Université de Montréal

Figures of Time: Preemptive Narratives in Recent Television Series

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Thèse présentée à la Faculté des arts et des sciences en vue de l'obtention du grade de Ph. D.
en Littérature, option Études littéraires et intermédiales

Juillet 2013

Résumé

Cette thèse de doctorat propose une analyse des temporalités narratives dans les séries télévisées récentes *Life on Mars* (BBC, 2006-2007), *Flashforward* (ABC, 2009-2010) et *Damages* (FX/Audience Network, 2007-2012). L'argument général part de la supposition que les nouvelles technologies télévisuelles ont rendu possible de nouveaux standards esthétiques ainsi que des expériences temporelles originales. Il sera montré par la suite que ces nouvelles qualités esthétiques et expérientielles de la fiction télévisuelle relèvent d'une nouvelle pertinence politique et éthique du temps. Cet argument sera déployé en quatre étapes.

La thèse se penche d'abord sur ce que j'appelle les *technics* de la télévision, c'est-à-dire le complexe de technologies et de techniques, afin d'élaborer comment cet ensemble a pu activer de nouveaux modes d'expérimenter la télévision. Suivant la philosophie de Gilles Deleuze et de Félix Guattari ainsi que les théories des médias de Matthew Fuller, Thomas Lamarre et Jussi Parikka, ce complexe sera conçu comme une machine abstraite que j'appelle la *machine sérielle*.

Ensuite, l'argument puise dans des théories de la perception et des approches non figuratives de l'art afin de mieux cerner les nouvelles qualités d'expérience esthétique dans la fiction sérielle télévisée. Pour ce faire, je développe le concept de *figure de temps* définie comme la forme abstraite, immédiatement ressentie, du mouvement temporel effectué par un récit.

Il sera montré, en troisième lieu, que ces mouvements figuraux mettent en jeu l'orientation vers l'avenir et la préemption. Tous les récits du corpus anticipent leur propre fin et prennent forme en fonction de cette fin prédite, ce pourquoi ils seront appelés *récits préemptifs* où l'avenir pose un problème affectif plutôt qu'épistémologique. Je montre que,

dans ces séries, la boucle passant par l'avenir est immédiatement ontogénétique dans la mesure où elle crée la réalité dans le présent en suscitant l'incertitude et la peur.

Enfin, la thèse soutien qu'une telle politique affective fait partie de ce que Gilles Deleuze appelle les « sociétés de contrôle » qui opèrent une modulation continue des conditions de vie de l'individu. En suivant les écrits de Deleuze sur les sociétés de contrôle et sur *l'Éthique* de Spinoza, je suggère que les exigences d'un tel environnement modulant sont *éthiques* (plutôt que morales). Seront ensuite décortiquées les complexes de techniques, appelés *procédures* suivant les artistes-philosophes Madeline Gins et Arakawa, qui soutiennent une éthique pour survivre la société de contrôle dans la série *Damages*.

Mots clés: séries télévisées, temporalités complexes, expérience esthétique du temps, préemption, figures du temps, éthique

Abstract

This thesis examines complex narrative temporalities in the recent television series *Life on Mars* (BBC, 2006-2007), *Flashforward* (ABC, 2009-2010), and *Damages* (FX/Audience Network, 2007-2012). The general argument proposes that the renewed technics of television have enabled innovative aesthetic standards and temporal experiences in serial TV fiction. It is subsequently shown that these new aesthetic and experiential qualities of TV fiction are correlative to an increased political and ethical relevance of time. This overall argument is laid out in four major steps.

The project first addresses the *technics* of recent television to show how new technologies have enabled new techniques of experiencing television. Drawing on the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari as well as the media theories of Matthew Fuller, Thomas Lamarre, and Jussi Parikka, the complex and productive linkages between technology and techniques will be theorized as an abstract machine which I call the *serial machine*.

The argument then draws on theories of perception and nonrepresentational approaches to art in order to analyze the new qualities of aesthetic experience in serial TV fiction. For this purpose, I develop the central concept of the *figure of time* understood as the directly felt abstract shape effectuated by a narrative's movement through time.

It will be seen, in a third step, that the figural movements discussed in this thesis concern questions of future-orientation and preemption. All of the narratives in this project anticipate their own ending and take form with respect to this foretold future. They are therefore conceptualized as "preemptive narratives," in which the future poses an affective rather than epistemological problem. I will show that, in the serial narratives under discussion,

the preemptive loop through the future is immediately ontogenetic in that it creates a reality in the present by inducing uncertainty and fear of the future.

Finally, the thesis proposes that such affective politics are an element of what Gilles Deleuze calls *control societies*, in which conditions of life are constantly modulated. Following his writings on control societies and Spinoza's *Ethics*, it is argued that the requirements of such a modulatory environment are *ethical* in nature (rather than moral). Drawing on the work by artists-philosophers Madeline Gins and Arakawa, I elaborate the techniques of attention which sustain an ethics for surviving the control society in the TV series *Damages*.

Keywords: television series, temporal complexity, aesthetic experience of time, preemptive narratives, figures of time, ethics of attention

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Remerciements/Acknowledgements

Je tiens à remercier ma directrice de recherche Livia Monnet : tout d'abord pour m'avoir fait découvrir mon projet de recherche, ensuite pour l'avoir développé avec moi en me guidant sans jamais s'imposer, finalement pour son soutien et ses conseils continue pendant la rédaction de la thèse.

Merci également à tous les membres du SenseLab pour l'extraordinaire communauté de recherche-création qu'ils continuent à créer à Montréal. Cette thèse ne serait pas ce qu'elle est sans l'inspiration, les idées et convictions que j'ai pu y développer. Je tiens à nommer Erin Manning et Brian Massumi pour leurs commentaires généreux et stimulants au cours de la rédaction.

Finalement, je n'aurais pas pu achever cette thèse sans le soutien financier de l'Université de Montréal. Je remercie le Département de littérature comparée pour m'avoir accordé une bourse doctorale, la possibilité de participer aux colloques internationaux ainsi que des charges de cours. Je remercie également la Faculté des études supérieures et postdoctorales pour m'avoir accordé la bourse de fin d'études doctorales.

0. Introduction

This project examines the aesthetic experience of time in recent television series. The general proposition is that the renewed technics of recent TV series have enabled new temporal experiences that, in return, relate to an increasing political relevance of temporality. These television series propose alternative modes of engaging with time – aesthetically, politically, and ethically.

The changes television has undergone since the 1990s are so significant that, according to some scholars, we are currently experiencing a "third golden age of television" (*FRAME* 2011). Indeed, it is safe to say that the changed conditions in writing, production, post-production, distribution, and reception have allowed for new narrative and aesthetic standards in TV fiction. These new standards have, in turn, created new possibilities for narrative complexity in general and *temporal complexity* in particular (Mittell 2006 and 2010, O'Sullivan 2010, Ames 2012a).

Since the variety of aesthetic experiments with time in recent serial TV fiction is dauntingly vast, I have chosen to focus my investigation on a very particular temporal movement that is more and more frequent in recent television series. In one way or another, all of the TV shows I consider – *Damages*, *Flashforward*, and *Life on Mars* (UK) – begin by anticipating their ending (or what narratology would call 'prolepsis'). These narratives preempt their oftentimes catastrophic outcomes and only afterwards return to a beginning, now imbued with the gloom of the foretold disaster, to slowly unfold over the duration of an entire season the events leading up to the latter. In this way, they activate the interval between the present moment and the foretold ending as the domain where reality is generated, where *time*

is made. This loop through the future is by no means a purely epistemological problem, nor is it politically innocent. It does not serve to provide excess information in a straightforward way, to merely add meaning. As I will argue, the seemingly objective presentation of the future *creates* meaning for the purpose of leading and misleading the viewer in the present; it makes and unmakes sense in the now; it triggers affective responses that color the perception of the present moment.

This movement is very clear in *Damages*, a legal thriller about high-stakes litigation (FX/Audience Network, 2007-2012). Each season begins in the same way: the viewer sees a final catastrophe, after which an intertitle ("six months earlier") takes her back in time. Subsequently, she learns the story of ruthless litigation and legal scheming in a continuous back-and-forth between 'earlier' and 'later,' in which the future image is always the same but affectively modulated over and over again (ch. 4). *Flashforward* (ABC, 2009-2010) is a science-fiction series that posits future knowledge as the premise of its story. At the beginning of the show, every person on the planet loses consciousness in what will be called the 'global blackout.' During the blackout, the entire world population sees its own future six months ahead. This factual knowledge of the future does not produce a useful resource for navigating the present. Instead, the characters of the show experience it as an affective shock that undoes all certainty and threatens to unravel the present. An FBI investigation ensues to determine what caused the global blackout/future vision (ch. 3). *Life on Mars* (BBC, 2006-2007) is a police procedural centered around the crime of time. After being involved in a car accident in 2006, the protagonist Sam Tyler wakes up in 1973, not knowing whether he has traveled in time, whether he is having a 'coma dream,' or whether he has gone mad. Questions of temporal, psychological and ethical integrity arise from the threatening confusion of times.

Police procedural, legal thriller, FBI sci-fi! It is crucial that all of these future-tending narratives relate to issues of justice, law, and law enforcement. It is by virtue of this concurrence of their loop through the future and their generic affiliation with crime fiction that these TV series address the social and political dimensions of temporal experience. They bring into awareness the fact that the ontogenetic force of a felt future creates reality, or what counts as real and as true in the present. These affective truths then serve as the – ethically questionable – basis and justification for the actions of authorities (lawyers, FBI agents, police detectives) and the TV series themselves. More specifically, I will show throughout this project that the decisive issue of contention of these narratives is the political mode of preemption, which consists in evoking a future threat in order to materialize (rather than prevent) it. To emphasize this specific political dimension of these TV series, I will call them *preemptive narratives*. While the various *stories* narrated in these TV shows will be discussed in due measure, they are decisively not the main focus of this thesis. For, while preemption continuously modulates representations, its force is not grounded in representation. Rather, it acts by virtue of an *affective* force, as an attack on *perception* (Massumi 2011b). Consequently, an engagement with preemptive narratives must pass through their aesthetic investment in time and the politically relevant experiences of time they create. Throughout this project, I will argue that the central insights concerning preemption are articulated *by* the image as well as its movement through time, and not *in* the image, that is, on the level of story and content.

These TV shows' preoccupation with preemption raises aesthetic as well as ethical questions. On the one hand, the series I will discuss clearly demonstrate the new aesthetic potentials of TV fiction. On the other hand, we have to ask whether, and to what extent a specific ethics is involved in the continuous affective modulation produced by preemption

across the political spectrum. When the domain of the political has gone affective, participation and resistance cannot resolve themselves in communication and rational discourse. Such an ever-shifting, modulatory environment comes with continuously changing requirements for effective action, requirements that are ecological or, in a spinozist-deleuzian tradition, *ethical* in nature. Individuals and collectives are advised to develop techniques allowing them to attend to and insert themselves into these sociopolitical and media dynamics of preemption.

These then are the four related concerns of my engagement which recent television series: a renewed *technics* of television that enables a new *aesthetics* of time which plugs into the untimely *politics* of preemption that call for a timely *ethics*.

Each of the four chapters that follow is an integral part of this overall argument and at the same time zooms in on one of its four aspects. I first consider the technics of televisual time-making, understood as the coupling of technology and techniques, to explore the conditions for the aesthetic experience in recent TV series (chapter 1). In a second step, I look at the series *Life on Mars* from a mainly aesthetic viewpoint to account for the various ways in which serial TV fiction can articulate time, moving from representations to sensations of time (ch. 2). Subsequently, I engage the TV show *Flashforward* to elaborate the political dimension of an aesthetic movement through time (ch. 3). Finally, I consider the possibility of an ethics that corresponds to preemptive temporalities. The series *Damages* will allow me to suggest alternative modes of participating in the aesthetic, technical, and political processes of making time (ch. 4). The remainder of this introduction provides a conceptual and argumentative frame for this general movement of thought.

0.1. *Technics*: Into Time

The disciplines of film and television studies have produced concepts of 'cinematic' and 'televisual time' that are highly determined by the respective media technologies. The work of Mary Anne Doane is exemplary in this respect. In her seminal monograph *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, she argues that cinema was "a central representational form of the twentieth century" because, as film splits movement into a sequence of contingent, indexical images, it rationalizes time into a homogeneous succession of discontinuous, equivalent instants (Doane 2002: 19). This gives cinema "the capacity to perfectly *represent* the contingent, to provide the pure record of time" (22, emphasis added). Although Doane provides a *critical* cultural history of this concept, the temporality of the cinematograph has remained the starting point for many contemporary explorations of the relation between audiovisual media and time (e.g. Mulvey 2006, Stewart 2007, McGowan 2011). With respect to television, it is not so much the 'apparatus' that has come to be considered as the determining factor for the medium's temporality but 'programming.' Once again, the core of the theoretical discussion may be summed up by referring to Doane's concept of "televisual time [which] is programmed and scheduled as precisely as possible, down to the last second. Television's time is a time which is, in effect, wholly determined" (1990: 237). In short, then, the time of film is determined by the *technologies* of cinema; the time of television is determined by its *modes of distribution*.

The general conceptual point I want to make – before returning to the specific case of television – concerns precisely this link between determinism and the conceptual work it enables or, more often, precludes. The focus on the technological deployment of the moving image, on its linear organization in broadcasting schedules, or even on narrative and its linear

progression is bound to produce a concept of time as a linear and steady passage from instant to instant. Consider this:

> Time in cinema – that is, narrative form – must break from, by breaking up, the repository of sheer duration and its inoperable continuities and instead activate sequence as discourse. Only then does it become cinema. (Stewart 2007: 129)

Here, cinema *must* break up duration and sequentialize time in or as discourse. Stewart recognizes that the time he speaks of is that of "narrative form" but does not hesitate to generalize this as being "time in cinema." Time *qua* linear succession is transposed between ontologically distinct levels: from the technological substratum to the narrative structure, to experience in the guise of 'duration.' Thus, the sequential progression of the apparatus and the narrative discourse provides the film scholar with a concept of time that will henceforth serve as a conceptual tool for investigations into "time in cinema."

This theoretical problem has been previously addressed by scholars such as Bliss Cua Lim, who proposes a practice of "temporal critique" to foreground the irreducibly heterogeneous and nonlinear temporalities or "immiscible times" that moving images give to experience (Lim 2009). This practice necessarily implies a critical assessment of the concept of 'cinematic time' itself and, more specifically, of its incapacity to recognize these 'immiscible times' as cinema or television's *very own* temporalities. As an example of this conceptual limitation, I'd like to briefly consider Todd McGowan's central argument in *Out of Time: Desire in Atemporal Cinema* (2011). McGowan analyzes films like *Butterfly Effect*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, and *Memento* to show that recent narrative cinema is increasingly characterized by anachronisms, temporal loops, parallel and crossing timelines, repetitions and so forth. Now, while I agree with McGowan's general diagnostic, I disagree

with his contention that such films take us "*out* of time" and make cinema "*a*temporal" as the title of his book suggests. Why would one call repetitions, loops, and anachronisms *a*temporal? It seems to me that this is only possible if one has already conceptualized time as a linear, homogeneous chronology:

> What unites the key films in the atemporal mode is the attempt to introduce the spectators to an alternative way of experiencing existence in time – or, more exactly, a way of experiencing existence outside of our usual conception of time" (McGowan 2011: 9-10)

Even though this conception of time is viewed from outside, the author's terminology belies the fact that he never abandons this conception as his starting point. To call temporal loops, repetitions, and crossing timelines *a*temporal, one must assume that time is linear and homogeneous to begin with.

My point is that, *if one begins with a different concept of time – based on notions of, say, topology, becoming and emergence –, one would actually have to consider these films all the more "temporal" for their strange loops and nonlinear timelines. They take you* into time *rather than out of it.* This is what I will argue with respect to the TV series in the following chapters: their quirky temporalities do not speak to a dismissal of 'real' time but, on the contrary, to a serious engagement with time as an aesthetic, political, and ethical problem.

To construct a more appropriate concept of time, it is however not necessary to reject the technological aspect of moving-image narratives. On the contrary, technological innovations and the techniques of viewing they enable have made a significant contribution to the creation of new and more complex temporal experiences in television series. Such complex temporal experiences are *co-conditioned* (rather than determined) by technological

innovation and upgraded viewing techniques. Before considering the specific affordances of these new technologies and techniques in the following chapter, I would like to dwell a little longer on the notion of conditioning factors in television and to propose, by way of an engagement with the ecological philosophy of Félix Guattari, an understanding of TV as a machinic assemblage.

In *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, Félix Guattari proposes the concept of "machinic heterogenesis" to refute the notion of a stable 'subject' and to suggest that *subjectivity* is *continuously produced* at the intersection of various, heterogeneous components (1995: 33-57). These components constitute a dynamic and "functional ensemble" that Guattari calls a "machinic assemblage" (35). Television can be conceived as such an assemblage if we think of it as the variable interrelations between network systems, digital media, production companies, distribution sites, writing processes, reception practices, politics as well as temporalities. In fact, Guattari does just that:

> To illustrate this mode of production of polyphonic subjectivity, where a complex refrain plays a dominant role, consider the example of televisual consumption. When I watch television, I exist at the intersection: 1. of a perceptual fascination provoked by the screen's luminous animation which borders on the hypnotic, 2. of a captive relation with the narrative content of the program, associated with a lateral awareness of surrounding events (water boiling on the stove, a child's cry, the telephone…), 3. Of a world of fantasms occupying my daydreams. My feeling of personal identity is thus pulled in different directions. How can I maintain a relative sense of unicity, despite the diversity of components of subjectivation that pass through me? It's a question

> of the refrain that fixes me in front of the screen, henceforth constituted as a projective existential node. (Guattari 1995: 16-17)

Following this conception, the components of a machinic assemblage are not discrete units that enable or preclude certain processes as on a switchboard, nor do they affirm or question certain 'subject positions' in a straightforward way. Instead the elements of a machinic assemblage constantly interact in "a process of mutual stimulation that exceeds what they are as a set" (Fuller 2005: 1). What comes into being or, rather, into thinking, then, is a dynamic network of differential relations between the various components. This is the "abstract machine" that animates and differentiates the assemblage of concrete components over time. The differential push-and-pull of the abstract machine at the same time *sustains* the assemblage and *differentiates* it in time. Guattari therefore speaks of an *auto*poietic *hetero*genesis (Guattari 1995: 37). Not incidentally, this way of emphasizing the *collective becoming* of the assemblage is "a fundamentally and radically *temporal* way of looking at the world" (Parikka 2010: 81, emphasis added).[1]

In fact, my conceptualization of television as a machinic assemblage resonates strongly with recent accounts of *media ecologies* such as Matthew Fuller's (2005) or Jussi Parikka's (2010). While it may be puzzling at first to juxtapose two concepts with such different connotations – "machines" indicate their technological foundation while "ecologies" evoke nature –, one of the most interesting aspects of these works consists precisely in questioning the sharp distinction between nature and technology (see e.g. Fuller 2005: 13-55, Parikka 2010: ix-xxxv, 70-72). This means that the different ways of thinking complex assemblages –

1 The inseparability of notions of "machinism" and the temporality of becoming is also evident in D. N. Rodowick's chapter on cinema's "Ethics of Time" (Rodowick 2007: 73-87).

in terms of abstract machines or in terms of ecologies – are not mutually exclusive but, rather, complementary. Thus Parikka's definition of media as ecologies lends further support for my above considerations on machinic assemblages:

> Media can be seen as an assemblage of various forces, from human potential to technological interactions and powers to economic forces at play, experimental aesthetic forces, conceptual philosophical modulations. (Parikka 2010: xxvi)

And indeed, as my argument moves from technics to ethics in the following pages, the 'abstract machine' of television gradually moves into the background to allow a stronger emphasis on 'political' and 'ethical ecologies.'[2] If I begin with Guattari's machine theory nonetheless, it is for two major reasons. First, it allows me to think televisual technics in terms of abstraction, that is, in terms of their *creative potential*. In other words, technics is here defined as the complex of technology (of, say, contemporary TV) *and* the techniques it enables.[3] In a second step, the term, thus defined, helps articulate the ways in which the concrete components of an assemblage collectively effectuate a felt movement of sensation. This is an important point because it brings in abstraction, potential, and sensation without isolating them from concrete matter and assemblages. The purpose of the following chapter, "The Serial Machine," is precisely to articulate this relation between the concrete technologies of TV fiction and its potential for creating innovative techniques and aesthetic movements. I will show how the technology of television (with its new modes of production, distribution, consumption, etc.) has co-evolved with a number of "expressive machines," such as new genres, season formats, episode structures, long-arc narratives, complex temporalities and

2 For the concept of 'political ecology' see Latour 2004 and Bennett 2010.
3 In this, I follow Murphie 2008: 2 and Lamarre 2009: 13. See also Parikka 2010: xxx.

more (Lamarre 2009: xxx). Within this large variety of innovations, I will focus on aesthetic effects related to time and, more specifically, to the future.

Secondly, the concept of the abstract machine allows the continuities and discontinuities, the confluences and differentials within processes of becoming to be addressed in equal measure. For, to use Gerald Raunig's words, machines are as much about "[c]onjunctions, connections, couplings, transitions, concatenations" as they are about "[i]nterruptions, ruptures, refractions, fragmentations" (Raunig 2010: 8, 9). As a brief example, one may consider the genre of the soap opera. The waning popularity of the soap opera is due in part to the fact that it does not connect with digital technologies in the same way other genres and formats do. Soap operas are not segmented into seasons; they are not made for rewatching. For this and other reasons, they never made it to the DVD market. This example, to be considered in more detail in the following chapter, indicates that the productivity of abstract machines is by no means a matter of flow and continuity alone. What I theorize as the serial machine in the following chapter sustains itself by disconnecting from other henceforth minor genres of the serial format. Guattari's machine philosophy allows me to elaborate these entanglements of both enabling and deactivating relations.

These first situating remarks show that a particular concept of time is already at work in the technics of the 'serial machine.' If I subsequently think narrative, politics, and ethics along the same lines, this is not however because my approach is just as determinist as that of current conceptions of 'cinematic' or 'televisual time.' The decisive difference is that, in this project, it is not the apparatus that comes first, but time itself. For if time is thought as the creative self-differentiation of a topological world, then *everything* discussed in this project – from media technics to preemption politics and then on to the control society – must fall

within the purview of this concept. This claim rejoins my earlier contention that, in this thesis, there is no "out of time." We shall see, in fact, that we can let go of the inside/outside distinction altogether and simply say that everything *is* time – *spacetime* – and, more precisely, spacetime in the making.[4]

0.2. *Aesthetics*: Making Time

What does it mean to say that a television series "makes" time and gives it to perception? This is a question that the second chapter pursues from the angle of aesthetics.

In a way, I begin to tackle this problem by showing what I do not mean by "making time," that is, I begin with various *representations* of time. The British television series *Life on Mars* is an interesting show to engage with in this respect because it offers three different representational logics for its story. A present-day police inspector has an accident and, when he comes to, finds himself in 1973. Has he traveled in time, is he in a coma, or is he mad? I will show that each of these premises – time travel, (un)consciousness, and madness – resonates with a specific *concept* of time or an aspect thereof. Interestingly though, the three representations of time in *Life on Mars* are mutually exclusive: if you look at the story through one representational logic, you temporarily cancel out the other two. More importantly even, no single representation can account for what is actually happening. In other words, time is irreducible to any one representation. If one forces it into a representational logic nonetheless, one aspect of it or another is bound to be lost. My point will be that, while *Life on Mars* takes the viewer out of various *representations* of time, it does *not* take her 'out of time.' As the

4 Interestingly, the exact relation between space and time is an issue of contention in the sciences now as it was in 1905 when Einstein introduced the notion of "space-time." This is due to the fact that the central theories in use – general relativity and quantum mechanics – articulate the relation between space and time in very different ways. Recent theoretical investigations tend to consider time and space as "interwoven" and "emergent" (!) rather than universal or fundamental (Ananthaswamy 2013: 37).

various representational logics exclude each other, they undermine an increasingly unstable narrative and foreground its form-*taking*. In this way, *Life on Mars* gives the viewer an experience of how moving images *make* time.

To explain what this means, I will draw on Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema* books. They provide an adequate theoretical foundation for two reasons which can be summed up in the names of the two main reference points of the books: Henri Bergson and Charles S. Peirce. Bergson's theory of duration will be central to my own concept of time as creative becoming; his philosophy is present throughout this project. Given the centrality of Bergson's philosophy in my own thinking, it may be worth noting here two aspects of his thought to which I do *not* subscribe: his strict distinction between space and time [5] and his criticism of the cinematograph.[6] Peirce's theory of *semiotics* resonates well with notions of *creativity* because it does not begin with coded signification or representation (as a Saussure-inspired *sémiologie du cinéma* would). An image – filmic, televisual or otherwise – is not already bound up with a meaning or a *signified* to form a stable, repeatable filmic sign (in the way that the sound/signifier /tree/ is bound up with that little drawing of a tree in Saussure's notorious model of the linguistic sign). Instead "the image *gives rise* to signs" (Deleuze 1986: 69, emphasis added). Via Peirce, Deleuze considers how the available resources (sounds, images,

5 From *Time and Free Will* through to *Duration and Simultaneity*, Bergson has vehemently critiqued the spatialization of time. While I agree with this criticism, I do not adopt Bergson's solution, which consists in 'despatializing' time, so to speak. As indicated above, my own theoretical solution will be to insist on the imbrication of space and time through the notions of *self-differentiation* (of spacetime) and topology.

6 Bergson has famously argued that the cinematograph breaks up 'real movement' into contingent images and inadequately reconstructs it as "an impersonal movement abstract and simple" (Bergson 2007a: 305). In short, it creates 'cinematic time' and movement. In addition to my above-mentioned reservations against the concept of 'cinematic time,' my rejoinder to Bergson's argument consists in emphasizing 1) my focus on perception and experience, and 2) the fact that film, just like television and digital film, does create a *real* continuous movement for the human eye. Given my earlier explanations on machine theory and technics, this discontinuity or heterogeneity between different components of the machinic assemblage (i.e. technology and perception) hardly poses a problem.

etc.) are employed to create meaning, to make sense, potentially differently each time. This is a way of approaching moving-image narratives that does not consist in discrediting representation; rather, it takes a conceptual step back to see *what else* there is and to integrate representation as one way of making sense among many.

What else is there, then? There is sensation. When I speak of sensation, I do not only refer to the sense perception of images and sounds. The relation between audiovisual media and its viewers is far more complex, melting the senses into one another. We see and hear, obviously. But we also have goose bumps, cringe and flinch, gasp and cry. The important point is that, when for instance a horror film or series scares us out of our seat, our reaction does not pass through signification, representation or reflection. The horror film's orchestral stab, often used to do the job, carries its name for a reason: it is a signal that directly hits the senses and produces a visceral reaction. From this vantage, the "spectator is no longer passively receiving optical information, but exists as a bodily being, enmeshed acoustically, senso-motorically, somatically and affectively in the film's visual texture and soundscape" (Elsaesser and Hagener 2010: 10). This, then, is what I mean by *aesthetics*: not the poetic codes of a genre or format, nor the current set of 'narrative devices' in TV fiction, but rather the perceptual dynamics and intensities of sensation specific to a given media ecology.[7] This project explores these dynamics between television series and the viewer, between the medium

7 Such an understanding of aesthetics has the advantage of reminding us of the original Greek meaning of the term, which is 'perception' or 'sensation' ("aesthetic, n. and adj.", *OED*). As the above remark indicate, perception is thought less in terms of distinct sensory channels (visual, auditory, proprioceptive, etc.) than in terms of *amodality*, that is, a fusion of the senses in experience (Massumi 2002a: 169-171). Research on perception in psychology and the neurosciences supports this view: "[The sensorimotor system] has multimodal capacities to receive input from the other modalities (hearing, vision, and touch), which are then integrated with the original sensory and motor functions. Thus there is no need for a 'Cartesian theater' […], a sort of 'third place' (e.g. 'association area') in the brain where the information from the separate modules is replayed and integrated Instead, this integration occurs in the sensorimotor system. […] In any event, a dynamic representation of all stimuli is the primary and fundamental layer of experience" (Stern 2010: 49).

and the body as forms of knowing, as modes of thought. The contention is that television series trigger experiential movements through time which, in turn, bring something to expression that is not thought representationally. (In the TV series I have chosen for this project, these *movements of thought* relate to issues of future-orientation and preemption.)

Given this emphasis on sensation, it may not be surprising that another important source for my aesthetic rethinking of serial television is Deleuze's *Francis Bacon: Logic of Sensation*. As I elaborate in the chapter on "The Serial Machine," Deleuze's notion of the Figural is central to the way in which I conceptualize *figures of time*. The Figural is a concept to think beyond the figura*tive*, to speak of the ways art has of 'capturing forces' and '*directly* relating them to sensation' (Deleuze 2004a: 31). What comes into focus is the *immediate* experience of the medium, not what is represented in or mediated by the image but how the image itself is experienced. Now, this immediate aspect of experience may be fairly easy to grasp in the above-mentioned example of the orchestral hit. But how does one think the visceral sensation of an aesthetic movement that is not as startling and bloodcurdling as the orchestral stab, but that is painted into a still canvas or that slowly unfolds over hours of viewing? In other words, how can one think the direct or immediate without reducing it to the fast and easy? The concept of the figural resists this reduction. Its main advantage, with respect to painting as well as to television series, is that it does not equate direct experience with speed or shock. The figural impact of one of Bacon's paintings can slowly grow on the spectator just as the figural movement of the TV shows considered here slowly builds from the interval that is opened up between the preempted ending and the present moment. This then is why I propose the concept of the '*figure* of time': it allows a serial movement through time to be thought as an abstract shape slowly but directly crafted into sensation.

The concept of the figure, as that which is un-seen and un-heard but abstractly sensed, is not a mere addition to that of the abstract machine: it grows out of it. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari write:

> Everything becomes imperceptible, everything is becoming-imperceptible on the plane of consistency, which is nevertheless precisely where the imperceptible is seen and heard. […] It is the abstract Figure, or rather, since it has no form itself, the abstract Machine of which each concrete assemblage is a multiplicity, a becoming, a segment, a vibration. And the abstract machine is the intersection of them all. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 252)

Here, Deleuze and Guattari replace the notion of the figure as soon as they evoke it with that of the machine because it still smacks of form and figuration. While I agree that the machines and figures must be articulated, I hesitate to make them coincide so quickly. In this project, figures are conceived as the singular aesthetic experiences that "lift off" from a narrative assemblage that is co-conditioned by the innovative serial machine (Massumi 2011a: 19-20 and chapter 4). I use Brian Massumi's expression of the "lift-off" to underscore that I consider the figure of time to be an *effect* of the machinically composed, concrete narrative. To focus on what a moving-image assemblage effectuates is, once again, not to pin down all of its qualities with descriptive accuracy, but to see what it *does*, what it gives to experience. Deleuze and Guattari call this a "functionalist conception" of aesthetics, which "only considers the function a quality fulfills in a specific assemblage, or in passing from one assemblage to another" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 306). This is a way of reformulating the distinction I make between, on the one hand, a *technics* and the concrete moving-image assemblages it produces and, on the other hand, the *aesthetic* experiences they enable.

While chapter 1 traces these connections between the innovative technologies and techniques of TV fiction and the aesthetic experience they facilitate, chapter 2 thinks through *Life on Mars* to explore how the technico-aesthetic opens up toward the political.

0.3. *Politics*: Preemption and Premediation

For these abstract movements of time that I call figures articulate the co-implication of contemporary politics and complex temporalities. More specifically, preemptive narratives, like the politics in this mode, draw their present force from the future.

That the future should still be a resource for political action is not beyond dispute. In fact, thinkers from various fields hold that the future has run its course as a driving force for social progress. In *Régimes d'historicité*, for instance, historian François Hartog suggests that the acceleration of life and the proliferation of crises over the 20th century has produced a new 'order of historicity' that he calls "presentism," that is, the "contemporary experience of a perpetual present" (2003: 28, my translation). According to Hartog, the modernist notion of a continuous social progress towards the future is no longer adequate to the ways in which history can be thought in a globalized, late-capitalist world. Italian activist Franco Berardi proposes a similar line of thought in *After the Future*:

> In the modern era the future was imagined thanks to metaphors of progress. Scientific research and economical entrepreneurship in the centuries of modern development were inspired by the idea that knowledge will lead to an ever more complete mastery of the human universe. The Enlightenment sanctions this conception, and positivism makes of it an absolute belief. […] In the last part of the 20th century these philosophical premises disintegrated. But what has disappeared, more than anything else, is the credibility of a progressive

> model for the future. […] The future becomes a threat when the collective imagination becomes incapable of seeing possible alternatives to trends leading to devastation, increased poverty and violence. This is precisely our current situation, because capitalism has become a system of techno-economic automatisms that politics cannot evade. The paralysis of the will (the impossibility of politics) is the historical context of today's depression epidemic. (Berardi 2011: 58-59)

Berardi holds that the sensory and semiotic overload of media, the acceleration of life, and cognitive labor have paralyzed our contemporary Western societies into a state of depression. While I do not always follow Berardi's (at times downright depressing) argument, his diagnostic has the merit of pointing to the *complex* relation between the present and the future. To say that the future has become a "threat" is far from declaring it obsolete. It is to say that it continues to shape our present as an affective charge.

It is this affective force of the threat as a "present futurity" that the doctrine of preemption harnesses for political ends (Massumi 2007: par. 13). In this and other ways, preemption distinguishes itself from the older future-oriented policies of prevention and deterrence. First of all, the threat it evokes "has not yet emerged"; it "is still indeterminately in potential" as opposed to the actual danger of a nuclear war during the Cold War (par. 13). Preemption is thus always and openly based on a lack of knowledge and factual evidence. It combines an epistemology (lack of knowledge) and an ontology (the mere potentiality of the threat) into what Massumi calls an "operative logic" (2007: par. 4). Secondly and precisely because one cannot know when the potential threat will actualize (when, for instance, the next

terrorist attack will strike), the goal of preemption is not to prevent or deter, but to materialize the indeterminate threat, to bring it about.

> In other words, you go on the offensive to make the enemy emerge from its state of potential and take actual shape. The exercise of your power is *incitatory*. It […] contributes to the actual emergence of the threat. In other words, since the threat is proliferative in any case, your best option is to help *make it proliferate more* – that is, hopefully, more on your own terms. The most effective way to fight an unspecified threat is to actively contribute to *producing* it. (Massumi 2007: par. 16)

A working definition of preemption must include a third component, its *conditional logic*. Since the factual basis for preemptive action is affective in nature, there will never have been any hard evidence to prove the necessity for preemptive action. You must therefore insist that the threat *would have* fully materialized by itself if you *had not* taken measures on time.

Now, one might – justly – object that fear of the future has always been coopted to modulate the domains of the social and the political. Let's follow this objection and consider the often-cited example of the prophecy of doom. The age-old prophecy may be a useful test case, not least because there are thinkers who hold that we *should* tackle future threats and uncertainties in the same way as Biblical prophecies do (Dupuy 2004: 166-174, 178-182, see below ch. 2). A prophecy consists in predicting a catastrophe in the future so that we can take measures in the present to prevent that catastrophe. This constitutes a fairly simple temporal loop that seems similar to that of preemption. Thus, a major similarity between preemption and prophecy would consist in the fact that both evoke a threat, a *potential* disaster or

calamity.[8] Based on the affective state of fear triggered by the prophecy, its recipients will then take preventive measures. If all goes well, the predicted catastrophe will not happen. Note that, following this logic, a "good" or "efficient" prophecy is one whose predicted catastrophe *never occurs*. In other words, a "good" prophecy will turn out to be false; it falsifies itself as it were (170). Consider this to be not a mere side effect but an integral part of the process: the efficiency of a prophecy of doom *depends* on its capacity to falsify itself. This also means that, if the prophecy is efficient, there won't be any proof that the measures taken actually needed to be taken. In fact, the very lack of proof can be recast as proof that whatever was done must have been appropriate. It is clear why this is possible and unproblematic within a theological view of the world: the Biblical god who imparts the prophecy also stands in as a transcendent guarantor of a truth that cannot be verified in this world. It should also be clear that, in the domain of contemporary politics, this *is* a problem. Unlike prophecy, preemption sanctions virtually *any* kind of concrete action (including war) by means of a hypothetical conditional proposition. Would have, could have (Massumi 2009). And that this should be possible in contemporary global politics is precisely what needs to be explained.

Throughout this project, I will argue that, lacking hard facts and certainty, governments and media draw on "affective facts" to *create* the futures they predict (Masumi 2009). Following Brian Massumi's considerable body of work on preemption politics (2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2012), I contend that the modulation of affective states (apprehension, shock, fear, terror, etc.) is used increasingly often to make social and political actions seem inevitable. It is

8 At this point, the attentive reader may have already reached the conclusion that I will draw in a moment: the epistemology and ontology of religious belief are fundamentally different from those of supposedly rational contemporary politics. While the prophecy may look like an unprovable threat without any ontological basis from an outside perspective, the believer must take it to be a concrete danger. Consequently, seen from within, prophecy seems closer to prevention than preemption.

this kind of modulatory, ontogenetic dynamic that the preemptive TV narratives under discussion trigger and perform. In so doing, they propose fictional models of what Richard Grusin calls *premediation*.

This concept is useful in determining the relation between affect and media. Grusin shows that, after 9/11, American news networks have tapped into the "affectivity of anticipation" to develop "a form of medial pre-emption" (2010: 4, 2). Media no longer only mediate preexisting content. In a globalized and accelerated world characterized by uncertainty and fear, they cover possible future events as much as the past, potentialities as much as actualities. Grusin's stock example is the war in Iraq, which was mediated at least a year before it started: "the mediation of war and its aftermath always preceded the events themselves, […] such real events as war and its aftermath occurred only after they had also been premediated by networked media, by government spokesmen, and by the culture at large" (45). Grusin also states that premediation "is not about getting the future right, but about proliferating multiple remediations of the future both to maintain a low level of fear in the present and to prevent a recurrence of the kind of tremendous media shock that the United States and much of the networked world experienced on 9/11" (4). In the logic of premediation, the main goal of media is not to convey reliable information but to attune the public to a shared affective state and to create the felt necessity for security measures.[9] This is a valuable reminder that the political must not be thought in terms of nation-states and governments alone. The dynamics of preemption make clear that 'Big Politics' cannot be disentangled from the mircopolitical, from individual or shared affect, and that their

9 The notion of affective attunement is Massumi's (2005) who derives it from Daniel Stern's concept of "affect attunement," developed in *The Interpersonal World of the Infant* (1985).

entanglement passes through the media. In this project, the political is understood as just such a complex articulation of the macro and the micro.

In the end, however, my focus on aesthetics, sensation, and affect is also the reason why the term 'premediation' itself rarely makes it into my own writing even though the logic it describes is pervasive in the preemptive TV series I address. It is because preemptive 'figures of time' are *directly* felt, *immediately* sensed, that this project is less interested in what is re- or premediated than in what is "immediated."[10] This is yet another way of saying that I am more interested in the figural than in the figurative. I insist, now and repeatedly throughout this project, that this shift in perspective does not discard narrative in any way; it only looks at it differently. To use Andrew Murphie's expression, it is a "shift away from an interest in representation to *operation*," in this case: away from narrative as representation to *narrative as an operation* (Murphie 2002: 193). The main question I want to answer is not: How do these narratives represent the future? (Though I answer it in passing.) It is: What kinds of aesthetic experience does the narrative loop through the future activate? What kinds of movements – of perception, of thought – does this narrative move enable or foreclose on this side of the screen?

A tentative, general answer would be to say that preemptive narratives create aesthetic experiences that make time felt as a complex and creative process. I have already indicated why I consider such a concept of time to be crucial to an adequate understanding of the *technics* of serial TV fiction and their *aesthetics*. It is equally important for an appropriate

10 I am aware that the term "immediacy" is central to Bolter and Grusin's conception of remediation as well as Grusin's concept of premediation. The crucial point is however that Bolter and Grusin use the term to refer to the immediacy of the mediated content (Bolter & Grusin 1999: 5-6, Grusin 2010: 2) whereas I use the term to refer to the immediate experience of the medium itself. I will return to this divergence in the conclusion (see below, p. 183).

understanding of the *politics* in question. Most theoretical discourses on the experience of time in modernity have foregrounded the aspect of speed and acceleration. Since Alvin Toffler's seminal work from 1970, the notion of the "future shock" has been associated with the loss of permanence produced by "the roaring current of change" (Toffler 1970: 3). However, the problem of change, that is, time and the future is largely reduced to the "accelerative thrust" in sociocultural processes and the general lack of "adaptivity" among the population (4 passim). In the recent *Futurism of the Instant*, Paul Virilio continues to argue that the extreme acceleration of life through information and communication technologies has contracted our experience of time to an "omnipresent instant"; it has 'exhausted chronodiversity' and produced the "atemporeity" of experience or "hygiene of Time" (2010: 71, 72, 102). The difficulties these terms pose are the same as in the case of the notion of "atemporal cinema." Though I agree with many of Virilio's observations, his rather dark view and the concepts that grow out of it evoke a lack of experiential complexity that is belied by the processes of contemporary politics. If anything, contemporary politics (and serial narratives, for that matter) operate in more complex ways than ever before. That is to say, they are fundamentally nonlinear and co-causal processes (Massumi 2005: 35). In sum, when I engage a number of preemptive narratives in the following chapters, it is also to argue that, in the geopolitical situation of the twenty-first century, sociocultural and sociopolitical processes do not only speak to acceleration and instantaneity but, more importantly and worryingly, to shocks induced by means of recursive loops, nonlinear causalities, and complex modulations.[11]

11 I discuss Virilio's work and what I consider to be its conceptual limitations in chapter 3.

0.4. *Ethics*: Surviving Complexity

In chapter 4, I will address these changed social conditions using Deleuze's concept of the "control society" (1995: 169-182). In an interview with Toni Negri, Deleuze states:

> We're definitely moving toward "control" societies that are no longer exactly disciplinary. Foucault's often taken as the theorist of disciplinary societies and of their principal technology, *confinement* (not just in hospitals and prisons, but in schools, factories, and barracks). But he was actually one of the first to say that we're moving away from disciplinary societies, we've already left them behind. We're moving toward control societies that no longer operate by confining people but through continuous control and instant communication. (Deleuze 1995: 174)

Within a social context of control, individuals can no longer assure success by fulfilling norms or following codes. While the disciplinary society imposes a "mold" or form that individuals can *con*form to, the control society continuously modulates or *de*forms its requirements. "[C]ontrols are a modulation, like a self-transmuting molding continually changing from one moment to the next, or like a sieve whose mesh varies from one point to another" (178-179). Among the many examples Deleuze gives,[12] his comparison of the work environments of the 'factory' and the 'business' may help illustrate the shift from discipline to control:

> Factories formed individuals into a body of men for the joint convenience of a management that could monitor each component in this mass, and trade unions

12 Other useful examples include the decoupling of *currencies* from the gold standard to variable exchange rates and the establishment of new *sports* like surfing that no longer require the individual to execute a prescribed sequence of specific movements as in, say, gymnastics, but to continuously adapt to a changed environment for no two waves are the same (Deleuze 1995: 180). The conceptual persona of the surfer will return in chapters 3 and 4.

> that could mobilize mass resistance; but businesses are constantly introducing an inexorable rivalry presented as healthy competition, a wonderful motivation that sets individuals against one another and sets itself up in each of them, dividing each within himself. (Deleuze 1995: 179)

What this means first and foremost is that there has been a *qualitative* change in what is required of the individual. In chapter 4, I will formulate this change as one from moral to ethical requirements. Drawing on the second chapter of Deleuze's *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* ("On the Difference between *The Ethics* and a Morality," 1988b: 17-29), I characterize morality as a 'system of judgment' based on a preexisting set of transcendent and immutable values (23), whereas an ethics considers the continuous "composition and decomposition of relations" within a given environment (19). In a dynamic field of relations, the requirement is to adapt one's capacities [*puissances*] to affect and to be affected in such a way as to create (mutually) sustainable relations (27). This creates two major differences between a morality and an ethics: 1) the constraints of an ethics are not immutable, transcendent values but variable, immanent criteria, and 2) an ethical practice does not produce judgments but continuous *experimentation* (40).

In this view, experimentation within a relational field is inevitably an *ecological* practice, leading to an "ecology of practices" (Stengers 2010: 37 passim). The first thing Stengers has to say about an ecology of practices is, once again, that it creates its own values. These immanent criteria are invented as various, heterogeneous beings pose the specific "question of what counts for its mode of life" (ibid.). From this angle, an ecology is the varying and therefore always only metastable constellation of various modes of life that overlap and intersect in such a way as to tentatively recreate their metastable commingling for

the next now. A key requirement in this respect is *attention*, which will be one of the main concerns of chapter 4: to take one's place in an ecology is to be aware of the multiple and entangled forces that sustain it. However, attention will not do the job by itself. It must facilitate the invention of *techniques*, understood as concrete practices, however molecular they may be, that get potential going. To form an ecology, techniques must come together in a mutually sustaining, re-potentializing way. The term I reserve in chapter 4 for such functional ecologies of techniques is that of the *procedure*. Drawing on the work of artist-philosophers Madeline Gins and Arakawa, I understand procedures as "[p]rocesses linked, no matter how briefly, to awareness" and "stage[d]" by a concrete assemblage of constraining elements (materials, textures, perspectives, techniques, etc.) (Gins and Arakawa 2002: 53). Evidently, the procedures of interest within this project are the televisual figures of time 'staged' or effectuated by concrete narrative assemblages.

But why amend the concept of the figure with that of the procedure, and especially this late in the process? First, Gins and Arakawa's emphasis on building-for-procedures underscores that the aesthetic experience cannot be separated out from its concrete narrative assemblage. This is in a way the reverse of what I have argued so far. Until now, I have stressed that there is more to a TV show than narrative structure and concrete images, that there are imperceptible but directly felt movements through time. What Gins and Arakawa stress is that this more-than, to be accessed or "entered wittingly" (53), must be carefully composed for. One must rigorously compose with concrete "features and elements" and give them "physical shape" to effectuate a procedure (Gins and Arakawa 2006: 115). So in the end, the *ethical* question is this: how does one build for a procedure? How does one compose for a lift-off? How does one combine concrete techniques to form a sustainable ecology? To

propose an answer, I will engage the legal thriller *Damages* as an example of how a set of techniques comes together to sustain a procedure: the narrative rigorously composes with three specific visual and narrative techniques to create a singular sensation of time.

This indicates a second advantage of the concept for thinking an ethics of time. When I oppose morality and ethics, this is by no means to suggest that an ethical practice is 'nicer' or 'easier' to do. When I oppose discipline and control, I do not mean to say that one is more or less sufferable than the other. The main point is that the *requirements* change. The requirements of the control society are perhaps less strict than those of the disciplinary society but, for that very reason, they are more demanding for they ask of individuals that they continuously attend to ever-changing relations in their shared environment. The concept of procedure includes these aspects of attention, co-composition and movement as requirements for aesthetic as well as political participation.

Third, procedures are reminders that any engagement with a surrounding ecology (be it technological, aesthetic, political, etc.) should work towards a productive and sustainable continuation of its process. It may be suitable for an introduction to say that this includes the ways in which academic thought engages contemporary television series. This project does not provide an objective outsider's perspective to produce positive knowledge. Rather, this thesis enters into an ecology of (academic) thinking and (creative) doing. That is why, for instance, the final chapter of this thesis does not end in a conclusion, but in an invitation. The last word is a first step towards renewed action: a set of propositions to inflect our modes of attending within the media ecology of serial TV fiction.

Lastly, this focus on productivity begs the realization that procedures, like most other concepts at work here, are for *speculative* thinking and *experimental* doing. One cannot know

what a procedure will end up doing, where it will move thought. This means that, although these concepts – machines, figures, ecologies, procedures – are built for nonlinear processes of composition, they are not caught in some kind of hermeneutic circle. What can come to be known does not preexist. These concepts relate to each other in their own functional complex, their own ecology. They will be introduced strategically – *procedurally* – to create a new way of sensing time in narrative.

1. The Serial Machine: Towards Figures of Time

1.1. The Machine at Work

What stands out, still, after more than 2000 minutes of *Damages* is the opening sequence of thirty-five seconds (screenshots 1-18):

A solemn symphonic score sets in on a black screen, each musical phrase measured by the single ring of a triangle. The scene opens to a crisp Manhattan morning, the grainy image washed in a hue of pale yellow. Pedestrians cross the street, walking backwards. Cut to a cab waiting at a red light. Enter smoke – wafting in reverse: instead of billowing from its source into an extended haze, it concentrates and intensifies into a dense fog returning to where it came from. Follows a shot of the star-spangled banner waving backwards in time. Then more smoke gathering in front of a grid of scaffolding (scr. 6-11). Cut to the entrance of an apartment building (scr. 12). A biker passes by, driving *forward*. Time has changed directions. Then stillness, movement seems to have left the image. And silence almost: the score fades out into an eerie, vibrating hum. After an interval of two or three seconds measured by the triangle, cut closer to the same building entrance. Stillness again. The triangle rings: cut to a closed elevator door. There is no motion in the image yet but the ring of the triangle, which is now the

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bell of the elevator, signals imminent action. "Something's doing" behind the image.[13] Eventually, the elevator door opens. Adjust focus. There she is: A young woman, covered in blood, shivering, fleeing from the building we have only just entered. Follow her.

Or: rewind. Go back. (Because you *can*.) What has just happened? Certainly, this opening scene establishes the setting for the story. It sets a certain mood. Its slowness creates suspense. The very absence of human action in an urban setting suggests that something is astir. However, while there is no *human* action in this opening scene, there is movement everywhere: movement *in* and *of* the image. What is at stake here from the very beginning is a set of linkages between the various (abstract and concrete) components of the image: time, perception, and media technology. These connections can be traced individually.

Consider the smoke. Or any kind of foggy, gaseous accumulation. Such mist is at no two moments identical to itself. In this sequence as anywhere else, smoke continuously differs in shape, density, and opacity. Moreover, it blurs the contours of the environment it fills. Mist "betrays, completely

13 Massumi 2011a: 1.

fills the environment with potential things" (Serres 2008: 70). Here, it covers and uncovers the orderly scaffolding, makes visible and invisible. For Michel Serres, this is how "mist disturbs ontology" (70). What it foregrounds instead is onto*genesis*, becoming. The smoke in *Damages* is a first rendering of time. It figures the continuous differentiation which lies at the heart of a concept of duration: "duration is *what differs from itself*" (Deleuze 2004b: 37). If there is creation and novelty in the world, this is not only because things change *in* time but first and foremost because time itself "is invention or it is nothing at all (Bergson 2007: 341). The smoke in *Damages* confirms this: there is no pre-composed body here that moves through a determinable sequence of poses. Rather, mist is generative of itself at every instant of its becoming. It is a topological figure: drawing on its potential for variation, it creates its next now by folding forth into the world. This smoky figure connects with another element of the imagescape, the grid of scaffolding. The two contrast in many ways: The grid of scaffolding is a stable, regular construct of horizontals and verticals intersecting at right angles. As a support structure, it literally allows for construction. It is order for the purpose of efficient action. But, *lacking* human action, it is also where nothing happens in these images. Smoke, as

we have seen, is quite the opposite: it continuously self-differentiates. Its very instability allows it to happen to the orderly grid. Blurry as they are, mists edge into the world, spill over contours, and consume color. But, while blurring ontology, mists do not undo it. What we get with the fuzzy texture of fog is a sense of topology, of "becoming-with" our environment as we move through it.[14] Self-variation according to one's own potentials and in relation with the world: duration. That is the importance of the first performer in *Damages*, smoke. Its frayed hues of pale yellow give us a sense of time as creative becoming that is first of all relational and nonhuman. 'Nonhuman' because it goes beyond the human without excluding it, because it introduces the human to a world that is already becoming. In this way, *Damages* sets a first challenge to conventional notions of time.

In another linkage, this first experience of time in *Damages* is immediately captured by the temporal order of reverse motion. The simplicity of this technique should not belie its experiential complexity for a reverse sequence is not simply the mirror image of the original sequence. Smoke wafting backward is not the mere "opposite" or "inversion" of smoke wafting forward; it is *qualitatively* different.[15] The eerie, forceful beauty of *Damages*'s opening scene suggests an unnatural control over time as the sequence reverses the irreversible, as it captures the smoke and contains its spillage. Note that this process of containment is different from the first linkage between smoke and grid: the movement of the smoke *within* the image is captured by the movement *of* the image itself. The technique gets hold of becoming and, in so doing, foregrounds the technological mechanism by which television articulates time: the regular (but reversible) succession of contingent frames. This does not mean that we

14 Erin Manning develops the notion of becoming-with in a piece on Étienne-Jules Marey's chronophotographies (Manning 2009: 95).

15 In an elegant essay, Maya Deren suggests that reverse motion "does not convey so much a sense of a backward movement spatially, but rather an undoing of time" (Deren 1960: 158).

consciously *see* the superposition of frames in time, let alone that the experience of time in audiovisual narrative is necessarily "unnatural." The important aspect here is that *technique* calls upon *technology* to feed into an experience of time. This inevitable coupling of technique and technology is a "technics" (Murphie 2008: 2, Lamarre 2009: 13). What this technics achieves in the present case is to make *felt* the quality of technology, to make it an integral part of the experience of time that the sequence gives. This feltness or "qualitative experience of technology" is the sequence's "technicity" (Lamarre 2009: xxiii). The second linkage then suggests that television as a technics can powerfully, yet effortlessly and beautifully get a hold on duration. It can homogenize, linearize, and manipulate time. The concept that enables this process is one of chronological, metric, scientific time.[16] It is profoundly human. Thus, while the smoke conveys a sense of becoming in nonhuman terms and places the human *within* it, reverse motion complicates this movement by manipulating it from without. This sequence is a preview of one of the main concerns in *Damages* as well as the other TV series discussed in this project: the technics of manipulating perceptions of time.

But, on yet another level, this technical capture is also a resistance. Third linkage: *Damages* is a television series that starts by going backwards. It swims against television's current. Or better yet: it wants to get out of the current, get rid of it. This current has been famously described by Raymond Williams as television's "flow" (Williams 2003: 77-120). This term designates the various and interwoven "series of timed units" that obliterate the unit as such (88). These series include 1) the programs to be broadcast, 2) commercial breaks, and

16 The conceptual distinction between metric and topological time will be fully developed in the following chapter. It is inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between the smooth and the striated (Deleuze/Guattari 1987: 474-500). They associate the striated with the metric and the smooth with the "vectorial, projective, topological" (361-362). While Deleuze and Guattari develop these concepts mostly with respect to spatial configurations, it becomes clear that topological space must be thought as a dynamic *spacetime*.

3) trailers advertising subsequent programs. Williams rightly observes that the time interval for commercial breaks and trailers at the same time *interrupts* the individual program and *connects* one program to others. Ultimately, the effect of this broadcasting technics is to relegate the continuity of individual programs to the background and to foreground continuity at another level, that of a program *sequence* as "planned flow" (86). Insisting on its never-ending present-ness, network television pulls the viewer into an anesthetizing current of indeterminate and self-obliterating contents. "Television thrives on its own forgettability" (Doane 1990: 226). Television's flow, Williams concludes, is "perhaps the defining characteristic of broadcasting, simultaneously as a technology and as a cultural form," that is, as a technics (Williams 2003: 86).

Perhaps this is no longer the case. If one of *Damages*'s main concerns is to decompose metric time, the opening scene of the show signals that this project is also one of breaking out of television's broadcasting flow. Instead of flowing carelessly ahead, each coming frame in this reverse-motion sequence folds back on its own immediate past. The image does not distend and wear out time into a shallow, "steady and continuous" flow (Doane 1990: 223). As a technique in this sequence, reverse motion folds the moving image back on itself, it creases time and makes it dense, intense. When the image cuts to the entrance/elevator shots, time almost seems to halt. Almost, because the passage of time is still felt through the jitter of the grainy image and the ring of the triangle/elevator bell. Each toll of the bell signals the completion of an interval of time that seems to be devoid of action. But as we hear the extremities of intervals and the lack of efficient action, we also sense the grainy rustle of the image. The richness of these shots lies in their foregrounding of the duration between

measured points of time. What is *felt* is the quality of time as it slows down without thinning out. Here, time is felt as both extensive and intensive at the same time.

This opening sequence speaks to the new potentials of fictional television for going beyond plot-driven narrative, technology as a mere material support, and flow as a mode of indifferent consumption. Over the last twenty years or so, television has fundamentally changed both "as a technology and as a social practice," to use Williams' phrase. As a technology, television no longer passes through the TV set exclusively: it has incorporated recording devices like VCR, DVD and, more recently, video-on-demand (VOD) platforms such as Hulu or Netflix; it has gone online to official homepages, episode guides, fan forums, smartphone applications, and social media (Lotz 2007, Murphy 2011). As a social practice, the television experience is no longer confined to a sequential flow of broadcasting (Uricchio 2004). Experiencing television henceforth passes through practices of rewatching, blogging, tweeting, gaming, rating, speculating, and many more (Gillan 2011). Part and parcel of what I call the serial machine, these practices are also techniques for resingularizing individual programs. Six years after its first airing, the opening sequence of *Damages* is *not* forgotten because digital archives create the possibility for qualitatively different ways of watching and studying TV. Finally, the numerous shifts in serial production have produced a remarkable variety of narrative temporalities: speeds and slownesses, extensions and intensions, loops, intervals, anachronisms and so forth.

It is not evident how these changes and their relatedness might best be addressed. Returning to the example of *Damages*'s opening scene, so far we have three linkages which make for three potentially contradictory arguments on time depending on which components

of the experience one pulls out: 1. The smoke that veils the grid and renders duration supplanting metric time. 2. The technique of reverse motion which captures the smoke and conveys the opposite: "cinematic time" containing duration (Doane 2002). 3. The technics of this sequence which resist television's flow as a "social form" or practice. While all of these arguments address one aspect of *Damages*'s opening sequence, none of them can sufficiently describe these thirty-five seconds of felt time. The reason is that none of experience's components – image content, technique, technology, social practice – can be separated out without reducing the complexity of experience. Nor can this complexity be grasped by a single conceptual pair. As we have seen, the terms of apparent oppositions – grid/smoke, human/nonhuman, technique/technology, technology/social practice, percept/concept, etc. – overlap and fold into each other to create a singular sensation of time. What opposes in thought composes in experience. Therefore, rather than as stand-alone oppositions, it may be more useful to think these pairs as functional linkages which are themselves connected among each other. These interconnected linkages create a dynamic constellation whose effects are transversal to the neatly separable, structural levels of, say, "content," "discursive articulation," "material support," "social relations," etc. Felix Guattari calls such a productive ensemble of heterogeneous components a "machinic assemblage" (Guattari 1995: 35). The opening sequence of *Damages* creates just such an assemblage in a very conspicuous way, imbricating various temporalities into one another.

What I'm interested in throughout this project are the experiential effects, the sensations of time composed by the assemblages of serial narratives. *Damages*'s opening sequence holds such a sensation of time, if only in germ. Time is experienced as a heterogeneous movement of creation, inflected by a variety of processes feeding into one

another. My main point for now is that this effect is not a representation of time. It is what I call a "figure of time."

1.2. Figures of Time

Whenever I speak of "figures" in these pages, I use the term as a derivation from Deleuze's concept of the *figural* (2004a: 5-38). In *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze conceives the figural as a way of going beyond the "figurative, illustrative, and narrative character" of art (6). Going beyond is not the same as leaving behind: working *toward* the figural is to work *with* the figurative. In this sense, the figure 'extracts' from the figurative (6, 10). This extracted figure is abstractly lived.

After this clear exposition, Deleuze seems to be provocative (not wrong) when he says later on that, in art, "it is not a matter of reproducing or inventing forms, but of capturing forces. For this reason no art is figurative" (48). Why this denial when figuration has previously been proposed as the ground from which the figure extracts? Where does Deleuze want to push thought? In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari write:

> No art is imitative, no art can be imitative or figurative. Suppose a painter 'represents' a bird; this is in fact a becoming-bird that can occur only to the extent that the bird itself is in the process of becoming something else, a pure line and pure color. Thus imitation self-destructs, since the imitator unknowingly enters into a becoming that conjugates with the unknowing becoming of that which he or she imitates. One imitates only if one fails, when one fails. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 304-5)

I take this to mean that before art represents and signifies (say, a fictional world), it operates as a productive force in this world. Art co-creates a relational field in which materials, colors,

textures, painters, spectators, birds, etc. co-evolve and invent what each becomes. This notion of art as a creative force in the world is a major consistency in the thinking of Deleuze and Guattari: in his own writing, Guattari suggests that, if we think of moving images as part of a machinic assemblage, then "[w]e are not in the presence of a passively representative image, but of a vector of subjectivation. We are actually confronted by a non-discursive, pathic knowledge" (Guattari 1995: 25). Such knowledge is not pre-constituted and contained in narrative; it is first of all produced in the encounter, the 'confrontation' with the image. It is this pathic or embodied mode of thought that the concept of the figure pushes us towards. The figure is a wager for thinking through the body, through sensation.

In the present context, this means that there is more to narrative than story, representation, and content. If Deleuze and Guattari repeatedly deny the figurative aspect of art, it is because they write at a time when structuralist theories and 'narratology' in particular reduce narrative to the double articulation of *discourse* and *story*. They provokingly refute figuration and mediation to challenge these theories and draw our attention to the "more-than" of art, the immediate sensation of the encounter with art.[17] Art, including narrative, as a lived experience. This, then, is what I attempt to grasp through the concept of the figure, defined as "the sensible form related to a sensation" without "the intermediary of the brain" (Deleuze 2004a: 31). The figure is a narrative movement *directly* felt before reflection and without signification. It is the viscerally felt gesture of a work's relational form-taking. As such, it emerges eventfully and does not express anything but itself. It is asignifying.[18]

17 I take the notion of the more-than from Erin Manning, who develops it in the context of machinic assemblages (2009: 10).

18 This is a major resonance with Lyotard's conceptualization of the figural in language: for him, the figural is a way of thinking beyond representation and signification in a time when structuralist conceptions of discourse tend to reduce language to codified signification. This "oversight with regard to the sensory," Lyotard argues,

That the figure is "directly" or "viscerally" felt means that it falls under the purview of affect. To grasp this qualification of the concept, it is helpful to distinguish between affect and emotion. Think of an emotion as "conscious, qualified, and meaningful, a 'content' that can be attributed to an already-constituted subject" (Shaviro 2010: 3). As an immediate affective force, the figure resists conscious reflection within a fully-formed subject and aims at transformative sensory effects. Remember that, before being conscious subjects, we are sensing bodies in an environment sustained by a multiplicity of human and nonhuman forces. The concept of affect is a proposition to think these complex relations as productive of what we tend to perceive as pre-constituted subjects and objects. "Affect is of the milieu: it […] activates the very connectibility of experience. It is the force, the lure, through which a certain constellation comes to expression" (Manning 2013: 26). Emotion, then, is codified affect, captured by consciousness; it is affect become. Affect itself is always becoming, ontogenetic (Massumi 2002a: 27-28). The term of the 'figure' addresses this relational coming-together of affective forces to compose an aesthetic experience.

Indeed, the opening sequence of *Damages* shows that a figure of time is not just a collection of devices or qualities. Pale yellow hue, grainy texture, vibrant sound, and aberrant movement come together not as a collection of distinct formal traits but as intersecting "force[s] of form": besides being what they are, these elements are also generative of a singular aesthetic experience (Manning 2009: 102 passim, 2013: 23 passim). What counts, then, are not the discrete elements as such but how they co-compose as an "operative" or

produces a "flattening" of perception in thought that simply does not correspond to the "thickness" of a text in lived experience (Lyotard 2011: 6, 4, 5). Lyotard calls this thickness an "absolute excess of sense" over signification and representation that creates a "zone of eventness" (6, translation modified, and 130). When David Rodowick later rephrases that the "figural is unrepresentable, beneath or behind representation," this is another way of addressing the more-than of language (Rodowick 2001: 8).

"relational field" (Deleuze 2004a: 6, Massumi 2011a: 143). What counts are the relations between elements, the differentials between, say, foggy billows and reverse motion, the fixed image and the dynamic grain, the metric triangle and the resonating hum. These relations are differentials because their terms don't actually connect: triangle and hum remain two separate components of the sequence; camera movement and grain remain distinguishable. Differentially co-composing, these components "come into effect *in excess* over themselves" (Massumi 2011a: 20, emphasis added). The "excess" mentioned here is the more-than, the figure of time that lifts off from the machinic assemblage. The shifting map of forces that animates the assemblage, the relational field of creative activity, is what Deleuze calls a diagram. "The diagram is thus the *operative set of asignifying and nonrepresentative* lines and zones, line-strokes and color-patches" (Deleuze 2004a: 82, emphasis added). "It never functions in order to represent a persisting world but produces a new kind of reality, a new model of truth" (Deleuze 2006: 30). In other words, this concept gives a name to the ontogenetic force of becoming activated by and feeding back into the assemblage. "It is an abstract machine" that effectuates a figure of time (30).

In sum, then, and in preparation of what's to follow, we can say that the abstract machine of serial TV fiction connects heterogeneous elements in a functional ensemble or assemblage. This assemblage sustains a relational force field that diagrams figures of time into existence.

In light of the above, the figure appears as fundamentally temporal. It grows out of the image's movement of shapes, colors, textures, sounds, and cuts; out of the sustained relation between the imagescape and sensation. For Andrey Tarkovsky, the sensed "more-than" of the image is essentially time itself:

> How does time make itself felt in a shot? It becomes tangible when you sense something significant, truthful, going on *beyond the events on the screen*; when you realise, quite consciously, that what you see in the frame is not limited to its visual depiction, but is a pointer to something stretching out beyond the frame and to infinity; a pointer to life. (Tarkovsky 1987: 116-117, emphasis added)

This sensation of time is not a punctuated experience but courses through an entire film. In this sense, the figural movement is a matter of a work's "consistency" that must be carefully crafted and honed in the processes of filming and editing (117). Through this rigorous process of composition, the work gains the potential to create "a new awareness of the existence of […] time, emerging as a result of the intervals, of what is cut out, carved off in the process" (119). Tarkovsky calls this process "sculpting in time" (63, 121). I find this notion helpful in conceiving 'figures of time' because it foregrounds the *plasticity* of becoming.[19] Consider once more the opening sequence of *Damages*: the foggy and grainy textures, the measured tolls of the bell and the vibrant hum as well as the aberrant movement of the image are ways of sculpting a figure into feeling. Think of it as the abstract shape of rhythmic movement, precariously sustained by a set of concrete techniques.[20] The examples of such topological shapes from the following chapters include 'loops' and 'thickets' of timelines. Despite this

19 David Rodowick agrees that "one of the deepest and most profound potentialities of the figural" can be found in the "direct image of time" or what Deleuze calls the 'time-image' (2001: 200). Most recently, Luc Vancheri describes the figural as "an image event whose principles are movement and time" (2011: 10, my translation).

20 Daniel Stern speaks of "temporal feeling shapes" and, more recently, of "forms of vitality": "The dynamic forms of vitality […] are psychological, subjective phenomena that emerge from the encounter with dynamic events. […] They are not motivational states. They are not pure perceptions. They are not sensation in the strict sense, as they have no modality. They are not direct cognitions in any usual sense. They are not acts, as they have no goal sate and no specific means. They fall in between all the cracks. They are the felt experience of force – in movement – with a temporal contour, and a sense of aliveness, of going somewhere" (Stern 2010: 7-8, and 17 for the reference to "temporal feeling shapes").

variety in figural renderings of time, there is a quality of time that courses through the imagescapes of *Damages*, *Flashforward*, and *Life on Mars* alike, which is that of preemption, the creation of life looped through the future.

Here we get a first glimpse of how the conceptual prism of the figural can shed light on the questions of the political. In its own way, contemporary politics has made the move from the figurative to the figural: preemption resists the representation of a *given* situation and produces a new reality by inducing affective charges. The doctrine of preemption draws on the creative forces of becoming, knowing that time "put[s] the notion of truth into crisis" (Deleuze 1989: 130). Not a particular truth, but the very *notion* of truth. This is because, considered dynamically, truth can no longer be conceived as preexisting, waiting to be discovered and mediated. Just like time can no longer be thought of as uniform and empty, just waiting to be filled. Truths and times are created in a continuous process of composition. This proposition may be frightening if one thinks of 'created' truths as fabricated or faked. In the case of preemption, it certainly is. But to think in terms of 'fabrication' is to hold on to the idea of a real, incontestable truth unless one acknowledges that *all* existence is thus 'machined' into existence, that the truth is always a matter of falsification (126-155, see below ch. 2). On a more constructive note, then, the concept of the figure is a proposition to consider one's share in the production of novelty. It is an invitation to be discontent with available structures and contents, stable and stale. In the context of the present study, it is more specifically a proposition to make time *differently*, to develop techniques that lead off the "beaten time" of modernity (Guattari 1992: 142, my translation). The TV series I engage with are examples of how felt realities can be generated through complex temporal movements.

If the figural has an ethical and political potential, it may be all the more surprising that television – out of all the possible candidates – should be the medium to make the cut. Television, in Chris Marker's words, is usually "deliberately moral," prone to shallowness and judgment (Marker 1994: 83, my translation). This remains true to a considerable extent. And yet Marker, a filmmaker who knows more about time than many others, nowadays "quench[es his] thirst for fiction at its most accomplished source: the splendid American television series" (Marker, Douhaire, and Rivoire 2003, my translation). I contend that a general shift in the 'serial machine' has opened up spaces for ethico-aesthetic projects on television – rare, admittedly, but all the more significant for that. I believe that, while television oftentimes thwarts such attempts, it also allows for differing, intensive modes of perception. In order to enter such modes, one must think across the boundaries between TV content, distribution, consumption, and other seemingly unrelated 'social practices.' If the viewer is ready to place herself right inside such a transversal field of relation, the abstract machine of serial TV can open towards new vectors of subjectivation. If the television series – as media ecology – co-composes collective and individual subjectivities, we need to know what it is capable of. What are the potentials of living with television as many of us do? What kinds of technics does it afford? The figural is also a proposition for watching television differently, *productively*, lest these spaces of potential be prematurely foreclosed, captured by more palatable and profitable modes of TV-making.

This much is clear then: figures of time 'aren't just there' as constituted forms; they *emerge*. They are diagrammatic *effects*. They *extract* from concrete assemblages to be *abstractly lived*. We have also seen that the lift-off of a figure depends on a number of co-composing elements.

"An event of lived abstraction is strictly speaking uncaused. Its taking effect is spontaneous: experiential self-combustion. It is uncaused, but highly conditioned: wholly dependent on the coming-together of its ingredient factors, just so" (Massumi 2011a: 149).[21] I have collected a few of the elements that factor into the opening scene of *Damages*. But this is only a figure in germ, a miniature. I will now fast-zoom out from *Damages*'s miniature figure to the television assemblage as a whole. What follows in the remainder of this chapter is a slow zoom-in to explore how the more general technical conditions of TV enable a figural aesthetic that reaches all the way into the political.

1.3. The Serial Machine

In speaking of a "serial machine", I refer to the diagrammatic relations that animate the heterogeneous, co-composing elements which constitute the concrete assemblage of fictional television series. These elements or components include digital technologies, production standards, post-production, creative workers, distribution channels, viewing habits, and many more, which collectively enable television's *technics*. As such, they co-condition the singular experience of serial fiction on TV. To understand how recent TV series construct their complex temporalities and how these enable the aesthetic experiences explored in this project, it is important to put some of these conditioning factors in place. In so doing, I will also show

21 These remarks allow for yet another conceptual lineage. In *Feeling and Form*, Susanne Langer also addresses the "more-than" of art: "What is 'created' in a work of art? More than people generally realize when they speak of 'being creative,' or refer to the characters in a novel as the author's 'creations.' More than a delightful combination of sensory elements; far more than any reflection or 'interpretation' of objects, people, events" (Langer 1953: 46). She conceives a work of art as an assemblage – which she calls an "arrangement" – that effectuates a "feeling": "A work of art, on the other hand, is more than an ‚arrangement' of given things – even qualitative things. Something emerges from the arrangement of tones or colors, which was not there before, and this, rather than the arranged material, is the symbol of sentience" (40). In this sense, art is a matter of "abstraction" (47). Consequently, what I call a *figure* of time is close to what Langer calls the "abstracted expressive form" or "semblance" of a work of art (Langer 1953: 54, 48 passim). Brian Massumi develops his concept of semblance drawing, among others, on Langer (Massumi 2011a).

that, over the last twenty or so years, the assemblage of serial TV has shifted so significantly as to modify the machinic relations animating it and to allow for qualitatively new kinds of serial storytelling on TV.

That such a shift has actually occurred seems to be certain. In fact, it is by now a commonplace to state we are currently experiencing a new or third "golden age of television." [22] The expression itself is certainly a response to Robert J. Thompson's *Television's Second Golden Age*. For Thompson, this period begins roughly in the early 1980s, with critically acclaimed TV shows such as *Hill Street Blues*. Tracing this development up to *ER*'s enormous success, Thompson never suggests that this second golden age might draw to an end (1996: 19-35). And yet, a mere fifteen years later, both TV makers and scholars seem convinced that there has been so fundamental a change that one should or must speak of yet another golden age, the third one.[23] It seems that Thompson's second golden age had revolved shortly after he suggested its existence. While I have little interest in establishing or correcting such periodizations (because I doubt their heuristic value), I find them interesting in that they speak to an *awareness* of change and an *effort* to come to terms with it. The anxiety to determine what is going on has produced admirable analyses of the industrial, technological,

22 See for instance *FRAME* 2011. The phrase is so conspicuous that television itself mocks it (see the *30 Rock* episode "Operation"). The collective volume Banet-Weiser/Chris/Freitas (eds.) 2007 suggests that cable television has brought us to the "Platinum Age of Television" (vi). For the use of this phrase see also Thompson 1996: 12. Lynn Spigel, in her introduction to the volume *Television after TV*, foregrounds the *uncertainty* of what television is becoming (Spigel and Olson eds. 2004). For an early evaluation of what this development means for TV studies, see Spigel 2005.

23 For this break, consider the two issues of *Cahiers du cinema* dedicated to American television series: No. 581 (2003) entitled "L'âge d'or de la série américaine" covers many of the series from Thompson's "second golden age", whereas no. 658 (2010: "Séries: Une passion américaine") discusses more recent series which would presumably belong to the "third golden age of television." While the earlier issue stresses a *growing* variety of genres and the *flourishing* industry of fictional television (*Cahiers du cinema* 581: 13-14), the more recent issue presents the new aesthetic quality of serial TV fiction as an established fact (see esp. Jean-Philippe Tessé's reference to no. 581 in *Cahiers du cinema* 658: 7).

and aesthetic innovations of TV series (Mittell 2006, Lotz 2007, Booth 2011, *FRAME* 2011).[24] Studies frequently highlight the intersections of these different domains. However, the side effect of such attempts at pinning down television series is that they avoid more complex spillages into and from other domains, such as theories of perception, time and politics. Much available research is aware of this far-side of economic, technological and narrative concerns but keeps it at bay.

Consider the subtle but momentous double edges of the following projects: TV scholar Jason Mittell explores the "nexus" of "historical forces" or "contexts that enabled the emergence of narrative complexity" and supposes that this emergence has "broader cultural implications" (Mittell 2006: 30). In a similar vein, Amanda Lotz insists that television has been "fundamentally redefined" by a "confluence of multiple industrial, technological, and cultural shifts" (2007: 20) and supposes that "[i]deas appearing in multiple shows […] might indicate concerns relevant to the broader society" (2007: 37). More recently, Paul Booth agrees that "many factors influence [the] increase in contemporary temporal complexity" (2011: 371) and intends to explore "the way these complex narratives are symptomatic of larger cultural issues" (2011: 372). While there is a lot to be learned from these writings, the above citations show how this research puts television in a creative deadlock on two sides. On the one hand, it is "redefined" or determined by its various contexts. Thus, when it comes to explaining recent innovations of the medium, television does not count as a "force" itself. Instead of one context among many, it turns into a determinable object, "output." On the other hand, the new formats and complexities of fictional TV series "indicate" or "are symptomatic

24 See Exposito Barea 2011 in for a detailed analysis of *Flashforward* according to Thompson's list of TV's new marks of quality.

of" general concerns of contemporary society, that is, they seem to be a mere means of expressing or representing a pre-existing social reality. (Besides, one hardly ever learns what these social "concerns", cultural "implications" or "issues" might be.) In short, television – though more complex and original than ever – remains oddly sterile. In none of the above-mentioned accounts is television "creative" in the proper sense of the word: the new aesthetic standards of TV series, while beautiful, do not seem to make much of a difference beyond television itself.

Simply said, my contention is that these new standards do make a difference. I suggest that the qualitative shift of television allows for new "ethico-aesthetic" potentials of serial TV fiction (Guattari 1995). These potentials are not merely determined by neighboring "contexts"; rather, television series co-compose with the technological, aesthetic and political vectors of a wider social assemblage. I further propose that one of the main concerns of television (as a creative force) within that assemblage is time. Consequently, as I trace my way through the serial machine and its various potentials, I try to pull out those industrial, technological and aesthetic aspects of the assemblage that have conditioned the emergence of a qualitatively new experience of viewing television. More particularly, I will focus on new potentials for singular experiences of time.

Let's begin with digital technologies. Besides their well-studied direct impacts, these technologies have interesting transversal effects on the functioning of the serial machine. Among the more direct consequences of digital *transmission* technologies certainly count the proliferation of channels and improved aesthetic standards. The number of available channels had first increased in the 1980s following the introduction of analog cable systems. Over the last decade, however, the number of channels that a regular cable subscription will provide is

usually in the three digits. With increasing capacities for digital data transmission, networks have started "multiplexing" their channels which means that a single network transmits several channels that share the same bandwidth. Thus, while networks proliferate in number, they also diversify their contents. This is a considerable change from the golden age of the big networks when very few channels (essentially ABC, CBS, and NBC in the US) were able to reach a maximum number of viewers, that is, they were able to *broad*cast their content to large audiences. By now, this ratio between networks and viewers has practically been inversed: More and more channels have to rely on fewer and fewer viewers per channel. Under these changed conditions, the real problem for networks consists in the fact that viewers respond to a greater variety of channels by being more selective. And even though there may still be idle viewers who aimlessly zip and zap their way through channels, the probability of them getting stuck on any given channel is too small for networks to rely on them in the same way they could at the beginning of network broadcasting.

Consequently, networks have devised strategies to secure viewers, one of which is commonly referred to as *narrowcasting*: instead of producing consensual programs that suit the masses, networks target very specific audiences. During the so-called network era, programs had to be acceptable for the majority and therefore controversial aspects had to be watered down and kept to an unobjectionable minimum.[25] In the "post-network era," political and social controversy is a means of establishing and maintaining a smaller but faithful audience (Turner 2008: 7). A way of doing that is to create a specific, branded identity for a network. Consider the cable service Showtime which airs shows like *Queer As Folk*,

25 For this theory shorthanded "LOP" (Least Objectionable Programming) see Thompson 1996: 38-39 and Lotz 2007: 15.

The L Word, and *Californication*, all known for their explicit sexual content. For a few years, Showtime sported the slogan "No Limits" to indicate that the network provides programs that conventional and consensual broadcast television cannot offer.

Interpretations of this development range from the *fragmentation* and *ghettoization* of audiences to the *diversification* and *democratization* of television programming. My interest is not in such generalizing arguments of media economy but in the potential that the shift from consensual to controversial programming creates for fictional TV series. I submit that this transformation creates a zone of indetermination within television that foregoes the moralizing (i.e. judgmental, determining) tendencies of the medium and allows for singular ethico-aesthetic engagements. So, to say that the serial machine harbors a zone of indetermination is not to say that individual programs are imprecise or messy. Nor does it mean that all television series have reached new levels of aesthetic, ethical and political investment. A smaller audience is not necessarily a 'gated community' and television is not freer or more democratic because it caters to the expectations of various molecular target groups. The notion of resingularization is a way of avoiding such quick judgments. What the confluence of above-mentioned factors produces is first of all a productive vagueness that allows individual programs to break out of ready-made patterns of storytelling and genre typologies that have crystallized into dead, unproductive structures. These first few transformations set off a dynamic in which an over-determined media format is jolted from its gridlock and repotentializes. Resingularization is not redetermination, then. While the latter term describes the possible paralysis of dynamic movements into "structures" or a "system," the former points to the new creative possibilities within the shifted map of TV production.

As another conditioning factor we must add the improved aesthetic standards of television. The digitization of recording, post-production and transmission (in HD) has allowed television to reach aesthetic qualities that were previously reserved to cinema, including image as well as sound standards and more elaborate editing techniques. Amanda Lotz – somewhat misleadingly – calls this "theatrical television" to indicate the aesthetic convergence between television and cinema (2007: 71-77). One of the interesting transversal effects of this convergence concerns the way in which the industries of TV and cinema have plugged into each other. While in earlier decades 'doing television' could be considered a career disaster for creative workers established in the film industry, a considerable number of film actors and directors have committed to TV series in the 2000s. "Human resources" migrate from cinema to television.[26]

In an increasingly competitive mediascape, networks draw on these resources to produce exclusive content. The practice of narrowcasting in concurrence with new aesthetic standards and prominent creative teams has established the "original series" as a common strategy to showcase a network's profile and create a limited but loyal viewership. In fact, these original series oftentimes turn into pure prestige projects which garner critical acclaim and awards (without necessarily being financially profitable through on-air time).[27] This leads to another linkage between distribution and production. Online video-on-demand (VOD)

26 Among the actors who have turned to TV are Glenn Close, Laura Linney, Jeremy Irons, Steve Buscemi, Laura Dern, Anjelica Huston, and Kevin Spacey. As for directors-cum-producers, consider for instance Martin Scorsese's involvement in *Boardwalk Empire* (HBO, 2010-2011) or Steven Spielberg who, in 2011 and 2012 alone, has executive producing credits on three TV shows: *Terra Nova* (Fox, 2011), *The River* (ABC, 2012), *Smash* (NBC, 2012). David Fincher directed the two first episodes of *House of Cards* (Netflix, 2013).

27 Besides the above-mentioned Showtime original series, the best-known examples are probably HBO's signature series *Sex and the City*, *The Sopranos*, and *True Blood*. M. J. Clarke conceptualizes such flagship programs as "tentpole TV series" (Clarke 2013).

services have first been established as sites of distribution: pre-existent content is licensed to platforms like Netflix or Hulu that make it available to their customers via subscription (Murphy 2011: 85-98, 108).[28] More recently, however, VOD services have started producing their own "original series."[29] The case of the TV series *Arrested Development* provides an interesting example: cancelled by its home network FOX in 2006 for low ratings, Netflix has reanimated the critically acclaimed show in May 2013. Thus VOD services turn into sites of production for programs that are not viable on network television.

In tracing these linkages, it is worth noting what the assemblage of television does *not* plug into. VOD services like Netflix (and most subscription-based cable networks) do not produce movies, soap operas, reality TV or documentaries. Priority is clearly given to fictional TV series for a variety of reasons (production cost, audience fidelity, prestige value). This means that a new technology does not connect with all genres and formats in the same way.

1.4. Expressive Machines: The Season

In return, a technological innovation does not necessarily create new aesthetic practices. There has to be a qualitative shift within the assemblage to give rise to new "expressive machines," that is, to new technical modes of expression (Lamarre 2009: xxx). Expressive machines can be sets of molecular techniques specific to one program and its aesthetic project. We will see later that *Damages*, for instance, couples the expressive machines of the flashforward, the close-up, and the plot twist to pursue its specific project. For now, I want to propose that the season is a more general expressive machine that co-conditions the temporal complexities I'm

28 Simone Murray shows from the angle of production how these new distribution channels have already changed media content because they require its "streamability" (Murray 2005).

29 In February 2012, Netflix has released *Lilyhammer*, its first original series, followed by *House of Cards* and *Hemlock Grove* in 2013. In what follows, I will often use Netflix as a benchmark for the potentials of VOD services. The choice is legitimate: as the biggest provider in its field, "Netflix accounts for almost a third of all Internet traffic entering North American homes" on a regular weeknight (Vance 2013).

interested in. Furthermore, I contend that the DVD has functioned as an enabling constraint for a new serial aesthetic.[30] At first, though, I want to follow up on the idea that some technological innovations do not produce a qualitative shift within the serial machine.

Let's briefly consider the VCR. While it has certainly changed audience's understandings of what passes on TV and when it does, it hasn't done much for the aesthetics of television series. The reasons for this are technological in the first place: VHS cassettes have various running times, most commonly between 60 and 240 minutes. This range allows for a number of different uses, among which: 1) private recordings of television programs to be watched at a later time, 2) "Best of" boxes, containing favorite episodes from popular television series, and 3) movies on VHS. Individual recordings are a first step towards 'timeshifting,' that is, the breaking out of the television flow (Lotz 2007: 52).[31] They also allow for private collections. However, these developments take place on the level of the individual and do not spill over into the economic and creative aspects of serial production. While "Best of" VHS boxes do have such an economic effect, they remain miscellaneous collections of relatively disparate episodes. This archiving method is still too loose to generate new modes of storytelling. The real potential of VHS lies in the third of the above-mentioned uses: VHS transformed cinema and the film industry by displacing movies from the theaters to the small screen (Rodowick 2007: 26-28). It created a new outlet for the market and *added* to

30 For the concept of enabling constraint, see Massumi 2011a: 76 and, more recently, Manning 2013: "An enabling constraint is a setting in place of a series of conditions that foster a limiting of the field of experience even while they allows the incipient event to remain open to invention. Another name for structured improvisation, enabling constraints enable precision of technique in an open field of experimentation" (111).

31 For recent accounts of timeshifting, see Lotz 2007: 52 and Uricchio 2010. In the context of media studies, the concept was originally proposed by Sean Cubitt (1991).

the uses of the television set. In this way, VHS became an integral part of the television assemblage in general without creating new expressive machines for the serial machine.

By virtue of its enhanced but still limited memory capacity, the DVD creates the possibility for an *integral archive* of a program. This continuity of archiving immediately produces an internal discontinuity or segmentation. For, in order to be revisited, the archive must come with techniques that lure viewers into new practices of 'rewatching' (Johnson 2006: 166-170, Mittell 2006: 31).[32] Within these developments concerning distribution and reception initially, new modes of production as well as aesthetic concerns have coalesced around the narrative unit of the season. For the season is not only compatible with DVD and favorable to rewatching. More importantly, it has emerged in recent years as an aesthetic complex with interesting potentials for experimentation.

This aesthetic complex remains open to previous and subsequent seasons but it is more than ever conceived as an intact and relatively autonomous whole. This has two temporal effects: on the one hand, seasons acquire a thematic consistency that can set it off from other seasons in remarkable ways. The prime example in this case is probably HBO's *The Wire* (2002-2008), which portrays urban life in Baltimore with a particular focus on the city's drug culture. Each of the show's five seasons focuses on a different aspect of urban life: drug trade (season 1), the seaport system (s. 2), city administration (s. 3), the school system (s. 4), and local news media (s. 5). What emerges over the course of the series besides a continuous story is a complex portrayal of a city's connected sub-systems. On the other hand, there is extension

32 The obvious precursor to more recent practices of rewatching are broadcast *reruns*, which already complicate the aesthetic experience of time as they disconnect narrative from a logic of revelation (Murphy 2011: 96-98, Nelson 1990). However, the conventional rerun has been in decline (Mittell 2010: 94). Unlike Nelson, however, I do not think that an interest in repetition necessarily indicates a compulsion à la *fort/da*. As I will argue below, repetition – both as a narrative device and in rewatching – creates an aesthetic movement that makes time felt as an intensity.

and complication of story-arcs *within* each season. While in earlier decades, stories oftentimes resolved within an episode (think of police procedurals and legal dramas like *Columbo* and *Matlock*), these self-contained episodes have come to be replaced by season-long story arcs (Creeber 2004: 9, Newman 2006, Gillan 2011: 135-144).

Another crucial effect of this dynamic is that seasons get shorter. While the 24-episodes season was the standard model up until the 1990s, many TV series now have seasons that count thirteen episodes. In fact, this format, first used in *The Sopranos* (HBO, 1999-2007), is by now dominant on cable TV shows. While the 13-episode season considerably *constrains* the length of individual narratives, it also *enables* more consistent and rigorous storytelling. TV scholar Sean O'Sullivan goes so far as to describe this format as a "sonnet-season" (2010: 69). Besides the approximation in formal segmentation (13 episodes $\approx$ 14 lines), this season format resembles the sonnet in that is has an equally "clear but flexible shape that both hews to established protocols and breaks those protocols when necessary" (61). In the context of my own research, the most important aesthetic effect of this constraint consists in the activation of intervals, most obviously between episodes and seasons. The pronounced formal segmentation facilitates an interplay between continuities and discontinuities. Gaps take on specific qualities and functions within a season's movement. O'Sullivan's test case, the 13-episode season of *The Sopranos*, provides an interesting example of conjunction-through-disjunction: David Chase, the creator of the Sopranos, strove towards creating 'stand-alone episodes' which could be viewed as self-contained narratives *and* installments of a longer narrative process at the same time. In addition, Chase regroups episodes to form coherent sequences within the more extended season-long arc, like a quartet within a sonnet. As a result, there are multiple rhythms with varying speeds coursing through the narrative at the same time – from the "beats"

of each episode to segments of episodes and on to the "arc" of the entire season – that form a temporal complex. As these rhythms are experienced as "parallels," "contrasts," "interruptions," etc., the season functions as an expressive machine (62): it is a technique around which technological, distributional, and aesthetic conditions coalesce to co-activate their respective and shared potentials. This development is central to the transformation of the serial machine because it has foregrounded temporality as a core aspect of narrative experience: through its multiple internal temporalities, the season "disfigures" linear, metric time and gives rise to the figural movements I explore in the following chapters.[33]

Before I continue to trace this line of potential, I would like to point out that this transformation is not a general, technology-determined development. It is dependent on a number of heterogeneous conditions coming together to produce a qualitative shift *where these conditions are in place*. Other segments of serial production may actually be deactivated. To illustrate this point, I would like to briefly consider the decline of the classic soap opera which, I submit, is partly due to its resistance to the machinic shift I have just described. First, the temporal layout of the soap opera is strongly rooted in the day-to-day rhythm of the working week, which it reproduces, and that of the calendar seasons which it follows in the long run. This results in an overwhelming amount of episodes to be archived, with around to 250 episodes a year. Tied to this temporal matrix, the soap opera lacks a clear notion of the season as a narrative complex. Secondly, the format privileges novelty value over rewatchability. Its stereotypical cliffhanger with a close-up shot of a character meaningfully

33 The notion of de- or disfiguration is central to most conceptions of the figural and will be explored more fully in subsequent chapters (Lyotard 2011: 235-236 passim, Rodowick 2001: 101-106, Vancheri 2011: 20). Deleuze more often uses the terms 'deformation' and 'decomposition.' The important point is that the figurative image is deformed or decomposed only to *recompose* a figure through it (Deleuze 2004a: 48-54).

gazing beyond the frame towards harrowing things to come constantly pushes the story into its next installment with new discoveries. In this constant advance, re-airings (like the weekly 'marathons' on Saturdays or Sundays) mainly serve as an opportunity to catch up for those who missed an episode on its initial broadcast. In any case, returning to an episode from twelve months ago would be like reading last year's newspaper. Accordingly, complete archives of soap operas on DVD do not exist. While "Best of" or "How It All Began" collections are available for exceptionally successful shows such as *The Bold and the Beautiful*, it is significant that, even in those cases, the format does not go beyond archiving models that VHS had already made available. From this perspective, then, the soap opera's specific temporal matrix, its lack of season formats as well as its incompatibility with archiving and rewatching practices are not contingent and coincidental facts. Rather, they are related conditions that can help understand the format's waning popularity over the 1990s and 2000s.

VOD services have not been able to revive the soap opera in important ways despite their ability to archive the immense amount of episodes. In 2012, Netflix included two years of the British soap opera *Coronation Street* in its online library. For lack of an immanent narrative unit, the series was arbitrarily archived by the calendar year (2006 and 2007). It seems then that streamable online archives with enhanced memory capacity manage to collect soap operas and make them rewatchable in a long-term view. However, by virtue of these capacities, the technology can archive soap operas *without* imposing any formal, temporal or otherwise enabling constraints. VOD's ability to bypass these limitations indicates that the *creative* potential of this technology does not lie here.[34] If Netflix produces 13-episode seasons

34 As of June 2013, Netflix has taken *Coronation Street: 2006* and *2007* off its online library. It should also be noted at the end of this digression that, while the soap opera may have lost in popularity as a format, its

for its original series, it *chooses* to do so for reasons that have no longer anything to do with its technology. The *technics* of Netflix's exclusive content is composed from other conditions, among them the DVD.

In short, then, if VHS cannot shift the serial machine because its memory capacity is too limited, VOD cannot do so because its memory capacity is too big. While the former technology is too constraining to be enabling, the latter might be too unrestrained to activate potential. This means that the *aesthetic* impact of different archiving technologies is not proportional to *technological* prowess. Tracing serial archives from VHS to VOD, I do not observe a gradual and continuous process of aesthetic innovation that corresponds to the development of archiving technologies with ever-bigger memory capacity (VHS < DVD < VOD < …). In this lineage, DVD makes a qualitative difference as it co-conditions the formation of the season as an expressive machine and an aesthetic complex.

1.5. Complicated Times

Among the narrative elements that are accentuated by more rigorous season models is the ending. Even as a series integrates contending arcs, rhythms, and discontinuities, the 'season finale' is kept firmly in view as a node for these movements to come together. Especially the long story arcs create heightened expectations for the final episode which hovers at the season's horizon. In some cases, however, the pull of the ending is harnessed as the central driving force of the narrative machine: the ending is posited at the very beginning of the series, the final disaster is preempted before the story even begins.

Go back to screenshot 18 (see above, p. 31). You see Ellen Parsons, the protagonist of

generic characteristics have migrated into prime-time formats. The most recent example, noteworthy for its surprising success, is ABC's *Revenge* (2011-present).

> *Damages*. And you see her at the end of the series of events covered by the first season. *Damages* anticipates Ellen's shivering, blood-smeared body after a final attack and her interrogation by the police (scr. 19) only to cut this moment of foresight by means of a blackscreen and intertitle: "six months earlier" (scr. 20). The scene then opens on Ellen applying for a job in high-stakes litigation (scr. 21). This is, in fact, the fourth and central linkage established in the opening sequence of the series: the ending is looped to the opening as a lead-in to the beginning. The effect is an immediate sense of movement: the foretold ending provides a vector for movement, an endpoint that the narrative is pulled towards from the very outset. This is what all the series I engage with do in one way or another. Like *Damages*, *Flashforward* and *Life on Mars* set a clear reference point in the future at which the season (or the entire series in the case of *Flashforward*) will have to wind up. Last things first! The foretold ending at the same time gives a sense of direction, constrains the narrative's options, and imbues it with futurity. How can we start to think about this anticipation of the ending, its imposition as an inevitability?

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Here is a possible line of thought. In his seminal study *The Sense of an Ending*, Frank Kermode suggests that the urge to predict the outcomes of our actions is an age-old human need to come to terms with life's unbearable provisionality:

> Men, like poets, rush 'into the middest,' *in medias res*, when they are born; they also die *in mediis rebus*, and to make sense of their span they need fictive

> concords with origins and ends, such as give meaning to lives and to poems. The End they imagine will reflect their irreducibly intermediary preoccupations. […] We project ourselves—a small, humble elect, perhaps—past the End, so as to see the structure whole, a thing we cannot do from our spot of time in the middle. (Kermode 2000: 7-8)

Envisioned endings, Kermode suggests, appear to be safe vantage points because they allow us to "look back" at the present *in* the present and to see what it means. This argument may be valid for Kermode's point of departure, the Biblical prophecy and its conservative moral purpose. But the opening scene of *Damages* undoes any sense of certitude and meaning: the foretold ending announces chaos and creates a sensation of instability. While Kermode holds that prediction can *capture* the movement of life in a reassuring way, *Damages* shows that the preempted ending triggers a movement infused with insecurity.

This stoppage of movement in thought is also at work in narrative theories of seriality. For the sake of clarity, I would like to elaborate this point with reference to Umberto Eco's seminal papers on serial narratives (most importantly Eco 1972 and the twice republished Eco 1985/1994/2005). Eco argues that 'serials' rely on recurrent narrative schemes. Each episode or installment of a serial repeats the same scheme with a slight variation in a dynamic that allows for the potential "infinity of the text" (Eco 1994: 96). It is important to note that Eco conceives the relation between the underlying 'scheme' and its many variations as that between an ever-stable structure and its many contingent actualizations, similar to a type/token relation. He concludes that the material *excess* of serial narratives, proliferating episodes and installments as they do, belies their fundamental *stasis*: things constantly happen but nothing ever changes. And this, Eco claims, holds for *all* serial genres in *all* media, from Balzac to

Columbo, without exception. *Structuralisme oblige.* Eco calls this the 'postmodern aesthetics,' which also comes with an injunction for appropriate consumption:

> The real problem is that what is of interest is not so much the single variations as "variability" as a *formal principle*, the fact that one can make variations *to infinity*. […] What must be enjoyed – suggests the postmodern aesthetics – is the fact that a series of possible variations is potentially infinite. (Eco 1994: 96, emphasis added)

Let's take the above-mentioned *Coronation Street* as an example: it has been running in the UK since 1960 and each of its more than 8,000 episodes must tell the story in such a way that it can *in principle* always be continued. True. Writing techniques and narrative devices to do that are certainly in place. But please don't tell me that, if you have been following the "same story" for the past few years, you actually take pleasure in the story's novelty (87 passim). What you can and "must" enjoy about serials is certainly the *variability* of the narrative scheme. If you don't, you are "ingenuous" and "naïve" (96), a "victim" of serial narration (92).

Movement has been captured by the underlying structure. Any objections have been silenced by way of an implied allegation of naivety. Such an argument precludes any interest in the singularity of a given serial narrative or one of its variations because scholarly value is created only when all relevant phenomena have been subsumed under the structural principle. Moreover, Eco's structuralist-descriptive mode of writing glosses over a markedly prescriptive, judgmental, and elitist reasoning. Umberto Eco is what Deleuze and Guattari would call a "State thinker" who tries to contain the potentially infinite variations across a repetitive process, to make sure that it "remain[s] identical to itself across its variations" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 356, 360). He fails to appreciate variation and difference in its own right

because, even though he is fascinated by what he calls "the open work," he needs it to be containable on some level, which is the level of structure, "the place where nothing ever happens" (Massumi 2002a: 27). His focus on narrative structures allows Eco to rationally halt the processual quality of narration and to see the open work as a fixed whole (Kovács 2010). The comfort of the meaningful, structural grid leads to a neglect of the movement that takes off from it, as if there were no fog around the scaffolding (scr. 6-11).

In *Damages*, *Flashforward*, and *Life on Mars*, neither anticipated ending nor serial movement operates in the ways Kermode and Eco suggest. One might argue that, by anticipating its ending, *Damages* creates a vantage point in the future from which the present can draw meaning, that it contains the present's provisionality and reveals its underlying wholeness. But one would still be extricating oneself from the narrative dynamic. The preempted ending does not function as a retrospective viewpoint; it is the activator of a temporal figure coming slowly into sensation. It does not stake out a 'narrative scheme' but is a point of departure for movements of thought that shoot off into very different directions in *Damages*, *Flashforward*, and *Life on Mars*, posing distinct problems and providing singular solutions.[35] Now, if the anticipation of an ending is not the stoppage of movement, what kind of temporal movement does it trigger specifically?

As the foretold ending folds back onto the narrative present, it qualitatively changes it. "The back-formation of a path is not only a 'retrospection.' It is a 'retroduction': a production,

35 Following William James, one might call the preempted ending a "terminus," that is, an experiential quality that makes felt from the beginning what "the concept 'had in mind'" (James 2003: 30-32). See also Manning 2013: "Terminus as that which gets the action underway, as that which in-forms the event without preempting an outcome. Terminus as that which captivates the process and propels a dephasing that results in the nowness of this or that occasion. Terminus as that which activates the distributed relational movement of the event in its concrescence. That which propels a transduction. […] The terminus that activates a procedure does not create a precomposed map, it potentializes the map" (144-145).

by feedback, of new movements. A dynamic unity has been retrospectively captured and qualitatively converted" (Massumi 2002a: 10). In the case of the TV series at hand, two impulses now determine the narrative dynamic. There is on the one hand the episodic unfolding of serial narration that foregrounds the intermittent or provisional quality of the account of events, its "openness of outcome," its resistance to fixed form (Massumi 2011a: 40). On the other hand, there is the foretold ending, which seems to pre-impose a fixed form but actually intervenes in each episode to affect each new present in new ways. The effect of these two seemingly conflicting functions – the openness of serial narration and proleptic preformation of the narrative – is a movement: a continuous loop, narrative and affective, through the future that foregrounds the interval between each present and the future.

In other words, *Damages*, *Flashforward*, and *Life on Mars* loop around a gap in time. Their narratives continuously spiral from future to present, back to the future and from there to the present again, slowly closing in on the time-in-between. This circling between the present and the future is also a tending-toward the interval, an activation of the gap: watching these series, you feel that what matters is precisely the stretch of time that is missing, that which is no longer the present and not yet the future. A no-longer-the-present that is not-yet-the-future is a *future-past*, the interval in which the past and the future fold into each other to creatively become the present.[36] What is *never seen nor heard* in these series but constantly *felt* is this

36 Although he does not use the expression himself, Bergson – prescient as he often is – formulate the future-past in a lucid and beautiful passage of *Mind-Energy*: "To retain what no longer is, to anticipate what as yet is not, these are the primary functions of consciousness. For consciousness, there is no present, if the present be a mathematical instant. An instant is the purely theoretical limit which separates the past from the future. It may, in the strict sense, be conceived, it is never perceived. When we think we have seized hold of it, it is already far away. What we actually perceive is a certain span of duration composed of two parts our immediate past and our imminent future. We lean on the past, we bend forward on the future: leaning and bending forward is the characteristic attitude of a conscious being. Consciousness is then, as it were, the hyphen which joins what has been to what will be, the bridge which spans, the past and the future" (Bergson 1920: 8-9). This passage will be a major reference point for my reflections on *Damages*.

interval of becoming, the "how of experience" (Manning 2009: 54). To feel something that is unseen is to experience an effect that goes beyond mere content and narrative continuity. This beyond is where the figural operates as an immediate sensation of the narrative's form-taking.[37] Time is then no longer represented as a content of narrative but experienced as the force of form. In this way, the affective loop through time invites a shift of emphasis in the experience of narrative from the figurative to the figural: You are invited to let go of a quest for reliable narrative meaning which – as you can imagine – you will only get at the very end of the season. Spend your time predicting what it all *means* and you spoil the experience by pinning the movement to one narrative trajectory. If, instead, you move with the temporal loop and attend to the interval, you are right in the middle of time-in-the-making.

Consider *Damages* once more to illustrate this point. Every episode performs the loop through time: our vision of the future returns in the exact same images. And in every episode, some kind of plot twist compels you to reconsider what you think the future, still the same, actually is. In other words, every time you *see* the future, you have to think the *same* images *differently*. In this movement, you do not only experience the making of *meaning* in time. Perception and thought mingle to make you feel how reality as a whole self-differentiates in the interval of the future-past, to become what it will have been. In other words, the interval of becoming is experienced in the linkage of thinking and feeling.

> We will have to give the gaps between things, and from one moment to the next, their vital, virtual due. It is in those gaps that the reality of the situation is to be

37 Erin Manning develops the notion of form-taking in Manning 2009 to emphasize to processual aspect of coming-to-form (78 passim). This notion is central to my argument on serial narratives, which make felt their own form-taking across intervals in various ways.

> found. If we gloss over them, we are missing the thinking-feeling of what really happens. (Massumi 2011a: 67)

As *Damages* shows, to think-feel the interval of becoming is to unknow the future, to come to know it differently all the time. This is another way of saying that the preempted endings I engage with in this project are not techniques "to see the structure whole" (Kermode 2000: 8). *Damages* does not give us a block of metric time, a narrative trajectory entirely determined from the outset. Rather, the series extracts a "block of sensation": "a compound of percepts and affects" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 164), a complex of sensory and affective forces that give consistency to thought in motion (Manning 2009: 216-217). An affective truth lifts off from narrative unknowing.

1.6. Future Politics

This is of political import for it means that, despite the best forecasting and scenario-planning techniques, our relation to the future is not only one of projective knowledge and rational calculation but also of affective qualities. Consequently, strategies of risk analysis and policies of precaution do not only 'represent' future scenarios, as probable as they may be; they inject affective charges into the present.

Let me note right away that this is not to discredit techniques of prognosticating. The question of the future remains important for it asks, in pragmatic terms, what the outcomes of current geopolitical situations or industrial processes might look like. It is efficient in that it allows us to design strategies for modulating these developments or preventing certain disasters from happening. But there is more than that: there is an excess of efficiency that concerns the immediate present. To get to the bottom of these effects, I propose to *add* a second, no less pragmatic question. This is in fact a *radically empirical* question for it

acknowledges that any kind of future-orientation is still an event in the now and asks in what specific ways a present that lives by a projected future is immediately changed by this temporal loop. How is our perception of Ellen Parson's present (scr. 21) directly inflected by the preview of her disastrous future (scr. 18 and 19)?

Contemporary theory provides numerous accounts of this dynamic. Let's begin to trace one of these lines of thought that I will further pursue in the following chapter and that passes through thinkers like Jean-Pierre Dupuy and Slavoj Žižek. What is interesting about their approaches is that they do analyze the problem of future-orientation as one of uncertainty and fear, but fear as a conscious emotive state and a discursive trope. Consequently, the solutions they propose rely heavily on a rational reorientation – as if one could think away the affective impact of forecasting. Consider Žižek who takes issue with ecological movements because their most important effect is to create an "ecology of fear" (Žižek 2008: 438). He argues that, when environmentalists evoke global warming, nuclear disasters and other natural catastrophes, they fuel an "ecological pessimism" that deactivates people rather than incite them to take action (439). "This ecology of fear has every chance of developing into the predominant form of ideology of global capitalism, a new opium for the masses replacing declining religion" (439). This caveat also prepares Žižek's solution because, being ideological, the above-mentioned "fear and pessimism are as a rule fake" (439). Environmentalists' diffuse anxiety about the coming disaster is in fact a way to *avoid* facing concrete threats of the future. It is first of all a powerful discursive strategy that imposes and sustains a reactionary, conservative politics.

But since, luckily, the ecology of fear is only an ideology, it comes undone once we become aware of it as a false consciousness. We will henceforth be able to look a very specific

future right in the eye (instead of seeing a diffuse blur of fake future fear). Drawing on Jean-Pierre Dupuy's *Pour un catastrophisme éclairé: Quand l'impossible est certain*, Žižek proposes this outlook as a qualitatively different mode of experiencing time:

> Dupuy calls this time the "time of a project," of a closed circuit between the past and the future: the future is causally produced by our acts in the past, while the way we act is determined by our anticipation of the future and our reaction to this anticipation. This, then, is how Dupuy proposes to confront the forthcoming catastrophe: we should first perceive it as our fate, as unavoidable, and then, projecting ourself into it, adopting its standpoint, we should retroactively insert into its past (the past of the future) counterfactual possibilities ("If we had done this and that, the catastrophe we are in now would not have occurred!") upon which we then act today. Therein resides Dupuy's paradoxical formula: we have to accept that, at the level of possibilities, our future is doomed, that the catastrophe will take place, it is our destiny and, then, against the background of this acceptance, we should mobilize ourselves to perform the act which will change destiny itself and thereby insert a new possibility into the past. (Žižek 2008: 459-460)

It seems to me that Žižek's thinking loops back to where it came from. First, his considerable theoretical effort leads to nothing more than the most conventional principles of prevention politics.[38] The only but decisive difference in this "fatalist interpretation" of time is that the catastrophe is for now merely projected, hypothetical (Dupuy 2004: 55). Now, that this might also be called a false or fake disaster does not seem to concern either Žižek or Dupuy: for the

38 Dupuy himself relies heavily on Hans Jonas's *The Imperative of Responsibility*.

former the fiction of a scientific hypothesis is better than fake fear; for the latter it is the only way to deal with the various uncertainties of our times. In this way, the authors unwittingly subscribe to the doctrine of preemption as outlined in the introduction (see above, p. 19): Žižek's hypothetical conditional justifies countermeasures to threats that might never materialize.

However, by far the most surprising aspect of this argument is that the problem of fear seems to have solved itself along the way. But why would this – admittedly *fatalist* – outlook into the future not be frightening? Why should this fear not be harnessed to work in the interest of those who generate it? I'll answer these questions in order. First, the kind of future narrative that Žižek and Dupuy propose bear a striking resemblance to the preemptive narratives I engage with: their loop through the catastrophe opens up the indeterminate interval of the future-past which is the domain of potential and affect. The best rational roadmaps won't seal this gap and contain its ontogenetic force. I therefore do not see a reason why Dupuy's "time of a project" would not be the beginning of fearful times. And, to take up the second question, this affective potential of the loop through the future is likely to feed right back into political agendas. For, given the hypothetical character of the coming catastrophe itself, the *fear of* the future is the only thing that is actually real (contrary to Žižek's supposition). The hypothetical catastrophe's affective force is its ticket into actual reality:

> It will have been real because it was *felt* to be real. Whether the danger was existent or not, the menace was felt in the form of fear. What is not actually real can be felt into being. Threat does not have an actual mode of existence: fear, as foreshadowing. Threat as an impending reality in the present. This actual reality is affective. (Massumi 2009: 53-54)

Now, the crucial point about this future threat and the fear it creates is that, more often than not, it will be used to actualize the threat rather than to prevent it. Consider as a most brief example how the logic of preemption allowed the Bush administration to start a war: there *could* already be weapons of mass destruction in Iraq which, if they are there, *could* be used to attack the US. For lack of hard evidence, it is the *actual* fear of *potentially existent* (actually *non*-existent) WMD that created the conditions for the Bush administration to invade Iraq with the support of the Congress, the Senate, and the majority of the population (Massumi 2009: 56). "Weapons are affects and affects weapons" (Deleuze/Guattari 1987: 400).[39]

This is the affective dynamic that Žižek and Dupuy ultimately reproduce, disregarding the reality of fear. It is also the dynamic that *Damages*, *Flashforward* and *Life on Mars* set off in their own various ways, sometimes to lay bare the ontogenetic power of fear, sometimes to employ it for their own interest. In the following chapters, these movements will be thought as figures of time.

The opening scene of *Damages* creates such a figure in miniature. As it pre-figures the series' more complex loop through the future, its strength lies in posing the philosophical problem of time in the nonrepresentational, more-than-human, relational terms of machinic assemblages. It articulates the experience of time as a diagrammatic effect of technological, aesthetic and political concerns. Preemption as a sociopolitical issue is entangled with the media technics in which it emerges; in return, such technics cannot be dissociated from modes of thinking and experiencing time. As we have seen, the creative coming-together of these

39 See also Berardi 2011: "The ideology of security is the *product* of a *paranoia fuelled* by the media and geared to *create* an economic system of global security that can always *feed* on *new* paranoia" (79, emphasis added). For a contemporary example in TV fiction, consider *Homeland* and Nancy Franklin's review of the series entitled "National Insecurity" (Franklin 2011).

elements co-composes more than just television series; it is connected to ecological apprehensions and actual wars based on possible futures.

To acknowledge this collective creativity "at the intersection of numerous vectors of partial subjectivation" prepares the properly ethical moment of this thinking (Guattari 1995: 98). Serial TV fiction no longer functions according to the models of mass medium theory, merely reproducing dominant ideologies, articulating ready-made, conformist content. When they take up the issue of preemptive politics, *Life on Mars*, *Flashforward*, and *Damages* enter a set of power relations to intervene in them, to shift the diagram. The ethical potential of these TV shows lies in the ways in which they insert themselves in this affective dynamic if not to disrupt, then at least to disclose and derange it. From a machinic or ecological viewpoint, the key aspect is attentive participation. Instead of asking how a show already is political (in content, for instance), the viewer is invited to explore the kind of politics a series performs and how its very real figural movements can fold back into the wider assemblages of life. Attending to these complex temporal movements can prepare a collective co-creation of a next reality.

Machines, ecologies, diagrams. Thinking about movement, Erin Manning offers yet another concept to think these abstract-but-real, dynamic, relational fields that produce novelty when she calls it a "dance of attention":

> A dance of attention is a direct feltness of the field of emergence, understood here as a quality of infinite potential with a margin of indetermination at its core. […] A dance of attention is the holding pattern of an almost unidentifiable set of forces that modulate the event. (Manning 2013: 141)

The pages that follow are a proposition for entering such a field of emergence, for becoming one of the many, almost unidentifiable but productive vectors of subjectivation. More specifically, they are an invitation to creatively participate in a collective making of time.

A proposition can fall on deaf ears. The invitation to dance the dance of attention needs to be considered.

Shall we?

Vector

Others delve yet deeper still. Beneath these joys and sorrows which can, at a pinch, be translated into language, they grasp something that has nothing in common with language, certain rhythms of life and breath that are closer to man than his inmost feelings, being the living law varying with each individual of his enthusiasm and despair, his hopes and regrets. By setting free and emphasizing this music, they force it upon our attention; they compel us, willy-nilly, to fall in with it, like passers-by who join in a dance.

(Bergson 1911: 156-157)

2. Three Representations and a Figural: Bergsonian Variations on Metric Time, the Virtual and Creative Becoming in *Life on Mars*

2.1. Lost in Representation

Time overspills any of its representation. This makes time a problem for thought: It seems it is better intuited or felt than represented.[40] This does not mean that representation, reductive though it may be, must be rejected. On the contrary, one must recognize representation itself as an ontogenetic force in the world. To say that time is always more than its representation is only to say that something gets lost in representation. The remains help build a concept that functions itself as a vector of becoming.

This, of course, presupposes that a concept makes a difference in the world, that our *reflections on* the world are also *inflections of* it.[41] As Andrew Murphie puts it, "even mimesis is never just representation" but "first and foremost a form of production" (Murphie 2002: 193). A thinking that acknowledges representation's reality-inflecting force can make the "shift away from an interest in representation to *operation*" or, as I would specify, to representation-as-operation (193). If we ignore this force more often than not, it is because we assume that the purpose of representations resolves itself in adequately reflecting a preexisting phenomenon, experience or world *as it is*. The supposition of veracity, which is premised on

40 Consider Saint Augustine's notorious formulation of the problem: "What then is time? Provided that no one asks me, I know. If I want to explain to an inquirer, I do not know" (Augustine 1991: 230).

41 The notion of "reflection" brings representation into proximity with a certain kind of thought, which is a thinking-*about*: "Models of mirroring or moulding – in a word, representational models – see the basic task of expression as faithfully reflecting a state of things" (Massumi 2002b: xvi, see xiv-xvii). This kind of thinking-about can be distinguished from a more productive "thinking-with" (Manning 2009: 11).

the presumed correspondence or conformity between form, content, and a pre-existing state of things, makes it possible to erase representation's creative force from thought.

To go escape this gridlock, the series *Life on Mars* proliferates representations (BBC, 2006-2007). The show introduces three different representational logics, each of which corresponds to a different concept of time. The credit sequence of *Life on Mars* briefly introduces this ambiguity, which is also the protagonist's dilemma:

> My Name is Sam Tyler. I had an accident and I woke up in 1973. Am I mad, in a coma, or back in time? Whatever's happened, it's like I've landed on a different planet. Now, maybe if I can work out the reason, I can get home. (*Life on Mars*, opening credits)

Madness, coma, and time travel: each of the show's three concurring premises creates its own idea of what time might be.[42] As these three representations contend with each other, they also indicate one another's limitations. An aspect of the experience of time that may be neglected in one rationalization of the plot becomes central in another, which in return may overlook other crucial aspects of temporal experience. *Life on Mars* makes felt the creative, reality-tweaking force of representation as the contending concepts of time falsify each other to create an affective experience of time.[43] For what comes to the fore in the constant back-and-forth between different representational logics and their underlying concepts of time is that which

42 James Chapman notices that the show "is posited on a deliberately ambiguous premise that invites debate over its meaning" (Chapman 2009: 8). However, the author hardly engages in such a debate; his analysis goes so far as to state that the narrative "refus[es] to clarify what is real and what is not" (10). Chapman does not venture to say in which way the questions of time and reality might be fundamentally intertwined.

43 Gilles Deleuze calls this the "powers of the false": "A new status of narration follows from this: narration ceases to be truthful, that is, to claim to be true, and becomes fundamentally falsifying. This is not at all a case of 'each has its own truth,' a variability of content. It is a power of the false which replaces and supersedes the form of the true, because it poses the simultaneity of incompossible presents […]" (Deleuze 1989: 131).

gets lost in each representation, the time that lies beyond the limits of representation. Another way of saying this is: what arises from the differential between the three representations is a figure of time.

2.2. "Back in Time": Metric Time and Memories of the Future

Sam Tyler considers the possibility of being a time traveler. The collision of his body with a car may have created a rift in time that allows him to slip into 1973 unimpaired. This means, among other things, that he has retained his memory, complete with recollections of the future. Time travel folds memories of the past over into a memory of the future and, furthermore, makes it possible to change that bygone future, thereby putting at stake the supposedly dead past that the traveler came from. In popular culture, this idea is often explained through the "paradox of the grandfather": If you travel into the past and kill your grandfather when he was a child, you will never be born and thus cannot travel back in time to kill your grandfather. Which means that your grandfather will live and you will be born and can time travel to kill your grandfather as a child, in which case you will not be born and … so forth.

Time travel, as any other event, modulates duration as a whole. One of its most intriguing aspects is precisely that it initially assumes a linear homogeneous timeline to logically motivate its premise – the displacement along a trajectory of time – but eventually falls back onto a notion of topological time. Even more interestingly, this shift in the underlying conceptual framework is rarely acknowledged. Time travel narratives oftentimes avoid such logical problems. Rather, they tend to stay within linear chains of (suspensefully complicated) causal connections in order to uphold an underlying schema of cause-and-effect,

action-and-reaction, sensation-and-movement.[44] Henri Bergson calls this a sensory-motor schema (2004: 177). Gilles Deleuze makes this schema the functioning principle of the movement-image: a perception-image is related to an affection-image and prolonged into an adequate action-image (1986: 63-66 and passim).

Sam Tyler himself denies that his awakening in 1973 may have changed time as a whole, that the linear schema of cause-and-effect may have been disrupted. He assumes that he has been displaced along a homogeneous timeline and that he can manipulate the past to prevent the accident that caused his temporal displacement. For that purpose, he uses his knowledge of the future to reshape his new present. This is the first variation in *Life on Mars* of the double problem of representation and future-orientation. Sam's action plan is a concretization of "teleological retrospect": he looks back on his new present from a point of view in the future in order to make sense of it (Currie 2007: 21). Sam thinks that his *epistemic* head start will allow him to *act* more efficiently. What he fails to acknowledge is that his displacement in time is not so much a matter of *knowing* time but of *making* it. Here as in many other places, time (travel) is construed as an epistemological problem and not, as Bergson would say, a vital problem (Bergson 2004: 281, 307). It seems to be about knowledge rather than activity and creation.

What *Life on Mars* is going to foreground in its first representation is that Sam's epistemic loop through the future is first and foremost a creative act. In return, Sam's

44 There are exceptions which address and follow through the paradoxes of time travel. The film series *Back to the Future*, by virtue of its comedic character, takes on every facet of time travel and turns it into a practical joke. In fact, it is interesting to see how the topology of time is at work not only in the series' individual movies but across installments. Strictly speaking, *Back to the Future II* does *continue* the story of its prequel. It folds back onto the first movie to replay and double its story, complete with two Marty McFlys. It intensifies time instead of extending it. Another, more serious film that takes on the quandaries of time travel to give a sensation of that it would feel like to be displaced in time is Shane Caruth's *Primer* (2004).

reduction of this creative act to an epistemological problem is what produces his alienation from the present. Sam's insistence on knowing all of time before acting in time will also be his ethical stumbling block. The show uses the generic framework of the police procedural – Sam is a detective inspector of the Manchester police – to explore the stagnant, regressive and even destructive effects of future-orientation. In his quest to get back to the future, Sam will find out what it means to live metric time and what its limits are. He will learn what harm a literal "memory of the future" can do. But what else could a memory of the future be in a philosophy of duration?

Life on Mars relies on a modern concept of metric time in order to construct its first representation of time. In fact, time travel narratives in general seem to depend on this concept of time: they only emerge in the 18th century when an understanding of time as a homogeneous and measurable container medium becomes dominant.[45] It is in the wake of the scientific revolution and especially industrialization that this new concept has supplanted locally varying, affective attitudes towards time.[46] In a newly industrial, capitalist economy,

45 Take the telling case of utopian narratives: Thomas More's *Utopia* was published in 1516 and established the genre. Note that More's utopian society lives on a *far-away* island that is contemporaneous to More's society. There is no travel through time here, only voyage through space. After the publication of this genre-founding text, it took an astonishing 250 years for the first *temporal* utopia to be written: in 1771, Louis-Sébastien Mercier publishes *L'An 2440, rêve s'il en fut jamais*. After this date, however, texts proliferate which situate a utopian society in the future (Hausmann 2009). It seems, then, that the idea of time travel required the development of a new concept of spatialized, homogeneous time in the 18th century. Note furthermore that the temporal displacement in Mercier's novel – as in many early time travel narratives – is made plausible through a dream: Much like the protagonist of *Life on Mars*, Mercier's hero has to be in a state of *unconsciousness* to travel through time. This indicates a fundamental ontological problem about time travel and its underlying concept of time. I will return to this problem in the following section of this chapter.

46 Diverging genealogies exist: Jacques Le Goff traces the emergence of what he calls "merchant's time" back to the Middle Ages and contrasts it with then dominant theological time: "For the merchant, the technological environment superimposed a new and *measurable* time, in other words, an *oriented* and *predictable* time, on that of the natural environment, which was a time both eternally *renewed* and perpetually *unpredictable*" (1980: 35; emphasis added). Le Goff's sociohistorical viewpoint gives a first indication of the cultural implications of "merchant's time" evidenced by the attributes "measurable,"

time was increasingly important: factory workers must be paid *by the hour*, trains must run *on time*, etc. The monotonous tick-tock of the factory clock measures the intervals of production. The authoritative station clock offers synchronized time and demands punctuality to guarantee the circulation of commodities. "Time is everything, man is nothing; he is no more than the carcase of time" (Marx 2008: 57).[47]

In order to *fill* time most profitably, it must first be conceived as a pre-existent, empty and homogeneous medium. For this purpose, it is spatialized. Moments of time may be *lived* as *succeeding* and replacing one another but are henceforth *thought* as units *juxtaposed* in space. Most human representations of time speak to this tendency: consider timelines, clock-faces, calendar sheets, and so forth. In the case of the calendar sheet, for instance, time is spread out in two-dimensional space and dissected into equal units such as days and months. The result is an orderly grid with one square for each day. In this way, time can be measured decades in advance, projecting empty and homogeneous units of time into the future. It is now "abstract, chronological, measurable" (Lim 2009: 18). The calculation and administration of time eventually supplants the unpleasant intuition by which the future is unknown and unforeseeable. The act of metricizing time (*métriser*) comfortably suggests that one might be able to master time (*maîtriser le temps*) (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 607).

"oriented," and "predictable." However, Le Goff acknowledges that the new understanding of time would only be naturalized in modernity.

47 In the "Working Day" chapter of *Capital*, Marx gives an impressive account of factory owners' tricks and schemes to "snatch[] a few minutes," for instance by "nibbling and cribbling at meal times" or by manipulating the factory clock during the day (Marx 1976: 352). But Marx never tires of reminding us that, even if the capitalist ran his business with the best of intentions, even if he were morally steadfast and refused to cheat, the capitalist economy would nonetheless systematically exploit laborers by virtue of its interest in surplus value produced by the purchase and use of labor power (see "The Production of Absolute Surplus Value").

Why should this be problematic? What has happened in the intellectual spatialization of time? What are its flaws and side effects? After all, if Sam Tyler wants to impact on a point of time that lies thirty years ahead, then a concept of metric time that allows him to calculate effects and consequences of the present across vast stretches of time arguably provides the most adequate approach. Henri Bergson argues that the philosophical and pragmatic weakness of metric time lies in that it accounts for an intensive, qualitative multiplicity in the terms of an extensive, quantitative multiplicity.[48] The term *multiplicity* stands for a complex reality; *qualitative* and *quantitative* describe two different types of relation between the elements and the ensemble. A quantitative multiplicity is that which, "in dividing, does not change in kind" (Deleuze 1988a: 41). Simply said, divide three acres of land by three and you end up with several (three times one) patches of the same land. It is a question of numbers. Time as a *qualitative* multiplicity is different, but not because it is indivisible. "In reality, duration divides up and does so constantly: That is why it is a *multiplicity*. But it does not divide up without changing in kind, it changes in kind in the process of dividing up. […] There is *other* without there being *several* […]" (Deleuze 1988a: 42). Add to duration or subtract from it and you change duration as a whole.[49]

But *Life on Mars* does not (yet!) make time as duration. We must return to the shortcomings of thinking time as a quantitative multiplicity. The seeming advantage of spatialized time consists in the representation of a fully rolled-out line of causally linked events. It suggests the possibility of *determining* change by means of a targeted correction of

48 See Bergson 2004, chapter 1. In *Bergsonism*, Deleuze explains that Bergson's critique of Einstein consists in saying that the latter misrepresents space-time as an "actual […] numerical and discontinuous" multiplicity instead of what it actually is: a "virtual […] continuous and qualitative" multiplicity (Deleuze 1988a: 80). Deleuze further: "[Einstein] is criticized [by Bergson], therefore, for having confused the two types of multiplicity, virtual and actual" (85).

49 In this respect, the concept of *qualitative multiplicity* resonates with that of *assemblage* (see above, ch. 1).

"an already worked out blueprint," a correction that will leave the rest of the design untouched (Grosz 2005: 110-111). Bergson calls this belief the "mechanistic explanation" of the relations between past, present, and future.

> The essence of mechanical explanation, in fact, is to regard the future and the past as calculable functions of the present, and thus to claim that *all is given*. On this hypothesis, past, present and future would be open at a glance to a superhuman intellect capable of making the calculation. (Bergson 2007a: 37)

Sam Tyler assumes that he occupies such a privileged position, that his supernatural displacement in time allows him to calculate a desired future. After all, Sam can situate his 1973 present within Manchester's social and political developments up to 2006, and use this knowledge to his advantage.

The first episode of *Life on Mars*'s second season gives a telling example of Sam's attempts to act on his knowledge. The protagonist encounters Tony Crane, a law-bending casino owner who has, as of 1973, not been convicted for any major crime. However, Sam knows that, by 2006, Tony Crane will have been responsible for several homicides. In fact, Sam investigates against Crane in 2006 and several details suggest that the suspect may have intentionally involved Sam in a car accident to obstruct his investigation. Sam's logic is simple: if Tony Crane never commits these murders in the future, then Sam will not have to investigate him and Crane will not attack Sam. And if Sam does not have the accident, he will not be displaced into the past. The rift in time will never have occurred.[50]

50 For another prominent instance of this, see season 1, episode 8, in which Sam makes an attempt at "correcting" his family history: After meeting his father, who left the family when Sam was a child, the incognito son tries to persuade his father that he should stay with his family. In this way, Sam assumes, his family would be whole when he gets back to the future.

The ethical pitfalls of linear, homogeneous time become apparent in Sam's action plan to prevent Tony Crane from murdering. In order to "stop [Crane] becoming a killer", Sam tries to "fit him up," to put him behind bars before he can actually commit his crimes. In other words, for lack of a reliable factual basis in the present, self-preservation must be ensured by means of preemptive law enforcement. The problematic aspect here is not so much that Sam is willing to fake the evidence as his claim that the difference between fact and falsehood is no longer relevant to begin with: what is now a lie will become a fact. In Sam's worked out blueprint, the truth is only a matter of time. His future knowledge allows and even impels him to create the circumstances under which Tony Crane can be arrested for murder.

In this way, Sam Tyler justifies the passage from crime prevention to preemption. It is this passage that helps understand both the general problem of metric time and Sam's ethical dilemma.[51] The main difference between a preventive and a preemptive approach is that the former "assumes an ability to assess threats empirically and identify their causes" in order "to avoid their realization" (Massumi 2007, par. 5) while the latter "actively produces what it fights, the better to choose the battle ground and respond with prepared tactics of choice" (Massumi 2012: 1). The ethical dilemma in *Life on Mars* consists in Sam's unacknowledged slippage from one regime to the other. He pretends that he is still reacting to an objectively given pre-existent reality when, in fact, he is already shaping the present to prematurely correspond to a "post-existent" reality. In other words, because Sam refuses to acknowledge that his epistemic advantage is an ontogenetic force he must remain incredulous to the idea that his epistemic certainty might translate into ontological – and ethical – *un*certainty. After

51 For a systematic distinction between the politics of prevention, deterrence and preemption, see Massumi 2007.

all, Sam *knows* for a fact that Tony Crane will commit several murders in the future. And it appears that, no matter what Sam does, he will have been right *in retrospect*. However, it is by virtue of this very conviction that he feels entitled to falsify the present so the murderer-to-be can be preemptively arrested. Criminality is short-circuited into an *a priori* conviction (Massumi 2012: 2). Tony Crane is eternally guilty of murder – whether he kills or not. And Sam Tyler will have been right.

In the fiction of *Life on Mars*, this ethical problem is foregrounded through time travel and the detective genre. It is also resolved rather easily when Sam can prove that Tony Crane has already murdered in 1973. In the contemporary reality of austerity politics, this problem is at the same time much more latent and much less easily resolved. The manageability of the future is therefore no less a preoccupation of cultural theorists and philosophers. Consider for instance French philosopher Jean-Pierre Dupuy who, in his *Pour un catastrophisme éclairé*, proposes an action plan that is strikingly analogous to Sam's intention of preemptively arresting Tony Crane. Dupuy proposes a "metaphysics" which considers the future to be *fixed* and which "consists in projecting oneself after the catastrophe and retrospectively considering it both necessary and improbable" (Dupuy 2004: 87, my translation). According to Dupuy, such an attitude towards the future makes it possible to *avoid* the unlikely catastrophe that *will happen*. Interestingly, Dupuy presents this as a kind of Bergsonism for our time, though fully aware of his conceptual contortions.[52] Bergson, in turn, never tires to point out that the inadequacy of such an approach resides in that it assumes the future to be given. For, as it assumes the "concreteness" of the future, this kind of thinking neglects the "abstract"

52 "The era [*temps*] of catastrophes is to a certain extent an inversion of this [Bergsonian] temporality" (Dupuy 2004: 13). On another occasion, Dupuy calls his own metaphysics an "antidote" to Bergson's (165). For further passages that contrast Dupuy's argument with Bergson's thought, see p. 9-14, 86, and 175-197. All translations from the French original are mine.

dimensions of the present. Instead, the concrete and the abstract must be thought as different but co-constitutive aspects of the same reality. This conceptual distinction allows for an articulation of the world's becoming as the self-differentiation of concrete matter through the in-folding of its abstract potentials (Massumi 2002a: 4-6). Following this line of thought, "abstraction is synonymous with an unleashing of potential" (33). Thinking reality in concrete terms exclusively, however, is to assign concrete entities definite positions on a linear arrow of homogeneous, immutable time. In other words, it is to thwart the potentialities of each present and to neglect the world's capacity to self-differentiate.

But, just like Sam's concrete future, Dupuy's "future [which] is considered to be fixed" merely prepares the slippage into preemptive politics (Dupuy 2004: 192). Despite Dupuy's many careful steps,[53] this is obvious in his reflections on prophecy, another mode of predicting a concrete future (166-174, 178-182). The dilemma of the "efficient prophet" of doom is that, if he shares his prophecy so that people can prevent it, the catastrophe he prophesied will likely not happen (167). "His prophecy, as it acts in the world, by virtue of its very acting in the world, is falsified" (170). The prophet himself risks humiliation, disgrace. But, Dupuy suggests, we must be bold enough to take that risk, we must take measures against a catastrophe that will ideally not happen.[54] We must justify our predictions as follows: "the content of my prophecy is what *would* happen *if* I did not prophecy at all" (170). Ethically,

53 Jean-Pierre Dupuy goes much further than Sam Tyler when he affirms that the kind of prediction he conceives does *not* "model itself on the causal sequencing of phenomena" in historical time (Dupuy 2004: 193). In his conception, prediction must be "conscious of its effect on the future, which predicts the future as if it were fixed and at the same time caused, at least in part, by the effect of the prediction" (193). But, as we shall see, this step towards topological time, in which "the past and the future mutually determine each other", is also the step towards preemption (191).

54 In other words, we must learn how to use the strangely inverted "performative power" of prophecies of doom: they ideally produce the opposite of what they announce (Dupuy 2004: 179). Following David K. Lewis, Dupuy calls this a "counterfactual dependence" of the future on the present (172).

Dupuy may deem himself on the safe side because he mostly considers natural or ecological catastrophes, the responsibility for which is shouldered by nobody or everybody, respectively. So the question of *guilt* may seem irrelevant. But what about the ethicality of the measures taken to prevent the catastrophe? In this respect, the philosopher's preemptive stroke of genius is as daunting as Sam Tyler's plan for fixing up a future murderer: the prophecy will have been *efficient* and the measures taken will have been *appropriate* if the predicted catastrophe does *not* produce itself. In other words, the *less proof* there ultimately is of an actual threat, the *more adequate* the countermeasures will have proven to be. The 'false' prophecy "will always have been preemptively right" (Massumi 2009: 65).

The worrying justification of preemption in the future anterior does not belie its failings in the present. In *Life on Mars*, the neglect of potentials for becoming often leads to dangerous misjudgments of the present – not despite but *because* of Sam's prescience. When, in the third episode of season two, his colleagues investigate a bomb threat that they believe to be IRA-related, Sam does *not* take the threat seriously, knowing for a (historical) fact that the IRA did not plant bombs in Manchester in the early 1970s. Unheedingly, he sends one of his colleagues into the danger area just when the bomb detonates. Here, Sam's future knowledge forestalls an appropriate response to a situation of great uncertainty. What Sam disregards, assuming that the "past, present and future [are] open at a glance" to him, is the contiguity of the case he is investigating. Pinning time down to a metric grid, first backgridding it from 2006, then foregridding from 1973, Sam cannot take note of what slips through the meshes: he does not consider that the bomber in question might not have anything to do with the IRA,

which is in fact the case.[55] Modern, metric, historical time certainly enables the production of certain kinds of knowledge. But when projected onto the future, it represents an obstacle to an adequate understanding of the present as an emergent, unforeseeable becoming. Consequently, those who rely on homogeneous and calculable time must always be stunned by this kind of becoming. It shocks them like a detonating bomb. This literalization of emergence risks being misunderstood as a metaphor. But the blast of explosion *is* becoming, becoming *is* such a burst. In *Mind-Energy*, Bergson describes the production of novelty in the world as an "explosive action" (Bergson 1920: 22).[56] What the all-is-given view of time ignores is that the release of what Bergson calls vital energy can be effectuated by the most inconspicuous trigger. Emergence is driven by the incommensurable, uncontainable "spark which explodes a powder-magazine" (Bergson 1920: 44).

In light of the above, it becomes clear that the rationalization of time in modernity, which tends to *integrate* the incommensurate and to *dominate* the contingent, has a disintegrating element of fallibility. Mary Ann Doane suggests that this double-edged tendency to dominate the contingent is common to both modern time and audiovisual narrative. Just as modern time consciousness constructs a homogeneous sequence of equal units, film juxtaposes contingent, indexical images and consolidates them in a continuous "motion picture." In this way, the concurrence of cinema and modern time in what Doane calls "cinematic time" functions as a means to temper modernity's fear of and "obsession with contingency" in so far as it makes the contingent legible (Doane 2002: 15). For this reason, Doane considers cinema to be "a central representational form of the twentieth century" (19):

55 For the notion of the "grid" and "backgridding", see Massumi 2002a: 1-15.
56 For the exposition of this argument, see the chapter "Life and Consciousness" in *Mind-Energy*.

the regular flow of indexical images seems to give a reliable and temporally consolidated record of reality.[57] However, as we have seen, this very regularizing and homogenizing tendency is also the weakness of modern time as a "socially objectivated temporality […] – a necessary illusion that must be exposed" (Lim 2009: 10).[58] As for the cinema, Bergson has famously argued that the cinematograph's basic mechanism of representation can only produce "an impersonal movement abstract and simple" which renders concrete becoming as "abstract, uniform and invisible" (Bergson 2007a: 305, 306). This means that, much like metric time, the film reel simply adds image after image in a process of linear succession. Thus, according to Bergson, the cinematograph produces an abstract form of becoming because it shows *what* happens but not *how*. By placing the present on a timeline of succeeding, uniform instants, both cinema and metric time presumably debase the now as the interval of becoming. At the same time, and quite practically, this uniformity assures the intelligibility and manipulability of past and future events.

The opening credits of *Life on Mars* seem to expose this complicity of metric time and the screen at the beginning of each episode (see screenshots 1-7). After Sam's remarks quoted at the beginning of this chapter (see above, p. 73), the television screen shows the partial title "Life on" followed by a countdown to the year 1973: metric time in reverse figures Sam's return to the past. The time specification disappears and is replaced by "Mars," a statement of

57 See also Doane 2002: "The significance of the cinema, in this context, lies in its apparent capacity to perfectly *represent* the contingent, to provide the pure record of time" (22).

58 While Doane and Lim express their apprehensions by repeatedly stressing that cinema's ability to contain the contingent is an *apparent* capacity, other scholars explicitly or implicitly base their arguments on the power of the *stilled*, *discrete* image (Mulvey 2006, Stewart 2007). Interestingly, contingency is alternately the mainstay of the frame-by-frame film reel (Stewart) or the digit-by-digit CGI (Mulvey). Depending on the argument, it is either the photographic still or the digital screenshot that becomes the "emblem of time's conceptual dismemberment into moments, into discrete and arbitrarily segmented units of temporality" (Stewart 2007: 69). This, as I have pointed out in my introduction, leads to a number of false problems around the experiential quality of moving-image narratives (see above, p. 5).

place. Sam's "travel" to 1973 is thus clearly marked as a "temporal *displacement*" (Booth 2011). The opening credits mark the fact that the series must at least initially spatialize and homogenize time in order to make its premise work. But *Life on Mars* also marks the tacit assumptions and pitfalls of this spatialization and, consequently, of the term "temporal displacement" itself. Before the show's actual title appears, one reads: "Life on 1973" (scr. 3), a first hint that something about this show, which makes its protagonist "live on 1973", will ring false. Behind the title, the screen is initially split into four different images of Sam Tyler's eyes. His face expresses disorientation and an intense effort to perceive his surroundings. These gridded, screen-like squares subsequently proliferate and occupy the entire image space. The screen thus fragments into a multitude of contingent images that can hardly be apprehended individually. This proliferation of contingencies which are *not* integrated in one temporally unified, moving image draws attention to the fact that audiovisual discourse can not only integrate these contingencies if it "wishes" to; it can also arbitrarily break down or manipulate this integrity. It seems, then, that the opening credits picture the discursive mechanism that subtends both film and modern time and that founds their complicity.

I would however argue something like the opposite. For, while the credit sequence seems to cater to Bergson's skepticism

and to figure the representational mechanism underlying moving-image narratives, it also makes evident that this is precisely not how we usually perceive these moving images nor how they make experiences of time. After all, the opening credits of *Life on Mars* involve a considerable aesthetic effort to make us see a mechanism that we quite effortlessly overlook otherwise. Do we not *actually* perceive the continuous unfurling of an image in time, regardless of whether we're watching analog film or digital TV, rather than perceive their (equally actual) juxtaposition in space on the film reel or, as bits and bytes, stored on a DVD? What is more, contrarily to what Bergson suggests, a single image can contain, create or vectorize movement. Consider screenshot 7: the eerily blurry squares in this frame capture more than one instant of time or – as I see it: they capture an interval, the movement between poses.

My point is a simple one: I mean to extricate moving images and metric time from the mutually determining relation which cultural studies has constructed between them. Starting from experience as I try to do in these pages, it is easy to see that film, digital cinema and television are all quite capable of creating a variety of felt temporalities.[59] This is not to discard arguments like Doane's or Lim's about the socially constructed role of film as a recording device for the contingent. On the contrary, their work, is an important stepping-stone towards letting go of that media determinism that consists in persistently correlating a medium and a specific temporality. This letting go consists in acknowledging the primacy of experience over mechanisms and rationalizations. Concerning mechanisms: The technological setup of an imaging device does not determine the experience of time a film or TV show

59 In this respect, one may compare the contemporary discussion around fast "post-continuity" films on the one hand and contemplative or "slow cinema" on the other (for the former, see for instance Shaviro 2010; for the latter, Matthew Flanagan's "Towards an Aesthetic of Slow in Contemporary Cinema" on www.16-9.dk).

creates in me. It is the rhythm, texture and intensive qualities of the image that create that experience, not the way in which these images are coded.[60] As for rationalizations, let's go back to the beginning of this chapter: the determinism that goes along the belief in "cinematic time" suggests once more that *time* poses an epistemological problem rather than an experiential. To say this in Bergsonian terms, modernity constructs time as a matter of "intelligence" rather than "intuition." What the proponents of cinematic time – just like Sam Tyler – overlook in so doing is that metric time, though it may be an intellectual tool for humans' organized participation in the world's becoming, is not becoming. Intelligence alone will never be able to account for creative evolution. Sam refuses to acknowledge this and therefore fails to see that "homogeneous space and time" are "principles of division and of solidification introduced into the real with a view to *action* and not with a view to *knowledge*" (Bergson 2004: 281). They are action-oriented schemas that allow human beings "to divide the continuous, to fix the becoming, and to provide our activity with points to which it can be applied" (281-282). In other words, thought, here, is a catalyzer for the sensory-motor schema; it is good enough to get us going. But that does not mean that intelligence adequately represents the vibrancy of matter and the creativity of duration. In reverse, this means that the felt participation in becoming is anterior (logically and experientially) to the thinking of time. In order to access this creative quality of time, we must begin before or go beyond representation, that is, rationalization.

For now, we have come – with Sam Tyler, Jean-Pierre Dupuy and others – to the

60 For this part of my argument, see "On the Superiority of the Analog" in Massumi 2002a: 133-143. Massumi argues that "[w]hatever inventiveness comes about, it is a result not of the coding itself but of its detour into the analog. *The processing may be digital – but the analog is the process*. The virtuality involved, and any new possibility that may arise, is entirely bound up with the potentializing relay. It is not contained in the code" (141-142).

conceptual, ethical and pragmatic limits of metric time. Fortunately, as I've suggested, moving-image narratives are *able* but *not limited* to making metric time. As we shall see, *Life on Mars* is a powder-magazine charged with a second representation of time. (The third will be the spark that blows it all up.)

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2.3. "In a Coma": Virtual Present and Actual Future

Sam Tyler had a severe car accident. Rather than having traveled through time, he might have fallen into a coma and his "awakening" in 1973 might be the dream reality of his comatose brain. Following this assumption, none of what happens in 1973 is real but only "a figment of [Sam's] imagination" (season 2, episode 1, 50'25").

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Depending on which premise one follows, many of the shows elements undergo a shift in meaning. Consider the numerous telecommunication devices and mass media that allow for communication between 2006 and 1973. In *Life on Mars*, car radios, telephones, walkie-talkies, newspapers, and, most importantly, television itself delivers messages from the future (see screenshots 8-14). In the logic of time travel, these devices help Sam overcome the spatialized interval between 1973 and far-off 2006. In this

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case, they are literally *tele*communication devices. If one assumes that Sam is in a coma, the interval that must be overcome is no longer spatial but ontological: the TV screens and telephones are ways for Sam to receive messages from the actual reality while stuck in his dream of 1973. The fact that Sam can only *receive* messages from the future and not send them himself speaks both to the coma premise and to the problem of future-orientation: on the one hand, the one-way communication via mass media corresponds to a coma patient's assumed ability to perceive what is happening around them without being able to respond. On the other, it is significant that, once more, the future informs the present in *one-way* communication. Conventional mass media, and television in particular, seem to be part and parcel of a discursive dynamic that constructs a future to determine and silence the present.

This alternative between time travel and coma premises is at work in *Life on Mars* from the very first episode and creates a tension between two different ways of conceiving time. The first is the concept of metric time, discussed in the previous section. The second approaches a Bergsonian conception of time (with major modifications as we shall see). For, if *Life on Mars* concretizes the discursive orientation toward the future, the series does however insist on an aspect that the scientific or modern view of time neglects. By means of its coma premise, the show introduces the present and the future as two ontologically distinct dimensions of time. As such, Sam's present and the future emanate from the same moment in time, his life in 2006 being the actual reality, his life in 1973 a virtual reality, a mere figment of his imagination.

Such an understanding of time in terms of "actual" and "virtual" is a key element of philosophies of time in a Bergsonian tradition. Throughout his vast œuvre, Bergson himself

critiques modern science because it 'abstracts' time from duration.[61] His own approach is based on the concrete and lived experience of time, a time that is "immediately given" (Bergson 2007b: 86).[62] However, even though Bergson's work is often focused on the human perception of time, his concept of *duration* also exceeds the human and the immediately given in its *virtuality*. Every moment is rich with potentialities. Some of these potentials are pulled out from the virtual to be actualized. (But, once again, the actual and the virtual are aspects of the same reality.) This ingress of the virtual into the actual is what allows for change in the world. "Evolution takes place from the virtual to actuals. Evolution is actualization, actualization is creation" (Deleuze 1988a: 98). Creation is key. The "continuous creation of unforeseeable novelty" produces a *qualitative* change of duration itself (Bergson 2007b: 73). Becoming alters duration as a whole. All the time. "Time is invention or it is nothing at all" (Bergson 2007a: 341). From this follows that in order for real change to occur, the future cannot be given. For Bergson, the future does not exist to the extent that it is *not yet*. It is not real (that is, neither actual nor virtual) but possible (Bergson 2007b: 73-86).

Life on Mars rediscovers the conceptual distinction between the actual and the virtual but, in order to picture future-orientation, it turns Bergson on his head. It is no longer an actual present that unfolds toward an unforeseeable future by actualizing virtuals. Instead, a virtual,

61 See the previous section, but also *Time and Free Will* for one of Bergson's earliest formulations of this argument (Bergson 2001: esp. 98 and 101). A terminological clarification may be in order: "Abstraction" for Bergson is not the same as for Massumi. For Bergson, the abstraction of time is its spatialization through the faculty of intelligence. Massumi refers to the abstract as to the potential-harboring dimension of reality. Thus, while "abstraction" (as an intellectual operation) stands for the flattening-out and depotentializing of reality for Bergson, it is the opposite for Massumi: it is, to repeat a passage quoted above, "synonymous with an unleashing of potential," (Massumi 2002a: 33). I continue to use the terms *abstract* and *concrete* as established in the previous section, that is, following Massumi.

62 For Bergson, the *immediate* experience of duration is opposed to the *mediation* of time through its representation as a linear, homogeneous medium. The subtitle of *Time and Free Will*, which is in fact the French main title of the book indicates the importance of immediacy: *An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*.

imaginary present is subjected to a concrete, determined future. As a consequence, the "virtual present" is no longer "virtual" in the Bergsonian sense. Rather, it is a "virtual reality", a simulated environment. The difference is crucial in the present context: A virtual reality is usually understood to be a "simulation by technological means" but can also refer to "something that exists in the mind," which is the case for Sam's life in 1973 (Jones 2005: 367). In both cases, that is, in immersive 3D environments as well as in Sam's coma-dream of 1973, the virtual reality is a representation. By contrast, the virtual is "inaccessible to the senses" and therefore cannot be represented (Massumi 2002a: 133).[63] Considering the virtual's generative force, another way of stating this difference is to oppose representation and creation. While a virtual reality fulfills its purpose by *re*presenting a *simulated* reality, the virtual participates in the *creation* of an actual, new reality.

If *Life on Mars* introduces the actual/"virtual" distinction in such a way, it does so to posit it against Sam's tendency to unify a time that is clearly out of joint. If the series capsizes the dynamic of actualizing virtuals, it is to convey the precariousness of future-orientation itself. The inversion of ontological precedence between present and future has severe consequences for the temporal order constructed in the series. The concrete future weighs heavy on Sam's 1973 present. It dominates his virtual life and repeatedly breaks into the present to disturb and even disrupt it. In these moments, Sam suffers a surge of pain; his senses are stunned (see scr. 15-18). While, for the protagonist, the intrusion of the future is a painful experience, the narrative itself is marked visually and, even more so, aurally. While the image of the virtual reality fades (scr. 16 and 18), the actual but precarious future of the

63 It can however be *figured* (Massumi 2002a: 133). In fact, since it cannot be represented, it *must* be figured – a point that is crucial to my overall argument. On the issue of "virtual vision," see also Massumi 2011a: 18.

protagonist makes itself *heard* through the sounds of the heart monitor in Sam's hospital room as well as the voices of doctors and relatives at his bedside. The audiovisual configuration of these sequences creates a tension between sound and image, each seeming to claim actuality for itself. The image, with its indexical quality, suggests that the viewer sees the accurate representation of a palpable reality. The soundtrack, however, debunks this reality as the fantastic output of a malfunctioning brain within a severely injured body. Every time Sam experiences such a "future shock," the narrative splits into the visual image of a virtual reality and the aural image of an actual reality. We begin to *see* Sam's 1973 present; but we see it as the mere reflection of a concrete, dominant future.

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It is precisely because the virtual reality is merely the *reflection* of a concrete future that we are still far away at this point from the virtual's being-felt through a figure of time.[64] It is worth noting, however, that the shift from time travel to coma has also produced a different kind of relation between the present and the future. In the previous section, we saw that, when Sam presupposes that he has traveled in time, he also assumes that the relations between present and future are *causal*. He therefore acts in such a way as to trigger the

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64 Garrett Stewart associates the two in *Framed Time* and consequently finds numerous representations of the virtual (Stewart 2007: esp. chapter 4).

production of a specific future across a thirty-year-long chain of causation. Besides the conceptual limitations of this approach that I have pointed out, *Life on Mars* highlights the ethical and pragmatic shortcomings of metric time in particular. The coma plot, by virtue of the inversion of actual and "virtual," foregrounds the depotentializing of the present through future-orientation. The relation between the present and the future is no longer one of causality but of *correspondence and conformity*. Sam's coma life is but a mental transcript of his psychopathological state. Everything (people, events, etc.) in 1973 *re-presents* something in 2006. Consider Sam's attempt, in the sixth episode of season one, at preventing a hostage-taker from killing his prisoners at the announced deadline of precisely 2 PM that day, which he *also* presumes to be the time that his doctors have set *that day* in 2006 for discontinuing his life-support measures *unless* Sam gives a sign of life. In short, the rationale is something like this: Since Sam's virtual reality is but a quasi-allegorical image of his psychopathological condition, a big enough, life-saving intervention in the virtual present must, in return, force a corresponding life-saving modification in the actual future. The present resembles the future.

Future-orientation, from this conceptual vantage point, seems to leave ample room for maneuver. For, if Sam can modulate his present to force the future into correspondence, then this present has apparently regained its creative impact on what the future will be. If Sam can figure out the code to decipher his virtual reality and modify it accordingly, then alternative futures are possible. But the keywords "code," "correspondence," and "possibility" indicate that the apparent leeway of the present is actually the future's stranglehold on it. If Sam can modulate the future in the present, it is only because the latter has been reduced to a mere *sign* of the former. To give *meaning* to the present, he must loop through the future. This means that, instead of freely creating, Sam is caught up in the worst kind of feedback loop between

present and future, which is the mutually determining kind. In other words, what distinguishes Sam's virtual reality from the Bergsonian virtual is that the latter *exceeds* the actual at all times whereas the former is, once again the expression is fitting, the blueprint of a pre-existent reality. *Life on Mars*'s conceptual twisting of the "virtual" into representational coextension with the actual conveys the depotentializing power of future-orientation.

We must therefore distinguish between the relative poverty of *possibility* and the infinite richness of the virtual's *potential*:

> Possibility is back-formed from potential's unfolding. But once it is formed, it also effectively feeds in. Fedback, it prescripts: implicit in the determination of a thing's or body's positionality is a certain set of transformations that can be expected of it by definition and that it can therefore undergo without qualitatively changing enough to warrant a new name. These possibilities delineate a region of nominally defining – that is, normative – variation. Potential is unprescripted. It only feeds forward, unfolding toward the registering of an event: bull's-eye. (Massumi 2002a: 9)

Backfeeding, prescribing, determining: that is why possibilities aren't good enough and intelligence can thwart creative evolution. A concrete future is always thought before it is lived. Intelligence thinks away life's boundless potential for self-differentiation.

The depotentializing power of future-orientation is another effect of considering the future as a problem of knowledge and representation. If, however, we think-feel it as a matter of emergence, of creative becoming, then any concrete future becomes fundamentally unknowable. That is why, for Bergson, the concrete future is strictly speaking *impossible*. This does not contradict his distinction between the (actual and virtual) real on the one hand and the

possible (future) on the other. What Bergson considers ontologically "possible" is *a* future. He affirms that creative evolution must "willy-nilly" produce *something* new (to use a phrase dear to Bergson's early translators). But the peculiarity of true novelty consists precisely in the fact that this something new cannot be predicted, pre-conceived. The really-new is therefore impossible before its realization. Only once it is in the realm of the real, it *will have been* possible all along. *Future-past*. Becoming (see above, p. 62).

In contrast, the *will-have-been* of Sam's concrete future is first and foremost thought into being. The depotentializing feedback loop of representation deprives his present of its creative force. As Sam tries to intervene in this circuit, the back-forming intrusions of the future into the present are increasingly violent and uncontrollable. In resistance to Sam's attempts at modulating the actual future, the latter disrupts the virtual present, undoes it for the purpose of fully instating the order of a time to come. Whenever Sam incurs a future shock, his present fades. These scenes are marked not only by a doubling of the soundtrack but also by a qualitative change of the image, as if it were overexposed or washed out (see scr. 16 and 18). In these instances, the hold of the encroaching future comes close to eradicating Sam's on-screen presence. The increasing orientation toward the future threatens to efface the here-and-now. The present is washed out, washed up.

Eventually, the future succeeds in visually imposing itself. Over the course of the series, Sam Tyler's virtual present is disrupted by sequences of blurred images of his hospital room (see, as an example, screenshots 19–24 from season 2, episode 1; the middle sequence is no longer than two seconds). The actual future manages to temporarily reinstate itself. However and against expectation, this "concrete" and "actual" reality is chimeric, apparitional at best (scr. 20-23). The "immediate data" from the future are corrupt, disintegrate, and

unusable on top of being a practical hindrance to Sam's more palpable presence in 1973. The onslaught of the future thus manifests itself as an audiovisual *and* pathological condition (scr. 19 and 24): it disturbs both the narrative and the protagonist.

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These two premises – time travel and coma – are played through in *Life on Mars* from the very beginning, privileged in turn to various extents. From episode to episode, Sam alternately tries either to travel back to the future or, more modestly, to wake up. Accordingly, his aim is to trigger chains of causation across a three-decade interval or to impact on his actual reality by modulating his virtual reality. This back-and-forth between the two premises is certainly one of the series' driving forces throughout its first season of *Life on Mars* and resonates with other rifts in the show's conceptual and aesthetic design:

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> *Life on Mars* constantly plays on the tension between Sam Tyler's "modern" and professional investigation methods and the more "hands-on" approach to law enforcement of his superior Gene Hunt. Without giving priority to either, the show vacillates between Sam's meticulous forensic examinations, in accordance with rule

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of law and anti-corruption codices, and Gene's hard-cop vigilantism that caters to a nostalgic longing for order. A forensic police upholds order in the name of (scientific) truth, says 2006. Life is rough and we may bend the truth, but we do it in the name of order, 1973 replies. This inflexion of the police procedural's generic conventions is at its most interesting when the good cop/bad cop opposition is short of breaking down. Nominally, order may be sustained in the name of the truth and through the enforcement of given laws but, as the above example of Sam's attempt at preemptively arresting Tony Crane shows, truth and order can be co-created in order to impose and preserve power relations. The feeling of nostalgia, that *Life on Mars* certainly purports, is tinged with a disquieting sense of helplessness in the face of the police's creativity.

The texture of the musical score creates a similar push-and-pull, bound to collapse. On the one hand, the show's soundtrack abounds with 1970s evergreens that activate the past, giving it an affective tone. Through the quality of (pre-synthesizer, "authentic") sound, the viewer gets a feel for the small-town working-class security in pre-Thatcher England. Consider the David Bowie song that gives *Life on Mars* its title and, appropriately, plays throughout the scenes depicting Sam's temporal displacement in the pilot episode. Its cryptic lyrics speak of loss, disillusionment and cultural decay, culminating in the escapist imploration: "Is there Life on Mars?" (Because if there is, let's get out of here-and-now.) The show's soundtrack is the lure of the past. On the other hand, the drift into the past only increases the pull-towards-the-future that dominates the first season. Sensation's indulgence in the past is countered by a sense of belonging tied to the future, which is sounded by the opening credits' flashy cop-show theme, the digital beep of Sam's heart rate monitor and the aseptic voices of his doctors. While the sounds of the future are much less alluring, they also

give the lie to the nostalgia for a past filled with corruption and arbitrary violence.

In this way, the series suggests a double sense of alienation throughout the first season. "Life on Mars" caters to an escapist longing for the past and, at the same time, presents that past as a strange, uninhabitable place (think "Mars"). It is drawn towards a concrete future that is also a source of disturbance and destabilization. It is strained between two modes of knowing time, one consisting in calculating various instants of time as causally connected outcomes of one another, the other in imaging one moment in time as the image of another. Depending on which premise is momentarily foregrounded, the present is reduced either to a calculable point or to a representation of the future. Regardless of which premise is foregrounded, time – in its ever-emergent inventiveness – inevitably turns out to be more than that which either logic can account for. Time overspills into a third premise.

2.4. "Mad": Image-event and Creative Becoming

At the beginning of its second season, *Life on Mars* introduces a third explanation for Sam Tyler's "temporal displacement," which is a doubt rather than a certainty: the protagonist could have been mad all along. This alternative explanation and its vagueness are only part of the reason why the first episode of the show's final season occupies a crucial position within the series. As a hinge between the two seasons, it hearkens back to the conceptual, ethical and pragmatic tensions of past episodes and, at the same time, prepares a major complication within the temporal dynamics of the series as a whole. In fact, *Life on Mars*'s second season asks the viewer to review and rethink the entire first season. It re-diagrams the archive. It is as if *Life on Mars* could not have known at its beginning what is what going to be about: time as invention, as creative evolution. In retrospect, it is as if *Life on Mars* had only been putting

into place the conditions that allow for the emergence – right from the middle – of a figure of time.[65]

Both of the previously discussed premises of *Life on Mars* and the corollary representations of time increasingly isolate Sam during the show's first season: since people would doubt his mental health if he voiced his apprehensions about having traveled through time or being in a dream, Sam must keep to himself. The issue of madness takes center-stage at the beginning of the second season. In an unsettling encounter, the protagonist is once more made aware of the fact that what he holds to be the truth (time travel or coma dream) is unacceptable to the world he inhabits. At the police station, Sam meets a mentally disturbed man under arrest who claims that "the world isn't what they think": "I see things. I have visions. […] It's horrible. Because I know the truth and no one else does. […] How do you think that makes me feel? I'm so alone" (9'20").[66] Only minutes later, Sam tries to explain how he knows that Tony Crane will commit several murders in the future: "I see things. I had a vision" (22'40"). Sam stops short, realizing that he must sound like the madman he has just encountered. Yet, Sam confronts Tony Crane with the "fact" that thirty years ahead he will have become a murderer. In a crucial scene of the series, Crane uses this information to discredit the protagonist (48'15"–53'40"): in an attempt to invalidate the investigation against himself, Tony Crane exposes "that DI [i.e. detective inspector] Tyler thinks he's from the future […] a time traveler" and concludes that Sam is "totally loco." Sam himself denies this charge and turns it against Crane, declaring that "it would take a seriously disturbed individual

65 I take up Deleuze's paraphrase of Nietzsche in *The Time-Image*: "To use a formula of Nietzsche's, it is never at the beginning that something new […] is able to reveal its essence; what it was from the outset it can reveal only after a detour in its evolution" (1989: 43).

66 All subsequent quotes are from *Life on Mars*, season 2, episode 1. Time codes indicate the occurrence of quoted scenes within the episode for easier reference.

to come up with such a bizarre excuse in order to discredit the arresting officer." Sam Tyler can live by the future, he can even solve cases relying on his future knowledge but he must not admit to this. The important thing to note here is that both of the explanations for Sam's "temporal displacement" discussed in the preceding sections, are considered "insane" within the fictional world. The idea of Sam's "time travel" is enough to declare as deranged the person who voices it. But the idea that Sam's 1973 reality might be a mere "figment of his imagination" is even worse as it fundamentally questions the ontological integrity of this reality. *Life on Mars* concretizes future-orientation and demonstrates that a present which posits a given and concrete future runs the risk of (onto-)logically ousting itself. The entire discursive dynamic is exposed as madness.

Life on Mars, in addition to representing this dilemma, performs it as a figure of time. Its emergence is triggered at the end of the episode under discussion, from within the story: Sam receives what he initially believes to be another call from the future (scr. 14). Heart sounds first appear but quickly fade away. More surprisingly, Sam is able to communicate with the voice on the telephone for the first time. The interlocutor tells him: "I understand your frustration, Sam. The job's almost done. Don't blow it now! Remember, if they find out why you're really there, you'll never make it back. Once we've dealt with it all, you can come home, Sam" (56'50"). This enigmatic reply is soon explained: Sam has not traveled in time, but in space. He has been sent to Manchester as an undercover investigator to produce evidence for the corrupt policing methods of the local force. The accident he has suffered on his way to Manchester at the beginning of the series has actually taken place in 1973 and caused amnesia; his impaired brain consolidates his undercover identity as "time travel" and produces hallucinations of the future. In subsequent episodes, evidence in support of this

hypothesis proliferates. In short, then, the protagonist *does* live in 1973. It is not time that is unhinged but Sam Tyler himself. (This may be a good moment to re-view screenshots 15–24 in order to try and *see* the opposite of what I have previously argued with respect to these excerpts.)

All this not so much changes the storyline as it impacts on the status of the image as such. The third rationalization of Sam Tyler's "temporal displacement" capsizes the established logic of the narrative and, eventually, pulls the comforting rug of representation out from under the viewer. The clear distinction between a virtual present and an actual future collapses: the virtuality of Sam's 1973 reality is less and less secure; the viewer might unknowingly have been witnessing the experience of a psychosomatically affected protagonist. Yet, the narrative never fully endorses any of the explanations it offers: *Life on Mars* does not simply reinvert the order of the actual and the virtual realities. It offers this inversion as one way of seeing the series, all the while maintaining the alternative explanation. Consequently, there are two coexisting but mutually exclusive ways of visually accessing the narrative: You can continue to believe that Sam is in a coma and that the main narrative represents the activity of a comatose brain; in this case, the actual image on the screen remains that of a virtual reality that corresponds to an actual but invisible reality. Alternatively, you may consider that Sam actually lives in 1973 and suffers from amnesia and hallucination; consequently, the narrative represents an actual reality that is disturbed by the virtual images or "visions" of a diseased mind. My point is, in any case, that the narrative maintains both of these incompossible views. The storyline is constructed such that the viewer *must* consider both possibilities at the same time.

In this way, the narrative is doubly saturated with meaning and splits the act of viewing

into a kind of double vision. This semantic excess of the image ultimately undercuts its own economy of stable and unifying representation. No longer only a representation, the image eventfully becomes figure. By virtue of its sustained ambiguity, the series triggers a continuous oscillation between its two logics through which the actual and the virtual realities continuously twist and fold into each other: the concurrence of the series' double logic and the two-layered audiovisual rendition of each splits the narrative into two distinct stories and four images. Significantly though, the proliferation of contending actual and virtual images emerges out of a single and concrete audiovisual narrative. Not unlike a topological figure, the formerly reliable narrative folds in and out on itself. The different images are distinct and can be *conceived* individually but, on a *perceptual* level, they are indiscernible. The narrative of *Life on Mars* is unified and split at the same time. The act of seeing persistently doubles on itself and the viewer's eye is caught up in a "continual flicker between these two visions" (Massumi 2002a: 65). Similarly, the conceptual distinction between the present and the future is maintained within each storyline; but this distinction can no longer be unequivocally and concretely perceived by the viewer. It is impossible to settle the question of the chrono- and ontological relations between the 1973 and 2006 plot strands. Any sense of linear time has been lost. In very much the same way, it is impossible to settle the question of consciousness. Sam's consciousness must be impaired (by his coma or his hallucinations) to allow for the strange loops and inversions of *Life on Mars*, this much we know. Once more, however, the "future shocks" do not produce a simple negation of conscious perception. Rather, they make consciousness and its negation indiscernible: Sam's future shocks (scr. 15-24) increase the ambiguity of the narrative. In these sequences, Sam is either *losing* his consciousness in 1973 or he is *regaining* it in 2006. While the viewer can distinguish between these two possibilities,

she cannot know which of the two she sees.

This threefold indeterminacy does not make *Life on Mars* messy. The show is not jumping the shark but, rather, putting in place one more conditioning factor to sculpt its diagrammatic movement.[67] In fact, representation's indetermination is more appropriately thought as its incipience in the elastic relational field of storytelling: neither the discursive separation into *story* and *discourse* nor the functional distribution of narrator, narrative and recipient is a structural given. What *Life on Mars* makes felt is that the relation between narrative and spectator cannot be settled once and for all. One continuously becomes a listener or viewer or storyteller, possibly shifting between various positions, in the relational field of storytelling. The figure lifting off from the various forces pulling at the image gives an unseen-unheard plasticity to reality in the making.

This eventful coming-into-being of the image cannot be seen or heard because it is not *in* the image; it is what constitutes the image-event and must be thought-felt. Watching *Life on Mars*, one cannot resolve the above-mentioned ambiguities and must grasp the narrative as a multiplicity of possible scenarios always only on the cusp of being fully actualized. Thus, the breakdown of the representational image and the breakout from linear narrative progression bring incompossible potentialities into immediate proximity and make them resonate eventfully in a nonlinear process. As the narrative fails to "perfectly *represent* the contingent" (Doane 2002: 22), perceptual certainty is constantly delayed. But this delay, this interval, in which it is possible to experience becoming, is a zone of indetermination and, hence, a center of action (Grosz 2005: 98). In this zone of indetermination, the received notion by which the

67 To tie in a thought from the beginning of this chapter (see above, p. 2, footnote 43): The mutual *falsification* of *Life on Mars*'s representational logics does not discard the notion of *truth*. The powers of the false consist in *creating* a truth, thereby casting doubt on any kind of stable truth that would pre-exist its representation.

television spectator has a fixed, passive and privileged vantage point onto a contained image-space comes apart. The indetermination of the narrative and the uncertainty of cognition, perception and, in particular, their co-functioning affect the viewer. Affective involvement activates vision: instead of following an unambiguous narrative, the viewer experiences the continuous differentiation of several incompossible stories unfolding simultaneously. She unsees-unhears but senses the creative evolution of images, a process that continuously postpones a unifying, representational solution within and across episodes. Sam's former life in a concrete future is no longer more than one possibility among many, lingering at the edge of the image. To think-feel the interval of the image's becoming is to unknow the future. Thus, after critiquing metric time in various ways within the story, *Life on Mars* offers an immediate experience of duration as it "hinders everything from being given at once." Time, Bergson says, "retards, or rather it is retardation. It must therefore be elaboration" (Bergson 2007b: 75). In a similar way, the second season of *Life on Mars*, far from representing a reliable fictional narrative, asks the viewer to continuously elaborate her own vision.

This is the beginning for a different ethical attitude towards time. Alternatingly leaning into the various entangled possibilities of the narrative's playing-out, the viewer senses its potential for becoming. Once the viewer has unknown the future, *Life on Mars* is all about the present, it contracts towards the middle. However, this present is not that of Sam's story, which is now as indeterminate as the future. We suddenly feel ourselves to be in the midst of the narrative's unfolding. This attention to the now is not a conceptually blown-up version of *carpe diem*. If the present emerges in the middle, it must come to be in the middle of something. On the one end, the entire past billows up against the unfurling now; what furls in from the other end is futurity, a tendency toward the not-yet. An attending to the present is a

tending-toward the future. Another way of saying this is that to lean into the incompossible potentialities of the now is at the same time to lean into what's next. The important thing to note is that it's the past that prods us into the new: "the Bergsonian revolution is clear: We do not move from the present to the past, from perception to recollection, but from the past to the present, from recollection to perception" (Deleuze 1988a: 63). This pushy past acts as what David Lapoujade calls a "memory of the future," which is also a memory *for* the future (Lapoujade 2010: 21). It is "something which has been present, that has been felt, but that has not been acted" (Lapoujade 2010: 21-22, transl. Manning 2012: 357). It is these recollections of the un-acted which contract and dilate around the present and from which the latter draws its "future explosive force" (Lapoujade 2012: 95, my translation). Contraction (and dilation) of the unlived past around the present instead of its constriction by a concrete future.

By overfilling one concrete image with representational potential, *Life on Mars* creates a relational field of storytelling that makes felt the force of such a memory of/for the future as it edges into the world. Simultaneously, the series affirms the viewer's co-individuation *as viewer* by making felt her own partaking of time-in-the-making. The point is not that, in so doing, *Life on Mars* achieves something unprecedented. Rather, it is to acknowledge that such relational, co-composing becoming happens all the time despite our tendency to unthink-unfeel it. In moving toward the uncomfortable edge of representation, *Life on Mars* undercuts this tendency and emphasizes the form-taking of the representational. Yet, *Life on Mars*'s ethics-in-germ is not simply a matter of self-reflectively becoming aware of what is already going on. It is an ethics of intuition. In the Bergsonian tradition of thought,

> Intuition is the *relational movement* through which the present begins to coexist with its futurity, with the quality or manner of the not-yet that lurks at the edges

> of actual experience. This is art: the intuitive potential to activate the future, to make the middling of experience felt where futurity and present-ness coincide, to invoke the memory not of what was, but of what will be. (Manning 2012: 355)

The figural release from the tensions between representational solutions in *Life on Mars* is a proposition to resist one's reliance on the comfortingly concrete, an invitation for flushing the present with the abstract potentials of the past. It consists in thinking-feeling the unknown as an opportunity to create (rather than as a threat) and in attending to the world's becoming with a sense of care for the not-yet. The challenge is to achieve a maximal holding of indetermination – three uncertain representations in the present case – in order to sense the world's becoming before making sense of it.

Easily said, one might object. It is true that this is infinitely more difficult to do. In order to achieve this, one might have to radically reorient one's way of being in the world. A good way of going about it is to learn from those who already know the difficulties of inhabiting this world. It is no coincidence that the figure of time in *Life on Mars* lifts off from the linkage of two psychosomatic conditions: coma and amnesia/hallucination. The series introduces each of these conditions into its fictional world to give its protagonist a particular scope and quality of temporal experience. Within either representational logic, the protagonist's psychopathologic dysfunctionality corresponds to a specific thought-feltness of time of the protagonist. But, it should also be noted, it is only afterwards, in an anxiety-driven *reaction* to the felt quality of time, that Sam assumes his various attitudes towards the future. In either case, Sam's lived experience of time is limited to one or several of its aspects and his attitude is unproductive. In either case, time is mediated, contained *within* representation just

as, in turn, representation seems to be *in* time as a linearly unfolding container medium. This changes, however, once coma dreams, amnesia and hallucinations are no longer confined within the representational rules of correspondence and signification. *Life on Mars* introduces its doubly psychopathological protagonist so that the viewer, by way of what I've called a figural image-event, can break out of the habitual modes of experiencing and thinking time. What leaks through the porous confines of representation into felt reality is an inkling of the "richness of ontological experimentation" which neurologically diverse conditions allow for and that is barely known to a neurotypical mind (Guattari 1995: 82).[68] The point of such an ethical reorientation can obviously not be to completely relinquish efficient action or, to take up Bergson's vocabulary, to permanently disrupt the sensory-motor schema. It is about minding the gap between perception and movement, about flushing the interval of becoming with creative potential. Guattari's words are key: We need to become sensitive to the richness of the world, an abundance that lies *beyond* concrete reality, spatiotemporal grids and action-oriented schemata. We need not look for an absolute alternative but for a more-than in the well-known. (This also means that there is no point in debunking the said concrete reference points, grids of intelligibility and the action-oriented schemata. It means we're impelled to work around and with them.) If we acknowledge that the future is always in the making as the past contracts and dilates to creatively nudge the present into a not-yet, then we acknowledge that our activity in the world is a matter of experimentation.

68 Deleuze makes a very similar point with respect to cinema in *The Time-Image* when, in an explicit reference to Bergson, he says that "attentive recognition informs us to a much greater degree when it fails than when it succeeds" (Deleuze 1989: 54). Interestingly, the examples of such failures that Deleuze gives include amnesia, hallucination and madness (55). More recently, this shift in perspective, which considers the *potential* of neurodiversity, can also be observed in autism communities and research (see, for instance, Manning 2009: 213-228, Manning 2013: 124-132, 149-171, passim, Mottron 2011).

2.5. Loop-Through

At the beginning of its second season, *Life on Mars* plunges into figural experimentation. The series moves to the uncomfortable edge of representation and recasts the future as the not-yet, as an attention to the present as it tends towards what it will have been. At the same time, *Life on Mars* reactivates the past, the series' first season, by creating an eerie sense of what this past could have been but wasn't at the time (madness instead of coma instead or time travel). Far from being a stable archive, the past is felt as a diagrammatic force that co-composes the future-tending now. *Life on Mars* figures topological time as it makes the audiovisual image encompass more than the presently visible, as sensation exceeds perception, as the present is experienced as a future-past. In this way, the series manages to foreground the creative becoming of the image in a mediascape that conventionally foregrounds the progression of a story. *Life on Mars* thus creates a productive relation between the image and the viewer, who experiences the potential of the (audiovisual) present moment as its pasts and futures fold into it, as it vibrates within a multiplicity of virtuals, to create the next now.

Vector

A book of philosophy should be in part a very particular species of detective novel, in part a kind of science fiction. By detective novel we mean that concepts, with their zones of presence, should intervene to resolve local situations. They themselves change along with the problems. […] I make, remake and unmake my concepts along a moving horizon, from an always decentred centre, from an always displaced periphery which repeats and differenciates [*sic*] them. The task of modern philosophy is to overcome the alternatives temporal/non-temporal, historical/eternal and particular/universal. Following Nietzsche we discover, as more profound than time and eternity, the untimely: philosophy is neither a philosophy of history, nor a philosophy of the eternal, but untimely, always and only untimely - that is to say, 'acting counter to our time and thereby' acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come'. […] We believe in a world in which individuations are impersonal, and singularities are pre-individual: the splendour of the pronoun 'one' - whence the science-fiction aspect […]. Science fiction in yet another sense, one in which the weaknesses become manifest. How else can one write but of those things which one doesn't know, or knows badly?

(Deleuze 1994: xx-xxi)

3. Loop into Line: The Moral Command of Future-Orientation in *Flashforward*

3.1. Knowledge and Thought: From Detective Fiction to Science Fiction

"A book of philosophy should be in part a very particular species of detective novel, in part a kind of science fiction" (Deleuze 1994: xx). Inversely, detective fiction and crime fiction share characteristics of philosophical thought. As I transition from *Life on Mars* to *Flashforward*, it is possible to understand what detective fiction and science fiction can do for philosophy. Deleuze spells it out: "concepts," not unlike a detective, "should intervene to resolve local situations" and produce knowledge (xx). But, Deleuze continues, these concepts change as the problem changes. We have seen in the previous chapter that *Life on Mars* repeats its problem of time three times, each repetition changing both the problem itself and the concepts put to work to resolve it. Moving with the series from representation to a supra-representational figure of time, I have chosen a concept of time understood as the creative becoming of a topological world to explore the *ethical* and *political* implications of future-orientation. The continuous confrontation with the unthought is what opens up a philosophical dimension within science fiction. This unrelenting impulse makes science fiction resonate with philosophy: "How else can one write but of those things which one doesn't know, or knows badly?" (Deleuze 1994: xxi)

Consequently, the transition from the police procedural *Life on Mars* to the science-fiction series *Flashforward* is also a move from a focus on knowledge production to thought and to a lack of knowledge as the motor of thought. It is this lack which makes the relation between knowledge and thought a complex one. For if the unknown *triggers* movements of thought (conditional aspect), knowledge comes with a risk of *stopping* thought. Knowledge, once it has taken form, tends to present itself as *positive* knowledge and obliterates its form-

taking through thought. In other words, this is a temporal problem: the tension between thought and knowledge is that between *process* and *product*. Thinking therefore happens *outside* knowledge (aspect of exteriority). In return, knowledge, to defend its primacy, is constructed as a stable *above* and *below* of thought: a transcendental *above* to be accessed, a truth to be discovered *below* the surface of things. Bergson, as we have seen, tackles this issue when he rejects theories that construe time as an *epistemological* problem and reinvents it as a matter of vitality, that is, of activity and creation (see above, p. 75). In fact, Bergson has to unpack an ingenious twist by which knowledge makes its own becoming disappear: Knowledge as (transcendental) truth to be discovered is safe as long as it is atemporal.[69] To defend such a concept of knowledge, it helps to treat time itself as a problem *of* knowledge: recall that, according to the "mechanistic" conception of time, "all is given." Past, present, and future are equally determined; *we just don't know them* in equal measure (see above, p. 79). By implication, then, the future is merely a truth to be discovered, not to be created. The twist is this: If time is a matter of knowledge, knowledge cannot appear as a matter of time. Knowledge is always already there, waiting to be discovered. As time is thus twisted into a problem of human ignorance, it becomes strangely atemporal. This is why Bergson says that, if we treat time as an epistemological problem and spatialize it, we are "really giving up time" (2001: 98).[70] Or, rather, time conceived as a question of knowledge will feed back into our

69 Recall that "time has always put the notion of truth into crisis" (Deleuze 1989: 130).

70 The following passage from *Creative Evolution* puts these considerations into perspective: "as physics retained of time only what could as well be spread out all at once in space, the metaphysics that chose the same direction had necessarily to proceed *as if time created and annihilated nothing, as if duration had no efficacy*. Bound, like the physics of the moderns and the metaphysics of the ancients, to the cinematographical method, it ended with the conclusion, implicitly admitted at the start and immanent in the method itself: *All is given*" (2007a: 345, emphasis added).

engagements with the world and modulate them. Knowledge, seemingly transcendent to process and experience, "falls back into experience" (Deleuze 1994: 166).[71]

Consider, for instance, the practical problem at the heart of the relation between knowledge and time: your conception of ethics and politics will change according to whether you argue for a deterministic world governed by the *laws* of nature (and in which time is merely an illusion) or for a world of becoming abounding with novelty (in which intellectual certainty is an illusion). The TV series *Flashforward* addresses this problem in somewhat more popular terms: if you think "the future is unwritten," then you can change it and prevent catastrophes from happening.[72] If you think "it's all mapped out," then the future is inevitable and your options range somewhere between defeatism and preempting the future before it can hit you unawares.[73] Prevention *or* preemption, the science fiction of *Flashforward* suggests, are the two materially and therefore politically viable paths. However, as the narrative oscillates between these two options of a questionable alternative, its serial movement

71 The temporality of thought is central throughout Deleuze's œuvre. Consider as an example the following passage from *Difference and Repetition*, in which Deleuze distinguishes between knowledge and learning, the latter being associated with thought: "it is knowledge that is nothing more than an empirical figure, a simple result which continually falls back into experience; whereas learning is the true transcendental structure which unites difference to difference, dissimilarity to dissimilarity, without mediating between them; and introduces time into thought" (Deleuze 1994: 166-167). Dinstinguishing knowledge from power in *Foucault*, Deleuze states: "Knowledge concerns formed matters (substance) and formalized functions, divided up segment by segment according to the two great formal conditions of seeing and speaking, light and language: it is therefore stratified, archivized, and endowed with a relatively rigid segmentarity" (Deleuze 2006a: 61).

72 In *Flashforward*, the proposition that the "future is unwritten" is taken to mean that the present contains a margin of indetermination that allows for creative intervention in the set of relatively determinable chains of causation which lead into the future. It could alternatively be understood to indicate the future as a radically open-ended contingency. However, prevention politics cannot work on the basis of this assumption: in order to counteract or prevent a certain line of events, one has to assume a predictable line of cause and effect leading from the present into the future. This implies a certain amount of determination (derived from the past) without excluding the possibility of willful intervention and accidental or contingent interference.

73 Both citations are from *Flashforward*, season 1, episode 7. Since this show ran for one season only, I will hereafter cite in the body of the text, indicating episode numbers only.

gradually crafts a figure of time that indicates a political dynamic far more disconcerting than a deterministic universe or a world of becoming full of uncertainty: a self-causing future.

3.2. Security and Identity: Begone, Self-difference!

The premise of *Flashforward* is summed up at the beginning of each episode: "On October 6 [2009], the planet blacked out for two minutes and seventeen seconds. The whole world saw the future." Every single person on the planet loses consciousness at the same time, an event that in itself causes the death of more than 20 million people: planes and cars crash, people drown in pools or bathtubs, fall down stairs, etc. But the actual disaster is of a different kind: during the 137 seconds of what will be referred to as "the blackout," people see their own future exactly six months ahead. They experience roughly two minutes of their life on April 29, 2010. These "flashforwards" will cause personal and political crises that threaten to unravel the present. Consider the protagonist Mark Benford. This FBI agent investigating the causes of the blackout is also a recovered alcoholic who sees himself drinking again in the future. His wife Olivia sees herself in a relationship with another man, Lloyd Simcoe, a quantum physicist whose experiments at NLAP may have caused the blackout.[74] Others, like Mark's friend Aaron, have a rosier glimpse into the future: Aaron sees his daughter who was presumed dead. Understandably, Mark and Olivia will do everything to prevent their future visions from

74 NLAP stands for National Linear Accelerator Project and is a fictionalized, Americanized version of CERN's Large Hydron Collider (LHC) situated near Geneva, Switzerland. *Flashforward* is based on a 1999 novel of the same title by science-fiction author Robert J. Sawyer. The novel is actually set in Switzerland; the story revolves around an experiment at the LHC. Another interesting change that occurred in the adaptation from novel to TV show concerns the temporal distance of the flashforward. In Sawyer's novel, people have a vision of their lives *twenty years* in the future. The reduction of this interval to six months is interesting for several reasons. Within the story, the shorter period of six months suggests urgency and asks for immediate personal and political reactions. For my reflections on figures of time, this change is important because it makes the six months of storytime coincide with the duration of the show's run in weekly broadcasts. This also means that the flashforwards at the beginning of the show anticipate the end of the season. Moreover, the show aired from September 24, 2009 to May 27, 2010, and consequently overlaps with the period of time covered in the story. I will return to this eerie sense of temporal immediacy in the following sections of this chapter.

happening whereas Aaron would reunite with his daughter rather sooner than later. To complicate matters, all of these futures are linked in a global ecology of connected fates: bringing about one desirable future might drag another undesirable vision into actuality, or have further, *un*foreseen effects. Prevention or preemption, what will it be? Let the thought experiment begin.

Let's start by pointing out that people on either side of this alternative are similar in one major respect. What brings all the characters in *Flashforward* together – so much so that it becomes one of the series' central themes – is that they are *stunned by their own self-difference*. The show's generalized crisis is produced by the characters' practical insight into the non-identity of their present and future selves. The immediate reaction is an urgent desire to reinstate self-sameness: Mark and Olivia resist change and take measures in order *not* to become what their future visions suggest (i.e. drinking and adulterous divorcees). They want to *stay* the same. In contrast, others who, like Aaron, have had a promising flashforward will take measures to realize their future visions, that is, to make their present selves identical to their future selves. In either case, it is the discrepancy between the present and the future self that triggers panic and euphoria.

Viewed through the prism of a philosophy of creative becoming, the curious thing to note then about *Flashforward* is that the entire world flies into a frenzy at the prospect of self-differentiation. What causes a global turmoil is the idea of change. This suspicion of change couldn't be rooted more deeply in the science fiction of *Flashforward*: the horror of change is directly related to the other big threat of our time, terrorism. *Flashforward*'s villain is – literally – a time terrorist. This identification is interesting for several reasons. On the one hand, it equates terrorism and uncertainty: while it is true that terrorism acts as a force in the

world by virtue of the fear mongering caused by the unpredictable when-and-where of the next attack, *Flashforward* seems to suggest a kind of biunique correspondence by which uncertainty and incalculable change also always indicate terrorism. One the other hand, the shocking threat of change is identified with an individual adversary, the mad scientist Dyson Frost. That the figure of the mad scientist should be cast as a global terrorist further complicates *Flashforward*'s time politics. Besides the obvious implication that scientific knowledge turns into a dangerous weapon once it gets in the wrong hands, the narrative constructs its adversary as a malevolent outsider, excluded by means of a vague notion of 'evil madness.' Note that we are far from Guattari's productive understanding of madness evoked in the previous chapter. Here, madness is not the enabling condition for a "richness of ontological experimentation" otherwise unavailable (Guattari 1995: 82). Instead it serves to *pinpoint* an individual's identity, *exclude* that individual from a discourse of reasonable politics and *motivate* an act of terrorist violence. In a few strokes, *Flashforward* has sketched Dyson Frost, the time terrorist, as the perfect threat to national security and the blackout/flashforward as a "violation of the self-same by an external intruder" (Manning 2007: 52). But the threat to security is not only the mad other from the outside. In addition to Dyson Frost as the terrorist other, the threat to security arises from the differences of 'the self' to itself in time. In fact, the former threat is mainly a means of figuratively capturing and discriminating the latter.

In short, then, change is constructed as a threat to national security. On the level of the individual, the problem is that there will be change. For social groups – from families to the world population – the peril consists in diverging notions of which kind of change is desirable, how fast it should occur, etc. What becomes clear is that the main issue of political contention

in *Flashforward* is time itself. It is relatively clear which strategy must subtend the reaction to such a threat: if change is the threat to national security, then security must be reinstated by preventing change, by reestablishing self-sameness.

Before I pursue these issues, I'd like to complete a first movement of thought that I began to outline at the beginning of this chapter. As *Flashforward* correlates self-sameness and security on the one hand as well as self-differentiation and insecurity on the other, it also constructs an opposition between these pairs that is partly reminiscent of the above-mentioned relation between knowledge and thought. Thought, because it is in motion, carries within itself an element of risk. And because thought in motion is nonlinear, its outcome cannot be predicted. This means that to start thinking is always also to accept the possibility of failure. As long as failure is made to coincide with unproductivity, thought implies danger and incites fear. The stability of knowledge's propositional content, on the contrary, suggests relative security. In *Neuropolitics*, William Connolly suggests that there is "a constitutive element of wildness in thinking [that is] marked by danger" (Connolly 2002: 113). This dangerous wildness results from the fundamentally temporal quality of thought:

> In thinking time is "out of joint," for thinking draws upon nonchronological sheets of past, and it might be nudged in a new or novel direction from the encounter between a sheet of nonchronological past and an uncertain future. Thinking participates in the forking of time because it is suspended in a delicate zone between reminiscence, dreaming, boredom, and action. It is a fragile and vulnerable activity for the same reasons. (Connolly 2002: 98)

Danger, fragility, and vulnerability: these are hard to sell to a population struggling through times of crisis. Connolly nonetheless proposes that we embrace the "*compositional* dimension

of thinking" instead of concealing it to solidify *propositional* knowledge, for uncertainty and risk cannot be separated out in a world of becoming (2002: 92, emphasis added). The proposition is obviously *not* to *discard* stability, security and knowledge for the sake of change, uncertainty and thought in motion. Rather, the question is how the two can be brought together. My contention is that *Flashforward* does bring them together, though not overtly. It *appears* to struggle with this alternative as a self-inflicted binary, a struggle that *shows* in its dual generic affiliation: it is both a detective story and science fiction. The series depicts at the same time the FBI's search for those responsible for the blackout and the consequences of future-orientation in macro- and micropolitical environments. This tension between the *whodunit* and the science-fictional thought experiment leads into two directions: the first is Deleuze's description of philosophical thought quoted at the beginning of this chapter, the second leads to yet another differential, that between the figurative and the figural.

3.3. Imaging the Future

Flashforward's present is precariously suspended between two catastrophes, the blackout and the foreseen future. This suspension strains the present. Instead of past and futurity feeding into the present, they feed on the present, so to speak. As the unfolding narrative tends in both directions, it does however try to hold the two together – by looping the future through the past. While people's flashforwards pull them into the future, they do so as *memories* of the flashforward, that is, "memor[ies] of the future" (ep. 1). We are however far from David Lapoujade's *mémoire de l'avenir* discussed in the previous chapter. Instead of activating the future potentials of the past, *Flashforward*'s memories of the future create an indeterminacy

that threatens to unravel the present.[75] The show begins with a *mise en abyme* that familiarizes the viewer with its logic:

Flashforward opens without a slow establishing shot, an intriguing musical score or any other televisual opening convention. It begins right in the noisy, upside-down middle of the flashforward's aftermath (fig. 1): close-up on a man's head upside down, car horns, ambulance sirens; cut to oranges rolling on the overhead ground, bits of broken glass falling up (fig. 2). As the man works himself into an upright position, the camera zooms out and we see that he's hanging in an overturned car. As the man inspects the surrounding chaos, and we with him, a shaky camera moves aberrantly around him, suggesting vertigo, creating disorientation. Smoke, fire, injured people on what seems to be a freeway. A massive pile-up. *Then* the show's title appears, accompanied by an animated lens flare (fig. 4). Black screen and intertitle: "Four hours earlier" (fig. 5). *Now* we get the most conventional of openings: panoramic establishing shot on the sun rising behind the Hollywood Hills. "Good morning, Los Angeles," the radio says as the birds twitter over an easy piano tune. Cut to suburbian family homes. Cut in on one particular house. Cut

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75 This dynamic is therefore occasionally referred to as a *traumatic* experience. In episode 11, an FBI therapist states: "For the past twelve years my job has been to help people cope by helping them explore their past. But since the blackout that's all changed. The majority of people who are coming to see me are dealing with traumas from their future."

in closer (fig. 7-9). A loving couple – we recognize the man hanging upside-down in his car – is starting their day (fig. 10).

Considering the conventions of broadcast television (after all, this is ABC), the contrast couldn't be more startling. Within two minutes, *Flashforward* has sunk its hooks into the viewer, who wants to know what it is she just *saw*, what it is that is *going to* happen. It is worth noting that this proleptic glimpse of an imminent narrative future has become a stock technique of serial television. It creates suspense, pulls the audience in and pushes toward the future. More importantly however, the future is already a memory, bound to repeat itself.

As the second opening sets out to catch up with the first one, *Flashforward* takes up speed until, just before the blackout, it offers one of its most interesting montage sequences. The sequence cuts rapidly between Mark who is caught up in a car chase (*FBI oblige*) and his daughter, asleep at home, plus her babysitter who sneakily makes out with her boyfriend in the downstairs living room and Olivia, who preps for an operation just as Aaron, also at work, climbs up an electric pole while Olivia's doctor colleague Brice skips work to blow a bullet through his brain at the beach, where surfers ride the waves. In fact, the way in which this sequence holds together a complex and shifting reality is not unlike riding with a wave that forcefully pushes you into the not-yet. Just when you

think that the wave might break, that the image might trip over its abundance of information, cut to agent Benford's iris: zoom-in to sounds of maximum acceleration (scr. 11-15). Welcome to Mark Benford's future vision: blurry, shaky images of Benford in his office, investigating the blackout, drinking; jump-cuts in between. Add double exposures, lens flares and color filters. 11

This concurrence of future visions, suspended consciousness and post-continuity editing lead Patricia Pisters to consider *Flashforward* an "interesting contemporary example of a neuro-image (with movement-image tendencies) that is told from the point of view of the future" (Pisters 2011: 111). Pisters proposes her concept of the *neuro-image* as a continuation of Deleuzian film philosophy, correlating it with Deleuze's philosophy of time in *Difference and Repetition*. If the movement-image, grounded in the first synthesis [76] of time, produces a sensory-motor present and the time-image, grounded in the second synthesis of time, activates the past, Pisters suggests, 12 13 14 15

76 Deleuze conceives time as a process that is continuously reproduced by the three passive syntheses of time, the first concerning habit and the perception of the present, the second concerning the in-folding of the past as memory, the third concerning the out-folding into the future (Deleuze 1994: 70-128). The main point to keep in mind here is that time *qua* process is not given but *com-posed* ('*syn-thesized*') out of three co-creating dynamics: the first synthesis which contracts a present through habit, the second which continuously adds the past to the mix, and the third which pulls the processual mix into the future. In one of his lectures, Deleuze repeatedly formulates a synthesis as a "mise en rapport" [putting in relation] (Deleuze 1978).

then the neuro-image can be related to the third synthesis of time which continuously culls a next now by in- and remixing the first two syntheses (102-106, see also Pisters 2012: 137-140).[77] In addition, the cinema of the neuro-image is "a mental cinema that differs in major ways from previous dominant modes of filming" (111). Pisters detects that the preoccupation with the future in contemporary moving-image narratives correlates with a new interest in issues of consciousness, neurological processes, and madness. These observations allow Pisters to describe "a change in cinema, where we slowly but surely have moved from following characters' actions (movement-image), to seeing the world filtered through their eyes (time-image), to *experiencing directly their mental landscapes* (neuro-image)" (110, emphasis added).

It is on the issue of direct experience, of *immediacy*, that I part ways with Pisters. While it is true that *Flashforward* uses jump-cuts, shaky cam, unusual camera angles, double exposures, fast editing, lens flares and color filters to image agent Benford's brainspace and to create a sense of disorientation, uncertainty, and urgency, the experience of *both* the future and mental landscapes remains utterly mediate (or indirect). The visions in *Flashforward* may be "image[s] from the future" but they are first of all images *of* the future (111). And we are far from Deleuze's notion that "the brain is the screen": what Benford's future vision and the many to follow give us is, once more, a screen that is an *image of* the brain (Deleuze 2006b: 282-291).[78] In the following section, we will see that this insistence on the figurative prevents an engagement with the figural movement in *Flashforward*. Moreover, it disregards the moral

77 "The neuro-image belongs to the third synthesis of time, the time of the future" (Pisters 2012: 140).

78 In my view, one of the limitations of Pister's theory of the neuro-image consists in the fact that she is ready to accept the mere representation of "mental landscapes" or quasi-synaptic connections as instances of the neuro-image.

and political affiliations of the show. If the neuro-image still confines us within the figurative, then where is it that the bubbling of a figure can be sensed?

Consider once more the first eight minutes of the series's pilot episode building up to the global blackout/flashforward. It is here, in this *unmotivated* temporal loop, that the conditions for a figural movement are set. The show *begins*, as I said, right in an uncomfortable *middle*. The image – possibly upside-down, certainly lacking narrative framing, shaking and noisy – is unmoored. It is then retrospectively given a conventional, stabilizing frame (establishing shots, musical score, cut-in). But as the intertitle ("four hours earlier") introduces retrospection, it also makes us acknowledge that the previous sequence was as an instance of prospection. The orderly second opening of *Flashforward* is already infused with our memory of the future. It is therefore useless to try and decide (in narratological terms) whether we are now looking back into the past or ahead into the future. As we learn how the future-now-past comes into being, retrospection has already inevitably folded into prospection. I speak of *our* memory of the future and *us* anticipating the future through a memory of it because this opening sequence gives us one of the shows' few unmotivated flashforwards, that is, one that is *not* mediated as the future vision of a character within the fictional world (Mark Benford et al.). The difference is crucial. For most of the series' subsequent flashforwards – much like the conventional flash*back* – create closed circuits anchored in a future-remembering subject. Such circuits branch out from the narrative's linear progression, but ultimately return to it. In fact, the extrinsic circuit of the motivated flashback/-forward oftentimes serves as an explanation of the (future-)remembering subject in the present: "character *x* remembers seeing incident *y* in his or her future vision and *consequently* does *z* in the present." In this sense, the flashforward fortifies the rational connections of the plot and

"confirms the progression of linear narration" (Deleuze 1989: 48).[79] This is not so in the case of the black screen and the intertitle (fig. 5).

> [T]he black or white screen stands for the outside of all the images, when the flickerings multiply the interstices like irrational cuts […], when proceeding by loops effects relinkages […]. The film does not record the filmic process in this way without projecting a cerebral process. A flickering brain, which relinks or creates loops – this is cinema. (Deleuze 1989: 215)

So, instead of moving *into* someone's headspace (for instance, through agent Benford's eye, fig. 11-15), instead of accessing an image *within* the image, instead of adding to the image's 'interiority' or narrative 'depth' in this way, the black screen takes us outside of the image, "of all the images." The before and the after are not "stacked" into each other by means of a dissolve-link or a zoom-into-eye ushering the viewer into a character's memory (of the future). They are disconnected, in juxtaposition, divided by a black screen, the outside of all images. That the images are disconnected does not mean that they don't relate. On the contrary, it is in the interstice of the outside that a relation emerges, a "relation-of-nonrelation."[80] The relation of times takes off from the outside of the black screen. Pre-articulated as it is, the relation must be unseen, that is, nonsensuously sensed as it comes into effect. Sensed by whom, this time? The viewer. What takes off from the disconnect between juxtaposed images is a relational field that involves the viewer, is in fact co-effectuated by her. That is why the future vision at the very opening of *Flashforward* is "ours," directly experienced as a differential relation of

79 This is one of the reasons why, for Deleuze, the recollection-image and the dream-image are *not yet* time-images.

80 See Massumi 2011a: "Elements contributing to an occurrence come into relation when they come into effect, and they come into effect in excess over themselves. In themselves, they are disparate. If they are in tension, it is precisely as a function of the differential between their positions. It is as a function of their distances from each other. The factors do not actually connect" (20).

times. Following the passage from the *Time-Image* cited above, it is here – in the outside of the image, the 'irrational cut,' the 'relation of nonrelation,' the unmotivated rift in time – that moving images "project[] a cerebral process." At this point, it also becomes clear, by way of Massumi's notion of "relation of nonrelation," *why* the projection of cerebral processes must come into effect *outside* or in between images. It is because a relation does not coincide with the elements composing it. It *exceeds* the concrete coming-together of its elements just like a cerebral process exceeds the concrete group of brain cells that effectuate it. This *qualitative leap* – lift-off, excess – beyond brain matter is precisely the 'miracle of consciousness' that neuroscience tries to account for (as yet without success). It is therefore not inside the image, that is, in a concrete representation of "mental landscapes," that we come to understand the correlation between cinema and thought. The screen is a brain long before (and already beyond) the "neuro-image."

The future vision is ours. But, it is worth repeating, we do not see the future *as* the future. We come to know that what we saw is a future when we are already back in the present (past?). The future is unseen. Nonetheless, our retrospective return to the past is already tinged with prospection. This prospective retrospection is a first sensation of time's intensity. It can be said that this is what comes into effect in excess of the mere juxtaposition of images in a feeling of *suspense*. This kind of suspense does not obey a logic of revelation; it arises neither from the detective story's *What has happened?* nor the thriller's *What will happen?* but from the intensive layering of the two in a what-will-have-happened? Catastrophe will have struck, this much we know. Instead of pulling us towards the production of knowledge, suspense here draws us into a zone of indeterminacy. What is felt in this zone is the ubiquity of self-differentiation:

> Suspense is the experience of an intensive embodiment, the body's own propensity to become other in time. Suspense thus names a technic for an attentive awareness to the minor form of difference that (re)constitutes a body in time, a feeling of futurity immediately impinging on the body's stability and reopening it to intensive relationality. (Thain forthcoming)[81]

Sensing the will-have-been of prospective retrospection, we feel both the no-longer and the not-yet of experience in general. This felt suspension in the future-pastness of experience – possibly uncomfortable – creates an "attentive awareness to the minor form of difference." As Thain points out, such an awareness makes the future appear not as a predetermined event, but as futurity, which is here understood as the *forces* calling forth the minimal-multiple inflections of reality that co-compose change, the topological foldings of a becoming world. It is precisely because the future is no longer conceived as a concrete state of affairs but as the not-yet in-the-making that it is not *in* the image. Co-composed *by* the image, the felt awareness of futurity in the opening sequence of *Flashfoward* comes into effect in excess over the image and, consequently, sense perception. It is an unseen figure of time. The ethico-political stakes of these considerations are inscribed in Thain's formulation of a "*technic* of an *attentive* awareness." A future that lies beyond the representationally determined is one whose playing-out must be relationally composed through an attending to the forces at work in the production of the next now. It is worth repeating that this concept of attention is not the commonplace of 'ecological awareness' or 'positive thinking' in disguise, nor is it a matter of 'paying attention,' of keeping your eyes and ears open (see above, p. 105). It demands a technics, which I have previously discussed as a coupling of technique and technology (see above, p. 10). In other

81 In her forthcoming book *Bodies in Time*, Alanna Thain proposes a thorough rethinking of suspense.

words, attentive awareness calls for ways of living-with technology that allow us to extract an ethics from the media formats of everyday life.

At the beginning of *Flashforward*, the above-mentioned technique – juxtaposition of images, foregrounding of the interval, forceful lift-off of a figure of time, the coming-into-sensation of futurity as a co-composing of the not-yet – consists in familiarizing us with suspension in the face of catastrophe, not for the purpose of desensitizing us to the shock of calamity but, on the contrary, to resensitize us to the continuous stirrings of a complex reality full of potential. If we can learn to detect points of bifurcation and resonances that lie *beyond* representational determination but still *within* the relational field of living-with serial moving-image narratives, we can also begin to carve out a space in which an ethics of attention can take hold and lead towards a creative co-composing of the world. *Such an ethics is politically relevant because it makes it possible to think and act beyond the* false alternatives *of an "all-mapped-out" and an "unwritten" future, of an anything-goes and determinism.* These alternatives are "false" in two senses: first, because the two terms of the alternative are *not* mutually exclusive options. They *work together* and, as we shall see, contribute to the effective preemption of a future vision. The second aspect of 'falsehood' concerns precisely the *creativity* of this supposed alternative. For what emerges from the mutual falsification of one by the other is an authoritative politics that justifies its world-*making* by insisting that "there is no alternative." In the following section, we will see how this works in *Flashforward*.

Let's note for now that we are on the track of another way of imaging the future, one that acts before or beyond the mere representation of false alternatives because it is *immediately* felt. *Flashforward* gives us a "feeling of futurity" at its very beginning. I have called this a *mise en abyme* in passing earlier on. Perhaps it could be more adequately called a

mise hors abyme in light of the above. At the very beginning of a 22-episode season, *Flashforward* plays out its larger narrative scheme in a figural miniature before that scheme can be apprehended as such. The figural and the figurative seem to work together: once we know what is at issue in *Flashforward* – concrete future visions –, the figural miniature activates the six-month interval of the story arc. It prepares us to attend to the stirrings in between the two moments in time. Another attempt at making felt the intensity of the not-yet consists in *Flashforward*'s layering of story time and "real time." The period of time covered within the story nearly coincides with the period of time in which it first aired (see above, note 74). The six months in question are not any old half-a-year; they're *this* time, my time. One may discard this as a science-fiction gimmick – as simple as it is frequent. And, indeed, from the viewpoint of narrative analysis, there is not much more to state than the quasi-simultaneity of two distinct timelines. But if we think the figural as a (nonlocal, immaterial) connector between the figurative, fictional world and the "real world," we can conceive an affective intermingling of the two – in fact, not so linear – temporalities. The threefold technique of the *mise hors abyme* that preempts the general *loop* of the future through the past in a *layering* of temporalities effectuates a contraction of time around my present. *Flashforward*'s future visions infuse reality with a sense of urgency despite the *known* fact that the witnessed events are signed with the *as if* of fiction. Fictional time, figurally felt, comes into resonance with my very own experience of time because sensation disregards the dividing line between fiction and reality.

At its beginning, then, *Flashforward* goes to some figurative and figural lengths to open up the interval, to make felt the potential that the future-pastness of becoming holds and that allows for creativity in the world. This is also the beginning of a series of experiments

with attention and with techniques for making time. However, the response to the interval in *Flashforward* consists in setting off a movement that aims at closing the interval by hook or by crook.

3.4. Self-causing Future Visions

Closing the interval of becoming has the purpose of foreclosing attention. Please do not mind the gap, for your own sense of certainty and protection! Isabelle Stengers suggests that "as soon as 'development' or 'economic growth' are in question," and I would add national security here, "the injunction is to by all means not pay attention" (Stengers 2009: 75, my translation). For paying attention, in the sense of attending, "requires the ability to resist the temptation to judge" (76). Inversely, not paying attention leads to hasty judgment. Judgment in return stops the development of an ethics of immanence. This precipitation of captures unfolds as the figurative recuperates the figural.

If the interval of uncertainty and experimentation must be closed by all means, the suspense *Flashforward* seeks to create can no longer be of the intensive kind. The figural must be in service of the figurative, which caters to the kind of suspense that follows a logic of revelation. In order to produce positive knowledge, imaging must be confined to the order of representation. This does not mean that the asignifying dimension of the image disappears but, rather, that it is subordinated to the principles of representation. While future-orientation initially drives the movement of the image itself *as a movement of thought*, this dynamism is soon arrested to obey the represented content of the image. Each temporal movement – back or forth in time – is deeply and securely rooted within the story and, instead of contributing to the lift-off of a figure, remains a mere ripple on the surface of the image.

The flattening of temporal folds is at its most conspicuous in the ways in which conventional flashbacks halt the incipient movement of the image. After the initial time loop from the opening scene, the great majority of the nonlinear temporal movements of the series will be flashforwards that are moored to one or another character within the story. Oftentimes, people will recall their future visions and start retelling it before the image becomes that remembered flashforward. This kind of framing, which says "here comes the past (or future)," is well-known from conventional flashbacks.[82] On other occasions, the flashforward may not be *explicitly* framed as for example when Mark Benford conceals the vision of his relapse into alcoholism from his wife and fragmented images of his drinking cut into his concealment efforts. Here the return of the future is psychologically motivated as a bad conscience; the seemingly unmarked intrusion of the future vision is in fact the mark of secrecy. The future returns as a memory to *explain* the despair, surprise, and deceitfulness of the present. It can be said, then, that the anachronisms in *Flashforward* are highly conventional in that they serve to plausibly advance a linear plot. In his suspicion against an overhasty, general appraisal of the flashback, Gilles Deleuze writes:

> But we know very well that the flashback is a conventional, extrinsic device: it is generally indicated by a dissolve-link, and the images that it introduces are often superimposed or meshed. It is like a sign with the words: 'watch out! recollection'. It can, therefore, indicate, by convention, a causality which is psychological, but still analogous to a sensory-motor determinism, and, despite

82 For conspicuous examples of this, see Ingrid's flashback in ep. 8 (17'30") or Charlie's recollections in ep. 17 (1'48").

> its circuits, only confirms the progression of linear narration. (Deleuze 1989: 48)

The same holds for the flash*forwards* discussed here. We can thus reformulate in Bergsonian and Deleuzian terms: While the global future visions "unravel the present," that is, disrupt the sensory-motor schema of action-reaction, the narrative itself imposes measures to reinstate sensory-motor determinism, that is, to guarantee certainty and security. This is not a performative contradiction but an ethico-aesthetic program.

Reinforcing a sensory-motor schema is an *ethico*-aesthetic act because it ties perception and action closely together in order to reduce that which occupies the interval between the two and which enables an ethics of attention: affect (Deleuze 1986: 65, Deleuze 1988b: 27 passim). The ability to affect and be affected is synonymous to the potential for self-differentiation in a world of becoming. To acknowledge this is to acknowledge one's involvement in a complex topology. And: "The more delay built into the link between perception and action […], the more the memories that form part of it can become recollections open to further reflection and assessment" (Connolly 2002: 28). This conceptual starting point of the delay (interval, suspension) makes it both possible and necessary to think *how* such a topology is going to play out according to the force relations at work within it. An ethics of attention is an ethics of immanence because what it attends to and works through are "immanent criteria" and values. "A possibility of life is evaluated through itself in the movements it lays out and the intensities it creates on a plane of immanence" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 74). This means that, in contradistinction, a 'possibility of life' is not evaluated with reference to transcendent, that is, preexistent and immutable values. The distinction between an evaluation through immanent criteria on the one hand and preexistent values one

the other is correlative to the distinction between an ethics and a morality (Deleuze 1988b: 17-29).

When *Flashforward* reduces the temporal interval by making it commensurable with linear narrative progression, when it makes future visions subservient to (psycho)logical determination, when it asks us "not to pay attention" to the interval's indeterminacy and focus on efficient action, it discards an ethics of immanence in favor of moral judgment. It does so by casting the image of the future as the arbiter of the present. Firmly relying on the unambiguous content of its images, *Flashforward*'s movement between the present and the future is nothing less than a circuit of value judgment, in which the future determines the moral integrity of the present. For this to work, it is crucial that secure knowledge and judgment be closely linked to one another *and* to the representational aspect of imaging. What you see is what you get is what you deserve, *Flashforward* seems to suggest. Unless you check your conduct and make the necessary choices for a serious "course correction" (ep. 19). This is what the false alternative of an all-mapped-out and an unwritten future deliberately facilitates in concurrence with prospective retrospection: a morality of command. *Be good, otherwise…* This conservatism is not a latent ideology of *Flashforward*; it is frequently made explicit and endearing even, for instance in references to the character of Ebenezer Scrooge from Charles Dickens's *Christmas Carol* (ep. 10 in particular): flashbacks into Christmas Past explain how Scrooge turns into a reckless miser just like visions of Christmas Yet to Come explain his sudden transformation into Tiny Tim's benefactor. In fact, rather than just explain it, the visit of the ghost of Christmas Yet to Come *brings about* this transformation by instilling regret, bad conscience and fear. The hero of a morality tale is the rehabilitated sinner – but, mind you, "rehabilitated" only because he fears he can't get away with egoism and

cruelty. As a consequence of closing the interval of an uncertain future-past of potentiality, *Flashforward* relates the "not-yet" less and less to the notion of creative becoming and increasingly identifies it with a determinate Catastrophe Yet to Come, a future which serves the purpose of a moral instance. Moral righteousness is backformed from the fear of the future.

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The efficiency of the future as moral instance increases with the apparent precision and integrity of the *knowledge* of that future. This is because, the more complete and precise the information is, the more attention this information will draw from self-doubting sinners who seek release from the unbearable torture of not-knowing what will be. (And in the case of *Flashforward*, that is everyone.) Moreover, as the future is revealed in all its complexity and precision, the moral judgments that the knowledge of the future carries within acquire an overwhelming evidence. The future must therefore be determined, represented, mapped – in short: mediated. *Flashforward* abounds with diagrams and illustrations of the future (scr. 16-21). Various models are called upon to suggest the future's inevitability: mechanic devices to calculate dates (scr. 16), lines of falling dominos (scr. 17),

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and a (rather un-Borgesian) "garden of forking paths" (scr. 18, episode 17). Consequently, a main goal of the investigating FBI agents is to determine the inevitable future in various maps, webs and mosaics (scr. 19-21).[83] The "Mosaic Collective" for instance is a network database which allows individuals to enter their own vision and link it to others in order to corroborate their future knowledge. *Flashforward*'s mosaic is not a Deleuzian diagram which affirms the creative aspect of immediate participation in a field of complex relations. This database is an epistemological tool for rational decision-making – for the future must be meticulously determined before it can be embraced or rejected, preempted or prevented. Each experience, each sensation of the future must be globally synchronized with all others: *con-sensus*. Through the notion of con-sensus, I take up what Brian Massumi describes as "affective attunement" (2005: 32) and what Paul Virilio calls the "Communism of Affects," the "synchronization of emotions," and "the globalization of shared emotions" (2010: 62; 2012: 30).[84] Even before taking this notion any further, it can already make us understand why the

83 Here it becomes evident why *Flashforward*'s garden of forking paths is not the same as the one Borges describes. *Flashforward*'s version maps *many* individuals' determined and intersecting trajectories in *one* map of the future. Contrarily, Borges suggests that *one* individual can have *many* different (incompossible) futures and thereby emphasizes the indetermination and potentiality of each present: "In all fiction, when a man is faced with alternatives he chooses one at the expense of others. In the almost unfathomable Ts'ui Pên, he chooses – simultaneously – all of them. He thus *creates* various futures, various times which start others that will in their turn branch out and bifurcate in other times. […] *The Garden of Forking Paths* is a picture, incomplete yet not false, of the universe such as Ts'ui Pên conceived it to be. Differing from Newton and Schopenhauer, your ancestor did not think of time as absolute and uniform. He believed in an infinite series of times, in a dizzily growing, ever spreading network of diverging, converging and parallel times. This web of time – the strands of which approach one another bifurcate, intersect or ignore each other through the centuries – embraces *every* possibility" (Borges 1962: 98 and 100).

84 And as in *Flashforward*, for Virilio this constant surveillance, even of the future, through the database is not unrelated to the LHC (the fictionalized NLAP in the series): "Just like the elementary particle at the heart of Geneva's Great Accelerator – the Large Hadron Collidor – we will not only be 'filed,' but tracked […]" (2010: 13).
It is worth noting right away that, while I agree with Virilio's *description* of the contemporary political landscape and its intentional creation and administration of fear, I do not share his *explanation* for this situation which largely relies on his concept of the "futurism of the instant" and the related notions of an exhausted chronodiversity and atemporeity of the present (2010: 72). In the introduction, I have laid out my reasons for rejecting the "atemporeity argument" from a film-theoretical viewpoint (see above, p. 7). In what

database logic must not be rashly associated to Deleuze's third synthesis of time and an "impure regime of images" in a celebration of the "neuro-image."[85] The database in *Flashforward* makes common cause with a very pure regime of orderly images and a morality of command. This is important because stating that *Flashforward*'s database "present[s] the countless possible variations of the future" is not only wrong inasmuch as, in fact, the series *re*-presents *one con-sensual* global future (Pisters 2011: 112). But, more than that, celebrating the database disregards the politics of this kind of imaging the future.

It is these politics, not the moral conservatism of the show, that remain latent and that are concealed even more by a celebratory evocation of the neuro-image. The disempowering cruelty of *Flashforward*'s future-orientation consists in occupying its characters and viewers with the false problem of knowing whether "the future is unwritten" or whether "it is all mapped out" while it slowly but steadily imposes the future it foretold. Worse: the future causes itself. This movement is first introduced as an interesting gimmick of the story. As early as in episode 2, we meet a pot-smoking, unemployed slacker who, after the blackout, applied to become an airport customs official because he saw himself working as such in his flashforward. In another secondary plotline, window-cleaner Timothy becomes a motivational trainer and founds the religious self-improvement forum "Sanctuary" because that's what he saw himself doing in his vision (ep. 11). This pattern is repeated with a twist in episode 14, in

follows, it will become clear why I refuse this argument from a political vantange point as well (see below, p. 137, esp. note 88).

85 See Pisters 2011: "This filmic image, that could be called the neuro-image, is connected to the impure regime of images typical for the database logic of the digital age" (98). Also: "Contemporary culture is driven by databases, from which time and again, new selections are made, new narratives can be constructed, in endless series. As Manovich explains, this does not mean that the database is only of our time: the encyclopaedia and even Dutch still lifes of the seventeenth century follow a kind of database logic. It is just that with the seemingly endless storage and retrieval possibilities of digital technology, the database seems to become a dominant cultural form. And it allows very explicitly for endless series of new combinations, orderings and remixes of its basic source materials, which on a temporal scale matches the characteristics of the third synthesis of time, the future as eternal return" (109).

which the Somalian militia leader Abdi Khalif founds the "Better Angels," an organization fighting to improve the condition of the Somalian people. The twist consists in the fact that Abdi Khalif is killed despite his promising future vision, thus "proving" that the future can be changed. At the same time, however, Khalif's death is a cause of fear for those around him, including the investigating FBI agents because "this was not supposed to happen." Changing the future is *by right* possible; however, it is also considered a *de facto* threat by the institution charged with guaranteeing national security. I could list further cases of flashforwards *effectively* and *preemptively* causing the predicted future, as when Mark Benford saves a hostage because his flashforward contains the information on how he will have saved this hostage (ep. 12). But the example that probably illustrates best the self-sufficiency of the future concerns the very foundation of *Flashforward*'s plot: the main reason why the FBI team around Mark Benford is appointed chief investigator of the blackout is that, in Benford's future vision, he was chief investigator of the blackout (ep. 5).[86] This means that the series does not simply unfold towards its ending, *an* ending. The entire story of *Flashforward* seems to have been *caused* by its specific, foretold ending. If there is something terrorizing about *Flashforward*'s experiments with time, it is this strange quasi-identity[87] of cause and effect, in which the future directly imposes itself as the present. This means that the future is *mediated* only so that its anticipation can have an *immediate* self-instantiating effect in the present. If

86 Consider also the remarks of his sidekick Dmitri in the pilot episode ("No More Good Days"): "This is kind of insane. I mean we're running point on all this because he had a vision of us running point on this?"

87 Massumi 2005: "A future cause is not actually a cause; it is a virtual cause, or quasicause. […] One of the reasons that its causality is quasi is that there is a paradoxical reciprocity between it and its effect. There is a kind of simultaneity between the quasicause and its effect, even though they belong to different times. Threat is the cause of fear in the sense that it triggers and conditions fear's occurrence, but without the fear it effects, the threat would have no handle on actual existence, remaining purely virtual. The causality is bidirectional, operating immediately on both poles, in a kind of time-slip through which a futurity is made directly present in an effective expression that brings it into the present without it ceasing to be a futurity" (35-36).

Flashforward emphasizes the concrete "visions" and models of mapping, it is because they are the pragmatic conditions of the future's self-creation. As mediators of billions of mutually confirming and reinforcing flashforwards sustaining a cycle of self-causation, they are 'only' the fulcrum that "leverages the future" *now* (Massumi 2011b: 82).[88]

It is worth pointing out the difference between this self-causing cycle and the more conventional self-fulfilling prophecies as can be found in cases as old as Sophocles' *King Oedipus* and as recent as Rian Johnson's *Looper* (2012). In the latter cases, the prophecy of doom will eventually come true and – that is the ironic twist – this does not happen *in spite of* the hero's efforts to prevent the predicted catastrophe but *because* of everything he or she does. Such a course of events can be explained conceptually with a strong notion of destiny or, in the modern logic of time travel, by way of including the pronunciation of the prophecy within the predicted course of events.[89] In either case, the elaborate measures taken to prevent the prophesied events from happening are precisely those that bring about these events. The case of *Flashforward* is different in that it adds a layer. There are, as we've seen earlier in this chapter, active struggles for and against a certain future. But there are also these self-causing cycles, in which a future is *unquestioningly* adopted as soon as it has been glimpsed. Mark Benford immediately starts investigating the blackout because he saw himself investigating the

88 Paul Virilio calls this the "futurism of the instant […] the imposture of immediacy, which excludes all expanse just as it does all true duration" (2010: 25). This harsh indictment is an appealing criticism of contemporary politics. But it comes with two theoretical disadvantages: 1) it associates the futurism of the instant with a lack of chronodiversity (Virilio 2010: 71ff., 2012: 88-90) and an increasing monochronicity (1997: 28). It can therefore not account for the temporal *complexity* of preemption. 2) As a consequence, it must describe the 'instant' and 'immediacy' as inherently detrimental to chronodiversity. I prefer to reactivate these concepts, in particular that of the immediate, in a less critical and more productive way (see above, p. 14).

89 That is what time travelers or the recipients of prophecies rarely consider: that whatever the prophecy predicts is the course of events *including* the prediction *and* the time traveler's reaction to it. That's why, at the end of many a time travel narrative, the protagonist is surprised at the fact that all her efforts were to no avail and unexpectedly led straight to catastrophe.

blackout and thereby brings about an aspect of the future another aspect of which he tries to prevent. This uncritical, unhesitating, *inattentive* transposition of what will or could be into what *is* indicates the ontogenetic power of future-orientation. It also belies an inability to conceive of a future event as the effect of a variety of co-conditioning factors.[90] However, since the constant debate about the mutability of the future in *Flashforward* does not go beyond the distracting and banal opposition between determinism and free will, the autogenesis of the show's ending, which *combines* the two terms of the opposition, easily goes unnoticed.

Going beyond this opposition requires attention. Once this overall movement of self-causation is attended to, it becomes clear that the present in *Flashforward* is entirely backformed from the characters' future visions. The eerie, overwhelming affective tone, which resonates from (but in spite of) the show's heroic fight for national security, is the result of this utterly disempowering certainty: the future no longer shows itself for humans to either submit themselves or counteract. The science-fictional thought experiment points beyond these two strategies to a future that only mediates itself to instantly cause itself. The interval of the future-past has been consumed by a future-already-present. It is in this *double* function of the mediated future – as an overt instance of moral judgment and as the latent, instant creation of a new reality – that the politics of *Flashforward* are founded.

3.5. Politics: Get in timeline!

The conclusion on future-orientation to be drawn from *Flashforward* is twofold and correlative to this double function of the flashforwards in the show. The first part of the

90 Within the example that I have just recalled, this means that Mark Benford is unable to consider that his investigation of the blackout might be one of the factors that effectuate his relapse into alcoholism. I will return to this notion of nonlinear 'causality' in the next section.

conclusion concerns the flashforward's moral imperative and resistance to change while the second addresses the concurrent and immediate inflection of reality produced by future scenarios.

Discussing *Flashforward*, Melissa Ames suggests that the show carries a "didactic message: changing the past/future is something to regret" (Ames 2012b: 119).[91] Ames nonetheless detects a certain ambivalence in the way this message is conveyed: *Flashforward* "go[es] so far as suggesting that each person has the ability to control his or her own destiny" but "simultaneously urge[s] viewers to steer clear of hopes that they might fully control the future" (121). While I agree with Ames' conclusion concerning *Flashforward*'s ambivalence, I find it too uncritical, as it does nothing more than reformulate the above-mentioned false alternative between determinism and an open future. I think it is fair to ask for a more detailed conclusion as to the politics of such "cautionary tales" as *Flashforward*, especially when they are classified as "post-9/11 television" (114, 111). What kind of political and ethical practice am I to cull from the sad double injunction that I can "control" my future but not "fully"? Is this an ethics of a little bit of agency? "Changing the past/future is something to regret." What does that even mean in pragmatic terms if we accept that science fiction is a contemporary site for philosophical engagement? In other words, what is the relevance of such a didactic message in a world in which time travel presumably doesn't exist anyway?

To discern the politico-aesthetic significance of this statement, we must rethink it outside the logic of time travel. If we fail to do so, we assume once again that the past and future pre-exist human and nonhuman activity and that, therefore, they *are there* to be

91 In this paper, Ames also studies the TV shows *Heroes* and *Fringe*. I quote from her conclusion on all three shows.

modified or "changed." This confines thought within the conceptual framework of metric, calculable time. If, however, time is conceived as a creative becoming, in other words: as *change itself*, then the dictum acquires an interesting redundancy: The regrettable act would consist in changing change. This is not a meaningless play on words. For the ethics of time pursued here, to "change change" is to inflect an already self-differentiating world. Another word for the change of change is *life*. "Life is something to regret"? That can't be right.

And yet this is the direction in which *Flashforward*'s didactic message leads, thereby challenging an ethics of time. It implies a distinction between a right and a wrong or regrettable thing. This dictum takes us right into a morality of command, whose value judgment on an individual is correlative to that individual's conformism to the laid-out blueprint of time. The future in that blueprint makes its own demands and requires specific actions: the "right" thing to do is to follow the road map, to get in line, in timeline so to speak. To avoid at all cost: hesitating before acquiescing, paying attention, intervening, and *making* time. Let's talk "post-9/11," as Melissa Ames suggests. In an infamous speech to the US Congress and the American people held on 20 September 2001, George W. Bush laid out a clear road map for post-9/11 US policies:

> Our response involves far more than instant retaliation and isolated strikes. Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen. It may include dramatic strikes, visible on TV, and covert operations, secret even in success. We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another, drive them from place to place, until there is no refuge or no rest. And we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to

> terrorism. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. (Bush 2001)

Either or. There is no in-between. And not just any either-or but that between just defense – which, in one big sweep, is made to include "isolated" and "dramatic stikes," a "lengthy [battle] campaign" as well as "covert operations" – and *terrorism*. There is no middle ground and therefore no reason for hesitation. *Or* … are you with the terrorists? I thought not. You have made the "right" choice and, incidentally, co-determined the future. The pre-determination of a (rather disastrous, as we now know) decade of politics is made to correspond to a moral choice that is also a moral judgment. On the one hand then, the dictum that "changing the past/future is something to regret" is a call for conformism, an injunction to get in timeline and stay put. Fear seems to merely reinforce this dynamic. But fear and threat are not simply added to the mix. It is *through* a massive mobilization of fear or what Massumi calls a "spontaneous mass coordination of affect" that the threat and our response to it are collectively felt into existence (Massumi 2005: 33).

This leads into what seems to be a paradox or contradiction. For, if *Flashforward* tells us that "changing the past/future is something to regret" just like Bush makes it clear that whoever messes with his road map is "with the terrorists," hasn't he in the same breath created that very road map, hasn't he just effectively changed the present and future? He has – and that is the latent power of preemption politics. The imposition of a future politics – generated by really-felt fear, enforced by a morality of command, and correlative to conformism – is a creative act. We "will *define* our times, not *be defined by them*" (Bush 2001, emphasis added). Instead of calling this a paradox inherent in *Flashforward* and preemption politics in general, we might more productively conclude that we have reached the limits of the dictum that

"changing the past/future is something to regret." Not only does it fail to explain part of what is going on in contemporary politics or in *Flashforward*, namely that those who give out this dictum respect it least. It *conceals* this fact, which is why it is not politically innocent. What seems to be a paradox or performative contradiction is better referred to as a *duplicity*. Yes, there is only one (henceforth) immutable reality, one reliable truth. And yes, this truth has been created. Because the latter affirmation produces the former and the former conceals the latter, because, in short, they enfold one another, we can think of them as a topology.

Let me say this again, differently:

If *Flashforward*'s visions (just like Bush's) have made one specific future entirely possible, this possibilization should be read in two ways. On the one hand, it can be understood as a creative achievement drawing on the ontogenetic force of fear, the successful crafting of *a* possible future. (After all, *others* – terrorists? – might try to "define our times" and impose their will. Executing your own creative vision can be quite a challenge.) But the possibilization of *a* future is also depotentializing to the extent to which it creates *only one* possible future. *Flashforward* makes palpable why, as I have suggested in the previous chapter,[92] possibilities aren't good enough. Possible futures are prescriptive, regulating, controlling. As this aspect of preemptive politics remains latent and is therefore easily missed, the road maps drawn by Bush and *Flashforward* are easily accepted as the only 'responsible' course of action. Correlatively, to say that *Flashforward* is didactic in that it suggests "changing the past/future is something to regret" cannot be an adequate response because it

92 See above, p. 94. I recall the relevant passage in Massumi 2002a: "Possibility is back-formed from potential's unfolding. But once it is formed, it also effectively feeds in. Fedback, it prescripts: implicit in the determination of a thing's or body's positionality is a certain set of transformations that can be expected of it by definition and that it can therefore undergo without qualitatively changing enough to warrant a new name. These possibilities delineate a region of nominally defining – that is, normative – variation. Potential is unprescripted. It only feeds forward, unfolding toward the registering of an event: bull's-eye" (9).

neglects the above-mentioned duplicity all over again, a duplicity that consists in a continuous tinkering with the future so that it is felt to be inevitable. The only productive way of engaging *Flashforward* as "post-9/11 television" is to foreground this topological duplicity of a politics that deliberately inflects reality in order to stall further, potentially contesting inflections of it, in short: to produce consent.[93] It is productive because it creates attention to the asignifying movements of the narrative that even a critical focus on didacticism is bound to ignore.

We cannot ignore this because political strategists, especially neoconservatives, understood it long ago. Yes, they might easily agree, *Flashforward* succeeds in suggesting that "changing the past/future is something to regret," in luring us into resignation, into a morality of command, and into a prescriptive politics of consent. We know the refrain: *There is no alternative!* But, creative strategists might insist, the principal question then becomes: *how* does the show do that? What are techniques for depotentializing the present in one's favor? *Flashforward* does this first of all, as we have seen, by looping a mediated future through the present to directly impose a con-sensual road map. Loop into line. The show's figural movement reinforces and disappears into its figurative subject matter. Or, to restate this in Connolly's terms used earlier, the compositional dimension of *Flashforward*'s temporal movement buttresses the series' propositional content at its own expense. In this way, a politics of mediation thwarts the attention to the *immediately* political.

We can productively engage with *Flashforward* because this new focus of politics makes itself felt to the attentive in the series' overall movement and the imaging forces that animate it. In other words, to attend to the series' ways of making time is to learn how to look differently. This chapter has tried to suggest such a different way of looking at *Flashforward*.

93 In Virilio's terms, one might say that the "hygiene of Time" covers up a "war of time" (2010: 102).

The wager is that, even if you have seen the series and have *not* seen what I suggested here, and that, *if* you go see it (again), you cannot help but see what I have suggested. In the more general context of an ethics of attention, however, the focus must be less on the techniques of foreclosing potential lest we remain in the realm of the possible, the mediate, con-sensus, and morality, lest the seeming certainty of knowledge stop movements of thought. We must look for techniques for harnessing the immediate potential of the present and understand it as an invitation, a challenge rather than a threat.

We can begin to understand this challenge by considering an aesthetic figure that appears at the beginning of *Flashforward* and that, not incidentally, is also as a conceptual persona for Deleuze and Guattari: the surfer.[94] The figure is interesting because a wave, like affective politics, is topological, by which I mean that it is a heterogeneous reality which self-differentiates in nonlinear and co-causal processes. Deleuze opposes surfing to the old sports which place a self-contained body in a stable Euclidian space. As an example of an old sport, consider a gymnast on a gymnasium floor: the task is to learn a series of deliberate and regulated movements on a flat, horizontal and stable surface for the purpose of exact repetition in a competitive context. In a competition, the quality of a gymnast's performance is evaluated by her conformity or deviation from an ideal execution of the movement. In surfing, on the contrary, the "ground" is ever-shifting which requires a singular energetic response from the surfer at every moment. This means that no surf ride is the same and that a surfer's

94 "And if today our sports are completely changing, if the old energy-producing activities are giving way to exercises that, on the contrary, insert themselves on existing energetic networks, this is not just a change in the type but yet other dynamic features that enter a thought that "slides" with new substances of being, with wave or snow, and turn the thinker into a sort of surfer as conceptual persona: we renounce then the energetic value of the sporting type in order to pick out the pure dynamic difference expressed in a new conceptual persona" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 71). The conceptual persona of the surfer also appears in "Mediators" (Deleuze 1995: 121-134) and the "Postscript on Control Societies" (177-182).

performance cannot be evaluated with reference to the ideal execution by her self-contained body. The surfer, in order to stay afloat, must continuously adapt to a dynamic spacetime in constant modulation. This makes her the conceptual persona of the control society (Deleuze 1995: 180).

Neoconservatives have understood how to harness the dynamic potential of preemption and affect, thereby "riding the surf of 9/11" (Massumi 2011b: 75). It is unlikely that a successful resistance to such politics will consist in stepping outside this new dynamic. Since there is no way of *knowing* how a certain 'cause' will effectuate nonlinearly, we have to *move with* thought and affect. "The key thing is *how* to get taken up in the motion of a big wave […] 'to get into something' instead of being the origin of an effort" (Deleuze 1995: 121, emphasis added). In the following chapter I want to suggest techniques for surfing the image. The key is not control, but com-position.

Vector

Control societies are taking over from disciplinary societies. […] Money, perhaps, best expresses the difference between the two kinds of society, since discipline was always related to molded currencies containing gold as a numerical standard, whereas control is based on floating exchange rates, modulations depending on a code setting sample percentages for various currencies. If money's old moles are the animals you get in places of confinement, then control societies have their snakes. We've gone from one animal to the other, from moles to snakes, not just in the system we live under but in the way we live and in our relations with other people too. Disciplinary man produced energy in discrete amounts, while control man undulates, moving among a continuous range of different orbits. *Surfing* has taken over from all the old *sports*.

(Deleuze 1995: 178, 180)

4. *Damages* as Procedural Television

4.1. Psychosocial Types: From Detectives to Lawyers

At the beginning of the previous chapter, I suggested thinking through the shift from detective to science fiction. The movement of thought in this chapter takes off from a shift in psychosocial types from the detective (or FBI agent) to the lawyer. Unlike *Life on Mars* and *Flashforward*, *Damages* is a legal drama set in the world of civil litigation. Each of its five seasons revolves around one civil lawsuit, in which Patty Hewes (Glenn Close) and her associates try a major corporation to obtain compensation for damages incurred by their clients. Consequently, *Damages* is not predominantly concerned with a criminal act itself or with a criminal charge brought against a defendant. (In the series' first season, for instance, Hewes brings a civil class-action against a corrupt CEO who has already been *acquitted* of criminal charges in a government trial.) *Damages* focuses on the area of the legal system in which justice is quantified in economic terms. The shift, then, is not simply from the police procedural to legal drama. It leads us more specifically from offences against individuals, society and (national) security to the financial interests of opposing private parties.

Although all the preemptive narratives discussed in this project revolve around issues of crime and justice, they enable different reflections on future-orientation depending, among other aspects, on their generic affiliation and dominant psychosocial type. But how is crime fiction and its detective different from a legal drama like *Damages* and its litigator? To make this question the catalyst for this chapter's argument, I propose a short excursion into basic legal theory and its relation to knowledge production.

As is well known, the burden of proof in a *criminal* case lies with the investigating tribunal. Since the accused is presumed innocent until proven guilty, the investigator or

prosecutor needs to produce substantial evidence that proves the defendant's culpability "beyond reasonable doubt." Only then can the defendant be convicted by the established standards of the criminal code. This strong principle for the burden of proof corresponds to the injunction to produce knowledge in crime fiction: the detective or investigator pieces together the evidence required to leave no doubt as to the culprit's identity. Though the crime cannot be undone, one can be sure that, in a police procedural, the truth will be discovered and justice will be done. That is why Raymond Chandler could say that "the detective story is a tragedy with a happy ending" (Chandler 2000: 117). It is not a coincidence, then, that the police procedurals of my corpus, *Life on Mars* and *Flashforward*, tend to foreground the production of secure knowledge to enforce the law, to reestablish order after a (future) shock.

The matter is quite different in civil litigation and *Damages* as, for a civil claim to be successful, one does not need to prove a defendant's guilt beyond reasonable doubt. The dominant principle for the burden of proof in civil law is called "preponderance of the evidence" or "balance of probabilities," which means that it suffices for the proposition of the defendant's fault to be *more likely than* the proposition of his or her innocence. As a result (and to cut litigation costs), opposing lawyers will perform a balancing act around the mark of 50 % likelihood, always trying to be one step ahead of their opponent.[95] This also means that the burden of proof can shift: there "are no hard-and-fast standards governing the allocation of

95 For a brief summary of the matter, see USLegal.com: "In a criminal trial the burden of proof required of the prosecutor is to prove the guilt of the accused 'beyond a reasonable doubt'. In a civil trial, the plaintiff must prove their case by a preponderance of the evidence, which translates to a 51% likelihood that all the facts necessary to win a judgment as presented are probably true" ("Burden of Proof").
See Posner 2011: "The burden of persuasion rests on the plaintiff for the main claim but the defendant for affirmative defenses […], and the burdens of production are allocated accordingly" (826). For the balancing effects on litigation costs, see Kobayashi and Parker 1999: "both litigants expend resources to alter the probability of prevailing," which leads to "equilibrium amounts of litigation expenditures [which] depend upon the relative stakes of the parties, and upon the relative merits of the case" (5-6).

the burden of proof in every situation" ("Keynes vs. School District No. 1"). In the legal fiction of *Damages* this translates into the accepted reality that the truth itself doesn't matter. "What matters is whose truth plays better" (*Damages*, season 5, episode 3). In addition to determining whose truth plays better, the aim of civil litigation is to establish the *degree* of damages caused by a defendant, which corresponds to the amount in monetary compensation.[96] This *gradation* of a case's financial stakes, the *ambiguity* of the standard of proof and various other idiosyncrasies of U.S. tort law contribute to making American civil litigation much more flexible and "business-friendly" than other tort law systems or criminal law. The result is what socio-legal studies call "adversarial legalism," that is, a "uniquely aggressive and *creative*" legal style with "more *complex* bodies of legal rules" and "more legal *uncertainty* and *malleability*" (Kagan 1997: 166-167, emphasis added).

I begin with such technicalities because they allow for a better understanding of the different stakes of police procedurals and legal dramas like *Damages*. As business-oriented, adversarial litigation diverges from crime prosecution, so the litigator diverges from the detective as a psychosocial type: the detective, a staple of Western literature since the 19th century, defends the social order, his methods being those of observation and identification (via fingerprints, DNA traces, etc.). He – for in the early literary tradition, the detective is male – represents the state's executive power, that is, he *enforces* dominant social values codified in a society's laws with the aim to arrest and punish a criminal. By way of this

96 Interestingly, this happens in relative disconnection from the strict epistemic requirement to establish someone's criminal fault within the binary options of 'guilty' and 'not guilty.' In fact, although defendants may have been exonerated of criminal charges (as is the case in the series' first season), they can still be subject to claims for damages in a civil lawsuit. I speak of a "relative disconnection" because the verdict in a criminal case obviously has an impact on the civil lawsuit: a criminal conviction will make claims for damages almost inevitable. However, and this is my point, an acquittal does not guarantee immunity from civil claims.

correlation between surveillance, knowledge production, and punishment through imprisonment, the detective can be associated with what Foucault calls "disciplinary societies" (Foucault 1995: 135-169). The civil litigator, on the other hand, has no interest in defending a social order. She – for in *Damages*, the two main civil litigators are female – is interested only in defending the legal and financial interest of her private client. Patty Hewes inserts herself in the law not to uphold it but to stay ahead of her opponent, to slightly tip the scales of Lady Justice in her favor. Therefore, Patty's methods do not produce certain knowledge; they serve to *create probabilities and cast doubt*. And since each piece of evidence can tip the balance of probabilities in one direction or the other, persuasion must always be laboriously wrested from opposing testimonies, knowledge management, delaying tactics, and evasion strategies. In short, while the detective enforces the law, the litigator outplays it if necessary. Thus, if the detective belongs to the disciplinary society, the lawyer is a psychosocial type of what Deleuze calls "control societies" (1995: 169-182).

Such societies "no longer operate by confining people but through continuous control and instant communication" (Deleuze 1995: 174). Instead of measuring and punishing people using a disciplinary standard (enforced in spaces of confinement such as prisons, the military, hospitals, factories and schools), the control society pits people against one another, thereby engaging them in a constant competition that enhances productivity even further.[97] It is

97 Deleuze explains this logic in references to wage politics and currency values. With respect to the former he says that the "[f]actories [of the disciplinary society] formed individuals into a body of men for the joint convenience of a management that could monitor each component in this mass, and trade unions that could mobilize mass resistance; but businesses are constantly introducing an inexorable rivalry presented as healthy competition, a wonderful motivation that sets individuals against one another and sets itself up in each of them, dividing each within himself" (Deleuze 1995: 179). With regards to currency values, he argues that "discipline was always related to molded currencies containing gold as a numerical standard, whereas control is based on floating exchange rates, modulations depending on a code setting sample percentages for various currencies" (180).

impossible in such an environment to figure out *one single* way to proceed because the control society sweeps its members up in a process of "*modulation*, a self-transmuting molding continually changing from one moment to the next" (178-179). From this perspective, the litigator is to the detective worker as the surfer to the gymnast (see above, p. 144). Since control comes with ever-shifting and increasing requirements, the qualities valued in this new environment are performance, competitiveness, and flexibility.

Damages takes us right into the mechanisms of such a social dynamic, in which private companies – that is, powerful law firms and wealthy corporations – engage in legal action for breathtaking compensation claims and in which whoever outdoes the other in a race for the more probable truth wins. Since just the slightest advantage can help gain a competitive edge, secrecy, knowledge management and manipulation count among the litigator's most important techniques.[98] This engagement in the *creation* of truths produces a final important difference in *Damages* between detectives or public prosecutors and litigators. Whereas the detective figure *represents* the social order and the prosecutor is oftentimes cast as a mediator between the accused and the law, the civil litigator in *Damages* is *immediately* involved in a battle of her own. The lawyers in this series continuously run the risk of exposing themselves to their enemies, for the enormous financial stakes of each case can warrant the most destructive acts of violence against them. Civil litigation in the U.S. is "costly, complex, uncertain, and *threatening*" (Kagan 1997: 170, emphasis added).

98 Deleuze's understanding of the control society resonates strongly with Kagan's account of U.S. adversarial legalism, which is "expensive and hard-to-control" (165), "more party-influenced, less hierarchically-controlled" (167), more "open[] to new ideas" (168), "so costly [that] lawsuits can be used as purely strategic weapons" (169), and – as I referenced above – infused with "more legal uncertainty and malleability" than other national systems (167).

Ellen Parsons (Rose Byrne) is the lawyer in *Damages* whose professional and private safety is constantly in danger. The precariousness of her situation is central to the series and clearly marked at the very beginning of the first season: the narrative preempts its season finale and, more specifically, Ellen's shocked, demolished body only to show us that "6 months earlier" she is a self-confident and personable law school graduate about to be hired by a law firm (scr. 1-3). As in *Flashforward*, the preempted future is catastrophic but, while *Flashforward* presents a *global* disaster that affects people *circumstantially*,[99] *Damages* is more radical in that it reduces an organized body – prim and put-together – to a shivering, blood-smeared, barely covered frame. It is significant that the series chooses a female protagonist whose body bears the marks of time and thus goes against the odd timelessness of the detective's or action-hero's (hyper)masculine body.[100] This atemporal masculinity relates to notions of reason, determination, persistence, and constancy: qualities ascribed to the law and social order themselves. The turn away from such a male body and towards a precariously "time-sensitive" female body in the context of a legal economy further

99 Recall that, in *Flashforward*, people's lives are changed in the future inasmuch as they find themselves living in unexpected *circumstances*: Olivia is with another man, Aaron's bemoaned daughter is alive.

100 The atemporality of the male hero can be observed in various genres. Consider the sober professionalism of detectives from Sherlock Holmes to Columbo, whose dedication to the profession forecloses any personal development or private obligation. The *James Bond* film series requires a new actor every three or four films to warrant an eternally middle-aged secret agent. In the superhero genre, which is equally related to questions of social order and justice, the hyper-masculine body of Superman is forever thirty-something years old. On these issues, see Atkinson 2008, Eco 1972, 1982, and 1985.

underscores that justice has become a matter of modulation. Unlike *Flashforward*, *Damages* never asks whether the future is "unwritten" or "all mapped out": the preempted ending will have been what it was. Instead, the series' movement through time is interested in *how* one must insert oneself into a precariously metastable reality in order to modulate it in one's own favor. In other words, *Damages*'s figure of time concerns *techniques* for navigating the interval of becoming.

4.2. Opening the Interval: Indeterminacy and Close-ups

Each of the show's five seasons revolves around a single case inspired by a real-life event. In season one, Patty Hewes and Associates take on a case that is modeled on the 2001 Enron scandal and which opposes her to the corrupt CEO Arthur Frobisher (Ted Danson). For ulterior motives, Patty hires Ellen Parsons who gets caught in the line of fire between Hewes and Frobisher. The second season's defendant, the fictional corporation UNR, is based on several environmental cases and the 2000-2001 energy crisis in California due to market manipulation. While season three is a clear adaptation of the 2009 financial scandal surrounding Bernie Madoff, season four showcases the controversies of the military-industrial complex, focusing on the private security firm High Star, a fictionalized version of Blackwater. The fifth and final season is based on the legal and ethical disputes around Julian Assange's WikiLeaks. In this way, *Damages* inscribes itself explicitly in the recent political and economic context of the United States, in which financial markets, information and communication technologies, and even energy supply and military intervention have become increasingly privatized. As a result, even basic services within a society (e.g. the provision of electricity) as well as international politics (e.g. warfare) obey the rules of private financial interest in a deregulated market. Most importantly, however, *Damages* stages the fact that the

juridical system that evaluates the injustices of such an environment – that is, the damages induced and incurred between private parties – is itself a sector of competitive capitalism. The lack of an external standard by which justice is administered makes evident that a theory of morality and its immutable laws is inappropriate for thinking the mutual and ever-shifting modulation of "persons" (including, as we know, corporations) within control societies. *Damages* therefore proposes that in order to obtain "justice" in such a system, you have to enter the movement, you have to become what you fight. This is why Patty Hewes is just as corrupt as her corporate opponents. This is why she can be at the same time the protector of small people and the immoral violator of the law. Whether you are celebrated as a hero or convicted for "fraud, conspiracy, [and] obstruction of justice" is a question of minor differences, a question of how well you move (s. 1, ep. 13). "What matters is whose truth plays better" (s. 5, ep. 3).

In light of the above, one might say that civil litigation (like the control society in general) is a "[s]mooth space [which] is precisely the space of the smallest deviation," a field that is constantly being reterritorialized by *minor* differences that can shift the *entire* spatio-temporal configuration (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 371). And, indeed, the cinematography of *Damages* begins and repeatedly returns to the "smooth space par excellence," the sea (479). At the beginning of the series and at the end of *every* season, Patty Hewes can be seen standing on a pier in front of open water; in later seasons, once Ellen has abandoned the morality of the law for the constant modulations of the control society, the protégée will be at

Patty's side (scr. 4-10).[101] While the two characters may not literally be moving with the surrounding waters like the afore-mentioned surfer, their association with this element is telling. The aesthetic framing of the sea indicates that these litigators begin and end not so much by dealing with the hard-and-fast 'facts of the case' but by cutting into a "vectorial, projective, or topological" field to 'bend the facts,' 'make moves,' 'play angles,' and 'build a case' (1987: 361). Trying a new case is like facing unknown, shifty waters, in which navigable routes must be explored and laid out for the first time. And the *return* to the sea in each season is crucial to understanding the modulatory field of civil litigation that *Damages* spreads around its protagonists. Each case requires that a clear line be drawn between the lawful and the unlawful so that justice may be administered. The smooth must be temporarily "striated," that is, gridded, parsed, measured, and mastered. But the subsequent return to the smooth is just as important insofar as it enables the continuous variation that is the driving force of the control society. After their temporary striation, the "sea, then the air and the stratosphere, become smooth

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101 Screenshot 4 is from the *pilot* episode of *Damages*. All the other screen captures are taken from the *final* episodes of season 1 (screenshot 5), 2 (scr. 6), 3 (scr. 7 and 8), 4 (scr. 9), and season 5 (scr. 10).

spaces again, but, *in the strangest of reversals, it is for the purpose of controlling striated space more completely*" (480).[102] Complete control requires that every new situation come with new requirements. Minor differences and smallest deviations have no precedents.

To say that success or failure in the control society is a question of how well you move in the topological spaces of the smooth and the striated is to say that it is ultimately a matter of process, of time. In civil litigation, *Damages* suggests, information, truth and justice are always sensitive to re-smoothenings and re-striations or, in one word, "time-sensitive" (s. 5, ep. 1).

It is thus no coincidence if one of the most remarkable stylistic features of *Damages* is its movement through time. Each season begins in the future and preempts a final disaster associated with physical violence in the form of a shocked, immobile, or disorganized body, an accident or a deliberate act of violence (scr. 11-15). After two or three minutes, an intertitle marks a time leap of six months into the past (scr. 2). This moment will henceforth be the present that slowly but gradually moves toward the foretold ending. This process of catching up with the future is regularly interspersed with additional glimpses of the future, usually at the beginning or ending of an episode. With respect to the preempted ending and the time frame of six months, the general narrative scheme of *Damages* is not unlike that of

102 For contextualization, see Deleuze and Guattari 1987: "This is where the very special problem of the sea enters in. For the sea is a smooth space par excellence, and yet was the first to encounter the demands of increasingly strict striation. The problem did not arise in proximity to land. On the contrary, the striation of the sea was a result of navigation on the open water. […] A dimensionality that subordinated directionality, or superimposed itself upon it, became increasingly entrenched. / This is undoubtedly why the sea, the archetype of smooth space, was also the archetype of all striations of smooth space […]. The sea, then the air and the stratosphere, become smooth spaces again, but, in the strangest of reversals, it is for the purpose of controlling striated space more completely. The smooth always possesses a greater power of deterritorialization than the striated" (479-480).

Flashforward.[103] The foretold ending suggests urgency in the face of future disaster while the temporal layering of fictional and "real" time playfully engages the viewer in a similar way.

The crucial difference between the two series is that, unlike *Flashforward*, *Damages* does not predominantly mediate the future through character perspective. Instead of using conventional flashbacks or flashforwards, the different moments in time are juxtaposed directly, without any mediating device. *Damages* thus chooses the kind of temporal movement that *Flashforward* opens toward at the very beginning of its season but quickly discards in favor of a more stable *mediation* of the future through flashforwards. In the previous chapter, I have argued that such an unmediated time differential in conjunction with the black screen and intertitle open an interval from which an unseen but sensible *relation* of time lifts off as a figure of time (see above, p. 124).

103 It is worth repeating that the period of six months is clearly chosen to make the story-time coincide with the broadcasting schedule of one season, which stretches out over the same period of time. When the channel FX did not renew *Damages* after its third season, the show was picked up by DirecTV for its channel Audience Network. It was subsequently decided that the fourth and fifth seasons would be shortened to ten episodes each with fewer breaks in the broadcasting schedule. Accordingly, the period of story-time covered in the last two seasons of the show was reduced to three months each so that it would still coincide with the schedule of broadcasts.

In *Damages*, the *direct* juxtaposition of as yet unconnected moments in time has two contrasting effects. On the one hand, it disconnects each image from character perspective and, thus, from problems of sincerity, bad conscience, impaired memory, etc., which plays an important role in *Flashforward.* By emptying its narrative of all mediating devices, *Damages* accords all images the same ontological status, neutral, detached, and at all times reliable.[104] In other words, the propositional content of each image is true 'beyond reasonable doubt.' They are therefore 'objective' and truthful images. On the other hand, the lack of mediation loosens the link between the 'present' and 'future images' among each other. Although the relation between them is marked by the intertitle "six months earlier" as one of *anteriority/posteriority*, it remains otherwise unqualified. As a result, the interval between the present and the will-have-been abounds with indeterminacy. There is no evidence as to *how* the two true propostions, present and future, relate to each other or how the former will evolve into the latter. In creating these two contrasting effects – the image's propositional transparency and compositional opacity –, *Damages* poses the question of the *how* of experience, of *qualitative* becoming. If every image in *Damages* is truthful and yet highly disorienting, it is because their truth is itself sensitive to time, because "time [puts] the notion of truth into crisis" (Deleuze 1989: 130).

This contrast between an impersonal image with reliable content and its inscrutability is central to the temporal movement *Damages* invites. The series makes use of a variety of tools and techniques to draw attention to this disparity and thereby further emphasizes a sense for the indeterminacy of the gap between present and future. One of the most important among

104 Even though *Damages* does in later seasons introduce conventional flashbacks and dream-images, these are always clearly marked and, in this sense, the image never 'lies.'

these techniques is the close-up. Unlike *Flashforward*, which proposes an action-heavy detective/science-fiction plot, *Damages* is a legal thriller about dissimulation and manipulation. Accordingly, the most momentous scenes in the show are conversations with numerous instances of shot/reverse-shot and a conspicuously frequent and sustained use of the close-up (scr. 16-23).[105] Interactions in *Damages* are about saving face or losing it. Not incidentally, the pokerfaces we see belong to some of the most recognizable actors in recent American film and television, including Glenn Close, Ted Danson, Marcia Gay Harden, John Goodman and many others: they stand out but say nothing.

This does not mean that they are void of expression. On the contrary, it is because they try at all times to remain utterly impassive, that the minutest movement in these distinctive faces can effectuate a considerable affective charge. Because a mere flicker of fear or weakness in the controlled face of Glenn Close is suggestive of exposure, uncertainty, and disarray, the close-up foregrounds the character's potential to affect and be affected in an environment of secrecy. The crucial point however is that, while the close-up in *Damages* comes with such an affective charge, it allows no immediate discharge into action or resolution. For a pokerface will not let you know what might happen next.

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105 The clearest example of the sustained close-up is doubtlessly the opening scene of season two. The extended version of this scene, revealed in the final episode of the second season, is a conversation of about ten minutes, predominantly in medium close-up and close-up.

Thus, as it creates and *sustains* a delay within the sensory-motor schema, that is, between the perception-image and the action-image, the close-up makes felt the not-yet. A face in permanent close-up is continuously *about to* take action.

In addition to this, the close-up, by reducing the in-screen content to a face and out-of-focus background, creates a maximum of off-screen content. This does not mean that it cuts the face off from the out-of-field. On the contrary, it "*abstracts* [the face] from all spatio-temporal coordinates" and thereby releases potential (Deleuze 1986: 96, emphasis added).[106] The most evident example from *Damages* is once more the opening scene of the second season, in which Ellen Parsons (in persistent close-up) speaks to another person whose identity will only be revealed halfway through the season (see above, note 105). Until then, this scene is repeated and continued with variations *without* ever making use of the standard editing technique that this conversational situation would require: the reverse shot. More than any other example, this scene uses the close-up to create indeterminacy and thereby evoke the potentialities of the situation. For the viewer is invited to alternately consider all the possibilities of who

106 On the relation between abstraction and potential, see above, p. 81. I recall briefly that, following Massumi, "abstraction" is taken to be "synonymous with an unleashing of potential" (Massumi 2002a: 33).

might be sitting opposite Ellen Parsons. More importantly, she is invited to hold all of these possibilites at the same time, to balance probabilities.

In these two senses, the close-up in *Damages* is a technique for a *holding of potential*. It lodges itself *between* perception and action and *delays* the switch-over from the former to the latter. This stretch of the sensory-motor schema defers the linear continuation of the story and creates an *intensive* sensation of the potentialities that the story holds in that very moment of delay. This capacity of the close-up is the reason why, for Deleuze, it is the prime example of the affection-image, which he also describes as being "potentiality considered for itself as expressed" (1986: 98). *Damages* proliferates these delays to foreground potential, to emphasize neither what has happened nor what is going to happen but what *can* happen.[107] The close-up achieves this because it is at the same time overdetermined (by recognizable faces and their distinctive features) and underdetermined (contextually and compositionally). This means that the faces in *Damages* are completely exposed and utterly opaque at the same time. This very contrast within each close-up invites the viewer to examine it for its potentialities. This notion of examining the interval of a delayed present is central to the way in which *Damages* moves *through* the interval.

4.3. Through the Interval: Trajectories and Plot Twists

The above-mentioned 'intensive sensations of potentialities' have already – albeit briefly – been addressed in the previous chapter with reference to Alanna Thain's distinction between two logics of suspense: one that tends towards a revelation or production of knowledge, the

107 In the passage in question, Deleuze also relates the close-up and affection-image to C. S. Peirce's notion of Firstness which describes "qualities or powers considered for themselves, without reference to anything else, independently of any question of their actualization" (1986: 98). Secondness describes what one thing is "in relation to a second" (98). Deleuze's point with respect to the close-up is similar to mine: the close-up is a Firstness without a Secondness, it lacks a clear relation and thus pulls into awareness *all* of its *potential* relations.

other which creates an "attentive awareness" for the "intensive relationality" of the present (see above, p. 126). I want to further pursue these two logics as well as the *dynamic between them* in order to think the figural movement through the interval that *Damages* proposes.

Thain's distinction roughly corresponds to Brian Massumi's distinction between *suspense* and *expectation*. The latter "depends on consciously positioning oneself in a line of narrative continuity" and pulls the expecting viewer along the projected timeline (Massumi 2002a: 25). Suspense, which Massumi also relates to intensity, is triggered by "nonlinear processes: resonation and feedback that momentarily suspend the linear progress of the narrative present from past to future" (26). It should be pointed out that expectation and suspense are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are two aspects of the same moving-image narrative. "[S]uspense could be *distinguished* from and *interlinked* with expectation as superlinear and linear dimensions of the same image-event" (26, emphasis added). In light of this, the relation between expectation and suspense can be seen as a reformulation of the way in which I have characterized the relation between the figurative and the figural. While the figurative encompasses the representational content of the image and drives the narrative's linear, extensive unfolding, the figural goes beyond the figurative (without abandoning it) to make felt the intensities of time, which the preemptive narratives I discuss achieve through nonlinear loops, etc. This means that the figural and suspense do not exist without the figurative and expectation.

Damages makes a very particular use of this interrelation between the figurative and the figural, between expectation and suspense, between thinking and feeling. As we have seen, *Damages* does not break the sensory-motor schema but *delays* it, for instance in its conspicuous use of the close-up. But – given the direct juxtaposition of moments in time

without any mediation, that is, ontological hierarchization of times – the general narrative scheme of the show itself can be considered a magnified version of the delayed sensory-motor schema. The viewer therefore rightly assumes that both the present and the future she views are immutable realities and part of the same continuous storyline. In this way, *Damages* insists on linear narrative progression. The viewer can *expect* that all of the shows events will lead to the foretold ending she saw at the beginning. I recall that this is not the case in *Flashforward* where the characters' future can be changed and their initial future *visions* can thus be *falsified*. *Damages* does precisely not allow for this kind of 'actual' falsification and thereby imposes a constraint that *Flashforward* struggles against: the future has already happened. Insofar as the narrative must lead to the foretold future, a functional sensory-motor schema is the most important enabling constraint for the figural movement in *Damages*.

In this sense, the narrative is tightly constructed from movement-images that lead to the end in a linear way. But if *Damages* is one big movement-image, its sensory-motor schema is stretched out across the six months from the exposition to the final outcome. All we *know* is that the sensory-motor schema *will have been* functional. In the meantime of the interval, however, the preempted ending serves a quite specific purpose. The "six-months-later" scenes are repeated and expanded in each episode of a given season. Continuously reminding the viewer of what will have happened, these scenes pull her attention beyond the immediately next action-image into the undetermined in-between. In this way, *Damages* relentlessly catapults expectant thinking into prediction mode. And since the narrative is based on the principle of the movement-image, the viewer is right to ground her thinking in the triad of perception-affection-action and project possible narrative trajectories leading toward the end. The preempted ending in *Damages* is a technique for harnessing expectation and making the

viewer trace lines through the interval. This is why the examination of both the present and the future (in close-ups, for instance) is so important. It helps sharpen one's capabilities of constructing plausible scenarios that bridge the gap between the present and the future.

This is where another technique comes into play to inflect expectation into suspense: the plot twist. In itself, the unexpected narrative turn is an established narrative device and linked to notions as old as red herrings or the McGuffin. In concurrence with the above-mentioned techniques already in place, however, the twist helps effectuate a figural movement in *Damages*, precisely because it pits the *unexpected* against expectation. The twist falsifies the projected narrative trajectory and throws thought back into the not-yet. But expectation immediately kicks back in and asks for a new scenario to be constructed. Consequently, a new trajectory will branch off from the initially anticipated line of events. The plot twist has become a bifurcation point. The plot twist as bifurcation point is fundamentally different from Deleuze's flashback as bifurcation point (1986: 47-55). Recall that, for Deleuze, Mankiewicz is "undoubtedly the greatest flashback author," in whose films several flashbacks fork time and create a multiplicity of recollection circuits. The result is "a fragmentation of all linearity, perpetual forks" (Deleuze 1989: 49). Thus, in the case of the flashback (or flashforward), forks of time are first of all associated with a *decomposition* of linear narrative progression. This is not so in *Damages*: linear time is decomposed from the very beginning without however providing a perspective to channel (i.e. linearize) the disjunct moments in time. This is the very premise of the show's narrative scheme. Hence, linearity is not actually there to be fragmented; what is *actually there* is fragmentation waiting to be linearized. Significantly, though, this alignment of past, present, and future is not immediately actualized but 'merely' expected, projected, and thereby held in potential. It is this *potential* trajectory, which *could*

actualize, that is forked and doubled. Thus, if the foretold ending triggers expectation to *compose* a possible timeline across the interval, the function of the plot twist is to *recompose* potential.

This, then, is what distinguishes the plot twist as bifurcation point from, for instance, Mankiewicz's flashback as bifurctation point: it does not fragment the actual, but recomposes potentials on the edge of actualization. This perspective allows for a qualification of the plot twist in *Damages* and in serial TV fiction more generally with respect to a more conventional reversal of events, peripeteia, or other pivotal discovery. In, say, a feature-length film, the major plot reversal oftentimes reorders the events rather late in the narrative and produces a *surprise ending*. In serial television, besides occurring towards the end of a season for instance, plot twists repeatedly intervene in the long middle, across all episodes of one season. In this position, they *permanently* remix the possibilities that the narrative holds within and *continuously* reactivate expectation. In *Damages*, the proliferation of twists creates a very specific dynamic in conjunction with the foretold ending. One twist by itself forces the viewer to create a second branch as an alternative line of events leading to the preempted outcome. But as twists proliferate, so do the branches of potential trajectories. Each twist stalls linear projection, splits it and re-infuses it with potential, leaving an ever-denser thicket of branches between the present and the future. The expectant back-and-forth through the interval becomes an intensive sensation of the interval's potential.

Now think of this thicket as what David Lapoujade calls a "memory of the future" (2010: 21). I have referred to this concept in the two previous chapters, first to introduce the term with respect to *Life on Mars*, then to distinguish it from *Flashforward*'s literal "memory of the future" (see above, pp. 106 and 118). It is *Damages* however which gives us a marked

sensation of how the memory of the future tends into the not-yet by reactivating the past in the present. It is worth repeating that this memory is the repository for "something which has been present, that has been felt, but that has not been acted" (Lapoujade 2010: 21-22, transl. Manning 2012: 357). In a similar way, the plot twist in *Damages* gives a sensation of the memory of the future precisely because it draws attention to a past potential that has not been activated. This un-acted past is held in reserve as a "future explosive force" until it is called upon to co-create the next now in a singular field of emergence (Lapoujade 2012: 95, my translation). Recall also that such a singular coming-together of heterogeneous elements which allows for novelty to emerge is not unlike a "spark which explodes a powder-magazine" (Bergson 1920: 44). The plot twist gives a sensation of the memory of the future because it *is* such a coming-together that unleashes an un-acted past to open up toward a different future. It is the point of release for the explosive power of past-and-future potential. In this way, it draws the viewer feelingly into the nonlinearity of time as experience.

For this to work as a figure of time in *Damages*, it is crucial that the past not be changed. Viewers know when they're being tricked, that is, when the past is retrospectively adjusted to allow for new developments. When this is done, suspense falls flat. Therefore, the creation of a pronounced figural dimension in a serial narrative depends on a particularly rigorous method. Everything must have happened the way it did and, at the same time, allow for several diverging lines of events. In other words, if the twist is supposed to create a new potential trajectory into the future, it *must* first of all suggest a plausible new trajectory *through the past* (which, in the case of a television series, is the entire archive of previous episodes). All the different trajectories must have been there all along *without* being activated. This means that, in order to create thickets of past and future trajectories that are only

gradually perceived, *Damages* must be rigorously vague and precise at the same time. Precise so that all the un-acted past is effectively inscribed in the narrative; vague so that expectation does not (yet) pick up on it. This does not mean that the future is predetermined by some notion of destiny but, rather, that whatever reality will turn out to be emerges in the now of experience as a confluence of co-conditioning factors set in the past. Because *Damages* is vaguely precise and precisely vague, it falls neither into random plot adjustments nor into predictability, which is the triumph of expectation.

It falls into suspension. If *Damages* continuously takes us into the future and back into the past, it is for the main purpose of making felt the memory of the future as a present potential. For the thickets of past and future trajectories necessarily pass *through the present* where they contend for ingress into the actual. They contend because, even though the memory of the future traces so many lines through the past and projects them into the future, only one of these lines can be fully actualized. The remainder is further consigned to memory where it is retained as potential. The present is a bottleneck for the virtual in this sense alone, that is, only insofar as the various contending memories of/for the future cannot be actualized at the same time. But in return, while the holding capacity of the actual is limited, the virtual dimension of the now teems with potentialities. This is what *Damages* draws attention to by means of its figure of time: the now is astir with all that could be but is not (yet), *felt* as so many vectors of becoming.

Through this rigorous – precisely vague and vaguely precise – com-position of different techniques such as the preempted ending, the close-up, and the plot twist, *Damages* folds *expectation* into *suspension* and opens up linear *thinking* to an intensive *feeling* of the interval. The show flushes the present with so many stirrings of a complex reality in order to

heighten our sensitivity for potential. What emanates from the show's figural movement more specifically is a coupling of *attention* and *tentativeness*, which is also of crucial importance to the more political concerns of this legal thriller.

In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson makes an appeal to our "attention to life," which, in the context of my argument, can indeed be understood as a sensitivity to the continuous stirrings of the complex reality we inhabit. David Lapoujade revives this concept and defines it as "a faculty of anticipation of and adaptation to the demands of the exterior world" (2010: 79, my transl.).

> Adaptation because [life is a matter of] responding to the demands of the present moment. Anticipation because we are interested in the present only in view of an immediate future. To adapt is to anticipate. The attention to life submits our relation to the exterior world to a schema of question-and-response. (Lapoujade 2010: 79, my transl.)

In a way, Lapoujade's schema of question-and-response leads back to the importance of the sensory-motor schema in *Damages*. Every present raises a question in the form of sensation and requires a motor response. More importantly, as we have seen, *Damages*'s reliance on movement-images demands that there be no response without a question that triggers it, no action without a perception that provokes it. On the one hand, then, "the attention to life is determined by sensory-motor montages" insofar as it must execute question-response circuits in the present (2010: 93, my transl.). But – and *that* is the lesson of the plot twist – the response can also come from the past. In this case, the imperative to respond "no longer emanates from either the present or its reflection in the future; it emanates from the past, from the deepest past, an immemorial past of which we've seen that it constitutes a kind of memory

of the future" (93-94, my translation). This ingress of the past is why nonlinear temporalities can emerge from even the strictest of sensory-motor schemas. This is also why, in return, the sensory-motor or question-response schemata are irreducible to a linear model of cause-and-effect. Lastly, it is why the com-position of the future necessitates an attention to the un-acted stirrings of world, which continue to bubble below the surface of the actual. Doing justice to this complexity is a matter of tentativeness.

Tentativeness is given two different nuances here.[108] The first is the more common usage of the word as 'carefulness' or 'apprehensiveness.' This kind of tentativeness and attention mutually sustain each other: to attend to one's surroundings, one has to move tentatively; and to move tentatively, one has to pay attention to one's surrounding. Expectation – and future-orientation more generally – can benefit from this hesitant dispersal of attention across the various heterogeneous elements in a complex relational field to probe how these elements might feed into the *how* of a process's playing-out. It can benefit because tentative attention leaves space for the creativity of the world, in the form of nonlinear processes, contingencies and accidents. In other words, tentative attending can be a technique for expectation to include the unexpected, to be falsified in time without being foiled. *Damages* invites its viewers to develop this technique by precisely-vaguely flushing time with potential and thus triggering a tendency into the future that is projective in a way that acknowledges these potentialities. The second nuance of 'tentativeness' is a specification of the first. Interestingly, the *Oxford English Dictionary* does not foreground the aspect of diffidence and apprehensiveness at all. Instead, it defines something "tentative" as being "[o]f the nature of an

108 At this point, I begin to integrate the conceptual work of artists-philosophers Madeline Gins and Arakawa, an influence that I will explicitly acknowledge in the following section.

experiment, trial, or attempt" (entry for "tentative," *OED Online*).[109] This is a useful reminder that tentativeness is not to be equated with procrastination, indecision or inertia. Tentative attention moves ahead *experimentally*, knowing that its hypothesis may be falsified and that falsification is still a way of getting ahead, only via a detour. If one thing is certain in *Damages*, it's that the narrative will reach its preempted goal – not despite but through all the detours it has to take. In conclusion then, tentative attention does not dispense with projective planning; it allows for nonlinear plans that do not depend on us to stubbornly go straight ahead. Tentative attention creates wiggle room within the sensory-motor schema and makes it elastic. It allows us to deroute the sensory-motor without disrupting it. Someone who follows a nonlinear plan in a tentative-attentive way still has a goal, but is prepared to get there on the indirect way.

That tentative attention is indeed *a key concern of the control society* is made clear by the resonances that *Damages* creates between its figure of time and the theme of civil litigation discussed at the beginning of this chapter.[110] We have seen that the field of civil law is governed by the 'balance of probabilities': the tiniest piece of evidence can tip the scale of justice in one direction or another, win a case or loose it. *Minor* differences can make *all* the difference. Consequently, the show is much less interested in the quest for an 'objective truth' (which would be the focus of detective fiction) and, instead, focuses on the continuous battle of equal opponents in which minimal deflections decide about success and failure. This is why, at the beginning of the second season, Patty Hewes warns her protégée: "Oh, you have to be careful, Ellen. Everyone is looking to play an angle" (s. 2, ep. 2). Everyone, that is, tries to

109 The *Merriam-Webster Third New International Dictionary Unabridged* accounts for both meanings: 1a) experimental and 2) hesitant.

110 These 'resonances' constitute one of the few points of agreement between this chapter and a previously published article on the temporalities in *Damages* (Pape 2012).

make use of the smallest, unnoticeable deviations, "the smallest angle," to redirect the line of events as a whole (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 361). For this reason, civil litigation requires tentative attention for the stirrings of the world. Like the viewer attending to various incompossible potentials, the litigator must disperse attention into her surroundings to become aware of a multiplicity of contending (past and present) forces that shift and complicate the surrounding world. And like the viewer examining the close-up, she must look out for what Guattari, in his own discussion of faciality, calls "tiny territorialities," to hold on to in the smooth and modulatory space of the control society (2011: 81). The "derisory refuge within a smile" can be a cue to act on; a "wink of an eye" can be a vector for the future (81). (That is also why, to make one's opponent lose grip, one must smoothen one's own face.) She must furthermore *insert* herself in her surroundings *as a force* and move tentatively – that is, carefully and experimentally – to inflect the surrounding world in her favor. Finally, to resist the "closure of the future," she has to acknowledge the possibility of a response from the past. In other words, she must consider the memory of the future and "envision reverse causalities and inversions of time" (105). In the ever-shifting, modulatory field of the control society, the truth has become a matter of time. How things play out depends on *immanent*, that is, *ethical* criteria. That the problem is ethical and no longer moral (see above, p. 154) does not make anything any 'better,' it only changes the problem's requirements. Evaluation and judgment are of little use (for, as *Damages* shows, what is morally wrong may still get the upper hand). Techniques and procedures are needed.

4.4. How It Moves: Procedural Television

An ethics is procedural and requires techniques because it is based on active and passive affects, that is, the "power of acting" and "of being acted upon" which both animate and

inanimate entities possess (Deleuze 1988b: 27). An ethics therefore consists in the continuous recreation of a sustainable ecology comprising the entire set of co-creating entities. To invent and sustain the multiple relations that constitute an environment, one needs *mutually sustaining* techniques or what Isabelle Stengers calls an "ecology of practices" (2010: vii et passim). *Damages* generates not only an awareness of this necessity but proposes techniques, among which the preempted ending, the close-up and the plot twist figure most prominently, that trigger and sustain a figure of time. This figure consists in a nonlinear dynamic of expectant viewing that pulls the viewer's thinking through the future *and* the past into the interval of becoming, thereby enabling a tentative attending to the stirrings of the world. As it teases, tricks, and surprises the viewer, *Damages* creates a participatory dynamism that is not merely a side-effect but the main focus of the narrative practice in the first place. Since the main goal of *Damages* is this narrative procedure, I propose thinking of it as a *procedural narrative*.

My intention in the concluding pages of this chapter is to make a case for a procedural mode of watching television. Instead of 'watching for the plot,' for structures and devices, I propose a mode of watching that foregrounds temporal movements, abstract shapes of narrative dynamics, and figures of time. While such a shift in attention can enrich the experience of any kind of narrative – be it audiovisual or literary, serial or self-contained, etc. –, it seems to me that recent television series are an ideal training ground for tentative attention by virtue of their slow and sustained long-arc narratives, internal rhythms, and conspicuously complex temporalities.

What is a procedure? To develop this concept, I draw on the work of the artists-philosophers Arakawa and Madeline Gins, who define procedures as "[p]rocesses linked, no

matter how briefly, to awareness" (Gins and Arakawa 2002: 53). However, their method of building for process never disregards the assemblages of *concrete* elements that make up an environment. On the contrary, they take them into careful consideration to examine *what kinds and qualities of movements a concrete environment affords.* Thus, if the focus of attention shifts to procedures in the work of A+G and in mine, it is because of a common interest in how embodied thinking and feeling move with an environment. As attention shifts away from identity to the productive commingling of entities in a relational field or what A+G call an "event-fabric," "agency, all agency, remains suspect" (Gins and Arakawa 2002: 22, 52). For the *field effects* in a complex assemblage of human and nonhuman entities cannot be attributed to one 'agent' or another. Where "propositional knowing (knowing that)" and its pinpointing of agents fails to account for the how of experience, we must develop our capacities of "procedural knowing" to better insert ourselves in our surroundings (60, 52). We must, in other words and to expand an argument from previous chapters, move from proposition to composition (see above, p. 117). The requirement to deliberately construct for procedures is grounded in a double deficiency of our modes of navigating the world. On the one hand, our interactions with the surrounding world are "insufficiently procedural" and therefore inappropriate to the topological complexity of any environment (54). On the other hand, the little procedural knowing we have is oftentimes "unconscious" or "tacit" (53, 60). The two corresponding tasks are therefore to *add procedures* and *harness them* so that they "can be entered wittingly" (53).[111]

111 The architectural procedures of A+G can be wittingly entered in their built surrounds, such as the Reversible Destiny Lofts in Mitaka, Japan, or the Bioscleave House in East Hampton, USA.

To activate a procedure, it must be given "physical shape" through the positioning of concrete "features and elements" (Gins and Arakawa 2006: 115). In other words, activation is a matter of strategically positioning constraining elements, which are not identical to but, rather, *effectuate* a procedural movement. Constraints "stage" procedures (2002: 55). In *Damages*, for instance, the preempted ending, close-ups, and plot twists do not in themselves constitute a procedure; they co-condition a procedural movement activated by the viewer and felt as a figure of time.

As a narrative, then, *Damages* is both *preemptive* and *procedural* because it "move[s] from the done to the doing, from the result to the process, or procedure," from linear narrative progression into a nonlinear figure of time (Lecercle 2006: 13). If I harness the concept of the procedure to further activate a sensibility for the figural movements of narratives through time, it is because the serial television narratives of the last decade demand such attentiveness by way of their complex temporalities. As I have argued earlier, however, much research in film studies is constrained by a concept of "cinematic time" as linear and homogeneous, which forces it to conclude that anachronisms, discontinuities, and temporal loops take us "out of time" (McGowan 2011; see above, p. 6). In television studies, the concept of "narrative complexity" has helped describe such innovations as the season-long story-arc (i.e. the shift from episodic to serial narration), the resulting new *rhythms* of serial narration as well as experiments with "real-time" as in *24* for example (Mittell 2006 and 2010, Newman 2006; see above, ch. 1). But while accounts of these new techniques and devices show that serial TV narratives have become more intricate and "complicated," they are not yet proof of temporal "complexity" understood as nonlinear and multi-causal process. In fact, analyses of 'narrative discourse' oftentimes stay within the paradigm of structures and linear temporality. Thus, if I

have invoked *figures of time* throughout this project and *procedures* in this chapter, it has been to give traction to a different mode of thinking and feeling time in moving-image narratives in general and TV series in particular, a mode that foregrounds the abstract, temporal movements *effectuated* by concrete, structural elements.

The case of *Damages* suggests that these procedural movements of preemptive narratives can, once we wittingly participate in them, become the ground for "daily research" towards an *ethics for surviving the control society* (Gins and Arakawa 2002: 95). Looking at the modulatory reality of such societies through the prism of civil litigation, the procedural narrative of *Damages* provides a "critical edge" and takes on "transformational or reconfigurative" purpose (57). In the previous section, we have seen that the show's emphasis on "attention to life" and the "memory of the future" enables an experimental mode of adapting to and anticipating the exterior world. The term that Arakawa and Gins use for this continuous practice is 'biotopological diagramming,' in which diagrams once again appear as "ongoingly organized and redistributing gatherings of all that pertains […], including the slightest of slight urges and what only faintly indicates itself as being operative as an organizing principle" (2006: 56). Once again, a diagrammatic practice consists in inserting oneself into a multiplicity of minor and major forces continuously pulling their topological field (a.k.a. the world) into its next singular now. *Damages* is diagrammatic because it sensitizes to the slight urges and faint indications of all that gathers and operates. As it playfully requires the viewer to see the preempted ending and *still* keep track of the world's complex stirrings, it trains our "capacity to know how to take direct action – keeping the end firmly in sight – through a set of indirect actions" (2006: 149). Because it takes into account notions of nonlinearity, indeterminacy, tentativeness, and the holding of potential, such

diagramming is an ethical practice that attends to the environment's powers to affect and to be affected. In the context of future-orientation, such an ethics, that has "foresight peering through forethought," can avoid the conservative politics and paralyzing effects of the catastrophic scenarios that our contemporary future visions oftentimes hold (2002: 60).

To conclude, I would like to trace out one more access into a procedural practice of watching serial TV fiction by following the dynamics of the "Previously on…" segment. This stock technique of serial narration on TV is usually understood to recapitulate past events up to the present episode. From this perspective, recap sequences summarize a TV show's archival history to keep its viewers in the picture. However, it becomes clear in recent TV series in general and in *Damages* in particular, that the "Previously on…" sequence rarely provides a straightforward, linear and objective recapitulation of the past.

In the increasingly complex TV narratives of recent years, the "Previoulsy on…" montage deliberately *selects* certain elements from the past to prepare a partial perception of the present. It repeats the past differently to shift certain memories into the focus of attention, make others slip into the background, or downright omit crucial information. By virtue of these shifts, slippages and omissions, the "Previously on…" sequence is no longer merely an uninterested and neutral threshold into the imminent narrative. It is part and parcel of the procedural figure of time that a narrative creates. The vaguely precise narrative of *Damages* uses the recap segment to recall seemingly unimportant characters and incidents and to dissimulate other developments.[112] Once again, it is important that everything you see in that montage sequence has effectively happened, that every image has been seen beforehand;

112 Consider the reintroduction of Finn Garrity after his disappearance for three episodes (season 2, episode 13) or Ellen Parson's illness which had trailed off into the background (s. 5, ep. 13).

cheating is not allowed. The past must not be changed but repeated and *reconfigured* in such a way as to make conceivable new trajectories into the future. In this sense, the "Previously on" segment in *Damages* is not so much an aide-mémoire for the viewer as a *productive remix* of the past. As it pushes un-acted pasts back into the present where they create new possibilities, the recap montage acts as one more force factoring into the lift-off of *Damages*'s figure of time. Once again, the show makes use of a concrete and even conventional feature of TV series to trigger a temporal movement that playfully activates the memory of the future and demands a response from the viewer: which possible trajectories does the past hold? Which future bifurcation points does the recap montage anticipate? From the past through the future into the present: the "Previously on…" segment in *Damages* literally keeps the viewer in the loop.

Keeping the viewer in the procedural loop of tentative attention is a productive force that must be attributed to the recap montage in general as well as to the "Next week on…" sequence frequently seen at the end of broadcast episodes. They feed the past and the future into expectation, contributing to its suspension in nonlinear process. What is more, they work as powers of the false, shifting and complicating reality so as to disperse attention even further across the narrative world. In these loops through the past and the future, old potentials are reactivated and new possibilities are created. TV shows use recaps and previews to guide and misguide the viewer, to make the viewer tread along carefully and thoughtfully, to have their procedural way. And while, conceptually, these powers of the false have little to do with lying, it occasionally happens that a preview into the next episode shows a future that will never

occur.[113] Whether these are deliberate "lies" or incoherencies between early and final edits of episodes, they are idiosyncrasies of *televisual* procedures of looping past and future into an intensive *sensation of time* in the present, of remixing the memory of the future, suspension, and expectation in a way that few other media and genres do in so conspicuous a way.[114]

I would like to reiterate, then, the crucial connection between procedural television and an ecology of practices that foregrounds attention and tentativeness. As *Damages* makes time felt as a productive remix, the requirement for the viewer is to insert herself into the mix and detect the forces at work which operate as organizing principles but may only faintly indicate themselves as such (Gins and Arakawa 2006: 56). Such an attentive responsiveness to the fielded *how* of process is nothing else but a *dance of attention* (see above, p. 69):

> A dance of attention is a direct feltness of the field of emergence, understood here as a quality of infinite potential with a margin of indetermination at its core. […] A dance of attention is the holding pattern of an almost unidentifiable set of forces that modulate the event. (Manning 2013: 141)

Almost unidentifiable. *Faintly* indicating. Because *abstractly* lived.

Despite the elusive quality of operating principles and holding patterns, they act as forces in the world. *Because* of this, we need to attune to the minor shifts and slight urges within a complex reality. The means to do this come by various names: figures of time, dances of attention, biotopological diagrams, and ecologies of practices. Each of them, however, enables and requires "a continual anticipating, self-guarding, accommodating, allowing,

113 As a recent example, consider a preview from the first season of *Smash* (NBC, 2012-present): at the end of episode 11, we get a preview in which Uma Thurman's character says a few (shocking) lines that never occur in the following episode.

114 See Mittell 2010 for this and other techniques used in serial fiction on TV to activate viewer memory.

bypassing": ever so many techniques for surfing the wave of the control society (Gins and Arakwawa 2002: 53).

Because of their intangibility, procedural constructs always come with "written instructions," that should be read as an invitation (2006: 151). Procedures are always named:

4.5. Directions for *Damages*'s Interval-stretching-and-intensifying Procedure

- Accept the inevitability of the foretold ending. Rest assured that the ending will have been what you saw but will not be what you thought.
- Feel how the interval stretches between the advancing story and its foretold ending. Accept the indeterminacy of this interval.
- Consider each plot twist a bifurcation point and hold both of its possible future trajectories in potential (for they still are).
- Then reconsider bifurcation points as cues and vectors of becoming. Consequently, begin to think less in terms of trajectories than in terms of movement: know that you will not have a complete trajectory until it's all over, that is, in retrospect. Cull cues and vectors to move-with the imperfect figure of time.
- To do so, look for tiny territorialities, faint indications of almost unidentifiable forces at work in the ever-shifting field of relations. Examine faces.
- Mind the responsiveness of the past! Be receptive to the past's reactivation in the present.
- Attend to the dynamic between expectation and suspense. Note that the former is continuously falsified into the latter and harness this dynamic as the creative powers of the false.

- Predict future bifurcation points, as you are invited to, *not* to determine the *outcome* of it all but for the purpose of a holding of it all. Attentively tend into becoming by considering all possible offshoots of a singular now. Have "foresight peering through forethought" (Gins and Arakawa 2002: 60).
- Note that the interval encompasses *more* possibilities as it gets *smaller* (that is, as the narrative present approaches the foretold ending) and that, as a result, the at-first determinate ending is increasingly indeterminate. Think the indeterminacy of the ending as a function of the interval's elasticity, its wiggle room, its *give*, encompassing all the potentialities of your holding.

Vector

Deleuze's concept of the diagram and his topological aesthetics offer us a way to articulate such an experience of the twisting and folding of information into perception. Our perceptions are not of a world, but immediately part of it, in a space-time that changes as we move through it in an immanently relational configuration. The diagram is *deforming*: if the archive is a "history of forms", as Deleuze writes in his study of Foucault, it is "doubled by an evolution of forces", or the diagram. A diagram does not only map existing actualized forms nor what Deleuze terms "possibility" or what we already know can occur based on what is already there. The diagram is a topological transformation of an existing social field, engaging both with possibility and also with virtual potential, a reserve of newness and difference. Memory is one name that Deleuze gives to such potential.

(Thain 2010: 53)

5. Conclusion: Anarchival Television

Life on Mars twists three stories into one narrative and gradually takes us into a zone of indistinction in which we sense time in the making. *Flashforward* loops through a shifting map of personal futures to plot out a linear, consensual roadmap. *Damages* juxtaposes disjunct moments, twists and close-ups to seed a thicket of potential trajectories through time.

Foregrounding these figural movements throughout this project, I have argued for the *creativity* of time. In the experience of serial TV fiction as in experience in general, 'time' is not a stable archive. The past cannot be neatly stored away, set aside in the records of history, to make space for 'something else.' This something else is not simply another moment added to the foregone ones. If reality is a topological field of creative becoming, as I have argued through the prism of process philosophy, its singular plasticity at any given moment is an effect of the past and present forces conditioning that field (ch. 2).

The *political* force that I have subsequently focused on is that of *preemption*, activated in the three series through an anticipated ending that informs the narrative as a whole. We have seen in three different cases that the foretold ending does not simply pose an epistemological problem of 'knowing more' than the past and present yield. The foreseen future folds into the present and changes it immediately. Sam Tyler, Dyson Frost, and Ellen Parsons, who know or anticipate the future, move differently through time and inflect a reality in continuous modulation. More specifically, I have argued that the 'global flashforward' of preemption enables a politics of conformism (ch. 3).

After interrogating the philosophical and political stakes of the foretold ending and preemption, I have considered the *ethical* requirements of preemptive politics within the conceptual framework of the control society. I have suggested that a pragmatic guide to

surviving the control society cannot consist in reaffirming the stable codes of law and morality because they are themselves swept up in the dynamic of modulation. Instead, we must invent an ecology of practices, techniques and procedures that are mutually sustaining and suggestive in character (ch. 4). The term "procedural television" itself is nothing else than a proposition to discern such ecologies in the construction of serial narratives, which pursue sustainability as a continuous goal lest the show "jump the shark."

The procedural movement of serial narration makes felt that all the past, acted and un-acted, as well as our anticipated futures act *in the present* as abstract forces, potential held in abeyance but ready to make ingress into actuality. To highlight this abstract activity of memories, futures, and memories of the future once more, I would like to suggest thinking of fictional TV series as *anarchives.* The anarchive is not a stable repository of the past but, rather, the ongoing activity of eventfully reactivating incommensurable pasts for the creation of novelty in the present, as the present. It is a continuous remix of heterogeneous temporalities. As Alanna Thain states, the anarchive "functions both as display of archive […] while simultaneously making felt the emergence of newness" (Thain 2010: 66). This means that the dynamic anarchive simultaneously "doubles and disrupts" the stable archive as it reactivates the 'stacked-away' past (66).

The fictional TV series I have discussed in this project are such anarchives precisely because they resist stacking away information in orderly, chronological succession. Instead, they remix their future visions and recapitulations of the past to create the next now. Time's active remix occurs at all levels in these shows; in occurs *in* them and *as* them. It occurs *in Damages*, for instance, through the numerous mutual double-crossings, manipulations, and modulations discussed in the previous chapter with respect to the control society. And it

occurs *as Damages* through the intricate editing, the montage of numerous loops through the future and the past, the blackscreens and intertitles, the tricky recap sequences, the concomitant foregrounding and backgrounding of archival material, the sudden reactivation of seemingly unimportant footage, etc. *Life on Mars*, in its first season, archives one story by two contending logics (time travel and coma), layering images of a dreamed present and the sound of a real future, thereby already indicating the excess of sense around the representational image. At the beginning of its second season, the series brings its anarchival qualities fully into the foreground when it *recasts* the entire first season as a narrative of madness and subsequently oscillates between its various premises. Contrarily, *Flashforward* pretends to lead us straight to the foretold ending, determining along the way whether the future of the archive is unwritten or mapped out. However, we have seen once more that preemption immediately remixes the present and that, consequently, such anarchival activity concerns first and foremost the now of experience.

My crucial point about these serial anarchives – the refrain of this thesis – is that this continuous synthesis of heterogeneous elements in-and-as time is directly felt. *Time's anarchival remix is an immediate event*.

To unfold the implications of such a proposition, I'd like to make a last brief detour and consider the shock value that has often been attributed to cinema ever since people ran away from the *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat* (Brothers Lumière, 1895). Walter Benjamin famously suggested that cinema reconfigured the sensory apparatus of its viewers by exposing them to the discontinuities of montage, uncommon perspectives and speeds of film. These "shocks" are immediate effects of cinema on the nervous system. At the same time, the argument goes, people would be "vaccinated" against the surge of stimuli in a technologically

advancing world (Benjamin 1989: 377). Benjamin argues that film *desensitizes* its spectators for the purpose of *immunizing* them against the stressful encounters with their social environment.[115] Cinema, then, has a "therapeutic," that is, positive effect on its public (377). What gets lost in this process of immunization, however, is precisely the awareness of moving-image narratives as immediate sensory events. TV series, like so many other representational media formats, focus on content and narration, that is, *mediation*, which often supersedes the direct sensation of the medium itself (in experience as well as in research). This dynamic is one aspect of what Jay D. Bolter and Richard Grusin call remediation, which tends to alternately foreground the medium (*hypermediacy*) or the mediated content (*immediacy*). Now, it is telling that, in this terminology, "immediacy" should specifically refer to the immediacy of the mediated content (instead of the immediate sensation of the medium itself).[116] This is decidedly not what I have been suggesting throughout this project. I have been arguing – putting to work the concepts of the figural, the procedural, and now the anarchive – that *the process of mediation itself is immediately experienced*.

This short detour leads directly to the following:

Via Bolter & Grusin, we can rethink how we experience media. Instead of focusing on the mediation of content, this project has emphasized 'immediation' to explore new ways of experiencing media. Providing concepts and techniques for resensitizing us to how sensation

115 See also Doane 2002: 15 for what, in film studies, is commonly referred to as the "modernity hypothesis," according to which film is a phenomenon that gives expression to the sensory strains of modernity and *at the same time* functions as a palliative against these strains. The quoted passage from Benjamin is not included in the (better known) first and third versions of Benjamin's famous essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." It can be found in the essay's second version, first published in German in 1989. All translations from the German original are mine.

116 See Bolter and Grusin 1999: "In all these cases, the logic of immediacy dictates that the medium itself should disappear and leave us in the presence of the thing represented" (5-6).

moves with media, as I have done in the preceding chapters, is a crucial task for audiences and scholars alike because, in some cases like that of *Flashforward*, a narrative's stated approach to time and its actual movement can diverge significantly and in *politically relevant* ways. In the case of *Damages*, on the other hand, the procedural movement through time involves us in the dynamics of the control society and provides techniques for moving through a complex, modulatory reality. In this way, re-sensitization to immediate discursive movements can help ward off some of the "future shocks" induced by a sociopolitical order that is increasingly characterized by austerity measures and preemption.

And it becomes clear, via Benjamin, that the way to immediation is a question of measure. That the sensory effects of moving-images can be both detrimental and therapeutic means that re-sensitization depends on dosage. Consequently, film, television, or any other moving-image media are not intrinsically 'good' or 'bad.' Since they can be engaged with in various ways to different effects, their value is not a stable benchmark but arises from the immanent criteria of one's specific engagement. The *shifting effects* of such media *ecologies* lead right back to the continuous process of immanent valuation in the control society; they require an ethics of attention.

A question of measure is a matter of attention: Benjamin is neither the first nor the last to express this idea through the image of the vaccine. In contemporary biopolitical thought, for instance, Roberto Esposito has conceptualized social contracts as a "negative [form] of protection of life," that is, a form of "immunization" (Esposito 2008: 46).[117] The idea is once

117 See Esposito 2008: "immunization is a negative [form] of protection of life. It saves, insures, and preserves the organism, either individual or collective, to which it pertains, but it does not do so directly, immediately, or frontally; on the contrary, it subjects the organism to a condition that *simultaneously* negates or reduces its power to expand. Just as in the medical practice of vaccinating the individual body, so the immunization of the political body functions similarly, introducing within it a fragment of the same pathogen from which it

again that the political subject comes into being only as its power for egoistic expansion is restrained. This dynamic, which consists in a *simultaneous* "protection and negation of life," suggests that restriction must be accepted for the benefit of an ordered and satisfactory political life (*bios*) lest society fall back into what Giorgio Agamben calls 'bare life' (*zoe*).

Now, helpful as the concept of 'immunization' may be to grasp the logic of modern theories of sovereignty, its strict distinction between 'bare' and 'good' life is inappropriate to the control society. It presumes an outside, 'bare life,' which has to be negated in order to protect political life, the inside. However, as I've argued in previous chapters and with respect to *Damages* in particular, the modulations of private interest and power constantly spill over the limits set by the rule of law (just like preemptive narratives continuously spill over the limits of representation and linear narrative progression). This does not mean that we can dispense with legal frameworks but, first and foremost, that our 'good political life' is itself swept up in the shifting field of ubiquitous control.[118] As *Damages* suggests, contracts, codes, and laws are continuously evaded to secure an economic or political advantage. To repeat this in the the terms of Benjamin, Esposito, and Agamben: the immunization hypothesis assumes that *everyone* accepts the same vaccine dosage to stay within the boundaries of *bios*. In the global context of our times, however, someone might refuse their own dose and increase yours to poison you.

wants to protect itself, by blocking and contradicting natural development" (46, emphasis added; brackets in original).

118 To rephrase this in the words of Cary Wolfe (who takes the expression from Derrida and develops it): power as well as politics take place *before the law* "in the sense of that which is is ontologically and/or logically antecedent to the law, which exists prior to the moment when the law, in all its contingency and immanence, enacts its originary violence, installs its frame for who's in and who's out" (2013: 8-9, see also 31-42 for Wolfe's discussion of Esposito's paradigm of immunization).

The point, however, is precisely not to become paranoid at the prospect of our submission to 'bare life.' Rather, it is to ask for *alternatives* to the theoretical distinction between the inside and the outside, the good and the bare, order and disorder. Throughout this project and in chapter 4 in particular, I have suggested that one alternative consists in making oneself comfortable in the wider, complex field of the world's multiple stirrings, in what Brian Massumi, following William James, calls "bare activity" (Massumi 2011: 1 passim). In bare activity, the above-mentioned dualities can only be temporarily extracted as points of reference and are continuously reinvented. But if everything starts from bare activity, why insist on a clear-cut separation of order and chaos? In fact, from this conceptual vantage point, chaos is *not* the opposite of order, but a *surplus* of order, the immediate co-presence of several, incompossible orders. Another word for this surplus, this more-than, is *potential*. Another word for bare activity, especially with respect to the form-taking of serial narratives, is *anarchive*. The anarchive is not, then, the opposite of the archive but the abstractly-lived potential from which the concrete archive is extracted. This dynamic of gradual extraction from a multiplicity of potential narrative trajectories is directly felt as a figure of time (ch. 2-4).

Now, we have seen that the paradigm of 'immunization' – both in Benjamin's conception and in Esposito's – sets thought in motion but only gets it so far. And we have seen that this is because "it is unable to overcome the divisions it establishes" (Wolfe 2013: 39). With respect to questions of mediation and immediation, this paradigm does not enable us to articulate these two processes in a complementary and productive way. The key dynamic it illustrates is this: the immediate sensation of the image (including sensory 'shocks') is turned against itself to stifle itself. All that's left is mediation and the 'immediacy' of mediated content.

As an invitation to think further and to go beyond film studies' modernity hypothesis, I suggest a conceptual displacement from the vaccine to the *pharmakon*. Following Derrida, Isabelle Stengers describes the pharmakon as a "drug that may act as a poison *or* a remedy" (Stengers 2010: 29, emphasis added). By virtue of this "intrinsic instability," the pharmakon distinguishes itself from the vaccine, which gains its stability because it negates and protects at the same time and thus pretends to siphon a safe inside off from a perilous outside (29). The pharmakon has no such pretensions. As Stengers points out, this uncertainty regarding its effects is the reason for our general distrust of the pharmakon. "We require a fixed point, a foundation, a guarantee. We require a stable distinction between the beneficial medicament and the harmful drug, between rational pedagogy and suggestive influence, between reason and opinion" (29). In other words, we require guidelines that don't require anything *of us*. The control society, however, is pharmacological in that it constantly asks us to respond to renewed circumstances and modulated conditions. To stay afloat in such a reality, one needs to *attend* to the duplicity of one's pharmacological surroundings and carefully put to use techniques with the aim of creating *sustainable* relations. In other words, the concept of the pharmakon compels us to think and act *ecologically*. And indeed, for Stengers, a pharmacological attitude is part and parcel of an 'ecology of practices.'

Throughout this project, fictional TV series have been encountered as pharmaka. It is a (true enough) commonplace that television distracts, depotentializes, and anesthetizes (to include another, frequently used medical term). But, so my argument went, we do not necessarily need *different*, more highbrow media as a 'remedy' against disengaging TV. Nor do we need to take a step back and critique it from, say, a media-sociological perspective. Instead, we may want to recognize the requirements of the pharmakon itself and engage it

differently. The different mode of engagement I have continuously pointed towards foregrounds *immediation*, that is, the directly felt movements of moving images in general and time's anarchival remix in particular. *Flashforward* has been the clearest example of the TV show as pharmakon: focus on the story (the mediated content) and you are likely to fall into the trap of preemption, to fall in line, to accept the 'future archive' that disavows its anarchival, bare-active coming-into-existence; but attend to the immediate movement of the image itself and the very same pharmakon makes you sense that, as preemption loops through the future to create a specific present, the anarchive and its modulation is politically contested.

To be quite clear on this last point, I want to stress that the call for a heightened sensitivity to immediation and to the anarchive does *not* require us to reject mediation. I have not once made a case against narration because that would amount to denying narrative's inherent duplicity, denying the pharmakon's 'intrinsic instability.' The mediate and immediate aspects of narrative obviously work together – be it as a differential as in *Life on Mars*, in tension as in *Flashforward*, or in resonance as in *Damages*. In the same way, the anarchive of serial television can be conceptually distinguished but not disconnected from a TV show's orderly archive of episodes. Rather, the anarchive occupies the abstract dimension of the same matter. It is the activity of the past churning above and below the seemingly stable, concrete archive. *Damages* has been the exemplary case of a narrative that reconfigures its story in such a way as to foreground its anarchival activity, to give an immediately-felt, abstractly-lived experience of time in the making.

With this conceptual background, my central concern has been to propose tools and techniques that could re-sensitize viewers to the duplicities of narrative, that foster and sustain an attentive practice of moving with narratives' procedural figures. Setting out from the

duplicity between the figurative and the figural, my argument has moved over the actual-*and*-virtual in *Life on Mars*, the linearity-*and*-nonlinearity in *Flashforward*, the dynamic of expectation-*and*-suspension in *Damages*, to the serial television as archive-*and*-anarchive in this last proposition. None of the terms from these doublets can be rejected in favor of the other. This is why I have continuously stressed that the figural (immediate) *lifts off* from the figurative (mediate), and that the consideration of figural movements requires a *shift in attention* from thinking to feeling. What I have tried to show is precisely that, by virtue of their conspicuously preempted endings, their vaguely-rigorously complex narratives, and many other individual techniques, recent TV series enable an attention for intervals and a sensitivity for the movements they activate.

I would like to conclude this project on contemporary *figural*, *procedural*, and *anarchival* television with one last proposition: since the anarchive is an activity, a process to be entered (and not a ready-made product), it is not available for quick consumption. Though the procedural remix of the anarchive is immediately figured and directly felt, re-sensitization may take some time. Don't mistake the direct and immediate for the fast and easy. In time, you will feel the series' constitutive duplicity of continuity-*and*-discontinuity, linearity-*and*-nonlinearity, figurative-*and*-figural. When experimenting with *Damages*, for instance, give it one season at least. Ideally, give it a few. In any case, give it a go.

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