



The Ends of the Humanities

Perspectives from the Humanities and Social Sciences

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**“Dig yourself out of the shit!” Violence, language
trouble and ideality, or why the undead father needs to
roar back in Twin Peaks—The Return**

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“Dig yourself out of the shit!” Violence, language trouble and ideality, or why the undead father needs to roar back in *Twin Peaks—The Return*

When the question of the legitimation and the possible ends of the humanities comes to the table nowadays, it is often followed by the demand for socially and politically dedicated literature, film and art. The legitimation for the humanities, so it might appear, lies in the display of art works (and maybe popular culture) which take an overt political stand on critical topics of contemporary discourse like war, displacement or discrimination. While this has quite rightly been identified an important part of the work of scholars in the humanities, I think another, not less important feature and maybe even unique selling point of the humanities, lies in their capability to bring to light subliminal socio-political conflicts and problems that are not yet part of the official discourse. The humanities therefore provide us with the tools to analyse and interpret current phenomena of art and/or popular culture and to explore how these phenomena allegorically or metonymically convey underlying tensions and ongoing or emergent social and political crises which remain largely invisible or neglected within public discourse. David Lynch’s and Mark Frost’s legendary television series *Twin Peaks* is worthwhile to be analysed under this presupposition as it deals with (hidden) sociopolitical conflicts by exploring them under the veil of the double or triple and the grotesque on one hand and within the scope of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory on the other.¹

The long awaited third season of *Twin Peaks* (2017) came up with a proliferation of many of the motives that were already present back in 1989 and 1990: the notion of the doppelgaenger, the topics of disturbed genealogy and ambivalent fatherhood, the juxtaposition of grotesque and sublime features, as well as beautiful, surrealist images and enigmatic messages. What is, however, probably most disturbing about *Twin Peaks—The Return* is the extreme but strangely anonymous violence, which is the underlying texture of almost any episode. Had *Twin Peaks* formerly been the site of the horrific yet more or less singular murder of Laura Palmer,² so is *The Return* swept by an epidemic of murderous actions and mutilations. Beyond the level of the corporeal, this violent tension manifests itself as well on the level of vexing sound: the humming, chirping or blaring noises without a clearly identifiable origin penetrate the contents of the storyline. They mostly remain unclarified and thus haunt the spectator, who tries to

1 There are of course several studies that focus on social criticism in *Twin Peaks*: gender roles, stereotypes, family and paternal violence. See for instance Kimball (1993), Hume George (1995), Stevenson (1995). What I will try to do in this study is to read especially the new emerging conflicts of the third season by means of allegory, metonymy and Lacanian concepts, combining the sociopolitical analysis with the peculiar cinematographic mix of images, sounds and language confusion that characterises *The Return*.

2 Before Laura, another girl named Teresa Banks was murdered in Tacoma, Washington, prompting agent Cooper to investigate in both cases and reveal their possible connection. She is however not visibly present in the first two series and appears only in the subsequent prequel film *Fire Walk With Me* (1992). Some weeks after Laura’s body was found, her identical cousin Maddy (also played by Sheryl Lee) appeared and met the same destiny as Laura as she came to be killed by Leland as well. Maddy is, however, a revenant of Laura, her murder being hence a reduplication of the original.

make sense of them, even more effectively than they haunt the characters themselves.³



Bill Hastings murdered

In this article, I argue that the violence depicted in the third season goes hand in hand with the disintegration of the symbolic order, a term coined by Jacques Lacan.⁴ The violence and the uncanny sounds, which belong to another Lacanian category, the register of the Real,⁵ are, in my opinion, the counterpart of a disintegrating symbolic which in turn serves as a symptom of a body politic in danger of imploding. The visual aes-

3 There are some studies who were concerned with sound in *Twin Peaks* before, however, they focused primarily on music, melodies, postmodernist parody, or the femme fatale: Kalinak 1995, van Elferen 2010, Richardson (2004).

4 The symbolic is one of the three categories crucial to Lacanian psychoanalysis: the other two categories are the imaginary and the Real. The symbolic order is the order marked by the law of the symbolic father, the *nom-du-père*. It is the stage where the infant needs to leave the dyad with the mother (belonging to the field of the imaginary) in order to enter the field of law and language, of social interaction. From this time on, the imaginary is perceived as a lost ideal, prompting the desire to return to it. This desire is however created only retrospectively. See for instance Lacan 2008: 111. It is important to note that Lacan's *nom-du-père* is a structural one; it is a paternal function: "A flesh-and-blood father does not immediately and automatically fulfill the paternal function, nor does the absence of a real, live father in any way automatically ensure the nonexistence of the paternal function. This function [...] may be fulfilled by another man who becomes a 'father figure'; and it may be fulfilled in other ways as well." (Fink 1997: 79)

5 The Real is characterized by its impossibility to be absorbed either by the symbolic or by the imaginary. The Real resists symbolisation; it can be a horrible accident or a body trait that provokes disgust; it is a non-object outside of the realm of language: "[...] the real lack[s] any possible mediation, [it is] the essential object which isn't an object any longer, but this something faced with which all words cease and all categories fail, the object of anxiety par excellence." (Lacan 1988: 164)

thetic of fragmented (dismembered, mutilated, devoured, burst) bodies, or, as Lacan would have put it, the visibility of the *corps morcelé*,⁶ mirrors a collective anxiety of an imminent fragmentation of the (national) community.



Ruth Davenport's head and Major Brigg's torso

I wish to show how some of the most notorious motives of all three seasons (the doppelgänger, the grotesque, the violence and the hope for transcendentalism) lead, in the end, to one fundamental underlying problem: a shattering symbolic order embodied by a shattered language, where meaning is constantly shifted and postponed. My hypothesis is that the terrifying doppelgänger of Dale Cooper is in fact a phantasmatic configuration needed to secure the revolutionary narrative. He serves as the unkillable, vampiric revenant of the father the revolutionary project needs in order to fight the symbolic.

6 Lacan introduces the notion of the *corps morcelé* in his early essay on the mirror stage. He argues that the infant experiences his/her own body as utterly deficient and therefore fragmented. When the infant (between six and 18 months) first recognizes his- or herself in a mirror, he or she experiences an assumption jubilatoire (exhilarating assumption) when realising that the body is in fact not fragmented but whole. The feeling of empowerment that goes along with the mirror stage is, however, illusory as the child still feels his/her body to be deficient when trying to stand, walk, jump etc. This experience constitutes the ideal ego, which—also in adult life—will always be in conflict with the ego ideal (the instance that 'checks' if the subject actually complies with the ideal). (cf. Lacan 1977)



Ruth Davenport's body without head



Sam and Tracey murdered



Torso

The problem is, however, that there is no social sphere beyond the symbolic. To explain this, I will refer to the notion of *jouissance*⁷— an excessive, ultimately lethal enjoyment beyond the symbolic. Once the characters are dominated by violent, uncontrolled *jouissance*, the symbolic falls apart, rendering a functioning *res publica* impossible. I therefore argue that the cinematographic language of *Twin Peaks*—especially *The Return*—tries to render this fundamental problem of the revolutionary discourse visible by presenting us with arabesque images and sounds that defy interpretation and fixed meaning, rendering hereby the utter impossibility of a discourse visible which makes believe that once we have gotten rid of the *nom-du-père*, we have set the conditions for a truly democratic body politic.

1. Troublesome communication. Sounds, images and the symbolic on the verge of breakdown

In the very first scene⁸ of *The Return*, we see Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle McLaughlan) sitting in the Red Room in his familiar black suit, looking at the *Giant/The Fireman*⁹ (Carel Struycken) who points his finger to a spot *hors-champ*, saying: “Agent Cooper,

7 Jouissance is a sensation of extreme enjoyment and simultaneous horror or pain. It derives from Freud’s essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and is therefore linked with death (cf. Lacan 2006: 83), as opposed to mere pleasure (*plaisir*), which lacks the dimension of excess and is therefore tied to the level of the symbolic. Jouissance has hence a bigger connection to the imaginary than to the symbolic: “We can imagine a kind of jouissance before the letter, before the institution of the symbolic order” (Fink 1995: 60), but also to the Real as it operates beyond controllable limits and often in connection with language trouble, such as *lalangue* (see below, footnote 13).

listen to the sounds.” We—and Cooper—then see and hear a gramophone making a somewhat creaking noise. *The Fireman* says: “It is in our house now.” Cooper asks: “It is?” and *The Fireman* answers “It all cannot be said aloud now.” The whole scene is presented in black-and-white.



Listen to the sounds

With F. Kittler, we could say that this sequence mirrors the Lacanian categories of the imaginary and the Real in a disquieting way. The imaginary—for Kittler the sphere of film par excellence—is here represented by the aesthetic iconography of the Black Lodge. Its powerful and somehow soothing black-and-white *mise en scène* provides the viewer—always already handicapped by a deficient body—with an illusionary beauty and continuity, while the creaking noise from the gramophone serves as an uncanny reminder of the Real: this “waste or residue that neither the mirror of the imaginary nor the grid of the symbolic can catch: the physiological accidents and stochastic disorder of bodies.” (Kittler 2006: 15 et seq.) However, Kittler’s allocation of the Lacanian categories is not entirely suitable for Lynch’s aesthetics. The creaking noise of the gramophone indeed serves as an indicator of the repressed, unsymbolised Real; however, the images as well are at least partially deprived of their soothing dimension. Image, sound

- 8 That is, the scene after the opening credits of the first episode, which are preceded by a flashback from the first season: Laura Palmer and Dale Cooper in the Black Lodge, Laura saying “Hello agent Cooper. I’ll see you again in 25 years. Meanwhile ...”
- 9 In the first two seasons, Carel Struycken’s role was called *Giant*, whereas in *The Return* he refers to himself as *The Fireman*. It remains unclear if the *Giant* and *The Fireman* are intended to be the same character or not. In the credits of episode seven (*The Return*), his character is only referred to by seven question marks (“Carel Struycken: ???????”), highlighting once more his uncertain identity/ontology.

and word (be it typed or uttered) in *Twin Peaks* are all equally threatened by an uncanny, resistant Real. It is for this reason that the *Giant/The Fireman* states, “it [the creaking noise] is in our house now”: what he means is that the uncanny Real embodied by peculiar sounds has taken over the national house, the allegory of the *res publica*. “It” is the intruder that is able to crush the symbolic order of the national house.

The gradual disintegration of the symbolic is consistently conveyed through the isotopy of malfunctioning communication. Language, the bearer of the symbolic order and the laws provided by it, is always complicated in *Twin Peaks*. It is most often—especially in the third season—on the verge of failure because apart from Dale Cooper in the first two seasons and Hawk who manage to decode the clues given to them by the log lady or by creatures of the Black Lodge, most of the other receivers and transmitters cannot be trusted to interpret linguistic signs adequately. This problem, which is also at the core of the peculiar backwards-forwards articulation of the creatures in the Black Lodge, is for instance comically repeated in the fussiness of communication carried out by good soul secretary Lucy (Kimmy Robertson) in the Twin Peaks Sheriff’s department or, during season 3, in the failed communication between the ambivalent Mitchum brothers, two rich Las Vegas casino owners (Jim Belushi, Robert Knepper), and their ‘bunny’ Candie (Amy Shiels).¹⁰ The threat of a breakdown of communication therefore always already haunts the social imaginary embodied by the Twin Peaks universe.¹¹ Therefore, deputy director Gordon Cole’s (David Lynch) acoustic hearing apparatus, which often does not work properly—people still have to yell to make themselves heard, or Cole’s ears are hurt by extreme squeaking if its frequency does not match the volume of his interlocutors—serves as a metaphor for a society of interpreters that does not (any more) succeed in finding the same frequency.¹²

10 Another example is the obese lady who in the first episode of season three reports to the police something must be wrong with her neighbour, Ruth Davenport (who is actually found murdered in her apartment). She constantly misunderstands the officers and fails to provide them with accurate information. She therefore hyperbolically doubles the communicational structure between Lucy and the *nom-du-père* (the sheriff and the officers).

11 Tellote (1995) has argued convincingly that communication in *Twin Peaks* often does not serve the purpose of stabilisation of the narrative but rather causes further destabilisation: “Such communications draw on our desire for connection, relationship, and meaning, yet they often seem to serve only a teasing purpose, like Laura’s diary, promising answers but seldom giving the payoff we expect and desire” (166). His analysis is however deeply indebted to Foucault’s *L’ordre des choses*, arguing that *Twin Peaks* establishes the new episteme of postmodernism. His interpretation of the status of signification in *Twin Peaks* (“a world of empty signifiers randomly crop up amidst overly determined ones, making us pause to question the nature of all signification, and where quickly shifting signifiers can leave us longing for meaning” [167]) might seem a little rushed as, as I would argue, *Twin Peaks* does not merely consist of empty signifiers but of rendering them disturbing precisely at the moment when we thought we were experiencing a working revolutionary narrative.

12 It is not my intention to identify a single, specific cause for this tension that is metaphorically and literally expressed in *Twin Peaks* as I think that the allegorical dimension of the series reacts to a bigger and more fundamental development that began roughly with the end of the cold war and consists of a complex patchwork of different kinds of sociopolitical issues. There have been several attempts to explain the reasons for current malaises with the *res publica*, one of them being the idea that the Western democracies for years now have been experiencing a shift to a structure which has been named post-democracy by Colin Crouch or Chantal Mouffe. An important feature of post-democracy is the growing dominance of social and economic elites that foster politics which serve the accumulation of wealth

The function of the character of Laura Palmer, the always already dead protagonist of *Twin Peaks* is therefore, in my opinion, to be interpreted in the very light of rendering visible a symbolic which is right from the start sound or solid only on the surface. Laura is the character that combines the gradual downfall of the symbolic on the different levels and forms that language can take in the three Lacanian categories, the imaginary, the symbolic and the Real. All three of them can be characterised by means of their relation to language: the imaginary is marked by the lack of language (by being pre-linguistic), the symbolic is defined by the entry into and the presence of language and the law, whereas the Real signifies the excess of language and is therefore marked by *jouissance*.¹³ Laura and her death represent the approach of a threatening Real that needs to be watered down by aesthetic buffers which allude either to the imaginary or to the symbolic. Laura herself and the news of her death are therefore from the outset mediated through several objects and devices which function as such buffers. The iconic photograph of Laura as homecoming queen (imaginary), the videotape of her and her friend Donna (Lara Flynn Boyle) made by her secret lover James (James Marshall), the cassettes she recorded for her psychiatrist Dr. Jacoby (Russ Temblin) (symbolic), and even the presentation of her dead body in the pilot that bears some resemblance to a Christo disguise artwork (imaginary)—all these records of her not only show how she represented a fetish and a haunting entity for many members of the town. They also prove that her carnal presence, as much as the people around her longed for it, was essentially unbearable.¹⁴ It therefore needed, to put it with Kittler, to be mediated. This applies also to the ways the news of her death is brought upon. Interestingly, it is mostly not conveyed through face-to-face communication¹⁵ but, as the several visual and

rather than the pursuing of political programs that benefit the middle and working classes (cf. 2004). According to Mouffe, another key factor is post-democracy's rejection of (political) antagonism and thus debate. She has pointed out that the post-democratic governments' reluctance to accept the importance of antagonism in democratic politics fuels a spiral of uncontrolled violence—the only possibility for dissenting groups to express themselves. Post-democracies hence tend to demonize political antagonists, identifying them as 'evil enemies' that need to be eliminated (cf. Mouffe 2005). We can therefore argue that the language prompted by this kind of politics is a language that bears violent *jouissance*. It is therefore marked by the Real. Authors like Michael S. Cummings and Robert Pfaller, who interestingly published his book in the year of the airing of *The Return*, have elaborated on the notion of language and democracy in the 21st century, suggesting that for example so-called politically correct speech was actually a symptom of a political discourse that has become incapable of addressing the pressing economic issues of contemporary society, therefore using politics of speech to cover up the underlying social problems which remain essentially unresolved. (cf. Cummings 2001: 1–48; Pfaller 2017)

- 13 Lacan termed the notion *lalangue* to describe *jouissance* conveyed through language excess. By *lalangue*, he means „non-communitative aspects of language [like puns, blabber etc.] which, by playing on ambiguity and homophony, give rise to a kind of *jouissance*.“ (Evans 2006: 100)
- 14 Benjamin Moldenhauer states—in accordance with the findings of Elisabeth Bronfen in her book *Over Her Dead Body* (1992)—that the fetishization of Laura goes along with a mystification of the beautiful woman whose presence is only bearable once she is dead. He argues that in Laura's (dead) body, the truth about a tabooed violence appears, which is nevertheless hidden once again by means of fetishization (cf. Moldenhauer 2019: 228).
- 15 Sheriff Truman tells Leland the devastating news personally, but the viewer is put into the position of Sarah Palmer, who bursts into tears as she hears fragments of the conversation between the men through the telephone.

acoustic metonymies of her, transmitted *via* similar buffers, that is, different forms of mediation. Her mother (Grace Zabriskie) elliptically finds out about the death of her daughter through the phone, trying to understand what Sheriff Truman (Michael Ontkean) tells Leland (Ray Wise). Donna in turn suspects that something horrible has happened to her best friend when she hears a cry and sees a schoolmate running over the lawn through the window of her classroom.



Schoolmate cries

Finally, the headmaster informs his students about Laura's passing *via* the loudspeaker system. Furthermore, there are several foreshadows of the Black Lodge that surround Laura: the kitchen of the Briggs family which is seen when Sarah Palmer calls Bobby's (Dana Ashbrook) parents in order to find out the whereabouts of her daughter is bright red, the walls in the schoolhouse feature alarming red lines painted on the white plaster and the red frame of the glass cabinet with Laura's homecoming queen photograph in it—all of them foreshadow the red curtains in the Black Lodge, a place which is characterised by distorted language and strange communication. The buffers through which both Laura's alive and her dead body are transmitted to the public are therefore intended to contain the inexplicable threat emanating from it. However, they prove to be inefficient because they actually expose the symbolic order in its fragility.



Red lines in school



Laura's iconic photograph in red cabinet

This becomes clear if we take a look at Laura's activities in *Twin Peaks* community services, traditionally one of the most important pillars of a functioning civil society (and hence of the symbolic).

The people she worked with are torn characters, who cultivate an ambivalent relationship with language and (hence) the symbolic. Josie Packard (Joan Chen), whom she tutored in English turns out to be an ambivalent figure who dies mysteriously, appar-

ently under the influence of some black lodge spirit.¹⁶ Johnny Horne (Robert Davenport/Robert Bauer/Eric Rondell), Audrey's mentally disabled brother also coached by Laura, remains unable to enter the world of language, that is, the symbolic: after Laura's death he remains trapped in the imaginary, being only able to scream.¹⁷ Neither do Laura's three clients from Meals on Wheels, a service run by Norma Jennings (Peggy Lipton), an elderly woman named Mrs. Tremond (Frances Bay) and her grandson (Austin Jack Lynch) as well as Harold Smith (Lenny van Dolen) match the apparent normality of a meals on wheels service as their respective relationship to the symbolic is at least questionable: Mrs. Tremond's grandson is a young magician, who occasionally wears a white plaster mask (and like this in a way erasing himself from the symbolic) and who mysteriously manages to make creamed corn disappear from his grandmother's plate. Harold Smith on the other hand suffers from agoraphobia and is unable to leave his house and engage with the outside world. He is hence stuck in between the imaginary and the symbolic on which he depends in order to get food. Laura was therefore the character that experienced a symbolic order, and with it, the symbolic law, on the verge of breakdown. The defective language and communication on behalf of several (minor) characters refers to this threat of disintegration. It is therefore logical that in this situation, the primordial father¹⁸ appears: a terrible *father-jouissance* that operates beyond the law and can therefore only emerge if the symbolic category of the law-affiliated *nom-du-père* is weakened or omitted. The symbolic order Laura engaged with was therefore full of symptoms that suggested malfunctioning on the level of the law, a level primarily concerned with the father: a defective *nom-du-père* that had allowed for deadly father figures to emerge and torture their environment.¹⁹ Whenever Laura engaged in the symbolic, she was therefore always already threatened by the Real, which the law failed to symbolise and thus to contain. Consequently, her own funeral ends up in a downright disaster with Leland jumping on the coffin crying and hence preventing the symbolic ritual from being completed.

16 Her dead body only weighs 65 pounds and after her death, she—or her spirit—appear or seem to be trapped in several wooden objects.

17 He can therefore be characterised as psychotic in the sense of Lacan. As I will show below in chapters III and IV, psychosis dominates the allegorical universe of *Twin Peaks* and especially of the third season.

18 The primordial or primal father has his (academic) origin in Freud's writings about the father of the Urhorde (primal horde) whom the sons wanted to get rid of. "The father of the primal horde is the père sévère, who is egotistical and jealous, a sexual glutton, a father who enjoys, who is not limited by any submission to the law of an order transcendent to him." (Grigg 2006: 65)

19 The role of the father is obviously most pressing in *Twin Peaks*, however, I suggest that this role fundamentally changes over the course of the three seasons, leading to a the desperate maintenance of a mere proxy of a revengeful father which is needed in order for the revolutionary narrative to survive. See below, chapter 4.

2. Of silly twins, grotesque triplets and the ideal arabesque: Lynch, language and Baudelaire

Laura's funeral is one of the many scenes of the series that can be described with the notion of the grotesque—a term that is, albeit indirectly, also intimately linked with language and articulation. The grotesque embraces the tension between tragic/melodramatic and downright funny elements, between humorous scenes or sympathetic characters and the sudden outbreak of excessive verbal and physical violence, or between skillful and subtle verbal expression on one hand and the unsettling inability of some characters to perform proper communication on the other.²⁰ Furthermore, the grotesque is a topos that frequently involves the notion of the double, which is essential to *Twin Peaks*. As part of literary aesthetics and object of theoretical discourse, the grotesque achieved its highest profile during the 18th and 19th centuries. Writers, among them Edmund Burke, Friedrich Schiller, Sir Walter Scott or Edgar Allan Poe elaborated on the notions of beauty, the sublime and the grotesque (cf. Vila-Cabanes 2014: 109; Lawson 1966). The probably most prominent study on the topic was however written by Victor Hugo in his *Preface to Cromwell* (1827). For Hugo, the grotesque is characterised by a fundamental duality: it relies on an unresolved conflict between its comical and repulsive elements; it creates the horrible as well as the burlesque, laughter as well as disgust (cf. Hugo 2017: 8 et seq.; cf. Vila-Cabanes 2014: 109). This apparent paradox is, for Hugo, essentially 'modern' as it mirrors the cultural, social, industrial and economic experiences of the modern era (cf. Hugo 2017: 8). Many of the grotesque elements of postmodernist *Twin Peaks* work, however, in a similar manner.²¹ A grotesque duality oscillating between the humorous and the uncanny can easily be found in Laura's father Leland's compulsion to dance and sing and his spontaneous graying after murdering Jacques Renault on the one hand, and in his uncanny transformation into

20 In the first two seasons, for example, Audrey Horne is not only perfectly capable of articulating herself, she also uses language to manipulate her father or potential co-contractors of her father in order to chase them away. Her disabled brother Johnny is her antipode as he is not capable of engaging verbally with his environment. Another example is the couple Big Ed and Nadine: while he is mostly able to convey his feelings and concerns (albeit not always entirely truthful) to her, she, on the other hand, is usually screaming, sobbing or bursting with extreme joy and excitement making it difficult to have a conversation with her. In the third season, this couple is mirrored by Sheriff Frank Truman and his exhausting wife Doris who answers his careful efforts to sooth her with desperate anger. As it is explained later, Doris only became like this after the suicide of their son, who, according to corrupt and disagreeable deputy Chad Broxford, could no longer take being a soldier—another lost member of the unhappy new generation of *Twin Peaks* inhabitants.

21 Ferraraz (2007) wrote an article on the grotesque in *Twin Peaks*, deeming it the Lynchian uncanny. Ferraraz focuses mostly on the surrealist characteristics of the Lynchian cinematography and links them to the notion of the grotesque: “[O] estranho lynchiano é revestido ainda pela forma como ele foca seus personagens e retrata o corpo humano, envolvendo sua obra no grotesco, que assume um tom surreal. Os surrealistas tinham obsessão em retratar o corpo em partes fragmentadas ou sendo cortado.” He focuses on the *doppelgänger* and the problems of identity and the possessed (grotesque) father (5). Although I agree with his assumptions, I believe that it takes us even further if we combine the notions of the grotesque and the double with the obvious problem with language that *Twin Peaks* poses. I therefore suggest to read the grotesque elements of *Twin Peaks* (and esp. of the third season) rather with Baudelaire than with surrealist art movements (like Dalí or Buñuel).

Bob (Frank Silva) whenever he looks into a mirror on the other. We can also find traces of grotesque duality in the character often referred to as ‘the dwarf’ (his actual name is The Man from Another Place aka The arm²² [Michael J. Anderson]). His curious appearances in the Black Lodge where he is seen dancing slowly and enigmatically, giving Cooper mysterious clues as to who killed Laura contrast to a certain degree with his particular physicality and the fact that he was made of a piece of severed human flesh. The visible elements of his body as well as the invisible ones (we suspect he is made of a severed arm, but we do not see it) thus add to the impression of a rather grotesque corporeality. Of special importance regarding the grotesque are, however, those characters who have brothers and/or doppelgaenger and who often—yet not always—appear together. In seasons one and two, the ruthless brothers Ben (Richard Beymer) and Jerry Horne (David Patrick Kelly) provoke both sympathy and repulsion. They engage in elaborate schemes and crimes as well as in sexual intercourse with underaged prostitutes and even with Laura. However, the laughter they provoke as well as their almost child-like naïveté and their peculiar longing for something beyond recall help to preserve sympathy, especially for Ben. By the third season—Ben has turned into an indulgent, silently suffering, fatherly boss, while a lonesome Jerry spends his time in the woods, hysterically searching for his way out—the grotesque potential of the Horne brothers has shifted to their ‘doppelgaenger’: the dubious Mitchum brothers, who first seem to be the despotic godfathers of the casino world, yet whose warm-heartedness prevails by the end of the season. The curious Fusco brothers, three detectives from Las Vegas who appear in *The Return*, likewise correspond to the logic of the grotesque: not only do they mirror the Hornes and the Mitchums but also the three Coopers (the Doppelgaenger, Dougie Jones and the real Cooper).²³ Their grotesque corporeality is expressed by the fact that all three seem to feel like being only one person (accordingly, they lack proper first names²⁴ and share a desk with just one name plate on it). However, the funny part resulting from this identity sharing is at least partly thwarted by their volatility, excessive outbursts of laughter and the uncanny threat of potential violence underlying their police work.

22 He was created from the severed left arm of the character *Mike*, an inhabiting spirit who only appears in the body of his host Michael Gerard. He cut off his arm to free himself from *Bob* with whom he had previously committed several murders and rapes.

23 The triple structures (good, profane/comical and sublime/horrible) allude as well to the holy (paternal) trinity: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This allusion adds to the Baudelaireian concept of the search for ideality during which man oscillates between his satanic and his divine pole. Also, it bestows the father with a ‘holy’ (yet horrible or Antichrist) status, rendering him a point de capiton (nodal point) for the narrative as a whole. See below, chapter 4.

24 They are called T. Fusco, D. Fusco and “Smiley” Fusco.



Detective Fusco name plate



The Fuscos laughing

The two-fold nature of the grotesque and the equally two-fold or three-fold structures, which lie at the heart of *Twin Peaks* (and in its name) give shape, then, to the pivotal point of the series: the endless ambiguity and infusible dialectics between the abysmal evil and the bodeful appearance of the transcendental. Interestingly, this dialectic can also be found in the poetry of Charles Baudelaire, one of the most influential French writers of the 19th century, whose modernist lyrics seem to have influenced the fantastic

and bizarre world of *Twin Peaks*. Baudelaire characterised the grotesque as the clash of evil with ideality. In his well-known study on modernist poetry, German scholar Hugo Friedrich stated that Baudelaire's poems are, like the grotesque, characterised by the basic tension between satanism (an intelligent, no longer animalistic form of extreme evil) and ideality. Modernity, especially the modern metropolis, embodies this tension *via* the juxtaposition of horrific or dirty and beautiful or sublime elements: for instance, pleasure and grievance, gas light and the evening sky (cf. Friedrich 1970: 42 et seq.). The negativity of modernity thus comes to be a fascinating and inspiring force. As it saves the subject from the worst thing to be stuck with—banality—it is even the necessary condition for encountering ideality, or at least for trying to encounter it. Therefore, beauty for Baudelaire is never just prettiness. Rather, beauty is grotesque in the sense that it is also aggressive, strange, bizarre. It is involved with the mysterious and the ugly, with terror and ridiculousness. According to Friedrich, this tension is transferable to human nature in general: the human being, understood as *homo duplex*, is fundamentally hyperbolic for Baudelaire. The *homo duplex* therefore finds himself swaying between the extreme polarities of good and evil: in order to feel the divine, man needs to satisfy the evil pole as well (cf. *ibid.*: 46). It is not difficult to uncover this dialectical structure of Baudelairean poetry at the core of *Twin Peaks*. In fact, we could refer to Dale Cooper as a 'seeker' in the tradition of Baudelaire's lyric *personae*. He finds *Twin Peaks* strangely meeting his most fundamental desires for transcendentality—incarnated for example in something that would normally, in another time and place, be regarded as rather banal: a cup of coffee and a piece of cherry pie. From the first day of his stay in the town, Cooper is confronted with the intersection of the two extreme poles, which are metaphorically realised in the two lodges—the black one and the white one. He therefore becomes enchanted with *Twin Peaks* right from the start. Like the urban metropolis for Baudelaire's *personae*, the rural small-town atmosphere which has nevertheless become the site of a brutal murder, fascinates and inspires Cooper, just like it inspired Lynch and Frost themselves. While Cooper's Baudelaireian hyperbolism is at first limited to his devilish enjoyment of local coffee and pie and the diving into the world of the unconscious in order to obtain clarity as to who killed Laura Palmer and Teresa Banks,²⁵ other figures crucial to the plot initially represent the dilemma of the *homo duplex* in a more obvious manner. It is for instance embodied by Leland Palmer and his split personality between the ordinary, loving father and evil *Bob*, and also by Cooper's former FBI partner Windom Earle (Kenneth Welsh) who becomes gradually obsessed with the black lodge and finally sets his mind on destroying Cooper. Yet, in the third season, Cooper himself becomes the perfect incarnation of the *homo duplex* as he is split into good and bad Cooper: the latter the personification of pure, intelligent evil; the former trapped in the body of Dougie Jones, the benign albeit clumsy middle class office worker. The main incorporation of Baudelaire's *homo duplex* however is, of course, Laura Palmer herself, who, in Friedrich's words, badly needs to feel her satanic pole in order to achieve the divine. Laura's beauty is therefore in a Baudelaireian manner locat-

25 In order to get hold of the killer, in the first season Cooper leans on messages transmitted to him in his dreams or on achieving the mental status of Tibetan monks.

ed between bodeful and bizarre, aggressiveness and benignancy, familiarity and strangeness.

We have already seen above that Laura herself and the various ways in which her corporeality is mediated in the first season, are a symptom of the gradual disintegration of the symbolic order. In *The Return*, this disintegration seems to have reached a new level as language disorders are now applicable to a considerable number of new and old, main and minor characters alike.²⁶ Interestingly, the by now not only threatened but already demolished symbolic is most prominently expressed through the difficult linguistic conduct of those characters who might not necessarily incorporate the *homo duplex* but who can nevertheless be characterised as grotesque in the sense already described above. What is of special importance here, is the fact that the characters in question tend to appear in double or triple structures.²⁷



Candie pointing to Anthony

- 26 The formerly extraordinarily eloquent Audrey, for instance, now seems to lack the capability of expressing her thoughts and needs adequately to her husband. She therefore ends up primarily bad-mouthing him. The helplessness of her linguistic conduct is reflected by the limitation of her movements. She talks about going to the Roadhouse to look for her missing lover Billy yet for two episodes she does not manage to actually leave the house. Her linguistic capability of making herself understood and her mobility have thus shrunk dramatically, mirroring the symbolic, which has apparently shrunk as well due to the take-over by violent *jouissance* and thus the Real.
- 27 Whereas the importance of double structures is already embodied in the name “Twin Peaks”, the increasing importance of triple structures is conveyed through the intertextual and autoreferential use of the “double R”: RR, on the metalevel of production, stands for the Rancho Rosa production company; on the diegetic level, RR stands for Rancho Rosa estates, a residential development in a suburb of Las Vegas where Dougie Jones meets to make love with the prostitute Jade. On an intertextual level, RR refers to the Double R—the diner owned by Norma Jennings, which serves as a melting spot for many characters and actions during all three seasons. The double hence triples in the third season, mirroring the equal tripling of main character Dale Cooper.

The Mitchum brothers for instance, fail to communicate efficiently with their assistant Candie who usually appears accompanied by her identically dressed colleagues Mandie and Sandie—another peculiar ‘trptych’ mirroring the three Coopers. Candie seems constantly distracted and moony, almost mute—like Johnny Horne—and not reacting at all or with great delay to the Mitchum’s pleas.²⁸ When she finally engages in verbal interaction with Cooper/Dougie’s corrupt colleague Anthony (Tom Sizemore) upon their request, the brothers see her through a monitor, talking and making mysterious gestures, without being able to gather the content of the conversation.



The Mitchums unable to understand what Candie does

Just like Johnny Horne and later Cooper/Dougie, Candie therefore represents something outside the symbolic, something beyond the symbolic dimension of language;²⁹ a refractory force that serves as a symptom for a gradually disintegrating socio-symbolic order where understanding each other becomes increasingly difficult. Besides their strange identity dilemma, the detectives Fusco (Larry Clarke, Eric Edelstein, David Koechner) in turn stand out primarily for their uncontrolled laughing and giggling, which is contrary to the rational and prudent behavior of other members of the police force like Sheriff Truman, Deputy Chief Hawk or Agent Cooper when he was still himself. The Fusco triplets therefore convey that lacking a proper identity can be accompanied by lack of proper language and communication. As a result, they are not entirely

28 The trigger for Candie’s strange behaviour seems to be the moment when she strikes a fly to death that sits on Rodney Mitchum’s face, causing him a small bleeding wound. After the incident, Candie cries for hours (although Rodney repeatedly assures her, he is fine) before entering a stage of constant absent-mindedness.

29 Language for Lacan has both a symbolic and imaginary dimension. Cf. Evans 2006: 100 et seq.

integrated in the symbolic either. They are creatures of a *jouissance* which cannot be absorbed by the weakened, demolished symbolic. It thus causes the effect of slight uncanniness and renders their nevertheless partially successful police work (they succeed in arresting Ike the Spike who attempted to shoot Cooper/Dougie) a little sinister. All of these characters—the Mitchums, Candie, Sandie und Mandie, and the Fuscos—are profane prolongations, grotesque inversions or a comic foreshadowing of the splitting of Dale Cooper into evil Cooper, good Cooper and Dougie Jones, which lies at the heart of the third season. When the good Cooper can finally leave the Black Lodge and becomes trapped in the body of insurance broker Dougie Jones, he simultaneously loses the capability of articulating himself normally. Now, evil Cooper has appropriated this ability in his stead, claiming for himself the “license to speak” (Webber 1996: 55) as so many doppelgänger figures in film and literature have done before at the expense of their good counterpart (cf. *ibid.*: 51–55). While evil Cooper commands and instructs his criminal accomplices without difficulty, Cooper/Dougie’s verbal capabilities are merely reduced to the repetition of the last words his interlocutor has just uttered.³⁰ He is therefore a reconfiguration of the mythological Oread Echo who was deprived of any original communication by the jealous Hera as vengeance for covering Zeus’s extramarital affairs.

According to Julia Kristeva, the dissemination of a persona or narrator into a kaleidoscopic subjectivity (*subjectivité kaléidoscopique*) (Kristeva 1974: 317) as well as the disintegration of signifiers is part of an artistic process, whereby an apparently closed socio-symbolic order becomes challenged from within, that is, within poetry. Certain poetry therefore becomes a challenge to the unification and meaning of signifier and signified; it threatens the keystones of the symbolic and exposes its deficiency (cf. Kristeva 1978: 26–31). Besides the emergence of the novel in the Early Modern era, Kristeva identifies French poetry of the second half of the 19th century as critical for the development of this special kind of deconstructive language. As we have seen above, in *Twin Peaks*, we deal with several kaleidoscopique, fragmented subjectivities, which are all characterised by their peculiar language, being dominated either by lack or by excess. If Kristeva hence identified a crisis on the level of language and the symbolic in the late 19th century, we can at least partially transfer her analysis to the late 20th, respectively to the first decades of the 21st centuries. Lynch and Frost as well challenge the order of signifiers, shifting meaning and convention from one point to another or erasing meaning altogether, replacing it with ambiguity or, to put it again with Baudelaire, with the notion of the arabesque. What Baudelaire aspired to do and partially realised was to separate content and sound, letters and semantics, and to create an organism that works almost independent of meaning in the traditional sense (cf. Friedrich 1970: 50–52).³¹ As a derivative to the theoretical and literary findings of Edgar Allan Poe, Baudelaire and

30 He is also able to repeat certain short phrases that have been articulated before, over and over again in different (random) contexts, like: “Jade gave two rides” or “Call for help” and to gather pieces of information about who he is (“Dougie Jones”, “Mr. Jackpots”) or where he lives (“red door”).

31 Although Kristeva pays more attention to Lautréamont and Mallarmé than to Baudelaire, the poetry of the latter is equally marked by a language that calls the symbolic order and the relations between signifier and signified into question.

other symbolist poets (especially Rimbaud) created verses whose semantic effect stem rather from their tonality than from their actual content. As Friedrich puts it, the different functions of language become dissociated. The referential function either succumbs to the pure acoustic function or the referential function is determined retroactively by the acoustic dimension of the verse. Sounds and rhythms hence create an undeterminable, pending sense of their own; adding an enigma to the formerly stable semantic dimension. Baudelaire thus proposes a new dimension of language whose most prominent figure is the arabesque: independent lines and movements that float freely within the realm of the verse (cf. *ibid.*: 57 et seq.).

What Baudelaire could only achieve within the limits of the written word and the tonality of poetry, Lynch and Frost could fully realise in their cinematographic aesthetics and they have done so much more in season three than in the preceding ones. I would therefore argue that in *The Return*, the need for an expression of the ongoing language trouble appears to be even bigger than in seasons one and two, which means in turn that the symbolic in 2017³² is even more threatened than back in 1989/90. *The Return* is therefore to a much greater extent than the previous seasons dominated by a growing autonomy of sound and of ‘arabesque’ images. If lines and movements floated independently within the realm of the verse in Baudelaire, in the third season of *Twin Peaks*, surrealist images of intense, contrasting colors or of black-and-white images with golden tinted objects float rather independently between the loose ends of the story.

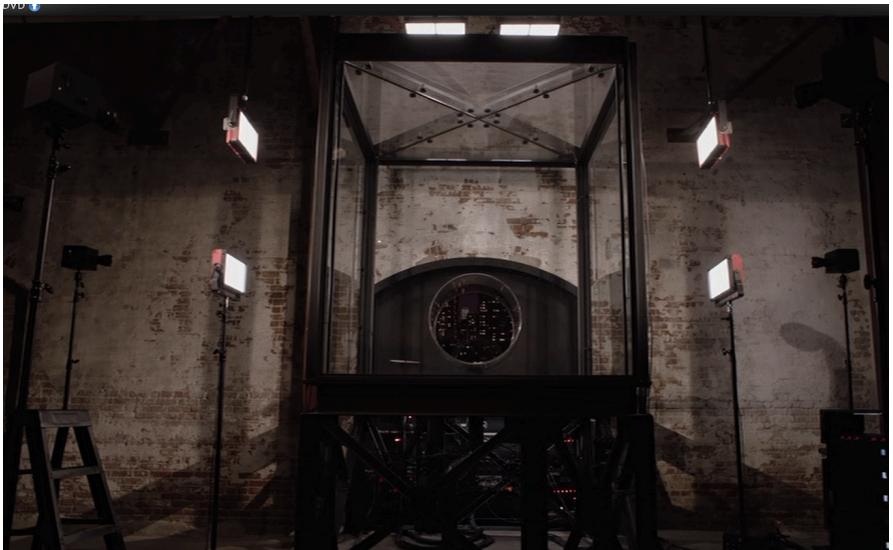


Red velvet gown in starry sky with golden object

32 Here, one should take into account the (at least) 4,5 years before the airing of the season, as this was the period Lynch stated he needed to write and film the scenario for season 3 (cf. Lloyd 2017).



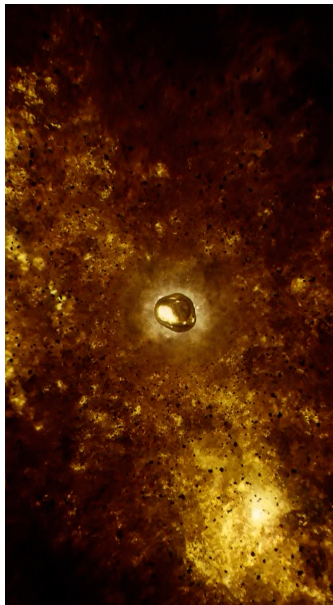
Naido falls into the sky



Glass box in New York City



Purple fumes



Rain of fire with golden orb



The Fireman, a rain of fire and the stars



Golden orb and golden horn



Ominous creature crawling into girl's mouth

The arabesque images are hyperbolic excrescences of a world that can no longer be described within the realm of the fantastic, the melodramatic and the comical, like it may have been the case back in 1989/90. Rather, the excessive character of a society which loses its connection to a stable position within a now equally unstable symbolic order; or a society, which is on the verge of getting rid of this order altogether and to trade it for unleashed *jouissance*, can only be described by mute images and, as their counterpart, by penetrating sounds that have no obvious connection to the *histoire*. Creaking, swooshing, humming, buzzing, whirring or whistling noises³³ are present in almost every episode of the third season and they do not necessarily contribute to solving the multiple riddles presented on the level of the story. They are acoustic arabesques and in this sense they serve as a constant reminder of the Real in the Lacanian sense: they are a surplus of the excess that haunts the series; an excess that can be traced back to the basic tension of the *homo duplex* in Baudelairean poetry.

In some—though not all—cases, the unclear, arabesque sounds can be attributed to the wider spectrum of electricity, a topos which was introduced *via* the buzzing noises apparently coming from utility poles and above-ground powerlines in the prequel film *Fire walk with me* (1992). In *The Return*, another buzzing utility pole appears at a

33 Besides the creaking noise apparently made by the Black Lodge gramophone, there is a muffled sound emerging from the strange glass box in New York city that grows stronger when Sam and Tracey are murdered by the smoky ghost figure. The episode ends not with one of the rather soothing indie music songs with which most episodes of *The Return* end but with creaking gramophone noise from the beginning. The same muffled humming sound is hearable when Bill Hastings is questioned about the murder of Ruth Davenport and while he is waiting in his cell, and it returns in several other episodes with different intensities. In episode 9, Benjamin Horne and his new assistant Beverly try to determine the source of a strange whistling noise that is audible in a room of the Great Northern hotel. As they unsuccessfully try to figure out where it comes from, the noise grows alternately weaker and stronger.

crossroad after a young boy was just killed there by Richard Horne. While this hints to a certain source for the unclear sounds, by no means does it provide a sufficient explanation for the several sounds and the reason they appear in different places and situations. However, as the electricity topos is explained by Hawk as being a very old symbol (formerly meaning fire) that could point to something good or bad, depending on the intention behind it, we can assume that electricity and the unclear sounds that seem to emanate from it serve as a metaphor for the violent *jouissance* by which the series is haunted and which goes along with losing the ability to see, interpret and communicate within the realm of the symbolic. Of special importance in this context is another couple of doppelgaenger, this time not at the level of ‘brothers’, as it was the case with the Hornes, the Mitchums and—metaphorically—with the three Coopers, but on the level of ‘sisters’: I am talking of the couple Diane (Laura Dern) & Naido (Nae Yuuki). In the third season, the real Diane is—in analogy to the real Cooper—trapped in the body of Naido (an imperfect anagram of Diane), a blind and mute Asian woman who seems to inhabit a mansion room in a large body of purple water somewhere outside the Black Lodge. The woman that is presented to us as Cooper’s former secretary Diane is actually, as it is revealed later, a tulpa: manufactured apparently for the purpose of providing a substitute for the imprisoned real Diane and an accomplice for evil Cooper. Like in the relationship between Cooper and his doppelgaenger, yet to an even greater extent, the tulpa has acquired all ability to speak (or rather curse³⁴) and write,³⁵ while Naido can neither see nor speak.³⁶ All she utters is a somewhat squeezed sound, a gentle noise, somewhere between bird and broken robot. She is therefore a symptom for the disintegration of the symbolic, which becomes apparent by the way language is distorted and communication therefore rendered difficult or even impossible. As Cooper/Dougie resembles Echo, Naido in a way mirrors the mythological seer Tiresias as she foresees the arrival of evil Cooper at the Twin Peaks sheriff’s department. Also, like Tiresias, she incarnates an experience of alterity: while the ancient seer had been transformed into a woman for seven years, Diane (as Naido) has been transformed into an Asian woman without the ability to make herself heard for about 20 years. Therefore, Naido mirrors as well Josie Packard, the ambivalent Chinese beauty who was not able to speak (fluent) English until Laura taught her, and Big Ed’s (Everett McGill) wife Nadine (Wendy Robie), who could only see through one eye and was equally unable to successfully communicate with her environment.³⁷ Naido hence represents the completion of a status of

34 She uses to reply a “Fuck you, Albert” or a “Fuck you, Gordon” to most requests the two make.

35 She sends evil Cooper text messages.

36 A foreshadowing (or the start of the isotopy “blindness”) can be found in the first episode of season 3: the head of one of the first three murder victims, Ruth Davenport, is missing an eye (the rest of her body is missing; another body without a head has been draped in her bed to combine with Ruth’s head giving the viewer the impression to be looking at an Hieronymus Bosch painting).

37 Through the first two seasons, Nadine seemed rather unable (or unwilling) to perform successful communication with her environment, including her husband, gas station owner Big Ed Hurley. She did not seem to understand (or wanting to understand) what people tried to tell her, partly because she was obsessed with creating an absolutely silent curtain rail—an obsession that also mirrors or foreshadows the red curtains of the Black Lodge and therefore strengthens her relationship with Black Lodge inhabitant Naido. In the third season however, Nadine seems to have succeeded in the invention of

alterity beyond the symbolic, which had been only partially embodied by Josie and Nadine. However, Naido is in fact the perfect double for Diane as during seasons one and two, the latter only appeared as a name mentioned by Cooper, whenever he addressed her on his voice recorder. Name, voice and body have thus always eluded the Diane character, contributing to the landscape of strange or—in one or another way—problematic communication that is depicted in *Twin Peaks*. It therefore seems logical that the pair Diane/Naido would exhibit the one signifier which links the symbolic with the Real, or, rather, which exposes the one piece of the Real that represents the biggest threat or the biggest defect of the symbolic order: the signifier that is represented in the letter ‘e’. In the transformation of Diane to Naido, the ‘e’ is obliterated, whereas in the nick name of (tulpa) Diane’s half-sister Jane (Naomi Watts)—Dougie Jones’s wife—the ‘e’ is doubled: throughout the season she is called Janey-E. This rather peculiar, redundant sounding nick name therefore restores the ‘e’ that has vanished in Naido. Both names, however, refer to the ‘e’ as signifier: one by over-emphasizing, the other one by effacing it; the mysterious ‘e’, I would argue, is the ‘e’ of electricity.³⁸ Electricity and all the strange, ‘homeless’ sounds that dominate the third season are the bearers of a Real, which haunts the symbolic order of the town. The superfluous doubling of the letter ‘e’ in the name Janey-E therefore shows how the Real persistently makes its way into the symbolic, that is, into the name.

It thus becomes clear that the Real in shape of sounds and the enigmatic electricity topos can neither be contained on the level of the symbolic nor be expressed on the level of the imaginary. As such, images and sounds function as arabesques to the effect that they reveal the hysteric dimension of a social structure trying to get rid of the symbolic without having a functioning substitution on hand.

3. Too little and too much: *Jouissance*, the symbolic and the vicissitudes of revolution

The reason for the proliferation of the electricity topos, of enigmatic sounds and overwhelming images is, I would argue, to be found in the status that sociopolitical revolu-

silent rails. She also seems to have overcome her communication problem through listening to the broadcast of Dr. Jacoby. For a closer examination of Jacoby’s therapeutic function, see below, chapter 4.

38 In his article on seasons one and two, Eric Savoy engages in a Lacanian interpretation of the various letters circulating in *Twin Peaks*: from the little pieces of paper, that were found under the finger nails of the female murder victims, each with a single letter on it (all letters brought together spell “Robt” and hence point to BOB), to the lost pages of Laura’s diary, Savoy argues that all of these items function in the way the letter functions for Lacan. They haunt Cooper until he ‘understands’ that he was the addressee of the ‘letter’ all along—the letter has reached its destination when Cooper finally becomes *Bob* (cf. Savoy 2016). I would like to add to this convincing analysis that in the third season, it is the *doppelgänger* who, in a way, serves as the ‘letter’ for the revolutionary narrative: he has reached the destination he looks for (a major part of his quests consists in finding a certain sequence of coordinates), or rather, the destination has looked for him and built its narrative upon the notion of the unbeatable, terrible father that has to be kept from power over and over again.

tion appears to have reached by the time of the airing of *The Return*. If in late 19th century symbolist poetry, deconstructive language and arabesques served to challenge signification and to reveal the hidden, underlying meaning of words that have been repressed in the reglementations of the symbolic, the language trouble in *Twin Peaks* seems to go one step further. If the disseminated language realised in poems by the French symbolists represented “textual refusal of socially installed signifying practices [and] consequently correspond[ed] to socio-economic change [,] [e]ven to revolution” (Petrey 1980: 4), in *Twin Peaks*, we seem to find ourselves at a time already beyond revolution. We are now at a point of unleashed, threatening *jouissance* that comes to the surface once the law retreats. We can see this by the gradual shortfall or demolition of the *nom-du-père* that has been conveyed by the series since 1989. Being a category of the symbolic, the *nom-du-père* is threatened to be omitted in a world where the symbolic law has been subverted. If, after a revolution that aimed at getting rid of the symbolic father, there is no new binding symbolic order perceivable, the terrible primordial father, hitherto averted within the limits of the symbolic, emerges again. In the first two seasons, the role of this terrible father is assumed by *Bob* respectively by Leland Palmer who is revealed to be an evil possessed, incestuous and murderous monster that abused and killed his own daughter. However, during the first two seasons, the symbolic was, if always already deficient still a relatively reliable category with the capacity of being renewed and improved. The symbol for this quality was an upright, largely uncorruptible police force that proved to be efficient in convicting Laura’s murderer.³⁹ Additionally, with Major Briggs (Don S. Davis), Doc Hayward (Warren Frost) or Big Ed, there were still rather strong and benign, dependable fathers (or father figures) available who would provide orientation and act as a counterbalance to the representations of the primordial father and its vestiges like Benjamin Horne. They were thus representations of a *nom-du-père* which may have required modification and renewal, yet which could still function and were not neglected altogether. In other words, at the end of season two—roughly a year after the end of the Cold War—we might have been at a point from which the positive outcome of a social or socio-political revolution seemed at least possible.

However, by the airing of season 3, this hope seems to be a distant prospect. Yes, the murderous respectively perverse fathers Leland Palmer and Ben Horne have been defeated—one is wretched, trapped in the Black Lodge begging Cooper to find (and rescue) his daughter, the other mournfully tries to make up for the criminal actions of his grandson. However, what we are dealing with now is another, even more terrible embodiment of the primordial father and his *jouissance*: the enigmatic Judy or Jou-Day, described by Cole accordingly not as a person but as “an extreme negative force”. Cooper’s evil doppelgänger is the hypostasis of this primordial father operating beyond the symbolic and the law. This means that a revolution has taken place which caused the symbolic to fall. However, as it apparently failed to provide a functioning

39 In *The Return*, the police force seems to be above all corrupt: Deputy Chad Broxford in *Twin Peaks* is in cahoots with Richard Horne, while Anthony Sinclair turns to a certain detective Clark in Las Vegas in order to obtain poison to kill Cooper/Dougie.

new law and hence provoked the emergence of the primordial father, the revolutionary undertaking has resulted in a state of psychosis. According to Lacan, the state of psychosis is characterised by the foreclosure (in the sense of Freud's *Verwerfung*) of the *nom-du-père*, leaving a hole in the symbolic order. Interestingly, psychosis is marked by certain language disorders; for instance, the using of holophrases or of neologisms because the psychotic has difficulties with signification, with bestowing the relationship between signifier and signified with meaning (cf. Evans 2006: 156–159; Lacan 1993).

We could therefore speak of a psychotic structure underlying the universe of “25 years after”: the psychotic hole in the symbolic and the foreclosure of the modulatory *nom-du-père* convey themselves especially in the behavior of the new young generation. The foreclosure of the name-of-the-father results in fathers who fail in providing a point of orientation. In the third season, this results in a generation of lost, addicted, violent children and young adults with weak or absent fathers and absent, distracted or helpless mothers. Although this was in part already true for the previous generation (the young adults of seasons one and two), there are some fundamental differences now. First, the violence exerted by the former generation was not as sweeping and brutal as it is now.⁴⁰ Second, the representatives of the next generation in 2017, in contrast to their parent's generation, lack the capability of complying to social conventions, that is to the semiotic system(s) regulating their environment. This is where the hole in the symbolic becomes most visible.

The shallowness and flatness of Wally's language for instance (Michael Cera), the son of Lucy and Andy Brennan (Harry Goaz), mirrors the psychotic difficulty of finding a quilting point (*point de capiton*) (cf. Evans 2006: 158 et seq.), which would bestow his words—and life—with meaning. Therefore, when Wally indulges himself in random reports about his life on the road, they seem like an outdated narration in the style of a 19th century frontier adventure and a bit commonplace. Wally's speech is excessive in its length and its obscure, yet banal content, and it leaves behind a perplexed Frank Truman, who apparently cannot think of an answer to it, thus failing to integrate Wally's words into a valid semiotic category. Steven (Caleb Landry Jones), the husband of Shelly's and Bobby's troubled young daughter Becky (Amanda Seyfried) on the other hand, is unable to obtain a job not only because he is a drug-addict but also because he is incapable of complying with the conventions of how to write a CV. In her rage, Becky herself in turn fails to estimate the possibly fatal consequences of throwing her mother off the windshield of her car while driving full speed.

40 For instance, drug dealer and rowdy Bobby Briggs experiences true love and affection in his relationship with Shelley, leaving him a lot more mature by the end of season two. Even Shelley's violent husband Leo experiences a kind of conversion by the end of season two, trying to save Shelley from the evil father figure Windom Earle who threatens to kill her. Both characters have killed people, however—especially in the case of Bobby, who killed a drug dealer in the prequel film *Fire walk with me*—these murders are told quickly and, contrary to the killings and atrocities acted out in season three, they do not receive much attention from the camera.



Becky throwing her mother off the windshield



Shelly on Becky's windshield

Last not least, Ben's ruthless grandson Richard (Eamon Farren) probably most prominently fails to comply with the rules and constantly neglects the rules of the symbolic. Beyond his violent and even murderous actions, he ignores the no smoking sign in the Roadhouse and then completely skips the convention of flirting which normally pre-

cedes the sexual act, by violently grabbing a young girl who flirtatiously asks him for a light, saying to her “Do you wanna fuck me, Charlotte?”. This is not surprising if we take into consideration that Richard is not only the son of Audrey but also of the evil doppelgänger (who apparently raped Audrey when she was in a coma). Richard therefore always already represents the primordial *father-jouissance* who acts beyond the law.

Regarding our key issue of language and communication trouble, we can state now that this paradigm has shifted its objective between the first two seasons and the third one. *The Return* focuses on what apparently remains after the law of the *nom-du-père* has been obliterated. The strong father has been replaced by weak or entirely absent fathers, who in turn fail to protect their children against the enemies within, that is, within *their own*, young generation. The weak or absent fathers are complemented by mothers, who are often (not always, as proves Dougie’s wife Janey-E) either helpless bystanders or remain completely outside the symbolic.⁴¹ The trouble with word, sound and image which is presented to the viewer in *The Return* is therefore the symptom of an already post-revolutionary, psychotic condition that can hardly be articulated.



Richard ignores No Smoking sign

41 However misogynist this narrative appears to be, I would argue that the main preoccupation of the creators was not to malign the mother and champion the father but to disclose the fundamentally violent potential of a revolutionary generation that, after it has gotten rid of its apparent strings, results in unleashed subjects installing an order which, in Lacanian terms, seems to be more dominated by the Real than by the symbolic.



Richard harasses girl

The gradual shortfall of the father can be seen in several small and apparently random scenes of *The Return*, which strike us by their unexpected, excessive violence and/or the utter sadness and loneliness they express. These scenes are populated by characters that often only appear once and that do not have any real influence on the progress of the plot. Unmindful of the utter violence they bring onto the screen, we might even call them McGuffin figures. There is the boy about 8 years old who—apparently in full recognition of the danger—takes his father’s pistol and fires several shots into the Double R diner. Although both parents are present, they remain bland and helpless or indifferent and fail in controlling their son’s violent affect. Although it is tempting to read this scene as an expression of critique of the rather lax American weapons law, I do not think that this is crucial here. I would rather argue that this scene is one jigsaw piece of the tableau of a defeated *nom-du-père* that Lynch and Frost are painting here. Another piece is the horrible sequence in which a little boy of approximately the same age gets overrun by a truck driven by Richard. Here, we have a loving mother and a benign but old and frail trailer park manager named Carl (Harry Dean Stanton), who watches them play and then hears the accident without of course being able to help, other than to offer solace to the desperate mother. To put it in Lacanian terms, in this scene we witness a mother-child-dyad ended abruptly and in the most terrible way imaginable, without a father even coming into the picture. In contrast to the classic misogynist narrative of a monstrous mother jealously keeping her son to herself, depriving him of the father and thus (figuratively) devouring her child, what kills the boy here is not an ex-

cessive *jouissance* on the part of the mother, but, rather, a lethal *jouissance* on the part of another albeit older member of the young generation. This homicide is, so to speak, a horizontal killing among ‘brothers’, committed in a state of unleashed, unsymbolised *jouissance*. In the case of the young boy who lives with his mother in a house of the Rancho Rosa estates opposite to the residence where Dougie Jones meets with the prostitute Jade (Nafessa Williams), we have another mother-child-dyad, this time with a mother, who—due to her drug addiction—has almost completely retreated from the symbolic. Her last connection to it is indeed a psychotic holophrase: her random screaming of the sequence of numbers one-one-nine. Alluding to the emergency code 911, the stubborn repetition of 119 seems to be the last thing that has remained of the symbolic: a grotesque, inverted version of the *nom-du-père* that cannot even be addressed any more. It has therefore turned into a little piece of the Real; a kind of *lalangue*,⁴² expressing wild *jouissance* and at the same time longing for something, a quilting point, that could stop the excess and the numb, pointless repetition. If this young, drug-addicted mother had already appeared over the course of seasons one or two, Dale Cooper probably might have had been able to interpret her and decipher her code; however, in his current state, her cry remains uninterpreted. She thus functions more as a symptom for Cooper/Dougie’s own status outside of the symbolic.

In fact, like the 119 shouting of the nameless mother, Cooper/Dougie’s whole speech consists almost entirely of holophrases. Furthermore, he fails to make meaning of the everyday communication the people he engages with try to involve him in. The major part of the third season (16 of 18 episodes) is hence devoted to Cooper/Dougie’s (unconscious?) attempts to fill the hole in the symbolic. This undertaking is only successful when he hears the name Gordon Cole on television: the name of his former boss triggers his memory and finally bestows the random world around him with meaning and, most importantly, identity. Therefore, after having woken from his coma, he can finally say to Bushnell Mullins: “I am the FBI.” He assumes his identity as FBI-agent, convinced that he will be able to retroactively save Laura Palmer and to change the destiny of the town. His assurance is partly due to the numerical code contained in the time 2:53. This was the time when he could finally leave the Black Lodge while, simultaneously, the doppelgaenger was supposed to be sucked back in. The cross sum of 253 is ten, which, according to Cooper, is “the number of completeness”. Characterised in fact by Pythagoras as a perfect—complete—number, forming an equilateral triangle, the ten is furthermore a highly referential number, which appears in many contexts associated with the level of the symbolic. For instance, the ten commandments, the ten Egyptian plagues, the ten rebellions of the children of Israel against God, or the ten years of war it took Zeus to defeat the Titans. In our context, the ten could also allude to Troy that was besieged for nine years and defeated in the tenth, or to Odysseus whose homecoming to Penelope happened only in the tenth year after the victory over Troy; similar to Cooper who, after his odyssey in the Black Lodge and subsequently as Dougie Jones, comes finally home to Diane. However, maybe because Cooper’s number of completeness is already usurped and contaminated by *Bob* (the other hypostasis

42 See footnote 13.

of the primordial father),⁴³ his happy retrieval of the symbolic is short-lived. In the final episode that apparently takes place in an alternate dimension after Cooper seems to have managed to save Laura from her destiny, he intends to bring her home to her mother. However, the woman whom he believes to be Laura Palmer works in a diner named Judy's in Texas, calls herself Carrie Page and cannot remember anyone by the name of Laura Palmer. When he brings her 'home', none of the people who live in the Palmer residence now knows Sarah Palmer and her family. However, when Laura/Carrie looks at the house again, she suddenly hears the voice of her mother crying "Laura". Subsequently, she starts screaming so loud that it causes a blackout in the house. These are the last seconds of the final episode. The voyage of Cooper/Dougie from psychosis to the symbolic was hence a circular movement: what began with psychosis now ends with psychosis: language is traded for screams, Carrie Page—who 'carries' the letter, that is, the language that leads to the symbolic—in her name, leaves the domain of language and (re)enters the realm of psychosis.

That the problem with an unattainable, unstable or defeated symbolic should not only interest us on the level of the immediate diegesis but also be perceived of as a jigsaw piece in a bigger allegorical picture, becomes clear when we take into account the subtle presidency isotopy depicted in *The Return*. A considerable number of scenes take place in Buckhorn, South Dakota, in the Black Hills region close to Rapid City. Buckhorn is the site of a place called 'the zone', where it is apparently possible to enter another dimension. It is also the place where the doppelgänger is supposed to be sucked into the Black Lodge again and, last but not least, very close to one of the most important national monuments, the Mount Rushmore. Buckhorn is therefore a place that evolves around the hole in the symbolic. While offering latent possibilities to fill it (like the apparent return of good father and director of a secret U.S. Airforce facility in Twin Peaks, Major Garland Briggs), at the same time, it displays that the hole cannot be plugged (Major Briggs returns as a *corps morcelé*, as a fragmented body, which provides some clues but which does not restore the hope for integrity once associated with the Major⁴⁴). Even more: Buckhorn and its surroundings reveal that the already lacking

43 According to The arm, who wants to help good Cooper get out of the lodge, 253 (or ten) has a direct connection to *Bob*. Before good Cooper leaves, the arm says "253. Time and time again. Bob. Bob." If we take B-O-B as an alphabetical number code, we get 2-15-2 or 2-1-5-2, which just like 253 adds up to the cross total 10. BOB is therefore always already associated with the "number of completeness", usurping it and thus preventing it from acting out its transcendental potential for the symbolic. It is interesting that Lacan should define a certain type of numbers as being part of the register of the Real: transcendental numbers which resist the means of algebra (cf. Nemitz 2016). The several confusing numbers presented in *The Return* (for instance, the numbers on the utility pole, or those which emerge from the kettle machine operated by Philip Jeffries), which may not necessarily resist algebraic symbolisation for a mathematician, but which certainly elude a direct interpretation, could thus be interpreted as elements that add to the proliferation of the concept of the Real in the series.

44 One of the biggest mysteries of *The Return* centers around the death of Major Briggs. He was believed to have died in 1989, shortly after Dale Cooper had entered the Black Lodge. However, school headmaster and Buckhorn resident William Hastings, who wrote a blog about alternate dimensions reported that he and his love affair Ruth Davenport had entered one of those dimensions and met a man named the Major, who asked them to obtain a list of coordinates for him; a list the doppelgänger would later be searching for too. Soon after the encounter, Ruth Davenport is found murdered, her

symbolic is constantly in danger of being usurped once again. This danger is conveyed when the doppelgaenger, shortly before he is due to reenter the Black Lodge, trades his Mercedes Benz for a Lincoln. He occupies the signs of the symbolic and thereby usurps and contaminates it.

The hole in the symbolic is also perceivable when the three FBI agents Gordon Cole, Albert Rosenfield (Miguel Ferrer) and Tammy Preston (Chrysta Bell) fly to Buckhorn in order to meet Cooper's evil doppelgaenger in federal prison. Gordon complains he cannot see Mount Rushmore. Albert then hands him a photograph of the monument. The "faces of stone" and with them the supposed transcendentalism incarnated in the founding fathers of the American nation have thus been reduced to a flat supplement. This scene alludes again to the notion of psychosis, as what Gordon perceives here is in fact the lack in the paternal function: "[...] in psychosis, the paternal function is reduced to the *image* of the father (the symbolic is reduced to the imaginary)." (Evans 2006: 181, my emphasis) Instead of the symbolic whole—the real "faces of stone"—Gordon receives only the "image of the father", the photograph, that is, the imaginary supplement. Later, the hole in the symbolic will be visible quite literally to Gordon, who almost gets sucked into a giant eye of cyclone in 'the zone', which apparently serves as a transporter between dimensions.

With the lack in the symbolic, it becomes increasingly difficult to retain or acquire a sense of (national) identity. The fact that Gordon has a big picture of Franz Kafka in his office, strengthens the idea that the (post-revolutionary) society deals with an identity problem: the off-putting, chimeric creature, which hatches from an egg associated with the detonation of the first A-bomb 1956, apparently half frog and half moth, is similar to the giant, disgusting beetle Kafka's protagonist Gregor Samsa finds himself transformed into one morning. Both creatures are beyond the symbolic, they represent alterity and mute *jouissance*, shattering the identity of the person they have once been (*The Metamorphosis*) or in whose body they nest (*Twin Peaks*). The identity problem resulting from a hole in the symbolic is also noticeable in some rather funny elements which nevertheless add to the impression that the symbolic has been damaged. For instance, Wally's Marlon Brando-like speech which causes awkwardness for Sheriff Truman, or Tammy Preston's extravagant hip swing, which might remind the viewer of the seductive *Mad Men* character Joan Holloway—both are a sign for a symbolic that has exceeded itself. The way Tammy moves her body seems a bit ridiculous, just as does Wally's speech, because it is too much—there is no signified that corresponds to this signifier anymore. Similarly, the French lady who keeps Gordon company in a hotel room in Buckhorn also stands for an excess of the symbolic. Her exaggerated gestures, her stereotypical self-confidence, the enervating slowness with which she takes out her actions (getting up, straightening her dress, putting on shoes, refreshing lipstick etc.) and Gordon, who watches her with patience and delight, seem more of a caricature of the hard boiled detective of older times, who spent a night with a beautiful woman (or prostitute) when the symbolic was still intact.

severed head lying on the pillow of her bed, whereas the torso that lies beneath her head belongs, as is found out later, to Garland Briggs who, according to the autopsy, had been murdered just recently.



Eye of cyclone in the zone almost devouring Gordon



Kafkaesque chimeric creature



Creature nesting in young girl



Gordon and the French lady

The lostness of the young generation in *Twin Peaks* thus to some degree extends even to the representatives of the government themselves. The only way to acquire identity and meaning that remains open to the, in Lacan's words, psychotic characters therefore seems to be to finally get hold of a quilting point that stops the floating of the signifiers and that bestows the revolutionary undertaking again with meaning: the fight against an evil father or Antichrist that never ends as the undead father always returns.

4. “I am dead, yet I live.” The doppelgaenger as *point de capiton* and the need to dig yourself out of the shit

One of the many small yet effectively disturbing scenes of *The Return* is situated right after the young boy mentioned above, who took the gun of his father, fired several times into the Double R diner. What follows the identification of the young shooter on behalf of Bobby is a chaotic traffic jam, with drivers repeatedly honking their horns. As Bobby takes a look to see what is going on in one of the cars, he is confronted with a woman who continually honks while screaming maniacally that she needs to go home. Bobby Briggs then sees a zombielike young girl in the front seat who vomits a large amount of disgusting greenish liquid.



The zombie girl

This liquid mirrors the vomit thrown up simultaneously by Dougie Jones and the doppelgaenger as the good Cooper finally leaves the lodge and changes places with Dougie. It is, to put it with Žižek, a piece of the Real, a signifier rejecting signification, “a terrifying bodily mark which is merely a mute attestation bearing witness to a disgusting enjoyment, without representing anything or anyone. [...] the embodiment of vitality as such, of the life-substance in its most radical dimension of meaningless enjoyment” (Žižek 1989: 76).⁴⁵ The mysterious sick girl who moves like an undead zombie from a bad horror movie therefore represents two things: first, she is the double of evil Cooper

45 Žižek is referring to Franz Kafka's story *A Country Doctor*, using the description of the horrific open wound on the child's body as an illustration of Lacan's term *sinthome*: a signifier related to the Real and therefore “penetrated with enjoyment: it is a signifier as a bearer of *jouis-sense*, enjoyment-in-sense.” (Žižek 1989: 75)

who is ‘undead’ like her, as every time he gets killed, strange bearded creatures appear and cure him. The doppelgaenger is therefore like a vampire who comes back no matter how often you kill him. Second, she represents the “disgusting enjoyment” of the Twin Peaks residents and especially of the young generation; a *jouissance* that manifests itself in the scenes described above.



The zombie girl vomiting green liquid

However, the fact that the zombie girl is staged like a grotesque parodistic version of an undead creature, like a character one would expect in a B-movie, gives us an important insight to how we should read the nature of the evil doppelgaenger himself. He is, I would argue, a proxy; a phantasmatic construction needed to keep the revolutionary undertaking alive that commands one must get rid of the paternal metaphor. The doppelgaenger might be the incarnation of evil, but ultimately, he is not the sole reason for a young generation being corrupted and disorientated: he is the hyperbolic incarnation of the evil father—hyper potent, merciless and seductive in his brutality. But the important thing is that the doppelgaenger is precisely *not* the ground zero of all evil. If he was, it would indicate that if one could only finally get rid of him (and subsequently of Bob), society would be free, and the next generation could lead a life unburdened by the violent heritage of the father. I would argue that, to the contrary, Lynch and Frost are hinting at the fundamental impossibility of any such revolutionary undertaking. This is why, in my opinion, over the course of the series the alleged roots of evil are continuously metonymically shifted: Once we think we have found the source of evil with the incestuous monster Leland, we see that he has been possessed by *Bob* all along, a mysterious demon who possessed other beings long before Leland. We then come to believe that *Bob* has incarnated in evil Cooper, shifting all our animosities to him. Then, the authors lay out another bait. We are made believe that the beginning of *Bob* is

to be found in one of the great sins the West has committed in the 20th century: the detonation of the world's first atomic bomb in the Mexican desert. In the gigantic clouds of smoke following the detonation, we see the strange ghost-like figure from the glass box in New York city as it emerges from the smoke, presumably 'giving birth' to *Bob* (season 3, ep. 8). We are thus offered to believe that the A-bomb and the evil it represents was responsible for the existence of both horrible creatures, they being hence a genuinely human (and Western) product. Towards the end of season three however, we learn that our assumptions might have been wrong again because Gordon Cole explains (or suggests) that the origin of the evil we are dealing with is to be found in a mythical creature, "an extreme negative force" named 'Jou-Day' (over the time, the name has been slurred to 'Judy'): the pre-symbolic, primordial evil figure. Even the hyper potent doppelgaenger is unaware of who or what Judy is and tries to find out about it from former FBI agent Philip Jeffries, who disappeared in the late 1980s and who returns in season three apparently transformed into a kind of steam machine. He provides evil Cooper with the information that he had already met Judy. The series does not reveal any additional information about Judy (where it originated, what kind of entity it might be etc.). Judy merely serves as a reminder that the source and origin of evil can neither be fixated nor named properly nor be attached to certain agents of history.

We are therefore denied any quilting point (*point de capiton*): the one signifier that would end the metonymic shifting, that would stop the endless chain of signification and determine once and for all who or what is the reason for the evil emerging in *Twin Peaks* (and in the rest of the world). Our desire to uncover the source of evil and hence to attach meaning to it, is denied and this seems to be one of the big lessons of *The Return*: a tyrannical symbolic order might be an appropriate target for revolutionary action but if you try to get rid of the symbolic altogether, what remains is a zombielike existence between the imaginary and the Real, between excess, *jouissance*, muteness and death. The invincible, terrible father that is incarnated in evil Cooper, is therefore not the sign of a failed revolution (that the father has survived and now haunts his offspring), but rather a phantasmatic projection: a hyperbolic configuration of the enemy we desperately want to get rid of without realising that we have already gotten rid of it. In order to keep up the revolutionary narrative, the father must survive; he must come back with even greater fury in order to function as the *point de capiton* that bestows the revolutionary process itself with meaning. Therefore, to stage the ultimate fight between evil Cooper/*Bob*, Lynch and Frost allude to the comic genre: it is Freddie Sykes (Jake Wardle), a young man from the United Kingdom and thus outsider to *Twin Peaks*, who, armed with a 'boxing glove' reminiscent to Hulk's smash hands, engages in the final fight against the doppelgaenger/*Bob* and succeeds in destroying him.⁴⁶ This

46 When still in the UK, Freddie had an epiphany with *The Fireman* telling him to go to a nearby hardware store, buy a specific gardening glove and travel to *Twin Peaks* to meet his destiny there. The glove (that he was unable to take off after first put on) bestowed him with superpowers. Freddie's story hence alludes to comic heroes like Spiderman who were perfectly ordinary young men until they (accidentally) acquired superpowers. Freddie's glove also mirrors Dougie Jones's boss Bushnell Mullins, one of the good father figures, who helps Cooper/Dougie out and who used to be a successful boxer when he was a young man.

fight, that owes much to classic computer games, where in the very last level the avatar gets to beat the final enemy, is important in two crucial ways. First, it is a prolongation of the hyperbolism incarnated in the character of the evil father figure and therefore adds to the phantasmatic quality of the revolutionary conduct. Second, it shows how both the status of permanent and therefore hysterical revolution and the evil father figure could be stopped: by gaining control over the affect; by getting rid of the violence partly represented by the excesses of *jouissance*. Freddie—after a few failed attempts⁴⁷—has learned how to control his superpowers and where to appoint them appropriately. In order to get rid of the surplus *jouissance* and to create a functioning symbolic order, the inhabitants of *The Return* (especially the young generation) need to understand what *The Fireman* said to Dale Cooper in the very first scene of episode one: “Listen to the sounds. They are in our house now.”

The house is obviously an allegory for the national house, which, according to my interpretations of “the sounds” is filled with violent, unleashed *jouissance*; the aftermath of a revolution that, after the defeat of a murderous father who contaminated and haunted the symbolic has failed to provide itself with a functioning new symbolic order. Instead, it keeps fighting against a phantasmatic father while simultaneously retreating into a state of equal or even worse ‘horizontal’, fraternal violence. To “listen to the sounds” would hence mean to recognise the source of the violence to be eventually able to determine the source of the sounds.



If you dig yourself out of the shit ...

47 He engaged in a fight with a love rival of James's in the Roadhouse, injuring the former severely.



... it looks like this.

Of special importance in this respect is the character of Dr. Jacoby. In the third season, Jacoby has apparently abandoned his profession as psychiatrist. He now lives in a trailer in the woods and markets golden shovels over his own little TV program (he buys ordinary shovels and furnishes them with golden color spray). His apparently successful slogan (he can even afford his own showroom) reads “Dig yourself out of the shit!”

Now, this slogan is entirely Lacanian: one needs to dig him-/herself out of the shit means, he or she needs to get rid of his/her excessive *jouissance* in order to be able to create and perform in the symbolic. Jacoby has hence remained in his profession all along. As he presents himself as an angry everyman, verbally attacking the state, globalism, capitalism, the pharma industry etc., he allows for interpassive *jouissance*: I delegate my *jouissance* to another agent who enjoys in my stead, freeing me from having to enjoy it myself (cf. Žižek 1997: 116; idem 2008: 35–40). As their *jouissance* is delegated, Jacoby’s ‘patients can “dig [themselves] out of the shit”, start to distinguish phantasma, reality and the Real and realise which really are the demons that haunt them and which they need to get rid of in order to tame the sounds, acquire meaning and get rid of the *jouissance* that instigates (horizontal) violence.

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