

8. The Film That Dreams

About David Lynch's TWIN PEAKS Season 3

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I recently told a friend that I had found TWIN PEAKS Season 3 “admirable.” He replied by asking whether I had seriously thought that admiration is a genuine aesthetic criterion. Knowing my pride in being considered an aesthetician, in the sense of practicing and teaching the discipline called aesthetics, it was a way of touching my sensitivity. However, at the same time, I was reminded of Charles Peirce envisaging the possibility of defining the beautiful by admiration: “we appeal to the aesthete, to tell us what it is that is admirable without any reason for being admirable beyond its inherent character. Why, that, he replies, is the beautiful” (1931-1958, 1.612). Leaving Peirce to his concerns – he immediately expresses doubts as to whether “any particular quality of feeling is admirable without a reason” – I wonder if admiring is not perhaps too much for a majority of beautiful things, insofar as they achieve beauty in simplicity, without ostentatious features, but with modesty. I mean that we must reserve admiration for special cases, special beauty. When I say that TWIN PEAKS Season 3 is admirable, I wish to express how *I* feel about it: this series is the most perfect and uncanny audiovisual product I have ever seen.

However, it is not my intention to bore the reader with this kind of manifestation of a pure subjective purpose. I am not alone in thinking that TWIN PEAKS 3 is “the most perfect and uncanny audiovisual product.” For example, Matt Fowler (2017) rightly points out that TWIN PEAKS “came back as a true artistic force that challenged just about every storytelling convention we know.” The uncanny feeling is based on some aspects of the series that are objectively strange. Among these strange aspects of characters and behavior, there is splitting – beginning with the splitting of FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) between Mr. C, a doppelgänger, Cooper’s dark half brought out of the Black Lodge, and Dougie Jones, ambiguously and partially linked to Dale and partially to Mr. C, who is affected by a chronic language disorder, but who is surprisingly charismatic at the same time. Aside from eccentric people, such as the enigmatic Log Lady (Catherine E. Coulson) who always carries a small log in her arms, there are very strange things, like The Arm, an electric talking tree,¹ a kind of “abhuman,” that is, “some indefinable ‘thing’ that is

mimicking the human, appropriating the human form" (Punter and Byron 2004, 41). Finally, it reflects another objective observation that *TWIN PEAKS 3* presents a very special form of storytelling at different levels: diegesis, story development, succession of scenes, rhythm (especially slow), dominant coloring (red, black), and so on.

In this chapter, I draw on research derived from textual analyses of *TWIN PEAKS 3*, using a theory of filmic storytelling, which is primarily based on Gérard Genette's narratology (distinguishing between diegesis, story, and narration). Yet this also takes account of the diegetic perspective introduced by Christian Metz (1974) – and, subsequently, endorsed by Genette (1972, 1980, 1982, 1983) – reworked in order to integrate the logic of possible worlds.² This adjustment not only aims to "thicken" the concept of diegesis, but also to help anchor my aesthetic quest for an answer to the question: What does it mean to have a filmic idea? In relation to *TWIN PEAKS*, I will speak in terms of film or cinema. Not only is it rather difficult in general to draw a clear boundary between film and television series, but in Lynch's case, starting with the fact that as a filmmaker, he is an *auteur*, there are special reasons to question this boundary. I will explain this in terms of "filmic ideas," meaning ideas in storytelling which do not involve a simple "packaging" of optional sights and sounds, but rather deep structural work. This kind of deep work which transforms the surface structure, or by which the surface filmic form can also seize power over the deep semantic structures, results, in the present case, from a dream-like form that goes beyond the dream's telling, toward *the film that dreams*. While Lynch did not invent this "genre," he raises it to the highest level.

Having a Filmic Idea

Although he did not exactly consider what I call filmic ideas, Gilles Deleuze answered my question as follows:

An example of a cinematographic idea is the famous sight-sound dissociation in the [...] cinema of Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, the Straubs, and Marguerite Duras, to take the best-known cases. What is common to these, and in what sense is the disjunction of the visual and the auditory a properly cinematic idea? Why could this not take place in theater? Or, at least, if this happened in theater, if the theater found the means, then one can say without exception that the theater borrowed it from cinema. (1998, 16)

In this proposition, the classical cinema-theater *paragon* is correlated with exceptions observed in avant-garde films (more precisely the sight-sound disjunction exception). Deleuze's essay is entitled, "Having an Idea in Cinema ..." which, in French, is translated as: "Avoir une idée en cinéma ..." I prefer "Having a filmic idea," precisely because I agree with the presupposition that the filmic (or cinematic) idea involves both filmic specificity and an artistic intent which we do not find in every film.³ To give another of my favorite examples, in the first part of Sergei Eisenstein's *GENERAL LINE* (1929), two brothers, having decided to divide their poor heritage, a very simple *izba*, saw it in half; it is, for Eisenstein, the occasion of a rhythmic montage which accelerates progressively, until the moment when, among the sawing shots, one of them very quickly appears upside down. The first time I watched this movie, I thought: "Here is cinema! Here is cinema as art!" I mean, the freedom to introduce a nonrealistic shot which, in this case, is not a breach by a foreign image, but the transmutation of the realistic film basis (this transmutation being supposed in Eisenstein's mind to elicit the ex-stasis process).

I compared that to my strong impression, which was constantly renewed from episode to episode, as I was watching *TWIN PEAKS* 3. I would speak of a masterpiece, especially with regard to Episodes 8 and 18, if the word was not obsolete – thanks to Antonin Artaud! – and despite the fact that it is a TV series. Yes, *despite that*, you read it right! I do not agree with researchers who think they have the power to decide that a TV series deserves the same level of respect as feature films or, more precisely, as feature films which are judged "artistic works." This label does not emerge from research, but from society and the institutions involved (I fully agree with George Dickie's institutional theory (1974), which invents nothing, but simply takes note of the fact that an artwork is such when a specialized institution supports its application to art). When research participates in this legitimation it is through an institution. With this in mind, I do not decide by myself to apply the filmic idea viewpoint to a TV series, and I only agree with the hypothesis that this viewpoint may be taken into consideration in the case of a work which includes both feature film and TV episodes, which is allegedly the case with Lynch.

To be more precise about the filmic idea, I refer to Kant's *Critique of Judgment* in which he writes that the principle of an artwork:

is nothing else than the faculty of presenting aesthetic ideas. But, by an aesthetic idea I mean that representation of the imagination which induces much thought, yet without the possibility of any definite thought

whatever, i.e., concept, being adequate to it, and which language, consequently, can never get quite on level terms with or render completely intelligible. ([1890] 1911, para. 49)

I like the suggestion of something that “induces much thought,” but “which language, consequently, can never [...] render completely intelligible.” All is in “completely.” This outlines the question of specificity, not as a pure medium distinction, but as aesthetic features produced by the medium or by an intermedial state. There are some kinds of representation which are only complete in movies as much as some others are only complete in writing, painting, and so on.

To avoid the exclusive medium dogmatism, we can recognize that the filmic idea is not purely filmic, or “100% filmic” to use Dziga Vertov’s words. Mikhail Iampolski (1998) shows in *The Memory of Tiresias* that French avant-garde films, which were supposed to achieve a high level of filmic purity, involved a literary subtext provided by the poetry of the time. And Yuri Tsivian (1980, 118) shows that fully understanding the sequence of Vertov’s *MAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA* (1929), where we see in alternate montage seamstresses and the film cutter, implies referring to Russian lexical fields, more precisely to the verb *strotchit*, which means both sewing and writing (so that the film is implicitly defined as “cine-writing”).

To return to *TWIN PEAKS 3*, it is worth noting that it has some very clear series characteristics, some features of seriality interwoven with filmic ideas, for example the musical performances at the Roadhouse Bang Bang Bar at the end of most of the episodes (and in the first third of Episode 8). Incidentally, I do not want to become locked into the auteurism controversy. We can speak of Lynch’s series because he is designated as the director, but without forgetting that he shares the scenario writing with Mark Frost. This means that the fantasies of this series, which includes many gems of this type, are also shared. The author need not be a single human being. Authorship is not a question of number, but rather of cultural purpose and human approach.

Possible Worlds

When we consider Lynch’s entire work, we see both continuity and evolution. The principle of diegetic continuity, especially that of characters (except when new ones appear or when characters acquire new skill properties by means of special narrative key events), not only governs each story but also spreads from

one film to another and eventually to the entire work. This diegetic feature must be linked to an obsessional characteristic which is difficult to miss: the same characters, places, and themes appear constantly. A simple example that Lynch's fans would understand is agent Coop's immoderate taste for coffee and cherry-pie! The recurrence of such details is both a signature and a principle of composition. An author's preferences, as Freud (1991) suggested, represent different aspects, even antagonistic ones, of his or her personality that are assembled to constitute the book (or the film) as a good object.

Lynch's works do not fit into any single genre classification. Cinema meets the challenge of being led by a dominant genre. In other words, a single genre is leading the story. However, in many cases, the supposed single genre hides complexity: even though it is supposed to belong to cinema, it is made up of a mixture of elements provided by the dominant genre and others originating in at least another genre – such is the case, for instance, with the well-known genre called film noir where we find typical elements of melodrama. The kind of genre hybridity that Lynch exemplifies is somewhat different from this customary interbreeding. The reason for this difference lies in the fact that the key of hybridity is no longer a question of genre. Neither is it the choice between pure and hybrid genre, nor, more precisely, the choice of hybrid genre as an alternative to the gradually declining trend of pure genres over the years. Beyond the question of genre, Lynch's key lies in filmic form. This does not imply a complete lack of genre, but that the way in which Lynch conceives the story prompts a partial reversal of relationships between diegesis and film.

A genre gives a specific framework to the film diegesis which also provides more precise properties so that the viewer can figure out the time-space conditions of the film and how the characters are supposed to behave within these conditions. When watching a film, the main issue generally faced is to understand the diegesis level vis-à-vis the world in which we live and the other worlds, more or less ideal, we are able to conceive – in other words, we need to identify a possible world which may be more or less close to our own. This definition of diegesis must be taken into account when trying to explain Lynch's keys for *TWIN PEAKS*.

A possible world is one which is defined by a set of assumptions we can more or less consider as assumptions of the world in which we live, not only our present world but past ones as well. These present or past worlds may be called the actual world, or the actual-like world. Admittedly, the past and present worlds differ in the same way that a world with mobile phones differs from one without. Nonetheless, we can assume that there is a historical continuity between past and present. In developing the theory

of possible worlds in order to cover stories, it is appropriate to adapt it to three types which can be defined as follows: a world comparable to the actual world; a world partially incomparable to the actual world; and a dream world. The first and second types share the feature of being portrayed as real, either because the world is simply interpreted as reality-based, or because the unreal facts or people it involves are supposed to work in a reality-like context; the third type is explicitly portrayed as ideal. An important question in terms of logic is how a possible world is accessible to others. The first accessibility relation concerning a film is its relation with our actual world or what we conceive as such. We will see that the question of accessibility must also be considered as a very crucial one in the heart of the film's diegesis when this is the case, as in *TWIN PEAKS*, which is composed of more than one possible world.

It seems relevant to consider Lynch's work as a dream world. However, this third type is inclusive, insofar as the representation of a dream world needs to involve the reference to a reality-like world. Moreover, in Lynch's case, there is a permanent play with this status of the fantastic ambivalence with regard to reality. To understand this point, it is useful to deepen the functioning of diegetic postulates within the story context. If the story's diegesis involves the postulate of someone who is supposed to belong to mankind and, at the same time, have a set of properties generally attributed to birds, this means that this person's behavior can incorporate, either simultaneously or alternatively, the behavior of a human being and that of a bird. For example, he or she can speak while flying. Nevertheless, the birdman- or woman assumption, or any assumption considered to be a diegetic one, needs to be understood very specifically within the framework of a precise story. Diegesis works as an axiomatic framework that determines the inferences underlying the story development. To give a very simple example, if the birdman- or woman is pursued by someone who clearly intends to kill him or her, we would be surprised if he or she forgot to fly in order to escape this threat. It is clear that what should be considered as nonactual, because it only belongs to the ideal and noneffective world of imagination, becomes such an imperative logical law that fantastic behavior (for example, flying) can be physically conceived as an actual ability (for example, speaking). Edgar Morin writes that:

we experience the cinema in a state of double consciousness, [...] an astonishing phenomenon where the illusion of reality is inseparable from the awareness that it is really an illusion, without, however, this awareness killing the feeling of reality. (2005, 225)

We could observe that this phenomenon of “double consciousness” is not really astonishing, meaning simply that we can feel with the characters or about the story while knowing that it is a film, and vice versa. In other words, the knowledge that we are watching a film does not prevent us from experiencing a wide range of feelings that we could have in reality (after all, watching a film is part of reality). Moreover, in most films, feeling supersedes knowledge, although, in a few, knowledge supersedes feeling. However, I do not wish to refer to reflexivity, the kind of films that teach us explicitly that they are filmic or cinematic. The key to Lynch’s films does not lie in this didactic approach, except very occasionally. Rather, his aim is to avoid any explicit reflexivity by means of promoting reflection within a dream context. His work has more to do with troubled consciousness than double consciousness.

Clues about Dreaming

To what extent can we speak of dreaming in Lynch’s work? A dream narrative implies someone who dreams, yet a film does not come directly from someone. Its author does not literally dream it. We therefore need first to identify some clues that would justify the dream hypothesis, and then, unavoidably, face the question: Who dreams? A film is not a dream, but a dream-like story or form of storytelling. In general, such dream-like qualities are firstly due to special diegetic postulates, so that there is always a dream element in every fiction and, secondly, to illogical developments and inferences that differentiate dream films from fantasy films. In a dream film, everything is permitted, even if it appears illogical; whereas in the fantastic – because we do not refer to our ordinary day-to-day experience, awake or not, but to what has been shaped by literature and cinema, to books and films that develop extraordinary diegeses – we are obliged to fulfill a logic of the plausible. In dream films, based on our own experience of dreaming, we accept anomalies and logical gaps. A part of this acceptance concerns the content of the dream, another, its form. In terms of content, we could try to list the dream clues in *TWIN PEAKS*, if this would not produce an endless list (it took four-and-a-half years to make this new series). Let us therefore consider four of the most notable.

1. *Double Doppelgänger*

Gry Faurholt writes:

The doppelgänger is an uncanny motif comprising two distinct types: (1) the alter ego or identical double of a protagonist who seems to be either

a victim of an identity theft perpetrated by a mimicking supernatural presence, or subject to a paranoid hallucination; (2) the split personality or dark half of the protagonist, an unleashed monster that acts as a physical manifestation of a dissociated part of the self. (2009)

Generally, as Faurholt also notes, the difference between these two can be considered “as a formal one only.” In *TWIN PEAKS*, Cooper has both a doppelgänger and his double, a kind of “double of the double,” who can be considered his opposite. It sounds like ubiquity, three Coopers seeming to be in different places at the same time, except that we cannot take for granted that these places are in the same world. In terms of possible worlds, it seems likely that such different worlds are parallel ones. Hypothetically then, for a given world, somewhere there exists one or more parallel ones in which the same people are acting, feeling, and thinking more or less differently. In one of these parallel worlds, I am a physicist, in another, an estate agent, and so on; and in one, I am writing a text for *Stories*, the next volume of AUP’s *Key Debates* series, and giving a rather distorted account of *TWIN PEAKS* ...

In this respect, Episode 3 Season 3 constitutes a diegetic node. Here, three possible or parallel worlds interfere, while electricity creates an accessible relationship between them. Electricity seems to be a materialization of the possible link between these worlds, as well as that of a dialectical tension between them. The fact that characters from different worlds are electrified in relation to one another, and that the worlds communicate by means of electrical discharges through plugs, materializes their dialectical tension. In a sequence which mixes *STAR WARS* with surrealist painting, Cooper is on a strange machine in outer space, with a woman whose eyes are sewn shut and whose words are incomprehensible. Pulling a lever then produces an electrical discharge, which electrocutes her and she disappears into space, before Cooper returns to the contraption. At this point, an alternate or parallel montage begins, which shows Mr. C driving on a desert road. Electrical spluttering is seen on the car’s dashboard, while Mr. C seems to become sick. Cooper meets a woman who looks like Laura Palmer’s friend, Ronette Pulaski, who says: “When you get there, you will already be there. [...] You’d better hurry, my mother’s coming.” Electrical spluttering and an obsessive pounding increase; Cooper’s face is distorted and he is sucked into an electric machine, all apart from his shoes. Mr. C has more and more difficulty driving and finally crashes his car. He is about to vomit, when, through the broken windscreen of the car, we glimpse the red curtain of the Black Lodge. Suddenly, at this moment, without any explanation, Cooper’s second doppelgänger, who may also be Mr. C’s double, Dougie Jones, appears.

The surest way to be disappointed is by trying to explain everything about *TWIN PEAKS*. Indeed, I assume there is no way to grasp the endless network built by Lynch from episode to episode, from detail to detail. Clearly, the appearance of Dougie Jones amounts to an arbitrary plot twist, which is retrospectively justified. We find the new character, Dougie, with Jade, a black prostitute and, while she is taking a shower, Mr. C and Dougie alternate, both being sick and vomiting. The red curtain intrudes in Dougie's universe while he is vomiting, and suddenly, he disappears, with Jade hearing a loud noise ("What the fuck was that?," she says). Dougie, who is shown sitting in an armchair, appears fleetingly through the dashboard and Mr. C vomits profusely. Back in the Black Lodge, Dougie converses with MIKE, the one-armed spirit:

Dougie: What's happening to me?

MIKE: Someone manufactured you.

Dougie: What?

MIKE: For a purpose, but I think now that's been fulfilled.

Dougie: It has?

Dougie dissolves in a golden ring, saying: "That's weird." Then Jade finds Cooper on the floor. The materialized Cooper is visibly frazzled by the transition through the electric machine. And while it has made him more slow-witted than the "real" Dougie, he has gained some special abilities and a thaumaturgic gift. He will prove to be a very special wonder worker. Everything happens now as if, having declined into a primitive state of understanding and communication, he has acquired a kind of guru-like telepathic power over things and others: Casino games, his wife (Naomi Watts), his boss (Don Murray), and the casino's owners, the Mitchum brothers (Robert Knepper and Jim Belushi).

2. *Slowness*

Episode 18 begins with short, disconnected sequences: Mr. C is on fire, supposedly in the Black Lodge; Dougie returns home (in fact, a new Dougie created by MIKE through electricity), and, at last, the "real" Cooper in the Black Lodge, meets MIKE, The Arm, and Laura Palmer's father (who says: "Find Laura!"). Now, while Cooper is with Diane, outside the Black Lodge, in the woods, a rhythmic slowdown begins. What must be emphasized in this regard is the fact that this kind of slowdown is as significant as short sequences with more or less fast cutting. It is true that illogical gaps and strange disturbances frequently occur in a dream, as do scary slow phases. Fantasizing requires slowing down, insofar as it involves a process of interplay between attraction and repulsion. Completely opposed to what we are conditioned to expect by the dominant

trend in TV drama series, Lynch's directing of actions and actors aims to reduce the storytelling rhythm. What he dares in this regard is extreme, the most extreme of which seems to be the car journeys in Episode 18, especially the third one. Cooper is now with Laura Palmer or, more precisely, with a woman he regards as her. Drawn to her by some evidence, Cooper meets this woman at her house, where there is a murdered man he overlooks – this lack of any reaction on behalf of an FBI agent is among the most explicit dream clues that should make the spectator think about the form of the film. The spectator could think that we were again in a first degree diegesis, since Cooper seemed to be conducting a police investigation. Still, it is no longer possible to maintain that belief. This is not the only strangeness, however. The investigation itself is not devoid of anomalies; rather, it is a matter of degree. Suddenly, the suspicion of the dream goes up a notch, and then there is an interminable road trip ... Cooper and Laura, side by side; a lacunary monologue by the woman; a hypnotic glide along a dark road lit by fleeting headlights ...

3. Details: Insignificant or Not?

Details that seem at first sight to be negligible, become important through recurrence: the green ring, the golden seed, the log, and so on. As we know, details are very important in a dream. Moreover, in Freudian theory, details are more important than what would otherwise be considered the main story elements. Freud (1933) called the mechanism that brings such details to the fore displacement. Even if we ignore the technical details of such an unconscious operation, especially the different strata of (un)consciousness involved, the process referred to by Freud as a “shifting accent” is very similar to what happens in *TWIN PEAKS*:

The different ideas in dream-thoughts are [...] not all of equal value; they are cathected with quotas of affect of varying magnitude and are correspondingly judged to be important and deserving of interest to a greater or less degree. In the dream-work these ideas are separated from the affects attaching to them. The affects are dealt with independently; they may be displaced on to something else, they may be retained, they may undergo alterations, or they may not appear in the dream at all. The importance of the ideas that have been stripped of their affect returns in the dream as sensory strength in the dream-pictures; but we observe that this accent has passed over from important elements to indifferent ones. Thus something that played only a minor part in the dream-thoughts seems to be pushed into the foreground in the dream as the main thing, while, on the contrary, what was the essence of the dream-thoughts finds

only passing and indistinct representation in the dream. No other part of the dream-work is so much responsible for making the dream strange and incomprehensible to the dreamer. Displacement is the principal means used in the *dream-distortion* to which the dream-thoughts must submit under the influence of the censorship. (1953-1974, 9-10)

We could say: *no other part of the dream-work is as responsible for making the film strange and incomprehensible to the spectator*. This is one reason why I will consider *film distortions* in the next section. For the moment, I am mainly interested in the different aspects that are analogical to dream-work in the TWIN PEAKS story. More precisely, we could speak of TWIN PEAKS' *stories*, since it is clear that, starting from the central nerve of Laura Palmer's murder investigation, Lynch has created a kind of narrative network which might be compared to a neural one, just as some computing systems inspired by the human neural network provide a model for artificial neural networks.⁴ These are also called "connectionist systems" because of the multiplicity and complexity of connections they involve (like brain synapses). In TWIN PEAKS, it is as though narrative or thematic signals can be transmitted from one to another, and instead of looking for a clear significance which marks the end of the process, it would be better to understand that the network opens many doors to unresolved hypotheses.

To give some examples, in Episode 18, the car that Cooper drives to the motel is not the same as the one in which he leaves after making love with Diane. He drives 430 miles to the motel, crossing over an electrical field and, after having sex, he wakes up in the motel room which Diane left, apparently after having left a note that reads "To Richard from Linda." At the beginning of Episode 1, a character identified as The Fireman, who resembles The Giant of the previous TWIN PEAKS seasons (because he is played by the same actor, Carel Struycken) provides cryptic clues, telling Cooper in the Black Lodge to remember "430 and Richard and Linda!" This kind of information, gathered in various places throughout the series, creates assumptions and expectations, which do not, however, insert definite decryption keys into the narrative locks, but establish *telestructures* that enrich the network, both narratively and aesthetically (Chateau and Jost 1979).⁵ Apart from these discontinuous structures, strange additional information, in the form of images and sounds, seems to be largely interspersed to intensify the weirdness. Examples include Dougie's habit of repeating the last word uttered by those to whom he is talking as way of answering, and the way in which the FBI agent, Gordon Cole (played by David Lynch), who suffers hearing loss, speaks very loudly.

4. *Story Derivations*

Film networks remain embryonic only unless there is some syntagmatic work in the end.⁶ Film cannot exist without syntagmatizing some paradigmatic choices governed by a diegesis. A film has a more or less sophisticated paradigmatic structure governed by a diegetic possible world, but it is also composed by combining and interlacing story sequences which comply more or less with the statutory requirements that can be inferred from the diegesis. It may be something very simple, like an everyday diegesis with people acting as we might do, regardless of the psychological complexity of the characters. Or it may be more complicated, partly because the diegesis mentioned earlier involves special postulates and underpins a complicated network, and partly because the story itself is made up of many paths significantly branching away, more or less, from the main path (if indeed that exists). In addition to TWIN PEAKS' main path, the inquiry into Laura Palmer's murder, there are many secondary interconnected paths that make the story denser, while simultaneously creating ambiguities, especially in relation to genre.

The question, "What happened to Audrey?" provides a clear example of the secondary paths in TWIN PEAKS. At the end of Series 2 (Episode 30), Audrey (Sherilyn Fenn) has chained herself to a grid near the vault of the Twin Peaks Savings & Loan bank, in protest of an environmental problem, when a bomb explodes. Audrey disappeared at the end of the series. Twenty-five years later, discussions on the Internet show that spectators are still concerned about this way of eliminating an attractive character. They had to wait until Episode 7 of Series 3 for a scene with Tommy "Hawk" Hill (Michael Horse) and Frank Truman (Robert Forster) to see her again. Hawk and Frank examine the pages in which Annie tells Laura that the good Dale is trapped in the Black Lodge. Frank says: "Laura never met Cooper. He came here after she died, didn't he?" Hawk answers: "She said that these words from Annie came to her in a dream." Having realized that the Cooper coming back from the Black Lodge could be the "wrong" one, Frank calls Doc Hayward by means of Skype.

Doc: We all knew Coop, but that morning he was acting mighty strange.
[...] I took him to the hospital [...]. About an hour later, I saw him sneaking out of intensive care, fully dressed.

Frank: What was he doing in intensive care?

Doc: I thought at the time he might have been looking in on Audrey Horne.
That terrible business at the bank, and ... She was in a coma.

Audrey then reappears under strange conditions. She is back, but seems to be in a kind of prison, chained once again and engaged in an endless



Fig. 8.1: TWIN PEAKS Season 3 by David Lynch, frames from Episodes 1 and 3.

discussion with her husband, Charlie. Charlie is a very strange character whose physical aspect (he suffers from rheumatoid arthritis) is provided by the actor, Clark Middleton (Episodes 12, 13, 15, and 16.) Audrey is obsessed with joining her lover, Billy, at the Roadhouse, but she and Charlie, who are continually arguing, seem unable to go. In Episode 16, due to Charlie's decision, they are finally at the Roadhouse, where Audrey dances in the middle of the crowd after a master of ceremonies (JR Starr) has announced "Audrey's dance." However, a fight breaks out and, feeling afraid, Audrey asks Charlie to leave. Prefaced by electric spluttering, we see her alone in a room, before a mirror in which she looks at herself with fear. All these details seem to be building a parallel story, a subsidiary offshoot of the main one. But two important details show that this is not the case. Episode 13 is entitled: "What Story Is That, Charlie?" In this episode, Audrey asks: "What story is that, Charlie? Is it the story of the little girl who lived down the lane?" The last clue which refers to Audrey, and which occurs in Episode 18 inside the Black Lodge, contributes to clarifying that Audrey's secondary story in TWIN PEAKS 3 has to do with the main story. Indeed, The Arm, the electric tree with a fleshy mass instead of a head, says to Cooper in its disembodied, jerky voice: "It is ... the story ... of the little girl ... who lived down the lane ... Is it?"

The Film That Dreams

The following appears on an Internet forum:⁷

When he was pressed over the fate of Audrey Horne [...] Lynch remained typically tight-lipped: "What matters is what *you* believe happened. Many

things in life just happen and we have to come to our own conclusions. You can, for example, read a book that raises a series of questions, and you want to talk to the author, but he died a hundred years ago. That's why everything is up to *you*.

This seems to provide a valuable key for overall interpretation. People have different memories of the episodes, different awareness of the relevance of various details and clues to issues regarding interpretation. However, the most important aspect of *TWIN PEAKS* is that this artwork has been purposefully made with the intention of providing spectators with a network of enigmas. One possible approach is to try to crack the enigmas systematically. The Internet is a breeding ground for such exercises, but the dice are loaded against anyone trying to impose their own interpretation. According to Lynch, what counts is the personal belief that we form about the enigmas, trying to solve them and, above all, enjoying the mental process which they activate, even if this does not lead to any definitive end.

I think that the major obstacle encountered by interpreters stems from the limited range of diegetic conceptions which are available for *TWIN PEAKS*. It is clear that the series does not refer to a "reality" diegesis, a possible world whose assumptions match our expectations about the world in which we live. We would be very surprised to see someone dissolve into a seed, like Diane in Episode 16! It is obviously not realistic, but depends on the diegetic logic, as we saw earlier with the birdman- or woman postulate. Furthermore, given a diegesis, we need to know whether the assumptions, however special, continue to operate on a basis of reality. With *TWIN PEAKS*, it would be a huge mistake to use this kind of basis for solving the enigmas. These two mistakes can be avoided if we consider the series as a dream. Admittedly, dreaming is part of our real experience, but only when the conditions of our waking consciousness are suspended. In such a context, the logic, according to which the birdman- or woman must fly to escape some assailant, may be suspended. In Luis Buñuel's *THE EXTERMINATING ANGEL* (1962), the dinner party guests are unable to return home for no apparent reason. In the same vein, Audrey cannot go to the Roadhouse despite her desire to join Billy. In our dreams, it is not uncommon to be desperately moving toward a point which is impossible to reach.

Dream contextualizing not only changes the diegetic logic, but also has some crucial consequences for storytelling. Generally in films, a dream that is being told or visualized is ascribed to some character. Some parts of *TWIN PEAKS* 3 fall within this category. As we have seen, Hawk and Frank read the pages in which Annie describes her dream about Cooper being trapped

in the Black Lodge. In Episode 14, entitled “We Are like the Dreamer,” what happens is most important. Gordon Cole tells agents Tammy and Albert:

Last night, I had another Monica Bellucci dream. I was in Paris on a case. Monica called and asked me to meet her at a certain cafe. She said she needed to talk to me. When we met at the cafe, Cooper was there. But I couldn’t see his face. Monica was very pleasant. She had brought friends. We all had a coffee.

Gordon speaks sometimes in vision, and sometimes in voice-over, the sequence being an alternating syntagm showing the deputies meeting in color, with some scenes described by the FBI chief in black and white. Gordon continues: “And then she said the ancient phrase ...” We see and hear Monica saying: “We’re like the dreamer who dreams and lives inside the dream.” Gordon repeats: “We’re like the dreamer who dreams and lives inside the dream.” Then he adds: “I told her I understood. And then she said ...” Monica whispers, in close up: “But who is the dreamer?” Gordon repeats: “But who is the dreamer?” And he adds:

A very powerful uneasy feeling came over me. Monica looked past me, and indicated to me to look back at something that was happening there. I turned and looked. I saw myself. I saw myself from long ago in the old Philadelphia offices listening to Cooper telling me he was worried about a dream he had.

Gordon and Cooper are now face to face, in black and white. Cooper: “Gordon, it’s 10:10 a.m. on February 16. I was worried about today because of the dream I told you about.” Gordon again, in color: “And that was the day Phillip Jeffries appeared and didn’t appear ...” Phillip Jeffries, played by David Bowie, appears in black and white.

With Gordon seeing himself as younger, and dreaming about Cooper, who tells him about a dream, this part of Episode 14 seems to give a double key: the dreamer living inside his dream and a dream within a dream. On this basis, one can entertain quite an interesting hypothesis: *TWIN PEAKS* is Gordon’s dream. However, given the fact that Gordon is played by David Lynch, another interesting hypothesis would be that *TWIN PEAKS* is Lynch’s dream. In fact, when we say that an artwork is the dream of its author, we assert this on a metaphorical level. A film is not a dream; it is neither the mental activity of dreaming, nor a dream narrative; and even more so, the film’s author is not the film’s dreamer. The only way to substitute the literal

for the metaphorical here would be to propose that *the film itself dreams*, meaning that it has a structure analogous to that of a dream. This hypothesis is clearly consistent with the idea that this kind of film subverts the logic of diegetic “reality.”

Accordingly, if dreaming is regarded as structural, we need to identify clues of correspondence between the diegetic material and the filmic form. To return to Episode 3, in the beginning, the film itself suffers electric discharges. An alternating or parallel montage begins at this point. Two series of images alternate when one image succeeds another according to a narrative relation, while parallel images create a discursive relation. Can we assume that the intruding series, which shows Mr. C driving on a desert road, has a narrative relation with the series inside the Black Lodge? We cannot be sure that the Black Lodge temporality is a narrative one, by which I mean following the diegetic temporality designed to be considered normal. We could name this sequence half alternating, half bringing together parallel worlds – a *shaky syntagm*. A new alternation begins. The new series may be considered as signifying *in the meantime* more precisely than the first alternation. Three worlds and stories are now intertwining more or less simultaneously. As already noted, electricity creates accessibility between the three worlds so that it works both in the deep structure governed by the diegesis and in the surface structure of filmic form. Nevertheless, if it is the film that dreams, we may perhaps reverse the proposition: insofar as the *electric conditioning* defines the *filmic form*, TWIN PEAKS’ story and diegesis are determined in the first instance by the author’s filmic idea. The extrapolation of Kant’s aesthetic idea to a filmic idea is clearly relevant in this case: something inducing thought, but inexpressible. It is symbolized by the woman whose eyes have been sewn shut and who merely whispers, within an electrified montage of choppy images accompanied by crackles, reverberations and, finally, loud pounding. When Cooper asks: “Where is this? Where are we?” the spectator feels bewildered. He or she wonders whether this part of the film is a rough draft, the sketch of a possible complete film.

Even though film is not literally a dream, in the sense that it is neither dreaming nor following the narrative of its own dream, the spectator who is well disposed toward a film, can have the experience of a dream while watching it. He or she has the feeling that he or she is dreaming, beyond the double consciousness that allows such empathic participation, despite awareness of the filmic *dispositif*. I will not invoke the filmic apparatus theories that identify it with a dream, and the moviegoer with a dreamer. There is a huge difference between the assumption that the filmic apparatus

is an ideological tool, because the viewer cannot differentiate between the filmic world and the real one – when the diegesis is supposed to be reality – and such films as *TWIN PEAKS*, where the filmic world is distinguished from the real one by a number of esoteric clues that progressively complicate the neural network, both at the level of diegesis and story.

The Sublime and the Grotesque (By Way of Conclusion)

Episodes 8 and 18 are unbelievable, not only because they involve strange things, but also due to Lynch's artistic daring in stretching his filmic ideas. I know that there are some who wonder whether numerology is involved in *TWIN PEAKS*. Despite the fact that I was born on August 18 (8/18) in 1948, I do not know what I could do with this numerical conjunction. Still, when I spoke earlier about admiration, I particularly had these two episodes in mind. I have already analyzed Episode 18, the last one (last of the last?), and only need to mention the final scream. Accompanied by the supposed Laura, Cooper finds Palmer's house now occupied by strangers. At this point, when we come back to the kind of FBI investigation which was the main narrative path of the earlier series, Cooper fails completely. However, his attitude indicates that this is unimportant or, at least, less important than the dream-like mood and structure. He gives up, slowly goes down the steps and walks along the street with Laura, before turning round, leaning forward, and asking the surprisingly simple question: "What year is this?" Then we hear a distant voice calling "Laura." In close-up, the supposed Laura screams, Cooper jumps and the house lights go out. This is the end of the last episode, abruptly broken by a kind of power cut, emphasizing the sublimity of this primal scream ... except after the credits, there is a shot of Laura whispering in Cooper's ear – perhaps there is hope for a future *TWIN PEAKS* sequel.

Episode 8 is probably the best of all the *TWIN PEAKS* series. It responds to Episode 29 in Series 2, entitled "Beyond Life and Death," like black responding to red. Among other meanings, in the Middle Ages, red evoked Christ's blood and Hell's fire; and as a symbol of darkness before the days of creation, black refers to primitive terror (Pastoureau 2016). The Black Lodge is in red and, in Episode 8, night-time terror covers the earth. It might also be considered the final explanation: in 1945, the first atomic bomb was detonated at White Sands, New Mexico at 5:29 a.m. This was accompanied, after the countdown, by Krzysztof Penderecki's *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima* (1960), as well as an abstract suite of color explosions, like fireworks. It explains,

among other enigmatic parts of Episode 8, the phantom-like woodsman occupied by Mr. C's body after he was shot, then terrifying a couple in a car, and killing people in a radio station (while we hear The Platters' *The Prayer*), and broadcasting a mysterious quasi-Biblical message: "This is the water. And this is the well. Drink full and descend. The horse is the white of the eyes and dark within," which causes listeners to faint.

But it does not explain Lynch's decision to develop a very special filmic idea and to extend it throughout the entire episode. Dream turns to nightmare, and the film turns abstract for a long, absolutely unusual, time. The TWIN PEAKS' audience does not faint, but is hypnotized by this never-ending nightmare, contemplating the night-time terror it represents. We could wonder how it is possible to do that in the context of TV production, but it is better to simply enjoy being led by image and music that gradually bring us to a mysterious state, as enigmatic as the dark electrified images of the gas station. I do not know of any film or series which has taken a filmic idea to such extremes, except Luis Buñuel's *THE DISCREET CHARM OF THE BOURGEOISIE* (1972), that we can consider one of the best examples of a film that dreams, especially the dream within a dream as filmic structuration.

"Dreaming is a second life" wrote Gérard de Nerval ([1855] 2001). If it means that a dream is real life reinterpreted, or another kind of life from the real one, it remains possible to distinguish reality and dream. In the cases of Buñuel and Lynch, dream representation is no longer supposed to occur in a real context from which it is distinguishable, because they develop dreams concretely; they develop them according to their proper mechanisms (sometimes called "dream work"), through the concreteness of filmic forms. Dream and reality become indistinguishable, so that fiction floats between them. The question is no longer the representation of a mental world, but the representation of the world as mental. Aesthetically, the mental or dream logic upon which the film depends is confirmed by values which we also find in films governed by a reality-diegesis, but with a very different purpose. The everyday has a role to play in the film that dreams: Coop's taste of coffee and cherry-pie are pleasures to be enjoyed every day; at the same time, these needs are so obsessional that we come to feel them as uncanny. Freud defined the uncanny as created "on the ground of common reality," and added:

By doing so [the writer] adopts all the conditions that apply to the emergence of a sense of the uncanny in normal experience [...]. But the writer can intensify and multiply this effect far beyond what is feasible in normal experience; in his stories he can make things happen that

one would never, or only rarely, experience in real life [...]. [H]e tricks us by promising us everyday reality and then going beyond it. (2003, n.p.)

We know the process of defamiliarizing by unusual repetition (whereas, as Shklovsky put it when he coined the concept of *ostranenie*, deautomatization also has the power to produce the same effect) (Shklovsky [1917] 1965; Van den Oever 2010). In dream film, some moments are highly differentiated from the sublime, as we have seen in the whole of Episode 8 or with Laura's scream at the end of Episode 18. But what is the sublime? Edmund Burke answers: "Whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror" (1909-1914, n.p.).

Another value, the grotesque, which seems very close to the everyday, interferes with it, thus emphasizing the ambiguous relationship between strangeness and the familiar. Many texts have been written on this topic, especially with regard to Lynch (McTaggart 2010; Mulvey 1996; Schneider 2004; Weishaar 2012). In fact, it is difficult to grapple with the subject at the end of this present chapter, but in my opinion "the grotesque and the sublime in TWIN PEAKS" would be an attractive issue to address in a future essay. Therefore, I wish to offer a few pointers here. Coop's gourmet obsession is somewhat grotesque, as is Gordon's way of talking loudly, or the way in which the Log Lady holds her precious piece of wood against her heart. In TWIN PEAKS, there are numerous examples of such small discrepancies disturbing everyday life. This kind of grotesque playing with familiarity, as a kind of unfamiliar familiarity, makes the viewer hesitate between laughing and feeling the uncanny. Film, as a dream, is a particular context in which the grotesque and the sublime may communicate or amalgamate without losing their strengths; in fact, they may reinforce each other. Among the former, the sheriff's Deputy, Andy Brennan (Harry Goaz), a Stanley Laurel figure, is a very sensitive grotesque character (a police officer who cries easily) who has a grotesque relationship with Lucy (Kimmy Robertson), the shrill-voiced immature Sheriff's Department receptionist. However, in Episode 14, he is literally transfigured by his passage through the Black Lodge. Coming to the woods with Frank, Hawk, and Bobby Briggs (Dana Ashbrook), having held the eyeless woman's hand, he is transported into the Black Lodge, where the Fireman shows him visions of many aspects of the story, including BOB, woodsmen, Laura, two Coopers, and himself. A grotesque figure becomes sublime. Even Lucy becomes mature on this occasion. And Lynch gives Andy the honor of welcoming Cooper and bringing him to his doppelgänger.

As I have tried to argue in this chapter, in TWIN PEAKS 3, this kind of reversibility not only deals with the routine of the fantastic (the simple

development of a special diegesis), but also with the dreamlike form that is the main characteristic of *the film that dreams* genre. Annie van den Oever asserts that “the experience of the grotesque [...] is not merely or exclusively a perceptual experience of grotesque (fused, hybrid, monstrous) beings; it is, more fundamentally, an experience of the distorting powers of the new technologies themselves effectively ‘working’ on the percipients in the perceptual process and destabilizing their notion of images, representations, beings and meanings” (2011, 101-102). In my opinion, it is relevant to extend this technical hypothesis to film form, conceived as a way of appropriating film technique through filmic ideas. If one tries to master TWIN PEAKS’ diegetic network and complex story without considering its special dreamlike form one will inevitably be disappointed.

Whether considered from the standpoint of story or technique, *the film that dreams* genre makes it possible to identify the series as a movie, justifying my quest for filmic ideas in TWIN PEAKS 3. “I’ve heard that you think of it as an 18-hour movie, not a series as such”: I recently discovered that Lynch has already replied to this interviewer’s remark:

I always saw working in television as the same as working on a film. *It is a film*. So when I shot the pilot for *Twin Peaks*, way back when, I just saw it as a short film. The pilot was not that short; it was a feature film, it just had an open ending. And the same thing goes with this – it’s a film. It’s broken into parts. (2017a)

Notes

1. Previously *The Man from Another Place*, played by Michael J. Anderson, in four episodes and in the prequel *FIRE WALK WITH ME* (1992).
2. Possible world semantics have been created in order to complete modal logic, i.e., logic of the possible and the necessary. Something is possible if it is true in one possible world, and it is necessary if it is true in all the possible worlds. About the logical background, see: Hughes and Cresswell (1972); about the application to story, see Eco (1979); Chateau (1976, 1983, 2015).
3. By the way, sight-sound dissociation is already in Eisenstein, Poudovkine, and Alexandrov’s “Statement on the Sound-film” (1928), a manifesto conceived as a weapon against the fascination that the introduction of sound, and especially word, might exert on the spectators: “The first experimental work with sound must be directed along the line of its distinct non-synchronization with the visual images” (Eisenstein 1949, 258).

4. Hence, recently, the idea to apply a neural network to planet discovery, "Artificial Intelligence, NASA Data Used to Discover Eighth Planet Circling Distant Star," <https://www.nasa.gov/press-release/artificial-intelligence-nasa-data-used-to-discover-eighth-planet-circling-distant-star>.
5. "Telestructures," or discontinuous structures are relations established between different parts of a film (or a novel) that constitute a narrative structure or present a structural analogy. See Chateau and Jost (1979).
6. Syntagmatic versus paradigmatic is a linguistic concept introduced into film theory by Christian Metz. It aims to distinguish the story choices related to the diegesis from the relationship between story parts that occur within the same filmic construction.
7. <http://www.denofgeek.com/uk/tv/twin-peaks/51236/twin-peaks-lynch-breaks-his-silence-on-season-4-possibility>.

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