

Between film and television.

An interview with Lodge Kerrigan

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After directing key films of contemporary independent cinema, like *Clean, Shaven* (1993), *Claire Dolan* (1998) and *Keane* (2004), Lodge Kerrigan has directed a number of television episodes for shows such as *The Killing* (Veena Sud, AMC-Netflix, 2011-2014), *Homeland* (Howard Gordon and Alex Gansa, Showtime, 2011-) or *The Americans* (Joe Weisberg, FX, 2013-). A month before the release of his latest project, *The Girlfriend Experience* (Lodge Kerrigan and Amy Seimetz, Starz, 2016), an eleven-episode television series produced by Steven Soderbergh, we talked with him about the differences between working for film and working for television, both in terms of narrative and mise-en-scène.

How did you feel when you first set foot on a TV set, compared to the atmosphere you were used to while shooting your films? In which ways is the work process different?

I think that independent filmmakers, who come from very low budget filmmaking are particularly well suited to make the transition to television, perhaps they are much better suited than directors who come from bigger budget projects, because low-budget or guerrilla filmmakers who've been trained to work with very limited resources are trained to go there and make the day. You have to make the day; you have to make your schedule, because if you don't there are no re-shoot days. I wasn't trained to have days to re-shoot, you know. So if I don't make my day as an independent filmmaker, then I have to look at what scene I'm not gonna shoot and then, you know, there's not more money coming in to allow more shooting. So in television... and I'm talking about the very standard model of television, the writer/showrunner model, the traditional model, because it's really changing a lot... But discussing this model, I think that there are more people involved in the decision making process, that I think is one of the big differences. In auteur cinema usually the writer is the director, it's the same, it's one vision, it's unified; and in the showrunner/writer TV model that's not the case. In fact, the only variable usually it's the director.

So the director becomes the variable, then.

Yes, they have established crews, they have the same cinematographer, the same production designer, the producer, the same crew, the same system, and the same cast by in large (depending on whether they have anyone coming for a specific

episode). But usually it's the director who changes; they bring in a guest director. There are a number of theories regarding why that's the case, but usually what happens in the traditional financing model is that the network will approve or order a pilot, and then a pilot is made, they bring in the director to do the pilot. Later the network will approve it or not, and then they have to go and write scripts, generate scripts, and in this time the directors has already left, moved on, they have no continuity of vision from the director. And I think now what's beginning to change, and what Soderbergh did on *The Knick* (Jack Amiel and Michael Begler, Cinemax, 2014-), and the first season of *True Detective* (Nic Pizzolatto, HBO, 2014-), and what we did on *The Girlfriend Experience*, is that you're starting to see either one or two directors who direct the entire show. And in the case of *The Girlfriend Experience* Amy and I wrote the whole show too, we co-wrote every episode and then we split directing duties. So you see a much bigger unity of vision, I think, but what that requires is that the scripts are all written upfront, that means that the network or the studio has to order an entire season. And you're starting to see that, you're starting to see the shift, maybe you could argue because there's so many players now in the game, with Netflix and others that are coming in, and Amazon. When the shows become binge-watchable, when everyone wants to see all the episodes at once, then it starts to transform the whole pilot model and the whole economics and the ordering of it. And, as a result, I think it's a changing landscape but it's one that's really really interesting.

Can you elaborate on the workflow between writers and directors?

In the traditional writer model, the showrunner is not on set, they are usually in another city supervising the writer's room and supervising the editing of the shows. They will send the writer of a particular episode to the set, to work with the director, so that the director comes in and has more knowledge of how the machinery can work and how they can fit all material in one day. Usually what happens is that scripts are too ambitious, they're too large to the amount of shooting time you have, and you have to ask the writers to make certain changes. Example: If it's a night scene could you shoot as a day scene? Could you condense scenes into fewer locations? Things like that, that would make it more efficient and allow you to actually make

the day. But it becomes an interesting negotiation, because the writers have to go to the showrunners and get their approval for any suggested script changes. But what happens is that, as a director, the showrunner is your boss; so if you ask for too many changes and then you can't fill your shooting day in twelve hours the chances are they are going to be upset and kind of hard on you. So it becomes a very interesting negotiation, and really, to survive one of the most important skills is to be able to analyze and determine how long a scene will take to shoot, with a crew and a cast that you've never worked with before, in fifteen minutes. If you can time it and know exactly how long something will take, then you're in a much better position to know what changes you need and deliver that material. But really, the big difference from auteur cinema, and from the standard writer/showrunner model is that the director is not the writer, there's no continuity of director on board, there's no continuity of the director's vision, and there are more people involved in the decision-making process, anywhere from costumes to locations to a casting to other things. There's just more people in the mix, sharing the voices, and I think the director has a significant voice, but ultimately the showrunner decides. The way I think of it is... I think of it more as pyramid, in a way, people are doing the work and then they're sending up the decisions to the next level, and then it keeps going and eventually you get to the director, whereas in an auteur film the director will be top. But here in the TV structure, the director's just below the showrunner, so they're doing the coverage, the casting. The showrunner will always get to have the final word on the casting, but hopefully it's a good collaboration and then the director will do their cut. And in a one-hour drama you get four days to do the director's cut, four days including all sound, all music, everything. And then you give it up to the showrunner, and the showrunner will then make the changes that they want.

As a filmmaker, what can you bring in to that scenario?

Well, auteur cinema is where I started, and that's hopefully where I'll go back to, but I think there are a lot of really wonderful, great things about the traditional showrunner/writer model of television. As a director, I think it's like the old studio system, where they gave you assignments. Like in the fifties or the forties, when they just gave you an assignment, you're a director on contract for the studio; they give you an assignment and tell you to direct this. And there's some shows that I've worked on where you gain so much experience, because you work for different genres, you get assignments, and if you can direct five, six or seven hours of television in a year, that's five or six or seven hours of directing experience. On set, there is no way in the feature world you could do that, there are very very few people who could do that at the feature world. And I really believe that at the end of the day if you're really

good at something you have to practice it consistently. So in terms of the experience, television is really fantastic, and also, in the traditional showrunner/writer model, as a director you get to work in genres that perhaps you wouldn't normally work in. Like I did an episode of *Bates Motel* (Carlton Cuse, Kerry Ehrin and Anthony Cipriano, A&E, 2013-) which is kind of this campy melodrama horror that I'd never, that's not my taste, I can't imagine me writing a script like that, but I loved directing it. It was incredible, the cast was fantastic, the whole aesthetic of it, I learned a new aesthetic I wouldn't have learnt otherwise. I think the ideal, though, in a lot of ways, what's really interesting now is the auteur television model, every model that's slightly different in a certain way.

In which ways do you find it interesting?

For instance, Soderbergh doesn't write *The Knick*, but it's definitely auteur TV, he is the one making the decisions on set, it's director-driven. And the same for *True Detective*, there is more useful tension I think in season one between the writer Nic Pizzolatto and Cary Fukunaga the director, apparently there was a lot of tension on the set and they were both equal parts so they had to try to decide together and coexist, which I hear was very difficult. But you can see the fact that Cary was the director throughout the episodes, how much unity of vision there is. And you could say the same for the writing, when there is one writer it has the same vision, it has a counterpart that it's equal also, and there's a unique idea of that. What Amy and I did in *The Girlfriend Experience* was really interesting too, because we wrote all the episodes and shared the directing duties, then really there's unity. I think when you have the writer and the director interpreting the same role then you're going to get a vision unlike anything else. So, I'm a big proponent of director-driven television, I think at the end of the day the skill set for directing it's different than writing, it's similar, but it's different. In my opinion, all dramatic material comes down to human psychology and it's based on action and reaction, and then the questions you ask as a director is how are you going to stage it or how you are going to cover it, if there is a relationship between the form and the content, do they reflect each other, which are all the *mise-en-scène* questions that you'd ask. But also, as a director, you're dealing with really understanding an actor's technical proficiency, understanding time of performance. The time of performances is crucial in directing, and also, you have to understand editorially how everything is going to fit. I think that even that the writer may be trained in human psychology and understand the beat of the characters, I think those other skill sets they don't necessarily possess, and that's why I think at the end of the day it really should be a director-driven medium.

The notion of director-driven television that you bring up reminds us of certain experiences of European filmmakers, such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder...

Like Kieslowski's *The Decalogue* (*Dekalog*, 1989-1990), exactly.

Or Lars Von Trier with *The Kingdom* (Riget, DR1, 1994-1997) a few years later. So thinking about *The Girlfriend Experience*, in terms of the narrative structure, how do you conceive the storytelling and the mise-en-scène, the relationship between form and content? We think the premise is very interesting, the fact of readapting a movie into a serial narrative, like Fassbinder made, for instance, when he wrote two scripts for *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, WDR: 1980), a movie script and a series one, two different scripts. He mentioned that it is not the same thing to explain a story in two hours than to explain it in fifteen hours, there's tempo, narrative...

That's interesting, I think the biggest difference between film and television, again in the sort of traditional showrunner/writer model, is really one of pacing. It's really the time on screen. I was re-watching *Climates* [2006], by Nuri Bilge Ceylan, the Turkish director, and what's really incredible is the performance, they use the whole screen and because of that you understand the psychology, and the reactions are constantly evolving. That's something that would be really hard to do in a traditional television format, because of the amount of material that is written and you have to cover. If your assignment is to get, in an hour show, fifty-two pages or so, and you're shooting at least four scenes a day, if not more, with a location, then you have to cover so many actions and reactions that you don't have time to let one sit. And it will they will never make the edit. So I find that is really the primary difference. But when you enter the world of auteur television, like Kieslowski's *The Decalogue* or *Berlin Alexanderplatz* or, you know, *The Kingdom*, then there is no difference. Then, I think is the filmmaker making, deciding on the pacing that is suitable for the story. It is slightly different with *The Girlfriend Experience* because Amy and I covered them both, so you're having two auteurs having a married vision, so it's not one singular vision, it's more a marriage or a synthesis, in a way. What's really interesting is that you have auteur television if the director is the writer and there's real control of the material and the pacing of the material. Then I think there is no difference, I really don't see the difference. One is a longer form, one is shorter form, but that doesn't mean anything. Some films are three hours and some films are sixteen hours.

Not even in terms of narrative? In terms of how to structure the scenes and episodes? This is what Fassbinder talked about.

Yes, you're right, in the structure of it, yes, you have to do something that can fit into the hour episode or the half-hour episode, you need some arch that either is the overall arch of the entire show, or the dramatic arch within the episode that can be completed or at least can be articulated clearly. But I think that the trick is... You could do a television show that combines both, you could watch *The Decalogue* as one movie, easily, you could watch *Berlin Alexanderplatz* as one, and they screen it. So I think it is more in the traditional writer/showrunner model, in the network/commercial end of that scale, where you see the repetition come into play, and when you really can't screen it back to back because it gets very repetitive. But when you get towards more interesting traditional showrunner/writer models like *Homeland* or *The Killing* or *The Americans* it tends to move away from that repetition, and then when you continue on the scale and get to auteur TV, then I think you're really free. And I think the trick is: can you structure something that works in the thirty-minute or the hour but then can also point to one continuous piece? So I think of it just more like another dimension to the problem or to the puzzle. If you can solve that, which is slightly more complicated than just writing a feature, or just writing a TV show, if you can actually solve that so it can play as an episode but also play all together, then I think it's completely free. The advantage is that if you can raise money for a TV show, and you can get it off the ground, and it gets approved, then all of a sudden, you have thirteen episodes to work. And then you get a second season, or a third season, so in terms of the efficiency of creating a structure where you can actually go off and work consistently, is much more appeal. Because to raise money, you know, I work in the US, and the US there's no government money, so I only get financing on the marketplace in advance capitalism, that means I compete with *Star Wars* (J. J. Abrams, 2015) to get funding. So there's no public funding like in France, it doesn't exist. For me, it takes years to try to raise money to make a film, but if I can get a TV show going, then I could do that for a number of years.

In fact, you are one of the few American independent filmmakers who can say they got a film produced by Marin Karmitz [laughs]. You've been on both sides...

And he was such a supportive great producer, he was a great producer. It's true, I've done both sides.

You seem to make a very clear separation between the traditional showrunner model of television and the auteur series. But we also think that, from a visual point of view, you've taken very bold decisions in some of the episodes you've directed, for example, in one you did for *The Killing*, the one that mainly takes place in a car: there is a very striking moment, when pastor Mike and Linden are in the parking lot, and it's almost dark, the screen is almost

completely black... It feels pretty bold to dare to darken the screen like that for several minutes, in something that will be screened for an audience of millions of people. Was that your decision, something that was on the script?

It's a collective decision, a lot of credit goes to Veena Sud, who was the showrunner, and to Gregg Middleton, who was the cinematographer, and also to FOX, who was the studio, because in *The Killing* they never got a note that it was too dark, the studio never complained once that it was too dark. So that gave us a lot of freedom to really push it, Veena wanted things that were interesting, that were different, breathtaking, and she encouraged that. I think Gregg is a really gifted, technically proficient cinematographer, so we were able to go that dark, and still capture some reaction in the eyes, which I think is crucial. It works because everyone was on board, you know. In the traditional model, if you don't have support from above, it's very hard to make this kind of choices.

Did you somehow shot that sequence, on location, thinking about *Clean Shaven*, unconsciously maybe? The car, the use of the mirror, the character's gaze...

Honestly, I tend to... I kind of proud myself on not having a style. You know, like you can go in and see certain filmmakers and you know exactly their style. I actually proud myself that I can find the correct style for the material, so it's not about me, it's not about having a consistent launched career and auteur vision, I'm not interested in that. What I'm really interested in is how you film something, the *mise-en-scène*, how does the form reflect the content, and how do you find a way to marry each. The search to build a visual system or a visual world, however you want to call it. So, in that particular episode, I'm in a car, right? The detective, Sarah, can't look back, her only way of seeing is through the mirror, that's it. I mean, it's literally that simple. You know, it's not this big theory of referencing *Clean Shaven* or not. I'm really interpreting what's going on and then I have to find a really interesting way to show that. When is the right moment to show the reflection in the mirror? When is the right moment to show her objectively? When it's the right moment to show them together? When it's the right moment to separate the two? And then how do you create a sense that she feels particularly isolated from the outside world, so how do you create distance, visually, between the interior of the car and the exterior world. And then, at what point you want to modulate that and change that. Really that's what it becomes, it's pretty clear, it's not mysticism, there's no... I think a lot of times when people discuss auteur theory there's a certain believe in mysticism, some secret genius at work, and usually the people who are very good at what they do can tell you very clearly what they're doing it and for what reason, it's almost scientific. There's another element which you can't really control at all,

which is, the energy on set. There's another element that you can't really control at all, which is the energy on set. You know, if you cast really well and you have the right crew, then all of a sudden, maybe, hopefully, you have an energy that transcends something. Literally, you get out of the way. You try to guide it a little bit, but you can feel it, you feel when something really special is happening in a performance, in the filmmaking. Then you just kind of step out of the way and that's it. I think the really great great truly master-filmmakers are the ones who can create that energy on set. That specific energy.

The last thing we want to do is to mystify, really, we didn't mean it that way. This project is about talking with the directors in order not-to-mystify. But every particular filmmaker has a set of skills, a way of doing the craft. We mean this in the sense of solving specific situations, bodies, relations of distance, composition in depth, very normal things, down to earth simple things that a professional has to do...

It's true, there is an artistic vision, you can have a vision for how you want something to look, and you can see that. But that becomes very difficult to quantify, so for me, I tend not to discuss that very much. To me, what I really try to discuss more is the craft, because that's something that you can communicate very clearly to other people.

There is another thing we are intrigued about. This is a question more about narrative; about how do you manage to solve certain storytelling requirements. For example, *The Killing* was a show where almost every chapter ended with a cliffhanger, you have to start a new chapter with a situation that was built by another director. So how do you manage to control the energy and deal with these climatic points?

It's really modulation, and that's what directing is. Directing is so many things, but modulating the tension over an episode, and the pacing too, knowing when to relieve some tension and then when to rebuilt some tension. If it's a very well written script then it will be in the script, but you also deal with performance to add to that and interpret it. So when you start at a cliffhanger you can't keep it at a hundred and eighty miles an hour the whole time. I mean, you can, but the audience could get burnt out very quickly, so you have to understand how to modulate and then how to build it back up, and that is really the skills of everyone involved. You have to communicate that through the script, through the performances, through the coverage, through the editing. I think the more experience people have the less you have to articulate that, because people understand it. That's your job. And also... I was script consultant in the American version of *Funny Games* (2007) by Michael Haneke, and he said something that actually I believe it's very true: the

directors have to have an innate sense of timing, and he believes is innate and it's something that you can't teach. A sense of timing and a sense of pacing. So if you really understand the modulation, I think it's not only that, I think it's also emotional, in terms of the performance, and I think it's also interpreted in the script. So it has to happen on the script level, it has to happen on the performance level, and then it has to happen in the actual filming, in the performance, in the staging, in the editorial choices... So it all has to fit, and I think that is a really crucial part.

You've brought up the importance of the tempo and the pacing of the performance, working with the actors. The energy, you said, which is a beautiful word that summarizes that. Without mystifying [laughs], we think that in a show like *Homeland*, for instance, in the way Damian Lewis moves in that series (the gestures, the bodily coping, the pauses, the silences) there is a lot of Keane, your movie. We don't think it's a coincidence that they asked you to direct him in a show whose main character, in a way, you contributed to create: Brody. We think there is a connection there...

Thanks, I can't take credit for Brody, but that's very kind of you to suggest [laughs]. Regarding how to work with actors, the more you do it, the more it slows down. And then the more you can see it clearly: you can see the performance while it's happening clearly. It's much like sports. When you get off, and you're new to a sport, everything is going super fast, and you don't have court vision, you can't see the whole field. So the more experience you have, the director-actor, then the more you can see it clearly. Like it slows way way down, and time on set is very different than time in an editing room. When you're watching a live performance it goes much faster than when you watch dailies, in a room, on a computer, you know, with a cup of coffee and relaxing. The speed is much faster on set. So the more experience you have if you really focus... It's all about action/reaction for me, it's all about human psychology. So somebody does something, and another person reacts to it, and that reaction is an action in another self, so that causes yet another reaction. So it becomes a chain, and what you're trying to do is draw an audience attention to those reactions that you think are important, and that's the frame. The frame is how you're saying to an audience "this is what you should be looking at", you're dictating where the attention goes. And hopefully through that you see the psychology of the character because you're tracking the psychological changes and the reactions. So, I think what's important is to really focus on the reaction and that's what I tend to do, I really focus on the character's reactions specifically, and then, with experience, the timing, the performance it slows down. You can see it clearer. And then I'm able to go in and ask for certain changes, or ask for a certain detachment, if I thinking that it will be worth for the actor to

express it in a different way, have a different reaction. And then when you take the chain of actions and reactions that's what that character really is, you build the character on the set and later you bring all that to the editorial room.

You mentioned that...

One more element that's really important too, is just taste. I mean, at the end of the day, ninety per cent of it is taste. If you have the skill set you command the craft: I don't really want that color at all, I think it should be this color, I prefer that color, you know? Do you like a wide-angle lens? And I go "no, I don't really want that distortion, I prefer it to be a normal lens" or a telephoto lens, or whatever, you can interpret the drama that way. But ultimately, whether you like it or not, it's a question of your tastes and sensibilities, and that's who you are as a person, that you reflect all your choices and decisions over the course of your entire life. That's why when people say you make films for an audience; I think that I never ever make films for an audience. I really don't know what an audience is. And if I start to second-guess myself, then I have no reference point at all. I'm lost. So I make for me, that's what I do, whether it's television or anyone else, at the end of the day, I go "this is really interesting, this is what I think it's interesting". You work with other people and collaborate, but at the end of the day, I want to put a frame on this because this is what I like, this is what I think it's interesting. And if other people find it interesting, great, and if they don't, well, they can go and make a movie.

That's the beauty of it, when other people think that they way you frame a character is interesting. There is, for instance, a beautiful sequence in one episode that you directed for *Homeland*, "State of Independence", when Brody approaches his wife and they start making love, but in a way that you feel there are a lot of things in between them, which reminded us of *Claire Dolan*, where just by looking at the actress you understand many things. So, now, this is bringing us to *The Girlfriend Experience*. We guess that it's very different to direct a single episode in a series that has been conceived by someone else, than to direct a pilot. A pilot gives you the chance to really set the tone, make certain aesthetic decisions. So, how did this work in the case of *The Girlfriend Experience*?

Amy directed the pilot, but it's not really a pilot because it was straight-to-series, they ordered all of it. We created the whole world. When you do the pilot or you do the first two episodes, you're creating the entire world, you're literally filling the page on paper, the entire world, literally, you're making it a reality: you're casting, you're finding locations, you're dealing with the production designers, you're dealing with costume designers, you're creating that world. Emotionally, psychologically, and

visually, all three. And so, yeah, it's much more interesting to be in that decision than it is to come in and do only one episode. But, one episode can be fantastic. I think of directing as problem solving, that's how I think of it. So when I'm only directing one episode, I go in and I say, "fine, this are the aesthetic parameters" so I understand how they shoot. In that *Homeland* episode, for instance, except for the woods where Brody kills the tailor, they don't do a tremendous amount of hand-held work, we did it in the sex scene between Brody and his wife, some hand-held work, but they don't do excessive hand-held. So there are certain visual and aesthetic parameters; my job is then to make it interesting within those parameters, so that's my challenge, and I love that. That's interesting too, you know? I enjoy being able to create the world from scratch, but I still find going in and directing an episode very interesting, and I find it very interesting because it's your craft, it's your discipline, you know what tools you can use, you are operating in a smaller space. Sometimes you can have as much detail as you want within those parameters, you can make some contrast, but then, it's discipline. And I think all craft is discipline, you have to be disciplined.

Something that also interests us is how the size of the screens used to watch TV shows is changing. Series are not only watched in a TV set, you can see it in your computer. How does that influence the way you direct an episode?

Not at all.

[Laughs] Not at all?

Not at all, I couldn't care less. Doesn't even enter my mind. In fact, I actively reject it. For me that gets us back to the audience question: what's the correct frame if I'm filming it for an iPhone or a computer? I'm not doing that; my job is to interpret the content in the best way I know. Look, at the end of the day, how can I say this? The greatest films of all, the greatest art of all, is one that, for me, transforms how I view the world. So I come out... it's completely transformative. I remember when *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976) came out, I was a teenager, and I went to see it, and I remember very clearly I saw it in a theater in the East Side in the seventies in New York city, and I came out and I had a hard time immediately reintegrating in this city. It totally changed how I viewed the world. That's what great cinema and great art can do. So I think that when you try as a filmmaker to achieve that, I'm not concerned about what the screen size is, I'm concerned about how do I use my craft to interpret the material in the best way so that an audience can be engaged, so that it's interesting.

That expression (to change how an audience views the world) reminds us of the way Fassbinder explained the difference between his film and TV versions of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. He says that films have more to do with a state of mind, with a certain shock that changes how you view the world, whereas his work for television had to do more with letting a larger audience identify with your characters.

Yeah, I don't, I don't... Maybe... When I discuss filmmaking or I discuss art at all, I think everything his valid, everything, you shouldn't define anything. The minute you define something you make it smaller, and it shouldn't be smaller, it should be all-inclusive, right? So I think that's a completely valid point of view. For myself, when I write and make films, I'm not thinking of an audience, and I don't think of identifiable characters, I don't care about identifiable characters. I think at the end of the day the characters should be interesting, not identifiable. I don't care if they're identifiable; I care whether they're fascinating. So if I see somebody that's fascinating, the character could be a terrible, hideous person that does awful things, but if it's interesting it's interesting. I don't need the character to be my friend; I just need to experience the world in a different way.

We think he didn't mean it that way, we think he meant it more in the sense of repetition. The episodic structure has to do with re-watching faces, repeating gestures...

Yeah, you're right, I understand...

We we're thinking about *The Girlfriend Experience*, you designing an episodic serial structure for your main lead actress. That's very different to the Sasha Grey film structure, we guess... The repetition of different episodes.

Yeah, and I think we've talked about this a little earlier, I think the more commercial end of the world you get, the more repetition there is. Because then TV becomes almost like a radio for the viewers. They're watching, but how are they watching? They're on their phones, you know, the phone rings, they're talking, they may miss some things so it's got to be repeated, it's got to be easy, it can't be challenging on any level. The more commercial end of television, like network dramas, soap operas, like commercial comedies, all these areas in the most commercial end of the spectrum, I think are far more repetitive, in the structure, in the information and in the exposition.

It's interesting the way we tend to think in a negative way about repetition. We're not going to ask you to cover this now; it's been a long interview already [laughs]. But we think repetition can also be a positive thing. We are looking forward to find the repetitions in the way you work with your actress in *The Girlfriend Experience*, to reencounter

her in different episodes. We feel this is different from a film experience in a theater... Anyway, too complex of a topic to end with!

Repetition can be fascinating, I think it's always a question of why are you doing something, for what reason. If you're doing it just because you're afraid an audience won't get the information, they'll be distract so you have to repeat something, that's not for me a good enough reason to do it. But if you are doing it for a dramatic reason, with a purpose, then I think it's fantastic.

Well, you mentioned the impact *Taxi Driver* had in you. To finish the interview we want to ask if there is a particular TV series that changed the way you see things, a show that struck you?

I think *The Decalogue* is one of the greatest, a seminal piece of work, it's really a phenomenal piece of work. I mean, obviously *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, and then you talked about *The Kingdom*, which is a bit less important to me, although I do admire it. I think *The Knick* is very impressive, you know? I'm not big on lists, though, like naming lists.

No, it's not about lists, it's about that moment when you were watching a TV show and maybe you sensed something more cinematic or you thought "I could do that kind of TV work" perhaps...

I think *The Decalogue* it's the one that struck me, but I saw it as cinema, I didn't see it as TV. I saw most of it in a theater. Also, some other narrative (as opposed to documentary) television works that are important to me are Bergman's *Scenes From a Marriage* (*Scener ur ett äktenskap*, 1973) and the work of Alan Clarke.

You're going all European on us!

[Laughs] Sorry, that's when I realized that television is an interesting form and that it is very cinematic. But I don't make this delineations between forms, I really don't. I don't view it that way, that's why when you asked me about the screen size I don't really pay attention to that. I don't view it in terms of the big cinemascope on the screen versus the smaller TV, whatever, I think everything can be cinematic, and by cinematic I mean that is a unified vision and that you're interpreting the psychological drama in an interesting, visual way that the form reflects the content. I have no real interest just in seeing pretty pictures, or a nice frame, or a vista, or some beautiful landscape. It has to always be interpretive, that's why I think, for me at the end of the day, the face is the more interesting landscape of all. Because you're seeing emotionally and psychologically how people are reacting.

We totally agree wit that, thanks for your time.

Sure, it was fun!

*This interview is part of a larger book project (*Imágenes en serie*) focused on the visual dimension of contemporary television series, a research mainly based on conversations with directors, cinematographers and producers.