

**Jørgen Riber Christensen****Andreas Halskov:  
*TV Peaks: Twin Peaks and Modern Television Drama.*  
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Following Andreas Halskov's previous book in Danish *Paradoksets kunst – om David Lynch og hans film* (2014) [The art of the paradox – on David Lynch and his films] this book focuses on Lynch's major TV production, *Twin Peaks*; and the book will become topical as this series is reborn with a new season on its way. Much has been written about Lynch; but what particularly makes Halskov's book special is the impressive empirical work behind some of the chapters comprising the author's own interviews with a large number of the participants in the production of the series. He has conducted more than one hundred interviews and sent questionnaires to 700 fans. A rewarding example is the inclusion of descriptions of Lynch's casting sessions. On the one hand, they are anecdotal and illustrated with interesting old private Polaroids filled with atmosphere, which have been placed at the author's disposal for the making of the book. On the other hand, they rigorously and academically document Lynch's improvising method, as a TV auteur, with regard to the genesis of his characters and the construction of scenes in the actual episodes. This is part 2 of the book, and it adds fine new knowledge to the existing work on Lynch and *Twin Peaks*. In contrast, part 1 of the book: "Peaks and Waves in Television History" is not quite as rewarding. The reader is presented with a 32-page high-speed survey not of "Television History", but of American television history, and some of the pages of this suffer from "title-dropping", making the reader feel overwhelmed by the number of titles of series. This chapter, however, may be quite useful in an undergraduate course in media history, partly because it goes all the way up to contemporary streaming series. Obviously, the purpose

of this chapter of the *Twin Peaks* book is to contextualise the series in American television history. The conclusion is that Lynch's series is a forerunner of quality television, and, to some extent, the series has been an influential "game changer" of TV media. This chapter ends with a rather unclear conclusion that *Twin Peaks* "coincidentally" (p. 50) anticipated some of the elements that would come to define high-end television drama. The reader cannot help but wonder what lies behind this degree of coincidence in *Twin Peaks'* place in television history. Will the book provide an answer to this question in the next 250 pages? Having perused the book, the reader is left merely with an implied answer; however, it is convincingly argued by Halskov that the overall high quality of the series is what has made it into a milestone that changed TV history.

"Part 2: Twin Peaks and the Concept of Quality Television" begins with a presentation of Lynch's narrative style and aesthetics. The point made is that Lynch's migration from film to television with *Twin Peaks* made him become an auteur with easily recognizable traits. The French nouvelle vague is, perhaps somewhat unnecessarily, presented, yet the discussion about TV auteurism, with its emphasis on the high status of the script writer, is much more useful. The mythology and the fandom around Lynch are, also quite wittily, described by the co-producer Mark Frost, who in an interview compares himself to The Beatles' Paul McCartney after John Lennon was shot (p. 95). The directors of the other episodes are not neglected in this part of the book. Lynch's style, including ASL (Lynch is slow), light (Lynch is dark), cinematographic one-camera-technique, low point-of-views, and wide angle shots, is demonstrated in a couple of excellent neo-formalist analyses. The cooperation with Angelo Badalamenti and the sound of the series receive a thorough treatment, and Lynch's use of music is resumed in details later in the chapter "Competing Moods".

TV history about the transition from broadcast to cable is continued in the book's analysis of Lynch's thematics of violence and incest in the family; *Twin Peaks* was pioneeringly transgressive in its thematics and auditory and visual presentations of it in relation to the so-called Standards and Practices for broadcast TV. Halskov positions the series between film noir, Hitchcock's films and television series (*Alfred Hitchcock Presents*) and streaming series such as *True Detective*. FBI agent Dale Cooper is convincingly characterized in this media historical context. There is nothing new in calling *Twin Peaks* a genre hybrid. Halskov resumes this subject, and after a brief presentation of the general concept of genre, he provides an informative and well-argued demonstration of the many soap characteristics of the series with soap tropes, e.g. fake departures, and the series' combination of genre traits from detective stories, melodrama, comedy, horror, science fiction, and cop show (police procedural). The duality of small-town America, with Lynch's trade mark of sleaze and dirt behind the nice and immaculate front garden and façade as in *Blue Velvet*, is placed in the double genre concept of film noir and small-town films.

Based on the narrative and serial complexity of *Twin Peaks*, its large number of characters and the demands made on the audience about intertextual teleliteracy, Halskov uses

Mittell's concept complex television, and again he mentions that the series was groundbreaking in media history.

According to Halskov, the indefinable locations such as The Black Lodge, characters such as Killer Bob, the Giant, the Old Bell Hop, and the One-Armed Man place *Twin Peaks* in a zone that is not only the Freudian Unheimliche, but closer to Todorov's fantastic, as the hesitation and insecurity this produces, exist not only with the audience but also with the characters of the series.

The chapter "Twin Freaks and Transmedia: New Media, New Modes of Viewing" describes and systematizes the fandom of the series and its transmedial manifestations; this is based on the empirical work of the book, involving questionnaires and scientific literature, and *Twin Peaks* is discussed as a cult phenomenon. This discussion on its reception is continued in the chapter on *Twin Peaks* in Scandinavia. This not only refers to Scandinavian fans and a coffee-drinking and pie-eating subculture that arose around the series, but to how it has influenced TV producers, in a way that Halskov almost perceives as a necessary step on the way to, or at least an inspiration for, contemporary Scandinavian hit and high-end series such as *The Bridge* and *The Killing*. In this part of the book, the introduction about American TV history is supplemented by a concluding part on Scandinavian TV history with a clear focus on TV drama. Parallels are drawn between von Trier's *The Kingdom*, Nordic noir and *Twin Peaks*. The last chapter of the book, its epilogue, is an overwhelming list of the intertextual and paratextual echoes that followed *Twin Peaks*; and finally Halskov yet again concludes that the series was a game-changing milestone in TV history.

*TV Peaks Twin Peaks and Modern Television Drama* is a book with excellent layout and illustrations, which reflect the author's academic thoroughness.

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