

# Women and child abuse in *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer*

## A systemic-functional perspective

ULISSES TADEU VAZ DE OLIVEIRA\*  
LEONARDO DA SILVA MARTINS\*\*

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**Abstract:** Themes of social criticism like child and women sexual abuse have constantly raised interest in literary works. Among them, we highlight *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer* (1980) by Jennifer Lynch. This literature breaks the silence around taboo subjects, exploring drugs, prostitution, sexual abuse, and fear. This article uncovers psychological effects of a lost adolescent who, breaking from conservative norms, often self-destructs. Using Systemic-Functional Linguistics, Logogenesis, and Resonance, it identifies ideology coded in ideational meaning associated with Laura's episodes of abuse.

**Keywords:** Systemic-Functional Linguistics; Literature; Sexual Abuse; *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer*.

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- \* ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5479-4905>  
Universidade Federal do Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS), Campus de Três Lagoas, MS 79600-080, Três Lagoas, Brasil  
[ulisses.oliveira@ufms.br](mailto:ulisses.oliveira@ufms.br)
- \*\* ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4046-9385>  
Universidade Federal do Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS), Campus de Três Lagoas, MS 79600-080, Três Lagoas, Brasil  
[leonardodasmartins@outlook.com](mailto:leonardodasmartins@outlook.com)

**Abuso de mulheres e crianças em O Diário Secreto de Laura Palmer: uma perspectiva sistêmico-funcional.** *Temas de crítica social, como o abuso sexual de crianças e mulheres, têm constantemente despertado interesse em obras literárias. Entre elas, destacamos O Diário Secreto de Laura Palmer (1980), de Jennifer Lynch, obra que quebra o silêncio em torno de assuntos tabus, como drogas, prostituição, abuso sexual e medo. Este artigo revela os efeitos psicológicos de uma adolescente perdida que, rompendo com normas conservadoras, se autodestrói. Utilizando a Linguística Sistêmico-Funcional, Logogênese e Ressonância, o texto identifica a ideologia codificada no significado ideacional associados aos episódios de abuso de Laura.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Linguística Sistêmico-Funcional; Literatura; Abuso Sexual; O Diário Secreto de Laura Palmer.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sexual abuse against women and children is a recurring theme in literature, reflecting its deep entrenchment in societal structures and historical realities. Today, rape culture has become a distressing consequence of such violence, representing an issue with profound structural and political dimensions.

For this reason, literature that critically examines forms of sexual abuse and prejudice plays a vital role in raising awareness, fostering empathy, and challenging harmful societal norms and institutions. By contextualizing these issues within their historical and social frameworks, such works not only educate but also influence public opinion and policy. Moreover, they validate survivors' experiences. In doing so, solidarity, healing, and empowerment can be shared in artistic expression. This paper highlights a literature that can promote dialogue and contributes to meaningful social change and "the necessity of turning the empirical lens inward to maximize positive outcomes for women who have been raped, beginning with the research itself" (Hockett & Saucier, 2015, p. 1).

The systemic neglect and marginalization of victims of sexual abuse, particularly regarding their experiences and visibility in societal structures, highlights a broader failure to acknowledge their vulnerabilities. As Fiedler

(1980) argues, authors play a role in bringing these harrowing stories to light, whether through fiction or nonfiction.

Such critics, like poets, playwrights and novelists, are accustomed to thinking of social reality not as given but as determined by perception. They have, moreover, no difficulty in understanding that to answer the question of why “abused children” remained for so long invisible to medical professionals, it is necessary first to deal with the question of why all children, why “the child,” as we have come to understand that term, remained for so long unnoticed, unperceived by *everyone*. (Fiedler, 1980, p. 148)

This study contributes to existing research on abuse against women and children in literature (e.g., Terr, 1990; Horvitz, 2000; Mahlendorf, 2001; Figenschou, 2020) by analyzing Jennifer Lynch’s *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer* (1990), which explores themes of exploitation, prejudice, and the psychological effects of sexual abuse. Set within the *Twin Peaks* universe, the book depicts Laura Palmer’s troubled relationship with her abuser, BOB, through a first-person diary format. The book is an immersive view of her psychological turmoil and self-destructive behavior.

Using Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL) as the analytical framework (Halliday, 1994; Martin & White, 2003), the paper examines how the diary’s lexicogrammatical choices reveal Laura’s emotional depth and the ideological meanings behind her experiences of abuse. SFL’s ideational metafunction is applied alongside principles of Logogenesis (Halliday, 1994) and Resonance (Thompson, 1998) to demonstrate the narrative’s underlying ideological messages, particularly regarding societal perceptions of abuse.

The paper is structured to include an overview of *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer* within the *Twin Peaks* context, focusing on BOB’s character and societal ideologies on abuse. Methodologically, it employs Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to analyze how language represents experiences, particularly through the ideational metafunction. Using Laura’s fragmented, vivid diary entries, the study integrates Logogenesis, Resonance, and ideological validation models to reveal psychological and ideological layers in her narrative. This approach enables a detailed examination of this serious theme and the societal ideologies surrounding sexual abuse.

## 2. TWIN PEAKS AND *THE SECRET DIARY OF LAURA PALMER*: HORROR AND PSYCHOLOGICAL THRILLER

The *Twin Peaks* series, created by Mark Frost and David Lynch, revolutionized open television in 1990 by incorporating cinematic audiovisual elements previously unseen in the medium. Jeremy Egner (2017, p. 1) describes the series as “visually ambitious, narratively dense and alternately dark and absurd”, noting its pioneering role in boundary-pushing storytelling. Despite its initial success in the first season and the critical decline in its second season in 1991, *Twin Peaks* remains a landmark in the horror and psychological thriller genre, recognized for its complexity and deeply developed characters (Egner, 2017). Its status as cult audiovisual material was reaffirmed in 2017 with the release of *Twin Peaks: The Return*, which revisited the town of Twin Peaks and explored new supernatural events, including the role of BOB, the malevolent spirit responsible for Laura Palmer’s murder.

Central to the *Twin Peaks* universe is the mysterious murder of 17-year-old Laura Palmer, whose body is found wrapped in plastic by the river. The series portrays the town’s facade of normalcy unraveling as FBI Special Agent Cooper investigates her death, encountering aspects of enigmas, both human and supernatural.

Jennifer Lynch’s *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer* (1990) extends the *Twin Peaks* narrative by offering Laura Palmer’s perspective, chronicling her life from age twelve until her murder at seventeen. Williams (2017, p. 1) describes the story as providing “graphic accounts of her sexual abuse by Killer BOB and her father”, Leland Palmer. She further asserts that “the book is a harrowing reminder that beneath the kitschy aesthetic, the loopy surrealism, and the damn fine coffee, *Twin Peaks* was a show about child abuse” (Williams, 2017, p. 1).

The integration of cinematic storytelling with an exploration of dark and complex themes defines the *Twin Peaks* universe – through both the series and the novel – offering a multidimensional view of Laura Palmer’s life. This approach sheds light on the psychological and societal factors that contribute to her tragic fate.

## **2.1. Ideological complexes associated with sexual abuse against women and the character BOB**

Ideological complexes, as a theoretical construct, have been defined in various ways by scholars. Althusser (1970) describes complex systems of ideas embedded in institutions and practices that sustain and reproduce power relations within society. Van Dijk (1998) emphasizes their manifestation in discourse, shaping and reinforcing societal norms and perceptions. Fairclough further elaborates on this, “the concept of ideological complex” raises the “question of whether discursive practices may be reinvested ideologically” (1995, p. 28).

Ideological complexes surrounding sexual abuse include cultural beliefs, social attitudes, and institutional practices that normalize abuse and perpetuate myths. These ideological compounds are commonly studied in various fields. Victim-blaming (Taylor, 2020; Flynn et al., 2023) and patriarchal norms (Becker, 1997; Franz, 2002) perpetuate structures that silence victims and normalize abusive behaviors. Rape culture, which objectifies women and trivializes their suffering, further compounds this issue (Minister, 2018; Gay, 2018). Silencing and stigmatization dramatically hinder victims from seeking justice (Caprioli & Crenshaw, 2017; Kennedy & Prock, 2018), while gender stereotypes (Quadrio, 1996; Maynard & Wiederman, 1997) reinforce a long-tradition misconceptions centered on notions of submissiveness and tolerance towards abuse.

Additionally, the normalization of violence within societal frameworks (Young, 1997; Barbara et al., 2017) and the fabrication of consent through misunderstanding (MacMartin, 2002; Buchhandler-Raphael, 2011) numbs the true nature of abusive dynamics. Economic dependency (Kalmuss & Straus, 2012; Ayan & Gökkaya, 2018) and cultural or religious beliefs (Doxey et al., 1997; Ganzevoort, 2002) entrap victims by creating conditions that justify or prolong abuse.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) connect ideological complexes to language by detailing how systemic choices in discourse encode and sustain dominant ideologies. From the ones mentioned in Figure 1 many are present in Jennifer Lynch's novel, an evil aspect of our societies. According to Jordan (2023), patriarchy sustains such ideologies by systematically reinforcing gendered ideas and inequalities, in the ways these are sustained by human

participation in this system. “The system doesn’t simply ‘run us’ like hapless puppets. It may be larger than us, it may not be us, but it doesn’t exist except through us” (Johnson, 1997, p. 84).

The immersion in her diary takes us readers into the intimacy of the victim’s thoughts and emotions, between the ages of twelve and seventeen, and trying to make sense of everything while being affected in ways better described by Mannapova and colleagues:

The child’s sense of guilt becomes very acute after the violence is revealed, as he/she starts to reconsider one’s relationship with the abuser. When the fear begins to diminish, the sense of guilt becomes dominant. The guilt is often suppressed because of the taboo imposed on sexuality. A girl may believe that she has seduced a criminal, and this thought is exacerbated if she has sexual feelings. She may believe that she has ruined the mother’s relationship with a father or stepfather. A child takes responsibility for the breakup of the family, accusing herself of poor protection. The guilt is revealed in different ways. (Mannapova et al., 2020, p. 146)

Children may develop negative emotions that manifest in self-destructive behaviors, including aggression, reckless actions at home or school, and delinquency. These emotions are frequently rooted in feelings of guilt and shame, which may also present as withdrawal and silence. Addressing these behaviors requires rebuilding trust in the child’s relationships through consistent and compassionate support (Mannapova et al., 2020, p. 146). It’s important to note, however, that such behaviors are responses to trauma and should not be interpreted as inherent qualities of the child or as implicit critiques of caregivers. Instead, these behaviors demonstrate the profound impact of abuse and the necessity of restoring trust and agency to aid in healing.

In *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer*, BOB is portrayed as a malevolent entity who embodies the evil and darkness within the town of Twin Peaks. In the fiction, he is a supernatural figure who sexually abuses and torments Laura Palmer, leading to her psychological and emotional downfall. From the sexual abuse standpoint, Jennifer Lynch uses BOB’s presence in Laura’s life to symbolize the insidious nature of the abuses. Therefore, BOB represents several layers of meaning, summarized in Figure 1, next.

Figure 1. Symbolism of BOB



Source: Authors

Figure 1 represents BOB as a supernatural, malevolent force that haunts and torments Laura, embodying fear, violence, and pure evil. As Laura's abuser, BOB exerts psychological and sexual torment, symbolizing her inner struggles and descent into self-destructive behaviors.

Within the broader *Twin Peaks* mythology, his dual identity, possessing Laura's father Leland Palmer, intertwines supernatural horror with personal and familial tragedy. BOB's presence in the diary highlights the psychological horror a woman victim of abuse endures, acting as a narrative catalyst and symbolic representation of the darker forces within society.

### 3. THE SYSTEMIC-FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS AND THE REPRESENTATION OF THE EXPERIENCE

Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL) views language as a system for meaning-making, driven by lexicogrammatical choices within social and cultural contexts (Halliday, 1994). It operates through three metafunctions: ideational (constructing human experiences), interpersonal (mediating social interactions), and textual (ensuring coherence) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

This study focuses on the ideational metafunction to analyze Laura Palmer's diary, highlighting how her experiences encode subtle ideological complexities. Ideology, as a suprasegmental dimension (Matthiessen, 2015), intersects metafunctions and is evident in the patterns of experience represented in the ideational domain.

Through transitivity, language organizes reality into participants, processes (actions, events, and states), and circumstances. Processes are categorized into material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential types (Figure 2). Analyzing these elements in Laura's diary uncovers her trauma, confusion, and self-destructive tendencies. Linguistic choices, both expressed and unchosen, reveal ideological meanings, offering a direct path into the complexities of her psychological state and the implicit representation of her trauma.

**Figure 2.** Process types, their meanings and characteristic participants

<b>PROCESS TYPE</b>	<b>Category Meaning</b>	<b>Participants, Directly Involved</b>	<b>Participants, Obliquely Involved</b>
<b>material:</b>	‘doing’	Actor, Goal	Recipient, Client;
action	‘doing’		Scope; Initiator;
event	‘happening’		Attribute
<b>behavioural</b>	‘behaving’	Behaver	Behaviour
<b>mental:</b>	‘sensing’	Senser, Phenomenon	
perception	‘seeing’		
cognition	‘thinking’		
desideration	‘wanting’		
emotion	‘feeling’		
<b>verbal</b>	‘saying’	Sayer, Target	Receiver; Verbiage
<b>relational:</b>	‘being’		
attribution	‘attributing’	Carrier, Attribute	Attributor, Beneficiary
identification	‘identifying’	Identified, Identifier; Token, Value	Assigner
<b>existential</b>	‘existing’	Existent	

Source: Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013, p. 260

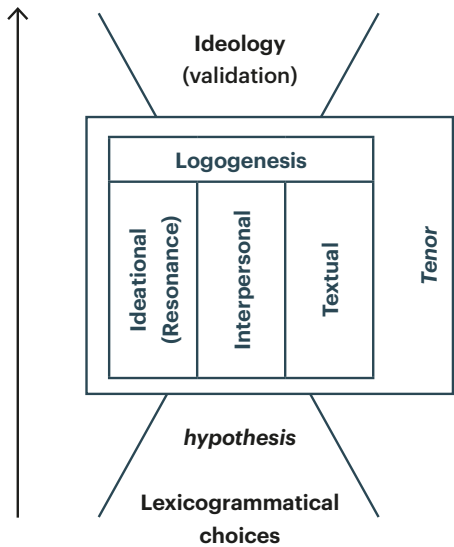
#### 4. LOGOGENESIS AND RESONANCE IN MODELS OF IDEOLOGY ANALYSIS AND VALIDATION

Within Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL), Logogenesis (Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013) and Resonance (Thompson, 1998) are pivotal to understanding cumulative meaning construction in texts. Logogenesis focuses on the sequential build-up of meaning, where the macro-meaning emerges progressively through micro-meanings at the clause level. In *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer*, the rhetorical structure of diary entries supports this process, gradually revealing ideological and psychological dimensions along the stages of her trauma.

Resonance emphasizes the reinforcement of textual elements to create tone and thematic coherence. Thompson (1998) defines tone as the “the total cumulative effect that certain choices in transitivity seem to reinforce each other” (1998, p. 30). Throughout the diary, Laura’s writing reflects her confusion, fear, and attempts to make sense of her experiences. It is only through the accumulation of these fragmented accounts that the readers can piece together the full scope of the trauma and abuse she suffers. Together, Logogenesis and Resonance depict Lynch’s technique of immersing readers into Laura’s psyche, enabling them to understand her experiences as the narrative unfolds.

This study adopts De Oliveira’s (2017) bottom-up validation model (Figure 3) to analyze ideological constructions. This model systematically identifies lexicogrammatical patterns that align with contextual variables. According to Banks (2009), ideology must primarily align with tenor – reflecting social relationships and attitudes – as the primary site for ideological positioning, considering that attitudes are often shaped by underlying worldviews.

**Figure 3.** Bottom-up ideological validation model



Source: De Oliveira, 2017, p. 270

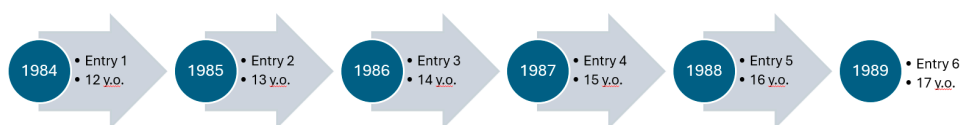
The bottom-up validation approach is particularly suited to examining the cumulative nature of Laura Palmer's diary entries. Her fragmented, emotionally charged writing style reveals her gradual understanding of her own trauma while exposing the broader societal structures that silence victims of abuse. This method demonstrates how Lynch's narrative critiques ideologies surrounding sexual violence.

## 5. CORPUS AND METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

To analyze the relationship between the protagonist, Laura Palmer, and her abuser, BOB, this research applied a qualiquantitative approach and the diary was divided into six parts corresponding chronologically to Laura's six birthdays leading up to her death, or the closest dates to her birthday (one preceding and one following). This was necessary because the diary entries are not consistently daily and there are gaps between them.

Using Laura's birthday as a reference seemed appropriate due to the way the text itself addresses these dates. Even when there wasn't an entry on her birthday, the next one after the date each year recalled the birthday, creating a retrospective perspective of the character's life. Thus, the corpus selection followed the organization depicted in Figure 4.

**Figure 4.** Corpus selection



Source: Authors

The selection criteria for the excerpts aimed to: (a) maintain a chronological order of one year, enabling the verification of how the logogenetic construction of meaning developed over time; (b) assess the protagonist's psychological degradation and the evolution of the abuse as represented by BOB over the years.

The analysis followed two stages: (1) the chronological analysis (in the diary sequence) of the processes in the work, according to the ideational metafunction (Halliday, 1994), to identify the phases and the psychological construction of the representation of sexual abuse; and (2) the systematization of the patterns of abuse occurrence through Logogenesis and Resonance, within a bottom-up validation ideological construction framework (De Oliveira, 2017).

## 6. IDEOLOGICAL COMPLEXES INVOLVED IN THE REPRESENTATION OF SEXUAL ABUSE: THE AGGRESSOR

The analysis first focused on the ideational metafunction in the representation of experience to map the psychological construction of the representation of the sexual abuse, as embodied in the relationship between Laura Palmer (the lyrical I) and BOB (possessing Laura's father and abuser).

It is important to notice Jennifer Lynch's ability to represent a common feeling in victims of abuse in *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer*. The symbolic possession of Laura's father by BOB symbolizes the deep confusion and emotional turmoil experienced by female children subjected to abuse by trusted figures. This duality is vividly portrayed in the pages of her diary, capturing her conflicting feelings of love and fear towards her father. Her psychological struggle to reconcile her father's loving persona with his abusive actions under BOB's influence mirrors broader societal themes such as victim-blaming, where Laura internalizes guilt for the abuse (Taylor, 2020), and patriarchal norms, which maintain her silence (Franz, 2002). "In this social order, it is extremely difficult to protect children from sexual abuse because most sexual abuse is a product of patriarchal privilege" (Becker, 1997, p. 1459).

Lanning (1992) characterizes behavior and emotional patterns of child molesters. In some cases, someone who insists on hugging, touching, kissing, tickling, or holding the child even when they do not want it. Most cases of sexual abuse involve a perpetrator known to the victim, who could be a family member or an acquaintance of the family. "A child molester typically attempts to justify his behavior [...]. If he is the father of the victim, he might

claim the child is better off learning about sex from him” (Lanning, 1992, p. 37). In the analyzed book, although it’s a piece of fantastical fiction, the reader/viewer is able to relate to defense mechanisms a child might apply to dissociate the figure of the “good”/“bad” father (e.g. “I know Daddy loves me, but sometimes it feels like he’s someone else entirely”, July 22, 1984, p. 24). Her father’s dual role reflects the fabrication of consent (MacMartin, 2002; Buchhandler-Raphael, 2011).

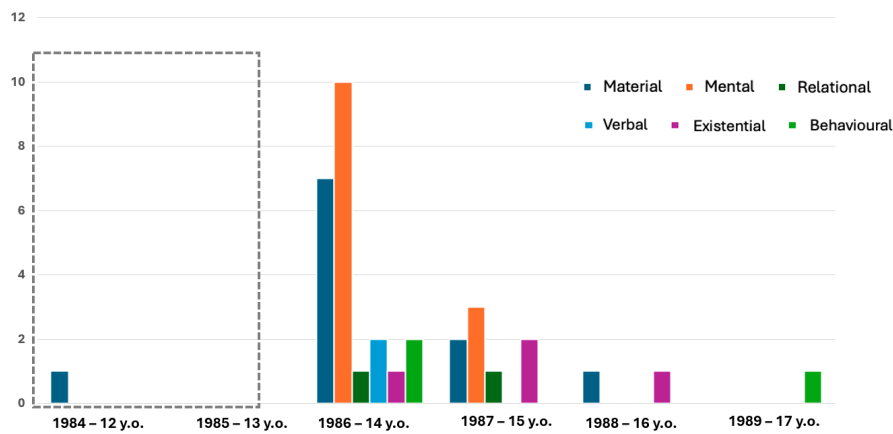
Contrary to common belief, aggressors are not generally violent men, alcoholics, or sexual deviants. The lyric I demonstrates affection for her abuser. Aggressive abusers exist but do not predominate; most sexual abusers of children and adolescents are heterosexual men who have relationships with other adults – these are known as situational sexual aggressors (Leclerc, Beauregard & Proulx, 2008). As Young (1997) and Barbara et al. (2017) ponder, abusive behavior tends to escalate progressively in certain environments which reinforces the normalization of violence. Through these layers, Lynch captures the devastating impact of societal constructs; some of them are inferred by readers immersed in the social design depicted in the book, such as economic dependency (Kalmuss & Straus, 2012; Ayan & Gökkaya, 2018) and gender stereotypes (Quadrio, 1996; Maynard & Wiederman, 1997). Laura’s fractured self-identity, trust, and perception of love illustrate, as we elaborate in the following pages, how these systemic factors compound the trauma of abuse victims.

The chronological analysis (following the diary sequence) of the processes in the work showed a high incidence of the lyric I and BOB as key participants<sup>[1]</sup> in the processes of accounts 3 and 4, respectively, on Laura’s 14th and 15th birthdays, when the abuses intensified (Chart 1).

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1. In a text, these participants help in mapping out the roles and relationships within the clauses. In the analyzed book, the episodes of abuse had Laura and BOB in the positions of: Actor, Goal, Sensor, Phenomenon, Behavior, Sayer, Receiver, Carrier, Attribute, Identified, Identifier, and Existent.

**Chart 1.** Incidence of processes with the Lyric I and BOB as key participants

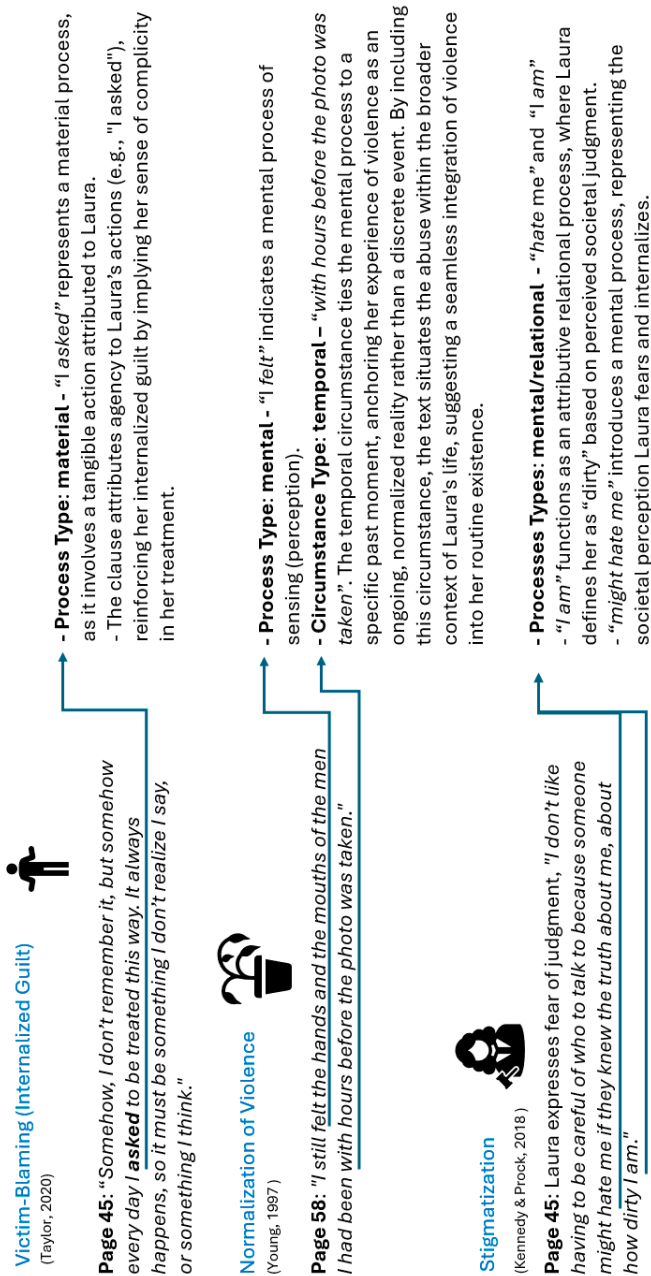


Source: Authors.

The psychological construction of the representation of sexual abuse in the protagonist is slow. First, the author inserts the figure of BOB as a sexual aggressor at age 12 (Entry 1), in a footnote (*post scriptum*) – page 11 (July 22) “P.S.: I hope Bob doesn’t come tonight”.

The sudden and subtle occurrence of the information creates an expectation on the reader and builds the silencing of the victim (Caprioli & Crenshaw, 2017) – dashed gray area in the chart – until the reappearance of BOB, only in Entry 3, at age 14. Research indicates that, when it comes to sexual abuse occurring in the domestic and family space, there is a greater predominance of the man as the aggressor and the woman as the victim (Azevedo & Guerra, 1988; Cohen, 1993; Saffiotti, 1977). The representation of experience in the book also confirms other complexes, highlighted in Section 2.1 and exemplified from excerpts of the book (Figure 5).

**Figure 5.** Victim-blaming, stigmatization, and Normalization of violence



Source: Authors.

Regarding the distressing “silence” stage, the reader and audience experience it alongside Laura. The phase of secrecy or concealment is important for those seeking to protect children and prevent abuse, as it often determines whether the abuse continues undetected. In this phase, the abuser uses his power to keep the child or adolescent silent, using threats or compensations for this purpose (Xavier & Santana, 2001, p. 14). The pedagogical character of the fiction is evident once the unaware reader/viewer is conduced to feel guilty or fool for not noticing what has succeeded.

According to Xavier and Santana, there is a succession of phases that are relatively constant in the occurrence of sexual abuse: “involvement, sexual interaction, secrecy, revelation, and denial” (2001, p. 14). In psychological contexts, “involvement” refers to the manipulative strategies employed by abusers to establish trust and dependency, often categorized as grooming. The authors describe this phase as the “seduction” or “flirting” phase, but it is important to emphasize that these terms reflect the abuser’s predatory behavior and not mutuality or consent. Similarly, “sexual interaction” is used clinically to describe the abusive acts but should not imply consensual engagement. These phases highlight the power imbalance and coercive tactics inherent in abusive dynamics.

The second phase is that of the sexual interaction itself. Oftentimes, there is an evolution of sexual contact, from games that expose the child’s body, through touching, caressing and kissing, to the occurrence of oral, anal or vaginal sex (Xavier & Santana, 2001, p.14). Chart 1 reveals the intensification of abuses in subsequent years (13, 14 and 15 y.o. entries).

In the 1985 birthday entry, Laura erases BOB’s impressions, just as abuse victims usually try to do, until, in subsequent years, such frequency can no longer be omitted and is mainly marked by the occurrence of material processes, processes of “doing”, Figures 6 and 7:

**Figure 6.** Material Processes examples in Entry 3–14 years (1986)

Entry 3–14 years (1986)
MATERIAL PROCESSES
<p><b>BOB as Actor</b></p> <p>(p. 70) (August 3) “when <u>he</u> made me <b>hold</b> him with my hand...”</p> <p>(p. 72) (August 3) “if this is something <u>Bob</u> <b>did</b>, then he will only have a surprising victory if I show no regrets...”</p> <p><b>Lyric I (Laura) as Actor</b></p> <p>(p. 66) (July 25) “[I] <b>went</b> where I usually <b>go</b> with Bob.”</p> <p>(p. 67) (July 25) “[I] <b>showed</b> him that I am not afraid.”</p> <p>(p. 67) (July 25) “I <b>masturbated</b> under his tree.”</p>

Source: Authors.

**Figure 7.** Material Processes examples in Entry 4–15 years (1987)

Entry 4–15 years (1987)
MATERIAL PROCESSES
<p><b>BOB as Actor</b></p> <p>(p. 108) (November 13) “With one of [his] hands <u>he</u> <b>grabbed</b> my wrist, and with the other he <b>covered</b> my mouth. “Shhhh.”</p> <p>(p. 108) (November 13) “With a jerk <u>he</u> <b>pulled</b> me into the room.”</p>

Source: Authors.

In the most common path of sexual abuse, there is also the revelation phase, which occurs when someone or something is discovered (Xavier & Santana, 2001). In this book, however, the protagonist’s premature death prevents such discovery, which is precisely one of the central themes and reason of the pedagogical aspect of the *Twin Peaks* series.

## 7. LOGOGENESIS AND RESONANCE: ANALYZING ABUSE AND THE IDEOLOGICAL VALIDATION IN LAURA PALMER'S DIARY

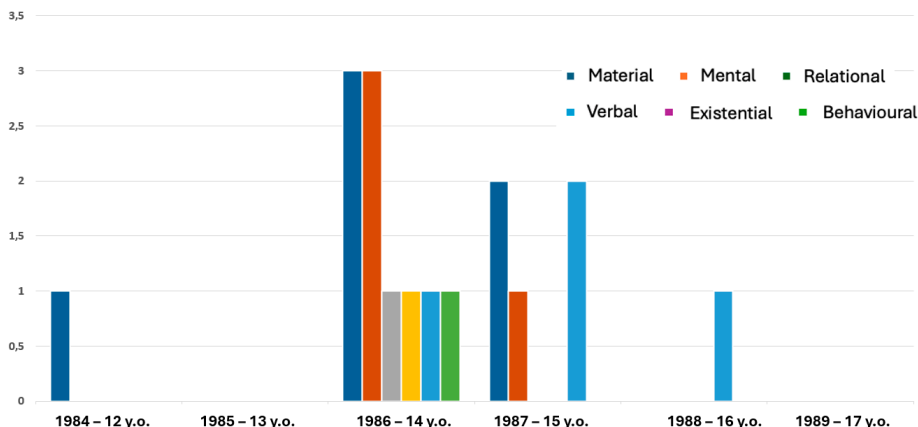
Gabel (1997) conceives the psychological dysfunction created by sexual abuses on three levels: (1) the power exercised by those in positions of authority over individuals rendered vulnerable (the structural power dynamics of abuse); (2) the trust that the dependent has in the protector; and (3) the delinquent use of sexuality, which violates the right every individual has over their own body. It is evident that Laura (the lyric I) seems to develop a form of Stockholm Syndrome<sup>[2]</sup> in relation to BOB, as she demonstrates conflicting feelings towards her aggressor, her father, altogether with the florescence of her sexuality.

To systematize ideological complexes in text, patterns of occurrence can be mapped and demonstrated. In this case, we will exemplify the Stockholm Syndrome hypothesis through a bottom-up validation ideological construction approach (De Oliveira, 2017). The following steps were taken: (1) mapping of lexicalgrammatical choices: transitivity processes (representation of experience); (2) establishing of the hypothesis: Laura develops Stockholm Syndrome in relation to her aggressor, which destroyed her psychologically; and (3) validation of the hypothesis was granted by one or more stages of the Tenor spectrum. In this case, ideological construction through Logogenesis and Resonance realised by the ideational metafunction.

Firstly, it is possible to observe that the lexicalgrammatical choices in the transitivity processes (representation of experience) followed certain phases throughout the work (Chart 2):

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2. Stockholm Syndrome refers to a psychological condition where individuals subjected to prolonged intimidation develop sympathy or affection, even love, toward their aggressors. From a psychoanalytic perspective, such responses may stem from latent sadistic or masochistic traits formed during childhood interactions with caregivers. Under certain abusive circumstances, these traits can lead to attachment or affection towards aggressors, kidnappers, or figures fitting the broader Stockholm Syndrome profile (Lamela, 2013).

**Chart 2.** BOB as the first participant

Source: Authors

The incidence of processes in the analyzed excerpts revealed a significant presence of BOB as the first participant in the clause, i.e., in the role of Actor (Material Process), Senser (Mental Process), Identified or Carrier (Relational Process), Behavior (Behavioral Process), or Sayer (Verbal Process), especially in the entries of the lyric I's 14th and 15th birthdays. What can be seen, from the analysis of the excerpts in which BOB is the first participant in the process, is that Laura, after the abuse, goes through a kind of “loss of innocence”, caused by the violence of the acts, especially when BOB is an Actor in material processes, Figure 8:

**Figure 8.** BOB as the first participant in the processes

#### BOB – 1st Participant

Age 14 – (p. 66) (July 25) – “Bob **says** her name is cunt” – verbal process

Age 15 – (p. 67) (July 25) – “[I] screamed out loud to Bob as he **rubbed** my secret little button.” – material process

Age 15 – (p. 108) (November 13) “With one of [his] hands he **grabbed** my wrist, and with the other he **covered** my mouth. “Shhhh.” – material process

Source: Authors.

The vulnerability of the victim (e.g., p. 72 – August 3rd – “The one I’m sure he’s waiting for.” – relational process, stative verb) translates into a susceptibility to continued abuse, as Laura is emotionally entangled with and psychologically manipulated by her aggressor. Her feelings of fear, guilt, and powerlessness render her an emotional hostage, perpetuating a cycle of abuse and dependency. This entry reflects her awareness of being targeted. After the 15th anniversary entries, mentions of BOB as the first participant become rare, although his psychological presence is marked especially by existential and relational processes, Figure 9.

**Figure 9.** BOB in Existential and Relational processes

**BOB as Existent and Identified**

Age 14 – (p. 67) (July 25) “I think he **was** there, but hidden.”

(p. 67) (July 25) “The wind picked up, but Bob didn’t **show up**.”

(p. 67) (July 25) “He hadn’t **shown up**.”

Age 15 – (p. 108) (November 13) “and then he **appeared** smiling.”

(p. 108) (November 13) “It **was** Bob.”

Age 16 – (p. 161) (August 10) “Would it **be** Bob?”

Source: Authors

BOB leaves an indelible psychological impression on the abused, revealed mainly by the change in behavior of the lyrical I (behavioral processes): report 5 – 16 years – 1988 – (p. 151) (July 22) “I **became** a thief like the visitor Bob.”; and report 6 – 17 years – 1989 – (p. 176) (October 5) “[I] **Smiled** like Bob would”. The construction of a “new” behavior indicates the Stockholm Syndrome process taking shape and materialized in the way Laura perceived the reality.

Jennifer Lynch explores the protagonist’s birthdays as important dates for the (psychological) appearance of the aggressor in Laura’s memory. Thus, we can outline the phases of the ideological hypothesis of the construction of Stockholm Syndrome and, subsequently, the psychological degradation of the protagonist, Figure 10:

**Figure 10.** Victim's phases in the representation of the experience

### Fear, Hate, Physical Violence and Psychological oppression

Age 12 – (p. 11) (July 22) “P.S.: I hope Bob doesn't **come** tonight.” (material)  
 Age 14 - (p. 70) (August 3) “when he **made** me **hold** him with my hand...” (material)  
 14 years old - (p. 70) (August 3) “and **[I]** **had** in my head the image of Bob's hands **doing** it to himself...” (mental)



### Resistance and Escape

Age 14 :  
 (p. 72) (August 3) “[...] something Bob did, then he will only have a surprising victory if I don't **show** any regrets...” (mental)  
 (p. 67) (July 25) “**[I]** **showed** him that **I'm not afraid.**” (material / mental)  
 (p. 66) (July 25) “**[I]** **tried** to look closely at the tree, **trying** to discover something.” (material)  
 (p. 67) (July 25) “all **[I]** **need** is a little time.” (mental)  
 Age 15:  
 (p. 105) (November 13) “**[I]** had to **get rid** of whatever called Bob to my window.” (material)  
 (p. 67) (July 25) “I called him and **made** a fool of him.” (material)  
 (p. 105) (November 13) “Then **[I]** could **tell** Bob to get away from me.” (verbal).



### Affection and sexual desire

Age 14:  
 (p. 66) (July 25) “**[I]** tried to **think** about the things Bob liked.” (mental)  
 (p. 67) (July 25) “**[I]** **thought** of all the ways to get Bob to come. (mental)  
 (p. 67) (July 25) “**I masturbated** under his tree.” (material)  
 (p. 67) (July 25) “**[I]** **screamed out** loud to Bob as he **rubbed** my secret little button. (mental/material)  
 (p. 69) (August 3) “**[I]** could get Bob to **watch** me now...” (mental)  
 Age 15:  
 (p. 96) (November 12) “but because **[I]** now **believe** in Bob a lot more.” (behavioural)  
 (p. 104) (November 13) “**[I]** **thought** of Bob and closed my eyes.” (mental)



### Inversion and interiorization

Age 16 - (p. 161) (August 10) **Could** it be Bob? [in me] (behavioural)  
 Age 16 - (p. 151) (July 22) I **became** a thief like the visitor Bob. (behavioural)  
 Age 16 - (p. 176) (October 5) [me] **Smiled** like Bob would (behavioural)



Source: Authors.

The validation of the ideological construction hypothesis through Logogenesis is confirmed by the principle of Resonance. The recurring processes create a discursive echo effect in the text, reflecting the gradual transition from fear to affection and sexual desire for the abuser. In this process, BOB becomes a ghost-like figure in the mind of the lyric I. Jennifer Lynch uses existential processes that make the reader uncertain about BOB's actual existence or the psychological or real consummation of the abuse. As Laura, the lyric I, faces abuse, she experiences a detachment from reality, a characteristic escape process known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Prado (2004) describes PTSD as an anxiety disorder that develops in response to exceptionally threatening traumatic events, such as sexual abuse.

The symptoms developed during a traumatic experience affect not only the individual's thoughts but also their memory, state of consciousness, and entire field of action, initiative, and objectivity in life. Many victims create a protective barrier around themselves that prevents them from continuing with normal life. (Silva, 2000, p. 32)

This is particularly evident when the abuser is not recognized as her own father (14 years old – (p. 72) (August 3) “When I find out who he is, I’m going to tell everyone!”). The loss of consciousness led the character into a spiral of self-destruction (ideological complex), which culminated in her death.

Furthermore, the relationship between the character BOB and Laura reflects on her understanding of sex. In three other moments in the narrative, Laura has other abusive sexual relations with other characters, however, during these acts, BOB's image is remembered and transcribed in the diary which demonstrates another effect of the abuse.

In the first sexual encounter, with his boyfriend also named Bob, Laura constantly describes the memory of the image of his abuser to compare the act, (Age 14 – (p. 69) (August 3) “because [I] realized he wasn't the BOB I hated so much”).

The second encounter, though not explicitly detailed, is inferred through the narrative gaps and Laura's fragmented reflections on her experiences. This omission aligns with the fragmented and secretive nature of

abuse often seen in real-life narratives. In the third described situation, Laura further develops her distorted understanding of intimacy and control, demonstrating the progressive impact of her experiences on her perception of sex and relationships (Age 17 – (p. 176) (October 5) “[I] Smiled like BOB would do”). Considering “smile” as a behavioral process, this moment signifies Laura’s absorption and emulation of her aggressor’s behavior. Lynch portrays this stage as the culmination of Laura’s descent, where the lyrical I stabilizes in its acceptance of sex as a mechanism of violence and oppression. Parallel events, such as her involvement in drug use and prostitution added elements to the spiral that defined her life and, ultimately, her death.

## 8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This research explored how Laura Palmer’s concept of sex was shaped by the sexual abuses she endured in the last six years of her life, as depicted in Jennifer Lynch’s work. By analyzing excerpts where BOB sexually abuses the lyric I and is recalled during other sexual encounters, the study highlights the profound impact of the abuse. It reveals how these experiences, constructed through the ideational metafunction, shape the protagonist’s perception of her abuser, family, acquaintances, and herself.

Logogenesis and Resonance were applied to analyze the psychological effects of the abuse over time, as recorded in her diary. The ideology validation model demonstrates how the lyric I’s perception of reality changed in the face of the abusive relationship she was trapped in. This study validates the discursive complexity of Lynch’s work and has a pedagogical nature by showcasing how linguistic clues can be revealed by victims. It also highlights the broader implications of oppressive and sexually abusive relationships in a person’s life, potentially leading to a cycle of destructive behaviors.

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