Subverting Nostalgia in *Twin Peaks: The Return*

Resistance and the Television Revival

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Abstract

Twin Peaks (2017), also known as *Twin Peaks: The Return*, has a problematic relationship to its predecessor *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991). In this thesis, I argue that *The Return* represents the past by undermining a sense of pacifying nostalgia, instead highlighting the incongruity of its ostensible return. By performing a textual analysis of the series' representations of the past in its visuals and narrative, as well as its portrayal of returning characters, I argue for a reading of *The Return* as being resistant in its depiction of nostalgia, a theory developed by Vera Dika. By also discussing nostalgia in *The Return* in broader terms of serial television in general, and the 'revival' genre in particular, I position *The Return* as a metafictionally situated revival text.

Keywords: Twin Peaks: The Return (2017), Resistant nostalgia, Revival television, Nostalgia film, Vera Dika, David Lynch

Table of Contents

Introduction

The State of the Issue

Twin Peaks: The Return (2017, Showtime, referred to as *The Return*) has a problematic relationship to its predecessor. Instead of exploiting the nostalgic power inevitable for a beloved show that has been off the air for twenty-six years, *The Return* evidently goes out of its way to repeatedly undermine a sense of pacifying nostalgia, instead highlighting the incongruity of its ostensible return. *Twin Peaks*, and, indeed, all revivals of well-established television-programs are seemingly torn between on the one hand telling an original, autonomous story, and on the other satisfying viewers' expectations of returning to their favourite places and characters. If this conflict were to be represented as a spectrum, onto which all revivals could be situated, where would *The Return* be placed? In other words, what is the relation between *The Return* and nostalgia, and how does its status as a revival influence this relation? Though many familiar characters and settings from the original show (1990-1991, ABC) return in the revival, they are often represented with a sense of unfamiliarity, both to the spectators, but also in their own perception of the world. This undercuts the sense of familiarity and belonging one would expect in a 'return'. For example, the original show had a local setting: the idyllic North American town of Twin Peaks, Washington; *The Return*, in contrast, expands into a global setting, encompassing Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, New York City, Buenos Aires, Paris, and more. Another example is the main character FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) who only appears as his usual self in the last three episodes. The rest of the season he is trapped in a borderline catatonic state while his evil unhinged *doppelganger* runs loose.

If one is to assume that *Twin Peaks: The Return* undercuts its own nostalgic potential, how is this achieved and what are the implications of such an act on the text itself? I am not ready to proclaim that *The Return* is simply devoid of nostalgia, or even anti-nostalgic, since there are moments undeniably nostalgic in essence throughout the show (though they are far and few in between). I would also argue that it is a misplaced endeavour to decide whether or not the series *is* nostalgic. Such a polarized discussion would run the risk of missing the nuanced and multifaceted representations of the past in *The Return*, making any deeper understanding of nostalgic representation impossible. A more fruitful discussion lies in *how* it is nostalgic – that is, how it functions in relation to nostalgic concepts and representations of 'pastness'. I would suggest that *The Return* showcases what Vera Dika has called 'resistance'

in her discussion of nostalgia in film and art. Dika suggests that some 'nostalgia films' evoke past images, but juxtaposes these with a new context, thus creating a new, contemporary meaning.[1] In a similar way, I will suggest that *Twin Peaks: The Return* evokes its own past not to copy or re-present that past (as could be claimed of other revivals) but to create a narrative and meaning of its own. I believe that this signification can be grasped through close analysis of the text combined with the theoretical framework here mentioned and further outlined in following sections. I will also discuss *The Return*'s position as a revival-text – that is, a television program that returns after a period of time - exploring how the genre can be understood in terms of the logics of nostalgia; and, finally, proffering a reading of *The Return* as a metafictional revival series. The relevance of my research lies partly in my reading of *Twin Peaks: The Return*, offering an in-depth analysis of its relation to nostalgia – a relation that I argue is vital in understanding its formal, thematic and narrative logics. Also, my research will reveal how a text can offer resistance to nostalgic attachment, furthering the analytical work begun by Dika. Finally, I will consider generic aspects in my discussion, partaking in the limited academic discourse on the television revival.

Outline of Disposition

In the introduction chapter, I define the point of departure as being *Twin Peaks: The Return*'s seemingly problematic representations of its own past and the subversion of nostalgic attachment inherent in these representations. Firstly, in "The State of the Issue", I outline this central problem, suggesting how I will solve it and with what means. The next part is this section: "Outline of Disposition", where I elaborate on the structure I have chosen for presenting my thesis. In "Method and Presentation of Material", I expound upon the methods suggested in "The State of the Issue", touching upon the primary source, as well as the more important secondary sources. Some of these sources form the theoretical framework of the essay, which is the topic of the section titled "Theoretical Framework". Here I outline key definitions of nostalgia, as well as elaborate upon Dika's model of resistant nostalgia. "Previous Scholarship" is a comprehensive mapping of the field of *Twin Peaks*-scholarship. The general structure of this section is chronological, but I also identify thematic currents in the research. Additionally, I bring forth scholarship on the relationship between media and nostalgia that will be useful for my research.

[1] Vera Dika, *Recycled Culture in Contemporary Art and Film: The Uses of Nostalgia*, Cambridge: University Press 2003

The analysis chapter is divided into five parts, each focusing on different kinds of representations of the past in *The Return*. The first: "Teasing Nostalgic Attachment: Glimpses of 'Home'", looks at familiar signifiers in some of the first moments of *The Return*. This section also examines three different moments in the show that could be described as nostalgic, though this description is contested in two of these cases. The section "Familiar Faces of Strangers: Returning Characters" focuses on those characters (and actors) that return from the original *Twin Peaks*. The three subsections mainly focus on three different characters: The Log Lady (Catherine E. Coulson), FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper, and Audrey Horne (Sherilynn Fenn), each suggesting different representations of nostalgia. In the following section, "New Interpretations", I first describe an example of how *The Return* re-presents something from the original *Twin Peaks* in a new context, in turn creating a different meaning than the original signification. The section then looks at the most extreme cases of these – the ending of the series, part eight's revelation of historical background, and the portrayal of Sarah Palmer (Grace Zabriskie) - where the relationship to the original *Twin Peaks* and history itself is challenged. Finally, in the last section of the analysis chapter, "Nostalgia as Void: Serial Television and the 'Revival'", I take a step back and consider the medial aspect of nostalgia in terms of serial television and the genre of television revivals; I also suggest a reading of *The Return* as a metafictionally positioned revival text.

The concluding discussion summarizes the main points I have argued for in looking at *The Return*'s representation of nostalgia, while also discussing the results in a broader context. I finally suggest further possibilities for research.

Method and Presentation of Material

I will employ textual analysis to break down the series into formal elements which will then be scrutinized. This will enable me to expose narrative and stylistic elements that reveal something of *The Return*'s position as a revival of an already existing text. These elements will be analysed closely and discussed through the lens of resistant nostalgia – a theory developed by Vera Dika – as well as their function and composition as representations of the past in general.

The prime material for my research will be the eighteen parts of *Twin Peaks: The Return* (2017). Since I will discuss its position in relation to the earlier iterations – *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991) and the feature film *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* (1992, dir. David Lynch) - I will also mention these when deemed necessary, though not performing any deeper analysis of these works. According to David Lynch, co-creator, co-writer, and director of all episodes, the

new series is to be understood as a "feature film in 18 parts".[2] Therefore, I will mainly use the term 'part' when discussing *The Return*, while sometimes using 'episode' when the alternative would be confusing.

With a show whose narrative is shrouded in ontological ambiguity, a discussion on some interpretive strategies seems vital in order to reach an understanding of its formal, narrative, and thematical connections to nostalgia. Also, the vast number of new insights that *The Return* reveals of the world of *Twin Peaks* naturally requires a reassessment of the original text, especially if the newer text, as I argue, displays a detached and almost suspicious stance in relation to its predecessor. Therefore, I will sometimes suggest interpretations of the text, stating this when done so. In ambiguous cases, I might for instance describe events formally, and then follow up with different (and sometimes opposing) interpretations. This is done to outline the new contexts given by *The Return* in which those older signifiers of *Twin Peaks* circulate.

The theoretical considerations of my thesis will mainly rely upon Vera Dika's book *Recycled Culture in Contemporary Art and Film: The Uses of Nostalgia* (2003). My choice of textual analysis is guided by Dika's own work with analysing visual material, as well as her assessment that "[t]he significance of the film image is tied to its narrative context, […] when that image is extracted from its sequence, it loses its grounding".[3] Textual analysis will thus enable me to expose these contexts and explore the fluctuating meanings between texts.

When discussing the connections between the generic form of revival television and nostalgia, I will employ the anthology edited by Katherine Niemeyer called: *Media and Nostalgia: Yearning for the Past, Present and Future*,[4] in particular Niemeyer's own chapter, written together with Daniela Wentz: "Nostalgia Is Not What It Used to Be: Serial Nostalgia and Nostalgic Television Series".[5]

Theoretical framework

Though initially conceptualized as a spatialized yearning for home, 'nostalgia' evolved to be primarily understood as operating through temporal logics, where anxieties over time's passing

[2] David Lynch, interview by Jeff Jensen, "Peaks n' Freaks", *Entertainment Weekly*, 31 March 2017, p. 23
[3] Dika, p. 20
[4] Katharina Niemeyer edt., *Media and Nostalgia: Yearning for the Past, Present and Future*, London: Palgrave Macmillan 2014
[5] Katharina Niemeyer and Daniela Wentz, "Nostalgia Is Not What It Used to Be: Serial Nostalgia and Nostalgic Television Series", in Niemeyer (edt.), pp. 129-138

in general, and the disappointing present in particular, yielded a desire to return to an irretrievable idealized past.[6]

Scholars like Susan Sontag has identified an intensification of nostalgic yearning connected to the dissemination of new media forms – like printing, photography, and television. Each of these media exhibited the past back onto the public, creating a new conception of the 'disappearing past'.[7] Also looking at the collective aspects of mediatised nostalgia, Ekaterina Kalinina, argued that the development of collectively mediated returns to the past signified a new type of social phenomenon.[8] This reflects the movement within media studies towards a conceptualization of nostalgia as a collective or individual act - 'nostalgizing'.[9] Nostalgia is thus associated with media, particularly mediated representations of the past.

Fredric Jameson saw a shallow consumer-oriented nostalgia in western culture in the late twentieth century, which undermined the historicity of that society and its population. The increasing commodity production of the 1980s and 1990s had encompassed aesthetic production as well, leading to a new 'cultural dominant' – postmodernism.[10] One of many constitutive features of postmodern culture are the weakening of historicity, both in terms of public history, but also in terms of personal temporality; a new emotional ground tone which Jameson terms "intensities".[11] In the ninth chapter of Jameson's book *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Jameson identifies the 'nostalgia film', a term designating historicist films that "are in no way to be grasped as passionate expressions of that older longing once called nostalgia".[12] Rather, nostalgia films "instead approache[s] the 'past' through stylistic connotation, conveying 'pastness' by the glossy qualities of the image", for example employing fashion as a significant marker of a certain period.[13] Taking the 1950s as an example, Jameson argues that there has occurred a shift from the reality of that period

> to the representation of that rather different thing, the 'fifties,' a shift which obligates us in addition to underscore the cultural sources of all the attributes with which we have endowed the

[6] Tyler S. Rife and Ashley N. Wheeler, "'I'll see you again in 25 years': doppelganging nostalgia & *Twin Peaks: The Return*", *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 2020 37:5, p. 426
[7] Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, London: Allen Lane 1977, p. 67: cited in Rife and Wheeler, p. 426
[8] Ekaterina Kalinina, "What do we talk about when we talk about media and nostalgia", *Medien & Zeit*, 2016 31:4, p. 7: cited in Rife and Wheeler, p. 426
[9] Katharina Niemeyer, "Introduction: Media and Nostalgia", in Niemeyer (edt.), pp. 1-23
[10] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism: or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, London: Verso 1991, pp. 4-5
[11] Ibid., p. 6
[12] Ibid., p. xvii
[13] Ibid., p. 19

> period, many of which seem very precisely to derive from its own television programs; in other words, its own representation of itself.[14]

The consequence of this shift is that our own historical moment is undermined, since, Jameson argues, rather than being a representation of the past, historicity can first and foremost be understood as a perception of the present as history: "a relationship to the present which somehow defamiliarizes it and allows us that distance from immediacy which is at length characterized as a historical perspective."[15] This process becomes more difficult when our understanding of the past consists of stereotypes and stylistic conventions, and thus we are separated from our collective and personal historical moment.[16] Jameson does however acknowledge the possibility of nostalgia films dealing with the past in allegorical terms, trying to reach a deeper understanding of the present as a result of the past, and attempting to 'break free', as it were, from the confines of un-historicity. In the end, this endeavour for understanding is doomed to fail however, since, despite the fact that some nostalgia films[17] "show a collective unconscious in the process of trying to identify its own present", they also "illuminate the failure of this attempt, which seems to reduce itself to the recombination of various stereotypes of the past".[18]

Departing from the broad theory of postmodern nostalgia, Vera Dika has attempted to explore and develop a practice which involves analysing film and art that 'resist' the cultural pull to the past. Whereas Jameson suggested that "[o]nly by means of violent formal and narrative dislocation could a narrative apparatus" restore our "capacity to organize and live time historically"[19], Dika instead asks "*how* this [narrative dislocation] might be accomplished in practice and to what extent such an effect could be attained".[20] Analysing films from the 1970s to the 1990s (the scope of which suggests that the narrative dislocation sought by Jameson was there all along), Dika argues that films like *The Conformist* (1970, dir. Bernardo Bertolucci), *Badlands* (1973, dir. Terrence Malick), and *American Graffiti* (1973, dir. George Lucas), "although referring to the past, destabilizes it in service of the present, and consequently tells stories that are very much [their] own."[21] Relying on Roland Barthes' elaborations on

[14] Ibid., p. 281
[15] Ibid., p. 284
[16] Ibid.
[17] Jameson mentions *Something Wild*, dir. Jonathan Demme, and *Blue Velvet*, dir. David Lynch, both released in 1986.
[18] Ibid., p. 296
[19] Ibid., p. 284
[20] Dika, p. 2
[21] Ibid., p. 21

'myth' and its components, Dika suggests that some films use a strategy of "double exposure between the copy and the new context"[22] which ruptures the established coded system and creates a new signification. For example, Dika talks about the similarity of Martin Sheen's character in *Badlands* (a film evoking the 1950s) to that of film star James Dean:

> The allusions to James Dean in *Badlands*, however, is not meant to ridicule the original star, nor is it meant to blankly re-present his image, as might be the effect of other copies. Instead, this Dean replica is set in a new historical context. The 1960s had irrevocably damaged the American innocence and vigour James Dean once signified. *Badlands* thus evokes a marginalized James Dean, one whose profession is that of garbage man, and whose rebel status is transformed to that of sociopath.[23]

Thus, in this example, the signification has changed from that originally associated with 1950s James Dean, to a new contemporary meaning which is enabled, as Dika highlights, by the historical knowledge and hindsight held by the audience of 1973 (and later).

The act of resistance is understood in terms of Roland Barthes' description of myth. In *Mythologies*, Barthes evokes the term 'myth' to describe all forms of cultural expression, composed of a specific society's culturally coded material. Barthes divides the cultural material (the formal components of the myth) into three categories. These are the signifier, the signified, and the signification. The signifier constitutes the manifest content, while the signified is composed of the latent content. "The signification is subsequently the myth['s] meaning, one that results from the combination of the signifier and the signified, the interrelationship of manifest and latent content."[24] However, myth also carries with it ideology, the unconscious meaning inherent in cultural expression. To counter this, Barthes initially proffers the 'artificial myth' which, by reconstituting its signifying elements, unmasks myth.[25] This train of thought is revised by Barthes however in "Change the Object Itself" (1971), since the 'artificial myth' has become conventional.

> It is no longer the myths which need to be unmasked (the doxa has taken care of that), it is the sign itself which must be shaken; the problem is not to reveal the (latent) meaning

[22] Ibid., p. 14
[23] Ibid., pp. 58-59
[24] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, New York: Hill and Wang 1977 (first pub. 1957), p. 135: cited in Dika, pp. 11-12
[25] Ibid.

> of an utterance, of a trait, of a narrative, but to fissure the very representation of meaning, is not to change or purify the symbols, but to change the symbolic itself.[26]

The fissure of representational meaning is vital to Dika's understanding of resistant nostalgia. In the example of *Badlands*, this fissure is an effect resulting from the juxtapositioning of 1950s/James Dean imagery, the social adversities and indifference of its main characters, and the disillusionment of its (post 1960s) historical moment.

By looking at nostalgic expressions through the lens of resistance, I am hopeful in revealing *The Return*'s engagement with its past, the nature of which most people, I think, instinctively deem as problematic or strained. My hope is thus that Dika's framework will reveal how nostalgia is expressed through narrative and formal means, while also enabling a deeper understanding of *The Return*'s relation to its predecessor. Several scholars have utilized this way of looking at nostalgic films,[27] though there have been voiced concerns that Dika is too medium-specific in her analysis,[28] employing a "cinematic point of view"[29]. Finally, then, by bringing the media perspective of the revival series into my analysis of a resistant text, I aim to bridge the gap between the textually oriented Dika and broader considerations of media and mediality.

Previous Scholarship

A lot has been written on *Twin Peaks*. Therefore, I devote this section to map out this broad field. The works are presented in a broad chronological structure, while also mentioning thematic currents. The main fields of research touch upon aspects of media/television, representation, genre, spectatorship, and authorship.

In 1993, David Lavery introduced a special issue of *Literature/Film Quarterly* devoted to the, by then, dead and buried, *Twin Peaks*.[30] The guest editorial commenced by stating that:

[26] Roland Barthes, "Change the Object Itself", *Image, Music, Text*, New York: Hill and Wang 1977: cited in Dika, p. 12
[27] e.g., Rife and Wheeler; Kristian Jared Robinson, "For Those of You Just Swinging In: A study of intertextuality, allusion and adaptation in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*", *Film International*, 2020 18:3, pp. 101-113
[28] Niemeyer, p. 7
[29] Morena La Barba, "Creative Nostalgia for an Imagined Better Future: *Il treno del Sud* by the Migrant Filmmaker Alvaro Bizzari", in Niemeyer, p. 180
[30] David Lavery, *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 1993 21:4, pp. 237-306

> As the most talked about series in recent memory, as a mass communication cult phenomenon, as a prominent director's first venture into television, *Twin Peaks* presents for film and television critics and theorists a fascinating subject of investigation, raising complex and profound questions about the nature and function of television in the nineties.[31]

Indeed, *Twin Peaks* quickly spawned scholarly interest, that, in the early 1990s, tended to discuss what Lavery referred to as the "the nature and function of television". Some of the earliest research dealt with genre, like Mark J. Charney's article "Invitation to Love: The Influence of Soap Opera on David Lynch's 'Twin Peaks'",[32] Brad Chisholm's "Difficult Viewing: The Pleasures of Complex Screen Narratives",[33] or Tony Giffone's "*Twin Peaks* as Post-Modernist Parody: David Lynch's Subversion of the British Detective Narrative".[34] Jim Collins discussed the relationship between television and postmodernism in a seminal article, a discussion in which *Twin Peaks* had a central role. He argued that if the postmodern condition is to be understood as a subjective negotiation of signs and subject positions, "*Twin Peaks* and other forms of hyperconscious popular culture address themselves directly to this condition, situating themselves exactly in the arcs and gaps that result when these positions don't coalesce."[35] The assessment of *Twin Peaks* as a postmodern text was very impactful and this perspective has been further explored by a number of scholars, for instance by Theresa Geller in her article "Deconstructing Postmodern Television in *Twin Peaks*". Geller explores a feminist postmodern perspective, reaching the conclusion that the investigation of Laura Palmer's murder is an investigation of patriarchy that "cannot follow phallogocentric, hegemonic discourse; instead, the 'truth' lies in the alternative and feminized discourses represented in non-Western, and specifically colonized traditions".[36]

Geller's analysis exemplifies the trend of *Twin Peaks*-research (most likely provoked by its unorthodox representational strategies) that looks at the representation of events

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[31] David Lavery, "Guest Editorial: Peaked Out", *Literature/Film Quarterly*, edt. David Lavery, 1993 21:4, pp. 239, 305
[32] Mark J. Charney, "Invitation to Love: The Influence of Soap Opera on David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*", *Studies in Popular Culture*, 1991 14:1, pp. 53-59
[33] Brad Chisholm, "Difficult Viewing: The Pleasures of Complex Screen Narratives", *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 1991 8:4, pp. 389-403
[34] Tony Giffone, "*Twin Peaks* as Post-Modernist Parody, David Lynch's Subversion of the British Detective Narrative", *The Mid-Atlantic Almanac: The Journal of the Mid-Atlantic Popular/American Culture Association*, 1992 1, pp. 53-60
[35] Jim Collins, "Television and Postmodernism", *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled: Television and Contemporary Criticism*, (2nd edn.) edt. Robert D. Allen, London: Routledge 1992, pp. 327-351
[36] Theresa Geller, "Deconstructing Postmodern Television in *Twin Peaks*", *The Spectator*, 1992 12:2, p. 69

and subjects in *Twin Peaks*.[37] Thus, interpretive strategy has occupied much of the discourse. A sub-category of this is the use of a psychoanalytical lens to scrutinize *Twin Peaks*. This was done by Martha P. Nochimson who highlighted the show's relationship to Film Noir. Her article "Desire under the Douglas Firs Entering the Body of Reality in *Twin Peaks*" was the first of many that applied psychoanalytical concepts upon *Twin Peaks*.[38] Her article was formative of future discourse, and the psychoanalytical perspective has become a staple of *Twin Peaks*-research.[39]

The already mentioned *Literature/Film Quarterly*-issue is a testament to the vitality of *Twin Peaks* as an object of study even after it was cancelled. The issue was edited by David Lavery and contains eight articles discussing *Twin Peaks* in terms of spectatorship, literature, feminism, narrative, American myth, and class.[40] Of these, Michael Carrol's "Agent Cooper's Errand in the Wilderness: *Twin Peaks* and American Mythology" has resonated most, highlighting the show's perpetrating stereotypes associated with the mythology of the American frontier (BOB [Frank Silva] as 'evil Indian', Deputy Hawk [Michael Horse] as 'noble savage', etc.).[41] Lavery would go on to edit the first academic monography on *Twin Peaks* in 1995 called *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to 'Twin Peaks'*. The book is a collection of thirteen critical papers on the series, covering areas such as spectatorship and cult watching, art and politics, production history and its influence on the text, the fantastic, music, feminism, genre, deconstruction, and postmodernism.[42]

In the 2000s, academic research on *Twin Peaks* declined, although producing the occasional article, many of which explored similar aspects as their predecessors. For instance, Kristin Thompson dedicates one chapter in her book *Storytelling in Film and Television* to David Lynch and *Twin Peaks*, where she considers *Twin Peaks* a postmodern narrative,[43] whereas Adrian Page calls it a "postmodern drama" in Glen Creeber's *The Television Genre*

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[37] e.g., Helen Deutsch, "'Is It Easier to Believe?': Narrative Innocence from *Clarissa* to *Twin Peaks*", *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature*, 1993 49:2, pp. 137-158; Greta Ai-yu Niu, "Consuming Asian Women: The Fluid Body of Josie Packard in *Twin Peaks*", *Engaging Texts: Essays in Chinese Comparative Literature and Culture*, edt. Yingjin Zhang, Stanford: University Press 1998, pp. 110-129

[38] Martha P. Nochimson, "Desire under the Douglas Firs: Entering the Body of Reality in *Twin Peaks*", *Film Quarterly*, 1992.1993 46:2, pp. 22-34

[39] e.g., Samuel Kimball, "'Into the Light Leland, Into the Light': Emerson, Oedipus, and the Blindness of Male Desire in David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*" *Genders*, 1993 16

[40] *Literature/Film Quarterly*, edt. David Lavery, 1993 21:4, pp. 237-306

[41] Michael Carrol, "Agent Cooper's Errand in the Wilderness: *Twin Peaks* and American Mythology", *Literature/Film Quarterly*, edt. David Lavery, 1993 21:4, pp. 287-295

[42] David Lavery edt., *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to 'Twin Peaks'*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1995

[43] Kristin Thompson, "The Strange Cases of David Lynch", *Storytelling in Film and Television*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2003, pp. 106-140

Book.[44] The Noir-perspective was further explored by John Richardson in "Laura and Twin Peaks: Postmodern Parody and the Musical Reconstruction of the Absent Femme Fatale",[45] as well as Jason Holt's "*Twin Peaks*, Noir and Open Interpretation".[46] The relationship between *Twin Peaks* and gothic literature was further discussed, although being brought into a broader consideration of television in Helen Wheatley's *Gothic Television*.[47] Speaking of genre, Linda Ruth Williams sees *Twin Peaks* as mixing genres in "*Twin Peaks*: David Lynch and the Serial-Thriller Soap",[48] whereas Rhonda Wilcox argues for the series' resistance to generic classification at all in "Beyond the Borders: Living on (the) Edge in *Twin Peaks*".[49] More consideration has also been given to the influence of surrealism on the series, such as Glen Creeber's "'Some Strange and Twisted Dream': The Neglected Surrealism of *Twin Peaks*",[50] Simon Riches' "Intuition and Investigation into Another Place: The Epistemological Role of Dreaming in *Twin Peaks* and Beyond",[51] and Lorna Jowett and Stacey Abott's *TV Horror: Investigating the Dark Side of the Small Screen*.[52] The nature of domestic violence in the narrative and its effects have continued to be discussed by Renée Tobe in "Frightening and Familiar: David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* and the North American Suburb",[53] and also in Christy Desmet's article "'Ding Dong the Witch is Dead': Postmodern Families in *Wild at Heart* and *Twin Peaks*".[54] Thus, in this period, one can identify a preoccupation with generic definition of *Twin Peaks*, while many discussions still tended to move towards representational perspectives.

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[44] Adrian Page, "Twin Peaks", *The Television Genre Book*, 2nd edition, edt. Glen Creeber, Toby Miller, and John Tulloch, London: BFI Publishing 2008, p. 55

[45] John Richardson, "Laura and *Twin Peaks*: Postmodern Parody and the Musical Reconstruction of the Absent Femme Fatale", *The Cinema of David Lynch*, edt. Erica Sheen and Annette Davison, London: Wallflower, 2004, pp. 77-92

[46] Jason Holt, "*Twin Peaks*, Noir, and Open Interpretation", *The Philosophy of TV Noir*, edt. Steven Sanders and Aeon J. Skoble, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky 2008, pp. 247-60

[47] Helen Wheatley, *Gothic Television*, Manchester: University Press 2006

[48] Linda Ruth Williams, "*Twin Peaks*: David Lynch and the Serial-Thriller Soap", *The Contemporary Television Series*, edt. Michael Hammond and Lucy Mazdon, Edinburgh: University Press 2005, pp. 37-56

[49] Rhonda Wilcrox, "Beyond the Borders: Living on (the) Edge in *Twin Peaks*", *'Twin Peaks' in the Rearview Mirror: Appraisals and Reappraisals of the Show That Was Supposed to Change TV*, edt. John Thorne, Craig Miller, and David Lavery, n.p. 2012, Kindle file

[50] Glen Creeber, "'Some Strange and Twisted Dream': The Neglected Surrealism of *Twin Peaks*", in Thorne, Miller, and Lavery edt.

[51] Simon Riches, "Intuition and Investigation into Another Place: The Epistemological Role of Dreaming in *Twin Peaks* and Beyond", *The Philosophy of David Lynch*, edt. William J. Devlin and Shai Biderman, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky 2011, pp. 25-43

[52] Lorna Jowett and Stacey Abbott, *TV Horror: Investigating the Dark Side of the Small Screen*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2013

[53] Renée Tobe, "Frightening and Familiar: David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* and the North American Suburb", *Visual Culture and Tourism*, edt. David Crouch and Nina Lübbren, Oxford: Berg 2003, pp. 241-57

[54] Christy Desmet, "'Ding Dong the Witch is Dead': Postmodern Families in *Wild at Heart* and *Twin Peaks*", in Thorne, Miller, and Lavery edt.

According to Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, who along with Catherine Spooner edited the monography *Return to 'Twin Peaks': New Approaches to Materiality, Theory, and Genre on Television*, "recent considerations of the series have tended in large measure to come in the course of more general discussions of Lynch's body of work or considerations of 'cult TV' and fan practices."[55] This was certainly the case in 2016 when the book was published, but also earlier.[56] Interestingly enough, Weinstock points out that *Twin Peaks* as a TV series is omitted from discussion in two monographies on David Lynch: Todd McGowan's *The Impossible David Lynch* (2007) and Allister MacTaggart's *The Film Paintings of David Lynch* (2010). Both books do however mention the feature film *Fire Walk with Me*.[57] This suggests a lingering preference of the concept of authorship in cinema as compared to television. In any case, the research is evidence of the auteurist vein of *Twin Peaks*-discourse, almost exclusively devoted to David Lynch's impact on the series and its position in his *oevre*. *Twin Peaks* is thus deeply embedded in a paradigm of authorship, in which David Lynch is often regarded as creator, even though it was a cooperative effort by Lynch and Mark Frost.

Weinstock and Spooner's book *Return to Twin Peaks* in 2016 coincides with an increase in academic interest in *Twin Peaks*, along with the news on Twitter that David Lynch and Mark Frost were working on a continuation of the series. Realistically, of course, many works published in 2016 could not have been written in such short time. Therefore, other reasons for the increase in interest can perhaps be explained by the series re-release on Blu-ray in July 2014 and the (intra-textually influenced) 25th anniversary, also in 2014. Weinstock's own chapter, "Wondrous and Strange: The Matter of *Twin Peaks*", explores the role of objects within the world of *Twin Peaks*, them being resistant to the traditional "order of things" as well as transcending the division between sentient/non-sentient.[58] Martha P. Nochimson also contributes a chapter: "Substance Abuse: Special Agent Dale Cooper, 'What's the Matter?'"; an article exploring the ontology of *Twin Peaks*.[59] Sherryl Vint brings the concept of

[55] Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, "Introduction. 'It is Happening Again': New Reflections on *Twin Peaks*", *Return to 'Twin Peaks': New Approaches to Materiality, Theory, and Genre on Television*, edt. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock and Catherine Spooner, London: Palgrave Macmillan 2016, p. 9
[56] e.g., Kenneth C. Kaleta, *David Lynch*, Woodbridge: Twayne Publishers 1992; Michel Chion, *David Lynch*, London: BFI Publishing 1995; Martha P. Nochimson, *The Passion of David Lynch: Wild at Heart in Hollywood*, Austin: University of Texas Press 1997; Jeff Johnson, *Pervert in the Pulprit: Morality in the Works of David Lynch*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company 2004; Anthony Todd, *Authorship and the Films of David Lynch: Aesthetic Receptions in Contemporary Hollywood*, London: I.B. Tauris 2012
[57] Weinstock, p. 13
[58] Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, "Wondrous and Strange: The Matter of *Twin Peaks*", in Weinstock and Spooner pp. 29-46
[59] Martha P. Nochimson, "Substance Abuse: Special Agent Dale Cooper, 'What's the Matter?'", in Weinstock and Spooner, pp. 47-70

ecocriticism and animal studies into the domain of *Twin Peaks*-scholarship[60], whereas Lorna Piatti-Farnell and Catherine Spooner discuss food and clothing respectively.[61] Lacanian psychoanalysis is explored in two chapters of the book: Eric Savoy's "Jacques Lacan, Walk with Me: On the Letter"[62], and Todd McGowan's "Lodged in a Fantasy Space: *Twin Peaks* and Hidden Obscenities",[63] continuing the tradition of psychoanalytical perspectives in *Twin Peaks* research. The series' connection to the science-fiction genre is discussed by J. P. Telotte in "'Complementary Verses': The Science Fiction of *Twin Peaks*",[64] whereas Stacey Abbott uses *Twin Peaks* as a case study to explore the director function within TV productions.[65] Matt Hills, on the other hand, explores the various paratexts that were released in connection to the show[66], and Lorna Jowett talks about the various parodies, homages and mashups that the series has spawned.[67] Finally, Linnie Blake brings back the discussion of postmodernism but with a contemporary hindsight, focusing on neoliberal discourse.[68] Other articles published that year were, amongst others, Geoff Bill's "Tensions in the World of Moon: *Twin Peaks*, Indigeneity and Territoriality", concerned with the representation of Native American characters, drawing upon Michael Carrol's article from 1993.[69] Ross Garner authored two published articles in 2016. The first one, "'The Series That Changed Television'?: *Twin Peaks*, 'Classic' Status, and Temporal Capital", talks about the industrial positioning of "classic" television, challenging text-based understandings.[70] The discourse of canonization is also discussed by Dana Och, although with a gender perspective, in "All Laura Palmer's Children: *Twin Peaks* and

[60] Sherryl Vint, "'The Owls Are Not What They Seem': Animals and Nature in *Twin Peaks*", in Weinstock and Spooner, pp. 71-86
[61] Lorna Piatti-Farnell, "'That Cherry Pie is Worth a Stop': Food and Spaces of Consumption in *Twin Peaks*", in Weinstock and Spooner, pp. 87-104; Catherine Spooner, "'Wrapped in Plastic': David Lynch's Material Girls", in Weinstock and Spooner, pp. 105-120
[62] Eric Savoy, "Jacques Lacan, Walk with Me: On the Letter", in Weinstock and Spooner, pp. 123-142
[63] Todd McGowan, "Lodged in a Fantasy Space: *Twin Peaks* and Hidden Obscentities", in Weinstock and Spooner, pp. 143-157
[64] J. P. Telotte, "'Complementary Verses': The Science Fiction of *Twin Peaks*", in Weinstock and Spooner, pp. 161-174
[65] Stacey Abbott, "'Doing Weird Things for the Sake of Being Weird': Directing *Twin Peaks*", in Weinstock and Spooner, pp. 175-192
[66] Matt Hills, "'I'll See You Again in 25 Years': Paratextually Re-commodifying and Revisiting Anniversary *Twin Peaks*", in Weinstock and Spooner, pp. 193-210
[67] Lorna Jowett, "Nightmare in Red? *Twin Peaks* Parody, Homage, Intertextuality, and Mashup", in Weinstock and Spooner, pp. 211-228
[68] Linnie Blake, "Trapped in the Hysterical Sublime: *Twin Peaks*, Postmodernism, and the Neoliberal Now", in Weinstock and Spooner, pp. 229-245
[69] Geoff Bill, "Tensions in the World of Moon: *Twin Peaks*, Indigeneity and Territoriality", *Senses of Cinema*, 2016 79, http://www.sensesofcinema.com/2016/twin-peaks/twin-peaks-indigeneity-territoriality/ (retrieved May 25 2021)
[70] Ross Garner, "'The Series That Changed Television'?: *Twin Peaks*, 'Classic' Status, and Temporal Capital", *Cinema Journal*, 2016 55:3, pp. 137-142

Gendering the Discourse of Influence".[71] Garner's second article is a unique study of the "dispersed anniversary" of *Twin Peaks* in 2014, exploring a process that "originated from a range of nebulously-connected statements originating in journalistic discourse before becoming appropriated by official marketing strategies".[72] Karra Shimabukuro explores the folkloric connotations of the series in "The Mystery of the Woods: *Twin Peaks* and the Folkloric Forest",[73] and Rebecca Williams talks about the series' social media afterlife in "Ontological Security, Authorship, and Resurrection: Exploring *Twin Peaks*' Social Media Afterlife".[74] Finally, Stephen Lacey explores performance styles in "Just Plain *Odd*: Some Thoughts on Performance Styles in *Twin Peaks*".[75]

Even though many of the articles published in this period employ similar strategies as earlier research, the increase in quantity suggests a newfound interest in *Twin Peaks*, one that has endured in spite of it being, by television standards, an old program. As is to be seen with the release of *The Return*, academic interest increased further.

Research regarding *The Return*

Since the release of *The Return*, several works have been published specifically concerning the new season, focusing on disparate parts and themes, and being grounded in different schools of thought. Walter Metz's article "The Atomic Gambit of *Twin Peaks: The Return*" discusses *The Return*'s portrayal of atomic weapons, discussing the implications of this in a context of American history and myth.[76] A similar context is used by Rob E. King in "The Horse is the White of the Eye: Pioneering and the American Southwest in *Twin Peaks*", though broadening the objects of study to "imagery of the American Southwest and its history in the transmedia of David Lynch and Mark Frost's *Twin Peaks*"[77].

Concerning genre, *The Return* has engendered a similar discourse as its predecessor, while not adequately considering its position as a revival text within this discourse.

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[71] Dana Och, "All Laura Palmer's Children: *Twin Peaks* and Gendering the Discourse of Influence", *Cinema Journal*, 2016 55:3, pp. 131-136
[72] Ross Garner, "'It Is Happening Again': Paratextuality, 'Quality' and Nostalgia in *Twin Peaks*'s Dispersed Anniversary", *International Journal of TV Serial Narratives*, 2016 11:2, p. 41
[73] Karra Shimabukuro, "The Mystery of the Woods: *Twin Peaks* and the Folkloric Forest", *Cinema Journal*, 2016 55:3, pp. 121-125
[74] Rebecca Williams, "Ontological Security, Authorship, and Resurrection: Exploring *Twin Peaks*' Social Media Afterlife", *Cinema Journal*, 2016 55:3, pp. 143-147
[75] Stephen Lacey, "Just Plain *Odd*: Some Thoughts on Performance Styles in *Twin Peaks*", *Cinema Journal*, 2016 55:3, pp. 126-131
[76] Walter Metz, "The Atomic Gambit of *Twin Peaks: The Return*", *Film Criticism*, 2017 41:3
[77] Rob E. King, "The Horse it the White of the Eye: Pioneering and the American Southwest in *Twin Peaks*", *New American Notes Online* (*NANO*), 2020 issue 15, https://nanocrit.com/issues/issue15/The-Horse-is-the-White-of-the-Eye-Pioneering-and-the-American-Southwest-in-Twin-Peaks (retrieved May 25 2021)

Lindsay Hallam examines the new series in terms of horror genre conventions in "'Drink Full and Descend': The Horror of *Twin Peaks: The Return*",[78] whereas Paul Muhlhauser and Robert Kachur discusses the gothic in "Listening to the Log: Gothic Awkwardness and *Twin Peaks*" (2017).[79] Wayne State University has also published a short monography on *Twin Peaks* as part of their 'TV Milestone Series'. Edited by Julie Grossman and Will Scheibel, the book discusses both the original series and the new season in an exploration of "the influences of melodrama and film noir, the significance around the idea of 'home,' as well as female trauma and agency."[80] They also touch upon performances and storytelling history. Evidently, the genre perspective has been prevalent in academic discourse since *Twin Peaks* was first aired. This lingering preoccupation with generic analysis reveals a promising field of study. However, in the case of *The Return*, the discourse of genre has tended to stay within those concepts that were present from the beginning (melodrama, noir, the gothic, etc.). As a result of this, a comprehensive discussion of its status within the revival genre has been lacking. This is something that I which to shed light upon in my analysis.

The media perspective is one discussed by several authors as well. It is the object of Carlotta Susca's two articles published in 2018. The first article takes *Twin Peaks* as its object of study, relating this to a broader perspective of television's evolution from multichannel era to the digital era,[81] and the second asserts television as the main narrative genre of the audiovisual era, with *Twin Peaks* as a complex narrative significant of that genre.[82] Susca states that the complex narrative in turn requires "a competent audience that is committed to a united hermeneutic effort."[83] The phenomenon of fan interpretation and reaction has been the object of several studies on *The Return*. Jake Pitre maps the reception amongst fans of *The Return* in "Fan Reactions to *The Leftovers* and *Twin Peaks: The Return*".[84] David McAvoy considers *The Return* to be a case of 'trolling' of its own audience in "'Is It About the Bunny?

[78] Lindsay Hallam, "'Drink Full and Descend': The Horror of *Twin Peaks: The Return*", *New American Notes Online* (*NANO*), 2020 issue 15, https://nanocrit.com/issues/issue15/Drink-Full-and-Descend-The-Horror-of-Twin-Peaks-The-Return (retrieved May 25 2021)
[79] Paul Muhlhauser and Robert Kachur, "Listening to the Log: Gothic Awkwardness and *Twin Peaks*", *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 2017 50:5, pp. 929-948
[80] Julie Grossman and Will Scheibel, *Twin Peaks*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press 2020, back cover
[81] Carlotta Susca, "'When You See Me Again, It Won't Be Me': *Twin Peaks* from the Multichannel Era to the Digital Era, *International Journal of TV Serial Narratives*, 2018 4:2, pp. 103-110
[82] Carlotta Susca, "Technical Constraints and TV Series as the Main Narrative Genre of the Audiovisual Era" *Comparatismi*, 2018 3, pp. 175-184
[83] Ibid., p. 175
[84] Jake Pitre, "Fan Reactions to *The Leftovers* and *Twin Peaks: The Return*", *Transformative Works and Cultures*, 2018 26, https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2018.1300

No, It's Not About the Bunny!': David Lynch's Fandom and Trolling of Peak TV Audiences".[85] Pitre's article was published in *Critical Essays on Twin Peaks: The Return* in 2019, the first and only monography focusing on *The Return*. The book was edited by Antonio Sanna. Brigid Cherry discusses the various memes inspired by *The Return* in said book, using them to interpret the show[86], similar to what Lorna Jowett did with the original series. Jeffrey Fallis and Kyle T. King discusses fandom in relation to technology, arguing in "Lucy Finally Understands How Cellphones Work: Ambiguous Digital Technologies in Twin Peaks: The Return and Its Fan Communities" that, for Lynch and Frost, technology expanded engagement with the fans, while also presenting new difficulties.[87] Different media perspectives are discussed by, amongst others, Allister MacTaggart who examines the role of art in *The Return*.[88] Sound and storytelling is the object of Kingsley Marshall and Rupert Loydell's article from 2019[89] and Andrew T. Burt focuses on sound and music in "Is It the Wind in the Tall Trees or Just the Distant Buzz of Electricity?: Sound and Music as Portent in *Twin Peaks*' Season Three".[90] Music is also the object of study in David Sweeney's "'I'll Point You to a Better Time/A Safer Place to Be': Music, Nostalgia and Estrangement in *Twin Peaks: The Return*".[91] Elizabeth Lowry's article "Extraterrestrial Intelligences in the Atomic Age: Exploring the Rhetorical Function of Aliens and the 'Alien' in the *Twin Peaks* Universe" explores *The Return*'s juxta-positioning of public contra private.[92] Thus, similar to the continuation of genre studies, the media perspective has proven itself vital after the release of *The Return*, particularly with regards to television. And, just like genre, media will figure in my discussion, particularly in the section dealing with serial television and nostalgia.

One section of Sanna's book is dedicated to the exploration of "representations of the subjects and their perceptions of the world along with the realistic, unrealistic and surreal

[85] Jake Pitre, "'Is It About the Bunny? No, It's Not About the Bunny!': David Lynch's Fandom and Trolling of Peak TV Audiences", *Critical Essays on Twin Peaks: The Return*, edt. Antonio Sanna, London: Palgrave Macmillan 2019, pp. 85-103
[86] Brigid Cherry, "'The Owls Are Not What They Meme': Making Sense of *Twin Peaks* with Internet Memes", in Sanna edt., pp. 69-84
[87] Jeffrey Fallis and Kyle T. King, "Lucy Finally Understands How Cellphones Work: Ambiguous Digital Technologies in Twin Peaks: The Return and Its Fan Communities", in Sanna edt., pp. 53-68
[88] Allister MacTaggart, "'I am dead yet I live': Revealing the Enigma of Art in *Twin Peaks: The Return*", *New American Notes Online* (*NANO*), 2020 issue 15, https://nanocrit.com/issues/issue15/I-am-dead-yet-I-live-Revealing-the-Enigma-of-Art-in-Twin-Peaks-The-Return (retrieved May 25 2021)
[89] Kingsley Marshall and Rupert Loydell, "'Listen to the Sounds': Sound and Storytelling in *Twin Peaks: The Return*", in Sanna, pp. 269-280
[90] Andrew T. Burt, "Is It the Wind in the Tall Trees or Just the Distant Buzz of Electricity?: Sound and Music as Portent in *Twin Peaks*' Season Three", in Sanna edt., pp. 253-268
[91] David Sweeney, "'I'll Point You to a Better Time/A Safer Place to Be': Music, Nostalgia and Estrangement in *Twin Peaks: The Return*", in Sanna edt., pp. 281-296
[92] Elizabeth Lowry, "Extraterrestrial Intelligences in the Atomic Age: Exploring the Rhetorical Function of Aliens and the 'Alien' in the *Twin Peaks* Universe", in Sanna edt., pp. 37-52

elements of the series, focusing particularly on the supernatural elements of the show".[93] Thomas Britt's contribution to that section deals with hyper-mediacy[94], whereas Anthony Ballas explores the nature of objects in the show.[95] Ryan Coogan sees the series as a dramatic reenactment of Speculative Realism's 'weird reality'-theory in "'Here's to the Pie That Saved Your Life, Dougie': The Weird Realism of *Twin Peaks*",[96] and Joel Hawkes' chapter "Movement in the Box: The Production of Surreal Social Space and the Alienated Body" talks about the metaphor of the glass box in the first episode of the series.[97] Similar to how Matt Hills looked at paratexts of the original series, Donald McCarthy looks at Mark Frost's two books released before and after *The Return* in "How Mark Frost's *Twin Peaks* Books Clarify and Confound the Nature of Reality".[98] Kwasu David Tembo continues the Lacanian tradition of *Twin Peaks* scholarship in "Copy of a Copy of a Copy: Theorizing the Triplicity of Self and Otherness in Season Three of *Twin Peaks*".[99] Finally, Cam Cobb and Michael K. Potter draws comparisons between the multidimensional nature of Lynch and Frost's show and the experience of life in "Who is the Dreamer?".[100] Evidently, representational strategies have continued to appeal to academics.

Even more so than *Twin Peaks*, a lot of research has been devoted to *The Return*'s position within David Lynch's *oevre* - him being a recognized auteur. Asli Favaro brings up *The Return* in his article "Whose Story is This? The Non-existence of the External Gaze in David Lynch's Films", grounded in the auteur tradition.[101] Focusing on another hallmark of Lynch is Timothy William Galow's "From *Lost Highway* to *Twin Peaks*: Representations of Trauma and Transformation in Lynch's Late Works" (2019).[102] Richard Martin contrastingly points out how *The Return* differs from much of Lynch's other works in terms of setting and

[93] Antonio Sanna, "Entering the World of *Twin Peaks*", in Sanna, p. 15
[94] Thomas Britt, "'Between Two Mysteries': Intermediacy in *Twin Peaks: The Return*", in Sanna, pp. 107-118
[95] Anthony Ballas, "'My Log Has a Message for You,' or, *Vibrant Matter* and *Twin Peaks*: On Thing-Power and Subjectivity", in Sanna, pp. 119-134
[96] Ryan Coogan, "'Here's to the Pie That Saved Your Life, Dougie': The Weird Realism of *Twin Peaks*", in Sanna edt., pp. 135-148
[97] Joel Hawkes, "Movement in the Box: The Production of Surreal Social Space and the Alienated Body", in Sanna edt., pp. 149-168
[98] Donald McCarthy, "How Mark Frost's *Twin Peaks* Books Clarify and Confound the Nature of Reality", in Sanna edt., pp. 169-182
[99] Kwasu David Tembo, "Copy of a Copy of a Copy: Theorizing the Triplicity of Self and Otherness in Season Three of *Twin Peaks*", in Sanna edt., pp. 183-197
[100] Cam Cobb and Michael K. Potter, "Who is the Dreamer?", in Sanna edt., pp. 237-252
[101] Asli Favaro, "Whose Story is This? The Non-existence of the External Gaze in David Lynch's Films", *Journal of Media, Communication & Film*, 2018 5:1, pp. 43-57
[102] Timothy William Galow, "From *Lost Highway* to *Twin Peaks*: Representations of Trauma and Transformation in Lynch's Late Works", in Sanna edt., pp. 201-220

scope in "David Lynch Sprawls".[103] Both Adam Daniel and Karla Lončar has examined Lynch and *The Return*'s Kafkaesque inclinations in "Kafka's Crime Film: *Twin Peaks - The Return* and the Brotherhood of Lynch and Kafka",[104] and "Kafka, Lynch, and Frost: The Trial and Tribulations in *Twin Peaks: The Return*" respectively.[105] The status of Lynch and the vast amounts of research devoted to his works cannot be ignored, even though the object of my research will not deal directly with this authorial perspective.

To summarize, *Twin Peaks*, *Fire Walk with Me* and *The Return* have been the subject of extensive academic research. Looking at this vast body of work, I have identified five strands of research, employing the perspectives of media/television, representation, genre, spectatorship, and authorship. To varying degrees, I will regard all of these concepts in my analysis of *The Return*, although spectator- and authorship will not comprise large parts; they will rather be considered when deemed relevant. The media and genre perspectives will be employed in my discussion of serial television, the revival genre, and their connections to nostalgia. Representation will, of course, be relevant in my analytical work, looking at representations of the past.

The Return and Nostalgia (and Media)

Some scholars have discussed the way that *The Return* positions itself in relation to the original series. Matthew Ellis and Tyler Theus sees the new season as a contemplation on 'returning' as a concept in their article "Is It Happening Again? *Twin Peaks* and *'The Return'* of History" in *Critical Essays on Twin Peaks: The Return*. For Ellis and Theus, *The Return* "makes explicit the impossibility of representing history as something one returns *to*, as well as something which itself *returns*."[106] Employing psychoanalytical concepts as well as closely scrutinizing narrative elements, particularly "how the new series might be said to narrate its relationship to the original by constantly calling into question the spectator's grasp of past narrative events"[107], Ellis and Theus reach the conclusion that

[103] Richard Martin, "David Lynch Sprawls", *New American Notes Online* (*NANO*), 2020 issue 15, https://nanocrit.com/issues/issue15/David-Lynch-Sprawls (retrieved May 25 2021)
[104] Adam Daniel, "Kafka's Crime Film: *Twin Peaks - The Return* and the Brotherhood of Lynch and Kafka", in Sanna edt., pp. 221-236
[105] Karla Lončar, "Kafka, Lynch, and Frost: The Trial and Tribulations in *Twin Peaks: The Return*", *New American Notes Online* (*NANO*), 2020 issue 15, https://nanocrit.com/issues/issue15/Kafka-Lynch-and-Frost-The-Trial-and-Tribulations-in-Twin-Peaks-The-Return (retrieved May 25 2021)
[106] Sanna, "Entering the World of *Twin Peaks*", p. 14. Original emphasis.
[107] Matthew Ellis and Tyler Theus, "Is it Happening Again? *Twin Peaks* and '*The Return*' of History", in Sanna, p. 24

> *The Return* asks us to repeat the past with a difference. Whereas the postmodernism emerging in the latter half of the twentieth-century treats the past as a collection of so many reified tropes able to be mined for empty aesthetic purposes, *The Return* treats its own historical moment as something the meaning of which has to be continuously worked through in the present.[108]

Thus, the new series does not employ that Jamesonian notion of postmodern nostalgia. Rather, *The Return* seems to elicit deeper reflections on its, and by extension its spectators', own historical moment. This idea of the new series as a dubious narrator of its own historical grounding will be useful when considering said grounding in nostalgic terms.

Other scholars have suggested that the new series' fascination with doubling and doubles can be understood as a mirror reflecting on the show itself, though some theories has tended to over-conceptualize nostalgia as a double. I will therefore distinguish a few of the concepts presented by scholars. Dominic Lash sees the new series as a uniquely situated double, superimposed upon the "quarter-century of fantasy, expectation, and prediction",[109] a metaphor mirrored by the constant recurrences of doubles and the scrambled narrative of which they are part. Similar to Ellis and Theus, Lash highlights the "way that *The Return* explores the futility of an attempt at a 'return'"[110]. Contrastingly, for Lash, this is what unites the old and new series:

> The delicious paradox is that it is by *destroying* the possibility of a return to *Twin Peaks*, or of successfully constructing its doppelgänger, that *The Return* ends up faithful to what was really so remarkable about the original series: its capacity to remain at one and the same time utterly distinctive and perpetually elusive.[111]

This train of thought - that by debilitating the connection to the earlier series, *The Return* actually fulfills the attitude of the original, reintroducing mystery - is extremely stimulating in looking at the nature of the new series. This will be relevant in my discussion of the various representations of nostalgia. A similar perspective is used by Tyler S. Rife and Ashley N. Wheeler in their article "'I'll see you again in 25 years': Doppelganging Nostalgia and *Twin Peaks: The Return*". They are more interested in theorizing nostalgia however, and the conclusion they reach in their discussion of *The Return* is that "the series' resistant treatment of nostalgia demonstrates a critical mode of theorizing nostalgia as containing inherent

[108] Ibid., p. 34
[109] Dominic Lash, "The Dangers of Getting What You Asked For: Double Time in *Twin Peaks: The Return*", *Open Screens*, 3:1, p. 4
[110] Ibid., p. 22
[111] Ibid. Original emphasis

multiplicity and duplicitousness. Thus, [they] argue for a theorizing of nostalgia itself as doppelganger."[112]. Their discussion mainly focuses on the two doppelgängers of main character Dale Cooper, and although their theory of nostalgia is interesting, there is no doubt a risk in limiting discussions of nostalgia only to aspects of doubling. Therefore, I will mainly consider their discussions on nostalgic aspects of *The Return* while bypassing the broader theoretical framework they suggest.

The professed 'return' of the new series has engendered such a perspective when looking at the show itself. Andreas Halskov was quick to consider this aspect of *The Return* in his article "No Place Like Home: Returning to *Twin Peaks*", published at a time when only four parts of the new season had aired. Halskov highlights the aesthetic changes from the original series, linking *The Return*'s visuals and sounds to Lynch's *oevre* in general, rather than it conforming to the aesthetics of the original show. He also talks about the disorienting and fragmented feeling caused by the series' narrative, which he sees as a reflection of Cooper's subjective experience of trying to "recover or recreate himself"[113]. This, in turn, can be interpreted as another reflection of "the series' attempt to define itself as both a continuation of *Twin Peaks* and an independent work of art."[114] Thus, the returning path to *Twin Peaks* is laden with obstacles: "the good old FBI agent and the cozy American small-town both look different, and both are torn into fragments that we, the viewers, have to investigate and reassemble, before we can ever really 'return'."[115] I will myself return to this aspect of the new series in my discussion. And with the luxury of having the entire series available to me, I will determine if the 'return' that Halskov speaks of is attained in the end.

Matt Hills employs a similar reading of *The Return*, though focusing also on the media-, cult-, and brand-perspectives in "Cult TV Revival: Generational Seriality, Recap Culture, and the 'Brand Gap' of *Twin Peaks: The Return*". Hills studies *The Return* to define and discuss the concept of 'generational seriality', that is, seriality that invokes "discourses of generationality (as key characters from the original run are shown to have children of their own and/or are represented in terms of visibly marked aging)."[116] By highlighting the marked gap of twenty-six years in the series' representation of age and death, Hills identifies a 'brand gap' between the new and old iterations, linking *The Return* to Lynch's style rather than the older series. Hills

[112] Rife and Wheeler, p. 424
[113] Andreas Halskov, "No Place Like Home: Returning to *Twin Peaks*", *16:9 filmtidsskrift*, May 30 2017, http://www.16-9.dk/2017/05/returning-to-twin-peaks/ (retrieved May 25 2021)
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid., p. 2
[116] Matt Hills, "Cult TV Revival: Generational Seriality, Recap Culture, and the 'Brand Gap' of *Twin Peaks: The Return*", *Television & New Media*, 19:4, p. 311

is also one of the few scholars who discusses *The Return*'s role as a revival text, mentioning that genre's inherent duality of *old* and *new*.[117] Finally, Simon Hall explores the performative aspects of representing the past in "Sentiment, Mood, and Performing the Past: James Hurley's Re-enactment of 'Just You' in *Twin Peaks: The Return*", where he contests the idea of Lynch as a 'trickster figure', arguing that the titular scene should not be considered 'trolling'. For Hall, the re-enactment of the song 'Just You' *can* be read as self-reflexive, but it should first and foremost be seen as an embrace of a vulnerable moment. Hall states that the "re-enactment demonstrates the difficulties inherent in ever fully performing the past, but also the past's overwhelming capability to pervade the present even as it eludes precise or complete articulation".[118] This performative aspect will be useful to have in mind, particularly when considering nostalgia as an act.

Others have identified trauma as that which *returns* in the new series. Raechel Dumas argues that *Twin Peaks* in general is organized around trauma. For her, "the problem of identity in *The Return* is developed into a metaphor for the enduring and extensive affects of trauma".[119] The suspension of identity and reality thus "work to sustain and amplify the traumatic reverberations that echo throughout the original *Twin Peaks*, and in doing so call attention to the limits of representation itself as an avenue for traumatic engagement."[120] Employing psychoanalytical concepts and feminist readings, Dumas argues that *The Return* presents a post-traumatic world in which the original trauma (the incestuous rape and murder of Laura Palmer [Sheryl Lee]) cannot be undone nor forgotten. Simultaneously, the series balances on the one hand the unrepresentability of trauma, while on the other offering "aesthetic and ethical possibilities for engaging it beyond the schema of repression, and without the expectation of resolution".[121] Joshua Jones is also of the opinion that *Twin Peaks* centers around trauma, particularly Laura's pain, which is foregrounded in *Fire Walk with Me* and *The Return*. In his article "'The Past Dictates the Future': Epistemic Ambivalence and the Compromised Ethics of Complicity in *Twin Peaks: The Return* and *Fire Walk with Me*", he regards the two texts as critically reading themselves (auto-exegetical texts) and introduces "the notion of epistemic ambivalence to describe how they offer the possibility of teleological resolution while

[117] Hills, "Cult TV Revival"
[118] Joshua Jones, "'The Past Dictates the Future': Epistemic Ambivalence and the Compromised Ethics of Complicity in *Twin Peaks: The Return* and *Fire Walk with Me*", *New American Notes Online* (*NANO*), 2020 issue 15, https://nanocrit.com/issues/issue15/The-Past-Dictates-the-Future-Epistemic-Ambivalence-and-the-Compromised-Ethics-of-Complicity-in-Twin-Peaks-The-Return-and-Fire-W (retrieved May 25 2021)
[119] Raechel Dumas, "It is Happening Again: Traumatic Memory, Affective Renewal, and Deferred Resolution in *Twin Peaks: The Return*", *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 2019 36:4, p. 327
[120] Ibid., p. 328
[121] Ibid., p. 342

deliberately failing to provide enough information to realize that possibility".[122] Jones argues that *Fire Walk with Me* and *The Return* shifts the audience's identification away from Special Agent Cooper and back to Laura Palmer, "encouraging viewers to renegotiate their relationship to and investment in the desire for closure and epistemic certainty".[123] For Jones, the desire for closure is at best superficial, and at worst violent towards the object of that closure (Laura). In other words, the spectator's desire for epistemic certainty does violence upon the victim of trauma, and they are thus complicit in the violence. *The Return* challenges this desire by undercutting a resolution, and:

> In giving Laura the final word, the show suggests that rather than continuing to search for closure viewers might negotiate a more ethical viewing position by re-engaging with Laura's trauma and by ceasing to use her as a bearer of meanings that ultimately propagate forms of gendered epistemic violence in which we and *Twin Peaks* itself nevertheless remain complicit.[124]

The absence of resolution and the post-traumatic reality in *The Return* I think are vital for a deeper understanding of the series' representation of the past, and by extension, its relationship to nostalgia. Therefore, Dumas and Jones' considerations on trauma as central to both *Twin Peaks* and *The Return* will be important in my discussion.

On the connections between media and nostalgia, Katherine Niemeyer has edited an anthology on how nostalgic sentiments acts through different media in *Media and Nostalgia: Yearning for the Past, Present and Future*. Looking at contemporary culture, Niemeyer notices "an increase in expressions of nostalgia, and in nostalgia objects, media content and styles".[125] In television, for example, this content can be programs set in distinct time periods like *Mad Men* (2007-2015, AMC) or *Boardwalk Empire* (2010, HBO), or old programs that are revived, such as *Dallas* (1978-1991, CBS; 2012-2014, TNT). Underlying the anthology is a belief that nostalgia is more than a fashion or a trend. Contrary to Jamesons assessment, nostalgia often expresses more profound relations to time and space, whether they be negative or positive, and it often relates to "a way of living, imagining and sometimes exploiting or (re)inventing the past, present and future."[126] This relationship to the past is central in my discussion of *The*

[122] Jones, p. 2
[123] Ibid., p. 5
[124] Jones, p. 17
[125] Niemeyer, "Introduction", p. 1
[126] Ibid., p. 2

Return, particularly the (re)invention of the past. In the ninth chapter of the book, Niemeyer, along with Daniela Wentz, theorize serial narratives on television as inherently nostalgic. In their hypothesis,

> series can never […] not evoke a feeling of nostalgia, because they are based on the imperative to always leave behind a void. The void is inevitably present, whether in the form of the temporal gaps between episodes and seasons, the void a long-watched series leaves when it finally ends, or the never-arriving closure of an unfinished narrative. Series always create gaps that can never be filled, even by rewatching them. This longing, which pertains to the logic of seriality, clearly shows, once again, that nostalgia is not just the preserve of the past, but can be directed just as well towards the future or even the present.[127]

In this context, nostalgia becomes interlinked with the formal and narrative aspects of seriality. I find the 'nostalgia-as-void'-argument particularly fruitful in the discussion of the revival series; a series that returns after years off the air. Nostalgia's relation to seriality will be considered all through the essay but will mainly be discussed in the final section of the "Analysis" chapter.

The genre of television revival has, with a few exceptions, not been extensively explored in an academic context. Instead, the study of narrative continuations has tended to focus on the sequel, the remake, and/or the reboot;[128] terms that have developed a theoretical apparatus for research and discussion. The preference for these terms has rendered a gap in our ability as academics to research the revival of television narratives - a genre which, I argue, has fascinating implications that suggests a connection between nostalgia and the formal aspects of the medium itself. Lacking an encyclopaedic definition, the popular consensus on the revival describes a television series that shares a continuity with an original show after a hiatus,[129] thus placing it within the category of 'expansion', using Peter J .Rabinowitz's classification.[130] It

[127] Niemeyer and Wentz, p. 134
[128] e.g., the term is neither touched upon in Thompson; Carlen Lavigne edt., *Remake Television: Reboot, Re-use, Recycle*, Washington DC: Lexington Books 2014; nor, Amanda Ann Klein and R. Barton Palmer edt., *Cycles, Sequels, Spin-Offs, Remakes, and Reboots: Multiplicities in Film and Television*, Austin: University of Texas Press 2016
[129] Matt Webb Mitovich, "TV Reboot? Or Revival? Here Are the Definitive Definitions — Don't @ Me!", *TV Line*, 2018 Sep 16, https://tvline.com/2018/09/16/tv-reboots-vs-revivals-definitions-differences/ (retrieved May 25 2021)
[130] Peter J. Rabinowitz, "'What's Hecuba to us?': The audience's experience of literary borrowing", in Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman edt., *The reader in the text*, Princeton: University Press 1980, pp. 241-63. Cited in Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, New York: Routledge 2006, p. 171

differs from the spin-off, remake, and/or reboot in that it features more or less the same cast members, while also continuing upon the same storyline, separating it from the sequel.[131]

In a special 2018 issue, *Television & New Media*[132] published several case studies of recent revival texts; a discussion framed by the revival genre's inherent connection to the past. Though production and reception contexts takes centre stage in the case-studies, the assessments made often reveal the underlying connection between *past* and *present* prevalent in the revival genre.[133] Felix Brinker, for instance, finds that the revival is "not simply a continuation of a television narrative that has ceased to unfold, but an attempt to reboot the larger cultural mobilizations that clustered around it in the past".[134] Because of these connections to the original text, which is itself situated in a time distinct from the present, aspects of nostalgia inevitably become significant whenever an old show is revived.

The extensive research on sequels, remakes, or reboots is not, however, completely irrelevant when looking at the revival. Andrew Scahill, for instance, has provided telling case-studies of the television series *Bates Motel* (2013-2017, A+E Networks) and *Hannibal* (2013-2015, NBC), both of which exist in relation to an original text (Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, 1960, and Jonathan Demme's *Silence of the Lambs*, 1991 respectively). In his discussion, he explores how both of these series relate to their respective predecessors, finding that, even though preceding the narrative of *Psycho* and *Silence of the Lambs*, "the programs seem to demonstrate no necessary allegiance to the original text – both are willing to rewrite or reimagine elements of the original and create new and unexpected plot twists."[135] Because of the series' unique situation as both prequels and reboots, Scahill suggests the term 'preboot'.

> As preboots, they make use of multiple modes of repetition, rewriting, and narrative extension; they are thus unique cultural products worthy of academic study. Additionally, their play with chronology and temporality, audience memory, and creative

[131] Elizabeth Wagmeister, "TV Revivals Making a Comeback: 'Coach,' 'X-Files,' 'Fuller House' & More", *Variety*, 2015 Jun 15, https://variety.com/2015/tv/news/television-revival-series-heroes-coach-x-files-fuller-house-1201519079/ (retrieved May 25 2021); Michael Rothman, "What's driving the resurgence of reboots, remakes and revivals in TV and film", *ABC News*, 2017 May 21, https://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/driving-resurgence-reboots-remakes-revivals-tv-film/story?id=47645549 (retrieved May 25 2021)
[132] *Television & New Media*, 2018 19:4, pp. 299–395
[133] Kathleen Loock, "American TV Series Revivals: Introduction", *Television & New Media*, 2018 19:4, pp. 299-309
[134] Felix Brinker, "Conspiracy, Procedure, Continuity: Reopening *The X-Files*", *Television & New Media*, 2018 19:4, p. 328
[135] Andrew Scahill, "Serialized Killers: Prebooting Horror in *Bates Motel* and *Hannibal*", in Amanda Ann Klein and R. Barton Palmer, pp. 317-318

> reinterpretation demand audience engagement with a complex constellation of meaning.[136]

I would argue that the concept of 'allegiance' considered by Scahill becomes central to the revival-genre as well, since the texts of that genre are expected to conform to an already established narrative and aesthetic. It is then interesting how these texts are able to show leniency in their loyalty to the original, seemingly focused on telling an intriguing story, rather than being incorporated into an existing over-arching narrative. Scahill also highlights the temporal aspect in the contemporary setting of both series, which can be related to Dika's assessment that nostalgia very often deals with contemporary issues. Finally, the 'play' that these series exhibit in terms of temporality, audience memory and reinterpretation will prove fruitful in analysing *The Return* in particular, a revival very much 'against the grain' set by the original.

[136] Ibid., p. 333

Analysis

Teasing Nostalgic Attachment: Glimpses of 'Home'

The first stage in Dika's outline of resistant nostalgia deals with signifiers based in a specific past. Therefore, before I can understand the new meaning that the text reaches "through the critical displacement of its elements"[137], I should first try to identify some signifying elements of *The Return* that are borrowed from the original *Twin Peaks*. In this section, I will look at those old signifiers, both across the entire run of the series, but also in the very first scenes. Red drapes, chevrons, and iconic images of prom queens are signals that inform us of *The Return*'s historical grounding. But, what is the nature of their signification in this new context, and has their meanings changed from those in the original *Twin Peaks*?

The town itself, of course, makes its return, along with those essential locations associated with it. The Great Northern Hotel, the Double R' Diner, and the Roadhouse all appear in the new season, generally serving similar narrative purposes as they did twenty-five years ago. The Roadhouse is actually given more screen time than before since almost every episode ends with a live musical act performed there. These locations are also reminiscent of the original series since they are inhabited by recognizable characters. Returning characters is such an important part of *The Return* - particularly in the perspective of historical distance – which is why I will devote an entire section to that discussion later. Going back to those elements from the original show, let us take a look at how *The Return* begins, and what signals are transmitted as to its relation to *Twin Peaks*.

As *The Return* begins, one is immediately served some visual cues that connect it to the original series. The very first shot is of the iconic chevron-patterned floor of the Black Lodge. The camera moves to reveal the signature red curtains as well, but then a cut is made. Agent Cooper is there, looking like he did in the final episode of *Twin Peaks*. This is in fact footage from that episode. Laura Palmer, who is also there, utters that familiar line: "Hello Agent Cooper" and clicks her fingers. She then says: "I'll see you again in 25 years. Meanwhile". This line, which might have been seen back then as yet another cryptic message from Laura, is put into a wholly different context in *The Return*; a context that gives it new meaning and weight. As Laura strikes that last pose as if to mimic a classical sculpture, the shot freezes, and fades to black. In the next sequence, we are enveloped in mist, which is eventually

[137] Dika, p. 121

broken to reveal the familiar woods of Twin Peaks. Accompanied by ethereal sounds, we move from the misty woods to a brief shot of a burnt down sawmill. The sawmill in Twin Peaks was a central plot-point in the original series and, indeed, featured heavily in the original intro. Here it is dilapidated, a reminder that the original intro's shots of lumber being sawed cannot and will not be revived. Next, we move to the high school, where we get a shot from the first episode of season one, in which a traumatized student runs across the courtyard at the news of Laura's murder. In the hallway, we see a display cabinet for the school's honours, the centre of which houses the iconic picture of Laura as homecoming queen. As the camera moves in for a close-up, the 'Twin Peaks Theme' starts playing simultaneously as the neon green title appears across Laura's face, announcing "Twin Peaks" has returned.

The title sequence that commences is different from the original, which has been discussed by both Andreas Halskov and Matt Hills. Whereas Halskov briefly mentions the intro's new sound design, Hills discusses how the composition of the sequence signals a departure from those patterns that the original had established. *The Return* is thus clear with its intentions to revise both the world and the text of *Twin Peaks*.

> This reinterpretation is evident from the very title sequence of *The Return* […], which Scott Ryan (2017, 3) has analyzed in relation to the franchise's previous titles. Ryan (2017, 3) noted that by substituting upwardly flowing red curtains and spinning chevrons for the static versions of such imagery from the original TV show, Lynch established 'what the new series is about – we are still in Twin Peaks, but we are shown things from a new angle.' The newfound dynamism of *Twin Peaks*' brand imagery here promises that although the show will be visually and stylistically recognizable, it will offer a sense of difference in comparison with its earlier incarnation.[138]

The dynamism of brand imagery observed by Hills could, with Dika's framework, be understood as resistant nostalgia at work. The introducing segments of the first episode scrambles those signifiers associated with *Twin Peaks* into a new and original text. Particularly interesting in this sequence is the use of old footage, because it makes the weight of context visible. The brief shot of the run-down sawmill serves a similar function of highlighting the distance to the past, making it clear that some things cannot return. Finally, the intro transcends those limitations that the show could have had if it were concerned with staying true to the

[138] Hills, "Cult TV Revival", p. 314

original iteration. These elements cooperate to establish the 'new order' of *Twin* Peaks, which, through of its function as introduction, is immediately communicated.

The Curious Case of Ed and Norma

One of the many engaging subplots of *Twin Peaks* was the struggling romance between Big Ed Hurley (Everett McGill) and Norma Jennings (Peggy Lipton). Both of them married to other people, their love was relegated to secret meetings of infidelity. As the second season went along however, their problems seemed to sort themselves out and there was a real chance that they might be able to be together. But, in the final episode, Lynch pulled out the carpet from under their feet and they were once again separated by circumstance.

Now, in *The Return*, they finally prioritize being with each other and are united. Norma is busy with the management of the Double R Diner's recent franchise of restaurants, and Big Ed is still unemotionally devoted to Nadine (though it is unclear whether they are still married). The circle of misunderstandings and unrequited advancements is broken when, in a moment of clarity, Nadine releases Big Ed from his commitment to her. He rushes over to the Double R to tell Norma the news, accompanied by Otis Redding's "I've Been Loving You Too Long". After he gives her the good news, in a final will-they-won't-they tease, Norma tells him that she is sorry and sits down with Walter, her business partner. Ed is devastated, sits down, and the music stops. But now we cut to Norma and Walter. Norma tells him that, because of family reasons, she is exercising her right for him to buy her out of the franchise while keeping the Double R in Twin Peaks for herself. Walter was under the impression that she did not have any family, but she responds: "No, I have a wonderful family. And I want to take care of them. I just spread myself to thin, worrying about all these diners. I… I want to spend more time at home." Now the music returns, and Walter storms out. Ed is still sitting at the counter with his eyes closed, but a smile starts to form across his face. As the music gets louder, Norma's hand touches his shoulder, and he turns around to face her. He simply says: "Marry me.", whereupon she gives him a long kiss and then says: "Of course I will." The music crescendos as they kiss once again, and the scene ends.

The happy resolution to Ed and Norma's love story distinguishes itself amongst the unresolved plotlines of *The Return* and its insistence on portraying the different 'returns' unromantically. How is this sudden nostalgic affection to be understood, when the series thus far have not shown any interest in satisfying viewers' expectations? Is this sequence the exception to the anti-nostalgic rule that permeates *The Return*? As I stated in the introduction,

I am not interested in deciding whether or not the series *is* nostalgic, but rather *how* it is nostalgic. With this in mind, one can determine that in the case of Norma and Ed, Lynch and Frost evidently wanted to provide that storyline with a romantic resolution – creating a powerful feeling of contentment in an otherwise dark world. The reason behind this decision is the object of speculation. What can be concluded is that in this particular case, *The Return* presents a satisfying resolution to a conflict that beset the original series and which fans had wanted an answer to. The series' return can thus be said to have been a nostalgic one.

If one considers the reunion of Ed and Norma as fully satisfying nostalgic attachment, similar scenes across the span of *The Return* 'dabble' in nostalgia, often satisfying nostalgic attachment, only to undermine or interrogate it. One scene that evokes feelings of nostalgia is in part sixteen when Cooper-as-Dougie finally wakes up from his self-induced coma. His awakening is preceded by that ambiguous ringing sound that appears throughout the series. It seems connected to the Black Lodge, and indeed, Cooper is greeted by MIKE (Al Strobel) who is extra-dimensionally positioned at the side of his hospital bed. "You are awake" he seems to ask Cooper, who responds "One hundred percent". MIKE answers "Finally", in a moment that seems congruent with the spectator's nostalgic sentiment and the frustration of that desire being put to the test for so long. Anyway, Cooper is now back in action and quickly sorts out a way to travel to Washington. As if highlighting a significant return, the 'Twin Peaks Theme' starts playing. Leaving the hospital, Cooper thanks his, or rather Dougie's, boss (Don Murray) in a straightforward but sincere way that assures us that this is in fact Cooper: "You're a fine man Bushnell Mullins. I will not soon forget your kindness and decency." As Cooper is leaving, Mullins asks what he should do about the FBI who are looking for him and are on their way. The camera cuts to Cooper in a medium close-up as he stops in the door and says, looking into the camera: "I am the FBI". As this line is delivered, the intro music peaks. This moment could perhaps be regarded as an archetype of that nostalgic return that one expects from a revival, which makes it a somewhat unique phenomenon in the case of *The Return*. What distinguishes this return, however, is the fact that it occurs in part fifteen, rather than in the beginning of the series. The return of Cooper is further problematized in a following scene. After this sequence we cut to Diane (Laura Dern) sitting in a bar. She receives a cryptic text message from Mr. C that shocks her. In hindsight (she is a double of the real Diane created by Mr. C), we understand that this message is her trigger to kill Gordon Cole (David Lynch) and his associates. Before she attempts this however, she traumatically retells her last meeting with Cooper (really Mr. C), where he raped her. This is a violent reminder of the horror that Cooper's *doppelganger* let loose upon the world and it immediately reverses the contentment generated

by that previous scene. To reinforce the connection between these scenes, the 'Twin Peaks Theme' actually carries over up until Diane sees the text message, where it ends in a violent thud. It is as if Lynch and Frost teases us with nostalgic gratification, only to quickly reverse the polarity and remind us of the violent underpinnings of returning to the past – suggesting that you cannot have one without the other.

Another example of problematized nostalgic feelings is in part four when the evidence in the old investigation of Laura Palmer's murder is scattered across a table in the sheriff's station. Bobby Briggs (Dana Ashbrook), who we have just seen is a police officer now, walks into the room where his colleagues are gathered. In the centre of the table, he spots the picture of Laura, smiling. 'Laura's Theme' starts playing as he tears up by the sudden flow of memories. "Laura Palmer?" he asks, and, as the music reaches its peak, he starts sobbing. This could be described as a brief moment of nostalgia – in its direct referencing to the past. But it is also complicated by Bobby's emotional reaction where it instead seems like an unwanted flood of the past – in the form of traumatic memories. The scene could be read as a return of trauma, a reading that has been advocated for by Rachael Dumas.[139] If one regards this scene as a return of the trauma that beset Twin Peaks twenty-five years ago, the scene could almost act as a critique of spectators' nostalgia for a return. In this scene, as is the case with Cooper's return in part sixteen, we are painfully reminded that the return desired for so long always ran the risk of violently rupturing old wounds. This is similar to the argument made by Joshua Jones that satisfying the desire for resolution is a violent act.[140] It is also interesting how both of these scenes utilize the iconic *Twin Peaks* soundtrack by Angelo Badalamenti. This could suggest a deep connection between nostalgia and musical cues. All the scenes in this section also dealt with returning characters in one way or another. It seems returning characters play a big role in *The Return*'s connection to the original *Twin Peaks*. This will be further explored in the following section.

Familiar Faces of Strangers: Returning Characters

The professed 'return' of the new series could be interpreted as a return of the characters inhabiting the world of Twin Peaks. Many original cast members show up in the new season, forming a bond to the original show that is perhaps the strongest of all connections between the different series. What more convincing way to signal a return to a distinguished past than to

[139] Dumas, p. 336
[140] Jones

bring back the persons who populated it? This can be particularly said of *Twin Peaks*, a show whose bread and butter were its colourful ensemble cast. Over thirty of the original cast members make their return. These include main characters such as FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper, Double R' Diner waitress Shelly Briggs (Mädchen Amick) and her boyfriend Bobby; but also, minor, even minute characters are present (like Andrea Hays' jovial waitress Heidi, or Carlton Lee Russel's invasive Jumping man). However, such a return is never that simple since it is bound to provoke conflicting significations. After all, that which separates the past from the present is time, and time takes its toll.

Age and Death as Markers of an Irretrievable Past

The toll of time's passing is something that Lynch and Frost have not shied away from - quite the contrary in fact. Those youthful characters of the original show are now in their forties or fifties. They are now the adults of *Twin Peaks*, whereas the adults from the original show are seniors. Also, many actors with central roles have passed away in the interim years like Frank Silva (BOB), Don S. Davis (Major Garland Briggs) and Jack Nance (Pete Martell), not to mention those that have passed since *The Return* aired, like Miguel Ferrer (Albert Rosenfield), Peggy Lipton (Norma Jennings), Harry Dean Stanton (Carl Rodd) and Robert Forster (Frank Truman). Catherine E. Coulson (Margaret Lanterman: The Log Lady) and Warren Frost (Doc Hayward) passed before the new season aired, marking both their performances in *The Return* as their last. The idea of characters and actors aging and passing away is of course nothing unique to *The Return*. However, as I will reason in the following section, *The Return*'s treatment of those topics is striking through its painfully realistic representation of age, disease and death, most evident in the case of returning character the Log Lady.

The unforgiving and unending churn of time's passing is presented in *The Return* through the vast changes in some of the original shows most loved and recognized characters, oftentimes engendering strangeness and uncertainty rather than nostalgic familiarity. As Tyler S. Rife and Ashley N. Wheeler stresses, the decay of concepts, places and characters makes itself known in *The Return* and "every character entrance folds our memories of *Twin Peaks* with the material impacts of time".[141] The faces of those returning characters, like Deputy Chief Hawk or Double R's Norma Jennings, reveal the twenty-five years that have transpired since we last saw them. Not even the dead are spared time's passing in the world of *Twin Peaks*. Murder-victim Laura Palmer is evidently aging back in the Black Lodge, along with the ethereal

[141] Rife and Wheeler, p. 432

characters of MIKE and the Giant (Carel Struycken), who could otherwise be presumed unconstrained by the temporal-physical world. Also, the characters of BOB and Major Briggs return in spite of their respective actors being deceased. This is done by incorporating existing footage into the narrative. BOB is now a greyish orb, encapsulating Frank Silva's original performance, while the severed, two-dimensional head of Major Briggs floats peculiarly across time and space. Thus, their presence transcends death. This is also the case of deceased actors appearing in flashbacks (Jack Nance, David Bowie, etc.).

What distinguishes *The Return*'s portrayal of aging is however the weight behind those physical changes being mirrored in the narrative itself. The reality of age is thus placed explicitly in the narrative, as in the case of Carl Rodd, played by 91 year old Harry Dean Stanton. Carl has found peace at the end of his life, moving his trailer park from the destitute and hostile Deer Meadows in *Fire Walk with Me* to Twin Peaks in *The Return*. Here he enjoys the serenity of life, playing music and going on walks, being a guardian of his own little community and gladly helping his neighbours and tenants. This is a vast character change from his brief appearance in *Fire Walk with Me*, where he was angry, confused, and sad. One can also talk about a distance to the past more implicitly by those characters that have undergone a development in the interim years, perhaps most notably teenage bad boy turned Police Officer and responsible parent Bobby Briggs. Matt Hills highlights the fact that many characters are now parents as a marker of "*The Return*'s commitment to generational seriality", that is, highlighting generational difference between old and new *Twin Peaks*.[142]

The most striking portrayal of aging, however, is surely the character of Margaret Lanterman, known in Twin Peaks as The Log Lady. In the original series, the Log Lady is introduced as one of the many eccentric inhabitants of Twin Peaks. Although given the screen time of a minor character, she was one of the few characters empathetic to the strange happenings in and around the town, and often turned up to guide Agent Cooper and the viewer.[143] This made her seemingly minor character integral to the narrative of *Twin Peaks*, and her presence thus permeates the show. Indeed, when the Bravo network hosted a syndicated re-airing of the original show, David Lynch wrote and directed short introductions to every episode. The introductions featured monologues by Coulson in character as the Log Lady,[144] which suggests a particular significance of that character. Her scenes in *The Return* are shot in

[142] Hills, "Cult TV Revival", p. 315
[143] This corresponds to her last name 'Lanterman', as a kind of bearer of the guiding lantern
[144] Susan King, "Taking Another 'Peak': BRAVO AIRS ALL 30 EPISODES OF SERIES WITH REAL LYNCHIAN INTROS", *Los Angeles Times*, 1993 Jun 13

a similar way – with the Log Lady sat in her home. The flat TV-lighting is changed however to a dark and moody one, highlighting the darkness that seems to have crept into the world itself in the interim years. And, instead of talking to the audience as she did in the Bravo-monologues, she talks on the phone with Deputy Chief Hawk. Her role of guide remains the same though as she continues to relay important messages picked up by her empathetic log.

These visual and narrative connotations to the original series constitute the first stage in Dika's theory of resistant nostalgia, that is, references to another text/time. The second stage – the new context – is in this case announced by the striking display of disease, pain, and death of this cherished character. The Log Lady is dying. Her lines are delivered while being hooked up to respiratory help, and her short head of hair leads one to suspect a recent treatment of chemotherapy. These visual signs are underlined by her performance, as every line delivered is accompanied by physical and emotional pain. There is an undeniable feeling of conflict in all of her scenes, as she struggles against her own limitations. One also has to consider the extra-diegetic dimension to this portrayal as Catherine E. Coulson was actually dying when these scenes were shot. David Lynch spoke in an interview about directing his long-time friend and collaborator through these scenes: "It was, you could say, extremely emotional. But thank goodness it was done. Catherine passed away four days after she shot that scene. Certain things came together just in the nick of time."[145] Even those not familiar with this story, however, will certainly be taken aback by the realism behind the portrayal and the raw power of Coulson's performance. The Log Lady appears in five episodes throughout the season. In part fifteen, she makes her final appearance, and, while crying, delivers an impactful farewell. "Hawk… I'm dying" she says, but continues: "You know about death. That it's just a change, not an end. Hawk, it's time. There's some fear. Some fear in letting go. Remember what I told you. […] Hawk, my log is turning gold. The wind is moaning. I'm dying." Later in the episode, Hawk delivers the news to his colleagues at the Sheriff's station that she passed away that night.

The juxtaposition between those visual and narrative connotations to old *Twin Peaks* on the one hand, and the unflinching and relentless reality of age and death on the other, achieves that resistant nostalgia that Dika describes. Any dream of regressive nostalgia for the good ol' *Twin Peaks* is ruptured by the violent internal montage of the old signifiers and the new context. Dika described this as a "shifting double exposure"[146], and one can indeed identify the two stages of this exposure particularly clearly in the scenes with the Log Lady. For Hills,

[145] David Lynch, interview by Darren Franich and Jeff Jensen, *Entertainment Weekly*, 2017 Sep 15, https://ew.com/tv/2017/09/15/david-lynch-twin-peaks-finale/ (retrieved May 25 2021)
[146] Dika, p. 14

this difference achieves the 'brand gap' between the two iterations, but one can also discuss it in terms of resistant nostalgia. What this internal montage achieves, both in the case of Carl Rodd, Bobby Briggs and the Log Lady, is an emphasis on the present historical moment rather than a nostalgic past. Rather than reaching for that past, one is made aware of the ever-increasing distance to it. And just as it highlights a distance to the past, it simultaneously signals a distance to the old *Twin Peaks*, and thus subverts the possibility of a nostalgic return.

Cooper/Cooper

One of the boldest creative decisions of *The Return* was the treatment of protagonist Special Agent Dale Cooper. Having been imprisoned in the extra-dimensional limbo that is the Black Lodge while his evil *doppelganger*, possessed by the spirit of BOB, was released into the world, the original run ended on a huge cliff-hanger; one whose resolution fans had been anticipating for twenty-five years. Even though the questions provoked by the finale of *Twin Peaks* are given answers in the new series with the return of Special Agent Cooper, it is not the satisfying heroic return that people expected. I will argue that this can be understood as one of the most convincing acts of subversion of nostalgia in *The Return*; because, as Rife and Wheeler states, "[n]owhere was the harsh challenge to nostalgic attachment more apparent than in *The Return*'s treatment of beloved protagonist Special Agent Dale Cooper."[147]

Coopers journey in *The Return* is a long and winding one. When we first see him, he is still in the waiting room of the Black Lodge he entered twenty-five years earlier. Meanwhile, his evil *doppelganger*, Mr. C, still roams the world in his place. Cooper is made aware that the time has come for his return to the material world. Unbeknownst to everyone however, Mr. C has planned an elaborate switcheroo where Good Cooper replaces yet another *doppelganger*, Dougie Jones. As Good Cooper switches places with Dougie, something goes wrong, and his black leather shoes gets lost in the interdimensional plane. Thus, Cooper has returned, but not wholly, as he does not seem to remember who he is, nor how to speak. So, for parts three to fifteen, we get to witness Cooper trying to live the life of insurance agent Dougie, married with kids. During this time, we also follow Mr. C on a quest of his own. Finally, in part sixteen, after having been in a brief comatose state, Cooper awakens and quickly realizes the gravity of the situation. He travels to Twin Peaks, reveals the imposter Mr. C, and defeats evil spirit BOB once and for all. In the final episode however, Cooper is seemingly doubled once again as he travels to another reality in search of Laura. Here he seems to be meshed with a

[147] Rife and Wheeler, p. 426

man called Richard. So, we are once again treated to uncertainty regarding our protagonist, rather than familiarity.

Whereas the aging and death of familiar characters acts as markers of the temporal distance to the original *Twin Peaks*, the overwhelming absence of the Special Agent Dale Cooper we know and recognize presents multi-faceted implications regarding nostalgia. Of course, the clear aging of actor Kyle MacLachlan can be incorporated into the previous argument as well. Matt Hills even proffers the interpretation of Cooper-as-Dougie's "loss of self-identity, and even control over bodily functions such as urination", as representing "generational anxieties surrounding aging and dementia".[148] That may be so; but, *The Return*'s act of producing various different 'Coopers', while simultaneously not giving us the 'real', recognizable, one, has consequences that necessitates a discussion from a variety of different angles.

First of all, in the original *Twin Peaks*, Dale Cooper was the main driving force of the narrative that was set in motion by the murder of Laura Palmer. He is the focal point through which all of the various clues and bizarre stories become focused into a cohesive narrative. After all, it is he who finds Laura's killer through a combination of "Bureau guidelines, deductive technique, Tibetan method, instinct, and luck", while also protecting the inhabitants of the town against the evil spirit BOB. The plot twist at the end of the final episode where Cooper has seemingly been possessed by BOB is so powerful because of his already established role as protagonist, as well as keeper of the rare knowledge required to make sense of the show itself. The possession of Cooper is thus a catastrophe both in terms of narrative agency and epistemological understanding, a catastrophe which *The Return* is very much dealing with twenty-five years on.

The absence of the protagonist is one of the main reasons the narrative of *The Return* seems so fragmented and impenetrable at times. Cooper, being stuck in the life of Dougie, cannot fulfil the detective role any longer.[149] Therefore, without anyone explaining how these seemingly disparate events are connected, viewers are either forced to do the detective work themselves and try to connect the dots, or fumble in the darkness. The connection between Cooper's lost faculties and the disorienting narrative of *The Return* seems evident; Andreas Halskov has observed a similar pattern. Reversing the thought however, he instead interprets the "disorienting and fragmented" narrative that some viewers experience as

[148] Hills, "Cult TV Revival", p. 316
[149] This is a similar conclusion as that drawn by Asli Favaro in his examination of ontology in David Lynch's films.

a subjective reflection of "Dale Cooper's feelings of being disoriented. We are struggling to find a path and a sense of place in the new *Twin Peaks*, just as Cooper is struggling to come home".[150] In this case, Cooper is in the same position as the viewer: being inserted into a world twenty-five years after he last saw it, trying to make sense of it all. But the fragmentation of Cooper is not merely a neat narrative device that has to be overcome. The implications are more profound when considering the series' relationship to the past. Rife and Wheeler argues that "*The Return*'s *doppelgangers* do not only play trickster to the series' plot, nor do they merely challenge audience's memories of the original *Twin Peaks*. They may fracture our relationship to nostalgia itself".[151] For them, the absence of Cooper ultimately results in a loss of knowability associated with an idealized past.[152]

Removing the epistemological grounding that is Agent Cooper not only confounds knowability in *The Return*, but, since this knowability is attached to a subject very much 'in the past', it questions our very notion of knowledge based in the past – i.e., that remembered from *Twin Peaks*. Rife and Wheeler sees those brief nostalgia-inducing moments as interspersed "between scenes that disrupt this familiarity through irony, satire, or abstraction"[153], similar to how Halskov saw a broad pattern of familiarization and defamiliarization in the series. The relationship to the past is something fragmented and incomplete. Just like Cooper-as-Dougie has brief moments of sensory recognition of things from his past life (coffee, cherry pie, case files, etc.), the show tries to make the connection to the past, but ultimately fails, since that attachment would only be superficial, close to what Fredric Jameson called the 'nostalgia film': shallow signs from history repackaged. Rife and Wheeler makes an interesting argument regarding one of those momentary references to *Twin Peaks*.

> At one point, we hear Dougie's assistant utter the sentiment, "Damn good joe," to which Dougie repeats, "Damn good joe." Though the audience is gifted with this nostalgic treat in its resemblance to the original series' best-known catchphrase by Cooper, "Damn fine coffee," they are simultaneously reminded that the beloved protagonist is not fully there. […] [T]he utterance of the catchphrase in an affectless, not-quite-Cooper manner creates an illusion of fulfillment which forces audiences to recognize the meaninglessness of longing for the return of an imperfect character and his platitudes.[154]

[150] Halskov
[151] Rife and Wheeler, p. 426
[152] Ibid., p. 429
[153] Ibid., p. 430
[154] Rife and Wheeler, p. 430

With this in mind, one can almost imagine Cooper-as-Dougie as a form of satire of that Jamesonian notion of nostalgia, making fun of the audience's desire for their 'nostalgia fix'.

The connection to Dika's outline of resistant nostalgia is also made by Rife and Wheeler, and indeed, one can observe the duality of resistant nostalgia at work here. The visual connotations to the original series is apparent in the different *doppelgangers* of Cooper (all played by Kyle MacLachlan), but the rupture of his representation is achieved through the almost complete absence of the characterization that we recognize. By constantly undercutting the return of Agent Cooper, *The Return* disrupts its own connection to the original series, and, through resistant nostalgia, its role as nostalgic text. What results is a text that is very much its own – existing on its own terms, not bound by the expectations attached to a sequel. One can also see how nostalgic detachment is represented in *The Return* by a main character's memory loss and lack of basic functions, highlighting the deep connection between resistant nostalgia and formal qualities at the level of the text. Considering the 'back-and-forth' representation of Agent Cooper's historical grounding, one could lastly suggest a reading of *The Return* as that of a bumpy road in the search for a balanced relationship to the past – showing the dangers of un-historicity, represented by Cooper-as-Dougie, as well as nostalgic regression, the representations of which are also present in *The Return*: most evident in the portrayal of recurring character Audrey Horne.

The Trouble with Audrey

Similar to how Agent Cooper was suspended in an unresolved cliff-hanger for twenty-five years, a similar fate beset fan-favourite Audrey Horne. In the original show, Audrey quickly enchanted audiences with her beauty and mystery. Reminiscent of the luminous *femme fatale*-character, though represented in terms of mischievous high-schooler rather than murderess, she is revealed to have a heart of gold – helping Agent Cooper in his investigation. In the final episode of *Twin Peaks*, she chained herself to the bank vault of 'Twin Peaks Savings and Loans' in protest of their connection to a deforestation project. Unrelated to her activity there, an explosion went off that seemingly destroyed the entire building. The speculation around what happened to her naturally occupied devoted fans ever since, and with *The Return*, expectations were high. In the new series, however, not much time is given to explain what actually happened to Audrey. The scenes involving her are more or less isolated from the rest of the narrative in the season and, in the end, her state of being is left more ambiguous than ever.

Audrey's appearance in *The Return* is fraught with unpredictability and warrants a summary. Her first appearance happens more than halfway through the season, in part twelve,

after which she appears in parts thirteen, fifteen and sixteen. The backstory to what happened to her after the explosion is not given in these scenes, however; it is told in fragments by other characters in other scenes over the course of the season. The story is briefed upon by Doctor Hayward in part seven when asked about that final night before Cooper went missing. He saw him (whom we know to be Cooper's *doppelganger*) sneaking out of the Intensive Care Unit at the hospital in Twin Peaks. When asked why he thinks he was there he answers: "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." Here we understand that Audrey was not immediately killed in the explosion. Throughout the series, we also understand implicitly that she has a son through the character of Richard Horne – an awful criminal that terrorizes the town. In part fifteen and sixteen, the story of Audrey takes a darker turn. Richard, hiding out from the authorities in Twin Peaks, comes across Mr. C whom he recognizes. Confronting Mr. C, he tells him that his mother knew him. When asked who his mother is, he says "Audrey Horne… and your name's Cooper". Mr. C takes him along to a secret location that he has been looking for. Sensing a trap however, he sends Richard in first, who is then obliterated in a blinding flash. Mr. C, unfaced by this says: "Goodbye my son" and turns around. It is thus revealed that Mr. C is Richard's father, which insinuates that he raped Audrey while she was in a coma. This awful crime is just one of many done by Mr. C, but it is most disturbing because of our sympathy with the established character of Audrey – still a teenager at the time of the assault. The scenes with Audrey do not touch upon this matter, but it is nevertheless there as an unspoken fact, permeating the scenes. Perhaps the ambiguous representation of Audrey and her fate can be understood in relation to her assault – but first I must look at the scenes themselves.

As mentioned, we are first reintroduced to Audrey in part twelve. Having waited for her appearance thus far, she appears after a slow camera pan, standing in a living room. Her husband, Charlie (played by Clark Middleton) is also there. They are arguing. She is trying to find Billy, her lover, who has gone missing, and Charlie helps her hesitantly even though he is "so sleepy". Audrey is agitated over the Billy-situation, but all her efforts to resolve it are in vain. In fact, she seems unable to do anything at all. She is also going through some sort of existential crisis, at least according to Charlie who responds to her anxious assertion that "I'm not sure who I am but I'm not me" with indifference, telling her that "This is existentialism 101". All their scenes except for the final one take place in their house as they are forever preparing to go to the Roadhouse to look for Billy.

Of all the sequences in *The Return*, the scenes with Audrey and Charlie flaunt that discrete dreamlike quality associated with David Lynch perhaps the most. There is a pervasive

sense of urgency, intensified by the character's inability to act or 'get going'. There is also an uncertainty in the nature of Audrey and Charlie's conversations. In part thirteen for instance, Audrey, in a moment of existential angst, shouts: "Who am I supposed to trust but myself, and I don't even know who I am, so what the fuck am I supposed to do?!", to which Charlie calmly replies: "You're supposed to go to the Roadhouse and see if Billy is there". Audrey, though still anxious, agrees, but then asks if it is far. This is very strange because the Roadhouse is one of the most well-known places in Twin Peaks, and one in which she herself has been several times in the original show. Charlie responds: "Come on Audrey, you know where it is. [---] I'm gonna take you there. Now, are you gonna stop playing games or do I have to end your story too?". There is weight given to this last question as Audrey reacts with fear. She is visibly shaken and almost whispers: "What story is that Charlie? Is that the story of the little girl who lived down the lane? Is it?". There is a sort of estrangement of verbal language here, a hallmark of Lynch[155] similar to the original show's dream sequences, where the signification of a conversation remains ambiguous. Charlie asks if she wants to stay or go, to which she replies: "I wanna stay and I wanna go. I want to do both. Which will it be Charlie? Which one would you be? … Charlie help me. It's like Ghostwood here." After receiving no response from her husband, Audrey starts sobbing and the scene ends.

In part sixteen, Audrey and Charlie finally get to the Roadhouse where reality starts to crumble. They share a drink together in the bar, but as the announcer is introducing the next musical act – a staple of the Roadhouse – he announces: "Ladies and Gentlemen: 'Audrey's Dance'". This act completely ruptures the border between diegetic and extradiegetic, since 'Audrey's Dance' is the name of a track on the soundtrack for *Twin Peaks*, referring to a scene in season one where Audrey put on a dreamy jazz-song on the Double R' Diner's jukebox and danced like nobody was watching. Both Audrey and Charlie look surprised by the announcement, but as the familiar music starts playing, Audrey is calmed and starts to dance. Her face expressing pleasure, she moves to the centre of the dance floor as everybody watches her. For a while, we are swept away in a wave of nostalgia as we once again watch Audrey dance to Badalamenti's familiar score, but the moment is eventually interrupted. A man in the audience starts to scream at another couple: "Monique! Monique! That's my wife asshole!" whereupon he smashes a bottle in the man's head and starts beating him to the ground. Audrey is scared and runs back to Charlie in the bar: "Get me out of here!" she says as the camera is on her, over the shoulder of Charlie. Now a sound of electrical discharge occurs and instead of the

[155] Mactaggart, pp. 17-18

camera cutting back to Charlie's reaction, it cuts to Audrey's face in a mirror, standing where Charlie was just located in frame. The location has changed to a completely white background. Audrey is different as well. She is not wearing any makeup, and her hair is not as kept as before. She is also wearing some sort of hospital gown. When faced by her own reflection, she is struck with fear and shock, not understanding what has happened. After a few seconds we cut to black. The sound of electrical humming continues and is transformed into an odd, vaguely melodic tune. We now see the band that accompanied Audrey in her dance. We realize that the strange melody is 'Audrey's Dance' playing backwards, as the footage of the band is also reversed. The credits start rolling over the performance and the episode ends.

Audrey's treatment in *The Return* has an undeniable quality of 'pastness', that is, one that refer to - and can be understood in relation to - the past. The nature of this connection to the past remains elusive however and therefore warrants close scrutiny.

First of all, the revelation of her abuse at the hands of Mr. C completely undermines that 'happy return' that is to be expected from revival television. In focusing the violence upon Audrey, one is painfully reminded of what *Twin Peaks* was always about: violence against women. Similar to how the effects of Laura's murder in the original show revealed the insincerity of the detective serial's 'murder-of-the-week', the abuse of Audrey questions the spectator's desire to return to a place which one knows to be violent. In this way, borrowing from Joshua Jones' argument regarding the violence inherent in the desire for closure,[156] we become complicit in the violence of *The Return*, since we are the ones who yearned for its continuation. The violence done to Audrey, then, acts as a reminder of the dangers of selective nostalgia – forcing its audience to recall the violence that was always a part of *Twin Peaks*. The scenes with Audrey and Charlie also evoke the original show in its portrayal of the secluded domestic conflict. In that view, one could suggest that this is *The Return* at its most evocative of original show's setting.

I think everyone can agree that the permeating feeling of these scenes is one of stagnation, almost to an absurd degree. It seems Audrey is stuck, and whether this is to be understood figuratively, as in 'stuck in an unhappy marriage', or literally as 'stuck in a temporal loop', perhaps as an effect of her trauma, is not that important. In either case, Audrey stands out most of the returning characters in the new series, not interacting with anyone but Charlie. With this in mind, the series almost seems to suggest that Audrey has been 'left out', perhaps mirroring her absence from *Fire Walk with Me*, which was due to internal conflicts. The conflict

[156] Jones

between Lynch and Fenn is perhaps more important than it seems. Charlie could easily be read as a director who's frustrated with an unruly actor, threatening to write her out of the story ("are you gonna stop playing games or do I have to end your story too?").[157] In any case, Audrey seems to have been left behind, her limbo perhaps being a subjective variant of that which occupied Agent Cooper in the same time span. Other recurring characters of the original series seem to have accepted the passing of time, but this is not the case with Audrey. Her constant fear and disorientation are perhaps her reactions to a world that has moved on, one in which her role is uncertain. Indeed, the only moment in which she is relieved from fear is when the song plays. At that moment, she knows exactly what to do and enjoys herself, almost to a euphoric degree. In other words, the song and dance are familiar and comforting, and because the act is grounded in the past (with particular specificity), it is a highly nostalgic act.

The Return, then, creates a moment of literal regression brought forth by nostalgic attachment, only to violently rupture said moment and quickly stick a mirror in our face – showing the vain attempts of escapism. A stronger example of resistant nostalgia would be difficult to find. The signifiers of the past: 'Audrey's Dance' and Audrey herself, are violently scrambled, creating a new signification rooted in the present. The contemporary meaning thus reveals the folly and, indeed, danger of living in the past.

New Meanings and Interpretations

As I have already established, old signifiers can engender entirely new meanings. In part thirteen, for instance, James Hurley (James Marshall) joins the roster of Roadhouse-performers with his song 'Just You' – originally sung by himself, Maddy Ferguson (Laura's cousin, also played by Sheryl Lee) and Donna (Lara Flynn Boyle) in episode two of the second season. Though considered by some as a way to 'troll' fans by bringing back what might be the most kitsch and ridiculed part of the original series, Simon Hall has instead argued that the performance is to be read as a genuine display of sentimentality, achieved by James' new context as a matured but also troubled man.

> The reprise of the song is not an empty reproduction of the original, despite using the exact same recording; the song's original, artistically flawed presentation is transmuted into an analogue for the memories of past mistakes and absurd happenstance that we were

[157] Similarly, Martha P. Nochimson ("Desire under the Douglas Firs...") considered metafictional aspects of *Twin Peaks* in her analysis of the final episode of season two, where she considers production conflicts as one reason for Cooper's failure.

> witness to in the original series, events which have inevitably shaped James Hurley's lived experience in the years since.[158]

In this reading, the sequence functions similar to Bobby's overwhelming emotional response to the picture of Laura Palmer, that is, a signal to the audience of the very real emotional bonds to the past. But, as Hall then states, the meaning of the song is transposed into a different narrative: his fascination with Renee, a new character in *The Return*.[159] Though Hall is hesitant to draw any broader conclusions about *The Return*'s representational aesthetic, the scene "illuminates ways in which the series re-enacts its past",[160] creating new meanings through the scrambling of old and new signifiers.

In the rest of this section, I will look at scenes and sequences that go even further in their arrangement of new meanings. In *The Return*, history - both general and biographical - is violently exposed, transformed and ruptured, questioning the reality of the past and the legitimacy of the original show itself.

'The Return' of Laura Palmer

The ending of *The Return* is wrought with ambiguity, obliterating any sense of historical (and general) grounding. After Mr. C and BOB has been defeated in part sixteen, Cooper, in what seems to have been planned beforehand, travels back to 1989 and intercepts Laura on her way through the woods. "We're going home", he tells her. Cutting to the very first scenes of season one, we see Laura's dead body disappear from the beach. Back at the Palmer house in present day, Laura's mother Sarah, whom we have been advised might be possessed by Judy (the mother of all evil entities), is moaning as if in pain. She picks up the picture of Laura, throws it to the floor and smashes it repeatedly. With Laura dead, perhaps the cycle of grief that Judy feeds upon has been broken? Cooper's plan seems to go awry, however. Walking through the woods with Laura back in 1989, he hears that elusive sound that the Giant warned him about in the first episode. He looks back and Laura is gone – her scream ringing through the forest. In the next and final episode, Cooper finds himself in the Black Lodge once more. Now, he is able to leave the 'normal' way however, appearing in the woods of Twin Peaks where he is greeted by Diane. Together, they drive a car into another reality to look for Laura who should now be alive. In this place, they seem to be interlocked with 'Richard' and 'Linda', a couple going

[158] Hall, p. 8
[159] Hall, pp. 7-8
[160] Hall, p. 11

through some sort of crisis. They are separated from each other, but Cooper/Richard manages to find a woman named Carrie Page (Sheryl Lee), who he is convinced is Laura Palmer. He drives her across the country in the middle of the night - from Odessa, Texas to Twin Peaks, Washington. When there, they go to her old house, to see if she can remember anything. She does not, and the inhabitants of the house are strangers and have never even heard of the Palmers. As they walk back to the car, Cooper stops in the middle of the street seemingly struck by a thought. "What year is this?" he exclaims. Laura/Carrie looks confused. But, looking back at the house, she hears the distorted decelerated shout of her mother Sarah coming from inside: "Laura!" Seemingly overwhelmed by the memories of violence and death, Laura lets out a harrowing scream that short-circuits the lights of the house, and seemingly, all of reality, as everything is plunged into darkness. The scene of Laura whispering some unknown message in Cooper's ear in the Black Lodge back in part two slowly fades in and the credits roll.

The conclusion that *The Return* offers has led to many interpretive discussions, and seems, as Dominic Lash has pointed out, to construct, "with great affective power, the possibility of *diametrically opposed* interpretations."[161] Lash touches upon these different interpretations but discovers that it is by "*destroying* the possibility of a return to *Twin Peaks* […] that *The Return* ends up faithful to what was really so remarkable about the original series: its capacity to remain at one and the same time utterly distinctive and perpetually elusive."[162] Lash mentions two themes that seem central in the understanding of the ending in particular, and *The Return* in general. These are on the one hand the delusion of changing the past – represented by Cooper, and on the other the return of trauma – represented by Laura. Joshua Jones argues that these are connected through the shift of identification from Cooper to Laura, stimulated by his failure and her significance: "Laura screams her familiar horrific scream, offering no resolution but instead returning viewers to and leaving them with what was there all along: Laura Palmer and the trauma that has been inflicted upon her."[163] Rachael Dumas also discusses trauma, but instead sees the ending as a representation of the very un-representability of trauma itself. Not only is trauma un-representable, but the desire for clarification is also what destroys any real recovery, similar to the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice (where Orpheus, just like Cooper in the woods, looks back to verify her presence behind him only to banish her once more). Ellis and Theus also regard the collapse of reality as related to Cooper's actions.

[161] Lash, p. 15
[162] Ibid., p. 22. Original Emphasis.
[163] Jones, p. 17

> That this world literally collapses with the shuttering of the lights challenges not only Cooper's insistence that he could 'return' to the home of Laura Palmer to undo the past, it suggests that any epistemological grounding based in some index of the past is mere construction.[164]

The first part of this argument seems more valid than the second, since it is not the grounding itself that presents the central conflict in *The Return*, but the epistemological grounding in the past being misplaced, either by negotiating past reality, as Cooper does, or refusing to leave it – as was the case with Audrey. For, just as Lash points out:

> for all its inscrutable non-linearity, time in *The Return* proves both real and impossible to master […]. It is certainly true that '*The Return* treats its original historical moment as something the meaning of which has to be continuously worked through in the present' (*ibid.*:34), but the result of this stance is often that knowledge of the past and its relation to our present often comes to be seen as confusing, distressing, elusive, or misleading, rather than as a 'mere construction'.

Thus, *The Return*, by constantly putting into question its own historical moment, actually emphasizes the role of time in its epistemological and, indeed, ontological disposition.

Cooper's strange attempt to rewrite and erase the narrative catalyst comes across as reckless, perhaps evoking Promethean overconfidence rather than Orphean folly, and finally asserts the impossibility of a nostalgic return. Through the fantastical retrieval of Laura, the finale illustrates the paradox of nostalgia: the will to repossess a past moment. In trying to rewrite the story, Cooper destroys the object of nostalgia (the past as we know it) and simultaneously undermines Laura's sacrifice in the first place, condemning her to more pain. Compare if you will the finale of *The Return* to the ending of *Fire Walk with Me*, where, after death, Laura finally found peace – smiling and crying tears of joy in the Black Lodge. Never given that peace in this new timeline, her repressed traumatic memories return as a violent disruptive force. In terms of nostalgia, the ending of *The Return* acts as a final warning against the dangers inherent in trying to 'return' to the past. Just like Rife and Wheeler asserts: Cooper's "heroic mission to rewrite Laura Palmer's life transforms […] into a selfish mission to vanquish

[164] Ellis and Theus, p. 34

reality and culminate an apparently unsatisfactory narrative."[165] If Audrey's scenes exhibit the danger of clinging to the past, Cooper's actions in the finale asserts the catastrophe that results from wanting to possess it.

Sarah Palmer and the Atomic Bomb

In part eight of *The Return*, we witness a flashback to 1945 where, in White Sands, New Mexico, the Trinity atomic bomb test is launched. Being transported into the violent explosion, we witness a hovering figure vomiting a projectile of small eggs and orbs, the largest bearing the face of BOB. The episode continues by showing the Giant, living in a castle, witnessing this event on a cinema screen. As a response, he also starts hovering and creates an orb of his own. His is golden however and bears the face of Laura Palmer. The orb is blessed by a woman who lives there with him, before being sent to earth.

Back in the New Mexico desert, we move forward in time to 1956, where an egg hatches a strange mix between a frog and a moth. Meanwhile, a woodsman - a bearded man completely covered in soot - descends from the sky. He walks into a radio station, kills the personnel and hijacks the broadcast. He now repeats a poem that puts listeners to sleep:

> This is the water, and this is the well.
> Drink full and descend.
> The horse is the white of the eyes, and dark within.

The frog/moth-creature finds its way into the room of a girl, lying on her bed passed out from the poetry reading. As it crawls up to her face, she opens her mouth, letting the creature in and swallowing it. His mission apparently fulfilled, the woodsman ends his mantra and walks out into the desert. The neighing of a horse is heard across the dark wastes.

Part eight not only transcends classical representational narrativization, but it also contests our perception of the past, both in terms of the 'real' historical past, as well as the narrative past, that is, the original *Twin Peaks*. Walter Metz sees this episode as revealing a backstory for *Twin Peaks* that had been hidden previously. "As *The Shining*'s hotel was built atop the grounds of Indian massacres, the plot of *Twin Peaks* emerges from a more recent sin of the United States government, the deployment of nuclear weapons."[166] Though

[165] Rife and Wheeler, p. 434
[166] Metz

underpinnings of Native American genocide were prevalent in *Twin Peaks* also, as discussed by Michael Carrol,[167] the birth of modern evil unveiled in *The Return* does change the historical foundation of the series. Suddenly, Albert's hypothesis in season two rings truer than ever: "Maybe that's all BOB is. The evil that men do", being born from nothing less than an explosion of unforeseen amounts negative energy. *The Return* thus challenges our understanding of the original text by revealing vital information. In terms of nostalgia, this immediately shifts the potential for understanding to the newer text, giving it precedence. The socio-historical dimensions have also been discussed further by Rob E. King, who, other than the history of atomic weapons, points towards *The Return*'s portrayal of abandoned suburban housing developments, emphasizing its post-2008 historical moment, as well as the oil 'boomtown' of Odessa, Texas playing a role in the finale.[168] Thus, the historical moment of *The Return* is once again emphasized, creating a text that deals very much with contemporary considerations, just like Dika argued that resistant nostalgic texts do.

Part eight also confounds our preconceived notion of guilt in its portrayal of Sarah Palmer. Some viewers aptly deduced the identity of the little girl swallowing the frog/moth as Sarah Palmer, which has since been confirmed by Mark Frost.[169] This, together with her other appearances in *The Return*, seems to point towards something that we had missed all this time.

From her first appearance in part two - where she watches a mauling of a wildebeest by lions on her massive flat-screen TV while drinking and smoking - Sarah is wrapped up in a world of pain, sorrow and violence. In part twelve, we see her at the supermarket buying liquor and cigarettes. At the checkout, she notices two different types of jerky hanging behind the cashier: beef jerky and turkey jerky. This seems to disturb her, and she asks about the turkey jerky. The cashier tells her that it is smoked, and basically the same as beef jerky but made from turkey. Now an ominous sound starts playing, reflecting Sarah's mounting fear. "Were you here when they first came?", she asks the cashier and then continues: "Your room seems different, and men are coming!" The cashier and bagger try to help but she gets more scared: "I am trying to tell you, that you have to watch out. Things can happen! Something happened to me. Something happened to me! I don't feel good. I don't feel good!" After this, she starts speaking to herself as if to calm herself down: "Sarah. Sarah don't do this. Stop doing this. Stop doing this. Leave this place!" She starts walking out of the store but continues: "Find your car key. Find the car key! Get the car key! Get the car… get the goddamn

[167] Carrol
[168] King
[169] Mark Frost, *The Final Dossier*, New York: Flatiron Books 2017, pp. 133-136

car key!" Later in the episode, Hawk, having heard what happened, goes to her house to see if she is alright. Now she seems annoyed at this disturbance. She tells him with marked disinterest: "I just don't know what came over me." As they're speaking, a sound is heard from inside the house, like the clatter of dishes, but with a vague electrical hum. When asked, Sarah dismisses it as just something in the kitchen. Hawk asks her one final time if she's alright, whereupon she says through clenched teeth as if in bottled-up anger: "It's a goddamn bad story, isn't it Hawk?" She says goodbye to him, and the next time we see her is part thirteen, when she, once again, watches TV. Now it is a boxing match however, consisting of a short section playing on repeat. It seems she has run out of drink which leads her, presumably, to visit a bar in part fourteen. After ordering her drink in said bar, she is immediately disturbed by an obnoxious man. Calling her a lesbian, he asks: "You like to eat cunt, huh?", to which she responds: "I'll eat you". This angers him and he threatens her, whereupon she turns to him and takes her face off, similar to how Laura did in the Black Lodge back in part two. Instead of the glowing light seen behind Laura's face however, Sarah reveals a darkness with some sort of claw lashing out of it. We also see a white hand with a blackened ring finger, as well as a devilish white smile. As this happens, her voice asks: "Do you really want to fuck with this?". She puts her face back and then quickly lashes out like a snake, biting of a part of his throat. With the man fallen dead to the floor, she screams as if to avoid suspicion. The barman suspects her however to which she looks him in the eyes with a blank expression and says: "Yeah. Sure is a mystery, huh?" This veiled threat scares him, and the scene ends.

Though given relatively few scenes, the character of Sarah Palmer acts as a vital marker of the thematic and narrative structure of *The Return*. She is the one most affected by the horrible trauma that ails the entire town, stuck in an endless cycle of misery and pain. But it is not only as the victim of a crime that Sarah appears, such as she did in *Twin Peaks*. *The Return* instead puts her role as victim under scrutiny, hinting at some deeper connection to the evil witnessed. Is *The Return* suggesting that she was culpable in the abuse of Laura? Perhaps - her possession by an evil entity (Judy?) from an early age would seem to suggest that she has always been 'touched' by evil. Through this possession, she might have grown to fear the *doppelganger* – a sign of terrible things to come – and in her confusion mistakenly connected this to turkey jerky, a sort of *doppelganger*. In the original show, Sarah had strange visions, amongst them the white horse, which appeared when she was drugged by her husband in order for him to abuse their daughter. In *The Return*, the horse's significance gets intermeshed with both Sarah and Judy, suggesting a connection between them. The horse might symbolise an unexplored, more complex evil: the act of allowing evil to continue, looking the other way. The

woodsman's poem could be interpreted like that after all: "the horse is the white of the eye, and dark within". Perhaps *The Return* is not suggesting that Sarah was evil all along, but rather that her guilt has been transformed into a great darkness over the years. Now, it seems that she, or Judy, is feeding off of all that pain. Her final appearance is the already mentioned scene in part seventeen where, upon somehow realizing that Laura has been saved from death, she lashes out in anger at Laura's picture, smashing it over and over again as the footage plays and cuts back and forth. She/Judy is not able to feed off of the pain of Laura's death any longer. The question is how to interpret the ending where, upon hearing Sarah's voice, Laura screams out in terror. Perhaps the realization that her mother knew of her abuse was too much, or perhaps Cooper accidentally led Laura right into Judy's hands?

Why I linger at Sarah's significance is because she is deeply embedded in the historical grounding of *The Return* and represents yet another example of the series' complicated relationship to the original show. First of all, the vast elaboration and reassessment of her character signals a departure from the original text, suggesting that there were things left out in *Twin Peaks*. Similar to how the atomic bomb-backstory of modern evil shifts epistemological authority to *The Return*, the probing of Sarah's role in the trauma of the series undermines the legitimacy of the original show, pointing out the failure in not informing us of this important aspect of the story. In terms of nostalgia, Sarah acts as a representation of reliving the past over and over again. Her traumatic memories have completely overtaken her, and she is stuck in a loop of suffering. Her watching of violent television, particularly the repetition of the boxing match, conjures up an image of the spectator's desire to re-live *Twin Peaks*, carelessly longing to return to the violence that characterized it. In this view, *The Return* could be seen as an attempt to break this cycle by not giving the audience a traditional continuation of the narrative, steering clear of the trappings of nostalgia. By removing the painful memory on which she feeds, Sarah lashes out in anger. The cycle of nostalgic feeding on past memories is broken.

Nostalgia as Void: Serial Television and the 'Revival'

Returning to Niemeyer and Wentz, if one considers serial television to create nostalgia through the voids it generates, how does this work in the case of the revival – particularly the revival of *Twin Peaks*?

For Niemeyer and Wentz, media is formative of nostalgia both aesthetically and emotionally,[170] a train of thought that I apply to the revival series in particular. In looking at 'nostalgic television series' (mainly *Mad Men*), they find that the serial television program, "due most notably to its structural and temporal characteristics, is particularly suitable to unfold the multiple dimensions of nostalgia, but also that nostalgia, through its modes of being and its tense, can itself be regarded as one of those characteristics."[171] I would like to incorporate the revival genre into this argument as well, seeing as it grounds itself in a specific past, and is inevitably prompted from some sense of nostalgia. Working from the assumption that all revivals function through the logics of nostalgia, the 'void' that Niemeyer and Wentz proffers in their understanding becomes apparent. I would, in fact, argue that this void is especially prevalent in the revival series, it being defined through said void of time between *old* and *new*. By its very definition, then, the revival series is an attempt to fill that void, defined partly in terms of temporal distance, but it can also designate "the void a long-watched series leaves when it finally ends, or the never-arriving closure of an unfinished narrative."[172]

All of these elements proffered by Niemeyer and Wentz in their discussion of serial nostalgia are not only present in the return of *Twin Peaks*, but they in many ways define the new series. The most obvious void is that of twenty-six years between seasons two and three. This temporal gap is highlighted again and again, whether through the aging and/or death of familiar characters, or the hidden significance of twenty-five (intradiegetic) years hinted at by Laura Palmer. This void is homogeneous to the narrative void produced, suggesting a period of time during which things have transpired that the viewer has not been witness to. History in *The Return* can only be grasped through various testimonies given through the series. One can imagine a Lynchian curtain being drawn over Twin Peaks for quarter of a century; and when that curtain is lifted as we tune in to *The Return*, it is the viewers job to make sense of all that has transpired in the darkness. The urgency of the spectator's detective-work is intensified by the dramatic cliff-hanger that ended the second season, which could also be described as a void – an unfinished narrative that encourages speculation. A similar view is shared by Dominic Lash, who, similar to the continuous doubling of Agent Cooper, reads the new series itself as a double:

[170] Niemeyer and Wentz, pp. 129
[171] Niemeyer and Wentz, p. 130
[172] Ibid., p. 134

> It is not, however, a double of the original *Twin Peaks*. Rather, it deliberately resists this status, playing instead with the way its reception is shaped by the ways it is doubled by the 'new *Peaks*' that its audience wanted, or at least *thought* they wanted.[173]

Thus, using the interpretation of nostalgia as expectation through suspension (serial nostalgia), as well as Lash's assessment of *The Return* as *doppelganger* superimposed upon those expectations, one can determine that *The Return* is formed by its status as a revival television show. One can also translate Lash's argument to encompass the revival genre in general, since a revival text is inevitably measured against preconceived expectations.

As a revival series, being born from nostalgia itself, *The Return* inevitably conjures up a host of nostalgic compulsions. What is distinct of *The Return* is the way in which the show adopts a critical, at times analytical stance towards said nostalgia, weaving it into its own narrative and form, but not being overtaken by it. Even in those moments when nostalgic currents are rampant in the series, there is always a sense of a meta-fictional dimension to what is happening: a feeling that we are not watching a nostalgic show, but rather a show *about* nostalgia. Considering this dimension, one could imagine *The Return* as a case-study on nostalgia itself, inferring its connections to expectation and desire for closure, but also to form and narrative. Ellis and Theus highlighted this metafictional aspect when they claimed that "the new series might be said to narrate its relationship to the original"[174], though I argue that the revival-aspect is an important factor as well, not least in a historical perspective. The mid-2010s saw a surge of revival shows, like *Fuller House*, *The X Files*, and *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life*, all released in 2016.[175] Released against this backdrop of retromania[176], *The Return* contrastingly makes the return to the past difficult. Writing about *Twin Peaks*' social media afterlife, Rebecca Williams pondered over how fans would receive the revival that had been announced. Quoting *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, Williams posited that some fans would be pleased, but that

[173] Lash, p. 21. Original emphasis.
[174] Ellis and Theus, p. 24
[175] Wagmeister; Emily Yahr, "The 'Gilmore Girls' revival is far from perfect. Luckily for Netflix, fans won't care", *Washington Post*, 2016 Nov 16, https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/the-gilmore-girls-revival-is-far-from-perfect-luckily-for-netflix-fans-wont-care/2016/11/15/1ccb02cc-ab01-11e6-8b45-f8e493f06fcd_story.html
[176] The impression that the mid 2010s was particularly obsessed with reviving television programs was partly contested by Daniel D. Drezner ("A very important post about… why television revivals are not the worst: A mild defense of television revivals", *Washington Post*, 2018 Jan 29), who presented data suggesting that the surge in revival television programs was intimately connected to a general surge in all kinds of scripted television programming.

> 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).'[177]

The concern over threatening an original object can be applied to most revivals, at least those in which the original is still appreciated by someone. But, in the case of *The Return*, this threatening of the original text moves far beyond the realm of reception. As seen in its representation of BOB's inception, as well as the scrutinization of Sarah Palmer's involvement, *The Return* positions itself uniquely as a revival television program on its own terms, confident in its ability to tell a story of its own. The paradox is that by problematizing nostalgic attachment, *The Return* raises awareness of its own (and its audience's) historical moment. By highlighting the impossibility of a return in the face of time's passing, one is reintroduced to that uncertainty and mystery that made *Twin Peaks* so impactful in the first place. By making the void visible, we escape falling into the timeless abyss that demarcates regressive nostalgia.

Returning to that spectrum of revival television series envisioned in the introduction, *Twin Peaks: The Return* effectively narrates its shifting position as a revival text. Even though the reading of *The Return* as a narration of its own relationship to *Twin Peaks* had already been proffered by Ellis and Theus, they missed what I deem is the key to understanding *The Return*'s enigmatic and multifaceted representation of the past. Through its position as a revival: filling the void engendered by a suspended narrative, combined with its resistance to nostalgic attachment, *The Return* suggests a reading of itself as metafictionally narrating the nostalgia inherent in the revival. Thus, it positions itself as a metafictional revival text.

[177] Williams, p. 147

Concluding Discussion

The introduction to this thesis stated that *Twin Peaks: The Return* was complex in its relation to the original *Twin Peaks*. This statement has been proven through scrutinization of *The Return*'s representation of past signifiers in a new context. Whether it be through the opening sequence of the very first episode, the Log Lady's death, Cooper's doubling, Audrey's crisis, part eight's exposure of the show's background, Sarah Palmer's questioned complicity, or the bleak ending of the final episode, *The Return* routinely undermines a sense of pacifying nostalgia, instead offering resistance to the past. Its position as a television revival has been vital in understanding its relation to the original text, engaging with the void of twenty-six years between the two series. By connecting *The Return*'s position as a metafictional revival text to the broader consideration of televisual nostalgia, I have exposed some of the logics at work within this genre; an assessment that will hopefully inspire other inquiries into this fascinating contemporary phenomenon.

Going back to the academic discourses surrounding nostalgia and/or *The Return*, I can draw some conclusions. Dika's model of resistant nostalgia has enabled us to look at profound representations of the past that, in fact, speaks of contemporary matters. This is far removed from that shallow postmodernist nostalgia that Jameson suggested. I have also seen how Niemeyer and Wentz's hypothesis regarding television nostalgia has offered productive insights, particularly when incorporating their argument into a discussion of the revival genre. Regarding *The Return*, I partly agree with Ellis and Theus' assessment that the show "narrate[s] its relationship to the original"[178], but I have argued that this phenomenon is better understood in terms of metafictional aspects of the revival genre. Similarly, though conceptualizations of nostalgia as double have contributed to the understanding of *The Return*'s relationship to nostalgia, I suggest that nostalgia in *The Return* is better understood as resistant, guided by its introspective exploration of its own role as a revival text.

There is still much to be said about *Twin Peaks*. It would be interesting to see an analysis of the original series with the new perspectives that *The Return* offers, some of which I have outlined in this thesis. Such a study could be structured in a similar way, but reversed so that the object of study is the original text, rather than the continuation. It would be interesting to see if Dika's terminology could be applied to such a study. Another venue for research could be the role of music in representing nostalgia in *Twin Peaks* and *The Return*. This dimension of nostalgia became evident in my analysis, but I had to limit my research for sake of space. It

[178] Ellis and Theus, p. 24

would be interesting to see such a study, perhaps by someone versed in musical theory. But, the field is endless. Just like Lavery stated in 1993 after the run of the original series; *Twin Peaks* still offers "a fascinating subject of investigation, raising complex and profound questions".[179]

Finally, there is a lingering question that still remains; did the new series deliver on its professed return? Halskov, writing when only the first four parts were available, pronounced that "the good old FBI agent and the cozy American small-town both look different, and both are torn into fragments that we, the viewers, have to investigate and re-assemble, before we can ever really 'return.'"[180] In hindsight, *The Return* is not devoted to bringing its audience on a guided tour of past memories. Instead, spectators are beckoned to make their own way through the fluctuating mess of nostalgic signifiers. Thus, we return to a place both familiar and strange; a return mirroring that of Cooper's first entrance into the Black Lodge in the final episode of *Twin Peaks*. Having seen it before in a dream, he *returns* to a place previously *unvisited*.

[179] Lavery, 1993, p. 239
[180] Halskov, p. 2

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