

## REVIEWS

**TIME ON TV: TEMPORAL DISPLACEMENT AND MASHUP TELEVISION,  
PAUL BOOTH (2012)**

New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 255 pp.,  
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*Time on TV* by Paul Booth is an ambitious book on the changing representations of time in recent popular and culturally successful televised programming. The main argument is that television audiences are expecting savvier shows with broader non-linear narratives due to an overall increased intelligence and expectation of the viewers. Furthermore, television shows such as CBS' popular *How I Met Your Mother* are doubling their connection with audiences with the use of social media, a connection that is defined by Booth as mashup television. The activity the show creates with the audience creates deeper bonds and connections.

A key strength of this work is Booth's articulate yet relatable voice. He writes in a conversational, yet academic, tone, easily wading through complex terms such as temporal displacement, the changing representation of time on television and transgenic media, and the incorporation of innovative and old-fashioned media that brings about a new definition of time. Specifically, recent television programming is engaging audiences in a different way due to shifting relationships with time and changes in everyday life. With the usage of Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, YouTube, WordPress and Instagram in everyday life, television has become a communal platform for online discussion with fans all across the world. What would *Lost* have been without the online following and fan theories?

Booth begins with an introductory framework on Charles Yu's 2010 novel, *How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe*, essentially stating that the relationship with narrative time has changed. Overall, he theorizes

that transgenic media allows audiences to broaden the relationship with the external environment. People are still sharing and communicating, merely in different ways. However, since corporate culture is attached to new media, audiences are consistently replicating 'a combination of individual contributions coupled with professionally produced templates' (Booth 2012: 9). The delivery of the material and where and to whom the material goes is the most important element of this discussion. The subsequent seven chapters illustrate this temporal displacement by examining its critical manifestations in television. Specifically, Booth examines *Doctor Who*, a programme that encapsulates Booth's arguments on the changing face of television, as, over time, the Doctor has undergone multiple regenerations, 'the rewrite ability of history and memory' (Booth 2012: 15). This use of time travel in television narratives fuels a cultural fixation with time, 'to scroll through our entire digital lives, our history recorded seemingly forever' (Booth 2012: 15). Booth contends that audiences' definition of television has shifted too, however, the focus of this work is still steeped within the medium itself.

Returning to *Doctor Who* and including *Boomtown*, *Desperate Housewives*, *Fringe* and *How I Met Your Mother*, the narratives grow in intricacy, from time jumps, different points of view, flashbacks, created memories and unreliable narrators. These devices help create a mediated intimacy, allowing the audience the opportunity to analyse shows and 'fill in the gaps.' This also means that programming is not aimed at the common viewer, but a limited niche audience, allowing writers and creators, 'to give this viewer the "wow" moment of narrative' (Booth 2012: 36).

It is often stated in cliché ridden articles on *Buzzfeed*, that millennials are the most nostalgic and narcissistic generation. Booth's perspective on these characteristics is positive; audiences are not self-obsessed; audiences are time obsessed within the platform of a disjointed socio-cultural location. When a character time travels and interacts with themselves, yes, it is narcissism, but it is also the interaction of self and the self-we-want-to-present. For example, in *Life on Mars*, a man travels back in time to interact with himself and his mother growing up, leading to further clarification on his current life.

Booth concludes that transgenic media is an acknowledgement of this cultural and communicative shift, to 'refocus attention on the non-linear characteristic of time' (Booth 2012: 212). With the success of DVD sales, Netflix, and Hulu, audiences are accustomed to temporal discrepancies in television storylines, including in comedies such as *Arrested Development*. With the rise of 'smart TV' and with the average person watching thirty-four hours of programming a week where is the future? Life, it seems, is non-linear; now, television is non-linear too. Booth writes that this is just the beginning. With *Arrested Development* shifting from a traditional FOX network show to a Netflix show, with each episode focusing on one character with intermingling storylines, the author's predictions seem valid. Booth's work is an excellent addition to the growing body of fan studies and is useful to scholars with varied popular culture interests.