

IN FOCUS: Returning to the Red Room—*Twin Peaks* at Twenty-Five

Foreword

by DAVID LAVERY

For *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990–1991), 2015 was a damn fine year. The last annum has seen the completion of a new collection of critical essays (Jeffrey Weinstock and Catherine Spooner’s *Return to “Twin Peaks”*: *New Approaches to Theory & Genre in Television*), an international conference in the United Kingdom (“‘I’ll See You Again in 25 Years’: The Return of *Twin Peaks* and Generations of Cult TV” at the University of Salford), and the current In Focus.¹ Not coincidentally, this has transpired alongside the commissioning of the return of the series on the American premium cable channel Showtime for a 2017 debut. Long before this *Twin Peaks* renaissance, the place of David Lynch and Mark Frost’s “quirky quality” series in TV history was, however, already secure.² As the creator of the iconic series *Mad Men*, Matthew Weiner, now fifty years old, put it definitively: “I was already out of college when *Twin Peaks* came on, and that was where I became aware of what was possible on television.”³

Twin Peaks has played a central role as well in our understanding of what is possible in television studies. As I have written and spoken about elsewhere, the collection *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to “Twin*

1 See Jeffrey Weinstock and Catherine Spooner, eds., *Return to “Twin Peaks”*: *New Approaches to Materiality, Theory, and Genre on Television* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). For a review of the conference, see Ross Garner, “Conference Review: ‘I’ll See You Again in 25 Years’: The Return of *Twin Peaks* and Generations of Cult TV”: University of Salford, 21–22 May 2015,” *Critical Studies in Television Online*, June 5, 2015, <http://cstonline.tv/twin-peaks>.

2 Robert J. Thompson, *Television’s Second Golden Age: From “Hill Street Blues” to “ER”* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 150.

3 Michael O’Connell, “Showrunners 2012: ‘Mad Men’s’ Matthew Weiner,” *Hollywood Reporter*, October 3, 2012, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/showrunners-2012-mad-men-matthew-weiner-376006>.

Peaks” was not only my own first foray into serious television criticism but also a seminal early book in the systematic investigation of important series.⁴ My involvement in each of this year’s three new exercises in *Peaks* scholarship has been that of an elder statesman; I am old enough (and quite proud) to be the father of many of the brilliant contributors to *Twin Peaks: The Next Generation*. Think of me as the world’s oldest bellhop of *Twin Peaks* criticism.

When I was assembling *Full of Secrets* even before the end of the show’s original run, it was one of my goals to make the book an exercise in critical pluralism—to offer a multifaceted take on the show. So I am pleased to see the present In Focus still essentially faithful to that goal. “The past,” Joost Merloo once observed, “is as open to development as the future.”⁵ He was thinking, of course, of history, but the observation is true as well for television’s past. The essays in this collection bring us a new, reconsidered *Twin Peaks*, essential preliminary reading before the series itself is reborn or reimagined for the twenty-first century next year. *

4 David Lavery, ed., *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to “Twin Peaks”* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995).

5 See Loren C. Easley, *All the Strange Hours: The Excavation of Life* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 96.

Editors’ Introduction

by ROSS P. GARNER and KARRA SHIMABUKURO

Twin Peaks (1990–1991) debuted on the ABC network on April 8, 1990. The pilot episode, which was directed by David Lynch and cowritten by Lynch and Mark Frost, garnered the highest viewing figures for a TV movie for the 1989–1990 season, and the series quickly became a cultural phenomenon of the early 1990s. The show was infamously received by critics as “the series that will change TV” and actively promoted under similar terms by ABC, while also sparking a national demand for cherry pie and coffee and raising many of its offbeat characters (such as the Log Lady, played by Catherine E. Coulson), and the stars who played them, to widespread recognition.¹ Outside of the United States, *Twin Peaks* also attracted a small but dedicated following in many of the countries where it became distributed, including the United Kingdom, Denmark, Finland,

1 Warren Rodman, “The Series That Will Change TV,” *Connoisseur*, September 1989, 139–144. For an example of how *Twin Peaks* was reported as a national phenomenon during its period of initial broadcast, see Susan Wloszczyna, “Throw a Killer ‘Peaks’ Party,” *USA Today*, May 22, 1990, 4.

and Australia.² Yet *Twin Peaks* ultimately ran for just thirty episodes, succumbing to cancelation in June 1991 as a result of poor domestic ratings. This was despite seemingly having set itself up for a third series when it ended on an unresolved (and heart-breaking) cliff-hanger in which lead character, and continual beacon of purity, Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) had become possessed by the murderous evil spirit BOB (Frank Silva) as a result of his journey into the otherworldly Black Lodge.³ In 1992, a prequel movie, *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* (David Lynch), was released to negativity (unfair, in the view of these editors) and seemed to signal the end. Lynch carried on directing unnerving cinematic masterpieces, Frost continued to work as a screenwriter for both film and television, and members of the cast had varying degrees of visibility and success in the screen industries.⁴

Then, unexpectedly, October 6, 2014, brought the announcement that *Twin Peaks* would return as a limited episode series for the premium-rate subscription cable network Showtime. Although the show has gone through a tumultuous preproduction phase during which Lynch departed from, and then returned to, the revival, this period has demonstrated two noteworthy points. First, the nostalgia for the show was signified by the cast-produced video “*Twin Peaks* without David Lynch is like . . .,” which generated many shares and reactions from fans across different digital platforms (a point Dana Och also alludes to at the start of her essay). Second, elements such as the additional “No Lynch, No Peaks” campaign and the Official *Twin Peaks* cast-run site on Facebook indicate the continued centrality of Lynch-as-auteur to the show in both production and fan interpretive communities. However, with these behind-the-scenes issues resolved, it seems certain that audiences will soon be revisiting the *Twin Peaks* inhabitants among the branches that blow in the breeze.

The years between the cancelation of *Twin Peaks* and its revival have seen it build and maintain a dedicated fan community through a variety of practices.⁵ These have included early fanzines (*Wrapped in Plastic*), long-running conventions on both sides of the Atlantic (e.g., Twin Peaks Festival and the Twin Peaks UK Festival), and, as Rebecca Williams discusses here, social media forms.⁶ *Twin Peaks* has also remained a highly visible program within the academic study of television. Although this has partly occurred because of an ongoing interest in Lynch’s oeuvre and perspectives indebted to differing inflections of auteur criticism within film studies, the show has also accrued a pivotal position in TV studies debates.⁷ Although postmodernist readings of the series have waned, the program’s status as a point of reference in analyses

2 “*Twin Peaks* (TV Series 1990–1991)—Company Credits,” IMDb, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0098936/companycredits?ref_=tt_dt_co.

3 See also Andy Burns, “*Wrapped in Plastic*”: “*Twin Peaks*” (Toronto: ECW Press, 2015), 1–6.

4 Relevant examples of Lynch’s films are *Lost Highway* (1997), *Mulholland Drive* (2001), and *Inland Empire* (2007).

5 Marisa C. Hayes and Franck Boullégué, eds., *Fan Phenomena: “Twin Peaks”* (Chicago: Intellect, 2013).

6 *Wrapped in Plastic* was a fan-oriented magazine published by Win-Mill Productions between 1992 and 2005. An archive of the magazine can be found at “*Wrapped in Plastic*,” Win-Mill Productions, <http://wrappedinplasticmag.com/collections/wrapped-in-plastic>.

7 See, for example, Todd McGowan, *The Impossible David Lynch* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 129–153; and Martha P. Nochimson, *David Lynch Swerves* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013).

of both quality and cult forms continues, and its reputation has been enshrined among television scholars and beyond.⁸

Recognizing these trajectories, this In Focus section uses *Twin Peaks* to examine wider issues regarding how the legacy of an iconic TV program becomes constructed. In considering this, two areas of focus arise. First, an ongoing interest in the text of *Twin Peaks* is demonstrated as scholars return to the series from emergent or hitherto-overlooked perspectives to provide new insights. Karra Shimabukuro begins this collection by using ideas of the folkloric to analyze the series's narrative and aesthetic representation of its trees and forest, arguing that the construction of these locations provides thematic continuity across the show's two televised series. Then, Stephen Lacey examines *Twin Peaks* from the neglected perspective of television performance by focusing on how the show combines and cuts between the requirements of melodramatic and comedic modes, which assists in creating its offbeat tone. Second, in addition to textual rereadings, the essays demonstrate that understanding the legacy of *Twin Peaks* also requires examining the discursive and material practices that adapt and rework the series's meanings across shifting industrial, technological, and reception contexts. For example, Dana Och adopts a feminist perspective toward the critical reception of *The Killing* (AMC, 2011–2014) and *Pretty Little Liars* (ABC Family, 2010)—both of which explicitly cite *Twin Peaks* in terms of their content—and argues that *Twin Peaks* and Lynch's authorial name work as gendered signifiers of “quality” that are avoided in popular reception of both series, and this contributes to their low cultural status. Using a similar discursive lens, Ross Garner reflects upon *Twin Peaks*' positioning as “classic” television and, using Bourdieuan field theory, argues that the show's classification as such arises from its ongoing reappropriation within culturally valued discourses that build its temporal capital.⁹ Finally, Rebecca Williams draws on Anthony Giddens's concept of ontological security to consider how *Twin Peaks*' transition to social media forms has provided the program's fans with a sense of stability and continuity in recent years.¹⁰ Cumulatively, the essays contribute to expanding emerging scholarly discourses on televisual remembrance, as well as paratextuality and fandom, by arguing that *Twin Peaks* has endured as an object of interest to both fans and academics not through any objectively verifiable features of “the text itself” but by its continuing reappropriation and adaptation to ever-changing discursive formations and cultural sites. *

8 For postmodernist readings of *Twin Peaks*, see Jim Collins, “Postmodernism and Television,” in *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled: Television and Contemporary Criticism*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert C. Allen (London: Routledge, 1992), 341–349; and Jimmie L. Reeves, Elizabeth Brent, Richard Campbell, Herb Eagle, Jennifer Jenkins, Marc C. Rogers, Lisa Saaf, and Nabeel Zuberi, “Postmodernism and Television: Speaking of *Twin Peaks*,” in *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to “Twin Peaks”*, ed. David Lavery (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 173–195. For discussions of quality television, see Glen Creeber, *Serial Television: Big Drama on the Small Screen* (London: BFI, 2004); and Linda Ruth Williams, “*Twin Peaks*: David Lynch and the Serial-Thriller Soap,” in *The Contemporary Television Series*, ed. Michael Hammond and Lucy Mazdon (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 37–56. For cult TV debates, see Stacey Abbott, ed., *The Cult TV Book* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010).

9 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1993).

10 Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991).

The Mystery of the Woods: *Twin Peaks* and the Folkloric Forest

by KARRA SHIMABUKURO

When we first meet Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) in the pilot episode of *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990–1991), he is obsessed with the trees he sees. One of his first questions to Sheriff Truman (Michael Ontkean) upon meeting him is “Sheriff, what kind of fantastic trees have you got growing around here? Big, majestic.”¹ When Truman answers “Douglas firs,” Cooper marvels: “Douglas firs . . .”² Harold Neemann has noted that “the marvellous becomes commonplace” within fairy tales, and it is the “marveling” attitude that Cooper (and others) demonstrate toward the forest in *Twin Peaks* that provides the starting point for this essay.³ In myriad fairy tales and folkloric narratives from different historical eras, ranging from Shakespeare’s plays such as *Macbeth* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* through the work of the Brothers Grimm and more modern incarnations, the forest is often dark, the source of evil and sometimes knowledge. This representation generates specific narrative forms as the forest becomes the obstacle the hero must overcome and traverse in order to accomplish a mission. In addition, while knowledge can be gained, it often comes at a price. I argue that the sense of marvel that is continually associated with the forest gestures to its intersection with folkloric discourses. However, rather than working as an example of what Mikel J. Koven terms “motif-spotting,” whereby scholars simply identify the presence of folkloric tropes in popular culture artifacts, I argue that *Twin Peaks*’ representation of the forest provides a through-line, both narratively and aesthetically, that brings thematic coherence to the two series.⁴ Previous narrative analyses of *Twin Peaks* have frequently read the series through the generic conventions of both crime drama and the soap opera, indicating how these generic combinations

1 David Lynch and Mark Frost, “Pilot,” *Twin Peaks*, season 1, episode 1, directed by David Lynch, aired April 8, 1990 (Studio City, CA: CBS, 2010), DVD.

2 Ibid.

3 Harold Neemann, “Fairy Tale,” in *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (London: Routledge, 2005), 157.

4 Mikel J. Koven, “Folklore and Popular Film and Television: A Necessary Critical Survey,” *Journal of American Folklore* 116, no. 460 (2003): 181.

produce a “ricketiness” in the program.⁵ In contrast, I argue that examining how folkloric elements are identifiable in *Twin Peaks* allows us to reconsider these positions, as it becomes arguable that the show’s ultimate narrative enigma concerns the mystery of the woods, and not the initial murder mystery established in the pilot.⁶

In *Twin Peaks* the action of the narrative is inseparable from the setting. Establishing shots tie the scene’s action to a particular diegetic location, which, in turn, constructs key binary oppositions for the series’ multiple narrative strands. Central to this is how the forest is represented, as it features recurrently in establishing shots and is continually visible in the background of many scenes. Establishing shots of the sheriff’s office show it dwarfed by the trees and forest that frame the building, and the Great Northern Hotel is similarly shown as an island of civilization, an oasis among the trees. Elsewhere, the Double R Diner appears in contrast to the darkness of the mountains and the forest in the background, as does Big Ed’s Gas Farm, where automobiles are juxtaposed against the forested mountains as backdrop. Similarly, reflecting what Fran Pheasant-Kelly has identified as the way “spatial conventions are inverted” in *Twin Peaks* by having external elements intrude into internal domestic spaces, Leo and Shelly’s incomplete house is both isolated in the forest and appears to emerge from it.⁷ Two points of significance emerge. First, the ubiquity of the forest to *Twin Peaks*’ mise-en-scène connects with discourses of folklore, as a phenomenon that surrounds and unites the different cultures and socioeconomic classes of the program’s represented “folk” (i.e., the characters within the diegesis).⁸ Second, if read from a structuralist position, *Twin Peaks*’ visualization of its diegesis connotes that a central conflict to the series is civilization versus the natural world.⁹

This tension between nature and culture, the town and its surrounding forest, then maps onto other oppositions structuring *Twin Peaks*’ narrative, such as the frequently noted dichotomy between the veneer the town presents and the wildness and danger “that underlie everyday existence,” as represented by what lies among the Douglas firs.¹⁰ This can be seen from the opening credits, where the natural—such as the robin on a branch, the waterfalls by the Great Northern, the river and the town sign—is juxtaposed to images of industry in the form of exterior and interior shots of the Packard Lumber Mill. The opening credits reinforce *Twin Peaks*’ contrasting

5 Both Marc Dolan’s and Linda Ruth Williams’s analyses of *Twin Peaks* read the series through these generic discourses. See Marc Dolan, “The Peaks and Valleys of Serial Creativity: What Happened to/on *Twin Peaks*,” in *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to “Twin Peaks”*, ed. David Lavery (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), 30–50; and Linda Ruth Williams, “*Twin Peaks*: David Lynch and the Serial-Thriller Soap,” in *The Contemporary Television Series*, ed. Michael Hammond and Lucy Mazdon (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 37–56.

6 For more about *Twin Peaks*’ noir nature, see David Bushman, “Bond on Bond: Laura Palmer and Agent Cooper in *Twin Peaks*,” in *Fan Phenomena: “Twin Peaks”*, ed. Marisa C. Hayes and Franck Boulègue (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2013), 84–93.

7 Fran Pheasant-Kelly, “Strange Spaces: Cult Topographies in *Twin Peaks*,” in *Fan Phenomena: “Twin Peaks”*, ed. Marisa C. Hayes and Franck Boulègue (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2013), 96.

8 See Aaron Tate, “Folklore,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (London: Routledge, 2005), 177.

9 Robert A. Segal, “Myth: Theoretical Approaches,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (London: Routledge, 2005), 332.

10 Pheasant-Kelly, “Strange Spaces,” 96.

of civilized-internal and unruly-external spaces by conveying that the town and its boundaries provide an appearance of civilization, whereas the forest, lying beyond this boundary, represents possible danger and the unknown. These meanings are then regularly restated: One-Eyed Jack's is situated in the middle of the woods on the Canadian-US border, as is the train car that represents violence and darkness for Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) and Ronette Pulaski (Phoebe Augustine).

The series's structural oppositions then become thematized and complicated as its serialized narratives unfold. In the first season, as the secret life of Laura Palmer is gradually revealed, her position as a prostitute at One-Eyed Jack's and the parties she attends that involve drugs and sex are placed in the woods, which results in each dark detail being associated with this location. Then, in the second season, the tension between the civilized and the savage becomes more unevenly executed. While the Black and White Lodges in the forest are key to Cooper's heroic journey, good does not necessarily equal civilization, and savage does not equal evil. The situation of both lodges in the woods, established narratively as a source of danger, knowledge, and possible evil, indicates that even the White Lodge is not civilized—a reading that Angela Hague's analysis of the series supports when she comments that Cooper "does not recognize that the Black Lodge is also the White Lodge" and that previously distinguished categories have become muddled.¹¹ What occurs in the second season is an escalation of the core tensions established in the first. Where the first eight episodes concern finding Laura's killer and identifying which side characters are on, the second season expands that tension, framing it as a battle between good and evil, which is represented by Windom Earle (Kenneth Welsh), BOB (Frank Silva), and the spaces in the forest that these characters inhabit. Narratively speaking, the woods are the key meaning-making device in the series, as they signal the underlying and ever-present evil that overshadows and threatens Twin Peaks and its inhabitants.¹²

The qualities attributed to Twin Peaks' woodland areas, as threatening and harboring unknown forces that are gradually revealed, make the setting readable as a character, thus supporting the narrative by using the visual shorthand of the folkloric forest as a constant reminder of the greater and lesser evils that haunt the diegesis.¹³ However, alongside representing folkloric tropes of evil and darkness, *Twin Peaks'* forest setting(s) connect with additional generic discourses regarding crime drama.¹⁴ Crime narratives revolve around "rational thought . . . intently focused on physical phenomena that will eventually unveil all their secrets," and this narrative progression from the unknown

11 Angela Hague, "Infinite Games: The Derationalization of Detection in *Twin Peaks*," in *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to "Twin Peaks"*, ed. David Lavery (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), 141.

12 The idea of setting and physical space as connecting elements within the narrative is not new. Marsha Lederman implied this when discussing moving shooting of *The X-Files* (Fox, 1993–2002) from Vancouver to Los Angeles for the sixth season. See Marsha Lederman, "X-Files and Vancouver Kiss and Make Up," *Globe and Mail*, March 13, 2008, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/x-files-and-vancouver-kiss-and-make-up/article1351588/>.

13 Uri Margolin, "Character," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (London: Routledge, 2005), 52–56.

14 Lindsay Steenberg, "The Haunted Pacific: Vancouver on Crime Television," in *World Film Locations: Vancouver*, ed. Rachel Walls (Chicago: Intellect, 2013).

to the known corresponds with the crime narrative's spatial representations.¹⁵ As Stijn Reijnders observes, in crime fiction "the detectives are also constantly on the go, moving from police station to pub to the next suspect."¹⁶ The continual revealing and understanding of diegetic spaces becomes a recurrent generic trope, as uncovering, moving between, and eventually comprehending the significance of diegetic locations is an essential part of how the investigating characters resolve enigmas. This is also the case with *Twin Peaks*; over the course of its two seasons, the forest setting is continually linked to the generation, presentation, and revealing of enigmas. In the first season a central enigma concerns Laura's secret life and the repercussions of these disclosures. The second season ultimately comes to revolve around who Windom Earle is and his desire to locate and control the Black Lodge, his presence hovering over the narrative from the season's beginning even though that he is not fully seen until episode 14, "Double Play."¹⁷ Yet throughout *Twin Peaks*, the folkloric forest operates as a character by inviting viewers to read past these surface mysteries and instead consider the series's wider themes. This idea is even suggested in the opening scenes of the pilot episode. When Laura's body is first discovered, it is shown washed up on the beach, with the mountains and forest looming above the scene framing the shot and the corpse. This framing points to the surface mystery while providing clues to the larger themes. This trope is then repeated when Ronette Pulaski is first shown alive. Having survived the events that killed Laura, the character is seen walking along railroad tracks, the literal road to civilization, and then ultimately emerging from the forest. The final showdown at the finale of the second season, "Beyond Life and Death," then repeats these ideas, as Cooper must enter the Black Lodge to save Annie Blackburn (Heather Graham) by crossing thresholds hidden in the forest.¹⁸ Entering and surviving the journey through the forest provides an intertextual point of reference to audiences, which gestures to what the true focus and mystery of *Twin Peaks* is and will be.

Twin Peaks' characterization of the woods as evil, uncivilized, and enigmatic is not, however, the only way these areas are infused with narrative meaning and intersect with concepts of the folkloric. Alongside framing the action, the woods are also presented as a source of knowledge throughout the show, with the series finale completely dependent on the information provided by the forest. However, within the show this knowledge comes at a price. The Log Lady's log tells her things, but it is implied that she lost her husband as a result of gaining its knowledge. Major Briggs's (Don S. Davis) knowledge of the lodges also comes at personal cost. While the major in many ways is a bridge character—between the military and civilians, the town and the woods, science and magic—his ability to traverse these worlds and carry knowledge from one to the other means that he must sacrifice time to do so. Major Briggs is shown disappearing, missing, losing time from his job and his family.

15 Hague, "Infinite Games," 131.

16 Stijn Reijnders, "Places of the Imagination: An Ethnography of the TV Detective Tour," *Cultural Geographies* 17, no. 1 (2010): 44.

17 David Lynch and Mark Frost, "Double Play," *Twin Peaks*, season 2, episode 14, directed by Uli Edel, aired February 2, 1991 (Studio City, CA: CBS, 2010), DVD.

18 David Lynch and Mark Frost, "Beyond Life and Death," *Twin Peaks*, season 2, episode 22, directed by David Lynch, aired June 10, 1991 (Studio City, CA: CBS, 2010), DVD.

Thus, Major Briggs is a model for Agent Cooper, as he foreshadows that it is possible to gain insight from both the lodges and the forest but that the experience of doing so has a price. Briggs represents that it is possible for Agent Cooper to enter the forest, face BOB, and survive, but that Cooper may emerge from the forest as a different person. The connotation of the folkloric forest is that it is dark and full of dangers, and while traversing it may provide knowledge, it is not without peril.¹⁹

Writing about *Twin Peaks*' narrative form, Marc Dolan has observed that at the beginning of the second season, "the murder of Laura Palmer is . . . reinvented as a spiritual crime as well as a physical one, and the viewer is essentially set up for the revelation of the Black Lodge as well as its denizen BOB as the origin-point of the previously peripheral mention of 'an evil in these woods.'"²⁰ Far from being peripheral, however, the woods in *Twin Peaks* are established from the pilot episode as a constant that runs across the series and provides an intertextual point of reference that unites both the whodunit narrative of early episodes and the transition to wider, cosmic battles in the second season. The aesthetic of the folkloric forest thus serves as a connecting thread throughout the series, aligning the narrative themes with the construction of the diegesis. In the end the central mystery is not who killed Laura Palmer, or even who within *Twin Peaks* is tainted or influenced by the evil of the woods.²¹ Rather, the mystery is whether a good man can emerge unscathed from a quest through the folkloric woods. The end of the series suggests not. However, the 2017 revival of the series would seem to suggest otherwise. Time will tell. *

19 Alexander Porteous, *The Forest in Folklore and Mythology* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002).

20 Dolan, "Peaks and Valleys of Serial Creativity," 41.

21 For more about how *Twin Peaks* conforms to the Hollywood mystery tradition, see Martha Nochimson, "Desire under the Douglas Firs: Entering the Body of Reality in *Twin Peaks*," in *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to "Twin Peaks"*, ed. David Lavery (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), 144–159.

Just Plain Odd: Some Thoughts on Performance Styles in *Twin Peaks*

by STEPHEN LACEY

The announcement that a new series of *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990–1991) is to go into production for 2017 transmission, with its original creative team of David Lynch and Mark Frost on board, has meant that the series has been rediscovered—if it had ever really been lost—as a progenitor of ambitious, cool, and contemporary television drama for journalists and critics alike. One of the latest dramas to be yoked to *Twin Peaks* is Sky Atlantic’s ambitious series set in an isolated community disrupted by a murder, *Fortitude*, which aired in the United Kingdom in early 2015.¹ *Fortitude* made consistent, knowing references to *Twin Peaks*, especially in its ensemble cast, its flirtation with the supernatural (from which it retreated), and its all-pervading darkness of tone. It did not, however, reproduce its forebear’s approach to performance—its distinctive combination of acting styles and genres—and it was not alone in this, since whatever else subsequent television drama has taken from David Lynch and Mark Frost’s groundbreaking series, it is rarely the way that it deploys actors.

Relatively little critical attention has been paid to questions concerning acting in *Twin Peaks*, although the series’s main actors became instant celebrities after the show first aired, appearing on television chat shows and magazine front covers.² This is partly, one suspects, because there is so much else about the series that commands attention. It is also because screen acting is intrinsically hard to talk about, especially when the critical task requires that the contribution of the actor is separated from other elements—script, narrative, mise-en-scène, and editing, for example. This essay’s focus concerns the distinctive, unsettling, and often surprising combination of melodramatic and comic modes of acting that sit within and across the many and varied genres that *Twin Peaks* deploys. Melodrama, understood here as a performance style that has its roots in nineteenth-century theater, is key to understanding performance in *Twin Peaks*, and—like comedy in the series—has an inexact and provocative relationship to genre.

1 See, for example, John Plunkett, “*Twin Peaks* Meets *The Killing* in Sky’s £25m Drama,” *The Guardian*, December 27, 2014, 13.

2 See the interviews with Mädchen Amick and Sheryl Lee in Charles de Lauzirika, dir., *Secrets from Another Place*, disc 10, *Twin Peaks: Definitive Gold Box Edition*, (Studio City, CA: CBS, 2010) DVD.

First, however, some contextual observations are necessary. The often labyrinthine procedures by which actors are cast are a neglected aspect in production studies. It is beyond the scope of this essay to remedy this, except to observe that Lynch and Frost cast both new and established actors, often changing and developing the script to accommodate their particular talents: Frost has said in interview that the role of Shelley, the wife of the first season's chief murder suspect, Leo Johnson (Eric Da Re), was created after auditioning Mädchen Amick, who played her, and it is part of the *Twin Peaks* mythos that the role of Laura Palmer originally consisted of little more than the corpse discovered on the shore until Lynch and Frost saw the potential of Sheryl Lee (originally given the job because she was local and inexpensive) and adapted the script to exploit it. This approach, which requires an openness to the potential of actors beyond the immediate demands of the script, is one that characterizes Lynch's work in cinema—it can be thought of as part of his distinctive signature as a director.

The casting of Kyle MacLachlan as Agent Cooper was particularly significant. MacLachlan also played Jeffrey, the central character in *Blue Velvet* (1986), Lynch's last full-length project before *Twin Peaks*. MacLachlan based his performance as Jeffrey on Lynch himself, and there is a sense in which both Jeffrey and Cooper function as the director's representative in each film. MacLachlan brings an openness to these roles, his position in both narratives and his ability to “think on screen,” enabling him to “connect different worlds,” as Lynch has said of Jeffrey.³

One notable aspect of *Twin Peaks* is its casting of established film actors from the 1950s and 1960s, such as Piper Laurie (Catherine Martell), Richard Beymer (Ben Horne), and Russ Tamblyn (Lawrence Jacoby), who played characters that went against the grain of audience expectations formed by their acting histories. Casting of this sort was one facet of *Twin Peaks*' interest in exploring, and subverting, genre.

The combination of different genres in *Twin Peaks*—many rarely seen in each other's company—has been extensively discussed: soap opera, sitcom, detective story, horror movie, 1950s-style juvenile delinquent film, TV commercial (“damn fine coffee”), and film noir, among others.⁴ Performance is important to the way that genre is signified, of course. The actors' physical appearance, which includes costumes and hairstyles, frequently locates them in direct relationship to a specific genre. James Hurley (James Marshall), costumed in black leather jacket and denim jeans throughout, connotes a biker from a 1950s teenager film. This is confirmed through much of both series of *Twin Peaks* by performance, framing, and narrative decisions that emphasize James as a sensitive, troubled (read: “misunderstood”) character. Performance is also intrinsic to the way that *Twin Peaks* foregrounds generically derived narrative tropes. There are several moments when actors are required to play, convincingly, sudden and unconvincing twists and turns, echoing the plot lines of the soap, *Invitation to Love*, that all of *Twin Peaks*' inhabitants seem to be watching. Peter Martell (Jack Nance), for example, is won over by the lies and deceptions of his unscrupulous wife Catherine,

3 David Lynch and Chris Rodley, eds., *Lynch on Lynch* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 141.

4 See especially Glen Creeber, “‘Some Strange and Twisted Dream’: The Neglected Surrealism of *Twin Peaks*,” in *“Twin Peaks” in the Rearview Mirror: Appraisals and Reappraisals of the Show That Was Supposed to Change TV*, ed. David Lavery, Craig Miller, and John Thorne (Kindle Books, 2012).

deployed in the most obvious and scheming of ways (“The Last Evening”).⁵ In such moments, actors are required to play against the naturalistic logic of the scene—would such a character be so easily manipulated?—and follow the narrative’s generic demands without irony.

Melodramatic and comic modes of acting, however, while they might be aligned with particular genres (melodramatic acting and the soap opera, as in the examples here, or comedic acting and sitcom), are not contained by them. Indeed, it can be difficult to be sure of the boundaries that enclose the “melodramatic” and the “comic” in performance, since they acquire their particular definition and character often in relation to what is around them—that is, in the context of a particular scene, episode, or season. In *Twin Peaks* the presence of both, often in the same scene, and sometimes in the same character or performance, makes them paradoxically more discernible and harder to separate. Melodrama shades all too readily into the comic; indeed, this has been its historical destiny, as Peter Brooks has argued persuasively, but it has at the same time retained its power to move and thrill the spectator.⁶ *Twin Peaks* may play with the comic absurdity of the melodramatic, yet it also requires that we are, if not thrilled, then at least disturbed by the excesses of melodramatic performance.

Melodramatic acting celebrates excess and is associated with the display of extreme emotional states. Historically, melodrama was a theater of sentiment and emotion, which recognized that evil was a presence in the world and offered its audiences, as Bruce McConachie has argued, the chance of “gaining knowledge through feeling.”⁷ Emotional extremity was articulated in an acting style that was externalized and physicalized and often, in the context of nineteenth-century theater, formalized in a series of codified gestures and postures that became a familiar and expected part of the theatrical experience.⁸ A melodramatic “moment” in acting occurred when a profound emotion was given expression in a suitable form of words and a physical action; melodramatic acting demanded both intensity and expressivity, and both are present in *Twin Peaks*. In addition, actors in melodrama were advised to hold their postures and “pause to ‘impress’ your listeners.”⁹ Impressing an audience was not simply about seeking approval; it was required so that spectators would register fully the meaning of each vocal and physical gesture. Therefore, duration was also important to both effect and affect. Theories of melodrama assumed that such communication was straightforward—a clear message could be transmitted directly from actor to audience; modern theorists, and indeed filmmakers, are aware that communication is more complicated than this, but nevertheless duration remains a significant factor.

5 Mark Frost and David Lynch, “The Last Evening,” *Twin Peaks*, season 1, episode 8, directed by Mark Frost, aired May 23, 1990 (Studio City, CA: CBS, 2010), DVD.

6 As Brooks notes in his seminal discussion of the melodramatic, it is “part of our postmodern consciousness that we don’t take melodrama ‘straight’ any more—maybe no-one ever did—but always with a certain ironic detachment.” Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), ix.

7 Bruce McConachie, “Theatres for Knowledge through Feeling, 1700–1900,” in *Theatre Histories: An Introduction*, 2nd ed., ed. Gary Jay Williams (London: Routledge, 2010), 236.

8 *Ibid.*, 242.

9 *Ibid.*

Indeed, the relationship between intensity and duration is particularly important to the emotional disturbance of certain sequences in *Twin Peaks*.

Emotions of all kinds, freely and visibly expressed, permeate *Twin Peaks*. There is, for example, a motif of crying throughout. Introduced to unexpectedly comic effect by Deputy Andy Brennan (Harry Goaz) at the lakeside where Laura's body is discovered, crying is a response by many characters to her murder, especially in the pilot episode: Laura's vice principal (Don Calfa) and classmates, her mother Sarah (Grace Zabriskie), and her father Leland (Ray Wise) are all required to express emotion emphatically and at length. Wise has commented that his first impression of the part was that it consisted of little more than crying.¹⁰ Leland's inability to prevent himself from breaking down is in turns affecting (his response to the news of his daughter's death and subsequent phone conversation with his wife), unsettling (he throws himself on top of Laura's coffin at her funeral, in a gesture that could have come directly from a stage melodrama), and disturbingly comic (Leland's behavior at a party to celebrate a business deal with the Icelanders in "Cooper's Dreams," at which he attempts to dance, is both deranged and absurd).¹¹

One of the best examples of when an excessive and direct expressive response is also dependent on duration is when Leland and Sarah Palmer receive the news of their daughter's death. Sarah clearly senses something is wrong when she does not find Laura at home and cannot trace her (she calls several friends and families on the telephone—an important motif in this sequence). Two frequent tropes of stage melodrama (and perhaps soap opera) are in place: the parent, who experiences a sense of inexplicable dread about the fate of her child, and dramatic irony—the viewer knows at this point what she does not, that Laura is dead. Leland is informed of Laura's death while attempting to placate his wife's anxiety on the telephone; the intensity is ratcheted up by having both Leland and Sarah respond to the news (in Sarah's case, before she has had it confirmed) simultaneously. The sequence cuts between the hotel, where Leland is with Sheriff Truman (Michael Ontkean), and the Palmer home, where Sarah's grief, shot in close-up, is palpable and open (Figure 1).

The sequence concludes with Leland being led away, leaving the telephone to dangle; the camera travels down the abandoned cord for about eleven seconds as we hear Sarah's sobbing, now at one remove. By this time, Sarah has been crying for more than a minute of screen time. It is hard



Figure 1. Sarah Palmer (Grace Zabriskie) receives the news of her daughter's death, in *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990–1991).

10 Lauzirika, *Secrets from Another Place*.

11 Mark Frost and David Lynch, "Cooper's Dreams," *Twin Peaks*, season 1, episode 6, directed by Lesli Linka Glatter, aired on May 10, 1990 (Studio City, CA: CBS, 2010), DVD.

to resist the impulse to turn away from such naked grief, and Lynch's insistence that we pay attention to it acknowledges that for all *Twin Peaks*' modernist, self-referential irony, there are consequences to this murder.

Comic performance also has a clear but inexact relationship to genre. The most consistently comic characters and relationships—the on-and-off relationship between Andy and police receptionist Lucy Moran (Kimmy Robertson), for example—can be related clearly to the genre in which they seem to be primarily located (sitcom). However, comedic performance, frequently of the disturbing kind, can be found across the generic spectrum and, in acting terms, has a connection to the melodramatic. Both often rely on vocal and physical exaggeration and externalization, with the voice and the body displaying the personality traits and contradictions of the character being portrayed. Physical exaggeration extends to the use of costume; Tamblyn, for example, in a parody of his role as a psychiatrist, is costumed in the most bizarre assortment of shirts, sweaters, coats, capes, and—especially—ties, and wears spectacles with different-colored lenses.

If melodramatic acting requires a full-throttle playing of the emotional moment without restraint or irony, comedic acting often plays with the distance between actor and role. Robertson as Lucy, for example, adopts a high-pitched, nasal voice that can be read as comic; and when we first encounter her, and her voice, it is to hear Lucy explain, in a demonstration of her desire (and failure) to be efficient, on which telephone the call concerning the discovery of Laura's body is coming in. This may be expressed as a form of "quotation marks," as Brett Mills has observed perceptively, framing and drawing attention both to aspects of character and to the decision making—and indeed skills—of the comic actor.¹² Characters and actors in *Twin Peaks* frequently slip in and out of this self-consciousness, caught in comic set pieces that stand apart from the narrative situation. For example, there is a curious scene at the beginning of "Traces to Nowhere" in which Lucy, Andy, and Sheriff Truman are caught by Agent Cooper with their mouths stuffed with doughnuts, forced to reply to his questions, indecipherably, while eating.¹³

The symbiotic relationship between the melodramatic and the comic in performance, and especially the significance of physicalization, is never far from view. One of the clearest examples concerns Bobby Briggs (Dana Ashbrook), Laura's erstwhile boyfriend. There is a suppressed violence in Ashbrook's performance throughout the first season, manifest in frequent and highly physicalized and vocalized outbursts (at Laura's funeral, for example). In "Cooper's Dreams," Bobby is interviewed by Jacoby. The scene establishes him in a by-now-familiar comic juxtaposition to his parents, slouched open-legged on Jacoby's couch, his body language contrasting with their erect primness. Jacoby asks to speak to Bobby alone, and, using his knowledge of Laura's mental state, he asks Bobby about the first time he and Laura made love. "Did you cry?" is followed by "Did she laugh at you?" Bobby leaps up and responds angrily to the first question but is in anguish at the second. His body language changes

12 Brett Mills, *Television Sitcom* (London: BFI, 2005), 78–79.

13 Mark Frost and David Lynch, "Traces to Nowhere," *Twin Peaks*, season 1, episode 1, directed by David Lynch, aired on April 12, 1990 (Studio City, CA: CBS, 2010), DVD.

immediately, and, as if in a trance, he walks away, head drooping, and lies down on the couch (as all good patients must) and confesses that he wanted Laura to die.¹⁴ The expression of grief and guilt is directly and openly expressed, like that of Sarah Palmer, and all the more unsettling because of what has preceded it.

One of the attributes of television comedy, Mills argues, is that it always requires a variety of acting modes: “We could distinguish, say, between expositional acting in sitcom and that required for punchlines”; and the point can be extended to the need in television comedy and melodrama of all kinds for a broadly realistic characterization (“expositional acting”) out of which other acting strategies and decisions might emerge, and against which they might be judged.¹⁵ If the tendency in most television drama is for the transition between the two to be seamless, in *Twin Peaks* it is often sudden and disorientating. It is the abrupt and unexplained shift in acting modes, the combining, dissolving, and recombining of acting styles, that makes the series so distinctive. A full study of acting and performance in *Twin Peaks* remains to be written; it would reveal a great deal about the continuing appeal of the original series and remind us, critics and viewers, that we have not yet fully appreciated all that it has to offer. *

14 “Cooper’s Dreams.”

15 Mills, *Television Sitcom*, 75.

All Laura Palmer’s Children: *Twin Peaks* and Gendering the Discourse of Influence

by DANA OCH

Toward the end of the *Antenna* roundtable in which Jason Mittell, Amanda Klein, and I discussed the announced return of *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990–1991) for a third season on Showtime, we noted how our varied reactions and fears reflected our memories more than the show itself.¹ Mittell mused, “With *Twin Peaks*, I feel like I am less of a fan of the show itself than the idea of it.”² In the months after the initial announcement, the breakdown of contract negotiations between David Lynch and Showtime (settled on May 15,

1 Amanda Ann Klein, Jason Mittell, and Dana Och, “Debating the Return of *Twin Peaks*,” *Antenna* (blog), October 11, 2014, <http://blog.comarts.wisc.edu/2014/10/11/debating-the-return-of-twin-peaks>.

2 *Ibid.*

2015, with Lynch tweeting about the return of the show) helped further distill exactly what fans and critics indicate they value about the series. Much of the online debate centered on whether people would still watch the third season without Lynch directing the episodes, a highly auteurist discussion epitomized best by the campaign involving the original series actors as well as fans musing in text and video form across social media platforms, “*Twin Peaks* without David Lynch is like . . .”³

Similar to Ross Garner’s questioning in this section of how and why *Twin Peaks* is being discursively positioned as “classic” television, I would suggest that the show also plays a telling role in the construction of quality TV as specifically masculine and auteurist. Reviews of *Twin Peaks* and recent television shows identified as “*Twin Peaks*–esque,” including the two shows under discussion here—the “guilty pleasure” *Pretty Little Liars*, henceforth *PLL* (ABC Family, 2010–), and the “quality” investigative drama *The Killing* (AMC, 2011–2013; Netflix, 2014–)—reveal how Lynch’s series is currently used to emphasize and legitimate an imagined history to the masculine television form, even though reviewers and critics did not eschew its melodramatic mode upon initial release. In fact, the initial reception of the series and its later critical treatment as cult television (rather than quality television) typically framed it through discussions of auteurism and soap opera.⁴

The legacy of *Twin Peaks* has roots in the contemporaneous critical and popular reviews of the series but with a major erasure of the form and pleasures of melodrama. In Andrew Smith’s 1990 review of the pilot, “David Lynch’s *Twin Peaks* the Ultimate TV Soap Opera,” auteurism was already key to thinking through the show as a playful and subversive “distortion of the soap genre.” Indeed, many reviews from the time talk about the series in terms of its status as a distorted or weird soap opera, which shouldn’t be too surprising given that the show invites this discourse by including the soap opera *Invitation to Love* within its own diegesis during the first seven episodes.⁵ However, more recent articles such as James Orbesen’s “How *Twin Peaks* Shaped the Entire Golden Age of TV” and even Joe Pompeo’s (misleadingly titled) “How *Twin Peaks* Made Modern Art of the Soap Opera” elide discussions of melodrama and soap operas.⁶ Not surprisingly, given Lynch’s presence, the critical community has consistently invoked auteurism as one of the most important ways—if not *the* most

3 See Twin Pie, “Twin Peaks Cast in Support of David Lynch, Fans Follow Suit to #SaveTwinPeaks (Video),” *Welcome to Twin Peaks*, April 7, 2015, <http://welcometotwinpeaks.com/news/twin-peaks-without-david-lynch-savetwinpeaks/>.

4 See the first collection on the series, David Lavery, ed., *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to “Twin Peaks”* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), or later takes such as Linda Ruth Williams, “Twin Peaks: David Lynch and the Serial-Thriller Soap,” in *The Contemporary Television Series*, ed. Michael Hammond and Lucy Mazdon (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 37–56; and Miles Booy, “Twin Peaks,” in *The Cult TV Book: From “Star Trek” to “Dexter,” New Approaches to TV Outside the Box*, ed. Stacey Abbott (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2010), 28–30.

5 See also Mark J. Charney, “Invitation to Love: The Influence of Soap Opera on David Lynch’s ‘Twin Peaks,’” *Studies in Popular Culture* 14, no. 1 (1991): 53–59.

6 James Orbesen, “How *Twin Peaks* Shaped the Entire Golden Age of TV,” *Salon*, June 22, 2014, http://www.salon.com/2014/06/22/how_twin_peaks_shaped_the_entire_golden_age_of_tv/; Joe Pompeo, “How *Twin Peaks* Made Modern Art of the Soap Opera,” *Mental Floss*, October 25, 2013, <http://mentalfloss.com/article/53367/how-twin-peaks-made-modern-art-soap-opera>; and Andrew Smith, “David Lynch’s *Twin Peaks* the Ultimate TV Soap Opera,” *Melody Maker*, October 20, 1990, <http://www.davidlynch.de/melody.html>.

important—to position the series; however, its function has shifted dramatically in terms of the gendering of the televisual medium even since the debut of *Twain Peaks*.

Quality TV as a historical genre is being refined and deployed in the paratexts of recent shows, as evidenced especially with the first seasons of *PLL* and the US version of *The Killing*, series that both center on the murder of a female high school student who, like Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee), lived a secret life (Alison DiLaurentis [Sasha Pieterse] and Rosie Larsen [Katie Findlay], respectively). As *Twain Peaks* is often mentioned by critics in relation to any series that has a murder mystery, especially that of a young woman, at its center or, more vaguely, a sense of oddness, it would seem that both series would have been discussed in relation to the Lynch and Frost series, but this was not the case.⁷ Rather, the continuing project to masculinize and thus legitimate television is visible in how the feminine and the popular are positioned outside the quality television genre; that is, *Twain Peaks* as a framing text is invoked specifically with masculine-associated series to establish boundaries to quality genre. While initially both *PLL* and *The Killing* overtly courted comparison with *Twain Peaks* through their marketing, narratives, and mise-en-scène, their industrial positionings on ABC Family and AMC resulted in very different treatments of intertextuality in the way they were received and criticized. These shows are interesting to consider, especially for the way reviewers and audiences eventually turned on the quality TV show *The Killing*, attacking it on the same terms with which *PLL* is dismissed: namely, it was perceived as a “feminine” form of storytelling.⁸

Briefly, on the one hand, *The Killing* not only markets itself with the tagline “Who Killed Rosie Larsen?” but also includes a videotape with a reflected clue in the victim’s eye, a secret boyfriend, a casino, and suspected prostitution. Reviews of the pilot and the early episodes of the first season tend to position the series as very similar to *Twain Peaks* but with a realist or “grim” mise-en-scène. Hank Stuever’s syndicated review leads with the claim that the comparisons are unfair, before proceeding to build the whole article around similarities with one brief parenthetical caveat: “What it is free of: Log Lady mysticism, dancing-dwarf montages and other tangential hallucinations.”⁹ The trend toward grounding the discussion of *The Killing* in terms of its realism reinforces how

7 Caldwell identifies a larger trend in convergence television toward the contradictory mode of needing to be “authored” by a show-runner vision that is original while simultaneously recognizable: to be “just-like-but-very-different.” John Caldwell, “Convergence Television: Aggregating Form and Repurposing Content in the Culture of Conglomeration,” in *Television after TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, ed. Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 58–59.

8 On how his anger at the show becomes focused on Veena Sud and her perceived failings as an auteur, specifically for how there were too many red herrings and concentration on emotional trauma, see, for example, Alan Sepinwall, “‘The Killing’—‘Orpheus Descending’”: Reviewing the Season Finale,” *What’s Alan Watching*, June 19, 2011, <http://www.hitfix.com/blogs/whats-alan-watching/posts/the-killing-orpheus-descending-reviewing-the-season-finale>; see also Maureen Ryan, “‘The Killing’ Season 1 Finale Recap,” *Stay Tuned with Maureen Ryan*, June 19, 2011, <http://www.aoltv.com/2011/06/19/the-killing-season-1-season-finale-recap/>. Ryan also pinpoints Sud as a problem when she says, “Let me be clear, I hold the show’s executive producer and head writer, Veena Sud, responsible for a season-ender that not only DID NOT tell us who killed Rosie Larsen but turned Holder into a villain and did a number of other stupidly melodramatic, preposterously manipulative things.” Ryan proceeds to blame the executives at AMC for trusting the series to Sud and giving her too much control.

9 Hank Stuever, “‘The Killing’ on AMC: Who Murdered Rosie Larsen? (Hint—Not the Log Lady),” *Washington Post*, April 1, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/the-killing-on-amc-who-murdered-rosie-larsen-hint--not-the-log-lady/2011/03/28/AFJG4XHC_story.html.

gestures made early on with regard to the treatment of emotion are careful to distance the show's affect from other types of (presumably) mainstream and melodramatic takes: the images are "so painfully realistic" that it "shows the real psychological and emotional void left behind, without wallowing in it or exploiting it for rating's sake."¹⁰

By the time the first season of *The Killing* ended, though, the early accolades had begun to falter. In *Slant's* review of the DVD release, for example, the highly touted realism is positioned as excessive and boring, exactly in the moment that the term "melodrama" is, finally, directly invoked.¹¹ Kristen Warner and Lisa Schmidt note in their article on embracing *The Killing* as melodrama that after the end of the first season, critics were angry over the show's perceived lack of direction, and that their criticism particularly took the form of attacks on the female showrunner, Veena Sud, and her departure from a more masculine form of storytelling toward the feminine mode of the soap opera.¹² As Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine point out, "A key trait of the soap opera is its never-ending story," and that absence of closure is associated with bringing "particularly feminized pleasures to viewers."¹³

On the other hand, *PLL*, which according to numerous interviews with co-showrunner Marlene King was pitched to ABC Family as deliberately descended from *Twin Peaks*, with the intention to delay solving the central murder for five seasons in favor of character explorations, is almost never compared to *Twin Peaks* in reviews. This is despite the fact that the series includes a very high number of similarities and homages, including, but not limited to, an unmotivated musical sequence in the first season; naming a character Agent Cooper (April Grace), who quite enjoys breakfast, and another Dr. Palmer (Nick Tate); jewelry serving as a major clue; and a promo in the first season intoning, "Gobble, gobble, little liars." Yet while *PLL* overtly references and courts comparisons to *Twin Peaks* in its own branding, reviews neither treat it seriously nor acknowledge the *Twin Peaks* connection. They instead employ language that mocks the series's attempts to take itself too seriously, implicitly limiting the ability of a nighttime soap—murder mystery run by, originated by, and starring women to rise above the designation of trashy or "sudsy" generic boundaries.

For example, Todd Van Der Werff, in his "D" grade review of the pilot episode, marks out his taste parameters when he remarks, "I was down for a dark soap with pretty girls for summer fun. Instead, this kind of fizzles out like a wet firecracker, particularly in the pilot, which is way, way overburdened, and, apparently, attempts to encapsulate basically everything that happened in the first book, if the Wikipedia plot summary I read of the first book is to be believed."¹⁴ The infantilization and

10 Alex Strachan, "The Killing Is Killer TV at Its Best," *StarPhoenix* (Saskatoon), May 29, 2011, E5.

11 Jaime N. Christly, "The Killing: The Complete First Season (Bluray Review)," *Slant Magazine*, March 16, 2012, <http://www.slantmagazine.com/dvd/review/the-killing-the-complete-first-season>.

12 Kristen Warner and Lisa Schmidt, "Reconsidering *The Killing* as a Feminine Narrative Form," *Flow*, July 7, 2011, <http://flowtv.org/2011/07/reconsidering-the-killing/>.

13 Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine, *Legitimizing Television: Media Convergence and Cultural Status* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 89–90. They address how the murder mystery on *Twin Peaks* was solved only at ABC's insistence (91), a well-known detail that signals the melodramatic mode of the series.

14 Todd Van der Werff, "Pretty Little Liars: 'Pilot,'" *AV Club*, June 9, 2010, <http://www.avclub.com/tvclub/pretty-little-liars-pilot-41945>.

gendering of this mainstream or “trashy” mystery soap is overtly made visible when the critic furthermore scoffs in his rejection of the assumed target audience: “This is more or less exactly how I spent my time that one fateful summer when I was a hot-ass teenage girl.”¹⁵ But more interesting, perhaps, is when he condemns the show for wanting to try to be more than its gendered genre allows for in that “the episode has a bad case of first-act-itis, where the story of the pilot bears basically no resemblance to an episode of television and is, instead, the first act of a movie.”¹⁶ *PLL* indeed marks its relationship to cinema periodically, in particular in its experiments with genre, such as the film noir episode (“Shadow Play”), and in its annual Hitchcock homages in the Halloween and Christmas episodes.¹⁷ The playful irony of multilevel recognition could be hailed as postmodern complexity in another type of series, or could at least be used as part of the standard legitimating discourse of aligning television with the cinematic and thus “quality.”

PLL, however, is deeply indebted to *Twin Peaks*. A few similarities, in addition to those mentioned already, include its lack of interest in its own history, with a frequent abandoning of narrative threads into a radical amnesia of its own mythology; the unexplained presence of supernatural elements; an aligning of adult male sexuality with perversion; the transmedia elements that extend into music, literature, and games; the fashion; and the references to other films and star images (part and parcel of a self-aware cinematic nature). The list goes on, but the key missing element is the respectable male auteur. A recent interview with Marlene King indicates that she is starting to move more into the position of auteur, what with the article describing her as *PLL*’s “creator and showrunner (and screenwriter of the coming-of-age classic *Now and Then* [Lesli Linka Glatta, 1995])”; however, while the move to finally position her as the force behind the show makes the standard auteurist move of grounding her version of Rosewood in her biographical details, this shift follows up on a larger discussion of fandom and how King, in tellingly dismissive terminology, “tried her best” to answer the questions about whether there is a larger plan in place for the series.¹⁸ Even in moments when King is allowed to be an auteur, this paratext simultaneously undercuts her with the—by now expected—accusation of having no direction.

My interest here has been less about analyzing the shows themselves and more about the discourse of reviewers and critics, for the ways they often perform the actual work of legitimizing media. Newman and Levine, in reconstructing how people talk about the golden age of television in masculine and auteurist ways, highlight how the division between television and cinema intensified after World War II with the rise of cinema auteurism. They argue that the current move to legitimate television, or more specifically certain kinds of television and ways of experiencing content, occurs

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 I. Marlene King and Joseph Dougherty, “Shadow Play,” *Pretty Little Liars*, season 4, episode 19, directed by Joseph Dougherty, aired February 11, 2014 (Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2014), DVD.

18 Jessica Goldstein, “Showrunner Marlene King on *Pretty Little Liars*’ Confusing Weather and Its Many Older Men,” *Vulture*, June 10, 2014, <http://www.vulture.com/2014/06/showrunner-marlene-king-interview-pretty-little-liars-crazy-seasons-and-many-older-men.html>.

by aligning it with the already-respectable cinema.¹⁹ Thus, it is not surprising that a cinematic auteur like Lynch working in TV becomes important. This process is nothing new, though, as the film industry itself went through this legitimation process, with the postwar period serving as a crucial moment, when cinema came to be defined against television through a masculinizing auteurism.

For television to be raised up, that is, for it to be associated with “quality,” a second term must be identified as illegitimate.²⁰ The denigration of one term in the binary ends up defining the other term, evidenced more broadly in the “generic and format ‘ghettoizations’ that the multichannel conglomerates have established and profited from” in the post-network era.²¹ For quality TV, this opposing term is “melodrama.” In particular, the soap opera functions as a set of assumptions that serve to demarcate boundaries of taste, not to mention the threat of gendered pleasure. Equating melodrama with femininity and emotional excess, and unwieldy plots with an unclear direction, becomes exactly the way to identify what is valuable in the quality drama.

The larger legitimating project of the current critical milieu, then, works across a number of fronts; however, these types of comparisons work in a limited and limiting context of gender and genre.²² With *Twin Peaks*, we see the convergence, in retrospect, of a number of legitimating discourses that can tell us more about the values of the current moment, especially as the show is so often invoked as a sign of genre and quality in the larger media landscape. Thus, *PLL*, associated as it is with a female fandom, youth, melodrama, and consumerism as part of Alloy Entertainment, needs to stand in for the unacceptable, for the low, for the popular. It should not be associated with *Twin Peaks*. While ideally these types of shows could function as a way to reveal the fault lines that result from refusing to acknowledge melodrama in the male-focused quality genre, it seems instead that their presence helps popular criticism to refine and justify the masculinizing discourse.

It is important to remember that these popular critical paratexts both shape the audience response and indeed help define genre in itself. They establish our expectations and establish boundaries not only in the moment but in retrospect as well. The failure, then, of *The Killing* as a quality text with a female auteur creates a mode by which male-centered quality texts can continue to dominate while woman-focused texts either serve as that which quality is defined against or are pushed to the gender ghetto margins. *

19 Newman and Levine, *Legitimizing Television*, 5.

20 Quality drama is a genre detailed by Jane Feuer and Robert Thompson as beginning in the 1980s before reaching widespread recognition with cable dramas such as *The Sopranos* (HBO 1999–2007). See Jane Feuer, “The Lack of Influence of *thirtysomething*,” in *The Contemporary Television Series*, ed. Michael Hammond and Lucy Mazdon (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 27–36.

21 See Caldwell, “Convergence Television,” 69.

22 Various popular books are also engaging overtly with the topic, such as Brett Martin’s *Difficult Men*. Martin worked as a content creator for HBO’s Internet site for *The Sopranos*, a fact that lends weight to his approach being the preferred marketing angle. See Brett Martin, *Difficult Men: Behind the Scenes of a Creative Revolution—From “The Sopranos” and “The Wire” to “Mad Men” and “Breaking Bad”* (New York: Penguin, 2013).

"The Series That Changed Television"? *Twin Peaks*, "Classic" Status, and Temporal Capital

by ROSS P. GARNER

At the launch of the *Twin Peaks: The Entire Mystery* Blu-ray box set, actor James Marshall (who played the series's James Dean-esque biker teen James Hurley) responded as follows when questioned about the program's enduring appeal:

I think it's a timeless quality that David Lynch has . . . there's a lot of movies that stand the test of time because it seems to be that certain directors are gifted with a certain magnetism and a certain sense of visual poetry that most people don't get. I think it's true art. I think truth always stands the test of time.¹

On the one hand, the themes employed here are familiar, as discursive bids for status and prestige—what Pierre Bourdieu names “symbolic capital”—made by a particular consecrating agent via associating *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990–1991) with culturally valued concepts such as authorship and, within the context of television, cinema.² However, Marshall's engagement with the term “classic” is also interesting, as this label is employed with increasing frequency across a variety of contexts relating to television at present. These range from everyday talk among audiences to continuity announcements introducing typically older rerun programming and promotional campaigns. *Twin Peaks* is a prime example of this, as recent articles announcing the program's return on Showtime positioned the series as “cult classic drama.”³ Whereas cult is a concept that has generated much academic discussion, the mechanisms underpinning “classic” status have received less scholarly attention and, when this has occurred, have been approached in a problematic way. For example, although the UK *BFI TV Classics* range has seen academics outline the “classic” status of series including *Edge of Darkness* (BBC, 1985) and *Doctor Who* (BBC, 1963–1989, 1996,

1 Eric Goldman, “*Twin Peaks* Cast on the Show's Enduring Popularity,” *IGN UK*, July 30, 2014, <http://uk.ign.com/articles/2014/07/31/twin-peaks-cast-on-the-shows-enduring-popularity>.

2 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1993), 75.

3 “Showtime to Revive Cult Classic *Twin Peaks* in 2016,” *CNBC.com*, October 6, 2014, <http://www.cnbc.com/id/102063521>.

2005—), these studies typically demonstrate what Jason Mittell has named a “textualist assumption” by assuming that “classic” status can be objectively identified by analyzing the program itself.⁴ Such approaches overlook how the term “classic television” can be analyzed “as [a] *discursive practice*[.] . . . as a property and function of discourse” that becomes meaningful according to the requirements of multiple interpretive communities—a point noted elsewhere in some overlapping discussions of televisual “golden ages.”⁵ Through adopting a discursive approach, this essay challenges text-based understandings of “classic” television by considering how *Twin Peaks* has been industrially positioned as “classic TV” in paratextual sources produced for the Blu-ray release in 2014 and to announce the program’s forthcoming return.

The discussion also draws on Bourdieu’s ideas concerning field and capital to argue that *Twin Peaks*’ “classic” status arises from consecrating agents making appeals on behalf of the program to forms of symbolic and/or temporal capital.⁶ “Temporal capital” here refers to the length of time that *Twin Peaks* has spent within the televisual field, and so it differs from Matt Hills’s use of the term, which concerns the status that TV studies scholars accrue from being up to date and debating new programs and technologies over historical equivalents.⁷ In contrast, this essay argues that *Twin Peaks*’ “classic” status is constructed by discursive appeals to longevity and an enduring reputation—discourses that frequently recur in previous studies of TV “classics.”⁸ Straight away, though, two possible criticisms to this approach require addressing: first, I am not arguing here that TV shows generate “classic” status independently and so demonstrate agency. Instead, I posit that *Twin Peaks*’ reputation arises from discursive statements proffered by agents operating within the TV field at specific sociohistorical moments, which bestow symbolic and temporal capital. Second, although this essay focuses on paratexts, I am not arguing for a complete rejection of the text. Both Mittell and Hills have rightly discussed “text functions” and how audience subcultures, including academics, produce textual readings to support certain classifications.⁹ Such constructions of the text do, however, need to be read reflexively to recognize the discursive trajectories through which such classifications arise.

The official press release for the *Twin Peaks* Blu-ray set promised to potential buyers “hours of never-before-released material that dives into the fascinating story behind

4 See John Caughie, *BFI TV Classics: Edge of Darkness* (London: BFI, 2007); and Kim Newman, *BFI TV Classics: Doctor Who* (London: BFI, 2005), respectively. The quote comes from Jason Mittell, “A Cultural Approach to Television Genre Theory,” in *The Television Studies Reader*, ed. Robert C. Allen and Annette Hill (London: Routledge, 2004), 172.

5 *Ibid.*, 173. On golden ages, see Amy Holdsworth, *Television, Memory and Nostalgia* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 117–121.

6 Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*.

7 Matt Hills, “When Television *Doesn’t* Overflow ‘Beyond the Box’: The Invisibility of ‘Momentary’ Fandom,” *Critical Studies in Television* 5, no. 1 (2010): 97–110, <http://dx.doi.org/10.7227/CST.5.1.10>.

8 See, for example, Caughie, *BFI TV Classics: Edge of Darkness*; Glen Creeber, *BFI TV Classics: The Singing Detective* (London: BFI, 2007).

9 See Jason Mittell, “Cultural Approach to Television Genre Theory”; and Matt Hills, *Triumph of a Time Lord: Regenerating “Doctor Who” in the Twenty-First Century* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 147–177.

the celebrated pop culture classic.”¹⁰ If approached purely from a political economy perspective, *Twin Peaks*’ classification as “classic” television through this promotional statement equates such status solely with commercially rooted discourses. As Simone Murray’s discussion of industrial meanings of “classic” media content suggests, “the optimal commercial goal is for a content package to achieve ‘classic’ status, positioning it for anniversary re-release and repeat consumption long after the initial costs of its production have been amortized, with the resultant revenues representing almost pure profit.”¹¹

A Bourdieuan perspective demonstrates the limitations of this understanding of “classic,” however. First, this perspective equates “classic” status solely with commercial concerns, and so suggests that *Twin Peaks* would be associated with the televisual field’s heteronomous pole, at which hierarchies are maintained via the pursuit and acquisition of economic capital.¹² Although financial concerns do motivate CBS’s (re)release of *Twin Peaks* on Blu-ray, further discursive work is required to bestow additional forms of capital on the series and separate it from negative commercial associations. What’s more, this industrially focused understanding of “classic” status cannot account for the comments provided by other agents adopting positions within the field and operating (semi)autonomously, such as reviewers and/or *Twin Peaks*’ cast and crew. These individual agents, despite possibly being attached to commercially driven organizations (as is the case with online journalists), mobilize forms of symbolic and/or temporal capital to build the series’s “classic” status.

Temporally coded discourses are constructed in various ways to suggest *Twin Peaks*’ enduring appeal in paratexts discussing either the Blu-ray release or the series’s upcoming return. These sources, framed from the perspective of the present, foreground the series’s temporal capital and equate this with symbolic capital to bestow “classic” status on the show. A recurrent theme that demonstrates this trend concerns referencing historical material that positioned the series as “groundbreaking” and “innovative” at its initial time of broadcast. For example, an article for the British newspaper the *Daily Mail* mentions that “the series became [one] of the most top-rated shows of 1990 . . . [and] the pilot was the highest-rated two-hour television event for the 1989–90 season.”¹³ Elsewhere, a review of the Blu-ray set begins by declaring, “*Twin Peaks* is an incredibly memorable and important part of TV history—even if you think the show went off the rails in season two, it undeniably had already

10 Adam Chitwood, “Watch: Trailer for *Twin Peaks* Blu-ray Set Teases 90 Minutes of Never-Before-Seen Deleted Scenes (Updated with Blu-ray Details),” *Collider*, May 15, 2014, <http://collider.com/twin-peaks-blu-ray-trailer/#pdzTV7CTKIHS4Chu.99>.

11 Simone Murray, “Brand Loyalties: Rethinking Content within Global Corporate Media,” *Media, Culture and Society* 27, no. 3 (2005): 417, doi: 10.1177/0163443705053973.

12 Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 45–46.

13 George Stark, “‘It’s Happening Again’: *Twin Peaks* Creator David Lynch Confirms His Cult Classic Show Is Set to Return with a New Series,” *Daily Mail*, October 6, 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-2782540/Twin-Peaks-creator-David-Lynch-confirms-rumours-classic-set-return-cryptic-tweet.html#ixzz3PT6sgGgs>.

established itself as something so daring and different, in the process changing all the rules for just how far outside the box you could go with TV drama.”¹⁴

Although remaining critical of some areas of the show, this discursive strategy highlights the symbolic capital bestowed on the series during its initial transmission and combines this with appeals to temporal capital by encouraging reflection on the part of the reader toward the “gap” between then and now. Similar discursive maneuvers are also displayed in statements made by cast members interviewed about their feelings toward the series. Ray Wise, who played Leland Palmer, has commented:

Twin Peaks was just a special moment in time. And prior to that time, there just hadn’t been anything like it, certainly not on any of the television networks . . . and there really hasn’t been anything much like it since[,] I think. It just broke new ground in every way. And I think many shows since *Twin Peaks* have tried to use aspects of the *Twin Peaks* formula, whatever that may be. . . . I really think it set some sort of cultural standard. Certainly in television viewing.¹⁵

Such sentiments echo wider discursive constructions of “classic” television; Glen Creeber’s reflection, in relation to the BBC miniseries *The Singing Detective* (1985), that “it is unlikely that we will ever meet its like again,” provides a point of reference here, since, as with *Twin Peaks*, symbolic capital is equated with discourses of innovation and uniqueness.¹⁶ So, while not explicitly using the term “classic,” these contemporary statements discussing *Twin Peaks*’ impact “then” force reflection on the part of “present-day” viewers and so foreground the series’s enduring reputation.

Of course, these assertions are open to other interpretations: on the one hand, such declarations seemingly reaffirm ABC’s original marketing campaign of *Twin Peaks* as “The Series That Will Change TV.” Alternatively, the statements arguably intersect with *Twin Peaks*’ common “discursive mantra” recited across different interpretive communities that, “by way of *Twin Peaks*, David Lynch, and Mark Frost brought a cinematic element of dark intrigue, unease and mystery to the screen that television audiences had not been exposed to. . . . It inspired and shaped its own cult movements, as well as a series of others, that followed in its wake.”¹⁷

Yet the praise heaped on *Twin Peaks* in paratexts promoting the Blu-ray release and the series’s return also bestow symbolic capital on the series by aligning it with Bourdieu’s autonomous pole, by which creativity and innovation are rewarded by consecrating agents, at the time of original broadcast.¹⁸ Moreover, such remarks

14 Eric Goldman, “Still Dead. Still Wrapped in Plastic. Still Fantastic,” *IGN UK*, August 5, 2014, <http://uk.ign.com/articles/2014/08/05/twin-peaks-the-entire-mystery-blu-ray-review>.

15 Eric Diaz, “*Twin Peaks*’ Ray Wise Talks *The Entire Mystery* Blu-Ray Set, the Show’s Legacy & More,” *Nerdist*, August 24, 2014, <http://www.nerdist.com/2014/08/twin-peaks-ray-wise-talks-the-entire-mystery-blu-ray-set-the-shows-legacy-more/>.

16 Creeber, *BFI TV Classics: The Singing Detective*, 140.

17 Discursive mantras are discussed in Matt Hills, *Fan Cultures* (London: Routledge, 2002), 67. The second citation is from Shara Lorea Clark, “*Peaks* and Pop Culture,” in *Twin Peaks: Fan Phenomena*, ed. Marisa C. Hayes and Franck Boulègue (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2013), 9.

18 Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 53–54.

prompt reflection on behalf of contemporary-situated audiences and encourage evaluation of *Twin Peaks*' reputation within the current historical context. It is through these processes that the program's original symbolic capital becomes reaffirmed and combined with temporal capital that assists in classifying the series as "classic" television. For example, by highlighting the originality of the show's visual style, *Twin Peaks*' enduring reputation becomes discursively associated with contemporary trends in "quality" drama such as HBO's now-famous tagline "It's Not TV, It's HBO."

Retrospective evaluations of *Twin Peaks* therefore fuse its original symbolic capital with temporal discourses to reinforce its reputation. In addition, though, *Twin Peaks*' construction as "classic" arises from its positioning as a series with ongoing relevance to the ever-reconfiguring televisual field. Writing about the cultural field(s) of art and literature, Bourdieu observes that the hierarchical organization of individual fields is always dynamic, as new agents enter into these spaces and make bids for forms of capital by introducing new kinds of creativity and subsequently becoming consecrated by their peers.¹⁹ By this logic, *Twin Peaks* might be viewed as "outdated" in that professional codes, technology, and criteria of value within the field might be assumed to have advanced since the series was first broadcast (a reading that is offset in some reviews by comments on the cleaning up of the original film prints and/or noticing its "advanced" production processes, such as shooting on film).²⁰ However, by accrediting the series's "classic" status, in part, to its difference from other forms of television in that era, *Twin Peaks* is constructed as still relevant.

Twin Peaks' "classic" status is, then, discursively constructed via retrospective comments that ask present-day viewers to consider the program according to contemporary criteria of value. As such, bids are made for temporal and symbolic capital by suggesting that, although the field's structure has changed, the series's reputation endures. The implication is that *Twin Peaks*, much like the diegesis itself, is "timeless," as the show's appeal negates the dynamic (and, in the context of television, commercially motivated) nature of the field; this discursive work assists in positioning the series as "classic" television.

Analyzing *Twin Peaks*' construction as "classic" television via discursive bids for symbolic and temporal capital in promotional paratexts complements Hills's arguments concerning the "zone of liveness" operating around television. He argues that "television studies seeks to 'keep up' with its object of study, fearing falling behind the medium's changes and texts of the moment. . . . The scholarly zone of liveness can also be joined belatedly, but only up to a point, as it will periodically move on to 'new' moments of debate, and new texts of the moment."²¹

Although Hills focuses solely on academia, this argument can be extended to other interpretive communities within the televisual field: journalists, for example, are continually "keeping up with the medium" by making visible and consecrating "the new," and distribution companies continue to make "new" content accessible—whether

19 Ibid.

20 Daniel Rasmus, "Retracing Classic TV with 'Twin Peaks the Entire Mystery,'" *PopMatters*, November 14, 2014, <http://www.popmatters.com/feature/188120-retracing-classic-tv-with-twin-peaks-the-entire-mystery/>.

21 Hills, "When Television *Doesn't* Overflow," 101.

this be contemporary hits or older products, repositioned as “TV classics.” Hills’s argument thus accurately captures the TV field’s dynamic nature and the economic imperatives underpinning much of its structure—a point that he recognizes in relation to academia but that, again, extends to other groups of situated agents in the field.²²

It would nevertheless be an oversimplification to view assertions of *Twin Peaks*’ claims to “classic television” as a practice that displays resistance to television’s “zone of liveness.” Instead, such discursive claims should be read as attempts to extend and reconfigure the series’s “zone of liveness” by reframing it within of-the-moment understandings of creative value while also enhancing the series’s reputation by stressing continuity between the program’s reputation “then” and criteria of value “now.” Of course, these discursive constructions of *Twin Peaks* mask how the bids made on behalf of the program for symbolic and/or temporal capital mask wider operations of power within the field, such as the generation of economic capital (whether this be through sales of the box set or clicks to websites). Nevertheless, combining Hills’s arguments concerning television’s zone of liveness with an approach that considers classifications of “classic” status by adapting Bourdieu’s concept of field to the televisual context allows for an enhanced understanding of both “classic TV” and key characteristics of TV-as-medium. Reengaging with *Twin Peaks* to decide whether it is “classic” television asks the wrong question(s). Instead, we need to consider the following: On what discursive criteria are bids for “classic” status being made? By which cultural agents, for what purposes (cultural, temporal, economic, or otherwise), and—where relevant—in which national contexts? “Classic” status should be approached not as something residing “within a text” but as a classification that arises discursively via reframing “past” programs within the contemporary structure of the televisual field to enhance their reputation via temporal capital. *

22 Ibid., 102.

Ontological Security, Authorship, and Resurrection: Exploring *Twin Peaks*' Social Media Afterlife

by REBECCA WILLIAMS

In his work on *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990–1991), Henry Jenkins notes how the series was one of the first to attract a dedicated fan audience, many of whom discussed its mysteries online.¹ Since the program first aired, this online fandom has not abated and, with the advent of social media networks, has actually proliferated, as the show has enjoyed “a high level of cultural penetration several decades after its release.”² Furthermore, as the series is now returning, its fandom has witnessed radically different periods over the past two decades. Use of social media to continue and engender fandom long after a series ends is not, of course, limited to *Twin Peaks*. Similarly, what happens to fandom and fan objects once those objects cease to provide any new opportunities for fan analysis or enjoyment has also been discussed and referred to as a program’s “afterlife” or “post-series fandom.”³ I have described this period as “post-object fandom,” which refers to “fandom of any object which can no longer produce new texts.”⁴ This allows consideration of “the moment of transition when individuals move from being fans of an ongoing text that can be speculated about to being fans of a text that has ceased production, which can be referred to as a *dormant fan object*. Although fans can re-watch DVDs or re-runs, and new audiences might find the show through these means, their fandom enters a period of *post-object fandom* in which fan practices and interactions inevitably change.”⁵

1 Henry Jenkins, “‘Do You Enjoy Making the Rest of Us Feel Stupid?’ Alt.tv.twinpeaks, the Trickster Author and Viewer Mastery,” in *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to “Twin Peaks,”* ed. David Lavery (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 51–69.

2 Andrew Howe, “The Owls Are Not What They Seem: Cultural Artefacts of *Twin Peaks*,” in *Fan Phenomena: “Twin Peaks,”* ed. Marissa C. Hayes and Franck Boulègue (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2013), 40–49.

3 Lisa Parks and Elena Levine, introduction to *Undead TV: Essays on Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, ed. Lisa Parks and Elena Levine (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 1–15; Bertha Chin, “The Fan–Media Producer Collaboration: How Fan Relationships Are Managed in a Post-Series *X-Files* Fandom,” *Science Fiction Film and Television* 6, no. 1 (2013): 87–99.

4 Rebecca Williams, “‘This Is the Night TV Died’: Television Post-Object Fandom and the Demise of *The West Wing*,” *Popular Communication* 9, no. 4 (2011): 269, doi: 10.1080/15405702.2011.605311.

5 *Ibid.*

The ending of a beloved fan object, especially a television series that offers ongoing opportunities to “get to know” characters, can be a difficult and traumatic experience for fans, and the cessation of “a favorite program creates an emotional void and forced detachment from the program narrative.”⁶ This can often lead to potential threats to fans’ self-identity, self-narrative, and their sense of “ontological security”—what sociologist Anthony Giddens describes as “emotional inoculation against existential anxieties—a protection against future threats and dangers which allows the individual to sustain hope and courage in the face of whatever debilitating circumstances she or he might later confront.”⁷ He notes the importance of a “shared—but unproven and unprovable—framework of reality” and observes that when external events suggest that this “framework of reality” is not universal, our ontological security is undermined.⁸ Simply put, ontological security “means the psychical attainment of basic trust in self-continuity and environmental continuity.”⁹ Giddens argues that the “routinization of day-to-day life . . . is the single most important source of ontological security.”¹⁰ The rhythms of television are particularly well suited to this process, given the predictability and repetition of their schedules that “regulate everyday life” and work to “manage crises and insecurities. Ontological security is sustained through the familiar and the predictable. Our common sense attitudes and beliefs express and sustain our practical understandings of the world, without which life would quickly become intolerable.”¹¹

Given the importance of media fandom to everyday life, television fandom can therefore offer a source of ontological security for fans, although this can be disrupted when a series ends. Since “fixed [television] schedules, in which the same program is put on at the same time of the day[,] . . . mean that audiences can come to find the overall shape of output to be ordered and predictable,” when a favorite program is no longer able to provide new episodes, fans draw on a range of discourses and practices to cope with this disruption.¹² One of these strategies is to continue discussion and debate with fellow fans, and, while this often takes place on message boards and fan forums, social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and Tumblr offer new outlets for fan communication and community.

Each of these sites has particular features that enable different forms of fan communication. Twitter has been accused of being limiting to fan discussion because of its fast-moving nature and the fact that communications via tweet are

6 Victor Costello and Barbara Moore, “Cultural Outlaws: An Examination of Audience Activity and Online Television Fandom,” *Television and New Media* 8, no. 2 (2007): 135, doi: 10.1177/1527476406299112.

7 Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991), 40.

8 Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 36.

9 Matt Hills, “Psychoanalysis and Digital Fandom: Theorizing Spoilers and Fans’ Self-Narratives,” in *Producing Theory in a Digital World: The Intersection of Audiences and Production in Contemporary Theory*, ed. Rebecca Ann Lind (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 113.

10 Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism, vol. 1* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 3.

11 Roger Silverstone, *Television and Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 1994), 19.

12 Shaun Moores, *Media/Theory* (London: Routledge, 2005), 20.

limited to 140 characters.¹³ However, Twitter has offered opportunities for fans of long-canceled series such as *Twin Peaks* to continue and, in many cases, enhance their fandom. Twitter has proved one of the liveliest sites for prolonging discussion of *Twin Peaks*, allowing fans to continue to present their identities as fans and, potentially, warding off any threats to their fan narratives or ontological security caused by the lack of new episodes between 1991 and 2017. As Clark suggests, “By keeping up with its virtual presence and continuing to revel in its existence, fans can hold on to the dream that maybe on some other Lynchian plane, the ‘Twin Peaks’ universe remains very much alive.”¹⁴ There are a range of strategies used online to maintain the fandom, and numerous Twitter accounts discuss and promote the series. These include @TwinPeaksArchve (which offers general information and discussion about the series, including tweeting images, posing questions, and, with the announcement of *Twin Peaks*’ return, offering a central location for new information and reports), @TwinPeaksPodcast (which features discussion about the show from two viewers watching it for the first time), @EnterTheLodge (encouraging fan fiction about a prospective third season), and @TwinPeaksUKFest (dedicated to discussion of the annual event). Exploring Twitter fan accounts from the very large to the more specific, and examining a spectrum of fan practices (including fan fiction, live events, and first-time viewings), enables consideration of how social media sites allow canceled shows such as *Twin Peaks* to maintain an afterlife—and continue to provide a sense of fan ontological security—given the shared promotional and conversational opportunities that they can provide.

The @TwinPeaksPodcast offers an entry point for those unfamiliar with *Twin Peaks*. New fans are essential in maintaining fandom in the post-object era, but hearing the responses of newcomers can offer its own security, as well as encouraging existing fans to rewatch the series, a practice that can offer “reassuring, therapeutic, cheering sessions with familiar guides and confidantes.”¹⁵ Ontological security can thus be maintained by returning to the beloved narrative world of *Twin Peaks*, but also by hearing the reactions of other fans. Security can stem from seeing how closely the new viewers’ reactions align with the fan’s own subjective responses, which can provide reassurance of those reactions, and validation of their own experiences and interpretations. There can also be a sense of vicarious pleasure for long-term fans, who can reexperience their own first impressions of the program and the pleasures associated with the “discovery” of the fan object. This return to their own first viewing offers an avenue toward ontological security for fans; many discuss how “becoming a fan” is a crucial point in their lives, and there are many examples of “fans’ accounts

13 Anatolij Gruzd, Barry Wellman, and Yuri Takhteyev, “Imagining Twitter as an Imagined Community,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 55, no. 10 (2011): 1303.

14 Shara Lorea Clark, “Peaks and Pop Culture,” in *Fan Phenomena: “Twin Peaks,”* ed. Marissa C. Hayes and Franck Boulègue (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2013), 14.

15 Will Brooker, “A Sort of Homecoming: Fan Viewing and Symbolic Pilgrimage,” in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, ed. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. L. Harrington (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 161.

of encountering media texts that resonate so powerfully that they transform one's identity, daily activities, and life trajectories."¹⁶

The Twitter account @EnterTheLodge performs a different function by encouraging fan fiction about an imagined third season. Fan fiction allows fans to deal with an unsatisfactory ending and enables continuation of a beloved narrative world, allowing exploration of the questions "What happens when fans of a canceled series want more of it? How does the ending of a series influence the subsequent creative writing about that series?"¹⁷ In the case of *Twin Peaks*—whose ending many considered premature and inconclusive—continuing to produce or read fan fiction allows fans to maintain their links to the series itself and to one another. Thus, "the communality of fan fiction allows fans to work together to create and protect the memory of a beloved show, also functioning to enable fans to ward off any anxiety or rupture to their fan ontological security. For fans who are interested in fan fiction, the narrative world can continue, albeit unofficially, and threats regarding the cessation of the fandom itself can also be warded off since the fan fiction offers an avenue for continued discussion and connection."¹⁸

The @EnterTheLodge account offered a collective writing experience via the creation of Twitter accounts for both major and minor characters from the series, allowing them to continue conversations in a post-series-finale narrative. One of the creators, Emmett Furey, noted that "there were somewhere in the ballpark of seventy character accounts . . . of varying degrees of importance, including most any character you ever saw on the show, and a few that we invented for our take on the third season."¹⁹ In this example, post-object fandom of *Twin Peaks* allows for attempts at closure and the continuation of the fandom itself, as well as attracting new viewers. As Furey explains, "We hoped that, through our project, we could give *Twin Peaks* fans some sense of closure, even if it was completely unofficial and non-canonical, and that we could inspire old fans to revisit the series and new fans to discover it for the first time."²⁰

As noted, *Twin Peaks* has been officially resurrected and, as we might expect, reaction to this news on social media was jubilant, suggesting that while ongoing discussion of a series can provide continuation of a fandom, many fans do ultimately seek the return of the fan object itself. In this case, *Twin Peaks* offers a relatively unusual example of a fan object that has been canceled and then brought back, shifting its surrounding fandom from the post-object stage to a form of interim fandom. Interim fandom refers to a period in which audiences assume that their beloved object is dormant, but it becomes active again. This usually refers to periods in which fan texts are neither officially canceled nor assured of a return (for example, in the case of the science-fiction series

16 C. Lee Harrington and Denise B. Bielby, "Autobiographical Reasoning in Long-Term Fandom," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 5 (2010): <http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/209>.

17 Francesca Musiani, "'May the Journey Continue': *Earth 2* Fan Fiction, or Filling in Gaps to Revive a Canceled Series," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 5 (2010): <http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/206/168>.

18 Rebecca Williams, *Post-Object Fandom: Television, Identity and Self-Narrative* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 168.

19 Evan DeSimone, "*Twin Peaks* Already Had a Season 3, on Twitter," *New Media Rockstars*, October 7, 2014, <http://newmediarockstars.com/2014/10/twin-peaks-already-had-a-season-3-online/>.

20 Ibid.

Torchwood [BBC, 2006–2011]). However, *Twin Peaks* complicates this dynamic because of the twenty-six-year gap between its second and third seasons; those continuing their fandom in the period between were not aware of being in an interim period. Rather, given multiple assurances that a return was unlikely, their fandom was based on the assumption that the show was “over” and that their fandom was concerned with a finite text. Thus, fans of *Twin Peaks* assumed that their preferred object was dormant, and they will have to negotiate their responses when the object becomes active again.

For many, the return was welcome, offering an opportunity for closure for a narrative that ended so abruptly and a return to a world that they loved. However, such resurrections can also provoke potential anxiety in fans, who have been used to a complete and bounded text; new canonical material means that “the idealized fan object is potentially threatened (in a way in which tie-ins, spin-offs and unofficial material cannot pose a threat).”²¹ What if the new episodes of *Twin Peaks* are disappointing? What if they fail to satisfy the diverse demands of the established fandom? What if the tension between attracting a new audience to the Showtime series and satiating the desires of existing fans proves too much? Such issues can threaten fans’ ontological security and trust in a text, as well as their own sense of fan identity; will they want to continue to identify as a *Twin Peaks* fan if the new series is a failure? Indeed, “if the return of a beloved object undermines the original attachment and sense of pleasure that is gained from being a fan, then there is a strong desire to ward off this threat and to avoid being disappointed or, even, embarrassed by its failure.”²² Discussion on social media cannot, of course, entirely eradicate such concerns. However, it does offer a space for these worries to be articulated and potentially assuaged by factors such as the involvement of many of the original cast members and the show’s cocreators and auteur figures David Lynch and Mark Frost—even if Lynch’s own brand connotes ambiguity, uncertainty, and a sense of the ontologically insecure. Thus, Lynch’s involvement may not necessarily provide the reassurance that we may expect; given his authorial status as someone who provides shock and surprise, fans cannot necessarily expect anything certain. *Twin Peaks*’ predilection for mystery and uncertainty—for representing the uncanny and often attempting to shock and disorient the viewer—is well known. The return of the series, therefore, promises a return to the town of *Twin Peaks*, but fans cannot immediately know what else this means. If Lynch’s association with the return signifies anything, it is that anything can happen and that the viewer or fan cannot take anything for granted—here the return of the author figure offers a promise that the show will be “true to its roots,” but in terms of content, narrative, and themes, all bets are off. As the *Twin Peaks* fandom awaits the new series, Twitter and other social media sites will continue to offer a space for promoting the series in this new era of resurrected “interim fandom,” both reassuring existing fans and providing them with an ongoing connection to the series, while also attracting new viewers to the program and its online communities. *

21 Hills, “Psychoanalysis and Digital Fandom,” 114.

22 Williams, *Post-Object Fandom*, 178.

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