Cedric De Maré

True Detective – A Hybridised Detective Narrative

Characterisation Through the Concept of the Cinematic Narrator

Paper submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of “Master in de taal- en letterkunde: Nederlands-Engels”

2015-2016

Promotor prof. dr. Gert Buelens
Department of Literature

Copromotor dr. Jasper Schelstraete
Department of Literature
Acknowledgements

Although this dissertation is a requirement of Ghent University to qualify for a masters degree, it has been an absolute pleasure to write about a subject I am truly interested in, namely True Detective. In this digital age, television has become one of my generation’s most indispensable factors for entertainment and a source for intellectual development. In this respect, I am obligated to acknowledge the importance of HBO, because of their production of many of my favourite television series. The network continuously sets a high standard for their drama series, because of which I began to equate the opening sequence trademark with a stamp of quality. Furthermore, my years at Ghent University, studying various aspects of languages and literature, have provided me with the knowledge and skills to thoroughly analyse one of the best television narratives I have ever seen. Therefore, I would like to express my gratitude to my promotor prof. dr. Gert Buelens for suggesting this research topic and for helping to develop the focus of my research on True Detective. I would like to sincerely thank my copromotor dr. Jasper Schelstraete as well, because he has been a great help in the evaluation of my work in progress. Lastly, I want to thank my girlfriend Aurélie Acx, who has been a very helpful sounding board in the long process of this dissertation, and most importantly my mother Martine Traen for giving me the opportunity to study at this university.
List of Figures

Fig. 1. Chatman, Seymour Benjamin. *Coming to Terms: the Rhetoric of Narrative In Fiction and Film*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990. Print.


Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... iii
List of Figures ..................................................................................................................... v
Table of Contents ............................................................................................................. vii
Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 9
Chapter 1 | Detective fiction .............................................................................................. 12
  1.1 Evolution of Detective Fiction in Literature ................................................................ 13
      1.1.1 The Whodunnit and Classic Detective .................................................................. 13
      1.1.2 The Hard-boiled Detective .................................................................................. 16
      1.1.3 Hybridisations .................................................................................................... 19
      1.1.4 The Postmodern Detective Story ........................................................................ 21
  1.2 Detective Fiction in the Visual Media .......................................................................... 23
      1.2.1 The Detective in Film ......................................................................................... 23
      1.2.2 The Detective on Television ............................................................................... 24
Chapter 2 | True Detective: The Cinematic Narrator ............................................................ 32
  2.1 Structure of the Narrative ......................................................................................... 33
      2.1.1 Theoretical Framework ...................................................................................... 33
      2.1.2 Story Overview .................................................................................................. 34
      2.1.3 Discourse of the Narrative ............................................................................... 37
  2.2 Narrating Agency in True Detective .......................................................................... 39
      2.2.1 The Implied Author .......................................................................................... 39
      2.2.2 The Cinematic Narrator .................................................................................. 42
  2.3 Mediation of the Narrative ....................................................................................... 44
      2.3.1 The Voice-over .................................................................................................. 44
      2.3.2 Status of the Flashback Sequences ................................................................... 44
  2.4 Characterisation: Case Study Rustin Cohle .............................................................. 50
      2.4.1 Cohle’s Profiling .............................................................................................. 50
      2.4.2 Incrimination by the Cinematic Narrator .......................................................... 51
2.4.3 Acquittal by the Cinematic Narrator .................................................................54
2.4.4 Indirect Self-Characterisation ...........................................................................55
2.4.5 Hallucinatory Manifestations ..........................................................................57
2.4.6 Influence of the Setting ..................................................................................61
2.4.7 The Evolution of the Characters and their Relationship .................................62

2.5 True Detective’s Genre Delineation ....................................................................67

Conclusion .................................................................................................................69

Works Cited ...............................................................................................................71

Word Count: 25.712
Introduction

In 2014 two well-known Hollywood actors at the height of their careers were featured in HBO’s new drama series *True Detective* (2014-).\(^1\) The series’ story spans over a period of seventeen years and chronicles Dora Lange’s murder investigation by Detective Rustin “Rust” Cohle (Matthew McConaughey) and Detective Martin “Marty” Hart (Woody Harrelson) of the Louisiana State Police Department. The casting of movie stars in television productions and the fairly recent news that the production costs of *Game of Thrones* (2011-) are on par with *Rome*’s (2005-2007) costs of ten million dollars per episode (Hawkes), are certainly indicative of the growing prestige of television for qualitative storytelling in comparison with its mother medium of film. With respect to *True Detective*, Graeme Virtue even states that “it felt like the whole world was unhealthily preoccupied with the show, and deliberately or not, it made detectives of us all”. In this respect, the premium television network of HBO (Home Box Office) has produced and broadcast highly innovative and extremely popular television series including *True Detective*.\(^2\) However, if we have a look at almost every television network’s broadcasting schedule, the range and variety as regards the format and content of television programmes is vast. It is important to note that even though the format of the drama series delineates the type of programme that is being broadcast, the genre of that particular series is a dynamic notion insofar that it is constructed through the bilateral considerations of viewers’ expectations and text-related interpretations (Turner 9). In other words, it is difficult to describe a drama series on the basis of singular generic specifications, because the genre of a television series is susceptible to hybridisation with conventions of other genres.

The crime series, which features a formula of restoring the status-quo by law enforcement agencies in a society that is threatened by a criminal danger, has been one of the most prolific and popular television genres in the past half-century (Cooke 29). Correspondingly, Bill Bradley states that *True Detective* has the most-watched first season of an HBO Original Series, which is another indication of the genre’s popularity.

---

\(^1\) Since *True Detective* is an ongoing anthology television series with a different cast and narrative per season, it is important to note that this research will be solely focusing on the first season of the series. Therefore, any reference made to *True Detective* denote the first season.

\(^2\) The popularity and acclaim of the television network’s productions is attested by the listing of no less than five drama series in the top twenty of IMDb’s (the Internet Movie Database) 250 Top Rated TV Shows.
Even though the pilot of the television series seems to outline a conventional search for the solution of a mystery, the programme’s creator and writer, Nic Pizzolatto, has argued that *True Detective* is much more of a thriller than a simple whodunnit (HBO: “Making True Detective”). In this respect, the susceptibility of television genres to hybridity can foreground facets which do not correspond historically with antecedent television programmes or even literary precursors in terms of generic conventions (Neale 5-6; Turner 7-8). Furthermore, Lez Cooke highlights that there has been an evolution in police series towards more profound, psychological character development instead of focusing purely on action or the solution of the crime (31-33). Bearing this in mind, it is going to prove interesting to analyse the generic hybridity of *True Detective* as well as the characterisation of Rust Cohle and Marty Hart. Moreover, research into the versatile medium of television is highly relevant in contemporary narratology, because of the steadfast surge of the popularity and possibilities of the medium for fictional storytelling.

*True Detective* can most aptly be characterised as a detective story, albeit a heavily transformed one, because of the distinct discourse of the narrative, which unfolds from the present situation through flashbacks of past events. In this respect, the solution of the mystery is constantly being deferred and eventually partly cancelled out through Rustin Cohle’s sense of failure, which is very atypical for a genre that is generally considered as a paradigm for narrative closure (Segal 153). Nevertheless, the inclusion of a subverted type of buddy narrative, which focuses on the relationship between two seemingly opposite characters (Gates 137), results in another type of resolution, namely the finality of *True Detective*’s character development. Due to the temporal separation of events, the audience is presented with a multi-faceted story that emphasises the characterisation and evolution of Martin Hart and especially Rustin Cohle. However, the narrative is still characterised by the highly visual medium and has to be analysed by applying medium-specific terms. In this respect, it is interesting to research how the concepts of narration in literature are transformed in television narratives. The rather static, retrospective narration of the protagonists in the present, for instance, is enhanced by visual actualisations of past events and actions. Nevertheless, narration in *True Detective* cannot be limited to the accounts of the protagonists, because of the surplus of information that is supplied regarding their personal lives and the investigation proper. Therefore, I want to propose that the viewer’s interpretation of *True Detective*’s Rustin Cohle and Martin Hart is thoroughly influenced by the medium’s binary mediation through Peter Verstraten’s concept of the cinematic narrator in terms of character development. Furthermore, a case study of Rustin Cohle will demonstrate the significance of that narrating agency for his characterisation as well as the generic delineation of *True Detective*. 
In the first part of the opening chapter I am going to provide a brief overview of the evolution of written detective fiction, which certainly does not have the pretence of being comprehensive, but will be indicative of the genre’s transformation over the years. The qualification of True Detective as a detective narrative will be justified by Martin Priestman’s outline of the detective story’s history in his book Crime Fiction: From Poe to the Present. I have used Priestman’s work as a general structure of the overview, complemented by various other sources, because he highlights the importance of the classic detective story’s hybridisations for the structure of HBO’s widely acclaimed crime series, namely The Sopranos (1999-2007) and The Wire (2002-2008) (75). In the second part of the first chapter, I am going to address the cinematic media of film and television in order to highlight the popularity of the detective story in the adaptations for the big and small screen. Furthermore, the segment on television is going to zoom in on the generic hybridity of crime series and the evolution of these types of programmes in the last decades towards more focus on the characters. The second chapter will contain the analysis proper of True Detective, focusing on the cinematic narrating agency’s representation of Rustin Cohle. Firstly, I am going to provide a contextual overview of the story and its structure. Subsequently, I will contrast the theory of Seymour Chatman’s concept of the implied author as a governing agent in filmic mediation with Peter Verstraten’s usage of the cinematic narrator. Next, the research is going to explore the characterisation of Hart and Cohle – emphasising Cohle’s pivotal role in a case study – by analysing the influence of the cinematic narrator on the viewer’s interpretation. Lastly, I am going to synthesise my analysis of the narrative in a discussion on True Detective’s generic delineation.
Chapter 1 | Detective fiction

In this first chapter I am going to provide a rudimentary outline of the evolution of detective narratives in relation to the innovations for storytelling in terms of the new media of film and television. Having an overview of the evolutionary scale of the genre across different media will help interpret the status of HBO’s True Detective as a non-prototypical form of the detective narrative. Furthermore, the susceptibility to hybridisation, which is an inherent element of television series in general (Turner 8), is also visible in certain transformations of the classic detective story, according to Martin Priestman (1-5). Naturally when talking about classic detectives in written fiction, the first character that comes to mind is Sherlock Holmes, whose name has become synonymous with the concept of the detective. Although his creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, popularised the genre, the basic elements of the detective narrative had been around for centuries. I will start by naming the most significant authors responsible for establishing and defining the genre and subsequently list the most prominent additions to or modifications of the genre. Although S. S. Van Dine and members of The Detection Club would disagree (see below), detective stories are not produced by keeping to restrictions nor applying a set of requisite characteristics or plot elements. It goes without saying that, due to the scope of this research, this chapter does not provide an exhaustive history of detective fiction, but merely allows to form some background knowledge on the evolution of the generic conventions in relation to True Detective’s narrative. Lastly, I am going to elaborate on the rise of film and television in storytelling and the adaptation of the common denominator of crime fiction, of which detective fiction is a prolific subcategory, for the big and small screen.
1.1 Evolution of Detective Fiction in Literature

1.1.1 The Whodunnit and Classic Detective

Before we can talk about the development of detective fiction, a brief delineation of the term is in order. There is some ambiguity in the term, which Martin Priestman addresses with the question: “is detective fiction fiction which detects, or fiction with detectives in it?” (3). Priestman is alluding to the role of the reader as active participant in the detection process, because of the clues the narrative offers to engage in the investigation, as well as the required hallmarks of the protagonists in a detective narrative. For the scope of this research, it suffices to state that a detective story features a mystery which needs to be solved by a character who has certain investigative qualities. To adequately understand the inception of the genre, an awareness of the concept of the whodunnit is warranted. Oxford Dictionaries describes the whodunnit as “[a] story or a play about a murder in which the identity of the murderer is not revealed until the end”. Although the term itself was only introduced in the 1930s, the concept and basic structural outline of the whodunnit have been used in various types of stories for centuries, seeing as how in effect the word signals a narrative based on the question: “who did it?”. One example Priestman lists as a precursor of detective fiction is Sophocles’ tragedy Oedipus Rex, in which Oedipus, as the new king, tries to discover who the murderer of his predecessor is, through a series of interrogations (6). Based on raw narrative materials alone, this tragedy fits into the pattern of the detective narrative: a criminal fact occurs and the protagonist attempts to recreate the criminal act mentally by making enquiries, in order to find the culprit. What sets a story like Oedipus Rex apart, is the fact that the outcome was already known to the audience from legend, but they enjoyed and were captivated by the process (Priestman 7). Because of the universal applicability of the whodunnit-element in various genres, the process towards resolution becomes an important factor to keep audiences interested, as will be evinced by the analysis of True Detective’s structure. Hundreds of years later, the whodunnit separated itself from the rest of literature, to form a new, self-contained genre (Priestman 1).

Edgar Allan Poe is generally credited with being the creator of the detective story (Segal 154). He is the spiritual father of C. Auguste Dupin, a Frenchman who appears in three of the author’s works in the first half of the nineteenth century: The Murders in the Rue Morgue, The Mystery of Marie Rogêt and The Purloined Letter.
The difference between the Dupin stories and other contemporary narratives featuring detectives was Dupin’s investigative consideration involving analytical reasoning, instead of a conclusion being reached by coincidences or confessions (Dijstelbloem 9). John T. Irwin also differentiates Poe’s “analytic detective fiction […] from stories whose main character is a detective but whose main concern is not analysis but adventure” (27). The genre established by Edgar Allan Poe is characterised by what Poe called “ratioication” (Gates 3) or analytical reasoning instead of heroic detectives on an adventurous quest. This distinction previews the difference between the classic detective story and the hard-boiled variant, on which I will elaborate in the next part of this chapter.

Characteristic for the classic detective story is the static progression of Auguste Dupin’s ‘adventure’ in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, which is metaphoric for his analytical method. He merely sits in his apartment and by reading newspaper articles about the crime, he solves the crime and reveals his reasoning to the police, with little or no character development (Irwin 27). In this respect, Edgar Allan Poe introduced some of the genre’s most recognisable tropes, such as: an eccentric genius who is situated in the upper classes, accompanied by an admiring, less gifted friend (Dijstelbloem 9); a first-person narrator, usually the companion, who is narrating the story as part of a chronicling endeavour (Hühn 457); and characterising the law enforcement agencies as inefficient in an unsympathetic manner (Van Leer 65). These three elements were introduced by Poe, but standardised by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in his stories featuring a brilliant, eccentric sleuth named Sherlock Holmes, his friend and biographer Dr. Watson and the incapable police officers of Scotland Yard seeking help. Another often reprised aspect of detective fiction initiated by Edgar Allan Poe is the single-hero-series form, as Priestman calls it (9). This meant the establishment of the returning detective protagonist displaying his analytical thinking methods in often very similar narratives, but without loss of interest from the readership.

The development and surge in appreciation of these classic detective stories are linked with the emergence of better organised law enforcement, or the shift from sovereign power to disciplinary power as Foucault formulated it (qtd. in Dijstelbloem 8). This meant that the people put their trust in the law, the police and affiliates to not only apprehend, but also discipline people accused of wrongdoing. This transformation in the mechanisms of law enforcement signified new means of administration, new research strategies and other ways of thinking (Dijstelbloem 8). The political shift paved the way for authors to write stories about policemen, private detectives, amateurs and so forth, demonstrating their prowess.
The appreciation of the detective was in turn being reinforced by the rising production of detective fiction and the public approval of the occupation as a respectable activity (Priestman 11).

In contrast to Edgar Allan Poe’s detective short stories, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s famous sleuth Sherlock Holmes was featured mostly in novels, which gave rise to a more diverse type of story. Patricia Merivale and Susan Elizabeth Sweeney categorise Poe’s detective as an armchair detective (8), a term that refers to the fact that the detective can complete his investigation from his chair by simply reading about a crime or by having it told to him. Short stories put most emphasis on the crime, the solution and most importantly the reasoning behind the detective’s findings, without diverging too much from the matter at hand. Whilst the short story is primarily concentrated on the issue of “who did it”, the novel touches upon many other themes and issues ranging from political or social awareness to more psychological development of the characters (Priestman 11). As inevitable as the evolution of the genre towards this format of literature was, there were some who tried to regulate or fixate a universal skeleton for the detective story, limiting the affordances of the novel. The Detection Club, founded in 1928, stressed the importance of accommodating and playing fair towards the reader, and underlined the need for rationality and logic (Molander Danielsson 24-25). In other words, the author should not withhold vital clues from the reader and there could not be supernatural explanations for the crime committed, in order to make the reading experience as congenial as possible. Also, to preserve the standard of scientific analysis set by Edgar Allan Poe and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the methods by which crimes are solved should be based on rational thought and not on coincidences or trial-and-error. Similar were the rules set forth by S. S. Van Dine in his publication “Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories”. Van Dine expresses his thoughts on the characteristic traits of the detective, the culprit, the crime itself and the detective’s methods (qtd. in Molander Danielsson 25). Either way, these rules were merely an attempt to describe and preserve the popular genre they were familiar with in that era.

Another notable author who solidified the popularity of detective fiction in the 1920s, was Dame Agatha Christie. She introduced several single-hero-series, of which Hercule Poirot and Jane Marple are the best-known protagonists. Christie’s stories featuring the Belgian detective contain many of the elements introduced by Poe: the quirky, eccentric Hercule Poirot who uses his “little grey cells” to solve crimes; his good friend Captain Arthur Hastings, who joins Poirot on most of his adventures and narrates the events to the reader and so forth.
His cases most often involve a rather large group of people who are suspects because of their relation or proximity to the victim at the time of the crime. After the murder has occurred, Poirot questions the suspects, who are readily available to him because of the confined setting, and he evaluates the stories for missteps or inaccuracies in order to expose the person responsible (Priestman 21). Christie most importantly introduced a crucial divergence from the classic pattern of detective fiction, as described by The Detection Club and S. S. Van Dine, by compromising the status of the narrator. In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, Christie ignored the rule of leaving the narration free of suspicion, by appointing the murderer as the narrating agent (Priestman 21-22).

As I have pointed out earlier, Captain Arthur Hastings is the Watson-like, trustworthy narrator in most of the Poirot stories, but in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* Poirot’s next-door neighbour figures as the narrator. Considering the fact that the narrator is someone from the detective’s direct environment, the reader interprets all the facts and events described by the neighbour as true, while in fact the reader is being misled by the murderer’s account. The author, however, did not let her narrator lie to the readers, he only deceived them by omitting certain elements from the story (Priestman 22). This feature was one of the first significant changes to the familiar pattern of the classic detective narrative, which gained following in many subsequent publications and is alluded to in *True Detective*.

### 1.1.2 The Hard-boiled Detective

Whilst the classic detective stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Dame Agatha Christie flourished in the United Kingdom in the period between World War I and World War II, another type of detective was emerging across the Atlantic: the hard-boiled detective. In the tradition of Edgar Allan Poe, the first narratives of this variety of detective fiction were short stories, published in specialised magazines such as *Black Mask* (Dijstelbloem 11). The most famous examples of the detectives who started out as characters in the *Black Mask* short stories, are Dashiell Hammet’s anonymous “Continental Op” and Sam Spade, and Raymond Chandler’s Philip Marlowe (Priestman 53-54). Some of these short stories were later compiled and edited to be released as novels, of which Hammet’s *The Maltese Falcon* and Chandler’s *The Big Sleep* are considered prototypical in the category of hard-boiled detective fiction. What separates this American detective from the classic detective is mostly the characterisation of the protagonist. Whereas Holmes has his Watson and Poirot has his Hastings, the hard-boiled detective is somewhat of a lone wolf without a side-kick (Dijstelbloem 11).
He embodies the contemporary hero and echoes the genre of the Western in a sense that he has to survive in a harsh world, where unlawfulness lingers around every corner – which in Dashiell Hammet’s opinion was managing oneself in the Prohibition era marked by organised crime and street gangs (Dijstelbloem 11, 25). Hammet voiced his views in his work *The Simple Art of Murder*, in which he describes the hard-boiled detective as follows:

Down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid. The detective in this kind of story must be such a man. He is the hero; he is everything. He must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be to use a rather weathered phrase, a man of honor – by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it, and certainly without saying it. He is a relatively poor man, or he would not be a detective at all. He is a common man or he could not go among common people. … He is a lonely man. … He talks as the man of his age talks – that is, with rude wit, a lively sense of the grotesque, a disgust for sham, and a contempt for pettiness. The story is this man’s adventure in search of a hidden truth. (qtd. in Dijstelbloem 24)

In comparison with classic detective fiction, the hard-boiled detective story is much more oriented towards the adventurous; it highlights the thoughts and considerations of the private eye and has a profound impact on the personal life of the detective (Dijstelbloem 11). In other words, the private detective is often confronted with issues whereby his decisions or choices can change the course and the outcome of the story in a sense that his case has a great influence on his own life. This entails another way of working on the part of the detective, compared to the classic Victorian detectives. Gilles Deleuze describes the Victorian methods of solving crimes as inductive or deductive, based on positive science, whereas the hard-boiled detective does not approach his cases in a scientific manner at all (qtd. in Dijstelbloem 23-24). Most of the stories featuring this American type of detective revolved around deception and fraud, with the protagonist having to navigate his way in a corrupt and violent society, branded as “the mean streets”. He has to tie loose ends together instead of purely solving a puzzle in the search for truth. Furthermore, Dijstelbloem argues that the detective’s moral resilience and emotional attachment has grown (11).
This does not necessarily make him more vulnerable, but there is a definite evolution towards psychologisation and personal involvement noticeable. In her comparison of the classic standards, described by The Detection Club and S. S. Van Dine, with the aspects of the hard-boiled detectives, Karin Molander Danielsson argues that “the rules [they] produced reflect very little anxiety or perceived risk of any of what later became hardboiled characteristics” (25). In this respect, the American detective type features as an extension of the classic whodunnit, adapted to the contemporary societal reality in the United States as well as an exploration of the possibilities of the novel’s format for enhanced character development.

Before we proceed to the various hybridisations of the narrative, I would like characterise the genre’s evolution as one moving towards the augmentation of the investigation. Karin Molander Danielsson points out the structural description of detective fiction as a paradigm of a double narrative, referring to the narrative of the investigation on the one hand, and that of the murder on the other hand (33-34). In other words, the narrative of the investigation is used to reconstruct the narrative of the murder. Classic detective fiction tries to find harmony between these two narratives, since the investigation leads to the uncovering of the murderer, whereas hard-boiled detective fiction accentuates the narrative of the investigation more than that of the murder (Molander Danielsson 34). Instead of plainly outlining the clues for the reader in order to seemingly give him a chance of discovering the culprit himself, the hard-boiled variant follows the detective’s trails and highlights the unknown and exciting course of the investigation. Martin Priestman categorises the hard-boiled detective story as “the detective thriller” (52-53). Although the private eye may be working on a case involving something that occurred in the past, his involvement with said case or his clients ensures conflicts with powerful opponents in the present (Priestman 52). The mystery for which he was hired initially, leads towards a new, often more serious case in the present. In this manner, the fairly straightforward whodunnit evolves into an intricate network of interlinked criminal facets, threatening the protagonist’s personal life. Notwithstanding the popularity of the basic conventions of the whodunnit, the formula has been adapted countless of times as a natural consequence of the demand of its contemporaneous audience, which led to more violence and more killing (Priestman 65). Whilst classic detective fiction often revolved around one murder, the hard-boiled detective stories gave way to more murders.
1.1.3 Hybridisations

The aforementioned detective thriller is the result of the intermixing of the classic detective story and the thriller. According to Martin Priestman, the development of detective fiction, a genre that in its initial stage was correlated with the whodunnit, eventually resulted in so-called hybrids, or new creations formed by the combining of elements of two or more different genres (2). Accordingly, one of these genres with which the detective story has intermixed, was the thriller. Detective fiction and the various kinds of thrillers naturally have many facets of the broader term of crime fiction in common. There is, however, a crucial difference insofar that the classic detective stories primarily focused on the past in order to reconstruct the story of the murder, whereas most of the thriller’s action is situated in the present (Priestman 1). In other words, the classic detective gathers all the evidence and attempts to reconstruct the crime through logical reasoning, whilst the action in the present remains rather passive. The protagonist of the thriller, on the other hand, actively pursues his goal of catching the criminal in the present, highlighting the difficulty of apprehending the person in question. It is evident that these two types of narrative share a clear resemblance regarding the subject matter, namely solving the crime. The difference, however, is the emphasis on the method, which is based on mental activity in the classic narrative and on physical activity in a thriller narrative. Even though the focus in classic detective stories was the exposure of the identity of the culprit, in later stages of detective fiction there was room for more psychological development and emotional attachment on behalf of the protagonist. This reduced the prominence of the analytical method and invigorated the suspense of the search, which led to the diffusion of the generic conventions of the thriller in detective fiction. In summary, I suggest that there is a requirement for detective fiction to have a detecting agent as the central figure of the narrative, whether they are amateurs, private detectives, policemen or others, who are looking to solve a crime and catch the culprit.

Beside the detective thriller, Priestman distinguishes another hybrid form relevant to the analysis of HBO’s True Detective in his work Crime Fiction: From Poe to the Present, namely “serial-killer fiction”. The evolution towards more violence, combined with the topicality of real-life examples, lead to this popular subcategorization in detective fiction (Priestman 65). Priestman goes on to characterise the new form as one where “the murderer repeatedly kills to satisfy some obsession, with no end in sight until caught or killed in a tense stand-off with the hero” (65). Here, the plurality of murders does not constitute a greater plan to conceal previous actions or a reaction to exact retribution.
Serial killers commit murder seemingly with no clear objective other than that they feel a need to do so. This type of narrative also has some conventional generic elements, namely a specialist who has been called upon to match his wits with the often brilliant, yet cruel antagonist; glimpses into the psyche of the serial killer, to strengthen the enticing element of the villain’s point of view; the ultimate stand-off between good and evil, where the protagonist threatens to fall victim to his foe etc. (Priestman 70). The aspects of this hybrid and the detective thriller resonate throughout True Detective, which most conspicuously features a serial killer.

Before we proceed to the next segment, I will briefly touch upon two other types of narrative that are going to prove useful in the discussion of True Detective as well as detective fiction in film and on television in general: the “police procedural” and the “noir thriller”. The police procedural came into prominence as a result of the emphasis on the police as the foremost detecting agencies in post-war detective fiction (Priestman 28). The success of the procedural lies partly in the realism of the narrative on the one hand, since murder cases were rarely solved by individuals as opposed to law enforcement agencies, and partly in the appreciation of detective work as an actual job on the other hand (Priestman 28). As the term itself points out, the police procedural is a realistic type of narrative, directing attention towards authentic procedures applied by the police in murder investigations. It highlights the teamwork within the homicide department – normally speaking if murder is involved – and shows the police force as common working men and women, as prone as everybody else to pressure. In the noir thriller, on the other hand, the reader follows the exploits of the criminal protagonist relatively more than following the detecting agent, in comparison with other types of crime fiction. This type of thriller has influenced the previously described detective thriller, in the sense that the private detective sometimes has to break the law or oppose law enforcement to protect his clients, achieve his goal and retain his professional and moral integrity (Priestman 52). The noir point of view has been administered in several detective narratives, as Martin Priestman points out:

the criminal-centred thriller has sometimes been twinned with the detective story to produce a split-level narrative in which we first witness the crime, then the investigation, and the suspense hinges on how the criminal will be caught rather than on his or her identity.

(41)

One of the prototypical detective series that hinges on this type of narrative structure was Columbo (1971-2003) and True Detective administers the noir point of view prominently in its final episode.
1.1.4 The Postmodern Detective Story

To conclude this brief overview, it will prove relevant to discuss the evolution of detective fiction towards a postmodern literature. Notwithstanding that there are certainly postmodern aspects present in *True Detective*, it is impossible to provide a comprehensive background of how the diversified and complex concept of postmodernism has influenced detective fiction. Furthermore, Kathleen Belin Owen argues that it is impractical to define a “definite” “postmodern” detective novel, because those terms are inherently contradictory (74). Therefore, the scope of this segment is going to limit itself to the postmodern interpretation of the anti-detective by Jack van der Weide in his work *Detective en anti-detective* (1996). Van der Weide mentions Stefano Tani’s characterisation of postmodernism as a mode that represents the idea of the absence of one universal truth and consequently the non-existence of finality or resolution in detective stories, whereas classic detective fiction and the modern, more conventional whodunnits heavily rely on the solution of the mystery (qtd. in Van der Weide 138-139). Jack van der Weide explains this division by positing the classic detective as the paradigmatic form of a positivistic world view, in opposition to the concept of the anti-detective, which is paradigmatic for the postmodern reaction to that world view (121). In other words, classic detective narratives are based on the conviction that the mystery, and in extension the world, can be knowable through logical reasoning and science, whilst the anti-detective denies this thought. These anti-detective stories can be broadly defined as stories of miscellaneous generic heritage, which employ elements of the detective narrative and consequently subvert those elements by diverting from classic conventions (Van der Weide 120-123). In this respect, these stories often include some kind of mystery and a character who is trying to solve it, but instead of a clear outcome, the narrative provokes philosophical thought and posits more existential questions, whilst the mystery is only partially solved or remains unresolved. Van der Weide further suggests a number of possibilities the postmodern anti-detective narrative can explore, such as the reversal of character roles, in which the detective becomes the victim or even the perpetrator; the opposition of linearity and causality in the classic detective story on the one hand and the circularity and temporality of postmodern texts on the other, addressing the illusion of closure; the metafictional awareness of the detective story’s narrativity; an existential fear that not everything can be solved or understood, etc. (124-133). Although a metafictional awareness was already inherently present in classic detective fiction, because the detecting agent in the narrative’s fictional world is trying to reconstruct the story of the murder based on clues (Hühn 453-454), this is only a covert form of metafiction.
In postmodern texts, on the other hand, Linda Hutcheon states that the metafictional elements become overt by commenting on the identity of their own narrative (qtd. in van der Weide 134), a feature that occurs several times in *True Detective*. Lastly, there is also a contradiction in terms of the interpretation of post-war detective stories as modernist or postmodern. Brian McHale argues that epistemology, which relates to the theory of knowledge, is primarily a modernist feature, whereas ontology, relating to the nature of being, is postmodern and the detective story is the quintessentially epistemological genre (qtd. in van der Weide 144-145). Nevertheless, instead of positing a clear-cut division between the two, Linda Hutcheon proposes an interpretation of postmodern detective stories as being grounded in modernism (143-144). This interpretation is perfectly formulated by Kathleen Belin Owen:

> The postmodern detective novel […] does initially ground itself in the typical detective genre declarations of a mystery, a detective, an epistemological search (though the *solution* is ontological, for in postmodernism the ‘rational’ explanations about states of being cannot be assumed), and a goal of resolution. (74)

In conclusion, this small-scale overview of the evolution of detective fiction, primarily throughout the twentieth century demonstrates the hybridity and diversity of possibilities for the detective narrative. Whilst the classic detective stories emphasised the solution of the mystery through logical reasoning, the hard-boiled detective started the progression towards more psychological depth by relocating the focus to the private life of the protagonist and the course of the investigation. These tendencies of focusing on the impact of the events on the detecting agent’s life, were further developed in the detective thriller, the serial-killer narrative and the police procedural. Lastly, the postmodern detective novel introduced the failure of the detective by omitting the formal resolution of the mystery and reallocating the emphasis to ontological and philosophical questions. All of these types of the detective genre will prove useful in the analysis of *True Detective* at the end of the second chapter. However, these descriptions still pertain to the realm of written fiction and therefore it is imperative that we examine detective fiction in the visual media of film and television first.
1.2 Detective Fiction in the Visual Media

1.2.1 The Detective in Film

Parallel to the flourishing of written detective fiction from its inception in the nineteenth century onwards, the vast surge of movie productions and the popularity of film have accounted for a new, widespread medium for detective storytelling. Although cinematography, as a new and innovating medium in the beginning of the twentieth century, often looked for inspiration in precursors of storytelling, it was somewhat handicapped in comparison with reading matter, because of its initial technological limitations. Silent films had to convey additional information, beside the purely visual, in short messages that interrupted the stream of images. Martin Maloney argues that, for this reason, film-makers had to opt for narratives or genres that lent themselves perfectly to highly visual films based on action, such as Westerns or slapstick comedies, whereas the classic detective stories were based on logical and analytical reasoning (35). Next to some attempts featuring Sherlock Holmes, albeit devoid of the customary puzzle elements and deductions, the complete detective story came to the big screen when sound was introduced to the medium of film (Maloney 45). Since Hollywood is the centre of the global film industry, the typically American hard-boiled detective played a pivotal role in the emerging movie business of the 1930s and 40s. According to Jack Shaheen, the hard-boiled screen detective became one of the most popular forms of detective fiction, because of the characterisation of the protagonist: a tough, morally decent yet lonesome hero, who is bound to save the day, no matter how grim the situation (37). The menacing urban setting and ubiquitous threat of criminals were perfect ingredients for the dark and menacing noir film adaptations of hard-boiled exemplars such as The Maltese Falcon by Dashiell Hammett and The Big Sleep by Raymond Chandler (Shaheen 37). According to Peter Verstraten, these noir films frequently had a structure in which the private eye conveys how he had gotten involved in a mystery, which is visually actualised through flashbacks (184). This structure is also being employed in the mediation of True Detective’s narrative, which I will discuss in the second chapter.

However, in the long filmic history of detective fiction, there have been shifting periods of popularity concerning the subtypes of the principal detective narratives I have described in the previous part of this chapter. Although every decade had its preferred type of detective film reflecting the zeitgeist, the genre as a whole never went out of style and the number of film productions remained consistent throughout the years.
I include this condensed overview of the detective narrative in cinema to demonstrate the popularity of the genre in a medium other than written fiction during the twentieth century. A subtype that adheres closely to the generic characteristics of True Detective, for instance, is the police procedural, which became very popular in the 1940s (Gates 5). This form of detective fiction features the “organizational sleuth”, which is also an overarching term for the “civil servant as assassin”, or in other words the spy (Shaheen 38). The detecting agents in these police and spy movies were part of an organisation in charge of maintaining the peace and order in society. Not including the sensational adventures of spies like James Bond, the police forces became the most prominent detecting agents on the silver screen from the early 1950s on, when more feats of violence were condoned on the big screen (Shaheen 38). Normally, police detectives work within the confines of the law and their department, always following standard procedure, but the amount of violence depicted in film grew exponentially in the second half of the twentieth century, so the interpretation of the word “correct” became very indistinct with the police heroes from the 1970s throughout the 1980s, such as John McClane in the Die Hard series or Harry Callahan in the Dirty Harry series (Gates 5, 126, 143). Philippa Gates argues that subsequently an “educated, intelligent, middle-class criminalist” prevailed in the detective appearances on the silver screen throughout the 1990s and 2000s (5). Nevertheless, the format of film differs from that of television and therefore it is imperative to research the history of detective fiction on television in more detail. Robert Larka pointed out that Hollywood was constantly changing the tone of their detective movies to adapt to popular demand and because of their declining audience, lost to television after the Second World War (40). Even though the film industry is a billion-dollar business around the world and has received much popular and academic interest, television has experienced a remarkable evolution in the last decades and as a medium for storytelling, it is becoming increasingly versatile and dynamic.

1.2.2 The Detective on Television

Television is a multi-faceted medium, distributing various formats of differing content. This section of my dissertation will limit itself to drama series adhering to the realm of crime fiction and more specifically detective fiction.3 This concise overview of detective fiction on television once more does not pretend to be a fully comprehensive history, but it evinces a growing popularity of the medium for a particular genre of storytelling.

3The syndication of films previously released in theatres and television movies will be left out of account as the general scope of this research requires an analysis of the serial format, on which I am going to elaborate in the next chapter.
Furthermore, I am solely going to refer to television programmes broadcast in the English-speaking world, meaning American and British productions. Specific television programming only became a prominent part of every-day life after the Second World War. In the 1930s there were a limited number of public places in the United Kingdom and the United States of America where people could watch television, which convinced some that the television medium could compete with film as a form of massive public entertainment (Bignell 49). However, when corporations realised there were extensive opportunities for a vast consumer market, the domestic television set was introduced and even though it remained almost prohibitively priced for years, when the prices declined in the 1950s it became a standard feature in the greater part of the population’s households (Bignell 49-50). Of course, the types of programmes broadcast from the 1950s and onwards differed from those seen at the public viewing venues in the 1930s. In the beginning stages of television, broadcasting technologies were in their infancy so all of the programmes were live (Bignell 19). This is self-evident for news broadcasts, but even entertainment programmes, mostly in the form of single plays, were not recorded in advance. This was considered to be too expensive and in the 1950s still, tape recordings of programmes were only used for training purposes, until eventually the production of television programmes became professionalised in the 1960s (Bignell 46-47). In other words, as soon as professional directors and producers came into play, the reception of television broadcasting, especially entertainment programmes such as the drama series, would change for good.

The nature of television viewers as the medium’s audience also constitutes an important factor of the production of programmes. Jonathan Bignell states that the broadcasting companies started to comprehend the importance of “the conception of the audience as consumers able to exercise a free choice” in the 1950s (22). Because of the increasing viewing options for the audience at home and the competition between national and commercial broadcasting networks, the programmes had to become more appealing in order to keep the viewer’s attention while changing channels or while considering what to watch. In this respect, the production of detective fiction on television was subject to cross-fertilization with analogous television narratives, creating generic hybrids. As opposed to films, aspects in television programmes can be changed by the producers to accommodate the viewers (Turner 8). By way of audience feedback in the form of ratings, suggestions on online forums and test audiences, a certain show could for instance suddenly feature other actors, foreground minor characters, play out a certain plot element or accentuate conventions that adhere to other genres.
In any case, it is difficult to delineate fixed limits in genre as regards television programmes, because they have to appeal to a large niche audience. The term niche audience refers to a shift in the view of modern-day society, as Bignell explains:

Rather than thinking of British society as if it were a pyramid with a small cultural elite at the top, with sophisticated tastes, and a broad base of ordinary viewers underneath preferring undemanding entertainment, the image of society has changed to one of overlapping and scattered sets of viewers, or ‘niche audiences’, who have changing and diverse preferences across many genres, forms and levels of complexity. (22)

In my opinion it is safe to assume that Bignell’s statement can be extended to the entire world. What is most vital in this excerpt, is that there is no particular type of viewer for a particular type of programme and so the composition of a television production is susceptible to generic innovations. In the plethora of television drama’s available in the programming of networks in the United Kingdom and the United States, there are a considerable amount of genres that focus more on action instead of character, such as: *The Sweeney* (1975-1978), a police programme where violence is more conspicuous than actual detecting work; *Mission: Impossible* (1966-1973), a series focusing on espionage; and many others (Miller 24). These two programmes are mentioned here, because they are examples of crime fiction, an overarching term for all fiction stories adhering to an infraction of the law and the varying kinds of solutions thereof. What is more, these series exhibit many similarities with the detective story, but have been transformed in keeping with the medium’s history and the demands of the audience.

Keeping in mind the difficulties surrounding genre delineation, detective fiction has consistently been featured in television broadcasting since the Second World War. Although the term “crime series” is used in *The Television Genre Book*, Lez Cooke allows some room for deviation in her description of the term. Cooke argues that in the last five decades “there has been a proliferation of police, detective and crime drama, with endless variations and reworkings of a basic formula in which society is protected and the status quo maintained by the forces of law and order.” (29). Put like this, the whodunnit aspect may or may not be present in the crime series, but as a standard for this research, there is an obligated requirement of this facet if we are going to talk about detective fiction on television.
A straightforward example is the private eye series, presenting a private investigator, who can be hired by individuals in matters in which the police cannot directly help. In the years following World War II, a number of private eye shows found their way to the small screen, after having their beginnings in radio, and the formula flourished for about 15 years (Larka 109). Some of the best-known shows were *Martin Kane, Private Eye* (1949-1954); *Perry Mason* (1957-1966); and *The Saint* (1962-1969) before the social context of the Cold War ushered in a period of espionage series in the 1960s (Larka 109-131). The private eye did not disappear entirely from television, as can be seen by the programming of *Magnum, P. I.* (1980-1988). However, the outline of this type of series was often configured with measures towards more action and show. Nevertheless, even the classic private eye series occasionally had episodes with a plot that did not contain a whodunnit element. Robert Larka analysed a number of private eye series and distinguished several other motifs present, based on Georges Polti’s *The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations*. Two examples of these plots are: supplication, when the client needs protection from his enemies; and personal vengeance, when the private investigator encounters a malicious person from his past and want to bring him to justice (Larka 197-199). This diversity of episode narratives naturally is not limited to those programmes featuring private detectives. I would rather suggest that it is a logical consequence of the fluidity of television programmes to remain appealing to the viewers, instead of a certain formula getting worn out.

The classic structure of a detective story, circling back to Karin Molander Danielsson’s reference to the paradigm of the two narratives (33-34), functions as the basis for many crime drama series. An episode starts out with a victim, whether the audience gets to see an obscured, situational view of the murder or merely obtains information about the murder the same moment that the detectives do, on the scene for instance. The rest of the episode contains the narrative of the investigation, in which the viewer partakes, in order to reconstruct the narrative of the murder. An example of this kind of prototypical whodunnit series is *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (2000-2015), which was wildly popular in the United States, considering the series’ runtime and the ensuing and still on-going spin-off shows *CSI: Miami* (2002- ) and *CSI: NY* (2004- ). Glen Creeber points out the fact that, even though the narrative structure of *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* might be considered predictable, the series innovated the concept of the murder narrative by focusing on what happened to the victim physically (30). The visually distinctive crime series featured many CGI sequences that showed the impact of the murder weapon on the victim’s body and so the narrative of the murder is constructed by taking the investigative techniques applied in the episode into account (Creeber 30).
The team of detectives employed an array of forensic researching techniques to obtain very detailed evidence, so whilst many other programmes focus on the motive of the murderer or the part of the murder narrative leading up to the fatal moment, *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* focuses on the actual method or action of the murder.

*CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* projected the basic structure of the whodunnit narrative, whereas some crime series, as well as written detective fiction, deviate from this pattern and invert the order. Eyal Segal argues that:

> Whereas in the standard detective story form the textual sequence primarily follows the course of the investigation, from which the crime is gradually reconstructed, in the inverted form the story of the crime is narrated in an orderly manner before the text moves on to the ensuing investigation. (185)

So, in terms of television drama, instead of starting the episode with the discovery of a murder and then gradually getting closer to the resolution of the case by means of the investigation, the audience has already seen the murder in full before the plot continues to the research. The identity of the murderer is known to the viewers, so the narration of the murder precedes rather than follows the narration of the investigation, temporally speaking. This means that, although the murder logically occurs before the investigation, and is the reason for the inception of the investigation, the classic detective plot delays the narration of the murder temporally until it can feature as the conclusion of the investigation narrative. In narratological studies, the Russian formalists have made a distinction between ‘fabula’, or the logical order of events, and ‘sjuzhet’, the order in which the reader is presented with the events (Herman 93-94). In other words, the narrative of the murder precedes the narrative of the investigation chronologically, whereas most detective stories order the events in a way that the reader or the viewer is only presented with the murder narrative after the investigation has taken place. With the inverted form, however, there is a shift from curiosity concerning the identity of the culprit to a feeling of suspense on how the detective is going to expose and apprehend the culprit as the main interest of the story (Segal 185). The suspense lies in the unknown evolution of the investigation towards the solution, instead of the uncovering of the unknown murderer.
One example of a television police series that employs this structure is *Columbo*, although the narrative of the murder itself is often only a small part of the episode (Segal 185), focusing much more on the route of the investigation and the apprehension of the culprit.

The two series discussed in the previous segment portray, as does the larger part of crime series, law enforcement as the keeper of order and peace. One of the first police series in Britain was *Dixon of Dock Green* (1955-1976), which did not support overly complicated plotlines or spectacular action at first, as it was being broadcast live, but received good reviews for its realism and morals (Cooke 29-31). In this series we have the working-class, ordinary policeman solving crimes for the good of the community, as opposed to the heroic individual who is not officially or not leisurely related to law enforcement. He uses his training and common sense to solve crimes and keep society peaceful. Lez Cooke comments on the division of police detectives in uniform and those in plain clothes as the former being the modest, thoroughly working officer and the latter coming across as a more skilled professional (31). The division of these two concepts has endured and is still being employed today. In the 1970s, however, there was a development towards more charismatic, heroic police officers, the likes of Starsky and Hutch or Kojak, who had “a self-righteous belief in the validity of their own methods, even if those methods involved a degree of violence and a bending of the rules” (Cooke 31-32). This approach in action-packed shows meant that the ends justified the means and diverted from the police procedural, which ought to represent a realistic portrayal of police operations and investigations. The answer to the flamboyant police detectives of the 1970s, came in the form of more realistic and experimental programmes in the 1980s. *Hill Street Blues* (1981-1987), for instance, was renowned for its innovating, progressive interpretation of the drama series. Cooke mentions the “multiple narrative strands with a lack of resolution to many of the storylines, documentary-style camerawork […], and […] a liberal attitude towards policing and social issues.” (29). These features produced the realistic atmosphere of the police procedural, with often very complicated narratives intertwining. Whilst *Hill Street Blues* paved the way for the equally inventive *Homicide: Life on the Streets* (1993-1999) and *NYPD Blue* (1993-2005) in the United States of America, the United Kingdom saw its television landscape enriched as well with the broadcasting of *The Cops* (1998). The new, original view on the police procedural emphasised character development over plot, as Cooke argues that “[t]he vérité style of *The Cops*, in particular, with its depiction of the police as ‘ordinary human beings’, with their own problems and flaws, demonstrates that the potential for using the police series to ask questions about the role of the police in contemporary society still survives.” (33).
Highlighting the personal and professional struggles of police officers further allowed the police procedural to develop as a dynamic generic subtype of detective fiction, with greater focus on character development.

One of the television networks that is noted for producing qualitative and innovating drama series in the course of the last two decades is HBO, or Home Box Office. The network’s early showpiece crime drama in the 2000s was *The Sopranos* (1999-2007). The series revolves around Tony Soprano, a New Jersey gangster, who has to cope with being the head of his mobster family and simultaneously trying to be a good father, husband and son to his real family at home. Navigating in the world of organised crime evokes the ‘noir’ aspect of the Hollywood film industry and written detective fiction, where the emphasis of the story is on the criminal’s point of view. What is more, whilst stories featuring or focusing on gangsters have an established history on the silver screen, *The Sopranos* reinvented the gangster genre, by on the one hand exploring the characters’ psyche in depth, and on the other hand being self-reflexive. Glen Creeber argues that many of the mobsters are aware of the heritage of their own generic narrative, meaning that they love gangster movies and often re-enact famous scenes from those classics; one character even tries his hand at writing a screenplay for a gangster movie (32). There is an intertextual, metafictional undertone that permeates the series and in this fashion it positions itself firmly within the historical scale of the genre. Furthermore, as I have argued earlier, in the past decades there has been an evolution towards more psychological development and analysis and this evolution is strongly featured in *The Sopranos*. Breaking down genre conventions, there are some powerful female characters in the series who have a great influence over Tony Soprano, one of which is his psychiatrist (Creeber 32). Having the character of the psychiatrist allows the audience to delve into the mind of the seemingly tough and hardened gangster and realise that he has profound psychological issues, stemming from his childhood, as well as pertaining to his stressful life as a family-man and gangster.

Another HBO drama series that sought to comment on and reinvent crime fiction, the police series to be more precise, was *The Wire* (2002-2008). Set in the American city of Baltimore, the series focuses on various institutions of public society in the course of five seasons, such as: the police force, drug gangs, human trafficking, political institutions, the press, education, etc. HBO offered an alternative to the stereotypical cop shows of commercial television, where the solution at the end of each episode restored the status quo of society’s well-being through the good work of law enforcement.
The Wire, on the other hand, incorporated all layers of society, instead of just the one or two protagonist detectives and the opposing criminals who only lasted a single episode, and it infused the mechanisms of various institutions with raw political, sociological and psychological realities (Rose 82-83). This resulted in various story arcs spanning over multiple episodes or even seasons, combined with the creation of a dark, urban, fraudulent atmosphere (Rose 88). In my personal viewing of The Wire, I found the parallel story lines of the investigating police force and the daily worries of the criminals or social outcasts of the large urban society to be the most attractive aspect of the series. The viewer’s attention is slowly diverted from the pursuit of justice to the question of what justice really means. The constant social concerns and discrepancies in bureaucratic mechanisms of official institutions lead to an eventual blurring of right and wrong or good and evil. David G. Rose finally argues that The Wire revolutionised the police series in shifting the focal point from salvation through investigation towards discussing social and political themes which are not featured enough on the small screen (90).

To recapitulate, in addition to the unwavering popularity of the detective narrative over the years, the most significant parallel between the discussed formats is the evolution of detective fiction towards a more diversified genre. The hybridisation of the conventional whodunnit with action-packed genres such as the thriller, shifts the focus from the past to the active present. Furthermore, the demands of television audiences for more realism and diversity helped shape crime fiction in terms of the specific series’ emphasis. The Sopranos, for instance, featured a more human criminal point of view, pertaining to the gangster genre of crime fiction, and The Wire primarily formulated social critiques of public institutions, constituting a reinterpretation of the more conventional cop show. The success of producing innovative drama series is perpetuated in another highly qualitative drama series of HBO, namely True Detective, in which its generic antecedents are continuously echoed in terms of structure, character development and substantive focus.
Chapter 2 | *True Detective: The Cinematic Narrator*

*True Detective* goes back to the roots of crime fiction and presents the audience with what initially seems to be a straightforward detective story, as one would gather from the title. Nic Pizzolatto, the show’s creator and only writer, was an avid reader of Hammett and Chandler’s hard-boiled detective stories and has mentioned the metaphysical, eerie works of H. P. Lovecraft as a further influence for the script of *True Detective* (Colon). Moreover, the television series was originally intended as a novel (Damico & Quay 11) before Pizzolatto reworked the narrative of 550 pages into a television script. In this manner, he created a gripping narrative spanning over eight episodes and comprising an amalgamation of generic conventions and innovations with a many literary influences. This chapter is firstly going to focus on the narrative proper and the characteristics of the story’s structure.4 For an in-depth analysis of a television programme, this chapter will be conducted according to the method of textual analysis developed in Television Studies in the 1970s and 1980s. Jonathan Bignell defines a text as “an object such as a television programme, […] considered as a network of meaningful signs that can be analysed and interpreted”; so the discussion of television programmes centres around studying elements such as structure, themes, setting and characters, similarly as in literature studies (15). In this respect, I am going to treat the story of *True Detective* as a literary work in this chapter, applying methods of narratological analysis to the various components of the narrative. However, the medium of television implies that the narrative is interpreted through other modalities than in literature, seeing as how the viewer has to conceive the story visually and auditory. Therefore, I am going to explore the narratological concepts of character, setting and ordering of the narrative’s events through the agency responsible for the mediation in *True Detective*: the cinematic narrator.5

---

4 All of my paraphrasing and summaries of *True Detective*’s narrative in this dissertation are based on the viewing of the television series: *True Detective: The Complete First Season*. Writ. Nic Pizzolatto. Dir. Cary Joji Fukunaga. HBO (Warner Home Video), 2014. DVD.

5 Although Peter Verstraten employs this agency in the context of film studies, the identical properties of the television medium justify the application of this concept in an analysis of *True Detective*. 
Firstly, I am going to provide a chronological overview of the narrative’s kernel events in order to fully comprehend the impact of the structure. After this short part of the second chapter, I will discuss the qualities of Peter Verstraten’s cinematic narrator as opposed to Seymour Chatman’s concept of the implied author in the mediation of film. Furthermore, the description of the cinematic narrator will allow me to analyse and comment on various important aspects of the narrative, such as the flashback sequences, character development, plot intricacies, influence of the setting on the characters and so forth. This analysis is going to emphasise the medium’s division between the auditory and visual channel insofar that the coordination or disharmony between the two creates meaning in terms of the viewer’s interpretation (Verstraten 18-19). Lastly, I will focus on the present generic conventions and the status of True Detective as a story of detective fiction in light of the first chapter’s outline of the evolution of the genre.

2.1 Structure of the Narrative

2.1.1 Theoretical Framework

Firstly, a pertinent distinction needs to be made between the “story” and the “discourse” of the narrative, which I have touched upon earlier. David Herman equates the distinction “fabula/shuzjet” with that of “story/discourse”, or as he puts it more simply: the relation between what is being told and how it is being told respectively (93-94). In this respect, the story is a term that can be used to refer to the order of the events of the narrative as they actually occurred chronologically, whilst ‘discourse’ refers to how the events are ordered in the narration of the narrative (Van der Weide 11). As I have discussed earlier, the detective narrative most often starts at the in-between moment after the murder but before the investigation proper. Although the narrative only seems to be moving forward, the narration often includes flashbacks or “analepses”, which signify a “textual point of retrospection, [which] reaches back to a time anterior to that being narrated” (Cohan & Shires 85). In this regard, the detective narrative always goes back to a point before the murder had occurred, for instance because of the accounts of witnesses or the formulation of theories on account of the detective. In any case, the reader has to reorder the narrated events into a chronological story line, because of the presence of anachronisms, a general term for either a flashback or a flash-forward, inherent to the detective narrative and because of the split in temporal order of the narrative of the murder and that of the investigation (Cohan & Shires, 84). For this reason, I am going to refer to the narrative with the events in a chronological order as the story, which will be featured in the next section. The discourse, on the other hand, is the structure of the narrative as it is presented to the viewer.
This entails the mechanisms of the cinematic narrator, which are not to be downgraded to the workings of the camera and the soundtrack, as we will see further in this dissertation.

Before I proceed to the overview of True Detective’s story, a more precise definition of the format is in order. Previously I have employed the word “series” in a general manner, as Oxford Dictionaries describes it: “a set or sequence of related television […] programmes”. The definition denotes a collection of singular broadcasts constituting a particular type of television programme. In this sense, the series is comprised of episodes of the same duration, recurring characters and set within the same generic category, distributed under a fixed title. However, in The Television Genre Book there is a more specific definition of the series in relation to the “serial”. Graeme Turner describes the distinction as follows: “One of the key differences, it seemed then, was the series’ use of self-contained episodes with relatively autonomous plotlines as against the serial’s use of continuing storylines with characters who learned from episode to episode.” (8). In this respect, the series is an amalgamation of separate episodes, which function as individual stories with the same plot structure in the same kind of micro-universe, but without any substantive connections concerning a continuous history of the story or characters. The episodes of the serial, on the other hand, are closely related with respect to a continuing storyline and evolving characters. However, True Detective is not a pure serial, because the narratives of the two seasons are self-contained, so it can be best described as having an anthology format with serial aspects. Nevertheless, I will keep referring to this television programme as a series, in the general interpretation of the word.

2.1.2 Story Overview

The narrative of True Detective features two police detectives forming an unusual partnership to solve a murder case of seemingly occult nature. For the purpose of clarity, I will recount the kernel events of the whodunnit in a chronological manner to establish the story, even though this transforms the narrative as it is interpreted by the audience. Hereby, I am deliberately omitting the events in the protagonists’ personal lives, in order to demonstrate their development and dynamic in the analysis of the discourse. The story begins in 1995, when the body of a young woman named Dora Lange is found in Vermillion, located in Southern Louisiana in the United States of America. Because the victim was “decorated” with a crown made of deer antlers and with painted drawings on her body, the local sheriff’s department calls in the state police.
This is how the protagonists of the story are introduced, namely Detectives Rustin Cohle (Matthew McConaughey) and Martin Hart (Woody Harrelson). “Rust” had recently been transferred to Louisiana State CID (Crime Investigation Department) and he was paired up with local veteran “Marty” to investigate this homicide case. The mysterious circumstances of the crime scene, hinting at an occult sacrifice, leads Cohle to believe that they have a serial killer on their hands. After questioning people close to the victim, the detectives find her diary in a hidden trailer park where she worked as a prostitute. They discover that Dora attended a church group called the Friends of Christ Revival and find references in her diary to a figure named the Yellow King. Hart and Cohle are informed by the preacher of this congregation that Dora was often accompanied by a large man with scars in his face. Cohle insists on revising old similar cases, because they had found a structure made of sticks, named a devil net, similar to the ones at the crime scene, near the house of a girl who went missing years ago. Eventually they come up with their first prime suspect Reggie Ledoux, who was a cellmate of Dora Lange’s ex. Cohle undertakes an undercover mission, infiltrating a biker gang that is being supplied with drugs by Reggie Ledoux, in order to learn the suspect’s whereabouts. Subsequently, by following Reggie Ledoux’s partner Dewall, Cohle and Hart arrive at the criminals’ hideout and infiltrate the building. Cohle ultimately has Reggie handcuffed and kneeling on the ground and has his gun pointed at Dewall, but in a climactic turn of events, Hart impulsively kills Ledoux after he had discovered two children who were locked up inside. After killing Ledoux’s partner, who tried to flee, they corrupt the scene of the crime to stage a gunfight, which would account for the deaths of the two suspects. Hart and Cohle retrieve the missing children and are treated as heroes.

Seven peaceful years pass until Rustin Cohle questions a murder suspect who claims that Reggie Ledoux was the wrong man and that the Yellow King is still out there. Cohle starts looking into the files of the Dora Lange-case again as well as files of other missing children and women and finds a connection between several of the missing persons and reverend Billy Lee Tuttle, cousin of the senator Edwin Tuttle. After pursuing his suspicions regarding the involvement of high-placed officials in these disappearances as well as talking directly to Billy Lee Tuttle, Cohle has to account for his actions to his superior and he is told to quit his enquiries. The relationship between Marty and Rust has also become very tenuous because of Rust’s preoccupation with proving the connection between the Tuttle family and the missing women and children, when Hart and Cohle have a fight, because the latter had sex with the former’s wife Maggie (Michelle Monaghan). Consequently, Rustin quits the police force and disappears for a long time.
After another hiatus of ten years, Martin Hart, now a private investigator, and Rustin Cohle, now working in a bar, are both summoned to a police station on separate occasions, to answer some questions for Detectives Maynard Gilbough (Michael Potts) and Thomas Papania (Tory Kittles). With the pretence of needing to gather information for a new case, they ask Cohle and Hart individually to recount what transpired from 1995 to 2002. Eventually Papania and Gilbough reveal to Rustin and Martin that they suspect Cohle of being the murderer of Dora Lange and others, because he returned to Louisiana around the same time Billy Lee Tuttle mysteriously died. Furthermore, he was spotted several times at the crime scene of their Lake Charles-case, which featured similarities to the case of the Yellow King. After the interviews, Rustin goes to see Martin to reveal that he has been continuing his research into the activities of the Tuttle family for the past two years. Cohle shows Hart a videotape he stole from Billy Lee Tuttle’s home, depicting the ritualistic sacrifice of Marie Fontenot, a girl who disappeared many years earlier. Rustin convinces Martin that their serial killer is the large man with facial scarring, who is a member of the occult group, and asks for his help to find the killer. They question a few people and find out that Billy Lee Tuttle’s father had a grandchild by the name of Childress with scars on his face. After having another look at the evidence, they discover a maintenance company established by Billy Childress, which worked on schools, playgrounds and churches across Southern Louisiana, corresponding with the locations dozens of women and children disappeared. They decide to go to an old address listed under Billy Childress’s name. Once they have arrived, Martin Hart forces his way into the dilapidated house, where he finds a mentally unstable woman, whilst Rustin Cohle spots the man with facial scarring, by the name of Errol Childress (Glenn Fleshler). Rust follows him into an ancient, maze-like building, called Carcosa. In a final battle, Cohle and Hart, who rushed to Rustin’s rescue, manage to kill Errol Childress, despite both being heavily wounded. Shortly thereafter, they are picked up by the police, who were called in by Hart. A few days later, Papania and Gilbough visit Marty in the hospital to tell him they have found evidence proving Errol Childress to be the serial killer. In the end, Cohle is disappointed that the connection with Edwin Tuttle was not pursued, because the FBI and the State Attorney General vindicated the senator of any relation to the serial killer.
2.1.3 Discourse of the Narrative

The serial aspect of True Detective warrants a comparison with the format of the novel. Fundamentally, the season is divided into eight episodes, in which the first episode establishes the narrative, the last episode concludes the narrative and in the episodes in between, the storyline is developed. A metaphorical comparison between this kind of anthology serial and a novel, would equate the episodes with the chapters of the story. However, the reality and most important aspect of True Detective’s narrative, is the temporality of its mediation, or the order in which the events are narrated to the audience. For this reason, I suggest an analysis of the narrative based on the diachronic division of temporal sequences. As could be perceived from the story overview, the events depicted in True Detective occur over the course of seventeen years in three separate temporal sequences: 1995, 2002 and 2012. The story started with the inception of the investigation, leading to the capture and death of Reggie Ledoux in 1995. Seven years later in 2002, the narrative centres around the restart of investigating on behalf of Rustin Cohle and his eventual altercation with Martin Hart, leading to the ten-year hiatus after Rust’s departure. 2012 focuses on the enquiries made by Papania and Gilbough and the tracing and demise of the real serial killer. However, this chronological ordering of events is distorted by the mediation to achieve various dramatic and narrative effects. The main temporal sequence in True Detective is that of 2012, in which the whodunnit is finally resolved after seventeen years. Furthermore, 2012 is the narrative’s present from which connections are made to the past temporal sequences of 1995 and 2002. It is the so-called base of operations for the narrating agency.

Although his definition signifies a textual narrating voice, which will prove inadequate in relation to the medium of television, Uri Margolin’s definition is relevant to demonstrate that the narrating agency determines the succession of the various temporal sequences: “In the literal sense, the term ‘narrator’ designates the inner-textual (textually encoded) speech position from which the current narrative discourse originates and from which references to the entities, actions and events that this discourse is about are being made.” (351). In True Detective the narrative discourse originates from the temporal sequence of 2012, through the questioning of Martin Hart and Rustin Cohle by Maynard Gilbough and Thomas Papania. Moreover, the narrative is characterised by intercalated mode of narration, which signifies a variation shifting between retrospective, simultaneous and prospective narration (Herman 129). Retrospective narration provides the audience with a combination of the account of past events and the influence of those events and character’s actions on the present.
The audience often sees either Cohle or Hart commenting on a previous flashback in 2012, which informs the viewer about how the characters look back on those events. Embedded within this narrative of retrospect, there are some hints of prospective mediation, referring to future events. In other words, when the viewer is presented with a sequence of events based in 1995, the discourse sometimes swiftly skips ahead to a point further in time. This primarily happens through visual mediation, for instance when we see Ledoux’s hideout before the protagonists, in the 1995 timeline, have even learned the location. Lastly, simultaneous narration occupies a pivotal role in the fracture point of the narrative, on which I will elaborately comment in the following section. Simultaneous narration presents the events and actions in a synchronous manner relative to the spectator’s interpreting of the impact of the situation on the overall narrative. A distinct feature of the flashbacks is the fact that these are mediated in the “present tense”, which is a discrepancy between the retrospective character and the past incarnation of that character. In other words, even though the protagonists can comment on the flashbacks in the present, because they know the outcome of the events, technically the character in the flashback does not know what is going to happen (Verstraten 221). However, it is important to note that David Herman based his arguments on Gérard Genette’s models of narration, which characterises literary narration, albeit relevant to this aspect of True Detective’s mediation. In filmic media, however, the analysis of the narrative process is confronted with the limitations of applying narratological models on cinematographic narratives.

The discourse of a narrative is inextricably linked to some form of narrating agency, constituting an interesting and controversial aspect of film studies. A term that has proven extremely relevant to the study of films, is “mediacy”, introduced by Franz Karl Stanzel, which I have used a number of times previously. This refined the terminology of literature studies, as it conveyed the answer to the question: how is a story told? (Alber & Fludernik 174). Jan Alber and Monika Fludernik mention Seymour Chatman in this respect, because he applied “mediation” to the medium of film insofar that he distinguished between narratives which are told, or “diegetic” such as novels, and narratives which are shown, or “mimetic” such as films (174-175). To conclude this predicament of terminology, in the analysis of a television series as True Detective, it is more accurate to state that the narrative is mediated by a narrating agency, since the viewer has to construe the story visually as well as aurally. By including film and drama in his discussion on mediation by a narrating agency, Chatman breaks away from studies insisting on the presence of a narrative voice (Alber & Fludernik 179).
This means that, whilst diegetic literature is characterised by a narrating agency in the form of a character or omniscient agent with anthropomorphic qualities, who actually tells the story, film and television are highly visual mediums that show the events rather than describing them. Edward R. Branigan and David Bordwell provide a contrasting view, rejecting the concept of a cinematic narrator or narrative voice in film, because the activity of narration itself wraps up the working of a narrator (Schmidt 220). According to Johann N. Schmidt, they have put forward a theory in which the film’s organisation of sequential events and actions is conceived as an independent structure without a sender of the information, whereby they anticipate the interpretation of the narrative by a viewing audience (220). Although this dissertation does not adhere to this theory’s rejection of a narrating agent, the prominent position of the viewer’s interpretation is also significant for the reception of True Detective’s narrative. Additionally, Chatman argues that “every narrative is by definition narrated […] and that narration, narrative presentation, entails an agent even when the agent bears no signs of human personality.” (115). Therefore, I suggest an analysis of True Detective on the basis of a narrating agency’s presence, whilst respecting the independent interpretation of the viewer.

2.2 Narrating Agency in True Detective

2.2.1 The Implied Author

Seymour Chatman posits a hierarchic structure in film narrative, with a governing agency named “the implied author [or] the agent intrinsic to the story whose responsibility is the overall design – including the decision to communicate it through one or more narrators” (132). The class of subordinate narrators is two-fold: there are personified narrators, or character-narrators, who are able to present certain events verbally in the narrative; and there is the cinematic narrator, which accounts for the visual and auditory presentation of the events (Chatman 131-136). In other words, in the course of a film narrative, a certain organisation of visual sequences of actions and events is presented to the viewer and sometimes the narration is taken over by characters, who give an account of something. This account in turn is supported by the cinematic narrator’s task of providing the viewer with the visual and auditory evidence of what the character is narrating. A type of narrative arrangement in which the implied author is most recognisably present, is a discourse with unreliable narration (Chatman 131). Chatman gives the example of Alfred Hitchcock’s Stage Fright, which contains a flashback sequence introduced and narrated by one of the characters, which was supported by the visual and auditory mediation of the cinematic narrator, but later proved to be false (131).
The character-narrator controls the cinematic narrator, by making it produce a false showing of the events. This is only brought to light, because it was the intention of the implied author to rectify the situation and restore the misrepresentation by the narrators (Chatman 132-13). However, the concept of the implied author is a highly complicated narratological issue, with both supporters and opponents.

The presence of an implied author presupposes a need for both interpretative intention and communicative invention. Communicative invention hinges on the theory that when a person writes a novel, for instance, he involuntarily creates an implied author, who neither belongs to the real world nor the fictive, narrative world. This implied author can be interpreted as an agent who designs the narrative world, determining its structure and sequentiality, and creates subordinate narrators, who are part of the narrative’s discourse and mediate the story to the readers (Ryan 35-38, Chatman 133). Furthermore, the inception of the concept is also linked to various factors in the interpretation of narratives. In this respect, Chatman mentions the involuntary creation of a bestseller novel by Anne Frank, who obviously did not intend her diary to be read by millions of people. Still, the readership presumes they are being addressed as the intended recipients of the book; an effect of the implied author, who infuses the book with intention, meaning and reason (Chatman 91). A more relevant issue for this research is the collaborative work behind the production of films as well as television programmes which both have extensive teams working on them and several individuals managing the production (Chatman 92-96). Although it is common practice nowadays to refer to a film as the achievement of the director, there are countless other factors involved in the creation of a movie, such as the crew in charge of sound, the editing team, the team providing CGI (Computer Generated Images), the producers’ final cut and so forth. All these aspects influence the final result, so in a sense there are multiple “real authors”, but the result is interpreted as the intention of a singular agent: the implied author. Notwithstanding that the production team of a television series is of a smaller proportion in comparison with that of major Hollywood films, the professionalization of television production has evolved exponentially. There are often teams of scriptwriters and different directors each episode for the same television series, making it a very diversified end-product (Bignell 47-48). Nevertheless, True Detective as a television series, is unconventionally cohesive, because of its production history. There was only one writer, Nic Pizzolatto, and one director, Cary Fukunaga, for the whole season. The latter has stated in a video clip published by HBO, that having the writer constantly present, when he had to direct a complete season by himself, was an important asset for the proper development of the narrative as well as the characters (“Making True Detective”).
Furthermore, Amy Damico and Sara Quay state that Nic Pizzolatto had complete creative control and that he consequently “was more than an author than is typically possible in the more collaborative television process” (12). Because the intended design of *True Detective*’s creator was not obstructed by the format’s normal production process, I would argue against the hypothesis of an implied author.

I also do not feature Chatman’s conception of the term as the governing agent of the mediation in *True Detective*, nor as an intrinsic device to direct the intended interpretation of the narrative. Whilst Marie-Laure Ryan rightly refers to the nature of literary meaning, which is open to countless options of personal interpretation beyond the author’s intentions (38), I suggest that the mimetic character of film and television, in contrast to the diegetic character of literature, discloses the existence of an implied author in *True Detective*. Moreover, I advocate Bordwell and Branigan’s theory that a cinematographic narrative is solely and independently interpreted by the viewer on the basis of a knowledge of historically formed conventions of the medium (Schmidt 220-221). The viewer’s independent interpretation also does not cancel out Nic Pizzolatto’s intended design and development of the story. Furthermore, I agree with Luc Herman and Bart Vervaecck’s contention that the implied author, a term that Wayne Booth coined, resembles a god-like entity in a superfluous manner, because it projects the reader’s – or viewer’s – interpretative conceptions onto the text (11-14) – or television programme. In this respect, the television programme would become too authoritarian, guiding the interpretation of the audience to demonstrate the intentions or moral messages of the series. Herman and Vervaecck also mention Booth’s belief that people who do not accept the existence of an implied author, form their expectations of a text before they have read it and retain those expectations regardless of the intended interpretation of the narrative (12-13). I strongly disagree with Booth’s statement applied to *True Detective*, in that I believe that the interpretation of this television series is the result of the viewer’s mental processing and conception of the narrative, notwithstanding that there is a governing agency for the mediation of the narrative. Peter Verstraten has adjusted and specified Seymour Chatman’s concept of the narrating agency in film in a manner which I feel is appropriate for the analysis of *True Detective*’s mediation.
2.2.2 The Cinematic Narrator

Peter Verstraten advocates a theory of film mediation which employs elements of Seymour Chatman’s studies on film, deleting the implied author, but maintaining the construct of the cinematic narrator. Supporting my refusal of the implied author in film, Verstraten rejects the guidance of intention by a structuring agent, as well as the division of hierarchy between sound/text and image by that implied author (129). Hereby, he refers to Chatman’s assertion that in a narrative with untruthful narration for instance, the implied author directs the cinematic narrator to support the character’s untruthful narrative, insofar that the character manipulates or controls the visual actualisation of his lie. In other words, according to Chatman, the text spoken by said character is hierarchically superior to the image in this situation. Verstraten, however, proposes to remove the sliding scale of superiority between the visual and auditory channel to maintain a form of tension between the two and create a governing agent encompassing both channels, also named “the cinematic narrator” (129). This tension Verstraten refers to, is a relevant feature of mediation in film, because it represents the preference of the cinematic narrator to mediate an event through one channel instead of the other. In this respect, the alternation and coordination between the auditory and the visual channel influence the viewer’s interpretation of the narrative. Furthermore, the application of the cinematic narrator as an encompassing entity of the two channels, implies hierarchical superiority, albeit without having a pretence to indicate intent, nor inspiring hierarchical competition between the two channels (Verstraten 129). In summary, the cinematic narrator is ultimately responsible for the discourse of True Detective.

As I have briefly mentioned, the cinematic narrator acts as a governing agent, regulating the alternation between a visual mediator and an auditory narrator, which operate on an equivalent level (Verstraten 129). I have adjusted Verstraten’s label from visual narrator to visual mediator in order to reflect the qualities of the two channels. Seymour Chatman has formulated an overview of these elements, which does not have the pretence of being exhaustive, in the form of a diagram (see fig. 1 on the next page). From this diagram, we can infer that many elements come into play in the mediation of a cinematographic narrative. In general terms, the auditory narrator controls the auditory channel of the general mediation, for instance the dialogues, voice-overs, miscellaneous sounds and music. The visual mediator, on the other hand, structures every element of the visual channel in order to provide a cohesive and multi-faceted visual unity.
Therefore, basic comparative descriptions of the auditory narrator as the being microphone and the visual narrator as being the camera are not comprehensive, because they exclude post-production procedures, such as adding a soundtrack and editing.

![Diagram](image)

The cinematic narrator controls the cooperation of the auditory narrator and visual mediator. That cooperation, however, can be diversified in a gliding scale of three possibilities. Either the cinematic narrator attunes the visual and auditory channel, whereby the auditory narrator and the visual mediator operate in harmony, or the cinematic narrator assigns the most prominent part of the mediation to only one, rendering the correspondence between the two agents in disagreement and causing one to become inferior in favour of the other (Verstraten 130). By way of explanation: certain events in a television narrative can be mediated by engaging characters in a dialogue while they are performing some kind of action and these situations constitute a harmonious cooperation between the auditory narrator and the visual mediator. On the other hand, the cinematic narrator can instigate a clash between the visual channel and the auditory channel, which leads to ambiguous situations of storytelling. In *True Detective* these clashes between the auditory narrator and the visual mediator demonstrate the presence of the cinematic narrator and help shape the viewer’s characterisation of Rustin Cohle and Martin Hart.
2.3 Mediation of the Narrative

2.3.1 The Voice-over

An integral factor in the narrative progression of *True Detective* is the voice-over, which also constitutes a device of commenting on events. The concept of the voice-over implies hearing the voice of a person who is not featured on screen, or is at least not seen speaking the uttered words. Karen Lury has described a number of functions of the voice-over, two of which are relevant to *True Detective*, namely to refer to events which have happened already, even though the viewer might experience them as happening at that moment; and to form a bridge between two different temporal events, for example to transition to a flashback (59). In terms of mediation, a voice-over is the achievement of the cinematic narrator, because the auditory channel is used to connect two different sequences of the visual channel. As I have previously mentioned, the narrative of *True Detective* unfolds from a fixed point in time, namely 2012. In most instances, either Rustin Cohle or Martin Hart starts talking about something that relates to the past events in their respective interviews, when their on-screen account transitions into a voice-over. This is accompanied by a shot cut away from the present, introducing the visualisation of past events. The mechanism links the present with the past in a manner that is descriptive and it comments on the characters’ actions, their current mindset and subjective views on one another in hindsight. When the voice-over ends, the cinematic narrator synchronises the auditory channel with the visual channel when the dialogue starts. The same mechanism applies when a voice-over signals the transition from the past events to the present setting of the police station. These shifts occur mostly when Hart or Cohle start a new account applicable to the content of the flashback, when Papania or Gilbough ask a follow-up question or when the interview is paused by an interjection, for instance when Rust wants to go out and buy beer.

2.3.2 Status of the Flashback Sequences

In the course of *True Detective* there is a gradual evolution noticeable as regards the relationship between the character’s accounts in the present and the substance of the flashbacks. Traditionally, the first episode, or pilot, presents the audience crucial elements of the narrative, some in a latent, inconspicuous manner and some very ostentatiously, to captivate the audience.
Jeremy G. Butler describes the pilot as being “frequently presented as if it were a stand-alone movie, [using] a certain degree of narrative aperture to engage us, drawing us into the narrative structure of the regular run of a series” (33). In this respect, True Detective’s pilot creates an outline for the rest of the series, for instance by uttering the suspicion that they are dealing with a serial killer, whose ritualistic methods are characterised by an occult belief; by introducing what is to be an arduous partnership between the mysterious outsider Rust and the conventional, patriarchal Marty; by establishing the three main timelines of the story, namely the year of the murder investigation, the year of Hart and Cohle’s falling-out and the present situation of the interviews; and by suggesting that Rustin and Martin caught the wrong person in 1995 and that the real serial killer is still at large. As I have demonstrated in the previous segment, an important facet of True Detective’s discourse are the constant transitions between the temporal sequences. The transitions from the present to the past temporal sequences are almost invariably initiated by the two questioned protagonists, which is logical as the flashbacks are being presented as visualisations of their recounts. Marty or Rust would answer a question or start their recount in medias res, followed by a different visual sequence. The distinction between the past and present is easily discernible, based on the static setting of the police station in 2012 and the physical appearance of Marty and Rust. In terms of mediation, the cinematic narrator attunes the images of the visual mediator to the words of the auditory narrator when the flashback is introduced in order to conceive a meaningful and constructive cooperation. In keeping with this structural device, however, the viewer could construe the two protagonists to be controlling agents of the narrative discourse, because they often trigger the flashbacks. This would suggest a hierarchical relationship between the auditory narrator and the visual mediator, following Chatman’s model, whereas I am going to justify the use of Verstraten’s cinematic narrator as governing agency of mediation by discussing two different interpretations.

In the first interpretation, the viewer could be deceived into thinking that the flashbacks are amplified visual actualisations of Rustin Cohle and Martin Hart’s accounts or extensions of their summary of the case, directed towards Papania and Gilbough. The storytelling qualities of the filmic medium account for this amplification of the protagonists’ recounts in the flashbacks, because the visual and auditory channel convey much more information than the literal accounts. We can assume that Cohle and Hart are not describing every detail of the setting or every single action, as a literary narrator would do. Still, the possibility of this interpretation is limited to the visualisation of procedural events and actions as regards the investigation proper and some events in the margins of Marty and Rust’s professional relationship.
Examples hereof are: the description of Dora Lange’s body and the crime scene, the interrogation of Charlie Lange and Rustin going over to Martin’s house for dinner. These three sequences occur in the first episode and similar examples are predominantly featured early on in the discourse. However, as the narrative progresses there is a gradual growth towards disharmonious mediation, rendering the interpretation that the characters control the mediation improbable. The first element of the narrative I want to discuss is Martin Hart’s characterisation of his family life. When Papania and Gilbough ask Marty questions about Rust, he is constantly contrasting Rust’s loneliness, pessimism and anti-social attitude with his own, more balanced life. Hart talks about himself as a respectable family man, with a loving wife and wonderful daughters and he is constantly highlighting the importance of having a stable environment at home, with a responsibility to be a good father and husband. Even though Marty alludes to having extramarital affairs in 2012, he justifies his actions by stating it was for the good of the family. Nevertheless, in the third episode of True Detective, Hart once more juxtaposes his self-proclaimed model behaviour for working day and night by stating that “the rest of us had families, people in our lives, good things; people give you rules, rules describe the shape of things” (1.3). These words are in sharp contrast with the ensuing images of an event in 1995, introduced by Hart’s emphasis on rules. We see a car pulling up to the kerb in a crazed manner, followed by an enraged Marty breaking down his mistress’s door and physically assaulting the man in her apartment. Not only is it highly unlikely that Hart would divulge this kind of event to the detectives, it also does not correspond to the content of his words. In fact, it is quite the opposite, since the viewer sees a violent, jealous side of an unfaithful Marty. Furthermore, the flashback is followed by his statements in the present about boundaries and the importance of having a family.

An example that pertains more to the investigation proper, is the crucial sequence at the end of the 1995 timeline which demonstrates the variable status of Martin Hart and Rustin Cohle’s statements in the present with respect to their truthfulness. Hart commences his recount of Reggie Ledoux’s capture by stating that he stands by the veracity of his original statement. By then both Hart and Cohle had already lied about how they had located their suspect’s hideout. The beginning of the flashback is initially commented on truthfully by Hart through a voice-over, by describing their approach of the hideout through the thicket and their observation of the building. Subsequently, the temporal sequence shifts back to the present, in which Rust and Marty, through meticulous editing, jointly and vividly describe how they were being shot at by Reggie and Dewall.

In the following shot of the flashback, however, we can see both protagonists running towards the building without being targeted with firearms by the criminals. The inconsistency between the auditory narrator of the present and the visual mediator of the past is elucidated later on, when in 1995 Rustin says that they have to make everything look right after Martin shot Ledoux. This was of course an illegitimate action for a police detective and so Rustin and Martin altered the original crime scene to make it look like they had been shot at in order to legitimise their actions. This sequence from the fifth episode of *True Detective* clearly demonstrates the absence of harmony between the content of Hart and Cohle’s accounts and the visual channel. Fundamentally, this sequence establishes the independence of the flashback in comparison with the auditory content of the interviews in 2012. However, the viewer can still make the assumption that the past temporal sequences are the character’s thoughts or memories brought on by Papania and Gilbough’s enquiries.

The interpretation of the flashback sequences as Marty and Rust’s mental structures is based on the fact that the visual mediator as the primary agent – in comparison with the delayed establishment of the auditory narrator because of the voice-over – shows a diverging narrative in the past temporal sequence from what is being told in the present. In other words, the flashbacks are what the protagonists think about when they are giving recounts of the past events. This interpretation could be most clearly evinced from the aforementioned sequence in which Hart and Cohle lied about the process of retrieving the children from Ledoux’s hideout. Another example that upholds this theory, is a sequence with Marty in the fourth episode. After a number of scenes in which we see Hart and Cohle interrogating people who might lead them to Ledoux, Hart’s voice-over summarises their enquiries before transitioning the discourse back to the present. The conversation in 2012 focuses purely on the enquiries and the investigation, but Marty seems absent-minded and when he looks down, the camera stays fixated on him after he has stopped talking, attributing him a pensive look (see fig. 2).
Subsequently, the visual channel cuts to the past again, but instead of continuing with a flashback relevant to the investigation, we see Hart coming home and reading Maggie’s note which says that his girlfriend came over and told her about the affair. After he has called his mistress in rage and has tried to desperately to talk to his wife over the phone, the shot cuts back to 2012, where Hart asks Papania and Gilbough if they have any ex-wives. If we consider the flashback scene as being brought on by the present-day incarnation of Marty as a memory or inner reflection, it has to be noted that the focalisation of the visual mediation is somewhat peculiar. Considering that these are memories, which would logically entail a subjective experience, we would expect the mediation to be internally focalised, or shown through the eyes of the character. Peter Verstraten attributes this inconsistency to the temporal division between the sequences, because the visual mediator steps in and externally shows, to some extent, what the character experienced in the past (134). This experience is enhanced by the visual mediator through jump cuts, which creates disruptive gaps through shots with the same framing, but something in the shot has suddenly changed (Butler 212).

In fig. 3 we see Hart moving away from the phone after he called his girlfriend with his hands on his head out of frustration and suddenly the shot cuts to Marty reaching for the phone with a worried face full of despair (see fig. 4), because he want to talk to Maggie. In this fashion the visual mediator conveys Marty’s contemporary, chaotic state of mind through fragmentation.

To return to the subject at hand, I would dismiss the consideration of the mental structure hypothesis, because of the presence of an interviewee other than Hart or Cohle. In the sixth episode, Maggie is being interviewed by Papania and Gilbough. Even though she introduces a number of flashbacks that relate to the content of her specific account, the flashbacks cannot be her memories or thoughts, because they either do not feature her or contain information she would not have access to. A good example hereof is the sequence in which Maggie’s voice-over comments on the good qualities of Rust, initiating a flashback showing Rust’s private meeting with Billy Lee Tuttle in 2002.
Moreover, since Rustin walked out of the police station at the end of the fifth episode, and Martin stops the interview halfway the sixth, it is impossible to assume that the flashbacks introduced by Maggie, could be assigned to either Cohle or Hart in that particular part of the episode.

In summary, these examples have demonstrated the presence of a cinematic narrator in a number of ways, highlighting its significance for the development of both the story and the characters. Firstly, the fact that the story spans over seventeen years and is organised in a discourse that originates from the present and constantly circles back to past events, produces a fragmented narrative. The cinematic narrator connects the principally static scenes in the police station with elaborate visualisations of past events, whereby it mediates an anomalous whole. Specifically, the interviews conducted in 2012 introduce and comment on the events from 1995 and 2002 and even though the outcome of the investigation was already revealed in the first episode, the audience is emerged in the chronological past more than the present. The structure of *True Detective* constantly challenges the viewer to reflect on the possible courses of the investigation, the reasons for the current interviews and the impact of past events on the 2012 versions of the main characters. Especially the correlation between the simultaneous experience of Marty and Rust’s actions in the past and the retrospective look of their present-day incarnations with respect to the impact of those actions, is one of the cinematic narrator’s most pertinent achievements regarding the development of the main characters.

The sequences provided in the previous segments displayed instances of incongruity between the content of the interviews and the ensuing flashbacks, for instance the depiction of private affairs and illegitimate actions. In these instances, the cinematic narrator contrasts the outline of the interviews, which is primarily construed by the auditory narrator, with the factual narrative, mainly through the character’s actions construed by the visual mediator. This type of discourse affects the viewer in a personalised way, because the audience initially relates to the interviewers in 2012, trying to find out what happened in the seventeen years prior to the conversation. Notwithstanding that Hart and Cohle are withholding information and twisting the factual course of events, the cinematic narrator provides the truth through flashbacks. Moreover, the viewer is able to look into the protagonists’ personal lives in a direct manner, which often explains their specific words and individual demeanour, for instance when the flashback clarifies Hart’s sudden contemplative look (see fig. 3).
Therefore, the viewer is privileged in comparison with Detectives Papania and Gilbough, because the viewer receives more information in relation to Rust and Marty’s recounts, whether the connection between the content of their recount and that of the flashback is manifest or less evident. As a result, I argue that the narrating agency of True Detective operates as an independent agent, without displaying a form of fixed intent of the narrative. This cinematic narrator is imperative for the discourse of the series as well as the characterisation of the Martin Hart and Rustin Cohle, because it renders the relationship between the viewer and the protagonists more personal. It is exactly through this sympathising effect that Rust’s characterisation thrives, in light of Papania and Gilbough’s – initially latent – suspicion of him as the serial killer.

2.4 Characterisation: Case Study Rustin Cohle

2.4.1 Cohle’s Profiling

In the previous section, I concluded that the cinematic narrator provides the viewer with a comprehensive, albeit fragmented, story that spans over seventeen years. Nevertheless, the discourse of True Detective posits a paradoxical correspondence between the purpose of the interviews in the present and the effect of the frequent flashbacks in terms of Rustin Cohle’s characterisation. Whilst Detectives Papania and Gilbough initially communicate the purpose of the interviews as purely consultative and informative, it becomes more clear each episode that the consultations are part of a criminal investigation. Papania and Gilbough are considering the possibility of Cohle being the real serial killer based on the sightings of Rust at a relatively recent crime scene that is extremely similar to that of Dora Lange; the timing of his leave of absence right before he and Marty took down Reggie Ledoux; his disappearance in 2002 and other suspicious factors. The manner in which they direct the interviews with their questions suggests this suspicion early on in the series, until they finally reveal their theory to both Cohle and Hart. The alternation between the suggestive interviews and the sympathising effect of the flashback sequences creates conflict and doubt with respect to the viewer’s initial interpretation of Matthew McConaughey’s character, until the cinematic narrator eliminates the confusion towards the end of the interviews. The formula of transitioning between the present and the past was maintained through the interviews, so when these ended the narrative shifts into what David Herman characterised as simultaneous narration (129) – disregarding two brief flashbacks to 2010. The permanent shift to the present is initiated by the reunion of Cohle and Hart after the latter left the police station doubtful of Rust’s innocence.
Nevertheless, the cinematic narrator has procured an implicit alibi for Cohle through the visual channel, but first is useful to examine the process that led towards the ambiguous characterisation of Rustin Cohle.

2.4.2 Incrimination by the Cinematic Narrator

The temporal division between the interviews in the present and the investigation of 1995 is accentuated in the first episode by the texture of the visual channel. Texture refers to the quality of the image, which can be manipulated by directors or editors by using filters and other techniques in order to render the definition of the image rough, soft, more clear and so forth (Lury 41). In the opening minutes of the first episode, a high-definition frontal image of a camera can be seen, followed by a relatively softer, pixelated image of inferior quality depicting the letters “REC”, which in turn is followed by the image of Martin Hart in that same texture (as depicted in figures 5, 6 and 7 respectively). The style of this cinematography, combined with the addition of the text in the bottom left corner of the screen in fig. 7, are part of the visual mediator’s suggestive development of the narrative. Jeremy G. Butler addresses the issue of image quality and texture by arguing that the manipulation of the levels of clarity or resolution can influence thematic effects and highlight narrative aspects (166-167).
In this respect, the opening sequences of *True Detective* set the tone for one of the narrative’s most significant themes, namely the suspicion of Rustin Cohle as the serial killer. The viewer can gather that the focusing of the camera lens, followed by the word “REC” and the lower quality of the picture signify that the interviews of Hart and Cohle are being recorded. In most police procedurals, a certain person’s questioning is recorded if they are suspected of having committed a crime. Even though the objective of the enquiries is quickly established to be informational, because the case files were ruined by a hurricane, the emphasis on the action of recording through cinematography lends some suspicion to the protagonists. In this instance, the suspicion is only transmitted through the visual channel. Moreover, the visual mediator portrays Hart and Cohle addressing Papania and Gilbough, who are initially not visible, by looking to the sides of the video camera. In this manner, the viewer is embedded in the interviewers’ point of view, even though the narrative is technically focalised through the video camera, which creates an undercurrent of suspicion. However, normally there ought to be a somewhat collegial atmosphere, because Papania and Gilbough are consulting Cohle and Hart – although Rust is not the most amiable person to have a conversation with. Later in the first episode the image of the video camera shifts to the high quality camera, when Rustin interrupts the interview in order to buy beer. By doing this, he is the first of the protagonists to break through the veil of suspicion. In this respect, Nic Pizzolatto addresses Cohle’s detection of the undercurrent by arguing that Cohle not only wants to drink because of his routine, but also because he knows that if he drinks alcohol, everything he says will become inadmissible as evidence (HBO: “Inside the Episode #5”). Subsequently, the interviews are conducted in the normal high quality picture and the viewer gets to see Papania and Gilbough frequently from then on. In other words, the cinematographic narrator metaphorically lifts the veil of suspicion as soon as Rust is taking measures against that air. This course of action paradoxically anticipates the cinematic narrator’s “acquittal” of Cohle as well as Rust’s intelligence by steering everything in the direction he wants, which will be one of the detectives’ arguments in their hypothesis.

Since the detectives are questioning and filming both Rustin Cohle and Martin Hart, the latter should also come across suspicious. However, through the binary oppositions between Hart and Cohle with respect to the visual channel and the auditory channel’s narration, Hart is implicitly cleared from suspicion. Firstly, the opposition of Hart’s visual portrayal in comparison with Cohle’s is largely based on appearance. Hart is wearing a decent suit, a golden ring, an expensive watch and overall he has well-groomed looks, whereas Cohle has a neglected appearance with unobtrusive clothes and tattoos and on top of that he smokes and drinks.
Moreover, the mise en scène of the interviews’ setting – which is the same police station – is also suggestive. The background in Hart’s interview consists of a window with blinds and behind the window a working space with people walking around (see Fig. 8), which causes the viewer to associate him with a respectable business man. Cohle’s background, on the other hand, is made up of wooden wallcovering and cupboards, with stacks of boxes, old computers and a typewriter on top (see fig. 9), which procures the same shabby appearance as Cohle.

![Fig. 8](image1)
![Fig. 9](image2)

Therefore, the audience is inclined to view Hart as a more honest, respectable man in contrast to Cohle in the first episode and this is enforced by Hart’s words when asked about his pairing-up with Rustin: “Well, you don’t pick your parents and you don’t pick your partner.” (1.1). This quote fits into the broader scope of the auditory narrator’s enhancement of the visual mediator’s incrimination of Rustin Cohle. From the outset of the interview with Martin Hart, Papania and Gilbough divert the focus of the questions towards Cohle instead of the Dora Lange-case, because they claim they want to understand Cohle’s process. Nevertheless, the cinematic narrator is careful not to reveal too much of the narrative’s design in the first episode, although there is a clear-cut suggestion that the serial killer has not been caught in 1995, by referring to an extremely similar new case in 2012.

Throughout the series, the audience continuously gets more insight into the personal lives and histories of Marty Hart and Rust Cohle, as well as their difficult relationship. Whereas Papania and Gilbough ask Rustin about the progress of investigation, sometimes zooming in on his personal life and his methods, the detectives direct the focus of Martin’s interview primarily to his partner. They want to know about their relationship, Cohle’s personal affairs, Hart’s opinion about him and so forth. What is very conspicuous in Hart’s characterisation of Rust, is the incongruity between his account as regards the manner in which he describes himself in contrast to Cohle, and Cohle’s actions in the flashback sequences.
As I have mentioned earlier, Marty characterises himself as a good, responsible family man, whereas the visual mediator showed him going out drinking, cheating on his wife, assaulting people and other things that do not exactly showcase his self-proclaimed qualities. Nearly every time Marty addresses Rust’s persona in a negative way, he blames his state on the lack of structure in his life, i.e. not having a family. In the course of the first half of the series, the viewer learns that Rustin lost his daughter in a car accident and that his marriage did not last long after that. Initially, Martin is reluctant to get to know more about his partner, because of Rust’s unsettling statements about everything Marty considers normal, such as religion, family life, the Southern mentality, etc. This is why he says to Maggie that “[she] [does] not want to pick this man’s brain” (1.1), anticipating his general consideration that “a man without a family can be a bad thing” (1.1). In short, although Hart sympathises with Cohle regarding his loss, he keeps the relationship purely professional and predominantly characterises Rust as eccentric and unsociable, but also as a very smart and mysterious man. However, due to the questionable status of Marty’s self-characterisation, procured through the flashbacks, the auditory narrator’s description of Rust is debilitated in this instance.

2.4.3 Acquittal by the Cinematic Narrator

The fifth and sixth episode are pivotal in the thematic structure of True Detective, because of the tension between the visual mediator and the auditory narrator across the timelines. In the fifth episode, the true purpose of the interviews is revealed, which was to analyse Rustin Cohle and find irregularities in the protagonists’ recounts of the case. At this point in the narrative, the viewer’s conception of Rust is that of a smart, mysterious character with a troubled past, who obsesses about his work, although not out of love for it. This general profile could, theoretically speaking, still fit into the role of a deceitful murderer, despite his dedication to the pursuit of the serial killer in 1995, keeping in mind that presumably there is a new victim. Papania and Gilbough suggest a hidden agenda, because Cohle did not want Tuttle’s task force taking over the investigation and the fact that Rust was the one providing all the evidence that led towards Reggie Ledoux, who was not the wanted serial killer. These allegations are only voiced through Papania and Gilbough, but never supported by visual evidence in flashbacks. On the contrary, the visual mediator independently disputes the accusations made by the auditory narrator in the present by providing Rustin with – a liberal interpretation of – an alibi. Towards the end of the fifth episode, Papania and Gilbough express their suspicions. Hart, who was tired of being kept in the dark about what was really going on, eventually stays until well into the sixth episode, whereas Cohle laughs the accusations off and leaves at the end of the fifth.
During the detectives’ statements directed towards Marty and Rust, the visual mediator frequently cuts to sequences from 2002, which depict Cohle exploring various places. One of these places is an abandoned school, which was funded by the Tuttle family and in which Rust finds many devil nets, associated with the serial killer’s occult disposition. Preceding Rustin’s solo investigation, the viewer was made aware of Cohle’s theory that high-placed individuals were involved, namely the Tuttle family. Rust does not include his partner in this investigation after Marty dismissed his theory in front of Major Salter, causing them to drift apart even before their altercation. This enforces the exclusive nature of the viewer’s relationship to Cohle, because we know that Cohle has found evidence in 2002. Papania and Gilbough, on the other hand, are trying to convince Marty in 2012 that Rust could be the murderer. This tension between the accusations in the present and the constant cuts to 2002 limits the effect of the auditory narrator’s incrimination to Hart’s state of mind. Marty’s doubt is mediated visually by showing him checking his gun after Rust pulled him over at the end of the sixth episode. At this point in the narrative, the search for the serial killer has shifted into a question of how well Hart knows Rustin Cohle, whilst the cinematic narrator is ambiguously accentuating Rust’s innocence and Marty’s doubt through the visual channel.

2.4.4 Indirect Self-Characterisation

Even though Martin Hart frequently – and subjectively – describes his partner, the most direct manner of characterising Rustin Cohle is through his own words and actions. My previous discussions foregrounded Rust’s nihilistic demeanour, which most likely took shape after his daughter’s death. His pessimistic views on human life are voiced in numerous statements, for instance:

I think human consciousness is a tragic misstep in evolution. We became too self-aware. Nature created an aspect of nature separate from itself. We are creatures that should not exist by natural law. We are things that labour under the illusion of having a self, this accretion of sensory experience and feeling, programmed that we are each somebody when, in fact, everybody’s nobody. (1.1)
These are the words of a complex, introverted character who has been shaped by his tragic personal history and by his profession, which confronts him with cruel and inhumane acts of mankind. Cohle’s manifest unsociable nature drives a wedge between him and the people in his life, not in the least between him and his partner.

In the third episode, the statements expressing his general state of mind are enhanced by imagery provided by the visual mediator. Marty and Rust are dancing in a bar with Maggie and her friend Jennifer respectively, and whilst Marty is secretly looking over to his mistress, who is there with another man, Rust cannot look Jennifer in the eye (see fig. 10). Simultaneously, a voice-over of the character’s present-day incarnation is indirectly commenting on the scene, by saying: “Each stilled body so certain that they were more than the sum of their urges; all the useless spinning, tired mind, collision of desire and ignorance” (1.3). Even though these words are uttered independently in relation to the flashback scene, they are applicable to the portrayed situation. Rust is visibly not interested in either Jennifer or the whole farce of going out and having a good time, which is referred to implicitly by characterising the dancing scene as “the useless spinning, tired mind” (1.3). Cohle is thus opposing himself with Marty, because Marty is a man who cannot control his urges and who desires another woman, even when he is dancing with his own wife, whereas Rust is seemingly impervious to these sensations.

An even more explicit example of Rust’s disgust for a sentient human being’s conformity to a pointless life – this bleak choice of words is of course a paraphrasing of Rust’s beliefs —, is given later on in the episode. Cohle is talking about the futility and illusion of life, because of the ubiquitousness of death, brought on by a conversation about photographs of murder victims. However, before he dwells on the look in the eyes of the victims, he directs the attention to the case file of the murder at Lake Charles on the table (see fig. 11).
Although Rust is using the picture of the Lake Charles-victim as a bridge to approach his philosophy on victims welcoming death, he implicitly connects the emptiness of life to the lack of solution regarding the Dora Lange-case, since he is hinting at the ongoing activities of the serial killer. Cohle is a very postmodern character in this respect, in that he sees the universality of crime and realises the absence of an ultimate ending resolution, but I am going to further discuss this facet of *True Detective* towards the end of this dissertation. The other reason I refer to this segment of the third episode, is the short cut to the scene of Marty and Rust dancing in the bar, in between the pictures of dead women and children. Cohle is continuing to express his pessimism by stating that the drama of life means nothing at all, because once those women and children let go, they were relieved. The moment he emphasises the hollowness of people’s everyday routine, the visual mediator cuts to the dancing scene, before the shot dissolves into a shot of another photograph. This symbolises Rustin’s ambiguous relationship with death, because he previously mentioned to Hart that he lacks the constitution to end his own life, even though he clearly despises almost all of its facets. In a way, he is envious of those women and children, because they had the ‘opportunity’ to fully let go, to be at peace, which is something Cohle so desires. In this respect, the visual mediator illustrates Rustin’s words and mindset by exemplifying the situation of the bar scene as something he utterly hates.

2.4.5 Hallucinatory Manifestations

Another feat of the visual mediator in relation to the characterisation of Rustin Cohle are the actualisations of his hallucinations. In the second episode, aptly named “Seeing Things”, Gilbough asks Rust about his so-called visions, which are described by Rust as “chemical flashbacks” and “neural damage” (1.2), a result of his years working undercover in drug gangs. Notwithstanding that he admits to having these hallucinations, he tells Papania and Gilbough that he could always tell what was real and what not and that the hallucinations did not affect his mindfulness or mental sharpness during work. In the course of that second episode, the visual mediator provides three manifestations of these visions. In contrast to his previous statement, the impact of his chemical flashbacks is much graver than he describes it to be in the interview. When he is driving, he needs to fully concentrate on the road, because the hallucinations blur his vision (see fig. 12 on the next page) and when he is sitting in the passenger seat of Hart’s car, he closes his eyes and tries to focus in order to stop the visions (see fig. 13 on the next page).
In figure 14, the viewer can see Rust’s distressed facial expression as he starts seeing bright streams of fluorescent light spreading across the sky, a sight which is reflected in the car window. The viewer is emerged in Rust’s perception of this hallucination through the eyeline match, a narrative tool to suggest subjectivity, in which the visual mediator shows a shot of the watching character (fig. 14), followed by a countershot of his field of vision (fig. 15) (Verstraten 90). Subsequently, Rust tries to control it (as could be evinced from fig. 13) and composes himself to a degree where it resembles a form of meditation. However, the viewer does not know if he reaches the desired result, because the visual mediator does not show a countershot of the fluorescent light fading away. Because these visions are something only Rust can see, the viewer has to assume that these weird phenomena are internally focalised. However, the visual mediator does not always assume Cohle’s gaze as in figure 15. It also employs the over-the-shoulder shot (fig. 12) and external focalisation (fig. 16 on the next page) to suggest Rust’s subjective point of view. In this respect, the viewer can relate to what Rust experiences during these hallucinations, but also has to diversify between what is real and what is not.
In spite of his clarification in the interview, Cohle’s facial expressions or statements sometimes indicate an uncertain processing of the images that have been focalised through him. In the first episode, for instance, whilst Hart is driving the car, we see Cohle looking outside when the countershot shows a little girl by the side of the road, waving to him (fig. 17). After the car has passed her, Rust has a pondering look and then asks Marty if he believes in ghosts, bringing about an irritated look on behalf of Hart. If we consider Rust’s question and the subsequent revelations concerning Rust’s hallucinations and his daughter, we can hypothesise that this little girl could have been another one of his visions. In this instance it would be a manifestation of his idea of how his daughter might have looked if she would have had the chance to grow up. Still, this is only a hypothesis and the scene could have just as easily belonged to the diegetic reality of the narrative, because of the rather unobtrusive nature of the scene.

On the other hand, Rust also gives mixed signals when he is confronted with a more improbable phenomenon, for example the scattering formation of birds at the end of the second episode (see fig. 16). The birds form a spiral for a brief moment, a symbol which Dora Lange had marked on her body, and afterwards Rust is looking confused in Marty’s direction (see fig. 18), as if he wants to ask his partner whether he saw it too. Cohle’s reaction is certainly not in accordance with his claim of always being able to judge the status of what he sees.
Moreover, the fact that this scene is focalised externally should normally entail that the visual mediator shows the event as it really is. Peter Verstraten explains the ambiguity in the combination of external focalisation and subjectivity by highlighting the probability of a certain phenomenon to be a hallucination and incorporating the positioning of the character, which in this case extends the eyeline match (107-114). Since we can only see Rust’s backside, with his head directed towards the birds, they are within his field of vision and because of the unlikely nature of the occurrence, the audience is able to presume the likelihood of this phenomenon as a subjective treatment by the visual mediator.

A final important aspect of this last scene is the accompanying music when Rust sees the birds. In the sequence leading up to that shot, we can see a car driving on a dirt road with somewhat muffled music playing. The visual mediator cuts to a shot of the protagonists through vehicle’s windows with the music still playing and Hart and Cohle’s dialogue louder than the music. When they spot an old church and start driving towards it, the volume of the music is enhanced and overpowers the sound of the car. Hereby we can infer that the music was most likely playing on the radio, meaning that it was inradietic or perceivable by the characters, and subsequently transitioned into a more pronounced version to conduct the rhythm of the sequence (Verstraten 154-157). In the aforementioned scene, however, the auditory narrator adds echoing effects and distortion to the music, just when Rust is looking at the birds, which amplifies the visual channel. According to Verstraten, the modification of music in certain situations can underscore the emotional impact on a particular character (156), in this case the impact of the imagery on Rustin. In this respect, a possible explanation for his reaction could be the content of the birds’ formation, referring to his obsession with the Yellow King. All these instances, which either allude to or explicitly demonstrate Rust’s hallucinations, accentuate his character as being troubled and enigmatic, whether it is the realisation of a single channel or the cooperation between the visual and auditory channel. In this manner, the cinematic narrator reinforces the veil of mystery this character is embellished with.
2.4.6 Influence of the Setting

A less conspicuous aspect of *True Detective*’s mediation on a visual level, which nonetheless permeates the narrative, is the abundance of wide long shots of the setting, implying extreme distance to create overview (Butler 173). These moving aerial shots are primarily positioned in between sequences of events or actions in order to connect them, but they also serve a more implicit purpose. Jonathan Bignell explains that shots in television narrative obtain meaning in the interaction with all of the programme’s other elements (150) and in this respect, the long shots not only establish the surroundings of where Hart and Cohle have to work, but also the environment within which the detectives constantly have to move. In other words, in addition to purely presenting the visual panorama of Louisiana, the visual mediator implies the influence of the setting on the characters as well. *True Detective*’s director, Cary Joji Fukunaga, has stated in a making-of video that “when your story is on a scale that we’re telling this one on, then the world that it’s set in becomes another character” (HBO: “Making True Detective”). In a tacit manner, this “new character” haunts Rust in a similar way to how he is haunted by the Yellow King. The most recognisable manifestations of the setting’s haunting effect on Rust are the shots of the eerie, obscure landscape (see fig. 19), which lends itself perfectly for the mysterious, occult-related events that occur in the narrative.

Another, slightly more abstract example is the display of Louisiana’s industrial scenery in contrast to the surrounding green landscape (see fig. 20). In the second episode, Hart and Cohle visit Dora Lange’s mother, who suffers from chronic headaches from working with chemicals for years. Later in that episode, Rust is hallucinating in Marty’s car, as I have discussed previously, and after he has tried to compose himself, the shot cuts away to a wide long shot, which shows the car and some sort of refinery in the background (see fig. 20).
The juxtaposition of Cohle’s hallucination and the shot of the refinery, in light of the scene with Dora Lange’s mother, could be considered as a reference to the influence chemicals have had on Rust’s state of mind and mental health. Correspondingly, there is a more general connotation of polluting industries’ impact on nature and people’s health, in a sense that Rust despises that factor of the human race’s selfishness.

Next to these visual representations of the haunting setting, the connotation of the setting as a metaphor for its inhabitants is a more explicit influence on Rust. In the course of the series, Cohle voices his loathing for the unworldliness of the region and the oblivious people on a number of occasions. His aversion is partly an extension of his persona and his views on life in general, but the fact that he specifically fixates on the small towns and inhabitants of South Louisiana on several occasions, is an indication of the setting’s influence on him. In the first episode, for instance, Cohle states that it is like “the people out here […] don’t even know the outside world exists” and that they “might as well be living on the fucking Moon” (1.1). Later in that episode he compares a town to somebody’s fading memory of it, even though Hart has told him that he does not care for his pessimistic demeanour and neither would the locals. In terms of Rust’s general characterisation, the manner in which he positions himself mentally as well as behaviourally as opposed to his environment, perpetuates his isolation, in that he distances himself from Marty, his colleagues and essentially everyone else. Therefore, Cohle’s personal disgust for everything Louisiana represents, including the criminal, occult network of high-placed figures, is echoed in the visualisation of the dreary, haunting setting of True Detective.

2.4.7 The Evolution of the Characters and their Relationship

The most vital elements of Cohle’s actual evolution as a character – which is going to prove metaphoric for the final resolution of the narrative this dissertation advocates – are confined to the two last episodes of True Detective. The two protagonists see each other again for the first time in ten years and because the audience has been able to observe their personal lives and their relationship in the past, we are aware of the significant changes these men have experienced in their life. The viewer could already partially conceive the impact of the past events on the present-day incarnations of Marty and Rust in the interviews. Martin and Maggie are divorced and he started a business as a private investigator, whereas Rustin is living in Louisiana again, working in a bar and drinking on a regular basis. Nevertheless, the latter is intent on uncovering the identity of the true Yellow King.
However, their interpersonal dynamic in these two last episodes, is not only influenced by the past events, but also the recent interviews, namely Hart’s doubt about Cohle innocence. His doubt is emphasised by the visual mediator by showing Marty’s hesitation and his gun behind his back when he has to follow Rust into his dark, secret storage unit. However, after Rust turns on the light, Marty is confronted with the incontrovertible evidence Rust has gathered in the last couple of years, including the video tape he found in the house of Billy Lee Tuttle. Both men set out to do what they have left undone and in this endeavour they come together as they did after Marty killed Reggie Ledoux. Although their partnership is not primarily based on trust, friendship or similar points of view, they helped each other in that troublesome situation, because more than a commitment to the law, they share a humane sense of justice. Hart and Cohle have both experienced feelings of impotence in the face of humanly disgraceful acts; in Marty’s case this led to the murder of Reggie Ledoux and as regards Rust, he had previously talked about shooting a drug addict who had injected her child with drugs. Now, seventeen years later, this parallel between two binary opposites conjoins them in resolving the injustice that has been tormenting Rust for ten years.

As I have touched upon in the previous segment, the manner in which Rust and Marty interact with one another in the present differs from their dynamic in 1995 and certainly 2002. Nevertheless, their conversation in the bar at the beginning of the seventh episode projects Hart as the same stubborn, arrogant person, who thinks himself better than Cohle. Similarly, the latter is not particularly joyful because of their reunion after such a long time, but he is determined to settle their debt. Even though Cohle has been back for two years, he realises that in light of the current events, he needs Hart’s connections and resources. This so-called debt they have is what unites them, it is what forces two opposites to work together. Their innate sense of duty to exact justice is further emphasised by Hart’s statement to Maggie that he “has” to help Cohle, after viewing the video depicting Marie Fontenot’s sacrificial murder. When they start working together again, the audience gets a first sense of how their mutual and individual pasts have changed these characters as Rust asks Marty – for the first time – about his personal life. In this manner we find out that both protagonists are not quite as different as they used to be, because they both lead quiet, solitary lives. The fact that this episode revolves around the reconnection between these two characters is amplified in the title – “After You’ve Gone” – which refers to how much their lives have changed over the years. Another striking aspect of their renewed relationship is the shift that seems to have occurred in the allocation of duties.
Nic Pizzolatto draws attention to the fact that “suddenly Hart’s the legman, scouring the archives for paperwork, doing all the one-on-one’s with people and Cohle’s sort of guiding him a little bit, but Hart proves himself a very effective investigator” (HBO: “Inside the Episode #7”). Whereas Cohle was sacrificing his personal time in favour of the investigation in the past, Hart has taken over the role of investigator in the present and even receives appraisal from Rust for his achievements. Although it is still suppressed by the sinister tone of the series and philosophical complexity of Rust’s utterances, the more light-hearted aspect of the buddy narrative is slightly breaking through in their conversations and witticisms. Nevertheless, despite their more involved conversations and the fact that Rust is taking interest in Marty’s life, Cohle’s ever-present pessimistic outlook on life is forming an anticipation of the final confrontation in the last episode when he says: “My life’s been a circle of violence and degradation, long as I can remember. I’m ready to tie it off.” (1.7).

The eighth and last episode of *True Detective* is the apex of the narrative, not only in terms resolving the Dora Lange-case after seventeen years, but also regarding Rustin Cohle’s evolution as a character. Cohle’s aforementioned anticipation of the end is mirrored by the antagonist’s remarks about his “ascension” and “the final stage” at the beginning of the final episode (1.8). The connection between Cohle and Childress is consolidated in the climax of the narrative, when Rust is lured into a labyrinth-like, overgrown structure and Errol “invites” him to die together. What is most remarkable about this episode is the cinematic narrator’s choice to display the point of view of the serial killer. For the first time, the viewer gets insight into Errol Childress’s life, instead of receiving vague information indirectly through Hart and Cohle’s investigation. The cinematic narrator enables us to experience the events through the hunted, instead of the hunters, and so we learn that he wants a final confrontation and has been expecting it for a long time. However, whilst the visual mediator initially upholds the serial killer’s status as the hunted through internal focalisation when he is hiding from the protagonists (see fig. 21), the roles are reversed once Errol flees into Carcosa.
The cinematic narrator instils suspense by coordinating the auditory channel's extradiiegetic, ominous music with the visual channel’s cinematography and intimidating mise en scène of the setting (see fig. 22), reflecting Cohle's anxiety. Childress is continuously talking to Rust in his eerie voice without revealing his location in the labyrinth. In this manner the serial killer appears to be omnipresent, almost like a supernatural being, luring in his prey. Eventually, Cohle reaches the centre of the structure and at this moment, the visual mediator further enhances the unworldly tone of the situation by showing Rust’s vision of a cosmic storm (see fig. 23), whereby he is thoroughly amazed, causing him to drop his guard and to be surprised by the Yellow King. In the end, the protagonist who consistently has been characterised as a person who knew perfectly who he was, almost loses his life due to something he could never control. However, the visual mediator alludes to the eventual outcome of the narrative by showing the light from the police’s flare suffuse Cohle's body through the dome’s oculus (see fig. 24).

The ending of the series provides the audience with the impact of Hart and Cohle’s endeavour, but the most gripping and veritable resolution of True Detective’s narrative is not the fact that the Yellow King has been caught. I propose an interpretation of Rustin Cohle’s “enlightenment” as the real resolution of the story. After he wakes up from a coma, we see Rust watching the news on television as he learns that in spite of the evidence against the Tuttle family he had sent to a number of news and law enforcement agencies, a connection between Errol Childress and senator Edwin Tuttle is being denied and not further pursued.
The impact of this news on Rust is channelled through the visual mediator who zooms in on his battered face and ends with a close-up (see fig. 25). According to Jeremy Butler, close-ups in filmic media are often equated with the soul’s window by focusing on the character’s emotions instead of his surroundings (Butler 176). Cohle’s close-up is preceded by him turning off the television and subsequently a shot zooming in on the night sky (see fig. 26), suggesting the internal focalisation of Rust.

This juxtaposition could imply that Rust’s defeated look reflects his thoughts on how useless the complete undertaking was in the end, because they were not able to expose all of the wrongdoers. In this respect, he focuses on the metaphor of the night sky, denoting the everlasting battle between good and evil, which I will address in the final section of this chapter. Furthermore, he voices his sense of defeat in a conversation with Hart with respect to the other men in the video and his own shortcoming in failing to capture Childress in 1995. Marty, however, says that it is not how the world works. The visual mediator continues to emphasise the futility of all the events by showing a sequence of long shots, which depict the shed near the Childress’s house, Reggie Ledoux’s hideout and the tree in the cane fields where Dora Lange was found. This refers to the evolution of the narrative in reverse order, focusing on the fixed appearance of Louisiana’s setting and therefore how the events seem to have passed unnoticed, whilst the anonymous men from that ritualistic cult are still roaming free. Nevertheless, there has definitely been a significant evolution in the narrative, namely the characters’ development.

The final scene of the series is an amiable conversation between Marty and Rust outside the hospital, almost like true friends, which nobody would have deemed possible considering how their relationship used to be and certainly considering the differences between their personalities. The most significant moment, however, occurs at the very end, when Rustin talks about feeling the presence of his daughter and his father when he was in a coma.
For the first time, Rust shows true emotion to Marty and in extension to the viewer, when he relates that he felt truly happy in that moment. In contrast to his pessimistic views on death and the – in his views non-existent – afterlife, Cohle now expresses his renewed outlook on life and death by means of the metaphor involving the stars in the dark night sky. Now that he knows that his daughter and father are waiting for him, Rust has found new meaning in life and his pessimistic, postmodern views on life have been put in perspective. He says that he believes the light of the stars is winning in the battle versus dark, because once there was only darkness in the sky.

According to Nic Pizzolatto, Cohle expresses this positive message the only way he knows how: by using terms of physics to reveal that he now believes that good is able to triumph over evil (HBO: “Inside the Episode #8”); that the stars only appear to be outnumbered by darkness, but that their presence is an indication that there are still good things in an otherwise obscure world.

2.5 True Detective’s Genre Delineation

In conclusion of this chapter and as a form of synthesis of my research, the establishment of True Detective in the generic spectrum of detective fiction is in order. As I have contended previously, both the detective story in specific and the television series in general are susceptible to generic variations, which in both instances led to hybridisations. Although the creator Nic Pizzolatto describes the series as more of a thriller than a whodunit, the diegetic length of True Detective as well as its structure invite a more diversified definition. Firstly, in addition to the serial-killer narrative, the police procedural is very apparent from the first episode onwards, because Cohle and Hart were detectives of the Louisiana State Police Department and the fact that they – initially – followed standard police procedures in the approach of the Dora Lange-case. Examples hereof are the analysis of the crime scene and the body; the interrogations of known associates and family; background checks through the database and eventually the comparison with other similar victims in the archives. However, towards the conclusion of the investigation in 1995, the narrative incorporates elements from the noir thriller, because Rust and Marty transgress the confines of the law when they set up the undercover mission in order to capture their suspect. Moreover, the noir aspect becomes more explicit when Hart unlawfully kills Reggie Ledoux, after finding the children in his hideout. Subsequently, from the 2002 storyline onwards the narrative resembles the detective thriller, because Rust – and Hart in a later stage – has to confront powerful enemies without the help of the police, when Rust discovers a connection between the murders and the Tuttle family.
In keeping with the antecedents of hard-boiled detective stories, the initial case of Dora Lange leads to a whole network of missing persons and the involvement of a high-placed figure. Moreover, the discourse keeps the focus of the whodunnit on the course of the investigation in the past, even though the viewer suspects that the real serial killer was not apprehended in 1995. In this respect, the thriller aspect is two-fold, because the viewer wants to know what happened in the past and the present, but the situation of the present is delayed until the past events have been developed fully.

Nevertheless, the most prominent aspect of *True Detective*, which permeates the narrative and resonates firmly in the ending, is the postmodern character. Firstly, in the series some of the characters address the conventions of the detective narrative in instances of overt metafiction. Next to Major Quesada’s characterisation of the case as a whodunnit, Hart frequently addresses Cohle’s proneness to a form of tunnel vision, for instance when he says that when “you attach an assumption to a piece of evidence, you start to bend the narrative to support it” (1.1). Furthermore, the narrative features an absence of finality, of resolution of the case when Rust highlights the fact that the Yellow King was only one of the wrongdoers. The connections with the Tuttle family were not pursued by the State Attorney or the FBI, which indicates the corruption of law enforcement agencies, on the basis of bureaucracy and politics. Moreover, Rustin Cohle has voiced his pessimistic, postmodern views on the omnipresence and perpetuity of crime and death in this world throughout the narrative. In the fifth episode, for instance, Rust alludes to the description of postmodern detective stories in the first chapter of this dissertation by stating: “I don’t want to know anything anymore. This is a world where nothing is solved.” (1.5). He says this in the interview in light of his ongoing investigation, because it makes him restless to know that there are so many monsters in the world. He continues by comparing time to a flat circle, in which all of our actions are repeated over and over again, insofar that there will always be new murders and people trying to solve them. In these utterances, Cohle embodies the postmodern spirit, because there is no final resolution, there is only circularity. Nonetheless, the narrative ends with an ontological solution, because Rustin Cohle expresses a hopeful message about the eternal struggle between good and evil. His nihilistic demeanour, which was manifested throughout the whole series, has been affected in a positive manner, because of an incomprehensible, yet meaningful encounter with death.
Conclusion

I would like to conclude this dissertation by agreeing with Amy Damico and Sara Quay’s statement that the “intellectual engagement of viewers is most interesting in *True Detective’s* reimagining of the detective genre” (15). A great deal of the series’ popularity can be attributed to the constant theorising about the Yellow King’s identity and longing for the narrative’s denouement, but *True Detective’s* unconventional treatment of the detective story offers a plethora of possibilities for analysis. Even though this dissertation primarily focused on the generic heritage of the narrative and the emphasis on character development through an analysis of the cinematic narrator, the narrative offers much more elements with respect to mediation that would provide an excellent basis for compelling research, such as a further exploration of the discourse; the creation of suspense through editing, sound, camera movement, etc.; the intertextuality of the series through literary references, and so forth. Nevertheless, Nic Pizzolatto indirectly validates the relevancy of my research topic in this statement: “My idea was that those familiar tropes could act as a way to ground the viewer, before subverting them. [In other words,] telling a crime story to lure people in, then feeding them the vegetables (an exploration of character and morality) that they wouldn’t otherwise eat.” (qtd. in Mulkerrins). The philosophical complexity of Rustin Cohle, his arduous relationship with Martin Hart and the impact of the Dora Lange-case on these two flawed men resonate throughout the narrative and reinvented television’s detective genre.

In the first chapter I have created a concise overview of generic innovations and hybridisations of the detective genre relevant to *True Detective*. Furthermore, this overview demonstrated the evolution of *True Detective’s* narrative in comparison with the classic detective stories, which were largely static and emphasised the scientific, analytical reasoning of the genius detective in reaching the solution of the mystery. In this respect, HBO’s detective series resembles the hard-boiled detective story more closely in terms of focus. Martin Priestman’s characterisation of this type of story as a detective thriller demonstrates the similarities with *True Detective*, because the detectives are confronted with an intricate network of crime through their murder case and they have to surpass the confines of the law in order to achieve their goal. Another aspect of the detective thriller is the focus on the impact of the investigation on the detective’s personal life and state of mind. Their work indirectly causes Marty to lose his wife and directly causes Rust to become haunted by the Yellow King.
Another element that permeates *True Detective* is the postmodern tone of Rust’s views on life and his consequent implicit opinion that there is no resolution. However, the viewer is able to construe a form of finality in Rust’s evolution as a character, from a depressing pessimist to a man who expresses hope for the future. Subsequently I have demonstrated the popularity of the detective story in the new filmic media of film and television. The evolution of the television detective initially entailed a growing emphasis on action, but soon shifted towards more realism and the perception of the police detective as a working man, whose job takes a toll on him mentally and physically. In this respect, HBO merited recognition, because of their pivotal role in the establishment of television as a fit storytelling medium for qualitative, engaging and intellectually challenging narratives, for instance *The Sopranos*, *The Wire* and evidently *True Detective* which reinvented the tried and tested format of the detective series in general.

In the second chapter I have argued for the presence of Peter Verstraten’s concept of the cinematic narrator and this narrating agency’s impact on the viewer’s interpretation of *True Detective*’s narrative. The independence of the viewer’s interpretation in this analysis is paramount, as I have dismissed Seymour Chatman’s implied author on account of an absence of hierarchy between the visual mediator and the auditory narrator as well as the contradictory notion of projected intent of the narrative. Therefore, I consider the cinematic narrator as the governing narrating agency and regulator between the visual channel and the auditory channel. Subsequently, I have demonstrated the cooperation between the visual mediator and auditory narrator as well as the foregrounding of one of these agents in the establishment of comprehensive and truthful character sketches of Marty and Rust. In other words, through the frequent flashbacks, which did not always coincide with the specific content of the interviews, the viewer is able to form a more accurate reading of the protagonists’ lives. Furthermore, the cinematic narrator enhances Papania and Gilbough’s suspicion of Rust, whilst paradoxically acquitting him later in the narrative. This ambiguous mediation eventually has a sympathising effect, not only because the viewer is engaged in the narrative, but also because it creates a superior position in comparison with the detectives. In this manner we are able to experience Rust’s state of mind through subjective treatment of the visual channel, for instance his visions. Ultimately, the cinematic narrator is able to bring the viewer closer to the main characters in *True Detective*, which produces a profound development of character in light of the progression of the narrative, the evolution of Cohle in particular and their relationship in general. Therefore, it is not the solution of the mystery which leaves a lasting impression, but the impact of the events on Marty and Rust.
Works Cited


Creeber, Glen, Toby Miller, and John Tulloch, eds. The Television Genre Book. 2nd ed. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan on behalf of the British Film Institute, 2008. Print.


Neale, Steven. “Genre and Television.” Creeber, Miller and Tulloch 5-6.


Schmidt, Johann N. “Narration in Film.” Hühn, et al. 212-227.


