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# 30 ANNI DI TWIN PEAKS

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# "Do you recognize that house?" *Twin Peaks: The Return* as a process of image identification

In the fourth episode of the new season of *Twin Peaks* (2017), also known as *Twin Peaks: The Return*, Bobby Briggs – formerly a young loser and wrangler, and now a deputy at the Twin Peaks Sheriff's Department – meets Laura Palmer, his high school girlfriend. Her photographic portrait, previously displayed among the trophies and other photos in a cabinet at the local high school they attended (we see it at the beginning of the first episode),[1] sits on the table of a meeting room. It had been stored in one of the two containers used to hold the official documents in the investigation into Laura's murder; like two Pandora's boxes, these containers have been opened following a statement from the Log: "Something is missing". That 'something' – Margaret Lanterman ('The Log Lady') clarifies to deputy Hawk – concerns Agent Cooper and, consequently, his investigation into Laura Palmer's death.

The scene is rather moving, not least because, after four episodes, viewers finally hear the famous and touching *Laura Palmer's theme* for the first time.[2] As the music starts, we see Bobby's face, having entered the meeting room where Frank Truman, Tommy Hawks, Lucy, and Andy are gathered. He literally freezes in front of Laura's framed image, and a 'dialog' begin between the two ex-lovers;

1 It's the same portrait showed at the beginning of the first season, actually *the portrait* of Laura Palmer.

2 Like the rest of the series soundtrack, *Laura Palmer's theme* was written by Angelo Badalamenti for the first season, and subsequently used in the second without the addition of any other tracks; Badalamenti composed some new pieces for the third season.

this takes the form of a series of shots and reverse-shots, with the camera slowly getting closer. As the music reaches its climax, Bobby bursts into tears, pronouncing the girl's name (though it sounds like a question) and commenting: "Brings back some memories". Once he has regained control of his emotions, he asks for an explanation, and Frank Truman informs him of the statement made by the Log. Later in the same episode, the 'newborn' Dougie Jones (spit out from an electrical wall socket in the previous episode) studies himself in a mirror. This scene – even down to the shooting style – is reminiscent of the final scene of the second season finale, in which Dale Cooper mirrors himself in Bob. Of significance here, however, is the fact that, like an animal, Dougie seems unable to fully recognize himself (his eyes revealing just a hint of a doubt, or a shadow of self-identification), incapable of properly matching the two images. He even tries to touch the 'other' Dougie in order to *understand* that image.

These two scenes – drawing on the theme of visual encounter and recognition, and featuring Laura and Cooper, two of the main characters of *Twin Peaks* – echo and revive the first (and most significant) question posed by Laura Palmer to Dale Cooper in the second episode of *The Return*, when they meet in the Red Room: "Do you recognize me?". Cooper responds with a question ("Are you Laura Palmer?"), and Laura's reply is enigmatic: "I feel like I know her… but sometimes my arms bend back". However, following a more direct question by Cooper – "Who are you?" – Laura confirms that "I am Laura Palmer". "But Laura Palmer is dead", observes Cooper, who receives another ambiguous statement in response: "I am dead… yet I live". This is followed immediately by a sort of demonstration: Laura 'opens' her face, revealing a powerful, inner white light.

From a certain perspective, what happens in the Red Room stays in the Red Room. That is to say that, on account of its non-realistic nature and lack of common-sense logic, it is a space-time that lends itself to the unforeseen. The relationship between what is said and done there and what happens outside of the space (at the level of the story) is normally non-linear or not based on a direct cause-effect paradigm (or at least, the relationship between the two dimensions should not be read in that way). It is not difficult, however, to see the revelation offered by Laura as a *pictorial gesture*, a statement about her own, profound nature. Like the two different Venuses that decorate the Black Lodge – one a reproduction of the Venus De Medici, the other a reproduction of the Venus de Milo – Laura essentially presents herself as an (audiovisual) image. She is made of light, immaterial yet visible, projected onto the 'screen' of the body by that inner luminous force, exactly death and alive like it is, in its ontological nature, a statue or a picture, brought back to life by the gaze and questions of an observer (in this case, Cooper who, almost enraptured, spends the entire duration of the dialog intensely contemplating Laura sitting in front of him).



Along with the two episodes referred to above, the first encounter between Dale Cooper and Laura Palmer draws on a theme that emerges throughout the series as one of the key visual and critical operations performed by *Twin Peaks* (conceived as a cinematic world and a myth, and not simply as a TV show): far from simply being a 'return' to the set and story of *Twin Peaks*, this third installment opens up an articulate and subtle work on the images of the series, on their visual consistency, time-space position, and autonomy. In so doing, it addresses the issue of memory, and the distance from the previous seasons in terms of (sometimes uncanny) recognition and identification of images themselves, to the extent that there is a clash between the separate levels of story and discourse. David Lynch is clearly not interested in simply adding a third part in order to revisit the past (and the myth) and the stories and characters from previous seasons; in short, he does not seek to serialize the series by simply breathing life, for a third time, into the world of Twin Peaks. Instead, *Twin Peaks: The Return* is a complex, subtle visual operation, in which the famous promise made by Laura Palmer to Agent Cooper in the final episode of the second season ("I'll see you again in 25 years") reveals itself, episode after episode, to be an unpredictable return on the imagery of the series, and on a time (that of images) that exceeds the standard, commonsense idea of time.

We cannot, after all, fail to notice that the series is framed by two radical questions concerning the chronological position of events,

and indeed whether they even belong to a knowable, measurable, orderable linear time. The first, posed in the second episode by MIKE in the presence of Cooper (just before the aforementioned Cooper/Laura scene): "Is it future or is it past?". This question is repeated shortly thereafter, and again at the beginning of the series finale. The second question coincides with the very end of the season, and is pronounced by a disoriented Cooper (disoriented, perhaps, for the first time in the whole of *Twin Peaks*), just after he visits the supposed Palmer's house: "What year is this?". And just as MIKE's phrase followed an attempt at recognition ("Are you Laura Palmer?"), this sentence too is prompted by a sort of 'visual test'. Cooper has driven Laura (or rather, the woman he thinks could, or should, be Laura) from Odessa to Twin Peaks to *recognize* her house, to find it again. And, by extension, to find herself *in* Twin Peaks, to recognize herself as *that* Laura, his Laura.

Before considering some examples of the 'life of images' –[3] an aspect largely overlooked by scholars and critics, and particularly TV critics, who are too engrossed in studying the fans' expectations and reactions to the third installment of the show (see, for example, Williams 2016, Hills 2018) – it is worth touching, first, on another facet. In this season, more than ever – and this includes not only *Twin Peaks,* but also his movies – David Lynch performs a series of pictorial operations, all of which ultimately emphasize the instability of images as temporary concretions, as fragile, transitory, simple appearances. In addition to the above example of Laura Palmer's inner light – alluding to the idea that Laura's is an immaterial surface, only temporarily illuminated (indeed, at the end of the dialog with Cooper, she is pulled through by an invisible force, following a furious trembling episode) – there are also numerous visual operations, characterized by explicit work on the texture of images, transforming them almost into a pictorial gesture, through which Lynch underlines the apparition or vanishing of images.

Viewed from a different perspective, these frequent visual *actions*

3 Intended to be understood here, as used in by Freedberg 1989 in the field of visual culture and enriched by Mitchell 2005, Bredekamp 2010, van Eck 2015 and the theoretical perspective of Georges Didi-Huberman.



on the body and surface of images – which, ultimately, underline their nature *as images* – support the idea that, as anticipated, one of the crucial aspects of the return of *Twin Peaks* is in fact the return *to* it, i.e. the exploration of the life and existence of images *per se* (their own memory, their own autonomy), rather than a mere factual revival of the Twin Peaks world and its stories. Considered in terms of enunciation theory, it is a work that, as shall be seen, involves frequent clashes between the level of story and the level of discourse (Branigan, Buckland 2014: 157-161). This thesis is explored here by analyzing three episodes in particular: the story of the two Coopers, the encounter between Audrey Horne and 'her' title track (*Audrey's Dance*), and the extreme gesture of cancelling *Twin Peaks*, conveyed by a new editing of a scene from the prequel *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* (1992).

## "So, you are Cooper?"

The story involving FBI agent Dale Cooper could be titled 'the (unstable) adventure of an image': an image left behind – in the viewer's memory and the world of the series – by the two, distant first seasons of the show. The intricate, challenging adventure experienced by Dale Cooper's image in this third installment of *Twin Peaks* reads like a paradigmatic process of becoming himself – a *return* to himself and, at the same time, a *recognition* of himself, having been 'invaded' by Bob at the end of the previous season. In fact, two versions of him exist throughout the series (to some extent mirroring Laura's doubling experience): a maleficent Doppelgänger (a word used and addressed to Cooper, for the first time, in the final episode of the second season) and a figure named Dougie Jones, who enters the world through a wall socket. The first Cooper contains Bob, the second Cooper is contained by Dougie; the first has to die, the second has to be born.

It would, however, be simplistic, or at least not entirely satisfactory, to analyze the Cooper decoupling as a straightforward story of doubles and of fighting doubles (as *Mulholland Drive* testifies, the double-ness is never treated in Lynch in a straightforward way; see

Malavasi 2008). It would be simplistic precisely because the splitting of Dale's figure is not merely a 'story issue' (a mystery to solve), but rather a problem posed directly to the entireness of Dale Cooper's image. *After 25 years*, David Lynch's work on the cinematic picture of Cooper is, at once, a quest involving both to the character – the possibility of retrieving that cultural emblem – and the picture – the possibility of reviving that visual emblem. The story of the two Coopers, then, is not intended to function simply as a 'puzzle game', a game of similarities and differences (though of course such an analytic attitude is almost inevitably fueled by the return). Instead, it shows an uncanny fragmentation of wholeness, *exposing* (and transforming into the very core of this third season) the problematic process of finding and identifying the character and picture of Dale Cooper after 25 years. Dougie Jones in particular – both shell and medium, a figure suspended between the true Dale Cooper and a completely different person, an 'other one' that does not belong to the *Twin Peaks* universe – embodies the trajectory of the quest. He is a *shadowed memory* of Dale Cooper, a series of layers that wrap and hide the original without, however, completely canceling it. As such, then, Dougie's 'story' seems to consist of *remembering* Cooper and giving him life. This is so both in the sense that he resembles Cooper (to the viewer), without being him, and in the sense that he is constantly touched by things and events that seem to evoke the original Cooper contained within (in this case, not just to the viewer, but also to Dougie himself, who, for these reasons – as mentioned before – cannot truly and completely recognize himself in the mirror). We can limit the examples of this slow emergence of Cooper through Dougie to three 'memories': the discovery of a 'greedy' penchant for black coffee, the discovery of a similar passion for cherry pie, and the recognition of the name Gordon Cole, which drives the final process of Cooper's coming back.

With respect to the first episode, we should add a brief comment. The scene featuring the Dale Cooper's firs encounter with a cherry pie at a dinner with the Mitchum brothers at Santino's (episode 11) is reinforced – in terms of memory – by two facts. First, the words of the old lady (for whom Dougie is Mr. Jackpot), a former



tramp 'saved' by him who, after expressing her gratitude to Dougie and listing the good things that have happened in her life thanks to him, concludes that "I have my life back again", foreshadowing what is going to happen to Dale Cooper himself. The second, most important fact is that this dialog (though Dougie does not actually speak, but simply replays some words or lines of the interlocutor)[4] happens right before a sort of 'musical call': just few notes, played by a pianist (Smokey Miles), which is reminiscent of *Laura Palmer's theme* or, more general, the melancholic musical atmosphere of *Twin Peaks*. This intense, moving moment, which sees Cooper literally enraptured and called back to 'something' by the music, is also an open clue to Lynch's whole artistic operation. Cooper has recognized 'something' that *he could not have heard* before, because the music in question belongs to the 'outside' (the discourse); it is part of the extra-diegetic soundtrack, and has never featured on an intra-diegetic level. A more explicit example of such a short-circuit – in terms of enunciation – occurs later, in episode 16, when Audrey Horne dances to *her* song (we discuss it in the next paragraph).

Regarding the third example, we should at least note that the crucial moment in which Dougie finally 'feels' that he is someone else is prompted by watching *Sunset Boulevard*[5] (Billy Wilder, 1950), which appears on the TV screen after he has randomly pushed some buttons on the remote. Dougie *recognizes* the name Gordon Cole (a secondary character in Wilder's movie) and, as if in shock, the image freezes on the close-up of Cecil B. DeMille (who plays himself in the movie) that follows the line 'Get Gordon Cole'. As we know, with respect to *Twin Peaks*, Gordon Cole is both Dale Cooper's director and mentor, and the director of the show (the director of the actor), being played by David Lynch himself. It is as though, by accidentally watching *Sunset Boulevard* (another unexpected image encounter), Dougie actually recognizes that he is in the 'wrong movie', and that

4 It is rather redundant to point out that Dougie's privation of verbal expression assumes a key role in showing the 'lost' Dale Cooper, who has always been known for his silver tongue and the use of words as a tool to rationalize his experiences.

5 *Sunset Boulevard* represents a crucial movie in Lynch's filmography, explicitly cited in *Mulholland Drive*, in which works as a 'pre-text'.

it is time to return to *his* Gordon Cole. This relaunches in a different way both the clash between the story and the discourse (between Twin Peaks and *Twin Peaks*), and the viewer's process of realignment and identification of the original elements.

As with Dale Cooper's first movement into the plot, the process of coming back to himself is once again characterized by the presence of electricity, a classic Lynchian aesthetic feature first used in *Eraserhead* (1977), which here literally transforms Dougie into Dale Cooper. In the third episode of the series, Lynch uses a complex black and white sequence to reveal the essence (and the starting point) of the transformational journey of Dale Cooper's image into 'something else' from which he must free himself. First, he places Cooper in an environment that he cannot truly recognize or understand ("Where is this? Where are we?" he asks the blind lady, a completely new character to the *Twin Peaks* universe). Then, his image is literally *dissolved* – a pictorial strategy that, as noted previously, is a comment, among other things, on the instable, metamorphic essence of the visual elements – into an old-fashioned, industrial wall socket (which would not be out of place in *Eraserhead*), before being spit out in the house where Dougie (who, in the meantime, is absorbed and erased in the Red Room) is in the company of a prostitute. From this point until the end of the 15th episode (where the 'Get Gordon Cole' scene takes place), then the consistency of Dale Cooper is tried and checked in his identitarian essence – by memories, people, events – ideally doubling the viewer's 'quest'.

The question used as the title for this section – posed in the 15th episode by Phillip Jeffries, played previously by David Bowie and now by a strange human/industrial mechanism – is just the umpteenth in this internal and external recognition process, particularly if we include 'negative' versions of the same questions, those addressed to Dougie about who he is, where he lives, and so on (questions that he cannot really answer). The final response to all these inquiries comes in the 16th episode, the turning point of *The Return*. When Dale Cooper is woken at the hospital by MIKE, who informs him that 'the other one' did not go back in ("He's still out"), Cooper's reply to Bushnell Mullins, Dougie Jones' superior, suggests a definitive



repossession of himself (and, of course, of the wholeness of the character): "I'm the FBI". The *Twin Peaks theme* – for so long absent from the series (with the exception of the opening credits) –[6] finally begins just a few seconds before this statement.

## "Ladies and gentleman, Audrey's Dance"

"Cooper, the one and only": a confirmation uttered by Diane in the next episode, the 16th, follows the final, Magrittian fight against Bob, who is depicted on a rock, and whose death doubles his transformation into Dale Cooper's doppelgänger. The doppelgänger then vanishes, and Diane comes back, taking the place of the blind woman (parallel to Cooper's, Diane also has a sub-plot related to double-ness). The end of that episode features one of the most eccentric and revelatory moments of the entire series, in which David Lynch appears to explicitly expose his interest in reworking *on* and *with Twin Peaks* images, fully cognizant that, 25 years later, it is precisely those images that live on, with their inner life and autonomy, their own memories and historicity.

The scene involves Audrey Horne, a central character in the two previous seasons but somewhat marginalized in the third, appearing for the first time in episode 12 with a storyline (essentially a fight with her husband, Charlie, concerning the need to find her former lover, Billy, who may be at the Roadhouse) that is quite independent of the main plot (as is the case with many other sub-plots of this third season). During this fight, which takes place at their home – and that continues in episode 13 – Audrey, whose panic regarding Billy is growing, starts to seem desperate and lost: "I feel like I'm somewhere else… Like I'm somewhere else and like I'm somebody else". In response to an annoyed reply from Charlie, who states that he is completely 'him' and sure of his identity, she insists: "I'm not sure who I am, but I'm not me". She cannot even remember where or how far away the Roadhouse, a place that the 'previous' Audrey knows very well, is. The fight ends in the 15th episode (Audrey and

6 It is quite clear that the absence of the famous original soundtrack from most of *The Return* is another facet of the *finding process* of *Twin Peaks*.

Charlie don't appear in the 14th), when they are finally ready to go out: in the end, the narrative segments form a very linear and unified single episode, which is simply divided and 'dispersed' across three parts. And it ends, as anticipated, in the 16th episode, with Audrey and Charlie finally at the Roadhouse, sitting at the counter, drinking a dry Martini. Like all the others crowded into the place, they are listening to the music – Eddie Wedder singing *Out of Sand*.

When the singer (who, for the occasion, uses his real name, Edward Louis Severson) finishes his performance, the host of the Roadhouse takes the stage and announces: "Ladies and gentlemen, Audrey's Dance", gesturing to the woman. Suddenly, as though this moment had been expected, the crowd moves away, leaving an empty space at the center. Audrey, surprised at first, waits for the music; when it starts, she closes her eyes, apparently touched, or rather 'shot' by *her* song, which seems to penetrate her, calling her. Slowly, she moves toward the center of the dance floor, completely enraptured. The dance is a sinuous movement of her body and arms. An ecstatic smile sometimes appears on her face, while her eyes remain shut down for the entire time. She is actually dancing on her own, completely detached from the situation, immersed in a classic Lynchian atmosphere of intense darkness and purple lights. Then, out of the blue, a man, shouting "Monique", breaks into the place, and starts a fistfight with another man; Audrey runs to Charlie, crying out: "Get me out of here!". And 'here', of course, refers not so much to the Roadhouse as to the character she has entered, seduced by the music.

Audrey Horne plays a quite strange role in *The Return*: it is a limited part – in terms of events and plot – that is however crucial. As noted above, she simply engages in a – not even particularly interesting – dialogue, in three parts, with her husband. That moment at the Roadhouse, however, at the end of the series (just two episodes away from the season finale) emerges as a strong statement about Lynch's aforementioned work on the memory and the world of *Twin Peaks*. First of all, Audrey is a character dubious about her feelings, identity and her belonging to a place. Like many other 'old' characters (Cooper and Laura, of course, but also, to add another example and another taken on the theme, Sheriff Frank Truman, who is persistently mistaken for his brother Harry throughout the series), her words and actions question her own character, the possibility that it could still be alive *as it was* in the past. Then, more explicitly than in the scene at Santino's with Dale Cooper, she finally listens to *her* song: the character is literally split in two, the actor who plays Audrey (in a very different set, 25 years later) and the dramatic persona created by David Lynch and, in musical terms, Angelo Badalamenti. And finally, the moment in which Audrey mirrors herself – in a very neutral environment –[7] repeatedly asking "What?". In so doing, she revisits not only the uncertainty about herself and what is going on, but also seems to uncover the 'real' actress (without makeup, whereas flashy makeup is Audrey's signature look) behind the character, ideally completing the scary image's journey from a 'different' Audrey (25 five years later) to her past version (with the uncanny clash between the inside and the outside of the *Twin Peaks* text) to a neutral, blank condition – a kind of a pre-figurative existence of the character.[8]

Like Laura Palmer (whose experience will be discussed in more detail below), Audrey is literally trapped in a painful recognition process. Indeed, her final, desperate reaction – as with Laura's at the end of the series – even suggests that she was trying to forget her own existence as a character, as part of the maleficent, obscure world of Twin Peaks (but then, the music started…). After all, her initial firm resolve to look for Bobby at the Roadhouse gives way to a fear of going out, losing strength and confidence with each word, as though she has a hunch of what could happen at the Roadhouse.

7 Due to the color of the environment and to Audrey's fright, that final moment could be related to her hospitalization at the end of the second series, following the bank vault explosion. She was in a coma for a month, and woke to discover she had been raped by Cooper's doppelgänger. But all this background information is really only of interest to fans, and could misdirect the link between her desperate line – "Get me out of here!" – and the fact that she has just 'met' her character, through the music, and 'entered' it.

8 I use here the expression 'pre-figurative' in the sense suggested by semiotic approaches: that is, something that is going to acquire a pictorial and tangible figuration, a textual, figurative stability; see Greimas, Courtés 1982, *ad vocem*).

In our terms, Audrey is like an image looking for herself, partly finding her character's past, partly escaping it, frightened by 'the return'. A troubled, anxious, moving figure who, in a different way to the two Coopers, demonstrates that *The Return* is not merely a return to events and characters, but also an uncanny operation on the life of images left, 25 years ago, in *Twin Peaks*, both the series and the story world: the time passed fatally unleashes a visual struggle and confrontation – between mirroring and schism – among images.

## "You can enter now"

Perhaps no other moment reveals Lynch's operation on the memory and visual consistency of the *Twin Peaks* world than the entrance of Dale Cooper on the night that Laura was killed (episode 17). This coming back to the 'set' of the murder – the night of February 23, 1989 – is made possible by Phillip, who, like he is searching in a visual archive (even the mechanical sound suggests this), finds the right 'episode' for Cooper. More precisely, Cooper gains access to the crucial and, from a certain perspective (that of Laura's life), final sequence of *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*, in which, following a violent yet passionate encounter with James, full of desperate love, the girl walks away from him to meet Ronette, Jacques, and Leo in a cabin in the woods for an orgy. The *Return* version is in black and white and places Cooper not only as an unseen (by Laura) observer, hidden behind the trees, but also as an 'obstacle' on her way to the cabin. Here Lynch 'reopens' the original editing, expanding the time in order to stop Laura's running – or, actually, it is Cooper's presence in the visual world of the 1992's movie that inevitably changes the structure of the sequence. In fact, from a theoretical perspective, it is Cooper's image that, having entered another visual space, takes possession of the plot, halting the flow of the events and reworking the previous editing. This has been his true goal since the beginning, to prevent Laura's death by rewriting the end of the movie and, in fact, the existence of the whole series (which, from a chronological point of view, comes later).
So these two images, which have never before met outside the Red



Room or dreams (they share a world, that of Twin Peaks, but could never have been in the same 'real' place at the same time), finally touch each other (Laura takes the Cooper's outstretched hand), and that gesture motivates not only a possible happy ending (for Laura), but also the paradoxical erasure of the entire series, i.e. the erasure of that very Laura Palmer and Dale Cooper as characters and pictures. This gesture triggers the reediting of the first scene of the first season (the beginning of everything): the enwrapped body of Laura Palmer is explicitly erased from the screen, images are finally in color, and Cooper's answer to Laura's question ("Where are we going?"), "We're going home", pronounced on the musical climax of *Laura Palmer's Theme*, marks a *new start*. The first episode is therefore repurposed without Laura Palmer's body: Pete Martell can now throw his fishing rod in the lake, while the sinister, turning face of Josie Packard is edited to appear after Pete walks to the pier, as though she was looking at him, instead of at Laura's body, as happens in the original version.
More than other image clashes or encounters, this one, which would possibly serve to nullify the entire series, reveals that revisiting the *Twin Peaks* material at a distance of 25 years is directly related to a more complex idea involving, first of all, the life of images, with their own destiny and autonomy, i.e. a more subtle version of the reworking of the memory of the series. Treated as what they really are – visual appearances – images are used as mobile signs, to the extent that they can celebrate an impossible encounter such as that between Laura and Cooper, whose existences, in the story world, are on different chronological planes. Here, the clash between story and discourse reemerges in the terms of enunciation power: Cooper is now the 'storyteller', he literally steals Laura from her narrative ending, leaving behind a blank, a void, a world without *Twin Peaks* – a visual absence, like the one created on the beach by the erasure of Laura's body. This idea of the suicide, or the assassination, of the entire project (the death of *Twin Peaks* for the life of Laura), led by the main character of the series, is probably the most surprising – and yet, knowing Lynch's work, not unpredictable – moment of the entire project. It's not just a simple 'what if', or a somewhat

confused moment of slipping between reality and 'something else' (reading Lynch's work in these terms, as quite often happens, is rather erroneous or, at the very least, simplistic). The idea, instead, is that of a 'combustion' – Fire Walk With Me… – of the visual world of *Twin Peaks* in which the final step of the process of recognition and identification of the images left in the past leads *inside* what seems to be a sequel of the previous seasons (and actually is), to a (possible) completely new beginning, in which *Twin Peaks* does not actually exist.

This work on the timelessness of images (see Didi-Huberman 2000) is another facet of the attitude with which Lynch approaches the return to the world of *Twin Peaks*. That "I'll see you again in 25 years" is actually a sardonic promise, as it once again creates a subtle conflict between the level of discourse (the actual 25 years that passed between the second and the third series) and the level of story, in which this time is both a fact (put into words, for example, by Lucy, Andy and others who knew Cooper and witnessed his disappearance) and a complete abstraction, particularly if considered in terms of images time. In this case, in fact, it's *just* time, an immeasurable portion of time, free of notions like past, present, and future, and, as we have seen, actually thrown into question, in terms of its chronological position, since the very first episodes of the series.

And it is not by chance that this very doubt regarding time resurfaces at the beginning of the final episode – which is a sort of a remake of and, in part, a sequel to the 17th – with the exact repetition of the scene (episode 2) in which MIKE asks "Is it future or is it past?". The 18th episode features a second attempt at the same mission pursued in the previous one, to bring Laura home. Again, Dale Cooper meets Laura Palmer and, again, they set out on a journey, this time by car, instead of through the woods. Like the Laura in the 17th episode, this one (her actual name is Carrie Page) does not know or recognize Cooper, not even from her dreams, but when he mentions the name of her supposed mother, Sarah, something happens. She is troubled, as though she is going to faint, and asks "What's going on?". In the end, however, both Lauras agree to follow him. And, again, the destination is home. But if, in the first instance, it



is Cooper that enters an unknown set (the night Laura was killed he was unaware of the existence of a city called Twin Peaks), this time it is the supposed Laura who is transported to another 'moment', and the journey around the city of Twin Peaks resembles a 'movie tour' of the series set, with Cooper asking Laura if she recognizes anything, if anything around her sounds familiar. He is literally testing her memory. In a certain sense, though, he is also testing his own (and, consequently, his own identity), thrown into question (again) by a previous event in that episode: before beginning his search for Laura, he spent a romantic night with Diane and, when he woke up (with Diane already gone), he found a note on the nightstand addressed to Richard and signed by Linda.

Having arrived 'home' – having *brought Laura home*, as he promised in the previous episode – Cooper puts his final and crucial question to Laura: "Do you recognize that house?". *That* Laura does not. And, as in the previous episode, Cooper offers her his hand, and they walk together toward the house. And, again, something goes wrong. That house is not the right house, not anymore, or not yet. "What year is this?" is the question that a confused Cooper finally poses to himself. But then, another, unpredictable, final encounter between images: if Laura does not, or cannot, recognize the house, the house – a house in which no Palmer family has yet lived, or lived too long ago to be remembered by the current owners – *recognizes* her, calls her, pronounces her name. That sinister 'memory' that shouts the name 'Laura' from an unmeasurable time position definitely puts the idea that 'the return' to *Twin Peaks* could be intended as a factual return to the story of the previous two series out of question: because once out, images have the power to live their own lives.

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