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RIOT MATERIAL

The New Avant-Garde: David Lynch's Glorious Late-Career Vision



The new *Twin Peaks* (2017) finds [David Lynch](#) working in fresh and sublimely haunting domains, ones that pleasurably flirt or unnervingly skirt the spectral drop-offs of some charged and sinister abyss. This seems no visional or evolutionary change of tack, nor does it appear, at least in these early episodes, Lynch is newly surveying unmapped terrains. Rather, there is something more elevated in this late-career landscape, and something far more intimate as well. One senses, when viewing this new series, particularly his excursions into Lynchian Other-Realms, that his articulation of these doppelgänger worlds feel more experiential than conceptual, more occupied than conceptualized.

Less dream (or dreamy) than earlier movements into surrealist expression, the first quarter of Season 1, Episode 3, for instance, shows Lynch, in an extraordinary way, to be as clear-eyed and sure-footed as he's ever been in these ghostly yet thoroughly gripping realms. It's as if, rather than imagining, some doppelgänger of himself now inhabits these realms, sending in return faint coordinates and word; or Lynch, figuratively, has set foot in them himself, excursed through them in a near-corporeal way, and now with intimate familiarity he is able to speak cinematically to their airy constructions, and he does this with such nuance that they feel like alternate extents of consciousness and being: expansive, elusive, wholly mercurial states of mind-borne self.

And Lynch is in no hurry to shuttle us through. Our movement along is appropriately in alt-world half-time, though our experience of that time in no way feels slowed or in retrograde. Rather, it is an embodied engagement through time and

Hassett, Christopher. "The New Avant-Garde: David Lynch's Glorious Late-Career Vision", Riot Material. 24 August 2017. Web.

space, the time of which feels surreally present tense, beyond any future or past, while space, yes, can feel constrictively closed, often menacing, it is also at once open, expressive, energized, altogether alive. Such is the instance that we're open for transmission — of imagination, of art elemental. But these same moments are also entirely fraught, so much so that our gaze is held fixed, our eyes on high alert, our mind pointedly conscious to all that is lit and what lies in wait, our chilled heart like a stone beneath the sole of some phantom foot.



This wonderful scene, as an example of Lynch's hushed command, is excerpted from the opening of Season 1, Episode 3: When viewing such scenes, one is precipitously emptied of self, a clean extraction, and delivered fully upright into the heart of Lynchian wonder, and there we hang, as if by puppeteer, as anxious and isolated as Cooper with, we learn, this creature. But we are not left adrift, at least not for long, for Lynch has us plugged squarely in to the logic of the larger narrative, to its counter-narrative as well, with orchestrated, arithmetic exactness.

In the video below, courtesy of Misha Melikov, we see how the two narratives sync up. Parts 1 and 2 are from the last half of Episode 2, and Part 3 is from the opening of Episode 3. The entire opening sequence of Episode 3, by the way, a full 17 minutes, is a masterstroke of palette and a small masterpiece of avant-garde cinema.

— Christopher Hassett