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Steven's Spectres: Stranger Things in Small-Town USA

Abstract: In recent years, the 80s and the attached plethora of cultural synecdoches have been haunting various genres of American film and TV. Often both the cinematic form and the content of these recirculations are structured around tropes established in the period by directors such as Steven Spielberg, John Carpenter, Robert Zemeckis, Richard Donner, Rob Reiner, Ivan Reitman and others. The paper considers the case of the Netflix TV show *Stranger Things*, directed by the Duffer brothers, attempting to read its spectral physiognomy and filiations, as well as to interpret its theoretical undertones in popular culture. The paper will analyze the theoretical implications between the small town of the story and the placeholder planetary spaces it is distributed to, as well as the curious palimpsest of temporalities manifest in the show's stories, the show itself as a global product and its distribution.

Keywords: Planetary Studies; Popular Culture; *Stranger Things*; Cinematic Nostalgia; Americana.

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In recent years, delineations of the “planetary” have been developed, proposing the capacious concept as a figure of thought capable of advancing theoretical reflection beyond the doldrums of the global, in a dialectic sublation of sorts¹. I would like to begin by proposing three provisional observations to triangulate my topic.

The first of these is concerned with the planetary in a theoretical-operative appraisal and contends that the planetary is always the issue of some constellation. Besides the second-rate pun, observations of the planetary usually involve an arrangement analogous to the observations of conceptual constellation: position, perspective, known but imperceptible parallax, and the intent of form or pattern. This final element marks the vested interest, the teleological in the emergence of the planetary, i.e. pre-existing forms recognised, selected, sanctioned so that the shape is recognisable and, more importantly, significant. The planetary is (ideological) constellation veiled as recognition and new awareness².

If the global is/was a geo-political concept, the planetary is an eco-political one, in which the echoes of politics devolve in the wishful expectation of an expanded – integrative, holistic – planetary

consciousness³. The planetary is part re-circulation (even if we only look at how it is sometimes described as “rethinking the planet”⁴, for instance), a conjunction of the old with the urgency of the new, and part utopian desire to transcend culture towards a new materiality, as well as to overcome the merely anthropological. The concept wants to propel itself outside itself and, so to speak, touch down.

I wanted to sketch this minimal and, admittedly, rather vulnerable theoretical premise so as to point out that the planetary is delivered by partial constellations of a chimeric whole – just as the field of studies gathers a patchwork of spaces in the service of a vaster, collective, relational figure of thought – and in so doing, thought (necessarily) frustrates itself in the particular applications at the same time it finds interpretive solace in its *pars pro toto*. Nonetheless, this theoretical arrangement is convenient to my topic here, which aims to reflect upon an assemblage of partialities hinting at the planetary. If this seems still to generally remote from topic itself, allow me to compress that distance by affective constellation.

My second observation, then, intersects the planetary with the partiality of general societal affect: we live in times of planetary anxiety, within an array of anxieties often of planetary magnitude, just as, conversely, the planet is the present anxiety, and the coming anxiety as well. From our communal catastrophe anxiety to our salvation fantasies, ecological or technological, popular culture has been traditionally an amplifier of the apocalyptic imagination, and increasingly so over the last 25-30 years.

While one might think that the predominant fear would be that of the

ultimate catastrophe, of utter destruction, in American film and television the format often relies on the hyperbolic dynamics of destroying the world and eventually saving the remaining “planet”, ablating the global so that the planetary may emerge in its survivalist synecdoche. It has pervaded the field, from science-fiction (80 to 100 years ago), through comic books and especially the superhero genre, to colonising horror, adventure etc. Film and television have constellated the repetitive scenario across genres, from disaster movies in the mid to late nineties and early noughties (*Armageddon*, *Deep Impact*, *Volcano*, *Dante's Peak*, *The Day after Tomorrow*, *The Core* and later: *2012*, *San Andreas*, *Geostorm*) to alien invasion films (*Independence Day*, *Signs*, *War of the worlds*, *District 9*, *Oblivion*, *Skyline*, *Battleship*), to monster flicks (the *Godzilla* films, *Hellboy*, *Cloverfield*, *Pacific Rim*), to man-made catastrophes (*Waterworld*, *12 Monkeys*, *28 days later*, *28 weeks later*, *World War Z*, *Snowpiercer*, *Avatar*, the YA series *Hunger Games*, *The Maze Runner*). TV shows have also followed the trend, especially in the last decade, with series such as *V*, *The Andromeda Strain*, *Revolution*, *Falling Skies*, *The Walking Dead*, *The 100*, *Salvation*.

“Saving the world” (although usually not in its previous global guise) has been perhaps the most pervasive, but also the lucrative story of the past few decades, creating what can be called a maximalist poetics of popular culture, re-enacted almost in a compulsion to repeat. This should be considered in its full ideological complicity with market profitability. There is a conjunction between hyperbolised anxiety and the highest profit margin, although besides the return on investment, there is also this

uncanny return of the global economy in the perpetual fantasy of its own collapse, which is administered with extreme efficiency. This is the conjunction of the screenwriting and the economic mechanism of set up and payback that powers so much of popular culture and its market underpinnings.

My third provisional observation, which will lead into the topic, regards a peculiar stylistic coloration of recent popular films and television series. A concurrent trend that intersects here and there with the world destruction story, (and definitely in the TV show I'm looking at in this paper), also another figure of return, is the return *to* and *of* the 80s in American film and television, markedly over the past decade. It can be inscribed within a wider revival, in music and fashion etc., but it is nonetheless puzzling, as no definitive answer as to the whys and wherefores is available for what Newsweek called, in its 2018 special edition, "a perfect storm of 80s nostalgia"⁵. Several partial answers – the apotheosis of geek culture, 80s kids reaching positions of creative power from which they can recirculate their youth in new products and pay homage to their icons, similar social and political circumstances and anxieties, cultural cycles of 30 or 40 years that make the respective mythologies recur⁶ – all these compound to situate our understanding to a certain degree. Its continued and widespread popularity remains somewhat baffling; while we understand the appeal for a certain demographic, what exactly clicks with people who have never actually lived through it, such as millennials, remains to be elucidated. In other words, the oft invoked nostalgia, especially in its restorative guise (to use Svetlana Boym's terms⁷), is not sufficient as a theoretical explanation, although it helps

clarify certain stylistic and thematic choices, as well as the texture of allusion that these works commonly weave.

To give a few examples of this return, one could mention J. J. Abrams' *Super 8* (2008, a return *of* and *to* the 80s), the sequel to the original *Tron*, *Tron Legacy* (2010), the new *Star Wars* trilogy, *Ready Player One* (the 2018 adaptation by Steven Spielberg of Ernest Cline's 2011 eponymous novel), the sequel to *Blade Runner*, *Blade Runner 2049*, the remake of *It* and its sequel *It, the Second Chapter*, the sequel to *Top Gun*, the remake of *Ghostbusters* and its upcoming reboot, as well as planned remakes and reboots of other 80s cinema such as *An American Werewolf in London*, *The Princess Bride*, *Dirty Dancing* etc., which indicates that the trend is far from fatigue. In TV, such shows as *Halt and Catch Fire*, HBO's recent *The Deuce* and *Chernobyl*, as well as the most famous example, the series I'll be talking about, *Stranger Things*, in many ways an epitome of the phenomenon.

Produced by Netflix (2016-present), with three acclaimed seasons under its belt and a fourth one announced, created by brothers Matt and Ross Duffer, *Stranger Things* is a prime example of what is called "quality television" or "prestige television", which does not imply merely a big budget and sleek production but also cultural relevance and a perceived sense of depth. The show is both a return *to* the 80s – its three seasons set in 1983, 1984, and 1985 – and *of* the eighties in the cinematics and the stylistic and storytelling choices of the creators. The distinction is here between reconstruction and spectral poetics. Two iconic revenants are most evident, both named Steven (Stephen): King and Spielberg, avowedly the main influences of the

Duffers⁸. The show has been analysed in relation to 80s nostalgia by a number of critics and academics (Lucy Baker, Amanda Howell, and Rebecca Kumar, Tracey Mollett, Rebecca Wildermuth⁹, Matthias Stephan¹⁰, whereas nostalgia in relation to television series has been investigated among others by Katharina Niemeyer and Daniela Wentz¹¹, and by Giulia Taurino).

Nostalgia is its force and façade, granted; however, I am concerned not as much with the vagaries of its cultural resonance, or of its psychological underpinnings, but with its operative function in the poetics of the show. As such, nostalgia functions in conjunction with what could be called “the (setting at) ease of influence”, as an obverse of Bloom’s “anxiety of influence”, something that is typical of popular culture, and especially geek culture. Nostalgia works to set up an allusive network of material signs (shots, narratives, mentions, nods and hints) meant to be recognised as marks of influence in a soothing play of return and recognition. This, one could argue, is the structural tension within *Stranger Things*, as was the case with J. J. Abrams’ *Super 8*: between the anxiety of world demise and the geeky pleasures of famous or obscure references, of Easter eggs. Even the companion book, written by the Duffer brothers with Gina McIntyre, starts with the dedication to its prime and privileged readers: “This book is for geeks”¹². Materialised and material nostalgia, as well as the nostalgia material that forms the show in terms of its content and aesthetics – what Matthias Stephan calls “totemic nostalgia”¹³ –, is more than just tribute. At the same time that it constitutes its temporal and affective drive, it is also an immobilising force; it is prescriptive of a certain cinematics, a certain story, certain

preferred reading: the past, in some sense, *blocks* the present with its spectral presence.

The show meshes the stereotypical, the iconic and the symbolic, and their combined weight fixes the show in prescribed forms, in a certain history, but also as distended between the return to *that past* and the refunctioning of its ghosts. To give a few examples: the cast of characters includes the gruff sheriff with a big heart, a past trauma and a drinking problem, the single working mom that will that goes from hysterical weeping to wielding an axe to protect her son, the estranged father, the middle-aged homemaker who turns into a cougar, the popular and unpopular teenagers in their budding romances. The four preteens at the centre of the cast – The Party, as they call themselves – are at once nerds, geeks, bullied and heroes, while the odd one out is the “freak” with telekinetic and telepathic powers, Eleven or El. They move through an intricate and painstakingly reconstructed world, often on paths pre-established by their cultural narrative roles. The iconic is abundantly embedded in this world as signalling to the present: while within the continuum of the reconstructed world it is the unnoticeable, it is the iconic for us in the present and it regulates the pulses or doses of recognition and nostalgia.

I would like in what follows to reflect on the spaces and sites of the show, particularly with a view towards connecting some of the strands mentioned above and converging towards the concept of the planetary. As is the case with characters and social relations, *Stranger Things* builds upon well know film tropes, a typical topology which it enhances and modifies with interesting results. The stock of Americana provides cultural localisation but planetary phantasmal resonance.

Small-town USA is the encompassing place, the fictional town of Hawkins, Indiana, but the Duffers make an interesting choice in rendering it cinematically: they shoot it so that it seems less like a cohesive town, but as an emptiness, sometimes a wilderness, sometimes a wasteland, a blank space with a few discrete entities: homes that codify social class (working vs. middle class) in both their exteriors and interiors, a shack, a forest cabin, a middle school and a high school, an arcade and a hospital (in season 2), a couple of shops, deserted train tracks and country roads, a quarry and, of course, an evil government lab where bad people do bad things and trigger a possible apocalypse. This changes in the third season, in which Hawkins gets a club with a pool and its own mall, the latter concentrating much of the action, also because, ironically, it is a front for a secret underground Soviet compound, the enemy lab, so to speak.

There's a sense of derealisation that the Duffers impress upon this cinematic assemblage; as Lonnie, the estranged father tells his son Jonathan, "You should move to the city, people are more real here". Just as the places are "of disaffection", to quote Eliot, so too the adults and adolescents are linked by frail social ties, a reflection, of course, on the Reagan years, but also, it has been argued, of Trump small-town America. On the other hand, the kids share strong group bonds, which will be tested by the arrival of the stranger Eleven, whom they will have to integrate.

In fact, all these places, down to the living room, come under attack and many are eventually destroyed (the school, the lab, the mall etc.), in a metonymy that indicates the larger world, and the planet itself, as it is not just civilisation that is threatened. Before I

move on to the monsters that wage these attacks (human, inhuman, and non-human), I would also like to mention another site that is of both iconic and symbolic relevance: *Stranger Things* makes the pre-adolescent child the site for the generalised anxiety: the familial, the social and the planetary coincide in the threat to the child¹⁴. In 80s American films, as well as in geek culture, pre-adolescents become the predilect agents in saving the world (in films such as *The Monster Squad*, *Wargames*, *The Goonies*, also revived by Abrams in *Super 8*), just as the freak child becomes the victim/perpetrator (*The Exorcist*, *Carrie*, *The Shining*, *Children of the Corn*). *Stranger Things* weaves these tropes together into a story about friendship resisting under duress, about solidarity and courage reminiscent of films such as *Stand by me*, also based on a Stephen King story.

The threat comes from the non-world of the Upside-Down, represented symbolically by a black, upturned board governed by a monster, narratively by an analogy with the "Vale of Shadows" from the role playing game *Dungeons and Dragons* ("a dark reflection of our own world, a plane out of phase, of decay and death, right next to you when you don't even see it"), the lore of D&D moulding the narrative of the show itself at points. The Upside Down is underworld, of course, infernal, but it is also disfigured space: "Everything is still here but it's all eroded", as a doomed exploring scientist observes. The passage to it is opened accidentally by a mental experiment on Eleven gone wrong.

Despite its name, the Gate, and unlike the sanitised image of a light portal from science fiction, or of other temporal rifts in the genre, it has initially the appearance of a monstrous sphincter, from which a

bio-invasion of Hawkins begins. Thus, the Upside Down is also the Inside as site a contaminating biological other, accessed by manipulating the human psyche violently, turning it towards the Outside of the world. This seems further supported by the fact that the Upside Down turns out to be *everywhere*, as walls or even trees become *membranes* through which it makes itself menacingly manifest. What is distinctive about the orchestrated attacks in *Stranger Things* is that they occur at all levels: political, social, biological, ecological, imaginary, which is not what usually happens in films of the genre. The body, the social body, the body politic, the natural and the anthropic suffer a series of invasions and erosions, they are taken, bit, gored, eaten, torn part, taken over or snatched, and since the show is still within the horror genre it works with the tools of the trade: tension ramping, threatening signals, silent invasion, infection, abduction, direct attacks (individual or collective), timed revelation of monsters. There is a corresponding hierarchy of monsters, of course, from the humanoid carnivore flower-headed Demogorgon in season 1 to the horde of Demodogs in season 2 and to the big boss, the Mindflayer in season 3. What is interesting is that the Mindflayer is less of a material entity than a force that materialises itself occasion arising but remains otherwise a kind of mental agent of evil.

The show itself becomes the repetitive site for salvation tropes responding to generalised, planetary anxieties, chiefly that of the saviour child: Eleven closes the “gate”, with sacrifices from others in each season, which brings a temporary reprieve and a return to the normality of Anyville USA, with its in-built amnesias and inertias. Behind this membrane, other dangers are doubtlessly forming to be projected unto it as unto a planetary screen. Hawkins, in a sense, *is* the planet – just as, in true King (and sometimes Spielberg) fashion, it is the *only* place – permanently threatened and, as yet, always saved.

A word, then, finally, on the disseminator of this ritual, the show's producer and distributing platform, Netflix, the first and possibly the most global of entertainment platforms today, which has not only changed serial watching by bringing the concept and the practice of bingeing on a planetary scale, but has also provided the viewer the viewer with a kind of ultimate temporality: the all-time of right now and the partial ablation of waiting, the moulding of the show's temporality to the viewer's individual time. The fact that Netflix itself is a global site, a global producer of products that come attached with a new kind of planetary instantaneity is an interesting point for a further reflection on the relation between the global and the planet, culture and economy, desire, payment and pay-off.

FILMS AND TELEVISION PROGRAMMES CITED

FILMS

- 12 Monkeys*, directed by Terry Gilliam, Universal Pictures, 1995
2012, directed by Roland Emmerich, Columbia Pictures, 2009
28 Days Later, directed by Danny Boyle, Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2002
28 Weeks Later, directed by Juan Carlos Fresnadillo, 20th Century Fox, 2007
An American Werewolf in London, directed by John Landis, Universal Pictures, 1981
Armageddon, directed by Michael Bay, Buena Vista Pictures, 1998

Avatar, directed by James Cameron, 20th Century Fox, 2009
Battleship, directed by Peter Berg, Universal Pictures, 2012
Blade Runner, directed by Ridley Scott, Warner Bros. Pictures, 1982
Blade Runner 2049, directed by Denis Villeneuve, Sony Pictures, 2017
Carrie, directed by Brian De Palma, United Artists, 1976
Children of the Corn, directed by Fritz Kiersch, New World Pictures, 1984
Cloverfield, directed by Matt Reeves, Paramount Pictures, 2008
Dante's Peak, directed by Roger Donaldson, Universal Pictures, 1997
Deep Impact, directed by Mimi Leder, Paramount Pictures, DreamWorks Pictures, 1998
Dirty Dancing, directed by Emile Ardolino, Vestron Pictures, 1987
District 9, directed by Neill Blomkamp, Sony Pictures, 2009
Geostorm, directed by Dean Devlin, Warner Bros. Pictures, 2017
Ghostbusters, directed by Ivan Reitman, Columbia Pictures, 1984
Ghostbusters II, directed by Ivan Reitman, Columbia Pictures, 1989
Ghostbusters, directed by Paul Feig, Sony Pictures, 2016
Ghostbusters: Afterlife, directed by Jason Reitman, Sony Pictures, 2020 (upcoming)
Godzilla, directed by Roland Emmerich, TriStar Pictures, 1998
Godzilla, directed by Gareth Edwards, Warner Bros. Pictures, 2014
Godzilla, King of Monsters, directed by Michael Dougherty, Warner Bros. Pictures, 2019
Hellboy, directed by Guillermo del Toro, Sony Pictures, 2004
Independence Day, directed by Roland Emmerich, 20th Century Fox, 1996
It, directed by Andrés Muschietti, Warner Bros. Pictures, 2017
It: Chapter two, directed by Andrés Muschietti, Warner Bros. Pictures, 2019
Oblivion, directed by Joseph Kosinski, Universal Pictures, 2013
Pacific Rim, directed by Guillermo del Toro, Warner Bros. Pictures, 2013
Ready Player One, directed by Steven Spielberg, Warner Bros. Pictures, 2018
San Andreas, directed by Brad Peyton, Warner Bros. Pictures, 2015
Signs, directed by M. Night Shyamalan, Buena Vista Pictures, 2002
Skyline, directed by The brothers Strause, Universal Pictures, 2010
Snowpiercer, directed by Bong Joon-ho, The Weinstein Company, 2013
Stand By Me, directed by Rob Reiner, Columbia Pictures, 1986
Star Wars: The Force Awakens, directed by J. J. Abrams, Walt Disney Studios, 2015
Star Wars: The Last Jedi, directed by Rian Johnson, Walt Disney Studios, 2017
Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker, directed by J. J. Abrams, Walt Disney Studios, 2019
Super 8, directed by J. J. Abrams, Paramount Pictures, 2018
The Core, directed by John Amiel, Paramount Picture, 2003
The Day After Tomorrow, directed by Roland Emmerich, 20th Century Fox, 2004
The Exorcist, directed by William Friedkin, Warner Bros. Pictures, 1973
The Goonies, directed by Richard Donner, Warner Bros. Pictures, 1985
The Hunger Games, directed by Gary Ross, Lionsgate Films, 2012
The Hunger Games: Catching Fire, directed by Francis Lawrence, Lionsgate Films, 2013
The Hunger Games: Mockingjay part 1, directed by Francis Lawrence, Lionsgate Films, 2014
The Hunger Games: Mockingjay part 2, directed by Francis Lawrence, Lionsgate Films, 2015
The Maze Runner, directed by Wes Ball, 20th Century Fox, 2014
The Monster Squad, directed by Fred Dekker, TriStar Pictures, 1987
The Princess Bride, directed by Rob Reiner, 20th Century Fox, 1987
The Shining, directed by Stanley Kubrick, Warner Bros. Pictures, 1980
Top Gun, directed by Tony Scott, Paramount Pictures, 1986
Top Gun: Maverick, directed by Joseph Kosinski, Paramount Pictures, 2020 (upcoming)
Tron, directed by Steven Lisberger, Buena Vista, 1982

Tron: Legacy, directed by Joseph Kosinski, Walt Disney Studios, 2010
Volcano, directed by Mick Jackson, 20th Century Fox, 1997
War of the Worlds, directed by Steven Spielberg, Paramount Pictures, DreamWorks Pictures, 2005
WarGames, directed by John Badham, MGM, 1983
Waterworld, directed by Kevin Reynolds, Universal Pictures, 1995
World War Z, directed by Marc Forster, Paramount Pictures, 2013

TV

Chernobyl, created by Craig Mazin, HBO, 2019
Falling Skies, created by Robert Rodat, Warner Bros. Television, 2011–2015
Halt and Catch Fire, created by Christopher Cantwell, Christopher C. Rogers, AMC, 2014–2017
It, directed by Tommy Lee Wallace, ABC, 1990
Revolution, created by Eric Kripke, Warner Bros. Television, 2012–2014
Salvation, created by Liz Kruger, Craig Shapiro, Matt Wheeler, CBS, 2017–present
Stranger Things, created by Matt and Ross Duffer, Netflix, 2016–present
The 100, developed by Jason Rothenberg, Warner Bros. Television, 2014–present
The Andromeda Strain, directed by Mikael Salomon, The A&E Network, 2008
The Deuce, created by George Pelecanos, David Simon, HBO, 2017–2019
The Walking Dead, created by Robert Kirkman, Frank Darabont, AMC, 2010–present
V, created by Kenneth Johnson, Warner Bros. Television, 2009–2011

NOTES

1. From Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's well-known "I propose the planet to overwrite the globe", this dream of overcoming the brutal sameness of globalization by the higher – and at the same time, "closer to earth" – awareness of the planetary has flourished and gradually given birth to a whole segment of studies anchored in the concept of the planetary. See Spivak's *Death of a Discipline*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, p. 72. See also Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time*, Princeton and London, Princeton University Press, 2006, p. 6; Donald Pease, "From American Literary Studies to Planetary Literature", in *Transnational American Studies*, vol. 23 of REAL, *Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature*, Tübingen, Gunter Narr, 2007, pp. 9–35.
2. In the outstanding introduction to their reader *The Planetary Turn*, Amy J. Elias and Christian Moraru trace the genealogy and map the territory of the planetary in this dynamic of recycling and renewal, powered by an "eco-cosmological" turn. See "The planetary condition" in *The Planetary Turn: Relationality and Geoaesthetics in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Amy J. Elias and Christian Moraru, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 2015, pp. xi–xxxvii.
3. Elias and Moraru, "The Planetary Condition", pp. xvi–xvii. See also Timothy Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept*, London, Bloomsbury, 2015, pp. 29–45.
4. Lucy Bond, Ben de Bruyn, and Jessica Rapson, "Planetary Memory in Contemporary American Fiction" in *Textual Practice*, 31:5, 2017, pp. 855–59.
5. "Why Do We Love the 80s so Much?", online at <https://www.newsweek.com/return-80s-natural-nostalgia-or-phenomenon-858720> [retrieved February 9, 2020].
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7. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York, Basic Books, 2001. For pop culture and nostalgia and restorative nostalgia see pp. 33–49.
8. See, for instance, Giulia Taurino, "Exploring Nostalgic Reconfigurations in Media Franchises", in Kathryn Pallister (ed.), *Netflix Nostalgia, Streaming the Past on Demand*, Lexington Books, 2019, p 11.

9. Lucy Baker, Amanda Howell, and Rebecca Kumar, "Introduction: Beyond Nostalgia, Discomfort and Difference in *Stranger Things*"; Tracey Mollett, "Demogorgons, Death Stars, and Difference: Masculinity and Geek Culture in *Stranger Things*", Rebecca Wildermuth, "Trauma and Nostalgia: Youth and the Darkness of Quality in *Stranger Things*", all in *Refractory. A Journal of Entertainment Media*, vol. 31, 2019, online at <https://refractory-journal.com/category/browse-past-volumes/volume-31/> [retrieved February 9, 2020]
10. Matthias Stephan, "Branding Netflix with Nostalgia: Totemic Nostalgia, Adaptation, and The Postmodern Turn", in *Netflix Nostalgia*, pp. 25-39.
11. Katharina Niemeyer and Daniela Wentz, "Nostalgia is Not What It Used to Be: Serial Nostalgia and Nostalgic Television Series", in Katharina Niemeyer (ed.) *Media and Nostalgia: Yearning for the Past, Present, and Future*, London and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 129-38.
12. *Stranger Things: Worlds Turned Upside Down*, Foreword by Matt and Ross Duffer, Afterword by Shawn Levy, Written with Gina McIntyre, New York, Del Rey, Melcher Media, 2018
13. Stephan, "Branding Netflix", pp.30-31.
14. See also Lucy Baker and Amanda Howell, "Parenting into the Spin: Trauma, Coming of Age, and Raising Children in *Stranger Things*", in *Refractory. A Journal of Entertainment Media*, vol. 31, 2019, online at <https://refractory-journal.com/category/browse-past-volumes/volume-31/> [retrieved February 9, 2020].