

Journal of Literary Studies

ISSN: 0256-4718 (Print) 1753-5387 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rjls20

Happy endings: The story of *Twin Peaks*

Gabeba Baderoon

To cite this article: Gabeba Baderoon (1999) Happy endings: The story of *Twin Peaks* , Journal of Literary Studies, 15:1-2, 94-107, DOI: 10.1080/02564719908530218

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/02564719908530218

Published online: 22 Oct 2010.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 250

View related articles

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=rjls20

Happy Endings: The Story of *Twin Peaks*

Gabeba Baderoon

Summary

In this paper I examine the complex manner in which narrative and genre operate in the American television series *Twin Peaks* (1990/1991). The role of the detective, in classic as well as postmodernist models of the detective story, is explored. Dale Cooper, the "literal" hero of *Twin Peaks*, is contrasted with earlier incarnations of similar protagonists. The most interesting index of the difference in this rendition of the detective hero lies in his relation to women. The classic roles which women are offered in the genre, as dead or deadly figures, are here intriguingly modified. I argue that the relation of male to female, and masculine to feminine, at work in *Twin Peaks*, may fruitfully be read in conjunction with generic shifts in the series. The interweaving of the detective and soap opera genres concludes with the jarring ending of the series. In the detailed discussion which follows I conclude that *Twin Peaks* offers a radical rereading of the detective story yet, at the end, disavows the implications of its own subversiveness.

Opsomming

In hierdie artikel ondersoek ek die komplekse werking van verhaal en genre in die Amerikaanse televisiereeks *Twin Peaks* (1990/1991). Die speurder se rol, in die klassieke asook die postmodernistiese modelle van die speurverhaal, word ondersoek. Dale Cooper, die "letterlike" held van *Twin Peaks*, word gekontrasteer met vroeëre inkarnasies van soortgelyke hoofrolspelers. Die interessantste indeks van die verskil in hierdie vertolking van die speurder-held word gevind in sy verhouding met vroue. Die klassieke rolle wat vroue gebied word in die genre, naamlik as dooie of dodelike figure, word hier op 'n interessante wyse gemodifiseer. Ek voer aan dat die verhouding van man tot vrou en van manlik tot vroulik, soos dit in *Twin Peaks* manifesteer, suksesvol gelees kan word tesame met generiese verskuiwings in die reeks. Die ineenvlegting van die speur- en die uitsaai-vervolggenre sluit af met die ontstemmende einde van die reeks. In die uitvoerige bespreking wat volg kom ek tot die slotsom dat *Twin Peaks* 'n radikale herinterpretasie van die speurverhaal bied, maar tog die implikasies hiervan aan die einde ontken.

Twin Peaks (1990/1991), the studiedly lyrical American television series, occasioned complex debates about its interactions with its medium. The series was created jointly by David Lynch and Mark Frost, and consists of only

twenty-nine episodes, but generated a reconsideration of television narrative.

For the contemporary world, television is the main source of narrative (Williams 1990: 59). *Twin Peaks* revisits the staples of televisual story-telling, inhabiting the genres of detective series and soap opera, and seems fascinated with the power of narrative to shape, conceal and reveal. Simultaneously it exploits the pleasure of looking at the workings of television (Fiske 1987: 237). Radical challenges to conventions of narration often display a superficial directness (Bordwell 1985: 284). The seamless surfaces of texts are undone by overloading them. Codes are applied with calculated intent. Instead of the emphasis on an uncluttered narrative, and unobstructed lines of causality, "the suspicion dawns that every shot or line can be treated transtextually" (Bordwell 1985: 312). By retaining the format of generic cues, but treating them excessively, *Twin Peaks* foregrounds and subverts the security provided by old forms.

Edgar Allan Poe's founding stories of the detective genre engaged with the challenge of the city, which in the nineteenth century loomed threateningly in the physical and psychological landscapes (Brand 1990: 221). In *Twin Peaks* the setting of the story is a small town in the northwest of America. The constitutive legend of *Twin Peaks* is that Mark Frost and David Lynch generated the first plots for the series from an outline of the town rather of the story (Dienst 1994: 95). The multiple significance of place is suggested in the first scenes of the series. The "Twin Peaks Theme" and the accompanying visuals of flowing water which start every episode, initiate a flow of representations which embody received ideas of the small town. With its placid surface hiding subterranean agitation, the setting of the small town has a long tradition in American narrative (Carroll 1993: 288).

The setting is an unstable amalgam of substance and intangibility. A small town is commonly mythologised as a haven of reality, compared to a citified *image* of living. It has become a trope of stability, yet it too is revealed as a construction (Pollard 1993: 303). Like the suburbs of big cities, the blankness of the small town is filled with comforting rituals like watching television. The combination of placidity and ritual has generated a similar fear of disjuncture between surface and what lies beneath. Inevitably, this disjuncture has also been rendered through film and television, adding to the bank of images. Paradoxically, the small town gains its materiality precisely through the weight of image. It is therefore not a place as much as a precipitate of countless fictions in which a setting of normality has been constructed (Pollard 1993: 301). As a site compulsively revisited by fictions, the small town is a metonymy for America (Pollard 1993: 297). The overstated freshness and openness is a specifically American vision (Kaleta 1993: 136). It is one which has also been repeatedly

reinvented on television. "The town of Twin Peaks had the feeling of a full-fledged community - the home we've dreamed of since we were old enough to turn on the TV" (Hampton 1993: 48). In the light of the constitutive nature of the fictions which have represented it, the small town has frequently been represented as the locus of "all the terrors and simulated realities [of post-modernism]" (Denzin 1991: 67).

In *Twin Peaks* these simulated realities are radically destabilised. The series refuses to respect the careful distinction between the various modes of fictionalisation of the setting. By combining every image of normality into a pose of studied plenitude, normality is fundamentally undermined:

> Soap operas, Father Knows Best-style sitcoms, perverse old thriller movies ... and bucolic commercials all converged, imploded; the seamless assurance and authority of TV's uninterrupted discourse became saturated with dread.
>
> (Hampton 1993: 48)

The consequence is an uneasy but compulsive watchability. Each of the disparate modes of narration, deployed simultaneously by the series, solicits schemata which could unify the narrative; but, as in Godard's films, the narration in *Twin Peaks* does not cohere around any single mode (Bordwell 1985: 314). The small town reflects the contradictions of these fictions; it is a place "in which things keep going on abnormally despite the most ordinary catastrophes befalling the most familiar of victims" (Deutsch 1993: 145).

This unstable balance of constructs means that the setting is re-created every time it encounters one of its constitutive functions. The unravelling of the crisp facades of small-town American life and what goes on beneath them, is integrally connected with the remaking of the town. This means that the deconstruction of the fictions is parallelled by a new construction. So if *Twin Peaks* is a precarious construct that is fundamentally undermined by the action of FBI Agent Dale Cooper, the town must also be re-created by him. A new surface devoid of subterranean evil must be fabricated (Pollard 1993: 298). As the bearer of the codes of goodness and clarity in a setting composed of the residue of codes, Cooper actually creates the small town. Within the menacing corporeality of the town he is "a detached, virtually fleshless site of cleansing" (Nochimson 1992/1993: 24). Agent Cooper's project is thus both subversive and profoundly recuperative. "Twin Peaks needs to be remade, stabilised: its moral boundaries redrawn, and homespun surface restored" (Nochimson 1992/1993: 24).

In the classical detective story the investigator is "the traditionally expected center of signification" (Carrion 1993: 242). The theme and structure of the classic Hollywood detective film reproduces the Cartesian split between a

powerful subject and a blank object of knowledge. This positivist division - exemplified by the detached expertise of the scientist - is manifested in a hierarchy of mind over body, and male over female (Waugh 1992: 2). Martha Nochimson describes its occurrence in the filmic Hollywood Mystery Tradition, which revolves around an unsettling encounter between the masculine protagonist and his unconscious "when desire meets the body of a deadly (or dead) woman" (Nochimson 1992/ 1993: 23). The division has been undercut by an emphasis on the body and the aesthetic in postmodernist works (Waugh 1992: 2). Furthermore, the television detective has modified the formula. In the Television Mystery Tradition the protagonist

> is not the erotically stunned investigator but ever-ready Sherlock Holmes. Like Holmes, the standard television detective is not seduced into his narratives; he enters them with a passion to dispel *any* illegibility represented by *any* body of crime - which is not a disruption in his life but rather its raison d'etre. For the Holmesian television detective, lack of clarity is the desirable aspect of mystery, an intellectually aphrodisiac opportunity for orgasmic restoration of clarity.
> (Nochimson 1992/1993: 23)

Television aids the process of materiality of the body; its shifts and slippages in the processes of identification unsettle the paradigmatic detective gaze (Nochimson 1992/1993: 23-25). On television, viewing becomes deceptive specifically through the disordering of narrative. *Twin Peaks* is a radical intervention in both the television and the postmodernist versions of the detective story because it makes overt the systemic disordering of narrative and vision in commercial television (Dienst 1994: 95).

The detective story rehearses the division of masculine and feminine, and mind and body, by investing the woman's body as the sign of excess and disruption to the masculine unconscious. The masculine protagonist is the figure around which the narration must cohere, and thus he must remain aloof from the disruptive event which causes his presence. Involvement is figured as contamination, and he is defined purely by a disembodied intelligence. His probing gaze is abstracted from the mutability of the body; all of his anxieties are projected onto the woman or the landscape (Nochimson 1992/1993: 23). The woman's body is made to bear what the masculine protagonist disavows - the fear of castration. In order to neutralise this fear the woman's body must be made into a spectacle, and cleansed of the mystery which always threatens masculine denial. The masculine protagonist enacts the power of looking, and controlling through seeing (Mulvey 1989: 19-21). He seeks resolution in both its senses: as solution and as clear vision.

The figure of the detective thus has a formal as well as a thematic role. In

addition to reconstructing the true story of the crime (Bordwell 1985: 69), he forms the centre of the narrative structure. Viewers are made to disavow their knowledge of the codes of the narration and "share the restricted knowledge possessed by the investigator" (p. 65). Thus the detective story trains viewers to regard every image as functional, and every shot a clue. *Twin Peaks* plays with this conditioning, teasing its spectators for expecting every image to mean something, as though they are detectives. The series deploys the codes of the genre, but then performs its own "stylized visual disavowal" (Deutsch 1993: 141). Instead of being made to share the detective's coherent, but limited perspective, the viewer is allowed a split position of "ironically assumed innocence" (p. 141). The viewer can exercise both choices at once: "to know and not to know" (p. 141). Thus the series modifies the detective paradigm. *Twin Peaks* acknowledges the televisual expertise of its viewers, and plays an exhilarating game of "knowing and not knowing" (p. 142). The series mediates the cinematic and televisual gazes; it

> offers the TV viewer an illusion of knowing distance, a distance necessary for active masculine spectatorship, from a medium branded excessively feminine, a medium all too familiar, a medium that comes too close to home. *Twin Peaks* seduces by offering the promise of a position of control over and projection of the system of representation implied by the cinematic gaze.
>
> (Deutsch 1993: 142)

As the protagonist in a postmodernist television detective story, agent Cooper is at once the "most literal hero" (Kaleta 1993: 137), and something else. His battles are fought not only against crime, but also on a metaphysical plane. As the archetype of good, he fights the archetypes of evil. Withdrawn from the corporeality of the body, he rejects Audrey Horne's sexual advances. This asexuality is integral to his moral authority. He has the traditional skills of the detective hero, which are also the skills of the hunter (Carroll 1993: 290-292). Yet Cooper is not a straight rendition of the detective; neither is he a parody of one (Carrion 1993: 242). He is an "ambivalent" hero (Carroll 1993: 288). This ambivalence dislodges the spectator's identification with figures of authority in the detective story (Carrion 1993: 241). The masculine, knowing gaze is disavowed, and the detective is implicated in the vagaries and subtleties of the body. In the cliffhanger which ended the first series he is shot and lies helplessly bleeding while he waits for help. Simultaneously, the detective's function on the metaphysical plane is also disrupted. If Cooper must restore the boundary between good and bad, his investigations reveal ultimately that the two are separated only by a mirror.

The source of destabilisation of the unified masculine authority is twofold: on

the one hand, the detective himself challenges the clear divisions between men and women which define his place; on the other, authority is reordered around a *group* of men. Cooper is invited to join the Bookhouse Boys - Sheriff Truman, Deputy Sheriffs Hawk and Brennan, and Big Ed Hurley - the secret order which actually maintains the law in Twin Peaks (Huskey 1993: 252). This development accentuates, rather than disturbs, the excision of women. While the detective manifests stilted relationships with the women in the town, his interactions with the men in the Bookhouse club are warm. He enacts a withdrawal both from the civilisation of the big city, and from women (Carroll 1993: 290).

The body of the woman is the mystery which draws the gaze of the detective (Nochimson 1992/1993: 23). Her death is the pretext for his presence. The drained, blue corpse of Laura Palmer forms a stark contrast to the rich browns and greens of the rest of Twin Peaks. The twin images of Laura wrapped in plastic and kept under glass are "the show's totem" (Deutsch 1993: 144). In both images she is packaged for consumption by a fearful but devouring gaze. As her living body represents the threat of castration to the masculine unconscious, her plastic-shrouded corpse is the tamed and sealed body from which any threat has been excised. The portrait of Laura "blazoning forth a smile like those of the fifties advertisements" (Deutsch 1993: 144) displayed in the school cabinet amongst the other trophies is also packaged for consumption.

Twin Peaks disrupts the classic divisions which structure the detective story. The most insidious of these disruptions occurs at the end of the second episode of the series. This is the dream sequence which occurs in the red room. Ironically, in the European film version this scene is the closing and most baffling scene, indicating its climactic quality. The scene's irreducible fascination with the textures of sound and image are all the more subversive for being presented as clues in a detective story. In the dream Cooper sees himself twenty-five years in the future, seated in a room draped with red curtains. On the black and white checkered floor stands a marble statue of a woman. In the room with Cooper are a dwarf and a woman in a black dress - she appears to be Laura Palmer. "Laura" kisses Cooper and then whispers something in his ear. The dwarf tells Cooper that the gum he used to like will come back into fashion. He dances. Both the dwarf and Cooper speak in a mesmerisingly distorted manner and subtitles are provided. The effects in this scene were achieved by shooting the scene with the camera running backwards; the actors memorised their lines backwards. The scene was then played forwards, providing the arresting distortion of words and movement.

In this scene *Twin Peaks* disturbs the compact which excises women in the detective story, rendering them silent and excessive, the bearers of projected

male anxiety (Mulvey 1989: 20). In the red room the woman is not a silent figure which captures the gaze and calls a halt to the action of the plot (1989: 19). Instead, she imparts knowledge to the detective, and it is only his own inadequacy which renders the message unintelligible (Nochimson 1992/1993: 28).

Finally, as a revision of the television detective drama, the red-room scene is most radical in its tolerance of lingering mystery. In the classic Sherlock Holmes stories, the mission of the detective is to "dispel magic and mystery, to make everything explicit, accountable, subject to scientific analysis" (Belsey 1990: 279). In *Twin Peaks* the detective's resolution will not obliterate every trace of mystery, and cauterise its wound. Instead, by *"[u]niting* precision of mind with flow of body in his pursuit of mystery, Cooper emerges as the first detective truly appropriate to the medium of television" (Nochimson 1992/1993: 24).

Yet, considering its status as the climactic mystery of the series, the red- room scene also suggests a contradiction. The revelation of Laura as the holder of the secret in the dream sequence, paradoxically *repeats* the formula of the classic detective format. It is indeed the woman who knows, who must be decoded and understood. Only, here the detective is immobile, and the progress of the tale is held hostage to the changeability of his body.

Twin Peaks's engagement with genre was a major source of its impact. Viewers were electrified by the stylised manner in which the series assumed the habit of generic codes; and its presumption of a media-conscious audience (Collins 1992: 346). On television, genre "entails a loss of freedom of desire and demand in order to achieve efficiency and properly labelled packaging" (Hartley quoted by Fiske 1987: 114). In order to fulfil the compact of genre a text must ensure the pleasure of fore-ordained recognition, or what we may call "generic" pleasure. *Twin Peaks* affects obedience to this compact, and then subverts it.

In the hundred and fifty years of its existence, the detective story has shifted from being a celebration of positivist concreteness and clarity, to exemplifying the postmodern questioning of resolution (Spanos 1992: 80). The postmodernist detective story poses the very problem of referentiality which its positivist origins would deny (Dienst 1994: 96). The evolution of the detective story can be traced in the shift from a primarily syntagmatic impetus to increasing emphasis on the paradigmatic dimension. This emphasis on the paradigmatic array leads eventually to the endless chain of signifiers which characterise postmodernist signification (Collins 1993: 262).

Conventional detective stories are teleological and provide the means to secure the resolution of the mystery (Fiske 1987: 130). The use of archetypes or familiar tropes (Eco 1988: 453) invite classic patterns of understanding, in order to unify the events of the sjužet (Bordwell 1985: 45-49). Bordwell finds Jean-

Luc Godard's films to be special instances of narration. *Alphaville* (1965), Godard's parody of the detective film, is marked by a peculiar use of generic codes. In *Alphaville*, on the one hand, the narration invites the normal application of narrative schemata (1985: 49). On the other, it provides either too few or too many cues to assure coherence. Frequently the requisite cues clash with those from irreconcilable codes. The effect of combining cues is to render all cues stylised and parodic rather than reassuring (pp. 315-316).

Stylised invocations of convention invite paradigmatic depth. The unsettling profusion of cues which drive the syntagm, causes an accentuation of the paradigmatic category instead, and in the detective tale, linearity is undermined. Echoing the petrifying action of the figure of the woman on the progression of the syntagm in the classic narrative described by Mulvey (1989: 21), the temporal impetus of the fabula is arrested by the accretion of paradigmatic detail (Bordwell 1985: 317). If the syntagmatic axis is motivated by a reconstruction of temporal events, the Godardian narrative is progressively "spatialized" by the suggestion of alternative temporalities (1985: 317). The use of stylised tropes triggers "a sense of the entire range of paradigmatic choice available at any point" (p. 318). This conceptualisation of visual texts reorders the nature of narration, and of audience. The text, no matter how simple its surface, becomes a palimpsest, and each sign shows traces of earlier uses. Palimpsestic traces record the process of construction (p. 325). Precisely those texts which show the greatest simplicity, even banality, promise insight into profound questions of narration (Eco 1988: 454). The simplest and most stereotypical plots refract attention to the meaning of the image (Zizek 1992b: 58-59).

The detective genre produces such deceptively simple texts. Though a detective story, *Twin Peaks* too defers resolution by inviting schemata in profusion, and abdicating its affirmatory role. Instead of paring down diversions in the sjužet in order to lead to the clarification of the fabula, *Twin Peaks* accentuates them through parody (Jameson 1990: 75). The disjunctive switching between schemata, and the accentuation of narrational strategy, deny the possibility of a coherent position from which to unify the narrative. Contiguous schemata therefore reveal their conventional character. By figuring the viewer's position as engaging with a clash of schemata, both *Alphaville* and *Twin Peaks* inscribe spectatorship into the text (Bordwell 1985: 316). For instance, characters in such aberrant texts abruptly change register. Viewers took delight in monitoring the shifting tone of the characters of *Twin Peaks*. At one moment they may be plausible individuals, at another, they veer into mimicry (1985: 320). Such vertiginous changes in tone shatter any sense of coherence. *Twin Peaks* is filled with such moments. The original clue of the series, the body of

a dead woman, is plastic-wrapped. It is the parody of a pretext - a generic clue. In its presentation of a beloved convention of police story - the doughnut - Cooper is led to a table arrayed with a cornucopia of doughnuts. Cooper's obsessive note-taking (his dictaphone takes the place of the conventional spiral notebook) becomes a paradoxical index of the viewer's activity. When convention dictates that a flickering lighting in the morgue signifies a sinister mood, a character reveals that the effect is simply due to "a broken transformer". The application of the conventions of one mode to another in *Twin Peaks* is incongruous and hilarious.

This paradigmatic density moves *Twin Peaks* out of the detective genre towards the "elaborate paradigmatic structure" of soap opera (Allen 1983: 103). Eventually, the series becomes an unstable combination of the two (Deutsch 1993: 142), whose tension reveals underlying similarities. Soap operas are driven by the promise of closure, yet defer resolution and produce pleasure through infinite diversions (Kaplan 1992: 266). By contrast, while the detective story is structured to ensure syntagmatic progression, its tropes are haunted by paradigmatic alternatives (Bordwell 1985: 317). Using the paradigmatic complexity of soap opera, *Twin Peaks*'s narration frustrates the resolution of the murder mystery by revealing ever more elaborate networks of connections.

Is *Twin Peaks*'s engagement with genre a liberating moment? Nochimson concludes that it is. Her finely argued paper makes necessary distinctions between film and television apparatuses, and between detective and soap opera conventions. However, in redefining the detective genre to leave space for mystery, and a speaking female subject, the narration of *Twin Peaks* does not simultaneously critique the repression which patriarchy is able to exercise through fixations rendered in genre.

The narrative focus on the family is a necessary antidote to the cliché of "glowing nuclear families and abiding values" which accompanies the small town (Hampton 1993: 38). In its insistent investigations of those things best left alone - the sacred secrecies of culture - *Twin Peaks* touches those things in which television, families, and cultures collude. "The worst secrets of all, *Twin Peaks* suggests, are the secret connections between culture and self that allow men to brutalize women" (Davenport 1993: 258).

However, the introduction of the supernatural in *Twin Peaks* allows an avoidance of a truly rigorous critique of patriarchal genres. After Dale Cooper has solved the mystery of Laura's murder, revealing that she has been murdered by her father, the spirit world becomes the series' deux ex machina which allows Cooper to ask evasively: "Is it easier to believe that a man would kill and rape his own daughter [than to believe in spirit possession]?". The demonic imagery through which an abuse survivor sees her abuser (Davenport 1993: 237) is used

as an escape route for a discomforted patriarchy. If it is easier to believe in malevolent incubi rather than murderously incestuous fathers perhaps it is because our visions of fathers and daughters are conditioned by the memory that "Father Knows Best". When *Twin Peaks* exposes "the affinity between the protection of innocence and its violation" (Hampton 1993: 39), it is at its most radical. The series poses a fundamental challenge to the formal parameters of televisual narrative, and reveals the ideological connection of form to subjectivity (Carroll 1993: 294). In its interrogation of the forms of television, incest is the metaphysically coherent answer to the mystery of Laura Palmer's death (Birns 1993: 280). The desire to excise the threat of the woman constitutes her as mystery (Mulvey 1989: 21). By retreating from this radical insight, *Twin Peaks* retreats into the very paradigm which it seems to subvert.

It is in the figure of the woman that the questions of genre, borders, paradigmatic depth, and the role of the detective converge. The fixating power of the woman's body on the syntagm in the classic narrative, is repeated by the accumulation of paradigmatic depth. This paradigmatic density suggests a larger structure which also works at the level of signifier, in the narration's acknowledgement of heteroglossia, or parallel inflections (Bordwell 1985: 20). The transmutation of *Twin Peaks* from detective story into soap opera can thus be retold as the invasion of "the masculine linear detective story [by] the feminine cyclical soap opera" (Deutsch 1993: 142). Agent Cooper starts out by challenging the artificial separation of mind and body which underscores subjectivity of the detective. He is drawn to the town, wishing to buy a house, and by becoming drawn into its subterranean networks, is absorbed by the feminised medium of the soap opera. However, his drive toward recuperation and wholeness inure him to the dispersed subjectivity - the multiple identification - offered by the genre of soap. Instead, Cooper's experience of women and the feminised medium remains the one which informs the classic narrative, and which opens the series - the terrifying plenitude of the woman's image. The series ends precisely as it began, with a mirror image, this time with Cooper occupying the place of the woman (Deutsch 1993: 141). When we see Cooper looking into the mirror and we recognise the image of the incubus BOB, the narration presents the patriarchal nightmare of the penetrated male (1993: 149). Once again, this nightmare is also transposed onto a problem of referentiality. The true profanity is not the incubus, BOB, but the fact that good and evil look the same (Pollard 1993: 303). Not only has the detective's logical eye been betrayed by the doubled and deceitful women (Dienst 1994: 97), but he himself becomes profanely doubled.

The radically suspended ending is simultaneously unique and exemplary of the narrative and economic organisation of television (Dienst 1994: 99). It is unique

for a detective story to leave unresolved issues. It is exemplary of soap opera to have deferred closure. This formulation suggests that the detective's subjectivity has been invaded by the feminised soap opera. The reordering of fictional positions through the destabilising of the determining male gaze results in a terrifying dislocation of masculine identity. Recalling the opening scene of Josie Packard gazing at her image in the mirror, the final shot of the series is of Cooper contemplating himself in the mirror (Dienst 1994: 97). He is caught in the terrifying immediacy of the image. "How's Annie? How's Annie? How's Annie? How's Annie?" he asks, speaking to himself in a frightening parody of the language of the soap opera. Unlike the language of the detective paradigm, this language is not aimed at clarification, but signifies the "elaborate paradigmatic structure of character relationships" (Allen 1983: 103). The narration of *Twin Peaks* steps back, aghast, and appears to disavow its earlier disavowal of certainty.

Because it oscillates between two primary generic poles, the soap opera and the detective story, "*Twin Peaks* begins and ends without the comfort of beginnings and endings" (Dienst 1994: 92). In both genres the ending is of definitive importance. The ending defines the narrative structure of the soap opera, since closure is always deferred (Allen 1983: 98). In the detective story the ending is the solution to the mystery; but it is also the proof of the detective's logical process, and "the revelation of the truth" (Bordwell 1985: 159).

By crafting a performance of its televisual textuality, *Twin Peaks* offers the television viewer of the detective series a position of ironic distance from the feminised medium in which it is embedded (Deutsch 1993: 142). As the male protagonist, Cooper achieves a certain liberation of masculinity. But because the liberating impetus is predicated on the difference between the feminised soap opera and the masculine detective series, it is Cooper who must eventually recover the sacred ground, abolish complexity, and cauterise the wound of the mystery of the woman. The detective's mission to retell the story of the crime becomes re-creating the crime, and finally, re-committing the crime.

The redefinition of the masculine subject in *Twin Peaks* is along the lines prefigured by the opening sequence of the series: the woman caught in the fascination of her own image. Though the series will unsettle the position of the male detective, it will ultimately place him in the same position as the female holder of the mystery. His body is literally invaded by the incubus, BOB. His intelligence and his probing gaze are abolished. He becomes exclusively the vulnerable, mutable body. Frozen in contemplation of himself, his only words are a parody of interaction, repeating a question which he has been asked. Unlike in the classical formula, the male protagonist is made to look at himself, and it is he who freezes the story. It is in this state of suspension that *Twin*

Peaks ends. In thrall to a terrifying plenitude of image (Dienst 1994: 97), Dale Cooper is made into a monster which must be excised.

Narrative closure marks the imprint of ideology in a text. The ideological force of closure lies in its pretence of openness, which represses the overdetermining logic of preceding events. Through closure, the subject "recognizes his/her place in the texture of the symbolic narrative" (Zizek 1992: 243). At the end of *Twin Peaks*, Cooper occupies the position held by a woman in the opening scene. The audience is faced with a narration simultaneously subversive and ambivalent.

References

Allen, Robert C.
1983 On Reading Soaps: A Semiotic Primer. In: Kaplan, E. Ann (ed.) *Regarding Television*. Los Angeles: American Film Institute and University Publications of America.

Belsey, Catherine
1990 Deconstructing the Text: Sherlock Holmes. In: Bennett, Tony (ed.) *Popular Fiction: Technology, Ideology, Production, Reading*. London: Routledge.

Birns, Nicholas
1993 Telling Inside from Outside, or, Who *Really* Killed Laura Palmer. *Literature/Film Quarterly* 21(4): 277-286.

Bordwell, David
1985 Narration in the Fiction Film. London & New York: Routledge.

Brand, Dana
1990 From the *Flaneur* to the Detective: Interpreting the City of Poe. In: Bennett, Tony (ed.) *Popular Fiction: Technology, Ideology, Production, Reading*. London: Routledge.

Carrion, Maria M.
1993 *Twin Peaks* and the Circular Ruins of Fiction. *Literature/Film Quarterly* 21(4): 240-247.

Carroll, Michael
1993 Agent Cooper's Errand in the Wilderness: *Twin Peaks* and American Mythology. *Literature/Film Quarterly* 21(4): 287-295.

Collins, Jim
1992 Television and Postmodernism. In: Allen, Robert C. (ed.) *Channels of Discourse Reassembled*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, pp, 247-283.
1993 Genericity in the Nineties: Eclectic Irony and the New Sincerity. In: Collins, Jim; Collins, Ava & Radner, Hilary (eds) *Film Theory Goes to the Movies*. New York & London: Routledge & American Film Institute.

Davenport, Randi
1993 The Knowing Spectator of *Twin Peaks*: Culture, Feminism, and Family Violence. *Literature/Film Quarterly* 21(4): 255-259.
Denzin, Norman K.
1991 *Images of Postmodern Society: Social Theory and Contemporary Cinema.* London: Sage.
Deutsch, Helen
1993 Is it Easier to Believe?: Narrative Innocence from *Clarissa* to *Twin Peaks. Arizona Quarterly* 49(2): 137-158.
Dienst, Richard
1994 *Still Life in Real Time: Theory after Television.* Durham & London: Duke University Press.
Eco, Umberto
1988 Casablanca: Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage. In: Lodge, David, Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader., London & New York: Longman, pp. 446-455.
Fiske, John
1987 *Television Culture.* London & New York: Routledge.
Hampton, Howard
1993 David Lynch's Secret History of the United States. *Film Comment* 29(3): 38-49.
Huskey, Melynda
1993 *Twin Peaks*: Rewriting the Sensation Novel. *Literature/Film Quarterly* 21(4): 248-254.
Jameson, Richard T.
1990 Evergreen Velvet. *Film Comment* 26(1): 73-75.
Kaleta, Kenneth
1993 *David Lynch.* New York: Twayne.
Kaplan, E. Ann
1992 Feminist Criticism and Television. In: Allen, Robert C., *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled: Television and Contemporary Criticism.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
Mulvey, Laura
1989 Visual and Other Pleasures. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
Nochimson, Martha
1992/1993 Desire under the Douglas Firs: Entering the Body of Reality in *Twin Peaks. Film Quarterly* 46(2): 22-34.
Pollard, Scott
1993 Cooper, Details, and the Patriotic Mission of *Twin Peaks. Literature/Film Quarterly* 21(4): 296-304.

Spanos, William V.
1992 The Detective and the Boundary: Some Notes on the Postmodern Literary Imagination. In: Patricia Waugh (ed.) *Postmodernism: A Reader*. London & Auckland: Edward Arnold.

Twin Peaks
1990/1991 Created by David Lynch and Mark Frost. Lynch/Frost Productions: ABC Network.

Waugh, Patricia
1992 Introduction. In: Patricia Waugh (ed.) *Postmodernism: A Reader*. London & Auckland: Edward Arnold.

Williams, Raymond
1990 *Technology and Cultural Form*. London: Routledge.

Zizek, Slavoj
1992 *Everything You Wanted to Know about Hitchcock, but Were Afraid to Ask Lacan*. London & New York: Verso.