

# Aesthetics of the Intro to “Twin Peaks” and the Intro to –The Game of Thrones”

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**Abstract**—The author examines the elements of aesthetics of the two most iconic quality series of nowadays. The key images and atmosphere of Twin Peaks and The Game of Thrones intros are analyzed in detail in this article. The concept of the world as the struggle of the forest (individual origin) and the Mechanism (dark power) is embodied in the intro to Twin Peaks. The concept of the Mechanism, which absorbed all independent, autonomous beings, embodies in The Game of Thrones intro. A dangerous Mechanism of Fate brings together the aesthetics of two highly original series.

**Keywords**—mass media; TV series; cinema; Twin Peaks; Game of Thrones; globalization; Log Lady; David Lynch; George R. R. Martin; map of Westeros

## I. INTRODUCTION

Widely known and even cult series "Twin Peaks" and "The Game of Thrones" can be classified as series for intellectual leisure (as well as "Sherlock", "Breaking Bad", "Mozart in the Jungle", "Black Mirror", "OST" and others). In such series, the tone can be set by a plot or a media design, a diverse creative group, and finally, the very element of creativity in a heated exchange with its time. It is the products of popular culture actively circulating in everyday life that participate in processes "causing structural shifts within a particular sociocultural or scientific sphere," as Razlogov describes the trend. [1]. Cult serials today influence the public atmosphere and to some extent initiate the transformation of fashion, tastes, customs, even ideals and values.

Internationally, humanitarian sciences actively study both –Twin Peaks” and –The Game of Thrones” in terms of their aesthetic identity, relation to philosophy [2], [3], history [4], as well as their interpretation of gender issues [5]. In general, modern scholars assume that the product of mass art as a representative of certain positions, views, and ideological concepts actively participates in the dialogue of a person with society. Currently, the appeal to "Twin Peaks" and "The Game of Thrones" is just as important as the recent interest of interdisciplinary researchers to "The Matrix" [6], [7] and Joanne Rowling's novels about Harry Potter and their adaptations [8], [9].

In this article, the series "Twin Peaks" and "The Game of Thrones" are presented as key works of mass art aimed at the future of the media, the future that is likely to blur the lines between cinematography, television, and the Internet. Both of the series fit into the trend of transmedia creative strategies development. The artistic language of such works can translate meanings of any complexity on one condition only — the external ease of perception, the possibility to serve as a means of entertainment for the general public.

This article studies the visual images of the intro to "Twin Peaks" and –The Games of Thrones" in order to read the messages with which these outstanding products of mass screen art begin to communicate with the audience. The purpose of the article is to analyze the aesthetic features of the intro to the series in relation to the artistic whole of each of the two ones and to comprehend the presence or absence of internal correlation of these two significant series produced in different, but close historical periods.

## II. TWIN PEAKS INTRO — THE IMAGES OF FOREST, SAWMILL AND SCARLET ROOM

In 1990-1991, the intro to "Twin Peaks" by David Lynch began with a minor music of intense anticipation and foreboding (with Angelo Badalamenti as a composer). A lonely forest bird was sitting on a branch, embodying a helpless creature. The birdie was looking around rather with curiosity than with anxiety, and obviously did not realize what happened to exist right by its side. Likewise, a lot of characters of the series occasionally seemed to find themselves in the same position as the bird. They were not only the most inferior inhabitants of Twin Peaks, but also the FBI agent Cooper, who regularly fell into a mess, as well as the curious and adventurous Audrey Horn, who decided to uncover all the secrets of the town on her own. The bird acted as a symbol of integrity of the individual and belief in the inner inaccessibility of the main characters for global evil. Further there was a scene with a sawmill and pipes, smoking in the silence of the forest.

It was followed by the picture of a working mechanism of the sawmill. The metal parts of the whole unit were moving. The sharp wheel was rotating and turning. The levers and other details were working. A spectator without professional knowledge in the field of wood processing

could not say how exactly the sawmill was functioning. It was the effect that was necessary for the series as a whole – it created the atmosphere of presence of some inexplicable, always not completely understandable, but inevitable processes of "vivisection", dismemberment of wood. Those processes were measured, tardy and indifferent to everything.

A part of a sawn trunk of a thick tree appeared in front of the sawmill building, introducing the emergence of the Log Lady. The living Forest and the non-living, but functioning Mechanism acted as two key archetypal images of "Twin Peaks". The terrible force there is no way to negotiate with (the Mechanism), and the objects of impact (the Forest) — all personified characters and characters of nature fell into these two categories.

The empty highway overlooking the Twin Mountains, the entrance poster and the forest urged us to proceed to a small town. Again, as if inadvertently, they stress the importance of the forest as a symbolic designation of some subject-object category. Further on, the images of the Forest could be correlated with those characters who did not want to be only passive objects, but did try to understand what was happening, to find the explanation and to influence the picture of the world.

Interestingly, in the intro to the series, the image of the sawmill as a working Mechanism was largely abstracted from the plot. According to the alignment of forces in Twin Peaks, the sawmill belongs to the "good" character, Josie, while the company of the "bad" characters, led by Mr. Horn, the local businessman, wants to ruin the sawmill for its heinous purposes. The paradox of the situation was that the Chinese beauty Josie was rather an exotic paradise bird than a moderator of the Mechanism's work. Visually, the sawmill symbolized the essence not of its owner, but of its enemies, related to the irrational forces of evil.

Later in the movie, at the time of death, the character was correlated with the wood. The smooth wooden handle of the bedside table in the hotel room for a few moments was transformed into a grimace of horror and a screaming mouth. In this room, in front of the enamored sheriff, Josie was dying. Wood was the conductor of the death convulsions of the soul.

Another character of the series, Margaret, never went anywhere without her log and was known in the town as The Log Lady. The log sent messages to its owner, and she was ready to pass them on to the police or private investigators of the crime. Margaret always tried to catch some text, broadcast by the mystical forest space of Twin Peaks, which not only seemed to know something, but also thought about the mysterious murder of Laura Palmer.

The image of the working sawmill in the intro to "Twin Peaks" and the image of the bird portended the conflict of two main antagonistic forces: the impersonal principle, unclear in its structure but relentlessly destroying the soul and life, and, on the other hand, individualistic volitional efforts undertaken by the defenseless living being.

Thus, the intro to "Twin Peaks" of the first two seasons set extremely indirect connotations of the motives developed

during the series. The intro complemented the development of the narrative with the help of a visual structure — an allegory about the world order in the Twin Peaks.

In 2017, more than twenty-five years later, the third season of "Twin Peaks" came out, raising mystical motifs to a new level and presenting the audience with a much more complex vision of the world. The third season intro changed dramatically. It absorbed the visual motifs of the series that had become cult over a quarter of a century and had been repeatedly replicated in amateur video blogs on the Internet: the beauty of Twin Peaks' nature, the beauty of mystical spaces, and the beautiful portrait of a beautiful girl.

Spectator can barely see a smiling face of the once murdered Laura Palmer emerging through the damp haze of the air. She is ghostly, forever young and beautiful. A damp mist covers the forest. A foaming waterfall of the town of Twin Peaks with steep rocky coasts enchants and draws a glance into the snow-white bubbling abyss. A moving scarlet curtain and a scarlet room are the entrance to the world of the subconscious, the place of the dark and focus of the mystical rules of the game in Twin Peaks. Crimson white, turning into black and white zigzags on the floor of the room visually hypnotize and promise to take you through the dangerous and enchanting spaces of undisclosed secrets. The spectator watches a kind of popular clip based on David Lynch's series, a small encyclopedia of their favourite visual formulas. The latter should enhance the anticipation of the audience of watching the new series and increase the time of contemplation of the aesthetic elements of the dark forces. The new intro can be perceived separately from the series. It clearly takes into account the viewers' potential "wishes" and the very principle of modern manipulations of the screen arts consumer with the matter of a particular work. The viewer can make personal selection of the scenes he or she likes, isolate them from the rest of the material, and create their own video collages based on the work.

David Lynch starts a dialogue with the audience, responds to the birth of new principles for the perception of the series and the interaction between the viewer and the screen work. He learns the rules of the series in virtual reality. Lynch produces a kind of double upgrade: he internetizes the series, which was initially cinematographed.

What is more, in the third season, many series end with a scene in a roadside bar, regardless of whether the narrative requires it or not. The blue-and-red gloom of these scenes and the indispensable musical number look like a poetic postscript, an autonomous, very close to clip-art small screen form. These scenes, along with the intro, resemble a clip-like "vertical" series.

In the third season, David Lynch offers the audience a completely different "Twin Peaks", more complex and gloomy compared to the first seasons. In terms of the story, however, Lynch remains true to his author's ideas of what type of screen entertainment a reputable director should create.

In other words, the third season intro performed the functions of "rebranding" and modernizing the series —

through the apparent readiness of the author to cooperate with the audience, to take into account the accents already made by viewers over the years in the highlight reel from the old "Twin Peaks". The new intro is both an advertising video of the series, and the director's ironic game of indulging the fans.

Postmodern "game development of chaos" [7], embodied in the third season, seems to be hiding behind the simplicity of the catchy images of the intro. Nevertheless, the new intro to the series demonstrates a change in the key message. There are no autonomous living subjects within the range of the dark forces. All the images are rather irrational impersonal elements, mystical spaces. An autonomous individual and a formidable over-power force no longer coexist on equal terms. The latter acquires different faces, increased aestheticism — and total, merciless power to decide destinies, destroy the integrity of the individual, the rational logic of being, and spiritual principles.

The intro is a pleasure to watch, but at the same time it warns us that the old "Twin Peaks" has turned into postmodernist ashes with no answers and clear endings. Dark energy is now everywhere. The mechanism of evil no longer has visual symbols. The emphasis is on its mystery, and the scarlet room from Agent Cooper's dreams turns into a scarlet maze.

### III. *THE GAME OF THRONES* INTRO — THE IMAGES OF DANGEROUS UNIVERSE

In the 2010s, the significance of "The Game of Thrones" series based on the novels of George Martin appeared to be comparable to that of the old "Twin Peaks". Unlike "Twin Peaks", however, its intro has not undergone a single radical change over the years, but has been modified permanently. By the end of the fourth season, the authors had fourteen various versions of the intro [11], and now there are even more of them.

In the very first series of the first season, intro and credits appear just seven minutes into the episode, after a long teaser. The series aims to highlight the critical dramatic issues first, and only then introduce the visual solutions. So, after the scenes behind the Wall, among the snow and blackening trees, in the vastness of cold and ice, the viewer sees a wide belt, being at the same time a giant sword, and the way crossing the frame space. This is the line of multiple humans — the four emblems of the main parties to conflicts for the redistribution of the world.

But before the viewer has time to look at the images on the line, a red-hot fiery sphere flows out of the depth of the frame. It is encircled with several belts, while the sphere itself freely moves in space. One can surely see emblematic images on a wide line. These images denote the alignment of forces, the alignment of the conflicting sides. The fiery and seemingly melting spherical shape could be perceived as a space body that threatens the characters' world, as well as a symbol of the planet where all the vicissitudes of the series are going to take place, and as a symbol of the main "apple of discord", which is the supreme power.

The paradox here is that in the title of the series, they focus on the symbolic importance of the central authority, the throne, where they can decide the destinies of the world. Likewise, in the series itself, the Iron Throne, made of the swords of different kingdoms, periodically appears as the main symbol of power and the dream of many characters. Yet, the intro does not visualize the image of the throne, but replaces it with the image of a hot ball and an apple planet. Thus, it is not the matter of power over the world, but the matter of the world itself and the symbol of this world. Mankind is trying to juggle, play, manipulate with their universe, creating an endless "reevaluation game" when the brutality of hierarchical structures that establish order meets the new brutality of disobedience, destruction.

While some people are struggling for power, in fact, there is a struggle to determine the fate of the world, not the possessor of power. Meanwhile, the universe, the planet of people is hot, dangerous for those who wish to play with it, and is itself in danger. A spherical body is a bunch of explosive combustible energies that are hard to control. This symbolic image contrasts the main images of danger in the episodes, which are the images of Winter, and the Icy Wall.

The Wall only creates the illusion of the world's division into civilization and wilderness, a protected space and a dangerous area. The development of the plot will show that the civilization is no less savage than the lands of the "wildlings", and protection with the help of the Wall does not work. The intro gives a hint that any symbolization is relative. The point is that a mortal danger is coming; it is close, or rather it is always there in the world of people.

The spherical body disappears to give way for a map and a Mechanism. It is subtly associated with the Mechanism of the sawmill in "Twin Peaks". In the intro to "The Game of Thrones", the Mechanism is of a different kind. Yet, it is also constantly working; it also has wheels and cogs. Or at least it looks like it does from above, looking down at the roofs of towers and other buildings, welded together with the landscape and growing there like plants.

The image of the wheel, especially as not a part of usual household items, is often associated with the wheel of fortune, with the decision of fate. Unlike the "Twin Peaks" intro, this time there are a lot of wheels there. It is all about the variety of potential opportunities to obtain different lifelines. Numerous forces of fate simultaneously participate in the embodiment of the characters' patterns of existence.

The buildings, walls and columns are rising, bridges are stretching, and the landscape is constantly changing. Right before our eyes, there come the letters adding up to the names of especially significant areas and cities: Meereen, Braavos, Iron Islands, Casterly Rock, the land of the "wildlings", and others. A snow-white wall is rising and a dark box of an elevator is crawling along the Wall, lifting loads and people to the very top, where you can see the guards of the Night Watch on duty. The intro is an embryo of a multi-season narrative that needs an introduction to the internal rules of the game, an aesthetic guide to the world of the Seven Kingdoms. The map was originally designed to

make it easier for viewers to navigate the fantasy universe [11].

The viewer explores the world of the "Game of Thrones", flying along with the Cine-Eye over the mechanism landscape. The flight is free and whimsical. Sometimes the Cine-Eye seems to lie on its side, and we see a rotated image. In the world of "The Game of Thrones", it is only dragons, and probably postal crows, as well as the Three-Eyed Raven, who is able to see everything in the past and in the future, are free to fly this way, turn over in flight and fly over a giant space, rising higher, almost trampling down the earth. In the intro, the viewer gets an opportunity to look at the world "from the inside" of the irrational beginning, from the point of view of natural and magical creatures, chthonic and superhuman forces.

The Mechanism presented in the intro has a specific feature — it cannot be separated from the surrounding space, it itself is the environment. And this environment is both the surface of the earth, and its mapping, which is a living space together with its artificial model.

The mechanism is universal; it is an innate component. It combines the soil, the growing buildings with towers, the walls, and the guns. Each transforming detail, as part of an integral whole, does not exist separately from the Mechanism.

Further to the comparison with the "Twin Peaks" intro, that of "The Games of Thrones" does not provide for the role of the Forest. In this world, there cannot be anything autonomous, existing in contrast with the Mechanism. So, the magical tree with burgundy foliage, where the all-seeing Three-Eyed Raven can dwell, grows in the Mechanism landscape just like the towers, in the same rhythm of the inevitable impersonal action.

Again, the line of Humanity, the line with four arms, intersects the Mechanism Landscape. The line denotes the importance of human sets acting in the space of the Fortune Mechanism, or the "multi-fate" Mechanism. It is opposed not by individuals, but by several communities, human associations, each of which claims to be entitled to decide the destinies of all mortals.

The view of the endless Universe Mechanism is inspired by the computer age, especially since computer games are part of this transmedia project offering various versions of the "universe" in different types of media products [12]. Appealing to the virtual environment, every millimeter of which must be worked out and filled with illusory visual matter, certainly affects the style of the visual texture of the intro [13]. However, this is not just an external style; it is a kind of visualized model of the device of the universe. Nothing and no one can maintain their autonomy and self-worth; they all live, change and disappear, being a part of the integral whole.

The comprehensive Mechanism works to the music of Ramin Javadi. It evokes a sense of powerful inevitability of the unfolding history, unpredictable from the present, but predestined events. This music carries no deep emotions, no human breath itself (contrary to that of Angelo Badalamenti

in "Twin Peaks"). It is the voice of an impersonal, severe element of transformation. In the intro, this element dominates completely, and there is no one to engage in dialogue with. Yet, this is only the initial dramatic situation. The multi-season narrative will resist it.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In general, the intro to the "Game of Thrones" well demonstrates the world we live in and the way we interpret it; it is a post-individualistic, chthonic and at the same time almost automated Universum Mechanism. There is nowhere to escape to. If we assume, like Niklas Luhmann, that society observes and interprets itself by means of media products [14], exteriorizing public moods, "The Game of Thrones" demonstrates the modern man's ideas about the world as a formidable irrational element, ruthless toward a single weak individual and nearly depriving them of freedom. It can be assumed that the current power of transnational corporations inspired the motif of power based on gigantic capital [15]. The era of globalization as a whole has led to a sense of insignificance of individual personality in the face of powerful communities, institutions, and structures. Thus, the intro to the series "The Game of Thrones" naturally embodies the moods of anxiety, dependence, but also fascination with the development of life of the entire civilization and the entire universe.

With all the difference in creative strategies, the intros to the both series seem to be intrinsically linked. It seems that the early intros to "The Game of Thrones" were influenced by "Twin Peaks", and the new David Lynch's intro takes into account the picture of the world created in "The Game of Thrones". Moreover, in the "Twin Peaks" intro to the third season, there is a measured movement above, a measured "flight" or floating produced not by a living being, but by some supersubject element. The image of the new "Twin Peaks" intro — the dark energy piercing the space — is correlated with the modern era of breaking down the barriers, the era of transnational business and transmedia projects. The global world is open, open to everything, including the global evil. So, the intros to both of the serials indirectly demonize the world of globalization era.

From the first season of "Twin Peaks" to the third one, released the same summer as the sixth season of "The Games of Thrones", we can see a kind of evolution of the image of the Mechanism, irrational, mostly hostile to the world. While in the early 1990s, it was possible to exist alone alongside the Mechanism, acting by yourself, at your own risk, now, in the latter part of 2010s, separate independent beings are lost species. This is the verdict of the intro.

Yet, the narrative in "The Game of Thrones" still persistently defends the belief in the role of the individual, capable of influencing the life of the world as a whole. The picture of the world in the series is not identical to that in the intro; it rather argues and struggles with it. However, this struggle requires an active use of motifs of a miracle, a magical act, a saving accident. The vision of the world in the narrative of "Twin Peaks" in the third season is much darker

and closer to the mood in the intro to "The Games of Thrones".

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