitful comparisons can be made with two television shows which were broadcast around the same period. These are Cinemax's *The Knick* (2014-2015) and FX's *Fargo* (2014-). In the case of the former, it signaled the official transition of renowned filmmaker Steven Soderbergh to television format. The summary goes as follows: set in 1900s New York, the show revolves around the Knickerbocker Hospital, where Dr. John Thackery (Clive Owen) conducts his tenure. In short, *The Knick* offers a fascinating view on the reverberations of medical discourse and, in general, science in society. In the case of the latter, it works as the heir of the original film *Fargo* (1996), directed by the Cohen brothers. What is emulated by the television production is the tone and atmosphere of the film, wrapped up in a delicate mixture of absurd comedy and hyperrealism, not easily accounted in television.

Both of the shows share an inclination towards basic art cinema tropes, stemming from the European cinema tradition of the 1950s. Film theorist David Bordwell for once, while writing for the rise and legitimation of art cinema, proposed that “films produced in various cultural contexts might share fundamentally similar features.”³⁸ His article ‘The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice’, remains a seminal piece of work for the legitimation of art cinema as a mode of film practice, and he in particular he hints on assumptions regarding the narrative structure, cinematic style and audience experience which are different to the context of classical-narrative cinema (deriving from the Hollywood production system). Thus, subversion, in also experiencing a film as an audience, is the key point here. Relating to the specific notions of narrative and time, at one point he states that “narrative time and space are constructed to represent the cause-effect chain”,³⁹ which he underlines as traits of an established mode of production which passes as the norm. What he detects as characteristics causing a (necessary) deviation are these of realistic representation, authorship and ambiguity. According to him, the pursuit of realism, in connection to a strong authorial voice and a narrative text that results to more questions than answer offer a basic template of an art film. Surely, almost forty years after the release of his influential article, the interconnection of media is more and more evident. The line between film and television is blurred, especially when the emergence of new media and the imbedding democratization of the image constitute today's mode of production.

When examining both *The Knick* and *Fargo* in their mode of production, it becomes quickly evident that they can be placed under the etiquette of art cinema, or at least check several points on Bordwell's list of characteristics. For a cinematic experience, in terms of audience potential engagement, production

³⁸ Bordwell, 1979, 56

³⁹ Bordwell, 1979, 57

budget and technical support is surely detected in both productions. See for instance the way Steven Soderbergh chooses to shoot all the episodes of the season in a typical non-chronological manner; this directly relates to the way an art cinema production is shot. Linear chronological development comes to a secondary priority when of importance are the locations, the rhythm of the characterization and the narrative fluidity that needs to be filled in a day's shooting schedule.⁴⁰ Or in the case of *Fargo*, the way the mise en scène creates a space of unpredictability in terms of narrative progression, multiple references to art cinema directors such as Béla Tarr and a homage to the filmography of the Coen brothers. Inextricable to the way these shows relate to the art cinema tradition is the way narrative implicates temporality with realistic representation. If in the case of a pursuit of realism, spatial and temporal constructions are affected, the spectrum these shows encompass is one of many possibilities in both temporal and spatial terms. In *The Knick*, this takes the form of "intense subjectivity", a term once again borrowed by Bordwell's lexicon.⁴¹ We are constantly following Dr. Thackery's trajectory (even in the way the camera is placed) and his inner turmoil until the point he reaches a dead-end.⁴² In these moments, narrative time seems to be extinct. In *Fargo*, a 'technical spatialization takes place in the way the direction of the show is intrinsically connected to spatial configurations and structural symmetry.⁴³

What is of interest when adding *Rectify* into the mix is both the affiliation with those characteristics, and also the singularity of its rendering in total, placing it even further when compared to those art cinema-oriented shows. *Rectify's* sense of time and place clearly reflects on the authorial vision of the creator. Ray McKinnon, born and bred in the South of the USA, proposes a locus of time that is fluid within the nineteen-year exclusion of his protagonist. What this means in televisual terms is a parallel existence in different realities, without the usage of any flashback, while in fact the identity of space and place is very specific; most of the actors are Southern actors who were trained in the area, while the accents employed by actors

⁴⁰ In this case, co-creators Jack Amiel and Michael Begler discuss about the time restrictions they encountered when shooting the first season. Specifically, in their interview with Indiewire, they mention that "We had 73 days to shoot a 10-hour movie, we're shooting 10, 11 pages a day. We all had to be on the same page. A good idea was a good idea, it didn't matter where it came from. But the man is genius. He not only shoots, he edits, he holds the camera and this is not a man with a shot list." See <http://www.indiewire.com/2014/10/interview-the-knick-writercreators-talk-steven-soderbergh-clive-owen-the-crazy-shit-of-the-1900s-more-271170/>

⁴¹ Bordwell, 1979, 58

⁴² This progression goes along with the show's evident purpose of providing a detailed psychological study of its protagonist

⁴³ In this regard, *Fargo* can be considered an interesting case study when examining Henri Lefebvre's theory of social spatialization. As a Marxist theorist and philosopher, Lefebvre proposed space as social, as a site of thought and action. *Fargo*, in turn, through its fundamental connection to spatial configurations offers a productive space of thought, bringing to the forth the current means of control, power and domination that Western societies encounter

outside of this geographical region (see more indicatively Aden Young, the protagonist, who is half Australian and half Canadian) is perfected. The specific tone of the show contributes to its identity (and most likely to the story Ray McKinnon intended to tell), and this specificity, all-pervasive in the narrative, flows naturally with the temporal elements as well.⁴⁴ *Rectify* proposes a mode of television production deriving from a singular point of view.⁴⁵ Inclining, therefore, towards the freedom implied and realized by art cinema in its traditional sense, we now find ourselves in a closer position to openly detect the way time and narrative are tied in an emancipating manner.

1.3 The Unconscious Matters

One of the main characteristics television productions and – at the same time – audiences can savor is the narrative time at their disposal. For the former, this enhances the possibilities to expand upon vast developments and trajectories of their characters. For the latter, it reinforces a level of connection and identification that characterizes the viewing experience in total. Focusing on the way *Rectify* uses its narrative space, the assistance of the field of philosophy can lead us to a deeper understanding of the way its narrative time functions.

Employing Henri Bergson as the main constituent of theory for this section is a choice fitting to the show's sensibilities. Bergson's understanding of time is one of emancipation. What is truly sensed as time must be lived, defying spatial constraints which are bound to ideological factors. This liberated notion of time is hard to imagine, when the way we live our lives today, and therefore spend our time, strictly comes in correlation with our occupations and distinct place and role within society.⁴⁶ It could be argued that art narratives and consequently fictional storytelling can offer a consoling view of time, creating a certain temporal space from which we can experience it fully. In the philosophy of language, seminal scholar M. M. Bakhtin's theory of the *chronotope* (stemming from the Greek χρόνος and τόπος) helps us realize this understanding of time. Specifically, in his 1937 essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel", he argues that the chronotope, and consequently what it connotes by its etymology, is the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature.⁴⁷ What is the

⁴⁴ For the unique chord that *Rectify* managed to struck with its cultural specificity, see <https://bittersoutherner.com/ray-mckinnon-rectify/#.XM4WyGgzblV>

⁴⁵ Ray McKinnon, the sole creator of the show, had a thorough control over the material and episode scripts

⁴⁶ Of assistance is Carmen Leccardi's view of accelerationism in today's Western societies, in her article 'New Temporal Perspectives in the "High Speed Society"'

⁴⁷ See M. M. Bakhtin's 1939 essay, republished in 1981, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel'

essence of Bakhtin's interpretation of the chronotope is the interrelation of time and space, their inseparability. Hence, time and space become a concrete whole, with time being thickened and fleshed out, and space becoming responsive to the indications of time. Those inextricable notions help us realize the case of *Rectify*, where in order to extract this temporal space and its unique characteristics, it is of importance to focus on its episodic structure. For untangling the way its main protagonist exists between 'two worlds', key sequences in episodes 105 (Drip, Drip) and 201 (Running With The Bull) will be assisted.

In the penultimate episode of the first season, enigmatically titled Drip, Drip, the cold opening begins with an up-close shot of a clock in Daniel's bedroom. (See Figure 3) It is 03:13 am, and what follows is Daniel's 'awakening', where he wanders in the streets of Paulie, Georgia, on his own. There, he encounters a strange figure, who, as already mentioned in the introductory part of this thesis, is credited as the Goat Man. The allusions at play here are multifaceted, beginning from the Biblical reference to the exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac,⁴⁸ to the known narrative construction of the dream sequence that many television texts had employed in the past.⁴⁹ The way the narrative construction of this episode is laid out implies that its first half (approximately 20 minutes) is up for the viewer to decide whether it is bound to reality or not. However, in the intradiegetic world, this sequence opens up the space for a detailed introspective view of the psyche of the protagonist where whether it is real or not is not of utmost importance. Borrowing the narratological terminology of Russian formalism, the fabula of this sequence is closely tied to the temporal progression of a day; Daniel finds the Goat Man in the early hours of the morning and leaves him near the noon.⁵⁰ In this restricted sense of clockwise time, Bergson's input is invigorating for the narratological implications. In his seminal publication *Matter and Memory*, his overall argument could be said to be his encouragement to understand time in experiential terms. In short, time, in its purest essence, needs to be lived.⁵¹ In the world of *Rectify*, this translates in the way time flows. In this episode's use of temporal distortion within a restricted use of clockwise time, we are encountered with a radical penetration of the protagonist's past into the present. While he is navigating the pasture field with the Goat Man, surrounded by a sense of beauty and possibilities that he never had the opportunity to

⁴⁸ See Matthew 8:28-34, where the Miracle of the (Gadarene) Swine is described in detail. The affinity between the pigs and the goats in *Rectify*'s sequence is evident in the linguistic affiliation of the scene in the show and the Bible

⁴⁹ See for instance the influential series finale of *St. Elsewhere* (1982-1988), or the seminal dream sequences of *Twin Peaks* and the dive into the subconscious of Agent Dale Cooper, the playful surrealist renderings in *Northern Exposure* (1990-1995), and the more clinical and threatening ones in *The Sopranos* and *Mad Men*

⁵⁰ For an elaborate examination of the role of fabula (and subsequently, time) within narrative forms, see Mieke Bal's book *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (1985)

⁵¹ Time, also mentioned as duration, is one of Bergson's main theoretical inquiries. In *Matter and Memory* he focuses on the importance of mental images and the way they are (re)presented through memory and the consciousness

encounter in his life, a sense of sadness over what he has lost and the reverberations of such a lack in the present is conveyed. (See Figures 4 & 5) In the Bergsonian thought, this process and conveyance of past (and future) into the presence is rendered in the forms of memory and desire. Time, in this sense, stretches and we seem to dig deeper into memory.

This permeation into the depths of memory is even more evident in the opening episode of the second season, titled *Running With The Bull*. After the season one finale and the brutal beating of Daniel from his murdered girlfriend's brother, we now find him in a coma. The narrative invention here lies on the way McKinnon chooses to render the unconscious of the protagonist. According to Bergson, "consciousness is the note of the present; therefore pure memory is latent and unconscious."⁵² The rendering of Daniel's unconscious takes the form of mental images, ones known to the audience (field pasture, the presence of his friend and cellmate Kerwin, the decomposed statue), followed by a dialogue between him and Kerwin that touches upon issues of existence and religion.

KERWIN: This ain't real, is it?

DANIEL: Well, the place itself is, but us being here... no. I'm actually in a hospital... in a coma.

KERWIN: A coma?

DANIEL: But I got out.

KERWIN: Wait. What you talking about?

DANIEL: I got out, Kerwin.

KERWIN: Out? You mean off the row.

DANIEL: Off the row.

KERWIN: You got out alive?

DANIEL: I did.

KERWIN: That made me so happy, boy! Made me so happy. Oh, man. Man, your sorry ass, showing no optimism-- none. For years, none, zero, and here you are in the natural world, man.

Wait. You say you in a coma?

DANIEL: I fought the mob, and the mob won. I just-- I don't think I can do this. Everything out here... it's just so complicated. There's so much pain and-- and hate. And I think I may just be... just too broken, you know? Just too broken. But now that's over with. That time has passed.

And I'm not of this world now, so...

⁵² Bergson, 2004, 181

As the exposition of this sequence shows, Daniel reaches some sort of enlightenment in his unconscious state of being. Not only he wonders about the essence of his existence in the 'real' world, but his thoughts presuppose a sense of agency, even in the fact that he is not conscious. It is in this manner that we shall return to Bergson's rhetoric, where a strong affiliation to agency and unconscious is evident. What he distinguishes between a conscious and unconscious state of being directly pinpoints on the distinction between the real and the virtual. For "that in the domain of consciousness, what is real is actual,"⁵³ then the unconscious exists when its true role is restored: "there will no longer be any more reason to say that the past effaces itself as soon as perceived, than there is to suppose that material objects cease to exist when we cease to perceive them."⁵⁴ What this implies in the relation to the storytelling format of *Rectify* and time is the way the protagonist, through his realizations in his unconscious state of being, reaches a point where he experiences time as lived. Whereas, as per Bergson, in the conscious state memories reappear as *ghosts*, in a similar fashion to the way we value unperceived objects to those which we perceive (for instance, objects that are part of the room we are in in comparison to how we think and/or envision ones that are out of our focal point), in the unconscious, objects (memories) and states are successively and parallelly developed in real time.⁵⁵ Hence, when Daniel is questioning his ability to live in the 'real' world, he does it from a standpoint where he actually lives duration.⁵⁶ In this regard, the narrative of *Rectify*, through its transparent rendering of the power of the unconscious, manages to encompass the psychological trajectory of its main character in temporal terms.

Summarizing the several topics discussed above, this chapter dealt with the way *Rectify* offers a noteworthy way of constructing, producing and experiencing time in the format of a television narrative. Through its inclination towards the theories of slowness and art cinema, which presupposes a certain degree of emulation of tropes and techniques, a conclusion is made as to its affinity to Bergson's philosophical ideas around the notion of duration and the unconscious. At the same time, in relating it to other, more well-known television productions that have earned their own share of appreciation towards their connection to

⁵³ Bergson, 2004, 182

⁵⁴ Bergson, 2004, 182

⁵⁵ Bergson, 2004, 186-187

⁵⁶ In Bergsonian thought, duration is constituted by three images. All of these images are of qualitative nature, thus duration itself is qualitative as well, multiple yet unified, defying habitual modes of thought and giving the torch to intuition. His extended analysis of those images can be found on his book, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1934)

art cinematic forms of production, its place to the vast contemporary field of television is located, even if it remains an obscure one. Retaining temporality within television narrative(s) as the main theoretical locus of this thesis, it is in this manner that we now turn to the second chapter and *Twin Peaks: The Return*, where the focus will lie on the way time reaches its climax in terms of fragmentation and dispersity.

Chapter II

The Eternal Return: *Twin Peaks: The Return* and the Fragmentation of Time

When the original *Twin Peaks* (1990) came into the air on the broadcast channel of ABC (April 8, 1990), both critics and audiences were shaken by its unprecedented cinematic vision and unique mixture of pastiche, absurdism, horror and drama. David Lynch's influence on the sphere of television can be seen all around contemporary narrative structures, with numerous texts emulating its stylistic techniques, mood, humor and unpredictability.⁵⁷ The announcement of the return of the show, twenty three years after its enigmatic and anticlimactic series finale came from the creators themselves through their social media accounts, three years before the release of the new season.⁵⁸ This time, the show found its venue on a premium cable network, namely Showtime, and that led to a certain degree of creative freedom, mainly stemming from the openness the president of the channel David Nevins, showcased.⁵⁹

Lynch's evident auteuristic preoccupations and sensibilities have been analyzed within the academic world, both in terms of his work on a holistic level (meaning his whole filmography) and that of the implications of his individual creations.⁶⁰ His oeuvre has been hailed and referenced by a new generation of filmmakers who partake the role of the new and updated 'Lynchian cinema'.⁶¹ What is of interest in the association of his holistic work to television is the evident challenge that such a unique creative force can encounter when dealing with the specific demands of television production. These challenges can certainly be viewed in the original run of the show, when both Lynch and Frost came across a problematic scheduling

⁵⁷ Main spokesperson of such a predilection was the famous and provocative television show *Lost* (2004-2010), which partook many of the supernatural elements, in correlation to a faith to the drama genre. More recently, shows like *Psych* (2006-2014), *Wayward Pines* (2015-) and *Riverdale* (2017-) are considered to be creations directly influenced by *Twin Peaks*' style and storyline

⁵⁸ Both David Lynch and Mark Frost posted a synchronized announcement on their twitter accounts, on the 3rd of October, 2014

⁵⁹ An early testament reflecting on the way the network approached Lynch and his creative process all the time leading up to the official premiere can be found here: <http://deadline.com/2015/01/twin-peaks-homeland-controversy-comedy-david-nevins-showtime-1201348508/>

⁶⁰ See for instance the publication *David Lynch* by Justus Nieland, disentangling the director's work in a meticulous manner, or some revelatory articles such as 'Digital Modernism and the Unfinished Performance in David Lynch's "Inland Empire"' and 'In threads and tatters: Costume, identification and female subjectivity in Mulholland Dr.' that provide a more insightful introspection on his films and the meanings that can be extracted from them

⁶¹ Directors like Nicolas Winding Refn, Darren Aronofsky and Shane Carruth are some of the most evident (and diverse) filmmakers whose work has been thoroughly compared to that of Lynch's, usually alongside the complementary adjective 'Lynchian'

structure that led *Twin Peaks* to low viewership numbers and gradual decline in quality.⁶² Broadcast television has diachronically been interested and aiming to satisfactory ratings, deriving from internal factors that include timeslots, production budget, audience expectations and an alignment to the current market demands. With the transition to the cable network, *Twin Peaks: The Return* faced less of a restricting environment, but still a dense and demanding network of expectations.⁶³

The show's return, 26 years after its original release, was accompanied by an unprecedented secrecy around its production. Showtime and the production team never disclosed any details regarding the much-anticipated return, leaving the audience in question whether the show would eventually be on the air. Many of the actors of the original run had already passed away, raising questions regarding the natural fluidity of open-ended storylines from the original production. On a similar note, the announcement of the new cast members back in 2016 created new expectations in terms of possible new storylines and deviation from the original narrative of the show. Having that in mind and after the end of the eighteenth-part season in September, 2017, questions arose whether the return was a success or not. Most of the discussion revolved around the small ratings Showtime had during the broadcast of the episodes, yet the debate further expanded on the streaming opportunities and success of the show, as audiences today seem to be more comfortable and keen on exploring the possibility of consuming a television production in their own time and pace.

By focusing on the way Lynch's auteuristic sensibilities and vision ultimately engages in a conversation with the streaming network demands from Showtime, I intend to locate the way narrative, through its affective operations and narrative complexity at play, offer a *tabula rasa* in terms of temporal constrictions. A focus on the notions of affect and narrative complexity will be placed, since the show showcases both of those distinct notions and subsequently the theories accompanying them, with the notion of time being, once again, the overarching and connective point. Both contemporary film and television studies have reached a point that is mainly defined as a *turn*, with a focus on the notions of affect and sensation on one hand, and storyline and character(s) complexity on the other being the locus of such a transition. The evident fragmentation of time, both a reason and result of the peculiar fluidity in the way the

⁶² For an elaborate understanding of the causes of this challenge, see Jeremy Egner's piece on The New York Times regarding the television landscape in 1990 and how deviant *Twin Peaks* was from that.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/17/arts/television/twin-peaks-abc-1990.html>

⁶³ See for instance <https://qz.com/1049101/david-lynchs-twin-peaks-had-one-job-to-do-for-showtime-and-it-accomplished-it-brilliantly/> for an insight on the way Showtime associated itself with the show and the reputation preceding it, and how this was directly associated on the ongoing transition of television to online platforms

story is told, is what I propose to be the result of the affective operations and narrative complexity. It is in this manner that through those type of approaches, this chapter will delve into *Twin Peaks: The Return*.

2.1 Affecting Temporality

A transmedia turn towards the notion of the affect, which in the field of film studies took precedent over the psychoanalytical approach of the 1970s, is evident when examining the theorization of film and media from the 1980s onwards. The main point of deviation was the Lacanian element central to *Theory's* rhetoric,⁶⁴ yet it could be argued that this stance reflected on the holistic disciplinary antagonism of deconstructionist and cognitivist studies respectively. Several attempts have been made for this gap to be reconciled, for an emergence of interdisciplinary approaches to film studies is evident. It could be argued that the affective turn was already foreshadowed when Walter Benjamin was describing the potential “shock effect” modernity could impose to the body, in his article 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', originally published in 1939, and republished in 1968 for his essay collection *Illuminations*.⁶⁵ However, the theoretical flourishing of the affect as a substantial counterpart to that of psychoanalysis and subsequently formalism came from the writings of scholars with philosophical background, like Brian Massumi, Steven Shaviro, Lisa Cartwright, and Eugenie Brinkema. Apparent in their writing is the delicate place devoted to the notion of temporality when examining affect in its various facets, and by opening up the space for those ideas, *Twin Peaks: The Return* relevance will be highlighted.

The original *Twin Peaks* showed a predilection towards affective operations through its characterization and aesthetics. Surely, indicating such influences of affect presupposes an understanding of what affect actually is and what could be defined as its potential site. Associating the notion of affect within the narrative world of *Twin Peaks: The Return*, I choose to touch upon the available literature, where an internal debate is evident, for questions revolving around the ways of immersion, the potential intensities (of affect) and the role of fictional narratology are raised. See for instance Lisa Cartwright's account on her book *Moral Spectatorship*. Here, Cartwright navigates through psychoanalysis, feminist theory, film and moral theory, and touches upon moral implications stemming from affect and spectatorship. Her main argument begins with the fact that she has “important reservations towards Lacan's influence”,⁶⁶ and more

⁶⁴ Theory being the term hinting to the psychoanalytic approach employed in film studies in the 1960s and 1970s

⁶⁵ Benjamin, 1968, np

⁶⁶ Cartwright, 2008, 6

importantly she believes that intersubjectivity is built around affect, “the anticipation of a meeting between the subject’s body and another’s body.”⁶⁷

Another way of approaching affect can be detected on Steven Shaviro’s writings. In his book, *The Cinematic Body*, he (also) criticizes the Lacanian model of thought in film theory and proposes an acceptance on the inevitable ambivalence of the contemporary culture that comes with an affirmation of its postmodern sensibility. Surely, Shaviro’s postmodernism does not entirely eschew theories stemming from seminal postmodern theorists such as Gilles Deleuze and Fredric Jameson, yet Shaviro, alongside with many of his colleagues focusing on affect, identify the aforementioned affective turn as one that enables political thought. In the manner of reading affect against the background of television storytelling, implications regarding an emancipated experience of time emerge.

Taking a further step, when focusing on social theorist Brian Massumi’s contribution to the field, we can see that his interpretation of affect is one that highlights the body’s potentiality of *emancipation* through movement. Essentially, Massumi’s interpretation of affect is political. In his book, *Parables of the Virtual Movement, Affect, Sensation*, he offers a fascinating view on the prospects of such emancipation, that finds its form both mental and corporeal capacities. Specifically, he states that the project of his book is to “explore the implications for cultural theory of this simple conceptual displacement: body movement/sensation-change.”⁶⁸ Body and change constitute a substantial concern within humanities, and Massumi acknowledges that. A fascinating distinction that he presents to us is the one of *intensity* and *qualification*. Both those levels, in Massumi’s lexicon, relate to the body sensation. The former, as he states, “is embodied in purely autonomic reactions most directly manifested in the skin-at the surface of the body, at its interface with things.”⁶⁹ The latter, on the contrary, entails “depth reactions...even though they also involve autonomic reactions such as heartbeat and breathing.”⁷⁰ The connection with time in this sense is the fact that intensity, when viewed from the perspective of the spectator as a ‘human body’, or the actual televisual text itself as a body (without organs),⁷¹ qualifiable as an emotional state, and that state is “static-temporal and narrative noise.”⁷² It is like “a temporal sink, a hole in time, as we conceive of it and

⁶⁷ Cartwright, 2008, 35

⁶⁸ Massumi, 2002, np

⁶⁹ Massumi, 2002, 25

⁷⁰ Massumi, 2002, 25

⁷¹ The term *Body without Organs* (BwO) was firstly introduced by Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their book, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, originally published in 1972, subsequently translated by Brian Massumi in 1987

⁷² Massumi, 2002, 26

narrativize it.”⁷³ Time in this sense is seen as fragmentary. Relating this to the heart of the show, the idea of viewing it as a “body”, albeit one without organs, is fascinating in its implications. In their book, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari argued, in parallel terms with Massumi’s line of thought, that a Body without Organs can be seen as an affective operation and a preparatory process of emancipation. Portuguese philosopher Jose Gil takes it even further, in his article ‘Paradoxical Body’, by stating that the construction of a BwO would mean that the interior space of the body would have to compose an interface with the skin, which in itself would constitute the matter of the BwO. This substantial interiority manages, according to Gil, to “allow the liberated affects to run freely.”⁷⁴

On the 21st of May, 2017, the much-anticipated return of *Twin Peaks* brought critics into a network of disentangling the mysteries evoked by the uniqueness of its two-hour premiere.⁷⁵ Lynch and Frost’s dramaturgical and narrative deviations from the original show open up the space for an affective reading of its constituents, following the theoretical framework planned out above. If we look closely on these two first episodes, what we encounter is a hugely elliptical approach towards a linear development of (a) story, scenes or narrative threads. What was the main anticipation and expectation after the series finale of the original show, that is the future of Special Agent Dale Cooper, is now left aside for an asynchronised and disconnected storytelling, bringing to the forth new characters and storylines, and blurring the lines as to which year or even temporal reality we have entered. The notion of emancipation here takes a temporal form and connects to the way the theoretical trajectory affect has followed; from Cartwrights moral implications and new ways of subjectivity, Massumi’s notion of intensity and the connection to the idea of the show as a BwO.

Furthermore, and maintaining the focus on the two-hour premiere, the episode offers multiple spaces that can be interpreted as *sites* of affect that have implications to time. As French philosopher Gilles Deleuze has argued in his book, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, affect can be defined as an entity with multiple potentialities. What could be detected as potential sites of such operations in fictional storytelling, according to him, are *shadowing* and *lyrical abstraction*. He specifically states that “shadow is therefore no longer an extension to infinity, or a reversal to the limit. It no longer extends a state of things to infinity, it

⁷³ Massumi, 2002, 26

⁷⁴ Gil, 2006, 33

⁷⁵ The critical response to the two-hour premiere of the show vary from surprise and excitement, to plain awe. Indicatively, see <http://collider.com/twin-peaks-season-3-episode-1-recap/>, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2017/may/22/twin-peaks-recap-episodes-one-and-two-crazy-town-just-got-much-much-weirder>, <https://www.vox.com/culture/2017/5/21/15670574/twin-peaks-premiere-recap-the-return-episode-1-episode-2-cooper>, and <https://tv.avclub.com/in-its-nightmarish-two-part-return-twin-peaks-is-pure-1798196775>

will, rather, express an alternative between the state of things itself and the possibility, the virtuality, which goes beyond it.”⁷⁶ The operations Deleuze points out here may seem to touch upon the technical aspect of a film production and more specifically the *mise en scène*, and it could be argued that both shadowing and (lyrical) abstraction, to which Lynch diachronically adheres to,⁷⁷ could be detected as general constituents of the show. The way this can be seen on the two-hour premiere is the use of the famous Red Room.⁷⁸ (See Figures 6 to 9) Refreshed and with the addition of new stylistic traits, the *modern* Red Room now seems to not just come parallel to reality and to the known universe of the characters and storyline, but furthermore bring to the forth a discursive rendering of temporality. What is seen at the end of episode 301 then, when Dale Cooper is trying to escape the Red Room, the place he has been trapped for twenty-six years, is a fragmentation of any kind of temporal balance. In his attempt to come back to the real world, a strange force from the Red Room, partaking the shape of a tree and imbued with electric intensities, denies him this return and instead it transports him into an otherworldly and eerie vortex where he meets characters of his own past. (See Figures 10 & 11) In this place, moving from one *level* to another is possible through transportation from an electrical socket. (See Figures 12 to 14) In the span of the two-hour premiere, we are placed into three different timelines, which partake the form of the past, present and future, without us or the protagonist though being aware which is what, and at what time. Cooper’s final transportation to what seems to be a place of no time, completely free, a somewhat *temporal sinkhole*, is what I propose to be the connective tissue binding the notions of affect and emancipation with time.⁷⁹ (See Figures 15 to 18)

Throughout the eighteen-part season of *Twin Peaks: The Return*, electricity plays a significant role. Mainly signaling and foreshadowing change or the anticipation of a development in the story, Lynch’s use of sound mixing and editing in order to (also) render electricity as something haptic and sensed reflects to the way electrical flow has been theorized in relation to power structures. What the Deleuzian influence and thought encapsulate is the fact that electricity, seen as an apparatus, constitutes and encapsulates the

⁷⁶ Deleuze, 1986, 112

⁷⁷ Arguably, Lynch’s influences go back to the cinema of Jacques Tourneur and Maya Deren, directors whose use of shadowing and abstraction is highly influential to today’s art cinema

⁷⁸ In the run of the original show and the feature film following the then series finale [*Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* (1992)], the Red Room had the quality of an alternative universe where *versions* of the characters would be either trapped, stored, manufactured, or totally destroyed.

⁷⁹ More specifically, Cooper is transported to a place very reminiscent of Daniel Holden’s unconscious, which in this case takes the form of a (space) ship journey; of course, the allusions of Dale Cooper being a modern-day Odysseus are evident throughout the whole season, yet what makes this place/space a fitting one in temporal terms is the fact that it defies any kind of temporal reality known to us or the characters. There, Cooper encounters old acquaintances (characters from the original show) which somehow guide him to a ‘different’ place. In a way, in both the cases of our protagonists, for them to reach such a state, their own mortal lives are at stake

experience of modernity since the late nineteenth century. More specifically and close to the inquiry of this chapter is the way he relates electrical flow to the process of reading a book. In his book *Negotiations, 1972-1990*, and specifically on the section 'Letter to a Harsh Critic,' he states that "you either see it as a box with something inside and start looking for what it signifies, and then if you're even more perverse or depraved you set off after signifiers... [Or] you see the book as a little non-signifying machine and the only question is 'Does it work, and how does it work?'... This second way of reading is *intensive*: something comes through or it doesn't. There's nothing to explain, nothing to understand, nothing to interpret. It's like plugging into an electric circuit."⁸⁰ The power of electricity remains unquestionable, as the way it is confronted (both socially and academically): from a distance, until things go amiss. Every child in the modern world, for instance, has heard the parental warning of not putting her finger in an electrical socket. Electroscares are ignored until they become dangerous. And yet, Deleuze reminds us that the lure of the effect electricity is always around, remaining available as a metaphor of power.

Lynch and Frost's usage of electricity is linked to affect when we examine the result of such focus, namely the temporal disorientation of the characters in the story. In the final episode of the season (318), the *new* Dale Cooper, accompanied by his colleague and love partner Diane (Laura Dern) drive off to a place and time unknown to both them and the audience. At one point, the familiar (by then) whooshing sound effect of electricity pervades the narrative space, with the characters staring at electrical grids in the middle of a highway, as if they are in a conversation with them. (See Figures 19 & 20) Issues of state power and electrical flows have been thoroughly taken upon academia, for a need of emancipatory politics is clearly evident.⁸¹ *Twin Peaks: The Return's* vision of such an emancipation – of time - comes through its static nature in narrative terms, as mentioned above, with stories and developments being paused for an abstract or lyrical rendering of an irrelevant element, which can take the form of a five-minute monologue of a character that is never seen again in the show (Wally Brando, an amalgamation of all the classical Hollywood figures proposed as icons, played by Michael Cera), or successful scenes playing in unknown timelines. The theoretical connection of emancipation, affect and temporality finds a fruitful site of examination in the two-hour season finale, with its entirety being played (in narrative terms) in an unknown timeline, which in the intra-diegetic world is considered to be the present. Both abstraction and shadowing, as proposed sites of

⁸⁰ Deleuze, 1997, 7-8

⁸¹ Indicatively, see David A. Alexander's contribution with his book *Electric Capitalism: Recolonising Africa on the Power Grid*, Antina von Schnitzler's article 'Traveling Technologies: Infrastructure, Ethical Regimes, and the Materiality of Politics in South Africa' and Timothy Mitchell's book *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*. In a nutshell, these publications point out the need of propagating the essence of a 'electrical democracy'

affect, are rendered to the extreme; in the imbedding return of Dale Cooper to the town of Twin Peaks, we see him under the narrative shadowing of the unknown. At no point we are given a certain affirmation of reality or that in fact he is really *present*. This is evident in the long sequence played out in the Twin Peaks Sheriff's department where the *Good* Dale Cooper tries to rescue the town from his evil doppelgänger (Mr C). What we encounter is an abstract rendering of time, where signs of clockwise time (a very particular close up to the office's clock is employed by Lynch), and smooth dissolving through the editing from composite images of Dale Cooper's face being the background of the overall picture (that is the intra-diegetic action). (See Figures 21 & 22)

In connection to the trajectory of the story, that in this point is not quite clear (are we about to take as the conclusion of the story Cooper's overcoming his evil doppelgänger, or is it the case that the fragmented timeline can lead to a sense of freedom to the characters from the constraints of the story itself?) media scholar Eugenie Brinkema's recalibration of theorizing affect is the overarching umbrella of examining *Twin Peaks: The Return* under the light of affect. In her revelatory book *The Forms of the Affect* she takes upon the task of approaching affect as something defying readings of sensation, feeling, intensities, potentialities and in general the vocabulary employed by postmodernist and neo-formalist scholars.⁸² In her view, affect should be examined and seen (especially when viewed in the context of an academic inquiry within the humanities) as a *fold*, "I will therefore treat affect not as a matter of expression, not as a matter of sensation for a spectator—in fact, not as a matter of spectatorship at all... In place of affect as a matter of expression, communication, address, spectatorship, experience, or sensation, affect will be regarded as a fold, which is another way of saying that affects will be read for as forms."⁸³ Reading and treating affect as *having* a form creates a fruitful space of consideration in relation to the way temporality, within narrative texts like the finale of *Twin Peaks: The Return* is challenged. Not only the technical aspects could be interpreted as sites of affect (e.g. lighting, color, and so on) but its kinetic lure as a formal entity in total through narrative can influence the way time is experienced within the text. Despite Brinkema's exclusivity of affect being interiorized or expressed, her argument that they should also be read "as structures that work through formal means, as consisting their formal dimensions (as line, light, color, rhythm, and so on) of passionate structures,"⁸⁴ is legitimate. Of assistance to this remark is a crucial sequence in the last episode of the show; more specifically, in the aftermath of *Good* Cooper's defeat over

⁸² In the introductory part of the book, alongside her examination of the field and what precedes her research, she openly aphorizes previous accounts of affect that focus on viewing affect as something (to be) expressed

⁸³ Brinkema, 2014, 36

⁸⁴ Brinkema, 2014, 37

his doppelgänger, we see him navigating through portals of both space and time, finally to meet his former colleague Phillip Jeffries (formerly played by David Bowie), who is now presented in the shape of a humungous tea kettle. (See Figure 19) Through a long expository monologue relating to Cooper's objective, details unbeknownst to the audience, he is entering the last portal (in the shape of a door), where he is transported back in time, the day Laura Palmer was murdered. This asymmetrically circular rendering of time, taking the form of different shapes, abides to the way Brinkema reads affect as having form, as a passionate structure that through formal means (see lighting, color, rhythm) a whole new meaning is created. As she aptly states, "the myth of asignifying affective immediacy offers the fantasy of superficial flashes of brilliance and insight, but its very antithesis to the durational mediations of reading inevitably leaves it with no specificity that might durably ground its affective claim. Affect is thus left a mere shiver, a tingle, the capacity to find brute responsiveness to flashes of light, loud noises, startling surprises."⁸⁵ The process of reading for affect, that particularity of reading itself, is what imbues affect with force, and in *Twin Peaks: The Return*, the reading of its narrative pinpoints to such a force, until we find ourselves to its dense net of complexity.

2.2 Narrative Complexity

The very notion of complexity, especially when used within television studies, pinpoints to issues of characterization and the means through which such characterization can be rendered.⁸⁶ Gestures, nuances, editing, and the usage of the image itself constitute such means, all of them also present in *Twin Peaks: The Return*. However, in taking a step further and detecting the way complexity is evident in this text, narrative will be isolated from characterization and mise en scène and detect the way it impacts time. What is of importance is the way the dense narrative of the show renders time fragmented; as in the case of the notion of affect, for which an assistance of existing theories is crucial, narrative complexity is a term that has not yet earned its own place in television studies. Instead, character complexity is related to the available narrative time of television shows that is vaster in comparison to a cinematic script. Complex and difficult psychological states are logically more plausible to be rendered when more time is available. In *Twin Peaks: The Return*, with a span of eighteen episodes, both characterization and narrative are complex and surely

⁸⁵ Brinkema, 2014, 37

⁸⁶ See for instance the readings and associations of complexity with seminal fictional characters Walter White and Dexter Morgan. Both of them are seen as paradigms of complexity in contemporary television drama, even if the shows themselves [*Breaking Bad*, *Dexter* (2006-2013)] are still accessible to the mainstream audience. Complexity, here, is taken out of the narrative context, albeit the protagonists remain a puzzle to solve

interconnected. Acknowledging this connection only help us to comprehend the implications at play when examining the – at times – indecipherable narrative of the show and its implications on time.

In his article, 'Narrative Complexity in Contemporary Television Drama', television scholar Jason Mittell partakes the task of distinguishing a new, contemporary form of television storytelling, one that deviates from the conventional episodic and serial forms. His use of the term 'narrative complexity' includes a vast array of television dramas and comedies, such as *The Sopranos*, *Six Feet Under* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (2000-). In locating the source of narrative inquiries in regards to complexity and subversion, Mittell uses Bordwell's remarks as a building block of his argumentation. More specifically, he notes that Bordwell, in his book *Narration in the Fiction Film*, proposes different *kinds* of narrative as distinctive modes of operation; "Bordwell outlines specific cinematic modes such as classical Hollywood, art cinema, and historical materialism, all of which encompass distinct storytelling strategies while still referencing one another and building on the foundations of other modes."⁸⁷ Bordwell's statement, of course, can be further expanded when focusing on Kristin Thompson's similar remark in her book *Storytelling in Film and Television*, where she actually distinguishes *Twin Peaks* as a show that can be considered as a form of 'art television'.⁸⁸ Mittell's methodological tools comply to a comparison of the American cinema of the 1970s and the then subversive edge to mainstream narrative tools, to contemporary television narrative and the complexity it ensues. For him, the word complexity is a construct that defines several ways with which television narrative today has developed significantly. In order to do so, he states that "in examining narrative complexity as a narrational mode I follow a paradigm of historical poetics that situates formal developments within specific historical contexts of production, circulation, and reception."⁸⁹ The works of Robert Altman, Hal Ashby, Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola certainly provide a template of artistic paradigms to which many contemporary television dramas and comedies adhere to, not only in the last years, as the case studies examined here may suggest, but even from the 1990s.⁹⁰ The significance of Mittell's approach towards narrative is the fact that he consciously focus on an approach that does not take (the) artistic background as a site of examination, but instead the historical contexts of production and circulation, as mentioned before. In this sense, his inclination towards what is termed as *historical poetics*

⁸⁷ Mittell, 2006, 29

⁸⁸ Thompson, 2003, preface

⁸⁹ Mittell, 2006, 30

⁹⁰ Fitting examples would be the television dramas *Once & Again*, *Picket Fences* and *Northern Exposure*, as well as the proliferation of television movies and mini-series, giving the opportunity to acclaimed screen and playwrights to delve into the television sphere

goes back to the neo-formalistic approaches of David Bordwell and Henry Jenkins.⁹¹ What *Twin Peaks: The Return's* narrative offers is a complementary proposal of complexity that is not attached to characterization, a tendency we find ourselves confronting to most of today's television dramas. In reverse, characterization remains elliptical, even lacking, tangled in a net of narrative deviations and complexities that have a considerable effect on the way time is experienced.

One of the early decisions Showtime's CEO David Nevins made when the return of the show was made official, was the examination of different ways of distribution. Surely, the ever-growing streaming options available not only in Showtime's platform but all around the television sphere (see Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu, DirecTV) create a vast array of options at the hands of creators, showrunners and producers. In the case of *Twin Peaks: The Return*, scripts were written prior to the announcement of which channel would actually and finally be housing the show. Streaming options and distribution strategies aligned themselves to the way Lynch and Frost wrote the scripts, which is a testament to both their status as writers, but also the nature of the storytelling itself.⁹² Through the span of the show, which lasted for three months, eighteen episodes were broadcast on the official channel of Showtime, with a subsequent option for the audiences to watch the episodes on the online streaming platform. The evident complexity of the story, or more appropriately put, *stories*, provides an interesting spin on the way streaming options and fluidity intend to function. Whereas the first and last two hours of the *Return* offer a more-or-less clear understanding of introduction and closure, what is in between defies such characterization. The complexity at play is the way the episodic structure(s) vary and can be felt as arbitrary; episode 308 (Gotta Light), for instance, can as well be seen before any of its prior or subsequent ones. Complexity, here, takes the form of a fold of different stories and narrative devices, independent sequences and stand-alone character arcs that never find a cohesive thread or explanation. Whereas Mittell finds a nexus within a historical perspective and therefore a strong affinity to ideological concerns, Lynch and Frost's narrative(s) renders time as abstract and fragmented through their artistic preoccupations and the way they intend to tell their story.

Interestingly, the implications deriving from the way Showtime decided to arrange the distribution of the episodes on their online platform encourages such a reading of the show; in contrast to the usual premium cable method of allowing restricted access to episodes while the season is on the air and only retrospective full access, Showtime offered open access to every episode right after it had been broadcast. It

⁹¹ In this regard, see Henry Jenkins' 'Historical Poetics' in *Approaches to Popular Film* (1989) and David Bordwell's identically titled contribution to *The Cinematic Text* (1989)

⁹² Early discussions with David Nevins in 2015, when he had read the first two hours of the *Return*, give away his amazement and the ways he (fore)saw this story could be told in diverse ways

is here that television scholar Glen Creeber's input is of use. In his illuminating article 'It's not TV, it's online drama: The return of the intimate screen', he investigates new forms of complex serial dramas, namely ones that are inextricably connected to online platforms. At one point, he takes the leap to state that "online drama is fiction specifically designed to be watched on the Internet. Beginning with amateur YouTube vlogs (video blogs) like 'Emokid21' (2006) and 'Lonelygirl15' (2006), this new type of digital story-telling has quickly evolved into an extremely popular and lucrative form of contemporary drama with 'KateModern' (2007) attracting an estimated 25 million viewers (see Carter, 2007)."⁹³ The underlying notion of both Showtime's and Creeber's approaches seems to be the one of the spectator's freedom in terms of movement and of choice, especially when we are dealing with narratives that are not easy to digest to begin with. Indeed, borrowing one of Creeber's remarks, "television's sense of intimacy was regarded as a particularly distinguishing feature of the new medium, especially in contrast to the conception of film as a 'cinema of attractions.'"⁹⁴ It can be argued that a more intimate space of spectatorship is created, and the allocated, domestic position of the subject in front of her television is now replaced by a more open approach as to when and the how someone chooses to watch a television show. Returning thus to the way Showtime offered a more open choice of access to its subscribers, both the spectator and narrative's time are rendered freely.

The eminent complexity that is viewed here is also defined by an episodic structure that is not bound to a standard broadcast serial form or narrative continuity. What we encounter for example at the end of each episode (with the exception being the final episode) is a different musical sequence at the Roadhouse bar of the city of Twin Peaks. (See Figures 24 & 25) Audience and narrative expectations are created when those sequences started to become a recurrent motif of each episode. Consequent examinations and in-depth analysis of the offered details of each sequence were unavoidable for the extraction of a logical meaning that could hypothetically offer an understanding of the overall narrative of the show.⁹⁵ However, in contrast to these expectations, Lynch and Frost never offered any kind of answers, or even affirmation that those scenes were even part of the reality of the show. What they could possibly be seen is a stasis in narrative, a site of contemplation for the audience to disentangle or digest what preceded, albeit in a paradoxical manner, since what really precedes them is another layer of ambiguity. This evident complexity, that does not put the weight towards characterization or thick plot arcs, would be more

⁹³ Creeber, 2011, 592

⁹⁴ Creeber, 2011, 593

⁹⁵ See <https://consequenceofsound.net/2017/08/we-need-to-talk-about-the-twin-peaks-roadhouse/>

appropriately seen as an accumulation of individual scenes that altogether create a vortex in time.⁹⁶ It is not of coincidence that the notion of vortex is very much present to the storyline itself, with our protagonist, who we only see for the first time on the sixteenth episode of the show, being transported into a different reality and timeline.

Hence, what makes *Twin Peaks: The Return's* narrative as complex is not only its active operation against serial norms, but the overall indecipherable set of smaller narratives within the overall one, where a fixed reality and timeline cannot be defined. It is certainly of use to attempt to find the motivations behind the creators' mind, however, as this chapter showcases, this is not the aim. The interpretation of the narrative text of the show offers many possibilities to witness the way temporality is dealt on television more generally, and what influence it can have on subsequent, similar attempts can only be awaited to be seen. In the case of *The Twin Peaks: The Return*, time is approached as both a conceptual and philosophical entity that is affected and defined by the tone, rhythm and narrative operations.

In summarizing what was discussed above, this chapter engaged with two distinct topics that the case study's creative richness brought together. The overarching theme of temporality gave space to the theories of affect and narrative complexity to be examined. The one of affect was viewed through different perspectives, and that of complexity was mainly approached through the writing of Jason Mittell. Several episodes and scenes were chosen to provide the necessary visual examples where potential facets of affect and narrative complexity caused a different experience of time, one that I have called as fragmentary and dispersed.

⁹⁶ Interestingly enough, several scenes throughout the span of the season featured a literal vortex, as an *entrance* to a parallel reality and timeline

Conclusion

To return to the notion of time within television dramaturgy, the title of this thesis 'Banishing the Expectations of Television Drama: Temporal Constraints Set Loose on Sundance Channel's *Rectify* and Showtime's *Twin Peaks: The Return*', is a reference to the way those shows offer an unusual experience of time, and as seen, this was the case for both the intra and extra-diegetic world.

My discussion began with an introduction of the television landscape of the last twenty-five years, where a reasonable change towards an approach that is more inclined to (art) cinema tropes is evident. In doing that, the lineage of television dramaturgy was fleshed out, beginning from the *Golden Era* of the 1950s, then following the British Golden Age of the 1980s, and the so-called *New Golden Age*, from the 1990s onwards. New modes of inquiry are apparent, namely the way television storytellers approached their characters, and moreover the ways stories were told. The parallel rise of streaming services and the creation of new sites of production only strengthens this multifaceted approach. On that base, the two case studies, namely *Rectify* and *Twin Peaks: The Return* were chosen as fitting examples of such a development in the television landscape, that challenged its boundaries even further.

More specifically and in the case of *Rectify*, the show was chosen to be examined in an episodic way and the visual analysis followed this path. To begin with, reading it against the background of slowness, a term that has aptly been used in the lexicon of cinema studies, we dealt with the way slowness in narrative can be connected to issues of memory and nostalgia, and how those preoccupations lead to a temporal stasis. *Rectify* certainly showcased that, especially in the first season of the show where narrative time came to parallel terms with the real one. It can now be argued that the noted slowness of the show within its narrative and editing process offered a more contemplative viewing experience and thus an awareness of time on the spectator's side as well. Subsequently, the focus on art cinema tropes, for which slowness was a catalytic factor, gave the opportunity to also highlight other television creations that share a similar preoccupation, albeit their intentions and stories being focused on other aspects than the ones in *Rectify*. The cases of *The Knick* and *Fargo* proved themselves useful by offering an insight into the current landscape in television and pinpointed to the openness of creators and actors of the big screen to transition to the small one. This transition could be very well seen as a twofold testament, mainly one that stems from the financial factor, with independent filmmakers struggling to fund their films,⁹⁷ and also the proliferation of

⁹⁷ The way the market forces work today leans filmmakers and companies (from the USA, in this case) to look for funding opportunities in Europe, and consequently shoot their films there (with special preference to countries of Eastern Europe and the Balkans.)

streaming platforms that certainly made things easier for filmmakers to decide to tell their stories in different ways. Finally, the focus on Henri Bergson and the notion of memory signaled the space to analyze two seminal episodes of the show, where the underlying psychological reality of the protagonist provided an insight as to how time was experienced within the intra-diegetic world.

Furthermore, and in the case of *Twin Peaks: The Return*, the overarching theme of time housed two distinct theories, prevalent in the discourse of film and television studies. More specifically, by focusing on the notion of affect, the understanding is that television has the capacity to express affect in several forms, and throughout different interpretations of what an affective operation might entail, *Twin Peaks: The Return* showcased a predilection towards a expression of affect that is more close to the writings of Eugenie Brinkema and José Gil. Essentially, metaphorically viewed as a Body without an Organ, the resulted implications of such operations have an impact on the way time is conveyed and experienced. The same goes with the focus on the narrative, where a more explicit understanding of the way the complex and sometimes nonsensical story is told results to a distortion of time, that someone might even call random. The connective line here is not one that intends to comprehend time in connection to narrative, that is a mission that requires intense investigative attempts, but alternatively one that has a causal nature. Hence, the fact that those operations at play, some of them most likely intended by Lynch and Frost, result to an experience and understanding of time that challenges preconceived notions in television production.

These distinct topics are intended to be viewed as building blocks towards a broader connective thread that is also a result of their interrelation. For this reason, it is proposed that the way time is experienced within and outside the text is an interesting trait that can open a discussion about new ways of televisual production and spectatorship. Moreover, it is indeed the case that preoccupations with the notion of time is a recurring topic in both film and television studies, we can now detect a differentiation of attributing meaning to television productions. As already mentioned, for those shows to be aired in the first place, it took a leap of faith from the CEO's of their respective channels, namely Charlie Collier (of Sundance Channel) and David Nevins (of Showtime). Furthermore, their afterlife does not attest to a marketing success, since the revenue of their boxset sales is not a wildly successful one. Surely, the intention here is not to propose that overshadowing mainstream trends and marketing goals is the sound way to follow, since such an approach does not necessarily guarantee a success in quality. It also raises a broader question whether the success has a merit at all in the eyes of the beholder (meaning, the networks themselves), despite the potential academic interest within the field of television. What is the intended point here is the

fact that the evident subversion in the way the stories were told, was also evident all over the hierarchy, starting from the creators and leading to the specific choices taken by the television networks.

Hence, this thesis concludes with a twofold consideration. In providing an answer to my research question, *Rectify* and *Twin Peaks: The Return* set loose temporal constraints, defined by the standard television narrative, by associating themselves with theories connected to the field of art cinema, memory studies, affect and narratology that proposes complexity as its focal point. In doing so, fruitful results can be extracted for future research. Furthermore, *Rectify* and *Twin Peaks: The Return* can now be considered the most representative works of the creators' oeuvre for this research, considering that they bring to the fore all those distinct topics of discussion. In both of those creations, the temporal implications can be viewed as the site for a better understanding of the dense televisual landscape, and moreover, a unified site for understanding the world we occupy.

Illustrations



Figure 1: Daniel and the Goat Man in the “divine” presence of the statue



Figure 2: While in coma, the show dives into the depths of the protagonist’s unconscious



Figure 3: The close-up to Daniel's clock signals the delicate way this episode deals with the notion of time





Figures 4 & 5: Romeo Tirone's close-up (director of this episode) showcases Daniel's overall sadness of grief and mourn over the sense of beauty that is presented to him





Figures 6 to 9: The rendering of the “new” Red Room is inextricably connected with the past... of the show itself; signs, characters and code-words from the original show are still present, mingling the present with the past.



Figures 10 & 11: The tree in the Red Room, which presents itself as the “Arm” causes an impact to Dale Cooper’s mental state, causing him several returns to his own past in Twin Peaks and the Red Room itself.



Figures 12 to 14: Dale Cooper's "Odyssey" is highlighted from transportations through electrical sockets;
Lynch's focus on electricity is evident throughout the whole season





Figures 15 to 18: Dale Cooper's odyssey into the unknown



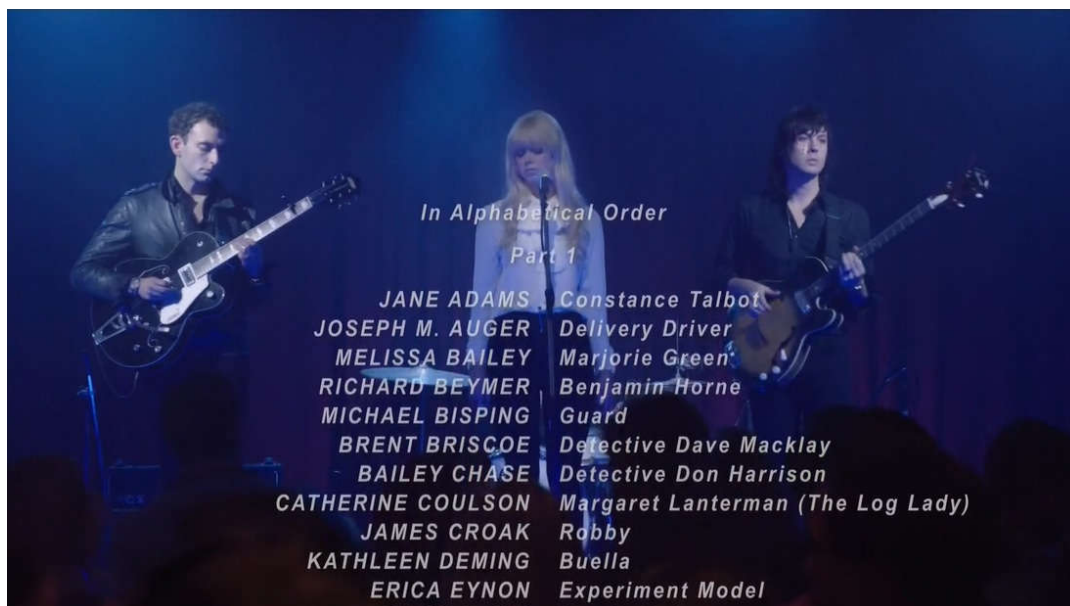
Figures 19 & 20: In an apt fashion, Lynch places his characters next to electrical grids, interacting with them, as if this was their final destination.



Figures 21 & 22: A long-term dissolve of Dale Cooper's face employed by Lynch



Figure 23: The character of Philip Jefferies in the form of a tea kettle





Figures 24 & 25: The Roadhouse live shows became a recurring motif at the end of each episode

Bibliography

- Bakhtin, M. M. 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', University of Texas Press (1981): 84-258
- Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Edited and with an Introduction by Hannah Arendt. Schocken Books, 1968
- Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Translated by Richard Miller. Farrar, Straus & Giroux Inc, 1991
- Bergson, Henri. *Matter and Memory*. Dover Publications, 2004
- Bordwell, David. 'The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice', *Film Criticism* Vol. 4, No. 1 (1979): 56-64
- Brinkema, Eugenie. *The Forms of the Affect*. Duke University Press, 2014
- Cartwright, Lisa. *Moral Spectatorship*. Duke University Press, 2008
- Creeber, Glen. 'It's not TV, it's online drama: The return of the intimate screen', *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 14(6) (2011): 591-606
- Creeber, Glen. *Serial Television: Big Drama on the Small Screen*. British Film Institute, 2004
- Deleuze, Gilles. Guattari, Felix. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi. University of Minnesota Press; Second edition, 1987
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Negotiations, 1972-1990*. Translated by Martin Joughin. Columbia University Press; Revised edition, 1997
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*. University of Minnesota Press, 1986
- Duffy, Enda. *The Speed Handbook: Velocity, Pleasure, Modernism*. Duke University Press, 2009
- Gil, José. 'Paradoxical Body.' *The MIT Press 50.4* (2006): 21-35
- Heath, Stephen. 'Narrative Space', *Screen* Vol. XVII (1976): 68-112
- Holdsworth, Amy. *Television, Memory and Nostalgia*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2011
- Kundera, Milan. *Slowness*. Harper Perennial, 1995
- Lim, Song Hwee. *Tsai Ming-liang and a Cinema of Slowness*. University of Hawaii Press, 2014
- Massumi, Brian. *Parables of the Virtual Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Duke University Press, 2002
- Mittell, Jason. 'Narrative Complexity in Contemporary Television Drama', *The Velvet Light Trap*, Number 58, (2006): 29-40
- Rectify. Dir. Ray McKinnon. ITV Studios. 2017. Blu-ray
- Sepinwall, Alan. *The Revolution Was Televised* (Updated Edition). Touchstone, 2015
- Shapiro, Steven. *The Cinematic Body*. University of Minnesota Press, 1993
- Thompson, Kristin. *Storytelling in Film and Television*. Harvard University Press, 2003
- Twin Peaks: The Return. Dir. David Lynch. Universal Pictures, UK. 2017. Blu-ray