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'THE SERIES THAT CHANGED TELEVISION'?: *TWIN PEAKS*, 'CLASSIC' STATUS AND TEMPORAL CAPITAL

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INTRODUCTION


- Key points of the argument:
 - ‘Classic’ status as discursive construct; moving beyond “textualist assumption” (Mittell 2004: 172) identifiable elsewhere.
 - Case study – *Twin Peaks* (ABC/Lynch-Frost Productions 1990-1).
 - Approach – Bourdieu (1993) and *The Field of Cultural Production*:
 - Symbolic capital.
 - Temporal capital.
 - Disclaimer:
 - TV shows do NOT display agency.
 - ‘Text function’ (Hills 2010a) remains relevant for other audience subcultures.



TWIN PEAKS AS 'CLASSIC' TELEVISION



- *Twin Peaks: The Definitive Gold Box Set:*
 - Released in the UK by Playback DVD.
 - Institutional discourse – ‘classic’ = ‘cult’, ‘quirky’ characters and characteristics.
 - Gold Box Set – ‘classic’ status via additional discourses of temporality and ‘quality’.
 - Murray (2005) – industrial definitions of ‘classic’ linked solely to economic discourses.
 - Can be furthered via Bourdieu’s (1993) ideas; ‘classic’ status not equitable to the ‘heteronomous pole’.



**"Something of
a miracle."**

- TIME MAGAZINE

**"...like nothing else
on television."**

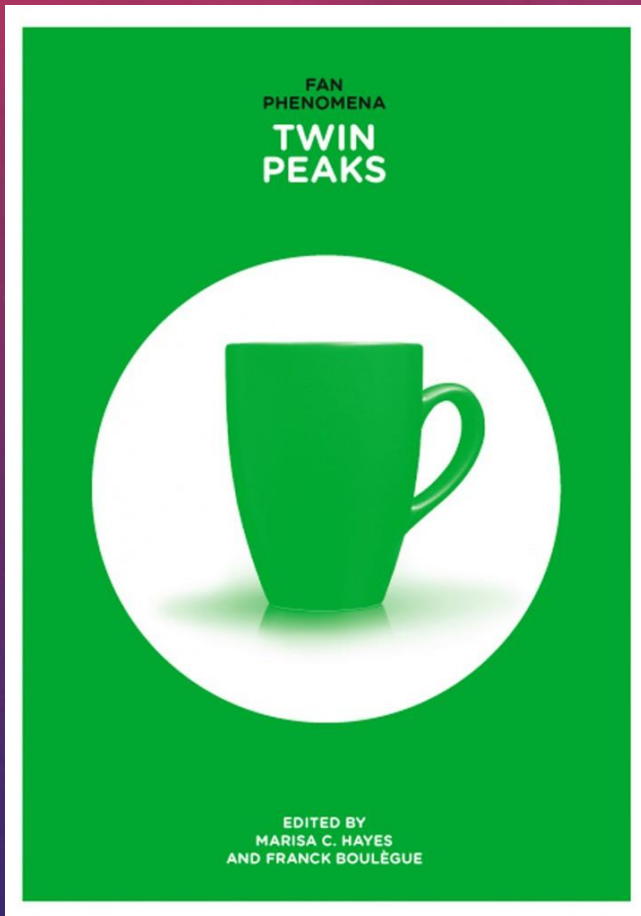
- ROLLING STONE MAGAZINE

TWIN PEAKS, SYMBOLIC AND TEMPORAL CAPITAL

- “It was breakaway television. It was, umm, it had a style all unto its own. It was distinctive. The characters were all really well-defined and really interesting to look at and the story was, you know, the story was unusual but it was the characters and the style that I think carried it. Just the whole combination was, was so radically different than anything else that was on television at the time and that’s what I think is good for television. It helps it to be breakaway. It helps it to be different. It helps it to be, err, non-formulaic and, you know, *Twin Peaks* wasn’t a formula show at all.” (Neel in *Secrets from Another Place* 2007)



TWIN PEAKS, SYMBOLIC AND TEMPORAL CAPITAL



- “It was unique. It came at a time when television was boring. It was on during the week so the next day people at work could all talk about it. I mean there was nothing like it on television. Absolutely nothing like it.” (Stewart in *Secrets from Another Place* 2007)
- By way of *Twin Peaks*, David Lynch and Mark Frost brought a cinematic element of dark intrigue, unease and mystery to the screen that television audiences had not been exposed to ...It inspired and shaped its own cult movements, as well as a series of others, that followed in its wake.

TWIN PEAKS AND TELEVISION'S ZONE OF LIVENESS

- Television's 'zone of liveness':
 - "television studies seeks to 'keep up' with its object of study, fearing falling behind the medium's changes and texts of the moment. ...The scholarly zone of liveness can also be joined belatedly, but only up to a point, as it will periodically move on to 'new' moments of debate, and new texts of the moment." (Hills 2010: 101)
 - Extendable to other agents located in the field.
 - TV Field – dynamic and commercially-underpinned.
- 'Classic' classifications do not equal 'resistant' practices...
- ...'classic' status = discursive strategies that extend and reconfigure the series' 'zone of liveness'.
Achieved by:
 - Symbolic capital 'then'
 - Temporal capital via continuity with 'quality' trends 'now'.

CONCLUSIONS



- *Twin Peaks* as 'the series that changed television' = wrong question.
- *Instead consider:*
 - On what discursive criteria are bids for 'classic' status being made?
 - By which cultural agents and for what purposes (cultural, temporal, economic or otherwise)?
- 'Classic' status as not something that resides 'within the text' but arising from discursive classifications combined with re-framing within the medium's zone of liveness and enhancing the reputation via temporal capital.