



RETURN TO **TWIN PEAKS**

NEW APPROACHES TO MATERIALITY, THEORY,
AND GENRE ON TELEVISION

EDITED BY
JEFFREY ANDREW WEINSTOCK
& CATHERINE SPOONER



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Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2016 978-1-137-56384-2

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First published 2016 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

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Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of Nature America, Inc., One New York Plaza, Suite 4500, New York, NY 10004-1562.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

ISBN 978-1-349-57140-6
E-PDF ISBN 978-1-137-55695-0
DOI: 10.1007/978-1-137-55695-0

Distribution in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world is by Palgrave Macmillan®, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Return to Twin peaks : new approaches to materiality, theory, and genre on television / edited by Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock and Catherine Spooner.
pages cm
Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Twin Peaks (Television program) I. Weinstock, Jeffrey Andrew, editor.
II. Spooner, Catherine, 1974– editor.

PN1992.77.T88R48 2015
791.45'72—dc23

2015020262

A catalogue record for the book is available from the British Library.

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Preface

My edited collection on the show that was supposed to forever change television, *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to Twin Peaks* (Wayne State University Press, 1994), was not born at a propitious time for television studies. As I have recounted before (see “Climate Change”), hardly anyone was taking series television seriously at the beginning of the last decade of the last century. The idea for the book was hatched just before *Twin Peaks* went off the air in the spring of 1991—at a time when potential publishers just couldn’t be convinced that either a show still airing or one about to be cancelled (*Twins Peaks* was, of course, both) was worthy of serious consideration. Of course they did not foresee, nor did I, that the book would stay in print for over two decades, prove to be a watershed in the scholarly study of Quality Television, and pay off with astonishing regularity year after year.

Nor did Wayne State University Press or *Full*’s editor have an inkling that *Twin Peaks* would be reborn in another century and in another, radically different television era. Professors Jeffrey Weinstock and Catherine Spooner’s volume stands as *Full of Secrets*’s worthy heir, auspiciously arriving on the scene when *Twin Peaks* is miraculously about to return, in fulfillment of Laura Palmer’s promise in the Black Lodge,¹ to a world where both television studies and passionate attention to David Lynch and Mark Frost’s creation continue to burgeon.

That *Twin Peaks*’s reincarnation on the premium channel Showtime was announced on Twitter speaks volumes about the media landscape into which it arrives. *Twin Peaks* in the 1990s was an affair of personal voice recorders and telephones. (As Martha Nochimson shows in these pages, phones—and retracting phone cords—play a conspicuous role in the series.) When the now-famous Henry Jenkins, characterized by Howard Rheingold on the cover of his 2006 *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Collide* as the “21st Century McLuhan,” contributed as a young man to *Full of Secrets*, it was the now obsolete,

pre-Internet alt.tv.twinpeaks newsgroup that attracted his attention. As I sought to understand the series' promos, tie-in books, and "commodity intertexts" in my introduction to *Full of Secrets*, "The Semiotics of Cobbler: *Twin Peaks's* Interpretive Community," John Fiske's *Television Culture* (1987) would be my guide. In the present volume, major figures in media studies including Matt Hills, Stacey Abbott, and Lorna Jowett can count their own work on such subjects, not to mention such important twenty-first-century investigations as Jonathan Gray's *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (2010), as inspiration.

Both *Full of Secrets* and *Return to Twin Peaks* boast an impressive cast of contributors: *Full's* editor went on to do a score of books on television; inestimable film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum wrote the book's first essay; future Bruce Springsteen biographer Marc Dolan considered the series' narrative complexities; Richard Campbell, the author of the widely adopted text book *Media & Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication* (2009), contributed to the unique collaborative dialogue on the show that closed the book. Pre-eminent Lynch scholar Nochimson is in both *Full* and *Return*, as is the prolific and astute film critic J. P. Telotte. Additionally, Weinstock and Spooner assembled a similarly dazzling cast of new authors, all of whom have made their mark in this century: the aforementioned Hills, Abbott, and Jowett, major science fiction and Gothic scholars Sherryl Vint and Catherine Spooner, and Lynch critic Todd McGowan.

As Glen Creeber has suggested studies of television series should be, both *Full* and *Return* are pluralistic,² bringing their contributors' respective expertise and methods into play in illuminating different aspects of the *Twin Peaks* text: in my volume, music (Kalinak), doubling (Kuzniar), detection (Hague), Foucauldian disorder (Telotte), the fantastic (Stevenson), postmodernism (Reeves, et al.); in the present collection, material objects (Weinstock), quantum physics/materialism/eastern mysticism (Nochimson), costuming (Spooner), genre (Telotte), direction (Abbott), postmodernism, again (Blake), animals and nature (Vint), and food (Piatti-Farnell).

As I have noted over the years, *Twin Peaks* has served as a foundational inspiration for many of the showrunners who have carried series television to new heights. To cite but one example, *Sopranos* creator David Chase, a notorious hater of network television, has admitted his indebtedness to *Twin Peaks* (Lavery and Thompson 23). *Return* conclusively demonstrates that contemporary critics, too, owe the series a debt.

Reading these consistently discerning, often brilliant essays, I found myself wondering, as scholar *and* fan, about what our return to *Twin Peaks*—still too far off!—will reveal. I want to know—what *Peakhead* doesn't?—"How's Annie?" I want to know, too, whether the reborn *Twin Peaks* will follow the Season Three plan (revealed by executive producer Bob Engel to Max Haley) to resume years later with no-longer Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) special agent Dale Cooper who is now a pharmacist in Twin Peaks.³ I want to know if the series will still enthrall. In the meantime, Jeffrey Weinstock and Catherine Spooner's damn fine collection will more than satisfy our appetite.

DAVID LAVERY
Middle Tennessee State University

Notes

1. Such inexplicable prophecies have a history in the Lynchverse. Catherine Coulson, *Twin Peaks's* log lady, has recalled on numerous occasions that when she served as second unit director on Lynch's *Eraserhead* (1976), Lynch informed her that she would one day carry a log that talked.
2. "What has become increasingly clear," according to Creeber, "is that one methodology is probably not enough to do justice to the complex array of themes, issues, debates, contexts and concerns that are involved in a discussion of any single piece of television. Textual analysis on its own is rarely enough, but when it combines with the wider contextual or 'extra-textual' nature of the subject, it can still offer insight and inspiration" (Creeber 84).
3. Whether Cooper would still be host to BOB is unclear. Surely I am not the only reader of Scott Frost's *My Life, My Tapes* to find more than a few hints that Coop brought BOB with him to Twin Peaks—that the evil supernatural parasite had come inside our hero years ago.

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Acknowledgments

The editors would like to thank John Edgar Browning for his assistance in preparing the images, as well as Erica Buchman and Shaun Vigil at Palgrave for their attention to and care for the project. A spring 2015 sabbatical release from Central Michigan University assisted Jeffrey Weinstock in preparing this manuscript.

Introduction

“It is Happening Again”: New Reflections on *Twin Peaks*

Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock

In the final episode of the original run of Mark Frost and David Lynch’s ground-breaking TV drama, *Twin Peaks* (“Beyond Life and Death,” airdate June 10, 1991), FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle McLachlan) ventures intrepidly and bodily into the “waiting room” between worlds, the confusing red-draped space with zigzagged floor that he had visited in his dream in the famous second episode (“Zen, or the Skill to Catch a Killer,” April 19, 1990). Speaking strangely (the result of backward speech itself then played backward), The Man From Another Place (Michael J. Anderson) informs Cooper that “Some of your friends are here” and then Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee)—or, perhaps, her doppelganger—having greeted Cooper, tells him “I’ll see you again in 25 years.”

Flash forward 24 years to 2014. *Twin Peaks* fans, having endured many false rumors about the resurrection of the program despite Lynch and Frost’s categorical denial of any intentions to return to the series (Getty)—and having recently been treated to a Blu-ray box set called *Twin Peaks: The Entire Mystery* collecting together both seasons of the program, 90 minutes of previously unseen footage, and Lynch’s prequel movie, *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* (1992)—are electrified by two identical and simultaneous tweets from Lynch and Frost. At 11:30 am (US Eastern Standard Time) on October 3, 2014 (the very same time of the morning that FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper first enters the town of Twin Peaks in the program’s pilot episode), the two *Twin Peaks* creators sent out the message: “Dear

Twitter Friends: That gum you like is going to come back in style! #damngoodcoffee” (Lynch, “That gum”). *Twin Peaks* fans of course know that this is a line that The Man From Another Place (Michael J. Anderson) speaks to Cooper in the second episode dream in which Laura also whispers to him the name of her killer that he spends the next 14 episodes attempting to remember. “Could it be true?!!” wondered excited, wide-eyed fans. Were Cooper’s and, indeed, our friends returning? Quoting Dale Cooper from episode 4 (“The One-Armed Man”), the WelcometoTwinPeaks fan site (among others) noted, “When two separate events occur simultaneously pertaining to the same object of inquiry we must always pay strict attention!” (Twin Pie, “Is It Happening Again?”). *Twin Peaks* fans were definitely paying strict attention.

Three days later, Lynch made the revival of the program official with another tweet quoting from the series: “Dear Twitter Friends . . . it is happening again” (“It is happening”)—a line that the Giant (Carel Struycken) speaks to Cooper in episode 14, “Lonely Souls,” as BOB (Frank Silva) prepares to kill again. The tweet was accompanied by a link to a 1 minute 10 second YouTube video titled “A special TWIN PEAKS announcement” revealing that the program would return to the air in 2016 on Showtime—thus proving the truth of Laura’s cryptic prognostication: we will see Cooper again 25 years later. To the further delight of *Twin Peaks* fans, actors from the series began to tweet their own responses to the announcement of the series reboot. Some like MacLachlan suggested their awareness and participation—“Better fire up that percolator and find my black suit :-) #Twinpeaks” tweeted MacLachlan on October 6, 2014 (MacLachlan); others including Richard Beymer (Ben Horne), Wendy Robie (Nadine Hurley), and Kenneth Welsh (Windom Earle) indicated no prior knowledge of the revival, but interest in contributing (see Dukes).

While Lynch himself stated to *Agenda Magazine* on November 14, 2014, “I’m not talking about *Twin Peaks* now. Not until 2016” (Ruëll), as of September 2015, details have continued to emerge to titillate *Peaks* fans. The new season on Showtime to premier in 2017 will consist of 18 episodes to be written by Lynch and Frost—with Lynch to direct them all. Also preceding the new episodes will be the release of *The Secret Lives of Twin Peaks*, a novel by Mark Frost that “reveals what happened to the people of that iconic fictional town since we last saw them 25 years ago” (Twin Pie, “Secret Lives”). And while no official announcements concerning cast have yet been made, *WelcometoTwinPeaks.com* reports that, in addition to MacLachlan,

Catherine E. Coulson (the Log Lady), Ray Wise (Leland Palmer), Mädchen Amick (Shelly Johnson), Richard Beymer (Ben Horne), Michael Ontkean (Sheriff Truman), Peggy Lipton (Norma Jennings), Sheryl Lee (Laura Palmer/Maddy Ferguson), Dana Ashbrook (Bobby Briggs), Grace Zabriskie (Sarah Palmer), and Michael Horse (Deputy Hawk) will be returning (Dukes). (Sadly not returning will be Frank Silva [BOB], Jack Nance [Pete Martell], Don S. Davis [Major Garland Briggs], Dan O'Herlihy [Andrew Packard], and John Boylan [Mayor Dwayne Milford], all having passed away since the conclusion of the original series in 1991.) It is indeed happening again.¹ *Twin Peaks*, the program heralded as "the show that will change television forever" (Rodman 139), is returning—although whether it "will come back into style" like Cooper's gum and captivate audiences the way that it did in its early episodes in 1990 remains at this point to be seen.

First Peek

Or, perhaps by the time you read this, it will already have happened. When work on this volume began in early 2013, however, those involved in this collection had no more of an inkling than anyone else (apart from Lynch and Frost perhaps) that the program wasn't "dead as a doornail" (Getty). This book thus was intended to be a contribution on the part of what Matt Hills refers to in *Fan Cultures* (1992) as "aca-fans"—scholars doubling as fans—to the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of *Twin Peaks*. Taking a cue from David Lavery's 2012 e-book collection, *Twin Peaks in the Rearview Mirror*, our goal was to "return" to *Twin Peaks* and explore its afterlife, so to speak—both in terms of its continued resonances in the mediascape and what new perspectives and contemporary approaches might reveal about the original series. The initial draft of this introduction had condensed this idea of figurative reflection by beginning with attention to a literal look in a mirror—a moment that still warrants attention, but now, as we shall see, with an important twist.

On November 10, 1990, episode 14 of *Twin Peaks*, "Lonely Souls" directed by David Lynch, aired to an audience of 17.2 million viewers (Ratings Archive Nov.). In this pivotal episode, the Log Lady (Catherine E. Coulson) has led Agent Cooper to the Roadhouse where, interrupting a characteristically dreamlike performance by Julee Cruise, the Giant appears to him and warns him twice, "It is happening again." The scene then cuts to the Palmer house where the shot/reverse shot of Cooper and the Giant is matched by a similar

shot/reverse shot of a grinning Leland Palmer (Ray Wise) facing himself in a mirror. The reflection is first that of Leland and then, stunningly, a surprisingly restrained BOB—whose leering, manic face is then momentarily superimposed directly atop Leland’s now expressionless visage. Leland and BOB then both turn from the mirror in sync as Maddy Ferguson (Sheryl Lee) arrives at the Palmer house, only to later leave stuffed into Leland’s golf bag.

To reflect on *Twin Peaks* at all by necessity involves reflecting on this moment of literal reflection because this single shot/counter-shot suturing Leland to BOB in the mirror is the narrative as well as affective apex of the series and undoubtedly among the most famous moments in television history. It is the revelation toward which the entire narrative arc of the pilot episode and first 14 episodes has been heading—that Laura’s own father is her killer—and it condenses into one supersaturated moment the dark, twisted strangeness that encapsulated the entire series: A man—either insane or possessed—has raped and murdered his own daughter. Seven months into the series, this “mirror stage” moment answers the question of who killed Laura Palmer, even as it raises larger questions. Indeed, in what seems a



Figure I.1 The Big Reveal: Leland’s Reflection is BOB.

culminatory exchange in the woods following Leland's death at the end of episode 16, Sheriff Truman (Michael Ontkean), FBI Special Investigator Albert Rosenfield (Miguel Ferrer), Major Briggs (Don S. Davis), and Agent Cooper explicitly frame the interpretive possibilities introduced by the preceding revelations:

SHERIFF TRUMAN: [Leland] was completely insane.

COOPER: Think so?

ALBERT: But people saw BOB. People saw him in visions; Laura, Maddy, Sarah Palmer.

MAJOR BRIGGS: Gentlemen, there's more in heaven and Earth than what's dreamt up in our philosophy.

COOPER: Amen.

SHERIFF TRUMAN: Well I've lived in these old woods most of my life...seen some strange things but this is way off the map. I'm having a hard time...believing.

COOPER: Harry is it easier to believe a man would rape and murder his own daughter...any more comforting?

SHERIFF TRUMAN: No.

Cooper, Sheriff Truman, Albert, and Major Briggs together here offer a kind of metacommentary on the series, sharing among themselves the same questions with which the viewer is left, despite having—like Laura, Maddy, Sarah (Grace Zabriskie), and Cooper himself—seen BOB reflected in the mirror. Was Leland possessed or insane? And which, finally, is more comforting—or, rather, less unsettling? That there are malevolent forces at play in the universe that can control human behavior? Or that human beings can become so twisted that they rape and murder members of their own families?

The “big reveal” of Leland as Laura's killer was not only the “peak” of the series' primary story arc however, but also a profound moment of affective climax for fans—one eliciting startled screams from viewers worldwide who had been waiting since the pilot episode had aired in April seven months earlier for confirmation of the killer's identity. As in any detective narrative, clues had been introduced (and bottles broken using Cooper's unorthodox “Tibetan Method”), theories proposed and discarded, and leads followed—and viewers seduced by the power of the narrative had speculated and conjectured as well. But the reveal here, exploiting the immediacy of the visual, was stark and visceral: the near-instantaneous realization provoked by the image of BOB in place of Leland's reflection and subsequent superimposition over Leland of the identity of Laura's murderer.

Perhaps most startling in this spec(tac)ular scene is the confrontational look Leland/BOB briefly gives the viewer as he turns away from the mirror to greet Maddy, who has arrived at the Palmer house (see Figure I.1 above). It is a look that both challenges and implicates the viewer who now knows the killer's identity—the viewer who has derived pleasure over the course of series from a plot we now know is about a man who rapes and murders his own daughter and who, in what is arguably the series' most violent and disturbing scene, is about to kill again. Knowing the truth, can we keep looking? And, if we do, what do we see in the mirror—one that now looks curiously like the TV screen at which we are peering? Indeed, the framing of this shot creates a gorgeous *mise en abyme* effect—a regress of Leland framed by the TV screen, BOB framed by the mirror, and behind BOB two more boxes within boxes (within a series both literally and figuratively preoccupied with boxes). Leland's look then boxes us in, forcing us to confront our own knowledge and pleasure. MIKE, the one-armed man (Al Strobel), tells Cooper in episode 13 (“Demons”) that only the “gifted and the damned” can see BOB's true face, the face in the drawing directed by Sarah Palmer. This, of course, is a face that the viewer has seen repeatedly as well, having voyeuristically experienced the visions of *Twin Peaks's* visionaries. Lynch and Frost's gift to us then is a kind of vicarious damnation—the pleasure we derive, like BOB, from horror. Leland as he confronts us, possessed or insane, human and inhuman, is our reflection. To reflect on this scene of reflection is thus to reflect on ourselves and the very human pleasure we take in looking at scenes of inhumanity.

After the airing of episode 14, after this moment of revelation and vision of horror, the air then went out of the series. Although it would take another two episodes before Leland would be arrested and die in custody, the disclosure of Leland as Laura's murderer—as the climax of both the primary story arc and viewer affective investment—led to diminished interest and a concomitant precipitous drop in ratings—just as Lynch had feared (on the 1997 Gold edition of *Twin Peaks*, he states that he never wanted to reveal the killer!). Viewership dropped from 17.2 million for episode 14 to 13.3 million for episode 15 (“Drive with a Dead Girl”) (Ratings Archive Nov.). Following episode 15, ABC put *Twin Peaks* on indefinite hiatus, which usually leads to cancellation. Helped in part by a letter-writing campaign dubbed COOP (Citizens Opposed to the Offing of *Peaks*), ABC agreed to air the remaining six episodes to finish out season two and ratings continued to drop to a low of 7.4 million for the penultimate episode (“The

Path to the Black Lodge”) preceding the double-episode series finale (Ratings Archive April). Revealing BOB as Leland’s reflection didn’t break the mirror, but arguably broke the show.

Second Peek

But now it is happening again. And because *Twin Peaks* is returning from the afterlife to the air, another scene of literal reflection (itself reflecting episode 14’s big reveal)—another “peek” in the mirror in *Peaks*—insists upon our attention. On June 10, 1991, the final episode of *Twin Peaks*, “Beyond Life and Death,” aired to an audience of 10.4 million viewers (Ratings Archive June) as the second half of the two-part series finale. In it, Cooper, seeking the return of the kidnapped Annie Blackburn (Heather Graham), pursues Windom Earle (Kenneth Welsh) into the disorienting waiting room to the Black Lodge. In the series’ final scene, the recuperating Cooper, having survived his walkabout between worlds, goes into the bathroom of his Great Northern hotel room expressing a desire to brush his teeth.



Figure I.2 Echoes of Leland: Cooper Possessed by BOB.

Suddenly, he smashes his head into the mirror and then, even more startlingly, BOB's face appears as his reflection as Cooper laughs maniacally, seemingly as cracked as the looking glass. Cooper, it appears, is now the new human host for BOB.

This scene of course intentionally recalls episode 14's revelation of Leland's possession. As in episode 14, the reflection in the mirror reveals the ironic reversal of expectation: those who should protect us—fathers and lawmen—are vessels for evil. And as in episode 14, this revelation is for the viewer alone. Gifted with a vision of damnation, the viewer sees what no one else sees—the “soul” of the character. There is a crucial difference however: Leland, after being revealed as Laura's murderer, is apprehended and the “truth,” such as it is, made known to the characters as well as to the viewer. And although BOB flies the coop, so to speak, at the end of episode 16, Leland's death—having rammed his head into the steel door of his cell like Cooper's breaking of the mirror—wraps up the story arc, offering the viewer a certain measure of satisfying closure. The end of the series finale, however—as per its title, “Beyond Life and Death”—has left us suspended in limbo, between life and death, for almost 25 years.

Like the broken mirror into which the possessed Cooper bashes his head, the finale of *Twin Peaks* left us with a world broken: Cooper compromised; Ben Horne, now revealed as Donna's (Lara Flynn Boyle) father, possibly dead on the floor of the Hayward home; Audrey (Sherilyn Fenn) seemingly blown to bits (and Andrew Packard [Don O'Herlihy] almost definitely so); Leo (Eric DaRe) tenuously holding in place with his teeth a suspended box of tarantulas. Nadine (Wendy Robie) has recovered her memory, so Ed's (Everett McGill) dream of bliss with Norma (Peggy Lipton) seems finished. The series went off the air with a literal bang that fans received as—and with—a whimper—and has remained suspended, like the box of tarantulas over Leo's head, in time ever since. Frozen in place, the shards of glass have had no opportunity to fall. Our last look was at Cooper/BOB's manic visage in the broken mirror.

For these reasons, one cannot think about the original series without having in mind these two twin peeks in the looking glass—BOB as Leland's reflection culminating the initial story arc and BOB as Cooper's reflection culminating the series as a whole. News of the return of *Twin Peaks*, therefore, insists that we foreground these reflections as the reboot will not only be expected to answer some of the questions introduced by the inconclusive conclusions of the original series (as the shards of broken glass finally fall into the sink) but

will also inevitably be compared to the series' first run. The new run will thus offer a reflection of the old—and, in the process, asks that we reflect on what the program was and what, through the passage of time, it has become.

Reflections on the Existing Scholarship

In the same way that it is impossible to think about the return of *Twin Peaks* to the air without having in mind the original series, an academic volume such as this, offering new considerations of a groundbreaking program, must also reflect on the existing body of scholarship on *Twin Peaks*—which, although sizable, is not as extensive as one perhaps might expect for a program heralded as “a watershed in the history of network television” (Lavery, *Full of Secrets 2*) and “the show that will change television forever” (Rodman 139). This section, therefore, will offer an overview of the existing scholarship, which, predictably, focused attention on issues of genre and the program's quirky aesthetics, as well as audience response and fan practices. A handful of articles have considered the program in light of its gender politics and, in recent years, the series has also received increasing attention from scholars attempting to situate it in relation to David Lynch's growing oeuvre more generally.

As one might anticipate, there was a flurry of interest in the series in the years immediately following its initial run—notably the special issue of the journal *Literature/Film Quarterly* devoted to the program in 1993 and David Lavery's edited collection *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to Twin Peaks* in 1995. (Together with John Thorne and Craig Miller, Lavery then assembled a follow-up collection of essays in 2000—mostly consisting of the inclusions in the *Literature/Film Quarterly* special issue but supplemented with a handful of new essays—which did not come out until 2012 when it was published as an e-book for the Kindle. Lavery, more than anyone, can be credited with promoting *Twin Peaks* as an object of academic scrutiny.) While occasional articles on the program have continued to be published in the twenty-first century, most recent considerations of the series have tended in large measure to come in the course of more general discussions of Lynch's body of work or considerations of “cult TV” and fan practices.

In terms of genre and aesthetics, a variety of articles and essays, particularly in the early years after the program's airing, sought to analyze its “postmodern” elements and the ways in which it scuttled

existing generic distinctions. This is certainly the case in Jimmie L. Reeves *et al.*'s wide-ranging "Postmodernism and Television: Speaking of *Twin Peaks*" (1995), an eight-person round-table offering a "multivalent discussion" exploring postmodernism as "an artistic tendency and intellectual movement" and using *Twin Peaks* as a kind of test case (174). Relatedly, Teresa Geller's "Deconstructing Postmodern Television in *Twin Peaks*" (1992), with an eye toward Jean-François Lyotard's 1979 *The Postmodern Condition*, details the series' postmodern "hyperreality, simulacrity, pastiche, and... 'incredulity toward metanarratives'" (65), and María M. Carrión, with the fiction of Jorge Luis Borges in mind, explores the interpretive openness of the program and its postmodern narrative complexities in "*Twin Peaks* and the Circular Ruins of Fiction: Figuring (Out) the Acts of Reading" (1993). *Twin Peaks* as "postmodern drama" receives its own text box by Adrian Page in Glen Creeber's *The Television Genre Book* (2008; see page 55), while in her chapter on David Lynch and *Twin Peaks* in *Storytelling in Film and Television* (2003), Kristin Thompson opines that "if any narrative program could be claimed to be postmodern, it would certainly be *Twin Peaks*" (109). Thompson then goes on to consider the program as an example of "art television" (115).

Much of the discussion of *Twin Peaks*'s postmodernism tended to circulate around Dale Cooper's unorthodox investigative techniques and the ways in which they both alluded to and diverged from expectations of the detective genre. Thus, Angela Hague's "Infinite Games: The Derationalization of Detection in *Twin Peaks*" (1995) asks whether one should consider Dale Cooper a "postmodernist detective" (133) and explores the elimination of boundaries in the program's "infinite play" of questions (133). Tony Giffone's earlier "Twin Peaks as Post-Modernist Parody: David Lynch's Subversion of the British Detective Narrative" (1992) similarly considers the ways in which the series subverted the convention of the detective as "embodiment of rational thinking" (53)—a thesis also shared by Catherine Nickerson's "Serial Detection and Serial Killers in *Twin Peaks*" (1993).

Relatedly, several critics have addressed the series' appropriation and subversion of elements of film noir, including the persona of the hard-boiled detective. For Jason Holt in "*Twin Peaks*, Noir, and Open Interpretation" (2008), *Twin Peaks*'s "'omissive' aesthetic"—the artistic omission of important information—runs contrary to the more realistic limitations on interpretation characteristic of noir. Adopting a more unexpected tact, in "Laura and *Twin Peaks*: Postmodern Parody and the Musical Reconstruction of the Absent Femme Fatale"

(2004) John Richardson examines the series' use of sound in creating a parody of film noir. (The program's unusual use of music itself became the focus of analysis in Kathryn Kalinak's "'Disturbing the Guests with this Racket': Music and *Twin Peaks*" [1995] and Isabella van Elferen's "Haunted by a Melody: Ghosts, Transgression, and Music in 'Twin Peaks'" [2010].)

Generic analysis of the series has also considered its connections to surrealism and the gothic and its playful appropriation of the soap opera form. Glen Creeber's "'Some Strange and Twisted Dream': The Neglected Surrealism of *Twin Peaks*" (2012) considers the debt to surrealism directly, while Simon Riches's "Intuition and Investigation Into Another Place: The Epistemological Role of Dreaming in *Twin Peaks* and Beyond" (2011) links the program's surreal aesthetic to dreaming and contrasts both with the rationalist approach of the conventional detective. In *TV Horror: Investigating the Dark Side of the Small Screen* (2013), Lorna Jowett and Stacey Abbott consider the ways in which *Twin Peaks*'s surrealism unsettles the audience and "offers an alternative, surreal view of the heart of Americana" (161). Bridging several topics introduced above and pursued below, Lenora Ledwon's "*Twin Peaks* and the Television Gothic" (1993) examines the program as a "post-modern form" (260) that locates horror in the space of the domestic setting, a thesis expanded by Helen Wheatley in *Gothic Television* (2006), which identifies the show as originating a "Gothic trend" in North American television drama in the 1990s and beyond (161). Alternatively, Mark J. Charney's "Invitation to Love: The Influence of the Soap Opera on *Twin Peaks*" (2012) examines the series' "tendencies" both to "borrow and break from conventions of daytime drama" (LOC 3357). *Twin Peaks*'s appropriation and manipulation of conventions of the soap opera, as well as of the "crime/investigative thriller" (38), are also considered by Linda Ruth Williams in "*Twin Peaks*: David Lynch and the Serial-Thriller Soap" (2005). Highlighting the program's liminality in several respects, including its resistance to generic classification, is Rhonda V. Wilcox's "Beyond the Borders: Living on (the) Edge in *Twin Peaks*" (2012), and looking forward to several inclusions in this volume of essays, J. P. Telotte's "The Dis-Order of Things in *Twin Peaks*" (1995) offers the interesting observation that the series consistently and insistently pits patterns of order against the threat of disorder as "empty signifiers randomly crop up amidst overly determined ones, making us pause to question the nature of all signification" (167). This questioning the nature of signification is then addressed as positively as

a means for viewers to “engage their minds, sharpen their deductive abilities, and ‘do’ television more than having it ‘done to’ them” (390) by Brad Chisholm in “Difficult Viewing: The Pleasures of Complex Screen Narratives” (1991).

Given that at the heart of *Twin Peaks* is a narrative about the rape and murder of a teenage girl at the hands of a (possibly demonically possessed) family member, it is perhaps no surprise that discussion of the program in relation to the issue of family violence and the social construction of gender roles has been the most visible way in which criticism has sought to contextualize the series in light of late twentieth-century social issues. Along these lines, Diane Stevenson offers a Freudian reading of incestuous violence through the lens of Tzvetan Todorov’s category of the fantastic in “Family Romance, Family Violence, and the Fantastic in *Twin Peaks*” (1995), and Christy Desmet argues in “The Canonization of Laura Palmer” (1995) that, “*Twin Peaks*, both the show and the community, masks the sociological fact of father-daughter incest by canonizing Laura Palmer as a post-Freudian saint victimized by the evil BOB” (94). Relatedly, Renée Tobe, in “Frightening and Familiar: David Lynch’s *Twin Peaks* and the North American Suburb,” explores Lynch’s representation of the seamy underside to wholesome suburban existence—a topic introduced by Lenora Ledwon’s essay referenced above as well. Samuel Kimball concludes in “‘Into the Light, Leland, Into the Light’: Emerson, Oedipus, and the Blindness of Male Desire in David Lynch’s ‘*Twin Peaks*’” (1993) that the program “provides an extraordinary canted commentary on the failure of a certain cultural tradition, particularly in the transcendental optimism and accompanying moralism of its American incarnation, to account for a certain blinded and blinding violence of the father . . . [in the form of] incestuous desire of the father for his daughter and his infanticidal violence against her person” (19). Christy Desmet’s “‘Ding, Dong, The Witch is Dead’: Postmodern Families in *Wild at Heart* and *Twin Peaks*” proffers a similarly caustic appraisal of the violence toward women inherent in the patriarchal family structure as played out in the series.

Addressing in particular the representation of women on the program, Diane Hume George in “Lynching Women: A Feminist Reading of *Twin Peaks*” (1995) presents a scathing evaluation, asserting that the program “fed America’s collective hunger for wounded, maimed, tortured, dead women” and let men off the hook by offering supernatural possession as an alibi (114). Helen Deutsch offers a similarly dour analysis of the program’s gender politics and links the series’ violence

against women to the broader literary tradition of besieged heroines in "'Is It Easier to Believe?': Narrative Innocence from *Clarissa* to 'Twin Peaks'" (1993). Focusing specifically on Josie Packard, Greta Ai-yu Niu explores the Orientalist exoticism of her representation in "Consuming Asian Women: The Fluid Body of Josie Packard in *Twin Peaks*" (1998).

Twenty-first century appraisal of *Twin Peaks* has often come in the context of broader considerations of David Lynch's body of work, although *Twin Peaks*, as a TV series rather than a film, has sometimes been omitted from such considerations—both Allister Mactaggart's *The Film Paintings of David Lynch: Challenging Film Theory* (2010) and Todd McGowan's *The Impossible David Lynch* (2007) focus on *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* rather than the TV series. On the earlier end of this spectrum are Michael Chion's *David Lynch* (1995) and Martha Nochimson's *The Passion of David Lynch: Wild at Heart in Hollywood* (1997). In the former, Chion includes a discussion of *Twin Peaks* together with *Blue Velvet* and Lynch's lesser-known short film, *The Cowboy and the Frenchman*, in a chapter focusing on "Lynchtown" (83), Lynch's America in which a wholesome, small-town façade masks evil and depravity. Nochimson affords *Twin Peaks* its own chapter in her important study, with an emphasis on border crossing within the series—particularly between the conscious and unconscious mind.

Jeff Johnson's *Pervert in the Pulpit: Morality in the Works of David Lynch* (2004) introduces a rather broad consideration of *Twin Peaks* and its themes, emphasizing Lynch's "hard-core Manichaeism" (149). Similarly, Kenneth C. Kaleta's *David Lynch* (1993) tenders an overview of the series' history and themes, touching on its film noir and surrealist aspects along the way. Anthony Todd's *Authorship and the Films of David Lynch: Aesthetic Reception in Contemporary Hollywood* (2012) focuses not on the program itself, but rather on its reception, particularly by the press.

To varying extents, all the texts referenced above attempt to make sense of the program's appeal and the "cultic" aspect of its following—and academic study of cult media and fan practices have burgeoned substantially in the intervening years since the series' initial airing. The twenty-first-century focus on viewership practices is indeed proleptically signaled by two inclusions in Lavery's 1995 *Full of Secrets* collection: Lavery's own introduction to the volume considers the program's features in light of the "checklist" of cult object characteristics detailed in Umberto Eco's seminal analysis of the cult

film, “*Casablanca*: Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage” (1986), and pioneering scholar of popular media and fan practices Henry Jenkins considers online fan pleasure (and frustration) with the program in his “‘Do You Enjoy Making the Rest of Us Feel Stupid?’: alt.tv.twinpeaks, the Trickster Author, and Viewer Mastery.”

Notable both in terms of the development of fandom studies and the contemporary canonization of *Twin Peaks* as cult series is the 2013 collection, *Fan Phenomena: Twin Peaks*, edited by Marisa C. Hayes and Franck Boulègue. Billed as “the first non-academic collection that speaks to the show’s fan base rather than a scholarly audience” (back cover), this collection reasserting the series’ continued importance as one that “essentially redefined the boundaries of network television” (10), indeed tries to span the academic / popular culture divide by including within its pages a mix of short, breezily written quasi-academic pieces on topics ranging from the program’s constructions of space to merchandizing that invokes the program’s “aura,” together with “fan appreciations” in the form of interviews and more personal reflections on topics such as Audrey Horne’s wardrobe.

Reflections on Fandom

Academic considerations of *Twin Peaks*, however, tell only a small part of the story. One cannot reflect on *Twin Peaks* and its legacy and significance without taking into consideration the unwavering devotion of the series’ fans, whose loyalty undoubtedly influenced Lynch and Frost in their decision to renew the series—and Showtime to carry it. Fan fidelity and enthusiasm not only persuaded ABC to run season two to its completion, but has found expression over the past quarter decade or so in a variety of forms ranging from official and unofficial extensions of the *Twin Peaks* universe to fanzines, websites, and festivals.

The (post)modernity of *Twin Peaks*’s scuttling of generic conventions was arguably matched by its modern marketing practices that catered to fan interest by extending the series’ fictional universe through a variety of official and unofficial print publications. First came *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer* from David Lynch’s daughter, Jennifer, published in the summer of 1990 between the series’ first and second seasons. Mark Frost’s brother Scott then joined the fun in 1991 with *The Autobiography of F.B.I. Special Agent Dale Cooper: My Life, My Tapes*. That same year, *Twin Peaks: An Access Guide to the Town*—a parody of a travel guidebook listed as published

by the Twin Peaks Chamber of Congress—was published by Mark Frost and Richard Saul Wurman. Early in season two, Simon and Schuster released the cassette-only *Diane...The Twin Peaks Tapes of Agent Cooper* on which Kyle MacLachlan presented new messages to his off-camera assistant mixed together with clips from the series (MacLachlan). Each of these works attempted to capitalize on the love borne by fans for the series by giving them more of the *Twin Peaks* world.

Unofficial releases by fans also proliferated early and quickly. In 1991, Scott Knickelbine published *Welcome to Twin Peaks: A Complete Guide to Who's Who and What's What*. Not licensed by Lynch/Frost, it was quickly pulled from shelves. Mark Altman's *Twin Peaks Behind-the-scenes: An Unofficial Guide to Twin Peaks*, also published in 1991, managed to avoid legal pitfalls. Several print issues of the *Twin Peaks Gazette*, a tabloid-sized black-and-white fanzine made to look like a newspaper and featuring articles about the town of Twin Peaks, were published in 1991 and sent to members of the program's original fan club. While the *Twin Peaks Gazette* published only a handful of issues, the bi-monthly print fanzine *Wrapped in Plastic* began publishing in 1993 and continues to this day. As Lavery notes, *Wrapped in Plastic* "has examined virtually every facet of the series' creation and production" (*Fifty Key Programmes* 224).

Those same facets also have been lovingly caressed, considered, and debated in a variety of online websites, newsgroups, and message boards. Although the print version of the *Twin Peaks Gazette* had only a short run, it was revived online at twinpeaksgazette.com, which published material on all aspects of the series from 1995 until 2012. A replacement site at paper.li/JosephDickerson/1342312745 was started soon after and has continued to provide articles about *Twin Peaks*-related matters. The online site glastonberrygrove.net (deriving its name from the mystical site in Twin Peaks's Ghostwood forest where the entrance to the Black Lodge is found) currently serves as a kind of *Twin Peaks* clearing house, offering not only background on the program but scripts, music from the program, and a host of links to other *Twin Peaks* sites, chat rooms, message boards, and discussion lists. The site welcometotwinpeaks.com was launched in January of 2011 to coincide with the program's twentieth anniversary. "Inspired by the show's ever-growing influence on today's art, fashion, music, film, television, design or just about any other aspect of culture," the "aims to demonstrate that even though more than two decades have passed, *Twin Peaks* is still relevant. Maybe even

more than ever” (welcometotwinpeaks.com/about) and offers not only news and information about *Twin Peaks* and David Lynch more generally, but merchandise as well.

For those fans left unsatisfied by solitary consumption of *Twin Peaks* paratexts and online discussion, *Twin Peaks* festivals continue to take place. *Twin Peak Fest* has occurred in North Bend, Washington in one form or another since 1993 (twinpeaksfest.com) and a UK festival premiered in 2010 and has been occurring annually ever since (twinpeaksukfestival.com).

No doubt with the renewal of the series will come a reinvigoration and expansion of its fan base that will have at its disposal technologies and modes of distribution and coordination not available when the series initially ran in 1990–91. As Lynch and Frost have already demonstrated with their twin tweeted announcements, we can surely expect a barrage of tweets, memes, videos, facebook pages, and other forms of fan participation in the twenty-first century.

New Reflections on *Twin Peaks*

Having surveyed the field of existing scholarship and reflected briefly on forms of fan participation, we turn our attention now to the new contributions offered here, which have been organized into two “clusters” of five essays each separated by a theoretical “interlude” of sorts consisting of two essays. As noted above, the original purpose of the volume was to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Twin Peaks* with a collection of essays offering new critical considerations and approaches to the series, as well as reflections on its significance and legacy. The first cluster of five essays, “The Matter of *Twin Peaks*,” offers a lovely example of the ways in which readers and viewers endow texts with meaning in light of historically situated and culturally shared emphases and interpretive strategies. Reflecting the twenty-first-century “materialist turn”—the contemporary interest in what Jane Bennett refers to as a “vibrant, quirky, and overflowing material world” (*Enchantment* 162) full of “strangely vital” (Bennett, *Vibrant* 3) things that challenge the autonomy, boundedness, and supremacy of the human subject and raise questions concerning where the human stops and the nonhuman begins—this cluster of essays offers a focused exploration of the roles of objects and the philosophy that underpins their significance within the series. My essay “Wondrous and Strange: The Matter of *Twin Peaks*” opens this section as I consider how fish in percolators, stacks of doughnuts, swaying traffic

lights and other objects in *Twin Peaks* resist their place in the usual "order of things," insist on being noticed, and at times undercut the boundary between sentient and nonsentient. "Materiality. That's what had been missing in my first book about Lynch," writes Martha P. Nochimson, who in "Substance Abuse: Special Agent Dale Cooper, 'What's the matter?'" picks up the ball and, in an essay that revises her own earlier claims about Lynch's series, examines the influence of the Hindu Vedas and its quantum physics-like description of materiality as solid-seeming, but essentially unbound and porous, on Lynch's vision of the universe as materialized in *Twin Peaks*. In keeping with contemporary ecocriticism and animal studies—two areas of interest that have emerged as new paradigms in humanities scholarship since the initial airing of *Twin Peaks*—Sherryl Vint in "'The owls are not what they seem': Animals and Nature in *Twin Peaks*" considers the ways in which "images of animals and nature in *Twin Peaks* are deeply enmeshed in the series' meditation upon the inevitable loss of innocence to encroaching modernity." And in "'That Cherry Pie is Worth a Stop': Food and Spaces of Consumption in *Twin Peaks*" and "'Wrapped in Plastic': David Lynch's Material Girls" Lorna Piatti-Farnell and Catherine Spooner focus respectively on the roles played by food and clothing in the series. For Piatti-Farnell, food occupies a "duplicitous position" on the program, one that is "closely entangled with the subversion of narrative structures and their connection to the reliability of cultural constructs." For Spooner, clothing plays a similarly dual role, assuming "a fantastic or even metaphysical dimension even as the show revels in its materiality." Taken together, the essays included in "The Matter of *Twin Peaks*" section showcase the ways in which new theoretical paradigms and cultural emphases can reinvigorate and enrich understanding of primary texts. *Twin Peaks* today is not what it was in 1990–91. To do a little twist on Heraclitus, one can never climb the same peak twice.

Intervening between the two clusters of essays is a brief theoretical "interlude": two interpretations that adopt a more established mode of analysis—Lacanian analysis—but that nevertheless arrive at surprising and productive conclusions. In Eric Savoy's "Jacques Lacan, Walk With Me: on the Letter"—completed well before the announcement of the renewal of the series—Savoy considers the circulation of the signifier within *Twin Peaks* in light of Lacan's maxim that "a letter always arrives at its destination." For his part, Todd McGowan explores the series in light of Lacan's understanding of fantasy—"the structure through which the subject organizes its enjoyment"—and

argues in “Lodged in a Fantasy Space: *Twin Peaks* and Hidden Obscenities” that *Twin Peaks* “rips the seams apart and separates fantasy from the bare symbolic structure that it undergirds,” thereby marking “a singular challenge to the role that fantasy plays within the functioning of ideology.” Savoy and McGowan’s readings are sophisticated and elegant reconsiderations of the series’ formal logic that, with Lacan in mind, show how texts always find their readers—and why *Twin Peaks* insists on a Lacanian approach.

Following this theoretical interlude, the second cluster of five essays, “Genre, Fandom, & New Reflections,” develops and inflects existing discussions of categorization and fan practices as it explores the continued resonances and shifting significations of the series. In “Complementary Verses’: The Science Fiction of *Twin Peaks*,” J. P. Telotte adopts the interesting approach of considering what the series tells us about science fiction TV and how the original airing forecast “the shifting nature of our sf genre experience.” Also focusing on the trailblazing nature of the series, Stacey Abbott in “Doing Weird Things for the Sake of Being Weird: Directing *Twin Peaks*” explores “how the director functions within a televisual production context that demands consistency, alongside the idiosyncratic style that was the hallmark of *Twin Peaks*.” She concludes that the series “marked a transition in the perceived importance of the director” in relation to television programs. Focusing not on the series itself but rather on its paratexts—publicity materials, extratextual features on DVD releases, parodies and homages, and audience-created content such as fan fiction—are Matt Hills and Lorna Jowett. In “I’ll See You Again in 25 Years’: Paratextually Re-commodifying and Revising Anniversary *Twin Peaks*” Hills examines these paratexts as part of the series’ “re-commodification” as its twenty-fifth anniversary approaches. Jowett, in “Nightmare in Red? *Twin Peaks* Parody, Homage, Intertextuality and Mashup,” proposes that consideration of what others have done with the series foregrounds what made the series memorable in the first place—we can learn a lot about the original series and what viewers found important (or ridiculous!) by exploring the exaggerated tendencies of self-conscious borrowings. And rounding out this cluster is Linnie Blake’s forceful reappraisal, “Trapped in the Hysterical Sublime: *Twin Peaks*, Postmodernism, and the Neoliberal Now,” which encapsulates the overarching theme of the collection by reflecting on the ways that the passage of time, personal growth, and cultural change impact on our understanding and enjoyment of primary texts. Resisting the seduction of *Twin Peaks*’s

narrative that once held her rapt, Blake considers the relation between series and its historical context and connects the series' postmodernism with the coming into being of a neoliberal discourse "that subsumes all other markers of identity (such as class and gender) to a willingness to refashion oneself both as worker and as the consumer of goods and services." Hindsight here allows for a reconsideration of the program as symptomatic of some troubling historical trends.

To reflect on *Twin Peaks*—with the benefit of hindsight—thus involves a kind of thick description that includes (but is not limited to) close readings of the text of the program itself through the lenses offered both by established critical approaches and new paradigms that highlight contemporary concerns, historicizations of the series that examine it in light of its cultural moment, and appraisals of its legacy and sphere of influence. One must consider what scholars have done with the program, what fans have done with the program, and what the program did and continues to do to and with television, fans, and scholars. The return of the series to the air adds yet another level of complexity as it will inevitably inflect our understanding and appreciation of the original series. Showtime plans to run the series in its entirety before premiering the new episodes (assuming they do ever run!), thus introducing the program to a new generation of potential fans with their own sets of historically specific anxieties, preoccupations, and desires. Our understanding of *Twin Peaks* will change as a consequence of its continuation. No doubt, we will then find ourselves reflecting on these reflections on reflections. And while this may seem as disorienting as Cooper trying to make his way through the Black Lodge, it also highlights the ways in which texts function as mirrors that reflect back to us our own concerns, interests, anxieties, desires, and perspectives. That *Twin Peaks* was announced to be returning while this collection was in progress was a coincidence—but also a gift to fans, scholars, and those who straddle the line. And, who knows—maybe we'll see you again in 25 years.

Note

1. Or, indeed, with the calculated ambiguity that suffuses the whole series, it *may* be happening again. Since the composition of this introduction, rumor has swirled that the remake/continuation may not happen at all—or that, if it does move forward, Lynch may not be at the helm. This only shows that any confident assertions about *Twin Peaks* will inevitably be called into question by *Twin Peaks!* *Twin Peaks* fans can only hope for a satisfactory resolution to the question of a continuation of the series.

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I

The Matter of *Twin Peaks*

Wondrous and Strange: The Matter of *Twin Peaks*

Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock

A fish in a percolator. An ominous swaying traffic light. A sublime vista of neatly stacked doughnuts. A log that conveys secrets. A Dictaphone (possibly named Diane). Not one but two diaries. A human chess piece. A man who reminds another of a lapdog. Much of the strangeness of the world of David Lynch and Mark Frost's *Twin Peaks*, its glorious and disorienting off-kilterness, inheres in its uncanny representation of *matter*—things out of place, things saturated with affect, defamiliarized things, inspirited things. It is not just the owls in *Twin Peaks* that are not what they seem—neither are people and ceiling fans, drape runners and cave pictographs, wood ticks and creamed corn. Judge Sternwood (Royal Dano) tells Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) in episode 12 to keep his eye on the woods, which are “wondrous here but strange”—and indeed they are, enfolding within them the entrance to the Waiting Room to the spirit world and triangulating messages for Cooper via SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence). But equally strange is the Great Northern, crouching on the edge of a waterfall like a gothic castle, complete with secret passages; and the Roadhouse, where the strange (Julee Cruise singing at a biker bar?) is replaced by the even stranger (the Giant [Carel Struycken] who appears there three times); and the Palmer house, where surreal visions of horses and spreading blood are glimpsed by the gifted and the damned and where BOB (Frank Silva) leers back at Leland (Ray Wise) from the mirror, the skipping record player emblematic of the replay of

the killing of Laura (Sheryl Lee) in the form of her doppelganger, Maddy (Sheryl Lee). From disorienting buildings to bodies wrapped in plastic to proliferating golf balls and doughnuts and sticky notes, things in *Twin Peaks*—objects and people and buildings—resist their place in the “order of things” as they insist on being noticed and at times transgress the boundary between sentient and nonsentient and living and dead. This ontological confusion participates in constructing *Twin Peaks*’s allure, its production of a kind of captivating “secular magic” (see Thrift 290).

This insistent foregrounding of matter as matter in *Twin Peaks* is something that both viewers and critics have sensed, noting, for instance, the series’ obsessive emphasis on pie and coffee and those ominous shots of trees buffeted by the wind. Among the critics, Michael Chion hones in on the series’ preoccupation with matter when he remarks a category of “bizarre” character in the program associated with a physical trait or prop (think Gordon Cole [David Lynch] with his hearing aids and Dr. Jacoby [Russ Tamblyn] with his loud ties and glasses with colored lenses) (107–108). Martha Nochimson similarly intuits the series’ emphasis on matter when she connects “a renewal of human desire for a miraculous world” (25) to a form of border crossing in which, according to production designer Richard Hoover, “the concepts of inside and outside were conflated”: “A massive use of wood gives an outside feeling to the interiors. The interiors burgeon with dead animals and their parts—horns, shells—and nature drawings that are often photographed as if they were theatrical backdrops for the action” (qtd. in Nochimson 26).

Focusing more specifically on things in the series are J. P. Telotte and Sheli Ayers. In “The Dis-order of Things in *Twin Peaks*,” Telotte makes the case that *Twin Peaks* is a world of semiotic confusion in which the tenuous stability of meaning is a façade barely concealing “a sense of meaninglessness or blankness that also haunts our world” (160). Within the program, the desire for fixity of meaning signalled by the “orderly arrangement of things” (163) is belied by the anxiety that some deeper structure and significance does not, in fact, exist. “The end result,” writes Telotte, “is that we move through a world where empty signifiers randomly crop up amidst overly determined ones, making us pause to question the nature of all signification, and where quickly shifting signifiers can leave us longing for meaning—or grasping at empty forms” (167). Rather than seeing the series as a kind of “animated Escher print . . . forcing

us to reassess the patterns and to reconsider how we see those patterns” as does Telotte (164), in “*Twin Peaks*, Weak Language and the Resurrection of Affect,” Ayers examines the series’ “empathy for things,” which “destabilises the boundary between subject and object” (95). Noting (as does Nochimson) how the program’s extensive use of natural wood and taxidermy confuses exterior with interior (97), Ayers goes on to address “demonic” objects, such as the ceiling fan in the Palmer house and the swinging traffic light at Sparkwood and 21st Street (99), and bodies that, through death or possession, themselves become things: “the central conflict of the Laura Palmer story, obscurely sensed in Cooper’s dream (episode 2): the reification of human beings” (99).

The matter of *Twin Peaks*, the roles that objects play and the uncanny affect with which they are invested, is clearly central to the series’ allure, and I would like to push the insights of Chion, Nochimson, Telotte, and Ayers further by using contemporary “thing theory” as a lens through which to examine *Twin Peaks*’s preoccupation with matter. Anticipating the twenty-first-century philosophical preoccupation with objects demonstrated by object-oriented ontology and speculative realism, new or vibrant materialism, and affect theory, part of *Twin Peaks*’s dazzling originality—and a primary strategy in the production of its captivating ambient dread—is its persistent thematization of what Jane Bennett refers to as “thing-power”: the “material agency or effectivity of nonhuman or not-quite-human things” (viii). *Twin Peaks* is a world of wondrous and strange things that “act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, [and] tendencies of their own” (Bennett viii). What *Twin Peaks* emphasizes through its things, however, is the gothic underside to what Ian Bogost refers to as “the awesome plenitude of the alien everyday” (134). Lynch and Frost, while in a sense returning the things to themselves, also showcase the gothic ramifications of confusing people with things and things with people. *Twin Peaks* thus represents a form of “sensuous enchantment with the everyday world” (Bennett xi), but the spell it weaves is the off-kilter anxiety of nightmare in which things—including objectified people—repeatedly act in the way Graham Harman suggests all objects do: withdrawing into themselves in such a way that they are fundamentally unknowable (see Harman’s *Quadruple Object*). Like the puzzle box Thomas Eckhardt (David Warner) leaves for Andrew Packard (Dan O’Herlihy) in season two, the world of *Twin Peaks* is one of objects as mysteries concealing other mysteries, the solution to which finally is death.

The Domino Effect

As I turn toward a consideration of the participation of “gothic things” in the construction of what, borrowing from Nigel Thrift, we may wish to consider *Twin Peaks*’s dark glamour, it is first necessary to foreground the range of roles that unruly objects play in the series. In general, there are five loose and at times overlapping categories of what we may refer to as “defamiliarized things” in *Twin Peaks* that work in concert to construct *Twin Peaks* as a kind of gothicized fantasy space functioning according to a different logic than that governing our familiar reality. These categories are what we may refer to as (1) displaced matter; (2) ominous matter; (3) inspirited matter; (4) fragmented or multiplied matter; and (5) objectified matter.

The first category, “displaced matter,” refers to matter literally out of place, and such matter takes on several different forms within the series ranging from instances clearly remarked within the diegesis to sorts of confusion that operate on the formal level. In a comic register, Pete Martell (Jack Nance) comes rushing in a step too late to stop Cooper and Sheriff Truman (Michael Ontkean) from drinking coffee, explaining, “You’d never guess. There was a fish . . . in the percolator!” (episode 2); during an investigatory trip to a vet’s office, a llama pushes between Cooper and Truman, looks Cooper in the eye, and snorts derisively (episode 8); Bobby Briggs (Dana Ashbrook) ironically sports a varsity letter on the back of his black leather jacket; and Dr. Hayward (Warren Frost) affords the viewer a close-up view of a squashed wood tick on the end of the bullet that plugged Cooper. Much darker examples of matter out of place include Laura herself wrapped in plastic by the river, the letter found beneath the fingernail of each of BOB’s victims, the part of a poker chip found in Laura’s stomach, Maddy Ferguson’s body stuffed into a golf bag, and the pool of scorched engine oil within the ring of sycamore trees at Glastonbury Grove that serves as the entrance to the Waiting Room to the spirit world.

In terms of furthering the plot, objects are repeatedly lost or discovered in unexpected places: the magazine *Fleshworld* is uncovered by Cooper hidden in a ceiling light in Jacques Renault’s (Walter Olkewicz) apartment; Laura’s locket is recovered from its hiding place in the woods and then concealed in a fake coconut by Dr. Jacoby; cash is stashed in a football; drugs are concealed in Leo’s (Eric Da Re) shoe and planted in the gas tank of James Hurley’s (James Marshall) motorcycle—later, Cooper himself is set up with planted drugs in a

similar way; Audrey Horne's (Sherilyn Fenn) letter to Agent Cooper slips under his bed; Audrey herself ends up at One Eyed Jacks and, in one of the series' most uncomfortable scenes, conceals herself from her father (Richard Beymer) behind a mask; Laura's secret diary is recovered from a hidden shelf in Harold Smith's (Lenny Von Dohlen) home and her audiotapes are concealed in her bedpost; Windom Earle (Kenneth Welsh) plants a microphone on a bonsai tree delivered to the police station; and almost the entire investigation of Laura Palmer's murder is framed by the Giant's taking and returning of Cooper's ring.

At times, matter out of place in *Twin Peaks* is unmistakably insistent in its sheer absurdity: a mounted buck's head on a table at the bank confronts Sheriff Truman and the newly arrived Cooper in the pilot episode ("oh, it fell down," explains the bank clerk [Jane Jones], with the head on the table in the foreground of the shot), the latter of which then humorously holds in his hand "a small box of chocolate bunnies"; in episode 9, it is creamed corn rather than chocolate bunnies that appears in and then disappears from the hands of Pierre Tremond (Austin Jack Lynch—creamed corn is revealed in *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*, the prequel to *Twin Peaks*, to be the physical manifestation of "garmonbozia," the negative spiritual energy of pain and suffering fed off of by the entities of the Black Lodge). Related to the llama in the vet's office and buck's head on the desk is the vision of the white horse in the Palmer living room twice experienced by Sarah Palmer (Grace Zabriskie). Then, of course, there are Nadine's (Wendy Robie) cotton balls—the answer to her obsession with creating silent drape runners—and the canister containing Andy's (Harry Goaz) semen sample that slips from his grasp and rolls across the floor. Relatedly, although functioning on a different level, one could include here the out-of-place music, dramatic and dreamy, that bizarrely entertains biker bar and diner patrons.

These instances of matter out of place, rife within the series, create moments of incongruity that fold together into the construction of a different order of things, a world that operates by a different epistemic logic—a kind of "cryptic totality" to borrow from Harman (see *Guerrilla* 122). As part of this process, certain objects within the series are enlivened and invested with affect—primarily dread (although also pleasure where food is concerned). What we may refer to as ominous matter within *Twin Peaks* consists particularly of those objects associated with circular or stationary movement. Into this category we may place the ceiling fan and record player at the Palmer



Figure 1.1 Ominous Fan.

house, the swaying traffic light and blowing trees, as well as Cooper's ring and Hank Jennings's (Chris Mulkey) domino. In each instance, the affective charge associated with these objects is thickened and catalyzed by framing, sound, and narrative context.

The fan is first introduced in the pilot episode when Sarah Palmer goes upstairs with the intention of waking Laura for school. The camera remains fixed at the bottom of the stairs pointing upward as ominous music plays and Sarah disappears from the top left of the frame into Laura's room only to find it empty. After Sarah comes back down distraught, a curious close-up of the spinning fan is introduced. The fan in this way is associated with Laura's absence and her mother's anxiety. The ominous quality of the ceiling fan is then reinforced at various points throughout the series and particularly in episode 14—the episode in which Maddy is killed and Leland is revealed to be BOB's host—where it is also connected with the skipping record player and with spinning more generally. In a scene divided into three parts, we first see and hear a record player skipping, undergirded by an ominous wash of noise. The camera tracks across the rug at floor level to the stairs, where Sarah Palmer comes into view, her hand

entering the scene at the top right as she crawls down, moaning as if sick or injured and speaking Leland's name once before appearing to lose consciousness. Sarah comes down the stairs just as she did in the pilot episode when she has discovered Laura missing, only this time her distress is greatly magnified by her inability to walk. The scene then cuts to the ceiling fan, suturing it to Sarah's anguish, before shifting to the police station, where Ben Horne is being brought in for questioning. The action jumps back to the Palmer house, where the camera again highlights the skipping record player prior to focusing on Sarah, who continues to crawl across the carpet before having a vision of a white horse in a spotlight in her living room and again passing out. The camera tracks from her prostrate form to the record player and across the room to Leland, who is fixing his tie in front of a mirror. From here, the episode cuts to the Roadhouse, where the Giant tells Cooper, "it is happening again," before returning a third and final time to the Palmer house, again starting with a shot of the skipping record player. The scene finally erupts into violence as Leland/BOB attacks Maddy and, like the record player and fan, spins with her in his arms in a dizzying conflation of agony and ecstasy.

Like the fan and record player, shots of the traffic light at Sparkwood and 21st Street and the image of trees blowing in the wind are also introduced in the pilot episode, concern circular movement or movement in place, and are connected by association to Laura Palmer and her death. The traffic light, which sways gently in the wind and cycles from green to red, marks the intersection where Laura jumped off of James's motorcycle and ran into the woods on the night she died. Following Cooper's address in the town hall in which he cautions residents to consider a curfew for those under 18 and reminds them that the crimes occurred at night, the scene cuts to the traffic light, brilliantly illuminated against a pitch-black background. Undergirded by a low wash of spooky noise, the light changes from green to yellow to red as the scene fades out. As with the fan, the traffic light is then introduced at various other points in the series and infused with an ominous sense of dread, such as at the very end of episode 3 where it shines red against the darkness. As the episode's last image—and as Telotte appreciates of things in the series more generally—it seems to insist on some deeper meaning, even as it scrupulously withholds what exactly that significance is. It is one more ominous puzzle among many.

Similarly, in both the pilot episode and episode 3, the woods into which Laura disappeared are linked directly to her: following the

identification of Laura in the morgue by Leland in the pilot episode, the camera lingers on Laura's pale face and purple lips before dissolving into a shot of agitated trees being tossed in the wind, signifying the restlessness of nature in the face of evil or perhaps even their inhabitation by Laura's spirit, which has now joined the other restless entities that reside in the suggestively named *Ghostwood* Forest. "I just know I'm going to get lost in those woods again tonight," Laura prophetically dictated to Dr. Jacoby—a wood that "holds many spirits" according to Deputy Hawk (Michael Horse). The trees are again associated with Laura as a shot of them blowing in the wind dissolves into the minister's (Royce D. Applegate) prayer at Laura's funeral in episode 3. Like Laura, the woods—wondrous and strange, as Judge *Sternwood* notes—are "full of secrets." The trees blowing in the wind, agitated by something unseen, are not only another puzzle box within the series, but particularly animate, moving as though possessing intentionality of their own. As I will discuss below, trees in *Twin Peaks* are in this way presented as inspired objects, objects possessing a kind of sentience.

From the spinning fan and record player to the sharpening of the saw of the opening credits to the circular pool within the ring of sycamores that swallows up Cooper in the finale, rings and circles assume symbolic significance throughout the series. The fan/record player/BOB assemblage highlights the association of circles and circular movement with violence and the spirit world. This connection is reinforced both through the symbolism of Cooper's ring—taken and returned by the Giant when Cooper finally understands who the killer is—as well as by what MIKE/Phillip Gerard (Al Strobel) refers to as a "golden circle" of appetite and satisfaction experienced by him and BOB when they were killing together.

The menacing duplication of circles is also affectively reflected in another prominent ominous object: Hank Jennings's domino. Hank's domino, consisting in season one of six dots divided into two sets of three (reflecting the number of people he has killed, according to the online Glastonberryygrove.net site), is first introduced in episode 4 as he fiddles with it during his parole board hearing. According to the actor Chris Mulkey, "the number three represented 'magic' and doubling it represented 'mysticism'" (twinpeaksexplained.tumblr.com). That we should associate this object with Hank is then made clear at the end of episode 4 when Josie Packard (Joan Chen) opens a letter to find a pencil drawing of the domino. The phone immediately rings and it is Hank on the line, shown sucking on the domino like

a lollipop, and asking if she received his “message.” As with other apparent symbols in the series, the significance of the object is hinted at, but never confirmed—the message it conveys to Josie, however, is clearly one of intimidation.

The objects above assume a kind of quasi-life by virtue of their investment with affect. They are things that become more than things, puzzles that suggest receding depths of meaning. Call it the domino effect—an object is introduced and, although its significance is unclear, it nevertheless precipitates a range of responses and effects. By virtue of their associations with Laura’s disappearance and BOB, the ceiling fan, record player, and the traffic light transform into what, borrowing from Ayers, we may consider as “demonic” objects. The buffeting of the trees seems to connote nature’s agitation over the active presence of evil in *Twin Peaks* and/or the agency of Ghostwood forest’s ghosts. Accentuating this quasi-life of objects still further are objects that we may consider as “inspired”—that seem within the context of the program to possess a kind of sentience. This is undoubtedly most evident in the case of the Log Lady’s log (Catherine E. Coulson), as well as with the owls that are famously—but in keeping with the series’ approach to objects more generally—“not what they seem.”

The Log Lady Margaret Lanterman acts as *Twin Peaks*’s resident sibyl, dispensing cryptic advice and prognostications that she claims are conveyed to her by the log she carries as one would a child. “Can I ask her about her log?” queries Cooper of Truman in the pilot episode, reflecting the viewer’s curiosity. “Many have,” replies the Sheriff, intimating that no satisfactory answer will be forthcoming. The log, we are told, “saw something” the night Laura Palmer was murdered and later Margaret, serving as medium, conveys the log’s message to Major Briggs (Don S. Davis) that he should “deliver the message” to Cooper. Online “explanations” of *Twin Peaks* symbolism hold that the log contains the spirit of her dead husband (see, e.g., the Log Lady entry at glastonberrygrove.net). While this theory—of course—is never confirmed by the series, the capacity of inanimate objects to be “strangely vital” (Bennett 5) is everywhere affirmed by the series. The Log Lady foregrounds this most explicitly in her introduction to the penultimate episode (introductions were created by Lynch for each episode when the series was syndicated to the Bravo network) when, speaking directly to the viewer, she explains that each ring of a crosscut tree (note the emphasis on rings again) indicates a year of the tree’s life and then tells the viewer: “My log hears things

I cannot hear. But my log tells me about the sounds, about the new words. Even though it has stopped growing larger, my log is aware.” The inspiriting of her log synecdochically connects to the spiritual inhabitation of Ghostwood forest and more generally to the trees everywhere present in *Twin Peaks* that so captivate Cooper (“Sheriff, what kind of fantastic trees have you got growing around here?” asks Cooper in the pilot episode).

Connected to the forest and the trees are of course the owls that inhabit them and which are linked to the spirit world. As Cooper lies on the floor after having been shot in episode 8, the Giant appears to him with three clues, one of which is that “the owls are not what they seem.” What the owls actually are, predictably, is never confirmed, but owls appear throughout the series with increasingly ominous associations. An owl is watching, for example, at the end of episode 4 when Donna Hayward (Lara Flynn Boyle) and James seek to reclaim Laura’s necklace from its hiding place in the woods and find it missing; in episode 17, an owl appears in the woods while Cooper is urinating and Major Briggs disappears—when the Major reappears in episode 20, the only thing he recalls clearly is a giant owl; an owl is also watching when Leo wakes up and attacks Shelly (Mädchen Amick) with an axe in episode 21 and Cooper sees an owl in the trees before he enters the circle of sycamore trees in the finale. More darkly, in Cooper’s dream in episode 9, an owl’s face appears superimposed over BOB’s; in episode 14, the Log Lady translates for Cooper what the Log saw—as part of her narration, she notes that owls first were flying, then near, then finally silent; later in the same episode, preceding the death of Maddy, the Log Lady tells Cooper, “We don’t know what will happen or when. But there are owls in the Roadhouse.” Connecting owls even more fully with the spirit world, at the end of episode 16, after Leland’s death, Sheriff Truman wonders where BOB is now and the scene cuts to woods at night with the camera moving close to the ground. The scene freezes and the episode ends with the sudden appearance of the owl, again metonymically connecting the owl with BOB. A pictograph of an owl in the aptly named Owl Cave is a piece to the puzzle of how to access the spirit world and, in episode 26, an owl is shown flying around the night sky within the silhouette of a hooded figure.

Beyond being simply birds of ill omen, the owls in *Twin Peaks*, like the Log Lady’s log, hold within them a kind of alien sentience. Whether they are spies, gathering information for the spirit world, vessels containing inhabiting spirits, or forms taken by the spirits

themselves is uncertain; what is clear, however, is that the owls are more than birds. The series insists that we look at trees and birds as inspirited objects gathering within them unanswerable riddles.

A fourth technique used to defamiliarize objects in the series is either to present them in pieces or to multiply them. Two striking examples of fragmentation are Jacques Renault's mouth in episode 7 and the wall tile in episode 11. As I will discuss below, human beings within *Twin Peaks* are frequently presented as or confused with objects, and one way *Twin Peaks* performs this conflation is through characters and shots that fragment the body. This of course is the case with Phillip Gerard, the one-armed man, and Nadine, the one-eyed lady—as well as perhaps with the wheelchair-bound Eileen Hayward (Mary Jo Deschanel)—but it is rendered much more viscerally in extreme close-ups of body parts that metonymically accentuate a particular affect. In episode 7, this is first the state of affairs with Dr. Jacoby, who, having been assaulted by Hank, loses consciousness as the camera zooms in for an extreme close-up on his left eye before dissolving into a spinning roulette wheel (yet another spinning circle) at the appropriately named *One Eyed Jacks* where Cooper—posing as a drug financier—hires Jacques Renault to move drugs across the border. As Jacques lasciviously recalls the night at the cabin when Laura died, the camera moves in for an extreme close-up of his mouth, the shot echoing and accentuating the repulsiveness of both the story told and the teller.

Fragmentation is used as an especially disorienting defamiliarizing technique most dramatically at the start of episode 11, which is introduced by a crash of scream-like noise and darkness. The camera pulls back within what appears to be a dark tunnel as a distorted child-like voice intones “daddy” and we hear what seems to be a beeping heart monitor indicate cardiac arrest. As it pulls further back, now spinning, the camera emerges from a hole subsequently revealed to be one among many. As it continues to pull back, the holes at last resolve themselves into sound-dampening wall tiles. Sheriff Truman steps into the scene, repeating “Leland Leland,” and then the camera focuses on Leland's sideways head before rotating 90 degrees so that Leland's image is upright. The effect here is clearly one of disorientation as the camera expressionistically renders—and interpellates the viewer into—Leland's confusion.

A similar sort of disorienting effect is created by uncanny multiplication, rendered in the series for both comedic and dramatic effect. Multiplication in space is used in an absurd and lighthearted way in the

series, such as in the pilot episode when Cooper and Sheriff Truman are greeted in the station by rows upon rows of stacked doughnuts (“a policeman’s dream!” enthuses Cooper) and a similarly comedic effect is evoked by a row of six cigar-smoking police officers all adopting the same posture (backed incongruously by opera music—is there no bar in Washington state that plays rock or country/Western?) when Donna meets James at Wallies Hideout in episode 22. More portentously, in episode 15, when James comes looking for Maddy at the Palmer house, Leland’s living room is shown filled with hundreds of golf balls, which reflects the mania the possessed Leland experiences following the murder of Maddy. (Although space doesn’t permit developing this more fully here, the uncanny multiplication of things also arguably functions through temporal repetition as well, such as with the series’ fixations on telephones and shoes.)

Connected to fragmented images of human beings and their duplication and the inverse of the inspiring of objects is a fifth and final technique of defamiliarization: the objectification of human beings. While things in *Twin Peaks* assume a kind of quasi-life, living



Figure 1.2 A Policeman’s Dream.

creatures become thing-like. This effect is achieved through fragmentation of the body, as indicated above, and the prominent placement of taxidermied animals, as well as through death and severe injury, duplication, and possession.

Through death, severe injury, and duplication, the ontological privileging of the human subject as special is undercut. Wrapped in plastic or stuffed into a golf bag, the bodies of Laura and Maddy become things to be investigated or tossed into the boot of the auto. (Indeed, the conflict in the pilot episode between Albert Rosenfeld [Miguel Ferrer] and the town as represented by Sheriff Truman is over the ontological status of Laura's dead body, with Albert asserting its status as essentially a thing to be fragmented and probed for evidence and Sheriff Truman resisting this position and asserting that the corpse possesses a greater social significance.) Leo, after being shot by Hank, becomes a "vegetable" for a time, partially recovering his cognitive abilities only to become a shock-collar-wearing slave to Windom Earle. Combining the inspiriting of objects with the objectification of human subjects is the bizarre fate of Josie Packard in episode 23. Discovered at the Great Northern, Josie kills Thomas Eckhardt and then collapses. Following this, the viewer is treated to the image of Josie—presumably her soul—trapped within the knob of a night table drawer. The objectification of human beings, however, is rendered most literally at the end of episode 26 when Windom Earle murders a hapless drifter (Rusty, played by Ted Raimi) and transforms him into a human chess piece.

Doppelgangers and, most dramatically, possessed individuals within the series similarly undercut the uniqueness of human subjects and force a consideration of human beings as merely things to be copied or inhabited. Doppelgangers are apparent in the cases of Laura and Maddy, Laura and the "cousin" of the Man From Another Place in Cooper's dream ("She's my cousin... but doesn't she look almost exactly like Laura Palmer?" episode 2), and Cooper in the series finale ("doppelganger!" exclaims the Man from Another Place as Cooper flees, pursued by a copy of himself). The possession of Leland by BOB is, of course, central to the series—as is the possession of Gerard by MIKE. In episode 6, MIKE explains to Cooper that, having cut his connection with BOB by severing Gerard's arm, MIKE nevertheless "remained close to this vessel, inhabiting him from time to time." In episode 16, BOB, speaking through Leland, refers to Leland as "a good vehicle." In each instance, the autonomy and indeed personhood of the subject is negated. People, like owls or logs, hotels or

percolators, are simply things to be filled and inhabited—vessels and vehicles.

The Rebounding of the Rock

In Nigel Thrift's "Understanding the Material Practices of Glamour," Thrift considers the ways in which contemporary commodities "charm" consumers through the production of "glamour," a specific type of allure that "blurs the boundary between person and thing in order to produce greater captivation" (291). Glamour, in Thrift's estimation, is a form of "secular magic . . . conjured up by the commercial sphere" (297) and exerted by commodities that participate in the construction of worlds in which consumers can realize alternative versions of the self (298). These worlds, which sometimes "cohere into a system that actively shapes intelligibility," have "their own practices of *rendering prominent*, which bring together humans and nonhumans in all kinds of distributed combinations" (295). *Twin Peaks*, itself a commodity conjured up by the commercial sphere, presents a richly imagined world to be imaginatively inhabited by viewers wholly in line with Thrift's observation that "nowadays the allure in allure is largely produced by the creation of worlds in which the boundaries between alive and not alive and material and immaterial have become increasingly blurred, so that what was considered alive can become thing-like and what was considered dead is able to show signs of life" (Thrift 296). *Twin Peaks* charms viewers by inviting them into a world of spellbinding objects around which the narrative is constructed and that bring together the characters as they blur the lines between person and thing, sentient and nonsentient, and living and dead.

Peter Stallybrass too considers the strange kind of "magical" transformation capitalism enacts upon things in his essay "Marx's Coat." To turn a thing into a commodity is to evacuate its "particularity and thingliness" (183). Quoting Marx, Stallybrass notes that to regard an object in light of its exchange value is to empty it out of "any useful function. Its physical existence is, as Marx puts it, 'phantom-like'" (184). Stallybrass continues, "To fetishize commodities . . . is to fetishize the invisible, the immaterial, the supra-sensible. The fetishism of the commodity inscribes *immateriality* as the defining feature of capitalism" (184). Marx's *Capital* was in Stallybrass's pithy summation, "Marx's attempt to give the coat back to its owner"—that is, to foreground objects as the products of "human labor and

love” rather than as the “evacuated nonobject[s]” of exchange (187). This is to return things to themselves, to see them in their particularity in light not only of the toil and sweat that went into their creation and their purposes, but also in light of the “history, memory, and desire...materialized in objects that are touched and loved and worn” (186).

Twin Peaks renders prominent the fetishistic reification of the material as it magically transforms commodities back into strange and wonderful things. The various forms of defamiliarized objects summarized above—displaced, ominous matter, inspirited matter, fragmented or multiplied matter, and objectified—combine to create a world marked by the gothicized insistence of commonplace things: objects in *Twin Peaks* demand to be noticed and present themselves in ways that chasten fantasies of human mastery. Matter throughout the series—like the flickering morgue light or the fish in the percolator or the buck’s head that won’t stay on the wall—repeatedly is presented as unruly, recalcitrant, even whimsical. In some ways, this is the reverse of Cooper’s signature Tibetan Method of investigative deduction. In episode 2, Cooper explains that he has gained from a dream “knowledge of a deductive technique involving mind-body coordination operating hand in hand with the deepest level of intuition.” This technique involves throwing rocks at bottles set on a tree stump as names of suspects are read aloud. This zen-like method of investigation establishes a kind of semiotic circuit in which the subconscious mind etches what the universe dictates in glass by way of the rock. When the name Leo Johnson is read, for example, the rock breaks the bottle, suggesting that Leo is a prime suspect. When the name Shelly Johnson is read, the rock ricochets off a large rock and hits Andy in the head—prompting Sheriff Truman’s quip, “Where there’s no sense, there’s no feeling.” But all objects in *Twin Peaks* are like rocks that strike one in the head, forcefully reminding us of the matter of matter, and what the series insistently establishes is that there *is* feeling where there is no sense. The universe of *Twin Peaks* resists the harmonious oneness of Cooper’s method and instead substitutes untranslatable hieroglyphics for meaningful significations. Things in *Twin Peaks* invariably rebound, introduce mysteries rather than solve them—and insist that we see them again precisely as mysterious things.

This foregrounding of objects within *Twin Peaks* as objects in their own right that are also puzzles that forever resist solving aligns *Twin Peaks* with the speculative or weird realism advanced by the philosophical school referred to as object-oriented ontology (OOO). As

articulated by Graham Harman, Ian Bogost, Levi R. Bryant, Quentin Meillassoux, and others, OOO challenges the “correlationalist” perspective that assumes that “if things exist, they do so only *for us*” (Bogost 4). In contrast, “OOO puts *things* at the center of being. We humans are elements, but not the sole elements, of philosophical interest.” OOO advances a “democracy of objects,” contending “that nothing has special status, but that everything exists equally” (Bogost 6). That objects exist outside of and beyond human perception of them introduces the speculative or weird element to object-oriented ontology. Objects withdraw from knowing, weirdly and forever evading complete understanding. According to Harman, “The object is a dark crystal veiled in a private vacuum: irreducible to its own pieces, and equally irreducible to its outward relation with other things” (*Quadruple* 47).

It is precisely this strangeness of objects—and indeed of the world in which they exist—that *Twin Peaks* repeatedly insists we acknowledge. This is a fundamental component of the program’s allure, a method through which it captivates the viewer and one exemplifying what Jane Bennett refers to as the “vitality” of objects: the “capacity of things . . . 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” (viii). In this sense, things in *Twin Peaks* are foregrounded as Latoureaan actants that manifest what Bennett refers to as “*Thing-Power*: the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle” (6). Thing-power “gestures toward the strange ability of ordinary, man-made items [and, we might add, naturally existing objects as well] to exceed their status as objects and to manifest traces of independence or aliveness, constituting the outside of our own experience” (xvi).

For theorists of things such as Bennett and Bogost, recognition of the intermeshing of human beings in networks or assemblages of things is a starting point for a reconceived ethical program that undercuts anthropocentrist arrogance. With Stallybrass, new materialists and object-oriented ontologists ask, “What have we done to things to have such contempt for them?” (Stallybrass 203), and attempt to envision a new, more harmonious relation between human beings and the world that “denies the human subject the sovereign central position” (Alaimo 16). What *Twin Peaks* reveals, however, is the gothic underside to such a reconceptualization. What the program renders prominent in its process of worlding is the anxiety that underlies the

decentering of the human. When things come alive and human beings are reduced to things, we enter the affective terrain of horror.

Conclusion: Boxes within Boxes and the Perfect Arrangement of All Things

In the series finale to *Twin Peaks*, Andrew Packard takes the key recovered from the final box within the puzzle box left to him by Thomas Eckhart and uses it to open a booby-trapped safety deposit box. He (and the viewer) has just enough time to appreciate the note exposed reading “Got you, Andrew! Love, Thomas,” before the bomb goes off and the mystery of the puzzle box is revealed to be a dark joke from beyond the grave. More generally, the joke in *Twin Peaks* is on the viewer. As Telotte appreciates, *Twin Peaks* repeatedly dangles before the viewer the prospect of some coherent vision of the universe where, whether it is Cooper’s Tibetan Method or Ben Horne’s “perfect arrangement of all things,” objects work in concert with one another to produce some intelligible whole. But there is no Rosetta Stone to interpreting the language of *Twin Peaks*’s things because they are not signs with stable signifieds. Instead, like the bomb in the safety deposit box, things in *Twin Peaks* are dark jokes that resist attempts at recovering meaning. *Twin Peaks* is thus finally a commodity that reifies commodities only to then remystify them as unknowable. Nothing in *Twin Peaks* is what it seems; what they are, however, is never clear—and it is this provocation of objects, anticipating theories of things developed decades later, that participates in fostering the program’s allure, captivating viewers seeking to make sense of the matter of *Twin Peaks*.

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Substance Abuse: Special Agent Dale Cooper, “What’s the Matter?”

Martha P. Nochimson

What if that solid-looking rock—that one over there—turns out to be a porous maelstrom of whizzing particles in the void, particles so mysteriously unstable that they might occupy the same place at the same time or appear in two different spaces at once? The predication of the visible world as a predictable and substantial-seeming surface that masks a deeper, ever moving, ever open to unexpected permutations level of particle activity contradicts all common sense evidence. But this is, in fact, how quantum mechanics asks you to understand said rock—and all matter, including your body. And so does David Lynch in *Twin Peaks*.

Or so I shall contend. This constitutes a revision of my earlier claims about Lynch’s groundbreaking series—and a departure from anything else being written about the show—but I am taking my cues from Lynch himself, as usual. The first time I wrote about *Twin Peaks* in “Desire Under the Douglas Firs” in 1992, it was the result of a phone conversation with Lynch in 1990 during which he talked to me for 30 exhilarating minutes about *Twin Peaks* in his oblique and poetic way.¹ Lynch never explains his work, and he didn’t on that occasion either, but everything about his indirection nudged me toward affirmation of what I had been thinking about the vision of interior reality embedded in his series.

Both the series and what Lynch said to me during that first phone call and in a number of subsequent conversations suggested that *Twin Peaks* was informed by a hopeful sense of connection among people,

and between people and the universe. And I used the best framework of thought I could reference back then for this insight in both “Desire Under the Douglas Firs” and my first book about him, *The Passion of David Lynch: Wild at Heart in Hollywood*: the ideas of Carl Jung. But theorizing *Twin Peaks* using Jung made me uneasy. He was not very helpful in explaining to my satisfaction why the radiant Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) ultimately was defeated by BOB (Frank Silva), and he was no help in interpreting the compelling, unique images of things and bodies that pop off the screen in all the early *Twin Peaks* episodes, some of the second season shows, and in the series finale.

So I was excited and intrigued when, during an interview with Lynch in March 2010, he handed me the solution to my problems.² Out of the blue, Lynch began holding forth on his interest in the stories and poetry of the Hindu Vedas, as he had never done before, and it was like coming upon the missing link. Lynch had never actually said anything unsolicited about Jung. I now gather that, for Lynch, Jung was not absolutely out of the ballpark—and probably he was relieved that there was a student of his work who had come that close to the frame of reference that is dynamically present to him, the Vedic picture of a unified field at the heart of the cosmos. But if Jung’s ideas and the Vedas share a sense of a linked humanity, there are crucial differences. Jung is essentially concerned only with interior human realities while the Vedas address the way we have misperceived the material nature of the external world and how that is connected to human interiority.

Materiality—that’s what had been missing in my first book about Lynch. And there was more. That 2010 interview also encouraged me to continue with speculations I had already begun about Lynch’s layman’s fascination with physics. It had not been unusual for Lynch to mention to me his interest in physics, but in March 2010, we spoke more extensively about quantum mechanics, and links between modern physics and the Vedas quickly took shape. The Vedas express a concept of matter that is surprisingly like the quantum description of materiality as solid-seeming, but essentially unbound and porous. But more to the point for our purposes, there is a similarity between the Vedic and quantum versions of matter and Lynch’s distinctive juxtaposition onscreen of images of objects as we expect them to be and sudden lapses in the dependability we expect from the physical world. The upshot of all Lynch’s revelations has been that I can now see that I was correct in my initial surmise that his work is about connection, but wrong in thinking of the problem in terms of psychology and the

mind only. The Log Lady's prologue to episode 9 has taken on new meaning: "Does our thinking affect what goes on outside us and what goes on inside us? I think it does."³

What Lynch told me led to my second book about him, *David Lynch Swerves: Uncertainty From Lost Highway to Inland Empire*. Lynch's later films opened up before my eyes once I was able to recognize that in them we see a mature cinematic vocabulary predicated on the bi-level nature of matter. But that vocabulary didn't come out of nowhere. Nothing then was more natural than to take another look at things and bodies in *Twin Peaks* to see whether Lynch was already developing it. And there they were, the paradoxes of boundless, fluctuating materiality. They are drawn tentatively, not in the bold strokes of his later films. However, they are abundantly present at many crucial moments, and particularly in Dale Cooper's encounters with the indeterminate physicality of a cup that at the same time contains liquid coffee, frozen coffee, and an oily substance, and in Lynch's portrayal of a man who is two men at the same time, both Leland Palmer (Ray Wise) and BOB. Understanding the vocabulary about matter that emerges from these paradoxes helps us to understand why the answers to the mystery of Laura Palmer's death are to be found in just those moments when matter does "strange things" when, the rest of the time, when everything looks as we expect it to, the clues confuse.

As I shall discuss in detail below, much of the confusion is sponsored by the iron grip of what Lynch calls "The Marketplace," the terrain on which ordinary business is carried out—which exists in contrast with the larger, cosmic reality. And here is where Lynch's works distinguish themselves from almost all other American film and television that dabble in alternate realities. Where the ordinary world of banking and grocery stores is almost always represented in the American entertainment media as the primary reality, Lynch depicts the Marketplace as a powerful illusion that generally precludes even the smallest intimations of what Lynch considers the cosmic truths beyond the familiar appearances of daily life.⁴ *Twin Peaks* is threaded by moments when for certain characters those appearances are pierced, and Dale Cooper is the primary seer. Or he is at first.

If we encountered in our daily lives the anomalous eruptions of the material plane Cooper witnesses, we would most likely be terrified, as indeed quantum particle scientists themselves would be if they ran into random particles and the void outside of the laboratory. But Lynch makes *Twin Peaks* a kind of perceptual playground by letting

us see these deviations through Cooper's delighted response to them, at least at the beginning of the series. By the end of the series, certain changes in Cooper's character over which Lynch had no control altered the show dramatically. Cooper still encounters the strangeness of the material plane, but now he is frightened—out of his wits. Exploring how and why this change took place will be as integral to this study as will a rigorous examination of the special character of materiality during Cooper's journey.

For the benefit of readers with little or no acquaintance with the aspects of quantum physics relevant to Lynch's work, I offer here a very brief, broad-brush account of the fundamental details. Lynch takes his cues from quantum physics experiments with which he is somewhat familiar that have shown that, contrary to what Newtonian science has asserted for hundreds of years, one particle *can* be in two different spaces at the same time, what is known in quantum physics as superposition.⁵ Then there is entanglement, a phenomenon that occurs when two particles that once were joined, but now are separated, respond as one to a stimulus that directly affects only one of them, no matter how far apart the once-joined particles now are. Under the conditions of entanglement, cause and effect become extremely mysterious. A particle light years away from the particle with which it was entangled can react simultaneously to an inciting incident, although there is no physical connection as we understand it between the two particles and no physical connection between one of the entangled particles and the event. That is to say, entanglement baffles our common-sense expectation that we can analyze the relationship between cause and effect. We currently have no way to talk about what happens to entangled particles.⁶

The nature of a particle when it is entangled or in superposition strains every concept we have ever been taught. Under those conditions, it is neither one nor two, but something in between that our verbal language cannot describe. Lynch's visual vocabulary in *Twin Peaks*, however, is extraordinarily effective in conveying that in-between state of matter in which it is neither one nor two, but something more liminal and strange. To understand what Lynch is about, we need to think of these in-between moments as revelations of a deeper material reality—not as illusions or dreams, as so many critics are inclined to see them.

The images that Lynch uses to depict this deeper reality are inspired not only by the experimental validation of quantum mechanics but also by the Vedic version of things and bodies that is itself a kind of

particle science. At the heart of Vedic physics is a creation myth that depicts the moment when matter appeared out of the void as the result of a certain mystical combination of sounds. By a process the Vedas assert from a poetic point of view, since no experimental verification is possible, at the moment of creation of the world we inhabit, these sounds vibrated together in a particular way. Out of the waves of these sounds, the appearance of matter as we know it was born. The Vedic creation myth has not generated the practical inventions, like the GPS, that quantum science has, but it suggests a similar perceptual problem: say what quantum mechanics and the Vedas may, that rock over there looks solid. At the same time, hard as that rock may feel, quantum mechanics and Vedas tell us that it is filled with void as well as particles.

Quantum mechanics and Vedic literature differ in many ways, but they overlap in their mutual understanding of our ordinary perceptions of solid matter as being illusory. It is in this overlap that they combine to aid us in our understanding of Lynch as an artist and his relationship to dubious certainties about the nature of things that have become almost sacred in our materialist society. Lynch is ever fascinated and alarmed by the hallucinatory nature of our belief in a thoroughly solid, dependable material plane that the Marketplace, to use Lynch's term, continues to tout as the most dependable facts we know. The Marketplace avoids and even suppresses any inkling that those things it offers for sale are just a jumble of moving particles. The quantum version of matter is bad for business and also quite frightening. We are encouraged to stay calm and buy new cars.⁷

One caveat. It would be a mistake to see the influence of quantum science on Lynch's vision in *Twin Peaks* as anything but poetic. As Lynch says, he doesn't know nitty-gritty physics; rather he has a rudimentary, nonprofessional sense of its mysteries, to which he has been exposed primarily by Dr. John Hagelin, a quantum physicist with an atypical perspective. Unlike the majority of quantum physicists, Hagelin has worked out some complex mathematical explanations for why, although the material plane of things appears and is random and uncertain, the larger universe beyond the plane of immediate human experience is neither random nor uncertain, but a unified field much as the Vedas picture it (see Hagelin).

Hagelin's unorthodox version of physics speaks to Lynch, the cinematic poet; experimental science gives Lynch a headache.⁸ The uncertainty of the quantum images does not. Lynch does not share the anxiety produced by the limitless possibilities of the quantum

universe produced in theorists from Lucretius to quantum physicist Niels Bohr. Over the centuries, they have sought experimentally to explore the mechanics of particle science to explain why we do not actually see what it describes, but rather solid-looking objects.⁹ *Twin Peaks* attempts no scientific treatment of this conundrum; rather, it uses the difference between solid material appearances and limitless material reality as a way of enabling the audience to experience the crucial differences between interpreting different perceptual possibilities with wonder and regarding them with fear.

In other words, following Lynch's lead, I contend that he is portraying the fissures in ordinary perception in *Twin Peaks* as crucial realities, not psychological aberrations. And I believe that if we are to engage Lynch's work, it is necessary that we understand the way he inverts what we take for illusion and what for reality. Herein lies the source of the hypnotic fascination of *Twin Peaks*, and the sensation that our minds are "being blown." In *Twin Peaks*, Lynch is depicting the comfortable, attractive surfaces of the town as the illusions, and BOB, MIKE (Al Strobel), the Giant (Carel Struycken), the Man From Another Place (Michael J. Anderson), and, in their ways, the old waiter (Hank Worden) and the Log Lady (Catherine E. Coulson), as messengers from the realities of the universe beyond immediate human experience. To some, this contention may be even more disconcerting than the experience of *Twin Peaks* at its most uncanny.

But what is the alternative? The price of appraising *Twin Peaks* with Sherlockian eyes, as is usual in Lynch criticism, is that we lose Lynch, since Sherlockian detection depends entirely on a definition of matter that is impossible in the quantum/Vedic universe as Lynch understands it. And, indeed, in *Twin Peaks*, while Lynch was in control of the series, brilliant, curmudgeonly Sherlockian forensic scientist Albert Rosenfield (Miguel Ferrer) quite noticeably brings so very little in the way of understanding of the murder of Laura Palmer. There is only so far the analysis of the rope with which Laura was bound will take us. In contrast, the characters that defy our common-sense idea of reality and take Cooper beyond physical surfaces are ultimately his path to discovery.

I do not undertake this journey to affirm the images from quantum physics and the Hindi Vedas that we find in *Twin Peaks* as truth; that is the job of students of science and religion, and there is much disagreement there. Rather, I undertake this journey to affirm how the images Lynch has derived from them quantum physics and the Vedas have enabled Lynch to speak a visual language that addresses the truth

in us deeper than the logic of verbal constructs that so obsesses the Sherlockian. Another important part of this journey will be to deal with the virtual disappearance from the episodes in *Twin Peaks's* second season of the images inspired by the Vedas and quantum science. This was the period when Lynch lost control of the series while he was making *Wild at Heart* (1990). That loss of control predictably caused large changes in what audiences saw on screen; and we will get to that in due course.

The Marketplace, the Cosmos, and a Small Northwestern Town: First Impressions

When we first see Cooper, he is dictating a message for Diane, back home at the FBI offices, giving details about the weather and his expenses that place him firmly within familiar Marketplace coordinates of time, space, and money. Diane, a disembodied woman we will never see or hear, becomes a running joke, but a joke with serious undertones. When Cooper records messages for Diane, he seems completely within our comfort zone. The detective as we know and understand him with his grasp of order and facts—just like the ur-detective of the mass media, Sherlock Holmes—Cooper will surely put an end to the disarray of a shocking crime in *Twin Peaks*. But Diane's persistent invisibility playfully insinuates a phantom into Cooper's solid world.

Similarly, the images of the main title montage of objects and bodies seem solid representations of a terrain that is beautiful and familiar—or they would except for the lap dissolves among them that create just a tinge of mystery.¹⁰ Moreover, once the body of Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) is discovered, little by little Lynch intensifies the presence of an uncanny activity in ordinary things that becomes important in the search for understanding of Laura's death. He asks us, for example, to focus on the ceiling fan upstairs in the Palmer home at the moment that Sarah Palmer (Grace Zabriskie) discovers that Laura is not in her bedroom, an atypical choice at such an emotionally charged time. Ceiling fans are literally "part of the furniture" in mystery stories, often mere atmospheric markers of an exotic or seedy setting for the drama of human emotions, but always stable, the part of the detective story that will not suddenly change in front of our eyes, as characters often do. In *Twin Peaks*, the fan achieves a presence that is as indeterminate as the human situation it looms above because the sound design encourages us to listen to the air



Figure 2.1 The Dangling Phone.

churning loudly through the fan's revolving blades in a new way. The air is a counterforce, a power already there before the fan begins to move, made more visible and audible by the man-made machine. As Sarah Palmer runs up the stairs, something else is set in motion aside from her anxiety; there is an energy aside from hers in her home.

A similar effect occurs when Lynch comes in for a close-up of the curled telephone cord left dangling when Leland is told by Sheriff Truman (Michael Ontkean) of the death of his daughter while he is talking on the phone to his distraught wife. As the cord hangs there, the vibration of Sarah's despairing voice continues to course through its looped wire. The long take of this phone cord is another atypical directorial choice. But as the first season of *Twin Peaks* progresses, such choices become the norm and redefine the audience's ideas about the relationship between energy and instruments of culture.

It is not a coincidence that we see fan and phone cord as we have never seen objects before at the very time that we discover Laura's death. Lynch's construction of Cooper's investigation encourages us to see animate materiality as crucial to the police case, so crucial that it is often given parity with the human drama. As Sarah makes her

heartbreaking discovery, we look at a ceiling fan as well as at her face, and when Leland drops the phone at the news of Laura's death, Lynch opts for a long pan down the telephone cord that is given almost as much emphasis as the reaction shots of either Laura's father and mother. Interpretations of these choices as merely interestingly stylistic devices miss the point. In Vedic terms, vibrating sound is shaking up the illusion of solidity here. In quantum terms, since Sarah's voice moves in particle form through a phone cord, while her body is in a room miles away, Sarah is effectively in superposition, metaphorically in two places at the same time. There is also an enigmatic connection made here and also in the image of the ceiling fan between objects and sound vibrations. In Lynchian terms, a small town in Washington State is visible as an environment more charged than the ordinary flat, lifeless terrain of conventional detective stories, which are routinely filled with coursing energies, but only those of human desires.

The buildings in *Twin Peaks* are enveloped by our sense of air animating the Douglas firs, and sometimes misted over with clouds, and our sense of the water cascading forcefully in the waterfall below the Great Northern Hotel, and gently as it becomes the flow of a stream. There is a drama and a modulation to the energy of the landscape, as there is to the emotions of the people on it. Often electricity is given a presence; it is not merely understood as part of an inert backdrop, but rather as a perceptible energy coursing through the wiring and tubing in which it is encased, as in the flickering of light and buzzing sound of electricity in the sign at the brothel One Eyed Jacks, or when the light in the morgue where Laura's corpse is being held blinks off and on. And the night scenes in the forest are filled with the typical Lynchian image of partial, only dimly illuminating flashlights, suggesting how small our resources are in the face of huge, unknown energies out there in the world we barely see and barely know. We are moving past the purely psychological in our perception of the animate world.

It isn't just nature and mechanisms that are touched with a different kind of vigor. The materiality of the human body is also unconventionally depicted. In Cooper's dream of the Red Room, the energy of speech reshapes the familiar cadences of the spoken language, and an uncanny energy of dance moves the body of the Man From Another Place, Cooper's host; when the Little Man rubs his hands together, the gesture releases the electric energy in his hands. The body of Audrey Horne (Sherilyn Fenn), the daughter of town entrepreneur Ben Horne (Richard Beymer), is also sometimes depicted as a flow

of spontaneously animated particles. In the pilot episode, when she mischievously sends the Scandinavians her father hopes will invest in his Ghostwood project packing by telling them about Laura's death, Audrey is consciously using her young, sexy body in a conventional way to undermine Ben's plans, out of high-spirited, teenaged rebellion. But in the next episode, alone in her father's office, she undulates sensuously as though her body was simply flowing in the air and she has gotten out of its way to allow it to happen. Later, in episode 2, when she breaks into dance in the Double R Diner to a tune on the juke box, the same tune the Man From Another Place dances to in Cooper's dream, like him, her body seems to make visible the flow of particles that takes place without anyone making it happen. And it is this aspect of her and her odd concentration on physical objects that makes her fascination with Cooper and his with her a part of the mystery that surrounds Laura. Leland Palmer's body also breaks into dance in the same mysterious way, albeit not with Audrey's mysterious beauty, but as a form of the pain and distress inflicted by his entanglement with BOB. These fissures in ordinary perception are not as startling as Fred Madison's (Bill Pullman) transformation into Pete Dayton (Balthazar Getty) in front of our eyes in *Lost Highway* (1997) and in our ears, but they do prefigure Lynch's more daring later visualizations of matter as being as open and filled with possibilities as spirit.

Much closer to what Lynch, in more recent work, has shown as the flow of energy in materiality is the entanglement of Leland Palmer and BOB, which Lynch builds up to very gradually. Initially, BOB seems to be a figment of Sarah Palmer's imagination. But slowly, as other people see him, he takes on a more equivocal existence. BOB's full implications as a part of the Laura Palmer murder mystery only become available in episodes 13–17 when, with BOB's murder of Maddy (Sheryl Lee), his entanglement with Leland as the vehicle for the deadly assault makes BOB and Leland each more than one and less than two as Laura's murderers. We're forced by the limitations of the language to use the plural word "murderers." But there is no true plural here; rather, there is instead something that quantum mechanics has shown to be possible and yet inexpressible in the language and concepts that we have at our disposal.

The eyes and ears the series gives the audience allow the viewers the potential to pierce the surface of matter to the life surging below (and above?) it. The Log Lady is one of Lynch's major facilitators. She provides few ordinary clues; rather, she is a forceful presence as

an enigmatic reader and listener to the world of matter. “What is a tear?” she asks in her prologue to episode 3. “What is creamed corn?” she wants us to wonder in a later prologue (to episode 9), which introduces an episode in which creamed corn moves mysteriously from a meals-on-wheels plate to the cupped hands of a little boy. Similarly, she tells us that her log speaks because it is alive although it is no longer part of a growing tree (prologue to episode 28), and she implicitly expresses her dismay that all around her is evidence that this knowledge is being either ignored, repressed, or masked.

Nailed, Stuffed, and Shellacked

The images that convey the mysterious energy of things are juxtaposed with images that defamiliarize the official version of the physical world as a dependable solid stage on which mutable human passions are played out. In juxtaposition with the flows that Lynch reveals to us, he conjures images of how the Marketplace relentlessly manufactures objects that mime the appearance of nature, but depleted of its energy. From this contrast grows an unorthodox view of Marketplace objects as comic appearances, stiffly nailed, stuffed, and shellacked, and absolutely silent, epitomized particularly by the rooms in the Great Northern Hotel.

Ben Horne’s establishment is a monument to the rigor mortis of a culture of pseudo-nature. To alert us to the lumpish deadness of Marketplace images of the world of objects and bodies, Lynch’s camera takes time out from recording human events to crawl over the bedposts in Cooper’s room that look like tree trunks, and a gun rack over Cooper’s bed that holds the gun in place with objects that look like goat horns. The rooms at the Great Northern that we see from time to time are all decorated in that manner and often feature stuffed birds, mounted fish, and heavily varnished nature paintings, sometimes embellished by the stuffed corpses of birds in bas-relief against a shellacked sky. There’s a certain antic inertia to these images. Walls are completely wood-paneled boards that, unlike the Log Lady’s living log, stand as a bulwark against living energy. Man-made fossilization of the natural is everywhere in *Twin Peaks*: heads of dead stuffed animals pop up in all sorts of rooms; and the objectified portrait of Laura as prom queen threads the series and substitutes for her. Laura’s cousin, Maddy Ferguson (Sheryl Lee), is murdered by Leland/BOB in front of a cheezily varnished idyllic nature painting in the Palmer house, against which she is brutally thrust; the entrance to

Ben Horne's wood-paneled office through which he and others enter is elevated as if they are walking onto a stage. All are evidence of cultural petrifications of the world.

From this perspective, the activities of the Marketplace, even the drug trade in Twin Peaks's criminal underworld, become visible as imitations of life. For Lynch, all speculation to the contrary, giving oneself over to drugs is another way of preventing oneself from surrendering (or opening up) to life. Drugs take possession of human sensibility and potential for creativity much as BOB does when he takes a character over, as we see in Laura, where both drugs and BOB fight to possess her. This use of images to conjure for us a vision of the enormity of life and the perverse cultural initiatives that diminish it in our eyes is the stamp that Lynch put on the series that lifts it above the level of melodrama and ordinary detective fiction.

As long as Lynch was actively involved in the early episodes, the series was marked by what I am calling the quantum poetry of open forms of matter roiling under and behind the artificial stasis of culturally created surfaces. But because *Twin Peaks* was a collaborative project, the landscape was, even in those early episodes, not as fully "Lynchian" as it might have been. Particularly at odds with what Lynch had in mind is the way Mark Frost took the lead in portraying the fictional television soap opera *Invitation to Love* that plays on a number of television sets in Twin Peaks. *Invitation to Love* is not an object; but it is a bunch of electrical impulses that look like people interacting via the technology of television, and that would have been another opportunity for showing how the Marketplace reduces life to the appearance of a controlled substance. But Frost only exploited Twin Peaks's favorite soap opera for clichéd jokes.

Although Lynch never got into detail with me about what he had originally intended, I glean from what he did say that he intended *Invitation to Love* to be a means of showing how culture endows human situations with a clarity they don't actually possess in contrast with the muddled, inexplicable behavior of the characters. Lynch's presentation of the soap opera would have contrasted the legibility of popular melodrama with the inscrutable tragi-comic convolutions of Norma (Peggy Lipton) and Ed's (Everett McGill) frustrated love; the noble sado-masochism of Sheriff Truman and Josie Packard's (Joan Chen) love affair; and all the other relational liminalities in the series.

Still, until the near fatal turn while Lynch was less connected to the series—small deviations from Lynch's vision notwithstanding—Cooper

seemed destined to surmount the nailed, stuffed, and shellacked world of the Marketplace through the power of a greater vision of forces beyond it. It seemed that in being able to see beyond ordinary cultural constructs, Cooper was becoming adept at forming partnerships of sorts with messengers of good from beyond cultural limits and developing a way of seeing messengers of evil for what they are. While Lynch never arrogated to himself the power to explain the evil in *Twin Peaks* that killed Laura Palmer, in the early episodes he did assert, through Cooper, the power to represent it in a way that never diminished either its ability to cause trouble and suffering or the human capacity for taking a stand against it.

Tidings from the Unified Center of Being

Serious evil and human hope and goodness butt heads within the quantum reality of infinite possibility that Lynch dramatizes in *Twin Peaks* in a way that says much about the originality of Lynch's vision. Most quantum physicists believe that the whole enterprise of ethics and morality has been, perhaps fatally, shaken by the randomness of the swerves and flows they have discovered in the behavior of particles. Quantum randomness poses such a serious threat to moral human control of culture that the founding father of quantum science, Niels Bohr, declared that anyone who isn't terrified by quantum mechanics doesn't understand the situation. Lynch is not terrified, and some would say that, ipso facto, he doesn't understand.

But Lynch holds that optimism is justified. He roots his depiction of the wonder of possibility in an oxymoronic simultaneity of limitlessness and stability: the infinite nature of particle combination and the unified field at the heart of the cosmos beyond the illusion-filled Marketplace. In *Twin Peaks*, the "beyondness" of something stable that guarantees the possibility of a clear division between good and evil is visualized by messengers from the larger cosmos, that are both good and evil. So, in the Lynchverse of *Twin Peaks*, if the quantum instability of matter may cause local disorientation, the appearance of these messengers from the beyond recuperates a cosmic stability. As long as Cooper is able to see and hear the messengers, both the good and the evil, he stands as a figure of hope.

BOB is a perfect metaphor for Niels Bohr's fear that the distinctions between good and evil must disappear in a quantumverse. But, at first, Cooper seems to be in place as the person who can do something about BOB, or at least fathom his role in Laura's death, without

diminishing the mysteries of BOB and the other messengers. What are these bodies that defy our expectations about corporeal nature? Are they dreams, fantasies? Proof of the instability of matter? Proof of the hopeful potential for limitless shapes in a quantumverse? In *Twin Peaks*, Lynch is not yet ready to go beyond presenting us with their mere existence.

The limits of the definition of these characters is announced by some of the characters themselves. One of these messengers, the Giant, makes a point of saying that he cannot reveal where he comes from, and while BOB and MIKE are silent on this subject, the Log Lady tells us in her prologues to the episodes that she cannot reveal the source of her knowledge (see, e.g., the prologue to episode 28). But none of these is merely a figment of anyone's imagination. The Giant factually takes and returns Cooper's ring, and the Log Lady is an ordinary country woman as well as a kind of Sybil. As poetic figures intertwined with the images of a physical world in flow, they are revelations of a universe in which we human beings are not completely enclosed within our own psyches, but rather we are innately connected to motivating energies from outside of ourselves.

Lynch takes his inspiration for BOB from evil presences in the Vedas called Rakshasas.¹¹ (Of course, this poetic embodiment of evil has no parallel at all in experimental quantum physics.) Vedic Rakshasas are malign shape-shifting beings that enter the space of ordinary human lives to cause trouble, as does the owl, a bird that figures in the Vedas as an evil spirit, not figuratively or mythologically, but in reality. Here is where knowing that Lynch is inspired by the Vedas rather than Jung's collective unconscious assumes special importance for the study of *Twin Peaks*. The archetypes that Jung discusses as structures deep within the collective unconscious as the animators of human actions and impulses are understood by Jung to be purely in the mind, but in the Lynch-influenced episodes of *Twin Peaks*, they are part of the external reality, as they are in the Vedas.¹² Lynch told me directly more than once that he considers them real, and as they figure within the *Twin Peaks* narrative they function to portray the impact on humanity of the beings from beyond the parentheses we have drawn around what we have decided culturally to consider the limits of the real. Lynch does not literally believe that there are Rakshasas and messengers among us, for as a human being he makes a very clear distinction between reality and making movies and television. However, as an artist, in the fiction of *Twin Peaks*, Lynch has poetically created BOB, his version of a Rakshasa, to visualize

the dire problems associated with being stuck in the illusions of the closed Marketplace.

I am not aware of benign messengers in the Vedas that serve as a source of the positive messengers in *Twin Peaks*; most likely Lynch invented them in order to create visible metaphorical cinematic presences of both good and evil in the larger Cosmos. (I suggest that in the Vedas the benign forces do not need to have a physical appearance since they inhere in the unrepresentable energies of the unified cosmic center of consciousness.) In *Twin Peaks*, the spectrum of good and bad messengers embodies the infinite range of possibilities for us, by destroying any and all discrete boundaries between life and death, the terrain of society and cosmic space, and between materiality and immateriality. New age mysticism? Not in the popular sense of the New Age as user-friendly, facile gospel of joy. On the contrary, if Lynch has found a metaphor for reassurance in the good messengers of his cinematic poetry, he has also found a way of confronting us with how extremely difficult it is to deal with evil and to defend goodness. In *Twin Peaks*, our usual defenses don't work.

Reason and deduction, which handily save the day in Sherlockian mystery tales, and acquire almost miraculous effectiveness in the television procedurals that are Holmes's most popular current media descendants, are never of any use in *Twin Peaks* in fighting against the evil messenger. Albert Rosenfield makes an impression with his almost uncanny forensic ability, buttressed by the latest technology. But Albert is of the Marketplace and deeply caught up in the illusion of stable matter. It is Cooper's yearning, uncertain receptivity to truths from beyond the Marketplace that holds the hope for piercing the mystery—even Rosenfield eventually acknowledges this—though we never learned how that insight might have made an effective difference. With Lynch's tacit removal from the show, Cooper dwindles and the helping messengers disappear. The consequences are dire.

Honey, I Shrank the Universe

After Leland's death in episode 17 and until the series finale in episode 29, *Twin Peaks* loses almost all of its initial poetry. In these episodes, a reductive Hollywood idea of normality takes over and anything that deviates from it is assumed to be not a function of vision but a mental disorder or an insubstantial fantasy. Narrative conflict is provided not by BOB and his paradoxes, but by the mental illness of Windom Earle (Kenneth Welsh). Earle is first mentioned in episode 9, at which

time he is briefly alluded to by Rosenfield as an unfortunate part of Cooper's past. As Earle and Cooper's past began to play increasingly large roles in the narrative, the scripts began to lose the Lynchian stamp, until the town shrinks, contained by all the limits that had previously been punctured by swerves.

In these episodes, Cooper's initial success attained by moving beyond ordinary limits is inverted. He is now guilty of what had initially been his most exciting talent. And although the charges against him are later revealed as the result of corruption in the FBI, Cooper remains stained by the guilt of having gone beyond FBI protocol. He is quite different from the earlier, glowing border crosser who dealt with the BOB/Leland entanglement. But then that entanglement is no longer on the *Twin Peaks* horizon.

Episode 17 marks the divide. At the end of that show, Leland having died, BOB is depicted as a dark energy that has entered into another entanglement, with the body of an owl. Sheriff Truman, a simple man who believes in the evidence of his eyes and common sense, is so deeply affected by the mysteries of the Leland/BOB entanglement that even he knows that no final end has been reached. "Where is BOB now?" he asks. In response, the camera tracks into the woods to a predatory owl who flies out at the viewer, claws bared. BOB is still there. Suddenly, in episode 18, as if all the air has gone out of a balloon, the enigmas of entanglement, superposition, and cosmic messengers have vanished. In contradiction of what was shown at the end of the previous episode, Cooper is scripted to reassure Sarah Palmer that BOB is gone forever. And he is for the time being. *Twin Peaks* is no longer visibly shaken by the currents of cosmic energy, but rather now reduced to nothing more august than eccentrics and psychopaths, with the odd Indian legend thrown in.

The most important of these deteriorations concerns the shift from BOB to Windom Earle, as Cooper's main adversary. Cooper, no longer a visionary, dwindles into a psychologically unbalanced person haunted by jealousy and madness, a victim stalked by his former mentor, Windom Earle. The new Cooper, no longer fascinated by the mysterious Audrey, is reduced to a romance with Annie (Heather Graham), a former nun who binds Cooper to a terrible past because she looks remarkably like Earle's wife, Caroline (Brenda E. Mathers) whom Earle murdered because he was unhinged by her rejection of him for his young protégée, Cooper, whom he also attempted to murder. Cooper is now threatened by his guilt about Caroline's death and the possibility that Earle will complete the revenge he was unable to

take before. Fear takes over the series, replacing the indomitable joy and energy of discovery in the face of cosmic threats with which both Cooper and *Twin Peaks* began.¹³

Cooper Gives Away His Soul But Not the Series

When Lynch returned to direct episodes 28 and 29, he had to contend with a fear-dominated Cooper who was certainly headed for disaster, not the resilient, open character he had originally created. As a result, he had to think of a way to make the end continuous with his vision without jerking around the character of Cooper. To do these things, Lynch disposed of the scripts he was handed and improvised the last two episodes right on the set. If we contrast the texts of the never-televised paper scripts, which I was given by Lynch's office, with what Lynch improvised for the screen, it becomes clear that the changes he made play out the problem of Cooper's fear, but not on the terms of his collaborators, Barry Pullman, author of episode 28, and Mark Frost, Harley Peyton, and Robert Engels, authors of episode 29.¹⁴ In the scripts, Cooper's fear is naturalized as a logical response to Earle's implacable and triumphant evil. By contrast, what we see onscreen is a man defeated by his own delusional belief in the power of an adversary, who is, in fact, nothing put a pawn of much larger powers.

Lynch made use of Pullman's script as the basis for the penultimate episode with minor changes not worth mentioning.¹⁵ But the radical changes Lynch made to the Frost/Peyton/Engels script for episode 29, the final *Twin Peaks* episode, are another story. Had script #29 been televised as the series finale, it would have driven *Twin Peaks* completely back into the box created for detective fiction by Arthur Conan Doyle through the prominence in Cooper's last hours of Windom Earle (Kenneth Welsh), an updated version of Dr. Moriarty.¹⁶ This is what we would have seen: Cooper's futile attempt to rescue Annie would have led him, not to the Red Room, but to both a surreal dentist's office and a huge, similarly surreal room-sized black-and-white chessboard floor on which space is measured out with painful precision, which serves as the battlefield on which he is bested by Earle and his sidekick, BOB. We would have seen a mentally ill, monomaniacal Earle browbeat Cooper into giving him his soul.¹⁷

But we didn't. In Lynch's revision of the confrontation, Cooper's futile attempt to rescue Annie leads into the Red Room, with all the cosmic indeterminacy that location suggests. There we find that

Cooper *only thinks that Earle is his main adversary*. Events in the Red Room reveal that Earle has been possessed by BOB and that it is BOB, not Earle's psychiatric imbalances, that was the source of Earle's terrible behavior and will be the means of Cooper's undoing. With this change, Lynch returned the series to a vision of human events being played out in a cosmic arena, rather than within the totally restricted space of the Marketplace, represented in its most extreme form by a chessboard. In Lynch's version, Cooper is defeated by his own reductionist thinking. In the Red Room as it really exists, not as it was in his dream, Cooper is frightened and confused by these divisions despite the attempts of the Man From Another Place to give Cooper a tutorial in survival in a porous, indeterminate Marketplace, dramatizing for Cooper the enigmatic entanglement and superposition of objects and bodies. Laura, who was once an enigmatic source of revelation, both dark and light, is now a polarized presence, either good or evil, and Cooper is stumped when the Little Man says to Cooper, "When you see me again, it won't be me." Granted the simultaneous existence of one as more than one but not quite two might be a daunting prospect, but would the Cooper we first met have been so unable to follow the Little Man's meaning?

The paradoxes in Cooper's dream tantalized him; in the final televised episode, they drive this dwindled version of Cooper toward hysteria. Cooper holds a cup filled with liquid coffee that morphs into a solid form of coffee and then into an oily substance. The Man From Another Place and the Giant are declared by the Giant to be "one and the same." The spaces of the Red Room permit no accurate sense of direction. Cooper wanders from one red draped enclosure to another, but he cannot determine where he is or where he has been. The enclosures look the same, but they aren't the same. A boundless fire erupts. The old waiter speaks in a palindrome, "WOW BOB WOW," which forecloses the ordinary one-way direction of language, since it can be spelled the same way forward and backward. Visibility is short-circuited as a blinding strobe light blinks suddenly in darkness.

The trauma Cooper suffers on this terrain of liminality is conveyed through the image of a puzzling physical lesion for which there seems to be no cause. He bleeds from his stomach although we have seen no physical attack on him. If we have been following the tutorial Cooper receives, we can recognize this bleeding as part of the quantum physics of the Red Room where bodies may be seen to occupy the same space at the same time—as they are not seen to do under "normal" perceptual conditions. Cooper in present time is entangled with his

body as it once was years before, when he was stabbed by Earle. Some may also find this an allusion to an entanglement with his body when shot by Josie. Similarly, Annie and Caroline merge before his eyes as if their bodies were entangled as more than one but less than two. Cooper's hysterical capitulation to fear of this entanglement leads him to agree to forfeit his soul to Earle to save Annie, and then a laughing BOB tells Cooper that Earle has no power. But Cooper's soul has been compromised. His fear—not Earle—leads to the domination of Cooper by a fiendish doppelganger that is and is not him.

When we next see Cooper, Doc Hayward (Warren Frost) and Sheriff Truman are hovering about him, and Cooper goes into the bathroom, ostensibly to brush his teeth. But he doesn't. Instead, he perversely squeezes the toothpaste into the sink, an image of depletion that simultaneously suggests the absurdity of our belief in dependable objects and, because of the phallic shape of the tube, a squandering of his erotic energy or the energy of creation. In this condition, he repeats multiple times in savagely mocking tones the words of concern he had, moments before, with seeming sincerity, spoken to Sheriff Truman and Doc Hayward, "How's Annie?" When Cooper's mirror reflects BOB and Cooper smashes his head against the glass, Lynch gives us an image of the mind in untenable relationship to matter. Cooper's fall into fear enables BOB, the demonic Rakshasa, to sap Cooper not only of his initial freshness and creativity, but also of his concern for others and for justice.

Conclusion: These Foolish Things

In *Twin Peaks*, Lynch is in the process of developing a cinematic vocabulary that appears full-blown in his later films as a way to articulate his sense of an opposition between what he sees as serious misunderstandings that lock us into a hallucinatory Marketplace and the courageous openness of those who can see past it. Earle, the creation of the Marketplace of network television, was scripted as invincible in the final episode, a denial of the possibility Cooper originally represented. Lynch had to pay a high price for keeping those possibilities alive. He destroyed the fantasy of Earle's power, but found it necessary to sacrifice Cooper, darkly dramatizing Cooper's unnecessarily self-inflicted defeat as a warning about allowing ourselves to fall for deceptions that cast the boundless options available to us in a fearful light. Now that it has become definite that Lynch and Frost will co-create nine new episodes of *Twin Peaks*, to be aired in 2016; the suspense about how

Cooper's rise into vision and fall into fear will play out on a new network, Showtime instead of ABC, after each of the co-creators has had more than 25 years to process the series intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually is almost unbearable. Diane, I can't wait.

Notes

1. See Nochimson, "Desire Under the Douglas Firs."
2. In-person interview with David Lynch, March 18, 2010. All future references to statements by Lynch should be understood to have come from this interview unless otherwise indicated.
3. Telephone interview with Catherine Coulson, September 9, 1994. Coulson told me that she recorded all the Log Lady prologues in one day and that Lynch was writing as she delivered them. She did not know about Lynch's take on materiality, but anyone who does can see that they are almost transparently about quantum and Vedic ideas about the material plane. For example, the entire prologue to episode 9 alludes to a plane of matter on which no matter how different objects may look, they are all swarms of particles in the void, which only our way of thinking shapes into discreet things: "As above so below; the human being finds himself or herself in the middle. There is as much space outside the human proportionately as inside. Stars, moons, and planets remind us of protons neutrons, and electrons. Is there a bigger being walking with all the stars within? Does our thinking affect what goes on outside us and inside us? I think it does. Where does creamed corn figure into the workings of the universe? What really is creamed corn? Is it a symbol for something else?"
4. What Lynch said to me precisely is that the Marketplace, what we recognize as the ordinary world, is the field of relativity. For Lynch, getting stuck in the Marketplace, with no recourse to the unified field beyond the relative Marketplace, leads to a stunted and blighted life.
5. Lynch never uses the vocabulary of quantum physics, but in his work he speaks of the same phenomena in his own terms, as is evident in the prologue to episode 8, for example, when the Log Lady asks, "Can you see through a wall? Can you see through human skin? X-Rays see through solid, or so-called solid objects. There are things in life that exist and yet our eyes cannot see them. Have you ever seen something startling that others cannot see? Why are some things kept from our vision? Is life a puzzle? I am filled with questions." Moreover, it also seems that he is beginning openly to refer to his interest in physics. He has titled a major exhibition of his paintings at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia (September 13, 2014–January 11, 2015), where he was a student in the 1960s, *David Lynch: The Unified Field*.
6. There are a number of excellent books available for laypersons who would like a grounding in modern physics. See Eddington, Feynmann, Gilder, and Manjit Kumar for a sampling.

7. As part of his explanation to me about the world of things as he sees it, Lynch gave me “the parable of the new car.” At first, he said, a person might long for the new car, feeling that life is not complete without it. Then, rapture, when the person finally gets the car. But little by little the car deteriorates both physically and as an object of fascination. Neither the car nor the desire for it is an immutable fact. This is a homely and oblique way of describing the illusion of the thing.
8. Lynch said to me that his work is not *about* his religious beliefs; that is, the themes of his work do not encourage us to meditate, as he does, or to read the Vedas or study physics. However, it is clear to me that, as with all artists, Lynch’s beliefs inform the shape of his fictional universes.
9. In an ancient treatise on physics that is great fun to read, Lucretius describes a particle universe, but is never able to tell us why we can’t see it. Detailed information about the relevance of Lucretius and the twentieth-century physicists who are his intellectual and scientific legatees to Lynch is available in my *David Lynch Swerves*.
10. I speculate that the lap dissolves in the main title montage suggest the physics lesson that Cooper learns in the series finale in the Red Room. As the image of a robin dissolves into the various images of the sawmill and then to the road bearing the Twin Peaks sign, there is a sense of the blurred lines among highly disparate things, or the interchangeability of things, that are at base all the same particles and void. Our thinking alone gives them discrete shapes.
11. The Internet is full of material about Rakshasas, as Lynch referred to them when he spoke to me of the turmoil they create. It is also possible to find allusions to Rakshasas in the Rigveda, one of the books of the Vedas, where they are referred to as Rakshas: for example, in Rigveda 7.104.18, which encourages destruction of the demonic Rakshas, and in Rigveda 7. 104. 22, which alludes to the shapes the Rakshas can take, notably, for our purposes the owl.
12. There are Rakshasa-like messengers in Lynch’s other works—for example the Mystery Man (Robert Blake) in *Lost Highway* and the Phantom (Krzysztof Majchrzak) in *Inland Empire* (2006). There are also good messengers such as Visitors One (Grace Zabriskie) and Two (Mary Steenburgen) in *Inland Empire*.
13. Both James Hurley’s (James Marshall) dalliance with Evelyn (Annette McCarthy), the blonde femme fatale, and the triangle between Caroline, Cooper, and Earle reflect a simplistic (and mawkish) psychology. This is a far cry from the exciting portrait of the competing perspectives that are possible about strange emotional and physical events as indeterminate as the waves of feeling that wash over a world of random particles.
14. In-person interview with Mark Frost, November 22, 1991. When I asked Frost for a copy of each of the two final episodes of *Twin Peaks*, he told me I would have to “ask David.” Since providing scripts for an article is almost always a matter of course, I knew that there was some interesting situation behind Frost’s reticence. In contrast, Lynch, without hesitation, authorized his assistant to send me the scripts, and I was stunned by my discovery that

- they had not been used for the onscreen episodes. During an in-person interview with Catherine Coulson, March 30, 1993, she told me at great length how Lynch had improvised the final two shows.
15. Barry Pullman, *Twin Peaks* #28 (Episode 2.021); First Draft: February 5, 1991; Second Draft/Dis. To Department Heads: February 8, 1991; Revised/General Distribution: February 14, 1991; Revised: February 14, 1991; Revised: February 20, 1991; Revised: February 21, 1991; Revised: February 22, 1991. My own experience writing for television as a scriptwriter, consultant, and story editor for several soap operas between 1984 and 1990—*Ryan's Hope*, *Search for Tomorrow*, *Guiding Light*, *Loving*, and *Santa Barbara*—leads me to take note of the number of rewrites. Script revisions are common in television, but the six revisions to #28 is an unusually high number of drafts.
 16. In-person interview with Mark Frost, November 22, 1991. Frost expressed surprise that I did not see Cooper as coming from the detective tradition of Sherlock Holmes, since that was the image he had of Cooper. When I spoke to him of Cooper's most un-Sherlockian methods, like throwing stones at bottles, and consulting with a Giant, he shrugged his shoulders.
 17. Mark Frost, Harley Peyton, and Robert Engels, *Twin Peaks* #29 (Episode 2.022) First Draft: February 14, 1991; Rewrite/Department Heads; Distribution: February 25, 1991; Revised February 29, 1991. Space prohibits a full comparison in the essay between the televised episode and the discarded script, but perhaps a brief sample of Earle's total domination of the final scenes in the final episode as scripted will give the reader a basis for comparing what Frost/Peyton/Engels wrote, and what Lynch dramatized:

EARLE: Don't prostrate yourself, dear boy. You're a tool, a useful one granted, but it can't very well be said that we play in the same league, now can it?

COOPER: You were always looking for this.

EARLE: That's right. And what were you looking for, in your endless perambulations? Oh, I know all about those three "missing years," Tibet and your pathetic eager-beaver globetrotting quest for enlightenment. In that one respect we aren't so radically different. Perhaps that's why I've tolerated you for as long as I did. Because I knew that, one day, you would prove useful.

COOPER: Useful for what?

EARLE: Why do you think, silly boy? For FUN.

(He points the remote at him again and presses the button. A blinding flash of light.)

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“The Owls Are Not What They Seem”: Animals and Nature in *Twin Peaks*

Sherryl Vint

Although the mysterious elements of *Twin Peaks*—the messages from the Log Lady (Catherine E. Coulson), Agent Cooper’s (Kyle MacLachlan) dreams, allusions to other cinema—have been extensively analyzed, comparatively little attention has been paid to the second of the Giant’s (Carel Struycken) messages to Cooper, “the owls are not what they seem,” a message repeated, along with Cooper’s name, in the radio signals initially presumed to arrive from space. On one level, the meaning of this message is made quite clear, at least on a visual level, as the series increasingly features shots of owls, including one that flies directly at the camera at the end of episode 16, as if in answer to Harry Truman’s (Michael Ontkean) question, “where is BOB now?”—a question prompted by the episode’s revelation that he had been possessing the body of Leland Palmer (Ray Wise). In the years since the series aired, both ecocriticism and animal studies have emerged as new paradigms in humanities scholarship. Looking at *Twin Peaks* through these lens reveals that, although animals have been overlooked in existing scholarship on the series, images of animals and nature in *Twin Peaks* are deeply enmeshed in the series’ meditation upon the inevitable loss of innocence to encroaching modernity.

Animal imagery plays a complex role in *Twin Peaks*, from the possessed owls, to the stuffed fox whose silver fur links Leland to Maddy’s (Sheryl Lee) murder, to the endangered pine weasel whose bandit-masked face adorns a button Ben Horne (Richard Beymer)

wears in the final episode. Is this weasel a sign of Ben's sincere desire to become good and save the woods, as he opines, or does the duplicity stereotypically associated with this animal hint that "Stop Ghostwood" is just the latest move in his development schemes? In her Miss Twin Peaks speech, Annie (Heather Graham) argues that we have lost touch with the beauty of the woods and perhaps "saving a forest starts with preserving some of the feelings that die inside us every day," a nostalgic vision for a better world that epitomizes all Cooper loves about Twin Peaks and why he wants to buy property there. Yet, like the owls, these woods are not what they seem, and the contrast between this nostalgic vision and the reality of a corrupt world is central to the series' meanings. *Twin Peaks* articulates a desire for a relationship with the nonhuman world, for values beyond those of material progress, but just as strongly suggests that such an ideal can only ever be a romanticized, nostalgic projection, a past that never was.

Throughout the series, images of pristine and beautiful wilderness are aligned with ideals of the simplicity of small-town life, articulated in contrast to the corruption of the external, callous world of urbanization. Yet this comforting binary is just as frequently undermined, confronting us with the naïveté and exhaustion of such tropes of the pure and innocent life of the past. Laura (Sheryl Lee) embodies the refusal of such binary logic, both homecoming queen and prostitute, meals-on-wheels volunteer and drug addict, and the solution to her murder starkly confronts the audience—and the town—with the fact that this evil came from within rather than beyond the community. In episode 16, the shaken investigators turn to the promised solace of the woods as they struggle to comprehend Leland's confession. Each leans against a tree, and Harry insists, "he was completely insane," continuing, "I've lived in these old woods most of my life": he cannot reconcile his experience with the idea that a spirit such as BOB has lived there too. Cooper, filmed from below to suggest his heightened moral authority, asks if it is any "more comforting" to believe that "a man raped and murdered his own daughter." Albert (Miguel Ferrer), originally contemptuous of such country bumpkins but, like Cooper, converted to seeing Twin Peaks as a special place, replies, "Maybe that's all BOB is: the evil that men do. Maybe it doesn't matter what we call it." Yet Cooper has already insisted that the source does matter, because "it is our job to stop it."

Although each man is alone in the frame when he speaks, Cooper is separated even further from the others by his erect posture, as

compared to their defeated leaning or crouching positions, and by camera angles that show Cooper still standing tall, filmed from below, while the others are huddled closer to the ground, below its gaze. By the series conclusion, however, faith in Agent Cooper’s moral stature has also been undermined, and this scene of his standing alone seems to speak more strongly to his rigid Manichean view than to his righteous mission. This pivotal exchange captures the central ethos of *Twin Peaks*, the longing for a stable, virtuous moral universe and the impossibility of finding anything that does not fall into corruption. *Twin Peaks* continually stages for us both why we want to believe in nostalgic visions of pristine nature and small-town simplicity, and why such fantasies of purity inevitably turn into their opposite. The series simultaneously participates in and satirizes American mythology of the frontier; as both Michael Thomas Carroll and Nic Birns note, the name Cooper reminds us of James Fenimore Cooper and his *Leatherstocking Tales* of escaping from corrupt civilization into unspoiled wilderness. Animal imagery is essential to this motif in the series. The opening credits epitomize this mix: they begin with a peaceful close-up of a beautiful bird, transition through a dissolve fade into an image of the mill’s smokestacks cutting the view of the mountains, dissolve again into a close-up on the automated sharpening of the timber saw, and finally rest on an undisturbed view of the mountains as we read the prominent sign, “Welcome to Twin Peaks, Population 51,201” in the lower right of the frame.

The Machine in the Garden

This contrast between animals and nature as opposed to machines shapes the entire series, with shots between scenes often passing through either an image of the wind blowing through the trees or one of a traffic light suspended over an intersection. At first, this pattern seems straightforwardly to reinforce the privileging of the natural over the machinic, the trees conveying all the wonder captured by Cooper’s description of them in the pilot episode while the traffic light is associated with Laura’s leap from James’s (James Marshall) motorcycle just before her death. The soft, swelling music and frequent staging of loving scenes—Donna (Lara Flynn Boyle) and James’s farewell, John (Billy Zane) serenading Audrey (Sherilyn Fenn) on their picnic, Cooper and Annie rowing on the lake—in beautiful natural settings links them with pastoral bliss, while the machinic is associated with danger and loss. Such danger is conveyed in the slow tracking shot of

the telephone cord as we hear Sarah (Grace Zabriskie) wail long before we see her grieving face in the pilot episode or the frequent shots of the ceiling fan, whose relentless and mechanical rotation becomes a metonym for the record player that faithfully turns and plays cheerful dance music as Leland brutally kills Maddy. Countless conversations and exchanges are disrupted by phone calls, and almost every scene of someone using a microphone has it fail in some way. Technology provides the major source of information about Laura's murder and is often associated with perversion of the promise of the pastoral: the clues found in Jacoby's (Russ Tamblyn) faux coconut; the videotape of Laura and James's romantic picnic, which becomes a haunting image after her death, dominating the frame in many of the scenes of police questioning in the pilot episode; and, perhaps the most sinister image, the tape recording of the bird, Waldo, repeating Laura's name, "don't go there," and "hurting me, hurting me" just before he is bloodily splattered all over the conference table doughnuts in episode 6. Yet this stereotypical association of healthy nature and corrupt technology is deeply unstable. Laura is found on a beach in the pilot episode, although wrapped in plastic, disrupting Pete's (Jack Nance) fishing trip. James and Donna's bucolic farewell requires them to admit that "it doesn't matter if we're happy if the rest of the world goes to hell" (episode 16), the defeat of their earlier declaration that "if we could just put our hearts together and keep them together no matter what, then we'd be safe" (episode 13), and Jack and Audrey's picnic ends with her feeding him an apple.

Efforts to separate the natural and the machinic only dramatize their entanglement, just as the Arcadian town cannot be segregated from debased urban life. Cooper in particular is susceptible to this mythos of purity. In the pilot episode, he makes a birdcall, announcing that whittling is "what you do in a town where a yellow light still means slow down, not speed up." In episode 4, he defends Harry for punching the insensitive Albert (who initially sees Laura only as a body of forensic trace and not a lost person), insisting that life has meaning in Twin Peaks, that here murder is not just an anonymous statistic. Cooper mulls that this is "a way of life I thought had vanished" and immediately makes a note to Diane on his tape recorder to look into buying land. Yet even as he strives for this morally upright position, Cooper's evocations of the natural world are contradictory: he whittles a birdcall designed to trick birds and make them easier prey for hunters, and his closest relationship is with Diane as mediated by the recorder.

Such contradictions are evident in the series’ aesthetics as well, such as the addition of jarring neon colors over images of flying owls and the landscape they traverse, or the production design of episode 11 that features the experimental opening shot of a slow spiral out of some sort of tunnel—eventually revealed to be holes in the wall tiles Leland gazes upon as he is interviewed about killing Jacques Renault (Walter Olkewicz). The costume and diction of circuit court Judge Clinton Sternwood (Royal Dano) suggest he has arrived straight from the set of a Western, and when Sternwood asks Cooper how he finds “our little corner of the world,” Cooper enthuses, “heaven.” Without missing a beat, Sternwood responds, “Well, this week, heaven includes arson, multiple homicides, and an attempt on the life of a federal agent.” Sternwood later delivers a maudlin but sincerely performed speech about “higher purposes” and the law as his former colleague, Leland, appears before him. The camera slowly tracks in to a medium-close shot that centers on his earnest face as he offers his final lines, but the tone of this standard technique of melodrama is satirized when he delivers his final lines about meeting again “in Valhalla” and we see a blue flash of lightning accompanied by the crack of thunder.

Cooper is afflicted by his desire to purify and separate, to retreat to the Douglas-firs-and-cherry-pie world of Twin Peaks that he believes will heal his troubled past. He seems most happy when he is made a local deputy instead of outside agent, as Albert observes, “replacing the quiet elegance of the dark suit and tie with the casual indifference of these muted earth tones, [is] a form of fashion suicide . . . but on you it works” (episode 22). As becomes clear looking at Cooper’s relationships with women, his vision of pastoral nature eschews sexuality, but as Rhonda Wilcox points out, the vision of fecund woods found in Hawthorne’s “Young Goodman Brown” (1835) shapes *Twin Peaks* as much as does Fenimore Cooper. Like Goodman Brown, Cooper loses his faith when confronted with desire, and such sexual appetites are often associated with animal imagery and a stereotype of women as closer to a dangerous nature. In episode 6, Cooper resists Audrey’s advances and instead offers her a fatherly relationship of malteds and talk and, in episode 8, Audrey’s sultry appeal is associated with animality by the cat mask she wears to conceal her identity from her father when she is undercover at his whorehouse (not incidentally, the fake name she first gives is Hester Prynne). Cooper falls madly for Annie, a woman who has spent most of her adult life in a convent, and a large part of her charm for him is her alienation from

contemporary life. As they flirt in episode 27, a scene that begins with an extreme close-up of her cleaning up some cherry pie that at first seems to be blood, Annie tells him, “I have faith in you, in us,” but the camera pulls away from them physically even as their banter brings them closer emotionally. The scene ends with the jarring crash of a dropped tray and a focus on coffee dripping in slow motion, almost like blood.

The series insists on the futility of Cooper’s desire to separate love and sex, purity and dishonor, small-town and urban life. As Annie and Cooper dance in episode 27, a twentieth anniversary sign frames them, as if this is both their wedding and evidence of the longevity of their bond. Images of the forest form the backdrop to the stage: she kisses him, and then their exchange is briefly disrupted by the machinic as the mayor (John Boylan) practices his speech, fading in and out as his microphone malfunctions. We then return to Annie and Cooper, and she explains that she understands his hesitancy in kissing her, that “the convent evokes the image of helpless women, fearful of any emotion other than those derived from scripture and prayer.” Far from this, she assures him, “when you hold me, when we kiss, I’m not afraid. I’m eager.” As she delivers these lines, Annie gazes to the left and toward the stage, not making eye contact with Cooper until she concludes, “I’m not afraid of anything you make me feel or want”—switching to focus on his face on this last word, and the camera pulls slightly back to frame them together in close-up as they kiss. Yet just as Annie admits to her sexual (culturally coded as animal) side, the lighting darkens except for a spotlight on the Giant, who has taken the mayor’s place on the stage, frantically signaling “no” to Cooper. In the next episode, explaining Annie’s appeal to Diane via the recorder, Cooper comments, “she is a completely original human being, her responses as pure as those of a child.” The nostalgia for childhood innocence is disturbing in a narrative premised on Laura’s incestuous rape (and that dallies with the incestuous rape of Audrey). Linked to the other binaries—pastoral/urban, nature/machine—this exchange suggests that the natural imagery in *Twin Peaks* is ultimately concerned with the nature of human nature, the question of whether it is more comforting to believe that Leland raped his daughter or that evil manifests in malevolent entities such as BOB.

In *The Machine in the Garden*, Leo Marx argues that American culture after the rise of industrial capitalism is filled with “the contrast between the industrial machine, say a steam locomotive, and the



Figure 3.1 Cooper and Annie Dance.

green landscape,” expressing a cultural division between those “who accept material progress as the primary goal of our society from those who—whatever their ideals of the fulfilled life—do not” (374). We see this contrast in *Twin Peaks* in the various machinations around the Ghostwood Development, which seems to threaten the woods and the good life of the town predicated on values other than accumulation of wealth. The further irony, of course, is that the disputed land is being harvested for its timber and so it is always-already bound up in regimes of capitalist accumulation and cannot deliver on this promise of escape. Frequent images of beautiful natural landscapes evoke the ideal that nature has a restorative power, while machines are often presented as alienating and isolating, such as Lucy’s (Kimmy Robertson) overly complicated explanation of how she will transfer a phone call in episode 9. Yet there is a camp sensibility in *Twin Peaks*, a certain extravagance and embrace of artifice, which allows this binary to be simultaneously genuine and flippant, a tone captured most effectively in the malfunction of the hydraulics lowering Laura’s coffin in episode 3, creating the bizarre scene of Leland’s grief expressed as a semblance of bouncing intercourse with her casket. Marx comments

that frequent images of machines in pastoral landscapes “indicated just how closely the meaning of the new industrial power was bound up, in the minds of Americans, with its perceived relation to nonhuman nature” (375). *Twin Peaks* echoes and subverts this central binary of the American imagination, anxiously interrogating the relationship between material and moral progress. Threats to the beauty of nature in *Twin Peaks* align with threats to the beauty of Cooper’s fantasy about its wholesomeness, as is suggested by Harry’s drunken despair after Josie’s (Joan Chen) death. “I’ve never seen him like this” comments Hawk (Michael Horse) while putting the sheriff to bed, “It was like taking a hike to your favorite spot and finding a hole where the lake used to be” (episode 24).

Human and Nonhuman Natures

Imagery associated with animals is deeply tied to *Twin Peaks*’s ambivalent nostalgia for the ideal of a more innocent world in the past. There are an astonishing number of images of animals in *Twin Peaks*, but very few living animals. Rather, animals are a ghostly presence, like those “feelings that die inside us everyday” that might be rescued by saving the forest, as Annie suggests. Nature is already dead, from the stag’s head inexplicably on the table when Harry and Cooper visit the bank in the pilot episode; to the fish found in the coffee percolator in episode 1; to the stuffed silver fox in Ben’s office that Leland energetically pets in episode 13, picking up the hairs that will later turn up as trace evidence on Maddy’s corpse. The production design of *Twin Peaks* is filled with images of animals turned into artifice: the animal totem at Ed’s Gas Farm; the stuffed animals and animal statues that fill Harriet’s (Jessica Wallenfels) room (pilot episode); the carved ducks on the table, gun rack made of a mounted goat, and stuffed bear in the study at the Packard home; the table made of antlers at One Eyed Jacks; the fish mounted on the wall at Shelly (Mädchen Amick) and Leo’s (Eric DaRe) and her dog statue on the table (episode 4); the fireplace at the Great Northern, featuring a fish mounted above it and an antler chandelier over the nearby dining table; the bizarre foods consumed by the Horne brothers, including the frozen leg of lamb from Jerry’s (David Patrick Kelly) girlfriend in Iceland (episode 5) and a smoked-cheese pig (episode 9); the rabbit chili on the menu at the Double R; the bizarrely phallic deer statue maneuvered in front of the conferring judges at the Miss Twin Peaks rehearsal (episode 28).

Animal imagery effectively captures the contradictions that structure *Twin Peaks*'s nostalgia for an uncorrupted moral order even as it recognizes the impossibility of such a dream. Once again, it is Cooper who is most invested in this vision, emphasized in the opening shot from episode 1 that slowly tracks from the FBI-issue gun at his Great Northern bedside table, across the rifle mounted in hooves above his bed, down to the stuffed bird on the other side of the bed, and across a painting of bird hunting and a mounted fish, as we listen to him extol the virtues of his lodging to Diane, including "a hint of Douglas fir needles in the air." These many images of artificial and taxidermied animals point to a haunting sense that the innocence associated with positive images of nature has already been destroyed by encroaching modernity, further implied by the fact that Cooper is literally upside down when he first enters this shot. Other allusions to animals evoke more pejorative associations of animality with primitiveness, sexual excess, and violence, such as Bobby (Dana Ashbrook) and Mike (Gary Hershberger) barking at James from their cells at the end of the pilot episode, the nickname Big Pussycat prominently stenciled on the truck driven by domestic abuser Leo, the manic performance of white-haired Leland singing "Mairzy Doats" (mares eat oats...) in episode 8, and the Dead Dog Farm Cooper visits with his realtor. These images of animals and nature construct them not as idyllic alternatives to the anonymity and callousness of the urban world, but instead as the dark and chaotic forest threatening the fragile compound of civilization and order.

The fear that the desired pastoral nature will turn out instead to be this violent and predatory nature, that the owls are not what they seem, drives the narrative in *Twin Peaks* and links this animal imagery to the series' palpable fear of sexuality. The spirit of BOB (Frank Silva), crawling on all fours toward the camera and his victims, snarling without language, is the decisive symbol of this dark nature. The many doubles throughout *Twin Peaks*—Bobby the high school boyfriend and BOB the spirit of evil incarnate; Mike the wrestler and one-armed MIKE (Al Strobel), the spiritual soldier; the visual cuts between Annie, the embodiment of innocent femininity, and Caroline (Brenda E. Mathers), the symbol of Cooper's betrayal of fraternity for lust—point to the uncomfortable truth that these two natures are the *same* nature. Owls effectively capture this duality of nature, symbolizing both the wisdom to which the "good Dale," as Annie calls him in *Fire Walk With Me* (Lynch 1992), aspires and a female sexual power (see Desmet) that threatens to bring forth

his dark doppelganger. In episode 17, temporarily relieved of FBI duty pending drug charges, Cooper takes respite in the woods with Major Briggs (Don S. Davis). "I've been thinking a lot about BOB lately," Cooper tells him as they sit in the small circle of light around their fire, "if he truly exists." Briggs introduces the topic of the White Lodge, the trials endured by men called upon to "face darkness" and the vulnerability this entails. This discussion is disrupted as Cooper goes to answer the call of nature, announcing his intention with his usual ebullience as he comments on yet another Twin Peaks marvel, "urinating in open air." Cross cuts between Cooper and a close-up of an owl lend the woods a suddenly sinister atmosphere just as Briggs disappears in a flash of light, seeming to confirm BOB's material existence and undermining any fantasy of sylvan sanctuary.

The series consistently links appearances of living owls with dark forces at work in the world, and when Briggs returns in episode 28 the symbols on his neck eventually lead them to the owl cave and, through its imagery, the gate into the Black Lodge. As with all things in *Twin Peaks*, however, the meaning of the owl is polysemic. Jenkins notes that one source may be Whitley Strieber's claim in *Communion* that "owls are often screen memories for alien encounters" (62), yet otherworldliness in *Twin Peaks* is strictly terrestrial: Project Bluebook turned from space to the local woods. Desmet sees in the owl an echo of both Christian mythology, which links them to Satan, and of an earlier Greek myth of Athena, goddess of wisdom, thereby linking owls with the destruction of femininity by a debased patriarchy, a mirror of Christianity's history of adopting and demonizing images from competing religions. Refusing to continue the "game" of careerism for the Internal Affairs review board in episode 18—an encounter during which Cooper is told that his refusal to defend himself implies that he "may be packing feathers where his spine is supposed to be"—Cooper announces that he has been thinking a lot and begun to focus "out beyond the edge of the board, on a bigger game." Asked to clarify, he leans forward and responds, rather unhelpfully, "the sound wind makes through the pines, the sentience of animals, what we fear in the dark and what lies beyond the darkness." The series links both the image of wind blowing through trees and the sentience of the watchful owls to the dark forces of BOB, yet Cooper evokes the same images to move beyond the darkness, and he ends by announcing, "I'm talking about seeing beyond fear...about looking at the world with love."



Figure 3.2 Blowing Trees.

This tension between Cooper’s buoyant embrace of the promise of bucolic life and the darkness of the crimes he is there to investigate defines *Twin Peaks*. The fact that the evil in *Twin Peaks* comes from within the town is central. To some extent a belief in the fantasy of wholesome community is what enables Leland to abuse Laura, since suspecting him is inconceivable. Moreover, Cooper fails in the Black Lodge because his fear of perfection tainted is stronger than his love. Fear, Earle’s “favorite emotional state” (episode 28), opens the gate, and Cooper’s myopic refusal to accept that the woods can be both wondrous and sinister, that Annie can be innocent and sexual, that Twin Peaks is simultaneously a place of community and of normal human frailty, dooms him to remain trapped within. Birds link these ideas. “Where we’re from, the birds sing a pretty song,” The Man From Another Place (Michael J. Anderson) tells Cooper in his dream (episode 2) just before Laura whispers to him, “my father killed me.” Cooper cannot assimilate this revelation, and it is not until episode 16, after he has been informed by the Giant and Major Briggs that “the owls are not what they seem,” that Cooper can finally hear what Laura whispers. In episode 25, Annie and Cooper have an extended

exchange about birds (whether those outside the windows are finches or chickadees), and when they first go out together he calls their excursion “a nature study” (episode 26). As Carroll points out, “Agent Cooper’s love of nature is vitally linked to his (and the American hero’s) strained relationship with women” (Carroll LOC 1948–1950), neither of whose duality he can accept. Yet this repressed knowledge continually erupts into visibility in *Twin Peaks* in surrealist dreams or comic moments, such as the burlesque striptease-like dance choreographed for the Miss Twin Peaks contestants that Tim Pinkle (David E. Lander) calls a “dance of nature” as he encourages the women to bend forward and display their cleavage, “like a sapling in the woods” (episode 28).

Saving the Forest, Saving Ourselves

Nature in *Twin Peaks* signifies the dichotomy of human experience, and for all the series’ surreal elements it nonetheless strives to convey something true about human experience that mythologies of absolute light versus absolute darkness obfuscate. Telling her mother (Mary Jo Deschanel) about falling in love with James through their shared grief over Laura’s death, Donna explains, “it’s like I’m having the most beautiful dream and most terrible nightmare all at once” (episode 1). Nature is both the dream of the pastoral and the nightmare of primitive, animal passions. In addition to the owls and Waldo, the only other living animal to receive significant screen time in *Twin Peaks* is the endangered pine weasel, whose fate becomes the cause célèbre for Ben’s conversion from championing Ghostwood Development to opposing it in favor of nature in the Stop Ghostwood campaign.

The pine weasel succinctly captures the dialectic of dream and nightmare that *Twin Peaks* attaches to images of nature, at once cute and a species characterized as duplicitous. Ben’s own motivations for his new platform may emerge from a sincere desire to be good, as he repeatedly announces, or may merely be another stratagem in his financial empire. Crucially, the shift in Ben’s agenda comes when he watches an old film of himself and Jerry as children, proudly standing beside their father as he ceremoniously breaks ground to develop the Great Northern. Only the sign announcing the hotel’s future home disturbs the pristine wilderness, and Ben is captivated by the image of his stable nuclear family launching this endeavor (episode 18). Smiling through tears, he approaches the screen, longing to enter the past as

he places his face next to the screen and kisses his mother. As he approaches the screen, Ben quotes Shakespeare's Richard III, "Now is the winter of our discontent, made glorious summer by this son of York," the soliloquy in which Richard, unhappy in a world that hates him, announces his intention to "prove a villain" since, it seems, he cannot be loved. Ben quotes only the opening line of the soliloquy, the announcement that the period of unhappiness has passed, and his meaning is ambiguous: is the "winter" the period between the disruption of the woods by the hotel, and his new plan to save the woods? Or is the "winter" the present that Ben is about to abandon in favor of an idealized past? Is he converted, or declaring his villainy like Richard III?

Ben's advocacy for the pine weasel is connected to the nostalgia that suffuses *Twin Peaks*, from the 1950s design of many of its costumes and sets, to the Mayberry ethos of the sheriff's department prior to Laura's murder. After this incident, Ben retreats into a fantasy of winning the Civil War for the South, which Jacoby suggests is a way of symbolically reversing his own losses (episode 21). Ben's true losses, however, are spiritual not material, most centrally the loss of a sense of innocence about the world and its possibilities, perhaps the very loss Annie alludes to in her speech about saving the woods. Just as Major Briggs reveals that what he fears most is "the possibility that love is not enough" (episode 27), *Twin Peaks* fears—or, better, knows—that the pastoral world is not enough, that it is not the whole of reality. Nadine's (Wendy Robie) happiness when she believes she is a high school student, and her return to crushing depression when she recognizes she is in her thirties, most dramatically reveals this sensibility. The fallen adult world inevitably encroaches upon youth and innocence, just as Ben cannot merge with his younger self on the screen but instead is confronted with empty white space as the film reel runs out. In episode 10, Leland comforts a distraught Maddy, telling her, "You just want life to be the way it was before. So do I. We all do. But try as we might, it won't cooperate, will it?" The dream of small-town life in *Twin Peaks* and the restorative aspect of nature are linked to this belief that the world used to be a safer and more harmonious place, but the series knows that this place is always out of reach. As Cooper admits in episode 20, "even this bucolic hideaway is filled with secrets."

Thus, the pine weasel is the ideal animal symbol for Ben's conversion. Announcing his new ethic to John, he describes his environmental activism as the "gift" of "the future" that will save "not just

the weasel, but life as we know it" (episode 23). At the benefit organized on behalf of the pine weasel, Dick (Ian Buchanan) criticizes Ben for the "supreme incongruity" (episode 24) of using a stuffed weasel as emblem for an ecological cause, but this incongruity lies at the heart of *Twin Peaks*'s ambivalent relationship to nature imagery, the dialectic between the intense desire for values associated with immaculate nature and the inescapable knowledge of its fallen state. Like most animals in the series, the pine weasel is present in *Twin Peaks* mainly as an image or artifact—the stuffed weasel, the cute weasel-face on the button Ben wears in the final episodes, the picture of its face on the Stop Ghostwood posters. The single time it is present as living entity, at the fashion show fundraiser, it creates chaos not comfort: escaping from its cage, biting Dick's nose, and provoking panic among the bolting audience. Dick calls the pine weasel "an innocent in a world gone mad" (episode 24), the description of precisely the kind of person Cooper seeks to protect in his commitment to a moral code, but—as the pine weasel's rampage suggests—such purity is always a construction and projection, an image not an entity.

The desire for such absolute purity is implicated in making the world more threatening to what innocence does exist. Lying on the floor after being shot and contemplating the Giant's messages, Cooper says among the things he regrets not yet having done in life is making love to a beautiful woman "whom I have genuine affection for" (episode 8), suggesting that, for him, love and sexuality are in tension. Similarly, Ben's efforts toward "good" produce far more harm than his scheming ever did: he encourages Audrey into an uncomfortable sexual performance in the Miss Twin Peaks contest to gain the platform for his cause, and her protest at the bank on his behalf results in her apparent death when it is blown up in the final episode; his confession about the affair with Donna's mother makes him feel good about telling the truth, but devastates the entire Hayward family and perhaps even results in his own death when Will (Warren Frost) punches him and Ben crashes into the fireplace and collapses covered in blood. Just as Will predicted when begging Ben not to reveal this past to Donna, goodness in him "is like a time bomb" (episode 27).

Indeed, even as Ben is backstage at the Miss Twin Peaks contest telling Donna that he wants to "do the right thing," his other daughter, Audrey, is on stage giving her speech in an effort to please him that he ignores in his focus on abstract principles. Audrey says, "there

is only one way to save a forest, an idea, or anything of value: to refuse to stand by and let it die" (episode 28). Audrey calls for people to fight to save the things they love, invoking "a law of nature, which is more fundamental to life than the laws of man." This law of nature can often prove dangerous, as Harry explained to Cooper when he introduces him to the Bookhouse Boys: Twin Peaks "is different" from the outside world, and there is a "back end" to this difference, "something very, very strange in these old woods" (episode 3). As the pattern of animal and nature imagery shows, however, there is also something worth fighting for in the woods that exists alongside the darkness. Earlier in the episode, Annie goes to Cooper's room seeking help writing her own speech. Their discussion quickly shifts into sexual flirtation as Cooper tells her, "your forest is beautiful and peaceful," while she demurs, "part of it has been damaged. I've tried to replant but nothing has taken root. Every forest has its shadow." Cooper counters with a kiss, and the scene ends with them about to have sex, perhaps the fulfillment of the wish he made while lying on his hotel room floor. In this moment, Cooper seems to accept the darkness as well as peace within Annie, her sexuality along with her innocence.

In *Twin Peaks*, however, such a moment of harmony cannot last. Cooper's investment in the absolute purity of good and its utter segregation from the darkness of evil blinds him to the inescapable duality of the world. He misses the crucial substitution of Earle for the Log Lady as he raptly watches Annie give her speech at the pageant, and later can save her life but not his soul in the Black Lodge. Annie's speech tells us that saving the forest requires "preserving some of the feelings that die inside us every day," which she goes on to describe as "those parts of ourselves we deny" (episode 28). Although one meaning of this description is the childlike capacity for wonder that seems destroyed by age and experience, another is the uncomfortable recognition that we must love even the damaged parts of others and ourselves if we are going to let something new take root. *Twin Peaks* shows us why we desire the pastoral vision of the forest, yet reminds us that such an impossibly pure vision is what Earle calls "saccharine excess" (episode 26). Agent Cooper remains caught in a binary of good versus evil, nourishing diner coffee versus the black sludge in the coffee cup in the Black Lodge, but *Twin Peaks* pushes its audience beyond such stark oppositions. We must fight not to let goodness die, it seems to demand, even as we acknowledge that we live in a corrupt world.

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“That Cherry Pie is Worth a Stop”: Food and Spaces of Consumption in *Twin Peaks*

Lorna Piatti-Farnell

Food is a conspicuously noticeable presence in *Twin Peaks*'s 30 episodes. The series' plot centers on events in the eponymous American town following the murder of a local resident, popular high schooler and beauty queen, Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee). As the investigation of the crime unfolds, food takes on an understated, yet central role, so ever-present in everyday events that it almost becomes an additional character in itself. From cherry pies to doughnuts to crispy bacon and pancakes covered in maple syrup, the food is everywhere. And it is so appealing that it often overtakes the attention of Agent Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan), the FBI agent sent to the scene to aid the local police department in solving the murder. As large quantities of food are consumed at various places, from restaurants to diners to the local picnic areas, the mysteries of death become entangled with eating, one of the most embodied and arguably “alive” of all human activities. Even at an embryonic level, the evocative presence of food in the series comes across as strange, as food has not traditionally occupied a prevalent position in David Lynch's creations, where the diner in *Mulholland Drive* (2001) is the only real connection to matters of consumption. This anomaly immediately makes one attuned to the possibility that food is not simply a background presence in *Twin Peaks*, but will play an instrumental part—hinging on notions of both embodiment and destabilization—in the construction of the surreal, erotic, and disorienting narratives that are typical of Lynch's work.

With this idea in mind, this chapter pursues an analysis of food in *Twin Peaks* as occupying a duplicitous position, one that is closely entangled with the subversion of narrative structures and their connection to the reliability of cultural constructs. On the one hand, I consider both the foods that are actually consumed in the series, and their places of consumption, including the now famous Double R Diner, as belonging to a sociocultural narrative that is deeply rooted in the America of the early 1990s. I uncover eating as a metaphorical activity of the self, a representational context of consumption where the psychology of the everyday, the porous boundaries of corporeality, and the proclivities of sexual desire collide in the idiom of food. On the other, I discuss the connection food holds to the strange and the odd and what this subversive relationship entails. The conspicuous presence of food becomes particularly evident whenever the show evades realist modes of representation. The tangibility of food is channeled in order to render the paradoxical intangibility of the human experience, and the treacherous paths of the human mind. By subverting the cultural meanings of food, the show also subverts the meanings and uses of common metaphorical structures, an action that finds an ideal placement in the surreal denial, as Jean-François Lyotard would have put it, of all-encompassing metanarratives (see *The Postmodern Condition*). By placing a focus on food, and its modes and spaces of consumption, it is possible to uncover how *Twin Peaks*—both the town and the show—exists in a space that is narratively and representationally disjunctive, an out-of-sync entity that continuously challenges the spatiotemporal coordinates in which it is placed.

Food Culture

We are first introduced to Agent Cooper in the pilot episode as he is traveling to Twin Peaks. While driving in his car, Agent Cooper takes some time to log his movements on his tape recorder; throughout the series, this will be a habit of Cooper's. In the recording, Cooper notes the details of his sojourn to Twin Peaks and what he plans to do once he arrives. In addition, Cooper takes time to relay his encounter with some of the local food: "Lunch was, uh, six dollars and thirty-one cents at the Lamplighter Inn, that's on Highway Two near Lewis Fork. That was a tuna fish sandwich on whole wheat, slice of cherry pie, and a cup of coffee. Damn good food. Diane, if you ever get up this way that cherry pie is worth a stop." Cooper's excitement about the pie immediately comes across as peculiar, as it almost overtakes

his interest in the case that is taking him to Twin Peaks. This attention to food, however, is but the beginning of Cooper's attachment to gastronomic details, and the mere first instance in the series' affair with consumption. Coffee and pie, together with doughnuts and bacon, will become two of Agent Cooper's recurring favorites during his stay in the small American town.

One of the most fascinating ways to look at eating is to see it as the conduit activity for merging matters of culture, individual identity, and desire, especially when those three dimensions are uncovered through the emblematic embodiment of important constructs such as nostalgia and the consumer experience. As food refuses to be tied to one aspect of life, its protean qualities—for creating situations, relationships, and, in its most individual and controversial aspects, "selves"—allow it easily to be molded into metaphor, one that is inescapably tied to both perception and physicality. In both its bodily and psychological functions, eating exists only as part of, as Elspeth Probyn would put it, "a system of representation" (63) that is oddly visceral, conceptually segregated, and intrinsically connected to cultural values.

Whenever food appears in other narratives on screen—or, in the literary world, for that matter—it allows for a metaphorical configuration pointing toward important social, cultural structures, and historical events. As Deborah Lupton puts it, food and consumption are "highly contextual" upon "the setting in time and space," and continuously function as "markers of identity" (Lupton 98–99). For examples of this, one need only think of television examples such as *Beverly Hills 90210*—a chronological contemporary of *Twin Peaks*—where the Peach Pit Diner, complete with its delicious pies, milkshakes, and coffee, acts as the center of the teenage community of the series, where dramas unfold and individuals construct relationships as they consume the same foods. Countless similar examples can be found not only on television, but also in the cinematic world, where the prominent inclusion of food in the storyline, from rose water cake to gumbo, pancakes, baklava, and the now-famous fried green tomatoes, provides a link to community, the domestic, and the discovery of "self." Food often means home, family, and memory, and gives a fruitful outcome to the search for belonging by transforming the intangible into tangible.

While food is a common occurrence in *Twin Peaks*, its presentation, however, is not always straightforward, and it is conspicuously at odds with its culturally recognizable meaning. On the surface—or,

at least, for parts of the narrative—food in the series acts as a stabilizing presence. It is grounded in the sociocultural frameworks in which the show is placed; it interacts with matters of sexuality, and articulates modes of nostalgia within the narrative. It provides anchorage for both the characters and the viewers, adding a layer of verisimilitude to the story and operating as a “passageway” toward the contextualization of experience (Seremetakis 14). This function, however, is not univocal, and it certainly fails to be the only one occupied throughout the narrative. Food in the series is often presented in a strange and unexplainable way, an odd presence in even more bizarre situations. One moment, food provides a realistic set-up for everyday occurrences to take place, adding a calendric elements to the narrative, from breakfast to dinner; the other, it breaks the boundaries of reality by acting as the fulcrum for literally unbelievable and unexplained, often mystical, narrative off-shoots to manifest. One moment, pies are enjoyed at the Double R Diner, a tangible cog in the reconstruction of community happenings; the other, a fish appears in the percolator in Pete Martell’s kitchen as he is serving coffee to Agent Cooper and Sheriff Truman, but its appearance is neither questioned nor investigated. And it is hard to forget, of course, the curious and surreal episode at Mrs. Tremond’s house, where Donna Hayward (Lara Flynn Boyle) witnesses the disappearance and reappearance of the mysterious creamed corn—or “garmonbozia”—another baffling occurrence that is blamed on acts of “magic.” In *Twin Peaks*, food is often connected to confusing states of mind, to perceived or imagined dream sequences and bizarre events. The distorted materiality of food—the presence most grounded in the commonality of the human experience—often acts as a catalyst here in constructing the bounds of *Twin Peaks*’s surreal narrative. The out of place focus on food contributes to establishing the series’ appealing and often unsettling combination of “murder mystery and melodrama” (Short 35).

Coffee, Doughnuts, and the Corpse

When Agent Cooper arrives in Twin Peaks and meets up with the local Sheriff, Harry Truman (Michael Ontkean), at the morgue, Cooper shows a distinct interest in the case, asking for details about the victim and how her body was discovered. The murder case, however, is not the only thing on Agent Cooper’s mind: upon encountering Sheriff Truman, Cooper displays a melodramatic enthusiasm for the local flora—the famous Douglas firs—and the local food. His

questions oscillate between the three topics, and while his curiosity about the trees is quickly satisfied, his obsession with food continues throughout the conversation with the Sheriff, as well as the whole series.

Indeed, an odd coupling of his involvements with the murder case and his fascination with food and consumption is what constructs a lot of Cooper’s personality for the audience. The potentially obsessive nature of his character often emerges in association with consumption throughout the series, particularly with his continuous comments over coffee, and what appears to be an uncontrollable desire to evaluate and rank every brew he drinks: “every cup is better than the last,” he proudly proclaims. A vivid example of this is present in episode 1, when Cooper preaches to the waitress who is serving him: “A true test of every hotel is that morning cup of coffee.” After he sips, Cooper declares it a “damn fine cup of coffee. I can’t tell you how many cups of coffee I’ve had in my life, but this is one of the best.” His interest in the drink is often out of place, as comments of a gastronomic nature curiously appear in the midst of discussing the death of Laura Palmer. The commentaries’ oddness extends to many other daily rituals in Agent Cooper’s life in Twin Peaks. Cooper’s breakfast instructions while staying at the Great Northern Hotel are peculiarly detailed and subtly macabre: “I’d like two eggs over hard. It’s hard on the arteries, but old habits die hard. Just about as hard as I want those eggs.



Figure 4.1 Cooper Enjoys a Cup of Deep Black Joe.

Bacon, super crispy. Almost burned, cremated.” Cooper is meticulous in ordering his breakfast; this provides a social commentary rationalizing his choices and, to some extent, desires. It is disturbing to see him use the term “cremated” when ordering his bacon, considering that the reason for his sojourn in Twin Peaks is a murder case.

And while food preferences often function—culturally and representationally—to construct a bond between individuals, this only seems to happen as far as the characters of *Twin Peaks* go. The audience is left with plenty of raised eyebrows as Agent Cooper continuously interrupts the murder case investigation to make seemingly detached comments about the local pies. Cooper’s culinary ruminations are indeed out of place, and often interrupt the “natural” flow of the narrative, challenging the suspension of disbelief on which the mystery tale relies. The relationship to food here is based on an oddly systematic mixture of scopophilia, gastronomic desire, and cultural inappropriateness, evoking Arjun Appadurai’s contention that consumption, when placed in a Western context, is often linked to a generalized mixture of practices dependent on “wanting, remembering, being, and buying” (33). Elements of taste merge and mingle with disturbing visual images. Cooper’s methodical orders of food draw attention to the ephemerality of the body, both living and dead, and its indistinguishable and often incongruous connection to pleasure.

Of all the foods that appear in the narrative, doughnuts are definitely a conspicuous presence. Stacks and stacks of doughnuts appear on most occasions when Cooper and the local police force in Twin Peaks are hard at work solving the case. Lines and lines of colorful doughnuts are neatly stacked in rows on the conference table at the police station. In episode 11, stacks of pink doughnut boxes are seen in all corners of the police station, the overflowing multitude acting as a metaphor of both excess and hard work. Doughnuts are even taken off site, always accompanying Agent Cooper and the local police; in episode 2, a special table is set up in the middle of the woods and stacked with doughnuts, so that Cooper and his affiliates can continue to investigate the murder without having to go without their favorite snack. At one point, they even become the instigator of Cooper’s reflections into Tibetan philosophy, and they are used as a handy prop in his less-than-orthodox methods in pursuing “the truth.” The part played by the doughnut in Cooper’s mystical moments is strange and alienating, as is the inclusion of Eastern spirituality in a plot-line that, up until that point, still resembled a common, and mostly secular, American police narrative. While often confusing, the ever-present

appearance of the doughnuts is also comical, as are the quantities in which they are served—for who, truly, could eat that many doughnuts in one sitting?—and the symmetrical lines in which they are presented. This connection between the police and doughnuts plays with the old stereotype of American policemen being doughnut-eaters, a gastronomic evaluation of character that always establishes the local police force as inept and rather useless.

In spite of the evocative nature of police stereotypes, however, *Twin Peaks* does more than simply draw a cultural connection. The association between the police and the doughnuts is pushed to an uncomfortable extreme. The quantities of doughnuts made available are so laughable that they become disorientating. The boxes and trays of doughnuts are an overwhelming and distracting presence; whenever the murder case is being discussed, the serious nature of the topic is interrupted by the infantile look of the doughnuts, covered as they are in glazing, pink icing, and sprinkles. The doughnut is usually a "cheerful" presence, an epicurean experience that is meant to recall jovial times and good experiences. In its glazed incarnation, it is also an "American icon," and perhaps brings with it notions of national pride and, possibly, positive everyday notions of family and community (Mullins 5). This culturally understood notion is, however, subverted in *Twin Peaks*. The doughnuts are often out of place and interrupt the narrative with their misplaced iconic presence.

An uncanny and suggestive connection to the murdered Laura also adds a macabre layer to the uncomfortable presentation of the doughnuts. In episode 1, Agent Cooper and Sheriff Truman go over the evidence for the murder over a platter of doughnuts. Agent Cooper manages to go through all the known details of the murder before the Sheriff even has a chance to finish chewing his morsel of doughnut. One might even say that, as the gruesome details of Laura's demise are exposed, the Sheriff is "kept quiet" by the doughnut. The sheriff is never given a chance to respond and listens in silence as the "real" Laura is uncovered. The details of the case are almost as shocking as the Sheriff's inability to comment on such a horrible discovery. The past, when Laura was alive and adored, and the present, where she is just a corpse, are sedimented together through the unlikely icon of the doughnut, but that sedimentation causes a form of cultural shock, a sequential break in the narrative that is signaled by the Sheriff's food-filled silence.

This connection between the murdered body and the doughnut is openly established in episode 8, when the narrative shifts between

images of doughnuts and images of the corpse, superimposing the doughnuts on scenes of the crime, as Agent Cooper and the Sheriff go through all the gruesome details of the murder. The images of doughnuts are incoherent and disorderly—ironically so, given their neat stacks and rows—and cause the audience to feel uncomfortable as the death of a young woman appears oddly trivialized. If it is true that, as Mullins suggests, the glazed doughnut is synonymous with “the American landscape” and, therefore, a potent medium for collective identities (Mullins 5), then its juxtaposition with the scenes of Laura’s murder interrupts the precision of the cultural narrative. This imagistic and conceptual confrontation between food and the corpse controversially suggests that the picture of “perfect” America is a glazed one, a manufactured one, as constructed and layered as the doughnut itself. The doughnut is, in a sense, a distorted cultural mirror image for the hidden politics of the American everyday. And the stability of that image collapses when the harsh truth of the horrors that lies beneath the layer of well-to-do society are exposed.

The (Incongruous) Diner

Just as the food introduces the uncanny disjuncture of American cultural politics in *Twin Peaks*, so do the places of consumption throughout the series. Reigning supreme among the list of establishments where food and other “commodities” are consumed—a list that includes the Great Northern Hotel, the Roadhouse, and One Eyed Jack’s house of pleasure—is the Double R Diner. The décor of the diner is set out in 1950s’ style: the high barstools are red and shiny, the tiles are chequered black and white, and the booths are covered with matching dark leather. The waitresses, for their part, wear pristine uniforms, continuing to reinforce the image of a bygone era. The recollection of the 1950s here is not exactly subtle. It is not presented as a “themed” restaurant, but offered as a true-blue location, a site of mingling and intermingling for the community, a center of everyday American life. Serving food that the average American is meant to know, recognize, and love, the traditional diner feeds both the body and the mind, highlighting the importance of shared food habits in the construction of both a national and a local idea of community. One must not forget the long-identified value of shared consumption habits in providing “a sense of belonging” and “an affirmation of cultural identity” (Fieldhouse 76).

The 1950s diners have a long history of being immortalized in narratives on screen. Consider, for example, *Happy Days*—a popular sitcom produced in the 1970s, but set in the 1950s—in which Arnold's Diner was portrayed as the center of the characters' social life. The 1950s décor was replicated in detail through what is commonly culturally associated with the era, from the chairs and the tables to the waitresses' uniforms and, of course, iconic diner foods such as hamburgers and milkshakes. Andreea Deciu Ritivoi suggests that any instances of nostalgia, especially when used in a figurative context, express "a crisis of representation that triggers a crisis of identity" (17). The desire to recreate familiar surroundings, especially if these surroundings belong to some notions of "the past," is symptomatic of profound alienation with the contemporary moment. This reality-detached state is endemic to *Twin Peaks* as a whole. It is fascinating to think that the Double R Diner—a place that, connected as it is to food and eating, should be helpful in making situations feel more "real"—is instrumental in constructing that alienated and surreal image. Nostalgia here functions both representationally and contextually as a conduit for a potential disaffection that is pervasive to the narrative.

Twin Peaks's engagement with the 1950s-style diner, however, is further complicated by the knowledge that, of course, the series itself is not set in the 1950s, but is meant to be contemporary to the time of production. The presence of the 1950s-style diner—complete with milkshakes, pies, doughnuts, and uniformed waitresses who serve coffee from filter jugs—is peculiarly out of place in the series. One must wonder at the representational significance of choosing such an iconic location as a place of consumption—a term used here in both its alimentary and economic understandings—and what that tells us in terms of cultural values, anxieties, and desires. The "local" American diner exists, as Matt Gottdiener puts it, in "virtually every town in the United States," but the décor of 1950s-style incarnations constructs an environment that is based on "contrasts" in order to mark a sense of national difference (Gottdiener 273). Any re-elaboration of the 1950s diner—both on-screen and in "real life"—manages, Gottdiener goes on to say, to "integrate the varied referents in the exploitation of popular nostalgia" (273). And while one might be tempted to speculate that the diner perhaps has stayed unchanged for 40 years and its décor is therefore insignificant, the metaphorical connections to the interpretative extranarrative reveal much more.

Although it is true that, recalling the 1950s, the Diner in *Twin Peaks* has an aura of nostalgia about it, even that sense of nostalgia is subverted. The Diner is the place where secrets get uncovered, where people conduct affairs, and where shady plots are hatched. It makes fun of the pristine image of the 1950s—and the diner as the epitome of that image—that was highly and positively politicized during the 1980s by Reaganite propaganda. The emphasis on “return” here evokes nostalgia, and is reminiscent of what Svetlana Boym has termed “restorative nostalgia”: this type of nostalgia conveys the desire “to rebuild” what was lost “and patch up the memory gaps” (41). Through the restorative nostalgia of the 1980s, the 1950s were mythologized and elevated to an unachievable level of perfection, and the image of the decade that was promoted was arguably as fabricated as the multiple 1950s replica objects that were manufactured and sold during the Reagan administration. Restorative nostalgia is usually carried out on the macro, rather than micro scale, and taps into nationalism and political conservatism. Although *Twin Peaks* first aired in 1990, the influence of the American 1980s context on pictorial and conceptual representations is undeniable, as are the elaborate connections to consumer trends and the critiques that derive from them.

The Double R Diner is spatiotemporally disjointed, a floating entity that does not belong. Its forceful 1950s décor and atmosphere are profoundly out of place in an early 1990s context, aiding the cultural disorientation that is pervasive in the series. Once again, we see *Twin Peaks* using food—or, more precisely, a site of food consumption—to create disorientation, and overthrow the stability of the culturally “known.” The Diner, of course, is not the only spatiotemporally disjointed element in the narrative of *Twin Peaks*. In the pilot episode, we see 1950s nostalgia evoked in the presentation of the local High School, an overly pristine setting that just doesn’t belong to the early 1990s context in which it is set. The temporal disjuncture between 1990s and 1950s is continued by Audrey Horne’s (Sherilyn Fenn) clothing: her straight pencil skirt and black-and-white saddle shoes, embodying the “good girl” look. Incidentally, Audrey is shown changing her flat shoes and slipping into stilettos at school, providing two 1950s female stereotypes at once: the “good girl” and the “sexy pin-up.”

On the surface, the Double R Diner looks unspoiled, wholesome, the embodiment of a by-gone era that was reliant on solid social values. One might be tempted to see the treatment of the nostalgic



Figure 4.2 The RR Diner.

Diner as a critique of America overall. The Diner can be described as a “non-corporate” business. It is owned by Norma Jennings (Peggy Lipton), and it is made clear throughout the series that all the food served is prepared and cooked on the premises, either by Norma herself or the diner’s cook. The Diner’s staff proclaims the pies to be “the best of Tri-Counties,” and Agent Cooper, unsurprisingly, declares their quality to be “incredible.” The home-made, “honest” nature of the food is discussed explicitly in episode 15, when Norma’s mashed potatoes are commented upon by her critical and openly unsupportive mother—who also cannot help giving her daughter some peculiar advice on how to cook a memorable omelet—and it is specified that Norma herself uses only “real potatoes” and not “flakes.” This, of course, is not by chance, and has an impact on the way the Diner itself is perceived. Although it is a business, and therefore part of a capitalist enterprise, the diner’s family owned status places it in a different category when compared to corporate diner and fast food companies such as McDonald’s, which are conceptually very far removed from any sense of community spirit.

Twin Peaks, however, only partially capitalizes on sociocultural metaphors, and that capitalization is mixed with the strange and the uncertain. Under the surface, the Diner is the perfect location for dark deeds and rotten souls. Even the character of Diner-owner Norma, who is forcefully presented as a wholesome presence in the show, with her welcoming and soft manners, is of dubious morality, as she is in fact having an affair with a married man. And although what could be perceived as “moments of grace” occur with the Diner as a setting—consider Major Briggs’s (Don S. Davis) epiphanic revelation of his dream to his son Bobby (Dana Ashbrook)—these moments interrupt the flow of the storyline, shifting its focus: they are out of place, and come across as inappropriate and confusing. The goodness of the Diner is as made up as its replica stools and chequered tiles. Through these subverted images of “cultural goodness,” *Twin Peaks* also challenges the viewer’s perception of the division between “good and bad” and “right and wrong.” It is not surprising that food and eating should be at the center of the subversion and the cultural disorientation, considering that eating, as Mary Douglas suggests, is at the center of social structures and definitions, and instrumental in marking the “codes” and “paradigms” of everyday life (Douglas 61–62).

With this obvious incongruence between its wholesome, retro look, and its subversive interpersonal, eroticized dynamics, the Double R Diner is, on the one hand, evocative of that desire for economic development that was shrouded in layers of patriotism in the post-war period and that reached its apogee in the 1950s. On the other, however, the nostalgic recollection of the “golden age” of consumer capitalism (Sprengler 60), and the cultural security that should derive from it is destroyed by layers of distortion and dislocation. Through exploiting the cultural mis/perception of the 1950s diner, *Twin Peaks* lures its viewers into the cultural trap of American nostalgia, while destabilizing its metaphorical foundations and creating an eerily seductive, but representationally treacherous, atmosphere.

Food/Sex/Desire

As notions of seductiveness and dangerous luring become prevalent, there is no denying that *Twin Peaks* displays a high level of sexual tension throughout its narrative. This tension is often made explicit through a series of love stories, extramarital affairs, and illicit engagements between the characters. It is also, on numerous occasions, kept implicit, and only communicated through the use of cinematic angles

that linger unnecessarily on attractive individuals, as well as the employment of an often "intentionally off-beat" soundtrack where the saxophone reigns supreme (Clark 9). As effective as cinematography and soundtrack are in making the atmosphere "sexy," however, one cannot fail to pick up on the place food occupies in establishing carnal connections—or forcefully platonic desire—between characters. While many sexual invitations are fulfilled over dinner, breakfast, or even coffee dates—with the relations between Bobby and Shelly (Mädchen Amick), Big Ed (Everett McGill) and Norma, and Ben Horne and Catherine Martell (Richard Beymer and Piper Laurie) functioning as prime examples—others are kept painfully unfulfilled. An example of the latter is the interaction between Agent Cooper and Audrey. Their meetings often happen over food in either restaurants or cafés, and the sexual tension between the two is reconciled by the food itself. At breakfast in episode 1, for instance, Agent Cooper orders "the grapefruit juice," stressing that he wants it "just as long as those grapefruits are freshly squeezed." As he is uttering the word "squeezed," Audrey appears and his eyes and the camera lingers on her form. The focus is brought to her breasts, and this is emphasized by Cooper's pedestrian references to "squeezing grapefruits." Young Audrey is as "fresh" as the grapefruits that Cooper requires. A close connection is established here between the wish for a refreshing drink to be consumed and the presence of a young, female body, which is made clear is to be "consumed" as much as Cooper's breakfast. Audrey's sexual allure, whether inherent or acted upon, is stressed on various occasions throughout the show, and often conspicuously connected to food: one must only think of the famous incident in episode 6, when she is seen sensually eating a cherry and then skillfully tying the stem into a knot with her tongue. The popular expression of "popping your cherry" as a euphemism for the loss of virginity inevitably comes to mind here.

Along these lines, Elspeth Probyn asks an important question: "when is eating sex?" (59). This open enquiry draws attention to the obvious similarities, both conceptual and physical, between eating and having sex. Both are highly sensual activities, where physicality becomes the center of attention, and where the tactile interactions between objects and bodies drive behavior and response. Both eating and sex make us aware of surfaces of the body, of textures, of tastes, of smell. Both engage, at various levels, with an interplay of "inside" and "outside." Like sex, eating is often—if not always—connected to the concept of pleasure, of seeking satisfaction, of forms of "desire."

And, like sex, eating is a very basic activity, one that is intrinsically connected to life itself and the continuation of the species—even if, perhaps, one is more immediately necessary than the other, for one might try to live life without sex, but it would be rather difficult indeed to have life without food.

As far as humans are concerned, sex and food both exist in the highly malleable sphere of social interaction, and draw attention to stages of encounter, mergence, and separation. In *Twin Peaks*, an evocative instance of intermingling and displacement, in terms of what connects food to sexual desires, is found in episode 6 when Agent Cooper finds Audrey waiting for him, naked in his bed. The open offer of sex leaves Cooper speechless, and he sits on the bed for a long period of time, pondering the possibilities. Eventually, however, and in spite of Audrey's pleas not to send her away, he politely rejects her advances. With a plan for conversation, Cooper then proceeds, once again, to focus his attention on food: "I'll get us two malts and some fries...I'm gonna get the food and you're gonna get dressed." An exchange between food and sex is taking place here. Food, to be more specific, replaces sex in the exchange. The offer of sex is taken "off the plate" and replaced with the malts and fries. This is a form of oral substitution, to evoke a Freudian term. One oral type of pleasure, the explicitly sexual one, is exchanged for the other, the "pleasure" of food. Agent Cooper's sexual desire, one might say, is sublimated into eating, and food becomes a clear substitute for intercourse.

Cooper's recourse to food to mediate the situation with Audrey is also fascinating in terms of behavioral impulses, or, to be more specific, pleasure impulses. Michel Foucault, of course, puts forward several ideas connecting the intercorrelation of behavioral practices, food, and the control of desire in *The Use of Pleasure*. And while Foucault's approach may be contested for several reasons, most of all for his continuous reliance on examples from antiquity, his understanding of dietary regimes in relation to pleasure may shed some light on the conflict experienced by Agent Cooper and his handling of food and consumption as a solution. Foucault, of course, is interested in neither food nor sex per se, but rather in the conception of control and ethics that the connection between the two unveils. Defining "the uses of pleasure," Foucault points us in the direction of caring for one's body's diet as central to establishing an ideal of self, where the term holds political, social, and cultural connotations. The way in which one eats, and the way in which one "controls" the pleasure that comes from it, is similar to controlling sexual impulses in that eating

characterizes the way in which one "manages" one's existence (98). In these terms, the way in which one deals with both sex and food problematizes the issue of behavior as a construct influenced by both internal and external impulses.

Seeing Agent Cooper's order of food as the sublimation of his sexual desire for Audrey not only uncovers a list of psychological impulses, but also situates the body as an entity belonging to a system of regulation that cannot be separated by the hold of culture and social regulation. If eating regimes are, as Foucault would put it, a "whole art of living" (98), then their emergence in relation to sex also defines Agent Cooper as an ethical subject. Thinking of his sexual impulses through food here unveils the interrelation of various corporeal dimensions, which are inevitably politicized through notions of "right" and "wrong." The interrupted exchange between Agent Cooper and Audrey operates through not only the vector of sex—a failed, stunted one—but through that of food. By controlling the intake of food, sexual impulses are also mitigated (Probyn 62). The conjugation of the two operates on regimented ideas of power. Agent Cooper's alimentary regime, as out of control and "excessive" as it might be, reconciles the blurred lines of his sexual desire. But the conflict does not simply uncover matters of a sexual nature. Sex, as overt as it is, is also a metaphorical conduit for the idea of possession, for the treatment of the body as a convenient commodity. The malts and the fries are fast, purchasable items. Their presence embodies Agent Cooper's sexual restraint, but they also uncover his ultimate inability to deal with an emotional situation without resorting to the comfort of consumerism. The purchasable food commodity here mediates the interpersonal interaction between Agent Cooper and Audrey. One commodity is exchanged for the other.

The connection between excessive behavior—often sexual—and food is conjured on several other occasions in the series; so many, in fact, that it is virtually impossible to list them all. Another specific instance worthy of note, however, is the curious naming of Ben Horne and his brother Jerry (David Patrick Kelly), and the focus on their typical practices of entertainment. Both Ben and Jerry are portrayed as greedy and shady characters, constantly involved with semi-illegal dealings; the two brothers are also habitual frequenters of One Eyed Jacks, where they gamble and pursue the services of the prostitutes who work there. A keen observer will of course notice that the coupling of "Ben" and "Jerry" is inevitably reminiscent of Ben & Jerry's, the popular brand of ice cream. As ice cream is often perceived to be

a food of pleasure and excess, the association with the Horne brothers suggests a figurative representation of the excessive and uncontrollable nature of their character. The knowledge that Ben & Jerry's is a successful brand also opens the association to critiques of consumerist desires; as far as Ben and Jerry Horne are concerned, the connection to the "pleasures" provided by a consumable that can be purchased—from food to sex—is difficult to miss. One can hardly forget when, in episode 2, the brothers ecstatically praise a simple baguette with brie in highly sexualized terms, complete with inappropriate and confusing moans that are uncomfortably out of place in a gastronomic scene.

The idea that one of the many representational uses for food in *Twin Peaks* is to evoke activities of a sexual nature is made particularly explicit through the attention that is given to "pies" throughout the series. They are insistently served and consumed by numerous customers at the Double R Diner, and Agent Cooper is particularly fascinated by them. The use of this foodstuff here is particularly poignant in view of the place occupied by "pie" in idiomatic language, a place that is often connected to sex. One can be said to have a "slice of the pie," meaning a share in proceedings and dealings. The expression is usually related to financial gain, but one needs to wonder if, in *Twin Peaks*, this metaphorical rendition could be pushed a bit further into the sharing of life that is particular to small American towns. Agent Cooper, in this sense, partakes in the secrets and lifestyle of Twin Peaks.

But "pie" is also a colloquial, slang (and often derogatory) expression for the vagina. This knowledge places the town's—and Agent Cooper's—relationship to pies in a different light. In episode 1, Agent Cooper makes a gastronomic recommendation to Albert on the phone: "I can recommend a place for lunch. The Lamplighter Inn. They got a cherry pie that'll kill you." In the midst of discussing the details of Laura's murder, Cooper once again causally switches to talking about food. The connection between food and narrative continues to have disorienting and confusing effects. Considering that the analysis of Laura's corpse uncovers multiple sexual acts with multiple partners, one might be tempted to see Cooper's comment about the cherry pie as a gastronomically derived metaphor to assess the "dangers" of overdeveloped sexual urges. If pie is sex, so to speak, and a metaphor for desire overall, then it is suggested that sexual depravity is what killed Laura. This is even more evocative if one considers that, as we find out, Laura's sexual proclivities were a reaction to years of abuse

by her father. What is more, what might even be put forward here is that while the cherry pie is part of the American culinary repertoire, its corruption stands for the disintegration of All-American sexual politics, as well as gender, familial, and cultural frameworks. The sexiness of the pie, and the sexiness of the "dreamy" small town community, are dangerous as much as they are secretive.

Final Remarks, By Way of Conclusion

Twin Peaks subverts the familiar and comfortable place often occupied by food in screen and literary narratives. In the series, the conventional uses of food as metaphor are reevaluated and undone; food is often at the center of surreal subplots, where the worlds of visions and consuming desires collide. Food is conspicuously involved whenever the boundaries of "reality" are broken, the narrative structures almost collapse, and the suspension of disbelief on the part of the viewer is stretched. With the negation of food's conventional roles comes the concomitant nullification of cultural values, the readjustment of consciousness, and the disruption of the common everyday (Stockwell 577). The distorted materiality of food—the presence most grounded in the commonality of the human experience—facilitates the construction of the surreal experience. *Twin Peaks* challenges the material properties of both people and objects, openly confusing the boundaries of what is often known as solid cultural and social markers. The subversion of food structures provides unexpected and perplexing breaks "in continuity" (Jahn 126) as it mixes authenticity with artifice, rationality with mysticism. And while food suggestively provides grounding for the narrative, it also unveils its impossibility.

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“Wrapped in Plastic”: David Lynch’s Material Girls

Catherine Spooner

Twin Peaks’s clothes are an inextricable part of its visual strangeness, and its appeal. As a British teenager watching the series on its original broadcast, I was perplexed by the exoticism of early 1990s America: all that big hair, all those lumberjack shirts (shortly to become a global trend, of course, through the ascendancy of grunge). Everyone was simultaneously underdressed and overdressed, wearing cozy knitted sweaters with immaculate make-up and bright lipstick. The rebel chic of Bobby Briggs (Dana Ashbrook) and James Hurley (James Marshall) was recognizable, if unsettlingly clean, but the other characters all looked strangely alien, evocative of a sartorial elsewhere.

Twin Peaks’s costume has aged well: its stylization looks less odd at its twenty-fifth anniversary, perhaps, following a twenty-first-century grunge revival and the ascendancy of vintage style. Fans continue to recreate the looks of the characters, with 1950s-inspired Audrey Horne (Sherilyn Fenn) a particular favorite (see *Bayout*), and in the years leading up to the anniversary, Lynch and Frost’s show has inspired an *Elle* photoshoot, a Lana del Rey-fronted advertising campaign for H&M, and catwalk hairstyles at Kenzo, as well as being name-checked frequently by up-and-coming designers. Although costume is mentioned in *Twin Peaks* criticism only in passing, it forms a significant part of the show’s world, and not only as one component of its overall aesthetic. As Michael Chion observes, “*Twin Peaks* boldly reintroduces a non-psychological logic, a system of types, costumes and poses in which the cowl makes the monk” (102). Characters

become defined by costumes that they are rarely (if ever) seen without, from Major Briggs's (Don S. Davis) military uniform to Dale Cooper's (Kyle MacLachlan) pristine suit. Chion's gothic metaphor is instructive, as this system of costumes and poses is precisely that identified by Eve Sedgwick as the logic of the surface that governs the gothic novel. For Sedgwick, critics have misunderstood gothic texts by searching too assiduously for hidden depths, when it is on the surface that meaning often resides, expressed in a gothic repertoire of masks, veils, disguises, and shrouds.

Twin Peaks is peppered with moments that foreground clothes or accessories, and in which costume exceeds its regular cinematic or televisual role of establishing narrative realism. In the earlier episodes, this takes the form of a kind of fetishism focusing on individual objects such as Laura Palmer's (Sheryl Lee) divided heart necklace or Audrey's red shoes. These function as what Stella Bruzzi describes as "iconic clothes" (17): "spectacular interventions that interfere with the scenes in which they appear and impose themselves onto the character they adorn" (xv). If Lynch and Frost can be accused of replicating Hollywood cinema's scopophilic dynamic in which, as Laura Mulvey famously argues, woman is image and man is bearer of the look, then iconic clothes complicate this dynamic and indicate different kinds of pleasure. In the second series, as the Windom Earle plot unfolds, this intermittent sartorial fetishism shifts into a more overt concern with masking, disguise, and performative dress-up, including the fashion show staged by the cartoonishly dapper Dick Tremayne (Ian Buchanan), the Civil War re-enactment by the Horne family and the Miss *Twin Peaks* beauty pageant.

What unites both approaches to clothes in the series is the attention they draw to the material, which in its oscillation with fantasy is a characteristic concern of the Lynch scholar. As Todd McGowan recognizes, "From his first film, *Eraserhead* (1977), [Lynch] has not simply included fantasy and material images in the same film but has wedded them together inextricably" (8). He gives the example of the protagonist's fantasy that a woman emerges from his bedroom radiator and sings and dances on a tiny stage, in which, as he points out, "the material object in some sense gives birth to the fantasy" (8). In *Twin Peaks*, costume likewise takes on a fantastic or even metaphysical dimension even as the show revels in its materiality. This is abstracted in the image of the curtain, a literal piece of material that within Lynch's oeuvre is accorded numinous properties. The curtain, for Lynch, is a form of veil: a garment that articulates the meeting

point between the body and the exterior world, and that deliberately screens one thing from another. The verb *to screen*, with its dual meaning of *conceal* and *show*, is instructive. As I will go on to explain in the remainder of this chapter, *Twin Peaks* is dominated by what we might call screening garments, items that appear to close off access to meaning but in fact project meaning upon their wearers.

Twin Peaks's Style: “A plethora of plaid”

Twin Peaks's style was initially fashioned by Lynch's regular collaborator Patricia Norris, who won an Emmy for costuming the pilot episode and returned for the feature film *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* (1992). Sara Markowitz took over for the remaining 29 episodes of the series. Norris and Markowitz constructed a distinctive look that combines a number of key elements. Most notoriously, classic 1950s Americana is referenced in James's motorcycle gear and Audrey's chic skirt-and-sweater combos, as well as the Double R Diner's waitress uniforms and Mike (Gary Hershberger) and Bobby's baseball jackets. This is mixed, however, with the alternately sleazy and cozy style of what might be called the long 1980s, respectively embodied in the lingerie of Blackie O'Reilly (Victoria Catlin) and her minions at the brothel One Eyed Jacks, and the oversized, patterned knits and scrunchies of police receptionist Lucy Moran (Kimmy Robertson). Finally, markers of a regional northwestern American identity appear in the form of plaid shirts and Native American patterns, such as the Navajo coats worn by Catherine Martell (Piper Laurie) and Sid (Claire Stansfield).

Indeed, as season two progresses, the excessive use of plaid becomes a signature look. Even Agent Cooper replaces his iconic suit with the favored local style, eliciting a grudging appraisal from the acerbic Albert Rosenfeld (Miguel Ferrer): “Oh, Coop, uh, about the uniform...replacing the quiet elegance of the dark suit and tie with the casual indifference of these muted earth tones is a form of fashion suicide, but, uh, call me crazy—on you it works.” This process reaches an apotheosis in the multiple clashing patterns of the fashion show at the Great Northern Hotel. This “plethora of plaid,” as commentator Dick Tremayne aptly puts it, is comically jarring, yet the ridiculous ensembles in which Lucy and Andy (Harry Goaz) appear are only a more exaggerated version of Annie Blackburn's (Heather Graham) ruffled tartan shirt or the multiple layers of Pete Martell's (Jack Nance) fishing outfit. In the United States, plaid is a

traditionally working-class fabric, worn, for example, by trucker Leo Johnson (Eric DaRe), Big Ed the gas station owner (Everett McGill) and, in their brief appearance in episode 2, Ronette Pulaski's parents (Alan Ogle and Michelle Milantoni). The Great Northern fashion show, however, restyles it as pretentious upmarket trend. Fittingly, clan tartans were devised in the nineteenth century in order to confer an artificially constructed Scottish heritage on the wearers. Plaid is both traditional and fake, cozy and (when taken to excess) bad taste, perhaps a quintessential Lynchean fabric.

Similarly, the use of Native American textiles in the series tends to perform regionality and authenticity while simultaneously trading on a fake ethnicity. The blanket-style coats worn by Catherine and Sid are in Navajo fabrics deriving from the southwestern American states. The American Northwest, in contrast, was populated by a number of loosely associated indigenous tribes including the Snoqualmie (who gave their name to the waterfall that appears in the credit sequence) and the Suquamish, who Annie references in her Miss Twin Peaks speech and in whose style the murals on the interior walls of the Great Northern Hotel are painted. A variety of other Native American references and styles, however, also appear in the show: Hawk (Michael Horse—an actor of Yaqui-Apache-Swedish-Hispanic descent) refers to the Blackfoot tribes of Montana and the Canadian plains, and Johnny Horne (Robert Davenport and Robert Bauer) wears a Blackfoot or Sioux headdress—with a Navajo blanket. The show draws on a number of different indigenous traditions in order to create a composite pastiche of Native American identity that informs and enables its invented “local” mythology.

Plaid and indigenous textiles are not the only signature looks of *Twin Peaks*: its aesthetic is dominated by uniform, which operates functionally to convey key information about characters' roles in the community. *Twin Peaks* is full of uniforms: Major Briggs's military regalia; the police officers' uniforms and badges; the high school students' cheerleading and football outfits; Shelly (Mädchen Amick) and Norma's (Peggy Lipton) waitress dresses and hats; the matching lingerie at One Eyed Jacks; the maid uniform forced on Josie Packard (Joan Chen) by her sister-in-law Catherine Martell. Yet even those not, technically, in uniform are also dressed in apparently inflexible styles that accommodate and communicate their role in the community: Benjamin Horne's (Richard Beymer) business suit; Ed Hurley's overalls and plaid shirt; James Hurley's biker jacket; even Pete Martell's fishing gear (signifying his lack of discernible role). As Alexandra

Warwick and Dani Cavallaro suggest, one of the prime functions of uniform is not its homogenization of the subject but rather their insertion into a complex system of readable signs, in which minute differences signify distinctions in role and hierarchy. The characters of *Twin Peaks* are rendered readable by their costumes, assimilable into a carefully differentiated social framework.

The most extreme version of this sartorial functionality is Agent Dale Cooper. His standard issue FBI black suit and slicked-back hair are perennially pristine, appearing out of place only once in the entire series, following his dream of the Red Room in episode 3. The opening shots of episode 2 show a close-up of Cooper’s ankle suspenders as he hangs upside-down from a pipe in his hotel room, followed by a slow pan down to his crisply ironed boxers, impeccable white vest, and immobile hair. Cooper’s immaculate surface, it is implied, extends to the layers beneath. This is the “system of types, costumes and poses in which the cowl makes the monk” that Chion describes: the suit is not something that Cooper puts on for his job, or a disguise concealing a deeper truth, but permeates his entire being.

By the time of the fashion show in episode 25, “Wounds and Scars,” the influence of Windom Earle (Kenneth Welsh) has begun to unmoor sartorial signifiers from their clear referents, so that clothing becomes increasingly excessive and performative. The arrival of Earle in *Twin Peaks* accelerates the attention to clothes as he appears in a series of ludicrous disguises, sometimes several to an episode, ranging from a dusty college professor to one half of a pantomime horse. As Earle infiltrates the lives of the *Twin Peaks* townspeople, so the whole town seems to be gripped by a performative madness in which no one appears his or her usual self. Some of these changes are benign: Cooper dropping the FBI suit for plaid work shirts; Andy and Lucy’s catwalk appearance; Dennis/Denise Bryson’s (David Duchovny) cross-dressing; Bobby adopting Leo’s too-large suit as he tries to wangle a job working for the Hornes. Others point to a profound confusion of identity: Benjamin Horne adopts a confederacy uniform in his delusion that he is Civil War General Robert E. Lee, while Audrey, Bobby, and Dr. Jacoby (Russ Tamblyn) also don civil war era costumes in an attempt to let his delusion play out; amnesiac Nadine Hurley (Wendy Robie) dresses as a high school cheerleader; Mrs. Tremond (Frances Bay and Mae Williams) manifests as two entirely separate people. Still further examples are overtly coercive: Josie is blackmailed into wearing a maid’s outfit by Catherine; brain-damaged Leo is put in

an electric collar by Earle; Evelyn Marsh (Annette McCarthy) masquerades as an abused wife in order to frame James for her husband's murder. To these examples we might add the episodes immediately preceding Earle's appearance in which Catherine swindles Ben Horne in the guise of Japanese businessman Mr. Tojamura. The fashion show allegorizes this process of unmooring, as on the catwalk, plaid no longer operates as a fixed symbol of a working outdoor life, but becomes a free-floating visual signifier.

Iconic Clothes and Other Pleasures: "Leo needs a new pair of shoes!"

In contrast to the reassuring typology of uniform and its subsequent disruption through performance, disguise, and sartorial coercion, very few characters in *Twin Peaks* appear to wear clothes to follow fashion or express individual taste. Where they do, this is often commensurate with their insertion into a formulaic role: Dick Tremayne's carefully coordinated classic menswear casts him as the effete, dandyish cad (British, to boot); Dr. Jacoby wears Hawaiian shirts, capes, and willfully mismatched spectacle lenses in his self-appointed role as countercultural guru. There are several exceptions, however, and their considerably more complex relationship to their clothes speaks to the show's particular concerns with femininity. Lynch has often been accused of misogyny. Diana Hume George, for example, notes his "fetish for victimized women" (115) and argues that by presenting the bodies of dead and injured women with lascivious enjoyment, *Twin Peaks* validates a "pornographic and thanotopic" impulse (118). There is no space to address the full implications of Lynch's construction of femininity here. However, the presentation of Josie Packard, Audrey Horne, and Donna Hayward (Lara Flynn Boyle) and their engagement with items of clothing does open up space for a more ambivalent reading of femininity within the show.

Of these, Josie is the most straightforward. Josie draws attention to the way that the clothing worn in *Twin Peaks* is located in a series of material practices of consumption, in which women themselves frequently become the objects that are consumed. The only evident fashion retail outlet in Twin Peaks is Horne's Department Store, which supplies the items for the fashion show and where Dick Tremayne works in the Menswear department. In the first series, Audrey Horne briefly has a job at the perfume counter, where the young, female

shop assistants are groomed for employment at One Eyed Jacks. The link between selling perfume and selling women’s bodies is overt; Ben Horne owns both establishments, and selling wares in one is shown to be roughly equivalent to selling wares in the other. The space of the department store is one in which, as Rachel Bowlby argues, merchandise is transformed into spectacle in a way that is analogous with cinema: “the pleasure of looking, *just* looking, is itself the commodity for which money is paid. The image is all, and the spectator’s interest, focused from the darkened auditorium onto the screen and its story, is not engaged by the productive organization which goes to construct the illusion before his/her eyes, nor with any practical use for the viewing experience” (6). Audrey’s investigations uncover the productive organization behind the illusion; in Horne’s department store, women are commodities and the apparently innocent pleasure of *just* looking supports a range of more illicit pleasures.

This entanglement of shopping and sex is reiterated by Josie’s shopping trip to Seattle in episode 11, “The Man Behind Glass.” Josie’s sophisticated, androgynous wardrobe cannot be sourced in Twin Peaks and requires a trip to the big city; she returns with a towering pile of boxes and bags that function as an alibi for her more shadowy dealings with figures from her past (in which she was, among other things, a child prostitute and a trophy bride). As Sheriff Truman (Michael Ontkean) questions her absence, she distracts him with clothes, showing off a sleek black stole draped over a floor-length black slip slit to the thigh. “I know I paid too much for it but I just fell in love with it,” she tells him. The banality of Josie’s expression defuses its naked symbolism: she will always pay too much for what she loves. It indicates a relationship with clothes that is wanton, even wasteful: in an explicitly fetishistic sequence, Josie asks Truman to tear the stole as they make love on the couch. Again the gesture is symbolic: Josie destroys what she loves. Yet it also suggests that Josie seeks release from entrapment in a system where women are objects of exchange, both reduced to and confined by the luxury commodities with which they are adorned.

If Josie’s sophisticated personal style contrasts markedly with the comfortable, homely style of the majority of other women in Twin Peaks, then Audrey too stands out as a key exception. Audrey’s clothes are not reducible to a role; they seem instead to be an expression of personal taste and to afford her a certain performative pleasure that exceeds social and filmic expectation. Audrey is an exhibitionist who deliberately invites the gaze, and in doing so evades the passivity of

the voyeuristic dynamic. In numerous scenes she draws attention to her own appearance, whether by dancing sensually on her own in the Double R Diner, mooching around the edges of the Norwegians' meeting, or—infamously—tying a cherry stalk into a knot with her tongue in her audition at One Eyed Jacks. In the pilot episode, she goes to her school locker to change her black-and-white saddle shoes for red heels, a gesture that is stereotypically interpreted as suggesting rebellion, but could alternatively be read as indicating a deep and possibly perverse pleasure in her own relationship with clothes. Crucially, the red shoes do not match the rest of her outfit, a feature that is emphasized by close-ups that fragment the shoes from the rest of her body. Audrey's pleasure in the shoes is not about creating an entire look but about the clash with her demure skirt and sweater; it also points toward her enjoyment of the shoe itself. If the lingering close-ups can be interpreted as a classic act of fetishism, in which Audrey as a whole is replaced by her shoes (there are three such shots in the pilot episode, in each of which the shoe close-up precedes the identifying shot of her face), then by showing her deliberately changing the shoes Lynch shows her actively controlling her own image.



Figure 5.1 Audrey Changes Shoes.

The red shoes also tie into the series’ imagery on a broader level. As Angela K. Bayout suggests, “this shot of the black and white flat versus the red heel establishes the show’s theme of duality, opposites, twin-ness, and so on” (23). It evokes the conventional noir pairing of the innocent woman and the femme fatale, but it combines them into the same character, and again suggests, through the deliberate switch, that Audrey has control over this imagery. The red shoes overtly recall Dorothy’s ruby slippers in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), one of Lynch’s most openly acknowledged influences. In *Wild at Heart* (1990), the film Lynch made in-between the two seasons of *Twin Peaks*, Laura Dern’s Lula clicks together the heels of her own red stilettos in a desperate desire, like Dorothy, to return to a normal world. Audrey’s two pairs of shoes, which evoke the black, white, and red color scheme of the Black Lodge, symbolize transit between two worlds, indicating that post Laura’s death, we are definitely not in Kansas any more. They are the first of a series of shoe references: Phillip Gerard the one-armed man (Al Strobel) is a shoe salesman; Leo tells Bobby and Mike that “Leo needs a new pair of shoes!” (a traditional gambling expression soliciting luck, although Leo converts it into a threat); and while in his brain-damaged state, Leo mutters “New shoes,” alerting Bobby and Shelly to the location of Laura’s cassette tape. Shoes with erotic connotations also recur in episode 18, as Nadine simultaneously luxuriates in the high shine on her patent shoes and fears that boys will be able to see her underwear reflected in them. In a typical Lynchian move, the red shoes are overloaded with significance, both piled with symbolic freight and rooted irrevocably in the material world. They may therefore be said to have, in Stella Bruzzi’s terms, “an independent, prior meaning; they function as interjections or disruptions of the normative reality of the text” (18).

The same can be said of Laura’s sunglasses, worn by Donna in episode 9, “May the Giant Be With You” (the first episode of the second series). Donna characteristically wears safe, even dowdy, mid-calf-length skirts with chunky knits in bright patterns. She is the girl-next-door to Audrey’s vamp. But when she wears Laura’s sunglasses to visit her boyfriend James in prison, she undergoes a radical image overhaul. Dressed in a black pencil skirt and an electric blue sweater cinched with a wide belt, she appears as a *noir* seductress, behaving in an uncharacteristically sexually assertive manner. Her face, screened by the glasses, repeatedly fills the shot. There is no clearer example of how, in the show, clothes “interfere with the scenes in which they appear and impose themselves onto the character they adorn” (Bruzzi

xv). The sunglasses constitute a kind of veil or mask, which can be understood in Warwick and Cavallaro's terms as an "exhibitionist disguise." In particular, Warwick and Cavallaro cite Roland Barthes's description of dark glasses as a "double discourse": he writes, "The hiding must be seen: *I want you to know that I am hiding something from you*" (Warwick and Cavallaro 131; Barthes 41).

Donna's adoption of the sunglasses and performance of a stereotypical femme fatale is disconcerting as it departs so radically from her usual ingénue persona. From James's comments afterward, it appears that he finds it baffling and disturbing rather than seductive (which is not to say that it is not erotic). The moment of masking points to a discontinuity of subjectivity and a sense that self resides in performance; it also complicates Laura Mulvey's model of woman as object of visual pleasure, as the glasses enable Donna to look without being looked at directly, and it appears the primary pleasure of the scene is for Donna herself. In Laura's sunglasses, then, we find the paradigmatic screening garment, the garment that both conceals and projects meaning on its wearer. As such, the sunglasses are merely one iteration of a theme that dominates *Twin Peaks*: the veil.

Veils and Curtains: "You waiting for those drapes to hang themselves?"

If costume in *Twin Peaks* oscillates between social functionality and "iconic" moments in which clothing exceeds realist logic, the series also displays an abstract concern with clothes as a covering for the human body that is signaled from almost the first line of dialogue. Pete Martell discovers the body of homecoming queen Laura Palmer washed up on a riverbank, and tells the sheriff's office over the telephone, "She's dead. Wrapped in plastic." Famously, Laura's lilac-tinted face appears framed by a ruff of semi-transparent tarpaulin that resembles the gauzy folds of a couture ball-gown. The dress-like properties of this wrapping underline the way it both covers and frames Laura's body, mimicking the function of clothes. The plastic forms a veil that simultaneously reveals and conceals, placing Laura in a long line of gothic heroine-victims and femmes fatales.

Laura's plastic wrapping offers a new iteration of a classic gothic garment in that it is simultaneously veil and shroud. Eve Sedgwick writes in *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* of the way that the veil in gothic texts characteristically redirects energies back to

the surface, rather than to supposedly hidden depths. It is also, she suggests, an agent of contagion: it transmits its deathly properties to the wearer. The veil is a massively overdetermined garment in gothic fiction. It is routinely spiritualized through its association with religious orders and eroticized through its association with the strip tease; these two properties are frequently mixed up, not least in its bridal incarnation. It is repeatedly associated with dereliction and decay, from the infamous black veil concealing a grisly *memento mori* in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) to Miss Havisham’s yellowing bridal wear in Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations* (1860–61). In the gothic novels of the 1790s and 1800s, the veil was suggestively routed into the contemporary fashion for the diaphanous white empire line dress; the style referred to by one fashion commentator in 1802 as “the close, all white shroud-looking, ghostly chemise undress of the ladies, who seem to glide about like spectres [*sic*], with their shrouds wrapt tight about their forms” (cited in Ewing 52). Ghostliness and undress are collapsed in this description, the erotic charge of the undressed body diffused into spectrality. In the Victorian period, the gothic heroine’s white dress was frequently refigured as a nightdress and therefore accorded further properties of intimacy and liminality—embodied, for example, in Lucy Westenra sleepwalking through the streets of Whitby to meet Dracula in her white nightgown. Laura Palmer’s plastic wrapping engages all these meanings: it is shroud and veil, dress and undress simultaneously; its transparency is ghostly and transmits its spectral properties to her even as it emphasizes the putrescence of her decaying flesh. Significantly, in Laura’s prom photo she is wearing a white ball-gown; the grimy tarpaulin can be read as a sullied version of the same dress. Ronette Pulaski (Phoebe Augustine) also wears a torn, dirtied white slip when she staggers traumatized down from the mountain. The gothic heroine/victim’s white dress provides a blank surface waiting to be marked with dirt and decay or, more frequently, blood: the white dress stands in for skin, and is a blank page on which the narrative of the heroine’s body is written.

The gothic properties of Laura’s plastic wrapping should be placed in the context of David Lynch’s recurring preoccupation with curtains and fabric. Stage curtains are an oft-noted visual motif of Lynch’s work, appearing in films including *Eraserhead*, *The Elephant Man* (1980), *Blue Velvet* (1986), *Lost Highway* (1997), *Mulholland Drive* (2001), and *Inland Empire* (2006), as well as prolifically within *Twin Peaks* itself. Asked about the motif by Chris Rodley in *Lynch*

on *Lynch*, the director states, "I've got a thing about curtains and I don't know why, because I've never done any theatre. But I love curtains, and a place where you look and it is contained.... There's something about it. The seven veils. Stuff like that" (187). Although Lynch professes not to know why he likes theatrical curtains, his response reveals a good deal. "[A] place where you look and it is contained" suggests that Lynch enjoys the framing effect of the proscenium arch, the way that the stage invites the gaze but also limits and controls it—which could be read as a self-conscious reiteration of the process of film-making itself. The reference to the "seven veils" is also highly suggestive. It refers to the Biblical story in which Salome dances for her stepfather/uncle King Herod in return for the head of John the Baptist on a platter. The combination of performance, erotic spectacle, transgressive desire, and violence is a characteristically Lynchian mix. However, more significant is the way in which the dance, a form of strip tease, uses clothing to exploit the gaze and withhold knowledge. Curtains in Lynch signal epistemological latency: they indicate that there is something to be known, if only we could pull the curtain aside. At the same time, by foregrounding performativity, they undercut the idea that there is, after all, anything to be known. As John Alexander suggests, curtains are "Lynch's metaphor for surface" and while we may look behind them seeking meaning, "there is no guarantee we will find it" (22). Theatrical performances in Lynch films and by extension *Twin Peaks*, whether Julee Cruise singing in the Roadhouse or the mysterious dance executed by the Man From Another Place (Michael J. Anderson) in the Red Room, take place in front of the curtain, not behind it. The curtain, perhaps, is all there is.

In *Twin Peaks*, the erotic charge of the curtain is mapped directly back onto the female body, as various female characters are presented as veiled in different ways. Of these, Laura Palmer is most prominent. Wrapped in plastic, she is a mystery to be solved, a package to be unwrapped by the various male professionals whose role it is to investigate her murder. So far, Lynch and Frost do not depart from the conventional noir script, in which the femme fatale's unknowability, as defined by Richard Dyer (92), is the source of her fascination and danger to men. Laura's veiled body is simultaneously massively underdetermined and massively overdetermined. As the series progresses, it seems we know nothing about Laura and everything about her at the same time. For Todd McGowan, discussing *Fire Walk With Me*, "Her subjectivity is an emptiness that remains irreducible to any

identity" (132). Veiling garments frame the female body, foregrounding its role as object of spectacle for the male gaze, and simultaneously foreground the female subject's unknowability.

The erotic properties of the veil are elaborated in the sequence in episode 9 in which Audrey, pursuing her own undercover investigation, is taken on at the brothel, One Eyed Jacks, only to find herself the object of her own father's attentions. In this scene, which is queasily comic and profoundly disturbing at the same time, Audrey is dressed in extravagant white lingerie, trussed like a parcel to be unwrapped, in yet another version of "ghostly chemise undress." Desperate to conceal her identity from her father, she dons a white, cat-shaped mask and hides behind the curtains of the bed, thus foregrounding the veiling effect. Deliberately following in Laura's footsteps, Audrey becomes a kind of replacement or body-double for her. Laura's sexual exploitation, however, is replayed in this scene as a kind of black erotic farce in which, ultimately, Audrey remains untouched, at least in a sexual sense. Significantly, Audrey does *not* perform the strip tease; the veil operates as a tool of concealment rather than revelation—or at least, the woman's body is not what is revealed.

As the series continues, it becomes apparent that there is no need for a body: the veil itself is sufficient signifier of latent meaning. In episode 22, "Double Play," it is revealed that Windom Earle has previously sent a series of packages to police departments in Texas. These packages appear to be mail-bombs but instead contain items of women's clothing: a veil, a garter, white slippers, pearls, a wedding dress that belonged to Earle's dead wife. Yet another reiteration of Laura's white prom dress, Caroline's wedding accoutrements are wrappings wrapped, veils veiled. A striptease without a body, their surface appears deadly, but the threat, once unwrapped, is indecipherable. At the episode's conclusion, Earle leaves Caroline's death mask in Agent Cooper's bed, the mask uncomfortably recalling Audrey's cat mask and by extension the scene in episode 7, "Realization Time," in which Audrey waits in Cooper's bed. The lady vanishes, to be replaced with her uncanny image.

At the same time, *Twin Peaks* repeatedly replays the veil motif as surreal comedy. At the Miss Twin Peaks beauty pageant in the penultimate episode, all the younger female cast members appear "wrapped in plastic," wearing transparent raincoats for a kitsch, revue-style dance routine. The raincoats echo Laura's appearance in the pilot episode, marking them out as potential victims for Windom Earle, who plans to abduct and murder the winner. In the individual



Figure 5.2 The Miss Twin Peaks Contest.

talent round, Lana Budding Milford (Robyn Lively) even performs a version of the Dance of the Seven Veils in the form of “contortionistic jazz exotica,” dressed in Turkish trousers, a jeweled bra, and multiple diaphanous wraps. This replaying of some of the show’s most serious themes in a comic register works to drag the ineffable back to the quotidian. The most vivid example of this process is provided by Nadine Hurley’s obsession with creating “silent drape-runners”; in Nadine’s world, drapes have a comically overinflated significance that mirrors and deflates their unbearable freight of meaning in the cryptic scenes set in the Black Lodge. This reveling in the material counteracts the pull toward the numinous found in the veil motif.

Ultimately, however, the series finale leaves us with the mystical version of the veil. If the erotic energies of the strip tease are redirected into the veil itself, then the standard dynamic of woman as object of visual pleasure, famously outlined by Laura Mulvey, is repeatedly frustrated in the series. The gaze is directed not, chiefly, at the woman herself but at the veil, which is accorded numinous properties. Curtains in Lynch frequently signal portals to another world. When

Shelly and Leo fight in episode 22, the plastic tarpaulin screening the unfinished wall of their house is slashed, opening a doorway between the domestic space and the forest through which Leo disappears (this tarpaulin, of course, being identical to Laura's plastic wrapping). When Agent Cooper watches Julee Cruise perform at the Roadhouse in a red dress in front of a red curtain, it invokes a vision of the Giant (Carel Struycken) and a message from the other world. When Cooper enters the Black Lodge in the final episode, he does so by means of an incongruous red curtain in the middle of the forest. Veils, and by extension curtains, are threshold garments, that mark a boundary between inside and outside, surface and depth. Recalling their stage context, they offer access to a magical elsewhere.

The magical elsewhere conjured by the curtain can, however, never fully be realized: the Red Room is only a waiting room, an interstitial space, recalling the recurring stairways and corridors of earlier episodes. A female figure lies at its heart in the form of the Venus de Medici, the classical statue that forms part of its striking décor. The statue represents the goddess unclothed and covering her modesty with her hands, and therefore depicts a female body unveiled and exposed, its secrets apparently revealed. Yet in this context, it is still inscrutable. A parallel to the show as a whole is instructive. The resolution of the immediate mystery of Laura's murderer seven episodes into the second series was imposed by the network in response to falling audience numbers; the investigation of Laura's murder is a dance of the seven veils that Lynch originally intended to continue indefinitely. What interested him was not the solution of the mystery but the process of unveiling. Just as in the final episode, "Beyond Life and Death," when Cooper penetrates the curtains in the Red Room only to find yet more curtains, more veils, meaning is continually deferred. The curtain, rather than what lies behind it, is the point.

In *Twin Peaks*, therefore, sartorial symbols are frequently both evacuated of and overloaded with significance so that they simultaneously possess no meaning and too much meaning. The veiling motif in its erotic and metaphysical aspects dominates the series and determines its relationship with clothes. However, veiling is also made comic and rooted in what is, within the world of *Twin Peaks* at least, the material and quotidian. As such, veils, curtains, and other screening garments constitute a kind of interpretative hinge, in which the show's numerable contradictions meet. It is in the refusal to resolve the tension between the suggestively numinous and the literally material that the power of Lynch's veils resides.

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II

Twin Peaks, in Theory

Jacques Lacan, Walk with Me: On the Letter

Eric Savoy

While the letter may be en souffrance [awaiting delivery], [the subjects] are the ones who shall suffer from it. By passing beneath its shadow, they become its reflection. By coming into the letter's possession—an admirably ambiguous bit of language—its meaning possesses them.

—Jacques Lacan, “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’” (21)

Why was there no third season of *Twin Peaks*? Among the possible responses to this vexing question (the dwindling audience, or the impasse of “creative differences” between David Lynch and Mark Frost), the most plausible one—for the formalist, at least—is that the story had arrived at its logical and inevitable conclusion. In the horrific finale at the Great Northern Hotel, Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) smashes his head against the bathroom mirror and, with ironic glee, gazes upon “his” reflection in its crazed, bloodied surface: the crazed, ugly face of BOB (Frank Silva). If the narrative economy of *Twin Peaks*—specifically, its temporal unfolding or the seriality of events—is largely predicated on doubling, and thus falls under the auspices of what Lacan conceptualizes as the “repetition automatism” (11), then Cooper’s ultimate convergence with his polar opposite, his gothic Other, is precisely and conclusively uncanny. For in the logical circuits of repetition and return, it is hardly coincidental that we have already witnessed the co-incidence, mediated by the mirror image, of Leland Palmer (Ray Wise) and BOB (episode 14). As the host who carried what Dexter Morgan of the Showtime TV series

might call the “dark passenger” of BOB until his pitiful death, Leland Palmer is at once the narrative precursor of Cooper’s destiny as a split subject and, as the original embodiment of BOB’s agency, the cog that sets the narrative machinery in motion. The very *recurrence* of the mirror’s specular affirmation of the monstrously divided subject suggests that the machine has done its work: that is, the plot has come full circle when the angelic Cooper is reincarnated as the slave of sublime evil (or when we are given conclusive evidence that the unfathomable Real is inside the Symbolic order). The narrative’s repetition automatism in the guise of “the detective story” has traced not only the *traces* of BOB—his letters, about which I shall have something to say—but also, and ultimately, his *transmission* to the most unlikely of carriers. According to these logics, there is nothing more to tell. Cooper emerges at the series’ close as BOB’s historically next, and narratively ultimate, addressee. In other words, “the ‘letter en souffrance’ means...that a letter always arrives at its destination” (Lacan 30).

The metamorphosis of Dale Cooper and Leland Palmer in the mirror scenes is both a gothic extension and a striking *literalization* of Lacan’s model, quoted in my epigraph, of the temporal itinerary of the letter: just as the subject succumbs to the shadowy allure of the letter as it circulates, awaiting delivery, he “become[s] its *reflection*.” From a Lacanian perspective, one could say that the uncanny affect of *Twin Peaks* intensifies as the narrative moves inexorably toward “realizing”—toward this becoming-literal in the mirror’s reflection of what is merely Lacan’s theoretical metaphor of “reflection.” The word becomes the thing. In order to situate the mirror scenes in relation to the larger narrative, they should be understood as the clarifying moments that render explicit the soldering of the subject to BOB’s traces as the Lacanian letter. As such, they arise from a narrative economy that not only depends upon the circulation of a wide array of “letters,” but that also deploys the letters as fragments of the Real to which they point. Ultimately, the letter is not a morsel of evidence that the detective manipulates as a safe distance from the Real; rather, in the field of the gothic, the letter binds the subject’s unconscious to itself in an insidious and totalizing manner, thus incorporating the subject into the Real that he persists in regarding as impossible, elsewhere, and purely Other. Such are the chiasmic logics that subtend Lacan’s argument about the transposition of subject and object in course of the letter’s narrative circulation (again, I quote from my epigraph): “By coming into the

letter's possession—an admirably ambiguous bit of language—its meaning possesses [the subject].”

The function of the letter is indexical: emanating from violent event, it glistens with potentiality. To follow the letter, to trace it back to its origin, is to take up its promise of referentiality. In the Symbolic dimension, to “follow” the letter is initially to provide an answer to the question that launches the story: who killed Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee)? However, if we consider the first letter to arrive for Dale Cooper’s hermeneutic consideration—the alphabetical letter R that he extracts from beneath the nail on Laura Palmer’s ring finger—it is apparent, in retrospect, that it points toward the ultimate agent of ritualistic murder, and not to its instrument, Leland Palmer; it points, that is, beyond the context of what Cooper (mis)understands as a crime. The letter R is an instantiation, and the initiation, of a sequence of similar letters that will arrive in due course in the full run of *Twin Peaks* and in its prequel, *Fire Walk With Me*: T (Teresa Banks), O (Maddy Ferguson), and B (Ronette Pulaski). To be clear, the letter never deviates from its indexical function, for the sequence that accumulates in the repetition of “extraction” spells ROBT—Robert, or BOB. However, it is

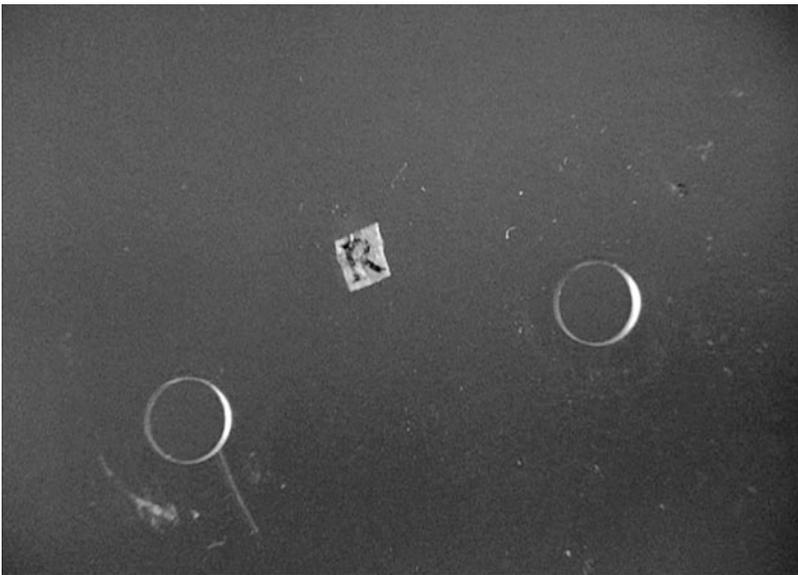


Figure 6.1 The Letter.

precisely this *ulterior* pointing that brings into focus not only what the Governess in *The Turn of the Screw* calls “the hideous author of our woe” (137), but more indirectly and unconsciously, the trap of the letter into which Dale Cooper stumbles.

How might one explain Cooper’s fundamental *méconnaissance* that launches, even as it anticipates, the dark extension of his destiny? Dale Cooper arrives in Twin Peaks as an agent of the Symbolic: he is there to solve a murder case, and murder cases involve working backward from event to perpetrator to motivation. Accordingly, he subordinates the import of the letter to the status of the clue. However, the promissory *allure* of the letter—both in its recalcitrance and in its return in the form of supplementary letters—draws him progressively away from the ratiocination of a Symbolic hermeneutics and toward the very *lure* of the mystical, the transcendent, and the dream-like. Toward, that is, the very impossibility that is the Real. As Todd McGowan explains, “within every symbolic order, the real occupies the place of what cannot be thought or imagined—the position of the impossible. The real is not reality but the failure of the symbolic order to explain everything. When seen in this light, the impossible is not materially impossible but rather logically impossible as long as we remain within the current social structure... What is impossible in the symbolic order is, in the real, perfectly achievable” (25). According to the logics of the gothic, what I have termed Cooper’s founding *méconnaissance* is the narrative’s necessary process by which he loses himself in the Symbolic in order to find himself in the Real—in order, ultimately, to lose “himself” in that very Real. This overarching narrative trajectory of the lost and found is shadowed forth in the proleptic vision of the Log Lady (Catherine E. Coulson) that precedes the pilot episode: the story will, she says, turn around “the mystery of the woods, the woods surrounding Twin Peaks. To introduce this story, let me just say that it encompasses the *all*. It is beyond the fire—though few would know that meaning” (pilot episode). Cooper’s founding illusion, then, arises from the very *dispositif* of detection as hermeneutic mastery. He believes that he can fit clues to events, and events to scenes, and scenes to perpetrators, and perpetrators to motivation, in a totalizing reconstruction of the letter’s indexicality. Ironically, however, the letter may be said to have gotten *under his skin*, if not under his fingernail (whether “he” will insert letters under fingernails in due course and at BOB’s behest is a matter of speculation). Cooper perseverates the discourse of detection by posing questions to the letter as signifier, but remains unconscious

of the signifier's response. As Lacan explains, the signifier is entirely deterministic: it is in you more than you. "For such is the signifier's answer, beyond all significations: 'You believe you are taking action when I am the one making you stir at the bidding of the bonds with which I weave your desires'" (29).

* * *

What is the deterministic function that Lacan designates as the letter? And what is its efficacy in the narrative gears of *Twin Peaks*?

Lacan invokes the letter at various points in his career. In "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious," he clarifies its status as a signifier, spoken or written—that is, as an event in discourse. It is "the material support that concrete discourse borrows from language" (413). By emphasizing the concrete, Lacan aligns the letter with one aspect of the Real, or the materiality over which the Symbolic attempts to exercise dominion. However, if Lacan's letter originates in Saussurean linguistics, its critical meaning is closer to what Derrida designates as *différance*: that is, in the field of complex or conceptual discourse, the signifier yields no punctual grasp of the signified, even as (or especially because) it repeats itself in an economy of meaning-production. Since the signifier is produced and repeated in time, it can only recede from referentiality rather than close in upon it. The signifier merely points. One might think in this context of one of the three riddles posed by the Giant (Carel Struycken) in Cooper's vision in episode 8: "without chemicals, he points." This refers in narrative terms to the fact that when MIKE, the One-Armed Man (Al Strobel) is deprived of his antipsychotic medication, his corporeal distance from BOB is diminished. Would it not suggest that there is referential or "significant" truth in pointing? Yes and no: yes, because the Giant's riddle sustains the movement of the signifier in the temporal plot of detection; and no, because the accumulation of signifiers will point collectively, in due course, toward the unfathomable mystery that is BOB. In other words, the relay of pointing demonstrates, in its turn, the *other* aspect of the Real in whose shadow the signifier moves—that is, it points to a place, and a time, where there will be no "reference," no "meaning," that is within the grasp of the Symbolic's comprehension. Earlier, I quoted Todd McGowan's interpretation of the Real in David Lynch's work as that which is "logically impossible" within the confines of the Symbolic. In terms of the signifier, one might understand such logical impossibility as the *différance* that

both subtends and drives the poetics of the gothic. As such, it permeates the Log Lady's prognostications; at the outset of episode 16, she traces the paradoxical interlinearity of knowledge with bafflement that is the endless circuitry of *différance* as it approaches the gothic Real. She theorizes in the unspoken context of what we "know" about Laura Palmer's murder: "There is a depression after an answer is given... Yes, now we know. At least we know what we sought in the beginning. But there is still the question, *why*. And this question will go *on* and *on* until the final answer comes. Then the knowing is so full that there is no room for questions."

If the material letter is laminated to the signifier, its function can be better understood as the *bar* that, in Saussurean linguistics, divides the signifier from the abstraction of the signified. It is this very gap of difference that occasions the splitting of the subject. Lacan approaches the subject divided by the signifier in his reading of Descartes's *cogito*: "Is the place that I occupy as subject of the signifier concentric or eccentric in relation to the place I occupy as subject of the signified?... The point is not to know whether I speak of myself in a way that conforms to what I am, but rather to know whether, when I speak of myself, I am the same as the self of whom I speak" (430). Arguing that the subject is eccentric, or uncentered, in relation to the sign, he concludes by demonstrating his inveterate love of chiasmus: "I am thinking where I am not, therefore I am where I am not thinking" (430). To clarify, the letter can be understood as the opaque signifier that might arise in the space between the two clauses of Lacan's chiasmus—in the space between "where I am not" and "where I am." The letter might be said, therefore, to follow the syntactic logics of chiasmus itself: it circulates between the unconscious, "where I am *not* thinking," and consciousness, "where I *am* thinking." In its semantic indirection, it directs the subject as constituted by his symptom (which is figured forth by the letter as signifier) and in his circuits of repetition *of* the letter. Its function, then, is precisely to determine the position of the subject in relation to signification itself.

If the stubborn persistence of the opaque letter is what makes all hermeneutic enterprises (psychoanalysis, literary, and film criticism) difficult, it is also what makes these enterprises possible and pleasurable. To continue my attempt at the clarification of Lacanian concept (and this time *really* to clarify!), I offer two concrete, concise, and familiar, narrative examples. Consider *The Scarlet Letter*. When Hawthorne announces that "the scarlet letter had not done its office"

(261), he refers at once to its failure as a disciplinary measure—for Hester Prynne has not been reintegrated into “the world’s law,” the Symbolic Order, which “she cast away [as] the fragments of a broken chain (259)—and also to its inability to coalesce a stable symbolic meaning. Originating as a “riddle” (145) or “mystic symbol” (146) in a dusty archive that is haunted by the ghosts of the forefathers, it concludes as “a type of something to be sorrowed over” (344). Hawthorne’s narrative unfolds a deconstructive theory of the letter *avant la lettre*, one that anticipates both Lacan and Derrida: it is a tale of the signifier’s *errancy*, in both senses of the word. As an allegory of reading, it reiterates the Puritan community’s attempts to attach the scarlet letter to a coherent referent—one that would transcend both the signifier’s materiality and its historicity. But in its circulation, and as it solicits radically diverse interpretations, the letter remains bound to the contingencies of temporality, pointing everywhere and nowhere. In other words, the letter’s signifying matrix is pure *différance*. Crucially, from a Lacanian perspective, the letter’s errant circulation arises because it binds its subject’s destiny to its own and occasions the subject’s splitting. If Hester were in analysis, well might she ask, following Lacan, “Is the place that I occupy as subject of the signifier concentric or eccentric in relation to the place I occupy as subject of the signified?” (quoted above). Hawthorne’s repetitive *mise-en-scène* confirms the eccentricity of this relation in direct proportion to the deterministic ascendancy of the letter—this obscure signifier that, in chiasmic fashion, moves between conscious speculation and the unconscious. This alienation of the subject from “herself” is true not only of Hester, but also of every subject who falls under the letter’s shadow. It is true, also, of the fiction that “Nathaniel Hawthorne” constructs about himself in “The Custom-House”: “I saw little hope of solving [the letter’s riddle]. And yet it strangely interested me. My eyes fastened themselves upon the old scarlet letter, and would not be turned aside” (145). It falls to Roger Chillingworth to explain, in gothic discourse, both the determinism of the letter and the overarching emplotment of its circulation: “‘It has all been a dark necessity.... It is our fate. Let the black flower blossom as it may!’” (268).

Another example of the letter in the labyrinth of signification concerns the spoken rather than the written, and it arises in Freud’s *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis (The Wolf Man)*. It concerns the letter, or the Roman numeral, V. Late in the analysis, the Wolf Man repeats his childhood memory of the anxiety aroused by the sight of a

butterfly with yellow stripes and large wings. Approaching the recollection as a screen memory—that is, “representing something of more importance with which it was in some way connected” (328)—Freud assumes that the image of “yellow stripes” points toward a woman’s garment. However, when the Wolf Man returns once again to this memory, he adds that, “the opening and shutting of the butterfly’s wings . . . had given him an uncanny feeling. It had looked, so he said, like a woman opening her legs, and the legs then made the shape of the Roman V” (329). Eventually, Freud concludes that the letter is a condensation of signifiers that collectively point to the traumatic impression of the primal scene. On the one hand, the yellow stripes of the butterfly’s V-shaped wings represent, in the logics of synecdoche, a particular kind of pear with yellow stripes on its skin: the name of this pear in the Wolf Man’s language is “grusha,” which is also the name of a servant girl who worked in his childhood home. The Wolf Man recollects, of his own accord, that one day when he saw the girl on all fours, scrubbing the floor, he urinated in her presence, and she responded with a threat of castration. Freud concludes that:

When [the child] saw the girl on the floor, . . . and kneeling down, with her buttocks projecting and her back horizontal, he was faced once again with the posture which his mother had assumed in the [primal] copulation scene. She became his mother to him; he was seized with sexual excitement . . . and, like his father (whose action he can only have regarded at the time as micturition), he behaved in a masculine way toward her. His micturition on the floor was in reality an attempt at seduction, and the girl replied to it with a threat of castration. (332)

On the other hand, the letter V represents the hour of the afternoon when the primal scene took place and “the hour at which, in his boyhood and even up to the time of the treatment, he used to fall into a depressed state of mind” (329). Clearly, the stubborn persistence of the letter in its circuitry of repetition and return testifies both to its “rhetoric” of imagistic condensation and to its status as a fragment of the Real. Freud’s method required a literal (*à la lettre*) attention to the analysand’s discourse—to the repetition of a signifier the import of which the analysand does not comprehend, but which, arising at the bar between the signifier and the signified, emanates as a letter from the unconscious. The Letter V, one might say, functions as the Wolf Man’s scarlet letter. A crucial difference in their status, however, is that Freud ventures the kind of totalizing explanation that was entirely alien to Hawthorne’s deconstruction. For one thing,

the Freudian letter must be efficacious in its pointing to the primal scene—the reconstruction of which was both scientifically and narratively “indispensable,” because “all the consequences radiate out from it, just as all the threads of analysis have led up to it” (289). For another, the primal scene itself takes its place within a larger economy of Freudian metapsychology: as a “comprehensive solution of all the conundrums that are set us by the symptoms of the infantile disorder” (289), it justifies the axiomatic status of the threat of castration, which is the bedrock of the Real in the Freudian *dispositif*.

What functional model of the letter can we take away from the preceding examples? Lacan’s argument that the letter is meaningless in itself draws upon Freud’s comparison of the analysand’s parlance to ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, which were illegible prior to Champollion’s work on the Rosetta Stone. The stone’s inscriptions in Egyptian, Coptic, and Greek demonstrated that the enigmatic signifier participated in a signifying system. Analogically, the Freudian analyst as “translator” occupies the role of Champollion. Crucially however, Lacan departs from Freudian practice by viewing skeptically the letter’s “indexical” production of the kind of coherent meaning that Freud located in the primal scene. Rather, as Dylan Evans argues, “the signifier persists as a meaningless letter which *marks the destiny of the subject* and which he must decipher” (100, my emphasis). “Deciphering” is subordinated to the sheer facticity of the letter’s “mark” of temporal “destiny,” for the letter “is essentially that which returns and repeats itself; it constantly insists in inscribing itself in the subject’s life” (100). Privileging the functional over the hermeneutic role of the letter, the Lacanian analyst “must focus not on the meaning or the signification of the [letter], but purely on its formal properties” (100). And this is why, in his “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter,’” Lacan demonstrates “the major determination the subject receives *from the itinerary of a signifier*. It is this truth, let us note, that makes the very existence of fiction possible” (7, my emphasis).

The point of Lacan’s seminar is to demonstrate how the subject is possessed—that is, the manner in which his or her position is determined—by the circulation of the letter as it wends its way to its destination. Within the economy of Poe’s tale, “the subjects, owing to their displacement, relay each other in the course of the intersubjective repetition” (10). In other words, regardless of what the subject thinks of his degree of power, there is a limited number of places that the subject can occupy in relation to the letter; paradoxically, to “hold” the letter is to fall under the curse of displacement within that

range of subjective places. Recall the intrigue of Poe's narrative: a letter received by the Queen is stolen by the minister in the oblivious presence of the King; the Queen cannot act without alerting the King, who must remain ignorant if the Queen is to preserve her safety. The Prefect of Police searches for the letter in conventional hiding-places and uncovers nothing; the detective Dupin calculates that the minister will have left the letter out in the open and, in a repetition of the original scene, steals the letter in the presence of the imperceptible minister. For Lacan's purposes, this plot raises two issues. First, the letter itself (like Hester's scarlet A) is a "pure signifier" (10): we know nothing specific about its message, save that its effect *would be* incriminating of the Queen and volatile for the Symbolic order were it to arrive at the destination ordained by the law—the King. Whether the import of the letter is amorous or political, its very existence "situates [the Queen] in a symbolic chain foreign to the one which constitutes her loyalty" (28). So long as the letter remains *en souffrance*—awaiting delivery to its final destination—its use for the goal of power can be only potential. Hence the importance in Poe's narrative of temporal dilation, of the relay of this pure signifier. Lacan's second—and for my purposes, more important—argument situates the displacement of the subject within this relay along the signifier's chain. According to the repetition automatism, if Dupin ultimately displaces the minister, then the minister can be said to occupy the position of the Queen. For "the ascendancy which the Minister derives from the situation [of 'possessing' the letter] is thus not drawn from the letter but, whether he knows it or not, from the personage it constitutes for him" (23). What is this personage? From the perspective of Queer Theory, one might say that the minister becomes a Big Queen. The consequence of purloining the volatile signifier is to suffer a transformation, or a transgendering, as he refashions himself within an amorous, or a treasonous, relationality *as* the letter's addressee. To conceal the letter, he turns it inside out and takes advantage of a blank space to write a new address—his own, which is inscribed in what appears to be a female hand. It is highly significant, Lacan writes, that "the letter which the Minister addresses to himself, ultimately, is a letter from a woman: as though this were a phase he had to go through owing to one of the signifier's natural affinities" (25). Lacan argues not only that the minister "suffers the curse of the sign of which he has dispossessed her [the Queen] so greatly as to undergo *metamorphosis*" (22, my emphasis), but also that such displacement *as* "metamorphosis" is conclusive proof that

“the unconscious is the fact that man is inhabited by the signifier.” The letter, as it were, becomes lodged under his fingernail.

Lacan’s project in the “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’” is to teach us what happens in the repetition automatism—the Symbolic machinery that makes fictions such as *Twin Peaks* possible. At issue is not only the displacement, but also the metamorphosis of the subject who falls under the spell of the letter. As I argued in my opening frame, *Twin Peaks* narrates as it *literalizes* this metamorphosis, this becoming Other, in terms that are merely hinted at in Poe’s tale. And as I shall demonstrate, Lynchian/Lacanian subjects “model their very being on the moment of the signifying chain that runs through them,” for “the signifier’s displacement determines subjects’ acts, destiny, refusals, blindnesses, success, and fate, regardless of their innate gift and instruction” (21). In Poe’s narrative economy, Dupin’s analytic distance from the repetition automatism yields various choices: he could forward the letter to the King, as the law requires; he could return it to the Queen, and thus risk setting in motion once again the cycle of blackmail; or he could destroy it, which would be the only sure way to annul whatever it is that it signifies. Lynch’s subjects of the letter will have no such liberty. BOB writes his letter. “From then on, everything proceeds like clockwork” (8).

* * *

“Like clockwork”: could one say that the circuitry of the letter in *Twin Peaks* is allegorized by the measured, mesmerizing movement of the gear-apparatus (*engrenage*) in the Packard sawmill during the opening credits? Prior to the steady flow of the waterfall and the river, the machine encapsulates—in a diagrammatic tableau—efficacious, unremitting repetition in space and time. Its triple motions render concrete the physics of *transmission*: as the saw advances, propelled at regular intervals by the lever, the sharpener grinds each of its teeth to an incisive point, turning on a fixed axis to refine the two edges that constitute the angle of each tooth. A frontal shot isolates the turnings of a single grinding mechanism, and then a profile shot reveals a larger network of sharpeners, all moving in sequence. It is, to my mind, the most beautiful image in the entire visual economy of *Twin Peaks*; its ten-second dilation (protracted considerably longer in the opening credits of the pilot episode) impresses upon us both the operation of *relay* and its complexity. For the image allegorizes not only the intersubjective matrix of the letter’s circulation in space, but also

its time lapses: the transformative, metamorphosing letter will surely arrive at its destination, but only subsequent to its errant itinerary.

* * *

The hazard of relay is a part, too, of Lynch's comedy; it is one of the means by which he laminates the ordinary dysfunctional functionality of the Symbolic to the gothic Real of BOB's litter of letters. Lucy Moran (Kimmy Robertson: is her surname the uncannily lexical origin of BOB?) is the central figure in this comedy: her plotline turns around the unresolved question of whether Andy Brennan (Harry Goaz) or Dick Tremayne (Ian Buchanan) has sent the sperm-letter that has fathered her unborn child; correspondingly, Lucy is singularly indirect in her office of relaying messages to Sheriff Truman. Consider the following dialogue, which takes place at the outset of the pilot episode:

Pete Martell: Lucy? Lucy, this is Pete Martell. Lucy, put Harry on the horn.

Lucy: Sheriff, it's Pete Martell up at the mill. Ummm, I'm going to transfer it to the phone on the table by the red chair? The—red chair—against the *wall*. The—the *little* table—with the lamp on it? The lamp that we moved from the corner? (pause)

The *black* phone. Not the *brown* phone.

Harry Truman: Mornin' Pete. Harry.

Pete Martell: She's dead. Wrapped in plastic.

Harry Truman (Michael Ontkean) is standing perhaps 15 feet away from the black telephone, which is clearly in his sight, as he attends to Lucy's convoluted directions. If Pete Martell's discovery of Laura Palmer's corpse launches the detective *plot*, then the Lucy scene may fairly be said to initiate the labyrinthine *eplotment* of the letters' trajectories. It is the narrative's primal scene; as such, and from the point of view of storytelling, it "stands in" for the historical primal scene of BOB's genesis. For, despite Freud's insistence that "all the consequences radiate out from [the historical primal scene], just as all the threads of analysis have led up to it" (289), BOB is an unfathomable event. He exists only in the mediation of the letter's repetition automatism, and in the letter's splitting of the subject. This is why Lacan argues that, "the signifier is a unique unit of being which, by its very nature, is the symbol of but an absence.... [I]t will be *and* will not be where it is wherever it goes" (17).

I argued in my preliminary section that the sequence of the four “fingernail letters” instantiates the matrix of pointing because they are “literally,” and directly, evidential. They point at once toward the Symbolic of detection and toward the traumatic Real from whence they emanated: Cooper spells them out to arrive at a name, but his illusion of ascendancy is subtended by his (ultimate) metamorphic coincidence with that name. He falls under the letter’s deterministic “spell” by his displacement toward (to paraphrase Lacan) the personage that the letter constitutes for him and by the signifying chain that runs through him. However, if the fingernail letters are the most direct in their address to Cooper, they are also the least intricate example of the letter’s circuitous path to its destination. As repeated moments of simple clarification, they—like the recurring mirror scenes that confirm the splitting of the subject—require to be set against a larger and more complex narrative of the letter’s uncanny circulation.

The Lynch-pin of this other narrative is Donna Hayward (Lara Flynn Boyle). If Dale Cooper comes under the spell of BOB, then Donna Hayward—a detective in her own right—is both always already and imminently under the spell of the deceased Laura Palmer. In an overarching plot that is replete with splittings and doubles, Donna stands (in) as Laura’s melancholic double—which in Freudian terms is to say that she compensates for an incomprehensible loss by incorporating the lost object. If something compels Donna to model herself after Laura, and thus to metamorphose in certain performative ways—she wears Laura’s sunglasses; she alternates between an innocent dedication to the unfortunate and sexual licentiousness; she claims Laura’s angelic boyfriend, James Hurley (James Marshall) and takes the measure of his diabolical double, Bobby Briggs (Dana Ashbrook)—she narrowly escapes Laura’s fate at the hands of the possessed Leland Palmer. Why? There are two answers to this question. First, although Donna is pivotal in the transmission of *another* letter—Laura’s secret diary, which is the dark double of her journal, itself a mere McGuffin uncovered initially by the police—she is not its addressee. The proper destination of the secret diary is, once again, Dale Cooper; and the perseverated, episodes-long narrative of its itinerary to his hands is, one might say, the mirror image of Lucy’s convoluted mediation of the telephonic message. If the function of the secret diary is not merely to confirm, but to converge with, the substance of Cooper’s mystical vision, then Donna’s pursuit and delivery of its traces attests to the letter’s presence-in-its-absence—it is and is not where it is, wherever it goes. Secondly, and in keeping with the

paradoxical logics of “is-and-is-not,” the suffering of Laura’s fate (while the letter remains *en souffrance*) is relayed to Laura’s *other* and more immediately recognizable double, Maddy Ferguson (also played by Sheryl Lee). In the context of the murder-event, Maddy is the double of the Donna-double; because her primary function is to prolong the circuitry of the fingernail-letter, she is constrained within this singular trajectory. And by taking the hit in her place, she allows Donna to function entirely within the Symbolic, unbrushed by the Real that she nonetheless touches (in relaying the letter) and by which she is touched (by her proximity to multiple deaths). For if Donna is melancholic, her psychopathology is entirely explicable and plausible. She persists as she begins—as the object of our love and thus, according to the logics of melodrama that interline the gothic in *Twin Peaks*, as the subject beyond sacrifice.

In terms of the diary-letter and its transmission, Donna’s instrumentality is framed by Cooper’s dream of the Red Room in episode 3, for this is the subject in its displaced place to whom letter is destined to return. And it is set in motion by a certain “purloining” of a fragment of the letter: as we learn in *Fire Walk With Me*, Leland Palmer rips several pages out of the secret diary, so Laura, knowing that BOB knows that he is “known,” consigns the diary to the safekeeping of the reclusive Harold Smith (Lenny Von Dohlen). After Laura’s death, Donna takes over her volunteer job of delivering meals on wheels from the Double R Diner to Laura’s recipients—two of whom are Mrs. Tremond (Frances Bay) and her neighbor, Harold Smith. When Donna visits Mrs. Tremond, she meets the old lady’s grandson, Pierre (Austin Jack Lynch—who bears an uncanny resemblance to David Lynch, for good reason: as Lynch’s son, he figures the “letter” of Lynch in the *mise-en-scène*). If Pierre is remarkable for what he *does*—he magically teleports the detested creamed corn from his grandmother’s plate and into his cupped hands—he is compelling because of what he *says*: “J’ai une âme solitaire” (episode 9), which seems to be yet another riddle. This sentence translates literally as “I *have* a lonely soul,” but more directly as “I *am* a lonely soul.” I note in passing that the slippage in French between the literal grammar of “having” and the connotation of “being” will have repercussions that elucidate, repeatedly—when this sentence subsequently takes the form of a letter—the existential isolation of a relay of subjects when BOB’s letter makes its mark upon them. Mrs. Tremond cannot assist Donna in her attempt to reconstruct the events of Laura’s final days, so she refers her to Harold Smith.

Donna begins to visit Harold regularly in episode 11. Learning that he possesses Laura's secret diary, she implores him to let her read it and then to turn it over to Sheriff Truman. Harold refuses because "she gave it to *me*"; luckily, Donna fails in her repeated attempts to purloin the diary, for it gathers unto itself the aura of a gothic archive—proffering knowledge that is a fascination and a fear and, like Poe's letter, toxic to the touch. When Donna fails a second time to make off with it, Harold says to her: "Are you looking for secrets? Is that what all this is about? Well, maybe I can help you. Do you know what the ultimate secret is? Laura did. The secret of knowing who killed you" (episode 12). The Log Lady, speaking in her customary discourse of metaphysical poetics (she thinks she's Lacan!), foretells the underlying circularity of events to come, and their intersubjective relay: "A poem as lovely as a tree. As the night wind blows, the boughs move to and fro—the rustling, the magic rustling that brings on the dark dream. The dream of suffering [*en souffrance*] and pain. Pain for the victim; pain for the inflictor of pain; a circle of pain. A circle of suffering" (episode 14).

The "circle of pain" is a metaphor for the circulation of the letter—"like clockwork"—as it points, progressively and retrospectively, to a secret, and to the secret of having (or being) a secret. Deputy Hawk (Michael Horse) discovers that Harold Smith has hanged himself amid the orchids in his greenhouse; Truman and Cooper find a note on his body: "J'ai une âme solitaire" (episode 14). We recognize the sentence as that spoken uncannily by the mystical Pierre, but Harold's letter hangs in abeyance [*en souffrance*] until it is taken up by the repetition automatism in episode 16. Donna enters the Double R Diner to find Deputy Brennan sitting at the counter and incanting the sentence of the suicide note in mangled French:

Andy: J'ai un ami solitaire. [I have a lonely *friend*]

Donna: What did you say?

Andy: It's French

Donna: I know it is; tell me.

Andy: J'ai un homme solitaire. [literally, I have a lonely *man*].

It means "I am a lonely soul."

Comically reminiscent of Lucy at the telephone, Andy is incapable of reading literally (*à la lettre*), and he is fortunate in this missed encounter with the letter. Donna recognizes it immediately as the repetition of Pierre's cryptic utterance and, accompanied by Cooper, returns to

Mrs. Tremond's house for an explanation, insisting that, "it all leads back *here*." It certainly does, but only because Pierre's/Harold's letter brings back into circulation a fragment of the diary-letter. For there is no elderly Mrs. Tremond and no grandson; there is, however, *another*, younger Mrs. Tremond (whose mother died three years ago and who has no children): recognizing Donna's name, she gives her a letter from Harold Smith that appeared in her mailbox the morning after he died. The letter consists of a single page—an entry in Laura's diary written the day before her death. She reads it aloud to Cooper:

Last night I had the strangest dream. I was in a red room with a small man dressed in red and an old man sitting in a chair. I tried to talk to him. I wanted to tell him who BOB is because I thought he could help me. My words came out slow and odd. It was frustrating trying to talk. I got up and walked to the old man, then I leaned over and *whispered the secret in his ear*. . . . Even if it was only a dream, I hope he heard me. No one in the real world would believe me.

As Donna reads, the camera closes in on Cooper's face and dissolves to the Red Room scene of Cooper's dream; this scene is then superimposed on a close-up of Cooper's right eye as he watches, in his mind's eye, Laura kissing him and then whispering in his ear. Then the Red Room scene dissolves into a close-up of Donna's mouth speaking the words. The brilliant camera work is, of course, the essence of uncanny representation. However, the letter has not completed its circuitry, because Cooper has yet to hear the words that Laura whispered in his ear.

Donna's implication in the letter's transmission—that is, with Pierre Tremond, Harold Smith, Andy Brennan, and Dale Cooper—does not entail a corresponding implication in the Log Lady's totalizing vision of a "circle of suffering." Like Andy Brennan's, hers is essentially a missed encounter which, in a suspenseful scene, will turn once again upon the doubling of "personage" and the doubling of event. Later in episode 16, Donna visits Leland Palmer to tell him about the discovery of the secret diary and to find out what she can: "I wish I knew what was in it, don't you? I think about Laura all the time." Taken aback, Leland moves ominously toward Donna, but is distracted by a ringing telephone (Maddy's mother is on the line, wondering where Maddy is). Leland looks in the mirror and sees BOB. The scene breaks, as we fear the worst for Donna. When it resumes, Leland puts on a record and insists that they dance: the syrupy music is overlaid by

thunder, and the camera alternates between the record going around and around on the turntable and shots of the gallant Leland morphing into BOB. Suddenly, and just as Leland violently clasps Donna, the doorbell rings: Sheriff Truman has arrived with news of another murder (Maddy's), and with a request for Leland's immediate help. The repeated shots of the spinning record allegorize, or shadow forth (like the gear apparatus in the Packard sawmill) the letter's circulation in its traces to its inevitable end point; but Donna escapes twice by the wry literalization of the creamed-corny adage, "saved by the bell." Her fingernail remains unsullied—which is why Donna is and is not a letter carrier. She has fulfilled her office.

Given the prevailing economy of inscription in *Twin Peaks*—the fingernail letters, Laura's secret diary, Harold's suicide note, Harold's letter to Donna, Laura's voice recordings that Donna and James purloin from Dr. Jacoby (Russ Tamblyn), Cooper's oral memoranda to "Diane"—it is striking that BOB's letter, upon arrival, is *viva voce* and entirely performative. It takes place later in episode 16, when nearly all the male characters are assembled at the Roadhouse. Just as Cooper frets that "someone is missing," Major Briggs (Don S. Davis) enters with the decrepit waiter (Hank Worden) from the Great Northern Hotel. In his role as psychopomp (the guide of souls to the place of the dead, or a messenger between the living and the dead), the waiter offers a stick of chewing gum to Cooper, upon which Leland exclaims, "I know that gum. It's my favorite gum"; and the waiter rejoins, "Your favorite gum is coming back in style!" Uniquely American, the chewing gum has its cozy place in the cherry-pie Symbolic of the town, but at this moment it is caught up in the circuitry of the letter: not only do we recognize once again the masticating Leland's implication in the larger design, but the waiter's rejoinder prompts Cooper's recollection of the first time he heard that sentence—in his dream of the Red Room, when it was spoken by the Man From Another Place (Michael J. Anderson). It is precisely this soldering of the everyday Symbolic to the Real of the dream that enables Dale Cooper to hear—in what Laura described as the "real world"—the full import of the letter. As the *mise-en-scène* of the Red Room superimposes itself upon the Roadhouse—in which the backdrop consists of red curtains—Laura whispers audibly in Cooper's ear, "My father—killed—me."

The remainder of *Twin Peaks* unfolds the stages by which Cooper arrives at his double reflection in the mirror—the point at which I began. The narrative fleshes out, quite literally, the implications of the letter's arrival at its destination: at the very point where Cooper's

detective work is accomplished, the letter consolidates its possession of him. A story of the uncanny morphs into one of the demonic—for, as the revelation in the Road House confirms, the impossible Real is *known* to have coincided with the Symbolic, with “the real world.” Is the point of convergence a vision or a waking dream? Insofar as *Twin Peaks* proffers answers, they emerge as citations—as twice-told repetitions, and therefore as an aspect of its uncanny poetics. According to the Log Lady, “Is there answer? Of course there is. As a wise person once said with a smile, ‘the answer is in the question’” (episode 13). And Major Briggs, the wise man in touch with the outer limits, pontificates: “There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy” (episode 16). Accordingly, the narrative remainder of *Twin Peaks* leaves in its wake a sort of mathematical remainder—and it has a lot to do with what remains to be explained about the circulation of the letter in the repetition automatism. Whence does it come? What agency determines its destination? What is its power to incarnate, to possess, to cast a spell even as it is spelled out? Is the letter made manifest by a page torn from a diary, a writing that bears witness to the unspeakable Real? Is it a spoken message? Is it a vehicle or a thing? As a signifier, is it a container or a content that cannot be contained? *Is it a stick of gum?* All we can know with any degree of certainty is that the letter, in its repetition and uncanny return, participates in a queer temporality, one that might be described as “always already but not yet.” This temporality is announced by the One Armed Man in Cooper’s dream of the Red Lodge: “Through the darkness of future past / The Magician longs to see / One chance out between two worlds / Fire, walk with me” (episode 3). If the letter materializes the conduit between two worlds, what is this temporal darkness? Does the grammar of the letter conform to the pluperfect or to the future anterior? Is one the double of the other? Do they mean the same thing? Does time fold upon itself?

But as the Log Lady might say, the time has come when there is no more room for questions.

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Lodged in a Fantasy Space: *Twin Peaks* and Hidden Obscenities

Todd McGowan

Despite its status as one of the first representatives of what has become known as quality television, *Twin Peaks* has received a striking amount of critique. Feminist critics take the show to task for employing the traditional sexist trope that the most beautiful woman is a dead woman and structuring its narrative around violence toward women. Not only that, but it also exculpates the murderer of Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) by depicting him possessed by a supernatural force when committing incest and murder. In the world of *Twin Peaks*, women are the victims, while men commit the crimes and solve the mysteries.¹ From the perspective of class, the series depicts a middle-class world threatened by dangerous members of the lower class, such as Leo Johnson (Eric DaRe) and especially BOB (Frank Silva). Despite its formal inventiveness, *Twin Peaks* seems to be on most counts a political disaster. The narrative structure of the series lends support to Jonathan Rosenbaum's critique that "*Twin Peaks* is ideologically no different from other prime time serials" (25). In one sense, Rosenbaum is correct: the series promulgates ideological fantasies as much as any other television program. But what he fails to see is that *Twin Peaks* takes a different approach to these fantasies, which is why the series is ideologically the opposite of most of its television counterparts. Lynch and Frost's series separates the fantasmatic elements of our social reality from that reality, and the effect is one of undermining our capacity for investing ourselves in that social reality. In this way, the series opens us to the possibility of changing our social reality rather than simply taking it for granted.

According to Jacques Lacan, fantasy is the structure through which the subject organizes its enjoyment in a specific and singular way. Enjoyment is an excessive pleasure that defines the subject and that makes its life worth living. It is the source of a subject's singularity—the way that the subject derives satisfaction from its existence. Fantasy provides a channel through which the subject can represent this excess to itself. Every fantasy involves the transgression of the symbolic law or of symbolic barriers, and every film or television show depicts a fantasy in some form or another. Films and television shows aren't crimes, but they demand that spectators think like criminals for a time relative to the symbolic law. This is why Christian Metz locates the cinema on the fringes of the social order, just on this side of social acceptability. He writes, "going to the cinema is one lawful activity among others with its place in the admissible pastimes of the day or the week, and yet that place is a 'hole' in the social cloth, a *loophole* opening on to something slightly more crazy, slightly less approved than what one does the rest of the time" (66). Cinema and television enable the spectator to indulge in imagined transgressions without repercussions, and yet these imagined transgressions do not have the effect of weakening the ideological edifice. In fact, cinematic and televisual transgressions have the effect of strengthening this edifice by creating the illusion of the ease with which one can overcome its barriers. This is where the real danger of cinema and television lies: it fosters the belief in the subject's fantasized subversiveness and thereby paradoxically produces more complacent subjects.

But *Twin Peaks* avoids this type of relation to fantasy. Instead, it reveals the complexity of fantasy's relationship to social reality in an unparalleled way. Even though Lynch's films provide explorations of the realm of fantasy, they tend to place their emphasis primarily on the fantasmatic underside of society, a world of rampant sexuality and violence. The most thoroughgoing instance of this in Lynch's career occurs in the film that he released while *Twin Peaks* was still airing—*Wild at Heart* (1990). Obscene figures such as Bobby Peru (Willem Dafoe) and outlandish images such as a dog holding a detached hand in its mouth populate the film, and they bespeak the complete dominance of the fantasmatic underside of society. *Twin Peaks* also delves into this underside through its depiction of the central role in quiet small-town life played by a casino and brothel, the drug trade, a secret band of vigilantes, and even indescribable evil. But unlike *Wild at Heart*, the series also highlights another more direct role that fantasy

plays in sustaining our social reality. Fantasy provides a basis through which we constitute the experience of social reality, and this effect of fantasy becomes clear through the form of *Twin Peaks*.

As a result of the relationship that the series takes up to the double role of fantasy in our social existence, it constantly violates the conventions of realism. The sense of reality depends on both a seamless integration of fantasy in social reality and a hidden fantasmatic underside to that reality. Most series or films present characters' fantasies as an aspect of their characters rather than highlighting these fantasies as distinct. *Twin Peaks*, in contrast, foregrounds the separation of the character from her or his fantasy. In the case of Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan), the series not only presents him as psychically flat, but it also stresses his fantasmatic investment in coffee and pie. That is to say, the show seems unrealistic because of its excess of realism—its depiction of the social reality detached from its fantasmatic supplement. Characters appear strange because their fantasy life has its own isolated position in their lives—like Dale's love for coffee and pie. The moments of excess in each character stick out from the rest of the character's personality in a way that we aren't used to seeing. In this way, *Twin Peaks* rips the seams apart and separates fantasy from the bare symbolic structure that it undergirds, and at the same time, it exposes the obscene underside of the social reality that typically remains obscured. When the show performs this act of radical separation, the appeal of the symbolic structure evaporates, and the hold that ideology has over us as subjects dissipates. We see that fantasy, not the promises of ideology, is the source of our enjoyment and of our investment in ideology. This has the effect, for the spectator attuned to the formal demands of the show, of freeing the subject from its ideological interpellation and opening the subject to the direct appeal of fantasy. In this way, far from being ideologically identical to typical television programs, *Twin Peaks* marks a singular challenge to the role that fantasy plays within the functioning of ideology.

Through the series, we see that fantasy is the source of our sense of reality.² There is no social reality for subjects without a fantasy structure that offers them a lens for making sense of this reality. Fantasy functions like the schematism that Kant describes for the application of the categories to sense experience.³ Subjects have categories for understanding sense experience and sense experience itself, but there must be some vehicle for applying the former to the latter. They cannot directly relate categories to their sense experience but require a

schematism that mediates the relationship between the categories and the senses and tells the subject how to apply the categories. Without the schematism, the connection between the categories and the senses would remain abstract and unrealized. Similarly, without fantasy, the subject would have no way of knowing how to inhabit its symbolic identity.

Social relations seem real because fantasy provides a world beneath the surface in which we can invest ourselves. Rather than just interacting with a series of symbolic identities or coordinates, rather than just interacting with a structural position, we engage with real people who are more than just the social role they inhabit. This sense of a deeper reality is the product of fantasy. The subject is a surface phenomenon; it expresses itself through its language, gestures, and acts. The idea that it contains a hidden mystery, that it is “full of secrets,” is a fantasy, but it is this fantasy that guides our engagement with others. Harold Smith (Lenny von Dohlen) puts this perfectly when speaking to Donna (Lara Flynn Boyle) in episode 11. He tells her, “There are things you can’t get anywhere . . . but we dream they can be found in other people.” We desire what we fantasize that the other is hiding within, and this fantasy creates the depth that the other has.

If fantasy accompanies social reality and gives it a sense of depth, it also plays a more extreme role in relation to this reality. Fantasy constitutes an obscene underside to social reality. This underside sustains the social reality by providing an inherent transgression of it that allows subjects to remain within their symbolic roles while also deriving enjoyment from transgressing the restrictions that the social reality places on them. According to Slavoj Žižek, such activities, “far from effectively threatening the system of symbolic domination, are its inherent transgression, its unacknowledged obscene support” (48). In *Twin Peaks*, this obscene support no longer remains unacknowledged.

The thorough revelation of the role that fantasy plays for the subject gives *Twin Peaks* its political importance. The strangeness of the characters in the series stems from the detachment of their fantasies from their symbolic identities. We rarely see fantasy exposed in this way, and when we do in *Twin Peaks*, its appeal shines through. It is fantasy that proves the source of the sublime moments that make our existence worthwhile. The series calls for spectators to identify specifically with its fantasmatic moments, even though these are the moments that strike us as the most bizarre.

Why We're All Carrying Logs

It is not by chance that when David Lynch wanted to add introductions to each episode of *Twin Peaks*, he chose the Log Lady (Catherine E. Coulson) to provide them.⁴ The Log Lady's introductions themselves are worthy of a book-length commentary, but the mere fact of their existence is revelatory. Despite her marginal status within the narrative of *Twin Peaks*, her function within the series is paradigmatic. The Log Lady exemplifies subjectivity itself and especially the pivotal role that fantasy has in the constitution of the subject. It is fantasy that provides the subject's singularity. The subject is distinct from other subjects not because of a unique soul, the particularity of its biological status, or the individuality of its experiences. It is rather the fundamental fantasy that the subject creates in response to its subjection to the signifier that gives the subject its singularity. The fundamental fantasy is how the subject addresses the trauma of its subjectivization. Even if other subjects share the same DNA or the same experiences, what they don't share is the same fantasmatic response to this DNA or to these experiences. This fantasmatic response defines how the subject relates to its world.

The subject's fundamental fantasy provides the coordinates for the subject's desire and even its being. This is why Jacques Lacan, in his seminar on *The Logic of Fantasy*, identifies the fantasy object (what he calls the *objet a*) as "this something that is in some way the substance of the subject" (session of April 12, 1967). The fantasy object is not lodged within the subject but manifests itself externally through the way that the subject comports itself. Even if we can't see the other's fantasy object, we do nonetheless see the effect of the fantasy on the subject's actions. In this sense, the fantasy, though it is singular, is not private. It is the basis for public interactions, and *Twin Peaks* foregrounds the public nature of fantasy.

In the case of the Log Lady, however, the subject's fundamental fantasy and its importance is clearly visible. It is easy to dismiss the log and the Log Lady's attachment to it as the result of a psychotic delusion. Clearly, the log is not really capable of seeing and hearing in the way that she believes, and if we met someone carrying a log at all times and speaking to it, we would surely consider him or her removed from any shared reality. But the log is all the same the fantasmatic source of the Log Lady's experience of social reality. Without the log, she would lose touch with reality and the real world would dissolve for her, and the same holds for the fantasy object as

such. Although it cannot but strike the spectator (and the characters in the show) as bizarre that someone carries a log and views the log as a cognizant entity, everyone utilizes a log in some form. The log is the log lady's fantasy object that distorts her being and yet renders the social reality accessible for her. It is impossible to exist as a subject without carrying some version of the Log Lady's log, even though it most often remains hidden.

The log is not just a privileged object that the Log Lady keeps close to her. For her, it is the vehicle through which she experiences the world.⁵ In episode 1, she tells Dale that her log saw something on the night of Laura's murder, but when Dale doesn't immediately ask her log what it saw and evinces skepticism, the Log Lady refuses to reveal what she witnessed. The log lady interprets Dale's distrust of the log as a personal insult, as a refusal to acknowledge her value as a subject. Later, this distrust evaporates. Dale and the police come to her to ask what she saw on the night of Laura's murder, and the role of the log as the vehicle for the Log Lady's relationship to the world becomes apparent.

After serving tea in her cabin, the Log Lady holds the log up and tells Dale, "You can ask it now." We see Dale lean toward the log and speak directly to it rather than to the Log Lady. He asks what it saw on the night of the murder. The Log Lady begins by speaking to the log, "Shh. I'll do the talking." Then she says, "Dark. Laughing. The owls were flying. Many things were blocked. Laughing. Two men. Two girls. Flashlights pass by in the woods over the ridge. The owls were near. The dark was pressing in on her. Quiet then. Later footsteps. One man passed by. Screams far away. Terrible. Terrible. One voice." Dale asks, "Man or girl?" She responds, "Girl. Further up. Over the ridge. The owls were silent." After she finishes, the show cuts to the puzzled reaction of each of the four men listening—Dale, Will Hayward (Warren Frost), Deputy Hawk (Michael Horse), and Sheriff Truman (Michael Ontkean). The log provides an account of the Log Lady's perceptions on that night. It permits Dale to conclude that Laura went to the cabin of Jacques Renault (Walter Olkewicz) with Leo Johnson (Eric DaRe) and him, but that a third man (who turns out to be her father) was also involved. The log functions as a key component of the investigation.

The Log Lady perceives through her log because the log is the object through which she organizes her enjoyment. Even though it has a tangible presence, the log is the manifestation of the lost object for the Log Lady. When she reveals what she heard on the night of

Laura Palmer's murder, we also learn that her husband was a lumberjack who died in a fire on the day after their wedding. It is tempting to see the log as the representative of the lost husband, a presence that replaces an object that one has actually lost in order to mitigate its loss. But this is precisely the type of interpretation that one must avoid because it fails to account for how fantasy works. Fantasy doesn't replace an original object that the subject has lost. Instead, the subject fantasizes the loss itself through an object that marks the loss. Even though it has a material presence, the log functions as the embodiment of loss due to its partiality. Loss provides an opening through which the subject can structure its fantasmatic enjoyment through a partial object. The log's status as a partial object is clear: it both represents the loss of the lumberjack husband and is literally just part of a tree.

In the case of the Log Lady, the extimacy of the subject is outwardly visible. While no other characters on the show go so far as to carry a log around with them, they nonetheless implicitly follow the model that she establishes. This separation of the character's fantasmatic mode of relating to her or his symbolic identity from the symbolic identity itself exposes the singularity of each subject and locates this singularity in the form that the subject's enjoyment takes. This same structure occurs again and again on *Twin Peaks*, and no character, even the most straightforward, is exempt from the revelation of a fantasmatic supplement. This supplement stands out from the symbolic role that each character takes up.

The receptionist at the police station, Lucy Moran (Kimmy Robertson), has a clear symbolic function. Like anyone in this position, she must manage affairs at the police station so that everything runs smoothly. In most television shows, the person performing this function would be seldom and perhaps never heard. In *Twin Peaks*, however, Lucy plays a major role, and she functions in much the same way that the Log Lady does. Although Lucy performs her symbolic role adequately, she doesn't do so unobtrusively. Instead, the performance of Kimmy Robertson makes evident the distance between Lucy and this role. The fantasy structure that integrates her into the symbolic role becomes visible for the spectator. Lucy's excessive activity is the indication of the fantasy that permits her to perform her symbolic duty. Without these excesses, Lucy would be incapable of functioning as a police receptionist. Typically, the fantasmatic supplement visible here passes unseen in television shows and films, but *Twin Peaks* draws our attention to it in order to show that subjects don't simply

perform their symbolic roles but relate to them through a fantasmatic supplement that enables them to enjoy what they do. Lucy's stumbling is her mode of enjoyment.

When a telephone call comes into the station, Lucy doesn't just send the call through to Harry. She uses the intercom to inform him about the call and then provides an involved—and completely unnecessary—description of how she will transfer the call and how he can answer it. At no point does Harry tell Lucy to bypass this convoluted commentary or to do her task more efficiently. He accepts this fantasmatic baggage that accompanies her symbolic role, and the series highlights it. Lucy's dealings with calls to the station are often humorous because of the difficulty that she creates out of a simple task, but the point that Lynch and Frost make through the character of Lucy is serious, just like the seemingly comic Log Lady.

One might assume that this separation of symbolic identity from its fantasmatic supplement is just the result of what Marx and Engels called "the idiocy of rural life" (40). That is, it is a function of the backwardness of the small town rather than the structure of subjectivity itself. But Lynch and Frost's inclusion of FBI Agent Albert Rosenfield (Miguel Ferrer) gives the lie to this interpretation even as he voices a version of it. According to Albert, the quirks of the population of Twin Peaks are the result of its distance from the centers of culture. At every opportunity, Albert insults the residents of Twin Peaks and demeans their intelligence. In episode 3, this behavior prompts Harry to punch Albert, but the beating does not change Albert's mode of interacting with the locals.

But a completely unexpected transformation does occur in episode 10, and this change in behavior reveals Albert's fantasy structure, a fantasy structure that is radically distinct from his everyday demeanor. When Harry asks Albert what they should be working on, Albert offers a customary sardonic response. He says, "Yeah, you might practice walking without dragging your knuckles on the floor." This remark leads Harry to threaten to beat Albert again, but Albert's response reveals his similarity to figures like the Log Lady and Lucy. He tells Harry:

You listen to me. While I will admit to a certain cynicism, the fact is that I am a naysayer and hatchet-man in the fight against violence. I pride myself in taking a punch, and I'll gladly take another because I choose to live my life in the company of Gandhi and King. My concerns

are global. I reject absolutely revenge, aggression, and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love. I love you, Sheriff Truman.

This conversation takes place in a close-up that emphasizes the tension between the two characters and the dramatic lessening of that tension that takes place. As Albert speaks, the “*Twin Peaks* Theme” begins to rise in the background and increasingly louder until his final words. The presence of this piece of music and Albert’s unusual declaration indicate that this scene occurs on the terrain of fantasy. Albert’s fantasy appears separated from him, and this separation renders it visible for the spectator, like the Log Lady’s log.

The fantasmatic supplement to social identity defines the subject and functions as the source for the subject’s enjoyment in its social role. This is most clearly exemplified in Dale Cooper. While we can easily see the Log Lady’s attachment to the log or Lucy’s excessive activity in transferring calls, these explorations of fantasy don’t highlight the subject’s enjoyment, even if it is present. But the fantasy interludes that we see with Dale revolve around his enjoyment of coffee and pie. For Dale, coffee and pie provide a source of enjoyment that makes his life worth living. At one point, he describes a cup of coffee as a little present that he gives himself at least once a day. He can function as an FBI Agent because coffee and pie (and doughnuts, to a lesser extent) enliven his symbolic position with enjoyment.

Our sense of social reality depends on its fantasmatic supplement. But this supplement can function as a supplement only as long as it remains obscure. Visibility impairs its ideological role because the visibility of the fantasy enables the subject to disinvest from its symbolic position. It becomes evident that it is the fantasy and not the symbolic position itself that is the source of enjoyment, and it is only enjoyment that secures the subject’s attachment to its symbolic identity. In this way, the depiction of fantasy in *Twin Peaks* not only separates symbolic identity from fantasy but also separates the subject from its symbolic identity.

Living with Obscenity

Fantasy does not simply provide a path for individual subjects to take up their symbolic mandates by giving social reality a depth that it otherwise doesn’t have. It also provides another, more extreme form of transgression that serves as a foundational social glue. Every symbolic structure permits certain transgressions that enable the members of

the social order to bond with each other and to enjoy themselves through the transgression. The model for the inherent transgression is lynching, an extralegal activity that nonetheless cements the membership of the participants and observers within the symbolic law that the act of lynching itself violates. Like the fantasmatic supplement to symbolic identity, participation in such inherent transgressions is widespread among the characters that Lynch and Frost create in *Twin Peaks*.

Everyone in *Twin Peaks*, inclusive of the seemingly pure Dale Cooper, participates in the obscene underside of the social reality. The primary obscenity that undergirds the world of *Twin Peaks* is that of incest. Incest is not just another obscenity but the primordial one. The symbolic law that founds the social order is the prohibition of incest because this prohibition, in whatever varied form it takes, forces subjects to leave those close to them and seek sexual partners within the larger society. In this way, the incest prohibition forges the social bond out of the natural world. As Claude Lévi-Strauss famously claims in *Elementary Structures of Kinship*, “The prohibition of incest is in origin neither purely cultural nor purely natural, nor is it a composite mixture of elements from both nature and culture. It is the fundamental step because of which, by which, but above all in which, the transition from nature to culture is accomplished” (24). The incest prohibition creates the symbolic structure and thus functions as the fundamental law of that structure. As a result, every fantasy through which the subject responds to its subjection to the symbolic structure must touch on, however indirectly, incest. Although most fantasies don’t involve sexual encounters with one’s parents or children, they take the incestuous encounter as a model for their structure. That is, every fantasy in some way narrates the loss of a privileged object and the path to its rediscovery.

The incest fantasy has the power that it does for subjects because it promises the ultimate transgression and thus the ultimate enjoyment. The prohibition of the incestuous object is fundamental to the social organization, and this structuring prohibition imbues the object with the ultimate enjoyment. Any object that embodies the ultimate enjoyment for the subject has its basis in the model of the incestuous object. By placing incest at the center of its narrative, *Twin Peaks* reveals the extent to which the image of the ultimate enjoyment determines our social activity.

The incest fantasy is not confined to Leland Palmer (Ray Wise) in *Twin Peaks*. In one of the show’s most disturbing scenes, we see Audrey

Horne (Sherilyn Fenn) secretly working at the brothel One Eyed Jacks, when her father, Benjamin Horne (Richard Beymer), comes in to her room to have sex with her. Unlike Leland Palmer, Benjamin Horne has no idea that this new recruit at One Eyed Jacks is his daughter, but the series nonetheless creates an incestuous situation. She wears a mask to hide her identity, and he approaches her on the bed with the intent of having sex with her. Only the fact that Ben's brother calls him away at the last second prevents him from discovering that he has been seducing his own daughter (though she herself reveals this to him later). Lynch and Frost include this incestuous scene not only to foreshadow Leland's relationship with Laura but also to indicate how an incest fantasy operates just beneath the surface of Twin Peaks.

For most of the characters on the show, their obscene enjoyment doesn't directly concern incest, but it always involves a transgression that wholly belies their public symbolic identity. The quarterback of the high school team, Bobby Briggs (Dana Ashbrook), is also a cocaine dealer and is having an affair with a married woman, Shelly Johnson (Mädchen Amick). Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) herself is at once the homecoming queen and a prostitute, a volunteer for meals on wheels and a drug user, a devoted friend, and a cold manipulator of her lovers.

Even the most attractive characters on *Twin Peaks* don't escape an investment in the hidden underside of the social order. Josie Packard (Joan Chen) initially seems like a pure victim of the machinations of Catherine Martell (Piper Laurie), but we later find out that she is involved in criminal activity and even turns out to be the shooter of Dale Cooper. No one is free from a fantasmatic underside that remains hidden from the public world, and *Twin Peaks* allows the spectator to see this underside.

Other appealing characters have investments in a hidden world operating beneath the surface of the public world as well. They justify this investment as necessary to counteract the evil in the woods around Twin Peaks, but it nonetheless reveals that no one simply inhabits a symbolic identity in the series. Everyone does so with a corresponding fantasmatic underside. Sheriff Truman, Deputy Hawk, Big Ed (Everett McGill), and James Hurley (James Marshall) all are members of the Bookhouse Boys, a secret society designed to fight evil. Although the intentions of the Bookhouse Boys are beyond reproach, they do bypass the law in their struggle. They illegally interrogate Bernard Renault (Clay Wilcox), use civilians as police operatives, and perform other activities outside the law.

The Bookhouse Boys are clearly heroic figures within the world of *Twin Peaks*. And yet, more than any other characters inclusive of Leland Palmer (who murders his own daughter), they exemplify the reliance of the subject on the fantasmatic obscene underside of the society. The existence of a secret organization for the sake of protecting Twin Peaks from evil reveals the inextricable nature of such extralegal organizations. The symbolic law cannot function on its own. It requires the transgressions that would appear to undermine it because these transgressions provide the enjoyment that mere obedience to the symbolic law itself cannot. Without its fantasmatic underside, no one would enjoy obeying, and as a result, no one would obey.

By bringing the fantasmatic underside of the symbolic structure to light in *Twin Peaks*, Lynch and Frost show its ubiquity, but they also lessen the hold of the symbolic law on us as subjects. The series shows that the link between the symbolic law and its fantasmatic supplement can be broken, that one can have the fantasmatic enjoyment without the corresponding investment in the symbolic law. In a sense, this is the political charge of *Twin Peaks*: separate fantasmatic enjoyment from the symbolic law that it supplements. It is Laura Palmer herself who points us in this direction, as she defies her father and BOB at the conclusion of *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* (1992) even though it portends her own death.

The Missing Laura Palmer

In numerous interviews, David Lynch laments the demand that network officials placed on him to solve the murder of Laura Palmer midway through the second season of *Twin Peaks*.⁶ This demand, as Lynch sees it, effectively killed the series. This claim appears exaggerated when one examines how much time the show gives to the investigation itself. As the episodes move forward, other story lines become even more prominent than that of Laura's murder, such as the intrigue surrounding the saw mill, the cocaine trade, the relationship of James and Donna, and the integration of Dale Cooper within the world of *Twin Peaks*, just to name a few. But even when the series doesn't foreground the investigation into Laura Palmer's murder, Laura herself plays the central role as the fantasy object that animates all the other characters and causes their fantasies to become visible. Her absence provides a blank space onto which the town's fantasy structure can project itself, and the solution to her murder largely closes up this

blank space, which is why the show loses so much momentum after the authorities discover that Leland is the murderer.

The role of Laura's absence on the fantasies of the other characters in the world of *Twin Peaks* becomes most evident in the case of Donna and James. Donna and James think of themselves as the two people closest to Laura, and they commit to solving her murder together. But as soon as their investigation begins, a romance develops between them, despite the fact that James was Laura's lover and Donna was her best friend. This romance begins because Laura is between them as a structuring absence, and this absence makes the feelings that they had for each other become directly apparent. Her disappearance from the world of *Twin Peaks* unleashes fantasies that were hitherto confined to her. But the solution to Laura's murder—the end of her structuring absence in the world of *Twin Peaks*—brings the romance between James and Donna to an abrupt end, as he rides off during episode 15, the same episode during which Dale solves the murder. The correspondence of these events is not coincidental but reveals the importance that Laura's absence has for the revelation of hitherto hidden fantasies.

A similar dynamic occurs with other characters in the series as well. Laura's absence brings the fantasy world of One Eyed Jacks under public scrutiny; it exposes the significant drug trade happening in the area; it leads Audrey to discover her father's sexual proclivities; and further revelations concerning all the characters in *Twin Peaks* are introduced. When the privileged fantasy object of the *Twin Peaks* world disappears, all the other fantasies come to light in order to compensate for this absence. In this sense, Laura Palmer is the central character of the series even though she appears only as a corpse "wrapped in plastic."

Although the absence of Laura Palmer makes possible the revelations of different forms of fantasy in *Twin Peaks*, this absence also represents a profound limitation of the series. While every character indulges in fantasy, the only figure who follows the various fantasies to their endpoint is missing. The world of *Twin Peaks* is palatable for television audiences, despite its insight into how fantasy functions, because it keeps the trauma of subjectivity itself at a distance. Laura Palmer is the only subject in *Twin Peaks* who traverses the fantasy, who invests herself in fantasy and completely abandons the blandishments of symbolic identity. This radical position is absent in the television series, and to this degree, the critics who attacked the show may have some justification. But Lynch's corrective more than compensates for this limitation. With *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*, he

shows the triumph that Laura Palmer accomplishes even through her death, a triumph that evinces an ability to follow the logic of fantasy to its traumatic endpoint in a way that none of the living characters within *Twin Peaks* can.⁷ The television series *Twin Peaks* is the story of how all the other characters fail Laura Palmer. The film *Fire Walk with Me* contrasts with a vision of her success.

Notes

1. The most vehement feminist critique comes from Diane Hume George. She claims, “Certainly *Twin Peaks* fed America’s collective hunger for wounded, maimed, tortured, dead women. It began with the ritualistically fetishized sexual death of a child-woman, killed off several others to keep up our pulse rate when the going got slow, and ended with the possible murder of an ex-nun, implicating the male character we trusted most” (114). George also attacks the series for letting actual men off the hook for sexual violence by attributing it to supernatural forces, whereas Diane Stevenson criticizes *Twin Peaks* for identifying these threatening supernatural forces with the lower class. For the various critiques of the series, see Rosenbaum, George, Stevenson, Kuzniar, and Johnson.
2. It is Slavoj Žižek who makes clear the role that fantasy has in the constitution of social reality. For instance, in *Tarrying with the Negative*, he writes, “the ultimate guarantee of our ‘sense of reality’ turns on how what we experience as ‘reality’ conforms to the fantasy-frame” (89).
3. Kant himself suggests that the fantasmatic origins when he identifies the imagination as the source of the schematism. *Twin Peaks* simply takes up this suggestion by Kant and traces its implications fully. See Kant.
4. Lynch supplied the Log Lady introductions when Bravo bought the syndication rights for *Twin Peaks* in 1993.
5. The way that fantasy shapes a character’s relation to the world is especially evident with Dr. Jacoby (Russ Tamblyn), who wears strange glasses with one red and one blue lens. These glasses not only give Jacoby a distorted look, but they also reveal the distortion in his perception of the world. The glasses are akin to the Log Lady’s log, but here the way that the fantasy structures perception is foregrounded.
6. For instance, in Chris Rodley’s *Lynch on Lynch*, he claims, “All I know is that they killed it by changing nights and then forcing the solving of ‘who killed Laura Palmer’” (183).
7. For an analysis of *Fire Walk with Me* along these lines, see McGowan.

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III

Genre, Fandom, and New
Reflections

“Complementary Verses”: The Science Fiction of *Twin Peaks*

J. P. Telotte

In one of his frequent taped messages about his investigation into the disturbing and often intersecting mysteries in the town of Twin Peaks, FBI agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) confesses a problem he faces simply in categorizing these events: “It would seem logic would dictate that these investigations be considered separate entities. However, I believe otherwise. I believe that these mysteries . . . are complementary verses of the same song. Now I cannot hear it yet, but I can feel it, and that’s enough for me.” It is a reaction that anticipates one line of critical response to David Lynch and Mark Frost’s landmark series, the problematic genre classification that has always attended a narrative that frequently shifts tone, subject, and even plot trajectory. How are audiences supposed to approach this constantly surprising narrative? In what context should they read—or “hear”—its various “verses”? That generic framing seems especially telling, a mystery—or “mysteries”—worthy of some investigation, especially since recent critical commentary has begun to frame it in what might seem an unlikely context. For *Twin Peaks* is a series that, like several other more recent efforts, most notably *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003) and *The Walking Dead* (2010–present), and almost in spite of conventional markers, has frequently been embraced by science fiction (sf) critics and historians, and cited in their recent accounts of the genre. While the mystery of that embrace is itself worth examining, particularly in light of the series’ unconventional links to the sf genre, I also want to use that critical embrace as a way to consider a

“complementary” verse, as Agent Cooper puts it, the mystery of sftv itself and its recent development.

We might begin by noting, as so many others have, the very different genre resonances that *Twin Peaks* presents to audiences. Since the series focused on a shocking murder and its investigation, it has frequently been seen in the context of the crime or detective drama; in fact, one argument for its sudden demise is that it simply revealed too much too soon, particularly the identity of Laura Palmer’s (Sheryl Lee) killer. As one commentator noted, “disclosing its central mystery diminished the incentive for many viewers to continue watching, and new narrative directions failed to compensate” (Williams 38). Thanks to its dark look and even darker view of American culture, it has also been framed as a neo-noir narrative, after the fashion of Lynch’s feature films *Blue Velvet* (1986) and *Mulholland Drive* (2001). And the horrific nature of the crime it details, along with the revelation that supernatural elements may be at play, has allowed it to be centrally featured in discussions of television horror, as we find in Lorna Jowett and Stacey Abbott’s recent *TV Horror* and John Kenneth Muir’s study *Terror Television*. Moreover, as Linda Ruth Williams, Rhonda Wilcox, and others have observed, the show was deliberately infused with “elements of soap opera,” as suggested by its highly melodramatic presentation of character relationships, its tracking of various interwoven plot strands—all punctuated by the sort of portentous narrative pauses typical of that form—and its repeated scenes of the waitress Shelly and other town inhabitants watching their favorite soap *Invitation to Love*, the events of which often comment on developments in *Twin Peaks* itself (Wilcox 213). These commentaries are all basically efforts at framing the series within traditional generic contexts, although the very multiplicity of such vantages suggests, as Jason Mittell offers, how much *Twin Peaks* also seemed intent on, in common postmodern fashion, “blurring boundaries between genres,” and in the process often “confounding traditional generic analysis” (154). In fact, Linda Ruth Williams seizes upon this “blurring” and “confounding” that were series hallmarks as another way of explaining its demise, noting her belief that *Twin Peaks* “had to self-destruct, given that it was pitched across such unsettling and perhaps incompatible generic demands” (49), a characteristic that, she suggests, ultimately made it too demanding for typical network audiences.

In light of that multiplicity of possibilities, it might seem almost futile—or further “confounding”—to consider the *series* from yet

one more generic vantage, in this case sf. However, starting in this direction might better allow us to consider that *genre context* from the vantage of the series, that is, to also see what *Twin Peaks* has to tell us about sf. As we initially noted, *Twin Peaks* has increasingly, and somewhat surprisingly, shown up in many commentaries on contemporary sftv. Of course, in recent years sf has itself come to the forefront of television, thanks not only to the appearance of some of the most popular series in television history, such as *The X-Files* (1993–2002), *Lost* (2004–09), and *Stargate SG-1* (1997–2007), but also to the introduction of the dedicated Syfy Channel, the critical praise achieved by a number of mainstream sf works, like *Battlestar Galactica* (2004–09) and *Heroes* (2006–10), and even the appearance of a wide range of sf-inflected reality shows, such as *Ancient Aliens* (2010–present), *Through the Wormhole* (2010–present), and *Face Off* (2011–present). While I am sure that many would hesitate to include this last grouping of shows in the category of sftv, I do so to make a point about both our categorizations and recent sftv. Sf, it seems, has become the genre of the moment, so it seems only natural that we view—and consider—more of television through that sftv screen, perhaps as a way of helping us understand where these and many other popular sftv series come from—and perhaps even as an indicator of where sftv might be going.

Even given this larger sftv context, I am also sure that many still see something curious in the *Twin Peaks* sf affiliation that we find a number of our standard commentaries on the genre simply assuming. After all, neither science nor technology—two relatively common signposts to genre membership—plays a very significant role here, although the third element in that usual triad of the genre—of science, technology, and *reason*—does come in for substantial investigation.¹ *Twin Peaks* also fails to deliver the obvious emphases on spectacle and “disaster” that Susan Sontag, in one of the most often-cited discussions of media sf, famously attributed to the form (see “The Imagination of Disaster”). And the show’s concern with a kind of demonic possession as an explanation or cause for the narrative’s various murders seems to draw it away from what Tzvetan Todorov, in his effort to incorporate sf into his own sweeping account of the various genres of fantasy, terms “the instrumental marvelous” (56). So what does *Twin Peaks*’s frequent inclusion in discussions of sftv tell us about it—or perhaps about sftv? Is it possible that something has changed in our notions of sf that has helped to invite this inclusion?

SFTV Commentaries

While recognizing its lack of many of the conventional markers for sf, so much so that she says it might initially seem like “the very antithesis of science fiction” (70), Jan Johnson-Smith still cites *Twin Peaks* as a familiar, even necessary touchstone for understanding the intersection of sf and contemporary American culture (see her *American Science Fiction TV*). She simply allows that “there are diverse opinions as to what or what does not constitute sf” (7), and then argues that the show had a formative influence on recent sftv: by helping to develop an audience for serious fantasy narratives (54), depicting “the bizarre” as “quite routine” (70), and establishing the possibility for “sustained alternative realities” (153)—and we should note that the alternate reality story itself is a fairly common and recognizable sf subgenre. As Johnson-Smith further observes, *Twin Peaks* was one of a number of other shows appearing in roughly the same period that seemed to play with expected generic conventions—programs such as *Wild Palms* (1993) and *The X-Files*—and she emphasizes that their strategic convergence, their “foregrounding of the background and inversion of everyday discourse is precisely what is attempted” by many more immediately *visually* recognizable sf narratives (70–71). In fact, Johnson-Smith reminds us that such “inversion” is typical of the strategy of “cognitive estrangement,” which Darko Suvin situates as the essential activity of all sf narrative.²

That same concern with the series’ influence also proves the key to Lincoln Geraghty’s treatment of *Twin Peaks* in both his authoritative entry for *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction* and his own monograph *American Science Fiction Film and Television*. Like Johnson-Smith, he cites a host of period titles that clustered relatively closely together—*Dark Skies* (1996–97), *Millennium* (1996–99), *The X-Files*, all of them generally classed within sf’s boundaries—and he notes how a certain strain of sf seemed to be developing, something he describes as a “paranoid” narrative style for the genre. That style drew on “dark and moody sets,” atmospheric lighting that obscured rather than revealed the action and characters, and a general “metanarrative of secrets and concealment” (150)—all characteristics he observes in *Twin Peaks*, although he does admit that they are not necessarily signposts of sf. However, those characteristics have continued to cluster together and have since become hallmarks of a number of more contemporary sftv series, including shows such as *Continuum* (2012–14), *Defiance* (2013–14), *Falling Skies* (2011–14), and *Jericho*

(2006–08), among others. Moreover, he suggests that in all of these series that paranoid style serves a common dystopian thrust, helping to project "a dark vision of the near future," that is part of what he claims was a larger cultural rejection of "the national optimism at that time" (150).

Lacy Hodges provides a similar perspective, including *Twin Peaks* along with an earlier series such as *The Twilight Zone* (1959–64), as well as later sf efforts, such as *Millennium* (1996–99), *Lost* (2004–10), and once again *The X-Files*, in what she terms an emerging "antirealist mode" of contemporary television narrative that is part of sftv's supertext (232). While these series were, as she offers, all "highly invested in maintaining a clear connection to recognizable reality," they also sought to deploy many of the "familiar tropes and themes of science fiction and horror," both to subvert our normal sense of the real and to construct "a liminal space" wherein further interrogations of our everyday world might take place (231). The resulting fantastic dimension, she argues, was part of a general postmodern strategy of dualism, one that allowed these series to occupy a familiar place within "mainstream television"—that is, as genre narratives of a relatively familiar sf stripe—while also preventing their critiques of mainstream culture from "being dismissed as merely a fantastic diversion" or conventional distraction (243).

Of course, the multiple possible links and categorizations offered by these and similar commentaries might simply be chalked up to the postmodern moment and its attendant effect on genre narrative—or at least to how we see the workings of genre narrative—as conventional texts either become highly self-conscious and hermetic, or they expand in ways that cannot help but seem to dilute their generic distinctiveness. It might also be argued, as Jason Mittell does, that genres in general, because they are actually "cultural categories," have always been rather flexible, or he puts it, prone to being "permeable, fluid, historically contingent, and subject to change, while still offering categorical coherence at any given moment" (154). This other version of the dualism Hodges describes has helped to generate an increasing number of hybrid texts, such as the comic sf series *Warehouse 13* (2009–14), the sf Western *Firefly* (2002–03), the sf police procedural such as *Fringe* (2008–13), and the sf teen romance *Roswell* (1999–2002). But such permeability or fluidity also holds out the possibility that we are actually charting changes in sftv itself—changes that this critical incorporation of *Twin Peaks* into the canon helps to highlight.

Twin Peaks's Science Fiction "Verses"

Before considering that generic side of the equation, we might first acknowledge the obvious: there are indeed recognizable sf strands, or "verses," that run throughout *Twin Peaks* and that give some reason to these critical accounts. Despite its setting in a seemingly pristine, heavily wooded area of the Pacific Northwest, five miles south of the Canadian border, the series from its start set about *denaturalizing nature*, presenting that world within a long sf tradition as "Other." It is an effect begun even as Agent Cooper first approaches the town of Twin Peaks, when, as he makes a tape for his putative assistant Diane, he notes in awe the region's landscape. As he begins talking about his upcoming meeting with Sheriff Harry Truman (Michael Ontkean), Cooper interrupts himself to remark on that landscape again, as if obsessed with these unfamiliar nature images that seem to be crowding all around him, and he announces, "Got to find out what kind of trees these are; they're *really* something!" And that fascination lingers through later episodes, as he queries Harry and others about the trees, repeatedly underscoring how strange they seem to him and how much of an Other world—at least a world outside of his normal experience—they seem to signal.

Continuing that theme is the message Cooper receives at the start of the series' second season. After being shot and as he slips in and out of consciousness, he has a vision of a Giant (Carel Struycken) who offers him three key clues to unraveling the mysteries of Twin Peaks, perhaps the most puzzling of which—and certainly one of the most often cited lines from the show—is a warning that "the owls are not what they seem." That message is then reiterated in the following episode by Major Garland Briggs (Don S. Davis), the Air Force officer who has, fittingly, been working on Project Blue Book, the government's effort to investigate UFOs. In this second instance, Briggs notes that the warning message came not from some vision he has had, but rather from a satellite that had been monitoring radio transmissions from space; in effect, it came from a very science fiction-y source and hints that the narrative might well be taking a more pronounced sf turn. Subsequently, those now-suspicious owls—inevitably recalling the mechanical/puppet/unreal/robotic robin that Lynch inserted at the conclusion of his film *Blue Velvet* (1986)—would become a ubiquitous presence in the series, as if monitoring the actions of the characters and marking key plot developments, including Agent Cooper's entry into the Black Lodge in the final episode. In any case, the owls,

perhaps those looming trees, and maybe even nature itself, the series implies, are simply "not what they seem," as the natural world—particularly in the series' second season—becomes suspect and denaturalized, subject to that very cognitive estrangement by which, Suvin suggests, we might readily know *sf*.

Of course, even the natural world might seem unnatural or strange to an alien figure, and there is certainly much about Agent Cooper that loudly announces his own Other status, even apart from actor Kyle MacLachlan's previous starring turn in Lynch's *sf* epic *Dune* (1984). As David Lavery describes him, Cooper approaches the town of Twin Peaks as if he were a "cultural ethnographer" (13)—or more precisely, as if he were visiting another world, one that not only looks very different to him, but also presents him with strange characters, mysterious events, and even different food (the cherry pie, as he notes in a fitting metaphor, is "out of this world"), all of which he must somehow account for. But as the epigraph for this essay suggests, Cooper's accounting is very different from the norm. He can in some inexplicable, perhaps even alien way, "feel" connections, larger linkages of events, that the others here cannot, and that ability—marked in a variety of other ways throughout the narrative—signals his difference from the regular inhabitants of this world.

Moreover, Cooper simply *acts* in strange ways right from the start, certainly in ways that mark him as alien from the regular inhabitants of Twin Peaks. Not only does he seem to see and know more than they do, but he does little to mask that appearance of difference. For example, in questioning Bobby Briggs (Dana Ashbrook) about the murder of Laura Palmer, Cooper suddenly develops a manic grin, as if he were listening to something other than the very serious and even pained comments from Bobby who is protesting his innocence. It is the same strange grin that we see on his face after he examines Laura's gruesome corpse and he tells Harry, "Sheriff, we've got a lot to talk about." And more disturbingly, that very look reappears in the show's final scene when Cooper, returned from the Black Lodge, looks into the mirror, begins smashing his head into it, and repeatedly asks, all the while laughing hysterically, "How's Annie?" At that point we simply presume—in light of the killer BOB's (Frank Silva) face also briefly appearing in the mirror—that he has been subsumed into that other personality, while each one of those queries about Annie (Heather Graham) becomes, as Martha Nochimson puts it, "more a parody of human connection than the one before" (158). Not just a sudden "slippage" into a darker side of the self, though,

that final crazed look, Nochimson argues, is part of a “dualism” that has been there all along (146), a sign of a kind of alien-ation that was, from the start, part of Cooper’s character, if also one that he had been able to keep “cooped” up or largely controlled before his descent into the Black Lodge.

When viewed in the context of the town’s seemingly idyllic setting, that descent also evokes one more noteworthy sf dimension of the series, a variation on the utopian/dystopian impulse that has commonly been seen as central both to our sf texts and to how we think about them. Codifying this thrust of the genre, Carl Freedman suggests that the “defining features of science fiction are located...at the level of the Not-Yet-Being, and in the dimension of utopian futurity” (70). For sf has always trafficked in the “what if,” and sf film and television, with their imperative to actually *visualize* or *realize* what might be, even more obviously so. With *Twin Peaks*, we not only find Agent Cooper initially quite taken by this town that, at a glance, seems a kind of protected natural paradise, but we also quickly learn that the town’s wealthiest citizen, Ben Horne (Richard Beymer), is advertising it in precisely that way. Trying to interest a group of Norwegian investors (and later Icelandic investors) to help finance his Ghostwood country club development, he describes Twin Peaks as “a clean, wholesome environment...with a quality of life that rivals the very best that this country has to offer.” However, the *faux* utopian vision he and his brother Jerry (David Patrick Kelly) have tried to conjure up and sell to these foreign visitors quickly dissolves when his daughter Audrey (Sherilyn Fenn) deliberately describes Laura Palmer’s grisly murder to the Norwegians. Of course, sf notions of utopia are, as Freedman reminds us, “always *elsewhere*, always escaping our [and thus the Norwegians’] actual horizons” (64).

That escape or all-too-easy evaporation of the utopian dream is partly due to another dimension of utopian conception, the psychological. Freedman emphasizes that “the hope principle...constitutes the human psyche as intrinsically *divided*” between what might be and what actually is, or as a dream of “plenitude” that can always be “apprehended only in fragmentary form” (65, 66). And that psychological split can be observed throughout the world of *Twin Peaks*, but most obviously: in the all-too-perfect Laura Palmer, “the Homecoming Queen everyone knew and loved” (Desmet 97), who is also a coke-sniffing wanton; in Ben Horne, Twin Peaks’s leading citizen, but also the mastermind behind prostitution, drug-dealing, and various murders in the area; in Josie Packard (Joan Chen), who

seems to be struggling to save the town’s lumber mill, despite the efforts of her resentful sister-in-law Catherine (Piper Laurie), but who in true femme-fatale fashion plotted to kill her husband Andrew (Dan O’Herlihy), shoots Agent Cooper, plans to burn down the mill, and eventually kills her former lover Thomas Eckhardt (David Warner); and most obviously in the two Lodges—the Black Lodge and the White Lodge—that seem to represent opposing psychological states, as well as the opposite potentials of this world. Certainly, we encounter many other instances of such opposing states or potentials throughout the series’ run, but all suggest the sort of duality that haunts all of our utopian imaginings, and that reminds us of the “twin” possibilities with which this series always toyed.

SF and Generic Possibility

The point of this discussion, though, is not simply to draw out the sf thread—or threads—that seem manifestly woven into the narrative fabric of *Twin Peaks*. Rather, I want to consider why those threads seem to matter—in fact, matter enough so that the series is, as we earlier noted, so often drawn within the orbit of contemporary discussions about sftv. While the genre has become far more prominent on television in recent years, it has also become more problematic. For even on television and in film, even in media forms that, as genre historian Adam Roberts observes, are “dominated by... ‘visual spectacularism’” (264), sf seems increasingly unstable in its markers, more focused, as the commentaries cited above suggest, on liminal effects, style, dualities. And here we might only recall such popular series as *Lost*, *The Walking Dead*, or even the British shows *Life on Mars* (2006–07, remade as an American series in 2008–09) and *Ashes to Ashes* (2008–10). While all have some of sf’s usual generic markers, they also have multiple signs of other forms. In fact, with *Lost* the science fictional possibilities simply disappear for multi-episode stretches, as its compelling survival story takes center stage; in *The Walking Dead*, horrific effects repeatedly block out consideration of the scientific cause for its zombie apocalypse; and the two British series constantly toy with the notion that their time travel scenarios might simply be projections of their protagonists’ minds—thus *Life on Mars*’ Sam Tyler tellingly muses on the multiple possibilities here, “Am I mad, in a coma, or back in time?”—allowing their police procedural narratives to shift into the foreground and dominate our experience. The resulting narrative instability does help produce, and

explain, the multiple generic connections that we began by noting in *Twin Peaks*: a show that is soap opera, supernatural horror tale, detective narrative, sf, and so on. Moreover, it at least gives some reason to sftv commentators claiming it as one of their own, even as a key text in the development of the television genre, as I believe it is.

While the postmodern spirit with its incessant questioning of boundaries and borders is, then, part of the equation here, it is the result of that blurring, a result we also glimpse in the various recent series mentioned above, that I want to emphasize. In her study of how new digital technologies have impacted our various media, Anne Friedberg offers a direction, as she suggests that today the very form of cinema has become “lost” in the welter of new technologies of visualization and visual consumption (6). She is not suggesting that film itself is disappearing—there are manifestly still big-budget films, theaters aplenty, and an avid, movie-going audience. Rather, she is noting how its essence now seems distributed across a variety of other visual media—television, the computer monitor, i-pad, smartphone, and so on—as the traditional movie screen becomes just one of many through which we experience our contemporary media texts. It is an observation that, I want to suggest, we might well apply to a highly popular genre like sf. For sf increasingly, and for all of its popularity and obvious “presence” on broadcast, cable, and satellite television, can seem similarly “lost” today—that is, drawn into or distributed across a broad spectrum of narratives with rather porous borders, shifting icons, and open syntax, thereby dissipating its obvious generic character. Catherine Johnson has observed part of this effect, noting how various horror, mystery, fantasy, and sf programs—all of which she groups under what she sees as the more useful heading of “telefantasy”—have never quite fit into the “dominant notions of the aesthetics of television” and, as a result, have typically been understood not as part of a simultaneous line of development of different sorts of fantasy television, or as a new mode of narrative, but rather “as exceptional in television history” (12), much as *Twin Peaks* quite obviously was by both network executives and critics at the time of its original broadcast.

I would just suggest that, as one of the trailblazing works of this lost genre-ration, *Twin Peaks* was already symptomatically demonstrating an issue that has simply become more prominent and readily visible today. But the issue I am pointing to is not just how we group different but related genres, or not only, as Johnson suggests, of the dominant industrial practice mis-taking their forms or misinterpreting what is going on in these shows. What *Twin Peaks* looked toward

is a situation wherein the conventional signs of sf—for example, icons of science and technology, or narrative patterns associated with space exploration, time travel, world building, and so on—are not especially required, or at least not consistently so, as generic markers; and when we do search them out, like with *Lost*’s “smoke monster,” they often seem to dissolve or disappear before our eyes—literally becoming *immaterial* to the narrative. We do not have to look for those signposts because, as is especially obvious almost a quarter century after *Twin Peaks*, we today inhabit a science-haunted world; we live and breathe a technological atmosphere; our world itself is *already science fictional*. Living in that context, we experience a kind of generic dissipation—or, conversely, a seeming ubiquity—as elements of the science fictional (after the fashion of Friedberg’s “screens”) already seem everywhere we turn, one way or another embedded in most of our stories, and for that reason are seldom even noticed.

Television storytellers can thus make do with a kind of short-hand, with a few sf memes that easily resonate with viewers, while also easily lining up with the markers of various other forms. We might consider the case of a figure such as Major Briggs, the Air Force investigator of possible alien encounters, who is also living his own version of alien-ation in his nonrelationship with his juvenile delinquent son Bobby. He might just as well be one of the parental/authority figures in any of a number of popular teen melodramas—*Dawson’s Creek* (1998–2003), *Felicity* (1998–2002), or even the pointedly sf/teen soap *Roswell* (1999–2002), which did, in fact, in its own version of this “short hand,” include actor Michael Horse, playing a sheriff’s deputy just like his character of Deputy Tommy “Hawk” Hill in *Twin Peaks*. When in the third-to-last episode of the series Major Briggs is captured by Windom Earle (Kenneth Welsh) who, searching for information about the Black Lodge, questions him about the implications of the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, Briggs could just as easily be speaking—under the influence of Earle’s drugs—about alien, other-worldly influences as about supernatural, other-worldly influences. Arguably, that conflation was quite intentional, a short-hand reminder of how much our sf concerns were coming to intersect with, or bubbling up in, the troubling issues of this world and its past, present, and future(s).³

But *Twin Peaks* was always nothing if not a collection of such short-hand elements, of different but equivalent “verses” of generic stories, and often without the sort of anticipated icons or fully developed patterns that had usually been associated with a generic source like

sf. Forecasting that contemporary situation, *Twin Peaks* thus presents us not with a natural paradise, but with a highly technologized society, a world where we just cannot get away from technology (like the sawmill's saw seen in operation at the start of each episode, grinding through the tree-emblem of the natural world), as well as the science that creates it, and the reason—often devious and faulty, as in the case of Windom Earle and his ongoing chess match with Cooper—that conceives it. As a result, it hardly seems unusual for Agent Cooper to talk out every detail of his daily life, even remarking on the quality of the cherry pie and coffee, to a hand-held tape recorder that may or may not correspond to a real “Diane” back at headquarters.⁴ FBI Chief Gordon Cole (David Lynch) unquestioningly relies on his faulty hearing aids to interface with the world, generally unaware of his repeated mis-takings of others' comments that result from this electronic interface. Lucy (Kimmy Robertson) the Sheriff's receptionist seems to conduct all of her business *and* personal activities through the intercom and short-wave radio, leaving us to wonder how she ever manages to get pregnant—a pattern that casts a new light on her inability to determine who the father of her child might be. Laura Palmer, painfully aware of her life of contradictions, seeks help from the town's only psychiatrist, Doctor Jacoby (Russ Tamblyn), but does so through a mode of technological convenience: sending her taped confession-like statements to this priest-confessor of a modern technological society—who in turn treats the tapes as a kind of technological erotica. And Windom Earle plants a microphone-laden bonsai tree in the sheriff's office, allowing him to listen in on every plan to stop his machinations, while also reminding us that, like the owls, even the trees are not what they seem here. While the town of Twin Peaks might well seem—initially—like a bastion of a lost natural world, these and other examples remind us that it was from the start a part of this strange modern landscape; it too was *already science fictional*.

However, we could only make out that character in short-hand form, since neither town nor series was science fictional in the sort of conventional and comfortingly familiar way of much more traditional sftv. And given the series' dark styling, the scientific and technological components that many other commentators had long associated with sf and had frequently drawn on as defining features were not just called into question, but they simply seemed to become *less significant* than other narrative “verses” here, and often even seemed to be *signifying less*—pointing to current and future circumstances in which science and technology did not hold out the promise with

which, throughout the postwar and early Cold War eras, American culture had invested them. But that implicit critique at which I am pointing should only return us to the key point, the real signpost that *Twin Peaks* represents—and which a number of our sf critics have properly gauged. So many of our sftv shows today offer us textures, fabric, a vague context of sf—markers but not the full map, or as Agent Cooper would put it, “verses” but not the same old “song.” Meanwhile, they assume, and probably rightly so given the science fictional fabric of contemporary life, what I have termed the ubiquity of sf, that just like Cooper we “can feel it”—feel and *know* that we are in the land of sf with all that such positioning implies. It is a mark of *Twin Peaks*’s place in television history that it could so effectively forecast this shifting nature of our sf genre experience.

Notes

1. For commentary on this triadic base of the genre, see my *Science Fiction Film*, p. 19.
2. Suvin, in his *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, has offered one of the most widely discussed definitions of sf, describing it as a “genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative alternative to the author’s empirical experience” (7–8). In this context, we should note that his definition lacks specific reference to tangible generic markers and instead emphasizes audience *effects*, effects that are not hard to recognize in the *Twin Peaks* narrative.
3. While perhaps an unlikely example of another such piece of sf shorthand, we might note that the town of Twin Peaks was also one of the settings for the sf film serial *Captain Video, Master of the Stratosphere* (1951), an adaptation of the first American sftv series *Captain Video and His Video Rangers* (1949–55). And the plot of that serial could even have inspired Windom Earle’s interrogation of Major Briggs about the imminent and dangerous conjunction of planets, since such a situation occurs there as well.
4. As Jimmie L. Reeves observes about the figure of Diane, “Who the hell knows if she is ‘real’ or not?” (181).

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“Doing Weird Things for the Sake of Being Weird”: Directing *Twin Peaks*

Stacey Abbott

American television has traditionally been perceived as a producer’s medium with the executive producer/showrunner overseeing all elements of the series’ production. Within TV drama, this role has increasingly become associated with the writer as the majority of showrunners enter television production from a writer’s background. For instance, of the 24 producers profiled and interviewed in James L. Longworth Jr.’s two-part publication on *TV Creators*, 22 of them began working in television as writers, with only 2—Barry Levinson and Ed Zwick—better known as directors. Roberta Pearson argues that the most successful of these writer-producers, or “hyphenate-auteurs” as she describes them, have, within an increasingly competitive broadcast landscape, been granted greater creative freedom over their television series, positioning writers such as Aaron Sorkin, Tina Fey, David Simon, Joss Whedon, and Alan Ball, to name just a few, as auteurs within the television industry (17). This stands in contrast to the cinema where the director is usually held to be the leading creative force and/or auteur, overseeing all aspects of a film’s production and binding the creative elements together into one coherent vision. On television, however, the director holds a secondary position, often hired on an episode-by-episode basis and with less input to the overall vision of the show, as compared to the writer-producer. As a result, the role and contribution of the television director remains an underexamined area within contemporary television studies.

Twin Peaks, however, stands as an interesting case to begin an examination of the creative role of the director. The presence of cult film director David Lynch, credited as co-creator (with Mark Frost) and executive producer, calls attention to the role of the director within the making of the series as does the show's surreal visual and aural style. This is a series that, from episode to episode, prioritizes aesthetics, often over story. As David Bianculli argues, "*Twin Peaks* tried harder and did more than most weekly series in prime time. It gave as much emphasis to visual images and lighting, and to the musical score and sound effects, as it did to the scripts and performances" (305). Through Lynch, as evidenced by the critical reception to the series, the director had been assigned a privileged place as a significant creative force within television. Anthony Todd points out that while the initial media marketing for the series did not mention David Lynch, it fell to the critics to "identify, and subsequently eulogise, Lynch as *Twin Peaks*'s creative mastermind; and it was Lynch who accounted for *Twin Peaks*'s elements of novelty" (90). Of course, serial television is one of the most collaborative of media and while Lynch's contribution as executive producer, as well as co-writer and director of a number of episodes, is significant, the show also utilized a distinguished mix of established television directors, alongside well-known independent filmmakers, who contributed to the series' reputation as edgy and more cinematic than televisual.

The aim of this chapter will be, therefore, to examine the role of the director within this series through an analysis of the relationships between director/producer David Lynch and the roster of directors employed to bring his and Mark Frost's vision for the series to the screen. The chapter will also offer a close study of a selection of episodes directed by David Lynch, Duwayne Dunham, Lesli Linka Glatter, and indie-filmmakers Diane Keaton and Uli Edel, to consider how these different directorial approaches contributed to the show's postmodern aesthetic and narrative style, in particular its genre hybridity. The chapter will not look to re-elevate the director to the position of auteur but will consider how the director functions within a televisual production context that demands consistency, alongside the idiosyncratic style that was the hallmark of *Twin Peaks*.

The Directing Team

Historically, television has been seen as a commercial medium characterized by what John Thornton Caldwell refers to as an institutional

“framework that approached broadcasting primarily as a form of word-based rhetoric and transmission” (4). The technological limitations of broadcast and production, as well as an inherited legacy from radio, meant that greater emphasis was placed upon script and performance than on the visual image, which was often characterized by close-ups, medium shots, and simple shot-reverse-shot editing. The production schedules were, and continue to be, intense, often allowing for little more than a week to shoot a 40-minute drama. Furthermore, Kathryn Kalinak, drawing upon the work of Rick Altman, reminds us that “many ‘viewers’ experience television aurally, listening to the soundtrack as they do homework, preparing meals, complete tasks around the house, pursue hobbies, and so forth,” and as a result the aesthetic often reaffirms this disregard for the visual image (84).

Television was therefore, for many years, the home of directors prepared to work fast and tell a story efficiently and economically, as well as a potential training ground for directors with ambition to move to cinema as soon as opportunity allowed, such as Michael Mann and Steven Spielberg.¹ Caldwell argues, however, that by the 1980s, “American mass-market television underwent an uneven shift in the conceptual and ideological paradigms that governed its look and presentation demeanor... [moving] to a visually based mythology, framework, and aesthetic based on an extreme self-consciousness of style” (4). Robert J. Thompson further points out that these developments began to make television a more attractive place for cinema directors to experiment with form and visual storytelling. Michael Mann’s return to TV to produce the visually and aurally dynamic MTV-styled *Miami Vice* (NBC 1984–90) is an example of this emphasis upon this self-conscious style. Similarly, following the success of *Jaws* (1976), *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1978), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), and *ET* (1982), Steven Spielberg was lured back to TV by NBC to produce the anthology series *Amazing Stories* (1985–87), for which he directed two episodes (“Ghost Train” 1:1; “The Mission” 1:5). *Amazing Stories* was notable not only due to Spielberg’s presence as producer/director (which in contrast to *Twin Peaks* was heavily marketed as produced by its blockbuster filmmaker), but also due to the fact that Spielberg was able to draw numerous well-established and high profile cinema directors to the series to direct individual episodes, including Martin Scorsese, Clint Eastwood, Joe Dante, and Robert Zemeckis. Their involvement in the series contributed to the legitimization of

television as a space for creative production and the increasing cross-fertilization of talent across film and TV. Another show that similarly drew directors from the cinema to TV prior to *Twin Peaks* (if only just) was the HBO anthology series *Tales from the Crypt* (1989–96), based upon the DC comics and executive produced by established filmmakers Richard Donner, Walter Hill, Joel Silver, Robert Zemeckis, and David Giler. Episodes for this series were directed by a wide range of Hollywood personnel such as John Frankenheimer, William Friedkin, Tobe Hooper, Mary Lambert, Michael J. Fox, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Freddie Francis (to name just a few). Of course, as an HBO series, *Tales from the Crypt* benefited from greater creative freedom for, as a pay channel, it is not bound by the same Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations as network television. This continues to serve as an attraction for cinema directors to work in television, for as the channel's slogan reminds us, "It's not TV. It's HBO."²

By 1990, as Thompson explains, when *Twin Peaks* aired, "it had become positively fashionable for big directors to create for the little screen" (151). In fact, *Twin Peaks* stands at a notable pivot point in television history when the presence of cinema directors working occasionally in television went from unusual to fashionable to commonplace. In recent years, well-established cinema directors have moved comfortably back and forth between film and television with increasing frequency, such as Quentin Tarantino on *ER* ("Motherhood" 1:24; NBC 1994–2009) and *CSI* ("Grave Danger Part I and II" 5:24/25; CBS 2000–15), Martin Scorsese on *Boardwalk Empire* ("Boardwalk Empire" 1:1, HBO 2010), John Dahl on *Vampire Diaries* ("Friday Night Bites" 1:3, CW 2009–present), David Slade on *Breaking Bad* ("Open House" 4:3, AMC 2008–13), Frank Darabont on *The Walking Dead* ("Days Gone By" 1:1, AMC 2010–present), and Len Wiseman on *Sleepy Hollow* ("Pilot" 1:1, Fox 2013–present).³ While there are numerous factors to do with the changing nature of TV drama and broadcast television that contributed to this shift, I would argue that David Lynch's high-profile move into television, while continuing his feature filmmaking projects in the form of the Palme D'Or-winning *Wild at Heart* (1990), paved the way for many of these directors, as well as changing the perception of the director in TV. To this day, despite the recognized collaborative nature of television, the creative vision for the series, in particular its visual and aural style, continues to be attributed to Lynch and the series holds a significant place in most analyses of

the director’s career (see Chion; Sheen and Davison; Todd; Woods). Largely, this is because of the series’ similarities to his previous and subsequent cinematic work, in terms of its surreal representation of familiar spaces, the blurring of dream and reality, the privileging of heightened emotions and tears, his distinctive and often disturbing use of sound, and its focus on unmasking the dark and disturbing underbelly of the American small town, calling to mind *Blue Velvet* (1986) in particular. As David Lavery points out, while questioning how this was possible, the show “succeed[ed] in retaining co-creator David Lynch’s auteur signature over the course of thirty episodes, only five of which he directed himself” (239).

Of course, along with being credited by critics and fans for the show’s idiosyncratic style, Lynch’s absence from the series was equally blamed by many for its demise. For instance, Laura Plummer claims that the series began to deteriorate when Lynch handed over the directing reins to other directors, arguing that “the show [subsequently] descended into more familiar soap-opera plots” (Plummer 308). This view, however, oversimplifies the complex and intrinsically collaborative production model utilized within serial TV drama. Lynch did not abandon the show to another group of directors when he became too busy with *Wild at Heart*. Rather, he carefully interspersed his directorial contribution to the show across the two seasons, choosing key episodes to direct in much the same way that writer-producer-showrunner Joss Whedon did on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (WB/UPN 1997–2003). As Whedon explains, “With *Buffy* I was beholden to the major episodes, it was my show, my responsibility, and it was very seldom I could do one that was just a sidebar” (qtd. in Richardson 35). In total, Lynch directed six episodes: the feature length pilot (episode 0), the season two opener (episode 8), the revelation of the killer (episode 14), and the series finale (episode 29), as well as episodes 2 and 9, which introduce and develop the show’s dream spaces and oneiric aesthetic while also highlighting the significance of possessing demon BOB. When asked how he selected the episodes to direct, Lynch responded, “I just picked the ones I couldn’t bear not to do” (qtd. in Rodley 174). Notably, he did not direct the season one finale (episode 7). This was handled by Mark Frost signaling the emphasis upon creative collaboration between the co-creators of the show, with Lynch starting and Frost ending this season that “changed the face of television” (Thompson 152). This left 23 episodes to be parceled out to other directors—but rather than recruit directors purely from television,

Lynch and Frost opened up the roster to a broader range of personnel. Miles Booy explains:

Peaks, recruiting cast and crew from America's newly vibrant and suddenly visible Independent sector, made the relationship between the two [film and TV] seem more casual, and the barriers between them were suddenly permeable. It is easy to overstate this, because much of *Peaks* looks like conventional television drama, especially in the second season. However, the programme offered high-profile exposure to independent directors prepared to grab the moment with some eye-catching camerawork. (28)

The selection of directors from this burgeoning indie-film scene was a deliberate move to further infuse the series with fresh innovative approaches to filmmaking, distinct from the more Hollywood, genre-based directors who worked on *Amazing Stories* and *Tales from the Crypt*. Furthermore, unlike these anthology series for which the director is responsible for the production of a self-contained story, *Twin Peaks* was a serial drama in which the director oversaw an individual portion of a long-running narrative, often, as was the case with *Twin Peaks*, without knowledge of the full story. The shift in style, as noted by Booy, between eye-catching camera work and TV that looks like TV can, therefore, in some measure be explained by the fact that the series was directed by a wide range of individuals parachuting into the project with very different production backgrounds. While Booy highlights the presence of indie-filmmakers, the roster of directors can, in fact, be divided up into three distinct categories, making influences upon the series all the more complex: first, up-and-coming career TV directors such as Tina Rathbone (2 episodes), Lesli Linka Glatter (4), Todd Holland (2), Stephen Gyllenhaal (1); second, cinema directors, largely from the independent cinema circuit such as Tim Hunter (3), Uli Edel (1), Diane Keaton (1), James Foley (1); and, third, colleagues and friends of Lynch, with expertise in different areas of filmmaking including editing and cinematography such as Duwayne Dunham (3), Caleb Deschanel (3), Graeme Clifford (1), and Jonathan Sanger (1).

While there is insufficient space within this essay to outline the complete careers of each of these directors, they do represent an interesting mixture of creative backgrounds, highlighting the blurring of the cinematic and the televisual, as well as independent and mainstream styles of production, that are among the hallmarks of *Twin Peaks*. Lesli Linka Glatter and Todd Holland came onto the series as young but experienced TV directors, having primarily worked on

Amazing Stories prior to *Twin Peaks*. Linka Glatter has subsequently become a leading television director having worked on series as diverse as *NYPD Blue* (ABC 1993–2005), *Mad Men* (AMC 2007–present), *The Walking Dead* (AMC 2010–present), and *Homeland* (Showtime 2011–present). Stephen Gyllenhaal had been directing for television since the early 1980s, oscillating between episodic series and TV movies, before entering into the cinematic indie-realm with *Paris Trout* (1991), although he continues to work primarily in television. Tina Rathbone was an experienced television director and Jonathan Sanger had years of experience as a director/producer for film and television. Duwayne Dunham was an editor who worked on *Blue Velvet* and *Wild at Heart* before beginning a career of TV direction with *Twin Peaks*. Graeme Clifford was also an established film editor from the 1970s independent cinema world with films such as *Don't Look Now* (Nicolas Roeg 1973), *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (Nicolas Roeg 1976), and *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (Bob Rafelson 1981) to his credit. Caleb Deschanel was an established cinematographer, known to Lynch from their days at the American Film Institute, who was making a transition to directing in the 1990s. Tim Hunter, Diane Keaton, Uli Edel, and James Foley represent the indie-circuit, although both Tim Hunter and James Foley have gone on to distinguished careers as television directors working on such shows as *Nip/Tuck* (FX 2003–10), *House of Cards* (Netflix 2013–present), and *Hannibal* (NBC 2013–15).

These directors were tasked with adhering to the broad tone and stylistic approach to the show established by Lynch and Frost through the pilot and regular consultation with either one or both producers. Lynch and Frost set the rules in what is commonly referred to within television production as the “series’ bible,” and the directors came in and conformed to the rules, as well as bringing their own individual sensibilities for how to stage the episode. As Lynch explains:

They have to come in and obey these rules that’ve been set up. And Mark and I know the rules better than anybody. So, again, it’s tuning in. They have a script and they chat with one or both of us and away they go. And then I’d see their shows at the sound mix. If something was completely wrong there would be time to fix it. But I can’t even say that that ever happened. (qtd. in Rodley 174–75)

Caleb Deschanel explains that Lynch encouraged all of the directors to develop their own creative ideas and welcomed their input in terms

of the vision of their individual episodes. Similarly, Todd Holland describes having to attend a “tone meeting” with Mark Frost and technical members of the crew wherein the director was briefed on the aesthetic and narrative rules of the series. This process ensured symmetry of style and vision but, like Deschanel, Holland then describes his process of running his own creative ideas for how to shoot a scene and being given the go-ahead from Frost. Through these production processes, the show walked a fine line between series’ consistency and producer control and individual creativity.

Between Depth and Surface: Directing *Twin Peaks*

In an interview conducted for the DVD release of season two of *Twin Peaks*, Sherilyn Fenn describes her preference as an actor for those episodes directed by David Lynch because “David encourages one to go into [the] dark places inside of them and see what’s going on...to embrace them,” urging the cast to see these places as “beautiful and good.” As a result, she found his work “soul based.” In contrast, she suggests that some of the guest directors came in and did “weird things for the sake of being weird,” employing shock value over depth of meaning and emotion. These comments are insightful in many ways. They betray a clash between what Marc Dolan describes as the “romantic argument” that art “should arise from a unified conception on the part of the artist” (31)—in this case, with Lynch’s *vision* taking priority in Fenn’s eyes—and the reality of television where different directors bring different visions and approaches. It also suggests a preferential opposition between depth and surface, meaning and effect. Fenn’s preference for “soul based” direction over a more stylized approach seems understandably based upon her preferences as an actor and yet the way in which performances of many of the characters on the series often move between depth and surface, moments of “truth” and more mannered moments, seems a key component of the series’ disruptive and disjunctive aesthetic style.

Fragmentation and disjunction are key signifiers for the series’ embodiment of a postmodern sensibility and have been commented on by J. P. Telotte, who explores how the show offers “curious interplay...between order and disorder” (160), often situating moments of “bizarre unpredictability” alongside “banal, soap-operatic predictability, as both empty and highly determined signifiers jockey for prominence” (168). Similarly, Kathryn Kalinak argues that the carefully constructed music score for the series is designed to set up and

then confound expectations of televisual music, deliberately short-circuiting “the flow of affect between the spectator and the screen by sending mixed messages for emotional reaction” (89). If, as Kalinak argues, music in television is designed to anchor “the image in a specific reading,” *Twin Peaks* uses it to disrupt those readings with what she describes as “wrenching juxtapositions of image and sound” (89). In this manner, *Twin Peaks*’s embodiment of the conventions of post-modern drama, which involves mixing “styles and genres of television using the technique of *bricolage*, and even [drawing] attention to its own constructedness” (Page 43), in part emerged as a direct result of the different and at times conflicting directorial styles and approaches of the show’s range of directors.

The most obvious way that the directors convey different aesthetic approaches is the manner in which the show betrays changing generic allegiances, shifting abruptly between detective, forensic procedural, soap, horror, comedy, melodrama, and film noir. While serial drama is by its very nature generically hybrid, often layering multiple genres on top of each and oscillating between genres to serve different aspects of narrative and character development (see Lorna Jowett’s analysis of the generic hybridity of *Angel*), the different directorial signatures on *Twin Peaks* often result in a clash of genres rather than a layering—another example of the “wrenching juxtapositions” that Kalinak describes. This is noticeably demonstrated in the shift in style between the pilot and episode 1 directed by Duwayne Dunham. Jonathan Rosenbaum argues that the careful balance “between weirdness and normality” that he suggests characterizes the pilot under Lynch’s direction is lost under Dunham’s supervision wherein the series “reverts to a *mise en scene* that was much closer to TV norms” (27). This episode is, however, where the show’s leanings toward the soap opera over surreal crime drama/forensic procedural come to the fore and a televisual aesthetic seems entirely appropriate.

The narrative of the pilot covers the first full day of the investigation into Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee)’s murder, beginning with the discovery of her body and concluding around midnight, roughly at the time that Laura was killed the previous evening. The final images are haunted by the memory of Laura’s death, featuring shots of the silent lake where her body was found, a lone street light blowing in the wind, a low angle shot of the dark stairwell outside of Laura’s bedroom and concluding with a sequence of a person walking in a darkened wood, lit only by flashlight, intercut with Laura’s mother (Grace Zabriskie) screaming out as the person digs up Laura’s necklace buried

in the earth. This sequence highlights death, fear, and horror, emphasized by the echoed distortion to Zabriskie's screams. In contrast, Dunham's episode takes place largely in the bright light of day and focuses on the more mundane elements of the investigation, as Agent Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) and Sheriff Truman (Michael Ontkean) interview Laura's friends and family. Woven around this narrative are a series of new strands that relate to the ensemble cast. While most of these characters are introduced in the pilot, they are presented in relation to the investigation (either as Laura's family and friends or investigators and suspects). In the tradition of the soap opera, however, Dunham's episode highlights domestic intrigue over murder investigation, positioning many of the characters in their homes and introducing their own series of family or professional dramas such as Ben Horne (Richard Beymer) and Catherine Martell's (Piper Laurie) affair and their conspiracy to take the mill away from Martell's sister-in-law Josie Packard (Joan Chen); the love triangle between Ed Hurley (Everett McGill), his wife Nadine (Wendy Robie), and lover Norma Jennings (Peggy Lipton); and the domestic abuse of Shelly Johnson (Mädchen Amick) by husband Leo (Eric DaRe).

In particular, the episode is focused on a series of family encounters in the home, contrasting the seemingly dysfunctional Horne and Briggs families with the Haywards. In these scenes, Ben rebukes his daughter Audrey (Sherilyn Fenn) for her childish attempts to sabotage his business while Major Briggs (Don S. Davis) attempts to comfort his son Bobby—Laura's boyfriend—but concludes with Briggs slapping Bobby across the face as a shocking punishment for his insolence. The scene between Audrey and Ben is shot in one long take, filmed primarily in medium long shot, highlighting, through Audrey's positioning with her back to her father and Ben's shark-like circling of her, the distance between them. The dinner scene at the Briggs home equally emphasizes familial separation, but this time through a series of over the shoulder shot-reverse-shots between Major Briggs and Bobby, with the occasional cut-away to Mrs. Briggs (Charlotte Stewart) observing the father-son dynamic. The formality and rigidity of the editing, cutting back and forth in quite a traditional manner between father and son, captures Briggs's parental formality and lack of tenderness for his son in this scene despite his statement that he wants to talk to Bobby about his "thoughts and feelings surrounding" Laura's death and Bobby's arrest.⁴ The family is only ever filmed together in the establishing shot that opens the scene, once again emphasizing emotional distance.

These two familial scenes stand in contrast to an earlier scene at the Hayward household that presents a much more supportive and traditional family dynamic. Laura’s best friend Donna Hayward (Lara Flynn Boyle) wakes up the day after Laura’s murder and bounds downstairs in the bright light of day to ask her mother why she let her sleep. The two then enter into a rather girlish conversation about Donna and James Hurley (James Marshall) discovering they are in love. Like the sequence between Bobby and his father, the scene is filmed in a series of over the shoulder shot-reverse-shots, but unlike the previous scene the framing, with both women leaning in toward each other, speaking in quite informal hushed tones and ending in a two-shot as the women hug, emphasizes love and emotional intimacy. Equally, they are bathed in the orange glow of diffused sunshine, which calls attention to the shared auburn tinge to their brown hair, highlighting the familial bonds between the two women. The aesthetic construction of these sequences is presented in a style more typical of television and completely in keeping with the show’s relationship to the soap opera. This relationship is reiterated in episode 2 with the introduction of the intratextual television series *Invitation to Love*—a fictional, and parodic, soap opera watched by many characters throughout season 1.

Of course, I am not arguing that there are no stylistic flourishes within this episode but that, in contrast to the pilot, they are far more typical of the soap opera. For instance, in the pilot, a home-video of Laura and Donna dancing while on a picnic figures as a key mode of inquiry and analysis, raising questions about who shot it, who possesses the other half of her heart-shaped necklace, and who owns the motorcycle Cooper spots reflected in the close up of Laura’s eye. This video is repeated in episode 1, but this time it is inserted in between a jail sequence involving a silent confrontation between Bobby and James and the scene of Donna waking up and speaking to her Mom, as described above. The viewing of the video is unattributed and the footage is presented in slow motion accompanied by a subtle and lonelier version of Laura’s musical theme, concluding with Laura’s voice gently whispering “help me.” Rather than representing evidence that must be analyzed as in the pilot, the manner in which this footage is presented here suggests either memory or dream (perhaps embodying Donna’s statement that she feels like she is “having the most beautiful dream and the worst nightmare all at once”). Unlike Cooper’s dream from episode 2, directed by Lynch, this one speaks of emotion rather than a mystery to be unlocked. The emphasis upon the televisual for

this episode is therefore not a sign of lack of directorial flourish but rather an appropriate recognition that the show embraces its place on television by utilizing technical flourishes more associated with TV rather than seeking to present itself as decidedly “cinematic.”

Through this comparison, I am not suggesting that Lynch disrupts traditional television aesthetics while other directors such as Dunham maintain televisual norms (thus reinforcing a false opposition between the cinematic and the televisual), but rather am foregrounding that the series constantly oscillates between multiple modes of aesthetics in order to challenge expectations and undermine linear, cause-effect narrative. Elsewhere, Lorna Jowett and I have argued that “*Twin Peaks* explores the uncanny and liminal world that exists between the conscious and unconscious, in which reality is infused with the qualities of dreams and nightmares” (163) and, while this a key factor of Lynch’s direction, it also infuses the directorial approaches throughout the series in which the surreal repeatedly emerges through the cracks and fissures within and between episodes. This is clearly in evidence in episode 5, directed by Lesli Linka Glatter, who helmed the most episodes of the series after Lynch (5, 10, 13, and 23). This episode begins to bring various of the season’s narrative strands together as it moves closer to its finale (episode 7). As a result, each strand has its own distinctive visual signature, such as the near idyllic lakeside gazebo where Donna and James meet in order to pledge their love and swear to solve Laura’s murder. The optimism and hope of young love is conveyed through the scene’s golden lighting and bright and colorful surroundings, with the green and yellow leaves beautifully reflected in the still lake-water as Laura’s theme, now evoking love and romance, plays in the background. This style stands in stark contrast to the series’ usually noirish color scheme and the beautiful but oppressive dark woods that surround the town. While this sequence conveys the saccharine possibility of “true love,” the manner in which Linka Glatter shoots Bobby’s therapy session with Dr. Jacoby (Russ Tamblyn) later in the same episode evokes primal pain and sadness by moving into tighter and tighter close-ups on Bobby as Jacoby pushes him to open up to the way in which Laura’s self-hatred lead her to corrupt him in her image. As Bobby breaks down and cries, Laura’s theme returns but this time evoking abject sadness at Laura’s and Bobby’s plight, conveying an emotional realism absent from the scene with Donna and James. The disjunction between constructed sincerity and emotional realism of these scenes evokes the intrusion of dreams and nightmare within the everyday.

These different aesthetic signatures are further disrupted by a series of surreal moments such as the dancing Icelanders that wake Cooper with their singing and dancing, strange cutaways to a woman sitting in shadows in Ben Horne’s office, or the animal-like wails of Leo when Shelly shoots him in self-defense. More significantly, Linka Glatter evokes the surreal through the utilization and repetition of decidedly stylized and artificial compositions at two moments in the episode. The first is when Cooper, during a search of Jacques Renault’s (Walter Olkewicz) apartment, points out a photo of a cabin that features the same red curtains as he saw in his dream from episode 2. Cooper, holding up a magnifying glass, is framed in a head and shoulder shot looking offscreen as Harry and Deputy Hawk (Michael Horse) enter the frame next to Cooper, each standing side by side. This composition is so unnatural and strangely self-conscious as to call attention to its construction, particularly when Linka Glatter repeats the framing later in the episode, with the same three men plus Doc Hayward (Warren Frost), as they find Renault’s cabin in the woods. The surrealism of this sequence is enhanced by the dulcet tones of Julee Cruise singing “Into the Night” over the soundtrack, music that at first seems non-diegetic but is subsequently revealed to be coming from a record player in the cabin. The repeated cutaways to close-ups of a black bird, seemingly overseeing their arrival, appear both narrative signifier—suggesting meaning that is yet to be revealed—and nightmarish harbinger of doom, evoking the dark truth that will be revealed and the nightmare that is yet to come. This episode in many ways serves as a microcosm of the stylistic surrealism that defines the series both narratively and aesthetically, repeatedly undercutting both emotion and affect with tropes that call attention to the episode’s construction.

If Glatter taps into the series’ deliberately disjunctive aesthetic and maintains the show’s engagement with an unsettling form of surrealism within the everyday, independent filmmakers Uli Edel and Diane Keaton, who each directed one episode in season two, infuse the show with decidedly idiosyncratic styles that call attention to themselves through their stylistic break from what has come before and after. Their episodes disrupt by their difference. For instance, Edel’s episode 21 stands out distinctly as horror but not the Lynchian form that Jowett and I categorize as surreal “art-horror.” Instead, it is the story of monsters, mayhem, and madness, in which domestic abuse—Leo Johnson’s attack on his wife Shelly—is re-imagined narratively and stylistically as a slasher film, transforming the Johnson household into

what Carol Clover describes as the “terrible place” of horror. Keaton, on the other hand, in episode 22 laces the horror with her own quirky humor, particularly in terms of composition, unsettling framing devices and odd unexplained behavior, that deliberately undercut the drama of the *Postman Always Rings Twice*-style narrative surrounding James and Donna, as well as accentuating the ridiculousness of the twisted Civil War re-enactment, in which the South wins, that is staged by Dr. Jacoby and Audrey, to pull Ben Horne out of his delusional depression. This episode is replete with stylistic flourishes that are undoubtedly weird for weird’s sake, highlighting the show’s commitment to individuality and narrative disruption. Equally, however, the final image of Cooper, shot through the eyes of a mask sculpted in the shape of Windom Earle’s wife—Cooper’s former lover who died at Earle’s hand—shows only his eyes, with his face concealed behind the mask, and speaks to the darkness that will encompass him by the season’s end.

Conclusion: The Show That Changed How We Think about TV

Twin Peaks holds a significant place within a transitional period in American television production as the nature of televisuality was changing to encompass a degree of stylistic excess and experimentation traditionally associated with the cinema. Its unique visual and aural style, as well as its postmodernist tendency to disrupt the diegesis by calling attention to its own construction, contributed to a growing concentration upon the aesthetics of television in this period. Television series such as *The X-Files* (Fox 1993–2002), *Millennium* (Fox 1996–99), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel* (WB 1999–2004), and *Supernatural* (2005–present), benefited from this precedent and regularly call to mind the visual language and narrative/genre disruption of *Twin Peaks* within their own narrative and stylistic frameworks. Owing to the show’s self-conscious privileging of aesthetics as a core element to television storytelling, it serves as an exemplary case study about the changing role of the director in contemporary serial TV drama. I have demonstrated not only that the contributions made by individual directors were distinctive in their own right, but that the aesthetic clashes of style caused by the transition from director to director are an intrinsic part of the series’ aesthetic matrix. Furthermore, this analysis of *Twin Peaks* in relation to directing

highlights the creative issues facing most serial drama on television, having to maintain a balance between series consistency and individual style. Significantly, the manner in which *Twin Peaks* drew attention to the director within a medium traditionally associated with the writer/producer, marked a transition in the perceived importance of the director as well as signaling greater flexibility for directors to cross back and forth between film and television. Certainly, Lynch opened the door for many other film directors—such as Frank Darabont on *The Walking Dead*, Martin Scorsese on *Boardwalk Empire*, and Len Wiseman on *Sleepy Hollow*—to follow his example by taking creative control over a television series by filming the pilot and therefore establishing a stylistic blueprint for the show, and as a result elevating the director to the position of executive producer/creator in many instances. While it is common to refer to *Twin Peaks* as the series that changed television, perhaps it is time to think of it as the series that changed the way we think about and write about television, opening up our understanding of the diverse creative voices that made the show a landmark in TV history and challenging our understanding of authorship.

Notes

1. With the rise of television and the decline of B-movie production in the 1950s and 1960s, a large number of cinema directors began to work on episodic television, producing dozens, even hundreds, of hours of episodic programming. These directors included: Jack Arnold, John Brahm, David Butler, Robert Florey, Tay Garnett, Sidney Lanfield, John H. Lewis, Ida Lupino, Joseph Pevney, George Waggner, William Witney. Their experience of making low-budget films with very short production schedules made them ideal for the production pace of television.
2. Todd Haynes directed the mini-series *Mildred Pierce* (2011) and Steven Soderbergh directed *Behind the Candelabra* (2013). In the case of the latter, the line between television and cinema was further blurred as the film was broadcast on HBO in the United States and distributed theatrically in Europe.
3. This exchange between film and television directing is increasingly moving both ways with TV directors such as Alan Taylor moving from directing quality series such as *Mad Men*, *Boardwalk Empire*, and *Game of Thrones* to take the helm for *Thor: Dark World* (2013).
4. Compare this scene to a later scene between Briggs and Bobby in episode 8, in which Briggs recounts to Bobby a vision he has had about his son's future well-being and happiness. This sequence, like the scene in episode 1, involves Briggs delivering a monologue to his son but while Bobby's response

in episode 1 is disdain, here he is moved to tears by his father's narration, offering a brief moment of intimacy and closeness between the two men.

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“I’ll See You Again in 25 Years”: Paratextually Re-commodifying and Revisiting Anniversary *Twin Peaks*

Matt Hills

Twin Peaks has often been considered as a work of art(house) TV (see, e.g., Lavery, “The Semiotics of Cobbler” and “*Twin Peaks*,” as well as K. Thompson and R. J. Thompson), but its status as a hyped and promoted commodity has been somewhat less well explored. This is something I will address here in relation to *Twin Peaks*’s paratexts as part of the show’s ongoing commodification, and especially its re-commodification at anniversary moments. Paratextual analysis (Genette) is something that has grown in relation to film/TV studies since the 2010 publication of Jonathan Gray’s *Show Sold Separately*. Official paratexts are the bits of publicity material that circulate around a text, but they can also include extratextual special features on a DVD or Blu-ray release, as well as audience-created content like fanfic that helps to carve “alternative pathways through texts” (Gray, *Show Sold Separately* 143). Gray notes that “some texts claim more paratexts than others, with . . . cult texts often sporting sizeable pos- ses” (*Show Sold Separately* 114), and *Twin Peaks* certainly accords with this. Indeed, a focus on paratexts has formed one fraction of scholarly work on the show. For example, Jim Collins has analyzed how:

The media blitz that surrounded the premiere of *Twin Peaks* is . . . a textbook example of the skillful manipulation of . . . discourses of cultural legitimation . . . The full-page ad that appeared in *The New*

York Times the day the pilot premiered (6 April 1990) is a case in point. In bold, oversized letters we are told: “*Twin Peaks*—the series that will change TV,” according to *Connoisseur* magazine. Two evaluative criteria are reiterated throughout the glowing reviews quoted in the ad—a romantic-modernist glorification of originality and the shock of the new it produces, and an all-purpose notion of connoisseurship. (344)

Academic work focusing on the “romantic-modernist” innovation of Lynchian auteurism works, therefore, uncritically to reproduce paratextual discourses put into play in early promotion of the series. Anthony Todd has relatedly observed that:

In book-length...[studies such as Chris Rodley’s work from 2005] Lynch’s legend is cemented through a proclivity to seek intertextual associations with his fine artworks (painterly, photographic and theatrical) while his numerous television commercials—including a series of four *Twin Peaks* coffee commercials for Japanese television—and other promotional films are all but passed over...[T]here remains a noticeable barrier in the building of artistic reputations that shows that the relationship between art and commerce is a difficult liaison to reconcile. (109)

Todd’s argument is that art discourses have proliferated around David Lynch and *Twin Peaks*, meaning that this work takes on cultural value by virtue of being semiotically disarticulated from connotations of commerce, even (and perhaps most especially) where *Twin Peaks* has been paratextually extended into the world of advertisements, such as with the Georgia Coffee sequence starring Kyle MacLachlan (Todd 116–17). Aligning sharply with the arguments of Collins and Todd, Kristin Thompson’s discussion of how “*Twin Peaks* would be an obvious candidate for the status of art television” (115) also focuses on paratextual material such as Lynch’s comments about the series:

Here is a man who thinks Sandy’s speech about robins is beautiful, but at the same time he wants it to embarrass us. He apparently thinks that Cooper’s speech in the forest is a way of calling attention to the plight of Tibet. If an artist has views this off-kilter, then it is no wonder that we do not know how we are to react to certain scenes. Thus in Lynch’s work authorial commentary becomes a major source of ambiguity. (124)

Unlike authorial paratexts that might work to close down textual ambiguity, Kristin Thompson suggests that many of Lynch's gnomic utterances on the subject of *Twin Peaks's* interpretation result, instead, in greater ambiguity, where this is said to be a quality of TV art. Lynch's authorial paratexts can thus be considered as rather unusual, and as bids for cult(ural) value, distanced from any directly auteurist commerce of meaning-making both by biographers such as Chris Rodley and by Lynch's own stance.

But if cult TV shows accrue vast swathes of industry, audience, and scholarly paratexts, then it is unlikely that these will only be about cultural legitimation, or "art" rather than "commerce" in a zero-sum game. Amelie Hastie has pointed out that scholarly work on cult TV can sometimes come problematically close to a form of "academic merchandising" (88) by replaying forms of established fan knowledge about a show, for example reiterating notions of *Twin Peaks's* cultural value. While paratexts can often be linked to a fan/academic desire for knowledge about an enigmatic text, as well as a desire to elevate the favored fan object into the realms of a celebrated and exceptional artwork:

Undeniably, the epistemological economy (that is, an economy based on a system of understanding, a way of knowing)... is tied to... [the] consumerist economy. But the economy based on knowledge is also responsible for the driving of the consumerist economy in many ways, especially as this myriad of [secondary] texts produces and reiterates what we "know" about [cult TV shows]. (Hastie 81)

The "epistemological economy" surrounding *Twin Peaks* may be especially knotted, given both Lynch's statements and, for instance, the "cult affect" of "indeterminate spaces" in the show, such as the Red Room (Pheasant-Kelly 99). But such levels of indeterminacy have also opened ongoing spaces for fan interpretation twinned with what might be termed "user-generated" or DIY merchandising: as such, paratexts have also performed *Twin Peaks's* commodity status as well as its cultural value. For example, Andrew Howe argues that alongside a market for second-hand merchandise hailing from the series' original run in 1990–91 (see Geraghty 159), other objects have more recently "been created by graphic designers seeking to capitalize upon continued interest in the series" (Howe 41). This unofficial or gray market re-commodification of an intellectual property that has otherwise been officially dormant has resulted in "a market-driven

proliferation of items that has served to advance the iconography of *Twin Peaks*, and perhaps even mediate which dimensions of the show have grown in currency” since it was on air (Howe 41). Andrew Howe goes on to suggest that one benefactor of DIY merchandising linked to fan consumption has been the supernatural, demonic figure of BOB: “Although critically important throughout the...run of the series, BOB had relatively little screen time. However, he has enjoyed something of a renaissance in online merchandising” (42).

In this chapter, I want to explore how paratexts linked to commerce *and* art have increasingly collapsed together these meanings since *Twin Peaks*’s initial “media blitz,” as the program’s epistemological and consumerist economies have become ever more permeable, partly as a result of fandom being marketed to (for instance, in the form of the *Twin Peaks: The Entire Mystery* Blu-ray release). This newfound twinning of art and commerce has also been linked to industrial deployments of anniversary dates and markers, sparking new waves of *Twin Peaks*’s (re)commodification. I shall focus on the specific role of anniversaries before concluding with an analysis of the audience-created “season 3” on Twitter (Twin Pie, “Enter The Lodge”) through which the show has been commemorated and revisited in a rather different way compared to the 2014 *Entire Mystery* Blu-ray set. Where new official paratexts have gestured toward anniversary dates while being positioned as worthy of hype in their own right through relatively unusual para-paratexts (trailers for Blu-ray special features and a “World Premiere” for deleted scenes from *Fire Walk With Me*), recent fan-created paratexts such as “season 3” have repeatedly emphasized and focused on precise *Twin Peaks* anniversary dates. Both unofficial and official paratexts, circulating prior to news of *Twin Peaks*’s Showtime return, have tended to blur diegetic and extradiegetic temporalities, as I will demonstrate.

Re-commodifying *Twin Peaks*: Commemorating the Original Show

Surprisingly little has been written on TV anniversaries (see Holdsworth; Hills, “Anniversary Adventures”), but in his *Celebrations: The Cult of Anniversaries in Europe and the United States Today*, tackling the phenomenon of mediated and promoted cultural anniversaries more generally, William M. Johnston suggests that such commemorations can lead to “commercial overkill” (66), as well as reflecting a lack of

cultural consensus over what is worthy of being commemorated (69). For Johnston, this represents a relativist malaise where celebrating anniversaries has become simply a way of commercially promoting specific cultural material, without reinforcing any "deeper" cultural value. Anniversaries thus work to secure what Robert van Krieken terms a kind of "attention capital" (57), cutting through the mass of brands, texts, and paratexts that otherwise confront contemporary consumers. Amy Holdsworth takes a far more nuanced view, arguing that TV anniversaries operate specifically in relation to television's "repetition and continual re-narrativisation" (1), often proffering "'milestone moments' ... as ... self-reflexive spaces within serial drama that 'reference back' on their own long perspectives" (36). For Holdsworth, then, the diegetic domains of serial TV are just as significant as extradiegetic, real-world dates (e.g., anniversaries of first or final broadcasts).

Twin Peaks has arguably enjoyed several doublings of its anniversaries. In the first instance, 2010 and 2011 have both been positioned as the show's twentieth anniversary (in the United Kingdom and United States), and these years witnessed a spike in *Peaks*-related activity, for example via the appearance of the fan-run and New York-based *Welcome to Twin Peaks* website on January 20, 2011 (Hayes and Dom 51). Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom in 2010 the previously available Region 1 *Definitive Gold Edition* DVD was finally released: "robust sales of the 20th anniversary DVD box set indicate[d] its ongoing popularity. The anniversary also saw an inaugural UK 'Twin Peaks Festival', and a thirty-two hour continuous screening of all episodes at Battersea Arts Centre that attracted 500 viewers and sold out in three hours" (Pheasant-Kelly 95; see also Lewis).

But if *Twin Peaks*'s twentieth anniversary hovered between 2010 and 2011—the show itself having run from 1990 to 1991 in America—then there has also been a more significant multiplication of anniversaries, bridging the calendrical concerns of William Johnston and the story-world interests of Amy Holdsworth. Rather than the show only being celebrated as a matter of its broadcast dates, fans speculated about whether official commemorations and new material would be based around diegetic markers such as the fact that Laura Palmer tells Dale Cooper in the Black Lodge "I'll see you again in 25 years" in the series finale (Twin Pie, "Twin Peaks Blu-ray Gets UK Release Date"). And although the release date of *The Entire Mystery* Blu-ray set was shifted back from its initial UK release as given on Amazon (March 24, 2014), events held at the Paley Center for Media in both

New York City and Los Angeles took diegetic material as their point of departure and scheduling:

Although airing on June 10, 1991, the [finale]... unfolds—as every true fan knows—in the Twin Peaks world on March 26, 1989... With the 25th anniversary of Laura’s comment upon us, the The Paley Center for Media—which presented the U.S. premiere of Twin Peaks back in March 1990—has every intention of celebrating the occasion, along with *Welcome to Twin Peaks*, and you are cordially invited to attend. Come join us for a damn good Twin Peaks screening on March 29th 2014 at the Paley Center for Media in New York City *and* Los Angeles. (Twin Pie, “25 Years Later, Paley Center”)

The Blu-ray’s eventual day of release (July 29, 2014) didn’t represent an (extra)diegetic twenty-fifth anniversary commemoration, but both the Paley Center and the fan-created “Enter the Lodge” Twitter season three did mark the diegetic date of March 26, with this Twitter fan fiction commencing on March 25, 2014 as well as using a #25YearsLater hashtag (Twin Pie, “Enter the Lodge”). These fan-driven celebrations thus participated in a blurring of diegetic and extradiegetic temporalities, articulating the world of fan activity and creativity with a significant storyworld date. Sectors of fandom thus embraced a suitably idiosyncratic way of commemorating their beloved (and equally idiosyncratic) TV show.

This quirky, self-reflexive slippage between fiction and reality was also mirrored in some of the extras on *The Entire Mystery* Blu-ray. “Between Two Worlds” features David Lynch interviewing Ray Wise, Grace Zabriskie, and Sheryl Lee as themselves (as actors who appeared in *Twin Peaks*) but also speaking to them in character, in a liminal state between life and death, as Leland Palmer, Sarah Palmer, and Laura Palmer. For example, Lynch chats to Leland Palmer, saying, “you’ve been dead around 25 years now, and I’d like to ask you how things are for you now, and what are your feelings and memories of your wife Sarah and your daughter Laura?” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyeJmbZLckw#t=42>). Publicized ahead of release on the CBS Home Entertainment YouTube channel as part of its #TwinPeaksTuesday promotional campaign leading up to *The Entire Mystery* Blu-ray’s availability, this provokes some necessary rethinking of paratextual analysis. Where paratexts are usually thought of as “bonus content” on a DVD, or trailers/ads for a “primary” text (a TV episode or film), the CBS Home Entertainment YouTube channel effectively used excerpts from “Between Two Worlds” as a *paratext*

for a *paratext*—that is, as a *para-paratext*, that is a trailer for a Blu-ray extra. At the same time, #TwinPeaksTuesday aimed to colonize and structure the period of time leading up to the Blu-ray’s release, converting this into a drip-feed of promotional material, and building up interest for the release while also highlighting CBS’s commercial investment in this product.

Discussing the ways in which fans await rumored or announced media texts, Owain Gwynne argues that this amounts to a type of “fan-made time” (79) where fan anticipation and speculation structures the experience of phases between official media texts. The importance of (projected) commemorative dates can also work in this way, with *Twin Peaks* fandom in early 2014 awaiting news of a possible return for the show linked to anniversary speculations (in January 2014 a casting call, in fact for additional Blu-ray material, was picked up by news media; see Project Casting). Fans hoped that the March 26, 2014 date would be marked by Lynch and Frost: “Nothing from David Lynch and Mark Frost’s camp on the symbolic ‘25 years later’ date last week, but that didn’t stop fans worldwide to celebrate . . . and create!” (Twin Pie, “Enter the Lodge”). Gwynne suggests that one characteristic of digital fandom—of fans’ use of social media—is that it enables the sharing of fan-made time “as time that fans can take possession of and hold some sort of claim over. . . . During this time . . . producers . . . have no power over the way films [or TV series or Blu-ray releases etc.] are . . . imagined by fans on the forums. This can also be thought of as a form of pre-textual poaching” (Gwynne 80; Hills, *Triumph of a Time Lord* 72). Online *Twin Peaks* fandom, as evidenced by sites such as *Welcome to Twin Peaks* and *Enter the Lodge*, clearly imagined March 26, 2014 as a “symbolic” date deserving of major news and/or new material. Gwynne argues that:

Online space provides an instant link to a wider population of fans and allows for the kind of rapid interaction through forums, chat rooms, and other forms of social interaction necessary for the constitution of fan-made time. As a result, fan-made time is a product of its technology. Different forms of online communication may affect the flow or structure of fan-made time, yet they are linked by the immediacy they provide the individual. (81)

However, as #TwinPeaksTuesday demonstrates, this is not only or purely “fan-made time,” since official rights-owners can also very much intervene in this gap between texts via the use of promos, trailers,

and other publicity images, albeit usually only doing so relatively close to the moment of official release. For instance, the “Between Two Worlds” clip was published on YouTube on Tuesday June 10, 2014, ahead of the Blu-ray’s release date of July 29, while the full trailer was released a fortnight later than the clip, on Tuesday, June 24, roughly one month ahead of *Twin Peaks: The Entire Mystery* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oo1HadKt14s>). If fan-made time is a product of its technology then so too is commercially made (pretextual) time: using Twitter, YouTube, and Amazon preorder links, CBS Home Entertainment sought to structure the fan experience of awaiting new *Twin Peaks*-related content, both in the form of deleted scenes and a broadly “25 years later” (extra)diegetic interview between David Lynch and the Palmer family, rather than having “no power” over how new *Twin Peaks* would be imagined, as Gwynne suggests would be the case.

The re-commodification of *Peaks* also depends, of course, on new media technologies as well as anniversary dates—with the show being re-released and paratextually supplemented on DVD in the first decade of the twenty-first century, and then being supplemented all over again, and further augmented in terms of picture quality, for its Blu-ray release. But while “fan-made time” has involved imagining “25 years later” as a particular commemorative date, the eventual Blu-ray release, shunted back from its initial March 24 date for preorders, offers only a more vague or gestural commemoration of “around” 25 years. In short, where fans tended to display paratextual precision, *Twin Peaks*’s industrial and commercial paratexts (prior to the formal announcement of the show’s return) were often rather less exact in terms of their commemorative functions. It could also be said that fans’ “banal commemoration” of the show is ongoing rather than anniversary-driven (Vinitzky-Seroussi 56 and 58). Fans’ DIY merchandise, creation of mash-ups, and attendance at annual *Twin Peaks* festivals are concerned less strongly with re-commodifying the show and more with seeking to ensure its continuing cultural value and relevance, despite the absence of new official material at the time. As Will Brooker has noted, while no new primary texts seemed to be forthcoming then it remained “up to...faithful longtime fans to become curators of the mythos, to keep it alive, to cherish it, and to sustain it” (88; and see Duffett 252–53).

When paratextually re-commodifying *Twin Peaks*, CBS and Lynch play on the canonical status of official material by offering “definitive” DVD or “entire” blu-ray releases, yet as Jonathan Gray observes,

some beloved cult texts are valued by (fan) audiences for their capacity to support ceaseless "re-decoding" rather than definitive or entire sets of textual answers: "some texts ask instead of answer, and...continued open-endedness becomes a large part of what they 'mean'" (Gray, "Scanning the Replicant Text" 117–18). However, one could suggest that this process of promising new (and supposedly final or completed) commodity versions of *Twin Peaks*, which supplement, extend, and add to fans' knowledge of the original TV text (without actually adding new episodes)—perfectly fusing epistemological and consumerist economies—replays fans' initial pleasures in relation to the show. Henry Jenkins analyzed fans who were active on alt-tv. twinpeaks at the time of the show's original US broadcast, concluding that, "fans' pleasures lay simultaneously in their mastery over the text (their ability successfully to predict the next turn of its convoluted plot) and their vulnerability to Lynch's trickery (their inability to guess what is likely to happen next)" (Jenkins, "Do You Enjoy Making the Rest of Us Feel Stupid?" 63).

By offering the "entire mystery" or a "definitive edition" linked to different media technologies, but always involving David Lynch as *Twin Peaks*'s visionary auteur, paratextually oriented re-commodifications of the show can reiterate this fan experience: "Between Two Worlds" can be predicted by fans, but its highly unusual blurring of diegetic and extradiegetic knowledge, seeming to place David Lynch-as-David Lynch oneirically inside "his" *Twin Peaks*'s narrative universe, simultaneously restores fans' "vulnerability" to Lynch's trickster role, albeit at a paratextual level. Revisiting his own earlier work, Jenkins suggests that contemporaneous 1990s' audience responses to *Twin Peaks* "should have been our first sign that there was going to be tension ahead between media producers and consumers" (Jenkins, *Convergence Culture* 34), with fans seeking greater complexity and more puzzles to solve while mainstream media couldn't—and still can't, to an extent—risk becoming "so complicated that it...near[s] incomprehensibility" (Jenkins, *Convergence Culture* 34). Yet *Twin Peaks: The Entire Mystery* evades this fan-producer tension by according with fan completism in many ways: rather than separating out Lynch's "art" intertexts and "commercial" intertexts (*contra* the arguments of Todd), it curates and includes promotional, commercial materials such as the Georgia Coffee ads (much like the prior DVD box set), hence working against previously powerful discursive separations of art/commerce that had structured *Twin Peaks*'s paratexts and texts (Creeber 56).

This collapsing together of discourses into a newfound archival unity also stretches to the inclusion of *Fire Walk With Me* on the Blu-ray edition—something that had been missing from the supposedly “definitive” DVD release. Linda Williams has argued that Lynch’s film prequel distances itself from television, thus elevating the art of film over TV’s commerce, but *The Entire Mystery* challenges this media binary by positioning *Fire Walk With Me* as simply more *Twin Peaks* material to be collected together: “Lynch cannot entirely erase his televisual legacy: the image of the dead Laura was, of course, where *Fire Walk With Me*’s living Laura was first born. *Twin Peaks* on cable, video, and DVD will always be *Fire Walk With Me*’s more populist context. The cinematic TV may explode [at the start of *Fire Walk With Me*]. But long live television” (Williams 53). Rather than video and DVD implicitly representing “televisual” forms that offer a more “populist” context to *Fire Walk With Me*’s “cinematic” devices, *Twin Peaks: The Entire Mystery* collects TV and film forms together in one package (Ayers 104). Yet it cannot ever be truly “entire”—even without factoring in the show’s return—given fans’ DIY merchandising and everyday commemorations. And where “fan-made time” and anticipatory speculation about *Twin Peaks*’s appearance “again in 25 years” mean that “a discursive text and a... consumer’s textuality begin to emerge” (Gray, “Scanning” 113), this is partly displaced and overwritten by the commercially structured time of trailers, para-paratexts, and #TwinPeaksTuesday. Such anniversary-oriented and technologically driven promotion blurs together both the “two worlds” of fiction and reality, and discourses of art (Lynch’s unusual, disruptive paratextual interview) and commerce (building up to, and hyping, the forthcoming availability of a consumer good). As Jonathan Gray has pointed out, “hype betrays a text’s industrial roots too obviously for some audiences, thereby disqualifying it for consideration as art” (*Show Sold Separately* 113–14). The para-paratexts of CBS Home Entertainment’s publicity do not and cannot wholly recontextualize *Twin Peaks* as a commercial product when the show already has such a long, sedimented history of being linked to art and postmodernism, but such fan-targeted marketing does fuse art and commercial discourses more thoroughly than many of *Twin Peaks*’s earlier paratextual iterations (as shown by the likes of Jim Collins, Kristin Thompson, and Anthony Todd).

I have already noted that new official paratexts (at least in advance of the show’s formally announced return to TV) were more vaguely

focused on "25 years" later when compared to fan-generated paratexts that rendered extradiegetic and diegetic calendars interchangeable or permeable. But what other roles can *Twin Peaks*'s anniversary-oriented "audience-created paratexts play in...supplementing those created by the industry"? (Gray, *Show Sold Separately* 143). To address this question, I will conclude by considering the pre-return announcement "third season" created by fans on Twitter.

Re-visiting *Twin Peaks*: Entering the Lodge

Twin Peaks's Twitter-based "3rd season," launching on March 25, 2014, has been collated at enterthelodge.com (Twin Pie, "Enter the Lodge"), allowing readers to follow the fan fiction by diegetic day, collected together as a Storify archive without any extraneous tweets which could disrupt the narrative. Writing for the *CNet* website, Bonnie Burton describes the enterprise as follows:

25 years later, in accordance with Laura's prophecy..., brothers Emmett Furey and Patrick Furey decided to construct a third season of "Twin Peaks"... To follow this "Twin Peaks" trans-media experience, fans are encouraged to follow the handle @EnterTheLodge on Twitter, as well as those of FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper, Sheriff Harry Truman, the mysterious Audrey Horne, owner of Great Northern Hotel Benjamin Horne, Double R Diner waitress Shelly Johnson, and Laura's best friend, Donna Hayward—just to name a few of the 65 characters represented.

The Twitter season draws on details and characters from *Fire Walk With Me*, integrating these into projected post-finale developments as Dale Cooper returns from the Black Lodge to be reunited with Annie and Chet Desmond, as well as receiving a warning from Gordon Cole, whose tweets are presented in caps by way of emphasizing the character's deafness, also allowing this figure to stand out somewhat, drawing on fans' awareness that Cole was played by David Lynch himself.

Other characters are also given distinguishing Twitter-related features; BOB, for instance, features in the narrative but his tweets are protected, so fans have to request access to this material, allowing them to feel part of the process of hermeneutic detection. As Ann McClellan has pointed out, each social media "format (Facebook, Tumblr, and Twitter) brings its own particular characteristics" to

online role-playing blended with fan fiction (154), and the Twitter season three makes use of this service's specific affordances:

Twitter is one of the social media platforms I am most familiar with, but I think it's also kind of the perfect medium to continue the story," Emmett Furey told Welcome to Twin Peaks fan site. "We wanted to pick up right where the series left off, and it was a simple enough matter to grab a screenshot of all of the characters as they looked in 1990. On top of that, Twitter allows us the opportunity to release our content in practically real time, which is something that the show wasn't even able to do, so that offers a lot of interesting new wrinkles for this kind of storytelling. (Burton)

The real-time nature of this Twitter storytelling means that Laura's diegetic promise that she'll see Agent Cooper in "25 years" can be almost constantly iterated and emphasized: tweets referring to *Twin Peaks's* original diegetic events of March 25, 1989 were tweeted on March 25, 2014, for instance, and this #25YearsLater pattern was typically closely maintained by the storytellers. The narrative wasn't only made up of tweets, however; links to supplementary documents were also provided, including a transcript of part of a death row interview with Dale Cooper set diegetically on February 23, 2014. This material again reiterates fans' favored anniversary connotations:

HANNA GREENWOOD: I can't help but wonder. Does your coming forward now have anything to do with the significance of today's date? It is twenty-five years to the day, is it not?

DALE COOPER: Since the murder of Laura Palmer, yes. I suppose that is fitting, isn't it?

HANNA GREENWOOD: So you're saying that's a coincidence?

DALE COOPER: I don't believe in coincidence (Uncredited).

By re-performing infamous bits of *Twin Peaks* dialogue and plot but recontextualizing them as tweets—for example, Cooper's "How's Annie?" is given a new cultural form (Twin Pie, "Enter the Lodge")—this audience-created paratext displays a high level of faithfulness to *Twin Peaks's* epistemological economy, drawing on diegetically established, canonical detail. As McClellan observes: "For many, fidelity to the source text . . . remains the most important element of both fan fiction and online role-playing games" (143). It is striking that this specific re-visitation of *Twin Peaks* appears concerned with mimetically re-performing the TV text's "Lynchian" atmosphere

and quirkiness. Insofar as there is an "interpretive doubling" at play, where "boundaries between source text and role play" are toyed with (McClellan 150), this playfulness is largely focused on the slippage between story time and Twitter time 25 years on (tweets' real-world days and times are preserved in the Storify archive, meaning that even read after-the-fact, or after-the-performance, this temporal quality is preserved). Rather than reworking the canonical text or transforming it in notable ways, this Twitter fiction integrates the film and TV series into a seamless whole, and although story developments are introduced—Annie is found murdered in the same manner as Laura Palmer—these also replay well-established diegetic rules and rituals. One has the feeling of an uncanny repetition rather than a fully linear story development. And by inserting details from *Fire Walk With Me* back into an extension of the original TV show's diegesis (a new recording is discovered from Laura, which narratively ties into Annie's demise) this sense of cyclical unification is again stressed.

Writing on "digital fandom," Paul Booth has considered how online role-playing can temporarily and performatively merge fan and character identities: "Although traditional media studies assume this divide between the fan and the character, the amalgamation of fan and character in online spaces challenges that assumption" (155). Here, though, the identities of the fan-creators are submerged and deprioritized—one piece of blog coverage even states that "[t]he identities of the *Twin Peaks* superfans behind this elaborate work of fan fiction remain a mystery" (Rife). But although the Furey brothers are identified at [enterthelodge.com](http://www.enterthelodge.com/about/) (<http://www.enterthelodge.com/about/>), their identities are rendered very much secondary in relation to Twitter character performances. Rather than a "fan/character amalgam" contributing "not to the extant media object itself, but rather to each fan's individual rereading of that object" (Booth 158), season three is presented as if it were *objectively "real" as Twin Peaks*, and hence (almost) unauthored in fannish terms—even the supplementary documentation is not credited to any writer(s), as if it is found, documentary material. The combined emphasis upon mimetic reiteration of *Twin Peaks* and *Fire Walk With Me* and the relative absence of authorial identifiers work together to represent season three as if it were more than simply a fan's "individual rereading" of the show. Instead, a claim is made to pseudo-canonical status, as if these events are simply unfolding before the Twitter reader. Henry Jenkins, in his study of *Twin Peaks* fans in the early 1990s, noted how

some hardcore net fans began to produce their own speculations about the likely outcomes with “Possible Spoiler Warning[s],” or in one case, “Probable Spoiler Warning,” granting only slightly less authority to their musings than to the actual aired material. Such postings point to the extraordinary degree of investment some fans made in their predictions, the certainty with which they promoted particular interpretations of the characters. (“Do You Enjoy” 59)

The Twitter season three is akin to this interpretive process, with a high level of investment in the characters (remaining faithful to their established depictions) leading to a sense of narrational certainty that this is how *Twin Peaks* could have continued. Very much akin to fans of *The West Wing* who similarly continued that show on Twitter: “Managing to stay in character and provide a convincing portrayal was a requirement for maintaining the pleasurable illusion that these characters exist beyond the end of the TV show. . . . As such, the aim for ‘authentic’ character simulation could be seen to frame this. . . co-production of digital fan narrative” (Kalviknes Bore and Hickman 234). Downplaying authorial presence/identity and stressing the anniversary commemoration of #25YearsLater, this Twitter fiction enabled “fans to access their memories and re-enter the show vicariously. A connection is made between past and present, between art and artifact. The act of displaying such an object. . . demonstrates the show’s depth of cultural importance” (Howe 48) in 2014. As Pieter Dom, the owner of *Welcome to Twin Peaks*, has noted: “I’m particularly excited about everyone using today’s technology to mess around with *Twin Peaks*. . . . I love discovering all those amazing projects and giving them. . . exposure” (Hayes and Dom 52).

Tweeting “season three” of *Twin Peaks* is one way in which social media and its technological affordances allowed audience-created paratexts to supplement *Twin Peaks: The Entire Mystery*. While “Between Two Worlds” and “The Missing Pieces” offer new paratexts rather than a definitive return to *Twin Peaks* as a TV series (which remains pending at the time of writing), their treatment as deserving of unusual para-paratexts (promo clips and trailers for a Blu-ray special feature as well as a “World Premiere” for *Fire Walk With Me*’s deleted scenes, “The Missing Pieces”) fuses art and commercial discourses. These paratexts, it is implied, should be thought of as new *Twin Peaks* texts in their own right—they are culturally valued, artistic endeavors (with Lynch’s vision and imprimatur being central to both), and material simultaneously integrated into marketing

"hype" (see Twin Pie, "How David Lynch..."). The target-marketed commercialism of a Blu-ray release means that many fans will repurchase story material that they effectively already own as consumers, i.e. the series itself. Anniversary commemorations of a sort—blurring diegetic and extradiegetic times—help to drive this consumerist re-commodification, but at the same time, fans have generated their own paratexts focused far more intently on #25YearsLater and on directly continuing *Twin Peaks*.

These anniversary "peaks" in activity will no doubt have been followed by further commemorations, including this very book, and a new series on Showtime. In short, *Twin Peaks: The Entire Mystery* cannot offer up any final word. Although it collapses together film and TV (just as the fan-created season three integrates televised *Twin Peaks* with *Fire Walk With Me* in novel yet faithful ways), any notion of "entirety" remains unstable, stubbornly affixed to "mystery," and to a text that carries on asking questions of its audience. However, in advance of industry news of *Twin Peaks*'s continuation/reimagining, those questions were instead conveyed in paratextual forms such as "Between Two Worlds" and "The Missing Pieces," themselves presaged by distinctive para-paratexts highlighting the art and commerce of such offerings.

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Nightmare in Red? *Twin Peaks* Parody, Homage, Intertextuality, and Mashup

Lorna Jowett

A well-known nineteenth-century aphorism states that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery and, following this logic, the many “imitations” of *Twin Peaks* might stand as flattering evidence of its status as an innovative, landmark television product—a show that, according to Robert J. Thompson, “changed the face of television” (152). In *Fan Phenomena: Twin Peaks*, Shara Lorea Clark mentions a *Saturday Night Live* (1975–present) sketch, two episodes of *The Simpsons* (1989–present), and *Sesame Street*’s (1969–present) “Monsterpiece Theater: Twin Beaks” segment as some of the first TV references to a show that “saturated the cultural consciousness” (9). It might be expected that *Twin Peaks* would attract this kind of attention during its run, but a more lasting influence is apparent in the number of “imitations” that continue to be produced. From the Japanese video game *Deadly Premonition*, released in 2010, to Disney’s animated *Gravity Falls* (2012–present), described by its creator Alex Hirsch as “my weird *Twin Peaks* meets *The Simpsons* series” (in Radish), these twenty-first-century references to *Twin Peaks* attest to the continued vitality of this ground-breaking series.

Yet references to *Twin Peaks* are not universally “flattering.” Rather, as examined below, they range from affectionate, even obsessive, homage to outright, ridiculing parody. While *Twin Peaks* may have “changed television,” it was not a sustained success and the very “art” characteristics that made it a critical darling did not please everyone. As Marc Dolan points out, many felt that “a) the show

went on too long and its plots spun out into needless complexity; and b) the show took itself so seriously it became, as one writer [Egan] for the *New York Times* Arts and Leisure section put it, ‘a self-parody’” (31). As well as demonstrating the show’s lasting influence, *Twin Peaks* parodies, homages, allusions, and mash-ups extend the show’s own strategy of pastiche and repurposing familiar genres, stock characters, and aesthetic styles. The exaggerated tendencies in the series are what make it easy to “imitate” and parody, as well as making it highly recognizable when it is referenced by another production. Such references also give a strong indication of which features make the show so memorable and resonant.

Twin Peaks “imitations” are often, as this chapter explores, highly self-conscious borrowings that directly acknowledge the history of television drama and popular culture, and are situated in an industrial context of TV production that is accustomed to recycling and repurposing, and is inherently intertextual. Here *Twin Peaks*’s distinctive sound design, visual style, and content (setting, structure, characters) are examined as key memorable characteristics of the series that are also highly susceptible to imitation and parody. The use of casting in *Twin Peaks* references is also situated within a more extensive practice of what Jeffrey Bussolini calls “intertextuality of casting” in film and television. This chapter examines brief references and more sustained treatments, analyzing how *Twin Peaks* appears, to very different effect, in material as varied as the light comedy drama of *Psych*’s (2006–present) “Dual Spires” episode from 2010, the YouTube Lego short “Twin Bricks” (2007), and season two of the United Kingdom’s *Psychoville* (2009–11). “Imitating” a previous creation, even with the intention of flattery, implies a lack of originality, yet each example discussed below demonstrates the complex ways in which media products interact with each other, negotiating the anxiety of influence as well as notions of creativity and originality. *Twin Peaks* homages and parodies thus illuminate issues within contemporary media, especially around genre, aesthetics, and consumption.

Both the Danish (*Forbrydelsen* 2007–12) and the US versions of television crime drama *The Killing* (2011–present) appear to reference *Twin Peaks* in the opening scene of their first episodes, though “flattery” does not seem to be their primary motivation for doing so. The tag-line, “Who killed Rosie Larsen?” appeared in promotional materials for the US series, scrawled in red across an image of Rosie’s (Katie Findlay) face, a shot strongly reminiscent, if not exactly duplicating, close-ups of the photograph of Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) that

was a recurring visual element in *Twin Peaks*. A Pacific-Northwest setting and slow pace add to the *Twin Peaks* comparisons. Many commentators and bloggers interpreted this as self-conscious *Twin Peaks* referencing, though most went on to outline the differences between the two series. Simon Dentith notes that at “the most obvious level [intertextuality] denotes the myriad *conscious* ways in which texts are alluded to or cited in other texts” (5) and such a direct borrowing in the tagline cannot be anything but a conscious citing of *Twin Peaks* by *The Killing*. Yet Dentith also suggests that, “Intertextuality refers to the dense web of allusion out of which individual texts are constituted” (5) and television drama is as densely packed with such allusion as other forms of fiction. “Television is often called a medium of borrowing,” argues Bussolini, because it is a medium “where programs appropriate sets, storylines, and popular characterizations from one another in a way that strengthens the genre conventions already mentioned and creates recognizable intertextual streams through the medium” (38).

Following a similar logic, entries in popular online databases such as IMDb and Wikipedia note that the *Fringe* (2008–13) episode “Northwest Passage” (2.20) is a direct reference to *Twin Peaks* because it uses the “original” title for the 1990s series. One online reviewer calls it “a giant unabashed shout-out to David Lynch and Mark Frost’s groundbreaking series *Twin Peaks*” (Holcomb). The episode includes a diner advertising itself as “the home of famous pie” and its narrative involves dead women found in the forest, yet strong specific links to *Twin Peaks* are more difficult to discern. While Dentith argues that intertextuality can become parody because, “All these linguistic echoes and repetitions are accented in various evaluative ways, as they are subjected—or not—to overt ridicule, or mild irony” (5), neither *Fringe* nor *The Killing* seem to “evaluate” their echoing of *Twin Peaks* and certainly do not overtly ridicule it. Rather, they seek to use intertextuality as a message to the viewer that the new series is doing something similar, whether this is offering a “slow burn” narrative (Stuever) (*The Killing*) or a “weird” take on investigation (*Fringe*).

The examples cited here all use or repurpose *Twin Peaks* in some way, yet they have been selected to demonstrate slightly different tendencies. *Twin Peaks*’s own use of parody draws on, homages, ridicules, and repurposes soap opera, melodrama, teen rebel movies, detective fictions, American gothic, and more, often laying bare the operation of these genres or modes in doing so. Yet, the series’ combination of

sound, visuals, character, and narrative tropes is never fixed simply in parody as ridicule. Summarizing Margaret Rose's argument about literary parody, Dentith describes how parody is "especially strong in drawing attention to the negotiations that are involved in reading a parody text, as the reader's expectations are disrupted and adjustments are required" (15). One of *Twin Peaks's* unsettling elements is its disruption of viewer expectation, often accomplished through parodied genre conventions. Both Isabella van Elferen and Kathryn Kalinak identify this in the series's use of music, and especially in its repetition of musical motifs and cues that initially appear to be associated with particular characters or emotions but gradually become detached from this specific relationship. Thus, van Elferen draws the conclusion that "letting leitmotifs migrate among different characters and situations," serves to "undermine and gradually dismantle the unwritten rules of film-musical signification" (181). Focusing on a slightly different aspect of music in the series, Kalinak argues, *Twin Peaks* "consistently short circuits the flow of affect between the spectator and the screen by sending mixed messages for emotional reaction" in that "the initial ironic or parodic effect of a specific musical cue 'wears off,' so to speak, and the emotion... gets reattached" (89). Each highlights how parody draws attention to conventions, and disrupts audience expectations of musical scoring.

Distinctive sound design is one aspect of *Twin Peaks* likely to be highlighted in a parody, and such references are a fascinating source for analyzing exactly what makes the series so resonant. As well as emphasizing the use of sound, many direct references "do" the famous dream sequence in the Red Room (like *Scooby Doo! Mystery Incorporated's* [2010–13] "Nightmare in Red" 2.22), others highlight different aspects of the striking visuals, or foreground elements of content. Rose argues that "the parody of a work may entail the changing, as well as the imitation, of both the 'form' and 'content', or 'style' and 'subject-matter', of the original" (43), and it is certainly the case that *Twin Peaks* parodies both imitate and change aspects of the series' form, content, and style.

Van Elferen opens her analysis of "Lynchian sound design" with a quotation from Lynch himself: "People call me a director but I really think of myself as a sound man" (179). The sound of *Twin Peaks* is certainly a key factor in producing its style and distinctiveness, with a dreamy score composed by regular Lynch collaborator, Angelo Badalamenti. Van Elferen argues that across Lynch's work in film and television, sound is used as an integral component of overall style: "If

Lynch's complex, destabilizing use of cinematic narration and mediation create ambiguity and uncanniness," she notes, "his soundtracks intensify that effect to a degree that sometime verges on the unbearable" (179). The repetition inherent in a serial television drama broadcast weekly over two years allows the music of *Twin Peaks* to become imprinted on the listener as the motifs mentioned above play out their repetitions and variations, becoming familiar even as they shift their associations. Sound is also used to heighten the ambiguity and uncanniness that are characteristic of horror and gothic elements in the series (see, e.g., Jowett and Abbott).

In terms of parody, sound can reference a preceding production immediately. Bernard Hermann's stabbing strings from *Psycho*'s (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) shower scene is often echoed, imitated, and parodied, inferring or lampooning horrific menace and violence. Likewise, Badalamenti's music and singer Julie Cruise's performance of songs in *Twin Peaks* recalls the specific atmosphere of mundane small town life infused with surreal happenings and bizarre characters. The series' opening credit sequence sets out one of the main musical themes, and this title music is often repeated, especially in user-generated parodies or mashups. Nek Mars's "Twin Peaks in Lego: 'Twin Bricks'" offers a short summary of the series, and Badalamenti's theme immediately situates the viewer in *Twin Peaks* territory, and allows Lego versions of Agent Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) or sheriff's department receptionist Lucy (Kimmy Robertson) to be more readily accepted as familiar characters. The accompanying description—"Twin Peaks in Lego form. Directed by Duplo Lynch and music by Angelo Brickalamenti"—both continues the gentle Lego parody and also acknowledges Badalamenti's music as worthy of credit, alongside Lynch's direction.

Another more outright YouTube parody of the opening credit sequence also features the original musical theme, along with static landscape shots and an imitation of the "hideous font" used for *Twin Peaks*'s on-screen credits to cue viewers to its target (johnzw1989). Sound thus constitutes a key element of and target for this parody, with the on-screen musical credit stating, "music composed, conducted & repeated over and over by Angelo Badalamanti [*sic*]" though the poster of the video is careful to preface it with the onscreen message, "Dear CBS, Please don't get pissy about the music track as this video is *legit* fair-use" (johnzw1989). The parodist also repeats this disclaimer in the video description: "Hey: CBS, about that music," with a link that takes the viewer to Wikipedia's article on fair use and the section on

parody. Official productions that homage or parody *Twin Peaks* are more likely to feature original music that is reminiscent of the score for the series, as *Scooby Doo! Mystery Incorporated* does. US series *Psych* got around this by way of another type of mashup, running a reimagined *Psych/Twin Peaks* credit sequence for the “Dual Spires” episode, which was accompanied by the onscreen “credit”: “psych theme song interpreted by Julee Cruz [*sic*]” (“Dual Spires”).

In similar fashion, *Twin Peaks* parodies often use recognizable elements of the visual design to reference their source. The stagey setting of the sparsely furnished Red Room from Agent Cooper’s dream (“Zen, or the Skill to Catch a Killer,” episode 2), with red curtains forming the “walls” and a black-and-white diagonal patterned floor offer striking visuals that immediately recall *Twin Peaks*’s more surreal elements. In addition to the Red Room, *Twin Peaks*’s dream sequences and visions provide a range of iconic visuals: the dancing, red-suited Man From Another Place (Michael J. Anderson) who appeared to Cooper in his dream and, talking strangely, offered vital pieces of information; the bowtie-wearing Giant (Carel Struycken), who similarly offered enigmatic clues, and first spoke to Cooper after he had been shot (“May the Giant Be With You,” episode 8); the white horse that appears before Laura and Maddy’s deaths; BOB (Frank Silva), a mysterious evil force that seems to possess others. More mundane repeated images such as the Welcome to Twin Peaks sign, the traffic light, the ceiling fan, or the waterfall have also come to symbolize the series through their repetition in the title sequence, or as recurring elements in episodes, while coffee and pie can also reference the series because of their prominence and valorization by Cooper. All these elements have featured prominently in parodies and homages, appearing in *Psych*’s “Dual Spires,” *Fringe*’s “Northwest Passage” as already mentioned, video games *Deadly Premonition* and *Alan Wake*, “Twin Bricks,” *Scooby Doo! Mystery Incorporated*, *The Simpsons*, *Gravity Falls*, and many others.

Animated series using hand- or computer-drawn animation can clearly play with visual elements freely, since they do not have to invest money in set design (though notably even “Twin Bricks” offers a Lego rendition of the Red Room). Moreover, *The Simpsons*, as Jonathan Gray notes, repeatedly relies on parody for its operation, so it is hardly surprising that *Twin Peaks* should feature among its plethora of pop culture references. In the course of “Who Shot Mr. Burns?” Part 2 (7.1), Chief Wiggum has a dream in a red room where Lisa talks backward to him; additionally, in a flashback to



Figure 11.1 The Simpsons Meets Twin Peaks.

1990 during “Lisa’s Sax” (9.3), Homer watches a television broadcast of *Twin Peaks*, complete with a reference to “damn fine coffee” and a white horse dancing with a giant under a traffic light. The Red Room dream sequence is also the basis of *Scooby Doo! Mystery Incorporated*’s parody: Scooby falls asleep and finds himself in a mysterious space with red curtains and a black-and-white patterned floor that he is told by a backward-talking dancing man is “the receiving room.” Returning to the same dream later, he is given “an urgent message” from an “interdimensional being” that inhabits the object of Scooby’s doggy affections, spaniel Nova (“Stand and Deliver” 2.20 and “Nightmare in Red,” both 2013).

Gravity Falls takes a less direct approach, with creator Hirsch commenting, “I love *Twin Peaks*, and because the show takes place in a similar Pacific Northwest location and has some of these magical themes, I thought it would be funny to . . . not even parody it, but acknowledge with some design choices that influence” (in Sims; original ellipsis). The most obvious of these is the interior of The Club, a restaurant shaped like a playing card club (itself perhaps an allusion to *Twin Peaks*’s One Eyed Jacks), which features red curtains and a

black-and-white zigzag patterned floor. The opening sequence also contains some references to *Twin Peaks*, not least because, as Hirsch points out, it has a similar geographical setting. Thus, the opening introduces the town of Gravity Falls, from its nearby waterfall, surrounding pine forests and statue of Paul Bunyan, to local landmarks like a wooden water tower and the Mystery Shack. This sequence also includes an image of character Stan wearing an eye patch, which he shifts from one side to the other and the series also features recurring character Lazy Susan, a waitress at Greasy's Diner with a lazy eye: both may be allusions to *Twin Peaks*'s eye-patch-wearing character, Nadine (Wendy Robie), and the diner also evokes another key location in *Twin Peaks*. *Gravity Falls* concerns itself with mysteries and the paranormal and the series engages heavily with codes, puzzles, and enigmas, as signaled by the hieroglyphs featured in the opening titles and a different cryptogram in each opening. This aligns it further with *Twin Peaks*, as both series have a dedicated fan following who try to solve the many mysteries of the series.

Some of these visual homages or parodies, then, incorporate the content as well as the style and aesthetics of *Twin Peaks*, playing with setting, whether in the general (the Pacific Northwest) or the more specific (dinners, dream locations) but also including roles (waitresses, sheriffs, FBI agents) or characters (the Man From Another Place) that were favorites in *Twin Peaks*. Along with musical echoes, these provide atmosphere or texture that invokes the series. A slightly different angle is provided by casting, which is also repeated across many *Twin Peaks* parodies. Here, the emphasis is not solely on the internal world created by the series, but also on the external factors that help produce it. One of the oft-noted aspects of *Psych*'s "Dual Spires" was its casting of actors from *Twin Peaks* and many reviews of or news articles about it highlight that it features not one or two, but seven original cast members (Sherilyn Fenn, Sheryl Lee, Dana Ashbrook, Robyn Lively, Lenny Von Dohlen, Catherine E. Coulson, and Ray Wise). Ray Wise had already guest-starred in *Psych* as Father Andrew Westley in a previous episode ("The Devil is in the Details... And the Upstairs Bedroom" 4.4) and it was understandable that he would feature again. Of the rest, some are more recognizably *Twin Peaks* than others or, rather, their characters are more iconic (Laura Palmer, the Log Lady). Thus, *Psych* plays openly with a relatively common, if underdiscussed, aspect of television. "Intertextuality of casting," Bussolini explains, "refers to the often intentional crossover of actors and actresses between and among different shows, and the way in

which bringing along recognizable faces and styles serves to cross-pollinate televisual texts and create a larger televisual intertext” (3).

Arguably, this type of intertextuality offers a certain pleasure to viewers, not necessarily aligned with “following” a particular actor, but more with recognition and the interplay of different roles across a range of television products. “Following the careers of actors and noticing the types of characters and moods they evoke is part of the pleasure and intrigue of television viewing,” notes Bussolini, adding that such pleasures are “vastly augmented through IMDB” (21) and similar databases, which viewers can search even as they are watching, in order to hunt down elusive memories and pinpoint that vague familiarity. This knowledge, always part of cinema and television viewing, yet now more readily available and accessible than ever, informs any kind of television watching and can be used, by producers and consumers, to enhance a parody. In other words, “the conscious choice of such casting offers an artistic tool in creating a televisual text” (Bussolini 3)—in this instance in creating a direct parody. Such casting works in various ways. In “literary intertextuality and intertextuality of casting,” Bussolini argues, “this seems to entail both unintentional, inescapable crossover as well as intentional, crafted instances in which artists draw upon previous productions to invoke a particular polyphonic register” (38). Homages or parodies, then, are “intentional, crafted instances” that consciously seek to recall the production they allude to or repurpose.

This type of deliberate intertextuality of casting can be seen in *Scooby Doo! Mystery Incorporated*'s parodies and *The Simpsons*' “Who Shot Mr. Burns?,” which all feature Michael J. Anderson as versions of his *Twin Peaks* character, the Man From Another Place. Reprising the same role draws attention to the direct parody here, highlighting its self-consciousness. Likewise, casting seven actors from *Twin Peaks* is hard to dismiss as coincidence or unintentional crossover. *Psych*'s use of casting for “Dual Spires” is purposeful in other ways too. Some actors do take on roles that equate their famous characters from *Twin Peaks*: Catherine E. Coulson for instance, has a cameo as a woman carrying wood, alluding to her role as the Log Lady. Yet others, as Hale recounts, fill roles that allow the episode to connect back to *Twin Peaks* in slightly unexpected ways:

The episode's best moments involve their spoofing the parts that made them famous. In one moment that's actually spooky—something you don't expect from the jokey, often tinny “Psych”—the camera pans

up from the face of Paula Merral to the face of the coroner, and it's Ms. Lee, the original Laura Palmer, in effect looking down at her own corpse. (Hale)

Given the place *Twin Peaks* has in television history and, perhaps, mythology, the ongoing work of the actors who helped create it and its memorable characters are now part of the "larger televisual intertext," Bussolini mentions, and these actors are often featured particularly in "cult" or "off-beat" productions that might benefit from association with a show that "changed the face of television." Anderson's guest appearance in the 1995 *X-Files* episode "Humbug" (2.20) and his regular role in HBO series *Carnivàle* (2003–05) are undoubtedly examples of this kind of intertextuality of casting, playing on his role in *Twin Peaks*. Anderson has also appeared in other Lynch productions such as *Mulholland Drive* (David Lynch, 2001).

Thus far, examples of parody and homage have been examined in terms of what they cite from *Twin Peaks*, and there are many common areas here. Yet there are also different inflections to parody and those examined here suggest a range of approaches and attitudes to *Twin Peaks* itself. Literary scholar Margaret Rose argues that parody can be a "ridiculing imitation" (46)—perhaps its most obvious meaning—as in johnzw1989's parody of *Twin Peaks*'s opening sequence where each on-screen title seems designed to mock the pretensions of the series. Yet parody can also acknowledge "that the parodist has an admiring attitude of some kind to the 'target' or 'model' which has been made part of the parody text" (46). Likewise, Gray points out that, "Parody can be tributary and loving, serving as homage and flattery" (45). Given the critical acclaim *Twin Peaks* received, the latter is likely to be a factor in referencing it. The online Muppet wiki describes *Sesame Street*'s "Monsterpiece Theater" as a segment that "brings a cultural element to the series by presenting stirring dramas based on classic literature, plays or movies" ("Monsterpiece Theater"), so "Twin Peaks" indicates *Twin Peaks*'s status as a television "classic." Even johnzw1989's video parody credits David Lynch and Mark Frost with creating *Twin Peaks*, despite its other mocking "credits." Emulating *Twin Peaks*, even in a minor way, may allow a new text to stake a claim for quality, art, surrealism, complexity, or "weirdness," while offering this echo as a parody can also establish the new text's independence from this predecessor, suggesting that it is prepared to repurpose it even as it flatters through a form of imitation.

Moreover, the very use of parody can, as Dentith observes, highlight the formal structure and operation of the parodied text and even its whole genre or type. He discusses this in relation to classic novels and their parodies, arguing that the presence of parody draws attention to the conventions that constitute narrative and novel-writing (15), but as Gray's book-length examination of *The Simpsons* as parody demonstrates, this notion is equally applicable to other forms of creative fiction. "Parody can potentially shift our frame of reference," Gray states, "suggesting a new, more critically aware frame for viewing other textualities, enabling the parody to travel to other texts, to stay with us" (47). johnzw1989's parody arguably frames itself as this type of parody with its appended description: "What if titles told the truth?"

Admittedly parody, while at times functioning as affectionate homage, "can also take the ground in order to transgress and subvert" (Gray 45). Yet this function is predicated on the audience for the parody being aware of the text parodied, and thus of the subversive action. Paul Booth certainly suggests that, "mashup inherently rests and relies on the audience understanding and constructing connections between elements" (11). In many cases, especially scanning the wide range of parodies and mashups of *Twin Peaks*, this may not be the case. Adult viewers of *Sesame Street*'s "Twin Beaks" might get the joke, of course, but children watching are more unlikely to have seen *Twin Peaks* (even though the series was airing at the time of the parody, in 1991). "Twin Beaks" even makes it onto an online list of "The 10 Most Head-Shakingly Inappropriate Sesame Street Parody Sketches" (Barish), surely for this reason, since it hardly contains any specifically "adult" material in its brief story of Agent Cookie trying to find out why a town is called Twin Beaks (the characters are all birds with two beaks). Likewise, many of those playing a videogame released in 2010 may not be familiar with a short-lived TV series that debuted 20 years earlier, despite its presence in the cultural consciousness. In this sense, parody, as Gray acknowledges, "constantly risks failure, miscomprehension, or simply being overlooked" (47).

In the contemporary media environment, however, information and audience engagement might guarantee that at least some of the parodies examined here are not overlooked by audiences because their creators acknowledge them as conscious references, directing the viewer to the parodied text (even if she chooses not to seek it out). Thus, *Gravity Falls*'s creator Hirsch regularly mentions his deliberate incorporation of *Twin Peaks* elements, but also comments that he

has “been very surprised and pleased that people have picked up on it and embraced” these references (in Sims). Likewise, *Psych*’s “Dual Spires” was clearly signaled and acknowledged as a direct homage to *Twin Peaks*, not least by its title. In contrast, the British comedy series *Psychoville* offers an allusion to *Twin Peaks* that is more subtle, perhaps to the point of being overlooked.

Psychoville is often seen as a successor to *The League of Gentlemen* (1999–2002). The earlier series grew out of an award-winning stage show devised and written by Jeremy Dyson, Mark Gatiss, Steve Pemberton, and Reece Shearsmith, and performed by Gatiss, Pemberton, and Shearsmith, who play multiple roles. *Psychoville* is written by Pemberton and Shearsmith, who again each play several characters. Both comedies draw on the grotesque and gothic, often parodying or paying homage to classic horror movies, other television programs, and genre conventions. Leon Hunt describes the writers and actors who create *League* as engaged in a project that “largely goes beyond pure pastiche or parody to create a genuinely disturbing world of their own” (77). *Psychoville* takes a similar approach, combining elements of mystery, crime drama, horror, science fiction, and sitcom, while its narrative follows disparate characters who are all being blackmailed by the same mysterious stranger. Season 2 introduced several new characters, one of whom is a librarian, Jeremy Goode, who sees visions that he refers to as the Silent Singer (both played by Shearsmith). The Silent Singer was a popular addition, trending on Twitter soon after appearing in the series, and Shearsmith responded to a tweet about influences on the character by stating, “Silent Singer is much more Killer Bob from *Twin Peaks*.” The similarity with BOB is apparent, but far from a direct copy, and the *Twin Peaks* connection is mobilized in several ways.

Jeremy’s story-arc traces his increasing agitation over an overdue, possibly lost, copy of a book named *Fifty Great Coastal Walks of the British Isles: Volume 2*. During his first episode (2.1), as Jeremy becomes stressed, dissonant noises (reminiscent of *Twin Peaks*’s sound design) take over from diegetic sounds and the Silent Singer appears. Dressed in a blue sweater, a leopard-skin print scarf around his neck, and wearing blond braids and large round-framed spectacles, he sings silently into his walking stick, showing his pointed teeth as he does so. The menacing noises cut off abruptly and diegetic sound returns as Jeremy, and the viewer, snap back into “normal” life. As Jeremy’s story unfolds, his obsession with the book prompts more visions of the Singer, and leads him into increasingly dubious and criminal

behavior: he invades the home of and steals a dog belonging to the library member who should have returned the book and threatens to kill the dog if the book is not returned. In episode 2.6, the connection between Jeremy and the Singer, and between the Singer and BOB, is made clear. Alone in a police interrogation room following the dog-napping, Jeremy sees his reflection as the Silent Singer, in the same way that *Twin Peaks* revealed that Leland Palmer and BOB were one and the same (episode 15, “Drive with a Dead Girl”), and that Leland, under BOB’s influence, had therefore killed his daughter Laura. In the previous episode of *Psychoville*, Jeremy tells the police that he was institutionalized some years ago and helped work on a nefarious mathematical equation. During this time, he came up for review but, not wanting to leave the work he enjoyed, he “made up” the Silent Singer, was diagnosed as schizophrenic, and thus achieved his goal of remaining in the hospital. The Singer has since started to appear to him.

This backstory ties Jeremy to *Psychoville*’s ongoing narrative about Ravenhill Hospital, but the figure of the Silent Singer hardly needs explanation for the viewer. It is clear that the Singer is a projection of Jeremy (his refrain, “Not now, Silent Singer!” signals denial and repression), and, given that the Singer is completely silent, the menace and impact of this minimally developed character is extraordinary. The Singer does not need to be a rounded character: like BOB, the Singer is the embodiment of menace. BOB’s unkempt appearance and grimacing at the camera offers a style of performance in keeping with *Twin Peaks*’s melodrama and excess and, similarly, the Silent Singer is utterly at home in *Psychoville*. A combination of male and female, with a ridiculous and colorful signature outfit, and a repetitive set of exaggerated movements, the Singer is at once ludicrous, laughable, and deeply disturbing. Just as *Twin Peaks* mashed together different worlds, genre conventions and styles to produce its unsettling and dreamlike atmosphere, so the Silent Singer’s appearances in *Psychoville* embody the eruption of the strange, fantastic, and horrific into mundane spaces and everyday life. The Singer, like BOB, gets relatively few minutes of screen time but is extremely memorable.

Much more direct, *Psych*’s “Dual Spires” is probably one of the most extensive *Twin Peaks* homages and incorporates many elements of the earlier series’ signature style. A list compiled for the *Welcome to Twin Peaks* website catalogs 76 *Twin Peaks* references in the 50-minute episode (Twin Pie). These include a small town setting, a body wrapped in plastic, a sheriff named after a US president, excessive crying, a

detailed visual replication of the opening titles of *Twin Peaks*, and several musical allusions in addition to Cruise singing the theme song. Responses to this level of homage (and it is generally taken as homage rather than parody) varied. Some lauded it as a triumph, others suggested it was trying too hard to fit in its multitude of *Twin Peaks* references, and one viewer, who admitted never having seen *Twin Peaks* before, “did a little reading up on *Twin Peaks* during the commercial breaks” and concludes, “I’m sure that fans of *Twin Peaks* probably will be a lot happier with this episode” than she is (Fredericks). An article in the *New York Times* highlighted the way *Psych* as a series generally “makes a practice of referring to old movies and television shows, and has frequently joked about ‘*Twin Peaks*’” thus suggesting that, while unusual in degree, this extended *Twin Peaks* parody was not necessarily new territory for the show (Hale). Yet, unlike Brittany Fredericks, the viewer of *Psych* but not *Twin Peaks*, Hale upholds the primacy of the original, closing his article by saying that, “The best thing about ‘Dual Spires’ would be for it to drive viewers back to the ‘*Twin Peaks*’ pilot episode, which is available from iTunes and on the



Figure 11.2 Psych Meets Twin Peaks.

‘Definitive Gold Box Edition’ DVD set.” Such responses demonstrate the inherent uncertainty in offering this level of parody to an audience who may not have the knowledge to “get it.”

Twin Peaks itself inspired similar divisions among viewers. Homer Simpson’s, “Brilliant! I have absolutely no idea what’s going on,” while watching *Twin Peaks* in “Lisa’s Sax,” comments on both the critically acclaimed “brilliant” aspects of the series, while potentially critiquing a deliberate obscurity. Jennifer Jenkins argues that at the time of its broadcast, *Twin Peaks* “did construct a hierarchy of viewers based on their accumulation of usable ‘cultural capital’” (in Reeves et al. 177), and it might seem that its parodies continue to do so. *Twin Peaks* parodies demonstrate the series’ position as, if not necessarily a show that “changed the face of television,” at least as a recognizable television “classic.” *Psych*’s “Dual Spires” readily announces the source of its “imitation,” ensuring that viewers know about it in advance and can investigate *Twin Peaks* before, or even during, the episode if they are unfamiliar with it. The ready availability of information about television history to contemporary audiences accustomed to multiscreening, as noted by Bussolini, somewhat erodes the notion of a hierarchy based on encyclopedic knowledge possessed by a limited number of viewers. *Psych* also makes its homage the unique selling point of an episode forming part of an ongoing series, something designed to provide novelty through mashing up the two different shows, but not requiring its regular viewers to take particular notice of the object of its homage. This also means that the audience for this episode might be self-selecting based on the appeal, or otherwise, of the parody. Many of the user-generated parodies and homages to *Twin Peaks* also imply appeal to a self-selecting set of consumers. References to iconic elements of *Twin Peaks*, from the visual style of the Red Room to the distinctive soundscape, need no prior knowledge to have an impact. Relatively few people may have seen the film *Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925), but its Odessa Steps sequence has been repurposed to great effect in media from *The Untouchables* (Brian De Palma, 1985) to a UK television advertisement for breakfast cereal. Other *Twin Peaks* examples, like *Gravity Falls* and *Psychoville*’s Silent Singer, do not even require the viewer to be aware of reference to “get” the atmosphere or tone that the parody provides or enhances.

Overall, the parodies themselves demonstrate tendencies that are not unique to *Twin Peaks* but are, rather, common to much contemporary television and its overflow media. Indeed, homage, parody,

mashup, and allusion can be seen as integral operations of many screen media productions, which rely on intertextuality whether it operates at the level of content, style, or casting. Some often now seem also to rely on viewers hunting down such references via the technologies at our fingertips, suggesting that such intertextual parody will continue as television evolves in the postdigital era.

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Trapped in the Hysterical Sublime: *Twin Peaks*, Postmodernism, and the Neoliberal Now

Linnie Blake

In 1990, I was living in Oxford in the United Kingdom and working as a policy writer for OXFAM. I shared a house with a chain-smoking Deleuzian, a psychiatric nurse, and an unemployed van driver. All in our twenties but with little else in common, we were an unlikely collection of housemates and most of the time we went our separate ways. Then *Twin Peaks* happened. *Twin Peaks* changed everything. Within a couple of weeks of taping the pilot episode, we had taken to meeting together as a household to watch it live. Friends were invited. On one occasion, probably best forgotten, there was dressing up. We were four very different people but we all loved this. We rejoiced in its humor. We adopted its catch phrases. We each had favorite characters and favorite things—the Little Man’s (Michael J. Anderson) dancing, Dr. Jacoby’s (Russ Tamblyn) glasses, Ben Horne’s (Richard Beymer) “little Elvis,” Lucy’s (Kimmy Robertson) voice. We suspected there was no real meaning to the thing, that it was a game of some sort where the search for meaning was more significant than the meaning itself. That too was exciting. And even when perplexed and frustrated by its endless deferrals, as happened often during the second season, we enjoyed its intensely realized period flavor. We had all grown up under the moral sway of the National Viewers and Listeners Association, a group that in 1983 had argued for the censorship of video releases likely to deprave and corrupt young people such as ourselves.¹ And as such, we rejoiced in *Twin Peaks*’s dark supernaturalism, its transgressive sexualities, and its sense of impending doom.

Here was a program that treated us like the adults we knew ourselves to be. Ethical qualms were for others of a less enlightened persuasion. So we positioned ourselves as a new kind of sophisticated audience, dancing in a hall of mirrors in which meaning (if meaning there were) was refracted beautifully by a wild, hallucinatory lens. As the ancient evil of the Black Lodge threatened to loose itself upon the world, *Twin Peaks* spoke to us and to our times. For it was in this period that the twin energies of neoliberal economics (which had triumphed in the geopolitical sphere) and postmodern philosophy (which had come to inform every aspect of contemporary culture) began to shape both the world-view and the life-options of my generation, bringing into being the world we inhabit today.

Watching *Twin Peaks* again, from the perspective of 25 years, a great deal has become apparent to me that was simply not “there” at the time. I am considerably more troubled by the program’s regressive class and gender politics, for example. I am less seduced by its bedazzling epistemological indeterminacy, generic hybridity, and often-absurdist pastiche of available styles. Mostly, I have come to question the ideological function of such representational practices—and this has led me to explore the links between postmodernism’s rejection of the certitudes of the Enlightenment and the social malaise of the new millennium. For, as Graeme Wearden reports, ours is now a world in which the polarization of wealth has never been greater—a recent OXFAM report demonstrating that the world’s richest 85 people now control as much of the planet’s wealth as “the poorest half of the global population put together.” As an avowedly postmodern text from the period in which neoliberalism came to dominant global economics, *Twin Peaks* proffers us a superb exemplification of the relation between postmodern representational practice and the coming into being of our own horrific world. It is this paradigm that this chapter will explore.

Across the 1980s, neoliberal economic models had mounted an effective challenge to Keynesian macroeconomics, with its public spending agenda and its commitment to fetter the wildest excesses of unregulated capitalist expansion through state regulation of the markets. In the United States under Reagan, as in the United Kingdom under Thatcher, neoliberals had mounted an effective propaganda campaign against “big government,” itself seen as inimical to the liberty of the individual because it was detrimental to the necessary freedom of the market as guarantor of broader political liberties. There was no sense, as Žižek would later put it, that “freedom of choice

only functions if a complex network of legal, educational, ethical, economic and other conditions is present as the invisible background to the exercise of our freedom.” The market was all and ethics were deemed an irrelevance. Hence, a doctrine of self-regulation was espoused while a range of programs that mounted direct attacks on workers’ rights were imposed on an international scale in return for dubious trade agreements. Concepts such as “the public,” “public interest,” and “general welfare” were deemed meaningless as spending on education, health, and benefits was slashed—welfare claimants being demonized (then as now) across all aspects of the media (Häring 21). As “a rising tide of social inequality engulfed the United States in the Reagan years, reaching a post-war high in 1986” (Harvey 330), unemployment surged to over 10 percent, homelessness rocketed, and manufacturing industry collapsed, being replaced by the generation of wealth through financial speculation, untethered from any real growth in production and entirely unregulated by the state. While a culture of rampant consumerism was promoted across all aspects on an increasingly corporatized media, the citizens of the world were refashioned as motile and hybridized entities, traditional markers of identity such as class, ethnicity, region, gender, and sexuality becoming irrelevant to the demands of the corporation. Who needed class solidarity, it was argued, when neoliberal capitalism promised freedom from historic oppression through the acquisition of wealth and the consumption of ever-improved products? Who needed to affirm the rights of the poor in an increasingly polarized society when value was now measured purely in fiscal terms? As Oliver Stone affirmed in *Wall Street* (Oliver Stone, 1987) and Tom Wolfe declared in *Bonfire of the Vanities*, greed was good and the Big Swinging Dicks of Wall Street (as Michael Lewis put it in 1989’s *Liar’s Poker*) were now masters of the universe.

Twin Peaks was first 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. This is the world we inhabit today, both periods being characterized by a conceptual adherence to the principles of postmodernism. This I define as a relativistic skepticism that challenges the instrumental rationality of post-Enlightenment humanism and all that it holds dear, including truth, justice, progress, the rights of the individual, and the social responsibilities of us all. In celebrating the dreamlike nostalgia of *Twin Peaks*, in reveling in its generic hybridity, its interstitial setting, and highly individuated yet strangely interchangeable characters, we the original

audience became part of this postmodern project. We thrilled at the novelty of a series that so insistently foregrounded its stylish artificiality. We were carried along not by social or emotional realism, but by glittering cleverness: the ways the series foregrounded the surface and repudiated depth. And what a transgressive surface it was: rape, murder, incest, teenage prostitution, drug dealing, adultery, and more. Anything went in *Twin Peaks* and we were happy to go with it. At the time, it was argued that “postmodern aesthetic experimentation should be viewed as having an irreducible political dimension” being “inextricably bound up with a critique of domination” (Wellberry 235). Certainly *Twin Peaks* was characterized by a sense of transgressive danger. Yet, even as postmodern thinkers affirmed the liberating dimensions of the postmodern turn, the world was becoming increasingly dominated by an economic model that brought exponential increases in wealth to the richest “even as it plunged billions into poverty” (Dean 67). And so, I have come to believe, as programs like *Twin Peaks* reveled in postmodernism’s critique of the positivistic order, first-generation viewers, such as myself, became gradually inured to neoliberal economics’ erosion of civil society, placated somewhat by cornucopia of goods and services that emerged during this period—including increasingly inventive TV.

We the original audience of *Twin Peaks* were, then, the children of a form of disorganized capitalism that manifested itself in the cultural products of postmodernism. For while the deregulation of the cultural sphere championed by postmodernism echoed neoliberalism’s deregulation of the markets, both postmodern relativism and laissez-faire capitalism disavowed transcendent meaning in favor of contingent and eminently revisable representations of the individual and the world. In both models, the individual was center stage, a consumer of goods and images possessed of the right to choose between them but not to choose otherwise (there is no outside this particular text) and bearing no responsibility for the impact of either choice on others. Certainly, throughout the 1980s, our cultural life had become more fragmented and pluralistic, but the changes wrought to self and society were not merely, as Scott Lash and John Urry have argued, reflected in the rise of postmodernism; they were advanced by it. For “in reifying culture” in this manner, “attention is diverted from both institutional change and class dynamics” (Wexler 165). This was particularly true, I would argue, in the case of television programming, which even at the time was being theorized as “the real world of postmodern culture” with “*entertainment* as its ideology...*electronic*

images as its most dynamic, and only, form of social cohesion” and “the diffusion of a network of relational power as its real product” (Kroker 270). From the perspective of 25 years on in time, the television programs of this period can indeed be seen to be characterized by the free market’s “network of relational power,” brokered through organizations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and brought into our homes through a corporatized media. And so, having hunted high and low for the meanings of *Twin Peaks* over a period of a quarter of a century, I am now inclined to argue that they are not to be found in the Red Room, in the dreams of Agent Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan), or in the Giant’s (Carel Struycken) gnostic portents. They lie, I believe, in a retrospective awareness that the program came into being at the moment at which neoliberalism was refashioning society as a Darwinian survival of the fittest, postmodernism was reconceptualizing the self as a mutable contingency, and the Enlightenment narrative of social progress was going rapidly out of style. This awareness now gives meaning to *Twin Peaks*’s self-conscious repudiation of meaning. This explains how intelligent people such as ourselves could have been so seduced by the ethical relativism of Lynch’s dark illogicality that we celebrated a cultural artifact that was at best politically conservative and replete with dangerous representations of already marginalized groups.

Part of our attraction to *Twin Peaks* was its avowedly interstitial setting. Not only was it set “five miles south of the Canadian border, twelve miles west of the state line,” but it insistently crossed and recrossed a series of boundaries: between life and death, good and evil, the past and present, the socially conservative and the formally radical, the rational and the irrational, the coherent self and the radical alterity of the abject other. It depicted a world we had never encountered and did so in a manner profoundly at odds with the historic depiction of the American small town from Capra’s *Bedford Falls* to CBS’s *Walton’s Mountain*. In the period before grunge put Seattle on the mass-cultural map, the Pacific Northwest was unfamiliar territory to many of us. The mist-shrouded mountains, lazy flowing rivers, logging camps, and rain offered both a specific kind of landscape yet retained a sense of nowhere in particular. It was somewhere in between. And if its setting was interstitial, the same could be said of its period. For while *Twin Peaks* embodied some terrifying examples of the hairstyles and fashions of the long-1980s, it also evoked a number of other periods in a manner that loaned further indeterminacy to the text. The self-referentiality of the casting, of course,

takes us from the Great Depression to the present—Hank Warden (Señor Drool Cup) having appeared in *Stagecoach* (John Ford, 1939), Richard Beymer (Ben Horne) and Russ Tamblyn (Dr. Jacoby) in *West Side Story* (Jerome Robbins & Robert Wise, 1961), and Peggy Lipton (Norma Jennings) and Clarence Williams III (Agent Hardy) in *Mod Squad* (ABC, 1968–72). The period most consistently evoked, though, was that of the 1950s—Audrey Horne’s (Sherilyn Fenn) sweaters, James Hurley’s (James Marshall) Harley Davidson, and the chrome and neon interior of the Double R Diner bringing that era into the 1990s in a manner highly reminiscent of the earlier *Blue Velvet* (David Lynch, 1986). This was an interesting twist.

We had become used to such images across the 1980s, the period being characterized by a “seamless integration of a simulacral past into the ideological needs of the present” (Forster 127) in the form of films such as *Grease* (Randal Kleiser, 1978), the *Back to the Future* trilogy (Robert Zemeckis, 1985, 1987, and 1989), *Dirty Dancing* (Emile Ardolino, 1987), and *Peggy Sue Got Married* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1986). It is of course notable that the mass media should so insistently return my generation to the decade of the 1950s, this being the period most frequently evoked in the rhetoric of the Reagan presidency. Public historic discourse was, in short, characterized by an insistent revisionism that airbrushed the troubling decades of the 1960s and 1970s out of time and projected national identity discourses back to the small-town family values of an Arcadian moment prior to the arrival of the liberals and lesbians, peaceniks and hippies, who instigated a counterculture that led the nation astray. In the conservative imagination it was, Jameson argues, “an unconscious sense of the loss of the past, which this appetite for images [sought] desperately to overcome” (203). And the conservative imagination informed all aspects of the culture industry.

Lynch too has been charged with having an unhealthy obsession with the United States of his own adolescence, consisting “basically of an infatuation with 1950s small town America and its dirty little secrets... a sentimentality about homecoming queens that borders on gush, a Reaganite preference for the wealthy over the poor (and for WASPs over everyone else)” (Rosenbaum 25). In giving us a town in which “a yellow light still means slow down not speed up,” Lynch is here accused of undertaking “a nostalgic regression... to the worst aspects of the Eisenhower era” (25). Certainly, the fictive world of *Twin Peaks* is controlled by middle-class men. It is ideologically conservative and publicly champions the institutions of family, hard

work, and moral rectitude. And, as I will argue, it displays attitudes toward women, the learning disabled, and those who are not white that would not have been out of place during the Cold War. Thus, while populist films such as *Back to the Future* (Robert Zemeckis, 1985) deployed nostalgia as a means of ideologically driven historical revisionism that affirmed an historical continuity with the Eisenhower era (while asserting that a white man invented rock and roll), Lynch would give us something that appealed to a more sophisticated audience with little time for the pietistic strictures of a neoconservative world view. His world of lies and secrets was predicated, I would venture, on a Baudrillardian sense that “when the real is no longer what it used to be,” nostalgia comes into play to generate a “second hand truth” (12–13) about the past that is, itself, only one of many truths. It remains the case, however, that for all its transgressive indeterminacy, Lynch’s “truth” lacks historical engagement and proffers no social critique. As such, it is conservative to the core.

Lynch’s will to pastiche is significant here, this being in Jameson’s formulation the “official sign” of neoconservative postmodernism (201). For if history, from the postmodern perspective of 1980s neo-liberal culture, had become little more than a history of representations, assembling the traces of the past into commoditized clusters, then it was no longer possible to make sense of the past at all. It had become a *mélange* of contradictions and paradoxes woven together into a narrative which, as Lyotard would argue, was no more authentic than any other version. Thus, in Jameson’s words, culture became “a field of stylistic and discursive heterogeneity without a norm” (201) in which the ideologically charged vocation of historic parody had been replaced by a hollowed-out pastiche, evoking only its own clever loveliness. All of these tendencies are amply apparent in *Twin Peaks*, as Lynch consistently sets his action in a dreamlike present characterized by “slow dissolves, spotlighting, extreme close-ups, figures who emerge out of darkness, shots held an extra beat to catch the sound and texture of a place or thing” (Woodward 42). In this durational moment, Lynch pays insistent attention to “facial deformities, exaggerated noise, sick puns and comically banal dialogue,” while confusing our chronological sense with repeated use of the styles, sayings, and “brand names of the past” (42). Here is the “omnipresent, omnivorous and well-nigh libidinal historicism” of Jameson’s postmodern aesthetics that cannibalize the styles of the past and in the present and “combines them in over stimulating ensembles” (203). This connotes, for Jameson, only “pseudo-historical depth, in which

the history of aesthetic styles replaces ‘real’ history” (204) and, in so doing, provides not meaningful representations of current experience but an ideologically driven obfuscation of the past. Such a move is utterly disempowering of those who wish to engage with their history and to effect social change in the now, providing as it does, “an effective means of controlling popular memory” (Lotringer 92) alongside a new market for retro-styled commodities from which a host of neo-liberal entrepreneurs were all too ready to profit. We were all wearing Audrey Horne sweaters in 1991. Such a reshaping of history was thus echoed in the period’s conceptual and material refashioning of the self.

In its parade of grotesques, *Twin Peaks* appears to espouse a radical individualism where characters are not only nothing like each other but are like nothing we have seen before. On first viewing, this was utterly seductive. Who could resist a weeping police officer, the world’s oldest bellhop, a steely whorehouse madam, or a sultry teen nymphet? From a distance of 25 years, however, it is difficult to escape the sense that for all their quirkiness, Lynch’s protagonists offer all the long-term satisfaction of fast food, their appeal lying in their instantly gratifying strangeness but lacking any sustaining emotional depth. Thus, Albert Rosenfield’s (Miguel Ferrer) damning critique of the “slipshod, backwater burg” that is Twin Peaks, replete with “the usual bumper crop of simple-minded, rural no-nothings, and drunken fly fishermen,” all “morons and halfwits, dolts, dunces, dullards and dumbbells,” is actually Lynch’s mode of characterization writ large. What is more, Lynch’s protagonists embody a highly reactionary social vision that this overblown yet superficial characterization serves initially to hide. Thus, Shelly (Mädchen Amick) is a working-class victim of her predictably villainous husband Leo (Eric DaRe), and Mrs. Hayward (Mary Jo Deschanel) is nothing more than “the doctor’s wife”—a woman in possession of a wheelchair but lacking both a credible backstory and, beyond the credits, a given name. Native American police officer Hawk (Michael Horse) is a quietly wise Injun while Josie Packard (Joan Chen) is a cunning Asian with ideas above her station, “humorously” forced to become first a maid and then an item of furniture. Learning-disabled Johnny Horne (Robert Bauer) is a dribbling, head-banging fool. Ronette Pulaski (Phoebe Augustine), “that girl that crawled down the railroad tracks off the mountain,” is both a plot function and startling image of sexual degradation but lacks any other dimension. The doubling of characters also marks their interchangeability: Leland (Ray Wise)

is paired with his dark nemesis BOB (Frank Silva) and Laura (Sheryl Lee) with her sunny cousin Maddy (Sheryl Lee). There is no integrity to the self here. Plots are repeated across characters: incest being a key feature in the relationships of both Leland and Laura Palmer *and* Ben and Audrey Horne. Both Laura and Donna (Lara Flynn Boyle) have relationships with James (as do Nadine [Wendy Robie] and Norma [Peggy Lipton] with Ed [Everett McGill]) and Lucy is both unsure as to whether Dick (Ian Buchanan) or Andy (Harry Goaz) is the father of her unborn child and remarkably unconcerned about it. Further examples abound and all echo the ways in which postmodern discourse sought, in this period, to call into question humanist versions of the self by decentering the idea of the individual as the subject of modernity. The result is a pantomime where melodramatic histrionics substitute for emotional depth and, in Jameson's words, "there is no longer a self [that is] present to do the feeling" (200).

This is best encapsulated in the figure of Laura Palmer, who begins the narrative as a predictably blonde Homecoming Queen working part time at the local department store, volunteering for meals on wheels and dating the star quarterback. But things are not, of course, what they seem. Laura is revealed first as a sexually voracious cocaine-taking part-time prostitute and then as a demonically possessed creature inhabiting an afterlife between good and evil. Far from individuating Laura or indeed situating her within a well-realized social world, Lynch's depiction reveals her as little more than a disparate collection of parts, a code that needs to be broken, or a repository of the secrets of others. In this, Laura becomes the putative subject of postmodernity, because "postmodernism is not a culture that creates a political individual characterized by critical distance, alienation, and reflexive rationality. Rather, the individual subject is decentered, diffused and fragmented" (Wexler 169). In making Laura an assemblage of parts complicit with her own destruction, Lynch is not only revisiting his earlier lurid treatment of the sexual masochist Dorothy Valens (Isabella Rossellini) of *Blue Velvet*, but espousing postmodernism's culturally grounded moral relativism, described by Zygmunt Bauman as a "rejection of...the philosophical search for absolutes, universals and foundations in theory" (3-4). Such a philosophy rejects all norms as oppressive and positions the individual as sole arbiter of ethical judgment. In this, postmodern ethics provides justification both for the peddling of raped and murdered women as a prime-time entertainment and for the adoption of economic policies that benefit only a tiny minority. At the hands of such policies,

“particular individuals and groups” are also “considered simply redundant, disposable—nothing more than human waste left to stew in their own misfortune” (Giroux 2). The lack of an ethical center so skillfully evoked here has some nasty implications in the world.

The ethically decentered emotional and corporeal fragmentation of human beings apparent in Lynch’s world is quintessentially neoliberal, this being a discourse that subsumes all other markers of identity (such as class and gender) to a willingness to refashion oneself both as worker and as the consumer of goods and services. Under neoliberalism, “the individual is forced permanently to choose, to take initiatives, to inform himself, to test himself, to stay young, to deliberate over the simplest acts: what car to buy, what film to see, what book to read, what regime, what therapy to follow” (Callinicos 153). This pattern of self-transformation is echoed across the series—particularly in its women: Nadine Hurley being only the most striking example. But such transformations, I would argue, are less an affirmation of individuality than an internalization of an objectified status. What is more, this transformative imperative echoes the privileging of the surface image that *Twin Peaks* does so well: witness the woodsy décor of the Great Northern Hotel. This is a culture of “flat, surface, ahistorical, eclectic textualism” (Wexler 169) in which, as we have seen, the characters’ superficiality echoes contemporary formulations of society as a random assemblage of surfaces. It is a paradigm echoed in the self-reflexive pastiche of televisual forms that gave *Twin Peaks* its signature style.

One of the most compelling aspects of *Twin Peaks*, on first viewing, was its willful generic hybridity, the series being an indeterminate mélange of detective story, serial melodrama, and horror-gothic thriller. Certainly, the program was loosely structured around the idiosyncratic FBI man Cooper’s putatively positivistic investigation into Laura Palmer’s rape and murder. And yet, this was not a police procedural as we had come to think of it. In 1990, the cop-show was the kind of TV our fathers watched. Its action unfolded in a predictably linear fashion until the crisis engendered by the crime proceeded to the successful apprehension of the criminal and the restoration of order at the end. In televisual terms, this was the pattern adopted by programs such as *Kojak* (Universal, 1973–78), *Columbo* (NBC, 1968–2003), and even *Hill Street Blues* (MTM/NBC, 1981–87), which, for all its inventive camerawork, decentering of the individual detective, and long-form narrative, continued to subscribe to the rationalist methodology of social realism. *Twin Peaks* offered no such

generic reassurances. Its subplots—of forbidden love, family dysfunction, contested paternity, and identical cousins—are all very “soapy,” while the string-heavy score and emotionally overdetermined acting style had all the latent hysteria of programs such as *Days of our Lives* (NBC, 1965–present)—if the writers of *Days of our Lives* were on acid and its actors possessed by demonic forces, for even the most “soapy” elements of *Twin Peaks* are pervaded by a gothic supernaturalism. Thus, the drape-obsessed one-eyed Nadine Hurley stands between her husband Ed and his high school sweetheart Norma until a botched suicide attempt leaves her first in a coma and then with both amnesia and superhuman strength, at which point she returns to high school and takes a place on the wrestling team and a lover from among her teammates. As we have seen, Lucy Moran is unable to tell whether her unborn child was fathered by the overemotional and none-too-intelligent weeping police officer Andy Brennan or the homosexually encoded gentlemen’s outfitter and soap-style hero Dick Tremayne. Teen temptress Audrey Horne falls for the dashing FBI agent Cooper who nobly resists her advances, but her attempts to help him investigate the death of her friend see her badly in need of rescue as, trapped in a brothel, she narrowly escapes having sex with her own father—and fetishistic sex at that. When Cooper awakes at the start of season two (episode 8), moreover, Lucy’s plot-recap leaves little doubt which genre is being evoked: “Leo Johnson was shot, Jacques Renault was strangled, the mill burned, Shelly and Pete got smoke inhalation, Catherine and Josie are missing, Nadine is in a coma from taking sleeping pills.”

In that it challenged those systems of knowledge that demanded that a text be a soap opera or a detective story (but never both), *Twin Peaks* could be said to echo formally the conceptual de-doxification of universally accepted truths that Foucault saw as a cornerstone of the postmodern project. In bringing together two genres that have traditionally been associated with distinctive male and female audiences, moreover, Lynch could even be said to create a new kind of hybrid text that deconstructs gender-based programming in its very form—though one may be more convinced by such an argument were Lynch’s representations of women not so decidedly problematic and his deployment of the soap opera’s generic markers not so screamingly camp. Again, I think what we end up with here is a pastiche that plays some exceptionally entertaining games but leaves us feeling decidedly ambiguous about the meaning of it all. Such games have the effect of replacing emotional engagement with ironic detachment in the face of

performances that veer from Rosenfield's sneering disengagement to Mrs. Palmer's hysterical and voyeuristically depicted grief.

In 1990, this mixture of irony, pastiche, intertextuality, and ambiguity was new to television, a populist medium to which a cinematic auteur had brought a high-cultural style that drew on some of the more experimental features of modernism. Even at the time, this seemed paradoxical. On the one hand, Lynch's hybrid style appeared to undercut the certitude of genre. On the other, that style was sufficiently distinctive to position Lynch as *the* auteur of pastiche. But whereas Lynch's generic hybridity is both inventive and entertaining, the postmodernization of economic theory during these years was considerably less innocuous. For neoliberalism too is a generically hybrid project. On the one hand, it disavows the state's responsibility for the provision of welfare, education, employment, and economic infrastructure. On the other, even in an allegedly free market, it engages in "actively managing monetary policy and interest rates in order to condition exchange-rate fluctuations and short-term capital flows" (Gordon 64). On the one hand, neoliberalism promotes a culture of individual entrepreneurialism and self-refashioning that serves the free market's will to constant growth. On the other, as Chair of the US Federal Reserve Board Alan Greenspan affirmed in 1987 as financial markets plummeted, it gladly draws on public money to "serve as a source of liquidity to support the economic and financial system." This gives rise to the paradox of a state that repeatedly disavows its role in the market and yet pumps billions of dollars of taxpayers' money into the financial system to keep the economy afloat. This it did in 1987 and again in 2008—the latter bailout, as Moira Herbst illustrates, costing US taxpayers some 700 billion dollars. Like the postmodern text, there is a hybridization of economic narratives here—neoliberalism simultaneously affirming the market's freedom from state interference (and indeed responsibility) and concertedly drawing on state funds when things go wrong (while continuing to argue against the state in terms of social provision). This is compounded, moreover, by neoliberalism's simultaneous celebration of the entrepreneurial individual of the Protestant tradition and its disavowal of that tradition's condemnation of greed, personal satisfaction, and indifference to the plight of others—these being the cardinal virtues of neoliberal enterprise. The logical inconsistencies generated by such hybridity are not, however, a problem for postmodernism because there is no such thing as reality any more—merely competing representations of it in variously hybridized forms.

And it is this epistemological uncertainty that is *the* defining features of *Twin Peaks*.

For all its self-consciously “soapy” campiness, there is an all-pervading darkness to *Twin Peaks* the town. Strange people inhabit its everyday spaces, normality itself becoming skewed by their eccentricity. This imparts from the outset a sense that things are not what they seem. Iconographic of such a state of affairs is the Log Lady (Catherine E. Coulson). Living in the forest, having been widowed on her wedding night, she carries with her a piece of wood with which she claims to have a telepathic connection. Her log, she insists, “saw something” on the night of Laura’s murder, its insights being filtered through the Log Lady herself in all her portentous irrationality. And just as we are never sure whether the Log Lady is delusional or whether she is indeed a conduit for the knowledge of the log, we are never really sure whether Leland raped and murdered his daughter because he wanted to or because he was under the demonic influence of BOB—a figure whose existence is never actually proven but who unequivocally absolves Leland of blame. So, while logical and supernatural explanations of events compete with each other, the lovingly evoked world of woods and river, hotel and police station, school, diner, and family homes becomes a self-conscious construct in which characters act out an eminently contingent drama. If no truth is definitive, nothing is definitively real.

It has become a critical commonplace to claim that *Twin Peaks* changed television forever. Certainly, the program brought to the medium a Baudrillardian erasure of the real that evoked the dreadful uncertainty of the American gothic tradition in a manner that made dark programming *de rigueur* across the 1990s and beyond. Without *Twin Peaks*, it is difficult to conceive of the success of subsequent programs like the hybrid detective horror of *The X-Files* (C20 Fox, 1993–2002) or the slew of gothic offerings from *Carnivàle* (HBO, 2003–05) to *True Blood* (HBO, 2008–2014) that have followed in its wake. The sense of horrible unknowing so consistently evoked by *Twin Peaks* had nonetheless characterized the American gothic tradition since Poe and, as in the work of Poe, it is here realized in a wildly overdetermined aesthetic. Here the surface is celebrated, the constructed nature of the artifact foregrounded, and the truth-value of all representation insistently questioned in a manner that has significant ideological implications, as in the work of Poe. But whereas Poe had foregrounded unknowing as a means of grasping at truth, *Twin Peaks* makes us doubt in truth itself.

Dale Cooper may come to town to assist the local sheriff apprehend Laura Palmer's killer and, over the course of his investigations, may enlist the help of various Bureau experts, not least the arch-positivist Albert Rosenfield. But we are never entirely sure who is responsible for the crime and, as such, whether the program subscribes to a rationalist explanation or irrationalist evocation of events. So, if *Twin Peaks* repudiated historical actuality and generic fixity for simulacral refraction, it could also be seen to place *all* forms of knowing under a cynical scrutiny, thus foregrounding a sense that there are always other ways of looking, other kinds of truths. Undoubtedly, *Twin Peaks* engages in a Lyotardian act of questioning the foundational metanarratives of Western culture by venturing, on a regular basis, into lengthy philosophical explanations as to the nature of evil, arcane mythologies, and alternative modes of knowing: through dreams, visions, and other nonrational means. All are highly gothic devices, and though they had a substantial critical lineage (both in female detective fiction and in figures such as Poe's Dupin), for a generation used to the rational certitude of a Columbo or a Kojak, this seemed to challenge dominant economies of knowledge in quite a radical way. Accordingly, we rejoiced in Agent Cooper's investigative method—narrowing his range of suspects by throwing rocks and quoting *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* and setting great store by the authenticity of revelation. There was no "knowing" in *Twin Peaks*, merely positing, conjecturing, theorizing, or affirming. One truth was as good as any other and, of course, there was no ethical center, with even Agent Cooper becoming (or revealing himself to be) something rather different at the end. If end it was, narrative closure having been effectively repudiated.

This epistemological uncertainly found its apotheosis, of course, in Cooper's adventures in the Red Room—this being a waiting room for both the White Lodge and the Black Lodge. These are the series' two extra-dimensional spaces and repositories of good and evil, categories that are depicted with such willful confusion as to make it very difficult for us to distinguish between the two. In the Red Room, all pretensions to rationality are abandoned as meaning takes on a decidedly slippery quality. The dead speak, the innocent become demonic, time runs backward, evil and good are conflated. All depth is lost to the overwhelming power of the surface. Certainly, at the time of first broadcast, the superficial potency of the Red Room sequences overpowered popular culture. They were quoted, debated, and satirized. Years later, they were cropping up in programming for children; both

The Simpsons (Fox, 1989–present) and *Scooby Doo* (Hanna Barbera Productions, 1969–72) incorporated ironic Red Room sequences into their narratives (see Lorna Jowett’s essay in this volume). At the time of first release, nobody knew what it meant, if indeed it meant anything at all. We were overwhelmed—but by what we did not know. Lacking both a traceable origin and a referent, Red Room and dream sequences became superlative exemplifications of Baudrillardian simulation, imploding the distinction between image and reality in a strobe-lit carnival of non-sense. Even the owls were not what they seemed.

All of this begs the question as to what function the supernatural dimension of *Twin Peaks* serves—whether the darkness that flows behind the façades of town is symptomatic of a gothic will to discover the otherwise unspoken truths of our culture or whether the gothic too has become subject to the kind of postmodern emptying of meaning that has led Jameson to refer to it as “the hysterical sublime” (214), a kind of gothic rapture where we are overcome by the otherness of the other that goes beyond communication. In flattening history through the incorporation of a range of temporal signifiers drawn from the 1950s onward and in joyously affirming a range of realities, some darker and some more hyper-real than others, in adopting an ethical relativism as well as attributing the first season’s atrocity not to Leland Palmer but to the unspeakably abject BOB, Lynch does seem to participate in this hysterical turn. And this, for me, further signals postmodernism’s participation in the ideological interpellations of neoliberalism, couched in the representational novelty of postmodern forms.

Looking at *Twin Peaks* 25 years on, in other words, I am less excited by its postmodern innovations than troubled by them. Standing in the ruins of the British Welfare State and surveying a culture in which the weakest are persecuted for the demands they place on the public purse while the furtherance of corporate interests appears to have become the primary role of government, I cannot help but think that my generation was seduced by the way postmodern representation subsumed the social to the cultural through the replacement of truths with images. Distracted by its cleverness we came to believe that a rejection of Enlightenment rationality promised a liberation of the self. Reconstituted as consumer-subjects unable to position ourselves within social history we came to accept the inevitability of the free market and the total global dominance of a neoliberal world-view. In the years since *Twin Peaks*’s initial broadcast, neoliberalism has

created a world in which, OXFAM argues, “dynamic and mutually reinforcing cycles of advantage that are transmitted across generations” have become the norm. Neoliberalism’s legacy of pain and suffering, proffered in the cupped hands of postmodern discourse, has become the garmonbozia of the world.

Note

1. Founded by the conservative social activist Mary Whitehouse in 1965, the NVALA was a pressure group that sought to challenge the spread of “the permissive society” by campaigning against media representations of sex (particularly homosexuality), violence, profanity, and blasphemy. Their campaign against the noncertification of films released on VCR (for which they coined the term “video nasties”) led to the passing of the Video Recordings Act of 1984, ensuring that all future video releases had to be passed by the British board of Film Censors.

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