



Family Romance, Family Violence, and the Fantastic in *Twin Peaks**

Diane Stevenson

The most admirable thing about the fantastic is that the fantastic does not exist; everything is real.

Andre Breton¹

Who was it that killed Laura Palmer? Was it her father Leland, or was it the fiendish BOB? *Twin Peaks* hesitates between a natural and a supernatural explanation of its central crime. Is Leland Palmer a split personality, and BOB a symbol of the deranged side of Leland? Or is BOB literally a demon who has taken over Leland's soul? The strange case of the killing of Laura Palmer can be accounted for either by paternal psychopathology or by demonic possession. The universe of *Twin Peaks* alternates between the psychological and the phantasmal, the physical and the metaphysical, and the boundaries between these realms are blurred. Such confusion of realms, such transgression of limits, such hesitation between a natural and a supernatural frame of reference, characterize for Tzvetan Todorov the genre of the fantastic.

So long as we are uncertain whether we are witness to the natural or the supernatural we are in the fantastic. This is a genre, as Todorov analyzes it, the fantastic, that adjoins unstably with two related genres: the uncanny, in which weird happenings do receive a natural accounting, and the marvelous, in which the supernatural is to be accepted as part of the order of things. Often a story will unfold for a considerable stretch in the uncertainty of the fantastic and then opt for the uncanny or the marvelous. But *Twin Peaks* is a story that remains fantastic to the very end. Even at the show's conclusion, when the image reflected back to Agent Cooper in his bathroom mirror is the image of BOB, we get no clarification but a deepening of the confusion between the

*This essay originally appeared as Family Romance, Family Violence: David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* in *Boulevard* 8.1 (1993): 12-28 and appears here with permission.

material and the spectral. This is a bold close. Not only does it leave the mystery entrenched rather than resolved but it leaves the mystery now dwelling in the detective himself, the traditional trusty figure who is supposed to resolve it.²

Todorov judges that the fantastic as a genre of serious literature lasted for about a hundred years, beginning with Cazotte at the end of the eighteenth century and ending with Maupassant at the end of the nineteenth. Why, asks Todorov, this particular life span for the genre? His answer is that the fantastic flourished during the period of ascendancy of positivist thought, when hard empirical facts were all that was admissible as knowledge: "The literature of the fantastic," he maintains, "is nothing but the bad conscience of this positivist era." The demise of the fantastic as a serious literary genre is connected for Todorov with the rise of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis takes over the themes and concerns of the fantastic, stripping them of their mysteries and mystifications, debunking them, as Kenneth Burke would say. The necrophilia disguised as vampirism in Gautier, for example, becomes in Bataille a matter of straightforward examination. Todorov argues that

psychoanalysis has replaced (and thereby has made useless) the literature of the fantastic. There is no need today to resort to the devil in order to speak of an excessive sexual desire, and none to resort to vampires in order to designate the attraction exerted by corpses: psychoanalysis, and the literature which is directly or indirectly inspired by it, deal with these matters in undisguised terms. The themes of fantastic literature have become, literally, the very themes of psychological investigations of the last fifty years. (*The Fantastic* 160-61)

The censorship of taboo subjects like necrophilia, like homosexuality or incest, has indeed been loosened since the advent of psychoanalysis. These hitherto forbidden subjects now admit of a more direct portrayal. What, then, do we make of the fact that in *Twin Peaks* the fantastic, with the same troubled hesitation that Todorov considers distinctive of the genre, reemerges in full force? How do we interpret this return to an older mode of representation? For Todorov the change in literary expression in the late nineteenth century was linked to extra-literary changes in cultural expression. The revival in *Twin Peaks* of elements of the fantastic takes place, a century later, within another context of cultural change. At present we are in the middle of a radical re-examination of psychoanalysis. Freud's view of women, his account of homosexuality, the role he assigns to incest in his theory have all come under critical inspection; the Oedipal story itself is being reconsidered, even rejected, in favor of a story that gives more credit, more weight, to the actual seduction and sexual abuse of children. A new vocabulary reflecting new understandings is emerging and throwing into question the authority long granted classical

psychoanalysis. In therapy, in law, in social work, in the news, stories of family violence are being told every day and are still in the process of being formulated. It is not surprising, then, that fictional narrative forms should find themselves under similar pressure and that *Twin Peaks*, at a time when cultural categories of representation are in flux and transition, should retrieve elements of the fantastic formerly ceded to psychoanalysis.

What we have come to call "the social construction of reality" is no simple matter, and in the case of family violence it becomes especially complicated. In a recent article, "The Making and Molding of Child Abuse," Ian Hacking writes:

What is happening? Is it that we are constantly being made more aware of an objective evil in our midst that we have been so good at ignoring? There are plenty of careful social constructionists—thinkers who are almost totally committed to the idea that categories and classifications are social constructions—who nevertheless rebel at looking at child abuse from the overall approach of "making up people." These otherwise thoroughgoing nominalists protest that child abuse is a real abuse that has finally been exposed after generations of cover-up. I don't disagree. I think that the child abuse movement may have effected the most valuable, albeit most discouraging, heightening of awareness that has taken place in my lifetime. . . . It is nevertheless the case that no one had any glimmering, in 1960, of what was going to count as child abuse in 1990. (257)

The question of child abuse can be considered on two levels. One is the level of the nominal versus the real: is "child abuse" merely a term we have been using more frequently—an arbitrary social construction in the nominalist view—or does it refer to a reality that has been going on all along and of which we have become increasingly aware? The other is the level of the imaginary versus the real: is child abuse merely something the child has imagined or made up, or is it something that really happened? Wherever we may stand on these issues—and recent voices like Hacking's have helped refashion the debate in literary circles on broader philosophical grounds—they are part of our endeavor to come to grips with the matter of physical and sexual abuse in the home. Surely the reason Lynch approaches this subject "fantastically" has to do with the fact that, even though child abuse and family violence have been much more openly discussed lately than in the past, we still lack a settled language that would enable us to talk about these things "realistically."

Family violence, the secret violence of American life, has from the beginning of Lynch's career been a key ingredient in his work. It is a subject that haunts *Eraserhead*, hovers at the edges of *The Elephant Man*, and makes a stark appearance in *Blue Velvet*; but only in *Wild at Heart* and (especially)

Twin Peaks does that hidden violence come unmistakably to the fore and assume central importance. Between the earliest and the most recent of these works a decade-and-a-half of intensifying attention to the violence and the abuse in our domestic midst has passed: the battered wife, the child of alcoholic parents, the victim of incest all became subjects of growing public concern, and all became subjects for Lynch. The year *Eraserhead* was released, 1977, is the year Hacking identifies as a turning point in the meaning of child abuse, when the term as commonly used begins to connote sexual rather than physical abuse as it did before. A parallel development took place in Lynch's work. His emphasis shifted from physical to sexual abuse, from male to female victims, and his treatment of the abusive home has grown blunter and sharper. In the 1986 *Blue Velvet* the abuser, though a kind of father figure, is from the criminal class; in the 1990 *Wild at Heart* the abuser is closer to home and is called an uncle; in the 1990-91 *Twin Peaks* the abuser is finally the father.

Eraserhead, an idiosyncratic underground horror movie that first brought attention to Lynch when it became a favorite with midnight audiences, already addresses the subject of child abuse. "The horror at the heart of *Eraserhead*," write J. Hoberman and Jonathan Rosenbaum in *Midnight Movies*, "is the horror of procreation" (242). The protagonist is a suffering father who does away with his troublesome child and in the process destroys himself. This ending, which Hoberman and Rosenbaum call a "fili-suicide," brings to mind stories of the doppelganger in which killing one's double means killing oneself. The abused child as the double of the man uncannily suggests that within the adult survivor of abuse the child lives on and must be retrieved for recovery. The horror of procreation in *Eraserhead*, moreover, evokes the fear that incestuous intercourse will produce monsters.

But *Eraserhead* deals with child abuse in an obscure and phantasmagoric way. Todorov is careful to exclude from the fantastic both poetry and allegory, because the worlds they propose are manifestly fictional and not to be equated with the real world. The fantastic requires a world that we can take as real and that we anxiously try to explain as we would the real world. *Eraserhead* immerses us in a mental world that unfolds according to its own weird logic and may be seen as poetic or allegorical: it is in any case an inner, imaginary world that allows no natural explanation and thus has none of the distinctive tension of the fantastic. That *Twin Peaks* portrays a more recognizably real world may be attributed to its being a more commercial project than *Eraserhead*; but it is also due to the fact that in the thirteen years that separate the two projects family violence has become much more a part of our recognizable reality.³

Critics of such different stripes as Robin Wood and Fredric Jameson have noted that Lynch's portrayal of the American small town in *Blue Velvet* has about it a certain postmodern quality of parody or pastiche (Wood 43-49; Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 287-96). Some of this quality also colors the small town in *Twin Peaks*. In *Twin Peaks* as in *Blue Velvet*, an equation is made

between the real and the normal with what Wayne Booth calls unstable irony. The abnormal is presented as nightmarish, most notably in the figures of Frank in *Blue Velvet* and of BOB in *Twin Peaks*. The normal is defined in the terms of the white, middle-class, heterosexual, patriarchal, nuclear family. The edge of parody, with its declaration of artifice, implies the artificiality of this constructed normality, of the equation between the normal and the real, of the division between the normal and the abnormal. The abnormal in Lynch—even in the case of *The Elephant Man*, who in Lynch's telling of the story may be taken as a figure of the abused child—seems always in some way to arise from family violence. This violence has two expressions in *Twin Peaks*, physical and metaphysical, the one embodied in BOB the serial killer, the other in BOB the demon. In *Eraserhead* the abnormal dominates in a world removed from the real. In *Blue Velvet* the normal wins out, but parody, most salient in the smiling, happy ending, undermines the triumph and raises the specter of the abnormal in the very domain being announced as free from it. In *Twin Peaks* the abnormal wins out but it stakes its claim at the very heart of the normal, in the body and soul of Agent Cooper, so that in the end normal and abnormal are seen to merge indissolubly.

Frank and BOB, figures of the violent underside of American life, are also figures of the underclass. As Lynch conceives of normality in terms of the middle class, so he tends to imagine the threat to that normality as coming from the lower class. This may bespeak a right-wing politics, but it also typifies the American imagination. The threatening phantasmagoric world of *Eraserhead* is associated with the shabby working class, a variation of the Gothic in which the old dark house becomes a small dingy apartment and the monster an ailing screeching baby. A similar air of the lower-class Gothic pervades *The Elephant Man*, in which the figure of the abuser is a hard-drinking specimen of the unwashed, undeserving poor, while the rescue from abuse comes from a nice well-bred doctor and his well-off circle. In *Wild at Heart* the abuser at home, the so-called uncle, recedes into the background, and the abuser figure who vividly comes forward is the fascinatingly repulsive Bobby Peru from the criminal underclass. Abuse as Lynch represents it, as most of us tend to imagine it, wears the garb of unclean low life, from which the clean middle-class home supposedly provides a haven; but in fact abuse lives in the middle-class home as much as anywhere else. This contradiction informs the resonant irony of *Blue Velvet*. In *Wild at Heart*, however, the excursion into low life, the displacement of tension onto the figure of Bobby Peru—whose sinister, impotent accosting of Lula makes for the film's most disturbing moment—is basically an evasion of the issue of family violence.⁴ It is only in *Twin Peaks* that Lynch allows himself explicitly to bring out the incestuous violence right in the midst of the middle-class home. Public discourse about family violence has by now made it clear that it is a problem that afflicts every strata of our society.⁵

The eruption of incestuous violence in the middle-class home in *Twin Peaks* does not come about straightforwardly, however, but through the doubling of Leland and BOB. BOB is the double of Leland, the Mr. Hyde to Leland's Dr. Jekyll, and he is double in another sense, doubly a figure of the underworld: a low-life drifter from the criminal underworld and a demon from the spectral underworld. That BOB the criminal drifter resides in Leland tells us that Leland harbors the criminal inside him, that the incestuous and the murderous are to be understood as part of his psychological make up; that BOB the demon possesses Leland tells us that anyone could be so possessed, that the incestuous and the murderous do not arise from inside but are constructed from outside. The ambiguity of the fantastic is not an obfuscation here but an expression of a genuine uncertainty about our understanding of family violence. Through its play with the genre of the fantastic and with the kindred genre of the mystery, *Twin Peaks* gives play to different ways of assessing family violence: in terms of the normal and the abnormal (which, as Hacking reminds us, we inherit from medical discourse), in terms of innocence and guilt (the discourse of the detective and the law), in terms of good and evil (the discourse of religion and the horror story), of outrage and redemption, and in terms of the inner and the outer, the psychological and the social, the intrinsic and the constructed.

"It is happening again," announces The Giant in the spotlight on the stage of a popular local tavern, about as public a place as can be found in the town of Twin Peaks. And yet this message is utterly private, addressed to Agent Cooper and received by him only. What is happening again is the murder of Laura Palmer. It is at this point in the show that we—it takes Agent Cooper a bit longer yet—discover the identity, the double identity, of the murderer. From the tavern, where music has been playing on the stage that The Giant takes over for Agent Cooper's eyes and ears alone, we switch to the living room of the Palmer home, where a record has been played out and continues to turn in the record player: from the public place to the private, except that The Giant has transmuted the public space into something private and that the living room is the public space of a private home. The ambiguity between public and private, outer and inner, reverberates.

The murder of Laura Palmer happens again because her father now kills her look-alike cousin Maddy, her double—as her father is doubled by the doubled BOB. It is not in the bedroom—where Laura's mother, in a vision, earlier saw BOB crouching behind the bed—but in the living room, the public within the private, that Leland now kills Maddy.⁶ Leland looks in the mirror and sees BOB: BOB seems to come from inside him, BOB is how he sees himself. But BOB seems also to come from outside him: all through the assault on Maddy BOB flashes into the living room and takes over Leland's place as The Giant took over the tavern stage, seemingly illuminated by the same spotlight—the public light that shines on the private. What for Freud was inner—

the inner space of the bedroom where the primal scene takes place, the inner space of the psyche where the scenes of the family romance go on being played—Lynch brings out into a space of fraught transaction between inner and outer. Family romance breaks the bounds of the inner when it becomes family violence. In Freud's discussion of the doppelganger, as in Otto Rank's before him, the focus is strictly inner: the doppelganger is created out of the psyche, as the paranoid projection of a narcissistic crisis for Rank, as the uncanny manifestation, for Freud, of a threatened return of the repressed. BOB cannot adequately be considered a doppelganger on either of these models, for BOB does not belong to Leland alone: he is seen by others and he takes possession of others. About to assault Maddy, Leland sees himself in the mirror as BOB; then we see BOB superimposed on Leland; and a moment later Maddy too sees BOB in Leland's place, in a point-of-view shot that belongs unmistakably to her. BOB is referred not only to Leland's subjectivity but also to Maddy's and to our own view in the audience. As the flashes of BOB alternate with Leland through the assault on Maddy we could be experiencing Leland's perception, or Maddy's, or the symbolic or literal materialization of a demon, or some composite perspective. The split between Leland and BOB, if it is a subjective formation, could be Maddy's view of Leland as much as Leland's view of himself: victims of abuse may not only split themselves into different personalities as a defense mechanism but they may split the abuser in like manner—commonly into a good and a bad figure. The doppelganger of the tales of Hoffmann and Poe and of the theories of Rank and Freud is made over by Lynch to express a new understanding.⁷

"There is no agreement on the 'causes' of child abuse," writes Hacking, "but there is an astonishing level of agreement that something else can be caused by it: multiple personality disorder." He continues:.

Multiple personalities, which had a fascinating role in French and to some extent American psychological theory between 1875 and 1926, effectively disappeared until the 1970s when they reappeared with a vengeance. A vigorous school of psychotherapy now finds that multiple personality disorder is not at all rare and that an individual can have up to a hundred distinct "alters." The multiple personality movement has ridden on the back of child abuse, thanks to this piece of new knowledge: multiple personality disorder is caused by child abuse, especially child sexual abuse. (261-62)

The seventies also saw the rise, in academic circles, of post-structuralist theories of subjectivity that posit the self, the individual subject, as fragmented rather than coherent. But the psychotherapy of multiple personality is in a way closer to the countercultural psychology of the sixties. A thinker like R. D. Laing regards the schizophrenic as the embattled victim, the self divided be-

cause in conflict with society; the Lacanian psychology that became fashionable in the seventies regards the fragmented self not as a response to society but as a condition prior to society, prior to the symbolic order that coerces the self into coherence. A Lacanian like Julia Kristeva dwells on absence, loss, the unnameable at the center of trauma; a psychotherapist treating a multiple personality disorder identifies and names the cause of that disorder in the patient's history of abuse.

Leland and BOB and Laura and Maddy are by no means the only doublings in *Twin Peaks*. Leland and Laura can be seen as also doubled, for example, in Leland's associate Ben Horne and Ben's daughter Audrey, whose relationship threatens to become incestuous in a whorehouse Ben owns where Audrey briefly works in disguise and where, it transpires, Ben had an affair with Laura, who also worked there. The plot of *Twin Peaks*, with its many characters and multiple subplots, is too convoluted to recount here. It is full of parallels and correspondences that, as we keep cutting back and forth among the various goings on, lead us to consider every character and every situation as an echo, a doubling, a recurrence, of another character or situation; and all somehow as an echo, a doubling, a recurrence, of the father-daughter incest at the center. In every young woman in town we seem to see the shadow of Laura: in Shelley, for another example, who like Laura is abused at home (beaten by her husband Leo) and who becomes involved with Laura's steady boyfriend Bobby. Lynch is certainly not original in connecting sexuality and violence. What is distinctive about *Twin Peaks* is the way it connects all sexuality and violence to the abuse of a daughter by a father in a middle-class home. It's as if every person in town were but a part of a multiple personality generated by that abuse—as if not just an individual but a society had been formed in that incestuous cradle.

"It is happening again": when we switch back to the tavern after Maddy is killed, and watch the faces of the living, and wonder what secrets they harbor, The Giant's words take on a wider implication. As it happened to Laura it happened again to Maddy, but who else has it happened to, who else will it happen to? For it happens again all the time: BOB the demon could possess anyone and anyone could be his victim.

The nineteenth-century fantastic asked the question: Is the imaginary real? Lynch's version of the fantastic tacitly asks a different question: is the real real? The nineteenth century put in question the reality of all the things that live in our minds, our dreams and fantasies, our desires and obsessions, our haunting and our lurking memories. Freud assured us that they are all real, real in the mind. Today the incest victim will be granted that the trouble is surely real in the mind, as the unconscious or the Oedipus complex is real, but will face disbelief in the truth of the abuse as something that really happened. Hence Lynch's question: Can what really happened be retrieved as real? It is crucially important for the incest victim that the truth of the abuse be recog-

nized rather than merely imputed to the mind. Lynch's version of the primal scene in *Blue Velvet*—the scene in which Jeffrey, hiding in a closet like the Oedipal child spying on his parents, watches Frank and Dorothy making love—revises Freud in significant respects. The child in Freud's primal scene witnesses normal sexuality but perceives it as violent, as the father doing violence to the mother. In Lynch the scene is literally violent: the violence Frank does to Dorothy is not in Jeffrey's mind but is really happening. Moreover, before Frank arrives and after he leaves, Dorothy, having discovered Jeffrey in the closet and pointed a large knife at him, approaches him sexually in a way that suggests abuse: this mother figure is sexually aggressive toward the boy and invites his sexual aggression. Whereas in Freud's scenario the boy desires the mother and imagines the father's violence, in Lynch's version the mother desires the boy and the violence is real in the mother as well the father. And, like the key scene of incestuous violence in *Twin Peaks*, this primal scene in *Blue Velvet* takes place not in the bedroom but in the living room: in the room where the inner meets the outer. At the film's end Jeffrey tricks Frank, who is out to kill him and whom he manages to kill, by pretending to be in the bedroom when in fact he is where he was before, in the living room. Where the inner meets the outer—a space of confusion of realms, of transgression of limits, a space of the fantastic—is where family violence takes place, and where it must be dealt with.

Postscript

This essay was written about the television series before the making of *Fire Walk with Me*. The movie bears out my perception that family violence and sexual abuse have been key to the work of David Lynch and that as his career progresses his treatment of these matters has grown more and more explicit. Lynch has been singular in the seriousness of his endeavor to come to grips artistically with this difficult subject. Brian De Palma addresses the subject in his recent *Raising Cain*, but he treats it facetiously, in a play with generic conventions that acknowledges their inadequacy to the subject without attempting to refashion them as Lynch has done. In *Twin Peaks*, both the television series and the movie, the experimentation with generic forms that I have characterized in terms of Todorov's conception of the fantastic serves Lynch's undertaking to forge means of expression suitable to the secret violence that centrally concerns him.

The theme of incest and family violence emerges still more clearly in the *Twin Peaks* movie than in the television series because the movie gives us Laura Palmer's point of view. Whereas the television series began with Laura Palmer's corpse and then proceeded with an investigation into what happened led by the detective, Agent Cooper, the movie takes us into what happened

through the consciousness of the young woman who ends up dead. The television series told the story of the town; the movie focuses on one young woman who comes to the fearful recognition that the incubus who has been invading her bed is no dream or phantom but her own father. Having Laura Palmer as the central consciousness makes the story more psychological and more amenable to natural explanation. Constance Rourke describes Poe's doppelganger story, "William Wilson," as a prelude to the psychological novel. Like Poe's Gothic tales, the *Twin Peaks* movie borders on psychological revelation. It similarly puts us inside the unreliable point of view of a disturbed consciousness. Interestingly, however, the unreliable subjectivity affords for Lynch more of a natural explanation than does the detective's objectivity in the television series. For Poe, when he moved from the Gothic to the detective story, it was of course the other way around.

For a long time in our culture a natural explanation of such matters has been more or less synonymous with a Freudian interpretation. It is because he rejects the Freudian model furnishing our prevalent view of the natural that Lynch turns to the fraught uncertainty between the natural and the supernatural that is distinctive of the fantastic. Eric Bentley has proposed that behind all drama stands the Oedipal drama: all stories are stories of incest. All the stories Lynch has been telling are indeed stories of incest, but not the incest Bentley had in mind, not the incest in the head that Freud theorized. Rather than the son's desire for the mother, *Twin Peaks* tells the story of the father's rape of the daughter: family violence rather than family romance. This is the story of Laura Palmer on which the movie concentrates and the story that, in the broader focus and multiple interconnections of the television series, everyone in the town of Twin Peaks seems to be living.

Lynch's refashioning of generic forms toward the expression of a new insight is nowhere more notable than in his handling of the double. In "William Wilson," as typically in Gothic stories of the double, reconciliation between the two sides of a split personality comes in death. When Laura Palmer's father dies in the series *Twin Peaks*, there is a kind of reconciliation between his two sides as the loving and protective father appears for the first time to confront the incestuous and abusive father. But there is another doubling that is left unresolved: the doubling, which is not seen as contained within a psyche but as something that transcends the individual, between Laura's father and the demonic BOB. In the *Twin Peaks* movie a good spirit comes to the rescue of a friend of Laura's who is in the same danger as she; but Laura lacks the resources—the self-esteem, one might say, the sense of the good in herself—to summon her guardian angel until after her death. This again is a doubling that transcends the individual and that makes use of the fantastic—the ambiguity between the natural and the supernatural—to express that transcendence. In his classic study, *The Double*, Otto Rank gave an Oedipal interpretation positing a conflict between the ego and the superego. Lynch reconceives the

double along lines other than the Oedipal and in terms pertaining to the conflict between self-esteem and shame. Rank's thinking took no account of the female double. Female doubles abound in literature and film but to this day they have not been properly theorized. Lynch's rethinking of the double gives as much prominence to the female as to the male and sees both genders of doubling as part of the same non-Oedipal complex.

Eraserhead was a midnight cult movie, but *Blue Velvet* was the movie that made Lynch famous. The television series began in the glow of that fame and was glowingly received at first but gradually lost favor both with the public and with the critics. Especially in its second season, it suffered from unevenness and from the obscurity of each episode to a viewer not knowledgeable about the series as a whole. But there were some very strong episodes right up until the end. The increasing disapproval that the series encountered had something to do, one suspects, with its increasing boldness in dealing with the theme of the violence that dwells at home. In *Blue Velvet* this theme was more veiled and with some distortion it could still be subsumed under a conventional Freudian reading. It's true that in recent years child abuse and family violence have been gaining a public hearing; but what is acceptable in daytime talk shows is not necessarily acceptable as *prime time* drama and not necessarily reputable to critics and commentators. Lynch's fall from their grace may be due, as they maintain, to a decline in the quality of his work; but it may also be due to the growing explicitness of his treatment of a theme that makes them uncomfortable.

For whatever reason, the movie of *Twin Peaks* was a critical and a financial disaster in this country. The reviews were unanimously negative; the public stayed away. I thought it a good and a gripping film that can stand beside *Blue Velvet*. Vincent Canby of the *New York Times*, who declared it virtually the worst movie ever made, found it so incoherent that he failed to grasp the evident fact that it deals with incest and family violence. It wouldn't be the first time that a charge of incoherence or boredom masks a refusal to deal with what is being expressed. One is reminded of the British censors who banned Germaine Dulac and Antonin Artaud's *La Coquille et le Clergyman*: this film, they said, "is so cryptic as to be almost meaningless. If there is a meaning, it is doubtless objectionable" (quoted in Rotha 87).

Notes

1. Quoted by Luis Buñuel in a lecture on "Poetry and the Cinema" delivered at the University of Mexico in 1953 and included in Adonis Kyrrou, *Luis Buñuel*.

2. In Europe the pilot of *Twin Peaks* with an added ending was released as a complete movie. In the European ending the murderer of Laura Palmer is BOB, who is not a demon but just a low-life drifter who, as Agent Cooper and Sheriff Truman are about to capture him, is killed by the One Armed Man. Leland is innocent and there

Family Romance, Family Violence, and the Fantastic

is no fantastic duality between him and BOB. Coop's dream at the end of Episode 3 of the American version enters into the European ending as a kind of retrospective epilogue and, though it retains its eeriness, it loses its oracular quality and thus its quality of the fantastic.

3. It may also be due to Lynch's collaborator Mark Frost. In this article I tend to treat *Twin Peaks* as Lynch's creation, but Frost collaborated with Lynch in conceiving and shaping the show, and he wrote or co-wrote a good third of the episodes and directed one of them. There were also, of course, several other writers and directors who worked on the show (see Appendix A).

4. In the novel by Barry Gifford on which the film was based, Lula recounts her rape by the so-called uncle without any of the traumatic emphasis that Lynch gives the episode. The book is a picaresque road narrative in which Lula and Sailor tell each other stories of their past; in Lynch's version the past keeps suddenly intruding on the present in a way that suggests the flashbacks experienced by victims of trauma. The recurrent flashback imagery of fire and flames belongs solely to Lynch. The film, unlike the book, raises issues it fails to see through. The scene in which Bobby Peru accosts Lula is not in the book and seems to be Lynch's attempt to dramatize these issues.

5. Family violence and abuse are found among rich and poor, black and white, neat and scruffy, in the families of New England Brahmins no less than in the families of Southern tenant farmers. On the cover of its issue of June 10, 1991, *People* magazine carried pictures of a former debutante and former Miss America from the fifties. Announcing the story inside, a caption reads: "It began at age 5. Now Marilyn Van Derbur tells of her shocking 13-year ordeal of sexual abuse by her millionaire father." More recently we have learned that the poet Anne Sexton sexually abused her daughter and seems herself to have been abused by one or more members of her family. In the popular media, and in the professional and scholarly media as well, the subject of abuse has come to roost even in the nicest middle- and upper middle-class families, in houses that an earlier, more complacent generation would have considered safe and secure from the scourge of family violence.

6. In the European version Laura's mother has not a vision of BOB but a sudden memory of seeing him in the bedroom the morning of her daughter's death. In both versions there is a recurrent shot, strikingly composed in depth, looking up the stairs from the Palmer living room to the upper floor where the bedrooms are. Associated with the mother, this shot evokes a Gothic feeling of the interior of a house, with its deep upper recesses, as the interior of a psyche. But in this house the affairs of moment take place downstairs, where that psyche encounters the exterior world.

7. In the extended sequence in the supernatural realm of the red curtains at the conclusion of *Twin Peaks*, the show's insistent concern with doubling is expressly put forward by having the dwarf utter the word "doppelganger."