


The Mother of all BO(m)BS: Apocalyptic Visions in *Twin Peaks: The Return*

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Abstract. The article focuses on David Lynch and Mark Frost's TV-series *Twin Peaks: The Return* – especially on episode 8 where we can see the ancestral goddess Joudy giving birth to the evil entity BOB during the Trinity nuclear test from July 16th of 1945 – in order to tackle the issue of past and present atomic anxieties (which are intrinsically linked to post-WWII geopolitics, the role of class-struggle in capitalism, and the problem of sexuality in a patriarchal society) while employing a theoretical approach that is mainly grounded in (post-)structuralism combined with other philosophical references as well, but also drawing from various approaches made towards the specific topic of the *Twin Peaks* phenomena as advanced in the field of cultural studies.

Key Words: *Twin Peaks*, David Lynch, atomic bomb, post-modernism, post-structuralism

Mati vseh BO(m)B-ov: apokaliptične vizije v *Twin Peaksu*: vrnitvi

Povzetek. Članek se osredotoča na tretjo sezono TV-serije *Twin Peaks: vrnitev* – še zlasti na osmo epizodo, v kateri lahko vidimo pravadno božanstvo Joudy, kako porodi zlobno entiteto BOB tekom jedrskega testa Trinity s 16. julija 1945 –, da bi s pomočjo teoretskega pristopa, ki je (povečini) utemeljen v (post-)strukturalizmu in drugih filozofskih ter kulturoloških referencah, zapopadel pretekle in sedanje atomske tesnobe (intrinzično vezane na geopolitično situacijo, kakor se je vzpostavila po drugi svetovni vojni, na vlogo razrednega boja v kapitalizmu in na problem seksualnosti v patriarharni družbi).

Ključne besede: *Twin Peaks*, David Lynch, atomska bomba, postmodernizem, poststrukturalizem

It seems that almost since the dawn of humanity, visions of the dusk of civilisation haunt human imagination during day and night, be it in the

religious shape of shining angels descending from the sky, as envisioned by John of Patmos in his *Apokalypsis*, or in the more modern cinematic form of atomic bombs flying across the oceans, as imagined by James Cameron in the *Terminator*. And then, half-way from the sacral to the secular, there is David Lynch, whom we can see, in a scene from *Twin Peaks: The Return*, whistling *Engel* by Rammstein with a black and white poster of the atomic bomb in the background.

Lynch and Frost re-imagined the end of humanity as a beginning in the legendary episode 8 – perhaps one of the most stunning, disturbing, mesmerizing pieces of cinematic art ever aired on television – where the Trinity nuclear test on July 16th of 1945 is depicted as giving birth to the evil entity called BOB via the ancestral goddess Joudy. Lynch being Lynch, the *Twin Peaks* universe is of course saturated with such cryptograms, which are accessible only to the cult of the initiated, the ‘Peakfreaks’ that followed the series from its beginnings in the 1990s, and patiently waited for its return 25 years later, as foreshadowed by Laura Palmer in the famous dream sequence: ‘I’ll see you in 25 years’.

I am here to guide the un-initiated through one such cryptogram, the above-mentioned Trinity test that allowed the ancient mother Joudy to give birth to the evil BOB, for in this scene one can not only find an eerie foreshadowing of the ‘return of the repressed’ that we are facing in this precise historical moment when atomic weapons are back in the geopolitical game, but also a condensation of mutually interconnected topics, ranging from sexuality in our age-old patriarchal society to class-struggle in contemporary capitalism.

Therefore, I propose to tackle all these issues, as raised by *The Return* in general and episode 8 in particular, through a theoretical approach based on post-structuralism (Deleuze, Lacan, Žižek), combined with other philosophical references as well (Eco, Jameson, Arendt), but also drawing from various approaches made towards the specific topic of the *Twin Peaks* phenomena as advanced especially in the field of cultural studies.

The Return of the Repressed

On the 3rd of October 2014, exactly at 0830 hours to be precise, Lynch (2014) and Frost (2014) simultaneously tweeted a cryptic quote: ‘Dear Tweeter friends: that gum you like is going to come back in style.’ The quote is, as we all know, or should know, taken from the original *Twin Peaks* series that held the promise to ‘change television forever’, more pre-

cisely from the same dream sequence that the above '25 years later' quote is taken, when at the end of the second episode of the first season the Dwarf is foretelling Cooper: 'I've got good news. That gum you like is going to come back in style' (Dunham 1990). In view of *The Return*, the 'gum' is obviously the show on which at least cult viewers chewed our brains out, over and over again throughout the years, and the 'good news' is that it is 'coming back in style', meaning the return of *Twin Peaks*.

Twin Peaks, the series that held the promise to 'change television', and indeed did just that, becoming a 'cult tv' phenomena that inaugurated what was later on conceived as 'quality-tv'¹ thus paving the way for tv shows like *X-files*, *Lost*, *Carnivale*, *Leftovers*, *Hannibal*, etc. – and even video-games like, perhaps most notably, *Alan Wake* – that were directly or indirectly inspired by it. *Twin Peaks*'s status of 'cult object' is perhaps most telling in terms of what does it mean to engage in its interpretative reading, for if we use the criteria as delineated by Umberto Eco we can clearly see how it adheres completely to at least three of them (cf. Eco 1986, 198–199; Lavery 1995, 1–21):² first, it possesses such a lively 'living textuality' that it created its own intertextuality (and its own clique of cult followers that perpetuated it in what become known as 'peak-speak' or the ability to 'speak Twin Peaks'); second, it comes with a tertiary 'completely furnished world' in the form of its 'commodity intertexts' (as most emblematically embodied by the *Secret Diary of Laura Palmer*, written by Jennifer Lynch, and the *Autobiography of FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper*, written by Mark Frost); and third, its quality of 'detachability' or its susceptibility to remain alive even if broken into separate parts (quotes, characters, images). And many of these features, combined with other innovative elements – most notably the layering of various tv and film genres

¹ Robert J. Thompson defines 'quality tv' as: everything that is not 'ordinary' television, as tv that violates all written and unwritten rules, contradicts established genre forms and shapes new, unseen narrative maps. Moreover, according to Thompson, quality television is defined by an extensive cast of actors or a number of subjective perspectives, it introduces formation of a new genre through combining old ones, it applies self-reflexivity, a tendency towards realism that accompanies allusion to the film form, and it is based on a unique design of the script, usually questioning more or less controversial themes, etc. (Thompson 1997).

² Umberto Eco's essay entitled *Travels in Hyper Reality*, where he describes in detail how contemporary culture re-creates reality as 'hyperreality' – to be sure, a term first coined and conceptualised by Jean Baudrillard – via a postmodern amalgamation of historical references, could indeed be read also as a theoretical introduction to *Twin Peaks*, the first tv show that embodies the concept of postmodern pastiche.

on top of the main detective story (horror, comedy, noir, soap-opera, etc.) – made *Twin Peaks* one of the most interpreted pieces of postmodern artwork (cf. Reeves et al. 1995). One can only imagine, with such a cult-status of postmodern phenomena paving the way to the ‘quality TV’ of the 2000s and onward, how high were the expectations for *The Return*.

The third season of *Twin Peaks*, known also as *Twin Peaks: The Return*, and *Twin Peaks: A Limited Event Series*, premiered on Showtime³ on 21st May 2017, and consisted of 18 approximately one-hour-long episodes, that take over the story 25 years later from the season finale, thus starting with Cooper trying to find his way out of the Black Lodge, while in the real world replaced by his *doppelgänger* Mr. C., both magnificently enacted by Kyle MacLachlan, the original idiosyncratic FBI agent from the series. Retaining all the above-mentioned elements from the original show, especially the post-modernistic pastiche of genres, but with a new visual and musical design, *The Return* was a veritable ‘repetition’ of *Twin Peaks* in the strict philosophical sense of the word as gradually (re-)conceptualized first by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, and then by Deleuze and Lacan, although of course in a very different way. For Kierkegaard a.k.a. Constantin Constantius and his *Gjentagelsen*, what repeats is first and foremost the impossibility of repetition itself (cf. Kierkegaard 1983), while for Nietzsche a.k.a. Zarathustra and his *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, repetition is ‘the eternal return’ of the same, the necessity of repetition (cf. Nietzsche 2022). Deleuze, in his *Difference and Repetition*, tried to reconcile these two very different philosophies of repetition by reversing the usual relation between copy and original in the sense that repetition is not an affirmation of identity, but rather of difference, and what repetition actually does, is a production of something new, i.e. repetition repeats itself anew (cf. Deleuze 1995). Lacan proceeded similarly, although in a very different context, when in his *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* he tackled the concept of repetition through an idiosyncratic reading of Aristotle’s difference between *automaton* and *tyche*, where the former is understood as the ‘automatic’ repetition that one can find in the milieu of natural necessity, while the latter is a specifically human ‘chance’ encounter with the Real (cf. Lacan 1998).⁴

³ Showtime was founded in 1976. It is a subsidiary of CBS. Besides *Twin Peaks: The Return*, and *Twin Peaks: A Limited Event Series*, it has established itself on the account of the original content of TV series like *Dexter* and *Homeland*.

⁴ Intriguingly enough, at least for a further philosophical discussion in a different context,

Thus, *The Return* – instead of merely mimicking the unrepeatable original *Twin Peaks* – made us experience the impossibility of repetition by breaking the circle of ‘eternal recurrence’ and thus repeating it completely anew as an encounter with the Real.

The story turned all expectations upside down while slowly and cryptically, but also steadily and linearly, unfolding from episode to episode, returning to the fates of the old, now aged characters from the first two seasons of the series, and at the same time introducing new ones and their side-stories, thus connecting the old generation with the new, as if passing the torch of the past to the future, where, however, the fantasies about how a ‘repetition’ of *Twin Peaks* should look like were completely shattered. As we can learn already from Freudian and especially Lacanian psychoanalysis, enacting a fantasy is always already a tricky business, for the pleasure obtained in its actualization is never the same as the one imagined beforehand (cf. Žižek 2009). As Lacan points out in his already mentioned *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, the difference between the *aim* and *goal* of desire means that the desiring subject aims at the object of their desire, but by inevitably missing it achieves a completely different goal instead (cf. Lacan 1998, 174–186). Or as Dale Cooper himself, the protagonist of the whole TV series, points out: ‘What I want and what I need are two different things, Audrey’ (Deschanel 1990). A phrase repeated later on by his evil doppelgänger Mr. C, characterized precisely by the insistence on desire detached from need: ‘Want, not need. I don’t need anything’ (Lynch 2017a). Or, if I take a slightly different example, namely, the album by Public Image Ltd., *This is what you Want ... This is What you Get* that can be read in two ways: what you want and what you get is ‘this’, for sure, the problem being that ‘this’, repeated twice, can mean either the same thing or something completely different.

The Return shattered the fantasies one might have had about what a veritable ‘repetition’ of the original show should be, and just as the viewers barely adapted to the ‘new’ *Twin Peaks*, episode 8 happened. As with the movie *Fire Walk With Me* that was released after the original Season Two finale and its breath-taking cliff-hanger, when everybody was expecting

is that despite all their differences, what all the referenced authors have in common is a certain conception of ‘repetition’ that distinguishes between ‘repetition’ in the ordinary sense of the world, where a copy is produced based on the original as in Plato’s and Aristotle’s theory of *mimesis*, and ‘repetition’ in its developed, dialectical sense, where the copy produced is as ‘original’ as the original – hence the formulation: ‘repetition anew’ – and thus leading us back to Hegel’s and Marx’s theory of history.

if not a continuation of the series, at least its wrapping-up in form of the feature film, but got a sequel in the form of a prequel (the story of Laura Palmer up until her murder), so did episode 8 (Lynch 2017b) of *The Return* overturn its own structure by being a surreal depiction of nothing short than its own origin. The detonation of the first atomic bomb, visualized and acoustically imagined by Lynch, annihilating and creative at the same time, as a retro-futuristic white-noise, gives Joudy or the 'Experiment', a white humanoid goddess from times immemorial, to vomit a stream of primordial fluid, with BOB as one of its darkest globules, while in another dimension the Giant, now re-baptized as the 'Fireman', together with Señorita Dido, spawn a golden orb with Laura Palmer in order to counter the birth of evil. The origin of Twin Peaks is therefore here with episode 8 re-interpreted as the age-old, perhaps the oldest battle of humanity – the one between good vs evil – which is, however, itself completely reshaped in the following 8 episodes.

If we leave everything else aside and focus on what is most important for our present discussion, one of the most striking facts about this scene from episode 8 is the date and location – July 16th of 1945, New Mexico – for we have very rarely, at least in the *Twin Peaks* universe, such precise temporal and spatial references, and even less any references to historical events. It is in this sense that we ought look upon episode 8 of *The Return* as a veritable 'return of the repressed' that is, as we know, one of the distinctive symptoms of postmodernism.

Atomic BO(m)B

The creation and detonation of the atomic bomb was oxymoronicly intended to achieve peace through a war-weapon of ultimate destruction, and because of the precipice that opened between means and purpose it perhaps comes as no surprise that the results were quite the opposite, for the world did not achieve peace, but rather drifted from an open global conflict into a latent one, marked by a perennial threat of nuclear warfare of apocalyptic proportions.

As Hannah Arendt pointed out in her 'On Violence': 'The Second World War was not followed by peace but by a cold war and the establishment of the military-industrial-labor complex' (Arendt 1972, 111). Arendt articulated the consequences of the establishment of the capitalistic military-industrial-labour complex in precise political terms: 'The practice of violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is to a more violent world' (Arendt 1972, 177). And *Twin*

Peaks: The Return reflects this 'more violent world' of ours accurately, in its extreme scenes of 'sex and violence', depicting rape, murder, etc., as well as, and perhaps more importantly, in its 'violent' aesthetic form, as best exemplified precisely by the depiction of the detonation of the atomic bomb in episode 8, a most violent aesthetic form rendering a most extreme form of violence. Moreover, considering the historical situation we are in, one can indeed say that history is far from over as Fukuyama imagined it in his liberal manifesto *The End of History* (cf. Fukuyama 1992). History is rather 'repeating itself' in the most general sense of the word, but this time not as a 'repetition of the same' and neither as a 'repetition of something anew' as previously discussed, but rather as a veritable, violent 'return of the repressed'.⁵ Fredric Jameson says that one of the most distinctive features of postmodernism is its anachronistic 'repression of historicity' – to be sure, a Marxist application of the Freudian theory of *Verdrängung* (Jameson 1991, 27) – upon which he bases a 'general observation about the tendency of 'foundations' to return via some extreme form of the return of the repressed within the most anti-foundational outlooks' (Jameson 1991, 135). And the Trinity nuclear test in New Mexico on 16th July 1945 can thus be read precisely as such a fundamental 'return of the repressed' in the milieu of this great postmodernist artwork that is *Twin Peaks* as a whole.

The imagery of cold war, including its anxieties and paranoias related to the threat of an atomic warfare on a grand scale, is depicted not only in episode 8 of *The Return*, but also in its two intertextual compendiums written by Mark Frost under the titles of *The Secret History of Twin Peaks* (2016) and *Twin Peaks: The Final Dossier* (2017), both books being brilliant examples of experimental, fragmental, postmodern story-telling: while the *Secret History* attempts to imagine a history of the town of Twin Peaks reintegrated into 'real' US history via its most enigmatic, intriguing chapters – ranging from actual history (Native American History) to plain conspiracy theories (UFO sightings) –, *The Final Dossier* functions as a series of dossiers about the main characters of *Twin Peaks* that complement the whole story as narrated and reinterpreted by *The Return*.

⁵ Hegel was allegedly the first to articulate the thought of 'history repeating itself' in his *Lectures on History*, where, however, one cannot find any reference to this (cf. Hegel (1975)). The confusion about Hegel's concept of history is perhaps due to Marx's famous statement from the beginning of *The Eighteen Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*: 'Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce' (Marx 1937, 5).

And it is here that we learn, among other things, that the entity known as 'Joudy', first discovered by agent Philip Jeffries, one of the members of the FBI 'Blue Rose' Taskforce (played by none other than David Bowie), links past and future, the beginning and the end (Frost 2017, 121–122):

Joudy, it turns out, is also the name of an ancient entity in Sumerian mythology. (This dates back to at least 3000 BC) The name was used to describe a species of wandering demon – also generically known as an *utukku* – that had 'escaped from the underworld' and roamed freely throughout the earth, where they feasted on human flesh and, allegedly, ripped the souls from their victims, which provided even more meaningful nourishment. They particularly thrived while feeding – and I quote – 'on human suffering'. These beings were said to appear in both male and female forms – 'Joudy' indicated the female, and the male was known as 'Ba'al' – and while they were considered beyond dangerous individually, if a male and female ever united while on the earth, the ancient text claimed, their resulting 'marriage' would create something far more perilous. As in: the end of the world as we know it.

Furthermore, linking the knowledge one can acquire through the accompanying books with the TV series one finds out that the girl from the very last scene from episode 8 is none other than Sarah Palmer (Laura's mother, played by Grace Zabriskie), who is 'impregnated' – in a sort of scene of birth in reverse – with an insect-like creature that spawned from the atomic explosion that gave birth to BOB, another reference to the eternal forces of creation and destruction connected to the topic of sexuality and violence as most emblematically embodied by Joudy herself: 'To beget and to give birth are no more creative than to die is annihilating; they are but different phases of the same, ever-recurring cycle in which all living things are held as though they were spellbound' (Arendt 1972, 179). And thus Joudy paradoxically embodies not only creation and destruction, but also both 'feminine ideals' of motherhood and sexuality.

As Leigh Kolb points out while discussing the link between war-mongering patriarchy, emancipatory feminism, and the role of women in *Twin Peaks*, conflicting views of 'American womanhood' could be best grasped if we take into consideration the fear of women's emancipation through labour in the aftermath of WWII, resulting also in their sexual liberation, and their persistent sexual idolization in the arts and pop-culture. The ambivalence of 'fear and love' is best illustrated by certain iconic images

from both world wars and their long military aftermath (cf. Kolb 2018, 128–129): ‘bombshell’ as synonymous for a beautiful woman that began in the 1930s/40s; fighter planes from the same period had artwork of half-naked women depicted on their bodies, sometimes the women riding bombs, and sometimes on the bombs themselves; the American bomber that dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima was named ‘Enola Gay’ after the pilot’s mother, etc.

History definitely has a sense of irony, for much later on, just at the turn of the millennium, the Americans developed the MOAB (‘Massive Ordnance Air Blast’), nicknamed the ‘Mother of All Bombs’ (inspired by none other than Saddam Hussein, who invoked the *Umm al-Maʿarik* or ‘mother of all battles’ during the Gulf War of 1991), allegedly the most devastating non-nuclear bomb ever created, that was dropped in Afghanistan in 2017 ... the very year that *Twin Peaks: The Return* was unleashed upon television.

Above the Convenience Store

All the striking imagery of episode 8, and indeed the whole of *The Return* should not only be watched carefully following its explicit symbolism, but it should first and foremost be *read* in order to grasp its allegorical meaning.

Walter Benjamin famously stated that contrary to the established aesthetical difference between symbol and allegory – and the related hierarchy of image and language – the latter is ‘not a playful illustrative technique, but a form of expression, just as speech is expression, and, indeed, just as writing is’ (Benjamin 2003, 162).⁶ From the point of view of language, the symbol is a process of encoding that fixes meaning and thus produces meaning, while the allegory is a process of constant recoding of meaning through destruction and creation: ‘Whereas in the symbol destruction is idealized and the transfigured face of nature is fleetingly revealed in the light of redemption, in allegory the observer is confronted with the facies hippocratica of history as a petrified, primordial landscape’ (Benjamin 2003, 166). The town of Twin Peaks itself, at least in

⁶ Walter Benjamin, while exploring *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, distinguishes baroque allegory from romantic symbol by saying that a symbol is a language of fixed meanings that are supposed to reflect the idea of a natural language, while allegory is the humanistic wet dream of the Renaissance, a chaotic form of expression that always reinvents its language and where the use is correct every time precisely because there is no original canon to which it would be possible to refer.

the first two seasons, is such an allegorically petrified 'primordial landscape', where on the facade it looks like the 'air is clean', where 'nature and industry go hand in hand', and where 'yellow light still means slow down', while at the same time, *Twin Peaks* deconstructs obvious meanings into cryptic enigmas ready to be deciphered and redefined, best exemplified by the famous: 'The owls are not what they seem' (Hunter 1990).

Sheli Ayers, in her article 'Twin Peaks, Weak Language and the Resurrection of Affects', develops a Benjaminian distinction between the 'weak' language of allegory and the 'strong' language of the symbol: 'If the symbol has 'strong' metaphysical pretensions, then allegory represents its 'weak side.' Allegory as weak language institutes the regime of arbitrary signs' (Ayers 2005, 94). The theoretical issue at stake here is that the symbol embodies the 'strong' side of language, its aspect of being a system of codified meanings, while allegory deconstructs the rigidity of such a system precisely by evoking its inherent non-meaning. A similar approach towards language could be discerned in Lacan's 'hyperstructuralistic' replacement – based on Jakobson's elaboration of Saussure's theory of language – of the linguistic concept of sign with that of the signifier in toto, where the concept of *lalangue* denotes precisely this reversal of the relation between meaning and non-meaning: since meaning arises from the material interplay of phonetic non-meaning, *lalangue* constitutes not a poetic derivate of language, but rather its fundament (cf. Milner 2002). Thus, allegory stands in the same relation towards symbol as does *lalangue* in relation to language as such, and if we consider the idiosyncratic 'PeakSpeak' of *Twin Peaks*, we can clearly see towards which side it is leaning.

Dale Cooper first arrives in Twin Peaks on February the 24th, 1989 while talking to Diane on his iconic tape-recorder, where, along with giving his expert opinion on the cherry pie that he ate at a restaurant on the way, and the intention to find a 'clean room with reasonable prices', is a certain curious desire to find a name for the trees that pass him in the car: 'Gotta find out what these trees are. They're really something' (Lynch 1990). Cooper acts like Adam in the Garden of Eden, feeling the need to name things, but it soon turns out that his desire is insatiable and that he is hungry for new and new names: after he learns their name (Douglas Fir), the trees retreat into anonymity again, and he himself pursues the name of the white rabbit (Snowshoe Rabbit). In the allegorical 'weak' language the value of things change constantly, change position and levels of meaning, up to the point where they risk mutual disintegration. In this regard,

it is definitely significant that the *ouroboros*, i.e. the image of a snake biting its own tail, was an extremely popular symbol at the time when the renaissance allegory was born. Although it is somewhat contradictory to express the meaning of an allegory through a symbol, I believe that the *ouroboros* not only perfectly reflects the withdrawal of symbolic representation and the rise of allegorical self-destruction through self-reflection, but also describes perfectly the function that *Fire Walk With Me* has in relation to the *Twin Peaks* series: at the time of the series' run, all that was perceived as 'symbolism' actually functioned as an allegorical regime of arbitrary signs open to various meta-discursive interpretations, while the film, as the sequel in form of a prequel, fixed fragmented meanings into a meaningful whole, which is exactly the function of the symbol as a *point de caption* or the 'stitching of an endless chain of ordinary signifiers' (cf. Lacan 1999). And what *The Return* did was precisely a further allegorization – through self-reflection and self-destruction – of the symbolic order that was thus fixed with *Fire Walk With Me* into an endless 'golden circle of appetite and satisfaction' for the Peakfreak community.

All of the supernatural residents of the Black Lodge, from 'killer' BOB to the 'one-armed-man' MIKE, have an appetite for *garmonbozia*, a corn-like soup translated as 'pain and sorrow' that they themselves must incite in their victims before consuming their souls. Moreover, in *Fire Walk With Me* we learn from an allusion by Phillip Jeffries, that he was 'at one of their meetings', which the residents held 'above a convenience store', itself depicted as a dirty and spare room, with covered windows and disparate furniture. This crucial location returns later on in *The Return* in a most meaningful way when 'The Woodsmen', a collateral of the same nuclear explosion that gave birth to BOB, approach a gas station with a, how convenient, 'convenience store above': '*The Return* shows the Convenience Store as a hub of oil, capitalism, masculinity, darkness, and decay. The Woodsmen – perhaps prophetic relics of an American economy that relied upon coal mining – revive Mr. C, attempting to keep whole a destructive American masculinity based on the burning of fossil fuels' (Kolb 2018, 134). The depiction of the Trinity Test that gave birth to the atomic BO(m)B as a symptom of the 'military-industrial-labor complex' is thus directly linked to collateral emergence of 'The Woodsmen' as an allegorical representation of the dialectics of labour and capital and the related issue of class-struggle, as best testified by their residence, the gas station and its convenience store above.

The post-WWII era of 'American Greatness' could thus be defined as the

military 'cold war' that followed on the outside, but also in terms of consumerism on the inside, both processes being fuelled by a growing, and at the same time life-consuming and earth-devouring capitalist economy, that one can now easily identify as – and nickname – 'Joudy'.

Conclusion

Lynch being Lynch, eccentric painter of surrealistic dreamscapes that turn into horrific nightmares, who already transformed the 'American Dream' into a nightmare explicitly in many (*Blue Velvet*, *Mulholland drive*, *Inland Empire*) and implicitly in most (*Eraserhead*, *Straight Story*, *Lost Highway*) of his movies, did so – together with Mark Frost – also with *Twin Peaks* in general, and *The Return* in particular, especially with episode 8.

Combining a variety of texts and meta-texts, ranging from ancient Sumerian mythology to post-WWII technology and contemporary capitalist ideology, Lynch and Frost tackled many of the most pertinent issues of our own human condition, ranging from sex, violence, and sexual violence in everyday life, to ecological issues and nuclear anxieties, and, perhaps not so obviously, also the problem of arts and artistic creativity in an 'age of mechanical reproduction' (cf. Benjamin 1969). As we have already seen and tried to demonstrate, 'Joudy' is herself the allegorical representation of how the creative and destructive processes that take place in human action are interlinked, thus linking the destructive military and consumerism industry, to which one can and indeed must add also the 'culture industry' (cf. Adorno 1991), in present times re-labelled as 'creative industries'. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that Lynch himself saw even in industry 'a symbol of creation that takes place through the same organic processes as in nature' (Rodley 2005), and was of course very well aware that destruction is the flip side of creation, as attested by his distinctive aesthetical taste. One cannot but recall the good old post-industrial landscape as depicted in *Eraserhead*, or his avant-garde musical performance entitled *Industrial Symphony*, or, perhaps most significantly, the opening scene of *Twin Peaks*, where images of wood-industry are overlaid upon natural imagery, both condensing in the eerie neon-green font used for the legendary title. However, the problem we are facing nowadays is that the processes of destructions outweigh the creative processes by far, for we are insisting on an unsustainable economic system that is burning out the natural resources of our world – quite literary 'burning out'. Even in the face of complete annihilation – be it all at once with an

atomic war on a global scale, or long-term via a pending ecological disaster –, we are simply unable to stop this global capitalist machinery that is eating the planet and us in it alive if we do not rely on what Arendt, for instance, denotes as ‘political action’, which implies free political subjects acting not as individual heroic figures, but rather together as a political community (cf. Arendt 1958). However, the problem of how to act as a political community in a global capitalistic context defined by geopolitical powers is an issue that far exceeds the purpose of this article.

Here, the scope was much more modest; in order to show how certain societal anxieties are related to the ‘return of the repressed’, the atomic age is not only artistically represented, but also critically reflected and aesthetically subverted in *The Return*.

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