Last Call

The lights go on in Club Trouble. Time to face the day. Facing our compatriots through the country of the night is another matter. All implore the barkeep: One more round, and then maybe one more. She’s no more anxious for the light than we are.

Down the lights go, back to a level that allows our countrypeople’s eyes to reopen, if not gain their focus. A few more songs, then. Someone approaches the jukebox, one of the last in town that doesn’t have a search bar.

Every book ends or is thrown down in disgust. Some books never end because we don’t bother to finish them. Here’s how this one turns toward the door and waves over its back.

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The Log Lady’s kindred gesture: She defers telling the trouble she has seen, and instead shows us her log. Her trouble song goes Someday my log will tell you what it saw that night. Verse after verse excised from the broadcast and added to the record.

75 She does not come from the mind of David Lynch, not anymore, though she is the only one who truly belongs in Twin Peaks, standing as she does at the edge (that is to say, the center) of town. Which must recall every trouble the town has produced.

76 Or was it Some of these days…?

77 The Log Lady monologues that open each episode with cranky prophetic poetry were not part of the show’s 1990–1991 network run, but are available in retrospect. In the versions we have seen, they look dubbed on VHS from some spectral broadcast directly from the TVs of Twin Peaks, an interruption of Invitation to Love, the soap opera that plays on loop in the fictional town. In fact, the Log Lady intros were created for the 1993 syndicated run of the show on Bravo. They are the footnotes placed before the body. Another integral lapse occurs in 2015–2016, when the band Xiu Xiu recreate and extend Lynch and Angelo Badalamenti’s soundtrack with Plays the Music of Twin Peaks. The set was first commissioned by Australia’s Gallery of Modern Art for “David Lynch: Between Two Worlds,” a celebration of the show’s 25th anniversary. I’ll see you in the trees, Xiu Xiu’s Jamie Stewart moans. He
I’m sorry, I’m nervous, she interrupted the song. Who could blame her? Patti Smith stood in the middle of a balcony over the stage, surrounded by an austere army of musicians. Below her were arrayed dignitaries and other titled people in royal finery. She was singing on behalf of Bob Dylan, who had to wash his hair. She was singing the longest song, with its endless lyrics about the hard rain that was gonna fall 50 years ago. She sang it over flood waters. More than once, the song lost her in the current.

Greil Marcus writes about the moment when a band finds a song during performance, and about the moments when the song happens around them, or fails to happen. At the Nobel Prize award ceremony, December 11, 2016, in troubled times, Smith bore witness to “Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall” — the absence of the song and its singer. Its refusal to wash your troubles, your troubles away.

Waves of anger and fear
Circulate over the bright
And darkened lands of the earth,
Obsessing our private lives;
The unmentionable odour of death

So writes W. H. Auden in “September 1, 1939,” which Lou Reed loops into “Waves of Fear,” from 1982’s The Blue Mask, an al-

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bum that opens with a tribute to the poet (and Reed’s former teacher, departed some 16 years prior, in the impossibly distant ’60s) Delmore Schwartz. *Waves of fear, pulsing with death* gasps Reed, over that unmentionable odour, an abjection that makes the words go round.

*Those to whom evil is done / Do evil in return,* sings Auden. This is a Trouble Song, one of many. Trouble is not evil, but it comes around.

FACES ALONG THE BAR
Cling to their average day:
The lights must never go out,
The music must always play,
All the conventions conspire
To make this fort assume
The furniture of home;
Lest we should see where we are,
Lost in a haunted wood,
Children afraid of the night
Who have never been happy or good.

Auden is cruel as that erstwhile light that must never come on. Truly we do not await its return. We are less afraid of the deep night than we are of the cold day. But yes, we seek a place of rest (until our barkeep sings the final song: *You don’t have to go home, but you can’t stay here*80). And as long as the music plays, trouble is far off where we can see it — where we can join it in the distance from our problems, which are so much worse for their illusory solutions. Trouble will kill you but it won’t pretend to go away for good.

Those other and more famous lines, we leave them to the poem.

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80 To which we reply, *It might not be such a bad idea if I never went home again.*