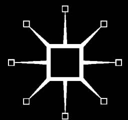
CRITICAL ESSAYS *on*

TWIN PEAKS

THE RETURN

Edited by

Antonio Sanna



Critical Essays on *Twin Peaks: The Return*

Antonio Sanna
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To all those avid fans who have grown up with
Twin Peaks *in their hearts and souls*

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Donald McCarthy is a writer and teacher from New York, USA. He has had essays appear in *Approaching Twin Peaks: Critical Thoughts on the Original Series* and *The Man in the High Castle and Philosophy*, and has had fiction appear with *Plots with Guns* and *Weirdbook*. A complete list of his works can be found at www.donaldmccarthy.com.

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PART I

The Real World: History, Technology and Fandom

CHAPTER 1

Entering the World of *Twin Peaks*

Antonio Sanna

In the September 1989 issue of *Conisseur* magazine, *Twin Peaks* was prophetically defined as 'The Series That Will Change TV Forever' (qtd. in Lim 2015, p. 91). Previously TV series were mainly family, doctor, law and detective shows. *Twin Peaks* introduced audiences to unpredictable plotlines and unconventional characters, and endowed the story with subversive themes (such as incest and deformity), eerie environments and settings (often characterized by the dichotomy of nature and society) and humorous sequences alternated with moments of horror. The success of the program and its cult following has been instrumental, as many critics have pointed out, to the advent of the present 'Golden-Age of Television.' Contemporary series such as the *X-Files* (1993–2002, 2016–), *American Gothic* (1995–1996), *Millennium* (1996–1999), *Queer as Folk* (2000–2005), *Carnivale* (2003–2005), *The L Word* (2004–2009), *Lost* (2004–2010), *Rome* (2005–2007), *Dexter* (2006–2013), *True Blood* (2008–2014), *The Vampire Diaries* (2009–), *American Horror Story* (2011–), *Game of Thrones* (2011–) and *Hannibal* (2013–2015) are all indebted to *Twin Peaks* in terms of both their contents and visual aesthetics (Angelini and Booy 2010, pp. 23–24; Clark 2013, pp. 9–12; Jowett and Abbott 2013, p. 46; Wheatley 2006, p. 162).

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Twin Peaks was born out of the combined efforts of David Lynch and Mark Frost. Lynch had previously directed the films *Eraserhead* (1977), *The Elephant Man* (1980), *Dune* (1984) and *Blue Velvet* (1986) and had already gained the reputation of an eccentric artist. Indeed, all of his films (especially, those released after the TV series) are generally characterized by extreme, provocative and brutal images, incidental dialogue, the juxtaposition of the mundane with the macabre and the bizarre, the use of horror techniques and the denaturalization of the parameters of time and space (Braziel 2004, p. 108). Typical thematic concerns of Lynch's oeuvre include: the lack of order in an individual's life and psyche, the exploration of identity crises and the effects of trauma and the uncanny. Such themes are often expressed through nonrepresentational images and encrypted narratives which do not necessarily present a clear, explanatory and final resolution or a linear narrative following Hollywood's conventional criteria. On the other hand, Mark Frost was an expert screenwriter, who had previously worked on TV on shows such as *Hill Street Blues* (1981–1987). His typical cerebral storytelling coupled with the quixotic visionary work of Lynch thus offered an opportunity for the creation of a unique product which would immediately capture the attention and interest of millions and created a resilient fan community that still thrives in the present day (Dukes 2014, p. 7).

The story of *Twin Peaks* is focused on FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper's (Kyle MacLachlan) investigation on the murder of seventeen-year-old homecoming queen Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee). The murder upsets the entire community of Twin Peaks, a small town in Northwest America, near the border with Canada. The local community is formed by mundane and simple as much as mysterious and bizarre characters (interpreted by a cast of convincing actors and actresses ranging in age from teenagers to elderly professionals), who all live secret, double lives. The righteous, honorable and self-confident Cooper is 'the moral compass of the series and the ideal outsider to engage with the dark secrets' (Dukes 2014, p. 68) of Twin Peaks. During his investigation, which blends deductive reasoning with intuitions and inspiration from dreams, he discovers that the woods around the town are inhabited by a timeless evil that manifests its presence through the actions of evil spirits. One of the spirits, called BOB (Frank Silva), has taken possession of Laura's father, Leland (Ray Wise), and has (allegedly) forced him to abuse and kill his own daughter. Some of the defining characteristics of the series are established in the pilot, such as the nostalgic references to the fifties

and the repetition of the frames of certain artifacts, urban locations and natural landscapes (the exteriors of the town's most important buildings, the oscillating ceiling fan in the Palmers's house, the pine branches fluttering in the wind and the suspended traffic light). Tragedy and absurdist comedy are frequently juxtaposed. Simultaneously, the mundane is invaded by the ominous and the supernatural. The narrative thus exemplifies the concept of the fantastic elaborated by Tzvetan Todorov, as Diane Stevenson has argued (1995, p. 70), because it alternates its events between the realms of the ordinary and the supernatural.

The series premiered on April 8, 1990 on the American Broadcasting Company (ABC). The pilot was watched by over 34 million viewers and a first season of the show was instantly confirmed. Season One, which aired from 12 April 1990 to 23 May 1990, consisted of eight episodes (including the pilot) and concluded with a series of cliffhangers that left the fates of many characters in suspense. Due to its quirky characters, quotable dialogue and enticing plotlines, *Twin Peaks* was an instant success, and the catchphrase 'Who killed Laura Palmer?' has reverberated ever since. During the four-month hiatus between the first two seasons, the public curiosity and interest in the show was further augmented by the production of some merchandise, including the publication of *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer* and *'Diane …' The Twin Peaks Tapes of Agent Cooper* (both 1990). Laura's diary, written by Jennifer Chamber Lynch (daughter of the director), chronicles the girl's painful history of abuse since she was twelve, her dark dreams, her slow descent into darkness and her '*two very different lives*' (1992, p. 78) as a perfect daughter and a cocaine-addict prostitute. The diary also contains several poems that express clearly Laura's silent requests for help ('When I call out / No one can hear me / When I whisper, he thinks the message / Is for him only' [Lynch 1992, p. 14]). Cooper's tapes, written by Scott Frost and recorded by actor Kyle MacLachlan, provided fans of the program with a glimpse on the FBI agent's past and his intimate relationship with Diane, the off-camera secretary he confides his thoughts to via a tape recorder. Such a backstory was further elaborated upon in Scott Frost's book *The Autobiography of F.B.I. Special Agent Dale Cooper: My Life, My Tapes* (1991)—a collection of transcripts from the agent's audio tapes that traces the character's education and his love for the FBI—and was paired to Lynch,' Frost' and Richard Saul Wurman's *Welcome to Twin Peaks: An Access Guide to the Town* (1991)—a volume on the local history and touristic attractions of the fictional town which parodies real guidebooks.

The 21 episodes constituting Season Two were aired from 30 September 1990 to 10 June 1991. Airing was discontinuous because, after the revelation of Laura Palmer's killer (which was forced on Lynch and Frost by ABC's executives) and the precedence given to unremarkable subplots in the central episodes of the season, ratings dropped dramatically. Also, the program's timeslot was moved six times to less congenial hours and days of the week, which contributed to ABC's decision to suspend the series (in spite of the fact that the program earned fourteen Emmy nominations and won the Best Drama Series award at the Golden Globes in January 1991). After a written campaign by C.O.O.P. (Citizens Opposed to the Offing of Peaks), ABC allowed the final six episodes to be broadcast, before deciding to definitely cancel the series. The last episode of Season Two, directed by Lynch, concludes with an extended and complex sequence that is open to contradictory interpretations and leaves many plotlines unresolved. Indeed, 'Episode 29' ends puzzlingly at the peak of its mystery, with the hero being apparently duplicated into two physically separate entities (the 'Good Dale' being imprisoned in the Black Lodge and the 'Evil Dale' being unleashed in Twin Peaks).

The first two seasons of *Twin Peaks* have been considered as a monumental example of postmodern intertextuality and parody. The series is an amalgam of genres as different as drama, sitcom, horror, thriller, science fiction, film noir and crime procedural. Nevertheless, part of the allure of *Twin Peaks* (and its subsequent mythology) is due also to the fact that the series (whose staff included a total of eight writers and fourteen directors) was a work in progress: its plotlines and characters were in fact subjected to frequent changes and revisions even during filming according to the exigencies of the program's staff or of ABC's executives. On the other hand, in spite of the number of different writers and directors of the episodes, the series reveals a certain consistency in its dark aesthetics and otherworldly contents, although it is undeniable that the six episodes directed by David Lynch are markedly characterized by the director's typical hallucinogenic, dreamy/nightmarish and otherworldly style. Common to the majority of the episodes are the leisurely pace and the use of many slow scenes, which contribute to the creation of an atmosphere that is uncanny and uncomfortable. A fundamental attraction of the series is constituted also by the soundtrack, composed by Angelo Badalamenti (and, in part, by Lynch himself), which certainly

helps to create a dreamy and haunting atmosphere with its experiments with styles as different as classical music, blues and jazz.

Particularly interesting is the show's depiction of the two opposite spiritual realms known as the 'Black Lodge' and the 'White Lodge,' where evil spirits and angels are respectively said to dwell. According to the fictional universe of *Twin Peaks* the evil spirits can inhabit the bodies of those weak humans who are unable to resist them and feed on their 'garmonbozia,' a term that is explicitly glossed as 'pain and sorrow.' The entrances to the two domains are triggered respectively by fear and love. Many critics have investigated the depiction of such spiritual realms[1] and have identified their origin in a series of texts that include the writings of the Theosophical Society and the Order of the Golden Dawn.[2] The Black and the White Lodges are also mentioned in the volumes *Moonchild* (by Aleister Crowley, 1917), *The Devil's Guard* (by Talbot Mundy, 1926) and *Psychic Self-Defense* (by Dion Fortune, 1935). Similarly, many critical readings of the program have focused on the figure of BOB, the evil spirit who commits nefarious crimes in the provincial town. BOB has been interpreted as a representation of 'the dominance of phallic power' in patriarchal society (Nochimson 1997, p. 88), a personification of 'the dark side of the community [and …] the daemon of classical literature' (Murray 2013, pp. 109, 111), a silencer of all those characters who do not respect the proper gender roles established by white, middle-class rules (Sanna 2012, p. 94) and 'a figure of the underworld' (Stevenson 1995, p. 75), to merely mention a few studies on the subject.

After the cancelation of the series, Lynch worked on a prequel film which included Frost in the project only as an executive producer. The film, titled *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*, was first presented at the Cannes Film Festival on 16 May 1992, and represents the last seven days in the life of Laura Palmer. Reactions from both the public and the critics were extremely negative throughout the world: fans were irritated by the film's apparent lack of resolution of the mysteries initiated in the TV series and by the story's lack of humor, whereas viewers who were not familiar with *Twin Peaks* criticized heavily the obscurity of the film. Lynch's dark style, already visible in the TV series, emerges in the film too through the exhibition of many of his hallmarks—such as 'screams, rapes, satanic dwarfs, sadists climbing up ladders into bedrooms, wood paneling, many trees, ghost horses, angels, bureaucratic jargon,

cocaine abuse, wounds under microscopes, clues that lead nowhere, and tableaux of sick middle-class family life' (Ebert, qtd. in Thorne 2016, p. 267). *Fire Walk with Me*—certainly, an ambiguous and difficult film—is an exploration of the inner workings of Laura Palmer's mind and her realization and fight against the abuse and evil she suffers. Lynch presents viewers with the girl's attempts to suffocate her pain and erase her juvenile purity through sexual promiscuity and drug use.[3] Moreover, the film confirms the mystical connection between Agent Cooper and the seventeen-year-old victim, a connection that is established through dreams and concretized in the two characters' final confinement to the realm of the Black Lodge. *Fire Walk with Me* presents stunning performances by Sheryl Lee and Ray Wise and is characterized by hypnotic music, the depiction of frightening nightmares and uncanny encounters, and the representation of the domestic as an oppressive environment.[4] Extreme close-ups, a regular feature of Lynch's films, are used with frequency, often to reveal some sordid details (such as Teresa Bank's corpse or the smoking cigarette butts on the floor).

The TV series and the prequel film generated an enormous number of follow-ups, imitations, allusions and parodies, including the self-referential four-part series of commercials for a Japanese coffee drink (Georgia Coffee) directed by Lynch in 1992 that was set in the North-American fictional town and involved several characters from the series. After the cancelation of the series a great quantity of artifacts and memorabilia were produced, from vintage clothing inspired by the character of Audrey Horne and Barbie dolls wrapped in plastic to mugs, trading cards and T-shirts or jumpers that use iconic phrases from the program. However, the resonances of the show on popular culture throughout the world were enormous: *Twin Peaks* was quoted, alluded to, parodied and imitated in programs such as *Sesame Street* (1969–), *The Simpsons* (1989–), *Psych* (2006–) as well as creating an undying fandom that still reunites at festival and conventions (such as the 'Twin Peaks Festival' in Snoqualmie, North Bend and Fall City since 1992, and the 'Twin Peaks UK Festival' since 2010) and share their opinions on Internet sites and fan blogs (Clark 2013, pp. 9–14). Furthermore, many installations, amateur and professional videos have been (and are still) inspired by—and based upon—the TV series.

After *Twin Peaks*, Lynch and Frost collaborated on the TV series *On the Air* (1992), a seven-episode sitcom broadcast on ABC that was canceled after the third episode, but their careers then separated until recent

years when they joined their talents again for the creation of a third season of *Twin Peaks*. In 2017, 26 years after the original airing of the first two seasons, Showtime aired Season Three of the program, titled *Twin Peaks: The Return*. In the intervening years Lynch had directed the films *Lost Highway* (1997), *The Straight Story* (1999), *Mulholland Drive* (2001) and *Inland Empire* (2006),[5] but also a tour documentary of the band Duran Duran and a fifteen-minute promo for Christian Dior. He had also created some online works (including the shorts *DumbLand* and the sitcom *Rabbits*, both in 2002), composed two music albums, *Crazy Clown Town* (2011) and *The Big Dream* (2013), staged an avant-garde musical (*Industrial Symphony No. 1*), and wrote a book on his creative processes and his practice of Transcendental Meditation (*Catching the Big Fish: Meditation, Consciousness and Creativity*, 2006). Lynch can be thus appropriately compared to a Renaissance artist because he has engaged in numerous different artistic areas of expression. Indeed, the American director is also renowned for selling his own line of organic coffee, regularly posting for years a daily weather forecast on his website, and collecting his artworks (which includes photos, paintings and designs for furniture collections) in several exhibitions presented in the United States, Japan and Europe. After *Twin Peaks*, Frost published several novels (including *The List of Seven*, 1993, *The Second Objective*, 2009, and the three-part saga *The Paladin Prophesy*, 2012–2015), but he also directed *Storyville* (1992) and (co-)wrote the screenplays for the films *The Greatest Game Ever Played* (2005), *Fantastic Four* (2005) and *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer* (2007).

Twin Peaks: The Return was preceded by the publication of Frost's *The Secret History of Twin Peaks* (2016), a volume in the form of a dossier allegedly recovered by the FBI inside a lockbox in 2016 and analyzed by Special Agent Tamara Preston, whose duty is to determine the identity of the archivist. The document chronicles several supernatural occurrences in the United States, arranged chronologically from the testimonies of the Western expeditions in Washington state at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the apparitions of giants in the forest during the 1920s, and UFO crashes and abductions in the 1940s, to the events concomitant to Cooper's investigation and final disappearance, 'tragic events … that, at first, seemed unrelated—until they eventually began to shed light on the bigger picture' (Frost 2016, p. 313). The book reconstructs brilliantly events only alluded to in the series and fills in the gaps regarding the backstories of a few secondary characters

involved in the unexplainable events. The volume also connects the supernatural events represented in the TV series to Native American mythology and depicts the interest of the American government in such mysteries as much as the different attempts to either reveal or cover up the truth. *The Secret History of Twin Peaks* is heavily influenced by the theories of the Theosophical Society and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and seems to update them by interweaving its characters' study of the occult with the involvement of aliens and other dimensional beings in human affairs.

Season Three premiered on 21 May 2017 and consists of 18 episodes, all co-written by Frost and Lynch and directed by Lynch. *The Return* focuses on the nefarious actions perpetrated by the 'Evil Cooper' in contemporary America and the release of the 'Good Cooper' from the Black Lodge. Some of the characters from Seasons One and Two, such as Deputy 'Hawk' (Michael Horse), Agent Albert Rosenfield (Miguel Ferrer) and Deputy Director Gordon Cole (David Lynch) have fundamental roles in Season Three. Other characters that fans were affectionate to, such as Dr. Jacobi (Russ Tamblyn), the Log Lady (Catherine E. Coulson), Audrey Horne (Sherilyn Fenn) and Benjamin Horne (Richard Beymer) appear instead solely in brief cameos throughout Season Three and barely have a direct role in the events leading to the defeat of the merciless 'Bad Cooper,' and 'Good Cooper's' attempt to prevent Laura Palmer's murder through time travel. Furthermore, Season Three introduces many new characters and a cast of actors and actresses that include Lynch's frequent collaborator Laura Dern (in the role of Diane), Monica Bellucci (as herself), Chrysta Bell (as Agent Tamara 'Tammy' Preston) and Robert Forster (as Sheriff Frank Truman). The narrative is set only in part in the North West provincial town, but its locations include also Las Vegas and South Dakota: the characters' actions in these different locations intersect convolutedly in a tangle involving money theft and loans, drug dealings, homicides and the opening of dimensional portals.

Both visually and thematically, Season Three presents many stylistic signatures typical of the Lynchian production, especially the latest works and their 'fragmented desires, bizarre erotic entanglements and abstract non-representationality' (Braziel 2004, p. 113). The director had indeed been variously defined as 'Hollywood's reigning eccentric,' 'the Czar of Bizarre' and 'a Weirdo' (Woodward, Corliss, and Kermode, qtd. in Hainge 2004, p. 136) because of his defiance of the Hollywood's principles of linear temporality, coherent, meaningful narrative and

closure as well as his emphasis on mood and feelings.[6] In *The Return* Lynch equally utilizes cryptic imagery and events. For this reason, the program has been criticized for its apparent lack of meaning throughout the first episodes of the series, whose narrative proceeds at an extremely slow pace (many dialogues are bland, slow, with long pauses, and camera movements are rare) and involves the depiction of events that are apparently inconsequential and untied to one another. An already-complex plot involving the journey of 'Good Cooper' to other planes of existence and his reincarnation in a dumb version of himself, the apparitions of strange nonhuman beings, the discovery of Major Briggs's mutilated body and the arrest of 'Bad Cooper' is further complicated by the frequent use of out-of-focus, blurred and distorted frames, quick cuts, slow-motion sequences and rewinds, as well as abstract, cloudy images (such as the cloud of dust and fire in Part 8 from which the spirits allegedly descent onto Earth). Many sequences do not follow a linear temporality ('Is it future or is it past?,' the question asked by the one-armed spirit of MIKE [Al Strobel], becomes symbolic of Lynch's treatment of temporality at large), and the last two episodes of the series even presents Agent Cooper's journey to the past to attempt to prevent Laura Palmer's murder.

Television critics have interpreted *The Return* as a series dictated by nostalgia for the older episodes without the comfort of an actual return to the thematics and visual aesthetics of the earlier program, without the bucolics of the provincial town (Stephens 2017) or with an intended will to destroy 'the nostalgic goodwill that had accrued since the show was announced' (Zoller Seitz 2017). According to Chris Cabin (2017), Lynch is reticent to reveal the mysteries of the series because he deliberately wants to secure the spectator's 'curiosity and a certain sense of displacement.' The program's apparent lack of meaning is one of the points most evidenced by the critics, who describe *The Return* as 'frustrating' (Dan 2017), 'as strange as you'd imagine—and as beguiling' (Sims 2017), whose 'electric inventiveness and gleeful inscrutability' (Schager 2017) are actually attractive, especially for the fans of Lynch's works.

Two months after the finale of *The Return* was broadcast, Frost's volume *Twin Peaks: The Final Dossier* (2017) was published. The volume is, like *The Secret History*, a collection of file entries, which have been compiled by Agent Tamara Preston and, unlike its predecessor, actually recounts what happened to the inhabitants of Twin Peaks in the years intervening between Season Two and Season Three. *The Final Dossier*

also updates readers with what occurs during Season Three and clarifies many—but not all—of the details that the TV program fails to explain, such as Leo Johnson's death, Audrey's pregnancy, Major Briggs,' Phillip Jeffreis' and Agent Cooper's disappearances, and Bad Cooper's foundation of a high-profit organization based on an extended network of illegal activities. The lives of the characters and the supernatural events they witness or experience are commented upon by Agent Preston, who reflects on the human condition and the cyclical nature of history, and concludes the report with a positive encouragement to face all adversities in life without surrendering. Considering *The Return*'s open-ended and ambiguous finale, which seems to suggest that Cooper's attempts to defeat evil are useless, there is a possibility that a fourth season of the show will be produced in the future. This further demonstrates that the mythology of Twin Peaks has not exhausted its life and themes and will certainly produce further intense debate among fans of the series (and of Lynch's works) as much as among academics, who have published extensively on the subject in the past two decades and a half.

Indeed, as Dennis Lim argues, '*Twin Peaks* was a mass-culture text that called for communal decoding, a semiotic wonderland of clues, symbols, and red herrings' (2015, p. 98). Critics have focused their attention on the most disparate aspects of the program, from its obsessive depiction of food (especially, cherry pies, doughnuts and 'damn fine cups of coffee') and representation of nature to its thematic interest in duality (the apparition of doppelgängers and the double lives of the characters), circular imagery (rings and cyclical returns), electricity and the representation of the female body. The scripts, contents, images and intertextuality of the series have been (re-)interpreted, fragmented, categorized and deconstructed for over 25 years, and the plethora of publications from the time of the program's airing to the present day has not managed to cover all the possible interpretations of the program and the film's challenging and contradictory messages. Studies that focus on the production history, realization and reception of the TV program and its prequel film, offer some interpretations of its multiple messages, and report the anecdotes of the experiences on the sets from the creators and/or the members of the staff are. Such works include the collection of interviews *Lynch on Lynch* (edited by Chris Rodley, 2005), Brad Dukes' *Reflections: An Oral History of Twin Peaks* (2014) and John Thorne's *The Essential Wrapped in Plastic: Pathways to Twin Peaks* (2016)—a collection of many articles from the bi-monthly magazine

dedicated to the series that was published from October 1992 to 2005. *Fan Phenomena: Twin Peaks* (2013), edited by Marisa C. Hayes and Franck Boulègue, provides readers with an entertaining exploration of all the products created (or inspired) by both executives and fans of the program for over two decades, from memorabilia and items of clothing to performance art and festivals.

Many volumes dedicated to the study of television, either focusing on a specific genre or more general examinations, include an analysis of *Twin Peaks*. Helen Wheatley's *Gothic Television*, for example, argues that Lynch' and Frost's program is, along with *The Addams Family* (1964–1966) and *Dark Shadows* (1966–1971), exemplary of Gothic television, 'a domestic form of a genre which is deeply concerned with the domestic' (2006, p. 1).[7] Lorna Jowett and Stacey Abbott's *TV Horror: Investigating the Dark Side of the Small Screen* categorizes *Twin Peaks* as 'art' and 'quality' television because of its hypnotic unfolding of images and sound (2013, pp. 156–166). Jowett and Abbott argue that the program shares the anti-narrative qualities and the aesthetics of cinematic surrealism. Many chapters in *Cult TV: From Star Trek to Dexter, New Approaches to TV Outside the Box* (edited by Stacey Abbott, 2010) describe *Twin Peaks* as epitomizing several definitions of cult TV because of its complex story arcs, transgressive subject matter, realistic dialogues, and because it requires the intense involvement of the loyal members of the audience (who thus positions themselves as connoisseurs as set against 'casual consumers').

All books devoted to David Lynch analyze *Twin Peaks* in one of their chapters, along with the rest of the director's oeuvre. This is the case of John Alexander's *The Films of David Lynch* (1993), Michel Chion's *David Lynch* (1995), Martha P. Nochimson's *The Passion of David Lynch: Wild at Heart in Hollywood* (1997), Paul A. Woods' *Weirdsville USA: The Obsessive Universe of David Lynch* (2000), Jeff Johnson's *Pervert in the Pulpit: Morality in the Works of David Lynch* (2004), and Erica Sheen' and Annette Davison's *The Cinema of David Lynch: American Dreams, Nightmare Visions* (2004). Monographs and collections of essays dedicated to the first two seasons of the program include: David Lavery's *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to Twin Peaks* (1995), a comprehensive study of aspects as different as Laura's martyrdom, the characters' scopophilic actions, the literarization of metaphors and the series' music; Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock' and Catherine Spooner's *Return to Twin Peaks: New Approaches to Materiality, Theory, and Genre*

on Television (2016), which reunites several experts on the TV series to offer new critical interpretations that examine substance abuse, images of animals and nature, food consumption and the postmodern elements of the first two seasons of the show; and Eric Hoffman' and Dominick Grace's *Approaching Twin Peaks: Critical Essays on the Original Series* (2017), whose twelve chapters analyze various facets of the show such as its representation of evil, its religious allusions and its surrealist elements.

As the previous list indicates, interest in the series has resurged, especially in recent years, after Lynch and Frost declared that a third season would be produced. However, none of the aforementioned books focuses on Season Three of the program. *Critical Essay on Twin Peaks: The Return*, therefore, is the first study of the third season of the cult program that changed the face of television in the early 1990s. The book is divided into three sections, which focus on different aspects of the TV program. The first part of the book, 'The Real World: History, Technology and Fandom,' examines the relationships between the fictional universe of *Twin Peaks: The Return* and the real world. The chapters present in this section focus on the series' representation of the world and American history as well as on the program's reception and its fans' production of material inspired by it. Part I begins with this introduction by Antonio Sanna, which examines the history of the show from its first airing to Season Three, traces the careers of both David Lynch and Mark Frost and illustrates the critical and public reception of the show from 1990 to the present day. The second chapter, by Matthew Ellis and Tyler Theus, reads Season Three as a critical reflection on the concept of 'returning.' Specifically, Ellis and Theus argue that the series makes explicit the impossibility of representing history as something one returns *to*, as well as something which itself *returns* ('It is happening again'). Elizabeth Lowry's chapter draws on Frost's *Secret History* and Season Three to examine the relationship between the town, UFO sightings and nuclear testing. According to Lowry, the series' fictional universe reveals the show's preoccupation with public and private, seen and unseen, alien and ordinary: in *Twin Peaks*, it is the unseen and 'private' forces that exert their most enduring (and devastating) legacy on the town's people. The fourth chapter, by Jeffrey Fallis and T. Kyle King, considers how *The Return* capitalizes on twenty-first-century technology in the way viewers experience and interact with the show. Fallis and King argue that technology empowered Lynch's and Frost's engagement with the show and their fellow fans, allowing them to draw on and respond

to emergent interpretations and fresh perspectives (via a series of panels on the weekly *Wrapped in Podcast*), yet the complex machinery necessary to the endeavor also presented challenges and limitations, from the uncertainties of social media interactions to the existence of technical difficulties. The fifth chapter, by Brigid Cherry, examines a representative sample of the memes which have been circulated during the broadcast of *The Return* and interprets their creation and circulation as an attempt, on the part of viewers, to communicate their responses to, as well as make light of, the complicated and often alienating text of the program. The first part ends with David McAvoy's chapter, which suggests that Lynch and Frost fundamentally reconstitute the structure of fan engagement that their previous work had helped make so necessary in the era of 'Peak TV,' taking online anti-fan activities as their primary inspiration: by delivering one anti-climax after another the show can be interpreted as an expert exercise in foiling fans' attempts to solve television puzzles.

Section Two, 'Into the Lodges: Subjectivity and (Un)Realism,' explores the representations of the subjects and their perceptions of the world along with the realistic, unrealistic and surreal elements of the series, focusing particularly on the supernatural elements of the show. The first chapter, by Thomas Britt, examines the narrative, visual and sub-textual/extra-textual devices that involve identity shifts. Specifically, the chapter focuses on the narrative and cinematographic techniques Lynch and his creative team use to draw viewers into various in-between states and to assert intermediacy as a key theme of *The Return*. In the second chapter, Anthony Ballas uses the program for the purpose of locating the tension between the traditional philosophical understanding of the subject and the human–nonhuman assemblages of the object-oriented school of philosophy that is fashionable today. Ballas argues that Lynch's visual and narrative style offers a conflicting discourse on both the potency and impotency of subjectivity, navigating the difficult terrain between human and nonhuman actants and the traditional correlationist model of subject and object. Ryan Coogan's chapter considers Lynch's third installment of *Twin Peaks* as a dramatic enactment of the theory of the 'weird' reality elaborated by the recent group of philosophers known as the Speculative Realists. In particular, Coogan looks at Lynch's dramatization of objects as animate beings with their own impulses, desires and effects on the world that are not directed or controlled by human actants. In the fourth chapter, Joel Hawkes argues that in the glass box

depicted in the first episodes of Season Three, Lynch presents a central metaphor for contemporary society: a physical and cultural space that has become increasingly surreal (though its surreal nature often goes unnoticed), and its inhabitants, their lives increasingly mediated through the screen(s), who have become dehumanized figures, isolated, and alienated from each other and from themselves. According to Hawkes, the box is a portal through which we access the show and our own lives. The following chapter, by Donald McCarthy, analyzes the unreliable narration, ambiguity and elaboration (but not solution) of mysteries in Frost's novels *The Secret History of Twin Peaks* and *Twin Peaks: The Final Dossier*, and their relationship with the events depicted in Season Three. The second part of the volume concludes with Kwasu D. Tembo's chapter, which uses Lacan's conceptual methodology of the Three Orders (namely, the Imaginary, Symbolic and Real) to study the theme of narratological triplicity of the season's narrative (which is split into three primary storylines, each developed across three primary locations) and the triplicity of self and Other (evidenced through the characters of Douglas Jones, Good Cooper and Bad Cooper).

The third section of the volume, 'Into the Psyche: Trauma, Dreams and Music,' considers some of the most intimate aspects of *The Return*, its representation of traumatic events and memories, its dreamy/nightmarish atmosphere and the crucial contribution of the music (created by Angelo Badalamenti)—all of them being fundamental in having a profound effect on the minds of both the characters and the spectators. The section begins with Timothy William Galow's chapter, which compares the radical shifts that the protagonists undergo in the late works of David Lynch. The changes (whether figured as dreams, psychological breakdowns, or fantasmatic projections) compel audiences to reconceptualize characters' relations to traumatic events, but, in each work, the transformations shift in narrative function and psychological register. Beyond providing much-needed context for understanding *Peaks*, Galow's analysis demonstrates how the series incorporates elements from the earlier films but employs them to very different effect. The second chapter, by Adam Daniel, interprets the TV series as an extension of Lynch's desire to direct a hypothetical Kafka crime film. The chapter focuses on the way Lynch employs an engagement with dream logic to depict the absurdity of life, the disconnect between mind and body, alienation and metamorphosis, in both a literal and figurative sense. The following chapter, by Michael Potter and Cam Cobb, interprets the ever-shifting,

multidimensional nature of Lynch and Frost's series as a reproduction of what we experience in life, as a story of memory, selfhood, attachment to selfhood and perpetual confusion. Potter and Cobb then draw many parallels between the series' depiction of the world of dreams and its representation of reality. Andrew T. Burt's chapter studies the use of sound as a critical indicator in determining shifts in tone, signifying changes in the narrative, or signaling a Lynchian aside that enhances the mood. Burt argues that sound informs all aspects of Lynch's universe, but is integral to scenes in which characters make discoveries or transitions, whether accompanied by electricity or machinery or going through the transitory motions of everyday life. The fifth chapter, by Kingsley Marshall and Rupert Loydell, pays attention to the predominantly dialogue-free Part 8 of the series in order to explore how Lynch makes use of intricate sound design, score, existing source music and music performed within the diegesis in order to complete his intricate visuals. The chapter explores how the episode, and the series as a whole, makes intertextual connections to conventional and experimental film form in addition to extending upon established Lynchian worlds, and how manipulation of sounds within the series lends an otherworldly quality to the image. The last section of the book concludes with a chapter by David Sweeney, which demonstrates that the various acts performing at the Bang Bang Bar—a mixture of fifties and eighties influenced musicians—makes perfect *real world* sense in the context of what music critic Simon Reynolds has termed 'retromania': pop culture's fascination with, and constant referencing of, its past. In the context of *Twin Peaks*, Sweeney explains, 'retro' music in some cases is a perfect pastiche of its sources as to seem to belong authentically to the past, but it also functions as an element of *estrangement*.

The diversity of approaches used by the contributors and the variety of subjects they consider demonstrate the complexity of *Twin Peaks: The Return* as an inexhaustible source of appeal and a stimulating generator of endless theoretical interpretations. A timely assessment of the critical importance of the program requires both an interdisciplinary perspective and the fusion of different intellectual approaches across genres. The chapters in the volume indicate a collective awareness of the TV series as a fundamental milestone in contemporary culture, a more-than-welcome return to a program that has changed TV and, through its aesthetic and narrative inventiveness in Season Three, can further change the direction and style of present and future TV series.

Notes

1. Michael Carroll considers the Black Lodge as 'the land of the dead' and therefore compares Agent Cooper's entrance in such a realm to the adventures of Odysseus, Aeneas and Dante (1993, p. 288); Angela Hague interprets the Black Lodge as 'a kind of photographic negative that is a frightening inversion of the White Lodge—and an integral part of the journey toward the spiritual perfection that the White Lodge represents' 1995, p. 140); Nancy Buffington reads it as an 'uncannily female' space that destabilizes the 'lineal, patriarchal structure' (1995, p. 102).
2. The Theosophical Society was founded in New York in 1875 by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Colonel Henry Steel Olcott and William Quan Judge. The nonsectarian group was based on 'a coherent doctrine combining cosmology, modern anthropology, and the theory of evolution with man's spiritual development' (Goodrick-Clarke 2004, p. 18) and dedicated its practices and rituals to the study of occultism and of comparative religion and philosophy. As detailed in the first writings from the founders of the movement, especially in the texts by Helena Blavatsky, the Theosophical Society's aim was 'to collect, and diffuse a knowledge of the laws which govern the universe' (qtd. in Gomes 1987, p. 6). In her 1888 volume *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatski argues that our planet is part of the cosmic evolution, whose progress is overseen by advanced spiritual beings that she calls 'Masters of Ancient Wisdom.' As Alex Owen summarizes, 'the entire complex pantheon of Theosophical ideas rests upon the idea of an evolutionary flux, a continuous ebbing and flowing of matter and spirit, marked by the periodic manifestation of an impersonal Absolute on unseen planes and in countless universes' (2004, p. 34). The hierarchical Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was founded by Freemasons William Woodman, Edward Maitland and William Westcott in the late 1880s with the express intent to promote Western esoteric philophy and to study Kabbalah also through the performance of rituals of high magic that lead the adepts to gain knowledge of the divine self and the betterment of humanity at large (Cicero and Cicero 2003, pp. 88–93). The study of the occult in both movements was therefore interwoven with the exploration of personal interiority and the development of the powers latent in human beings (Owen 2004, pp. 13, 20).
3. According to Miles Booy, 'the film is largely set in Laura's head. Its several lengthy scenes featuring extreme background noise nearly obliterating the dialogue represent her split consciousness, her knowing, but also denying, the identity of her abuser' (2010, p. 30). Fans and critics are divided whether to advise viewers unfamiliar with *Twin Peaks* to watch the film before or after the TV series. Personally, I would advise spectators to watch

the TV series first and further comprehend it in part through the film, rather than understanding the cryptic film through the series.

4. In July 2014 ninety minutes of previously unseen footage from *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*, titled *The Missing Pieces*, were released in a Blu-ray box set. The deleted scenes include some domestic sequences at the Palmers' house, several depictions of the lives of the town's citizens and an extended version of Agent Philip Jeffries' (David Bowie) visit to the spirits from the Black Lodge and his materialization in Buenos Aires.
5. *Wild at Heart* (1990), filmed during the production and filming of *Twin Peaks*, was released in 1990.
6. According to Anne Jerslev, 'classical Hollywood narration is the invisibly present textual order—or other—that Lynch's films to a greater or lesser degree address and subvert' (2004, p. 155). Similarly, Martha P. Nochimson argues: 'this belatedness of explicit narrative meanings, the foregrounding of tonal/emotional depictions of unspoken narrative events is primary to an understanding of Lynch's work, which urges us to contemplate events with the larger faculty of imagination before the reductive words are spoken, for it is only the larger faculty that can apprehend what is really going on, a truth too absurd for ordinary logic and reason' (2004, p. 170).
7. Wheatley defines Gothic TV as characterized by its proclivity toward the representation of the supernatural and the images of the uncanny as well as by its 'mise-en-scène dominated by drab and dismal colors, shadows and closed-in spaces' (2006, p. 3)—characteristics that were clearly established in *Twin Peaks* as well. According to Wheatley, the first two seasons of *Twin Peaks* are permeated by 'a mood of melancholy and desolation' (2006, p. 163) and represent the American Dream as a flawed ideology (2006, p. 170).

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CHAPTER 2

Is It Happening Again? *Twin Peaks* and '*The Return*' of History

Matthew Ellis and Tyler Theus

Psychoanalysis is bound to creep into the discussion of the revival of *Twin Peaks*. Despite some recent attempts to keep it out of the discussion of Lynch's work (Nochimson 2013), the program's content is simply too suggestive, even for those with only a passing familiarity with psychoanalytic concepts. Most striking in this respect is the general move made in the new series away from the Freudian oedipal grid structured around the crimes of the obscene father to the pre-Oedipal, distinctly Kleinian world of the mother. One need only briefly cite a few instances of *Twin Peaks: The Return*'s (2017) (hereafter *The Return*) obsession with motherhood to see the force of such a reading: the overshadowing of BOB (Frank Silva) with 'Jowday' as the supernatural source of evil, the possession of Sarah Palmer (Grace Zabriskie) that seems to be result of her swallowing an evil insect—in Kleinian terms, the 'bad object' put into the mother in phantasy that results in her "splitting" into two figures: the 'good,' loving mother, and the 'bad,' persecuting mother (Segal 1974; Klein 1959)—the central role of Janey-E (Naomi Watts); the relationship between Shelly Briggs (Mädchen Amick) and

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her daughter Becky (Amanda Seyfried); Sheriff Frank Truman's (Robert Foster) wife Doris's (Candy Clark) brief narrative arc concerning the death of their son; and so on. If Oedipal relations between children and fathers are invoked—as in the case with Agent Cooper's doppelgänger Mr. C (both played by Kyle MacLachlan) and Richard Horne (Eamon Farren)—they tend to be relegated to the margins of the overall narrative or generally treated as narrative dead ends. This reading of the new series in terms of a move from the Oedipal to the pre-Oedipal has the advantage of partially explaining its peculiar narrative logic. No longer concerned with the law of the father and its relation to an obscene, forbidden enjoyment, *The Return* presents a 'paranoid-schizoid' world of phantasmatic relations between 'good' and 'bad' objects (Klein 1986, pp. 295–296). Accordingly, the narrative is not centered on solving a crime and assigning guilt, but on unambiguously separating good and bad so that the source of persecution can be identified and isolated, if never successfully defeated—something attested to by the frequent representation of eating and vomiting throughout the new series. Cause and effect relationships—even of the non-linear variety—become less important, and characters become much more two-dimensional.

One could no doubt offer other such readings—say, from a Lacanian perspective in which the categories of the Real, object *a*, and *jouissance* are brought in to nuance the theorization of the pre-Oedipal. The problem with all readings of this type, of course, is that, regardless of their theoretical sophistication, they turn psychoanalysis into an interpretive meta-vocabulary arbitrarily imposed on the text. At worst, they speak only to those already initiated, and function by subjecting textual elements to a small set of a priori categories whose validity nearly always remains undemonstrated. But if psychoanalysis is to be of any help in making sense of *The Return*, it lies not in re-encoding the text in its own conceptual framework, but in its potential to illuminate some of its formal narrative features. For what the reading roughly sketched above suggests is a certain way of understanding how the new series might be said to narrate its relationship to the original by constantly calling into question the spectator's grasp of past narrative events. In much the same way that *Fire Walk with Me* (David Lynch, 1992) 'returns' to the scene of Laura Palmer's (Sheryl Lee) murder to problematize spectators understanding of the original event, *The Return* presents a story haunted not by the memory of 'the little girl who lived down the lane,' but by the ungraspable past where she still resides.

Psychoanalytic explanation is often likened to detective fiction, in which the analyst's job is that of reconstructing the scene of a crime (this has been particularly true of those working in the Lacanian tradition; see Žižek 1991, pp. 48–66; Copjec 1994, pp. 163–200; Lacan 2006, pp. 6–50). But as the philosopher Sebastian Gardner has noted in reference to the case history of the Wolfman, what one often finds is that, by the end of analysis, one's grip on the determinate features of the crime itself has started to slip away. The analysis comes to be directed not to finding the perpetrator, but to determining just what the crime was in the first place (Gardiner 2016). Invoking the pre-Oedipal is one way of recognizing this tendency toward a certain incoherence in psychoanalytic explanation by pointing to those aspects of a case history that inherently resist narrativization. It signals a certain tendency of the new series not to *extend* the original narrative, but to show that, in some sense, we as spectators have failed to understand just how enigmatic it always was. The new series does not ask us to reassess who killed Laura Palmer, but rather asks what kind of crime and trauma this event whose effects continue to reverberate really was. The reference to the pre-Oedipal also suggests that implicit in this relation between the two series is a certain conception of history and its narrativization, one that moves forward only to problematize conclusions drawn about its own enigmatic beginnings.

The announcement that *Twin Peaks* would be returning for a third season took the internet by storm, coming as it did on the heels of a series of organized Twitter posts by the series' creators, David Lynch and Mark Frost, and its lead actor Kyle MacLachlan. As Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock notes, Lynch and Frost's identical tweets were posted on the 'very same time of the morning that FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper first enter(ed) the town of Twin Peaks in the program's pilot episode,' 11:30 a.m., 3 October (2016, p. 1). Shortly afterwards, MacLachlan suggested he had some idea of what was afoot with a tweet reading 'Better fire up that percolator and find my black suit:-) #Twinpeaks,' (MacLachlan 2014) leaving little left to the imagination of fans who had been relegated to blogs, fanzines, and Twin Peaks' infamous Usenet bulletin board (Weinstock 2016, p. 2). The irony was lost on few: shortly it was announced the show's 2016 third season premiere would air *precisely* at the extra-diegetic moment coinciding with Laura Palmer's cryptic message from the 1991 Season Two finale ('I'll see you again in 25 years'). Of course, whether this 'return' was or was *not* planned by Lynch and Frost seems not simply

a banality, but rather utterly beside the point. Fans expecting to uncover the mysteries behind Agent Cooper's exile in the Black Lodge in the years since the second season left the air, and by extension the fate of his doppelgänger inhabited by the spirit of BOB left to roam the 'real world' in the interim years, might have taken a note from the episodes following the reveal of Laura's killer in Episode 14 ('Lonely Souls'): that is, the manner in which *Peaks* always pointed toward a certain narrative incommensurability, seeking not simply to obfuscate any sort of spectatorial comprehension, but rather to call attention to the constitutive contradictions of the plot.

To begin to make this logic explicit, it is worth looking at the mode of narration in *The Return* to better understand how it constructs relationships between past and present, cause and effect. The ambiguity of narration in Lynch's films is well-documented. The consensus among scholars of contemporary film narration is neatly stated by David Bordwell when he notes that '[c]ompletely indeterminate movies are rare in American cinema …, and perhaps only David Lynch currently makes them' (Bordwell 2006, p. 82). Warren Buckland has unpacked his own version of this claim in a detailed analysis of Lynch's *Lost Highway* (1997) in which he pinpoints the specific ambiguities and indeterminacies of the film on both a 'horizontal' axis of relations between cause and effect, and a 'vertical' axis of focalization and point of view within a particular narrative unit (Buckland 2009, p. 58). On the horizontal axis, Buckland notes that the film's narration functions through a kind of double movement in which the narration initially '*appears* to be communicative. But a close analysis of later scenes in the film makes the film analyst realize that the narration … is in fact being very uncommunicative but that its uncommunicative status is disguised' (2009, pp. 46–47). In other words, the film gives the appearance of proceeding in a conventional fashion with clear, linear relations between cause and effect and appropriate narrative gaps to be filled in as the narration moves along, but goes on to provide either new information that casts doubt on the narration's reliability (e.g., that the protagonist of *Lost Highway* is mentally unstable and that the film has likely conflated his dreams with actual events in the story), or answers to certain narrative enigmas that are so unexpected and improbable that they force spectators to reevaluate the intelligibility of earlier events (*Lost Highway* begins with the protagonist receiving an enigmatic message through his front door intercom; at the end of the film it is revealed the message was delivered by the protagonist himself

in an apparent temporal warp that allows him to appear at both the beginning and end of the film, talking to himself). Buckland concludes that the distinctive mode of narration in Lynch's film works by inviting spectators to engage with the film using traditional narrative 'schemata,' only to frustrate these expectations by asking them to 'become aware of the schemata's conventions, and work hard to apply them in new and unforeseen ways (spectators unwilling to do this stop watching the film)' (2009, p. 57).

This general narrational structure of apparent conventionality and precisely placed ambiguity and indeterminacy is not unique to *Lost Highway* and can be found in varying degrees throughout Lynch's *oeuvre*. *Twin Peaks* is no exception, but it provides an interesting spin on the Lynchian formula, not least because of its existence as a television program. In a sense, *The Return* continuously offers both answers to the unfulfilled narratives of the first two seasons—will Ed Hurley (Everett McGill) finally get together with Norma (Peggy Lipton)?—while simultaneously suggesting they were never the right questions to be asking in the first place. In an influential essay written long before the announcement of the show's third season, Marc Dolan notes the way *Twin Peaks*' first two seasons already complicate televisual narrative forms of the episodic serial 'layered on top of' the continuous serial, arguing that the show's 'serial narrative pointed, as always, straightforward,' while 'pointing backward, too' (Dolan 1995, pp. 35–43). To Dolan, Season Two effectively filled in certain narrative enigmas previously established by then-seemingly minor plot points from the show's first season, always already suggesting each narrative event to be incommensurable with a given spectator's knowledge at any given moment. For instance, where Agent Cooper first seemed 'standoffish' toward the residents of Twin Peaks in the show's first season, effectively standing in as a simulacra of 1950s Americana-meets-sexless-film-noir-detective, we later discover an earlier relationship with Windom Earle's (Kenneth Welsh) wife Caroline (Brenda E. Mathers) has seemingly chilled Cooper's ability to fully engage with others, a revelation which then further complicates narrative developments through the re-emergence of Windom in the second season. Forwards, backwards, forwards again; an illustration of the impossibility of gaining any one, true epistemological grounding telling us *what is really happening*.

The Return uses a similar narrative strategy, but pushes it to an extreme not only through the constant generation of new enigmas,

but also by undermining our grasp of old ones. What is unique about *The Return*, then, is the way in which it integrates the Lynchian mode of filmic narration within the structure of a miniseries. Consider a key sequence involving one of the 'continuous serial' plotlines, in which Bobby Briggs (Dana Ashbrook), Shelly Johnson/Briggs, and their daughter Becky discuss her troubled relationship with her husband Steven (Caleb Landry Jones) at the Double R Diner in Part 11 ('There's Fire Where You Are Going'). In Part 5 ('Case Files') we learn that Steven is an unemployed drug addict, and that the couple relies on handouts from Shelly. In Part 6 ('Don't Die') a scene in which Richard Horne (Eamon Farren) attempts to buy a drug called 'sparkle' from a dealer known only as 'Red' (Balthazar Getty) suggests that the drug that Steven and Becky use has some connection with the supernatural elements of the series (although this remains uncertain). Five episodes later, Becky learns that Steven is having an affair. Stealing her mother's car and armed with a pistol, Becky drives off to confront Steven at an apartment complex. After firing several rounds into an apartment door where she believes him to be, we see Steven and a girl—who, in the end credits is revealed to be Gersten Hayward (Alicia Witt), sister of Donna Hayward (Lara Flynn Boyle) from the original series—hiding in a stairwell. At the Double R Diner, Bobby and Shelly confront Becky and encourage her to leave Steven when, suddenly, Shelly sees the drug dealer Red through a window and leaves to meet him. We see them embrace, implying that they are having an affair. A gunshot rings out, and Bobby, now working as a police officer, goes to investigate. It is revealed that a small boy in the back seat of a minivan fired one his father's guns. Both the boy and the father appear menacingly stoic as the mother answers questions from the police. Meanwhile, a woman in a car behind the van continuously honks, yelling that she is late for dinner with 'her uncle' (whose uncle this is remains unclear). As Bobby attempts to calm her, he finds a sick girl vomiting in the passenger's seat. The series then cuts away, and no more information is provided about the mysterious woman and the vomiting girl.

What is most striking about this scene is the way in which it continues certain plotlines by introducing a host of ambiguities and enigmas that the series leaves largely unresolved. The diner scene sets up a number of standard narrative enigmas—will Becky leave Steven? What is the nature of his affair with Gersten? What is the nature of the relationship between Shelly and Bobby? How is the drug 'sparkle' implicated in all

of this?—and then subverts them with a series of bizarre events that the series as a whole fails or refuses to resolve. First, seeing Shelly with Red raises a whole host of new questions that call into question our understanding of the unfolding plotline, not least by calling our attention to the role of the mysterious drug in the strange events unfolding in the town (what explains her abrupt change of affect when she leaves the table with Becky to embrace Red?). Further, it appears that Shelly is implicated in the relationship between Becky and Steven in an unexpected way by involving herself in the drug plotline. None of this, however, prepares us for the strange scene outside the diner, which undercuts our grasp of the overall narrative significance of what has come before by casting it in light of the mysterious series of events that have begun to unfold around the Double R—one is reminded, for example, of the unidentified man looking in the diner for 'Billy' in Episode 7 ('There's a Body All Right'). Not only are the initial enigmas not resolved, but the series moves forward by connecting them with further, perpetually unresolved mysteries. As with the narration in *Lost Highway*, the overall narrative intelligibility of this initially conventional plotline is continually undermined. In *The Return*, old enigmas are not simply the source of new narrative material; they are themselves retroactively re-contextualized and revealed as overdetermined. In this way, the narrative as a whole emphasizes the radically unresolved, open nature of the past as it opens up future developments.

Within the space of 25 years both diegetically *and* through the real-lived time between the show's second and third seasons, an even more complex relationship to time begins to emerge. The libidinal economy embedded in the expectation of *returning* to the town of Twin Peaks, Washington—with its 'damn fine' coffee and red cherry pies—was not only a useful tool in utilizing Showtime's monthly subscription model rather than the advertisement-driven network television model dominant in the era of network television. It effectively helped bridge the gap between the lived, extra-diegetic time of Seasons One and Two's 1990s with Season Three's 2017 broadcast, collapsing the distinction between the diegetic time passing in that rural Washington State town with the spectator's *own*. That these are the dates in question is not merely a happy accident of production history. As Linnie Blake notes in the recent collection on *Twin Peaks* published shortly prior to the airing of the third season, *Twin Peaks*' first two seasons aired at precisely the same moment as the rise of neoliberal economic regimes in the West, helping to usher

in a certain kind of interstitial postmodern world with its requisite hyperactive focus on the autonomy of the individual, privileging of 'low' texts such as television and pop images, and skepticism of grand narratives. '*Twin Peaks*,' she notes, 'proffers us a superb exemplification of the relation between postmodern representational practice and the coming into being of our own horrific world … broadcast, then, in a world in which the certainties of state and nation, society and self, were being changed utterly by the radical energies of neoliberalism' (Blake 2016, pp. 230–231). To Blake, revisiting the series she remembered so fondly from her youth seems troubling with the added distance of history, suggesting the show's critique of epistemological grounding and traditional representational practices can be seen as effectively inculcating viewers to the new world being carved out by neoliberal capitalism.

In one sense, this reading fits in nicely with similar critiques of the emergence of what could be described as postmodern aesthetics by theorists such as Jean-François Lyotard, Fredric Jameson, and Jean Baudrillard. That the show so playfully merged genres (the daytime soap opera with the detective serial) as well as high/low cultural signifiers (an 'auteurist' filmmaker working through network television) certainly feeds into this idea, to say nothing of the show's decentered characters and perceived 'depthlessness' (Reeves et al. 1993, p. 187). But underneath *Twin Peaks*' quirky humor and genre mixture lies a depiction of a place deeply embedded within late twentieth-century America and the forces of capital emerging in the remaking of the state by neoliberalism. One need look no further than Great Northern Hotel owner Benjamin Horne's (Richard Beymer) plan to secretly destroy the town's hub of manufacturing, the lumber mill, in order to replace it with mass real estate development, airing precisely as the United States was in the process of deregulating vast swaths of the public economy. Rather than celebrating a seemingly 'postmodern' notion of epistemological uncertainty, or merely producing disorientation as an affect, it could be argued that *Twin Peaks* instead offers up uncertainty as the central *problem* of the entire series.

If *Twin Peaks*' first two seasons emerge alongside the rise of neoliberal capitalism, *The Return* airs in a landscape utterly refashioned by it. Part 1 ('My Log Has a Message for You') opens by returning to one of the final scenes from the Season Two finale, depicting Laura and Cooper in the waiting room of the Black Lodge where she utters her now even more compelling line: 'I'll see you again in twenty-five years. Meanwhile …'

While the audience is treated to a few brief '*Where Are They Now*?' scenes featuring some of the original series' cast, we then quickly spend time with a mysterious box in a New York City high-rise building and a scene of a murder inside a Buckhorn, South Dakota apartment complex. But rather than merely teasing out fans' libidinal investment in the faces and places of Seasons One and Two as a bait-and-switch, *The Return* here suggests the questions fans had been asking for 25 years had 'answers' which were not even thinkable in 1992—not simply because they had yet to be written, but rather because 'returning' to the site of these earlier narrative enigmas only produces further questions. Consider the conclusion to Agent Cooper's imprisonment in the Black Lodge. Rather than emerging back into the 'real world,' Cooper's exit is suggestively thwarted by Mr. C in Part 3 ('Call for Help') as he is effectively switched into the place of a Las Vegas-based insurance agent named Douglas 'Dougie' Jones, missing his memory and reduced to a near catatonic state. While Cooper's antics as 'Dougie' continue over the ensuing episodes, he provides the narrative with an opportunity to move between the casino capitalism of downtown Las Vegas and an adjacent near-empty suburban residential development, fallen into disrepair. The dichotomy between these two settings is stark—just as the original series' setting of the town of Twin Peaks contrasts a seemingly idyllic small American town with the reality of sexual violence lurking within, *The Return* grounds the economic violence from the fallout of the 2008 housing crisis directly within its own diegesis. In this way, Cooper's amnesiac wanderings amidst boarded up, foreclosed homes mirrors that of a subject plucked from time and left to survey the damage wrought by the emergence of neoliberal capitalism in the twenty-first century, one envisaged by Fredric Jameson long before the airing of the first series (Jameson 1991, pp. 26–29, 38–45). Rather than a *celebration* of the postmodern, decentered subject, Cooper's wanderings come to stand in for the difficulty of grounding oneself within the flows of global neoliberal capitalism, his repeated linguistic phrases suggesting the breakdown of the signifying chain, his pleasure in the few things he seems to instinctually remember—coffee and cherry pie—a symptom of a larger inability to position oneself within one's own history.

Although *Twin Peaks* has long been thought of as a postmodern text *par excellence*, we do not wish to argue *The Return* merely adopts these same representational practices 25 years after it first aired on network television. Indeed, for while Cooper as Dougie looks much like the

Jamesonian postmodern subject, *The Return* has a distinctly different relationship to history than the one imagined by theorists as simulacra, filled with pop images and empty signifiers. Through nearly sixteen full episodes, the Agent Cooper of the show's first two seasons is missing, his absence filled either by new characters or familiar faces trying to stop the carnage brought on by Mr. C in his cryptic mission. If the question asked at the end of *Twin Peaks*' second season was 'will Agent Cooper escape the Black Lodge and stop BOB from inflicting more evil upon the world?,' then its seemingly bizarre answer in Part 17 ('The Past Dictates the Future') might seem altogether unfulfilling for a spectator searching for any kind of deeper narrative coherence. Toward the beginning of the episode, Agent Cooper returns to Twin Peaks just in time to find the body of Mr. C on the floor of the Twin Peaks' Sheriff's Department, having just been shot by Lucy Brennan (Kimmy Robertson). But soon, Mr. C's stomach opens (seemingly through the interference of mysterious beings from the Black Lodge) to give way to a glowing orb, emblazoned with the face of BOB. Luckily for our heroes, however, a young security guard from The Great Northern Hotel (who had earlier disclosed his belief that his destiny was to travel to the town of Twin Peaks from his native England wearing a strange green glove that seemed to give him superpowers) arrives on the scene to punch the orb containing BOB, which eventually shatters into countless pieces before floating up into the ceiling, disappearing forever. BOB, it seems, has finally been vanquished from the world.

But just as *Fire Walk with Me* recontextualizes Laura's abuse and murder away from the work of a mysterious malevolent force and toward the horror that a father could ever do such a thing to his daughter, BOB's quick 'death' in *The Return* seems to suggest that our focus on him had been misplaced all along. Indeed, the possibility that an even more terrifying entity known as 'Jowday' is at loose in the world proffers a number of compelling interpretive possibilities. Perhaps a more complicated mythology of the *Twin Peaks* universe is being unraveled (as suggested by Mark Frost's expanded universe books published before and after *The Return*'s original run). As we suggested above, the gendering of each series' demonic entities could indicate a symbolic shift from the Freudian Oedipal grid of BOB to the pre-Oedipal 'mother' of 'Jowday.' As we argued, however, such a reading is only useful insofar as it helps draw attention to the way in which 'Jowday's' distinctive kind of unrepresentability—from 'her' first mention by

Phillip Jeffries (David Bowie) in *Fire Walk with Me* to her implied possession of Sarah Palmer—stands for the impasse of time itself, retroactively haunting each season's obsession with temporality, history, and the 'return' of the past. It is this final reading which seems most salient to *The Return*'s enigmatic finale. After the defeat of BOB, Agent Cooper returns to the basement of The Great Northern Hotel with his lover Diane (Laura Dern), passing through a mysterious door and eventually emerging on the other side back at the fateful night of Laura Palmer's murder, as she argues on the side of the road with James. What had been a strange scream in *Fire Walk with Me* is now 'revealed' to be the moment Laura sees Agent Cooper standing in the shadows. Cooper then guides Laura's hand away from the fateful cabin, seemingly to her salvation before she is suddenly whisked away into the sky as her scream fills the air.

What follows next in the Part 18 finale ('What Is Your Name?') has led to much debate within the *Twin Peaks* fan community, but a rough version seems to look something like this: Cooper is eventually whisked into something like an alternate timeline, one in which it appears to him that Laura Palmer was never murdered but is instead alive and in her early forties, now a waitress in Odessa, Texas, named 'Carrie Page.' Cooper tracks Carrie down and is surprised to find her initially unresponsive to his theory, but she eventually agrees to travel back to Twin Peaks to confront 'her mother' when it is revealed she has a decomposing body in her apartment (she realizes she needs to 'get out of dodge'). Upon arrival, Carrie admits she is utterly unfamiliar with many of the iconic locations depicted in the first two seasons such the Double R Diner, and even Laura's home. Nevertheless, Cooper takes her to the front door of the Palmer house only to find a woman by the name of Alice Tremond (Mary Reber) living there. Cooper seems perplexed: Mrs. Tremond not only does not recognize the name 'Sarah Palmer,' she admits she bought the house from a woman named Mrs. Chalfont. Resigning themselves to the situation, Cooper and Carrie walk back down the stairs to the car, only for Cooper to perk up and ask Carrie, 'what year is this?' Carrie's face starts to tremble, and a barely audible 'Laura' is heard (voiced by Grace Zabriskie), causing Carrie to scream before the sound of an electrical surge. All the lights go out.

This sequence contains a number of diegetic clues as to possible interpretations—from the running theme of 'electricity' tied to the Black Lodge throughout the entire series, the sound of Sarah Palmer's

voice trying to wake up Laura the morning after her death, and even the names of the homeowners mirroring those of characters in the earlier series and film. But regardless of whether or not 'Jowday' somehow whisked Agent Cooper into an alternate dimension, or if the whole thing was a kind of dream by a strange man named Richard, the shock of the finale is the collapse of a meaningful world that Cooper had constructed for himself, filled with narrative continuities and an assumed epistemological grounding upon which it was built. That this world seemingly *literally* collapses with the shuttering of the lights challenges not only Cooper's insistence that he could 'return' to the home of Laura Palmer to undo the past, it suggests instead that *any* epistemological grounding based in some index of the past is mere construction. In this way, *The Return* effectively narrates its own relationship to the earlier series as one in which *any* form of comprehension is called into question, the untenable link between past and present a mere construction like Benjamin's angel whisked backwards into the future.

Finally, over the credits we return again to the image of Laura whispering into Cooper's ear in the waiting room of the Black Lodge mirroring that from the first season. What was at first a mystery, 'answered' by the reveal that she whispered 'my father killed me,' is called into question yet again. Significantly, another ambiguity lies in the fact the scene has been reshot with the older actors. In the original sequence, Kyle MacLachlan appears in heavy makeup to make him appear 25 years older while Laura appears to remain as young as she was at the time of her death. At the end of the *Return*, both Laura and Cooper appear to have aged, with no attempts to hide the age of the respective actors. Are we to read this as the same moment depicted in the original series? Or have Cooper and Laura been returned to the Black Lodge after the disintegration of the world with Carrie Page and Richard? If so, what does this tell us about the original image, and the non-diegetic, lived time between the two scenes? We are told repeatedly throughout the entirety of *Twin Peaks* that 'it' is 'happening again.' But is it really happening, *again?* And beyond the diegetic question about what "it" is, what is the meaning of repetition in this context? *The Return* asks us to repeat the past with a difference. Whereas the postmodernism emerging in the latter half of the twentieth-century treats the past as a collection of so many reified tropes able to be mined for empty aesthetic purposes, *The Return* treats its original historical moment as something the meaning of which has to be continuously worked through in the present. If 'the past determines

the future,' as the title of the first episode of the two-part finale suggests, it is not in a linear causal way. Rather, it is the past's own indeterminateness that determines the future.

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CHAPTER 3

Extraterrestrial Intelligences in the Atomic Age: Exploring the Rhetorical Function of Aliens and the 'Alien' in the *Twin Peaks* Universe

Elizabeth Lowry

The town of Twin Peaks is an ideal site for alien abductions: its forests provide seclusion and shadow. A thick veil of mist hangs over the undergrowth in the morning, and at night, the darkness is complete, broken only by patches of moonlight slipping between the branches of trees. Alien abduction narratives frequently reference environments such as these—remote and heavily forested. In such narratives, alien beings are often compared to woodland animals with dark inky eyes like those of a raccoon, or pale luminous eyes like those of an owl (Frost 2016, p. 682). Indeed, in *Twin Peaks* where 'the owls are not what they seem,' it is unclear what is of this world and what is not. Twin Peaks resident Doug Milford reports having seen an owl as big as a man near Glastonbury Grove—and others mention having seen similarly odd things. The archetypal forest and the mysterious owls link discourses of ancient terrestrial

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lore with the paranoid, yet spiritualized, discourses of extraterrestrial visitation.

In *Twin Peaks*, it is unclear as to whom or what the 'extraterrestrials' or alien 'others' are—but they seem to be connected to electricity. Allusions to white light, fire, and electricity—especially in conjunction with otherworldly beings—suggest unseen sources of energy. Blinding flashes of light provide a strong visual cue linking spirituality, alien 'others,' and atomic power. But fire and light carry multiple associations, indicating a complex web of benevolent and malevolent forces struggling for primacy. For instance, ominous shots of whirling ceiling fans foreshadow the appearance of BOB; lights flicker around Laura Palmer's corpse in the morgue; and a blinding white light accompanies the detonation of a nuclear bomb.

In this exploration of the intersection between nuclear power, atomic weapons, aliens, and spirituality, this chapter argues that the concept of the extraterrestrial or alien 'other' fulfills a significant rhetorical function in the *Twin Peaks* universe. References to alien life-forms reflect the ethos of both the Black and White Lodges in that extraterrestrials are cast as malevolent entities associated with war and destruction, but also as benevolent entities associated with spirituality, love, and healing. However, these two discourses are not readily separable, and allusions to the alien or extraterrestrial demonstrate how Lynch and Frost move beyond reifying a good/evil narrative binary in order to explore complications inherent to a dualistic worldview.

In UFO lore (and to some extent within the ufology community), there is a prevailing belief that extraterrestrial visitors are especially interested in visiting nuclear-related sites because they hope to use our own nuclear power to destroy us (Fox News 2010). However, a reassuring counter to this view is that extraterrestrial visitors are attracted to nuclear sites only because they are concerned with our wellbeing and hope to keep up from harming ourselves (Ackerman 2010). That is, extraterrestrials are typically cast as being either pure evil or entirely benevolent. Mark Frost considers these themes in *The Secret History* novel, where the rumored alien life-forms discovered at Roswell turn out to be genuine, and Twin Peaks denizen Lt. Colonel Doug Milford contributes to the cultivation of a longstanding 'alien cover-up' conspiracy theory. In *The Secret History*, Milford recounts a tale of having been invited by President Nixon to Florida's Homestead Air Force Base, where he is treated to a private viewing of what appears to be an extraterrestrial prisoner:

> We were looking into a very dimly lit room that appeared to be empty. Then, in roughly the center of the room, I realized a shape, small and pale, appeared to be sitting or squatting, turned away from us, showing only a grayish-greenish-white spiny back. Then it disappeared entirely. Moments later it reappeared, as if a concealing shadow—or a magician's cape—had simply passed over it. But it hadn't moved and I still couldn't tell if it was inert or animated. Whatever it was then phased in and out of my view a second time. The General flipped a switch on the console and tapped twice on a microphone … I saw the shape react, stiffen. Then it turned to look our way through the window—it seemed to me likely that it was one-way glass, mirrored on the interior side—and for a brief moment the shape of the face was visible. The glimpse we got was extremely brief before it vanished again, and I wasn't entirely sure of what I saw beyond a vivid impression of large oval black eyes, pinched to the point of nonexistent mouth and nose, and a smooth bulbous head. Then it was gone. (Frost 2016, p. 293)

This description of the 'alien' is familiar to the twenty-first-century reader. The alien's 'grayish-greenish-white' color evokes abductee reports of small humanoid creatures, either gray or green in color. The creatures are rarely clothed—but have smooth almost reptilian skin, and no visible genitalia. The eyes are large and opaque, reflecting no emotion. The mouth and nose, markers of individuality and heredity, are almost absent. Indeed, the cool appraising gaze of the alien is one of its most unsettling characteristics. The figures that Milford describes are those that readers would recognize from the paperback covers of classic abduction narratives such as Whitley Strieber's *Communion* (1988) and Bud Hopkins' *Intruders: The Incredible Visitations at Copley Woods* (1987). In these books, as well as in Milford's account, the physical characteristics of the alien match those described by Harvard psychologist John Mack in his numerous interviews with alleged abductees. Referencing Mack's work, Bridget Brown refers to these aliens as being 'fully fetal-looking, with large heads, large black eyes, necrotic skin, smooth, sexless, and hairless bodies' (Brown 2002, p. 121). Yet, in *The Secret History*, Milford is concerned less with marveling over the creature's appearance than he is with describing his reaction to it:

> But what lingered longer than the persistence of the image was the visceral feeling that seemed to emanate from the figure; what clawed at my gut and the base of my skull was a sickly sour wave of such pure and uncanny malevolence that for a moment I thought I might lose consciousness. (Frost 2016, p. 294)

What is unclear to the reader, and perhaps to Milford himself, is whether his 'paralyzing fear' has caused him to project malevolence onto the figure of the alien, or whether the alien is inherently malevolent. For the twenty-first century reader, the scene is evocative of the *X-Files* (1993–), a television show in which alien forms—always mysterious and disturbing—are seen alternately as captors and captives in operating theaters, morgues, or glass tanks. These images of the alien inevitably signal panic—a sense of human vulnerability—the notion of being at the mercy of beings (and indeed forces) of extraordinary power. These alien forms are also a hallmark of nineties-era pop culture.

In their work on representations of extraterrestrials and the alien in late twentieth century television and film, Corliss and Harbison discuss ways in which an atmosphere of paranoia suffuses much of that era's popular entertainment, arguing that once the Cold War was over, Americans had lost their sense of a tangible 'enemy'—in which case, the enemy became the specter of the extraterrestrial. The technologically advanced alien reflects our fear of scientific developments moving too quickly for us to keep up, and our fear of being 'taken over' by 'science' itself—by hyperrational and unfeeling entities against which we are defenseless. Referencing J. G. Ballard and other science fiction authors, Corliss and Harbison suggest that much nineties television is preoccupied with exploring the notion that ultimately the alien is 'us.' 'We' are the alien, 'we' are unknown to ourselves—and we externalize the impossibility of knowing ourselves in the figure of the alien—or, the case of *Twin Peaks*, the alien 'other', BOB (Corliss and Harbison 1996).

In the *Twin Peaks* universe, a discursive triangulation between extraterrestrials, nuclear power, and 'evil' manifests in the figure of BOB (Frank Silva). Written in capital letters in the Twin Peaks scripts 'BOB' recalls a Cold War era acronym for 'Bolt out of the Blue', meaning a surprise nuclear attack (Lipton 2017; Hafemeister and Levi 1991, p. 97). But BOB is not explicitly connected to nuclear power until Season Three, and, as Thorne points out, BOB's awful power as a supernatural entity is not recognized until well into Season Two (Thorne 2016, p. 64). For instance, in 'Drive with a Dead Girl' Leland looks into the mirror by the door of his home and sees BOB's face grinning back at him—a demonic presence that is neither Leland, nor *not* Leland (Season 2, Ep. 8, 1991). BOB is visually linked to the owls which are 'not what they seem' suggesting that he is himself a nonhuman life-form—but of what ilk? In 'Gotta Light,' BOB's face appears in a mushroom cloud

depicted over the Trinity testing in New Mexico prior to the detonation of atomic bombs over Japan in 1945 (Season 3, Ep. 8). If the atomic bomb is the dramatization of the evil of modern war, BOB is a personification of the same. Or as Agent Albert Rosenfield (Miguel Ferrer) suggests, perhaps BOB is 'the evil that men do' (Thorne 2016, p. 244). More specifically, Walter Metz argues that 'Gotta Light' and its focus on the testing of the atomic bomb at the Trinity site in New Mexico 'reveals the hidden backstory of *Twin Peaks*: the murder of Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) has its roots in the creation of American evil, the development of atomic weapons. As *The Shining*'s hotel was built atop the grounds of Indian massacres, the plot of *Twin Peaks* emerges from a more recent sin of the United States government, the deployment of nuclear weapons.' In *The Secret History*, this idea is developed further, becoming a prominent part of the narrative history of Twin Peaks—a history in which this fictional town is associated with nuclear power because of its similarities to the real town of Hanford, Washington. In Hanford, uranium was mined to fuel Little Boy, the bomb that would eventually be dropped on Hiroshima—an irreversibly devastating event. Metz suggests that the burned out 'Woodsmen' are reminders of such irreversibility. Referring to these three filthy humanoid creatures who seem to have supernatural powers, Metz writes: 'One of the ghouls enters a radio station repeating the phrase "Gotta light," which seems not be asked as an interrogative, as if wanting to ignite a cigarette, but instead as a declarative threat. Once the atomic bomb has been released from the genie's bottle, we must burn.' Here, Metz implies that the presence of the 'ghouls' indicates that evil cannot be atoned for—that once the 'fire' starts, it can be—as the Log Lady (Catherine Coulson) warns in *Fire Walk with Me* (1992)—impossible to put out. But as horrifying as the Woodsmen are, and as demonic as they seem, Lynch suggests that there must be some celestial corollary—some angelic counter to these creatures from the underworld.

Indeed, numerous religious studies scholars have noted discursive parallels between ufology and alien 'experiencers' and theosophists, who believed that 'adepts' could channel otherworldly or extraterrestrial beings known as 'ascended masters.' These 'masters' were believed to be the spirits of long-deceased Eastern monks or 'teachers' who could communicate across time and space (Battaglia 2005, p. 78; Roth 2005, p. 910). In this vein, Metz argues: 'the Giant in *Twin Peaks: The Return* seems to be an alien whose job it is to intervene in Earthly

affairs once the atomic bomb liberates Killer BOB from the primordial ooze. The unexpected weapon he delivers is Laura Palmer, not a heroic figure by any means, but to us a symbol of an American tragedy' (Metz 2017). Hence, the Giant (Carel Struycken) plays the role of an extraterrestrial intelligence who acts as an advisor—or in theosophical discourse, an 'ascended master.' In Season Three, the Giant identifies himself to Deputy Andy Brennan (Harry Goaz) as 'the Fireman,' a title that suggests his function is to extinguish fires—perhaps those set by BOB. Significantly, the Fireman and Dido reside somewhere in the heavens, above Blue Pine mountain, and are able both to ascend (and pull other people up) to their domain, and to descend (and send others down) to earth. In a similar vein, religious studies scholar Christopher Partridge asserts that 'the modern sacralization of the extraterrestrial has been a central feature of UFO folklore' for time immemorial, with the Bible referencing people coming from the sky and lights descending from the heavens (Partridge 2003, p. 70). Hence, as Partridge asserts, the connection between extraterrestrials or 'space aliens' has been with us for centuries, although we did not recognize extraterrestrials as 'space aliens' until the atomic age—before extraterrestrials were recognized as such, they were believed to be 'gods' or 'spirits' (Partridge 2003, p. 70). Connections between *Twin Peaks* lore and the nineteenth-century New Religious Movement of theosophy are alluded to in comments made within the diegetic world of *Twin Peaks*, in particular when Cooper is connected to ancient Tibetan mystics (Thorne 2016, p. 155; Carroll 1993, p. 290). In Season One, Cooper discusses Tibet and how it appears in his dreams, while in Season Two Windom Earle references *dugpas*, or sorcerers associated with Tibetan mysticism (Blavatsky 1973, p. 105). In Season Three, frequent references are made to *tulpas*, or 'thought-forms' referenced in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. As such, Mat Cult argues that Mr. C matches a quintessentially theosophical description of a *tulpa* as being a kind of a mischievous puppet that has 'gone rogue and [is] working to its own devious ends, struggling to remain free from control' (Cult 2017). But while there are suggestions that Mr. C is a *tulpa*, it is also possible that Dougie-Cooper is a kind of enlightened being—one who is living entirely in the present, with no prejudices, beliefs, emotions or attachments (Bernardy 2017).

Dougie-Cooper is an unmistakably benevolent character—one who is not unlike various denizens of Twin Peaks whom viewers know will invariably do the right thing. For instance, the characters in Twin

Peaks who have (possibly) been abducted by 'aliens' all have something in common: a penchant for positive intervention and a desire to help others. This could be due to their otherworldly experiences—for instance, the psychologist John Mack asserts that most abductees claim that their experiences provide them with a sense of 'enhanced spirituality' (Partridge 2003, p. 28). Moreover, 'Abductees come to appreciate that the universe is filled with intelligences and is itself intelligent. They develop a sense of awe before a mysterious cosmos that becomes sacred and ensouled' (Partridge 2003, p. 32). In the *Twin Peaks* universe, the Log Lady's log 'speaks' and 'hears.' For instance, in the first episode of Season Three, 'My Log Has a Message for You,' the Log Lady reappears, older and evidently frail enough to rely on a nasal cannula, yet still holding her log and conveying its cryptic prophecies. On the telephone to Hawk (Michael Horse), she says 'Hawk, my log has a message for you. Something is missing and you have to find it' (Season 3, Ep. 1). The log is 'enspirited' perhaps with the soul of the Log Lady's dead husband. Further, the Log Lady's frequent references to light, fire, and smoke—especially the 'idea of fire as an autonomous entity—a force that one must struggle to control' demonstrate that she is keenly 'aware of forces beyond the natural' (Thorne 2016, p. 64). Forces that perhaps she came to understand following an unusual childhood experience.

The Secret History details a 1947 *Twin Peaks Gazette* account of the disappearance of three schoolchildren on a trip to the woods (Frost 2016, pp. 145–146). One of these children was the Log Lady and another was Carl Rodd (Harry Dean Stanton). Carl, owner of the Fat Trout Trailer Park, appears onscreen only in *Fire Walk with Me* and in *Twin Peaks: The Return*. He is an enigmatic character who, like the Log Lady, is given to making odd and seemingly decontextualized pronouncements. For example, in *Fire Walk with Me*, Carl meets with two FBI investigators and serves them coffee before saying tearfully: 'I've already gone places. I just want to stay where I am.' This line, like much else in the *Twin Peaks* universe, is open to multiple interpretations. Is Carl alluding to the abduction described in Frost's *Secret History*? Or is he referring to his peripatetic lifestyle, long-ago travels that took him to the Far East (including Tibet) in search of spiritual enlightenment? Or is this statement simply reflecting Carl's fear of being uprooted from a place that he loves, one in which he finally feels needed? Either way, Carl and the Log Lady are well-meaning eccentrics who have always been firm fixtures in Twin Peaks—and who apparently feel some measure of

responsibility to restore balance and peace to their troubled community. Carl's unusual benevolence manifests in his generosity to residents of his trailer park, is highlighted in 'Don't Die' when Richard Horne (Eamon Farren) kills a little boy in a hit and run accident (Season 3, Ep. 6). Carl is the only person on the scene who runs to the bereaved mother to offer emotional support. While beside the mother, Carl sees the child's spirit, a bright light, rise from the small broken body and float into the sky above the power lines. Carl's ability to empathize, to see the unseen, might perhaps be attributed to his prior abduction experience.

In addition to Carl and the Log Lady, Major Briggs (Don Davis) has had access to much-classified government data and perhaps has also had an abduction or 'contact' experience that has caused him to be unusually sensitive. Cooper describes Briggs as 'a man of clear eye and deep thought' who 'sees right through the illusory texture of this world, and frequently reads beneath it' (Thorne 2016, p. 155). As a member of the military, Briggs is to ensure that whatever is in the woods (or indeed in outer space) does not take Twin Peaks by surprise. However, from a broader perspective, Briggs is tasked with protecting his country from something unknown—a *something* from which protection is most likely impossible. Like the Log Lady and Carl, Briggs plays the role of mediator between terrestrial and extraterrestrial influences, or the mundane and the supernatural. All three characters—Briggs, Rodd, and the Log Lady—have three triangles branded onto their skin and, in *The Secret History*, we discover that Milford, who turns over to Major Briggs his top-secret military role as 'Watcher in the Woods,' also has the triangular marks on his forearm (Frost 2016, p. 355). The configuration of these three triangles appears similar to those signaling a fallout shelter or radioactive trefoil symbols. In this manner, the comforting notion of safety and shelter from disaster is melded with the disturbing idea of radiation sickness and contamination. Fear and salvation are indicated in the same way and they are expressed in the same terms, suggesting that such concepts are inextricably bound.

Moreover, in Season Two we learn that the three triangle symbol carries a significance beyond the small group of possible abductees. The three triangles are reminiscent of symbols found on the wall of the owl cave—the ostensible entrance to the Black Lodge. In *The Secret History*, FBI Agent Tammy Preston observes that the symbols in the 'Owl Cave' were pictographs drawn by Native Americans, and that the three triangles most likely symbolized owls. However, she also observes that owls

tend to be associated with masonic lore—in particular what is known as the 'nemesis lodge' or, in the world of Twin Peaks, the Black Lodge. Later, upon concluding her reading of the documents compiled in *The Secret History*, Tammy writes: 'The owls may indeed not be what they seem but still serve an imperative function: they remind us to look into darkness' (Frost 2016, p. 357). We must be reminded to look into darkness so as to be reminded of who we are—to hold our own dark impulses in check. Problematically, however, as Lynch repeatedly points out in *Twin Peaks*, the darkness and the light are so bound up in one another, that sometimes it is hard to tell them apart.

Ironically, in *Twin Peaks*, humanity's 'darkness' is often telegraphed by a display of light. For instance, Laura's murder is shown in *Fire Walk with Me* by means of a strobe light—one brilliant flash after another—a quick flicker of blinding white followed by darkness. The trope of the flashing light also appears in Harold's (Lenny Von Dohlen) apartment after his suicide: 'A photographer documents the scene and bright flashes punctuate the proceedings. The scene ends with Hawk, Truman, and Cooper gathered around Laura's "secret" diary—which they are now seeing for the first time—as a flash fades the screen to white' (Thorne 2016, p. 127). The revelations therein about the terrible abuse that Laura endured are akin to a bomb dropping—a stunning flash of light; a shocking illumination. But, Thorne also discusses how, in the diegetic world of *Twin Peaks*, the flash of light can indicate love—for example, in *Fire Walk with M*e (1992), after Laura has agreed to 'party' with two truckers for money: 'Laura sees an oblivious Donna who has become vulnerable to the predatory sexual advances of Tommy … and all Laura's instincts of goodness and friendship resurface. A bright white light shines down on her, signaling the resurgence of Laura's good side. Laura panics at the imminent threat to Donna and takes action to save her' (Thorne 2016, p. 282). The white light then suggests a flash of insight, an impulse toward salvation. This, Thorne argues, is indicative of an internal force within Laura—a conscious choice to acknowledge Donna. In contrast, Martha Nochimson argues that this white light suggests a benevolent external force that intervenes to prompt Laura to help Donna (Thorne 2016, p. 279). Either argument is plausible—but more importantly, the *Twin Peaks* mythos allows both possibilities to carry equal weight. Laura's white light is indicative both of an internal awareness and an external cue. In *Fire Walk with Me*, when BOB comes to kill Laura in the abandoned train car, a bright light 'brings a reminder

to Laura of BOB's inescapable power' (Thorne 2016, p. 288). This is a 'reminder' that comes both from Laura's lived 'internal' experience, and from the 'external' invasive power that BOB wields. However, for Ronette (Phoebe Augustine), the light means something different: when she prays for salvation at the site of Laura's murder 'An angel appears above Ronette, its presence made known by a bright white light and a sudden silence' (Thorne 2016, p. 289). Thorne argues that the angel can also be interpreted as Laura's salvation—although not from death—rather from self-loathing and self-blame, offering Laura the opportunity to die with a clear conscience.

But in *The Return*, light signaling love typically turns to gold, suggesting a movement from the bright white of relevalation and purification to an alchemical apotheosis. For instance, when Carl joins the grieving mother at the side of the road he watches her child's spirit, a yellow light, float into the air (Season 3, Ep. 6). The same golden orb is seen when Dido and the Fireman ostensibly send Laura down to earth—a golden orb of light. And finally, after Big Ed and Norma reunite and Norma accepts Ed's offer of marriage the camera travels from the diner to the mountain where 'We get to see the sun shine on the steep range and the blue heavens above—not a very common thing in Twin Peaks' (Fleischer 2018). In a place that is typically gray, overcast, and where much is hidden from view, Norma and Ed's love communicates a sense of joy and of purity that helps to temper some of *Twin Peaks*'s darker themes.

One such theme is the suggestion that, hidden from view, there are sinister interlopers—intruders that threaten the mundane normalcy of our lives. Secrets are kept. Lies are told. An atmosphere of mistrust grows ever more potent. For instance, not long after the crashes at Roswell 1947, rumors began to circulate about a top secret 'Blue Room' (also known as 'Hangar 18') allegedly housing alien remains at the Wright Paterson Airforce Base in Ohio. Similar rumors circulated about a 'Blue Room' at Area 51—a former Nevada nuclear testing site. Former employees of both facilities claimed to have seen autopsies or alien corpses inside 'cylindrical glass tanks containing gel-like preservatives' (Webster 2017). These hidden spaces within larger government structures were known as 'Blue Rooms' in reference to Project Blue Book—a highly classified military investigation into UFOs. In Lynch's world, Project Blue Book overlaps with his fictional 'Blue Rose' cases, that is, investigations that pertain to the paranormal. Blue is the color of inscrutability, of secrecy, of conspiracy,

and of the alien. Yet, although Lynch makes frequent references to the color blue in the *Twin Peaks* universe, he leaves the notion of a 'Blue Room' to the viewer's imagination—presenting instead a 'Red Room' and eventually a 'Purple Room.'

The Red Room is described by Robert Engels, a writer for *Twin Peaks*, as being a place of indeterminacy: 'Evil is there and good is there. If you could go into some metaphysical state that would explain reality, it would look like the Red Room … there would be this place with beautiful music and love, it seems like a dream, but there's some pretty fucked up stuff going on there! Which is kind of like life' (qtd. in Thorne 2016, p. 225). The Red Room, with its black and white floor, and its thick red curtains is steeped in ambiguity: 'According to David Lynch it's a place where "things get kind of slippery"… Time becomes nonlinear and unreliable, events appear disordered, misleading and incomplete' (Thorne 2016, p. 2). There are no clear rules for the mythic world of the Red Room, it simply provides reflections and representations of people in the *Twin Peaks* universe as seen (for the most part) from Cooper's point of view. Thorne characterizes the Red Room as 'a reflection of the subconscious' and 'a place of free association and infinite possibility' (Thorne 2016, p. 236). Hence, the 'meaning' of the Red Room is subjective, contingent, and inconsistent. The 'changes' within it 'result from the unique mind of each visitor as their fears, doubts, and beliefs find manifestation in distinct ways' (Thorne 2016, p. 239).

In Season Three, although the Red Room continues to play an integral role in the *Twin Peaks* universe, the Purple Room is introduced in the second episode. In the Purple Room, the light is shadowy and foreboding, and movement and speech are difficult—appearing to occur as if underwater or otherwise trapped in some viscous liquid. The Purple Room is further characterized by a disturbing clanging sound—an ominous noise suggesting that an angry *someone* is drawing ever closer, bringing danger with him. Significantly also, the Purple Room is where an entrapped Cooper encounters Naido (Nae Tazawa) for the first time. Naido is a Japanese woman who has only lumps of flesh where her eyes should be. Naido's deformity, as well as her inability to speak, evoke the effects of the atomic bombs dropped on Japan. While Naido could represent victims of these nuclear attacks, her presence also indicates a racialized nuclear age panic. Here, Battaglia discusses how World War II xenophobia was leveled against the Japanese—particularly in discourses relating to the retrieval of 'alien' corpses in New Mexico: 'almond-eyed

aliens remaindered from the "yellow peril" captured the postwar, specifically post Hiroshima, imagination … Loose in the desert near Roswell after 1947, these desubjectifed entities were this period's arch ethnics, articulating the ambivalence toward a non-victimized foreign presence' (Battaglia 2005, p. 393). The term 'arch ethnics' highlights the postwar conflation of the alien 'other' with the Japanese enemy, suggesting that Americans were able to expiate their guilt over having bombed Japan by marking the Japanese as an 'alien' menace rather than as human victims. Yet, Naido is clearly a human victim and her intense vulnerability provokes sympathy. However, while Naido is a victim of human violence, she is not a passive entity—she demonstrates agency in her efforts to help Cooper. Upon her eventual exit from the Purple Room, Naido's victimization is reversed with the obliteration of BOB (Season 3, Ep. 17). At this point, she becomes 'whole' again, able to speak and to see—suggesting a symbolic reversal of the harm inflicted by the detonation of the atomic bomb.

The presence of a Red Room and a Purple Room enlivens the viewer's imagination to the possibility of a 'Blue Room.' However, the implied metaphorical fusion of the 'Red Room' with the mythical 'Blue Room' evokes a sense of entrapment further compounded by its location within a narrative that evades resolution. If the Blue Room is a place of sublimated fear imbricated with dark national secrets, and the Red Room is a reflection of one's own psyche, the Purple Room is an insidious combination of both. The associative melding of the Red Room and Blue Room to spawn a Purple Room indicates a relationship between the individual psyche and the larger cultural whole: as we internalize the fear within our culture, that fear becomes a part of us, goading us into the production of further fear. Again, does the 'paralyzing fear' Milford experiences upon seeing the alien in a Florida 'Blue Room' suggest that the alien is actually malevolent, or that he cannot imagine the alien to be anything but?

The dual discourse surrounding the 'alien' is emblematic of how the duality explored in *Twin Peaks* is far from simplistic—rather than simply commenting on binaries—in particular that of good and evil—the show seeks to demonstrate how the two are intertwined and how they are constantly in tension within us as individuals and within us collectively, as a society. *Twin Peaks* attempts to make the complex and occasionally deceptive forces of good and evil visible, and to show how such forces act upon us and how we, in turn, harness them. When Sheriff

Harry Truman (Michael Ontkean) expresses disbelief that 'BOB' was some sort of demon that possessed Leland, Cooper asks 'Harry, is it easier to believe a man would rape and murder his own daughter?' (Season 2, Ep. 9). With this statement, Cooper implies that we have normalized the kind of evil that human beings inflict upon one another. Because we have accepted this kind of evil, we will continue to replicate it. Indeed, Cooper suggests that perhaps the problem is that we have become complacent about evil—that we do not question the horrors of the atomic bomb, rape, and murder in the same way that we might question whether or not trees have spirits or that demons (or indeed aliens), might take the form of men.

As individuals, we experience an internal struggle, but, as Laura's experience with BOB suggests, there is only so much we can do on our own. Sometimes we simply have to hope that we will somehow be saved from ourselves. In a conversation between Laura and Donna (Moira Kelly) in *Fire Walk with Me*, Donna asks Laura whether she believes a person falling through space would eventually slow down or speed up, to which Laura replies: 'Faster and faster. And for a long time, you wouldn't feel anything. Then you would burst into fire … forever. And the angels wouldn't help you because they've all gone away.' The image of falling through space evokes the human condition, a solitary foray into the unknown, an existential void in which even death may not bring salvation from one's personal demons. The sentiment Laura expresses here operates in poignant contrast to the scene from 'Gotta Light' in which the Fireman and Dido send Laura—as a gold orb, indicative of their hope for good—to earth (Season 3, Ep. 8). Thus, this scene from Season Three suggests that when Laura is speaking with Donna in *Fire Walk with Me*, she has already experienced this strange journey through space—initially sent by the 'angels,' who then seemed unable to save her. Similarly, at the beginning of Season Three, we see Cooper floating through space when he is catapulted from the Red Room (Season 3, Ep. 2). Cooper first finds himself in a glass tank—which we recognize as being part of the room in which a young man is hired to 'watch' for something. Next, Cooper appears to be in outer space, surrounded by black sky and stars. Below, there is what at first appears to be a purple sea, but could be ripples of sand and fog—or even smoke. A small lavender mushroom cloud appears, growing over the rippling purple backdrop, and then, eventually, Cooper seems to descend—as if he were an extraterrestrial falling to earth—only to find himself in the Purple Room

(Season 3, Ep. 2). This movement through space and time, the visual foreshadowing of the mushroom cloud over White Sands, and Cooper's apparent inability to control where he goes and why, are reminiscent of Laura and Donna's conversation about falling through space and our need for the guidance of some higher power—or at least some more enlightened part of ourselves. If we are lucky, there will be 'Ascended Masters' to help us. If not, then it is already too late.

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CHAPTER 4

Lucy Finally Understands How Cellphones Work: Ambiguous Digital Technologies in *Twin Peaks: The Return* and Its Fan Communities

Jeffrey Fallis and T. Kyle King

Approximately sixteen minutes into the sixteenth episode of *Twin Peaks: The Return* (2017), an odd sequence occurs. FBI Deputy Director Gordon Cole, played by David Lynch, the director, co-writer, and uber-auteur of all eighteen episodes of the new season of the program, stands silently in front of a vast assortment of electronic surveillance equipment in the suite of rooms in the Mayfair Hotel in Buckhorn, South Dakota, that he and the other members of the Blue Rose Task Force have been occupying indefinitely for days, perhaps weeks. (The gigantic collection of electronic equipment had appeared suddenly a few episodes earlier, absurd in scope and amplitude, with no immediate explanation offered for how it came to make its way to the Mayfair, or

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what exactly its purpose was.) Cole appears to be lost in thought or listening closely to sounds unknown. Considering Cole's visible hearing aid and famous difficulty hearing anything (except for the voice of Shelly Johnson [Mädchen Amick] in Season Two), it is hard to credit the fact that he might actually be listening to something, but nevertheless he seems to be doing so. The scene lasts for only about thirty seconds and cuts to a shot of the electronic life support system in the hospital room of Special Agent Dale Cooper/Dougie Jones (Kyle MacLachlan) in Las Vegas, Nevada, where Cooper/Jones was recuperating from a coma caused by sticking a fork into an electrical socket, as well as the general transdimensional amnesia caused by spending 25 years in the Black Lodge. Like much of the editing in Season Three, it is unclear whether the cut between the two scenes is meant to be associatively or narratively driven—is Lynch linking the two scenes because both feature sophisticated whirring and beeping electronic equipment? Or is he linking them because we are meant to understand that his character, Gordon Cole, has some sort of intuition that Cooper/Jones is about to shake off the cobwebs and awaken from his coma in a few minutes' time, transformed thrillingly again into 'original recipe' Dale Cooper after a twenty-five-year (and sixteen-episode) hiatus?

The episode moves on quickly from this tableau of Cole in front of his wall of imported surveillance devices, but it is emblematic of the way contemporary technology is depicted in *The Return*: ubiquitous, but ambiguous in purpose and utility. The first two seasons of the program (1990–1991) are decidedly analog in nature. Crimes are solved and detection is made using mostly nothing more high-tech than tape recordings, walkie-talkies, and video footage of picnics. Even the most forbidding and mysterious technology in the first two seasons, the deep-space monitoring system operated by Major Garland Briggs (Don Davis) at Listening Post Alpha, uses dot-matrix printer paper. Because of the original series' residual nostalgic analog aura, and perhaps because the show's creators, Mark Frost and Lynch, were aging into their sixties and seventies, some viewers might have expected the new season to be a throwback of sorts, free of tablets, laptops, and smartphones, with no obnoxious Millennials sending Snapchats and hashtagging themselves from the cozy wood grain of the Double R Diner.

It must have been a shock for such viewers to encounter the new episodes and see just how casually omnipresent contemporary technology is in the newly broadened landscape of *The Return*, much of which does not actually take place in Twin Peaks, Washington, at all. A glass box

in New York City is ceaselessly surveilled by a battery of digital video cameras. Duncan Todd (Patrick Fischler) sits forever in front of a small tablet computer on his desk in a well-appointed but anonymous office that resembles a hotel lobby in Las Vegas. Mr. C., Agent Cooper's evil doppelgänger, and Diane Evans (Laura Dern), Cooper's longtime secretary, are deeply involved with their smartphones and the codes and coordinates contained therein. Dougie Jones/Agent Cooper, also known as 'Mr. Jackpots,' wins multiple jackpots at multiple digital slot machines in a Vegas casino, with a little help from the Lodge spirits. A goofy gang of central-casting gangsters and criminals watches the arrival of Mr. C. at 'The Farm' in South Dakota on what appears to be the world's biggest-screen closed-circuit TV. The already-mentioned Blue Rose Task Force's hotel rooms are overstuffed and bursting at the seams with imposing arrays of electronics. Even two of the most 'old-school' of characters in *Twin Peaks*, Sheriff Frank Truman (Robert Forster) and Doctor Will Hayward (Warren Frost), communicate comfortably with each other via the newfangled technology of Skype. The world of *The Return* is recognizably our own, at least in terms of technological saturation.

And yet that technology is often unreliable or defective, even superfluous in solving the season's most profound and essential mysteries. A crucial part of the action in Part 16 revolves around text messages that are not received on time. The television in the haunted home of Sarah Palmer (Grace Zabriskie) plays the same black-and-white loop of an ancient boxing match again and again. The coordinates that Mr. C. electronically chases after, and much of the information he tracks down via cellphone and computer, ultimately trap him and lead him only to dead ends, figurative and literal. Transcripts of intercepted texts lead Albert Rosenfield (Miguel Ferrer) to suspect that Diane Evans might possibly be working as a double agent, but, other than that, the FBI's outsized electronic surveillance operation bears little useful fruit. More important to defeating the forces of darkness in the show are green gardening gloves, messages on paper hidden in living room armchairs for decades, and oneiric visions. Integrated circuits and superconductors are there, unavoidable and occasionally helpful—but when dealing with cross-dimensions of good and evil and multiple branching timelines, they are perhaps ultimately beside the point.

The Return ignored virtually all of the second half of Season Two prior to the Lynch-directed cliffhanger conclusion, notably omitting meaningful mentions of either Annie Blackburn (Heather Graham)

or Windom Earle (Kenneth Welsh); when Frost revisited those characters and story arcs in his novels *The Secret History of Twin Peaks* and *The Final Dossier*, he contradicted previously established facts and spoke through narrators who subjected the original series' most egregious missteps to derisive condemnation and condescending mockery. Finally, in yet another two-hour season (and, evidently, series) finale seemingly designed to sabotage the very expectations the preceding episodes had served to create, *The Return* sends Agent Cooper back to February 23, 1989, in Part 17 to ensure that the murder of Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) never occurred. This act of unraveling—which placed present-day Dale Cooper in familiar 25-year-old scenes with Laura Palmer and reused footage from the series pilot from which the plastic-sheathed corpse had been removed—epitomizes the way *The Return* both revives and undermines the original show's established patterns. Having managed to emancipate themselves from the structural restrictions of conventional series television through the unprecedented creative freedoms offered them via their deal with Showtime to produce the series, Lynch and Frost reimagined *Twin Peaks* for *The Return* using the transformative technology of the modern world to view the town's warm earth tones using a distinctly colder eye.

Where *Twin Peaks* had trafficked in red herrings that led down blind alleyways to dead ends, *The Return* flummoxes viewers by putting characters who would never be seen again in situations of no discernible relevance. While *Twin Peaks* often switched between genres when shifting between scenes, *The Return* eschews anything like a linear narrative with clear chronology. *Invitation to Love* conspicuously was the original series' show within a show, yet *The Return* rarely makes it plain when the timelines, tulpas, power poles, portals, doppelgängers, and doubles are living inside of dreams. Whereas *Twin Peaks* was steeped in nostalgia for wholesome fifties Americana, *The Return* allows viewers few detours down memory lane. (On the rare occasions that *The Return* meets fans' expectations with heartwarming callbacks to the original series—such as when Big Ed Hurley (Everett McGill) proposes to Norma Jennings (Peggy Lipton) and Agent Cooper undergoes an Angelo Badalamenti-scored reawakening in the hospital—the good vibes promptly are dashed by being followed almost immediately with sorrowful scenes of ostensible suicide and familial dissolution.) Lynch and Frost, it seems, were determined to have the audience respond to familiar hallmarks from the original series the way Deputy Bobby Briggs (Dana Ashbrook) reacts to

the sight of Laura Palmer's prom picture: first, by noting the memories the image brings back; then, by being overwhelmed by sadness.

In all these reinventing revisitations, Lynch and Frost offer a determinedly digital take on what was characterized above as the distinctly analog original. In 1990, the bucolic hamlet was a town out of time, in which a yellow light still meant slow down instead of speed up; in 2017, the burg was beset by an entirely modern malaise combining designer drugs, economic recession, and corporate irresponsibility, inducing communal despair too deep to dig out from without one of Dr. Amp's (Russ Tamblyn) solid gold shovels. The Great Northern Hotel, having long since converted to coded electronic entry cards, is home to an omnipresent yet untraceable hum—as well as a door to the netherworld that can only be unlocked using the old-fashioned anachronism of a key. Lucy Brennan (Kimmy Robertson) can use a computer, but it is only after the longtime receptionist for the Twin Peaks Sheriff's Department finally figures out how cellphones work that she acquires the ability to take the decisive action that brings down Mr. C. Evidently, even the Fireman (Carel Struycken) keeps track of events on Earth from the White Lodge using a big-screen television on which he can change channels by swiping right or left. In short, the calculatedly contemporary setting of the Showtime series leaves no one except Dale Cooper's confused Richard persona wondering what year this is.

Since legend has it that Lynch and Frost went to Showtime with a 400-page document setting out what became *The Return*, perhaps the series' long-awaited third season suffers from having too many meticulously planned individual moments of beeping and whirring digital precision and too few of the happy accidents inherent in the buzzes and pops of imperfect analog experience that would have tied it all together. It appears, after all, that almost everything that was included in that fabled 400-page behemoth doorstop of a teleplay was actually filmed in one form or another and that there are not many (if any) lost or alternate scenes from the new season floating around. The facts that Lynch and Frost were willing to let the entire project die if the episode count for *The Return* was not doubled from nine to eighteen and that no extra footage (besides onset documentaries) appears on the December 2017 Blu-Ray/DVD release of the season seem to bear this supposition out, as does the fact that none of the actors or actresses involved have mentioned shooting any scenes that did not show up somewhere in the series' run. (They often did not know exactly where, when, or in what

context their scenes would appear, but their scenes do show up eventually.) The clips of Lynch directing *The Return* on set show him to be extraordinarily involved in minute details, even down to the shading and coloration of the Woodsmen's makeup, and in remarkable control of his overall vision; his instructions to his cast members are exhaustive, engaged, and specific. In an interview with *Variety* published the day after the season finale aired, Kyle MacLachlan described filming the episode with Lynch in this way: 'He's fully in control as a director, I think that's absolutely in control. Precisely what he wanted. He's pretty impressive' (2017). MacLachlan, the actor with by far the most scenes in the new season and the one whose participation was so essential that he was the only cast member allowed to read the legendary mega-script in its entirety before production started, further characterized Lynch in the same interview as having 'shot very economically, very precisely' (2017). As is typical of Lynch, there seems to have been little extra coverage and very few alternate takes shot for the season. A review of the Blu-Ray/DVD release of *The Return* in the online magazine *The Verge* recounts how Lynch 'walks [his actors and actresses] through every broad move and odd gesture, sounding at times like he's asking them to re-create a dream he had last night' (Murray 2017).

Nevertheless, even if the evidence in large part bears out the characterization of the new season as carefully plotted and precisely executed, this does not necessarily mean that the storied Lynchian onset improvisation in the moment and openness to spontaneous accidents are entirely absent from *The Return*. That improvisatory openness to chance and creative accident just moved to a different location: the editing room. Jonathan Foltz persuasively states in his November 12, 2017, *Los Angeles Review of Books* article 'David Lynch's Late Style' that the most distinctive thing about the new season is the 'oblique, beguiling aesthetic' it creates, a narrative style that he describes as 'gloriously digressive,' 'elliptical … [and] unforgivingly distracted,' and productive of the effects of 'extravagant, far-flung discord' and an 'erratic, transfixing chaos.' Lynch crafts this distinctive and disjunctive late style primarily through his unconventional editing decisions—his *shaping* of the meticulously planned footage he directs into unlikely 'caesuras and sudden discontinuities' that uncannily disrupt and trouble our customary patterns of narrative and audiovisual perception (Foltz 2017).

In *The Return*, scenes go on for far longer than the audience is accustomed to: the camera lingers on the face of an actress for two or four

more beats than expected. The viewer is introduced to characters who never appear again—wherefore art thou, Trick (Scott Coffey)?—and to seemingly urgent questions and scenarios that are left tantalizingly or, more often, indifferently unresolved. Two and a half minutes of screen time is given to a guy sweeping up the floor at the Roadhouse, or, at the other end of the temporal spectrum, the spectral image of Laura Palmer's crying face from a scene in *Fire Walk with Me* flashes disturbingly for an instant when Gordon Cole opens the door to his hotel room in Buckhorn, never to be mentioned or seen again. Attention is lavished on weird and unlikely details like Sarah Palmer's aversion to new brands of turkey jerky or a magic trick involving a coin performed by the drug dealer Red (Balthazar Getty). Chronological inconsistencies and 'continuity errors' become more and more apparent as the season progresses, with certain scenes obviously taking place before or after their rightful place on a linear timeline and the overall narrative schema for the show far removed from the original series' usual pattern of one episode aligning with one twenty-four-hour period in the life of the town of Twin Peaks. The editor for the show, longtime Lynch collaborator Duwayne Dunham, elaborates in an October 2017 interview with *Pro Video Coalition* on how he and Lynch worked closely together to shape the eighteen hours of footage for the new season into the eighteen hour-long parts that Showtime required using a system of colored and pinned index cards that were arranged according to character and location. Green cards might represent Twin Peaks the town, salmon cards might represent Sarah Palmer, and pink cards might represent the Roadhouse or Mr. C. Instead of making their editing decisions based on conventional factors like chronological narrative continuity or character arcs, Dunham said he and Lynch would 'look at the board and say, "We haven't seen any green for a while. We're away for a long time, and we've got a little bit here and a whole bunch over here. And you can just look at [the board] and say, What if we broke that up a little bit more?"' (Dunham 2017). Break it up they did, in a free-form and often dreamlike style that is confounding and disjunctive, and at times seems even purposefully perverse and capricious, but which nevertheless ultimately proves to operate by its own associative logic and serve, per Foltz, as the most distinctive aesthetic characteristic of *The Return*.

Lynch's attitude to recent technological advances is contradictory and ambivalent (2008). On the one hand, his cranky and delightful diatribes against watching films on laptops or smartphones ('You will be cheated.

It's such a sadness that you think you've seen a film on your fucking telephone. Get real!' to quote an interview with the director included on the 2007 *Inland Empire* DVD available on YouTube) make him seem like a cantankerous elderly Luddite. But on the other hand, Lynch arguably has embraced the possibilities of digital video and Internet distribution more enthusiastically and wholeheartedly than any other major director of his generation, as evidenced in his work on *Inland Empire* (2006) and the video experiments that appeared regularly on davidlynch.com in the early 2000s. Lynch shot the largely improvised footage for *Inland Empire* over a period of two and a half years without a final screenplay, using a consumer-grade Sony DSR-PD150 digital video camera that allowed him to work quickly and cheaply whenever he wanted to and had secured the funding he needed. Lynch effusively praised digital video's aesthetic and economic freedoms in interviews from around the time of *Inland Empire*, and he swore he would never work with analog film again, despite its seductions, as is poetically expressed in this 2006 interview with Dennis Lim included in his book *David Lynch: The Man from Another Place*: 'The sky's the limit with digital … Film is like a dinosaur in a tar pit. People might be sick to hear that because they love film, just like they loved magnetic tape. And I love film. I love it! … It's so beautiful. [But] I would die if I had to work like that again' (Lim 2015, p. 167). Critics were split about the aesthetic appeal of Lynch's low-grade DV murk and mud on display in *Inland Empire*, but several made the comparison of the film's freewheeling improvisatory structure to that of what Lim called 'the darting, associative logic of hyperlinks' (Lim 2015, p. 173) on the World Wide Web. Lynch edited the unwieldy footage for *Inland Empire* into its final three-hour form himself using the software Final Cut Pro on an Apple computer in his home office in Los Angeles, the first time he had edited a film digitally. The industry name for the style of editing he learned and used in the process of making his movie is the very Lynchian 'nonlinear.'

Hence, the happy accidents characterized in the foregoing (perhaps overdetermined) digital vs. analog binary as being the products of an imperfect, comfortable, cozy, and nostalgic analog experience are, in the case of late Lynch, ironically the result of the freedom afforded to the director by digital technology, specifically digital editing. As is so often the case with Lynch, he troubles easy binaries and makes the answer to a question 'both/and' instead of 'either/or.' Is it future, or is it past? Laura is dead, yet she lives. And what year is this, anyway? Interestingly

and paradoxically, however, Lynch and co-conspirator Frost do not seem to be willing or able to imagine a similar compromise or synthesis between contemporary digital technology and organic analog experience for the characters in *The Return*, who often remain stuck or stranded between two worlds with little technology to guide them out again. The technologies that do seem to work in ushering characters between physical and metaphysical spaces in the new season call to mind science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke's famous adage that 'any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic': the steampunk electrical outlets and floating orbs used by the likes of the Fireman, Lady Dido, and Naido to transport characters like Agent Cooper from occult Red Rooms to suburban Las Vegas tract housing are technologies that are, to paraphrase Albert Rosenfield (Miguel Ferrer), perhaps beyond the coordinates in our hardware to completely understand.

This theory about technology and *The Return*, and Gordon Cole in front of the whirring and beeping and buzzing electronic equipment as the perfect emblem of the relationship between them, was expressed by one of the authors (Jeff Fallis) for the first time on a podcast—Episode 16 of *Wrapped in Podcast*, to be precise, a thirty-part (and counting) podcast that obsessively analyzed and theorized about every episode of the new season of *Twin Peaks* each week after it aired. Both authors appeared as regular panelists on *Wrapped*, along with Ken Walczak and host/impresario J. R. Parker, and such podcasts empowered the viewers of *The Return* to experience the show through the same technologically modern digital lens employed by the series' creators in making it.

Although the authors' encountering of *The Return* via the vehicle of a particular podcast provided them with a specific personal perspective, their individual experiences are hardly exceptional. As far back as early 2004, when the portmanteau 'podcasting' was competing with 'audioblogging' for primacy as the accepted term for the new form of amateur online radio, former National Public Radio journalist and podcasting pioneer Christopher Lydon summed up the possibilities and uncertainties of the emerging medium: 'Everything is inexpensive. The tools are available. Everyone has been saying anyone can be a publisher, anyone can be a broadcaster. Let's see if that works' (Hammersley 2004).

By the time *The Return* premiered in May 2017, podcasting was wholly mainstream, especially among fans of Lynch's and Frost's visionary series: John Bernardy, who kept track of *Twin Peaks*-centric podcasts for the weblog 25yearslatersite.com, reports that he attempted to follow

up to 50 such podcasts on a weekly basis during *The Return*'s original run. Furthermore, although he only listened to *Twin Peaks* podcasts available on iTunes, Bernardy says he was aware of as many as 20 more that were accessible only through streaming platforms or at other sites, in addition to fan-generated YouTube video reviews of the Showtime series (Bernardy 2018).

Much as Lynch's conversion from film to digital brought new techniques to an established medium, the podcast as technology likewise is simply reconstituted radio from the thirties and forties made new again. Nevertheless, as Bernardy's informal survey attests, the proliferating podcasts devoted to *The Return* unmistakably are twenty-first-century: downloadable any time to anybody, free-flowing and democratic to produce and distribute, endlessly open and accessible to the niche interests of Internet culture. Accordingly, podcasts provided the ideal vehicle by which to break down and interpret the dense and inscrutable narratives, images, and sounds of Frost's and Lynch's new series week by week through the use of a technology at once available, unbounded, and problematic.

The adventures of *Twin Peaks* podcasters perfectly (and perversely) paralleled the course of *The Return*. Lynch's and Frost's distancing digital updates prefigured their audience's adaptation of the more fractured communal fan experience from the original series' run a quarter-century previously to latter-day realities even as the intervention of those novel technologies proved simultaneously frustrating and liberating. In the early 1990s, VCR-enabled repeat viewings of *Twin Peaks* episodes allowed loyalists to parse the show's minutiae in search of clues that would permit them to crack the code, solve the crime, and be the first to answer correctly the nagging question, 'Who killed Laura Palmer?' In so doing, the viewers of that era were following faithfully the example of their hero, Special Agent Dale Cooper, whose perceptive and intuitive investigative prowess had been highlighted in the series' pilot when he froze the aforementioned secret video on the crucial frame revealing the reflection of the motorcycle belonging to James Hurley (James Marshall) in a tight close-up on the unblinking eyeball of the departed Laura Palmer.

While *Twin Peaks* thus encouraged its fans' obsessive fixation on the finest of details, though, it also went to great pains to stymie their efforts by leaving plot threads unresolved, introducing utterly unforeseeable elements, and ending each episode with 'previews' that purposely presented

indistinct still shots overlaid with mismatched snippets of unrelated dialogue. Nevertheless, the show's insistence on delaying its audience's gratification and stonewalling any payoff for the most ardent armchair detectives served only to stoke the passions of committed viewers, whose pooled efforts and heartfelt arguments on such nascent message boards as alt.tv.twinpeaks were chronicled by Henry Jenkins in his examination of the *Twin Peaks* fan community on the then-emergent Internet for the 1995 anthology *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to Twin Peaks.*

More than 25 years later, these same trends and themes were everywhere evident in the delicate dance defining the interplay between *The Return* and its enthusiastic followers. By bringing the series back on Showtime, co-creators Lynch and Frost succeeded in freeing themselves from the narrative constraints of network television, which required commercial breaks at regular intervals, a regimented number of episodes airing in accordance with a set season schedule, and an unshakable expectation that the central storyline ultimately would reach resolution. Lynch, in particular, had chafed at having his creativity fenced in by the network brass, delaying the revelation of Laura's killer as long as he was able and then undermining the solution to the mystery in the Season Two finale by having the milky-eyed doppelgänger of Leland Palmer (Ray Wise) unequivocally state that he did not kill anybody. While *Twin Peaks* limped through the second half of Season Two as a dead series walking, hiatuses hampered the show's storytelling rhythms leading up to a two-hour finale in which Lynch jettisoned much of what had been scripted and front-loaded the commercial breaks in order to afford himself an uninterrupted final stanza within which he subversively could perform exorcizing acts of iconoclasm against what he saw as the heresies that had crept into his creation.

After *Twin Peaks* ended and a stunned audience was left to ponder a shocking new unanswered question about another doomed blonde damsel—'How's Annie?'—Lynch and Frost made it perfectly clear that they would not be similarly limited on any subsequent treks to the Pacific Northwest. Lynch opened *Fire Walk with Me* (1992) on an image of static before pulling back to reveal the screen of a television that was then violently destroyed, thereby sending a message only slightly less subtle than the fish in the flak jacket from *The Godfather* (1972) that communicated to the Corleone crime family that Luca Brasi (Lenny Montana) 'sleeps with the fishes.' Even after it was announced that the gum fans liked was going to come back in style, the deal with

Showtime for a *Twin Peaks* revival almost fell apart when Lynch and Frost expressed their aforementioned willingness to walk rather than be denied the opportunity to do their show their way. Thus was the stage set for the series' 2017 return, in which unrestrained creators unleashed their vision to a waiting throng of unencumbered enthusiasts.

In this bold new landscape, the ability of the creators to shoot and edit the show using novel modes also holds true for the ways in which fans experience *The Return*. Gone are the inscrutable previews before the closing credits, succeeded by advance announcements of the indecipherable titles of upcoming episodes. In place of the VHS tapes with which *Twin Peaks* was captured and dissected, *The Return* releases episodes early on web-based platforms and invites high-resolution re-viewings of airplane windows vanishing in patterns, familiar faces appearing for flashes, and opening logos ostensibly offering color-coded foreshadowing. Fan engagement, rather than being enabled only by way of first-generation Internet message boards, today takes place across a variety of social media, via Facebook, Twitter, weblogs, and podcasts.

In the particular case of *Wrapped in Podcast*, Audacity, Garage Band, and Doc Hayward's beloved Skype made it possible for a pair of Georgia residents and a pair of California residents to meet weekly and converse freely about the preceding episode of *The Return*. Unfortunately, the experience of that podcast all too often echoed that of Gordon Cole amid the beeping and whirring, as the technology that enabled the participants' interaction also operated as an impediment to it. Podcasting platforms made recording, editing, and publication possible. Shared Google documents organized preparations. One panelist invariably had his tablet handy for rapid re-watching if another panelist insisted that a character's spoken line had not matched the closed captioning. What would have been impossible in 1991 and unwieldy until fairly recently was readily available—even seemingly easy—in 2017.

Even so, *Wrapped in Podcast* invariably was a work in progress, requiring increasingly complex setups and enough equipment upgrades to prompt the eventual pursuit of Patreon contributions. The intrusion of ambient sounds proved distracting, a sufficiently smooth signaling system for taking turns while speaking was never developed to replicate adequately the cues used in face-to-face conversation, and technical difficulties were never entirely absent, up to and including an episode in which the host painstakingly had to re-create his own lost vocal track—which had disappeared into the ether like Phillip Jeffries (David

Bowie)—and do so faithfully enough to the missing original to integrate his separate second recording with the other three participants' audio files from the first session. Such instances of unplanned deviation from expectations, while specific to the authors' particular experience, are far from unique in the burgeoning world of *Twin Peaks: The Return* podcasts.

Bernardy points to a pair of representative examples to illustrate the inherent unpredictability of the medium. The two co-hosts of *There Will Be Drinking Recaps Twin Peaks*, both of whom had improvisational backgrounds, 'riffed off each other' in an evidently unscripted exchange. Likewise, *Dishin' The Percolator* featured a *Twin Peaks* 'superfan' whose comedian co-host had no previous familiarity with the series. Even though the newcomer was less invested in and less enamored of the show than his colleague, Bernardy says their responses in the moment 'made for a fun dynamic where they could take the show seriously but not too seriously.' Hence, an aspect of the podcasting experience that appeared to be inherent in multiple amateur digital discussions of *The Return* was the way the unanticipated quirks and inconveniences kept conversations lively and authentic.

Verbal slips contributed to podcasts' unique argot, reactions in the moment produced their most genuine humor, and unplanned insights led directly to sparkling instances of spontaneous creativity. Just as the accidental appearance of set dresser Frank Silva's reflection in a scene in *Twin Peaks* brought forth BOB, much of what went wrong with fan-produced podcasting about *The Return* was responsible for much of what went right with it, as well. Referring to the recurring podcasting phenomenon of 'the happy accidents adding to the experience,' Bernardy affirms: 'Each show had the same material to analyze but it's the personalities of the hosts that really shined in these moments and gave you ways to differentiate yourselves from the others' (2018).

This reality of those podcasts, however, raises doubts about the show that was their subject. Indeed, the earlier examination of linearity and the editing process serves primarily as a reminder that the success of the *Twin Peaks* podcasts was due in no small part to the editing that molded dead air, lost tracks, and the participants' throat-clearing, fruitless digressions, failed jokes, drink-slurping, and other random sonic intrusions into something coherent and listenable. As evidenced by the ominous green scarab fortuitously appearing on a video slot machine in the Silver Mustang Casino while the shot pulls back from the image of

the ostensibly abandoned Janey-E (Naomi Watts) and Sonny Jim (Pierce Gagnon) in *The Return*, shooting may be accidental, but editing is not.

Frank Silva's reflection appearing in the mirror in the original series was not planned, but the decision to leave the shot in the show was a deliberate choice. Lynch's directorial style, emphasizing actors' reactions in the moment during a limited number of takes, seems designed to bring forth these happy accidents, calling into question just how accidental they truly are. In that respect, Lynch and Frost are not unlike their hero, Dale Cooper, whose meticulously methodical approach to detective work nevertheless builds spontaneity into the system: 'Harry,' he explains to the original Sheriff Truman (Michael Ontkean) when deviating easily from his carefully constructed plan, 'I'm going to let you in on a little secret. Every day, once a day, give yourself a present. Don't plan it. Don't wait for it. Just let it happen.' Some podcasters took this advice to heart by starting the recording and simply letting the conversation proceed spontaneously. Others, perhaps without meaning to do so, unconsciously honored this bit of Lynchian/Frosty wisdom by engaging in such preparations as crafting weekly Google docs to give structure to the discussion yet inevitably veering from this roadmap after getting underway.

In the end, then, the inadequacy of easy binaries is as evident in the progression of the *Twin Peaks: The Return* podcast communities as it is in the limited event series itself. In the original *Twin Peaks*, both the pilot began and the finale ended with shots of mirrors; it is not shocking, therefore, that technology-fueled audience engagement with *The Return* would serve as a reflection of the digitally driven Showtime program in a real-world demonstration of both series' familiar doubling. It is, perhaps, in this innovative and unpredictable interaction of art and audience that *The Return* achieves its number of completion.

The notion of 'the number of completion,' of course, was introduced into *The Return* in Part 17, when Bushnell Mullins (Don Murray) reads the note written by Agent Cooper one episode earlier, following his reawakening in the hospital immediately after the aforementioned Gordon Cole was seen listening intently for what might be overheard in the Mayfair. What is Gordon listening for amid all the whirs and hums of the FBI computers? Why is Deputy Director Cole looking for Agent Cooper in the backwater of Buckhorn? Similarly, why did Internet-erudite fans expressing themselves on weblogs and social media seek a 1990s network series in a 2017 Showtime program? Did the asymptote

of *Twin Peaks: The Return* podcasters' analyses hew nearer to the truth through painstaking planning or through unrestrained spontaneity?

As Coop is on the verge of proving true a line from Lynch's and MacLachlan's initial collaboration (the iconic 'The sleeper must awaken!' from 1984's *Dune*), Gordon is searching for him in an upscale hotel in a rustic setting—the very sort of space where we last had seen Dale Cooper emerge from slumber, in the chilling closing cliffhanger of *Twin Peaks*'s second season. Given the characters' and the audience's collective previous experience, therefore, it is a logical place for Gordon to look—but *The Return* takes a surprising detour from conventional expectations, evidently catching even the director and co-writer unawares and giving fans, as always, more to dissect, debate, and discuss as the viewers' buzzing brains endlessly whistle and whir along, flitting associatively and intuitively about as acetylcholine neurons fire high-voltage impulses into the forebrains of those who wonder in vain why the auteur chooses the images he does.

Though the director is in the details, the sharp precision of the digital images and the ready availability of a flood of fan discussions nevertheless belie any concomitant upgrade in the accessibility of easy answers. Although one may, like Lucy, understand the cellphone, one still may be as baffled as Mr. C. by the inscrutable uncertainty of whose voice is speaking on the other end of the line. On both sides of the screen, clarity of voice and vision improved dramatically during the interminable interstice separating the old *Twin Peaks* from the new, yet the challenge remains what Lynch warned that it was on the eve of the debut of *The Return*: 'Keep your eye on the donut,' he wisely advised, 'not on the hole.'

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CHAPTER 5

'The Owls Are Not What They Meme': Making Sense of *Twin Peaks* with Internet Memes

Brigid Cherry

'The owls are not what they seem' reads the message Major Briggs delivers to Agent Cooper in Episode 9 of the original *Twin Peaks*. Significantly, this iconic line became established as the basis of an Internet meme replicated across social media. This meme consists of a picture of an owl (a screengrab, a drawing, or a digital montage incorporating other iconic imagery—the Red Room, the symbol from Owl Cave) combined with the text of the message for Cooper. Some memes used a screengrab of the Giant, who repeated the message to Cooper in a dream, others the computer printout from the deep space monitor itself. The caption was even remixed with other non-*Twin Peaks*-related images. But in one notable example, this meme was transformed into a 'metameme' (a meme about memes) with the assonant caption borrowed for the title of this chapter: 'The owls are not what they meme.'[1]

Many *Twin Peaks* memes circulated on the social web in the years between the original and third series, with various Cooper images, Log Lady sayings, the 'Damn fine coffee' catchphrase, and the idea of being

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confused about the meaning of the series predominating alongside the owl memes. In the era of the social web, such digitally manipulated images have become a key component of online communication, forming a shorthand method of conveying responses, emotions, and opinions, as well as just being for fun (Davison 2012). Given the role of the meme in online fan discourse on social media, and given the expectations surrounding the new series, it was not unexpected for Twin Peaks Internet memes to proliferate in the run-up to, during, and in the aftermath of its transmission.

Audiences on social media, particularly those in online fan communities, discussing the return of *Twin Peaks* for its third season often attempted to make sense of episodes that exhibited the Lynchian traits of surrealism, otherworldliness, psychosis, and convoluted, intermittent, or seemingly nonsensical narrative threads. Whilst discursive arguments and analysis took place, fans also made and made use of Internet memes as a significant component of their online discourse. In the following analysis of *Twin Peaks* Internet memes, this chapter examines a representative sample of such memes and other fan-created images which have circulated during *Twin Peaks: The Return* with a particular focus on the ways in which they are employed to communicate responses to the series.

As Patrick Davison observes, there are a 'variety of phenomena popularly identified as Internet memes' (2012, p. 126). These can include emoji and emoticons (ASCII text strings or small images that resemble smileys and other expressions), hashtags and other catchphrases, gifs (short video clips repeated on a loop), and image macros (digitally manipulated and captioned photos or other types of art). Such memes have become a significant component of computer mediated discourse, both in terms of their predominance on the social web and in terms of the meanings and messages they encode. Internet memes are facilitated by the generative platform of the social web, instantly and widely transmitted and shared across the Internet. In the milieu of social media, memes have become a shorthand mechanism for online communication as viewers share their thoughts and reactions in spaces such as Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, Tumblr, and online discussion forums.

Davison broadly defines an Internet meme as 'a piece of culture … which gains influence through online transmission' (2012, p. 122). Users incorporate memes into their posts and messages to add nuance to their words. Memes can, for example, be non-verbal conversational cues. In other words, they add facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, physical responses, or emotion—aspects of face-to-face communication

which cannot be normally seen in social media communications. As Davison states: 'More than just re-creating face-to-face meaning in textual communication, emoticons also add the possibility of a new level of meaning—a level impossible without them' (2012, p. 124).

Predominant types of Internet memes used in *Twin Peaks* discussions (as in other social media) are gifs and image macros.[2] Gifs often present facial expression, body language, or other physical actions that a speaker might use in face-to-face conversations, whilst image macros are image and text combined according to a formula[3] that often express a common remark, a joke, a witty retort, a catchphrase, or a line of dialogue. Gifs and image macros are often used to convey a non-verbal response in discussion, but they also work as comments or argument points in their own right, and as phatic language. Furthermore, when image macros are employed in computer-mediated discourse, such as that in fan forums, they often play on characters and dialogue from well-known examples of popular culture and cult media.

Prolific examples include memes of the 'One does not simply ...' Boromir line from *Lord of the Rings*, Picard's facepalm (from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*), and *Futurama*'s Fry with narrowed eyes suspicious expression. Whilst such memes are not limited to fan discourse, it is significant that they replicate popular culture in a milieu where 'we are all fans now' and may permit the demonstration of fannish behaviors including detailed knowledge of iconic moments from popular and cult texts. As Davison also suggests, Internet memes are typically jokes (2012, p. 122). Furthermore, Knobel and Lankshear define memes as 'collaborative, absurdist humor in multimedia forms' and as 'geek kitsch humor' (2007, p. 210). Over and above humor, it is the link with online geek culture and with collaborative forms of fan art here that are important considerations for this work in terms of how memes work within fan communities.

Many memes are collaborative due to their extreme fluidity and large degree of hybridity. Knobel and Lankshear categorize Internet memes into two forms based on whether they change or stay the same when they are replicated across the social web, namely high fidelity static memes[4] and remixed memes, the latter being 'replicated via evolution, adaptation, or transformation' (2007). This is facilitated by graphics editing software (apps), digital availability of films, television programmes and photos, and meme captioning sites such as Meme Generator.[5] The remixed meme in particular permits immediacy, instant reaction, and dynamic discourse, making memes extremely useful in fast-moving online fan discourse when discussing current episodes of a TV series.

In undertaking this research, this chapter sets out to analyze the range of memes used in the computer-mediated discourses of *Twin Peaks* fans in the period around the transmission of the episodes of *Twin Peaks: The Return* (and hereinafter referred to as *The Return*). The aim is to identify the ways in which memes were incorporated into discussion and what messages they encoded in respect of the fans' responses (both analytical and emotional). As Kate M. Miltner (2014) states, 'Internet memes are an increasingly widespread form of vernacular communication.' In my previous research into fan communities (Cherry 2010), I discussed how fans share their responses and reactions to episodes of a television programme, particularly how they communicate their thoughts and emotions in the immediacy of viewing, in the context of computer-mediated discourses. Lengthy text-based discussion and analysis are often side-lined, image-based conversational contributions playing a much greater role in the fan discourse. Images are therefore considered as discursive objects, as vernacular language, and as phatic expressions. This research therefore starts from the position that Internet memes have become essential components of vocabulary for online fandom, an accepted and commonplace vernacular language, and a highly visible practice in fan groups.

In various *Twin Peaks* online forums, fans made and made use of a wide range of Internet memes to communicate their opinions, emotional responses, and analysis of the text during the broadcast of *The Return*. I have analyzed this visual material in order to identify the ways in which affective responses to the text, processing of possible meaning making of the text, expectations raised for the series or for particular episodes, recognition of the creative process, and the position of the viewer vis-à-vis both the text and the wider community were addressed. As well as identifying patterns of discourse that emerge in such communication, these findings also contribute to the identification and categorization of the ways in which cult viewing is positioned with respect to the public spaces of the social web. Further, I consider the relationship of the meme with fan art, what such transformative works reveal about the fan culture surrounding *Twin Peaks*, and what fannish memes might reveal about the culture of social media in a time when 'we are all fans now.'

In collecting data for this research, I focused on a selection of groups or pages from these social media spaces. These included the Facebook groups Welcome to Twin Peaks, Twin Peaks (1990–2017) The Official Facebook Fan Club, Twin Peaks Memes, Fire Walk With Meme and Twin Peaks Festival, the Twitter hashtag #twinpeaks, together with the

feeds @twinpeakmemes, @twinpeaksfestival and @twinpeaksrevolution, the twinpeaks subreddit, and the twinpeaksgeek and welcometotwinpeaks Tumblrs. A representative sample of memes was taken from these groups, and discussions of or including memes were analyzed. It is important to note that there is a great deal of overlap between memes posted on these groups, as might be expected given the nature of memes as highly replicable. Such memes are examples of spreadable media, or 'a self-perpetuating phenomenon' (Jenkins et al. 2013, p. 28). Specific examples of memes discussed below are therefore not always attributable to specific groups, or even to specific individuals posting to those groups, and the source given for each meme is thus only indicative, and it might be found in a number of other online locations. Given the sheer volume of memetic material and other images in the online groups, there are many memes that could not be included in the following analysis. A representative sample has been selected to reflect the different kinds of use and discussion points they denote, as well as a selection of both preexisting remixed memes and original memes created by the fans for their discussion (and here there is some overlap with fan art). These memes are analyzed in the context of sense-making practices and affective responses to popular culture texts. Considering Knobel and Lankshear's (2007) point that online memes offer potential for studying novel forms of literacy developing in online cultures, the following analysis summarizes the uses of memes in discussion of *The Return* and the sense-making practices they contribute to.

Modes of emotional affect are one of the key ways fans engage with texts, and memes indicating an emotional response predominate in many episode discussions in the immediacy of viewing. In the twinpeaks subreddit thread for Part 8[6]—selected due to the fact that the episode eschews the normal conventions of TV drama and might therefore elicit extreme reactions—various preexisting gifs and image macros are used. Some responses are pure reaction gifs, as where a poster breaks their reactions down according to timings of the episode: the first 11 minutes are the 'staring, confused' Ron Swanson (from *Parks and Recreation*) gif; 11–16 minutes is the Andy Dwyer 'shock' gif (also *Parks and Recreation*); and from 16 minutes to the end of the episode is a Ryan Howard 'what?' gif (*The Office*). This works as a running commentary on reactions to the narrative events of Part 8. Another response is a gif of Major Kong riding the atom bomb from *Doctor Strangelove*. This is a rather apt choice given the role that an atomic explosion occurs in Part 8, but also indicates that the fan is along for, and enjoying, the

(potentially nihilistic) ride. Another reaction gif post is Milton from *The Simpsons* saying 'We're through the looking glass here people,' connecting the viewing experience to being in the bewildering and nonsensical dreamworld of Lewis Carroll (a parallel that has previously been drawn with respect to Lynchian drama).

This is not to say that the fans did not enjoy the episode. Indeed, bewilderment, it could be said, is an intended response given a narrative designed to disorient viewers. These fans, however, make this into a game, laughing at it and themselves. To convey their responses to the episode, they make and use image macros from moments in *The Return* itself: Dougie saying 'Call for help,' Dougie urgently needing the toilet, a dazed-and-confused Jerry Horne in the woods, and—extending into Lynch's wider body of work—the perpetually-bemused Henry from *Eraserhead*. 'Me, watching this episode' is a 'What the hell?' gif of Agent Cole from Part 3—a clip that seems destined to join the ranks of highly spreadable memes. Not only do these memes demonstrate cultural competence (knowledge of the series) but some fans also act quickly—demonstrating their 'timeliness' as a fan (see Hills 2002, p. 178)—to make memes from shots taken from the episode itself. 'Me tonight' is a shot of the Fireman floating in the air in the theater captioned 'The floor is my comprehension,' indicating that this fan has left the solid ground of textual understanding behind (below) them. These memes thus communicate a mix of simultaneous bewilderment and amusement at the unexpected nature of this episode in particular. This use illustrates Davison's definition of Internet memes as objects which are both 'replicable' and 'malleable' (2012, p. 123); the fans remix preexisting memes and make their own, and the resulting *Twin Peaks*-specific memes are spread across *Twin Peaks* groups on social media. Moreover, the reaction meme serves in the reinforcing of the group identity and the construction of the social (see Miltner 2014). Through the sharing of responses encoded in the memes, the fans share in a viewing experience even though they may be dispersed temporally and geographically.

Of course, fans express a broad range of emotional responses to the series as a whole. A notable example of another potentially highly spreadable meme made from the series itself expresses the ecstatic pleasures of viewing. This consists of an image macro of Becky looking skyward in drug-induced ecstasy from Part 5. This meme is also used by the *Twin Peaks* fans to communicate their affective investment in the entirety of *Twin Peaks*: one caption reads 'When I think I can watch 3 seasons and 1 movie

of Twin Peaks over and over again.' This very specific caption also indicates excessive fan consumption of cult media. Viewing *The Return* is shown in its own right as a moment of heightened pleasure, but it is also indicative of cult viewing as watching the cult text multiple times. Such intense (and repeated) viewing also gives rise to textual analysis. Fans are inveterate analysts, discussing the meaning of narratives, both in terms of storyworld and character, as well as plot and story. Given that *Twin Peaks* is a dense and opaque text, this is one of the key areas of fan discourse, especially in the context of *The Return*, which raised as many questions as answers to previous enigmas from the first two series and the prequel film *Fire Walk with Me*. One of the key ways fans made sense of the text was in identifying connections to wider popular culture and other cult media.

Given that memes are often jokey in tone and intent—and taking into account Paul Booth's (2015) argument that watching, joining groups to chat, making gifs and engaging imaginatively with media are acts of play—*Twin Peaks* fans made meaning by playing with the enigmatic, comic, and alienating moments in the narrative. In response to Part 8 and its account of the birth of *Twin Peaks*' evil entity BOB, fans shared a photo-montage that remediates the surrealistic imagery and uncanny conjunctions of objects and ideas in the episode. This consists of a picture of Kermit the Frog from *The Muppet Show*, with added dragonfly wings, relaxing on a mushroom cloud emerging from an opened Cadbury's Crème Egg, all composited on the background of the red room,[7] the caption reading 'The birth of BOB.' This is a clear example of the type of fan play that Booth categorizes as pastiche (2015, p. 2). It is mimicry or 'the deliberate imitation of … a text,' and 'directed at other fans' (Booth 2015, p. 2). In this random conjunction of elements, fans are both 'making meaning' by emphasizing the irrational elements in the narrative—weird hybrid creatures, a philosophical connection to the nuclear age, and the esoteric nature of *Twin Peaks*' demonic entity—and 'making fun' by substituting other prosaic cultural icons for those in the text. The narrative is tamed as it were by the inclusion of familiar well-loved puppets (which also returns a nod to *Sesame Street*'s 'Twin Beaks' parody from 1991) and popular chocolate confectionary alongside elements of horror (the atomic cloud and the Red Room), allowing the fans to laugh along with the episode and their own responses. The pastiche of the episode in this meme also illustrates the way fans hybridize cult texts or play with intertextual references (crossover fan fiction often unites different cult storyworlds according to the tastes and preferences of the fans).

Intertexts are certainly a significant factor in the memes used to communicate critical and analytical responses to *The Return*. Memes in this category referred to the earlier *Twin Peaks* and *Fire Walk with Me*, but also to Lynch's wider oeuvre, and cult media more generally. One meme which plays on Lynchian cinema remixes an existing image macro of Leto and Paul Atreides from *Dune*.[8] The top half shows Leto saying 'The sleeper must awaken,' the lower Paul with the line 'The Sleeper has awakened!' This was a significant intertext for fans in respect of Part 16 where Agent Cooper 'returns' after electrocuting himself in the Dougie persona. Although many of them enjoyed the character of Dougie, this was a moment they were waiting for, when the Dale Cooper they knew from the original series returned. There is overlap between MacLachlan's roles of Paul Atreides and Cooper here; they are expressing affective investments in the star. Indeed, fans make other memes to reflect the cult status of MacLachlan (as for instance, in the remix meme based on *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* poster, remixed here as 'The Good, the Bad and the Dougie,'[9] acknowledging MacLachlan's three roles in the series). With the *Dune* meme, the connection between roles was emphasized in the minds of the fans through the dialogue in Part 16 and MIKE's utterance, 'Finally,' when Cooper wakes. The discussion of this scene in the twinpeaks subreddit underlines how MIKE stands in for the fans' response too. Moreover, they make connections with *Dune* explicit by remixing the *Dune* meme and replacing Paul Atreides in the lower portion with Cooper waking from his coma. These fans are demonstrating their cultural competencies (in this case of Lynch's films) by identifying the textual parallel.

Demonstrations of cultural competencies are also made to other cult media in the fans' sets of tastes and preferences. A prime example of this was the way fans worked through Phillip Jeffries's 'disembodiment' in *The Return* (due to David Bowie being unable to reprise his role from *Fire Walk with Me*). This was an opportunity for fans to offer homage to Bowie, and not just his performance as Jeffries. Some memes created an intertext between the machine (Lynch's term for the large kettle-like metal object that stood in for Jeffries) and Bowie's band Tin Machine on the one hand and the lyric from his song Space Oddity—'For here am I sitting in a tin can'—on the other. One image macro consists of the machine spouting steam (which fans debate is either the disembodied Jeffries himself or his messages to Cooper) when Cooper visits 'Jeffries' in Part 17. One variant has the aforementioned lyric as a caption,[10] albeit

with a question mark that perhaps suggests the doubt about whether the machine or the steam is Jeffries, and another has the caption 'Best recasting ever.'[11] The second remix acknowledges Lynch and Frost's creativity in finding a work around for Jeffries/Bowie's absence. This is further expressed in a posting to the Fire Walk With Memes Facebook group. It consists of a photo of Bowie from the early 1970s holding up a steaming kettle, and is captioned with some imaginary dialogue:

> Mark Frost: "How are we going to handle Philip Jeffries in this season? David Bowie's too sick to come back."
> David Lynch: (absentmindedly Googling old photos of David Bowie) "I HAVE AN IDEA."[12]

Here Lynch and Frost's authorship is acknowledged, whilst the surrealistic embodiment of characters as/within industrial artifacts is also acknowledged—the juxtapositioning of chance elements being a key trope of surrealism.

Other memes make additional connections to Bowie's work, paying homage to a widely admired performer whose loss was still felt by many fans. One references the shared rank between Major Briggs (given a key role in *The Return* even though, again, the actor had died almost a decade earlier) and Major Tom (the character from Bowie's Space Oddity).[13] The top half of the meme shows Ray lying on the floor after being shot by Mr. C, who is asking him (in a caption that slightly reworks/clarifies the actual line of dialogue) 'Did Phillip Jeffries mention Major Briggs?' The lower part is a picture of Jeffries from *Fire Walk With Me* with the reply 'No, but he mentioned Major Tom.' The linking of Ray's reworded reply over a picture of Jeffries is intended to emphasize the Bowie and Space Oddity connection (in case a passing reader should otherwise miss it). This suggests a deliberate acknowledgment of Bowie in the context of his absence from *The Return*; Jeffries might be an incidental character, but Bowie is a significant loss for the fans (as is Don S. Davis).

Fans are making meaningful connections in these memes, but other examples illustrate how fans make meaning of plot threads that lacks resolution. Where storylines were left unresolved, fans made up their own. This is unsurprising. Fans are inveterate producers of fan fiction that fills in gaps in timelines, develops life stories for incidental characters, and extends narratives when a series ends (Jenkins 1992, p. 74). The *Twin Peaks* fans filled in gaps in the narrative with memes.

One extrapolates a connection between Bowie/Jeffries and the cowboy statue that Dougie is transfixed by in Part 5 and Part 6 (no explicit motivation is given for this in the text). One montage places an inset of Bowie as Major Jack Celliers from the film *Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence* (1983) into a screen grab of the cowboy statue,[14] the angle of Cellier's head and his hat mirroring that of the cowboy's. The fans know that the statue does not particularly resemble Jeffries/Cellier/Bowie, but they still enjoy the random visual pun.[15] It is not that the fans are reading too much into the text with such memes, but rather that they are enjoying the puzzle-aspects of working out the meaning of the text, knowingly taking it too far on occasion. For these fans, the text can mean everything and nothing.

It is important to note that these memes are part of a discourse that also involves verbal contributions—as Vickery (2014) has previously discussed with respect to the Confession Bear meme on Reddit. The statue was the subject of intense discussion on the twinpeaks subreddit, taking in the planes of Bowie's and the statue's faces on the one hand and the textual meaning of the statue (and statuary in *Twin Peaks* in general) on the other. Although Lynch has said the statue is of his father (Ivie 2017), fans nevertheless also speculate it is a reference to Bowie as Thomas Jerome Newton in *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976). They interpret the 'clue' that his co-star in that film, Candy Clarke, was also in the episode as Sheriff Truman's wife Doris as evidence for this. Another 'theory' suggests that the statue's pose resembles Jeffries's in *Fire Walk with Me* when he points at Cooper in Cole's office. The respective meme[16] again includes an inset, this time of a mid-shot of the statue prominent in which the arm is held straight out pointing the gun—a pose that mirrors Jeffries, arm in the same position, pointing at Cooper. The caption is the dialogue from the scene 'Stand fast, Coop' and 'Who do you think that is there?', 'stand fast' being taken as a descriptor of a statue. The fans might very well know who that is there—that is, that the statue is not intended to be of Celliers/Newton/Jeffries/Bowie, but it adds to the analytical game they are playing.

At the same time, this discussion reflects the idea that Lynch may be 'trolling' the viewers. They know they are along for a ride, or even being taken for a ride, as they enjoy (over-)analyzing the narrative. In fact, some fans make memes which suggest as much. One is in the style of a BBC news website report that has the headline 'Twin Peaks fans

left red-faced after praising hour of television static, mistaking it for new episode.'[17] Whilst this could be interpreted as disparaging *Twin Peaks* fans, it is circulated and discussed on the twinpeaks subreddit thread for Part 8.[18] It is self-deprecating (as indeed fans often are about themselves), but equally denotes the way the Lynchian text is often opaque (something these fans appreciate as discussed above). In these memes, fans are laughing along with the conceit (they know very well, but …), and this simultaneously confers authorial status on Lynch.

It has to be noted that some fans were also unhappy or even angered with aspects of the narrative; some wanted Agent Cooper back much earlier in the series, some wanted more resolution for Audrey, others were irritated by the further enigmas of the final episode. The latter, for example, was remediated through the persona and authorial traits of Lynch in the remix of a publicity image of Lynch sitting at a table covered by a black and white zigzag table cloth in a red room. The caption draws on the open-ended, if not infuriatingly vague, narrative. It reads 'I heard u guys want some answers? Guess what? My name is not Google.' This evokes not just the aesthetics of the Red Room, but positions Lynch as a denizen of the Black Lodge and a trickster figure. Regardless of the narrative pleasures or frustrations, however, the fans are adept at remediating the text to suit their own desires.

One form of producerly activity that fans undertake is reworking or remediating of existing texts to better suit their own preferences and desires. For example, fan fiction writers and fan artists often add or develop intimate relationships between favorite characters. As I have previously discussed in relation to *Doctor Who* fan art (Cherry 2018), many instances of fan art consist of computer-generated images that include manipulated screengrabs or publicity stills that position characters in non-canonical relationships. It is apparent that there is overlap here with Internet memes, and instances of fan art do resemble memes and the image macro style, though they are not automatically generated by meme generator sites. Or as Booth (2015, p. 63) states, 'fan art becomes the meme.' Many such pieces of artwork can be one-off, unique pieces created by a single artist, but they are nevertheless circulated in the same ways as other Internet memes. Furthermore, many image macros and other pieces created by participants in *Twin Peaks* fan groups do share much in common with fan art or with fan fiction, even though they might be made casually and with no artistic intent.

One example of narrative embellishment, or mini-fanfic if you will, can be seen in the Woodsman memes. His 'Gotta light?' line makes him extremely memorable in his own right. He is an enigma, typical of a cult text, and as such invites deeper consideration. The incantation he broadcasts—'This is the water and this is the well. Drink full and descend. The horse is the white of the eyes, and dark within'—remains one of the unexplained elements in *The Return* that fans discuss at length: what it refers to, why it makes listeners pass out, how it connects with the pale horse seen by Sarah Palmer and Agent Cooper, or with the Silver Mustang Casino, how it connects with the insect–frog–thing, who the Woodsmen are. These are questions with no clear answers, but fans also appropriate the character in their fan art and acts of play, specifically here the memes they create. Many 'Gotta light?' gifs and image macros circulated in the wake of the episode, but one in particular creates a narrative by juxtaposing the Woodsman's 'Gotta light?' in the top half of the meme with Diane (cigarette in hand) saying 'Fuck you, woodsman' below.[19] Diana and the Woodsman's smoking habits and their succinct catchphrases are here connected in a mini-narrative as if the Woodsman and Diana were actually conversing (fans on the Welcome to Twin Peaks site debate whether and what she mouthed when Hastings dies in Part 11). Similarly, Dougie's actions also give rise to transformations of the narrative, and the casino scene is one of the most productive. An image of the casino staff gathered to stare at Dougie from Part 3 has the caption 'Casinos hate him!' at the top and 'See how he won 30 jackpots with one simple trick!' reframing the scene as a key to gambling success. A 'Slot Machines for Dummies' meme (based on the cover of the 'For Dummies' series of books with an insert of Dougie winning a jackpot) takes this narrative reworking further with the tagline 'Get help from the Black Lodge and improve your chances of winning by 100%.' Rather than simply acting on impulse, Dougie is now a successful gambler who can pass on tips (albeit with help from supernatural forces). Like the remixed *Dune* image macro, these memes relate short narrative transformations of the text. Fan fiction does often take on the short form (in drabbles and flashfics, for example); memes too can be employed as transformative works. Others work as instances of fan art in that they manipulate or embellish the image in some way to remediate the narrative.

The 'C'mon, Audrey. You know I don't have a crystal ball' is not simply a meme made from a screengrab of Charlie at his desk during the conversation with Audrey in Part 12, it is also a remediation of their argument that highlights one line of dialogue from that scene. In the meme,[20] two green circles connected by a green line (green standing out from the predominantly brown color palette of the setting) draw attention to an object on the desk. The larger circle contains a blow-up of the content of the smaller: the crystal ball. Amongst the clutter and piles of paper on the desk, this object may not be noticed or be easily overlooked by the viewer. And even though Charlie mentions not having a crystal ball, this might again be overlooked as a clichéd complaint in a domestic argument. However, when pointed out as in this meme, which juxtaposes the line of dialogue alongside an enlargement of the very object Charlie claims not to have, the enigma is emphasized, whilst also making a potentially amusing analysis of the scene.

The 'Therapy Bear' is also an interesting transformative work. This piece of fan art is a pastiche in the form of a toy advert for Johnny Horne's bear from Part 10.[21] It was produced for the Twin Peaks Festival facebook group and is much more elaborate than a typical image macro meme, thus more representative of the amounts of fan work that can go into various forms of fan production. It presents a cropped image of the bear (removing the table and other elements of the scene), placing it on a background of color blocks and frame in shades of beige and tan. The bear is surrounded by taglines, splashes, pull quotes, and other graphic design elements. One in the top left corner reads 'New arrival' and one next to the bear's head quotes the dialogue from the episode 'How are you today?'. In the lower left corner is a box out reading 'Exclusively at Horne's' above a picture of the Twin Peaks department store; this reinforces the sense of an advertising campaign, but also creates wider connections to the Horne family and their businesses. In a further connection to the storyworld, a 'Dr. Amp' logo is positioned near the foot of the bear, suggesting that this therapeutic toy is produced by the town psychiatrist-turned-webcaster, Dr. Jacoby. The main block of text taking up the upper right quadrant cites the benefits of the bear: 'Soft, tranquil, glowing light,' 'promotes healthy interaction,' 'addresses you by name,' and 'Chair restraints (optional') before ending with the small print 'No batteries required—fuelled by your own tears.' This not only provides a

backstory for the prop, but the fact that this text is headed 'Post-Festival Therapy Bear' makes an explicit metatextual link to the fan experience, here the exhausting and possibly traumatizing experiences of the fan convention. This fan art, which is amusing in the context of the narrative, can be seen as reminding the fan of a funny scene in the series, but also renders a sequence that was quite repetitive and lengthy more accessible (fans do comment that many scenes seem designed to try the patience of the viewer or are uncomfortable to watch). Such memes can work to transform the text, distilling disconcerting or disorienting narrative moments into amusing imagery that can be circulated on social media.

The range of memes discussed above is representative of the ways in which fans incorporate an image-based vernacular language into their discourses. These memes work as phatic dialogue, making small talk to encourage sociability amongst the fan or viewer group, but they also serve in fan analysis—both of the text itself and of emotional responses to it. *Twin Peaks* fans engage with each other through memes, and in turn these memes represent fans' play with the text. They also illustrate Davison's (2012, p. 126) 'use' related category of memetic behavior. Fans who are already versed in fan art and have the attendant photoshopping skills make use of memes in ways that closely resemble existing practices of fan art. In this, and in the way fans use memes to make sense of the narrative, fannish memes can therefore be understood as contributions to archontic literature (Derecho 2006) as they remediate and transform the text. Fannish memes are more than disposable additions to social media posts, nor are they easily categorized as derivative or subordinate. Rather they are contributions to an archive that expands the storyworld of the text.

Notes

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2. Image macro is a term borrowed from the computer code that allowed forum users to display images.
3. Well-known formulae include LOLcats, Advice Dog, Success Kid, and Grumpy Cat, for example.
4. The website Know Your Meme categorizes static content that does not change or evolve while being replicated across social media as viral content, and therefore not a meme.

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CHAPTER 6

'Is It About the Bunny? No, It's Not About the Bunny!': David Lynch's Fandom and Trolling of Peak TV Audiences

David McAvoy

Twin Peaks: The Return opens, fittingly, with a series of returns to some of the most archetypal spaces in a series obsessed with temporality and liminality. After decades of waiting to see new images from the Washington town of Twin Peaks, audiences are greeted with the familiar sight of a still-young Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) sitting in the mystical Black Lodge, listening to the ghost of a still-young Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) tell him that she would see him again in 25 years. After a few visual citations from the original series, the show then dissolves to the credits, which gives us the strikingly familiar waterfall that provides a vista for visitors of the Great Northern Hotel. Finally, we are greeted again by Agent Cooper in the Black Lodge, this time appropriately aged by his experiences and given new advice in that space's patented backward-speech by the Giant (Carel Struycken).

The opening is a series of refreshing returns for audiences who have craved them for so long—with a series of equally ominous detours.

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The original series scene subtly so, as it has been remastered and optimized for the widescreen televisions that have become standard in the 'meanwhile' that Laura mentions. The bookend scene in the Black Lodge is rendered in stark black and white, discomfiting in its refusal to shy away from the actors' aging. And where the camera had previously captured the waterfall as a painterly landscape from a safe distance, the camera in the credits now follows the river from above, careening over the precipice and giving us a singularly new perspective. In other words, each of these repetitions with an uncomfortable difference gives fans of the series virtually everything they had hoped for when the project was announced two years prior: an almost literal deeper dive into the mythos, one that would reveal new perspectives on those familiar faces and spaces that they had puzzled through for years.

So fans were baffled when the next scene cut to the town's outskirts—in woods that held such mythic value for the original run—reintroducing us to the relatively minor Dr. Lawrence Jacoby (Russ Tamblyn), living now in a trailer in the middle of nowhere. Viewers stare as a pickup truck slowly enters the frame, backing into Jacoby's driveway, while Jacoby limps out to greet a man delivering large packages. Smalltalk muffled by wind and distant woodpeckers accompanies his painstaking unloading of shovels out of the boxes for an agonizing length of preciously limited screentime, only for it to fade to black, an editing choice previously reserved for scenes of momentous import. The show picks up this thread occasionally over the first half of the season, always offering viewers stunningly mundane scenes, like Jacoby delicately and systematically operating a pulley system that spins the shovels around so that he can spray paint them one-by-one. This scene is especially ironic, juxtaposing Jacoby's efficiency in coating the shovels in gold paint with the scene's own inefficiency in its use of narrative or screen time: viewers literally watch paint dry. Their experience steadily becomes one of marking time's passage, waiting for the thread to tie together some of the puzzles left unsolved when the original run was canceled unceremoniously decades before, or at least to pay off meaningfully.

But this is the structure that director David Lynch brings to his return to television: scenes of intense foreboding interspersed among lengthy scenes of inscrutability so profound that viewers could be forgiven for feelings of boredom. While the third season arguably delivers an even more puzzling series of mysteries than the original, this chapter suggests that Lynch and Mark Frost fundamentally reframe and work against

the now-dominant structure of online fan engagement that the original had helped make possible. Where the original series set the template for how fans collaborate online to find closure by inferring the deeper layers behind a series, this *Twin Peaks* 'trolls' that desire, instead offering scene after anti-climactic scene of characters staring at nothing or brooms sweeping floors. Lynch is in it at least partly 'for the lulz,' subverting his most devoted fans' expectations of what *Twin Peaks* is supposed to be and, in turn, how viewers should respond to the problems of media oversaturation and paranoia endemic in the era of Peak TV. As *Twin Peaks: The Return* reflects on both the television viewing habits and online archive its original run created, this chapter argues, Lynch's trolling leverages disappointment and boredom into a form of sublimity, asking us to explore what we most need out of television art in the digital age.

To understand fully how *The Return* comments on television fan cultures, we must understand how the original run of *Twin Peaks* shaped fan culture itself, and how fan culture in turn constructed a legacy for the series as shaping the future of television programming. The show was legendarily associated with its fans, partly as a result of the manner in which the show's marketing blitz of 'Who killed Laura Palmer?' deliberately courted a cult audience (Lavery 1995, p. 4). But the fandom exceeded even this targeting by using early forms of Internet discussion boards to set up a crowd-sourced sleuthing service: the *alt.tv.twinpeaks* forum became the online equivalent of an obsessed detective's corkboard, with hypertext strings pinned in place to connect each user's theory of not only who killed the prom queen, but also the show's deeper mysteries about the Black Lodge and the nature of evil more broadly.

For Henry Jenkins, pioneer of fan studies as an academic discipline and first-hand observer of the phenomenon,[1] the relationship between *Twin Peaks* fandom and emerging online discussion technologies were, to an extent, symbiotic: during its original airing, the Internet made it 'possible to trace the process by which television meanings are socially produced, circulated, and revised' (Jenkins 2006, p. 118), while *Twin Peaks* served as a perfect vehicle for popularizing these tools among a relatively small group of early adopters of the open Internet. Even more than a tool for finding like-minded viewers, though, online discussion boards encouraged the growth of characteristics that we now identify with modern fandom generally, such as their self-perception as particularly 'sophisticated television viewers' and their belief that they most appreciate shows that stand outside of the 'mainstream' of American

tastes, in spite of the high ratings such *outré* offerings as *Twin Peaks* might receive among mainstream viewers (Jenkins 2006, p. 119).

This distinction between a community of online detectives and an atomized mass of 'normal,' 'casual' viewers underpins fan culture today. While this distinction between 'fan' and 'normal viewer' certainly impacted the experience of, for example, earlier *Star Trek* fans who circulated self-produced zines through mailing lists, *Twin Peaks* amplified this feeling through the simple accident of its release date, its many puzzles complicated through a serial story structure that could be endlessly pored over between episodes (and even during commercial breaks) in a paratextual online extension of the narrative. The *alt.tv.twinpeaks* board was the first online space, for instance, where fans compiled comprehensive chronologies of the events of the series, built digital libraries of sounds from pirated tapes of the episodes, or explored and mapped out the local geography of filming locations. In an interview with Jenkins before the release of the reboot series, Liz Shannon Miller reports, 'By creating such a captivating mystery, 'Twin Peaks' taught a nascent group of internet users what it meant to engage with TV online' (Miller 2017). In other words, *Twin Peaks* not only encouraged antagonism between fans and casual viewers, but also encouraged fans to seek refuge in virtual spaces to indulge their fandom in ways exponentially more complex than before. This online refuge only expanded in what Rebecca Williams calls the 'post-object era' of *Twin Peaks* fandom, where fans endlessly debated these mysteries and used new media to, for instance, write collaborative fan fiction for a desired third season on Twitter (2016, p. 146).

In the 25 years since its original run, fandom, the Internet, and television itself necessarily all transformed, but *Twin Peaks*' originary mythos of intertwining the three cast a long shadow over all of them. While this chapter is not concerned with whether the series changed television or online fan communities forever (see Garner 2016, for a scholarly account of its impact), it is concerned with how both the creators of the series (especially Lynch and Frost) and its fans online have adopted a belief in this influence as a basic article of faith about modern pop culture. Moreover, this conflation of online fandom and the series' lasting impact on television narrative and aesthetics were coded into *The Return*'s DNA, its marketing and fan discourse (as well as its serial structure and narrative rhythms) each explicitly insisting that we all live in the reality of a television world that Lynch and online fans created together.

This collapse of the online fandom into the series permeated *The Return*'s marketing campaign, which began with Lynch's and Frost's simultaneous announcements of the show on Twitter (Dom 2014), encouraged fan activism in a 'No Lynch, No *Twin Peaks*' campaign on YouTube and a trending #SaveTwinPeaks hashtag on Twitter when the production's budget negotiations hit a snag (see Diaz 2015; or Rodriguez 2017), and aired the first two episodes free on Facebook in honor of National Donut Day (Strauss 2017). Every aspect of their strategy was designed to cater specifically to an Internet-savvy fandom: Gary Levine, Showtime's president of programming, even pointed out that he was excited to see how the show would work in a 'social media universe,' since, for him, it has always already felt like a 'social media phenomenon,' like it had been 'viral in some way back then' (Cohen 2017). Immediately prior to its release, Henry Jenkins himself was called upon by news outlets to comment on the *Twin Peaks* phenomenon, adding his own voice to the show's official publicity tour and adding his ethos as the foremost expert on how fandoms use convergence technologies (see Miller 2017; or Rose 2017). Similarly, the Blu-Ray collection of the reboot series hit shelves with special features alternating between 'fan service' behind-the-scenes footage and short PR reels with talking heads from the production discussing how the original show shaped both modern fan culture and modern television narrative. In other words, while the original show's non-rational mysteries may have serendipitously benefitted from its release at exactly the moment in which online technologies made collective fan engagement with them both more possible and desirable, *The Return* was born of the 'forensic fandom' of social media (Rose 2017), in much the same way that the evil BOB is born of US experiments with the atomic bomb in the show's most celebrated instalment.

Importantly, while fans of the original run set the protocols for fan engagement, they also ultimately constructed the lovingly antagonistic relationship with showrunners that characterizes modern fandom more broadly. On *alt.tv.twinpeaks*, they routinely asserted that 'those who focused only on the Palmer murder'—that is, the majority of its huge audience—'were missing the point of the series,' elevating their own status above other viewers, but also—sometimes inadvertently and sometimes by design—positioning themselves in competition with Lynch and Frost (Jenkins 2006, p. 122). Jenkins notes, 'While many critics complained that the series had become so complex as to

be incomprehensible, the computer net fans feared it was becoming too simple and predictable, selling out to the lowest common denominator, betraying the promise it offered as the ultimate problem set' (2006, p. 129). Decades later, he revises this formulation to point out that the fandom was 'demanding more depth, more layers, than they were receiving' (Miller 2017).

But this collective demand for depth often transformed Lynch into a trickster figure in the fandom's imagination, working behind the scenes and behind the computer screen, monitoring fan discussions for the sole purpose of throwing his most ardent viewers off-track. They assumed that the show 'all made sense on some higher level, not yet fully recognizable, that would be more profound than anyone had previously suspected,' but equally assumed that Lynch and Frost would do everything in their power to force those who wanted it badly enough to work for that sense of closure and coherence (Jenkins 2006, p. 130).[2] Balanced with die-hard fans' hope that the show would end meaningfully in a closed interpretive loop was the fear that Lynch would engage them in a long-form tease preventing them from achieving that necessary narrative closure.

This may sound like the fandom was struck with mass paranoia, but, in their defense, they were largely correct in those fears: Lynch did deliberately refuse that kind of closure on multiple occasions—famously so in the original series finale, which closed with what many saw as a classic cliffhanger—and he went into *The Return* with a similarly sly motive of teasing viewers with what they hoped to see only to tear it away. As early as 1990, Lynch commented explicitly on denying fans the 'drug' of closure: 'Closure. I keep hearing that word … Everybody knows that on television they'll see the end of the story in the last 15 minutes. It's like a drug. To me, that's the beauty of *Twin Peaks*: we throw in some curve balls. As soon as a show has a sense of closure, it gives you an excuse to forget you've seen the damn thing' (Rose 2017). Such demands for closure, as well as the producers' responses to this desire, have become increasingly complex as online television fandom has become more sophisticated: fans who had created their own massive Wiki site famously were divided in their reactions to the seemingly unanswered questions in the *Peaks*-inspired desert island mystery *Lost* (2004–2010), and Reddit-bound detectives were equally divided in their disappointment in the overly simplistic solution to the puzzles of the first season of the similarly Lynchian *True Detective* (2014–). In each case, *Lost* showrunners

Carlton Cuse and Damon Lindelof and *True Detective* showrunner Nic Pizzolatto actively engaged the fandom, making promises at conventions about their mysteries and writing responses to message boards assuring their fans of both a plan and a purpose to be revealed to fans as a reward for their due diligence in collective sleuthing. Needless to say, these promises directly from the showrunners only aggravated this antagonism and the perception that they were somehow out to deliberately trick their fans. Or, as Jenkins described the *Twin Peaks* fandom, 'the more authority fans ascribed to the author, the more suspicious they became of that authority' (p. 132).

Unsurprisingly then, in the context encouraged by such showrunners, *The Return* builds this forensic fandom into the narrative, commenting on it and reflecting these practices back to the fans like one of Lynch's typically warped or broken mirrors. Much of the first episode of the series concerns a young man (Benjamin Rosenfield) charged with sitting in front of and staring at a glass box, recording anything that happens with the most sophisticated DVR system imaginable. He quietly stares at what is essentially a blank television screen: occasionally he recalibrates the tools necessary to interpret whatever story events he captures, but mostly he sits in bored anticipation for something to happen that justifies the experience of watching it at all. We are told later in the series that in the years that the box was operational, only two images ever manifested in it, one of them a grotesque being credited as 'The Experiment' (Erica Eynon) who violently kills the young man and his lover (Madeline Zima) during the one moment in which he chooses not to pay strict attention to the 'screen.'

The entire tableau is a warning to fans: be sure to watch the glass box extremely carefully, using all of the tools at your disposal, even when it appears that nothing is happening—even when sitting up late at night to watch it on Showtime or on streaming outlets, waiting for the narrative to show something recognizably *Twin Peaks*—or you will miss the most important, indelible, and unique images that the show has to offer. This premiere episode allegory tells us that not adopting the kind of online forensic fandom that characterized only the most ardent viewers of the original run is the way of narrative death, our hopes for closure eviscerated like that poor young couple. And yet, that metaphor builds into it the antagonism and tricksterism fans had already come to know and love: watch closely, Lynch seems to say, but also prepare to be bored for long stretches of time.[3]

In other words, Lynch advocates an affective viewing experience that modernist literary theorist Sianne Ngai calls the 'stuplime,' combining the stupefying affect of boredom with the fleeting sense of terror associated with the Kantian sublime. More specifically, she describes this ugly feeling as 'a concatenation of boredom and astonishment—a bringing together of what "dulls" and what "irritates" or agitates; of sharp, sudden excitation and prolonged desensitization, exhaustion, or fatigue' (Ngai 2005, p. 271). For Ngai, this complex fusion of emotions in the stuplime is not an end unto itself: stuplimity is an aesthetic and emotional overpowering, a combination of two affective 'responses that confront us with the limitations of our capacity for responding in general' (2005, p. 262). In frustrating a diligent viewer's obsessive quest for depth, layers, closure, and sense 'on a higher level,' Lynch and Frost use the stuplime in a way that, as Ngai describes, 'strategically enables us to find new forms of "coherence" in an incoherent world' (p. 296).

Stuplimity puts into relief those moments in *The Return* that force us to watch, for instance, a broom in close-up sweeping up debris left over from a concert for minutes of screentime on end, or seemingly interminable chats among characters whom we have never met discussing oblique minutiae in the daily lives of other characters we have never met and who have no apparent connection to any of the main storylines. As one review described the entire series, 'It's been designed to hypnotize. The show slows down your biorhythms as you watch it—which makes the sudden bursts of horrifying imagery even more alarming' (Burns 2017). These moments force fans out of their complacent habits of television viewing, even if those habits are incredibly rich collaborative reading strategies: the stuplime confronts fans with the fact that the collective intelligence they spent the past quarter of a century building is not an appropriate methodology for reading and interpreting a show like *Twin Peaks* in the twenty-first century.

Indeed, rather than a highbrow modernist literary strategy, in a decidedly twenty-first-century text that cannily incorporates its fandom's online reading strategies into the text itself, Lynch's use of the stuplime feels more analogous to a particular type of fannish behavior—or more appropriately, 'anti-fan' behavior—that has grown in proportion with collaborative online technologies: his nods to the fans throughout the series are a showrunner's version of online 'trolling,' which, according to the online crowd-sourced *Urban Dictionary* is the 'art of deliberately, cleverly, and secretly pissing people off, usually via the internet'

and often by 'convincing your victim that [you] truly believe in what you are saying, no matter how outrageous' (Zerotrousers 2009). Tama Leaver notes that the definition of online 'trolls' has evolved considerably over their short history, as it 'morphed from a description of newsgroup and discussion board commentators who appeared genuine but were actually just provocateurs' to more recent politicized definitions that articulate trolling behaviors through 'anonymity, memes and abusive comments most clearly represented by users of the iconic online image board 4chan, and, at times, the related Anonymous political movement' (Leaver 2013, p. 216). In most of these definitions, as Ryan M. Milner notes, trolls are 'undergirded by a "logic of lulz" that favors distanced irony and critique' (Milner 2013, p. 62), striving to disrupt and make jokes at the expense of groups of people who earnestly strive for collaborative discussion online, or, in the case of entertainment media, who work together as a good-faith interpretive community. As Nathaniel Tkacz observes, trolls are marked 'as one-off exceptions [to "open communities" like fandoms], as problematic individuals bent on destroying the common spaces and creations of the well-meaning many' (Tkacz 2013, p. 15).

In this context, it only seems appropriate that professional reviewers (Willmore 2017) and fansites (Allen 2017; or Rouben 2017) would describe Lynch's *Return* to Twin Peaks as an epic act of trolling and that fans on Reddit would then debate the merits of using that term (Slim_Fatty 2017). The show is uniquely imbricated with its mythic identity online among fans, and it thus feels accurate to describe some of these relentlessly stuplime moments as Lynch and Frost 'flaming' their fans. In particular, fans and reviewers alike are prone to point to a musical performance that closes out the thirteenth episode of the season (see Bradley 2017). The show had already rebranded the Roadhouse from local biker bar with Julee Cruise soundtrack into a hot regional destination for headliners like Lynch alumnus Rebekah Del Rio (with Moby silently appearing as backup guitar player) or 'the' Nine Inch Nails. And yet, this inexplicable musical mecca even more inexplicably gives original series character James Hurley (James Marshall) a venue to reprise 'Just You and I,' originally performed with Donna Hayward (Lara Flynn Boyle) and Laura Palmer's doppel-cousin Maddy (Sheryl Lee). During the performance, Renee (Jessica Szohr)—one of the young women unconnected to the other main storylines—becomes visibly moved by the song, weeping as she listens to the repeated off-key falsetto of the fifties-style ballad.

The scene at first glance appears to be the ultimate in earnest fan service: it convinces its 'victim' (fans) it really and 'truly believe[s]' what it is presenting, giving us an emotionally raw response to a musical cue that shaped the original series. But it also goes alarmingly off the rails and 'piss[es] people off' by virtue of its own ridiculousness: fans have poked fun at James's musical 'invitation to love' for 25 years, and this reboot has not only given him a literal stage to sing it again—in full—but asks bemused fans to take it seriously, pointing to the very serious responses that James's fans within the universe of the show have. In the Reddit thread cited above, one user notes, 'If that James roadhouse scene wasn't "trolling," I don't know what is.' It bears all of the hallmarks of perfectly executed lulz, constructed by a master troll:

> As the troll, you affirm a playful mastery of Internet lore and practice that outstrips that of [your] target. You assert your distinction in a positional game which mobilises and accumulates technological, cultural and social capital. You aggrandise yourself as a puppeteer, maintaining control over your own passions while asking the other to question the bearings of their affects: 'u mad?' … The troll is proprietorial of particular forums, or even of the network as a whole. The troll looks to repel incomers, to deter the masses, or at least introduce a tiny break-flow into the circuit of discourse. (Wilson et al. 2013, p. 1–2)

James's moment in the red velvet spotlight and all other similarly stuplime moments in the series demonstrate Lynch and Frost's absolute proprietary control over the narrative terrains they had previously invited fans to poach from: they actively prevent all 'n00bs' from approaching its gates, and they bait experts' interest with the promise of resolution and a nostalgic trip back to a time and place long abandoned only to sit them down in a chair to watch an empty glass box. As one fan-reviewer writes, '[W]henever the show promises answers, they instead get dragged out by long, uncomfortable, and meaningless scenes' (Rouben 2017).

But as Wilson, Fuller, and McCrea note, the questions we should always ask about trolls—from white nationalists who hurl racist or sexist abuse against casting decisions in superhero films to the more politically ambivalent activities of Anonymous—are, 'How are nonsense, lulz, play, non-communication, violence, noise and negativity being marshalled? Against whom, and by whom? … Who is laughing at whom? Should we be asking trolls to back up, or join in? Are we trolling up, or trolling

down?' (Wilson et al. 2013, p. 6) In other words, toward what ends does trolling work, or, even more pointedly, what are the ethics of this trolling?

Ngai asks precisely these questions about the stuplime more generally, arguing that, while a 'negative' feeling, in its invocation of Kantian distance and judgment, stuplimity necessarily makes way for a more explicitly critical state. The stuplime 'asks us to ask what ways of responding our culture makes available to us, and under what conditions. The shocking and the boring prompt us to look for new strategies of affective engagement and to extend the circumstances under which engagement becomes possible' (Ngai 2005, p. 262). For instance, the texts that Ngai examines—Gertrude Stein's and Samuel Beckett's novels, among others—'produce another affective state in [the stuplime's] wake, a secondary feeling that seems strangely neutral, unqualified, "open",' a purely affectless disinterestedness that, 'in its formal strategies of postmodern accretion, ultimately critiques capitalism's formal system of accretive power' (2005, p. 284). Ngai might argue similarly about these stuplime trolljobs: for Lynch and Frost, trolling is part of a larger aesthetic and ethic that implicitly critiques the power dynamics and accretions of media capital that characterize televisual engagement in the era of 'Peak TV.'

Lynch's and Frost's return to *Twin Peaks* was announced on Twitter shortly before FX's CEO John Landgraf coined the phrase 'Peak TV' to describe the problem of a glutted marketplace arising from so many online streaming television options converging with the more traditional (and escalating) options offered by broadcast, basic cable, and pay-cable television networks. Since 2015, Landgraf has hosted annual data-driven, state-of-the-televisual-union talks that describe an even more complicated web of issues each time: in 2017, the year that *The Return* aired on Showtime, Peak TV was still rising, as 487 scripted series aired on all available outlets, up by seven percent from the previous year (not including the 750-plus unscripted series each year). One commentator paints an even more problematic picture: 'between 2012 and 2017, the streaming scripted series output has increased 680 percent. Basic cable shows have jumped 40 percent, pay cable is up 45 percent and broadcast has increased 29 percent. Overall, the number of scripted shows is up 69 percent in that time frame' (Lynch 2018).

The problem Landgraf identified and named, then, was not a question of television quality—after all, 'quality television' was a term that

has defined the discourse since *The Sopranos* (1999–2007) initiated the so-called 'Golden Age of Television.' Rather, the problem was sheer quantity of output, which has consequences both at the production and consumption ends: as Paskin notes, '[T]his volume is keeping audiences from finding good series they would enjoy, and this is unsustainable on the network end of things. … The sheer number of decent shows currently on offer is a big part of the whelm, but compounding that is the wide variety of forms good TV now takes and the vast profusion of places it can be found' (Paskin 2015). Peak TV can be a double-edged sword, encouraging unique and uniquely excellent content, but struggling to find its audience and placing pressure on network budgets trying to keep up with this televisual arms race. In his latest fireside chat at the end of 2017, Landgraf began by citing Dickens's iconic opening from a *Tale of Two Cities*, replacing the 'best of times' and 'worst of times' of its pre-revolutionary French setting of aristocratic excess and impoverished masses with a post-millennial setting of media excess and impoverished ratings (Flint 2018).

Indeed, only a month after *The Return* had aired its final episode, Hub Entertainment Research released the results of a survey revealing a large increase in respondents who felt that there were too many shows available: around half of U.S. consumers who watch at least five hours of TV per week and have broadband connections felt paralyzed by the wealth of choices (Wallenstein 2017). The issue is only being magnified by two defining trends dominating viewers' experiences: the demands that quality television makes on its viewers as well as the constant influx of reboots and sequels. As many have noted, the level of narrative complexity and puzzle-solving that felt new and fresh for the original run of *Twin Peaks* has become *de rigueur* among prestige dramas, and the intense puzzle-solving discussions of online fans so novel in the early 1990s are simply another element of the marketing of shows today. Moreover, *The Return* premiered in a television environment replete with old shows resurrecting or being rescued by new networks or streaming services, like *Gilmore Girls* (2000–2007), *The Killing* (2011–2014), and *The X-Files* (1993–2002, 2016–). In spite of David Lynch's enthusiasm for the 'great coming of age of cable' that allows people to have 'a cinema on a TV screen' (Nguyen 2017), this is hardly the ideal environment for Lynch's and Frost's return to television. How could a 25-year-old show hope to find its audience in a world of viewers increasingly disgruntled by the overload of television choices and a wealth of

shows that regularly look and feel like *Twin Peaks*? And how would Lynch's decidedly oddball aesthetic play out for a social media fanbase whose penchant for television puzzling has only grown more sophisticated and demanding of closure?

To borrow the phrasing of one television critic who noted that '[s]omething always rang a little false about the idea of *Twin Peaks* getting a revival in the vein of Peak TV rescue operations like *Arrested Development*, *Roseanne*, and *Will & Grace*,' and who questioned whether Lynch was 'really about to become just another player in the IP sweepstakes, giving the people what they want instead of striving to give us what we didn't know we need?' Well, 'in retrospect, it's a silly question' (Herman 2017). As others indicate, the revival 'doesn't work like other shows' in the prestige Peak TV model which 'favor densely plotted, tightly scripted setups and payoffs … received primarily as narrative delivery devices—their plotlines incessantly scrutinized' (Burns 2017).

In this context, Lynch's mass trolling explicitly 'piss[es] off' viewers who come to the show expecting the kind of densely plotted closure the age of social media fandom demands of its prestige shows in Peak TV. The uncomfortable sense of *déja vu* extends beyond the distorted nostalgia for the town of Twin Peaks and skewers some of the most iconically weird images of the Peak TV era more broadly. Thus, the desert housing development where we meet Dougie Jones (and which contains some of the most elliptical moments in the entire series) feels like an even more sordid version of the perpetually unfinished housing development constructed by the Bluth family in the *Arrested Development* (2013–) reboot on Netflix.[4] An extended sequence in which a Vegas gangster's moll chases down an errant housefly recalls and perverts one of the most avant-garde (and derided among fans on social media) episodes of the series *Breaking Bad* (2008–2013), a show that Lynch himself really loved.[5] Citing a scene in which Agent Cooper (trapped in the somnambulant body of Dougie Jones) fumbles with a television remote, one critic observes:

> So much of the new *Twin Peaks* was like this: patient if you loved it, boring if you didn't. We're used to watching content that is heavily edited, cut to every chase … [I]t feels like a wry joke about TV itself: Who among us can't relate to Dougie, tapping away on every confusing button of one of our three TV remotes, a piece of technology built to confuse. (Franich 2017)

The stuplime always works this way, playing on the viewer's patience, sneaking in arguments about larger systems through its strategic deployment of confusion and boredom. Specifically designed to upset the kinds of Peak TV expectations about narrative 'payoff' created by the online fandom of *Twin Peaks*'s original run, *The Return* instead validates the patience it takes to simply sit, marking time's passage as its own fulfilling aesthetic experience. We stare at a seemingly empty glass box while the entirety of the televisual world is passing us by, and, for Lynch and Frost, that is a victory when we are assaulted from all sides by television options.

But beyond simply a television auteur setting out to upset our expectations, Lynch is more aggressively trollish in his disdain for what fans want from a Peak TV version of *Twin Peaks*. Lynch has a habit of taking his aggression with the system of television out on the fans who love him most: lest we forget, he opened his theatrical film expansion of this universe in *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* (1992) with a television set smashed with a sledgehammer and offered a narrative that similarly refused to pay off the enduring cliffhangers from the series, instead making the setting more traumatic, dangerous to love in the way that online fans had. TV auteurs proliferate nowadays (what with cinema-friendly names like Martin Scorsese, Steven Soderbergh, Spike Lee, Baz Luhrmann, Jane Campion, and David Fincher all gracing the opening credits of Golden Age television shows), but Lynch's use of the stuplime aggressively stands against the intertwining of media technologies in everyone's imagination, pointing out the dangerous ends of online fandom.

After all, his punchline to forcing us to watch paint dry with Jacoby is to sell Jacoby as a Peak TV online showrunner. As Dr. Amp, he livestreams an Alex Jones *Infowars*-style red-faced rant against the 'fucks [who] are at it again' in the 'vast, global corporate conspiracy,' seguing into an infomercial to sell 'Dr. Amp's Gold Shit-Digging Shovel' for the very low price of $29.99 plus shipping to the adoring fans watching on their tablets. The forensic fandom encouraged by Peak TV's multimedia narratives, this storyline suggests, leads to a worldview in which every structure has an antagonistic hand acting as puppeteer: paranoid conspiracy logic is inherent to even discerning puzzle-solving fandoms desiring 'layers,' 'depth,' and the visible marker of a hand moving all of the pieces carefully into place. John Landgraf implicitly agrees, noting,

> Information technology and the internet are rapidly transforming almost every aspect of our lives—some for better, some for worse. … All the world's combined knowledge is at our fingertips. But the same technology that makes this possible is robbing us of deeper insight … [Internet culture] has elevated the voices of many people who deserve to be heard, but it has also elevated the voices of many people who have nothing of value to say. (Holloway 2018)

Peak TV, he argues, is simply a 'sideshow' in a much larger 'media circus' that has no real accountability for the content it produces in pursuit of profit. For Landgraf, the best TV cuts through the 'noise' and delivers 'carefully curated and highly contextualized' messages.

The dangerous affective politics of the Alex Joneses of the Internet are fully embedded into the logic of Peak TV as an institution, but *The Return* trolls against this dark undercurrent to what is otherwise mainstream media practice. Some define trolls not as mean-spirited disrupters of the Internet, but as defenders 'who constitute a kind of immune-system response to the recoding of the Internet for corporate and mainstream sensibilities. They stand against the hegemonic values [of] a corporatised Internet; they respond to the massification of digital life' (Wilson et al. 2013, p. 4). Lynch is a troll who forces everyone to pause, to be aware of the passage of time as they think through their own boredom. Online fans famously love the thrill of following their favorite shows down rabbit holes they perceive to be dug out by the loving hands of showrunners, but in a famously, languorously stuplime moment, Chief Hawk (Michael Horse) warns, 'No, it's not about the bunny!' When asked about whether fan theories had any significance to him, Lynch responded: 'No, but the thing I love is the fact that people are thinking. … We're all like detectives. … It's beautiful that people are thinking' (Nguyen 2017). In his epic troll, Lynch transforms collaborative thinking into an aesthetic of its own, a thinking that is 'beautiful' because it cuts through the noise.

Notes

1. Jenkins's study appeared so early in the discipline's development that several pages explained what the Internet was, using the outdated term 'computer net.' While there are more recent valuable scholarly works, this early article becomes part of the mythos of this show's influence on television

fan cultures online, as Jenkins became part of the publicity surrounding the show's return.

2. These notions of a producer working through fan notes to throw them off track was only recently debunked. Frost's response to early exposure to the message boards was: 'I received a stack of printouts on my desk as thick as an L.A. phone book. Chat room dialogues from some online forums that had sprung up. Needless to say, astonishing. I was an early adapter [*sic*], but still here was concrete evidence a new world was forming right under our feet. I read about nine pages and realized "this way lies madness, it's way too much to think about." I set them aside and went back to making the show' (Miller 2017).
3. In even more explicit incorporation of fan practices, the character William Hastings (Matthew Lillard) mentions, mid-interrogation, having made a website called *Search for the Zone*, which producers actually created in all of its early 1990s-style glory (Dessem 2017). Fans flocked to the site, pored over clues (a GPS tag, 'Guest Book,' hidden sound files, and so on). Reddit assumed that it was an Alternate Reality Game (ARG), but, unlike other shows like *Lost*, it proved a dead end that added nothing to the narrative.
4. One of the Bluth clan appears in *The Return*: Michael Cera plays Wally Brando, who expounds upon his travels across the country to Sheriff Truman in a breathtakingly stuplime moment; like viewers, Truman stares in disbelief at the monologue's length.
5. For Lynch's appreciation of *Breaking Bad* and *Mad Men*, as well as the 'beauty' of the programming on the car-centric cable network Velocity, see Ryan (2017).

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PART II

In the Lodges: Subjectivity and (Un)Realism

CHAPTER 7

'Between Two Mysteries': Intermediacy in *Twin Peaks: The Return*

Thomas Britt

Twin Peaks (1990–1991) co-creator and visual artist/film and television writer/director David Lynch is often characterized by his resistance to providing answers to questions about the meanings and mechanics of his creative works. Following the original airing of the series finale of *Twin Peaks: The Return* (2017), *Vulture* assembled several such refusals under the headline 'Every Time David Lynch Has Ignored Questions About *Twin Peaks: The Return*'s Finale Plot.' Contrary to the headline, these responses by the writer/director are not an act of ignoring, but instead an acknowledgment of the essential subjectivity, interactivity, and above all, the mystery of what happens when these ideas are produced for the screen and then pondered by viewers.

Somewhere between the act of creation and the act of reception is a wide intermediate space populated with a seemingly limitless number of associations and individual interpretations. Lynch himself has theorized

'Between Two Mysteries' is the title of a 2009 Mount Eerie song, written by Phil Elverum, which includes references to Lynch's *Twin Peaks* as well as Angelo Badalamenti's original score for the series.

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that each individual film/television viewer experiences a distinct version of a collectively experienced film/television exhibition (Lynch 2014). Lynch does occasionally offer clues to discern the meaning of his works, both extra-textually (issuing '10 Clues' during the DVD release and promotion of *Mulholland Dr.* [2001]) and within the texts (the lists of tasks to achieve or information to remember issued by *Twin Peaks* character(s) The Giant/The Fireman/??????? [Carel Struycken]). Yet even these pieces of evidence serve to aid the enjoyment of experiencing mysteries. None of the information provided is said to solve anything.

This chapter explores *Twin Peaks: The Return* as a work that operates according to philosophical propositions about individual humans and other entities of essence and existence, of being and becoming, of act and potency. Informed by age-old principles of Aristotle, St. Thomas, and other philosophers, this short journey through certain aspects of *The Return* examines the particular way Lynch merges observable material reality with abstraction and immaterial activity. The term/concept of intermediacy, though not exact, is a useful way to frame the primary dramatic action and theme of *The Return*. After outlining the apparent circumstances and stakes of the plot, this chapter will contrast the dualism and paradoxes of material/immaterial interaction using the narratives of characters Margaret Lanterman (Catherine E. Coulson) and FBI Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan). Finally, it concludes with impressions *The Return* offers about the interactivity between physical and spiritual worlds and the philosophical/theological implications therein.

When thinking through the plots of original series *Twin Peaks*, prequel feature film *Fire Walk with Me* (1992), deleted scene and alternate take compilation *Twin Peaks: The Missing Pieces* (2014) and concluding installment *Twin Peaks: The Return*, one simple summary is: a girl, Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee), has been murdered. FBI Agent Dale Cooper and his associates come to her hometown of Twin Peaks, Washington, to investigate her murder, which is linked to other disappearances and murders happening in the area. Alternatively, an equally simple summary is: evil non-human forces that possess and consume the sufferings and souls of ordinary humans become known to human observers, including Cooper and his associates, during and after the investigation of Laura Palmer's murder in Twin Peaks, Washington. Both of these descriptions are true, but the primary actors and agents therein become so distinct as to seem to belong to entirely separate tracks of existence. In one, the boundaries and stakes are those of a small town, once stable but now

exposed as harboring corruption at various levels, especially family and business. In Season Two of *Twin Peaks*, criminal murderer Jean Renault identifies Cooper himself and Cooper's arrival as catalysts for the ruination of Twin Peaks the town. In the other reading of the show, the boundaries and stakes are of the unknown universe, much more difficult to assess in terms of causation and purity and corruption because its components are unknowable.

The perceived premature end of the original *Twin Peaks* series is popularly linked to the early Season-Two resolution of the primary plot unveiling Laura Palmer's killer (her father, Leland, possessed by an entity called BOB [Frank Silva]), after which the remaining two-thirds of a season moved away from 'the story of the little girl who lives down the lane,' which is a line spoken by several human and non-human characters in *The Return*. In some ways *The Return* benefits from an awareness and appreciation of temporal qualities. The quarter-century latency between the original end and the new series beginning establishes relatable markers of aging and other dynamic processes. When *The Return* begins, the characters are older, the effects of previous conflicts persist, and there is a new Sherriff in town (Robert Forster's Frank Truman). And there are still missing pieces of Laura Palmer's mystery to discover. Yet *The Return* also engages more fully than its predecessor with the forces beyond space and time that shape the observable reality of the small-town characters, whether or not those characters acknowledge the existence of such forces. What *The Return* implicitly asks of its viewers is to contemplate an upper/outer reality that is unknowable alongside the lower one which is apparently finite and observable, as well as to consider the probability that the upper/outer reality is more consequential than the lower one.

Though the original series did frequently invoke a supernatural/spiritual essence beyond the material universe, the dualism with which the series dramatized those distinctive realms was relatively easy to process. For example, characters like Major Garland Briggs (Don S. Davis) and Margaret Lanterman, who had experienced encounters with the upper/outer reality, came back with physical brands that provided clues to portals between worlds. Additionally, the resolution of the murder of Laura Palmer was also rather squarely delineated when the murderer Leland is apparently rid of the demon BOB at death and to some degree absolved by Cooper himself. Cooper recites this passage from the *Bardo Thodol*, which, according to Tibetan Buddhism, affects or aids the consciousness of an individual passing into death and rebirth:

> Thy breathing is about to cease. Thy *guru* hath set thee face to face before with the Clear Light; and now thou art about to experience it in its Reality in the *Bardo* state, wherein all things are like the void and cloudless sky, and the naked, spotless intellect is like unto a transparent vacuum without circumference or centre. At this moment, know thou thyself; and abide in that state. (Dawa-Samdup and Evans-Wentz 2000, p. 91)

The concluding episode of the original television series finds Cooper having gone into one of the Lodges that are part of the series' outer/upper reality and being replaced by his doppelgänger. Thus in his own form of rebirth, the newly generated Cooper can be viewed as a perversion of the sort of destiny that the former Cooper proclaimed for Leland. The original Cooper, now stuck in a middle state, has taken on a physical manifestation that is in some existential way *not himself*. However there is no suggestion that he has necessarily altered observable reality for everyone else. Plainly, the 'Good' Cooper is locked up while a 'Bad' Cooper is free to affect the observable world of Twin Peaks. Anything beyond that is speculation that the author (Lynch) does not substantiate. In *The Return*, the Bardo state to which Cooper alluded, and/or some similarly intermediate and/or paradoxical states, are central to the ways in which essence and existence are shaped and sorted. *The Return* is a mystery and a detective story on a much larger scale than the original television series because the field of inquiry is so much more complex. *The Return* is predicated on human characters who are manipulated by unknowable forces and who are trying to make sense of the contradictory and seemingly impossible states in which they are stuck or are passing through.

In the original series, the interaction of the material and spiritual (and extraterrestrial and nonmaterial) worlds included clues and cautions, such as the quality of courage with which one enters and exits intermediate spaces. In Season Two, Deputy Tommy 'Hawk' Hill (Michael Horse) says to Cooper about the Black Lodge: 'But it is said that if you confront the Black Lodge with imperfect courage, it will utterly annihilate your soul.' This Lodge activity—like many of the mysteries General Briggs so firmly believes in and recounts—contains a discernable logic of causality and traversability. Hawk's words also suggest that there is a non-annihilating nonmaterial state a character could enter, if they first exit the material world the right way. Leland's death, despite his prior villainy, is one such striking example. *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* maintains this view of causality and change, as Ronette Pulaski (Phoebe Augustine) appears to confess and pray away her bondage, thus staying

alive. Likewise, Laura, through choosing to die, can gaze upon her angel once more.

The more complex and varied theme of intermediacy in *The Return* can be broken down into a few categories according to characters and their responses. Dominant among these are characters that possess knowledge or insight that might be a useful substitute/analogue for perfect courage. Margaret, also known as the Log Lady, is a character whose knowledge, in the original series, benefits those willing to listen. She is also a witness to the sounds (if not the sights) of Leland's attack on Ronette and Laura, her awareness conveyed in a *Fire Walk with Me* scene included in *The Missing Pieces*. By all appearances, she has drawn clear boundaries for how active she will be in communicating what she knows about the immaterial world to those with whom she interacts in the material world. By conveying messages ostensibly from her log, and interfering no more than that, she appears to maintain a safe distance from the extraterrestrial forces that have enveloped her at least once earlier in her life. Margaret's presence in *The Return* is nothing short of revelatory. In scenes shot not long before Coulson's death from cancer, Margaret appears in several exchanges with Deputy Hawk. On these occasions she is alone in her home, talking over the phone with Hawk. In Part 10, 'Laura is the One,' she provides a significant piece of information for both the characters within the story world (such as Hawk) and those watching the story world on television (viewers). She says: 'Watch and listen to the dream of time and space. It all comes out now, flowing like a river. That which is and is not. Hawk. Laura is the One.' Nearly every phrase of that short monologue turns out to be a directive for the primary plot. 'Laura is the One' is a phrase that dates back to 1993, when Lynch created introductions to *Twin Peaks* episodes airing in syndication. These introductions were monologues featuring Margaret, and she acquainted viewers with Twin Peaks by saying, among other cryptic things, that 'Laura is the One.' In *The Return*, 'Laura is the One' takes on new meanings compared to the emphasis on the passive dead girl from the original series. In the earlier Part 8 of the TV series, viewers see the way in which Laura Palmer, perhaps as essence prior to her existence, is manufactured and transported to Earth by supernatural characters known as the Fireman and Señorita Dido (Joy Nash), possibly as a response to the material event of the Trinity test and the subsequent introduction of demonic BOB. 'Laura is the One' in this context positions Laura as an intermediating entity spawned by supernatural intermediators, fated to become a daughter of parents possessed by a drive to destroy and consume her.

'That which is and is not' is a phrase that connects a large network of characters in *The Return*, beginning with Laura. In Part 2, 'The Stars Turn and a Time Presents Itself,' the trapped Cooper sees Laura again in the Black Lodge and she says to him: 'I am dead. Yet I live.' If the viewer is to believe that this Laura is still an individual who was in the form of a living human being in the material world, then perhaps this statement means her physical death (which is a fact of the series) precedes the continuing/new life of the soul (which seems possible in the Lodge, but the metaphysics of the Lodges and the Red Room have never been spelled out). Another possibility, increasingly likely as Cooper's *Return* journey commences, is that some version of Laura is in fact still alive in the material world, despite having died within a previous/alternate arrangement of the material world.

In Part 3, 'Call for Help,' Deputy Andy Brennan (Harry Goaz), Lucy Brennan (Kimmy Robertson), and Hawk begin to examine evidence related to Cooper and share an extended (comic) variation on the concept of 'that which is and is not,' centered on the language of the difference between some piece of evidence that is 'here' versus 'missing.' As their conversation goes on and on, it becomes clear that a number of difficult propositions are involved in trying to distinguish what is 'here' from what is 'missing.' These include Hawk's question, 'if it's not here, then how do you know it's missing?' and Lucy's answer (another question) 'but if it is here, then it isn't missing?' Once again, the obvious connection a viewer will make is the Laura Palmer murder case, in which certain key evidence is still missing, as well as the Cooper disappearance, because he has been missing since his doppelgänger disappeared from Twin Peaks. However, as *The Return* reveals more of the characters and spaces whose activities and processes are intermediations between the upper/outer reality and the lower reality, the complicated dualism of 'here' versus 'missing' crosses into much more mysterious territory. For example, Laura's essence was not missing from the Earth before the Trinity test. Nor was it here. Yet the detonation that threatened to tear open the universe, associated with evil/negative forces including Judy, the Experiment, Mother, et cetera, created a lack or an absence (something 'missing') that needed to be filled (to be brought 'here').

Another, more contained, but still tragic dualism involves Audrey Horne (Sherilyn Fenn). Having previously been in a coma from the bank explosion in Season Two and becoming the mother to villain Richard Horne (Eamon Farren), possibly from a rape by Cooper's doppelgänger, Audrey is now stuck in what seems like a delusion. Mark Frost's *Twin Peaks: The Final Dossier*, written from the perspective of FBI Agent

Tammy Preston (Chrysta Bell), introduces the likelihood that Audrey is in a 'private care facility' (2017, p. 32), though that is not confirmed by Lynch and the book was released after *The Return* had completed airing. Thus based solely on what the viewer sees when watching *The Return*, Audrey is stuck in a repetitive argument with her husband Charlie (Clark Middleton) and attempting to connect to a group of named characters (Billy, Tina, et cetera) that are never quite seen in *The Return*. Her statement to Charlie, 'I'm not sure who I am, but I'm not me' is another variation on the 'missing/here' paradox, one that is only possible to begin to resolve by stating such a thing, and in Audrey's case, apparently by waking up out of the dreamlike state—an activity that finally, abruptly, appears to happen in Part 16, 'No Knock, No Doorbell.' Audrey, after finally getting what she wants, which is to have Charlie take her to the Roadhouse, performs her signature dance for everyone in attendance. But then a jolting cut to an entirely new place and time, featuring a scared Audrey in a blank white room, seems to substantiate the theory that she has been shocked awake, out of the Roadhouse fantasy.

The other phrase Margaret says to Hawk, 'Watch and listen to the dream of time and space,' is the most encompassing directive in her cryptic message. Dreams have always been important in *Twin Peaks*, with Cooper's dreams and visions guiding his detective work, Laura's dreams and visions bringing her some painful clarity about her abuse and about Cooper, Major Briggs' dreams promising him a bright future for his son, and so on. While the characters in *The Return* are similarly informed by dreams, those dreams are distinguished by a different sort of liminality and a much more intoxicating appearance of reality or interaction with material reality. William Hastings (Matthew Lillard), a high school principal in Buckhorn, South Dakota, is arrested for having murdered a woman with whom he was exploring a seemingly alternate dimension. What first seems to him an adventure in a dream turns into a real-life nightmare, which leaves his actual fingerprints at a crime scene and the woman's head ripped from her body. In Part 9, 'This Is the Chair,' Hastings proclaims of the dream place, 'it's all real,' a phrase which resonates with missing FBI Agent Phillip Jeffries' (David Bowie) assertion from *Fire Walk with Me* that 'We live inside a dream.'

Though there are other dreams in *The Return*, to contrast Hastings' realization with Jeffries' realization is to arrive at the same point from two different directions. For Hastings, the dream is the reality. For Jeffries, the reality is the dream. Both men get lost in the spaces between. Thus Margaret's 'watch and listen to the dream of time and

space' might be read as a caution to never forget material reality's relationship to dreams and to never assume that any human dreamer can have power over time and space just because the dream is in some ways real. This caution is consistent with what philosopher David S. Oderberg explains as the limits of finite bodies and the potency of reality:

> There are no actual infinites in the material universe, in fact every material body is finite … To be finite is to be limited in various ways, in particular spatio-temporally, in terms of the characteristics a thing has, and in terms of the characteristics it is *capable* of having … Reality is, as it were, constantly in a state of being carved up in new and different ways: bits of reality are constantly changing through the agency of other bits of reality. All of these phenomena call out for an explanation, yet essentialism in its contemporary and scientific varieties has little to say about them. (Oderberg 2009, p. 62)

In Season Two of *Twin Peaks*, during the same conversation in which Hawk speaks to Cooper about courage, he advises Cooper, 'You may be fearless in this world. But there are other worlds. Worlds beyond life and death. Worlds beyond scientific reality.' Hawk and Margaret, consistent with Oderberg's framework, suggest that any dreamer who forgets that he, too, is susceptible to being carved up, underestimates agencies of actualities far more powerful than he. This is precisely the tragedy of Cooper, whose multiple selves are the subject of the final section of this chapter. There are indeed four versions of Cooper who populate *The Return*, and they are all sourced from the intermediate state of 'good' Cooper, who remains trapped in the Lodge 25 years after he went in. Cooper's evil doppelgänger is one form of walking proof of a world beyond scientific reality. His uncanny relationship to the original Cooper is reinforced by his consistent use of FBI technology and tactics, which ground his otherwise supernatural-seeming abilities (such as overpowering physical strength). This evil form of Cooper, who exhibits many varieties of criminality, including sending his own offspring to a shocking death, is at first solely focused on bypassing the cosmic rule that would send him back to the Lodge. One part of his strategy for bypassing this rule is to manufacture another double of Cooper, a man called Dougie Jones, who has lived a life oblivious of his origins and who is destined to return to the Black Lodge instead of the doppelgänger.

Yet the good Cooper's escape from the Lodge at the moment of Dougie's exit complicates the doppelgänger's plan, because the original

Cooper is now back in the material world to fight evil. Except that he is not. In a turn of plot that fulfills Cooper's wish spoken to Annie Blackburn in the second season of the series ('I would love to see the world through your eyes … there are some things I might do different if I had the chance'), Cooper returns to the material world as a blank slate, a tabula rasa. Although the Black Lodge version of Philip Gerard (Al Strobel) repeatedly encourages Cooper to 'wake' from the dream state in which he appears to be stuck, Cooper wanders life in the existence of Dougie for most of the episodes of *The Return*. Knowing nothing of the world around him and learning new words and sensations one by one, Cooper's existence as 'Dougie' is the closest Cooper gets to abiding Margaret's wise instruction in the events of *The Return*. His blankness, often serving a comical function akin to the physical comedy of Lynch influence Jacques Tati, prepares Cooper-as-Dougie to win riches in slot machines, to be a sensitive and loving father, to decipher business paperwork discrepancies with the doodling abandon of a child, and to avoid death on more than one occasion by simply following the signs from a spiritual reality that supersedes material reality. While it is interesting to anticipate signs of Cooper's return within the Dougie persona (pie and coffee stir something in him, for example), Dougie's existence is a type of blissfulness that neutralizes significant existential threats. Yet when Cooper returns, galvanized by electricity in one of that force's many variations within the series, the initial staging of his return is triumph upon triumph—he asserts 'I am the FBI' and works to make things right with all of Dougie's friends and family before leaving Las Vegas for Twin Peaks, to combat his doppelgänger. But it is not Cooper who saves the day in Twin Peaks. Guileless Andy and Lucy and a new character Freddie Sykes (Jake Wardle) are arguably much more responsible than Cooper for the doppelgänger's defeat.

Cooper's moment of realization within the crowded Twin Peaks Sherriff's Station is defined by his being stuck within a dream. Following the dream-statements of Jeffries and others spoken by FBI Deputy Director Gordon Cole (David Lynch) and actress Monica Bellucci, playing herself within Cole's dream, Cooper now utters 'We live inside a dream' as Kyle MacLachlan's face is superimposed over the wide shots of the assembly of characters present for the defeat of evil Cooper. Visually, this extended superimposition is one of *The Return*'s foremost examples of visual montage reinforcing the theme of 'that which is, and is not,' as the viewer's attention oscillates between the wide shot of many characters as if in a stage play and the simultaneous close-up of individual character Cooper witnessing the scene of which he is a player.

Significantly, the superimposition fades out for a number of seconds when Cooper's longtime confidante Diane (Laura Dern) appears to return in her original form. However, it is never confirmed that the Diane who returns to him is indeed the original, and the effect in this particular moment is to push Cooper *into* a reverie that makes him temporarily forget what he knows about the reality of the material world he is in. His earlier line 'Now there are some things that will change. The past dictates the future' is a darkly ironic precursor of the tragic final quest Cooper embarks upon as a result of forgetting his ontological gaze, of not 'watching and listening to the dream of time and space.' In other words, to lose focus even momentarily, to not be at '100 percent' awareness, as the recently awakened Cooper characterized his condition, is to open oneself up to manipulation by powerful nonmaterial forces. The heightened awareness that Lynch tracks via the appearance, disappearance, and reappearance of the superimposition, transforms into a flawed certainty and a plan Cooper comes up with to change the past by rescuing Laura.

Fixated on the idea that 'Laura is the One,' Cooper becomes convinced that he can save her from her fate by asking Jeffries to send him to the night that Laura died so that he can intervene. Cooper asks for nothing less than to have the past return, so that he can reenter its already determined material reality and carve it up. He goes beyond the purview of man. In *The Metaphysics of Being of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Leo J. Elders asks:

> Can the past return? A final question to retain our attention is whether something that has been can return to existence … St. Thomas observes that God can do everything which is not contradictory in itself … Now the past is that which has been, and it would be a contradiction to say that it has not been. In reply to the question whether things which existed formerly can return Aquinas writes that natural causes cannot bring this about, as they act in time and time and movement are now different from what they were; hence the same effect numerically will not come back again. But because God's causality is beyond time and change, God can make that a thing which has ceased to be, comes into existence once again. (Elders 1993, pp. 306–307)

Though *The Return* illustrates no God, the final episode is conclusive regarding the attempt to 'play god' in the way Cooper does. Cooper loses both his existence and essence through the hubris of trying to

save Laura again. He reduces himself to a robotic shell of formerly good Cooper, now possibly existing as a dull FBI Agent named Richard. The blame for that hubris and its effects might be partly assigned to supernatural guides like the Giant/Fireman, Philip Gerard, and Phillip Jeffries, and especially to the demonic forces of BOB and Judy for their essential negativity and desire to consume sorrow and souls. But it is Cooper's choice to breach the potency and causality that he previously respected. He dislocates Laura from the material reality of Twin Peaks and escorts her into an alternate existence or nonexistence. And/or he wakes her from a dissociative dream to face her nightmarish materiality once more. Either way, the concluding impression of *The Return* is that Cooper paid the price for interfering with the unknowable and damned the One he claimed to want to save.

While *The Return* is silent on the existence of God, the material construction of *Twin Peaks* has always included observable representations of an unknowable outer/upper reality to which man submits or rebels. Jos. B. Lear's 'What is God?,' an atheistic essay predicated on unbelief, arrives at expressions of the unknowable that share several specific connections to the visual and narrative material of *Twin Peaks*:

> Whenever we use the term god we must attach to it some material idea or representation of something seen heard or felt. Thus we may perchance liken him to one of ourselves a little bigger than a good sized giant—one that knows 'a sight more' than the best of us a little more than Sir Isaac Newton—and who can see farther than a hawk. Others may liken him to some such a subtle agent as electricity or magnetism or a spirit stronger than brandy and more proof than the best gin. Others again may liken him to the earth and tell us that his perfection 'is longer than the earth and broader than the sea.' All these definitions are doubtless sublime but they are also so often ridiculous. (Lear 1842, p. 3)

The Return is arguably the most sublime and ridiculous installment in a series full of such moments. And when watching that series it is impossible to miss the godlike giant, the hawk, the electricity, and the sea that Lynch uses to tell his story. What he means by their inclusion remains a mystery. Yet the effect of such inconclusiveness on viewers is to reinforce the dramatic situation and theme of the series, which is that individuals in the material world are limited in their power to understand and change immaterial reality. Both realities are mysterious. Human beings risk becoming trapped and stuck, or forever altered by forces that exist in

a multidimensional outer/upper reality that influences the lower reality of Twin Peaks and places beyond. As pure as his courage appears to be, Agent Dale Cooper is not qualified to *return*, play god and repair the past. The purer act, as Margaret advises, is to remain constantly aware of the larger dream of time and space that is still unfolding, and to not lose sight of the limits and fallibility of human existence.

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CHAPTER 8

'My Log Has a Message for You,' or, *Vibrant Matter* and *Twin Peaks*: On Thing-Power and Subjectivity

Anthony Ballas

We begin *in media res*: about midway through the first episode of David Lynch's *Twin Peaks: The Return* (2017), Margaret Lanterman (Catherine E. Coulson)—better known as 'The Log Lady'—places a phone call to Deputy Hawk (Michael Horse) at the Twin Peaks Sheriff's Department, delivering to him the following dispatch: 'my log has a message for you … something is missing … and you have to find it… it has to do with Special Agent Dale Cooper. The way you will find it has something to do with your heritage. This is a message from the log.' We might interpret Hawk's earnest reply, 'okay Margaret,' as analogous to the way Lynch asks for the spectator's sincere acceptance of the confounding narrative structure of *The Return*; through the perspective of an inanimate object, transmitted through the voice of a human subject, several major elements of the plot are established, triangulating an often delirious storyline between Dale Cooper (Kyle McLachlan), Hawk's Native American heritage and a certain *missing something*—the profound

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central mystery around which the visual and narrative elements of the series orbit. This missing object, this central void, is of utmost interest for our purposes in what follows.

The ontological status of Lynch's *missing something* places us directly within the contemporary debate between object-oriented ontology (OOO) and psychoanalytic theory. In brief, through the predominance of the anthropocene and posthumanist theories of ecology, a renewed realism has emerged in the past decade in which the various entities often considered to be Other to subjectivity have taken center stage: organic and inorganic objects, physical and nonphysical things, animals, debris, the matter of the world beyond or irreducible to the subjective correlation thereto. Largely influenced by Quentin Meillassoux's *After Finitude* and Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory (ANT), several philosophical schools of thought have budded out of the imperative to seek the substance of being beyond the discursive cage of human subjectivity. Jane Bennett, Graham Harman, Paul Levi Bryant and Manuel DeLanda represent the leading edge of this object-oriented turn in philosophy, favoring the nonhuman agencies of the world in the attempt to move beyond correlationism, or the co-emergence of subjects and objects as adopted and popularized by post-Cartesian philosophy, most notably Immanuel Kant's transcendental idealism.[1]

OOO's critique of correlationism seeks to undo centuries of philosophical discourse which grounds its first principles in the co-relationality of subjectivity (human agency) and objectivity (nonhuman things). What Kant saw as the rift between the phenomenal subjective frame, and the noumenal thing-in-itself (the unperceived real inaccessible to human perception), marks, for proponents of OOO, a flawed discursive barrier which posits one kind of object (the human) as primary while consigning all others to a lesser, ontologically static existence. Thus correlationism is thought to preclude a priori the possibility of accessing the inner stock of agency belonging to objects, as Harman explains how, 'things themselves must have autonomy from their relation to us, or they are not the things themselves' (Harman 2011, p. 53). Furthermore, OOO and its variants often take up a political call, decentering human subjects as the primary entities of the world in order to better understand the ecological influence of nonhuman actants, as Levi Bryant decries how 'with the looming threat of monumental climate change, it is irresponsible to draw our distinctions in such a way as to exclude nonhuman actors' (Bryant 2011, p. 24). This turn toward nonhuman objects presents something

akin to The Log Lady's 'missing something,' asking us to think in terms of objectal agency rather than resorting to the rote terms of human subjectivity.

Although it could be argued that the *Twin Peaks* franchise (1990–1991; 2017) is (at least in part) a detective story, the mystery of Lynch's missing something is not indicative of a 'locked room' or 'pilfered jewel' typical of the genre—there is no purloined letter, but something is nonetheless known to be lost. Rather, Lynch's missing something has a peculiar quality: it comes into existence as *missing*, invoking mystery by its very presence as a missing thing. Lynch's missing something functions as a self-referential absence, much like the Lacanian *objet a*; the cause of desire, the revelation that something is missing brings this missing something into existence.[2] Like *object a*, Lynch's missing something is a metonymy of the void marking an epistemological impasse.

From the vantage of vital materialism—Jane Bennett's neo-vitalist ontology (a variant of OOO)—Lynch's *missing something* is perhaps not as mysterious as it might appear. For Bennett, inanimate objects like The Log Lady's log possess a material agency which she calls 'thing-power.' Thing-power is a kind of 'protean agency' which belongs to all matter: minerals, crystals, trash and other so-called 'dead' matter beyond the subjective frame (Bennett 2010, p. 13). In Lynch's universe, objects as well seem to give off the glow of agency: lamp posts, trees, rocks, geo-spatial coordinates, and, again, The Log Lady's log, are not simply passive, static objects, but rather things which resonate with an internal capacity to affect the world, highlighting their entanglement in human affairs.

There is a specific way in which Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* and Lynch's *The Return* share this affinity, converging on what Bennett has dubbed the 'material dignity of the thing' (Bennett 2004, pp. 350–351). Just as Lynch's universe asks the viewer to consider the dignity of the object (as is the case with Hawk's sincere acceptance of The Log Lady's message) so too Bennett's vital materialism asks us to embrace the thing-power inherent to matter, which has been hitherto relegated to the background of philosophical investigation in favor of subject-oriented considerations of materiality. By focalizing the perspective of the object and asking the viewer to accept the premises established by Hawk's and Margaret's dialogic exchange, *The Return* echoes the object-turn in philosophical discourse: for Lynch, objects possess an agency, perhaps even a vitality, which is rarely afforded to nonhuman and inorganic matter.

By precluding a strictly anthropocentric articulation of this 'missing something,' Lynch offers his spectators subtle access to what might normally remain unthought, namely, the thing-in-itself: the object beyond the discursive confines of the subjective frame. Though at times confusing, even delirious, Lynch's cinematic apparatus can perhaps be said to capture an agency occupying the margins between human and nonhuman agency, elevating dead objects like logs, shovels and strange glass cubes to the dignity of speaking subjects.

In Bennett's ontology, we confront a similar paradox: things have thing-power, but how does the subject perceive this agency? Instances such as the strange humming sound perceived by Ben Horne (Richard Beymer) and Beverly Paige (Ashley Judd) in Ben's office at the Great Northern Hotel and the mysterious energy which Carl Rodd (Harry Dean Stanton) sees ascending from the body of a boy (Hunter Sanchez) who has been killed in a hit-and-run can be interpreted as Lynch's cinematic representations of thing-power. For Bennett and Lynch, material things appear as 'vivid entities not entirely reducible to the contexts in which (human) subjects set them, never entirely exhausted by their semiotics' (Bennett 2004, p. 350). The question remains whether thing-power is something that can truly be known, or whether it is, as the log makes us aware, a *missing something*, and therefore more akin to the Lacanian Real as the limit of our understanding. In what follows, *The Return* functions as the staging ground for this contemporary philosophical debate, providing both visual and narrative elements with which to parse out the contentions between vital materialism and psychoanalysis.[3]

Far from an anodyne concept, Bennett's thing-power poses an ontological problem for the psychoanalytic subject: whereas Bennett seeks to understand how the subject encounters material objects without trapping them in its discursive web of language, sociocultural meaning and/or economic use-value, psychoanalysis seeks to ontologize the subjective frame itself. In the preface to *Vibrant Matter*, Bennett says the following of subject-oriented philosophy, establishing the theoretical coordinates of her neo-vitalism by spelling out what she deems to be the major flaws of the former, 'the philosophical project of naming where subjectivity begins and ends is too often bound up with fantasies of a human uniqueness in the eyes of God, of escape from materiality, or of mastery of nature; and even where it is not, it remains an aporetic or quixotic endeavor' (Bennett 2010, p. ix). The starting point of Bennett's project is thus in her distinguishing subject-oriented projects from her own,

which she considers able to 'enhance receptivity to the impersonal life that surrounds and infuses us' (Bennett 2010, p. 4), searching for the thing-power adhering to nonhuman objects, cultivating an awareness of what she elsewhere calls the 'animacy of matter' (Bennett 2015, p. 98).

Bennett does not deny the existence of the subject, but rather her intention is to establish a perceptual openness through which we may be able to home in on the vitality of nonhuman matter, thus making her overall project one which is intended *for* the subject—toward the modulation of the subjective frame itself. However, despite whatever sympathies Bennett may have for the subject, it is precisely this subjective frame which is repressed in her ontology; what Bennett fails to incorporate into her theory of thing-power is the way the subject necessarily distorts reality by the perceptual apparatus which identifies and names 'thing-power' in the first place, neglecting to offer an account for the way in which her conception of material agency functions as a construction from within the subjective frame extending to and therefore altering the very objects she pursues.

Bennett's inaugural gesture is therefore more accurately a leap of faith, as she consolidates all of being under the monadic substance of thing-power, providing ontological unity to what she describes elsewhere as the 'indeterminate momentum of the throbbing whole' (Bennett 2012, p. 227). Thing-power not only stands in as master signifier, but as well demonstrates how Bennett forgets the very act of naming which she performs, thereby repressing the subjective frame as though the name 'thing-power' simply stands in for the object itself—as though the referent and the name have become seamlessly superimposed and accessible to knowledge.[4] There is a curious similarity between Bennett's neglect to account for the subjective frame and Dougie's (Kyle McLachlan) amnesia in *The Return*; Dougie (Dale Cooper's 'tulpa') is a post-linguistic subject who has no memory of language, and must relearn simple tasks like eating, drinking and social cues. However, Dougie's amnesia does not result in a lack of agency, but rather enhances his abilities—as though he has pure, unmediated access to reality, is able to divine the truth, and ultimately access knowledge of the real beyond the subjective frame.

There are similar stakes in Bennett's ontology. Bennett's neo-vitalism attempts to cultivate a perceptual openness beyond discursivity, permitting access to objects detached from their sociocultural embeddedness in language, and, as Bennett puts it, generate a 'self that acknowledges its thingness,' who, like Dougie, 'is paradoxically a body with newly

activated sensory capacities—including the power to detect the presence of material agency' (Bennett 2015, p. 104). Just as Dougie's amnesia gives him an upper hand toward knowledge of truth, Bennett's project benefits greatly from the amnesia of the subjective frame. In this way, Dougie can be thought of as the subject *par excellence* of vital materialism, insofar as he has direct access to reality despite his amnesia and repression of the subjective frame: although Dougie is able to perceive things that have been 'released from the tyranny of judgment,' his access to these things is characterized as a mystical or supernatural attribute belonging only to him (Bennett 2015, p. 102). Consider the scene from the third episode in which Dougie enters the casino owned by the Mitchum brothers (Jim Belushi and Robert Knepper) and is able to sense which slot machines are going to hit the jackpot, sensing a fiery spark hanging in the air above each one as though he perceives the vital energy they emit. What Dougie senses here is Bennett's thing-power; a force detached from its sociocultural backdrop beyond the discursive cage of subjectivity.

This pure agency has appeared elsewhere in Lynch's cinematic universe. For instance, in *Lost Highway* (1997), the Mystery Man (Robert Blake) has access to the inaccessible interior of the subject, which Žižek describes as 'fundamental fantasy.' For Žižek, 'The paradox of the fundamental fantasy is that the very kennel of my subjectivity … is inaccessible to me: the moment I approach it too much, my subjectivity, my self-experience, loses its consistency and disintegrates' (Žižek 2000, p. 20). The Mystery Man is 'the Other who has direct access to our (the subject's) fundamental fantasy: his impossible/real gaze is … the gaze able to discern the most intimate, subjective kernel inaccessible to the subject himself' (Žižek 2000, p. 20). Notice the similarity between the Mystery Man and Dougie: whereas the former has impossible access to the innermost subjective fantasy, Dougie has unencumbered access to the fantasy of the outside, and, just as the Mystery Man is able to be in two places at once (recall the scene in which he is simultaneously speaking in person with Fred Madison [Bill Pullman] and on the phone with him while inside of Fred's home), Dougie is able to float effortlessly between metaphysical borders, traveling through the 'eccentric out-side' of the thing-in-itself, offering a view of reality from the standpoint of fantasy—a fantasy of pure accessibility (Bennett 2010, p. 5).[5] Bennett's perceptual awareness of thing-power is supported by the fantasy of pure access from

the standpoint of an amnesiac, 'post-linguistic' gaze which is the result of the repressed subjective frame.

Just as Žižek describes the subject getting too close to the fundamental fantasy, so too can Dougie's pure gaze of reality result in a kind of loss of consistency and disintegration; through the repressed subjective frame, Dougie maintains an umbilical link with the real, functioning as though in perfect union with materiality, similar to the mystical teachings of Teresa of Avila, who describes how when 'the soul is in a state of suspension' it can perceive 'certain mysteries, such heavenly things and imaginary visions' (Teresa of Avila 2012, p. 105). Through his amnesia, Dougie exists in a suspended state wherein difference and distance have been homogenized; he is simultaneously inside and outside, neither subject nor object. The result of this collapsing of inside and outside is the production of pure fantasy unmediated by the presence of the subject.

In order to understand how Bennett's ontology is supported by this type of fantasy, we now turn to what could be called the 'primal scene' of Bennett's *Vibrant Matter*: the image which she claims prompted her discovery of thing-power in the first place. Bennett gives a detailed description of a *mise-en-scène* she happened upon while walking. In it Bennett sees:

> One large men's black plastic rubber work glove
> a matted mass of tree pollen pods
> one dead rat who looked asleep
> one white plastic bottle cap
> one smooth stick of wood. (Bennett 2010, p. 4)

For Bennett, this contingent aggregation of various objects oscillates 'back and forth between debris and thing ... exhibiting a thing-power,' and issuing a call to her which she identifies as a material agency (Bennett 2010, p. 4).[6] This back and forth oscillation between trash and thing indicates less an agency beyond discursivity, but rather a radical Otherness inherent to all phenomena, demonstrated by the splitting of each object in the scene between two different statuses: discarded object, which 'betokened human activity' and thing as 'stuff that commanded attention in its own right, as existents in excess of their association with human meanings, habits, or projects (Bennett 2010, p. 4).[7] If this is the case, then thing-power as a monadic substance disavows the dialectical

nature of phenomena themselves—the radical gap in things which permits their phenomenological oscillation in the first place.

In attempting to articulate the inner agency residing within this scene, transforming it from *tableau* to *tableau vivant*, Bennett equates the alterity of the scene with an agency issuing solely from the material, describing how 'it commands attention, exudes a kind of dignity, provokes poetry, or inspires fear' (Bennett 2004, p. 350). Thing-power names the alterity of the scene, synthesizing the antagonistic split between debris and thing by erecting a fetish-image, which sustains and homogenizes its inherent Otherness, ostensibly defending against 'the incomplete ontological constitution of reality' (qtd. in Zupančič 2017, p. 103). Thing-power alleviates the phenomenal split or inconsistency in things themselves, unifying the contradictory phenomenal appearance of reality (as 'debris' and 'thing') under one common agency.

The Return features a fetishistic imaginary screen which similarly sutures the split or inconsistency of phenomena: in Part 8 (Lynch's most aggressively avant garde episode in the series) we are given the origin story of a specter, namely BOB (Frank Silva)—the manifestation of evil in the *Twin Peaks* mythology. Just as BOB is born out of the throbbing indeterminacy in the wake of the nuclear explosion at White Sands, New Mexico in 1945, Bennett's fetish-image of thing-power is born from the indeterminacy of reality, the 'eccentric out-side' which is in contradiction with itself. In this way, both thing-power and BOB are ontologically synonymous: collecting and unifying the incompleteness of reality, giving body to the unrepresentable (chaotic multiplicity and radical evil) via the consecration of a fetish-image to conceal the lack at the heart of being, functioning as 'representative[s] … of a missing representation' (Žižek 2013, p. 589). This idea is portrayed in a particularly gruesome manner (even for Lynch) in the first episode of *The Return*, in which a mysterious glass cube is shown inside of an apartment in New York City, which Sam Colby (Benjamin Rosenfield) has been tasked with observing. After his love interest Tracey Barberato (Madeline Zima) convinces Sam to allow her to accompany him in the apartment, the two begin to have sex in full view of the mysterious cube. The sex act is interrupted when an agitated, twitching apparition is produced from the glass cube which proceeds to violently tear the two characters apart leaving only bloody mess in the otherwise pristine space.

Images like BOB and the cube-apparition are what Lacan dubbed *das Ding* [the Thing]: the image which stands in as the fantasmatic support of

the horror of the Real. They do not represent entities which have a transcendental reality—they do not exist outside of our perception of them—but rather, they exist precisely because of our perception of a deadlock, indexing the incompleteness of phenomena themselves. As Žižek explains, '"transcendence" is the illusory reflection of the fact that the immanence of phenomena is ruptured, broken, inconsistent … it is not that phenomena are broken, that we have multiple partial perspectives, because the transcendent Thing eludes our grasp; on the contrary, the specter of this Thing is the "reified" *effect* of the inconsistency of the phenomena' (Žižek 2004, p. 61). The cube-apparition has no transcendental reality to be grasped, but rather is the effect of the deadlock embedded in the inconsistency of phenomena. Bennett's thing-power thus provides an answer to the wrong question, which should not seek to explain what transcendental entities are, but rather, how they arise in the first place.

The oscillating partial views that Bennett sees in the primal scene of *Vibrant Matter* produce the reified spectral, Thing called thing-power, and not the other way around.[8] Thing-power thus functions to narrativize Bennett's perception of the phenomenal deadlock, as Žižek observes, 'in order to understand our reality, we should first imagine the possible alternate realities, and then construct the "impossible Real" which serves as their secret point of reference, as their "hard core" … in psychoanalysis, one collects all variations in order to reconstruct their "absent center," a purely virtual (inexistent in reality) form negated (distorted, displaced, etc.) in a specific way by every variation given in reality' (Žižek 2017, p. 124). To put it simply, the absent center exists as a negative form which clings to the different phenomenal variations that are given in reality, marking a point of irreducibility which cannot be overcome. However, it is precisely this point that Bennett professes to positively identify as thing-power. In *Vibrant Matter*, Bennett makes a reference to Kafka's 'Cares of a Family Man,' offering the following description of the character Odradek whom she views as a Spinozist-Deleuzian human–nonhuman assemblage possessive of thing-power: 'Wooden yet lively, verbal yet vegetal, alive yet inert, Odradek is ontologically multiple' (Bennett 2010, p. 8). For Bennett, the subject/object divide is a false one, as entities like Odradek exude thing-power issuing from the fact of being a human–nonhuman assemblage. In other words, human–nonhuman assemblages enter in precisely to alleviate the deadlock between subject and object; dissolving difference by constructing a hybridized entity which is meant to neutralize the deadlock.

For Žižek, the various 'alternative realities' demonstrate this deadlock of phenomena; they are but contingent narratives referring to the absent center as their common point of reference. What Bennett identifies as an assemblage of ontologically multiple agencies elides the absent center to which phenomena refer.[9] Ontologically multiple assemblages and 'reified specters' like Odradek and the cube-apparition stand in as subjectively constituted Things which neutralize the negativity of the absent center, allowing the subject a quasi-tangible image with which to keep the void at bay, ultimately disavowing the contradiction in reality itself.

In *The Return*, Lynch features an ontologically multiple assemblage which neutralizes the perceived dualism between outcast/hero (two contradictory variations): Freddie Sykes (Jake Wardle), a Londoner with a thick English accent (certainly out of place in the *Twin Peaks* universe), recounts to James Hurley (James Marshall) the story of how his hand became fused with a green gardening glove. Freddie later uses his gloved hand to destroy BOB in the penultimate episode. In terms of Bennett's theory, Freddie exists as an ontologically multiple, human–nonhuman assemblage—a fusion of human subject and object, resonating with an inner vitality irreducible to either subject or object. This kind of assemblage, insofar as it seeks to alleviate a deadlock—in this case between passive/unlikely hero and active/superhero—results in just the opposite; even though Freddie successfully eliminates BOB, nothing is solved. The *missing something* is not found, Laura remains dead, and the trauma of her death is repeated in the series' subsequent finale.

By destroying BOB, Freddie is only able to destroy the semblance of evil—'the reified specter' of radical evil—the act itself taking place in a dreamlike, fantasy realm. Although the semblance is overcome, the problem of radical evil that BOB stands in for continues on in the final episode through Cooper's attempts (and failures) to deliver Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) back from the dead. In a similar sense, although the notion of thing-power stands in to reconcile the indeterminacy of being—applying to all objects a centripetal faculty which smoothes out the discontinuous plane of being, anchoring it to a unifying principle—the inconsistency of phenomena *qua* the negativity inherent to being, or the absent center, cannot be overcome. The genius of Lynch is that his depiction of this cosmic battle between good and evil takes place merely between two dueling phenomena; two semblants that never touch the void which they stand in for, or, in other words, BOB *qua* reified specter is destroyed by Freddie *qua* assemblage: two ideal constructions with no

consequences in the real. Although BOB is defeated, he is only defeated on the level of semblance, and has not been ontologically overcome.

A line from Jose Saramago's 'The Chair' illustrates this point nicely: 'Death has this strange beauty of being as lucid as a mathematical demonstration, as straightforward as drawing a line between two points, so long as it does not exceed the length of the ruler' (2013, p. 11). In this formulation, it is not so much that death cannot be measured, as though it hangs in the air as a kind of looming undecidability, but rather, that death as a measurable force (dead means *dead*) has the capacity to exceed its own metric, precisely insofar as its 'negativity [is] transmitted with the "positive" ontological order of being' (Zupančič 2017, p. 104). Bennett's perception of a vital force functions similarly to reawaken 'dead' matter through the symbolic 'transubstantiation' of debris into thing-power, enabling 'dead' matter to exceed its own metric. Lynch provides for us a similar formula, as Laura says to Cooper in the third episode, 'I am dead yet I live.' When death exceeds its metric, it becomes death drive: the compulsion to repeat, the incessant repetition of trauma, which, in the case of *The Return*, means the repetition of the trauma of Laura's death. Although it can never be reconciled, her death functions as the eternal return of the same. However, we should not misread the eternal return as the latent possibility of Laura coming back to life; what returns in *The Return* is the subject—the repressed subjective frame—visually alluded to when Dougie returns as Agent Cooper, his face appearing superimposed over the interior of the Twin Peaks Sheriff's Department for a full five minutes in the penultimate episode. When Freddie destroys BOB, nothing changes except for this return of the subjective frame; the fetish-image, the Thing, the 'reified specter,' is destroyed so that the repressed subjective frame may return. We could make a similar claim apropos of thing-power: by eliminating this fetish-image, the subjective frame can once again re-emerge as a force in the world, as though we go to sleep as Dougie, the repressed subject of vital materialism, and wake up as Cooper, the explicit acknowledgment of the psychoanalytic subject.

It is crucial to note that it is only after the return of the repressed subjective frame (Cooper's superimposed face) that Laura is allowed to die differently; Lynch stages this by having Cooper lead Laura back through the Twin Peaks woods where she was killed, attempting to aid in her escape from the death she previously suffered.[10] As Zupančič puts it, 'in the end this is what matters, and what breaks out from the fatigue of life:

not the capacity to live forever, but the capacity to die differently' (2017, p. 106). The modicum of revolutionary potential latent in death drive is thus not the ability to transcend death, but rather to die a different one: Cooper's failed attempt to save Laura illustrates instead his successful attempt to help her die differently. The return of the repressed subject enables Laura's passage from one death to another, rather than the incessant oscillation between split, inconsistent phenomena, death drive and repetition reveal the absent center—the negative, *missing something*—for which the subject finds ontological purchase.

In this way, Lynch's *The Return* can indeed be considered object-oriented cinema; however, the object it focalizes has no positive existence; it is rather a *missing something*, sustained through repetition and not falsely positivized as the monadic thing-power perceivable only from the perspective of an amnesiac, repressed subjective frame. This provides a new spin on the Log Lady's message to Hawk: the goal is not simply to overcome the *missing something* by giving it a positive identity—indeed, missing objects and clues are often uncovered throughout the series without yielding any fruitful returns, nor in any way reducing the mystery at the center of the narrative. Rather, Lynch employs the absent center already inherent to the object, revealing the negative, material ligature linking the subject and the object—'this is a message from the log.'

Notes

1. Meillassoux claims that 'the "co-" (of co-givenness, of co-relation, of the co-originary, of co-presence, etc.) is the grammatical particle that dominates modern philosophy, its veritable "chemical formula."' See: Meillassoux (2010, p. 5).
2. The 'missing something' I am referring to is not a direct reference to Lynch's *The Missing Pieces* (2014), a film composed of deleted scenes from *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* (1992). If anything, the 'missing something' identified in this chapter only refers obliquely to Lynch's *The Missing Pieces.*
3. This is not the first time Lynch has found himself caught between two opposing poles of a philosophical debate; Žižek turns to Lynch's *Lost Highway* (1997) in *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime* (2000). It is interesting that we turn again to Lynch for the aesthetic material within which opposites encounter one another: whereas OOO attempts to offer a glimpse of being beyond the discursive frame, proponents of psychoanalytic theory seek to ontologize this very frame itself by establishing the

material link between being and subjectivity. In psychoanalytic theory, what links the subject(ive frame) to the object is fantasy. The underlying tension between OOO and psychoanalysis may well be the difference between 'atoms and void' and, as Badiou puts it, 'bodies and languages.' See: Ling (2013, p. 13).

4. Thing-power functions as what Lacan describes as the *point de capiton* (quilting point); the master signifier which unifies an incomplete field under a common name, ultimately adding nothing of substance. As Žižek claims, 'what unites a multitude of features or properties into a single object is ultimately its *name*.' See: Slavoj Žižek (2013, p. 586). Bennett is thus here typical of Lacan's barred subject ($)—the subject of modern science—insofar as she 'cannot but efface the traces of [her] own creation.' Like the barred subject, Bennett effaces the inaugural gesture out of which she formulates her neo-vitalist ontology. As Zupancic puts it apropos of science, 'if science has no memory, it has no memory of that out of which emerges the objective status of its enunciations.' The same can be said of both Bennett's and Dougie's amnesia: just as science, so too Bennett's and Dougie's amnesia results in a constitution of the real which 'forgets the circuitous path by which it came into being.' See: Zupančič (2017, pp. 83–84).
5. Bennett continues, 'this window onto an eccentric out-side was made possible by the fortuity of that particular assemblage, but also by a certain anticipatory readiness on my in-side, by a perceptual style open to the appearance of thing-power.' It may be useful to compare Bennett's analogy of a window with Lacan's apropos of fantasy: 'Fantasy is beheld on the other side of a windowpane, and through a window that opens. The fantasy is framed.' See: Lacan and Miller (2014, p. 73).
6. Bennett continues, saying, 'had the sun not glinted on the black glove, I might not have seen the rat; had the rat not been there, I might not have noted the bottle cap, and so on' (2010, p. 4). Bennett's way of understanding the chain of signification, how each object led her to the next one, illustrates what Lacan means when he says, 'the signifier is what represents a subject for another signifier.' The link in the chain of signifiers—the passage from one signifier to the next—is forged by the subject: there is no access to the referent beyond the signifier, and no sequence from one signifier to the next without the presence of the subject. See: Lacan and Miller (2014, p. 62).
7. Bennett conspicuously echoes Freud's language from his 1927 essay 'Fetishism,' in which Freud recalls a patient of his who fixated on the *Glanz auf der Nase*—the shine on a man's nose. Both the glint of the sun shining off of the black plastic glove that Bennett observes and the shine on the nose observed by Freud's patient, Freud suggests, would

constitute fetishes; 'token[s] of triumph over the threat of castration and a protection against it.' Freud continues with how a patient of his implemented a fetish after his father died: 'The patient oscillated in every situation in life between two assumptions: the one, that his father was still alive and was hindering his activities; the other, opposite one, that he was entitled to regard himself as his father's successor.' Is not this oscillating action between two sides of a split precisely what occurs in Bennett's description? See: Freud (1968, pp. 154–156).

8. 'Reified specters' like Odradek and the cube-apparition are found throughout literary history, usually situated in the interstices of a perceived dualism: just as Aristophanes speaks of spherical, androgynous beings [*sphairos kukloteres*] in Plato's *Symposium*, or Shakespeare's infamous 'beast with two backs' line from *Othello*, so too Odradek and the cube-apparition are located in between two antagonistic poles which seek to alleviate the deadlock between subject/object, active/passive, or masculine/feminine. Like these, Bennett's idea of assemblage seeks to synthesize the perceived active and passive dualism between subject and matter. It is also interesting to note that, just as the objects in Bennett's primal scene oscillate between trash and thing, the cube-apparition quivers back and forth between two loci in space, as though perpetually caught between two sides of a phenomenal deadlock.
9. Permit for a moment the following psychoanalytic free association: as Kafka wrote how Odradek's laugh 'sounds rather like the rustling of fallen leaves,' so too Simone Weil offers the following description of what she calls *awakening to the real*: 'a transformation takes place at the very root of sensitivity … a transformation analogous to that which takes place in the evening, along some road, at a spot where we thought we noticed a crouching man, we suddenly discern a tree; or when, believing we heard a whisper, we find out it was a rustling of the leaves. We see the same colors, we hear the same sounds, but not in the same way.' Does not Weil's description have a distinctively Lynchian feel to it, in which a common setting suddenly erupts into horror? For instance, when BOB appears in the first two seasons of *Twin Peaks*, crouching behind the bed in Laura's room, or climbing over the couch, disturbing an otherwise mundane setting, ultimately demonstrating how Otherness—the radical incompleteness of being—can issue from anywhere. See: Chenavier and Doering (2012, p. 23).
10. In Mark Frost's *The Final Dossier*, Laura's fate is a bit different, as Agent Tamara Preston (played by Chrysta Bell in *The Return*) describes a headline from the *Twin Peaks Post*: 'It's right here on the front page: **Laura Palmer did not die** … Laura Palmer disappeared from Twin Peaks without a trace—on the very same night when, in the world we thought we knew, it *used to be said she'd died* …' (Frost's emphasis). See: Frost (2017, p. 132).

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CHAPTER 9

'Here's to the Pie That Saved Your Life, Dougie': The Weird Realism of *Twin Peaks*

Ryan Coogan

This chapter takes as its starting point the notion that the world of David Lynch is a world of object vitality, object agency, and human–object equality. That is to say that in Lynch's world, objects act as humans do, humans are often object-like, and there is no distinct hierarchy between the anthropocentric and the inert. While this is a thesis which can be applied to and explored in most if not all of the cinematic and televisual landscapes of Lynch's oeuvre, it has never been more central to an understanding of his work than it is to his *Twin Peaks: The Return* (2017). Of course, 'understanding' is a dangerous term to use when discussing Lynch, whose work is often analyzed with reference to the director's interest in surrealism, transcendental meditation, the symbolic power of dreams, and the otherwise seemingly obscure products and ventures of the esoteric mindscape. His work is considered deliberately ephemeral,[1] evoking the subconscious imaginings and desires of his characters, his audience, and of Lynch himself, through an onslaught of symbols and metaphors delivered via stream-of-consciousness narratives that wash over the viewer like music rather than theater. However, as

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transcendent and dreamlike as his works tend to be, they are populated by items, icons, relics, and artifacts that are as concrete as the screens on which they are viewed. In *The Return* Lynch, corresponding with recent movements in philosophical thought from phenomenological subjectivity toward an object-focused speculative realism, brings the object to the fore of his viewers' consciousness, constructing a world in which the relationship between the human and the thing becomes 'flattened' and democratic rather than hierarchical. In this way, he creates a world which is incomprehensible to the anthropocentric (that is, human-privileging) mind-set, but instead adheres to a type of object-logic of its own.

In order to begin to unpack Lynch's adherence to this type of object-logic, it would be useful to first briefly consider the current landscape of object theory, and in particular that of the type advocated by the speculative realists, whose work forms the bedrock of contemporary object-oriented philosophy. Speculative realism is a philosophical movement which was conceived in 2007 by a loosely knit collective of philosophers including Graham Harman, Ray Brassier, Quentin Meillassoux, and Iain Hamilton Grant, who place themselves in opposition to correlationism, which is (as defined by Meillassoux in his *After Finitude*) 'the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other' (2009, p. 7). Correlationism is a defining characteristic of phenomenological thought, which seeks to make enquiries about the world through the lens of subjectivity, acknowledging that any understanding of the world beyond such subjectivity is impossible, and has been the cornerstone of continental philosophy for the better part of a century. The speculative realists, finding this perspective limited, advocate for an object-oriented ontology, a term coined by Harman in his 1999 doctoral thesis and later adapted as the book *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (2002), and which advocates for the rejection of the privileging of human perception and the investigation of objects *as* unknowable entities which withdraw from it. To fail to do so, according to Harman, is to either 'undermine' or 'overmine' the object. Using the example of a rock, Harman explains that

> Just as humans do not dissolve into their parents or children but rather have a certain autonomy from both, so too a rock is neither downwardly reducible to quarks and electrons nor upwardly reducible to its role in stoning the Interior Ministry. The rock has rock properties not found in its tiny inner components, and also has rock properties not exhausted by its uses. (Harman 2012a, p. 199)

For Harman, when an object is reduced downwards to its physical subcomponents—for example, when a table is considered as a collection of atoms and subatomic particles—it is being undermined. When the opposite takes place—for example, when we ignore that the table is a thing in its own right, and instead refer to it by its table-effect on the human consciousness—it is overmined. In either case, whether under- or overmined, it is not being considered in terms of its particular object qualities, and as such it is not the object itself which is being observed. The object exists somewhere in between our strategies for understanding it, and as such it must be understood as an entity which is in a constant state of withdrawal from those strategies. Because of the inherent unknowability of objects—that is, the matter which surrounds us and makes up our environment—this reality in which we find ourselves becomes itself 'weird,' 'because' according to Harman 'reality itself is incommensurate with any attempt to represent or measure it' (Harman 2012b, p. 51). It is this 'weird' quality to our reality, and to the objects that make up that reality, that Lynch seeks to represent in *The Return*.

The objects of *Twin Peaks* (1990–2017) are of particular interest to a speculative realist analysis in that they act on their surroundings in a way that cannot be strictly categorized as 'magical,' 'automatic,' 'animated,' or indeed by using any other language that might be recognized as describing a non-sentient entity which possesses sentient qualities appearing in a work of fiction. We might potentially use the phrase 'magical realist' to describe a world in which, for example, a human arm is removed from its host, takes on a life of its own and then ultimately becomes a sentient tree assemblage; however, this denomination implies that a magical element has 'invaded' an otherwise 'highly detailed, realistic' (Strecher 1999, p. 267) environment. The world of *Twin Peaks*, detailed though it may be, is demonstrably weird from the outset. It is defined by its sentient object forces, rather than reacting to them as they might to invaders.

However, to say that the world of *Twin Peaks* is 'weird' is not necessarily to say that the series can be comfortably categorized as weird fiction in the same way that other cultural products might be. To quote H. P. Lovecraft on the subject, weird fiction is categorized by

> A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be a hint, expressed with a seriousness and portentousness becoming its subject, of that most

> terrible conception of the human brain—a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space. (Lovecraft 1927)

While much of this is certainly true of the world of *Twin Peaks*—dread does loom over the town, and the various denizens of the realm beyond threaten to launch their assault at any time—there is no clear and distinct boundary between this weirdness and what we as viewers might call a sense of normality. While figures and institutions such as Gordon Cole (David Lynch) and his Blue Rose task force are able to identify and combat deviations from what they perceive as an established norm, they do so in a way which leaves it unclear as to what counts as a truly supernatural occurrence and what is considered part for the course. For example, when Cole reveals the true nature of the task force to Tamara Preston (Chrysta Bell), she does not react in a way that we might expect one to upon learning of the existence of the supernatural. Likewise, Cole is happy to treat his dreams as clues in an investigation, and in doing so meets to resistance or even cursory skepticism from either Preston or fellow task force member Albert Rosenfield (Miguel Ferrer). Put simply, there certainly exists some divide between the normal and the abnormal in the world of *Twin Peaks*, but that divide is constantly shifting. As such, there are no hauntings or cursed objects in Twin Peaks, but rather a world of objects which operate according to a 'weird' logic that goes beyond our understanding as viewers sitting comfortably in our 'normal' living rooms. Instead, the objects of *Twin Peaks* adhere to the kind of 'vitality' which Jane Bennett discusses in her *Vibrant Matter*; a term which she defines as 'the capacity of things, edibles, commodities, storms, metals—not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own' (2010, p. viii). For Bennett, the habit of parsing the world into dull matter (it, things) and vibrant life (us, beings) is a 'partition of the sensible' (2010, p. vii), a phrase which she borrows from Ranciere to mean the division of the world into what is immediately visible and present before us and what is not. In *The Return* this partition is lifted time and time again, and objects are seen to act with total vitality and purpose on, with, and against human actors. Likewise, those same actors are demonstrated again and again to have object qualities of their own, and otherwise to be in conference and occasionally symbiotic relationships with objects.

When the character of Freddie Sykes (Jake Wardle) delivers his monologue in Part 14, we learn that he wears a green rubber glove which is attached to him constantly. When James Hurley (James Marshall) enquires as to whether or not Freddie can remove the glove, he responds 'Nah, I can't … It's part of me. Doctor tried to take it off once, and I started bleeding,' suggesting a relationship between human and object that goes beyond the correlational and toward the co-dependent. Freddie continues his story, describing how he was compelled by a vision of (or perhaps bodily transportation to; in Lynch the two are also often interchangeable) the Fireman (Carel Struycken), who instructs him to go to a nearby hardware store and purchase an open packet of green rubber gloves in which only one glove remains, promising him enormous strength in that hand if he does so. Freddie then describes the encounter between himself and the 'jobsworth' employee who refuses to sell him the defective product. However, Freddie does not see a mass-produced consumer item, but rather the key to his 'destiny' as he later describes it. Freddie's account of this exchange recalls what Nigel Thrift refers to as the 'secular magic' (Thrift 2010, p. 290) of the consumable, whereby commodities 'participate in the construction of worlds in which the consumers can realize alternative versions of the self' (Weinstock 2016, p. 42). However, Freddie subverts this relationship by seeing what the employee cannot, looking beyond the capitalistic materialism of the thing toward its particular vital materiality; he does not undermine nor overmine the mass-produced utilitarian object, but rather sees it for its own specific objecthood, seeing past the jobsworth's claims of the item's supposed defectiveness to the particular vitality that only he knows that it possesses, and replying to his assertion that 'You *have* to buy one that hasn't been opened,' with 'That's alright, *I want this one*' (my italics). This is made particularly ironic when considering his account of the Fireman's answer to his question 'Why me?' The Fireman responds 'Why not you?' implying that those denizens of a realm beyond our own world of objects do not see any particular distinction between humans, in the same way that humans may not see distinctions between objects of the same type. Freddie becomes an assemblage of objects in the eyes of these external powers, and in becoming so is treated as an object himself.

In the penultimate episode (Part 17) Freddie's destiny is realized, as he uses his abilities to combat Killer BOB (Frank Silva), who is also rendered object-like in this final encounter. After three series and a film spent possessing human vessels (or otherwise taking human form), BOB

takes the form of a large black sphere onto which Silva's face is rendered. The motif of the sphere is used throughout *The Return* as a kind of generic object through which the will of others is realized. This is most obvious in the 'true' form of the tulpas who appear as small ball-bearings, but is also the form which Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) takes at the moment of her creation, as a large golden orb inside which Laura's prom photo can be seen. However, whereas those examples are rounded and clearly identifiable, the BOB sphere is riddled with divots and fissures. While this may simply be to highlight BOB's corruption as an evil entity, this explanation is not entirely satisfying. The Diane (Laura Dern) and Douglas Jones' (Kyle MacLachlan) tulpas are at best morally grey, spying on our main characters and consorting with prostitutes respectively, and one of the central themes of *Twin Peaks* as a whole is the surprising immorality of Laura Palmer's secret life. What does distinguish BOB is not necessarily the depth of his depravity, but rather his lack of an external purpose. BOB is a force which wreaks havoc for his own gains, and as such when shown in his true form is an imperfect object. Unlike the other spheres which are created and guided, and thus take on a uniform, recognizably machine-made quality, BOB is an object with true vitality, and as such his form is unique, and even grotesque to the viewer. Freddie, as an object in sync with another object, whose destiny is clear to us and his usefulness known, must destroy the BOB-sphere which does not belong in the wider networked object–human system which we have come to know over the previous 16 episodes and preceding series.

The line between the world of objects and that of humans is further disturbed by those instances of humans not only partnering with and encountering, but in their literally becoming objects. This first occurs in Episode 23 of Season Two of the original series ('The Condemned Woman') when Josie's (Joan Chen) spirit is trapped in the knob of an end table; however, the significance of this to similar transformations in *The Return* is difficult to assess due to the fact that the revived series never provides any further closure on Josie's ultimate fate. That being said, accidentally or otherwise it does provide a satisfying piece of foreshadowing of the fates of The Man From Another Place (Michael J. Anderson) and Philip Jeffries (David Bowie). When Agent Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) encounters The Man From Another Place throughout the series' original run, the Man's origin is a mystery, and he serves largely as an enigmatic device to provide Agent Cooper with clues as to Laura Palmer's death. In *Fire Walk with Me* (1992), the Man explains 'I am the arm.' This is in

reference to another inhabitant of the Black Lodge, MIKE (Al Strobel), a one-armed man who explains early on in the series that he removed his own arm in order to rid himself of a tattoo bearing the incantation-like phrase 'FIRE WALK WITH ME' which recurs throughout the series and is connected to Killer BOB. Retroactively, this means that the Man is the Arm from his very first appearance; that is to say, that he is the non-sentient part masquerading as the sentient whole. This is clearest at the point in *Fire Walk with Me* when the arm touches MIKE's shoulder and they speak in unison. He is perhaps the clearest bridge between human and non-human communication, and his objecthood is apparent in his imperfect imitations of human speech (his abstract riddles to Cooper such as 'That gum you like is going to come back in style' suggest a sincere attempt to aid him in his quest, since they ultimately do help him catch Laura's killer, but belie an inability to share information in terms which are common to both) and behavior (his unusual jerking movements and dancing). His strange consultations with Agent Cooper represent the apparent impossibility of an entirely coherent partnership between the human and object worlds, as his attempts to communicate in human terms result in a cryptic parody of human language and embodiment.

In *The Return*, however, the Arm is transformed. In Part 2 MIKE leads Agent Cooper to a new section of the Lodge and introduces him to 'The evolution of the Arm,' visually represented as a leafless tree atop which sits a strange brain-like sack (in an *Entertainment Weekly* interview Lynch unambiguously refers to this portion as 'just a head' [Lynch 2017a]). The structure pulses with blue energy, resembling a neural network connected to a brain. Rather than unsuccessfully mimicking the human form, the Arm has 'evolved' into a state which is evocative at once of both the human and of the object. Likewise, it no longer can be considered a part of a whole, but is instead its own distinct entity. As such, it is able to act as a much more effective bridge between the human and non-human object, offering much clearer instructions to Agent Cooper such as 'Do you remember your doppelgänger? He must come back in before you can go out' (this moment is even highlighted by an unambiguous shot of the doppelgänger to further drive the point home), and later to Dougie (Kyle MacLachlan) whom he instructs to 'twist his hand off' when the latter is attacked by an assailant; advice which ultimately saves his life.

Phillip Jeffries also undergoes an interesting transformation which results in a different type of object–human communication. When we are

first introduced to Jeffries in *Fire Walk with Me*, he is manic and unable to convey information to his fellow FBI agents. This is further complicated by the actor David Bowie's affectation of a Louisiana accent, his delivery of which seems deliberately poor in order to further highlight the futility of his attempts at conversation. 'I sure as hell want to tell you everything' Jeffries explains to Agent Gordon Cole (David Lynch), 'but I ain't got a whole lot to go on.' What information he does manage to impart is fuzzy and devoid of context and immediate relevance; it is not until *The Return* that we will discover clues as to why he so insistently is 'not gonna talk about Judy at all,' and it is not until later in the internal timeline of the show that his gesturing toward Cooper while asking 'Who do you think that is there?' will become darkly relevant to all present.

Like The Man From Another Place, Jeffries (who at this point has been a 'missing piece' for more than two years) is unstuck from both the human and object worlds, and can only offer imitations of communication with either. Correlationism between his interior self and his understanding of the wider world is thrown in to disarray, and he is unable to operate within wider networks. In *The Return* Jeffries is further unstuck for the vast majority of the series, appearing throughout only as a series of whispered rumors and anecdotes about his activities. From a metafictional perspective, the death of David Bowie adds a new layer to his character's withdrawal from the human realm, as viewers speculated for weeks as to whether or not Lynch had managed to film a cameo appearance which would firmly fix Jeffries' status as a human actor in the world of *Twin Peaks* instead of leaving him an incorporeal plot device. Of course when Jeffries finally does reappear in the world of objects, it is as an object himself. Like the Arm, Jeffries must take on a form which is evocative of both the object and of the human in order to operate within the human–object network of *Twin Peaks*' reality. When Cooper's Double (Kyle MacLachlan) meets Jeffries at the convenience store in Part 15, Jeffries has undergone a transformation into a large machine structure which communicates via a combination of speech and the production of visual symbols. In an interview, David Lynch states that Bowie's only input with regard to the representation of Jeffries in *The Return* (Bowie's cancer diagnosis prevented him from reprising the role himself) was that the voice should be 'done by a legitimate actor from Louisiana' (2017b), resulting in a more authentic voice for the character, and in turn a more recognizably authentic avenue of communication.

When quizzed for information about the enigmatic Judy mentioned during his earlier appearance, the new Jeffries offers to 'Let me write it down for you,' indicating another gesture toward a plain and unambiguous commerce between the human and object worlds.

In both of these examples, a transformation takes place from a form which invites discrete categorization as human or object, and into one which occupies a liminal space between the two. It is in this liminal space that the human and object worlds are able to engage each other on a more equitable level; hierarchies between the two are weakened and although communication is not always entirely successful, it certainly becomes closer to hand. To use an example from Bruno Latour, these moments of human–object intercourse are akin to spectral readings on an instrument designed to pick up on radiation from far away galaxies. Though the galaxies may never be reached and the quasar pulse never witnessed with the human eye, human scientists may still pull back the veil and measure cosmic events through the use of intermediary equipment (Latour 2016). Similarly, though the world of objects may always be withdrawn from human experience, the characters of *Twin Peaks* are able to develop strategies whereby their agency may still be sensed, honed, and utilized.

The object-qualities of the human subject are not always necessarily conveyed through the literal transformation of one form into another in *The Return*. Rather, Lynch disrupts the humanity of various characters throughout the series by stripping them of their personalities and other qualities that mark them as individuals, and supplanting them with new roles which are specific to the evolving situation. When Agent Cooper first reappears in the conventional 'Earth' reality of the Nevada desert in Part 3 after traveling through the more abstract reality of the Black Lodge and beyond, he has been stripped of his memories as an FBI agent, and more importantly as a member of the wider social world. This new personality, Dougie, is first presented as a kind of vessel for the will of the Black Lodge inhabitants, spending his first few hours following signs from his spectral captors which compel him toward winning slot machines in a Las Vegas casino. During these initial scenes in his new role, Dougie himself acts as a marker for others, at one point indicating to an elderly (presumably homeless) woman (Linda Porter, credited as Lady Slot-Addict) which machines will pay out. Dougie here becomes part of a network of objects, between the ghostly signs which compel him and the machines themselves, in order to guide the hands of the

surrounding human actors. He has little agency of his own and simply acts as a component in the wider material culture of gambling.

Nevertheless, as the series develops and Dougie is exposed to more and more human characters—particularly those from the old life of the tulpa Douglas Jones, for whom he is mistaken—he gradually takes on, if not a personality per se, then a 'flavor' of his own. For example, when in a comical scene Dougie has sex with Douglas Jones' wife Janey-E (Naomi Watts), he is a more than a serviceable lover. During intercourse Janey-E exclaims his name over and over again, cementing his particular personhood (rather than simply as an amnesic case of mistaken identity), and professes her love for him in a way that it is suggested she may not have for the tulpa Douglas. However, during lovemaking Dougie is inert, prone on his back with his arms flapping up and down, more a tool for Janey-E's pleasure than an active participant in the act. This is one of many examples—including his accidental solicitation of a confession from Anthony Sinclair (Tom Sizemore) and his growing relationship with the Mitchum Brothers (Jim Belushi and Robert Knepper)—of Dougie's passivity being a defining characteristic of his personhood rather than a barrier to it. His status as a tool for use—his objecthood—makes him a successful participant in the social world.

However, Dougie's own relationship with the wider world of objects both threatens and reaffirms his own chimeric object/personhood. Throughout *The Return* the audience is teased by moments wherein Dougie encounters objects which carry particular semiotic significance to the Agent Cooper personality which lies within him. When he sits down to breakfast with Douglas Jones' family, he is handed a mug of coffee; a pop culture symbol synonymous with the original run of *Twin Peaks*. Dougie looks at the beverage with a kind of hungry awe, exclaiming 'Coffee' as he goes to pick it up. The expectation for the audience at this moment is that drinking the coffee will "snap him out' of the Dougie persona and restore his memories as Dale Cooper. However, the cup carries the message 'I am DOUGIE'S COFFEE,' and when he goes to pick it up it immediately burns his mouth and he spits it on to the floor. Although the abstract object 'coffee' carries with it special meaning to viewers, the particular vessel object carries with it a reminder of our protagonist's new circumstances and identity. Dougie rejects the significance of the beverage in favor of this marker of his new life, which is further enforced by Janey-E's exasperated exclamation of 'Dougie!'—his new identity—as she turns and witnesses the scene. This moment highlights

the tensions between personality and objecthood which permeate Dougie's arc throughout *The Return*.

Another example of this tension between the symbolic values of objects occurs in Part 11 when Dougie is driven to the desert to meet the Mitchum Brothers in order to honor their insurance claim. The Mitchums initially plan to murder Dougie, but hesitate when he exits the car carrying a cardboard box. 'There's something in that box' explains Bradley Mitchum (Jim Belushi), recounting a supposedly prophetic dream about the encounter, 'and if that something is what I saw in my dream we can't kill him.' Bradley is insistent that if the box contains 'one certain thing' then 'he is not [their] enemy' and they must spare him. The object to which they are referring is a cherry pie, another marker of Dale Cooper's character, which does happen to be in the box. Confirmation of this leads the Mitchums to check Dougie's pocket, where they find a $30 million check made out to them, after which they immediately make (one-sided) amends with Dougie and take him to a casino to celebrate. 'Here's to the pie that saved your life, Dougie' exclaims Bradley, highlighting the decisive significance of the pie in this new *Twin Peaks* landscape; no longer as a passive consumable extension of one version of the character's personality, but as the active, vital savior of another.

In *The Return*, and indeed in much of Lynch's work, characters are not only rendered object-like through the direct stripping of their personality and explicitly human qualities but also through a process of excessive mirroring and multiplication that throws into question the particularity of identity. Throughout *The Return* characters are doubled, replaced by doppelgängers, and given new identifies with such frequency that it is often difficult to keep track of which actor is playing which role at any given time. This confusion of personality reaches its apex in Part 18, when Cooper passes through to another reality which is similar to that of the *Twin Peaks* we know but is distinct from it, and meets Carrie Page (Sheryl Lee), a waitress who resembles Laura Palmer except several years older. Carrie has no memory of Cooper, Laura, or any of the events of the series up to this point; for all intents and purposes, she is an entirely distinct entity, although Cooper recognizes her as Laura. Cooper himself, meanwhile, has already demonstrated a harsher personality than that of the Cooper the audience has come to know, and may himself be an amalgamation of the various characters that Kyle MacLachlan has played throughout *The Return*. When he wakes up on the morning

that he sets out, he finds a note on his motel nightstand addressed to 'Richard,' which may or may not be the role that he has stepped into in this new reality, and when confronted in a diner he is uncharacteristically violent. When Cooper steps into Carrie's home, he sees a corpse on the couch; an image which recalls Laura's own corpse from the original series' very first moments, bookending the series with the ultimate symbol of the absurdity of the human/object distinction.

After some persuading, Carrie leaves with Cooper, and the two travel together to Twin Peaks. Their journey is represented as an extended, mostly silent sequence of the two in Cooper's car. The camera invites the audience in these final minutes of the show to sit and consider whether these two characters, played by our two main actors, are still the protagonists that we have come to know over the past two and a half decades. It also invites us to question whether such distinctions ultimately matter in a world defined as much by presence and encounters in the world as it is by any two specific personalities. When they arrive in Twin Peaks, coming full circle from the very first episode, they approach the Palmer house and are told that Sarah Palmer (Grace Zabriskie) has not lived there in recent memory. They stumble away, confused, and Carrie turns to look at the house; a symbol of her former life. In the episode's, and in the show's final moments, Carrie/Laura is overcome by signification, and screams in a way that we have seen Laura scream many times; it is even framed similarly to Laura's scream in the Black Lodge from the Season Two finale (albeit reversed). This breakthrough and conflict of personality overwhelms not only her, but the reality of the show itself, and the screen, with nothing else left to do, cuts to credits.

There probably are not many who would disagree that the world of *Twin Peaks*, and particularly that of *The Return*, is 'weird.' However, Lynch taps into a particular weirdness which allows for the creation of a reality adhering to a logic that is predicated upon that weirdness. This chapter does not intend to provide an 'understanding' of *Twin Peaks* any more than Lynch himself does. However, it does aim to gesture toward a framework by which we might begin to grasp certain elements of the rules which govern its universe. *The Return* is deceptively abstract, in that it only appears abstract if we approach it according to our received notions of how experience, fiction, and narratives are intended to operate. If we approach it with the fallacy that the human is somehow distinct from its surroundings, or privileged in some way, we fail to unearth layers of meaning that abound in the surrounding environment of Lynch's

universe. *The Return* is an exercise in bringing reality to the fore, and pushing the human to the back, resulting in a flattened plane wherein an FBI agent, a murdered prom queen, a gardening glove, a ring, a drawer table knob, a husband, a doppelgänger, a severed human arm, a cherry pie, and a coffee cup all act as equally vital players in a rich network of narrative incident. Lynch's weirdness is not in his subversion of expectation or in his deliberate withdrawal into the self, but in these moments in which he shows us reality as it truly may be; beyond perception, above conventional wisdom, and behind the curtain.

Note

1. This is a somewhat broad claim, based on the fact that Lynch is such a difficult filmmaker to categorize that in discussing it reviewers, critics, and the general public often defer to the language of surrealism and dreams in order to describe it. In a review of *Mulholland Drive*, Roger Ebert refers to that film as a 'surrealist dreamscape' which Lynch has worked toward 'for all of his career.' For Ebert 'the less sense it makes, the more we can't stop watching it' (2001), which is a notion that is emblematic of more general attitudes toward Lynch, which lionize the director's tendency toward the supposedly nonsensical. Academic critics are of course significantly more nuanced on their views, but still titles such as *The Philosophy of David Lynch* (2011) which promise to reveal to us the philosophical and ideological underpinnings of Lynch's work, present us with a Lynch that is 'surreal, often nightmarish (Devlin and Biderman 2011, p. 1) and place great stock in the impact of Zen Buddism, Indian Philosophy, transcendental meditation, and dreaming on his oeuvre.

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CHAPTER 10

Movement in the Box: The Production of Surreal Social Space and the Alienated Body

Joel Hawkes

In the opening episode of Season Three of *Twin Peaks*, the viewer is shown a glass box, and a man, Sam Colby (Benjamin Rosenfield), whose job it is to watch the box and monitor the numerous cameras trained on this strange object. David Lynch seems to invite us to watch as well—the box is a metaphor for television, and for *Twin Peaks*: 'locked away' for 25 years, the show returns to our screens, just as a nightmarish creature, and, later, Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan), fleetingly manifest inside the box, in escape from the Black Lodge (Part 1, Part 3). As with the smashing of a television at the beginning of *Fire Walk with Me* (David Lynch, 1992), the screen again appears a central concern. If television (and the show) was dead and transcended by the film, the viewer is now returned to the medium of television, even if the show's content and style is much altered from the first series. However, as with the smashing of the television, the grizzly deaths of the two viewers in front of the glass box (Part 1) seem to present an invitation to watch, indeed enter

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this world, but with a warning of the consequences. In this box, Lynch presents a central metaphor in the show, not only of television and *Twin Peaks*, but of American society: a physical and cultural space that has become ever-more surreal (though its surreal nature often goes unnoticed). Its inhabitants, whose lives are increasingly mediated through the screen(s), have become dehumanized figures, isolated, and alienated from each other and from themselves. The box is a portal through which we access the show and glimpse our own lives.

Through the screen isolation begins and reveals the state of 'reality,' where, as Ted Sarandos (Netflix's Chief Content Officer) recently claimed 'life and art just happen on a constant continuum now and are played out through television' (qtd. in Butler 2016). Drawing from traditions and criticism of surreal art, which shape Lynch's vision, and from theorists Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, this chapter will examine this 'continuum' of American art and life explored in *Twin Peaks: The Return*, and the alienated individual who is trapped within. Cooper manifests as the apotheosis of this alienated human. He returns to a world where an over-the-top obsession with coffee is mirrored in cities that have a coffee shop on almost every other city block—a transformation begun with Star Bucks turning its first profit in 1990 (Pendergrast 2010, p. 336), the same year that Season One of *Twin Peaks* first aired. Alongside the ubiquitous and homogenic coffee outlet, the more sinister roaming gangs and drug-taking mothers help construct, and are lost within, the bland and confusing everyday suburban landscape. Trapped in his body, barely able to move or speak, Cooper epitomizes America's inhabitants, who hardly note his strange behavior because it so closely resembles their own. In his ability/inability to negotiate the society of the twenty-first century, we are left not pondering his surreal presence but that of American life around him.

In drawing attention to the surreal nature of society and the influence of television in its production, *The Return* continues the representation, production, and exploration of society begun in Seasons One and Two of the show (1990–1991). In the first two seasons, Cooper's obsession with coffee and cherry pie, the ubiquitous nature of donuts ('disorientating' in effect [Piatti-Farnell 2016, p. 93]) and taxidermy and plaid, the retro fifties imagery, and a series of terrible disguises (Windom Earle [Kenneth Welsh] and Catherine Martell [Piper Laurie]), all draw attention to the oddities (a 'gothicized insistence of common place things' [Weinstock 2016, p. 43]) of small-town America, and of America more

generally. Lynch's 'absurd' show reveals the absurdity of life (Kaleta 1993, p. 148; Arp and Brace 2011, p. 7). But, more importantly, it draws attention to the conceptions and representations of this life, especially as mediated through television and film. Donut-eating cops and plaid wearing, hunting-obsessed small towners are cultural and television stereotypes/jokes—Lynch blurs (and acknowledges the blurred) boundaries between nation, rural town, and television. Coffee has long been an American obsession, or indeed ritual, while conspicuous consumption of food more generally, in the show, speaks to animalistic human drives and lusts (Piatti-Farnell 2016, p. 88), but also to the consumer consumption the nation (is seen to) revels in and is often derided for. The show's various 'fixations' might be read as parodies of product placement, a reinvention of the bombardment of advertising experienced by citizens who are increasingly regarded as *consumers*. In 1994, Lynch developed this sense of product further with four Japanese *Twin Peaks* Georgia Coffee commercials. *Twin Peaks* as product is used to sell another, with the advertisements a parody of the show, which itself seems at moments, with Cooper's coffee fixation, a parody of a coffee advertisement. In the commercials, the Log Lady's (Catherine Coulson) incanting 'It's true,' in response to claims of the coffee's excellence, also seems to suggest that much more is true—that, yes, really there is a *Twin Peaks* coffee ad, and that the television show is marketable abroad as something profoundly recognizable and American. Lynch's cultural 'product placements' in Seasons One and Two display and sell American society to the viewer, but also question, ridicule, and warn of America's power to consume its inhabitants. He offers a nation defamiliarized through its repetitious and startling familiarities.

The use of film noir and soap opera tropes further the sense of both knowability and unreality, and again reflects powerful media forces that have shaped conceptions of the nation. Noir films such as *Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941), *Gilda* (Charles Vidor, 1946), and *Touch of Evil* (Orson Welles, 1958); and soaps like *General Hospital* (1963–), *The Days of our Lives* (1965–), *Dallas* (1978–1991), and *Dynasty* (1981–1989) have helped create a sense of American cultural identity. *Twin Peaks* makes reference to a number of American classics, including Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) and the television show *The Fugitive* (1963–1967); while Donna Hayward (Lara Flynn Boyle) and James Hurley (James Marshall) seem to resemble Jim (James Dean) and Judy (Natalie Wood) of *Rebel without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1955), and something of

Marilyn Monroe's life is instilled into Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee)—Lynch and Mark Frost were working on a Monroe biography script immediately before *Twin Peaks*. The show's self-conscious use of these cultural/television markers highlights the unreality of television, but also demonstrates how television acts as a filter in our reading and experience of the 'real' world, and how the 'real' world might just be as ridiculous as its representation. Kenneth Kaleta notes the power of television, suggesting many Americans experience life through the screen, as he highlights the absurd potential of the medium for *Twin Peaks*, with commercial breaks during the show's airing inserting another 'fiction/reality' into the viewing experience, and into our reading of life (1993, p. 148). Lynch's coffee commercials further this sense of 'absurd continuum' (Kaleta 1993, p. 148) of television and the everyday. Reality is layered upon reality, forcing viewers to question, even abandon, their notions of the 'real.' *Invitation to Love*, the soap that plays on Twin Peaks televisions in Seasons One and Two, offers yet another reality, reflecting the show back at itself, just as the show reflects a distorted image of society back at the viewer. This television soap and many of the reflective soap-like qualities of *Twin Peaks* are tellingly absent from Season Three, though screens abound, with their fare updated to reflect a society transformed beyond the oddities of soap opera, as will be discussed below. If Lynch's 'vision is a dual world encompassing both American Dream and American Disillusionment' (Kaleta 1993, p. 135), it is one self-consciously mediated through the medium and influence of the television.

While *Twin Peaks* considers a society shaped through television and film, the show, in turn, became a filter through which future television programming was reimagined, helping to establish the greater influence of the screen on our experience of reality—as recognized in *The Return*. The cultural impact of the original series has been as great as many of the shows and films it references—*The Simpsons* (1989–) parody of the show ('Who Shot Mr. Burns? (Part Two),' 7.1, and 'Lisa's Sax,' 9.3) attests to its importance. References and homages are found in many shows, including *Sesame Street* (1969–), *General Hospital*, *24* (2001–2010), and *Psych* (2006–2014).[1] *Twin Peaks* helped shape the storytelling and tone of the *X-Files* (1993–), while David Chase cites the show as a major influence on *Sopranos* (1999–2007). *The X-Files* arguably opened up possibilities for genre and science fiction television, just as *Twin Peaks* had before, presenting the world as a 'surreal' experience, and helping to make such a creative approach acceptable on screen.

J. J. Abrams's *Fringe* (2008–2013) begins almost as a homage to *The X-Files*, before it takes an ever-more surreal path (it, too, contains a number of 'Easter eggs' for *Twin Peaks*).[2] As Sheli Ayers suggests, Lynch's show also 'helped to destroy the boundaries between media,' (2004, p. 104) anticipating and influencing the increasingly cinematic experience (and budgets) of television and the big screen's use of television tropes and practices. Today, a single episode of *Game of Thrones* (2011–) or *The Crown* (2016–) costs around $10 million to produce; Season Three of *Twin Peaks*, screened on a premium channel, reportedly matched contemporary costs of Showtime's 'other high-end dramas' (Ryan 2017). And through streaming services everyone can watch, indeed binge on, new shows and old. Magazines, chat shows, and conversations increasingly feature television actors, or film actors now working on the small screen. Ever more time is spent watching the screen in a period often described as 'Peak TV'. Through social media and portable handheld screens, fictions and reality blur ever more into a surreal continuum. And in this screen-mediated-world, *The Return* was one of the most anticipated, reported, and discussed shows of 2017, and the show is 'conscious' of this, returning in the first episode through the medium of a glass box, surrounded by video cameras, with characters and viewers watching.

The glass box that begins *The Return* places the show and viewer more fully 'inside' the television screen. The box functions like a platonic image of a 'frame,' representative of the many framing devices that give structure and create meaning in a show deeply concerned with the 'framing'—our conceptions and ordering—of society and reality. This frame increases a sense of confinement within the boundaries of the screen, but also blurs former boundaries between art and everyday life. The final scene of Episode 13 further suggests this emphasis on framing, with 'Big' Ed Hurley (Everett McGill), alone at the gas station, staring out through the door that frames an empty road like a screen. A sign on the gas station anticipates this moment, advertising 'Frame Straightening' (Part 13). Upon close viewing, Ed's reflection can be seen in the glass of the door moving differently than Ed, and he notices this—it appears to show his earlier movements in the scene. The framing is clear, but the effects are far subtler, as they bend the reality they demark.

The Return looks to make viewers conscious of the effect of these framing techniques in the show and on our sense of reality, by emphasizing the dominance of the screen as a reality-mediating device (that bends

time and space). As in earlier seasons, Lynch creates this consciousness through the use of other framing devices. It is, for example, through the tradition of the still image, specifically that of painting, that Lynch frames, and makes the viewer conscious of, the surreal continuum inhabited by society. The slow pace of Season One and Two of *Twin Peaks*, the lingering camera, the ubiquitous photograph of Laura, and Lynch's tableaux, like that of Leland Palmer (Ray Wise), Maddy Ferguson (Sheryl Lee), and Sarah Palmer (Grace Zabriskie) seated on the couch in the Palmer house (Episode 14), or scenes inside the Red Room, as first seen in Cooper's dream (Episode 2), speak to Lynch's 'train[ing] as an abstract expressionist' (Bushman 2013, p. 85), and his 'penchant for treating a film set like an unfinished canvas' (Olson 2008, p. 289). Allister Mactaggart's study *The Film Paintings of David Lynch* attests to the importance of painting in Lynch's screen work, arguing that film allowed him to add 'movement and sound' to 'mute' paintings, and so move beyond their simple 'frame' (2010, p. 12). This 'continuum' of style and technique, at play in the film and *The Return*, is a process of artistic creation and deconstruction—scenes are overloaded with detail, more like an intricate painting or composed photograph than a film set. The stuttering, flickering images of the atomic test and its metaphysical aftermath in Part 8 of *The Return* exemplifies this technique, and we view the episode almost like a collection of artistically composed black and white photographs and sketches (disorientating because they move at speed), 'painting' a reality more confusing than that created in the first two seasons. As Lynch's 'painting' makes viewers more conscious of his artistic processes, and of the individual frames of film that make up a moving picture, the viewers are also made to recognize the frame of the screen enclosing their world as an ever-increasing reality-bending force.

Surreal artistic techniques in particular draw attention to the border and space of the screen and the society the screen both reflects and helps shape. There is a deliberate emphasis on the visceral, lived, spatial experience of life through art. While Robert Arp and Patricia Brace compare Lynch's work to that of surrealist Mauritus Escher (1898–1972; *Self-Portrait in Spherical Mirror* [1935], *Day and Night* [1938], and *Relativity* [1953]), presenting a 'picture of reality,' one of a 'twisted and chaotic' 'logic' (Arp and Brace 2011, p. 17), and others suggest similarities with Jean Cocteau's avant-garde cinema (Richardson 2004, p. 87; Martin 2014, p. 157), more certain is the influence of Francis Bacon. Lynch's 'adaption of Bacon's framing devices,' the 'recurring cubes and

stages … [and] drapes' (Martin 2014, p. 85) draw attention to a world delineated by the borders of a painting, within a screenshot and screen, and arranged between hanging drapes—an emphasis on the artistic and theoretical framings of 'reality.' The red curtains, in particular—Lynch admits to having 'a thing about curtains,' and to using them in many of his 'watercolors' (qtd. in Rodley 1997, p. 187)—reveal the blurred boundaries between different spaces: between the metaphysical, or underworld, of the Black Lodge, and the town of Twin Peaks. These are the spaces we map, plan, imagine, and dream—practices of our immediate cultural/physical milieu. We might usefully read this rendering of reality through the social/spatial theory of Henri Lefebvre, who suggests that everyday space (life) is a conflict of experiences, lived through an intersection of '*Spatial practice*' (a lived experience of space, e.g. of local small town); '*Representations of space*' (the 'conceptualized space of planners and state [The map of the town in the sheriff's office and Horne's plans for developments]);' and '*Representational space*' (space '*lived* through … images and symbols'—space of its 'inhabitants' and artists [Lefebvre 1991, pp. 38–39], and those of the writer/director?). As Richard Martin argues, 'spatial awareness is both demanded and undermined' in Lynch's work, presenting a world of 'murky geography with abstract precision' (2014, p. 2). Other spaces within Twin Peaks demarked by red curtains—Blackie O'Reilly's (Victoria Catlin) room in One Eyed Jack's, Jack's more generally, and Jacques Renault's (Walter Olkewicz) cabin—further complicate this framing device and the show's sense of reality.

In the Black Lodge we find the most problematic space, and one that best anticipates the complexities of an increasingly screen-mediated world in Season Three. Martin and other critics have sought through Michel Foucault's theory of heterotopia to understand this more surreal location. Foucault identifies heterotopias in spaces like the garden, theatre, and cinema—locations formed from 'bits and pieces of time' and a 'system of opening and closing that [both] isolates … and makes them penetrable at one and the same time' (Foucault 1997, pp. 354–355); and, with 'the power of juxtaposing in a single real place different spaces and locations that are incompatible with each other' (1997, p. 354). Stage and screen operate under similar principles. Loaker's and Peters' suggestion that the Red Room and the Roadhouse are heterotopias is convincing—time and space collide in these zones (2015, pp. 632–634). They are also the most obviously artistically arranged,

and clearly framed, spaces in the first two seasons. Ultimately, the various spaces of the town of Twin Peaks collapse into these heterotopias, and into the darker locations of the Black Lodge and the Red Room, which then reflect, like Foucault's example of a mirror (Foucault 1997, p. 352), back into the 'real' world of Twin Peaks, so altering a sense of space and reality there as well. In one sense, this effect highlights the 'absurd … organization' of our society (Powell 2014, p. 625) and the artistic and surreal elements of day to day living. And, yet, boundaries, though admittedly permeable—as with a mirror—are evident. A series of buffers remain in the first two seasons: the most surreal acts take place in the Black Lodge, where time and space move backwards and forwards at once, due to Lynch's filming techniques. The town of Twin Peaks offers yet another buffer between 'realities' (though the world of the Black Lodge encroaches further in Season Two, when some of its residents, and finally Cooper's double, manifest in the town). This crossing over is more profound in Season Three as Black Lodge residents roam America. The television screen is yet another buffer between the *Twin Peaks* world and ours—though, again, the television offers a permeable and reflective surface, and Lynch makes the viewer wary of this. The television itself might be considered the greatest of heterotopias—a space in which anything goes, and one that alters our reality. When, in Season Two, BOB crawls across a living room toward the camera, to acknowledge the viewer (Episode 2), a border is briefly transgressed, and the power of the television as frame of society is fully felt. It is only in *The Return* that the boundaries between television, art and life more fully collapse to suggest the coming of a truly heterotopian reality, or continuum.

With the creature breaking free of the glass box to shred its two viewers in New York (Part 1), Lynch introduces a society where boundaries have broken down. This breach is fittingly the clearest manifestation of Bacon's influence on *Twin Peaks*, introducing a heightened sense of a society of the absurd. The fleeting monstrous, shrieking figure that appears in the box recalls not only Lynch's series of images, *Heads*, but paintings by Bacon of the same name, and the series of around 50 paintings of Pope Innocent X, to which some belong. These are images of a ghoulish figure, screaming, and caged behind bars or in a box. The vertical 'fold'-like structures that hold the Pope reflect Bacon's earlier paintings' use of curtains, and isolate the figure behind them, so that, as Bacon suggests, 'the sensation doesn't come straight right out at you; it slides slowly and gently through the gaps' (Sylvester 2000, p. 243).

Bacon might almost be describing the slow movement of the inhabitants of the Black Lodge through the folds of red curtain. Lynch's creature from the box, however, suggests a greater impingement upon reality. With borders broken, Lynch introduces a heterotopian America stranger than the Black Lodge or the town of Twin Peaks.

In denying a return to the Twin Peaks of the first two seasons in *The Return*, Lynch emphasizes the now greater absurdity of America beyond the fictional town and television frame. The 'pristine,' 'Arcadian' small-town that Sherryl Vint suggests is contrasted to, and tainted by, the 'corruption … of urbanization' (2016, p. 72) in Season One and Two is no longer a tenable place, even of myth. Lynch appears to play with, and then refuse, the nostalgic turn of much contemporary programming, denying the viewer escape from the conditions of modern America that shows like *Stranger Things* (2016) offer. Lynch seems to acknowledge what Zygmunt Bauman has termed 'Retrotopia'—a society reeling from modern technologies and the processes of globalization that regresses to past practices, looking backwards because the future no longer seems to offer hope (of utopia). Noting a breakdown of community, and a return to destructive tribalism and self-interest, Bauman finally identifies a desire to return 'back to the womb'—the ultimate deathly and narcissistic escape (2017, p. 148). Shows like *Stranger Things* (channelling older Steven Spielberg and Stephen King creations), and their streaming mediums, allow a greater immersion into such retro worlds—a merging of art and life—through uninterrupted viewing. Viewing is a 'suspension' not in a sense of community located in a lost past but rather in escape from community of the present—into a darkened room and the self. Paradoxically this is flight from a society transformed by the screen, by the overwhelming information and numerous vicarious experiences screens offer, and from the blurring of real and imagined worlds they help engender. This vision of Retrotopia is also arguably one of heterotopia, a place filled with 'incompatible' spaces (Foucault 1997, p. 352) actions and expectations, its residents 'overburdened with duties' (Bauman 2017, p. 148). Fleeing is resistance, but it also contributes further to the fragmented nature of the space inhabited. Lynch teases viewers with the initial retro feel of *The Return* and of the town of Twin Peaks but allows no escape from the 'real' everyday present we inhabit; instead, he highlights the absurdity of society, as our 'reality' bleeds into the fiction of Twin Peaks, making it a more unsettling experience.

Many retro aspects remain in *The Return*—the Double R Diner, for example, is still a 'floating entity' in time and space, but this now seems an even more 'disjointed' locale (Piatti-Farnell 2016, p. 88). The franchising of the Double R (Part 13), sees a series of pale imitations 'afloat' across the American landscape, untethered from but reflecting the original—places where 'America,' in the show, can access the small-town experience, and hope to see itself as a nation reflected in the small-town experience. The more dangerous heterotopian spaces of Season One and Two, the Black Lodge, and the Roadhouse, are now oddly safer, simpler spaces—though only relatively. Here, at least, borders are carefully demarked. All but two episodes return us to the Roadhouse for a musical performance, offering retreat and safety after the violent and surreal events of an episode, but it, too, offers a more disturbing 'reality' through its 'safe' nostalgia. Audrey (Sherilyn Fenn) epitomizes this continuing struggle for the 'authentic' Twin Peaks/*Twin Peaks* of the 1990s, trapped in a house with a 'husband' she hates, ignorant of the son she has; she knows something is wrong and wants to get back to the Roadhouse to see James, but cannot quite seem to leave the house, and does not know where the Roadhouse is; just as the viewer asks, where is the Twin Peaks of the first two seasons? Audrey is disconnected from her life, her younger self (the character we knew) and from the Season Three narrative. Only when Audrey finally arrives at the Roadhouse and performs what is announced as 'Audrey's Dance' do we see another side of her isolation—one that transcends the boundaries of the show. Audrey's dance in the Double R Diner in the original series (Episode 3) became an iconic moment to fans of the show—but only those on our side of the screen know this dance as 'Audrey's Dance.' It is, then, Sherilyn Fenn, who plays Audrey, not Audrey, who appears to be trapped in the show with nothing to do in the narrative until her final dance. What is the actress without her role? Like Cooper in the Black Lodge, or the viewer waiting for a new season, Audrey, too, has been waiting 25 years to get back to Twin Peaks/*Twin Peaks*, but still cannot quite make it. Here, the space of the show is not disrupting of, but disrupted (corrupted?) by the space of our 'reality' and our desire for escape into an unreal time and place. We are forced to ask, what are we like as viewers looking to inhabit screen realities; where do we fit in; what becomes of us as we increasingly exist within the frame of a screen?

Perhaps in answer to this, Season Three offers not the town of Twin Peaks but modern America as a confusing and nightmarish heterotopia.

Lynch's geographical locations are telling. We are introduced to the show through the box, which, backed by a porthole-style window, looks out onto the New York skyline (Part 1): the modern metropolitan hub of the United States, a much-mythologized scene. In this most disorientating, busy, and collage-like city, we witness the first acts of extreme violence in front of the box. The landscape and locale that follow reflect this violence and an increasing sense of unreality. Cooper (as Dougie) is for most of the series 'trapped' in Las Vegas, a site that best represents the America of heterotopian design. The blurring boundaries between The Black Lodge and Las Vegas—Cooper fittingly sees the red drapes appear in front of Szymon's coffee shop that sells cherry pie (Part 11)—suggest the leaking of metaphysical and television spaces into our own; and when Cooper finally eats pie in the coffee shop, we immediately cut to an image of the Double R Diner (Part 13). Spaces here reflect and refract each other—realities blur. This blurring is compounded in an American landscape homogenized by a modernity that even touches the Double R Diner: discussion of the franchises of the Double R and the lesser-quality of pie fillings (Part 13) at these 'imitation' diners highlights the bland box stores and franchises that pave the nation into an empty landscape more confusing than the Black Lodge. As everything begins to look the same, the environment becomes difficult to inhabit. It, too, becomes an underworld, a purgatory, or even hell, impossible to escape.

Lynch's Las Vegas further pushes this sense of a hollow landscape and empty American myth. The gambling capital is a heterotopia, a puzzle of time and space distorting the world around it with reflections of European cities, glitzy casinos, and the town's seedy underbelly. It is also a site greatly influenced by the screen, with mobster films and narratives of cons and heists coloring an understanding of this space. Lynch blends these film tropes around Cooper's interactions with the mobster-like Mitchum Brothers (Jim Belushi and Robert Knepper), owners of the Silver Mustang Casino, while Cooper's visions of a flickering light designating a series of winning slot machines adds to the unreality of the scene (Part 3) and the greater Las Vegas area. Cooper is trapped in an unstable landscape of high-rise buildings, mobsters, hitmen (Ike 'The Spike' Stadtler [Christophe Zajac-Denek]) and clueless Las Vegas FBI who perform as though they have stepped off the screen of a Hollywood farce. All this is mediated through Dougie's place of work, Lucky Seven Insurance, run by Bushnell Mullins (Don Murray), an ex-champion boxer known as 'Battling Bud,' perhaps suggesting life is now a gamble

and a fight out of our control. We are increasingly presented with a confusing space of Hollywood movie-like characters and sitcom and soap opera stars, with narrative devices to match, all juxtaposed in one place of 'incompatible' locations (Foucault 1997, p. 354), creating a kind of roulette, or revolving glass door-sense of space. Like Cooper, who ineptly negotiates the door into the casino (Part 3), viewers find it difficult to navigate this television space—a milieu recognizable and 'everyday' but now also strange in its re-presentation on the screen. The 'real' space and the TV space as one experience speaks to the increasing disorientation of day-to-day lives lived in this continuum.

The confusion of the modern American heterotopia is, though, apotheosized not in the unreality of the Las Vegas strip, but found in its most violent and banal forms in the ubiquitous American suburb. Dougie's house is only identified from other houses by the color of its door—red (Part 4). The door recalls the darker space of the Red Room, and the house is barely distinguishable from others around it, echoing the emptiness of a film set façade. Gangs of car thieves scour the neighborhoods (Part 5), and a junky mother (Hailey Gates) sits at her kitchen table shouting '119,' seemingly citing backwards the number for emergency services, anticipating the car bomb explosion outside, while highlighting her own need for help and the risk posed to her son by both bomb and her habit (Part 5). This reality, 'backwards' in more than one sense, suggests an encroaching of the Black Lodge into every day America. Suburbia becomes more surreal when assassins Gary and Chantel Hutchens (Tim Roth and Jennifer Jason Leigh) arrive to kill Cooper, and a neighbour, a Polish accountant (Jonny Coyne), furious at their parking, smashes his car into theirs before killing both assassins in a gunfight. Like the FBI agents and the Mitchum brothers, viewers look on incredulous at the surreal movie-like spectacle, yet know from the 24 hour cycle of news (as entertainment) that such gun violence is increasingly a part of everyday American life, and that this might owe something to a history of television and film that makes an icon of the 'gunslinger' but even more so of the gun. The narrative of America (and so *Twin Peaks* Season Three) demands a shootout. Cooper's own drugged-like state and his obsession with the gun-holding cowboy statue is another of Lynch's American 'product placements,' echoing the encroachment of film reality. The statue appears to resemble the David Bowie (who played Agent Phillip Jeffreis in *Fire Walk with Me*) of Nicholas Roeg's film *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976) and is

positioned between the appearance of Candy Clark (as Doris Truman, Part 5, Part 6) who starred with Bowie in the 1976 film. Again, Lynch hints at a 'fallen,' or warped, society—Bowie's Alien on Earth is corrupted in great part through an addiction to television. Lynch's vision seems to display the increasing horrors of the American heterotopia, a maze of images and realities, reflected and warped, built and destroyed, through the 'realities' of the screen.

If the glass box that begins *The Return* introduces the television frame and the transcending of boundaries between art and life that help produce the wastelands of modern living, like those of suburbia, then the box also introduces the body that exists in such a continuum. The glass box as a framing device isolates the figure in the same way that Bacon's framing devices do. Indeed, even as Lynch's creature intrudes upon New York, much of its menace comes from its isolation in the box, just as Bacon's screaming Popes are contained, distorted, and dehumanized by the bars of their frames. In his philosophical work *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, Gilles Deleuze evolves the subject of 'The body without organs'—an image of the human form no longer an 'organism' (2002, p. 41). The Pope images, among many others, embody this theory for Deleuze and illustrate the human form overwhelmed and 'deformed by a plurality of invisible forces' (2002, p. xxiii)—the many forces of society. Lynch's Baconian image anticipates other brutalized figures in the show and reveals the precarious mutability of the individual under the conditions of a screen-mediated heterotopia.

This distortion of the individual begins with the television screen, which isolates figures in *The Return* in commentary of modern American life. Dr. Jacoby (Russ Tamblyn) spews 'garbage' from his online show, watched by Nadine Hurley (Wendy Robbie) on a laptop, alone in her darkened room (Part 5); the Mitchum brothers watch Candie (Amy Shiels) in the casino from security monitors (Part 10); Sarah Palmer watches a repeating clip of boxing (Part 13), and a savage nature documentary (with Lynch's voice on it [Part 2])—violent images reflecting her family's violent past, and perhaps too the violence of America: the unreality of the soap opera on the screens in Seasons One and Two is replaced by images of a more brutal 'real life,' reflecting a transformed America that can no longer be seen within the safe frame of a soap. The shows anticipate Sarah's ultimate transformation, or possession, by something from The Black Lodge. Her face revealed as flickering screen in episode sixteen shows the violence within—the individual as product of

the screen in this 'new world.' Not only is the individual altered here but also the family and community: the widescreen television seems to have replaced the fireplace (The television is the new 'hearth' of America) in the Palmer home. These various figures isolated from community are presented as broken, in a sense less human—literally and figuratively isolated from the outside world and one another, as we are, in turn, behind our screens. The remoulding of our thoughts and beliefs by the screen manifests physically in Sarah's final transformation. But do we recognize ourselves in Lynch's world?

The damaging frame of the screen is legion in *The Return*. Cooper's doppelgänger is also viewed through a window by the FBI and on a bank of television screens (Part 7, Part 5); and a distant Diane Evans (Laura Dern) constantly, surreptitiously, checks her phone (Part 9, Part 16). Ed, too, is isolated, gazing through the screen-like door of his garage (Part 13)—a frame reminiscent of the door John Wayne stands isolated in, trapped between two worlds in John Ford's iconic western *The Searchers* (1956). Instead of being trapped between civilization and the old west, Ed (and his reflection) is caught by the modern 'civilization' of the screen and the iconography of the old west the viewer might glimpse here. Spotting his reflection, Ed is both watcher and watched. But, again, do viewers see themselves—a moment of uncertain understanding, like that which crosses Ed's face? Even the residents of the Black Lodge peer through screens into the United States, the country itself having become a show (Part 8). Many of Season Three's 'watching' figures have retreated behind the screen, and through the screen, in a sense back into the womb (identified by Bauman [2017, p. 148]), in escape from the stressors of modern life. Yet, at the same time the screen becomes a source of stress—a force acting upon the body of the viewer, isolating and contorting, and fracturing the body of community. The body that watches is also a body being watched.

Many of the screens in *The Return* speak to the all-powerful assemblage of CCTV that monitors, records, and deconstructs the modern American citizen—yet another constricting frame of reality. Bowie's alien in Roeg's *The Man Who Fell to Earth* might be caught in a spiral of watching television, but he is also as an alien on earth concerned that he is being watched. We might usefully consider Roeg's film *Don't Look Now* (1973), in which John Baxter's (Donald Sutherland) tracking of what he thinks is his dead daughter (in a red coat) through Venice, relies on glimpses and suggestions of her presence. Lynch-like editing techniques

and impressionistic imagery presents reality to John and viewers as multiple and unsettling, in anticipation of surveillance film narratives of the later twentieth century. As Catherine Zimmer points out, cinema has always been a narrative created through surveillance in its tracking and filming of actors (Zimmer 2015, p. 9). CCTV in *The Return* plays with this quality of film and with the surveillance that captures modern life to expose its reshaping of our bodies and actions. Scenes in the prison and casino suggest the fragmentation this surveillance society has on person and place. Lynch's editing techniques are reflected back by these screens, as bodies become multiple: the many images of Cooper's doppelgänger on the bank of screens suggests a schizoid individual (Part 5), which also manifests physically in the variations of Cooper, Dougie, and perhaps a different Cooper again in the final scenes of the series. CCTV digitally breaks up an image of the individual but also introduces a narrative of surveillance and paranoia that takes away autonomy from its filmed subjects. Candie too is broken down by the camera, trapped by the gaze and mockery of the Mitchums. She appears fragmented, or cloned, into the equally vapid Mandie (Andrea Leal) and Sandie (Giselle DaMier), who appear by her side, just as the Las Vegas FBI agents manifest as a farcical trinity: Detective T. Fusco (David Koechner), Detective D. Fusco (Larry Clarke), and Detective "Smiley" Fusco (Eric Edelstein). The 'processes of disassembling and reassembling' that 'surveillance technologies' undertake with the individuals in filming, recording, and storing images, and data (Haggerty and Ericson 2007, p. 4) reveal also the containment of the individual (caught on camera). This is yet another heterotopia-creating device that helps construct (and deconstruct) Lynch's nightmarish vision of digital realties we willingly inhabit. The digital recording as fragmentation of the individual is further suggested in the looped behaviors and images scattered through the series, such as the repeating seconds of boxing and nature show watched by Sarah Palmer (Part 13), and her equally looped behavior of leaving and returning to her screen, and Ed's looped reflection at the garage (Part 13). The loop is also a trap, imprisoning the individual in a repeating moment of time and place—a hellish experience. These prisons reflect the CCTV surveillance of our lives, cut also the constant checking of phones, the binge watching of television, and the updating of online profiles—the loops—that structure our everyday actions. Trapped like the creature in the box, the filmed, watched, recorded, and reconstituted body becomes an unreal body—caught, looped, glitching, a 'body without organs.'

Beyond the impact of CCTV, the bodies of the show's numerous isolated individuals manifest the various stresses of the screen/life continuum, or heterotopia, in which they reside. Individuals present varying forms of the 'body without organs.' The victims of various forces, many characters seem tired and run down (as is the case of Sarah and Ed). Sarah Palmer alone in her house with her television, drinks and takes prescription medication—other forces that Deleuze identifies acting upon the body (2002, p. 41). Mental illness is another (2002, p. 41), which many of the characters might be seen to exhibit in this surreal and schizophrenic landscape. The junky mother displays symptoms of these various forces, stoned, disassociated from her body and reality, with sores covering her face (she is also trapped in a loop). She is a diseased, suburban Cassandra (daughter of Queen Hecuba in Greek mythology who is cursed to utter prophecies no one believes), bewailing her, and our, misfortunes. She is incomplete, not without organs, but no longer an 'organism' (Deleuze 2002, p. 41)—no longer a coherent arrangement of a living being. Ed's out-of-sync reflection (Part 13) and Audrey's complete personality change suggest similar disassociation. The extreme vacancy of Candie (Mandie and Sandie) also shows an empty figure in parody of screen/cultural representation and expectation of women in the Las Vegas entertainment world (she is the 'dumb blonde'), but Shiels also suggests that Candie's backstory is one of abuse: she is traumatized, with nowhere to go (qtd. in Devon 2017a)—no longer a functioning organism. Figures in this nightmarish America 'shut down,' unable to cope, retreating into themselves. Even the residents of the Black Lodge are affected: The Arm much diminished, no longer human, now manifests as an electrified small tree with a mass of flesh where a head might have been (Part 2). Does he/it reflect residents outside the lodge who are also dehumanized? Sarah Palmer gives perhaps the clearest vision of the 'body without organs' when she removes her face to reveal a dark vortex inside her body, the skull now a flickering screen from which we see flicker a snake-like tongue (Part 14), akin to that of the creature in the glass box (Part 1). Sarah's defense of 'He just fell over,' to her murder of the obnoxious and violent drunk in the bar (Part 14), might also elicit a questioning of why more bodies on the show do not collapse under the pressures exerted upon them. These failing bodies highlight our own precarious position: with a life lived through the screen—bombarded by screens and filmed onto the screen—we are exposed to multiple forces of control and manipulation. Who knows what might get

in or who has control? It is, though, Cooper's alienation from his own mind and body that best displays the forces of a surreal society acting on the individual. His emergence into the America of the twenty-first century is fittingly mediated through electricity—a constant presence in the series; and the force powering modern life, and of course our screens. It is almost as if electricity animates our own bodies, with such reliance upon it. But how does it animate; how much is it also a control or a binding of our movements and thoughts? If Cooper is icon for the modern American, he shows us to be Frankenstein creatures, birthed with electricity into the twenty-first century as incomplete forms. Spat out of the Black Lodge through a power socket (Part 3), Cooper is as broken as those other isolated residents of *Twin Peaks*. His dissociative behavior—unable to communicate with others; walking into glass doors (Part 13); drawn to the gun-holding statue (another body without organs [Part 13]); barely able to eat and drink at times—draws attention to his surroundings. He is contained by a maze-like, homogenized suburbia, and by the walls of steel and glass—a 'hermetically sealed'—place(s) of work, while being open to the bombardment of other forces, as witnessed in the demands of the casino. The modern milieu both constricts and exposes the bodies of its subjects (victims). The heterotopian confusion of these spaces begs the question 'Where do we go next?' This is the question a news presenter asks their co-host, on a television watched by the Mitchum brothers, only to be told 'Roll the dice,' to decide the next segment of news, which happens to be a local report of Dougie/Cooper's escape from Ike (Part 10). Cooper barely knows what to do in this modern world; it seems that only chance (for example, The Mitchum brothers seeing Cooper on the local news; jackpots at the casino; the payment error at the insurance company), allows survival in the chaos.

When Cooper finally awakes '100 percent' from his over-awed, dream-like stupor (Part 16) his existence seems no longer tenable in this modern American space—he is a creature of the past, and the Twin Peaks/*Twin Peaks* that once was. After the apparent defeat of BOB (everything is uncertain in this world), Cooper begins to fade out of existence (Part 17) and enters Twin Peaks before Laura's death, and the film space of *Fire Walk with Me*. The attempt to rewrite the past, to save Laura, seems to fail at least in part because the spaces of various 'realities' cannot be disentangled in a show that delights in playing with complexities and paradoxes and because the heterotopias of

Twin Peaks/*Twin Peaks* cannot be put back in the town or behind the screen (back in the box). They transcend the screen. Lynch shows us that modern America is forever altered by the screen (and perhaps by *Twin Peaks*). Finally arriving at the Palmer house with an older Laura, who goes by the name Carrie Page in yet a different version of reality, Cooper discovers a Palmer house that seems to have never known the Palmer family. The final moments of *The Return* reveal the confusion and brutality of this heterotopia, when the owner of the Palmer house, Alice Tremond, tells Cooper that she purchased the house from a Mrs. Chalfont—seemingly a reference to the Mrs Chalfront, also known as Mrs Tremond, who consorted with BOB and other residents of the Black Lodge in her home in Season Two of *Twin Peaks* (Episode 9). In a further bending of realities, the actress Mary Reber who plays Mrs Tremond in this final scene is the 'real' owner of the house used for filming. Reber notes in an interview, 'We actually have the television that Sarah Palmer watched her shows on in the living room. That's our television set. So it was cool to watch the finale on that TV. So many layers!' (qtd. in Devon 2017b). This experience emphasizes the screen/life continuum of modern America. The final image of Laura screaming in front of the house seems to speak to this television heterotopian reality. She is caught between art and life, unable to move, the scream on her face recalling Edvard Munch's four paintings (1893–1910), and reminiscent of the contorted scream of Bacon's *Pope Innocent X*, who 'scream[s] before the invisible' (Deleuze 2002, p. 34), who 'cannot be seen behind the curtain,' and 'who cannot see, who has nothing left to see, whose only remaining function is to render visible [the] invisible forces that are making him scream, these powers of the future' (2002, pp. 51–52)—these powers of the heterotopias we inhabit. Laura's scream seems to respond to the confusion of art and life, and to the show's framed, 'dead,' image of Laura, in which she is forever trapped. Her scream returns us to the mouth of the creature in the glass box and to the scream that follows the smashing of the television at the beginning of *Fire Walk with Me*: a disembodied scream and a body with little definition. Laura, residents of the show, and the show's many viewers are this creature, 'without organs,' gliding through the box, a flickering projection-like image, trapped in and transformed—devoured—by its frame, even as it is ready to scream and devour in turn.

Notes

1. See *Sesame Street* (2822). In *General Hospital*, Russ Tamblyn (Doctor Jacoby) plays Doctor Rose in two episodes (2000), a reference to his *Twin Peaks* character. In *24*, Ray Wise (Leland Palmer) is a suspect in the murder of David Palmer (Season 5). *Psych*, 'Dual Spires' (5.12), is a homage to the show, starring seven *Twin Peaks*' actors.
2. See *Fringe*, episodes 'Northwest Passage' (2.21), 'The Firefly' (3.10), and 'Immortality' (3.13).

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CHAPTER 11

How Mark Frost's *Twin Peaks* Books Clarify and Confound the Nature of Reality

Donald McCarthy

When the return of *Twin Peaks* (1990–1991) was announced in September of 2014, news of a novel by *Twin Peaks* co-creator Mark Frost soon followed. The contents of the novel remained a mystery. Early rumors of it being set between the original run of episodes and the new season on Showtime turned out to be wrong once Frost specified it would cover many events prior to the original run. As the publication date grew closer, it became apparent that Frost would not be delivering a straightforward novel, either, but something unique. This novel, *The Secret History of Twin Peaks* (2016), was presented as a dossier written by Major Garland Briggs (Don S. Davis), with annotations along the way written by Agent Tamara Preston (Chrysta Bell), a character who would appear in the new season of *Twin Peaks*. The premise is that Gordon Cole (David Lynch) found the dossier, gave it to Preston, and wants Preston to make comments and deductions based on it. The reader sees her deductions on the side of each page, creating a story within a story, reminiscent of *Invitation to Love* playing in the background of scenes

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during the first season of *Twin Peaks.* The novel also serves to push the reader in a certain direction, opening up new avenues of discussion while closing others.

Just before *The Secret History of Twin* Peaks arrived, fans were informed that a second novel would be coming their way: *The Final Dossier* (2017), also written by Mark Frost. Like its predecessor, *The Final Dossier* was not a typical novel. It ended up being a series of files compilated by the aforementioned Tamara Preston after the end of *Twin Peak: The Return* (2017). These files are to be sent to Gordon Cole for review as the Blue Rose Task Force attempts to come to terms with how its case in Buckhorn and Twin Peaks ended. Frost's aim with this second novel was to provide closure that did not fit into the new season's framework. He told *Huck Magazine*, '*The Dossier* was written long after the scripts were finished. If something didn't make it into *The Return*, it was because we believed there wasn't room for it in the narrative. So I then felt there were some spaces to be filled, some gaps to be closed and some strong narrative threads that needed to be tied up' (Traynor 2017).

An examination of the two novels shows that Frost had two main goals: to elaborate on *Twin Peaks*' complex mythology and to engage with its themes, both structurally and spiritually, in a way that alludes to *The Return*. Both novels are in conversation with the structure of *The Return*, even if readers did not know it at the time of *The Secret History of Twin Peaks*' release. Released about seven months before the 2017 series aired, *The Secret History* sets the stage for *The Return* by exploring the reader's perception of memory. *The Return* plays with nostalgia, sometimes indulging in it such as with Ed and Norma's (Everett McGill and Peggy Lipton respectively) reunion, while other times mocking it, such as with Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) taking the form of the permanently confused and out of touch Dougie Jones (also Kyle MacLachlan) for most of the season. Yet it also takes on a grander view of nostalgia by asking whether a television drama that has been off the air for 25 years can still be a part of its original run. Airing at the same time as other revivals, such as *The X-Files* (1993–2002, 2016–), this question was not limited only to the franchise of *Twin Peaks*, but to the future of television in general.

In *The Return*'s concluding episodes, Cooper goes back in time, inserting himself into a scene from the film *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* (1992), and rescues Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) from being murdered

by her father, Leland Palmer (Ray Wise). This action not only involves footage from the original run of *Twin Peaks* and its film, it also rewrites it, making *The Return* a part of the original in a way that is undeniable since it has now altered the original. The question is no longer about returning home; *Twin Peaks* has changed what home is. How the audience remembered *Twin Peaks* going is no longer the way it will be from now on. The act eliminates discussion of authenticity or canon, because Cooper's time travel reinvents the rules of *Twin Peaks*' world.

The Secret History has a similar relationship with the original series' canon. The contents put together in the novel were assembled by Major Garland Briggs, but very little of it is authored by him. In some cases, Briggs states where he received files from; in other cases, it is left to the audience to decide where the information came from and who its author might be. This leads to questions on the trustworthiness of the information given to the reader, such as whether the author had an agenda. Certainly, in the case of editorials clipped from Twin Peaks' newspaper, an agenda must be present. The next question, and the one the book is most interested in, is, even if the author does not have an agenda, can the information be trusted?

For the reader well acquainted with the television show, there will be a number of inaccuracies to spot. For instance, Norma Jennings' mother is described as having died in 1984 when, in fact, she appeared alive and well in the television series. The novel also has an excerpt that describes how Ed and Nadine (Wendy Robie) became a couple, which involves Ed going to Vietnam, an aspect of their relationship that is never discussed in the television series. The specifics of how Nadine lost her eye are also at odds with a monologue Ed gives in the second season premiere of the program. This causes the reader to question just how truthful the narration is, both in *The Secret History* and *Twin Peaks* itself. Did Briggs obtain documents that were erroneous? Or did characters in the original series lie or misremember events? There is ample room for both depending on the inaccuracy being considered. It becomes important here that Frost himself is the author of the novel. As Frost was the co-creator and co-showrunner of *Twin Peaks*, these inaccuracies do not seem to be the result of shoddy research, but, instead, a writer purposely exploring the pitfalls of believing narratives. When asked about this on Twitter, Frost replied, 'All will be revealed in time.' During an interview with the *Twin Peaks: The Return Podcast*, Frost commented that historical texts are often filled with errors, and thus inaccuracies slip through. He wanted to

create the same feeling with *The Secret History* (and, although listeners of that podcast did not know it at the time, with *The Return*).

Frost alludes to this early in *The Secret History* by having Tamara Preston note: 'Any instances of documents that prove resistant to verification will be duly noted' (Frost 2016, p. 5). Throughout the book, Preston comments in footnotes when a specific part of the dossier has been verified. There are instances, however, where she notes she cannot find confirmation, such as the dossier's contents on the MJ-12 documents: 'I am unable to confirm whether a star chamber panel like MJ-12 ever actually existed' (Frost 2016, p. 153). At another point, Preston notes a document she found appears to be verifiable yet she still cannot quite accept its legitimacy: 'This appears authentic—as does the signature—but I can find no other existing copy of this letter or the transcript that follows it in official files' (Frost 2016, p. 239). In some instances, she does not know how to attempt to verify what she is being shown. After the dossier tries to link some UFO sightings to a section of the Bible, Preston notes 'Okay, I will admit my mind is reeling. It's after three in the morning and I feel like I'm teetering on the edge of a mine shaft' (Frost 2016, p. 122).

Not surprisingly, the points when Preston steps in to specify she is having trouble verifying or simply believing an aspect of the dossier tend to be instances where Briggs is recording supernatural events. This makes sense on a story level, because Preston has yet to see the supernatural occurrences in *The Return*. Thematically, it alludes to the events of the original run of episodes and the film. During that run, there was a constant tension as to just how real the beings from the Black Lodge were. The first scene set in the Red Room, in Episode 2, can be written off as a dream sequence if one so desires. In Episode 16, Agent Albert Rosenfield (Miguel Ferrer) wonders aloud if BOB (Frank Silva) is merely the evil that men do instead of an actual entity. *Fire Walk with Me* further explores this by graying the line between BOB and Leland Palmer. Perhaps, the film suggests, Leland was not an unwilling vessel for BOB and was complicit in the rapes and murder of Laura Palmer. *The Secret History* allows for the supernatural events recorded to be true, with Preston at times noting how disturbed she is ('It's late, it's dark, and I'm now turning on all the lights in my office' [Frost 2016, p. 260]) but it also allows for the incidents to be the product of frustrated and disturbed psyches. Toward the end, Preston shows some level of frustration, remarking, 'I'm beginning to wonder if I am going to be able to show

this to anyone without getting fired. The world of Doug Milford is like a hall of mirrors. Frankly, I could use a drink' (Frost 2016, p. 313).

Preston's journey through the dossier mimics the audience's journey through the original run of *Twin Peaks*. There is the uncertainty over the supernatural elements, the sense of horror at what is occurring, and the occasional bouts of frustration. Frost also has Preston voice the complaints that some fans felt about the latter half of the *Twin Peaks*' second season. When reviewing material pertaining to that series of episodes, Preston comments: 'For anyone not yet convinced this amateurish slice of Chamber of Commerce civic puffery is pure fiction, the *Romeo and Juliet* reference should put those doubts to rest' (Frost 2016, p. 163). When looking at material relating to Josie Packard, Preston comments: 'It just occurred to me that the film *Body Heat*, which came out a few years before this, has a strikingly similar plot twist. Maybe she saw the movie? Still worth watching btw' (Frost 2016, p. 178). This winking at the audience serves as a joke, but also as a way to take the audience through the emotional journey of the original run, while introducing questions of legitimacy.

Yet for all the clever asides, for all the questioning of how accurate we should view our understanding of the original *Twin Peaks* as being in flux, *The Secret History* ends on a very similar note to the original series—and to *The Return*. At the end of the dossier, Briggs relates that he was visited by Cooper, or at least some version of him. Briggs writes: 'He just left. Something's wrong. The message holds the answer, just as I thought, but I've misinterpreted it. Protocols are in place. I must act quickly' (Frost 2016, p. 359). There is a level of urgency in the writing here that is absent throughout the book, making this section a startling departure. From Brigg's perspective, the Cooper he has known, and the one he has drawn some of the information in the dossier from, is suddenly an almost malevolent force, certainly not one he can any longer put his trust in. This mimics *Twin Peaks*' surreal and horrific second season finale, wherein Agent Cooper visits the Red Room and is replaced by his doppelgänger, the very doppelgänger that visits Briggs at the end of the novel.

In essence, Frost is telling the reader that while the *Twin Peaks* they know and love might not be exactly how they remembered it, the horror at its heart is still potent. This also prepares the audience for the journey in *The Return*. Not only does history potentially get changed at the end of *The Return*, but the series itself is different from the original run,

just as *The Secret History* challenges the reader to examine what *Twin Peaks* truly is. Lynch and Frost's return to the world of *Twin Peaks* was faced with the challenge of resolving outstanding questions from the original run and reviving a series whose sensibilities both no longer worked on television and were no longer of interest to Lynch and Frost, both of whom had another two decades of writing behind them since the original run. *The Secret History* acted as a signpost on how they would do this: by taking the heart of *Twin Peaks*, both its joys and its horrors, and forging a new direction that might make some view the original in a significantly different light, or, at the least, make the viewer feel like they have additional context upon rewatch.

For instance, the nature of BOB is elaborated on in *The Return* in a fashion that changes some of the original series. In Episode 13 of the original run, when MIKE (Al Strobel) tells Cooper and Sheriff Truman (Michael Ontkean) that BOB has been with them for forty years, viewers of *The Return* know he came into being, at least in his current personification, with the advent of nuclear bombs. Not only will they know it happened forty years ago, but they will, in fact, be able to pinpoint the exact date. The audience also learns that BOB either comes from, or has some sort of relation to, Judy, a force that appears to be even stronger than the malevolent spirit. This does rob the audience of some sense of mystery, but, in true *Twin Peaks* fashion, the answers only lead to more questions: why is it that a nuclear bomb opens a portal for BOB? Is this the first time BOB has appeared? Did other supernatural entities arrive when future nuclear bombs were set off? So, instead of ending discussion, this sets the discussion on a different, but no less rich, track. This approach is mimicked in Frost's novels.

For instance, *The Secret History* reinvents the character of Douglas Milford (Tony Jay) in much the same way *The Return* reinvents BOB: nothing is rewritten; instead, understanding is broadened. In the original run, Milford appeared as an elderly man who was smitten with Lana Milford (Robyn Lively). He is presented as a bickering man, easily taken advantage of by the young girl. However, Frost's novel lays out an involved backstory for Milford, detailing his work with the US military and his investigations into the supernatural, including a visit with Richard Nixon where Nixon showed him a being very similar to Judy/The Experiment. That Frost wrote *The Secret History* as *The Return* was being filmed is evident in these similarities in theme and storytelling structure. Knowing how different *The Return* would be, Frost seemed

to be teaching the readers of *The Secret History* to get used to a new, very ambiguous and narrative shifting form of storytelling. It is an understandable inclination, especially after *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*, a film starkly different from the show, received such a critical blasting upon its release (although later it was reevaluated, with some critics calling it Lynch's best).

When Frost followed up *The Secret History* with *The Final Dossier*, he answered some of the questions left outstanding from *The Return*. Yet, true to the spirit of *The Return*, *The Final Dossier* offered up answers that led to more questions. Just as seeing BOB's birth yields the question of what the nature is of the being that birthed him, answers in *The Final Dossier*, such as the fact that some people's memories of Laura's death are changing thanks to Cooper's interaction, lead to near unlimited potential for speculation. *The Final Dossier* also continued the tradition of *The Secret History* and *The Return* by calling into question the reader's recollection of the events of *Twin Peaks*, except in this case both the original run and the new season are reexamined. In Part 17 of *The Return*, the entity that is Phillip Jeffries (David Bowie and Nathan Frizzell) tells Cooper that Gordon Cole (David Lynch) will 'remember the unofficial version.' For readers of *The Secret History*, this will immediately recall that book's theme of shifting narratives and perspectives. *The Final Dossier* takes this a step further. In it, Agent Preston reveals how, after the events of Part 17, it appears that Laura Palmer did not die as the audience saw in *Twin Peaks* and *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*, but, in fact, vanished without a trace. Instead of arriving to investigate her killing in 1989, Cooper arrived to investigate her disappearance. Leland Palmer commits suicide out of guilt; Cooper's investigation still leads to him becoming trapped in the Red Room for 25 years. Preston emphasizes the change when she reads the cover of a newspaper: 'It's right there on the front page. *Laura Palmer did not die*' (Frost 2017, p. 132). Whether this indicates a new reality or simply subverted memories is vague. Preston notes in her letter to Cole: 'Chief, I'm glad I've written all this down rapidly, because my own thoughts about every one of these events are growing fuzzier and more indistinct the longer I stay here' (Frost 2017, p. 137). As with *The Secret History*, this is both a commentary on the story and on nostalgia. The viewers' own memories of the original *Twin Peaks* become warped with time, and expectations of what *Twin Peaks* really 'is about' change. Frost makes these changing perspectives literal in his novels, both teaching the reader what to expect

from *The Return* and challenging the reader to examine their own preconceived notions about how the world of *Twin Peaks* works.

But, like *The Secret History*, *The Final Dossier* makes certain that one aspect stays concrete: that Laura Palmer was abused while an entire town looked away. Even if her ultimate fate has changed, the horrors she went through remain as potent and disturbing as ever in *The Final Dossier*. This links nicely with Part 18 of *The Return*. Parts 17 and 18 put into question much of what the audience has assumed they knew about the world of *Twin Peaks*, but the last image is stark: Laura Palmer/Carrie Page screaming in terror as she stands outside the house she was abused in for years. *The Secret History*, *The Return*, and *The Final Dossier* form a trilogy that reinvents the world of *Twin Peaks* and changes its narrative structure. Each piece helps to illuminate the other two, all of them in conversation with one another. At the same time, they also all point to one unchanging theme about abuse and the stark reality of Laura Palmer's existence: the town of Twin Peaks allowed her to be tormented by her own father because it was more convenient to ignore it. As much as the novels may resolve questions and raise others, Frost makes sure that the central trauma of *Twin Peaks* remains intact, suggesting that no matter how one tries to interpret the information given, no matter what questions arise from new revelations, the heart of *Twin Peaks* is still Laura Palmer's tragedy. In a sense, although Frost is allowing for more theorizing thanks to his novels, he is still drawing a line in the sand in respect to Laura's abuse: no matter what the audience might now believe about BOB or Milford, the audience must still deal with the horrors that happened to Laura Palmer.

Upon the release of *The Secret History*, fans eagerly picked up the novel, hoping to get some answers after the original run's cliffhanger and the new questions posed in *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*. Critical reception tended to be positive, with *Entertainment Weekly* giving the novel a B+ review. *The Nerdist* noted how it revealed just how integral Mark Frost must have been to some of the weirder elements in the original run: 'We all might need to rethink this idea of Frost as "the normal one," because thankfully, *The Secret History of Twin Peaks* proves he's just a weird as Lynch, only in a totally different way. And this is very much a good thing' (Diaz 2016). *Slate*'s Laura Miller took the opposite view, with a review critical of the novel and of Frost himself. 'And that explains why *The Secret History of Twin Peaks* turns out to be the perfect title for Frost's book. There's not a drop of mystery left in it by the time he's

done' (Miller 2017). Miller's perspective here seems to be somewhat at odds with the novel, because, if anything, it seems resistant to answering questions, more interested in forcing the reader to reflect on what can and cannot be seen as the unimpeachable truth. Yet having a viewpoint in contrast with the general consensus seems almost necessary to *The Secret History of Twin Peaks*' nature: nothing can be agreed upon completely due to varying perspectives and experiences, all of which color both the reviews of *The Secret History of Twin Peaks* and the contents within it.

While some lingering questions from the first two seasons are addressed, usually indirectly, *The Secret History of Twin Peaks* expands the mythology from the original show as opposed to giving concrete answers about it. This had, in fact, been Frost's goal for quite some time. He told *Publisher's Weekly*: 'I wanted to write this book during the original run, but I was too busy running the show and never found the time. The intent is to offer readers—and viewers—a richer historical and narrative context through which to view the show, both then and now. Twin Peaks is an immersive world, and this was my effort to expand it narratively and chronologically' (Maher 2017). *The Secret History* does just what Frost hoped it would do. The novel includes Lewis and Clark, Thomas Jefferson, and Richard Nixon, among other historical figures, and integrates them into the *Twin Peaks* mythology. *The Secret History* also introduces readers to some concepts that appear in *The Return*. One such concept is that of the Experiment, the entity that is seen in the glass box in Part 1 of *The Return* and later seen in Part 8 vomiting out BOB after the atomic bomb test in Los Alamos. The first mention of the Experiment, albeit indirectly, in *The Secret History* comes from a memo concerning Douglas Milford's meeting with Jack Parsons (Parsons is a real historical figure who dabbled in the occult, but his use in the novel is fictional; his presence is, though, another example of how Frost took the narrow scope of *Twin Peaks* and expanded it to a national stage). The memo states: 'His associate told me … those rituals were "an attempt to summon into human form the spirit of a figure central to the Thelema pantheon, the goddess Babalon, known as The Mother of Abominations"' (Frost 2017, p. 259). Next to this text is a photograph of a sculpture of the Whore of Babylon, whose body is reminiscent of the Experiment's as it appears in *The Return*. The idea of summoning a figure plays into the Experiment's appearance in Parts 1 and 8. In Part 1, sex between Tracey (Madeline Zima) and Sam (Benjamin Rosenfield)

seems to usher the Experiment into the glass box, and in Part 8, the nuclear bomb appears to give the Experiment a doorway into the human realm. With this segment from *The Secret History* in mind, it can be hypothesized that the Experiment is summoned, and, perhaps, does not appear of its own accord as other supernatural figures in *Twin Peaks* do.

The Experiment makes an even larger appearance later in *The Secret History*. The dossier contains a private journal entry from Douglas Milford that describes a time President Nixon took him to see a creature that Nixon believed was an extraterrestrial (that this creature, almost certainly the Experiment, is extraterrestrial in nature is later put into question, with Briggs wondering if it is instead extradimensional, following up on the extradimensional aspects of *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*). Milford describes the encounter as such: 'I realized a shape, small and pale, appeared to be sitting or squatting, turned away from us, showing only a grayish-greenish-white spiny back. Then it disappeared entirely. Moments later it reappeared' (Frost 2017, p. 293). Later, Milford describes getting a closer look at the creature: 'The glimpse we got was extremely brief before it vanished again, and I wasn't entirely sure of what I saw, beyond a vivid impression of large oval black eyes, pinched to the point of nonexistent mouth and nose, and a smooth bulbous head. Then it was gone' (Frost 2017, p. 293). Not all of these descriptions match the Experiment as it is seen in *The Return*. The 'large oval black eyes' sound more like the grey aliens from *The X-Files* than the Experiment. But this is in keeping with Frost's portrayal of reality in *The Secret History*: the reader does not always know who, what, or how much to believe. Enough of the description does match the Experiment, though, to make some basic conclusions, such as the United States government being aware, to some extent, of the White and Black Lodge entities. This adds to the revelations in *The Return* about the Blue Rose Task Force, a force started by Gordon Cole and Phillip Jeffries. The Blue Rose Task Force, while aware of the supernatural, was probably only a small slice of a larger government conspiracy to examine and cover up Lodge related entities. It is even possible that the Blue Rose Task Force was knowingly kept in the dark by higher authorities.

The Final Dossier continues to explore the background of the Experiment in the chapter titled 'Judy.' In this chapter, Preston follows up on Phillip Jeffries and notes he was looking into a person named Judy. She discovers that the word Joudy was carved into a wall in a room he used in Buenos Aires, a location briefly shown in *The Return*.

Preston notes that Joudy is an old reference: 'Joudy, it turns out, is also the name of an ancient entity in Sumerian mythology … The name was used to describe a species of wandering demon … they feasted on human flesh and, allegedly, ripped the souls from their victims' (Frost 2017, pp. 121–122). In a reference that *Twin Peaks* fans will pick up on, Preston further notes that Joudy feasted '"on human suffering"' (Frost 2017, p. 122). Human suffering recalls the 'garmonbozia' that BOB consumes, which links Judy to the evil spirit. Preston's description of Judy feasting on flesh and ripping souls recalls two instances from *The Return*: the Experiment's attack on Sam and Tracey and the entity inside Sarah Palmer (Grace Zabriskie) that kills the man harassing her at the bar. If Frost's intention is to link Judy to the Experiment then not only does *The Final Dossier* imply that Judy appears in the flesh in *The Return*, but *The Secret History* had a cameo of the main villain all along. Adding further fuel to the fire is that the creature Jack Preston was trying to summon was the aforementioned Mother of Abominations. In *The Return*'s Part 3, the American Girl (Phoebe Augustine, who also played Ronette Pulaski) tells Cooper that the slamming sound he hears is the arrival of her mother, and she begs him to leave before her mother arrives. Chronologically, this scene occurs at the same time the Experiment is appearing in the glass box, gaining strength until it breaks out of it and kills Sam and Tracey, which links the idea of the Experiment and the Mother of Abominations together. Further supporting that theory is that the Experiment appears to later reside inside of Sarah Palmer, herself a mother and, by far, the most important mother figure in *Twin Peaks* canon. By combining Frost's text with the visual clues in *The Return*, three separate entities (Mother, the Experiment, and Judy) appear to be, at the very least, connected, and possibly the same creature. By no means does a viewer need all of this to understand *The Return*, but Frost's texts add layers to the plot that may not have been elaborated on in the show, thus deepening the viewing experience. This does have the effect of cutting off some theories audiences may have been creating since the end of *Twin Peaks: The Return*, but, similar to the show's reveal about BOB's creation, the additional information given on Judy leads to more questions and more reevaluations of the *Twin Peaks* world. In fact, this seems to be the overall point of Frost's novels, which examines how answers can be unsatisfactory. The answer to a question can merely reveal that the original question was the wrong one. Frost, to an extent, answers the question of who Judy is, but in

doing so he reveals a more detailed question should have been originally asked: what does Judy want?

This is not to say that Frost offers nothing concrete. In a few cases, Frost does explicitly answers questions left open by Part 18. At the end of *The Final Dossier*, Frost connects Sarah Palmer to a young girl seen in the 1956 sequence in Part 8. In this sequence, the young girl is on a date with a boy, who kisses her goodnight. She returns to her house, puts on the radio, and falls asleep only to have a creature crawl into her mouth. In Preston's final letter to Cole, she describes how she discovered Sarah Palmer was involved in a strange, borderline supernatural incident, where people in the town she lived in blacked out. 'Two of the people named in that account lived in the Novacks' neighborhood. Sarah Novack was one of them: According to her parents, they found Sarah unconscious and unresponsive in her upstairs bedroom' (Frost 2017, p. 136). This tracks with where Part 8 ended, linking together the nameless girl with Sarah Palmer. In this case, Frost is explicitly resolving a question: who is the girl in Part 8? While the answer, Sarah Palmer, does lead to more questions, those questions dovetail with questions the audience likely already has about Sarah based on her supernatural abilities in the original run and her behavior in *The Return*.

Frost also answers questions left open by the original run of episodes, such as the fates of Annie Blackburn (she is in a mental institute and rarely speaks) and Leo Johnson (dead). These are questions *The Return* could not engage with in a manner that would not smack of fan service, but, thanks to the way Frost structured *The Final Dossier*, he was able to give the readers answers in a way that feels natural to the format instead of shoehorned. Yet, in keeping with the spirit of *Twin Peaks*, Frost still manages to retain mysteries that audiences were hoping would be solved. Whether Cooper changed the timeline when he went back in time to rescue Laura Palmer or just changed people's memories is still an open question. While Frost draws connections between Judy, the Experiment, and Mother, the entity's ultimate desires are still vague, as is how the entity fits into the overall Black Lodge mythos. Frost's works complement and expand the world of *Twin Peaks*, but they do not ruin the mystery of *Twin Peaks*. While the novels will likely be consumed by a much smaller portion of people than the two television shows, both are important and illuminating pieces of the *Twin Peaks* canon that do service to Lynch and Frost's original creation.

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CHAPTER 12

Copy of a Copy of a Copy: Theorizing the Triplicity of Self and Otherness in Season Three of *Twin Peaks*

Kwasu David Tembo

The experimentalism of the mythology in all three Seasons of Mark Frost and David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* (hereafter *TP*) offers a dense hermeneutic loam from which polyvalent readings may be extracted. *TP* splices genre, cinematic and television tropes, and aesthetico-narratological techniques to produce a parodic, convention-defying detective story, operating under the aegis of a high-school drama-cum-murder-mystery (Blassmann 1999; Lavery 1995, p. 16). An unsurprising consequence thereof is a notable trend in *TP* scholarship that frequently deploys readings based on generic conventions. However, *TP*'s vast intersectional mythology is widely known to combine multiple genres and storytelling modes including, but not limited to, soap opera, sitcom, detective story, horror movie, fifties-style juvenile delinquent film, TV commercial, and film-noir, among others. Scholarship offering Lacanian analysis of the above can be found in Theresa Geller's 'Deconstructing Postmodern Television in *Twin Peaks*' (1992), Nolan Boyd's 'Dark Reflections: Fantasy and Duality in The Work of David Lynch' (2014),

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Eric Savoy's 'Jacques Lacan, Walk with Me: On the Letter' (2016), Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock and Catherine Spooner's *Return to Twin Peaks: New Approaches to Materiality, Theory, and Genre on Television* (2016), Todd McGowan's 'Lodged in a Fantasy Space: *Twin Peaks* and Hidden Obscenities' (2016), and Cam Scott's 'Metaphysical Detectives: Guilt, Grace, and Gaze Throughout the World of *Twin Peaks*' (2017). The proteanism of *TP* has engendered an enduring mystique which in turn has facilitated a broad range of critical analyses in both popular and academic presses. Examples of concerted scholarship pertaining to the series can be noted in such works as David Lavery's *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to Twin Peaks* (1995), or later scholarship such as Linda Ruth Williams' '*Twin Peaks*: David Lynch and the Serial-Thriller Soap,' in *The Contemporary Television Series* (2005), Miles Booy's 'Twin Peaks,' in *The Cult TV Book: From Star Trek to Dexter, New Approaches to TV Outside the Box* (2010), and Glen Creeber's '"Some Strange and Twisted Dream": The Neglected Surrealism of *Twin Peaks*,' in *Twin Peaks' in the Rearview Mirror: Appraisals and Reappraisals of the Show That Was Supposed to Change TV* (2012).

As a theoretical framework, this chapter will parse both the leitmotif of triplicity in Season Three more generally but the triplicity of Cooper more specifically through Jacques Lacan's conceptual methodology of the Three Orders, namely the Imaginary, Symbolic, and the Real, developed during a series of lectures in the fifties. Lacan's Three Orders help uncover insights as to how the Season's three manifestations of Cooper interact, as well as the consequences of the overlapping of the spaces in which they appear and disappear. Put simply, Lacanian theory is useful in theorizing the aesthetic and narrative weirdness encountered in every aspect of the series pertaining to Cooper and his journey(s). Being that Lacan's concepts underwent extensive revision and evolution throughout his productive theoretical career, it would be impossible to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Three Orders in themselves, nor their implications within the field(s) of media studies. That said, a summary could be offered as a theoretical context for the analysis of the triplicity of Cooper to come.

Lacan's Three Orders are based on an individual's primary experience of subjectivity. In 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience' (1966), Lacan develops a theory of identity formation and the structuring of an individual's subjectivity through apperception. For Lacan, the mirror stage is

instrumental in the development of an individual's self-consciousness: both the individual's sense of self-awareness in terms of one's physical body and its appearance, as well as self-awareness in the sense of one's sense of self as being distinct from other selves encountered in one's environment. The mirror stage is a process which involves a human infant recognizing its own image as reflected back to him/her, typically by a mirror (Lacan 1966, pp. 75, 76, 96). The Imaginary Order is a space in which the image of the ideal self is internalized. The ideal self is described as ideal precisely because the notion of a whole or complete self is closely associated with ideas of bodily and psycho-emotional coherence as opposed to flux and fragmentation. In this way, an individual's subjectivity is a direct result of his/her identification with his/her own specular image encountered in the mirror. The realization of the subject, their I-hood, so to speak, is always-already mediated by an imaginary relation (Lacan 1966, p. 54). Therefore, an individual's imagined and/or longed for sense of wholeness, completion, and mastery resides within the Imaginary Order (Lacan 1966, p. 241).

Beyond the Imaginary Order is the Symbolic Order. In *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1981), Lacan states that as an interactive and intertextual/intersectional being emerging from the ideality of the post-mirror stage Imaginary, the human subject is consciously and unconsciously made up of a web of chains comprised of signifiers and signifieds (Lacan 1981, pp. 126, 246). Lacan distils this concept in 'Symbol and Language,' (1956) stating that 'symbols in fact envelop the life of man in a network so total that they join together […] to [constitute his entire Being]' (Lacan 1956, pp. 39, 42). In other words, for Lacan, the dependence on and use of symbols is the chief predicate of humanity itself. While Lacan posits that latent aspects of the individual's subjectivity may be accessed through language, a subject's insertion into the Symbolic Order following first birth, and secondly the mirror stage, ensures that the pre-discursive or pre-semiological Order of the Real remains forever inaccessible. In this way, a subject's desire for the Real is always-already bound within the plays and slippages of language but is never satisfied thereby.

Of Lacan's Three Orders, the Real is the most abstract and, therefore, difficult to describe. Unlike the Symbolic and Imaginary Orders, the Real is that which resists representation because after the subject is inserted and circumscribed by language in the Symbolic, he/she is radically and permanently severed from the Real. While the Symbolic is

predicated on the fundamental opposition inherent to all semiological signification—namely the opposition between presence and absence—this distinction does not exist in the Real. Such dialectical opposition inherent in the linguistic sign indicates that something is missing or inexpressible in the Symbolic (Lacan 1991). In contrast, Lacan characterizes the Real as a state of being associated with totality and the absolute, making a direct experience of it impossible in so far as our inability to express it semiologically is concerned. In his translator's notes for *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Jacques-Alain Miller offers a helpful description of the Lacanian Real as 'the ineliminable residue of all articulation, the foreclosed element, which may be approached, but never grasped: the umbilical cord of the symbolic' (Lacan 1981, p. 280). From this description, the Real can be defined as the difference between reality and an individual's subjective interpretation of it. Lacan argues that due to its unfathomability, the Real can take on orgasmic or horrific qualities. As Adrian Johnston notes in 'Jacques Lacan' (2016), it is this 'character of impossibility and resistance to symbolization [that] lends the real its traumatic quality' and adds:

> the real may only be experienced as traumatic gaps in the Symbolic order. An example of this are traumatic events such as natural disasters, which effectively break down the signification of everyday life and cause a rupture of something alien and unrecognizable, without the usual grammar of the Symbolic that conditions how to make meaning of something and how to proceed. (Johnston 2016)

By conducting a close reading that compares and contrasts Cooper's tridentity against psychoanalytic concepts, this chapter will endeavor to provide a theorization of the theme of triplicity in Season Three, the primary manifestation of which centers on the triplicity of self exemplified by Douglas Jones/Good Cooper/Bad Cooper.

The numerous manifestations of triplicity in Season Three are a natural development of the theme of duality mediating the main narrative arcs of the show's previous two Seasons. In Season One, the narrative moves away from the ostensible singularity of the deceased Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) toward the duality of Twin Peaks and its citizens more generally. Such an exploration centers specifically on Laura Palmer, and is simultaneously expressed through objects such as her two contradictory diaries, as well as through her doppelgänger, twin, or double in the

form of Maddy, her cousin. By the conclusion of the season, the viewer learns that she was onto-existentially bifurcated, or always-already elsewhere, so to speak. There are and have always-already been two Lauras: the homely albeit troubled high-school student and the wild, promiscuous prostitute, each a dialectical element in a double life. Immediately, Lynch and Frost establish the importance of both physical and psychological doubling, and the moral and ethical duplicity of the town of Twin Peaks itself and of its townsfolk's lives. Ultimately, the 'investigation into Laura's duality revealed that everyone in the town of Twin Peaks seemed to be leading double (at least) lives. After all, even the name, Twin Peaks, implies duality' (Allen 2017b). By the conclusion of Season Two, this duality is made clear in the splitting or twinning of Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) into two distinct entities, one we can call 'Good Cooper,' who remains trapped in the Black Lodge and his Other or Shadow, 'Bad Cooper,' who is dis-Lodged and gains access to the 'real' world.

In Season Three, the occurrence and recurrence of the number three is too extensive to be coincidental or passively thematic. Allen diligently notes the appearances of the number three as follows:

> In New York, Sam [Benjamin Rosenfield] is alerted to 'Camera 3' needing its memory card replaced. In the Mauve Zone, Naido [Nae Yuuki] redirects Good Cooper to outlet 3. The photograph of Bad Cooper at the Glass Box is labelled '003'. We even have three main story lines, playing out in Buckhorn, Las Vegas and Twin Peaks. Perhaps more serious though are the names spoken three times. The Arm [a nerve-like 'tree' crested with a talking pound of flesh that is meant to be a replacement for the Man From Another Place, voiced by Michael J. Anderson] says 'Bob, Bob, Bob!' right before sending Agent Cooper out of the Red Room. Gordon [David Lynch] laments 'Albert, Albert, Albert' [Miguel Ferrer] after he reveals he had given information to Jeffries [David Bowie] that led to another agent's death. These names spoken three times seem to carry power with them, as if they are a type of magical invocation. Philip Gerard [Al Strobel] also says 'Don't die' to Good Cooper three times, in the part of the same name. Speaking of magical invocations, the nuclear test which may have punched a hole between worlds and let in a great evil, the epic centerpiece of Part 8, is called 'Trinity.' (Allen 2017a)

There are other, in some instances more obvious, triadic formations in the Season. In the Las Vegas story-line, the viewer is introduced to

the trio of Sandie (Giselle DaMier), Mandie (Andrea Leal) and Candie (Amy Shiels), cocktail waitresses-cum-P.As to the Mitchum Brothers (Jim Belushi and Robert Knepper), the storyline's semi-competent antagonists and disorganized criminals. There are also the triplet detectives, T. Fusco (David Koechner), D. Fusco (Larry Clarke), and 'Smiley' (Eric Edlestein), who are typically portrayed as acting in tandem.

The most important trimetric manifestation within the broader triplicities of Season Three pertains to that of Dale Cooper. In the aptly-numbered Part 3 ('Call for Help'), it is revealed that the duality of Good Cooper and the dis-Lodged Bad Cooper (infected/possessed by the malignity of the force/spirit of BOB [Frank Silva]) has since evolved into a triplicity through the addition of Dougie Jones. While the physical manifestation of Dougie Jones, who it is later revealed was a Tulpa or copy, is removed from the Season's diegesis almost as soon as he is introduced, the implications of Jones as a third incarnation of Cooper persist well beyond the character's physical departure from the narrative. It would seem obvious that Bad Cooper is the opposite of Good Cooper, however we could argue that in many ways, the 'real' Dougie Jones is the antipodal opposite of Good Cooper. The starkness of the difference is best summed up by Allen's description of Dougie in his post titled 'The Magician Longs to See—A Theoretical Framework for Season 3':

> This pathetic loser version of Cooper who owes someone a lot of money, probably from a gambling habit, and skips out on his own kid's birthday to have sex with a hooker, squatting in someone else's unoccupied home. Dougie Cooper exists to take Bad Cooper's place when go- back-to-the-lodge day comes. (Allen 2017a)

It is important to note here that the ending of Season Two is predicated on a similar concern with gaps, rupture, and fracture, noted in the concluding scene in which Good Cooper smashes his head into a mirror, a symbol of his splitting into Bad Cooper and Good Cooper. While this finale can be described as being a morose acquiescence to evil, or, at least, the most deplorable aspects of human nature, this seemingly nihilistic conclusion was tempered somewhat by the release of *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* (1992) in which the viewer learned that Good Cooper still existed but was trapped in the Black Lodge. In essence, Season Three is ultimately concerned with the question of the reunification or self-annihilation of Good Cooper and his copies Dougie Jones and

Bad Cooper. One of the Imaginary aspects mediating Good Cooper is the ideality of the character presented in Seasons One and Two. Lynch and Frost present a character of singular vision, discipline, resourcefulness, sensitivity, openness, and dedication to the righteous conviction of his office and rank. This moral virtue and ethical probity also pervades the prequel/sequel *Fire Walk with Me*, in this way conclusively suggesting that before the finale of Season Two, there are no onto-existential fractures or dualities in Cooper. From a Lacanian perspective, the pre-fractured Good Cooper is a representation of wholeness and competency, an ideal *I* who, despite the supernatural mysteries, hardships, and setbacks encountered, endured and overcome in Twin Peaks, is both proficient and able. In this sense Good Cooper, in being the ideal Cooper, is also the most Imaginary of the three Coopers.

While Good Cooper is an archon of rectitude and true altruism, Bad Cooper is a representation of that which the Imaginary attempts to nullify and displace through an illusion of completeness, namely the chaotic, unmastered forces that remind the subject of the fundamental disunity of his/her selfhood. As such, Bad Cooper is everything the ideal of Good Cooper is not. As Grant Piercy notes, Bad Cooper is Good Cooper's 'darker self, the inverse of his virtue and goodness': 'his deeper impulses and desires were things he suppressed …, were the things that defined the Dweller on the Threshold, who would come to be identified as the Doppelgänger, [whether they were] the evil within Cooper or an external definition, the polar opposite of his behaviors,' or perhaps even an anthropic reification of the 'aspects of his personality separated when he went into the Lodge' (2018). Interestingly, there is an ideality to Bad Cooper as well. Having been dis-Lodged for 25 years, Bad Cooper is a dark ideal of Good Cooper in that he represents the malign application of the exact same skill sets and character attributes, if not improved versions of them. Bad Cooper is methodical and calm to the point of droll deadpan world-weariness. His tactical acuity, single-mindedness, and discipline are qualities he and his Good counterpart share; ideal attributes, skills, and characteristics required for the reification of both their shared desire.

This ostensible separation between Good Cooper and Bad Cooper also constitutes a substitution. While Bad Cooper's 25 year dis-Lodging allows him access to 'the world' wherein which he has free reign to spread the malignancy of BOB, the force which powers him and allows him to become a criminal/underworld kingpin figurehead, Good

Cooper, remains dis-Lodged from himself in the ordinal interstices between the Zones. As a result, the inversion of ideal, that is, Good Cooper or Imaginary Cooper, into Bad Cooper suppresses 25 years of the former's life, leaving his shadow self free to rape and murder his way through the 'real' world. Piercy notes that within the space of 25 years, Bad Cooper's actions, in lieu of his Good counterpart, represent a concerted effort to erase Good Cooper through inversion:

> This Doppelgänger 'visited' Audrey Horne while in a coma (raping her, and fulfilling the desire of the good, chaste Cooper in an awful inversion) and produced the terrible Richard Horne, further fracturing the self. Likewise, the Tulpa Dougie Jones produced an offspring with Janey- E named Sonny Jim. The Doppelgänger also visited Cooper's old secretary Diane some years after original Cooper disappeared, pressed her for information on the FBI, then raped her as well. We're also then left to infer that he trapped Diane in a shadow realm on an ageless violet sea (likely near the fortress or within the fortress where the Fireman lives) without eyes or language and manufactured a Tulpa to take her place on earth for the purpose of gathering information should Gordon Cole and Albert Rosenfield come knocking. (Piercy 2018)

Not only this, but *The Final Dossier* (2017) reveals to the viewer that Bad Cooper is the undisclosed billionaire who funded the Glass Box in New York in which the 'Experiment'—a being resembling the creature that 'gave birth' to BOB in Part 8, which also kills Sam Colby and Tracey in Part 1—is contained. Without getting too immured in ancillary speculation, the implications of this connection here could be that Bad Cooper is in some way trying to exploit the transdimensional powers of the 'Experiment'. Through its containment, Bad Cooper could indeed be attempting to learn from it, particularly how it is able to permeate dimensional boundaries. Opposing this hypothesis, in containing the 'Experiment,' Bad Cooper could also be attempting to tactically control any entity he is connected to with the ability to influence and/or control him.

If Good Cooper is the ideal Cooper and therefore the most Imaginary Cooper, then how do we theorize Bad Cooper from a Lacanian perspective? 'What we learn about the Doppelgänger in *The Return*,' notes Piercy,

> is that he is a creature only of want, not need; he is trying to gain an audience with an extreme negative force called Jiao Dai (Jowdy in *The Final Dossier*, or Judy as it's referred to in the various *Twin Peaks* mythos) as evidenced by his incessant search for coordinates; and that he's acquired a massive amount of wealth that has augmented his ability to gain that audience. But we come to find out from Gordon Cole that Cooper himself was seeking that force prior to entering the Lodge—that he was seeking to 'kill two birds with one stone'. So, in fact, the Doppelgänger was defined specifically by a desire within Agent Cooper. He was a creature of want. (Piercy 2018)

While Bad Cooper certainly makes devastating use of his time, neither he nor Good Cooper, despite the latter's quarter-century long handicap, are able to achieve their shared goal, namely an encounter with Jiao Dai. Therefore, the two manifestations of Cooper are, in fact, ultimately undifferentiated by a more fundamental unity, which is also simultaneously a fundamental disunity: the inability to *access* the Order to which Jiao Dai, a being portrayed as a primordial, pre-discursive force, belongs. As Piercy notes, their desires are undifferentiated because Bad Cooper seeks to capture the entity known as Jiao Dai,

> just as the original Cooper wanted [, whereas] BOB, on the other hand, wants Garmonbozia, the creamed corn embodiment of pain and sorrow in the *Twin Peaks* universe. Subtract that from the equation and all the Doppelgänger seems to be is a blank negative of the original Cooper, whose only purpose is to meet the extremely negative force that the original Cooper wanted to go after. He's acquired all the wealth and power, gorged himself on the Garmonbozia, he's ensured his continued survival by substituting Dougie Jones for himself once Coop's time in the Black Lodge is up … He says he's a creature of want, but what does he want? Only what has already been determined for him [, circumscribed within the remit of the exact same desire in his opposite, namely Good Cooper]. (Piercy 2018)

Jiao Dai, being as elusive and abstract as it is in the *TP* diegesis, would suggest that both Coopers' failure to encounter it is a direct result of the fact that the latter belongs properly to the Real and as such is simultaneously the kernel of both their desires and horrors, as well as the barrier against which this desire for contact disintegrates. This question of

Imaginary ideality also extends to Dougie Jones. My use of the term 'extends' is intended to reflect Piercy's understanding of Dougie Cooper as a Tulpa, which has a slightly different meaning and implications as opposed to the term 'double.' He states that Bad Cooper manufactured a Tulpa that

> served the purpose of redirecting the good Cooper when he exited the Lodge. Tulpa is an interesting word to use in the context of Twin Peaks; a Tulpa equates to 'thoughtform,' both as the idea of a form conjured from thought as if out of nothing, but also specifically in Tibetan Buddhism, Tibet having been very important to Cooper prior to going into the Lodge. Note that a Tulpa in the *Twin Peaks* mythos is not the same as a doppelgänger, which is an inversion of the original; the Tulpa seems to be an extension of the original. This Tulpa was named Dougie Jones, and had a weakness for gambling and prostitutes, yet somehow married and produced a child. Being an extension of the evil Cooper, he has wants (greed and lust) that may or may not reflect the original Cooper. (Piercy 2018)

Therefore, if not a detached methodical approach or the earnestness of true virtue Good and Bad Cooper represent respectively, what then does the Imaginary ideality Dougie Cooper represent? Dougie Cooper lives within a Symbolic Order mediated by the quotidian aspects of life. It would appear that from a Lacanian perspective, Cooper as Dougie is characterized as being fundamentally the most Symbolic manifestation of the Cooper triumvirate. If, as Lacan states in *Écrits*, the Symbolic Order is characterized by the fundamental binary opposition between absence and presence, whereby nothing in the Symbolic order 'exists except upon an assumed foundation of absence' (1966, p. 392), then Dougie Cooper can be described as an absent presence or a present absence. Cooper as Dougie is, physically, seemingly indistinguishable from Dougie, but his presence as such bespeaks an absence of Cooperness, so to speak. While the good and evil struggle mediating the antagonism between Good Cooper and Bad Cooper is transmogrified into the struggle between the law and lawlessness, organized crime, gambling, fraud, and embezzlement in the Las Vegas diegesis where Dougie Cooper resides, ultimately Dougie is shown to live in the comparative placidity of Las Vegas with Janey-E and Sonny Jim. Unlike his Good and Bad counterparts, Dougie's existence is marked by the middling banality of upper middle-class life, with both its advantages and vices. He is an insurance

broker for former boxer, Bushnell 'Battlin' Bud' Mullins, has debts, a gambling addiction, and is a serial adulterer, all quintessential aspects of the postmodern reality of the American Dream. Therefore, when Cooper is substituted for the Tulpa, he becomes a symbol of settled staticity, as unremarkably quotidian as his suburban setting implies. One can say that in his recasting as a simpleton, Cooper as Dougie is a representation of the so-called simple life. One untroubled by the inter-ordinal clash of zonal forces represented by the antagonism of Good and Bad Cooper and, instead, marked by silent enjoyment of coffee, pie, and being driven around.[1] However, there is also an ideality inherent to this simplicity in that Cooper as Dougie represents a mode of being unavailable to either Good or Bad Cooper, namely the ostensible tranquility of a suburban life.

Interestingly, before the substitution is disrupted by the mystical and transportive power of electricity in Part 15, Cooper's entire turn as Dougie is marked by an insipid toddlerism whereby Cooper-as-Dougie attempts to simply function as an adult, husband, father, and employee in the world. This description of Dougie Cooper as a toddler on account of his doltishness evokes comparisons with the pre-mirror stage infant. The Lacanian implication here is that Dougie Cooper represents the idea that the transition between Orders is psycho-emotionally degenerative and traumatic. This can be noted in Cooper-as-Dougie losing all his psychological perspicuity, physical ableness, and social competency that registers as a cost of this transference. However, we could argue that there is a far simpler Imaginary aspect to Dougie Cooper at play. Despite Janey-E's initial frustration and impatience with Dougie Cooper, she is shown to be nurturing and attentive with him all the same. She literally and figuratively takes the wheel for Dougie Cooper while he recuperates from the trauma of his inter-Order transition from the Black Lodge, through the paradoxically labyrinthine simplicity of the Mauve Zone and Naido's Station, finally to Las Vegas. Therefore, despite the imminent danger lurking beneath the site of Dougie Cooper's rehabilitation and attempts to reconstruct or regain the missing aspects of his identity, this lengthy and difficult process occurs within the Imaginary setting of ideal American suburbia. This ideal setting is also symbolically the setting of the life Good Cooper never had, one with a wife and child, a simple job. As shown in Part 5, the Imaginary ideal of this life is, however, always-already out of reach as the viewer witnesses Dougie

Cooper gazing reflectively in the mirror, inexplicably crying when looking at Sonny Jim, reaching but failing to reach the ineffable Cooperness represented by his personal totems such as coffee and cherry pie, or the righteous lawman represented by the cowboy statue outside the Lucky 7 offices. In this way, the viewer witnesses Dougie Cooper's inability to reconcile the ideality of his Good Cooper or Imaginary Cooper self with the largely uncoordinated, inarticulate, and psycho-physically dependent Dougie Cooper self looking back at him in the mirror. As such, Cooper, while present, is simultaneously absent from/to himself.

In the Symbolic Order, therefore, Dougie Cooper also represents Lacanian alienation. For Lacan, alienation is not an accidental phenomenon that a subject can transcend. Instead, Lacan posits the phenomenon as a fundamental aspect of subjectivity itself. For Lacan, the subject is fundamentally split or alienated from him or herself with no possibility of escape, or to achieve a sense of wholeness or synthesis that is not illusory. As a result, the split or gap between Good Cooper and Dougie Cooper is an inevitable consequence of the Good Cooper's transition from the Black Lodge/Mauve Zone to Las Vegas. In *The Seminar. Book III. The Psychoses, 1955–56* Lacan states that 'the initial synthesis of the ego is essentially an alter ego, it is alienated' (1966, p. 39). Ultimately, for Good Cooper, this identification with his alter ego in the form of Dougie Cooper is always-already both incomplete and illusory. As such, the alienation of Good Cooper from himself through a temporary identification with Dougie Cooper belongs to the Imaginary Order whereby this 'alienation is constitutive of the imaginary order. Alienation is the imaginary as such' (Lacan 1966, p. 146). This illusory stability found in the life of Dougie Jones is only effective in so far as it keeps Cooper from remembering the fundamental drive of his desire to (1) save Laura Palmer and (2) encounter Jiao Dai.

However, the most ideal and therefore Imaginary aspect of the Cooper triumvirate occurs in Parts 17 and 18. In the former, Good Cooper receives a key which allows him to enter a portal in which a transmuted Jeffries is able to send Cooper back in time. This splitting of the timeline creates, in effect, a *mirror universe* which is uncannily similar to the *TP* diegesis as it has been understood heretofore. In this mirror universe is reflected the ideal Imaginary Cooper, one who, returned to his competence and conviction, is convinced that he is able to change the past and erase/prevent the murder of Laura Palmer. The implication here is that the most Imaginary aspect of Cooper is his reflected

identification with himself as a literal and figurative agent of good, able to prevent the murder of a young woman and vanquish the forces of evil. However, as is the subject's identification with an ideal *I* in the mirror stage, the Imaginary Cooper in the mirror universe created by Jeffries' disruption of the timeline only produces an illusory stability and wholeness. In Part 18, the viewer learns that while Good Cooper succeeds in erasing/preventing the murder of Laura Palmer, he also erases *that* Laura Palmer from that timeline, leaving behind a doppelgänger Laura in the form of Carrie Page. Therefore, Good Cooper does not resolve his desire to prevent the death of Laura Palmer, but merely transfers, displaces, or defers it into another timeline, ultimately doubling or *extending* said trauma in Carrie Page. While the seemingly ideal Good Cooper, returned to a modicum of wholeness, doggedly attempts to traverse realities in order to reunite Laura Palmer with her mother, Cooper only succeeds in re-introducing a simulacrum of Laura Palmer to the disjunctive trauma of a different timeline in which self and identity are subject to further fracture as opposed to a final synthesis. The Imaginary Cooper is only able to attain an illusory resolution to his desire to save Laura Palmer. As a result, the final iteration of Cooper encountered in Part 18 both is and is not any of the Coopers the audience has seen hitherto. In view of him receiving a note addressed to one 'Richard,' and his seeming desire to combine Good Cooper's predilection for law, justice, and order with Bad Cooper's proclivity for violence, the complexity of the final iteration of Cooper indicates a paradoxical scattering and amalgamation of conflicting psycho-emotional attributes as they appear across the Three Orders.

Lastly, the most Real aspect of the Cooper triumvirate occurs in Part 8. In the episode, Bad Cooper is shot by the FBI informant Ray Monroe and left for dead. Subsequently, the sooty-faced Woodsmen emerge to protect/heal BOB and his vessel, namely, Bad Cooper. Then, in a highly abstract manner, Lynch and Frost present what we could call 'the birth of evil' in a sequence beginning with the first Trinity nuclear bomb detonation at White Sands, New Mexico, in 1945, which subsequently initiated the atomic age. This manifestation of apocalyptic violence and destructive aptitude is shown to be concomitant with the 'birth' of BOB. The viewer sees the Experiment/Jiao Dai expectorate BOB from its 'mouth,' and, seemingly in response, the Fireman creating a glowing golden orb with the face of Laura Palmer, both of which are sent into the world as antagonistic forces of malignity and benevolence.

While there is a comparative similarity in both the desire and characteristics required to attain said desire in both Good Cooper and Bad Cooper, Part 8 shows the viewer that the latter properly belongs to the Order of the Real. Bad Cooper can trace his genealogy from Cooper, to BOB, and finally to the Experiment, a highly abstract entity residing in the void/hyper-textured space that is shown to be a higher or separate abstraction radically distinct from any of the show's previous chronotopes, including Buckhorn, Twin Peaks, the Black Lodge, the Mauve Zone, and the spaces comprising the Deco Castle. While the aesthetico-narratological treatment of the Reality of Bad Cooper through an experimental and avant-garde exploration of the origin of evil through the Experiment is simultaneously engrossing, confusing, and disquieting, the reality of the Real resists Symbolic representation/signification. This is why Lynch and Frost opt for a highly abstract use of textures, shapes, sounds, and figurations—including tableaus of monochrome and color textures resembling close-ups of skin and blood vessels, as well as the evocative use of Krzysztof Penderecki's *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima* (1960)—to attempt to *intimate* the unrepresentable Reality from which BOB emerges. While this Reality may be fundamentally inaccessible, Lynch and Frost also use the monstrosity of Bad Cooper, a monstrosity predicated on sadistic violence that horrifically ruptures or breaks through the audience's understanding of Cooper based on the Imaginary ideal Good Cooper, to gesture to the unrepresentable Reality from which Bad Cooper initially emerges.

Note

1. This can be noted in one of the recurrent leitmotifs of the Season, namely the relationship between cars and control. While Bad Cooper is primarily associated with night drives down dark empty roads, Dougie Cooper is constantly driven, by Jade, Janey-E, the Mitchem Brothers' limousine driver and so on.

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PART III

Into the Psyche: Trauma, Dreams and Music

CHAPTER 13

From *Lost Highway* to *Twin Peaks*: Representations of Trauma and Transformation in Lynch's Late Works

Timothy William Galow

Long stretches of *Twin Peaks*'s third season could be described as postmodern supernatural noir. At the beginning of the series, FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) leaves an otherwordly space he appears to have been inhabiting for the past 25 years and returns to Earth. During that time, a doppelgänger, most commonly referred to by associates as Mr. C, has been operating in his place, building a vast criminal network with a little inadvertent help from Cooper's colleagues in law enforcement. Mr. C and Agent Cooper were supposed to trade places when the latter returned, but the double avoided spiritual repatriation by creating a third version of Cooper, an insurance salesman named Dougie Jones, who returned in his place. As a result, both the newly freed Agent Cooper and Mr. C are on the earthly plane at the same time, and one of them, the audience is informed by the supernatural figure named MIKE (Al Strobel), 'must die.' The narrative tension generated as these figures move toward a seemingly inevitable confrontation

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is complicated by the fact that Agent Cooper does not return as himself. He is, in the words of Lynch, 'coming into the world as a new life, learning [his] likes and dislikes, and doing the best [he] can to find [his] way' (Jensen 2017). This version of Cooper does very little talking, beyond repeating the last few words spoken to him, and spends most of the series wandering around in apparent confusion, except when particular symbols (such as police badges or electrical outlets) or sensations (the taste of coffee or pie) grab his attention. To complicate matters further, this strange man-child comes to inhabit the life of his duplicate, 'Dougie Jones,' and is inexplicably embraced by Dougie's friends, his boss, and even his wife and son.

Dougie/Agent Cooper stumbles along for much of the series, repeatedly avoiding, through luck or instinct, a number of killers Mr. C has sent after him. Then, after nearly 16 hours of meandering development, Agent Cooper suddenly awakens from his stupor with a clear plan of action. Within an hour, significant characters from the show have been assembled at the Twin Peaks Sheriff Station, and Mr. C, after a brief struggle, is dispatched back to the supernatural realm. Rather than conclude the show, however, this brief wrap-up sparks a new series of transformations, as Agent Cooper visits different otherworldly locations, travels back in time, and passes through what appear to be different planes of existence. He ends the series staggering in confusion, wondering aloud (his final line of the show) 'what year is this?'

When attempting to explain these bizarre final episodes, critics, commentators, and armchair theorists have repeatedly wrestled with the 'Monica Bellucci dream.' At the beginning of Episode 14, FBI Director Gordon Cole, played by David Lynch himself, recounts a dream to other agents in which Monica Bellucci (appearing as herself) meets him for coffee. Amidst pleasantries, she pauses and offers Lynch's interpretation of an 'ancient phrase' (drawn from the *Upanishads*): 'We are like the dreamer who dreams and then lives inside the dream.' She concludes with the question, 'But who is the dreamer?' These lines, retold by the director himself, have obvious meta-filmic resonances. Lynch, as co-writer and director, is (at least in part) responsible for the movie/dream world that these characters are inhabiting.[1] The passage also implicates the viewer, as it refers not merely to a literal dream but to the subjective construction of 'reality,' a potentially relativistic perspective that Lynch seems to embrace and connects with processes of interpretation. As he notes in *Catching the Big Fish*, his book-length reflection on

transcendental meditation and creativity, 'I like the saying: "The world is as you are." And I think films are as you are.... Each person [in the audience] is looking and thinking and feeling and coming up with his or her own sense of things' (Lynch 2007, p. 21).

At the same time, Bellucci's question echoes through the final episodes as Cooper (with Diane and Laura) seems to move across multiple layers of reality, shifting through different time periods, identities, and mental states. The suggestion that some part of these episodes (or the series as a whole) is a dream might seem like a shocking turn so late in the story, but it is much less surprising when *Twin Peaks* is placed in the context of Lynch's last films. Three of his final four movies—*Lost Highway* (1997), *Mulholland Drive* (2001), and *Inland Empire* (2006)—involve characters who seem to be operating in multiple realities, worlds that are strikingly different and yet also strangely reminiscent of each other. Critics, as will be noted below, have commonly resorted to psychological phenomena (fantasy projection, wish fulfillment, psychogenic fugue) or a rarely defined 'dream logic' to explain the complex narratives, often casting one version of a particular character as 'real' and other versions as by-products or projections of a damaged psyche. The obvious challenge for viewers of Season Three is that such a reading potentially displaces the entire series (if not the whole world of *Twin Peaks*). Characters and events might partake in a new order of signification, one with a fabula as mysterious as the absent 'dreamer' within Cole's dream. (Resistance to such displacement can be seen in many early fan theories that develop complex mythologies involving alternate dimensions and cosmic transformations to wrest closure from a disorienting and seemingly disheartening final episode.)[2]

Another interpretive challenge raised by this larger context is that such transformations do not necessarily retain stable meanings across Lynch's late films. The changes (whether figured as dreams, psychological breakdowns, or fantasmatic projections) compel audiences to reconceptualize characters' relations to traumatic events, but, in each work, the transformations shift in narrative function and psychological register. *Lost Highway* changes its central character partway through the film, thereby juxtaposing two men's difficulties with female sexuality. *Mulholland Drive* revolves around a similar split, which foregrounds the main character(s) psychological struggles, but it explicitly draws attention to the broader institutions and forces that mediate fantasy and desire. *Inland Empire* discards the binary structure of the early films and explores the

abstract interrelations of numerous characters and plotlines. This shift moves the story's focus beyond an isolated consciousness and accentuates the power of film and fantasy to transcend individual circumstances.

While each film's engagement with transformation becomes increasingly complex and further disrupts conventional representations of individual psychology, all three works align seemingly different characters and disparate strands of plot to comment on individuals' struggles with traumatic circumstances. *Twin Peaks* builds on this expanding framework, exploring Cooper's character through a figure that appears fragmented or multiplied in a variety of ways. To complicate matters further, Cooper's story is woven through a complex web of narratives that wander and circle and repeat. In this postmodern context, the dream reflects a promise of transformation and unification that remains elusive within the narrative. Unlike any of the films, the story ends with Cooper feeling lost, displaced somewhere between an old familiar world and a new, not yet fully realized, one. This interstitial position simultaneously reflects his internal struggles, the influence of supernatural forces, the series' postmodern influences, and the show's own ambivalent figuration as a dream. It is a rearrangement of a 25-year-old story that exists somewhere between creative vision and evocative revision, between (to shift from the perspective of the creators to the audience) a nostalgic immersion and a nightmarish provocation. Viewing *Twin Peaks* as part of this on-going meditation not only helps to clarify what is unique (and striking) about the most recent iteration, but it also provides ground for examining how the series' experimentations with subjectivity and postmodern aesthetics involve the figure of the dreamer.

Before taking up the layered complexities of Season Three, it is worth returning to Lynch's first attempt to structure a feature-length work around a fractured protagonist, *Lost Highway*. The film, while narratively complex, revolves around the psyche(s) of its male lead(s) and employs a relatively coherent binary structure that can be mapped all-too-easily onto rudimentary psychological oppositions (reality/fantasy, dreamer/dream-persona). Both the narrative split, which positions the second half of the film as a distorted reflection of the action in the first, and the psychological focus connect (and in some crucial ways, distance) the film from Lynch's later experiments with narrative and representation.

The beginning of the film follows Fred Madison (Bill Pullman), a middle-aged jazz saxophonist who suspects that his wife, Renee (Patricia Arquette), is cheating on him, possibly with a man named Dick Laurent

(Robert Loggia). Their deteriorating relationship is documented through a series of stilted conversations and an awkward sexual encounter, which ends with a seemingly indifferent Renee patting Fred on the back and repeating, 'It's okay.' Fred's frustration mounts until a rapid and disorienting series of cuts shows him, first, surrounded by the dismembered parts of Renee's body; second, in a chair being interrogated by police; and, finally, walking in handcuffs to a cell while a voiceover pronounces his sentence: death by electric chair. After a few short scenes in prison that grow increasingly bizarre, the film shifts when a guard realizes that Fred is no longer in his cell. He has been replaced by a 24-year-old auto mechanic named Pete Dayton (Balthazar Getty). The second half of the film follows Dayton, after his release from prison, into a noirish world of violence and betrayal.

On a superficial level, the two protagonists seem unrelated, but, as many critics have noted (Astic 2000; McGowan 2007; Žižek 2000), some of their differences underscore Fred's inadequacies: Dayton is young and rebellious, or at least he is associated with stereotypical symbols of 'rebelliousness' (motorcycles, leather jackets, cigarettes) in a stylized narrative that trades on conventional signifiers. He also has passionate relationships with two different women, one of whom, Alice Wakefield, happens to be the love interest of an older gangster named Mr. Eddy (Robert Loggia). Alice, again played by Patricia Arquette, is also quite different from Renee, both in appearance (Alice, for instance, is blonde and Renee has dark hair) and in attitude. In contrast to Renee's evasiveness, Alice assertively pursues what turns into a passionate sexual relationship with Pete, despite the potential consequences of cheating on the volatile and violent Mr. Eddy.

Many scholars, following the suggestions of screenwriters Lynch and Barry Gifford, have interpreted the second portion of the film as a 'psychogenic fugue' (Rodley 2005, pp. 235 and 289; Biodrowski 1997; Herzogenrath 1999; Schaffner 2009). Fred Madison, facing death for actions that his mind is struggling to repress, has a psychological breakdown in prison and the Dayton narrative presents, at least initially, his escapist fantasy. For the purposes of this chapter, it is less important to establish a precise relationship between these two characters than it is to outline the nature of the contrast and, in particular, understand why critics have been so drawn to the psychological as a mode of understanding. On a superficial level, the film is set up in a way that encourages identification with the protagonists. The events depicted revolve

around Fred and Pete, and the camera follows action largely through their perspective. The scattered flashbacks that reveal Renee's apparent murder and Fred's sentencing, for instance, reflect Fred's struggle to come to terms with these events. The narrative skips over the night that the crime is committed and first shows the bloody scene in a quick shot the following morning, as a freshly showered Fred sits calmly on his living room sofa. The film then cuts to the police interrogation, where Fred sincerely pleads, 'I didn't kill her. Please tell me I didn't kill her.' Fred also appears to have murdered his wife's lover, Dick Laurent, in the desert, but this event, which would immediately precede the opening scene of the film, is not shown until the end. On a psychological level, this placement reflects his ongoing struggle to come to terms with the traumatic confirmation of his wife's infidelity and his own subsequent actions. Early in the film, Laurent's name comes up at a party and Fred asks, 'But Dick Laurent is dead, isn't he?' When Laurent's friend, who is surprised by the news, asks Fred how he knows Dick is dead, Fred appears genuinely confused and stammers, 'I don't. I don't know him.'

The second half of the film, in a fashion typical of dreams, externalizes Fred's anxieties in an exaggerated way. His apparent fear about a mysterious lover manifests in the violent Mr. Eddy, who first forces Alice into his services at gunpoint. This characterization helps to justify the murder scene that concludes the narrative, and it provides something of a sympathetic rationale for Alice when Pete asks, 'How did you get in with these fucking people?' At the same time, the rationale raises serious questions for Pete about Alice's motives and desires. After hearing the story of her first experience, Pete asks, 'why didn't you just leave? You liked it, huh?' These concerns only grow as Pete gets to know more about Alice, who, again, provides an extreme counterpoint to the first part of the film. The vague suspicions that Fred has about Renee's past are literalized with Alice, who has admittedly worked as a prostitute and made pornographic films. Pete freezes during a robbery when he sees a video of Alice having sex projected on the wall. After accidentally murdering the man they are robbing, symbolically under the sign of Alice's uncontrolled sexuality, he becomes physically distressed, suffering acute head pain and blurred vision, much like Fred in prison. While staggering in search of a bathroom, he imagines a distorted version of Alice having sex with a strange man. In a sequence that could be addressed to Fred and Pete, she taunts, 'did you want to talk to me? Did you want to ask me why?'

The tension growing between Pete and Alice reaches its climax at the end of the sequence, when they make love one last time while waiting for a fence to buy their stolen goods. During sex, Pete repeats, 'I want you,' until Alice leans over and whispers, 'you'll never have me,' before disappearing from the film. Despite the obvious differences in style and substance between Fred's and Pete's stories, both men finally face abandonment mired in questions about female desire. It is at this point that the film returns to Fred's attempt to resolve his situation, which begins with the murder of Dick Laurent. The sequencing, as noted earlier, reflects Fred's early denial, but it also allows the murder to function climactically, as an attempt to come to terms with the confusions and frustrations of his own failing relationship by eliminating a 'positive obstacle,' the other Dick (Žižek 2000, p. 20).[3]

The two main sections of this film, whether they are interpreted as a psychogenic fugue or as some form of fantasy meant to be taken literally, follow men as they struggle with potency, dominance, and the mystery of female desire. The numerous psychological readings of the film have also drawn heavily on the contrasting styles of the two parts, that is, the ambiguous and elliptical narrative centered in the dark, minimalistic home of Fred Madison and the more conventional, stylized noir adventure of Pete Dayton. Taken together, the form and style of the film raise many questions about male fantasies and their representation both in the imagination and in the form of a Hollywood film featuring recognizable stars.

Season Three of *Twin Peaks* might seem, at least initially, quite different from this early experiment with psychological representation. Agent Cooper's personality and role have been clearly defined after several seasons and alternate versions of the character appear, quite conventionally, as autonomous figures pitted against each other in the same narrative world. This split, however, can be connected to his psychological condition and it relates to the more radical break suggested by Cole's Bellucci dream. Within the narrative, Mr. C is variously referred to as a doppelgänger and a tulpa, and he is also a vessel for BOB. These readings all suggest larger supernatural forces at work and a threat that is distinctly external to Cooper. At the same time, or alternatively, Mr. C could be envisioned as a metaphorical representation of dark impulses within Cooper, something like the 'Dweller on the Threshold' interpretation offered by Hawk in the original run (and revisited in co-writer Mark Frost's 2017 novel, *The Final Dossier*). Either way, the fragmentation,

as in *Lost Highway*, seems to be a byproduct of Cooper's failure, in this case to 'kill two birds with one stone' in the Season Two finale (Thorne 2016). Cooper attempts to save love-interest Annie Blackburn (Heather Graham) from his former partner (and deranged murderer) Windom Earle (Kenneth Welsh) while also finding a way to reach Judy, the 'extreme negative force' first discovered by Major Briggs (Don S. Davis). By following Earle and Blackburn into the lodge, Cooper seems to unleash Mr. C, who escapes to spread chaos through Cooper's life, and the world more generally, while Cooper himself remains trapped for 25 years. Annie does escape but with little fanfare, as she effectively disappears from the show (and if Frost's *The Final Dossier* is to be treated as canonical, she remains essentially catatonic until she commits suicide years later).

This set-up connects *Peaks* with the earlier film, which relates characters' transformations to psychological duress. The radical conversion, whether it is figured as fantasy, performance, or narrative contrivance, reflects some need for change. Likewise, the series connects Cooper's fragmentation with limitations or forces that he has failed to overcome. The alternate versions of his character can be viewed either as fragments or as supplements of an elusive whole, with Cooper functioning as an agent of order. If he is attempting to control some aspect or distorted imitation of himself, the Dougie plot, already a striking break from *Highway*'s binary structure, serves as an added layer commenting on this larger trajectory. As in a dream, Cooper is literally trapped within himself, and MIKE, a figure known for battling his own dark impulses, repeatedly prompts him to 'wake up.' From this perspective, Dougie serves as a prison and a simplification of the more complex 'Cooper.' (Beyond Lynch's own suggestion, cited earlier, other characters in the narrative treat him like a child, helping him to the bathroom or giving him 'homework' because, as his boss Bushnell Mullins [Don Murray] puts it, 'you missed the last days of school.')

Dougie also complicates the more conventional reading of Cooper's struggle because his story serves to defer and ultimately displace the climactic showdown between Cooper and Mr. C, which, in the end, turns out to be perfunctory and humorously anti-climactic. Rather than replace one quest with another progressive narrative (the gradual development of Dougie/Cooper), however, Dougie remains more or less static throughout. Weekly columns, blogposts, and commentaries on the series all demonstrate a desire to read each revelation from Dougie

(He remembers coffee! He bought a cherry pie!) as a step toward Cooper's return, but the evolution, in any conventional sense, never happens.[4] Cooper, with little direct build up, suddenly 'wakes up' late in the series. In the interim, episodes introduce a swirl of characters and plots that move the series thematically beyond one of its central conflicts. This postmodern dispersal reflects a key development in Lynch's follow up to *Lost Highway*, *Mulholland Drive*, a film that seeks to explore fantasies and dreams not simply as a reflection of a given subject's desires but as themselves mediated by forces beyond an individual's control.

Mulholland Drive, like *Lost Highway*, employs a radical narrative transformation that draws attention to the psychological struggles of its protagonist(s). The order of the parts, however, is reversed. The film ends with a dark elliptical sequence that follows Diane Selwyn (Naomi Watts), a young actress trying to get a break in Hollywood. Diane has been getting small roles through her lover, Camilla Rhodes (Laura Elena Harring), but Camilla ends their relationship and cruelly flaunts her engagement to wealthy director Adam Kesher (Justin Theroux). Enraged, frustrated, and desperate, Diane hires a hit man to kill Camilla. When police begin asking questions after Camilla's disappearance, Diane, wracked by guilt and feelings of failure, commits suicide in her apartment.

The beginning of the film features the same performers, but most play different characters in a stylized Hollywood mystery. The film opens with the camera moving toward a pillow, suggesting a direct link between the film's binary structure and the world of dreams/fantasies. The character-driven action commences when an attempted hit on a mysterious dark-haired woman (Laura Elena Harring) is thwarted by a random car accident. The woman, who loses her memory in the crash, wanders away confused and alone. She eventually meets Betty Elms (Naomi Watts), an ingénue who has just arrived from Deep River, Ontario, with dreams of becoming a famous actress. The two start piecing together clues about the mysterious woman's identity and, at the end of the first section of the film, begin a romantic relationship.

Despite the many obvious similarities between *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*, the transformation at the narrative center of both functions somewhat differently. Given *Highway*'s limited perspective and narrow focus on the lives of its protagonists, elements of the film are typically resolved into aspects of the protagonist(s)' psychology. The second half of the film, for instance, ventures into a noir universe where

violence is prevalent and women are stereotypically suspect, a choice that reflects Fred's imaginary retreat into a world where murder can be justified (Emerson 2007). At the other interpretive extreme, Martha P. Nochimson, whose work goes a long way toward subverting traditional psychological readings, argues that the film explores 'threshold experiences' that augur alternative realities. (Nochimson connects Lynch's art with his practice of Transcendental Meditation and reads his films as pointing beyond the 'impediment' of the 'material plane' to 'the heart of reality in the universal consciousness' [2014, p. 11].) Yet even she reads *Lost Highway* as a '"bad case" parable of modernity' that revolves about Fred's 'blocked perspective,' which is to say his tendency to 'misread every sign of the miracle of existence' (Nochimson 2014, pp. 59, 32, 28). It is, in short, a psychological reading that figures Fred's failure symbolically, as representative of the failure to transcend individual subjectivity.

In contrast, *Mulholland Drive* engages more directly with the social dimensions of fantasy by expanding Betty's story. The first part of the film features a number of scenes involving directors, producers, and other mysterious but powerful figures in the industry whose actions lie entirely outside of Betty's experience. Their decisions impact her, as she auditions for a role that powerful forces have already marked for another actress. These scenes also present a credible fantasy world for Diane. The director, for instance, that both casts Camilla over Diane and then proposes to her late in the film is repeatedly humiliated in Betty's story. These scenes, however, expand the scope of the film beyond the psychological struggles of Betty/Diane and invite scrutiny of Hollywood as both a business and a cultural institution, a purveyor and a source of fantasy with its own conventions, interests, and (often sexist) practices. This dimension, in turn, adds more depth to Diane's narrative. Her failure is not simply personal, nor is it entirely allegorical. It is also part of a broader social commentary.[5] As a result, *Mulholland Drive* has been described as both a 'Panegyric to' and 'a powerful critique of the destructive hegemony of' Hollywood (McGowan 2007, p. 194; Sinnerbrink 2005).

Twin Peaks has a similar dynamic, as the storyline is littered with minor characters and narrative fragments that expand the thematic perspective of the series. *Mulholland Drive*, a Hollywood fantasy about Hollywood fantasies, uses these developments in part to explore the mediated nature of Diane/Betty's fantasies and underscore the

individual's lack of control. People in this film are as much subject to their dreams as they are subjects of them. These limitations are also accompanied by the related fear/desire that the amorphous forces guiding events might result from actual controlling agents. The film suggests an elusive order primarily through brief but incomplete references to a shadowy cabal of Hollywood heavyweights who might control the jumble of events.

The postmodern sprawl of *Twin Peaks*, with all of its attendant gaps and instabilities, similarly draws on forces that operate beyond the immediate experiences of most individual characters, but it inflects them with the mystical and moral preoccupations that have long been part of the show. In effect, the lack of resolution on the earthly plane enhances the significance of the story's mythological dimensions, which pit the Black Lodge, and mysterious figures such as the 'Experiment' (Erica Eynon) and Judy, against the White Lodge and its inhabitants, the Fireman (Carel Struycken) and Señorita Dido (Joy Nash). Within this binary framework, key elements from the original series, such as the conflict between Laura (Sheryl Lee) and BOB (Frank Silva), take on broader symbolic significance as corollaries in a cosmic battle between what it is all too easy to simplify as good and evil. From such a perspective, Cooper and Mr. C seem less central to the narrative and function more like related figurations, specific instances in a larger moral economy. Cooper's heroic quest (to escape the Black Lodge, defeat Mr. C, find Laura, confront Judy) becomes, in effect, just one part in a larger drama being directed by the Fireman, a part that he has far less control over than might seem possible during his brief stretch of lucidity late in the series. If this shift ironically makes Cooper seem, in some ways, more human, a figure caught in a larger swirl of forces and events that remain partially beyond his control, it also alters the dynamics of his fragmentation. Perhaps this new dimension, that is, the representation of Cooper from the perspective of the Lodge entities who maneuver humans like pieces on Windom Earle's chessboard, is best encapsulated by Dougie's role as something of a cosmic (as opposed to holy) fool. He is a figure, aided both by his seemingly instinctive goodness and by supernatural forces, who seems to help others in spite of his own apparent obliviousness. Despite the control cosmic figures seem to have over events and the interpretive force of their binary opposition, the story's mythological dimensions fail to provide a clear unified structure for viewers. Just as *Mulholland Drive*'s mysterious gangsters and studio heads remain

frustratingly out of narrative focus, both the Fireman and Judy all but disappear from the final episodes. They leave behind little more than echoes and fragments that suggest an on-going presence without revealing anything specific about their influence on events.

It is through this complex layering and the suggestive, if incomplete, intertwining of plots that *Peaks* comes closest to Lynch's last feature length film, *Inland Empire*. After exploring binary structures in both *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*, structures that invite psychological and thematic comparisons between distinct sections of narrative, *Inland Empire* explores the relationship between trauma and fantasy through a multi-layered approach with more fluid boundaries. The narrative opens up layers of stories within stories within stories that blend and fragment in unexpected ways. The first characters in the film are a Polish-speaking man and woman, perhaps a prostitute and a john. The scene is shot in black and white, and the two actors have their faces fogged out. After a brief, and blurry, sexual interlude, we see a woman, again with her face distorted, crying on a bed. The camera cuts around the room until we return to the woman (Karolina Gruszka, referred to in the credits as Lost Girl), now in color and without any visual distortion. The Lost Girl appears to be the woman from the black and white segment, but the room has clearly changed between the two shots, as she is watching characters from other parts of the film on a television that was not present in the black and white hotel room. Over the remainder of the film, three main, though not entirely distinct, plotlines unfold, perhaps as the fantasy of or merely just on the television before the Lost Girl. First, actress Nikki Grace (Laura Dern) is given a role in a new film, *On High in Blue Tomorrows*, a film that is based on an unfinished film, *Vier Sieben* (Four Seven), that was, in turn, based on a 'Polish Gypsy folktale.' Grace begins to have an affair with her co-star, Devon Berk (Justin Theroux). As filming gets underway, she merges with her character from the film, Sue Blue, who is having a related experience. Sue has an affair and is impregnated by her wealthy employer, Billy Side (also played by Justin Theroux). Then, the story of Sue Blue starts to merge with the story of a Polish girl (also played by Karolina Gruszka, who plays the Lost Girl). The story within a story within a story within a story involves a similar love triangle, though it ends in both the death of the Polish girl's lover and his partner. This strand of plot could be a backstory for the Lost Girl; it could be part of the unfinished *Vier Sieben*; or it could be an independent narrative designed to resonate with the others.

The repeated transformation of characters and plotlines ultimately serves to obscure any clear sense of who or what is 'real' in the film. Critics and scholars have made credible cases for each of the three female characters being the 'real' or 'dominant' figure in the film (Jersley 2012; McGowan 2012; Pranolo 2011). (The fictionalization of Sue Blue's narrative could be a dissociative response to trauma.) Others have suggested that the stories present competing or contradictory realities, that there is no visible 'reality' in the film, and that all three characters are facets of the same person: 'The actress feels like a whore, the wife is also a mistress, the whore is also an actress' (Emerson 2007). Brian Rourke combines these latter two approaches and claims that the various narrative strands are 'heterogeneous overlapping deliria of a single character' but 'her name is never given, and one can never be certain whether her image appears on camera directly' (2016). The disoriented woman in the opening segment and the 'Lost Girl' establish an appropriate tone for a film that traverses time and space, connecting brutal realism with the obviously fantastic (such as the family of anthropomorphic rabbits who periodically appear and seem to merge with human characters).

This transition from the clear binary focus of the previous films echoes *Twin Peaks*'s movement beyond its early emphasis on twins and doubles (suggested most obviously in the name of the town and the diner). If the first episodes of Season One recall *Blue Velvet*'s (1986) fascination with the contrast between superficial appearances and the (both literally and metaphorically) violent appetites barely concealed beneath the surface, the show quickly transcends simple dichotomies. Laura Palmer, for instance, begins as do-gooder prom queen/mysterious murder victim, but accretes facets and identities as the story develops, from unfaithful lover/girlfriend to victim of terrible incestuous violence and drug abusing prostitute, not to mention either the appearance of her visual double, cousin Maddie (Sheryl Lee), or the spiritual versions of Maddie and Laura who appear, most notably, in the Red Room. Previous references to the many facets of Cooper or the number of tulpas in Season Three, as well as the related flurry of identity crises, involving both prominent characters (Cooper or Diane, to name just two) and those with smaller roles (Ben, Jerry, or Audrey Horne), suggest a pattern of disrupting stable identities and clear delineations. From the opening moments of the season, when the character later identified as the Fireman tells a manifestation of Cooper 'you are far away,' the story is littered with characters

who are absent in some ways (Laura, Cooper, Diane, Audrey, Jerry, Billy) but present in others.

In this postmodern context, with fractured characters traversing fragmented narratives embedded in a larger, though incomplete, supernatural network, Gordon Cole's Monica Bellucci dream becomes just one more frame for unifying the elements of the story. The dream suggests that Cooper could be a symbolic representation in the psychoanalytic space of Season Three, a facet of a more complex figure who reintegrates the symbolic struggles of the Fireman, Judy, and Mr. C. Such a reading is supported by Cole's dream, which concludes with Agent Phillip Jeffries (David Bowie) pointing at Cooper and asking, 'who do you think that is there?' It is also reinforced by events that follow the showdown with Mr. C in the Twin Peaks Sheriff Station. As Cooper is preparing to leave the current cast of characters behind, his face is superimposed over the action on the screen and he repeats Bellucci's phrase, 'we live inside a dream.' The figure of Cooper that emerges afterward is different from any of his previous iterations. He is arguably something of a composite, an FBI agent with a brooding intensity (reminiscent of Mr. C) and cloudier ethical lines than the figure who orchestrated the initial investigation into Laura Palmer's death.

The analytic appeal of the dream is that it inspires a Cartesian hope for some kind of unifying consciousness (a Fred Madison or Diane Selwyn?), that will make sense of the disparate plot elements and strange transformations, even if it threatens viewers' emotional investment in the original story. The mythological elements instrumentalize Cooper to a certain extent, but the dream theory threatens to displace him. This suggestion, however, is never directly realized. Cooper, perhaps like many in the audience who waited for his 'return,' clings to his identity, even when his personality and his name seem to have changed, and he stumbles through the final sequences pursuing an old objective that may not be relevant after Laura Palmer's disappearance. The show underscores its commitment to the 'dream' with Audrey's fragmentary narrative. Her sequences appear to be some sort of fantasy that concludes with a jarring transition to a new state, but there is no explanation of what that state is or how it relates to the first. Something lies beyond, but what it is remains outside the purview of Season Three.

This insistence on remaining within the fantasy space distinguishes *Peaks* from *Empire,* which disrupts the individual consciousness and complicates notions of experience. The disconcerting convolutions of

plot frustrate linear readings even as they accentuate repeating elements across the uneven narratives. Actions, numbers, and phrases are scattered like puzzle pieces through each woman's story, suggesting connections that might exist beyond the confusing progression of events. At several points, the film even encourages representational readings of the characters. Nikki/Sue opens a long monologue that is interspersed throughout the film by downplaying specific identifications: 'There was this man I once knew. His name was. It doesn't matter what his name was. A lot of guys change … It's an old story.' The individual man is important here insofar as he exemplifies a common type of behavior, a type familiar enough to have its own narrative force. This move is comparable in some ways to the blurry faces at the beginning of the film or the generic tag line, 'a woman in trouble.' Each de-emphasizes the audience's association with individual characters and underscores broader conceptions for their relevance/resonance within the narrative.

By setting up psychological trauma as a framework ('a woman in trouble,' a Lost Girl whose 'trouble' is revealed only in the broadest sense) within which more specific individual traumas reverberate, the film moves beyond the binary structures that largely organize Lynch's previous two works and it complicates their reliance on localized consciousnesses. Accordingly, it does not conclude with a climactic reference to the struggles of one character, nor does it resolve around the specific terms of one character's trauma. In the early films, Fred and Diane seem no better off for the elucidating narratives of Pete and Betty, a fact which has led many of the previously cited commentators to address the limitations of certain fantasmatic responses to trauma. The layered endings of *Inland Empire*, on the other hand, interrelate and build toward a seemingly celebratory epilogue, one that underscores the power of cinema even as it suggests the inadequacy of traditional narrative to account for the radical interrelation of experience and fantasy. Sue's death allows Nikki to transcend her own immediate circumstances and set the Lost Girl free. She, in turn, reunites in Sue's home with a man who appears to be Sue's husband and a boy who is presumably their son. This climactic sequence leads to a redemptive moment for Sue/Nikki and a smile from Visitor 1, a mysterious figure that initiates, and perhaps projects, Nikki's journey at the beginning of the movie. The film then closes with a literal invocation of 'power' as a group of women dance to Nina Simone's version of 'Sinner Man' ('Lord, lord, hear me prayin' … Power/All down/All down/Bring it down'). In the background, Laura Dern sits

on a couch, surrounded by a number of figures from *Empire*, actors who resemble figures from other Lynch films, and even people from the performer's real lives (musician Ben Harper, then-spouse of Laura Dern, plays piano on-screen during the closing). This postmodern blurring (of characters, narrative lines, and frames of reference) allows Lynch to explore redemptive possibilities and outcomes that remain implicit in works more directly focused on particular traumatic circumstances and their psychological/filmic representations.

In contrast, characters like Cooper and Audrey do not 'wake up' to new levels of consciousness, at least not in any straightforward or sustained way. From a perspective inside the dream, such awakenings are often figured in the series as confusing, frightening, or dangerous (think Dougie sticking a fork in a light socket). This approach makes some sense in the context of the season. It is a return to an imaginary world, a dream from which the show itself cannot escape no matter how far it strays temporally or geographically, and it revels in audiences' nostalgic desire to revisit this place. From the opening line, Laura Palmer's famous statement from the original series, 'I'll see you again in 25 years,' to the narrative interludes featuring old characters, sometimes with little direct relevance to other elements of the plot, Season Three is haunted by figures present and absent; actors living, dead, and dying; plot lines continuing and dropped. The show is never free of that tension, between a desire to return to the past and the inevitable passage of time. It recalls *Peaks*' original interest in soap operas, a genre where characters are subjected to amazing hardships (demonic possession, the appearance of evil twins, and, reminiscent of the Dougie plot line, bouts of amnesia) only to return essentially unchanged for the next dramatic twist. (This provides some context for Lucy's bizarre inability to grasp cell phones.) Yet, in Season Three, a return to the past is never simply a return, as the closing episodes suggest, and 'moving on' becomes a recurrent motif in the show. It is foregrounded with Wally Brando (Michael Cera), a comically nostalgic caricature of a romantic character who, like Nadine (Wendy Robie), is finally ready to let go (of his childhood bedroom). The obverse, in tone and suggestion, is Sarah Palmer (Grace Zabriskie), a tragic figure who, like the boxing loop on her television, is stuck, mired in the violent traumas of her past. Within the narrative, Cooper functions ambivalently. He emerges from the seemingly static Dougie as a character with a clear plan of action and apparently preternatural vision, though it does not seem to extend to the consequences of his actions. In the

end, he finds himself chasing a 25-year-old tragedy as the world becomes increasingly unrecognizable.

Ironically, it is the heroic Cooper, a crucial element of the early series and, presumably, a nostalgic figure for many viewers, who is repeatedly displaced by his transformations, first as Dougie and then (potentially) as a figure in a dream. In this, *Twin Peaks* incorporates elements from the earlier films but employs them to very different effect. All of these works feature characters struggling against forces that they cannot control, but the feature films explore outcomes through structures that bring together, at least on the imaginary level, seemingly disparate sections of plot. Without the binary arrangement of the early films or the progressive conclusion of *Inland Empire*, *Twin Peaks* ultimately underscores Cooper's lack of control and leaves him amidst a collection of fragments, echoes, and loose ends. If the final events represent a dramatic conclusion of some sort, Cooper himself is unaware of what it all means and, in the final moments, he draws attention to the unbridgeable temporal gap on which the series is predicated. Within the larger tensions noted above (is it future or is it past?), it is fitting that the stunning conclusion of Season Three in some ways recalls the end of Season Two, with transformations (fragmentations/multiplications) that exceed Cooper's control. Season Three, however, suggests new ways of understanding these changes, some of which are further complicated by the show's engagement with the temporal itself. So, while the closing moments most immediately recall the narrow perspective and bleak tone of *Lost Highway*, the series as a whole sets such a view against a broader backdrop (*Mulholland Drive*) without sacrificing the narrative complexity and abstract power most characteristic of *Inland Empire*.

Notes

1. When discussing the filming of *Blue Velvet*, Lynch noted: 'I'm not trying to manipulate an audience. I'm just trying to, you know, get in there and let the material talk. To work inside a dream' (Rodley 2005, p. 150).
2. Fan theories are easily accessible in a variety of places. There are a wealth of videos on youtube.com, and some participants, such as Old Tin Man and Wow Lynch Wow, have repeatedly dissected aspects of the series. Other fans have turned to Facebook to publish ideas. (For just one example, see Joseph Charles Powers, 'Theory of All Theories,' https://www.facebook.com/TwinPeaksOnShowtime/. A repository of commentary

can be found on the Twin Peaks page at https://www.facebook.com/TwinPeaksOnShowtime/.) For a more systematic written account, see Parthimos (2017).

3. I am borrowing from Slavoj Žižek's psychoanalytic reading of the film, but in doing so, I have distorted his interpretation a bit. Žižek does not acknowledge the slippage between Mr. Eddy and Dick Laurent in his analysis. Instead, Žižek reads the ending as purely fantasmatic, that is, as Fred's vision of his actual wife, Renee, having sex with the patriarchal figure of his imagination, Mr. Eddy. (It is worth noting that, following the murder, Fred returns to his home to announce that 'Dick Laurent,' not Mr. Eddy, 'is dead.') The symbolic weight of the moment, however, is comparable, whether it is viewed as a function of imaginary or narrative structure.
4. For a few examples, see Jeff Jensen's recaps for *Entertainment Weekly* (http://ew.com/author/jeff-jensen/) and reviews in *The Guardian* and *the New York Times*. There are many examples in each, but reviews of Dougie's cherry pie experience in Part 11 contain useful references. See https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2017/jul/24/twin-peaks-recap-episode-11-cherry-pie-and-a-black-hole-vortex-in-the-sky and https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/24/arts/television/twin-peaks-season-3-episode-11-recap.html.
5. This is not to say that *Lost Highway* does not explore the social dimensions of fantasy. It does so, however, less directly, as through the stylization of Pete's narrative. In this reading, Pete does not simply serve as a psychological counterpoint to Fred, but the (often stereotypical) noir elements of his story also draw attention to the influence of narrative conventions on the structure of this counterpoint.

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CHAPTER 14

Kafka's Crime Film: *Twin Peaks—The Return* and the Brotherhood of Lynch and Kafka

Adam Daniel

When David Lynch teamed with veteran showrunner Mark Frost to create the original *Twin Peaks* (1990–1991), critics attempting to codify it labeled it a murder mystery serial. Certainly, the premise seemed to lead in that direction: when the dead body of homecoming queen Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) is found, a young FBI agent named Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) is sent to assist the investigation by the local Sheriff's Department. However, the first two seasons of *Twin Peaks* would soon transcend the limitations of generic boundaries in much the same way Lynch's cinematic works refuse a similar rudimentary classification. The paranormal became inextricably interlaced with the show's soap-opera skeleton. The resolution of Laura's murder became a turning point in the original series; rather than concluding the mystery, it introduced more potent philosophical questions on the nature and origins of the evil responsible. It was revealed that BOB (Frank Silva), the interdimensional entity that had possessed Leland Palmer (Ray Wise) and effected

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the murder of his daughter, had escaped the bounds of a place called the Black Lodge. The pursuit of the Black Lodge by Season Two's main antagonist Windom Earle (Kenneth Welsh) revealed a deeper mythology about the woods, and the eternal struggle between light and dark, good and evil. As Deputy Hawk (Michael Horse) tells Agent Cooper, the Black Lodge is:

> The shadow-self of the White Lodge. The legend says that every spirit must pass through there on the way to perfection. There, you will meet your own shadow self. My people call it 'The Dweller on the Threshold' … But it is said, if you confront the Black Lodge with imperfect courage, it will utterly annihilate your soul.

This revelation leads to the notorious conclusion of the show's original run: Cooper enters the Black Lodge to rescue his love interest Annie Blackburn (Heather Graham), and while he succeeds, he returns to Twin Peaks now possessed by BOB, his soul potentially 'annihilated' by his imperfect courage in confronting the evils that dwell within the Black Lodge and its apparent antechamber, the Red Room. Clearly, we are a long way from a conventional murder mystery serial. However, it is also well-known that Lynch felt frustrated by the overall direction of Season Two and that his departure from the show's writer's room to make *Wild at Heart* during that season had led to a feeling that *Twin Peaks* had failed to ask the questions that most interested its co-creator; 'It may be fine,' Lynch told filmmaker Chris Rodley in a 1997 interview, 'but it's not what [I] would do' (Lynch, qtd. in Rodley 1997).

When production of a third season was announced, labelled *Twin Peaks: The Return* (2017) in 2016, it came with an implicit expectation by fans of the show that it was these unanswered questions that could now be investigated; Lynch made it central to his negotiations that he would direct and co-write every episode of the return series with his co-creator Frost. And although Lynch explicitly said 'The one artist that I feel could be my brother is Franz Kafka. … If Kafka wrote a crime picture, I'd be there. I'd like to direct that for sure' (qtd. in Rodley 1997, p. 56), there are a multitude of examples of why his long-term desire to make a hypothetical 'Kafka crime film' may have filtered into their crafting of the return series. This chapter will examine this claim through the lens of a spiritual brotherhood between Lynch and Kafka, and present examples of the myriad ways in which Season Three of *Twin Peaks* shares

affinities with Bohemian author Franz Kafka's literature. Doing so will provide greater insight into the motivations underpinning Lynch and Frost's creative process and enrich a reading of the return series.

The most overt nod to Lynch's admiration for Kafka comes through the interior design choices of the character played by the writer/director himself, FBI Deputy Director Gordon Cole. In 'Call for Help,' Part 3 of *The Return*, a prominent portrait of Kafka is seen hanging on Cole's office wall; one reading of its conspicuous presence is a nod of affinity between Lynch and the famed Czech author. The question emerges of what could bond these two creators, working in different mediums and different eras; the answer can perhaps best be found by examining resonances between the works of Kafka and Lynch and Frost's approach to *The Return*.

Among the many thematics examined by contemporary Kafka scholars, some common subjects emerge: the absurdity of life, the disconnect between mind and body, alienation, and metamorphosis, in both a literal and figurative sense. The term 'Kafkaesque' has evolved in modern language in an attempt to label the sustained emergence of these themes in art and in life. However, Kafka biographer and scholar Frederick R. Karl argues that the term is often misused. For Karl, Kafkaesque is still 'the representative adjective of our times'; its location is

> a surreal world in which all your control patterns, all your plans, the whole way in which you have configured your own behavior, begins to fall to pieces, when you find yourself against a force that does not lend itself to the way you perceive the world. You don't give up, you don't lie down and die. What you do is struggle against this with all of your equipment, with whatever you have. But of course you don't stand a chance. (Karl, qtd. in Edwards 1991)

In an article for *The Atlantic*, Joseph Epstein (2013) echoes this reading, suggesting that Kafka's stories '[convey] nightmares in sharp detail' as they 'chronicle the unraveling of lives in which illogic becomes plausible, guilt goes unexplained, and brutal punishment is doled out for no known offense.' Each of these conceptions, while credible readings of Kafka, are perhaps somewhat too nihilistic for Lynch's worldview, within which the nightmarish and the brutal are often leavened with hope or optimism.

Lynch's creative debt to Kafka borrows instead from the quintessential qualities of Kafka's literature identified by author Ben Marcus: 'affecting use of language, a setting that straddles fantasy and reality, and a sense of striving, even in the face of bleakness—hopelessly and full of hope' (Marcus, qtd. in Fassler 2014). Lynch, however, replaces the affecting use of written language with the affecting use of sound and image, choosing visual and sonic combinations that are in excess of the representational demands of the image. *Mulholland Drive* (2001), for example, illustrates the combination of the above elements, through its enigmatic, dreamlike logic, and the hopeful and hopelessly doomed love story at its center.

Given Lynch's confessed love for the author, it is only natural that the connection between Lynch and Kafka has been previously investigated, by scholars such as Justus Nieland (2012) and Dennis Lim (2015). Nieland, for example, contends that Lynch's first pre-*Eraserhead* (1977) script was a deliberately Kafkaesque project entitled *Gardenback*, which drew obvious inspiration from *The Metamorphosis* in its story of a grotesque insect growing both in the attic and head of a married man considering adultery. Nieland also sees Kafka's presence in Lynch's short film *The Grandmother* (1970), which, he proposes, contains the same 'deforming pressures of the Oedipal family' and the 'carving out [of] lines of flight from the domestic' that appear in so many of Kafka's works (2012, p. 120). However, Nieland also makes a key comparison, drawing on Walter Benjamin's consideration of Kafka, of the inhuman qualities of both Kafka and Lynch's 'odd beings,' a term Nieland assigns to the human protagonists of both artists' works (2012, p. 120). Benjamin draws the conclusion that in Kafka's fictional worlds 'man is on stage from the very beginning,' yet his movements 'divest the human gesture of its traditional supports; they are far from the continent of man' (1960, p. 124). This 'lost gestus' that Benjamin identifies in Kafka is, in Deborah Levitt's terms, an 'experience of surprise at the strangeness and estrangement of one's own being,' which Benjamin considers the 'engine of Kafka's world—where one might awake one morning to find oneself transformed into vermin, or to find one's hands transformed into machines' (2011, p. 205). Nieland claims that, for Benjamin, becoming aware of the elemental condition of alienation and how it was revealed through the transitory quality of the meaning of gesture '[rescued] Kafka's work from both natural and supernatural readings' (2012, p. 120). He argues that this operation occurs in Lynch's work through

similar estrangement, particularly in 'defamilizations of the domestic' (2012, p. 121). For Neiland, the 'bourgeois home' transforms in Lynch's work into 'a kind of gestural theater, a shifting and mobile arena of codes, conventions and habits that frustrate any attempts to reify the nature of the private' (2012, p. 121).

This understanding of Lynch becomes particularly visible in *The Return* in the figure of Sarah Palmer (Grace Zabriskie), mother of the murdered Laura Palmer. The passage of 25 years has done little to assuage Sarah's grief, and she is shown in multiple scenes still living in the family home of the original series, although it may be more accurate to say that she resides inside a haze of cigarette smoke and alcoholism. There is little to tie these scenes to any kind of conventional domesticity: in two separate episodes we observe Sarah camped before the television screen, watching blankly. In the first instance she watches the kill scene of a wildlife documentary, and in the second, a looping segment of a black-and-white boxing match. Both sequences seem to wash over her like ambient noise. In one of the few sequences where Sarah is shown outside of the home, her visit to a convenience store in Part 12 is disrupted when she becomes abnormally upset by the presence of a new brand of jerky at the checkout. Aberrantly anxious, her eyes dart around the room, appearing to see something neither of the young clerks see. 'Your room seems different. And men are coming,' she says. And then: 'I am trying to tell you that you have to watch out! Things can happen! They can happen to me! Something happened to me!' As much as her mien and disposition confirm her traumatic response, they are also incongruous with what we are shown of the relatively benign convenience store. When Deputy Hawk visits her later in the episode, a noise from within the supposedly empty house is dismissed by Sarah as 'just something in the kitchen.' The Palmer home is clearly a haunted house, but the only occupant we see is Sarah Palmer, herself haunted by the unresolved past.

The inscrutability of the shifting interplay between reality and unreality is another fundamental shared quality between the works of Lynch and Kafka. In Benjamin's essay 'Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death,' he claims that the incomprehensible nature of his works especially appealed to Kafka:

> Kafka wished to be numbered among ordinary men. He was pushed to the limits of understanding at every turn, and he liked to push others to them as well. At times he seems to come close to saying with Dostoevsky's

> Grand Inquisitor: 'So we have before us a mystery which we cannot comprehend. And precisely because it is a mystery we have had the right to preach it, to teach the people that what matters is neither freedom nor love, but the riddle, the secret, the mystery to which they have to bow—without reflection and even against their conscience.' (1960, p. 124)

For Lynch, this mystery is also pivotal to his work. Rodley claims that Lynch's refusal to interrogate the origins or meaning of his images, sounds, and ideas 'accounts not only for their uniqueness, but also for [Lynch's] occasional inability to articulate their precise meaning' (1997, p. 54). Lynch's desire, Rodley asserts, is to '"speak directly" through the films,' and it is this, combined with a faith in the audience's receptivity, that produces the 'strange, sensory power' of the Lynch canon (1997, p. 54).

Epstein (2013) argues that the universality of Kafka's work derives from its generality. He notes how often 'places are not named' and 'characters go undescribed,' and that landscapes 'appear as they might in nightmares,' indistinct and austere. Lynch similarly employs this movement from generality to detail, and although places are named ('Buckhorn, South Dakota') and characters are given rudimentary qualities, they are often generic placeholders that are progressively ruptured by quirk, menace, or the irreal; for example, Buckhorn's true importance to the narrative emerges when it is revealed to be the location of an interdimensional portal (a portal that opens above a rather nondescript dilapidated house).

The unmooring of reality is a recurring element of *The Return*. While the space inhabited by Lynch and Frost's characters is recognizably concurrent with our own experience of the world, there is often an alien, unrecognizable quality to its characters' behavior. There is also the frequent irruption of the supernatural and unexplainable among the prosaic: a glass box becomes a portal through which the murderous 'Experiment' arrives and kills the lustful Sam and Tracey (played by Ben Rosenfield and Madeline Zima); Cooper-as-Dougie Jones (also played by Kyle MacLachlan), under attack by Ike the Spike (Christophe Zajac-Denek) while leaving his office, is the only witness to the arrival of the spindly miniature brain-tree of the Black Lodge as it implores Cooper-as-Dougie to 'squeeze his hand off!'; the mystical powers of Freddie Sykes' (Jake Wardle) magic rubber glove become crucial to finally defeating the evil entity known as BOB, but the origins of its power remain murky.

These are but three examples of multiple bizarre incidents or sequences populating the series, where the supernatural is placed in stark contrast to its ordinary surroundings. While theories abound for each of these moments, there are no definitive explanations offered to solve their mysteries.

For Lynch, mystery and abstraction are crucial to the power of his stories. He describes them to Rodley as 'like a magnet. Whenever there is something that's unknown, it has a pull to it' (1997, p. 231). Clayton Koelb (2010) identifies a similar appeal of the unknown for Kafka, when he writes of how Kafka's perplexity with the world resonated between frustration and fascination, an interplay that also emerges for the reader. As Theodor Adorno writes of Kafka, 'each sentence says "interpret me," and none will permit it. Each compels the reaction, "that's the way it is," and with it the question, "where have I seen that before?": the déjà vu is declared permanent' (1983, p. 246). Rather than a magnet, Koelb argues that this technique was to Kafka a figurative knife: the reader was not to understand the story in terms of deciphering it, but was to be 'stabbed' by it. If the reader found the experience of Kafka's stories 'threatening, painful and ultimately inscrutable,' they would partake of how he saw the world (2010, p. 10). Lynch, however, prefers to seductively draw the viewers into his world and then bind them to the work through its mysteries. In *The Return* this can be evidenced in how certain narrative threads are established but then neglected for multiple episodes (or, in some cases, are never to be returned to again). The unresolved nature of these scenes taunts the viewer, hinting at greater implications that are just out of their grasp: consider, for example, how the Roadhouse scenes operate to layer mystery upon mystery, forgoing narrative progression or resolution for scenes that are imbued with menace and unease, scenes that hint at an altogether different, unseen narrative that is taking place concurrent to that which we are watching.

The apparent absurdity of life, and how it could reverberate in art, is a shared fascination for both Lynch and Kafka. Richard T. Gray argues, for example, that the broadest rubric under which Kafka has been read is that of the absurd, pointing to how many of Kafka's texts contain protagonists whose bourgeois lives are radically altered by an external force (or internal transformation) that is 'at the same time serious and comical, tragic and ironic' (2005, p. 2). We see this in *The Return* most clearly in the characters of Dougie Jones and family, who are drawn into the

narrative when Cooper comes to inhabit the body of Dougie after his escape from the Black Lodge. Outwardly recognizable to all who know him as Dougie, the Dougie/Cooper hybrid is a catatonic savant whose use of language is limited to mumbling words or phrases that are previously spoken to him. A dormant Cooper lies inside the shambling, uncoordinated husk of a body, but neither his employer nor his loved ones remark on Cooper-as-Dougie's outwardly childlike or lobotomized state. In fact, much like Peter Seller's famous Chance the Gardener from *Being There* (1997), Cooper-as-Dougie is continually successful in navigating situations he is ill-equipped to deal with, from filing a work report to evading several assassination attempts. The absurdity of these moments is accentuated by a lack of acknowledgment of his altered state by his family and colleagues.

The Return synthesizes absurdity with some of the genre hallmarks of the crime film most evidently in the Las Vegas based story-line. Dougie's employment at Lucky 7 Insurance, and his handling of an insurance claim on a suspected arson case by the occasionally menacing Mitchum brothers (played by Jim Belushi and Robert Knepper), could well be told dramatically, but the show repeatedly defuses the darkness of the criminality, comedically skewering the Mitchum brothers and many of the other nefarious characters at the periphery. For example, the random deaths of Tarantino-esque husband and wife contract killers Chantal (Jennifer Jason Leigh) and Hutch (Tim Roth), due to mistakenly parking over a Polish accountant's driveway, also showcase this embrace of the absurd and the macabre—an argument over parking intensifies in an instant into the murderous machine gun wrath of an oafish-looking white collar worker. *The Return*, like Kafka, finds levity in darkness and ill portent in the quotidian.

Another angle of approach to the premise of *The Return* as a 'crime film' of sorts is an examination of how it utilizes the conventional protagonist and antagonist of the crime film, the hero and the villain. As previously mentioned, the ostensible hero of the original series is FBI Agent Cooper, ably assisted by the members of the Twin Peaks Sheriff Department in pursuit of Laura's murderer, and later, pursuit of the villainous Windom Earle. *The Return*, in its opening, presents a less conventional configuration of heroes and villains: the good Cooper, we discover, has remained in the Black Lodge while the BOB-possessed Cooper, known to his associates 25 years later as 'Mr. C,' has been wandering the world and leaving a trail of vicious, destructive ill-deeds.

As detailed above, Cooper is eventually ejected from the Lodge and finds himself stranded in the catatonic form of Dougie Jones, and now largely without agency. Of course, Cooper later emerges from this fugue and returns to Twin Peaks for the final battle with his evil doppelgänger, but for the majority of the new series' runtime, the traditional Cooper remains in the backseat. It is, in a way, a Kafkaesque dismissal of the distinction between hero and villain, emphasizing instead alienation and a disconnection between mind and body, over agency and unity, be either used for good or evil.

The detachment of mind and body is a repeated thematic in Kafka's works: in *The Metamorphosis*, for example, we see the consequences of Gregor Samsa's mind remaining intact after his bodily transformation into a 'monstrous vermin' (1981, p. 1). Lynch's examination of this separation takes a different tack, with its emphasis on dreams, journeys to trans-dimensional spaces, and possession by evil entities and doppelgängers. However, in *The Return* this disintegration of the unity of mind and body is further emphasized in the focus on the Cooper/Mr. C./Dougie Jones triad, as well as the intentional destabilization in the final episode of the identities of Cooper and his secretary Diane (Laura Dern), who through an apparent interdimensional shift, appear to at least temporarily inhabit the alter-egos of a man and woman named Richard and Linda. In this same unfamiliar world, Cooper later locates the familiar figure of Laura Palmer, who insists she is not Laura, but instead a woman named Carrie Page (also played by Sheryl Lee). The return of Philip Jeffries also tells us all we need to know about Lynch's concern with the unity of mind and body: previously incarnated in a human form (played by David Bowie in 1992s Lynch directed *Fire Walk with Me*), Jeffries reappears in the new series in the form of a large teapot shaped machine that communicates both through speech and emissions of steam.

In this undermining of identification and comprehension, there appears to be a desire by Lynch to challenge our conception of the stability of perceptions, sensory, and otherwise. This is a twin desire of Kafka, who underpinned his novels with his protagonist's necessary skepticism of certainty. Czermak contends that this distrust was, for Kafka, tied to a 'conviction that none of our fleeting impressions and accidental associations have a fixed counterpart in a "real" and stable world. There is no clear-cut boundary between reality and the realm of dreams' (2001, p. 3). Czermak proposes that Kafka demonstrates this by the way he

undermines the discovery of any such boundary: the unpredictable logic of what is supposedly the 'real' and comprehendible world merely 'leaves Kafka's characters yearning for a firm metaphysical anchor which they never quite grasp' (2001, p. 3).

This is evidenced quite clearly in the reappearance of Audrey Horne (Sherilyn Fenn). Gone is the mischievous, troublemaking teenager of the original series, who also played a heroic role in her surreptitious attempts to assist Agent Cooper. Instead, Audrey returns in Part 12 of the new series in a scene that is equally frustrating and ominous. Absurdity and alienation are the primary colors of the scene: in what lasts for over ten minutes, we see the older Audrey Horne engaged in an argument with a man named Charlie (Clark Middleton), who we later discover is her husband. Audrey begins by demanding Charlie join her to look for Billy, whose identity is unclear to the viewer. When he dismisses this request, the argument escalates, referring to further unknown characters such as Tina, Paul, and Chuck. The scene ends with an unheard phone call between Charlie and Tina, the contents of which Charlie refuses to share with a furious Audrey. In Part 13, we return to Charlie and Audrey in the same room, although this time she seems shaken, timid. In this scene she says to Charlie, 'I feel like I'm somewhere else. Have you ever had that feeling, Charlie?' to which Charlie responds in the negative. She continues: 'Like I'm somewhere else and I'm somebody else.' This Audrey certainly seems a distant person from the Audrey remembered by viewers of the original *Twin Peaks*, even taking into account her injuries from the explosion at the Twin Peaks Savings and Loan that occurred in the series finale. However, this is not a simplistic psychological estrangement: the new series hints (and later confirms in Mark Frost's [2017] companion book, *The Final Dossier*) that Audrey is *not* in this seemingly real space and seemingly real conversation, even when she is later seen dancing inside The Roadhouse. She *is* somewhere else and somebody else—contained within an all-white room, perhaps in the mental care facility called Ghostwood that is earlier alluded to. This revelation potentially undermines all the previous scenes in The Roadhouse, which have played out with the same obscure and indecipherable logic.

The conversations between Charlie and Audrey, and their apparent impenetrability and interminability, resonate with some of the incomprehensibility of Kafka's fictional worlds; Gray, for example, notes Kafka's regular employment of 'a force or radical transformation of the self that makes the world incomprehensible,' where 'normal patterns of social

intercourse and communication break down' (2005, p. 2). In this situation, an enigma rises to the surface of the scene, making us question not only the subtext of the conversation but also its literal place in the text. This foregrounding of the enigmatic also occurs in the way Lynch deals with the 'crimes' of the new series, crimes which are far less tangible than the murder which inaugurated the original series. Lynch has always demonstrated a fascination with detective fiction and police procedurals, as well as the hardboiled or noir elements of crime fiction, and again, *The Return* is a melange of these tropes: we see detective fiction in the Sheriff Department's unravelling of the mystery of Jack Rabbit's Palace, police procedural in the investigation of Bill Hastings (Matthew Lillard) in Buckhorn, and noir elements in Mr. C's escape from prison and journey to Twin Peaks. On the fringes of this is something which is a fusion of all of the above with an overt acceptance of the supernatural: The Blue Rose task force, led by Gordon Cole with the assistance of Agents Albert Rosenfield (Miguel Ferrer) and Tamara Preston (Chrysta Bell). For the Blue Rose Task Force, the initial crime that captures their attention is the discovery of Major Briggs' lower torso in Buckhorn (his missing head has been substituted for that of Buckhorn's school librarian), but it soon becomes clear that their purview is far greater, and Cole and the Task Force's more specific interest is in 'troubling abstractions' such as the Cooper who is not Cooper in the form of Mr. C. Meanwhile in Twin Peaks, a variety of crimes manifest but appear to draw little to no police attention, from Richard Horne's vehicular manslaughter and subsequent attack on witness Miriam Sullivan, to the epidemic of a drug named 'Sparkle' that may or not be responsible for the general sickness that appears to have infected the town.

While Lynch crafts a narrative that is interested in all of these elements, it could be argued that the central crime of *The Return* is, fittingly, a return: to the death of Laura Palmer. For while she does not become the focus of the series until the finale, Laura's presence haunts the series as a whole (including the opening credits), and even materializes in a few crucial moments, such as her conversation with Cooper in the Red Room in Part 1, and her emergence from The Fireman's celestial cinema screen in Part 8. Her time-bending resurrection becomes, in some ways, an attempt by Cooper to avenge the crime of her murder, but in a Kafkaesque twist, the mission detailed in the series finale is a failure due to mistaken identity in the most metaphysical sense. Despite following The Fireman's clues, ('430,' 'Richard and Linda,' 'Two birds

one stone') Cooper has been led not to 'his' Laura Palmer, but to a doppelgänger living in Odessa, Texas, who calls herself Carrie Page. Inside Page's house, the dead body of a man remains unacknowledged by both Carrie or Cooper, another in a succession of gruesome moments of absurdity in the series. Carrie willingly leaves with Cooper, and they embark on the long journey back to Twin Peaks, arriving by car in the middle of the night at the infamous Palmer residence. But when they knock on the door, the expected resident, Laura's mother Sarah, does not answer—instead, it is a woman named Alice Tremond, who tells the pair that she bought the house from a Mrs. Chalfont years earlier.[1] An obviously devastated Cooper leads Carrie away from the house. Moments later he staggers, plagued by an unspoken existential paroxysm. He turns to Carrie and asks: 'What year is this?' Staring up at the house and hearing the distant, plaintive cry of her mother, Carrie/Laura screams, and all the lights of the Palmer house are extinguished. In the most Kafkaesque of developments, we are left to ask not only what year does this scene takes place, but also, who is this woman: Carrie Page? Laura Palmer? Some combination of the two? No answer is provided, and the viewer is left to stew in the miasma of alienation and dread that emerges in the moment, unsure of whether the crime of Laura's murder can ever be avenged or undone.

It is difficult to reconcile a conclusion like that described above with the typical detective story, and indeed, while it is clear Kafka and Lynch recognize the power of detective stories, it is also apparent they understand the limitations of a conventional use of the genre. In Gustav Janouch's autobiographical account of his friendship with Kafka, he recounts the author discussing the sedating power of conventional detective stories:

> Detective stories are a narcotic which distorts the proportions of life and so stands the world on its head. Detective stories are always concerned with the solution of mysteries which are hidden behind extraordinary occurrences. But in real life it's absolutely the opposite. The mystery isn't hidden in the background. On the contrary it stares one in the face. It's what is obvious. So we do not see it. Every-day life is the greatest detective story ever written. Every second, without noticing we pass by thousands of corpses and crimes. That's the routine of our lives. But if, in spite of habit, something does succeed in surprising us, we have a marvellous sedative in the detective story, which presents every mystery of life as a legally

> punishable exception. It is—in Ibsen's words—a pillar of society, a starched shirt covering the heartless immorality which nevertheless claims to be bourgeois civilization. (Janouch 2012, p. 133)

From an analysis of *The Return*, it could be argued that Lynch, like Kafka, is more interested in the 'greatest detective story ever written,' and that, like Kafka, his means of examining it is by pulling back the veneer of logic and cohesion that ordinarily holds a fictional story together. Czermak notes that Kafka's literary worlds are 'broken and distorted' reflections of his analytical mind, and that, as a result, his characters are 'not "real" in a psychological sense, not "true" in an empirical sense, and not "natural" in a biological sense. Their one distinctive mark is that of being something *created*' (2001, p. 75, italics in original). In a similar manner, Lynch is less interested in the 'real,' the 'true' and the 'natural,' than in works that question the very stability of any and all of those terms. Martha P. Nochimson writes of how Lynch's early life as a painter propelled this movement, contending that Lynch understands the importance of narrative as its ability to 'make us dream,' and thus bring us closer to the truth and to each other (2012, p. 16). She argues that Lynch understands the paradox of how narrative conventions can foreclose the possibility to dream, and claims that he therefore alternatively uses narrative 'as a support for the dream,' rather than the primary driving force of the film or television series (Nochimson 2012, p. 16). By utilizing some of the same thematics as Kafka, as argued above, Lynch opens up more space for the dream, which coalesces with his affective use of sound and image to unmoor the viewer from the safety of the 'marvellous sedative' of a conventional detective story.

For all the alliances between the work of Lynch and Kafka, it is notable that Lynch recently abandoned an attempt to adapt Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* for film, and through this failure came to identify what he proposes is a central difference between himself and the author. Interviewed at the Rome Film Festival in 2017, Lynch discussed abandoning the project, commenting that 'once I finished writing the script for [the adaptation], I realized that Kafka's beauty is in his words. That story is so full of words that when I was finished writing I realized it was better on paper than it could ever be on film' (Lynch, qtd. in Niola 2017). While Lynch rightfully identifies each artist's skillful embrace of their medium, it is still apposite to propose that there is a

spiritual brotherhood between the two that transcends the limits of their respective mediums. Lynch and Kafka each understand the power of art to shock, mystify, astonish, terrify, and ultimately unveil, if only for a moment, the unspoken and unseen clues to the riddle of existence. In *The Return*, Lynch fulfills his dream of making Kafka's never-written crime film.

Note

1. Kafka would no doubt have enjoyed the para-textual discovery that the woman who played Alice Tremond was the real-life owner of the house, another piece of meta-textual play by Lynch to blur the boundaries between fiction and reality.

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CHAPTER 15

Who Is the Dreamer?

Cam Cobb and Michael K. Potter

The delineation between dream and reality is a fuzzy one in *Twin Peaks: The Return* (2017). So are the lines from one dream to another. As a result, we can never quite be sure if what we see is real or something in a dream. Yet it is more than that. Because there is not necessarily one singular dream in the narrative, we can never tell exactly whose dream we are in at any given moment. Can dreams truly help us to unravel this vast, enigmatic story? While some, such as Jane Douglas and Siobhan Lyons, caution us about using dream theory to analyze David Lynch's work (Lewis 2002; Lyons 2016), the science of dreams offers a useful way of untangling the complex narrative of *The Return*. The 18-episode narrative is a web that shifts and blends the dreams and realities that characters navigate as they attempt to make sense of their ever-changing, often unfamiliar surroundings.

To better understand how dreams seem to structure the narrative of *The Return*, it is important to review the mechanics of dreaming. As EEG research indicates, the human 'brain is active twenty-four hours

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a day' and we are perpetually involved in mental activity, or mentation (Fosshage 2007, p. 214). Yet while we are sleeping, we experience two different types of mentation, which correspond to two types of dreaming. Rapid eye movement, or REM, 'dreaming occurs in approximately ninety-minute cycles with non-REM (NREM) dreaming taking place during the intervals' (Fosshage 2007, p. 214). While NREM dreaming more closely resembles waking thought, REM dreaming veers more toward 'affect-loaded imagistic scenarios' (Fosshage 2007, p. 214). When we engage in REM dreaming, we are less bound by the norms of our day-to-day surroundings. Rather, we soar above (and sometimes muddle through) our *reality*, drifting in and out of familiar and unfamiliar landscapes, times, casts of characters, and memories. While dreams may generate false memories at times, on other occasions our memories of dreams themselves may be fuelled by misinformation (Beaulieu-Prévost and Zadra 2015, pp. 18–21). Yet dreaming can help us to consolidate, organize, and learn from our memories (Fosshage 2007, p. 214). In fact, some of the most complex thinking we carry out in our dreams occurs when we grapple with cognitive and affective problems we encounter in (or recall from) our waking state (Fosshage 2007, pp. 214, 218). All the while, throughout our dream activities, we are never stationary. Moving from NREM to REM sleep, we travel through different dreams, and shift across different types of dream experiences. As all this happens, our dreams themselves shift in time and place—carrying us along with them.

The Return, with its twists and turns up and down the alleyways of characters' psyches and perceptions, could be seen as a web of dreams and waking states of different characters. For example, Audrey Horne's (Sherilyn Fenn) seemingly concrete experiences in Parts 12, 13, 15, and 16 could be seen as a semi-realistic NREM dream. In a world very similar to the Twin Peaks she grew up in, a grownup Audrey bickers incessantly with her accountant/husband, Charlie (Clark Middleton) and frets about the apparent disappearance of her lover, Billy. Audrey has utter scorn for her husband and during their many spats she pesters Charlie to call Tina, supposedly the last person who saw Billy before he went missing. Waiting in frustration and desperation, Audrey barely contains her temper as Charlie engages in a drawn-out phone conversation with Tina, a woman his wife despises. Charlie then shares none of Tina's revelations. In fact, throughout his interactions, Charlie passively agrees then mildly disagrees with his wife, never pushing her narrative forward.

Perhaps he is just an accessory to accompany Audrey as she traverses her NREM dreams. Even the events of Audrey's surroundings are blurred. Details of Billy's escapades leading up to his apparent disappearance, for instance, haphazardly come to light. Billy's own narrative is convoluted, and seems to be clumsily pieced together. It is as though Billy's recent backstory exists on the periphery of Audrey's NREM dream. Billy's out-of-focus story could well be something Audrey is almost improvising as she moves through her dream. Nevertheless, her dream unfolds. Worried about Billy (a character who may or may not even exist), Audrey becomes almost hysterical, and she oscillates between dearly wanting to visit the Roadhouse to continue her search, and feeling terrified to venture there on her own. Browbeating her husband, Audrey eventually wears Charlie down, and in Part 16, he finally accompanies her to the bar. When the MC (J. R. Starr) unexpectedly announces 'Audrey's Dance,' some ethereal cool jazz begins to play, the dancefloor clears, and Audrey is soon captivated by the music. Dancing hypnotically, as though in a trance, she appears to be in a state of bliss, perhaps locked into a vivid, overwhelming long-term memory (LTM) that has temporarily overtaken her NREM dream. Yet a jealous husband violently starts a fight and a frightened Audrey quickly scurries to Charley, crying out, 'Get me out of here!' With the sound of electricity in the air, Audrey instantly sees a closeup of her face in a small mirror. Yet she is no longer in the Roadhouse. Instead, she is wearing a white gown (possibly hospital garb), standing in a sparse, white room. Quite possibly, the white room represents Audrey's transition from a semi-realistic NREM dream to a more abstract REM dream. Alternatively, perhaps a sharp, unpleasant LTM has interrupted Audrey's dream, and overtaken her joyful moment of reliving a happy memory—her dance.

Yet there is also a third possibility, which may well intermingle with the previous two. It is possible that Audrey is spending time in a psychiatric clinic, perhaps hallucinating, throughout *The Return*. There are numerous reasons why her psychological and emotional well-being may be damaged. After all, Audrey has had ongoing emotional issues with her father, Ben (Richard Beymer), throughout her life. She has endured the physical and psychological trauma of the bank explosion (at the end of Season Two) as well as her subsequent coma. Audrey also took an unexpected pregnancy (possibly the result of a rape by Mr. C. during her coma) to term, and she has endured a hapless marriage of convenience. Chronicling Audrey's harrowing narrative in *Twin Peaks:*

The Final Dossier, Mark Frost gives weight to this third option in the following passage: 'Audrey apparently consulted her own mental care professional during this time, but those files are sealed and inaccessible … Not long after she seemed to vanish from public life, into either agoraphobic seclusion, or—one troubling rumor suggests—a private care facility' (Frost 2017, p. 32). Each of these possibilities is entirely plausible if we apply the science of dreams to disentangle Audrey's complicated narrative in *The Return*. In all three cases, Audrey faces the challenge of grasping what is a dream and what is not, amidst a narrative that suddenly becomes jarringly nonlinear.

As narratives, dreams are neither bound to linearity, nor are they moored to a singular perspective—and neither is *The Return*. For those who know David Lynch's work, this sort of dream shifting is both new and familiar (Bulkeley 2003). While the shifting itself between dream and *reality* (or waking state) crops up in other works by Lynch, the scale and complexity of the dream shifting that arises in *The Return* is entirely new. In the 18-episode narrative we are faced with a web of dreams, where the waking states and dreams of characters shift, blend (and indeed bleed) into one another. It is so new and unfamiliar, in fact, it is downright disorienting. Yet David Lynch followed a path to this point—and it is useful to consider his trek from *Fire Walk with Me* (*FWWM*, 1992), along *Lost Highway* (1997), down *Mulholland Drive* (2001), circuiting all the way to *The Return*.

In *FWWM*, Reginal Bureau Chief Gordon Cole (David Lynch) and Agents Albert Rosenfield (Miguel Ferrer) and Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan), experience a fantastical event when Agent Phillip Jeffries (David Bowie)—who has been missing for two years—suddenly steps into Cole's office in Philadelphia. When asked where he has been, Jeffries offers few absolutes, but is sure of one thing: 'It was a dream. We live inside a dream.' For a few fleeting moments, Jeffries is there, talking about things that, for the most part, do not seem to make any sense—then, in a flash, he is gone. Jeffries is a man of the past, and an apparition in the present. He is a man transplanted, unanchored, unmoored. As Lynch once said of the film, 'I liked the idea of the story going back and forth in time' (Rodley 2005, p. 187). In this sense, the narrative is structured like a dream, or dream sequence. Yet there is more. Philip Jeffries directly tells his fellow agents (and the audience) it is a dream. However, we cannot be certain of whose dream it actually is. *Wrapped In Plastic* co-editor, John Thorne, speculates that Philip Jeffries is saying this to

Agent Cooper and consequently, Chet Desmond's (Chris Isaak) narrative is truly Cooper's own self-referential dream (Thorne 2016, pp. 301–319). In Thorne's view, Chet Desmond is Cooper's avatar. While Lynch is reluctant to sketch out *any* sort of authorial intent regarding what unfolds in this scene (or any other works he has created for that matter), applying Jeffries' clue to the puzzling narrative that unfolds helps to make sense of things—which, on the surface, appear to be disorderly.

Lost Highway is another film that, at first, seems to offer up a jumbled narrative. Midway through the story, musician Fred Madison (Bill Pullman) suddenly finds himself on death row, blamed for (and possibly guilty of) murdering his wife, Renée (Patricia Arquette). Though Fred had suspected Renée of cheating on him, her death completely shocks him. He claims to have no recollection of her murder. Yet perhaps Fred is *choosing* not to remember. After all, he does have a flexible view of memory, as he explains at one point, 'I like to remember things my own way, not necessarily the way they happened.' It is entirely plausible that Fred, through the recall process, is purposefully blocking (or even altering) his memories. But there is a second possibility. It is also plausible that Fred, as he sits on death row, is unconsciously misremembering the past. LTM, after all, is fluid. While LTM has traditionally been viewed as a fixed, unchanging entity (Schechtman 1994)—like the files we would keep into a cabinet—a growing body of research indicates that it is in fact dynamic (Finnie and Nader 2012). The context of our psyche and dialogic process when accessing and sharing memories—often through narratives—leaves an imprint on the memories themselves (Linde 1999). Consequently, even our 'strongest and oldest memories may not be entirely invulnerable to modification' (Finnie and Nader 2012, p. 1679). So, it is entirely possible that Fred is so shaken by what has happened to his wife (something horrible, which he may have done to her), that he blurs memories as he recounts what happened under interrogation. Of course, *if* he is purposefully misrepresenting his memories, Fred will forever face greater challenges whenever he tries to access more accurate memories surrounding the events he is distorting (Loftus 1992; Pickel 2010). To put it simply, we cannot trust our recall of the past, even if it draws from our LTM, and especially if we distort our representation of past memories.

Yet there is a third way to grasp Fred's journey. To explore this option, we need to consider the second half of the film. While sitting in his cell, awaiting his execution, Fred instantly transforms into the much

younger Pete Dayton (Balthazar Getty). Because he is no longer Fred, Pete is set free. Then he meets Alice (Patricia Arquette), a woman who looks exactly like Renée, and a complicated relationship begins yet again. But physical transformation is impossible. Well, in our waking state it is impossible. Perhaps Fred is not in a waking state at all. Perhaps rather than (or in addition to) misremembering the past, he is misremembering the past within his dreams. Indeed, some of the most complex mentation we engage in is our working through cognitive problems and conflicts and emotional traumas in our dreams (Fosshage 2007). Contemplating Fred's transition, Lynch explained, 'That's why I think they called it a "psychogenic *fugue*" because it goes from one thing, segues to another, and then I think it comes back again' (Rodley 2005, p. 239). As in *FWWM*, the science of dreams can help us to unravel the seemingly disorderly narrative of *Lost Highway*.

Mulholland Drive is another film where the mechanics of dreaming offers plausible explanations to a seemingly disorderly narrative. With Betty's (Naomi Watts) arrival in LA, the film opens with intrigue and glitz. Betty is an aspiring actress, borrowing her Aunt Ruth's apartment. Meeting Rita (Laura Elena Harring), the apparent victim of a car accident in the Hollywood Hills, Betty quickly finds herself taking care of her enigmatic new friend. Rita has amnesia. As the two women try to solve the mysteries of Rita's accident and past, they fall in love. As Betty says, 'I mean, I just came here from Deep River, Ontario. And now I'm in this … dream place.' It may be a dream. After all, strange flashes—including a menacing hobo and a mysterious blue key/box—occasionally surface or interrupt the narrative from time to time. Shortly after Betty and Rita visit the otherworldly theatre, Club Silencio, Rita unexpectedly finds a blue box in her purse. The box seems to match Betty's blue key. When Rita soon opens the box, the entire narrative tilts and Betty suddenly becomes Diane (Naomi Watts), a failed actress, struggling with addiction. She is obsessed with Camilla (Laura Elena Harring), who (at least in appearance) is identical to Rita. In this tilted world, Camilla has only disdain for Diane. As viewers, we do not immediately understand what is happening. As in *Lost Highway*, midway through the narrative the protagonist has somehow transformed into someone else. At least, that is how it appears. Yet in *Mulholland Drive* the transformation—or shift—unfolds on a larger scale. After Rita opens the blue box, the entire landscape of characters shuffles—and Betty becomes Diane, Rita become Camilla, Adam becomes a very different Adam (Justin Theroux),

and Coco becomes Adam's mother (Ann Miller). Viewers are left wondering how this sort of transformation could occur. Like Fred Madison, Betty/Diane may be traversing a fractured narrative of NREM dreams, wrestling with emotional frustrations and traumas of her past—and these problems appear to include a failed career in Hollywood, a broken relationship with Rita/Camilla, and her hiring (or contemplating, or perhaps fantasizing about hiring) a hitman to kill Rita/Camilla. Like Fred, Betty/Diane may well be misremembering things as she reconstructs her surroundings (and the past of her LTM), navigating feelings of frustration, guilt, and confusion along the way. Though the consensus seems to be that the last portion of the film is *real* and the rest is a dream (see, for instance, Bulkeley 2003; Taubin 2001), there is no definitive way to interpret *Mulholland Drive*. It is entirely possible that Rita's opening of the blue box represents a transition from NREM sleep to REM sleep, and the film then skips over Betty/Diane's REM dreams, returning to a new NREM dream with Diane's nightmarish narrative.

In each of these stories, characters struggle with perception and memory. At various junctures, they question things they believe they have seen, or remembered, or once thought to be true. These are characters who face the unexpected, the impossible. They inhabit worlds that are both strange and seemingly (or at least partly) unreal. Struggling, these characters come to question the lines between possible and impossible, real and unreal, and perception and truth. Once thought to be sharp, these lines become almost indistinguishable. These are characters who walk a path that is riddled with uncertainty. Perhaps they walk in and out of dreams, uncertain of when their dreams end and their *realities* begin. Alternatively, they may be trekking through different dreams, unsure of the veracity of their own LTM, which has reshaped their past experiences and surroundings into what Betty calls a 'dream place.' In navigating a confusing, ever-shifting narrative, the journeys of each of these characters predicts the world—and path—of Dale Cooper (and so many others) in *The Return*. Like Philip Jeffries, Fred Madison, and Betty, Cooper is unanchored to a singular identity, a clear reality, and smooth, forward-moving narrative. In many ways, the narratives in these stories seem to be incoherent.

Each of these stories—from *FWWM* to *The Return*—upsets conventional narrative coherence. After all, we are typically expected to experience a story's narrative through one or more of the characters' perspectives. Yet with these stories, perspectives and narratives are

fragmented. Protagonists wander through different sorts of dreams (NREM and REM), all the while relying on an unstable (perhaps even deceptive) pool of LTMs. Because these characters cannot firmly recall their experiences, they cannot form stable images of themselves. They cannot form stable identities. Consequently, the narratives of these films are unreliable—and the very habits we, as the audience, have formed to follow a typical narrative no longer help us work our way through the narrative (Halskov 2015). Because we cannot be certain if (or which aspects of) what we are seeing is truly happening, making meaning of things—such as the actions, motivations, or ethics of characters—is an impossibility. Firmly rooted in a state of uncertainty, we can never truly grasp the narrative. We are like each of the protagonists, struggling to establish the reliability of everything we see transpire. As seemingly impossible events become everyday occurrences, we struggle to make sense of the scientific laws that govern the place we are visiting. It is as though Lynch has created fantastical narratives—which shift between REM and NREM dreams and waking states, all built upon LTM quicksand—to pull us into an existential struggle. In this place, we strive vainly to make meaning of the world we inhabit. After all, the only meaning these stories can offer us is the meaning we give them. As Jean-Paul Sartre observed, 'Before you come alive, life is nothing; it's up to you to give it meaning and value is nothing else but the meaning you choose to give it' (2000, p. 49). Fittingly, in *The Return*, Gordon Cole has a framed portrait of existential storyteller Franz Kafka hanging in his office. Yet the uncertainty of these stories has other repercussions. It has implications for selfhood and identity.

In narratives where characters strive to pin down their memories, selfhood becomes fragmented. It is something we all experience as we navigate the worlds of REM and NREM dreams. Nowhere is this more explicit—or complicated—than in *The Return*. Throughout the first two episodes of the 2017 series (and part of the third episode), Cooper is locked in the Black Lodge, a place where he encounters an assortment of puzzling experiences and questions. In Part 1, The Fireman (Carel Struycken) advises him to remember the number '430' as well as the names 'Richard and Linda.' During the second episode, he interacts with one-armed spirit MIKE (Al Strobel), who asks, 'Is it future or is it past?' Cooper also encounters Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee)—or someone who is identical to her—and a radiant barren tree that represents 'the evolution of the arm.' In the following episode, Cooper seems to shift to a place

that veers further away from reality, a capsule-like structure that exists in a vast purple sea, or void. It is as though Cooper inhabits a hazy world of REM dreaming—a place where imagistic sketches and puzzles loosely connect to his experiences and friends/acquaintences of waking state as well as NREM dreams. If these are indeed REM dreams, then they are ones that seem to shift further and further away from Cooper's familiar memories and surroundings. When Cooper passes through an electrical outlet and metamorphizes into Dougie Jones in Part 3, it is as though the dream shifts from REM to NREM sleep. All at once, Cooper has moved from the more abstract, tenuous world of the Black Lodge and entered a world that more closely represents the surroundings of his waking state. Stuck in the body of Dougie Jones, Cooper's consciousness becomes stifled. It is as though his awareness of his past and present surroundings has become misplaced, or blocked. From Part 3 through 15, Cooper/Jones muddles through his life in Las Vegas, occasionally alerted to the foggy LTMs of Agent Cooper.

Through a variety of triggers, Cooper/Jones is sometimes reminded of his past. When he is attacked outside his workplace in Part 7, for instance, he acrobatically disarms the hitman with surprising ease. It is as though he is accessing a sort of muscle memory. In Part 8, he is mesmerized by a large bronze statue of a man dressed like a cowboy with an arm extended out, grasping a pistol. Perhaps the image reminds Cooper/Jones of his life's work in law enforcement. Haphazardly encountering these triggers, Cooper/Jones muddles through his existence as a husband, father, and insurance agent. His erratic process of learning new habits and forming an identity resembles the epistemological unrest we ourselves experience—as we make meaning of our own everchanging LTMs while constantly weaving in and out of dream and waking states. Hearing the word 'Gordon Cole' while watching *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), Cooper/Jones is startled. Picking up a fork, he carefully inserts the object into an electrical socket and falls into a coma. When he wakes up from the coma, in Part 16, he is once again Agent Cooper, with full access to Cooper's own memories. At this moment, it is as though he shifts from one NREM dream to another. Or, perhaps it is less drastic. Perhaps Cooper's NREM dream adjusts itself to a narrative (and world) that more closely resembles his own LTMs and waking state, or *reality*. These dreams, psychologically and perhaps ontologically indistinguishable from life, are fractured and fragile; with other *realities* sometimes slipping in.

This sort of phenomenon may be precisely what Audrey Horne experiences in *The Return*, as previously discussed. Like Audrey, we—the audience—may be watching overlapping realities and dreams, unable to pinpoint precisely what is *real*. It is unsettling, and Lynch himself knows this all too well. As he once said, 'Some things in life are not understandable, but when things in films are that way people become worried' (Rodley 2005, p. 227). Yet Lynch still offers audiences a key (or set of keys) in each story—and once you perceive the key that unlocks the narrative puzzle, you can see the straightforward narrative at the heart of these stories. For *Lost Highway*, it is a matter of understanding Fred's morphing into Pete, and in *Mulholland Drive* it is understanding Betty's metamorphosis into Diane. Both characters appear to create a dream world to inhabit, in lieu of the harsh realities, the tragic circumstances of their own lives. Like us, Fred/Pete and Betty/Diane are on a path of puzzling their way through what they see, hear, and experience. It is this problem-solving process that Lynch cherishes: 'Clues are beautiful because I believe we're all detectives,' he once mused. 'We mull things over and we figure things out. We're always working this way' (Rodley 2005, p. 287). Afterward, we might even forget that these were nonlinear and surreal stories in the first place.

The narratives and individual lives in *The Return* play out as disconnected and independent—at least, superficially. Dozens of separate but connected stories, none of which unify Cooper's story or dominate, no longer even connected by the geography of Twin Peaks the town, but rather dispersed across space and time, constitute what to many viewers may not even seem like a warped and jumbled approximation of an anthology series. In each of these lives there may be a key that could help audiences pass through the threshold of understanding, enabling them to see the underlying cohesion of the narrative. Yet Lynch does not seem to have any interest in giving the audience the key. Perhaps he wants the experience of *The Return* to be dynamic, open-ended, perpetually unfinished. The theories we impose upon it could (to varying degrees) connect to what Lynch had in mind, and yet he does not seem to care. He would accept each interpretation, privileging none of them. As Lynch once asserted, 'Everybody is at a certain place and they have so many internal things going on. The frames of the film are exactly the same [but] every screening is different, every individual reaction is different. It's just the way it is' (Thorne 2016, p. 263).

Thus, *The Return* discards another convention: what were once, and still could have been, side characters in the protagonist's story become protagonists of their own stories. The reveal happens gradually, almost imperceptibly, building until the end of the season when it becomes clear that no one character is an accessory to the others. The struggles of every character are Cooper's struggles, and his theirs. Cooper's path through dreams and realities are reflected in Audrey's own journey. So it is for Diane Evans/Diane's tulpa (Laura Dern), Bradley Mitchel (Jim Belushi), and so many others who populate the vast narrative. Each person in the story could be seen as a synecdoche for every other, for each other's REM and NREM dreams, and for personhood as a whole. Perhaps Diane Evans is navigating a pathway of dreams throughout *The Return*—narratives where she exists as a tulpa, where she was abused by Cooper's doppelgänger, where she cavorts with Gordon Cole and Albert Rosenfield and is invited into the inner circle of the *Blue Rose*, and where she finds fleeting companionship with the real Cooper himself (who has transformed into Richard) in an alternate reality. If Diane is indeed dreaming, then her fantasy as a tulpa seems to resemble the more realistic parameters of a NREM landscape while her brief fling with Cooper/Richard in what appears to be an alternate reality more closely matches the abstract nature of a REM dream. Bradley Mitchum is also shifting between dreaming and waking life in *The Return*. In Part 11, he speaks of having a vivid dream involving a cherry pie, which somehow has warned him that Dougie Jones should not be harmed. The dream indicated, in fact, that Dougie should be trusted. We cannot tell if Bradley's cherry pie dream occurred during REM or NREM sleep, or even if truly it was a dream all. After all, it could be the product of a false memory (Beaulieu-Prévost and Zadra 2015). Yet Bradley's *perception* of the dream is real, and as a result his dream bleeds into his waking state reality, guiding his decision-making process when he and his brother struggle with what they should do with Dougie, a man they firmly believe to be their foe. In each of these cases the science of dreams offers unique possibilities as we disentangle the complexities of *The Return*.

Once we interpret *The Return* in this way, we can understand why no one point of view is privileged, and why fragmentation of narrative, fragmentation of reality, is inevitable. When two characters' perceptions diverge, and disagree, there is no hierarchy we can rely upon to decide which is correct. When Cooper seems to disappear in Part 3 we

are left with the passive perspective of his replacement, Cooper/Jones. When Audrey jumps dreams (or memories, or realities) in Part 16—and she sees herself in an unfamiliar white room—we question the veracity of everything we have seen of her previously in *The Return*. We cannot default to the protagonist's point of view, nor any other, so the habits we have relied upon as lifelong consumers of stories no longer serve us. We do not know who or what to trust, who or what to dismiss.

How we see ourselves and how we interpret the world around us may, at any time, change—or be changed—by new events, new perceptions, or new interpretations. Nothing is static. Much of the time, perhaps even most of the time, we are not even aware of why we see even ourselves the way we do, whether our self-understanding is adequate or defensible, and what has influenced it. Despite our common assumptions to the contrary, we do not have privileged epistemological access to the self. We cannot even trust our own LTMs. Moreover, because we are a collection of our memories and perspectives, there *is* no unitary self for us to understand anyway. We are like Gordon, Dale, and Albert, trying to make sense of Philip Jeffries' sudden appearance and disappearance. Like Fred/Pete, we trek along *Lost Highway*, struggling to grasp what really happened in our lives, again and again. Like Betty/Diane, we hike down *Mulholland Drive*, frantically trying to grasp what is real and unreal in a narrative that oscillates between fantasy, reality, and nightmare.

The Return draws us into a world (or multiple worlds, rather) where dreams and realities converge and diverge with unsettling regularity. We are with Jones/Cooper as he muddles through his life, attempting to make sense of an unfamiliar world again, and again, and again. Yet it is more complex than this. We are also with Gordon Cole and Albert Rosenfield and Tammy Preston and Diane Evans' tulpa and Audrey Horne and Sarah Palmer and the Mitchum brothers, and so many others who are all trying to make sense of the world they inhabit—and delineate the boundaries between different types of dreams, and between dreams and *realities*. We cannot be certain of what happens to Audrey Horne in Part 16, when she flashes to the other Audrey (or *version* of Audrey) who stands in a barren, white room staring into a mirror. She may be shifting from a dream to a reality, a reality to a dream, one dream to another dream, or even one type of dream to another type of dream. Yet she may also be locked within the same dream, facing an LTM that had previously remained blocked, or suppressed. While we may not be able to definitively know what is happening to Audrey, the science of

dreams offers us a spectrum of plausible possibilities. Ultimately, in terms of selfhood and memory and perspective, there are no absolutes in *The Return*—or in our own lives.

If there is no unitary perspective in a selfhood that persists over time, we are left with the self as a fragment of smaller selves with their own perceptions and ideas, held together with often flimsy memories, many or all of which are unreliable. Moreover, memories often conflict with one another—not to mention the memories of others (Loftus 1992, pp. 121–123; Pickel 2010, pp. 16–24). Without a privileged self, we resemble the meta-story of *The Return*. Each of us. The story, a vast network of NREM and REM dreams as well as waking *realities*, could be seen as a synecdoche for every human life, and vice versa. Ultimately, this is what makes *The Return* a coherent, natural story. The ever-shifting, multidimensional nature of David Lynch and Mark Frost's epic reproduces what we experience in the dreams and realities that form our everyday lives—where our mental activities continue circuiting, 24 hours a day—like electrical currents that are charged in perpetuity (Fosshage 2007). It is a story of unstable memory, and selfhood, and attachment to selfhood, and perpetual uncertainty. Because our memories and our perceptions are fluid, so is our identity. This is true for various characters in the vast landscape of *The Return*. As we have seen, both Cooper/Jones and Audrey face this unsettling reality in one way or another day after day.

What seems to matter to Lynch is the internal logic of an interpretation. When it comes to dreams—and perhaps everything, if all is a dream—the director's work embodies a coherence theory of truth. It is a theory that eschews superficial coherence for the deeper coherence of theme and self-determined meaning. There are logics to REM and NREM dreams and the failings of LTM, just not logics we are accustomed to in what we consider waking life. Yet perhaps these, too, are merely the logics of different dreams, dreams we unjustifiably privilege as *real*. Nothing is random for Lynch. Everything in his films and television shows is carefully placed, for reasons he is uninterested in explaining. There is a bravery in Lynch's indifference to being understood that even Nietzsche—concerned to the last with whether his readers received his message—could not manage. 'Have I been understood?—Dionysus against the crucified,' Nietzsche worried in *Ecce Homo* (2007, p. 95). Lynch merely shrugs.

Over time, Lynch has demonstrated a growing resistance to linearity and conventional notions of narrative coherence. That is not to say his

stories are incoherent, or that his penchant for telling nonlinear stories is in any way senseless. Far from it. Lynch's approach is natural and meaningful, no matter how it might seem at first glance. In this chapter, we have used the science of dreaming and LTM to survey the unstable yet surreally natural world of *The Return*—a world without reliable perception, enduring memory, or static selfhood. It is a web of dreams, different *types* of dreams (both REM and NREM), and many possible *realities*, or waking states. We have also looked to some of Lynch's earlier films to better understand how he came to construct the world, story, and vast world of dreams that is depicted in *The Return*. Yet one question remains. *Who is the dreamer?* The question arises in *The Return* to unsettle us, to mislead us, and to point toward a fundamental truth, to the dream of dreams, the meta-dream that we can only see in fragments. Always engaging in mental activity, we navigate choppy waters that constantly shift between reality, NREM dreams, and REM dreams. Amidst all this, we can never fully trust the veracity of our memories, even our LTMs. The dreamer is then all dreamers—something Lynch achieves in the complex web of dreams and realities in *The Return*. The 'is' is an 'are.' Then, the question becomes, and is truly: *Who are the dreamers?* The answer is: all of us. And we can never work out when or what exactly it is we are dreaming. We cannot wake up.[1]

Note

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CHAPTER 16

Is It the Wind in the Tall Trees or Just the Distant Buzz of Electricity?: Sound and Music as Portent in *Twin Peaks*' Season Three

Andrew T. Burt

David Lynch, Dean Hurley, and Angelo Badalamenti designed *Twin Peaks*' third season (2017) soundtrack to include ominous sounds, backwards language, and an underlying current of audible wind, creating a feel of unease and foretelling narrative developments in surprising ways that expand on the ways that earlier seasons of the series used sound. In the Black Lodge and other extradimensional places and mundane sites like the Roadhouse, sound is a critical gauge that determines tonal shifts, signifying overarching narrative changes, as well as signaling mood-enhancing Lynchian detours that complicate that narrative. Sound is commonly used to delineate transformation, transportation, and rebirth and help the audience make sense of how each of these ideas develops within the narrative. Throughout his career, Lynch has used industrial sounds juxtaposed with orchestral scores and recurring motifs, and

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Season Three relies on new methods of collaborative effort, such as the Roadhouse scenes, and older methods of fitting narrative to sound to develop contrasting soundtracks to accentuate both unusual and everyday scenes and the liminal borders between them, while developing a narrative that relies heavily on sound to predict what is to come.

This chapter contends that not only does the series use musical motifs and sounds to create a feeling of unease, but it also warns of oncoming change by virtue of how music and sound disorient and affect the viewer. Unlike other studies of music in *Twin Peaks*, this study examines directly how music works as portent for change in the series, also accounting for how ghosts and other phantoms serve as portents. Previous studies, especially Isabella van Elferen's, discuss how ghosts along with music complicate the plot and lead to transgressive spaces and mention the process of transition between 'ghostly and human spaces' (2010, p. 290). This study takes this analysis further by directly analyzing how music and sound augur change with an emphasis on how sound specifically foreshadows transformation and transportation in Season Three. Motifs also shape the narrative because Lynch often breaks the classical paradigm and designs scenes around music. He does so through a juxtaposition of different techniques, including prioritizing elements of parody and irony to deliberately undermine the 'dominant reading of the image track' (Kalinak 1995, p. 89). This process also reinforces the impact of portentous music in *Twin Peaks*. In fact, it draws attention to the artificiality of the text and makes it difficult to determine what is real or not, which only makes it more unsettling and causes viewers to pay attention to the changes that are occurring.

Lynch's use of music has been unusual throughout his career, but during *Twin Peak*'s original run (1990–1991), he and Badalamenti changed the basic design for television show music through their collaboration, disrupting the general process and formula that was commonly used in television and film at the time. Although the show's use of sound was actually more akin to that of film, it changed the paradigm for what could be done with television music. Lynch often writes music to fit the narrative. In fact, *Twin Peaks* rearranges classical Hollywood music tropes, utilizing early film music's purpose as a vehicle of emotional affect, to disrupt conventional expectations of television music, utilizing leitmotifs, pop music, and both diegetic and non-diegetic music to heighten suspense and cause narrative disruption.[1] A combination of techniques that play with film and television music conventions

commonly follows the series' twisting of genre conventions and creates a perpetually unsettling or confusing atmosphere. One example of how the show does this is its use of recognizable musical motifs that are attached to specific characters and concepts, such as 'Audrey's Dance' and 'Laura Palmer's Theme' and, as Kathryn M. Kalinak points out, how it changes them and reassociates them with different characters (1995, p. 87). John Richardson contends that *Twin Peaks* parodies classic film noir, particularly in the construction of Laura Palmer as an absent femme fatale. Thus, he argues that all the music in the series is 'related in some way to the character of Laura Palmer,' and examines her leitmotif as a sort of ghost that affects how audiences view her character (Richardson 2004, p. 82). This concept is further analyzed by Isabella van Elferen who claims that the 'central ghost character is Laura Palmer, the dead girl who is always present in *absentiae*' (2010, p. 283). However, neither of these theorists explores the role of ghostly figures and sounds as portent for what will come next. Van Elferen writes, 'medial agents such as film, phones, turntables, and soundtrack not only summon the ghosts of Twin Peaks, but are also operative factors in taking both televisual characters and audiences into a transgressive space where dichotomies collide' (2010, p. 282).

This chapter argues that sound does not only help move characters to transgressive spaces but also foreshadows and portends what is to come in transgressive and mundane spaces. In Season Three, spiritual entities are as evident as ever, but fewer of them are explicitly evil and some, such as The Giant and other characters in the Red Room, are attempting to help Cooper. Building on this idea, these characters and their accompanying musical motifs act as actual disembodied portents that direct the viewer. While ominous stand-ins for different characters, they do not always reflect the idea that bad stuff is afoot. Indeed, they point toward change between realms and changes within understanding of characters.

The use of non-diegetic and diegetic music is key to Lynch's reimagining of sound and often points to changes in the narrative. Viewers are used to experiencing musical cues that explicitly trend toward emotional climax just like in film scores, but *Twin Peaks*' score makes these cues more explicit and obvious. *Twin Peaks* complicates this tendency to explicitly revisit cues through its use of the non-diegetic and diegetic music and sound. Sometimes music appears non-diegetic, and then the camera reveals that it comes from within the filmic world. In *The Return*, it is hard to tell if sound in other dimensions is diegetic or

nondiegetic. Yet just as in the original seasons, there is 'semi-diegetic music and sound in the Red Room' (van Elferen 2010, p. 290). One of the few times that it is easy to tell music is diegetic is when the series uses leitmotifs and soundtrack snippets from earlier seasons. The diegetic use of lip-sync and voice also disrupts the basic paradigm. Kalinak claims: 'These performance strategies … expose the constructed nature of the text, encouraging the viewer's recognition of the diegesis as mediated and produced' (1995, p. 86). Lip-synching and instrumentation does not seem to match the situation it is created for and sound is often manipulated, distorted, and various motifs are endlessly reconfigured and changed to disorient, confuse, and reconfigure audience expectation. The boundaries between the real world and the filmic world, as well as the different worlds and places in the narrative, are also confused through disorienting music and sound, but the viewer expects change. As van Elferen explains, the boundaries 'between ghostly and human spaces as well as those between good and evil are continually transgressed … met by the anti-linear, dreamlike narrative of the series, which endorses a further and even more destabilizing transgression: that of the boundaries between the real and the imaginary, the mediated and the unmediated' (2010, p. 285).

Furthermore, sound and music are often ominous in the season, especially when they lead to transgression and portent; however, Lynch and his cohorts will sometimes instill that feeling but just provide an omen of change. According to the *Oxford Learner's Dictionaries* (2018), portents are a 'sign or warning that something, especially something momentous or calamitous, is likely to happen.' Omens, on the other hand, show prophetic significance that change is going to come, but they do not necessarily signal good or bad situations. The term 'omen' and the related word 'ominous' have slightly different meanings that are applicable to this discussion of music in *Twin Peaks*. While portents can signal something momentous about to happen, omens have 'always been neutral—it can be good news or bad—but something that's "ominous" is a bummer. In fact, by definition "ominous" means inauspicious' (O'Conner and Kellerman 2016). Indeed, if viewers hear certain types of music that they have been conditioned to consider ominous, they will accordingly expect bad things to occur. Even though the two words, omen and ominous, stem from the same root word, the meanings are quite different because one foreshadows doom, while the other warns us of change. A portent can mean anything, but it usually refers to cataclysmic change.

Portents are common in horror and folklore because they are often used to intensify feelings of fear and disassociation and a very real sense of uncertainty and inability to change, despite warnings. In *The Return*, music and dialogue work to further this uncertainty and sense of change. Musical and sound portents are similar to superstitions in that they build on people's fears, allowing people to feel some sense of security in the face of uncertainty. In fact, even if one could listen to or act on the warnings of the seers in the community, who often seem mentally unstable or marked in some way, it might not change anything. Yet people like to have some warning and are apt to listen unless the messenger is too deranged. Messengers, such as the Log Lady (Catherine E. Coulson), deliver messages that might be audibly indecipherable at first listen. The spirits from the Black Lodge also deliver messages to regular people. Dreams and visions also often foreshadow what is to come, especially in gothic literature, yet they serve a different purpose in *Twin Peaks*. The series uses dreams as both omen and as a place where characters can first learn about the supernatural realms beyond the city. In many cases, dreams and the music and sound that accompany them point to the instability of the divisions between these realms and the inability of characters to discern the truth.

In *The Return*, portents are a sign that something horrific and uncontrollable is bubbling beneath the surface and might destroy the complacency of normal lives. Laura Palmer's (Sheryl Lee) murder was one such occurrence of a disaster that, even at its surface, could shake the complacency of small-town life. The supernatural elements of the story may appear unbelievable even as they play into people's fears that 'normal life can be shattered in an instant and that nowhere is completely safe' (Lee 2011, p. 45). The supernatural aspects of *Twin Peaks* are ambiguous because of how the series juxtaposes them with the commonplace. The seemingly innocuous surface of life in the quiet community of Twin Peaks is often subverted by the supernatural and the unseemly. As Sander H. Lee contends, characters in Lynch's universe are subject to the concept of 'Schopenhauer's Will [which] is made up of our worst impulses, the irresistible violent and sexual drives that most of us try to hide behind a veneer of civility' (2011, p. 46). Given this worldview, it is nearly impossible to escape these drives. Successful characters must learn to listen, and act against impossible odds or control them, 'hiding them when it's to their advantage and yet satisfying them when they can get away with it' (Lee 2011, p. 59). Thus, dialogue between characters also

becomes portentous. *Twin Peaks*, like much horror, subverts these ideas by presenting very real monsters that commit heinous acts through others, like BOB, or in the appearance of the doppelgängers. However, as van Elferen contends, these ghosts confuse the liminal boundaries that are so loose in the narrative, pointing to the closeness of the complacent and the disastrous. Characters cannot escape monstrous drives just as the different realms are necessary to the plot and ghosts cannot be framed in terms of such binaries as 'life and death' or 'good and evil' (van Elferen 2010, p. 282). The horror is transitional and part of life in *Twin Peaks*.

Moreover, the sound design of *The Return* is portentous and commonly ominous sounding, mostly fitting the former, but actually more typical of horror films or Lynch's early art films like *Eraserhead* (1977). Minor key melodies and industrial noise intertwine to create a feeling of foreboding and unease, and the transitions between different dimensions and between locations in the town of Twin Peaks are more structured by sound, especially in the case of the Roadhouse because of the bands that play. Typical of horror film music, the series' music 'works with recourse to both conscious and semi-conscious linguistic codes: however, it is sheer material aspect … sometimes it works more obviously through a kind of "direct access" to the audience' (Donnelly 2005, p. 90). This process works because audiences are familiar with how horror music will affect them and, in fact, expect it. The soundtrack uses certain features of horror music, such as the 'drone, where tension is built through anticipation' (Donnelly 2005, p. 90). Badalamenti also commonly uses stingers in the soundtrack, a chord or effect that works in tandem with onscreen action.[2]

Season Three uses these cues and familiar musical themes to increase tension and play into audience expectations about particular characters and situations. 'Laura Palmer's Theme' and most of the older themes are sparsely utilized during specific moments to shift tone and create unease, as if our nostalgia is misplaced, especially as it relates to the darker flavor of the narrative. Other familiar themes, like the *Twin Peaks* theme, which is still omnipresent, add to the gloom, and sometimes seem unfamiliar in their intensity and placement, despite being brought back in their typical forms. Sometimes soundtrack choices reflect a calmness that recalls the mundane soap opera-like scenes of earlier seasons, notably before scenes in the Sheriff's Office or at the home of Dougie Jones and Janey-E (Naomi Watts). Badalamenti's new music, such as the piece that plays when a young boy (Hunter Sanchez) gets hit by a car, 'gradually rises and sharpens to meet the crash before quietly retreating into a

mournful hymn' (Wray 2017). It was recorded as is commonly the case without Badalamenti knowing where it would be used, but follows the formula of intense foreboding before drifting away to nothingness when danger has passed. His other tracks, especially the finale closer, 'Dark Space Low' are more ominous than those in the original series, adding to the unease, but sometimes expressing a sense of hope. For example, the piece 'Heartbreaking' and its mesmerizing effect on Dougie Jones (Kyle MacLachlan) points to a possible positive ending for Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan).

Thus, especially in *The Return*, music commonly demarcates changes in the narrative and shifts in tone that build emotion and direct the viewer in how to process momentous changes. Sometimes the whole series works as a portent that is directing viewers in understanding the narrative and choosing what might be critical in navigating tonal shifts and narrative asides. Generally, the music is darker and the leitmotifs are utilized in greater spasticity to underscore the darker feeling of the season. Sound is generally diegetic, and music is used to subtle effect. Lynch might also take viewers on narrative asides and keep them guessing for several episodes.[3] Yet he frequently returns to the premise that even with dialogue, mood, and many other variables it 'feel(s) correct all the way through' (Lynch, qtd. in Murray 2017). The noises, sounds, and soundtrack choices in *Twin Peaks* all add to the unease, and Lynch often picks them based on intuition, but he still makes definite choices to take viewers into new realms or continually escalate the feeling of unease.

Lynch's use of sound in both mundane and alien backdrops builds the sense of unease and works as portent in several ways in the third season: sometimes the soundtrack generally matches the environment, like in the Black Lodge and the Roadhouse or Bang-Bang Club, and is portentous in moments of transition, while at other times, leitmotifs, sound, and songs are jarring and show that momentous events will occur soon. For example, the way the season reorganizes themes and leitmotifs shifts audience expectation. At first, the Roadhouse scenes seem out of place, as if their only purpose is to showcase Lynch's musical taste, and he superfluously added them at the conclusion of each episode. But, as Daniel Dylan Wray argues, 'scenes and the music within them, are used as a guide back toward something resembling reality' (2017). In fact, the Roadhouse 'scenes were constructed to allow editorial fluidity—to act as a punctuation tool—because Lynch imagined "The Return" not as a TV show but rather an 18-hour film broken down and shown in parts' (Wray 2017).

Generally, the Roadhouse offers softer, more traditional sounding bands, playing to Lynch's expectations of classic acts that borrow heavily from contemporary and classic forms of popular music. The Roadhouse acts range from newer indie bands and folk artists, like The Veils and Sharon Van Etten, to older acts like Eddie Vedder and Lynch mainstays, including Julee Cruise, whose ethereal vocals seemed out of place in what Badalamenti refers to as the 'ruckus of the Roadhouse … you would never have that kind of a song in a place like that' (qtd. in Halskov 2016, p. 68) Yet in the third season, the Roadhouse is generally a safer, calmer, orderly place compared to the relative danger and ominous feelings of the outside world, and Cruise's presence reiterates that. The musical variety in the Roadhouse mirrors the season's song assortment that ranges from classic doo-wop groups like The Platters to classic rockers, ZZ Top.

Other times, even the Roadhouse music does not seem reassuring as the feeling of doom progresses in the series. Music does not appear to match the tone of the area where it appears, or there is a shift between two settings that does not necessarily change that tone. One example of this occurs in Part 8 when Nine Inch Nails plays and does not especially alter the soundtrack that has been playing in the other realms, such as the Black Lodge and the Red Room. Nine Inch Nails' music muddies the idea of the Roadhouse as a transitional place because it is caustic and ominous in ways most Roadhouse artists are not. It very much recalls the jarring music of the Black Lodge and points to the importance of changes within Part 8 by reinforcing the sinister tone of the episode. Since Lynch wanted 'a harder, hairy edge sound in the show,' Trent Reznor became involved, which is not surprising, given the director's penchant for industrial music (Hurley, qtd. in Synchtank 2017). Reznor's Nine Inch Nails should not seem that out of place in the roadhouse, but their presence distorts the previous pattern of slower acts that identifies the roadhouse as a place of refuge from the outside world. However, the music, especially in the case of Nine Inch Nails, tends to accentuate that the Roadhouse also contains arbitrary instances of violence and scenarios that are just as confusing as those in the outside world. Indeed, violence can occur anywhere, and the Roadhouse is no more a sanctuary than the Black Lodge or other evident worlds in *Twin Peaks*. Indeed, transitions between episodes are abrupt because of Roadhouse scenes, and music and dialogue are key in demarcating changes between worlds and portentous events. As Robert Arp

and Patricia Brace contend, 'reality is carefully planned and controlled for maximum effect, even when it seems uncontrolled and illogical to the viewer' (2011, p. 7). Lynch's brand of logic creates a 'sense of the random and absurd happenings all around his characters and … a sense of order out of chaos' (Arp and Brace 2011, pp. 7–8). Viewers often expect bizarre transitions and absurdist logic, yet the music plays with these expectations, even as motifs play for characters who seem to know the answers to illogical problems, possess secret knowledge, or can warn the viewer. The Log Lady and Dr. Lawrence Jacoby (Russ Tamblyn) in his guise as conspiracy radio host, Dr. Amp, for example, direct viewers with portentous rhetoric that leads to undesired wishes or ominous thoughts, if not a stay at the Black Lodge.

Lynch's attraction to electricity, humming, and the sound of the wind show how the director integrates natural and man-made sounds to shape the narrative, control the audience, and forecast change. He told Noel Murray that 'much of what "Twin Peaks" is in people's minds is Angelo's music. And then I guess it's that moaning wind. I love winds' (qtd. in Murray 2017). Lynch explained to him, 'I love electricity. I love the wind. I love so many things about sound. I always say that cinema is sound and picture, flowing together in time' (qtd. in Murray 2017). Thus, sound remains indelibly important to Lynch's process and often anchors the narrative, pointing to the bizarre changes that increase the mystery of the show. As Martyn Conterio argues, 'electricity also fits in with Lynch's obsession with duality: light and dark, good and evil, doppelgängers … when electricity falters, too, darkness and strange events commence' (Conterio 2017). For example, the Man from Another Place (Michael J. Anderson) even connects the supernatural directly to the spoken by summoning up the uncanny, foretelling 'E-LEC-TRICI-TY!' in *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* (1992) and then electric effects appear over him that connect him to supernatural electricity. His transformation into the electrically propagated tree with the head-like mass on top of it in Season Three reifies the increasing importance of electricity in the narrative.

Electricity, accompanied by sound, is a common trope in *The Return*, especially during transitions or before momentous events, particularly when Agent Cooper is involved. To get back on track, characters like Cooper, in his Dougie Jones persona, follow hidden clues that are often associated with sound and electricity. For example, the only thing that will shake Dougie from his stupor in Part 15 is sticking a fork in an

electric socket. Jones is eating cake and sitting at the kitchen table watching a scene from Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) that prophetically points to his next actions, using sound and electricity to direct him in a different manner through a film on the television. Cecille B. DeMille is showing Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson) out of Studio 18, and she replies to his assurances: 'I'm not worried. Everything will be fine. The old team together. Nothing can stop us.' When DeMille turns to his assistant and says 'Get Gordon Cole,' Cooper is noticeably affected by the name of his old boss, which seems to jar his memory, the dialogue drops away, and the sound of intense, crackling energy begins. The dialogue foreshadows their working together again. As van Elferen shows, 'media also quite literally summon up ghosts' (2010, p. 288). Here it is responsible for bringing two living human beings together through the power of the ghostly presence of film. The possible diegetic sounds of the energy and wind draw Cooper to the socket. The portentous sound of electricity increases before he sticks the fork in, but he does not ignore the danger because he has reasoned that electricity is the only way he will become himself again and be able to contact Gordon Cole. As van Elferen states, 'electricity acts as a transmitter of otherworldly forces' (2010, p. 288). However, here electricity is the transference of life and the portent that allows Cooper to change.

In the Black Lodge, the White Lodge, and other extra-dimensional places, electricity is connected to sound, but it is not the only component that signals transitions or has portentous meaning. Backwards language and sound sputtering from electronic devices provide another outlet for premonition and disrupt audience understanding of what is happening. Michael Goddard argues that technologies like sound, as well as audiovisual ones, are essential to *Twin Peaks* and 'constitute this world as both a communications network with portals to the unknown, and an accumulation of recordings of ghosted voices and entities, perhaps finding its ultimate expression in the backwards reprocessed speech in the Black Lodge' (2016). He stresses that the lodge is only made up of 'recordings, albeit now on a cosmic, spiritual and demonic level and Twin Peaks [is] a haunted archive of sonic and other mediations' (Goddard 2016). For viewers, the language is hard to understand and the cues only seem effective to others in the dimension. In a discussion of the Red Room, van Elferen argues that 'since recording technology separates a sound from its origin … the Red Room's seemingly non-significant text lines sounding out in echoing backward loops strengthen

this effect to its extreme, thereby exposing the gaping hauntological emptiness behind language and mediation' (2010, p. 289). Thus, she sees this speech as ghostly in itself as it obscures meaning through other devices. For sure, backwards language shows that time works differently there. It heightens the suspense and mystery, while reiterating that technology can provide clues but also can commonly obscure our understanding. The development of time and language in the Black Lodge is possibly connected to its role, as Deputy Hawk (Michael Horse) explains to Cooper, of 'the shadow self of the White Lodge.' Angela Hague contends that it serves as a 'kind of photographic negative that is a frightening inversion of the White Lodge—and an integral part of the journey toward spiritual perfection that the White Lodge represents' (1995, p. 140). This inversion possibly accounts for the backwards language, but the language and slow movement of characters in these otherworldly realms indicates that they are set apart from the Earth and reifies their import as monstrous places that confuse *Twin Peaks*' narrative development. That the inhabitants know more about the supernatural and can warn characters on Earth only confuses matters more.

Devices foreshadow portents with their sputtering and ominous sounding transmissions, signaling the strange tendency for electronics to act as conduits of bodies or knowledge in *Twin Peaks*. However, characters have to know how to 'read' the knowledge they transmit as 'one would like to think that media simply record and reproduce reality as it is, the media in *Twin Peaks* show that the "reality" is all but simple and unambivalent, and not all that easy to reproduce' (van Elferen 2010, p. 289). Agent Cooper has seemingly learned to decipher these messages as he starts understanding the different worlds. For example, this is how the Giant (Carel Struycken), who is now known as the Fireman, communicates with Cooper as he uses devices, such as radios or the woods, to transmit clues. In Part 1, the Fireman tells Cooper in backwards language to 'listen to the sounds' from an old radio horn; apparently Cooper can decipher it and responds, 'I understand.' Yet the Fireman also explains that 'all cannot be said aloud now,' indicating that silence is just as important to understanding the narrative. Each time someone talks it is proceeded by electrical buzzes and clicks or obscured by sound as when Laura talks to him in the Red Room in Part 18. Silences, sounds, and whispers of the wind alike can change the narrative or add uncertainty, but Cooper is able to understand the language and act, leaving the audience in the dark until they see his actions. In the original

series, Cooper's tape recorder delivers and records messages that inform viewers of what might come, and in the third season, his acknowledgment of sound and how he reacts foreshadows what is to come.

Electricity also configures transitions between realms as transportation through portals separating the regular world and extradimensional spaces is always accompanied by electricity, energy, and portentous sound and music. For example, electricity is not just Cooper's solution when he needs to escape the Dougie Jones persona, but it also allows him to escape the Black Lodge. An electrical sound accompanies his movements, and buzzes and clicks occur in the Lodge as he talks to people. He returns to the real world through various mechanical devices and interactions with backwards speaking people before he is pulled through an electrical socket to Las Vegas where he assumes Dougie Jones' identity. Additionally, musical cues often signal this transportation. Even the entry to the Red Room, the portal between the two lodges and our world that is generally seen in dreams, has its own theme, 'Dark Mood Woods,' which announces entry into the Black Lodge for Agent Cooper. Both Windom Earle (Kenneth Welsh) and Deputy Hawk use ominous language to describe the lodge's purpose. In Episode 19 of Season Two, Windom Earle describes it as a 'place of almost unimaginable power, chock full of dark forces and vicious secrets,' while Hawk discusses its role as an evil counterpart to the White Lodge. Those in the lodge can also communicate with those outside. In the case of Agent Cooper, others help him to escape as he has been trapped in the lodge, while his doppelgänger, Mr. C (Kyle MacLachlan) leads a life of crime.[4] Doppelgängers reside in the lodge that are identical to real-world counterparts, but there are also spirits that inhabit and replace others to commit evil acts or abduct people from the real world, such as BOB. Their method of transportation between our world and the Black Lodge takes various methods, usually involving the Red Room, but orbs in Season Three and electricity undoubtedly are key. However, when the doppelgängers are in the real world, their real-life counterparts are trapped in the other dimension and methods of transportation seem more difficult.[5]

In Part 8, tellingly titled 'White Light, White Heat,' sound and electricity are linked to not just transportation but birth and destruction as ambient drones, industrial buzzes, and skronking violins accompany the atomic bomb explosion and its aftermath.[6] Perhaps, it is not coincidental that the title of the episode is also a reference to the song 'White Light/White Heat' by the notoriously discordant rock band, the Velvet

Underground. The song purportedly mimics the effect and disorientation of injecting methamphetamine and its lyrical content and noisy bass solo indicate similar disorientation to that occurring in the episode. Black and white visuals of ink in water and a passage through a cloud seem to bring the viewer out of the danger as black and white transitions to color, but then two streams of water edge together during the atomic thunderstorm as the explosion subsides. An alien creature, which would not be out of place in *Eraserhead*, is birthed and is not dissimilar from the one that appeared in Part 1 and escaped the glass box to the sounds of wind. The creature vomits and orbs of evil appear, including one with BOB's essence, seemingly transporting evil to Earth. Sound is linked to transportation as a woman in a sequined dress listening to music hears a bell buzz and is interrupted by the Fireman, who leaves the room and walks upstairs. He levitates as she enters and his head projects a glittery substance that turns into an orb with the essence of Laura Palmer encased within it. She kisses the orb, and it floats through a tube to head toward earth. The episode then flashes to 1956 New Mexico where an egg hatches in the desert and gives birth to a frog-like creature that enters the body of a young woman, arguably affecting her transformation into something different as the Woodsman recites his poem over the radio: 'This is the water and this is the well. Drink full and descend. The horse is the white of the eyes and dark within.' His message puts the town to sleep but also possibly signifies transition and transformation through sound and technology. Indeed, the Woodsmen commonly appear when there is some sort of birth, revival, or change occurring. For example, when Mr. C. is being revived after Ray Monroe (George Griffith) shoots him, the Woodsmen perform some kind of ritual to the sound of the wind and contemplative organ, revealing the face of BOB before he is reborn. They also appear during the Trinity Nuclear Test and one sits two cells away from where William Hastings (Matthew Lillard) is being detained for Ruth Davenport's (Mary Stofle) murder.

In conclusion, sound is portent in *The Return* and is often as fundamental to understanding the narrative as it is disruptive. It is linked to transformation, transportation, and rebirth. Key moments, such as Agent Cooper's arrival on Earth and his remembrance of his former job, are foreshadowed by sounds and motifs. The birth and transformation of other characters also rely on sound, whether it is garbled, backwards messages, the revision of leitmotifs, or the sound of the wind through the trees. The season also demarcates transitions through sound in novel

ways as musical Roadhouse scenes truncate each part. Lynch and his collaborators use music and sound to not only heighten tension, but as a key to the mystery as it unfolds. Even innocuous sounds, such as buzzes and clicks, are not just complementary, but they are integral to the narrative. In fact, sound is portentous, signaling not just the arrival or rebirth of characters, but also demarcating the discoveries they make and the transitions they go through in both moments of decisive change as well as the monotony of daily life.

Notes

1. Kalinak contends that the show 'challenges not only the authority of the televisual model for the use of sound: it also confronts deep-seated notions about music's function and the relationship of sound and image institutionalized in classical scoring practices' (1995, p. 87).
2. Clare Nina Norelli describes a stinger as a device that can be used 'to elicit shock in the listener/viewer or to exaggerate or reveal something of importance on the screen' (2017, p. 61).
3. Narrative asides in Lynch often do have consequences in the development of his overarching narrative. However, it is not at first apparent how scenes like Dougie Jones at the casino, Deputy Hawk's (Michael Horse) search for clues, and the diner scenarios fit in.
4. Of course, each doppelgänger has music that introduces them and can be associated with them. While Dougie Jones is associated with more upbeat music, such as Dave Brubeck's 'Take Five,' Mr. C's music is ominous, especially the song that introduces him, David Lynch's slowed-down remix of Muddy Magnolia's 'American Woman' that alters the upbeat song so that it is virtually unrecognizable. It provides a good musical counterpoint to the speech in the Black Lodge.
5. That said, the doppelgängers are affected immensely by what happens to their counterparts as with the case of Mr. C who seems to weaken as he glances at the cigarette lighter, starts seeing visions of the red room, fights to not return there, and crashes the car as Cooper travels back to earth after a woman in red, Ronette Pulaski (Phoebe Augustine), tells him 'when you get there, you will already be there.'
6. In *The Secret History of Twin Peaks*, Mark Frost creates a fictional story for rocket scientist and Thelemite occultist Jack Parsons that might provide clues to the aftermath of the bomb test. He 'began enacting his bizarre "Thelema" rituals … [in] an attempt to summon into human form the spirit of a figure central to the Thelema pantheon, the goddess Babalon, known as "the Mother of Abomination"' (Frost 2016, p. 259).

Perhaps, this is the creature that enters the young girl after the explosion, but his actions undoubtedly released some evil into the world that affects the narrative. A colleague claims that Parsons 'used this area for his personal exploration of what he called "the explosive sciences, of both the literal and metaphorical varieties'—because he believed they would 'open up the gate"' (p. 259).

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CHAPTER 17

'Listen to the Sounds': Sound and Storytelling in *Twin Peaks: The Return*

Kingsley Marshall and Rupert Loydell

Following a pre-title sequence that serves to connect the 25 years that separate Showtime's 2017 reboot from the transmission of its preceding two television seasons (Lynch 1990, 1990–1991) and the feature film *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* (Lynch 1992), the opening line of *Twin Peaks: The Return* (Lynch 2017) is spoken. Carel Struycken's character—described as The Giant in those previous iterations, but referred to initially as ??????? and as The Fireman in later episodes of *The Return*—directs FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) to 'Listen to the sounds.' Speaking in the unsettling backwards dialect familiar to viewers of the series, The Giant indicates a repetitive, scratching phrase from a gramophone. The instruction is clear and though he can hear only noise, Cooper appears to understand. These opening moments of the latest incarnation of director David Lynch and writer Mark Frost's groundbreaking television series demonstrate a playful approach to the relationship between what is said, what is shown and what is heard and understood by characters—and ultimately the audience—in the *Twin Peaks* universe.

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In this scene, the extra-dimensional Black Lodge is presented in stark monochrome, the audience denied the deep red of velvet curtains which delineated the hallways from the chamber, referred to as the waiting room in previous seasons. Cooper is trapped within this space as his evil doppelgänger Mr. C—who escaped the Black Lodge in the second season—commits violence and crime in the real world. Following a further set of instructions from The Fireman and a low rumble of room tone, Cooper vanishes in a flicker of Lynchian wind noise and a crackle of electricity. Frances Morgan argues that Lynch uses noise to augment reality in order to 'create atmospheres of disquiet and liminality' (2011, p. 189). In an interview, Lynch has described his use of these sonic atmospheres as 'presences' that he further defined as 'the sound you hear when there's silence, [the space] in between words or sentences' (in Rodley 2005, p. 73). As fans speculate as to the purpose of Cooper's journey from the Black Lodge in *The Return*, this chapter instead explores these Lynchian 'in between' spaces and argues that it is not the spaces themselves that are important, but how sound presents the interconnectivity between these liminal or threshold places. Intrasoundtrack analysis is used to identify moments where components of the soundtrack supplement visual representation in order to provide guidance to the viewer/listener as to the characters, their place in the timeline and the spaces they occupy within the complex narratives of *The Return*.

The first few minutes of the opening episode present the audience with a number of very different spaces, where these connections are articulated in part by sound design. As the narrative shifts from the extra-dimensional Black Lodge to the 'real world' of the Ghostwood National Forest that surrounds the titular town of Twin Peaks, so color is reintroduced to the image and the sound design becomes more conventional. A non-descript truck reverses into a driveway, and Dr. Lawrence Jacoby (Russ Tamblyn) opens his trailer door and speaks with the van's driver over the ambient sounds of the forest. In the sequence that follows, helicopter wide shots of New York City are accompanied by similarly sonic localization—the soundtrack dominated by the tropes of this most familiar of cinematic cities, brought to bear through distant sirens and the honking horn of a yellow cab. As this exterior wide shot cuts to the interior of a skyscraper, however, the sound design returns to the Lynchian wind noise of the Black Lodge. The interior shot presents a large glass box with a circular porthole situated high above Manhattan. This chamber later serves as a portal

between the extra-dimensional and real worlds in *The Return*, and is identified sonically as a liminal space. As the camera tracks backwards and reveals the watcher of the box, Sam Colby (Ben Rosenfield), so the soundtrack foregrounds in the sounds of the room itself—air conditioning, hum of fluorescent lights and whirring servos of surveillance cameras trained upon the box. Changes of camera position correspond with a subtle shift in room tone or Lynch's 'presences,' disquieting perhaps in Frances Morgan's vernacular, but a use of sound that situates Colby within the real world, perhaps protected from the inhabitants of the extra-dimensional space by the glass walls of the box itself. When an alarm prompts Colby to change a memory card in one of the cameras, his movements loudly reverberate in the space accentuating his presence within it. Already, *The Return* is distinguishing the visual and sonic rendering of real world and extra-dimensional spaces and begins to establish the conventions for the whole season.

As these sonic 'presences' help to distinguish different spaces for the audience, they also provide clues as to the different characters within the narrative. Importantly, these sonic rules remain consistent throughout the season and are evident in the use of processing and effects applied to dialogue and bodily movement of the characters, in the deployment of both pre-existing source music conveyed non-diegetically in the soundtrack and through the diegetical performances of acts within venues situated within the narrative, and, finally, in the musical score written specifically for the series by Lynch, composer Angelo Badalamenti and supervising sound editor Dean Hurley. What is most striking about *The Return* is how sound design is privileged throughout: dialogue is often secondary or entirely absent, there is barely any music in the first few episodes and it is the often expressionistic sound design that provides subtext, tone and important narrative information. Where Lynchian wind noise or the hum of electricity appears on the soundtrack, something significant is occurring. '*Listen* to the sounds,' says The Fireman to Cooper in Part 1. '*Pay attention* to the sounds,' say Lynch and his collaborators through their sound design.

In addition to articulating the spaces themselves, sonic cues are indicative of how characters move between the real world and those fantastic, supernatural environments that populate Season Three of the show. *The Return* presents many more real-world spaces than previous iterations of the *Twin Peaks* universe, with characters traveling to and from New York, South Dakota, Las Vegas, Philadelphia, Buenos Aires, New

Mexico and London. More significant to the narrative, however, are the numerous portals or gateways that connect the increased number of extra-dimensional spaces of the season. These portals represent ruptures in space and time, and lead characters to specific locations—the Black and White Lodges, The Glass Box, Convenience Store, Mansion Room, Dutchman's Lodge and The Fireman's residence—a fortress above a purple ocean. Where characters move from these extra-dimensional spaces to the real world, it is sonic cues that indicate their arrival or departure. In Part 8, within a scene in which Ray Monroe (George Griffith) shoots Mr. C, a group of Woodsmen appear and attend to the slain man. White noise precedes the Woodsmen's arrival and this changes to radio static as they work on Mr. C's body. Ray's real-world cries are muffled within the mix, sounding like the cries of an animal and further distinguishing the 'in between' space occupied by the Woodsmen from the real world. Later in the same episode, the Woodsmen flicker into being around a gas station and convenience store following a flashback to 1945 that depicts the Trinity atomic bomb test. In this sequence, the camera is static and frames the entire ground floor with a sign above a window presenting the space as a convenience store and a phone booth and two gas pumps in the exterior surrounded by smoke. Initially, the editing is driven by jump cuts that match an accompanying arrangement of Krzysztof Penderecki's 'Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima' (1960) though the arrival of the Woodsmen corresponds with a pause in this non-diegetic music, in a flurry of what the closed captioning describes as a 'warbling static stuttering' (Part 8).[1] This digital and glitching sound cue varies in volume and pitch, and mirrors sonically the strobe lit, jump cut imagery of the sequence as eight woodsmen move around the gas pumps before entering the building and being silhouetted in its windows. The stuttering sound is distorted, jarring and unnerving, and carries with it the tropes of what Karen E. Collins and Philip Tagg describe as the aural qualities of alienation—framing dystopic film and television as typically making use of messy, complex and chaotic sound design (2001). As the scene draws to a conclusion, the closed captioning describes 'ominous atmospheric music' that further underlines the inherent menace of the Woodsmen before the sequence ends with sound design captioned as 'electrical scratching.' The same sound cue accompanied Cooper's departure from the Black Lodge in Part 1 of *The Return*, and the arrival and departure of other characters to the space in previous series. In addition, this same sound cue of

'static stuttering' announces a Woodsman's appearence in Part 7 where one is seen in a corridor by Air Force Lieutenant Cynthia Knox (Adele René) before passing the doorway of the morgue in Buckhorn, South Dakota. In Part 2, the cue foreshadows the appearance of an individual Woodsman staring out before fading from the image of a prison cell two doors along from the cell occupied by William Hastings (Matthew Lillard), who has been arrested for the murder of his mistress, the librarian Ruth Davenport (Mary Stofle). Though Hastings denies murdering Ruth, he later acknowledges to his wife that he had dreamt that he had been in her apartment while the killing had taken place—a narrative that echoes Leland Palmer's (Ray Wise) account of the murder of his daughter in the second season of *Twin Peaks*. In Part 11 of *The Return*, the sound precedes the arrival of a number of Woodsmen around a vortex that appears at the trailer park located at 2240 Sycamore, where Gordon Cole and his colleague Albert Rosenfield (Miguel Ferrer) are led by Hastings following his arrest. Leaving Hastings in their car, Cole passes briefly into an extra-dimensional space through the vortex to see a number of ashen-faced Woodsmen on a staircase before Albert is able to pull him back into the real world. As the pair investigate the area and discover a body, a single Woodsman approaches the car occupied by Hastings. Shortly afterwards Hastings' head implodes with fatal consequences. The presence of the Woodsmen suggests that Hastings, like Leland Palmer, has been possessed by an evil force compelling him to commit terrible acts. As Hastings questions his understanding of reality from his jail cell, he is unaware of the forces acting upon him. In each of these instances sound design is effectively serving as leitmotif, a recurrent theme of non-diegetic audio cues associated with the Woodsmen, that functions as a reminder to the audience of the Woodsmen's presence as carriers or conduits of evil forces between the real and extra-dimensional spaces.

Julio d'Escriván describes Lynch as a filmmaker who privileges the psychological dimension of sound rather than the representational, and argues that it is sound design that can best serve to link abstraction with representation (2009, p. 1). Lynch appears to wilfully make use of sound as a catalyst for the audience to forge their own connections with narrative events occurring on screen. However, Brooke McCorkle argues that sound in *The Return* marks a shift from previous seasons—in that it is often 'hyper-rendered not just for an ephemeral "jump scare" moment, but rather [is] in service of the story and/or the overarching aesthetic

of the *Twin Peaks* world' (2017). A core part of this aesthetic rendering of the world is that it becomes 'real' only in certain spaces. McCorkle focuses on electricity, something that she acknowledges has fascinated Lynch throughout his career, and which she connects to the manner with which the nature of evil is presented within the season as a transient or mobile force stating, 'like electricity, the evil is transitory or, to put it better, transmigratory' (2017). Of course, electricity is everywhere in the universe of the real world but is rarely physically manifest, and then only through its interaction with its surroundings such as lightning or where its flow is channeled as in a light bulb, but in Lynch's fictional world electricity serves as an invisible power—a binding force that links real-world locations with extra-dimensional spaces and timelines. Dean Hurley explains that electricity is written into Lynch and Frost's script of *The Return*, and that Hurley's bespoke library of electricity sounds 'became a defining signature of the show' (qtd. in Joyce 2017). Again, this primacy of spaces and what connects them serves as a multi-dimensional palimpsest where sound and image collude to determine and distinguish the real, extra-dimensional and liminal spaces of *Twin Peaks* from one another, and demonstrate the functioning of the portals that will allow for Cooper's eventual return to the real world from his Black Lodge purgatory.

Instructions for the audience to listen are not limited to The Fireman's initial direction to Cooper in Part 1. In Part 7, a scene within the Great Northern Hotel sees the conventional sounds of the busy lobby—customer conversation, the tapping of a computer keyboard and the clink of glasses—lost in the mix when a mysterious ringing tone becomes foregrounded. As the camera pans from the reception desk across the lobby before settling on a lamp the tone becomes more prominent, a call back to an incident in Season 2. In the next scene, the hotel manager Ben Horne (Richard Beymer) asks his assistant Beverly Paige (Ashley Judd) when she first 'started hearing the sound.' Echoing the earlier command of The Fireman, Ben instructs Beverly not to move, but 'just listen carefully.' The pair approach the wall by the lamp, then move towards a totem pole in the corner of the room though the sound gets neither louder nor clearer. Unable to find the source of the tone, Ben asks Beverly to ask the maintenance team to find its source. Variations on this ringing sound are deployed whenever Agent Cooper sees The Fireman, when he wakes in a hospital in Part 16 and is passed the Owl Cave ring by Phillip Gerard (Al Strobel). In Dean Hurley's *Anthology Resource Vol. 1*, the same cue—entitled 'Tone/Slow Speed Prison/Low

Mood' begins with the sound of the ring dropping to the floor of the Black Lodge from Dougie Jones' finger in Part 4, and in a scene in Part 14 when Mr. C shoots Ray, who is told to wear the ring before being shot. This investigation into the mysterious ringing tone offers an example of where sound is used to bury the past actions of characters literally in the walls of locations within the narrative. In *Fire Walk with Me* for instance, the Owl Cave ring with which the tone is associated in the narrative has been possessed by Laura Palmer, and its power appears to be the ability to send characters from the real world to the Black Lodge when they die. In *The Return* each of the locations in which the sound occurs serve as a portal between real and extra-dimensional spaces or indicates an instance where characters are moving between these spaces. The use of this sound cue in this instance suggests that the Great Northern Hotel shares this property.

This determination of the significance of sound even precedes the events of the narrative within the very opening moments of *The Return*. Jeff Wilser observes that in the opening titles of *The Return* Badalamenti's pervasive theme begins a full 12 seconds after the opening shot, a gap that presents 'an uncomfortable stretch of stillness' (2017). The powerful use of silence or stillness established in this moment is continued throughout the season, most unusually in dialogue scenes—a rarely deployed device in television, which favors exposition. In another instance of a character prompting others to pay attention to sound, in the opening scene of Part 17 Gordon Cole (played by David Lynch himself) commands his fellow FBI Agents Albert Rosenfield and Tammy Preston (Chrysta Bell) to 'Now listen to me.' His rapt audience sit—somewhat ironically—in front of surveillance equipment and Cole pauses for more than ten seconds before explaining to Albert and Tammy the intricacies of Jowday, something he describes to them as an 'extreme negative force.' This moment of discomposure finds the soundtrack occupied solely by an awkward shuffling of Rosenfield in his chair, and a background hum of room tone. Lynch's notion of a 'presence' is articulated through the context of what surrounds this moment of perceived silence within the narrative, where Cole's initial dialogue asks Rosenfield and Preston to listen, but in withdrawing sound from the scene they—and the viewer/listener—are directed to listen carefully to the space itself. Here, Cole's pause both builds tension and also illustrates what Michel Chion describes as external flow, a sudden change of tempo that draws attention to the temporality of the scene (Chion 1994).

In *The Return*, silence is occasionally deployed as a subversion of form rather than something drawn to the attention of the audience by expositional dialogue. In the opening scenes of Part 1, for example, the use of a sound bridge that traditionally serves to link or suture a visual transition from an exterior to an interior space is missing. As an example, the first exterior wide shot of the Great Northern Hotel shows a unified visual and sonic representation of the waterfall outside, but a visual cut to the interior of the hotel is accompanied by a similar sonic cut—the abrupt silence of the hotel manager's office divorcing it from the previous shot and its location. Sven Raeymaekers suggests that the use of such techniques reinforces an 'uncertain sense of coherence rather than providing a cohrent ambiguity' (2014, p. 41), a destabilization of spaces which suits the movement between the real world and the extra-dimensional places central to the narrative of *The Return*. Raeymaekers describes this mode of silence as metaphorical, and observes that its use in the horror genre often serves to represent the 'absence of a connection to reality, or life, conjuring up otherworldly places and extraordinary events' (2014, p. 12). This is certainly the case throughout *The Return* where Lynch's presences, or awkward periods of filmic silence, are coupled with the use of barely audible or manipulated dialogue. The silence is further literalized within the narrative through the presence of mute characters such as Naido (Nae Yuuki) and, to some extent, characters who are only able to repeat the dialogue of others including Dougie Jones (Kyle MacLachlan) and the Drunk (Jay Aaseng) incarcerated in the lock up of the Twin Peaks Sheriff Department. All encourage the audience to pay attention to both sonic and visual cues within a world where filmic characters are themselves often unable to hear, listen to or understand what is being said to them. Jeff Jensen argues that this serves as a meta-narrative acknowledgment whereby Lynch is expressing to a knowing audience the challenges of returning to an intellectual property that is so obviously resisting many of the demands of a contemporary television reboot (2017).

These creative decisions, coupled with the lack of cues from the original score in the first three parts of *The Return*, caused some critics to speculate that Lynch was deliberately distancing the 2017 season from previous iterations of *Twin Peaks*. Sarah Nicole Prickett, for instance, suggests that 'the theme remains, but nothing else plays' (2017) and notes that this lack of music, coupled with Lynch's predilection for

abstraction, extended use of cinematic silence and elongated shot lengths, finds time moving achingly slowly in those early episodes. This sparing use of score makes the use of diegetic source music in *The Return* all the more striking. Handpicked acts feature in the majority of the parts by playing to the residents of Twin Peaks in The Bang Bang Bar, the Roadhouse venue familiar from earlier iterations of the series. These performances provide the opportunity for the audience to decompress, escaping Cooper's existential stasis and return to the town to spend time with those still resident there. Andreas Halskov argues that these sequences are one of only a handful of markers of seriality, in a season which otherwise 'radically subverts our expectations of television storytelling and causality' (2017). Yet by performing under their profilmic names, each of these sequences has a disturbing secondary effect. The performances directly connect the real world of *The Return* with *our* world and situate the fantastical events in the present day. In doing so, Lynch and Frost prompt the audience to consider how the historical events articulated within the narrative—such as the Trinity bomb test—continue to resonate in the contemporary moment.

With such a dense narrative, large array of characters and Lynch's resistance to conventional expository dialogue, it is sound design that is required to do much of the narrative heavy lifting. Dean Hurley explains that Lynch's practice involves the introduction of 'music into sound and sound into music where everything blurs,' what he calls an 'omni-lateral understanding of all aspects of film' (in Amorosi 2017). This notion of omni-laterality, or the representation of all points of view, resonates with the larger meaning of *The Return* defined by its multiple dimensionality and coexisting timelines. This is also evident in the lack of conventional narrative hierarchies and playful misdirection. Lynch and Frost's description of the season as a film, or narrative born of literature, rather than TV—is a disruptive one. Deviating from the conventional is, in part, how Lynch moved from noun to the Lynchian adjective and, as sound designer for *The Return*, he continues in a career-long avoidance of the familiar. This is made manifest also through the director's use of editing techniques such as jump cuts and glitching that are evident in the sound design as much as in the visuals, an unusual combination in which sound more commonly serves to provide an anchor to space or narrative events where a filmmaker makes use of expressionistic visuals or otherwise deviates from traditional continuity editing. Michael Ewins describes deviations from traditional continuity as a fantastic corruption

of form that allows events to be 'rearranged, recontextualised or completely reversed,' this observation serving as apt description of how Lynch and his collaborators unify their production practices with narrative meaning in *The Return* (2018, p. 34). This divergence from familiar practices of continuity is evident across the season, and manifests in some unusual spaces.

Instead of focusing on narrative cause and effect, *The Return* is interested in articulating the fluidity of space, temporality and subjectivity through a complex combination of visual and sonic information. The emphasis on the *inbetweenness* of each of these states allows for a nuanced exploration of both the existential and physical explosions that can disrupt reality. Since *Blue Velvet* (1986), Lynch's films have depicted the underbelly of American society but *The Return* has more similarities with the industrial surrealism of the director's earlier film *Eraserhead* (1977). Adrift in the lodges, traveling the electric wires and alive in at least three versions of himself, Agent Dale Cooper communes with the dead and missing, travels through the spirit world, laments lost love, and rescues Diane (Laura Dern) from the trauma of rape by his doppelgänger. In doing so he loses himself, sets Diane adrift, and finds himself in a world where Laura Palmer is another person and does not live in the cozy town of *Twin Peaks*. If much of Lynch's work reveals the hidden arguments, sexualities, addictions, violence and strangeness of society and familial life, *The Return* goes even further, to reveal literally hidden, underground and occult geographies. There are no easy answers, but it is sound that plays a large part in the manner with which Lynch and his collaborators allow characters to transition between the real to the extra-dimensional in their storytelling—a suture that connects the representation of alternative realities through the crackle of electricity and the resonant hum of half-forgotten memories.

Note

1. Sarah Nicole Prickett observes that even the closed captioning of *The Return* takes an unusually cinematic form, with 'incredible, specific descriptors of sound and score. A line dialed by the Log Lady […] isn't ringing but "trilling." Footsteps on tile in the Black Lodge are "odd reverberations." Skin "crinkles." In the anonymous woods are "whooshing sustains," followed by, naturally, an "ominous tone"' (2017).

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CHAPTER 18

'I'll Point You to a Better Time/ A Safer Place to Be': Music, Nostalgia and Estrangement in *Twin Peaks: The Return*

David Sweeney

In her review of the first two episodes of *Twin Peaks: The Return* (*The Return* hereafter) for *Variety* Sonia Saraiya criticizes the 'inexplicably stupid' closing scene in which 'the indie-electronic band Chromatics performs to a room of middle-aged townies taking tequila shots' (2017). Leaving aside the class contempt, ageism and regional snobbery evident here, Saraiya also demonstrates a complete misunderstanding of the aesthetic of the series: Chromatics' music is strongly influenced by eighties synthpop—most notably New Order and Giorgio Moroder—and therefore its inclusion in the show is consistent with the use of similarly 'retro' music in the original series—usually referencing the fifties—and throughout Lynch's *oeuvre*.

Furthermore, Chromatics' presence, and that of the other acts performing at the Bang Bang Bar—a mixture of fifties and eighties

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influenced musicians—makes perfect extra-diegetic sense in the context of what music critic Simon Reynolds has termed 'retromania': pop culture's fascination with, and constant referencing of, its past (2011). The late cultural theorist Mark Fisher developed Reynolds' concept in his 2014 book *Ghosts of My Life* with his analysis of the 'classic style' of twenty-first century artists such as Amy Winehouse and Adele, whose music 'belong[s] neither to the present or the past, but to some timeless era, an eternal 1960s or an eternal 80s' (p. 11). For Fisher such music is an indication of cultural stasis and a lack of innovation (one theme of the book is, as its subtitle indicates, 'lost futures'); however, in the context of *Twin Peaks*, 'retro' music—which in some cases, like the Cactus Blossoms (Part 3) or Rebekah Del Rio (Part 10), is such a perfect pastiche of its sources as to seem to belong authentically to the past—also functions as an element of estrangement. *Twin Peaks* is set in a world recognizably similar to our own but noticeably, strangely, different.

Similarly, the addition of the definite article to the band Nine Inch Nails' name when they are introduced at the Roadhouse in Part 8, and also in its closing credits with the definite article in quotation marks, serves as an example of *divergence* from the actual world: this is not 'our' Nine Inch Nails but an alternative version. Similarly, the evocation of the pop cultural past in *The Return* may seem more realistic today than perhaps it did in the nineties of the original series' broadcast given how digital technology, particularly the internet, has created a kind of 'archive culture,' but it also works as another indicator of difference: Twin Peaks, both the series and the town, is not quite a pocket universe, but it does seem to exist in some kind of temporal aesthetic bubble (which is generally true of Lynch's work and his fondness for anachronisms: when exactly, for example, are *Blue Velvet* or *Mulholland Drive* set?). This chapter will discuss how the 'retro' music of the various acts performing at the Bang Bang Bar/Roadhouse contributes both to the sense of nostalgia surrounding *The Return* epitextually and to the themes of memory and loss present in the series. In doing so it will draw on the work of Reynolds and Fisher to argue that Saraiya's sarcastic comment 'nothing says rural, small-town, faded glory like an impossibly cool synthpop band' (2017) is actually true in the (e)strange(d) world of *Twin Peaks.*

Of the musical acts which contributed to *The Return*, Chromatics (Parts 2, 12, and 17, with Julee Cruise) and Au Revoir Simone (Parts 4 and 9) can be described as synthpop acts, a sub-genre of electronic music. Nine Inch Nails, an 'Industrial' group, also make electronic

music, although this seems less true of 'The' Nine Inch Nails from Part 8 (titled 'Gotta Light?') who sound, and look, like sixties rock band The Velvet Underground. Sonically, 'The' Nine Inch Nails are closer to other rock acts in the series such as Trouble (Part 5) and The Veils (Part 15), although these bands reference the fifties rather than the sixties. Hudson Mohawke provides perhaps the most modern music in the series with his performance of the instrumental 'Human' in Part 9 which eschews any conventional instrumentation or traditional song structure (unlike Chromatics or Au Revoir Simone). By contrast Cactus Blossoms (Part 3); Sharon Van Etten (Part 6); Rebekah Del Rio (Part 10); Lissie (Part 14) and Eddie Vedder (Part 16) all perform songs with conventional instruments which are firmly rooted in the established traditions of mid-late twentieth century Western songcraft.

Given *The Return*'s thematic concerns with time, memory and nostalgia it is perhaps more useful to classify the performers at the Bang Bang Bar by which era they evoke rather than by which (sub)genre they belong to. Both Chromatics and Au Revoir Simone point directly to the eighties; Cactus Blossoms, Del Rio, Trouble and The Veils to the fifties; *The* Nine Inch Nails to the sixties. Lissie, Van Etten and Vedder are less specific in their period borrowings, belonging instead to a tradition of 'classic' songwriting: Van Etten's 'Tarifa' even goes so far as to quote musically from Leonard Cohen's 'Hallelujah' (1984), as popularized by Jeff Buckley (1994; released as single in 2007), in its introduction. Following Buckley's tragic early death at the age of 30 in 1997, and his subsequent posthumous elevation to the status of rock icon/martyr, 'Hallelujah' has become something of a standard for singers keen to demonstrate both their virtuosity and their authenticity. Julee Cruise's collaboration with Chromatics on a version of 'The World Spins' (Part 17) refers back, of course, to the original series of *Twin Peaks* and therefore to the 1990s, although the song itself is influenced by fifties pop ballads. Hudson Mohake's performance points only to itself, as a product of the twenty-first century.

As stated above, Cactus Blossoms and Del Rio deliver songs which are such perfect pastiches of their sources—respectively, fifties country pop à la the Everley Brothers, and torch song in the vein of Patsy Cline, albeit with some lyrics in Spanish—as to be indistinguishable from them. Or almost indistinguishable, at least: as Fisher has pointed out, modern production techniques give such pastiche a 'buffed up' sound (2014, p. 11).

The same is true of Chris Isaak's song 'Wicked Game,' included on the soundtrack to Lynch's *Wild at Heart* (1990) and 'Rockin' Back Inside My Heart' by Julee Cruise (1989), co-written by Lynch and Angelo Badalamenti. Simon Reynolds has described the former as 'a highly stylized retro-chic affair, like a fifties ballad sluiced through the deluxe atmospherics of Roxy Music circa [their 1982 album] *Avalon*' (2011, p. 179); hearing it on the radio in 1990 it was easy to assume it was a re-issue of fifties recording. This was not uncommon in the eighties and early nineties: TV adverts for Levi jeans, for example, spawned the re-release of several 'classic' soul and rock songs such as Marvin Gaye's 'Heard It Through the Grapevine' (1968; 1985) and 'Should I Stay or Should I Go' by The Clash (1981; 1991). However, Cruise's performance of 'Rockin' Back Inside My Heart' on a 1989 episode of BBC2's culture magazine program *The Late Show* came with a comprehensive introduction by host Sarah Dunant which made it clear that this was a new song, and not a cover version.

Cruise's performance was, and remains, eerie. Dressed in black, pale and frail beneath a platinum blonde bouffant, her voice yearning and pure if slightly out of tune, accompanied by a group which included two back-up singers in white fifties taffeta prom dresses and a duo of sharp-suited saxophonists, all of whom clicked their fingers and swayed in time to the music, albeit with a certain listlessness, Cruise appeared otherworldly on *The Late Show*. And in a way, she was: as Dunant stated in her introduction, Cruise was to appear in Lynch's 'much anticipated TV pilot *Twin* Peaks'; the singer and her band seemed to be envoys from the world of the series more than simply musicians promoting an album. The song's lyrics further invoked this world, with their intriguing references to a shadowy, brown-eyed man and a woman destined never to go to Hollywood, phrases which subverted the otherwise conventionally romantic content of the song, just as *Twin Peaks* would subvert the conventions of the soap opera form.

Twin Peaks, like Lynch's 1986 film *Blue Velvet*, drew on fifties Americana in its music and production design, but crucially neither film nor series is actually set in that decade, nor is the deployment of fifties signifiers presented as an exercise in retro-chic or even nostalgia by the characters in the show (as Greil Marcus once wryly observed, Laura Palmer's outfits 'suggested that the Twin Peaks department store hadn't reordered since 1959' [2006, p. 149]). Rather, this is what the world of *Twin Peaks* the series—and Twin Peaks, the town—is like. 'From the

eighties on,' Reynolds writes, 'rock 'n' roll recurred only as a ghostly signifier detached from any real world referents,' but in both *Twin Peaks* and *Blue Velvet*, the prominence of a fifties inspired aesthetic makes their worlds both recognizable but unfamiliar to the viewer. It is this estrangement which makes both series and film so compelling (and admittedly, in the case of *Twin Peaks*, at times irritating).

Lynch has described the twenty-first century pop star Lana Del Rey as being 'like she's born out of another time' (Guan 2017). Del Rey covered the song 'Blue Velvet'—the 1963 Bobby Vinton version of which features in the opening scene of Lynch's film and, when re-issued in 1990, became a UK number 2 hit single—as part of Swedish clothes' retailer H&M's 2012 global advertising campaign for which she was the face. However, we might say Del Rey appears to be 'born out' of another world, a Lynchian one. Del Rey would fit right into Twin Peaks or the Lumberton, North Carolina, of *Blue Velvet*. Her carefully crafted, fifties-influenced image and sound might appear anachronistic in the actual world but would be unremarkable in a Lynchian one. Nevertheless, Del Rey does not have quite the same otherworldliness as Cruise, largely because of the cultural impact made by the original series of *Twin Peaks* and the subsequent recognizability, and easy reproducibility, at least on a superficial level, of a Lynchian style.

This is evident in Del Rey's version of 'Blue Velvet,' the video for which features Patrick Fischler who appeared in both *Mulholland Drive* (2001) and *The Return*. Her rendition applies some modern, Dub reggae-derived echo to its instrumentation but apart from this the arrangement is fairly traditional, albeit with a twenty-first century 'buffed up' sheen. The arrangements on *Floating into the Night*, Cruise's debut album (1989), written and produced by Lynch and Badalamenti, on the other hand, warp the fifties sources—doo-wop, torch song—on which the album is based. Even the relatively traditional 'Rockin' Back Inside My Heart' has an element of sonic subversion—to complement the lyrical one mentioned above—in the disruptive saxophone break beginning at around 1.44, which punctures the song's eerie, dolorous tranquility. Synthesizers dominate the instrumentation throughout the album, with 'Falling,' the instrumental version of which is the theme music to *Twin Peaks*, and 'The World Spins' featuring percussive synthesized bass-lines oddly similar in timbre to those used by eighties pop music producers such as Trevor Horn and Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis. Echo is also prevalent—again recalling the techniques of Dub, but with a more

destabilizing, estranging effect than Del Rey's superficial use on her version of 'Blue Velvet'—deployed to make Cruise sound isolated, vulnerable and incorporeal, as befitting the lyrical content of the record and the thematic content of *Twin Peaks*, which is, after all, an investigation into the murder of a teenage girl which engages with the supernatural.

The music of Au Revoir Simone and, particularly Chromatics, has clearly been influenced by *Floating into the Night* (Chromatics' vocalist Ruth Radelet even wears a platinum blonde wig in *The Return*, possibly in tribute to/imitation of Cruise; Johnny Jewel, the band's main composer/producer, has confirmed the influence of Lynch, Badalamenti and Cruise on his work [Roffman 2018]). And Chromatics' performance of 'The World Turns' with Cruise in the penultimate episode of *The Return* provides a certain sense of closure to the series before the disruptive coda of the final episode in which Agent Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) and his secretary Diane (Laura Dern) travel to a parallel earth. Various critics have described the music of both groups, and of Cruise, as 'Dream Pop' and this seems a particularly appropriate sub-genre to be associated with Lynch, given the preoccupation with the oneiric throughout his *oeuvre* in general, and *Twin Peaks* in particular. Dream Pop's roots lie in the music of eighties British post-punk and New Wave acts such as New Order and the Cocteau Twins. The influence of the former is evident in both Chromatics and Au Revoir Simone, with 'Shadow,' performed by the former in the first episode of *The Return*, recreating the sound of New Order's second album *Power, Corruption and Lies* (1983) and the latter's two contributions recalling their mid-late eighties singles. Chromatics also demonstrate a certain debt to the Cocteau Twins' ethereal sound in the arrangement of the instrumental 'Saturday' (Part 12). Lynch had planned to use the 1984 version of Tim (father of Jeff) Buckley's 'Song to the Siren' (1970) by This Mortal Coil, sung by Cocteau Twins vocalist Elizabeth Fraser, in *Blue Velvet*. He substituted Cruise's 'Mysteries of Love' when he was unable to secure the rights (and would eventually use the song in 1997s *Lost Highway*). Dream Pop, then, is a genre which originated in the eighties and has persisted into the present where it is both retro and of the moment. Or rather, it is of the moment because it is retro: both Chromatics and Au are the kind of group played on the Domino Records show on the internet radio station East Village Radio (2009–2014), which featured classic acts such as the Velvet Underground, New Order and the Cocteau Twins alongside bands they had influenced, to create a kind of lineage of good taste, curated by the staff from the titular record label which releases such 'retro' but à la mode music.

Chromatics is popular enough to pull a sizeable crowd at the Bang Bang Bar, as are all the other acts who perform in *The Return*. So, we can imagine a regular patron hearing synthpop one night, heavy rock another, exquisite country pastiche yet another and so on. In the world of Twin Peaks, these sub-genres co-exist comfortably, and unremarkably, both together, and also alongside the fifties aesthetic favored by Lynch. We can understand this situation using Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the 'chronotope,' which refers to the relationship between time and space in fiction. There is nothing anachronistic about the fifties aesthetic which pervades *Twin Peaks* for the people who inhabit that world; Agent Dale Cooper is charmed by the town when he arrives there but we do not get the sense that he considers it to be 'weird' (the eccentricities of characters like the Log Lady notwithstanding). And Cooper himself has something of a fifties aesthetic in his clean-cut appearance and courteous manner. He shares space and time with the citizens of Twin Peaks, both in the town specifically, and, more broadly, in the world of which it is a part and so what might appear anomalous to the viewer is not necessarily so for him. Saraiya's error in her review of the first episode of *The Return* is to read for realism, an odd approach for anyone to take to Lynch's work, particularly a *Variety* journalist with such a condescending attitude towards 'townies.' It may be the case that, in the actual world, Chromatics would not receive as warm a reception in a non-urban venue as they do in the series, but then *Twin Peaks* is set in a fictional world, which Lynch and series co-creator Mark Frost have *imagined* into being. Of course, the use of fifties signifiers in *Twin Peaks*, as in *Blue Velvet*, serves a purpose beyond indulging Lynch's affection for that era: by deploying fifties iconography, Lynch and Frost are able to expose the hypocrisy of the white, suburban American dream and reveal the corruption beneath its pristine surface, just as the lyrics of 'Rockin' Back Inside My Heart' taint its veneer of pop perfection.

The xx are another twenty-first century Dream Pop band, active since 2005, whose 2010 track 'Infinity' is, as Reynolds writes, 'blatantly related' to 'Wicked Game':

> [I]t really is a study, an exercise in technique, in the sense that the band have written a new song entirely within the very specific and immediately recognisable texture palette and emotional atmosphere of Isaak's original. (2011, p. 179)

Reynolds acknowledges the irony that 'Wicked Game' was itself a pastiche; the same does not apply to the New Order album which influenced Chromatics: on its original release *Power, Corruption and Lies* was innovative in its combination of electronics and conventional rock instrumentation. Which is not to diminish the appeal of 'Wicked Game': it remains a highly affective song perhaps because of its status as pastiche which gives a certain 'timeless' gravitas. The xx, all born in the eighties, would have been too young to remember the song on its initial release so their choice of it as the model for 'Infinity' is testament to its durability. And of course as a recording 'Wicked Game' has a lifespan far beyond its time on the charts, and as both a classic and a prominent element in *Wild at Heart* the song has become a staple of pop culture. Romy Madley Croft, the band's guitarist and co-vocalist, has cited a number of performers—such as Jimi Hendrix, The Slits and the Cocteau Twins—who were active before she was born as influences; this shows that her tastes—like those of the acts, and audience, at the Bang Bang Bar—are typical of what we might call our 'archive culture.'

Apart from Cruise, only one other Bang Bang Bar act was active in the nineties: Eddie Vedder, as lead singer of the 'grunge' band Pearl Jam (1990–). Vedder is an icon of nineties popular culture, particularly as the singers from the other key grunge bands had all passed away before *The Return* aired: Kurt Cobain from Nirvana (d. 1994); Layne Staley from Alice in Chains (d. 2002); Scott Welland (d. 2015); Chris Cornell of Soundgarden (d. 2017; Cornell died on 18 May, three days before the first episode of *The Return* was broadcast). Vedder's presence in Part 16, then, was not only iconic but totemic: as the last surviving vocalist from grunge's 'Big 5' he embodies a period of (pop) cultural change when alternative music entered the mainstream, which is of course comparable to the way in which *Twin Peaks* transformed television, paving the way for such notable series as *The X-Files* (1993–), *Lost* (2004–2010), and *True Detective* (2014–). There is also a poignancy to Vedder's presence because he represents perhaps the last time such a transformation of mainstream pop culture was possible. As with punk and the Sex Pistols in the seventies, the success of Nirvana's *Nevermind* in 1991 led to a feeding frenzy in the music industry as major record labels sought to capitalize on the novelty/notoriety of the band by signing dozens of new and established 'underground' acts. And as with punk, grunge quickly became a style, reduced to a set of easily recognizable, and reproducible, sonic and sartorial signifiers: down-tuned guitars; 'grainy' vocals; plaid

shirts; Converse tennis shoes. To borrow terms from the Situationists, both grunge and punk were recuperated by the music industry: their 'edgy' and 'alternative' elements commodified, made into marketable characteristics (Home 1996, pp. 156–157).

As early nineties phenomena, both grunge and *Twin Peaks* emerged at what the American neo-conservative economist Francis Fukuyama called the 'end of history.' This is the phrase used by Fukuyama in his book of the same name (1992) to describe the consequences of the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989–1990) and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union in Eastern and Northern Europe and the end of the Cold War in the early nineties. The demise of the Soviet Union saw democracy spread throughout its former territories and with it, free-market capitalism: in other words, the rise of neoliberalism. For Fukuyama, this suggested that Western capitalism was the ultimate economic, social and governmental model for humanity: therefore, history had ended in the sense that human sociocultural evolution was over. Mark Fisher discusses the emergence of 'capitalist realism' beginning in this period, using the phrase as the title of his first book. For Fisher, capitalist realism is a 'pervasive atmosphere' (2009, p. 16) in Western culture based on the belief that there is no alternative to capitalism, which has the result of 'conditioning not only the production of culture but also the regulation of work and education, and acting as a kind of invisible barrier constraining thought and action' (p. 16). Under such hegemonic conditions all things become equal as commodities, even if they are marketed as alternative. Kurt Cobain seemed, on some level, to be aware of this—after releasing their debut album on the independent label Sub Pop Nirvana signed to the major DGC—and struggled with the contradictions of his fame and his desire, borne from his background in the American punk rock underground, for integrity and authenticity. By contrast, Vedder and Pearl Jam seemed to have no such issues over becoming rock stars. But despite these factors, perhaps the early nineties does still have the air of a 'golden age' of popular culture, not only because of grunge and *Twin Peaks* but also due to other factors such as the hip hop of this period (which is often referred to as 'Golden Age' hip hop); the rise of American independent cinema and directors such as Spike Lee, Quentin Tarantino, and Kevin Smith; Acid House and 'Madchester' in the UK. Maybe it is understood retrospectively as a period of innocence before the full effects of neoliberalism would become apparent with the events of 11 September 2001, the subsequent invasion of an endless war in

Afghanistan, and the financial crash of 2008. Perhaps it is seen as a time when, for all it was the end of history, there was still a future.

The subtitle to Fisher's second book, *Ghosts of My Life* (2014), makes reference to 'lost futures.' For Fisher, twenty-first century Western culture is characterized by a sense of stasis which has been buried, interred behind a superficial frenzy of 'newness,' of 'perpetual movement' (2014, p. 6). Furthermore, Fisher identifies a 'vague but persistent feeling of the past' (2014, p. 11) as being prevalent today, particularly in pop music. But this residue of the past in the present is not necessarily nostalgic: rather, it seems to be the result of a sense that everything—including every time—is available; an inevitable consequence of living in an archive culture. Certainly, this relationship to the past is not nostalgic in Walter Benjamin's sense of a remembering which stimulates a challenge to the status quo in the present in order to shape the future. Rather it is a mentality in which 'the past is looked to as both a *resource* for contemporary production, and as a *compensation* for "lost futures"' (Sweeney 2015). This situation is an example of what Douglas Rushkoff terms 'presentism': a perpetual now in which '[e]verything is live, real time, and always-on' (2013, p. 4). This is a result, he argues, of our present 'connected' society, so perhaps nostalgia for the nineties is also for a pre-internet era, one without the present-day pressures of connectivity.

The lyrics of 'Out of Sand,' the song Vedder—introduced as Edward Louis Severson III, his birth name—performs in Part 16, have an elegiac feel to them, a sense of loss and fatigue, in keeping with the tone of much of *The Return*, several episodes of which ended with an *in memoriam* dedication to members of the cast who had passed away. He sings them to the sole accompaniment of his acoustic guitar in an 'unplugged' rendition which recalls the MTV show of that name (1989–1999) which was, as Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor have observed, 'conceived as a response to the public perception that the contemporary music scene was obsessed with image rather than content' (2007, p. 5) and in which several grunge bands, including Nirvana and Pearl Jam, demonstrated their aptitude, and authenticity, as musicians by performing acoustic versions of their songs. Vedder's performance can be interpreted as an elegy for youth, for optimism, for futurity. But his status as a survivor means that if his presence is an exercise in nostalgia it is not a comforting one, which is in keeping with the strategy of estrangement taken by Lynch and Frost throughout *The Return* to problematize the audience's relationship with the text.

This strategy is also evident in an initially trivial-seeming error in Part 8. Having the MC of the Bang Bang Bar introduce Nine Inch Nails in the episode with the definite article may simply be a joke by Frost and Lynch at the expense of his folksy, old-fashioned personality, but it can also be understood as another act of estrangement deployed to indicate that the series takes place in a world similar to but significantly different from our own: an alternative earth where the group really is called The—or 'The'—Nine Inch Nails. In one sense, all fictional worlds, no matter how realistic, are alternative earths, populated as they are with characters who either do not exist in the real world or are invented versions of real people, as in the case of historical fiction. Realist and historical fiction depend upon a fidelity to actual events for their efficacy; to an extent this is also true of alternative history fiction—which creates alternative earths—but this sub-genre also requires a point of divergence in order to ask 'what if?' questions, as in, for example, Philip K. Dick's imagined consequences of an Axis victory in World War II in his novel *The Man in the High Castle* (1962; adapted as a TV series by Amazon in 2015).

Twin Peaks never presents a point of divergence comparable to *The Man in the High Castle*; however, the scenes in Part 8 set in 1945 and 1956 provide a historical context previously absent from the series. The nuclear bomb test at the Trinity Site, New Mexico, in 1945 is clearly of fundamental importance to the narrative as it results in the entrance of both BOB and the soul of Laura Palmer to the earthly plane through a kind of dimensional tear created by the blast. The 1956 scene, also set in New Mexico, shows other supernatural entities at work, implicitly as a result of the Trinity test. We might argue then that the alternative earth in which *Twin Peaks* is set diverges from our own with the supernatural incursion created by the Trinity explosion. As in our world, the test resulted not only in the allied victory in World War II but subsequently the rise, beginning in the fifties, of American consumerist-driven popular culture, which came to dominate first the West, then the globe. In actual history, fifties styles went out of fashion, but, as we have seen, this does not seem to be the case in the world of the series. Indeed, in the world of the series retro elements seem less exercises in nostalgia than signifiers of the milieu of an alternative earth. Lynch deploys similar signifiers in *Blue Velvet* to expose the corrupt truth beneath the pristine surface of white, suburban America; similarly their use in *Twin Peaks* presents the viewer with a seemingly perfect environment which is revealed to be a charade. Both series and film evoke the myth of fifties American

prosperity and its enduring appeal—particularly in American politics—as a simpler, better time before the perceived cultural degradation caused by the rise of the 'permissive society' in the sixties.

Although set in the early sixties, the look and feel of the America of the TV adaptation of *The Man in the High Castle* draws on a fifties aesthetic in its costume design and art direction. In Episode 3 of the series' second season, we learn that, in the suburbs of Nazi-occupied New York, nobody locks their doors because there is no crime. Of course, such seeming security is a by-product of totalitarianism; similarly, the implication in *The Return* that America's post-war prosperity was the result of its nuclear sovereignty, which, as we see in Part 8, tore the fabric of reality and allowed BOB to enter the earthly plane in 1945. Although the tests did also occur in the actual world, this incursion can be taken as the point of divergence from actual world history, and the fifties aesthetic of the world of *Twin Peaks* can be interpreted as a sign that the prosperity which resulted from America's nuclear program is inextricably linked to the incursion of evil resulting from the Trinity test. That a sense of the fifties is present in both the original series and in *The Return* shows how this evil is a fundamental part of American culture. The use of fifties style in both *Blue Velvet* and *Twin Peaks* is an example of what Viktor Shklovsky called *ostranenie*, which translates from Russian as 'defamiliarization' or 'estrangement.' In the essay 'Art as Device' (1925), Shklovsky writes:

> The purpose of art, then, is to lead us to a knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition. By 'estranging' objects and complicating form, the device of art makes perception long and 'laborious.' The perceptual process in art has a purpose all its own and ought to be extended to the fullest. (1991, p. 6)

Attaching the definite article to Nine Inch Nails's name is also an act of estrangement which, like the enduring fifties aesthetic, is a way of reminding the audience that this is not the world with which they are familiar, however similar it may appear. The use of quotation marks seems to be an ironic act, acknowledging that this is not the 'real' Nine Inch Nails and also suggesting that it is only the version for this particular timeline. As such, their presence anticipates the 'rewriting' of the series timeline which occurs in Part 17 when Cooper travels in time to attempt to prevent Laura Palmer's murder. Similar moments of

foreshadowing occur in the various 'glitches' which occur in *The Return* such as the major continuity 'error' in the Double R scene in Part 7 (which suggests the existence of another, parallel earth); Big Ed's out-of-sync- reflection in Part 13; and the 'shudder' in Part 15's assassination scene.

This might seem like the over-interpretation of what may just be simple jokes or mistakes, were it not for the use of a parallel or alternative earth trope when Cooper and Diane cross over (in a fifties style car) to another world in the final episode of *The Return*. This earth is more like our own, with no obvious fifties elements present. Compare for example Judy's Diner in Odessa, Texas, with the Double R in Twin Peaks: where the latter is warm, inviting and lively, Judy's appears drab, impersonal and on the point of closure (it is all but empty with chairs already on several tables even though it is open), which we can take as a reference to the decline in the American economy since 2008. What small clientele there is includes three thuggish cowboys who molest the waitress, unthinkable behavior at the Double R. Furthermore, these cowboys are revealed to be armed, perhaps as a comment on the increase in gun ownership, and crime, in America in the twenty-first century.

The version of Cooper we see in this world is in some ways also more realistic, being, in the words of Christopher Knowles, 'a much more authentic rendering of a middle-aged FBI agent: severe, laconic, brutally efficient at physical violence' (2017) as is shown in the aforementioned diner scene in which Cooper single-handedly bests the three cowboys without breaking a sweat or even leaving his seat. This version of Cooper is a synthesis of Dale and Mr C, his BOB-possessed doppelgänger. Referred to by some fans online as 'Grey Coop' and named as Richard in the episode, the Cooper of this earth is nevertheless still, as Knowles observes, 'on a quest to right a wrong done when he was young' (2017): the murder of Laura Palmer. So, we can see that the act of estrangement here is to make both this alternative earth and its Cooper more realistic, in contrast to the quirky milieu and clean-cut hero we are used to. This is a Cooper for 2017 and his presence undermines any comforting nostalgia *The Return* might provide.

Another act who performs at the Bang Bang Bar, so far un-discussed, is James Hurley (as played by James Marshall) who, in Part 13 sings 'Just You,' co-written by Lynch and Badalamenti and first heard in Season 2 of the original series. Unlike the other acts James has no actual world counterpart; even 'The' Nine Inch Nails have a real-world equivalent,

the slight difference in name notwithstanding. Or that is, he has no counterpart unless we consider James Marshall as fulfilling that role. In that case, we might say that Nine Inch Nails also plays the role of 'The' Nine Inch Nails; certainly, the band members are credited as such in Part 8, as is the case with all the other bands. Eddie Vedder, as we have seen, is credited as playing a character with Vedder's birth name, while Sharon Van Etten is billed as Sharon Van Etten. Rebekah Del Rio, however, is credited as playing 'Herself' while Moby, a well-known recording artist and DJ, who is in her band at the Bang Bang Bar is credited as playing 'Musician.' Is there any significance to this inconsistency in credits?

Perhaps so. Lubomir Dolezel argues that 'actual-world (historical) individuals are able to enter a fictional world only if they become possible counterparts, shaped in any way the fiction maker chooses' (1997, p. 21). When celebrities play themselves in entertainment industry based TV series such as *The Larry Sanders Show* (1992–1998), *Extras* (2005–2007) or *Entourage* (2004–2011) they are fictionalized, transformed into characters often with certain aspects of their personality exaggerated or inverted. We do not get any insight into the personalities of the acts from the Bang Bang Bar except James, but a comparison of their performances there and in the actual world, via footage on YouTube, shows no significant differences. Sharon Van Etten, then, plays a character called Sharon Van Etten who shares time and space with James Hurley (just as the actual world Van Etten shares time and space with James Marshall); Del Rio plays 'Herself' but it is a version of this self which has been fictionalized. Moby plays a 'Musician' who looks very like the Moby we know and could very well be this world's version of him (who has perhaps failed to achieve the success of the actual world Moby). The inconsistency in the credits seems, like the definite article and its quotation marks attributed to Nine Inch Nails, another act of estrangement; a puzzling irritant which disrupts the smooth consumption of *The Return* as a comforting piece of nineties nostalgia.

'I'll point you to a better time/A safer place to be' sing Au Revoir Simone in Part 4. Nostalgia undoubtedly accounts for part of the appeal of *The Return* to certain elements of its audience; however, Lynch and Frost do not pander to this desire. Instead, *The Return* interrogates the form of the TV series 'revival,' just as the original series subverted the generic conventions of the soap opera. The audience's return to *Twin Peaks*, and to Twin Peaks, is problematized through acts of estrangement which, in addition to the 'glitches' mentioned above, include

sub-plots which go unresolved (what happened to Audrey Horne?); characters who are introduced but never developed; and seemingly 'pointless' scenes such as Part 7's two and a half minute shot of a bar worker sweeping the floor of the Bang Bang Bar (which is accompanied by an authentic recording from the past—'Green Onions' by Booker T and the MGs (1962)—rather than a live performance from a retro act, perhaps as an indication of our archive culture), are included in the episodes of the most challenging pieces of television ever broadcast: if it points to a better time hopefully it is to one where such an innovative use of the medium is more widespread. We are told constantly today that we are in a 'Golden Age' of television but, in many ways, this is a safe place to be with 'quality' series such as the aforementioned *True Detective* or *Tin Star* (2017–) as offering undeniably well-produced but ultimately rather conventional fare deliberately. The final episode of *The Return* jettisons all traces of the fifties aesthetic typical of Lynch for a stark realism which is, in this context, also an act of estrangement, pulling the audience out of the dream of *Twin Peaks* and into a more familiar(ized) chronotope. We do not hear what Laura whispers to Cooper at the end of the episode, disturbing him so, but it might be summarized by the title of Thomas Wolfe's great novel (1940) of nostalgia and its dangers: 'You can't go home again.'

Which seems to be what *The Return* was telling its audience all along.

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