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"We have to go back!": Watching (over) the Island

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Translator: Brian Stacy

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- 1 An airplane crash-lands on an island in the Pacific. Stranded in an uncharted part of the world, a handful of survivors discover they aren't the only inhabitants on an island where bizarre and unusual forces are at play. Together, they will confront the Others, conjure up their tormented past and unravel the island's mysteries. Through its narrative experiments, *Lost* (ABC, 2004-2010) gives us front-row seats onto characters' disorientation. The series blurs timelines, challenges our understanding of the story and prompts us to grasp for bearings both in the story and in our own lives. The series continually urges us to look back over the show in order to better understand it, reconciling postmodernism with a desire for sincerity, critical distance, hard-hitting emotion, multiple worldviews and the universal experiences of life and death. A transformational tale about awakening to the wonders of existence, the series multiplies geographical and temporal shifts, plot twists and changes of perspective. *Lost* reflects on our relationships with others, as well as notions of time, truth, belief and fiction. Replete with coincidences, miracles and reunions, *Lost* left millions of viewers enthralled and completely revolutionized the way television narratives are constructed.
- 2 You'd think the island of *Lost* would be done with us, and we with it. Not so. Since Jack Shephard (Matthew Fox) last closed his eyes on May 23, 2010 on ABC, studies on *Lost* have not abated, quite the contrary. Jointly authored books were published in English even before the series finale, such as *Reading Lost: Perspectives on a Hit Television Show* directed by Roberta Pearson (London, UK). Tauris, 2009); others just after, such as *Ultimate Lost and Philosophy: Think Together, Die Alone* under the direction of Sharon Kaye (Hoboken, John Wiley & Sons, 2011), *Looking for Lost: Critical Essays on the Enigmatic Series* directed by Randy Laist (Jefferson, McFarland, 2011) and *Lost thought* directed by Pearson Moore (Inukshuk press, 2012). In France, two monographs on the series were published - *Les Mêmes yeux que Lost* by Pacôme Thiellement (Paris, Éditions Léo Sheer,

2011) and *Lost : Fiction vitale* by Sarah Hatchuel (PUF, 2013), but missing from extant literature is a concerted survey of the series, an illuminating multiple-angle kaleidoscope of an overview using a variety of approaches and disciplines, not unlike the way the series attempts to afford viewers a sophisticated and comprehensive view onto its characters.

- 3 We wanted this issue to be evergreen and open-ended, able to incorporate new articles, in French and English, and advance ongoing research on *Lost*. Successive editorial instalments shall in a sense reflect the serial nature of the object of study, its seasons and episodes. In order to explore, in a never-fixed way, a philosophy *immanent* to the series, but also the tension *Lost* builds up between illusion and reality, as well as the relationship to the gaze and otherness it introduces, the present issue is laid out around broad sections whose content will be regularly enriched with new submissions. These sections deliberately feature memorable lines of dialog as their titles, underscoring this issue's aim to cast light on the series through conceptualized thinking, and not the other way around. The aim is to study the series as a standalone work, not as an embodiment of a theory.
- 4 The section entitled "Not Penny's boat!" will focus on the emotional experience in and of *Lost*. That entitled "Man of Science, Man of Faith" will deal with the issues of doubt and faith that beset characters and viewers alike. The section, "It's not easy being an Other" will focus on the question of otherness. "See you in another life, brother!" will explore the intertexts and influences of the series, both in its scriptwriting and in the way it operates in other works of fiction. A section entitled "Whatever happened, happened" will focus on issues of acceptance and fatalism at play in the series. Finally, "Remember, let go, move on" will explore the controversial ending to a series that spanned six seasons and 121 episodes.
- 5 Other sections may be added depending on submissions received.
- 6 In a departure from the standard practice for academic literature on television series, articles may focus on single episodes, such as "Cabin Fever" (4.11) or "LaFleur" (5.8), in order to analyze them through crossover approaches and explore the extent to which episodes can also be understood as self-contained works and maintain complex relationships with the series as a whole.
- 7 If, as Pacôme Thiellement has shown, *Lost* plays the same role in viewers' lives as the island in the lives of those of the characters, as a place of transcendence and pathfinding. As such, this issue is meant as a space for analysis, exegesis and meta-narrative that keeps the series alive and keep serving it back up to viewers, that they may pick up where Hurley left off and keep watch(-ing) as best they can.

AUTHORS

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Claire Cornillon has a doctorate in comparative literature. She also holds a master's degree in film studies. She is currently PRAG at the University Paul Valéry-Montpellier 3. Her most recent research focuses on narrative and fiction in American television series, particularly network. She co-directs the *Sérial* collection at the Presses Universitaires François Rabelais.

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