

2-1-2006

# Altered States of Reality: The Theme of Twinning in David Lynch's Lost Highway

Alan Edward Green Jr.  
*University of South Florida*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd>

 Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), and the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

## Scholar Commons Citation

Green, Alan Edward Jr., "Altered States of Reality: The Theme of Twinning in David Lynch's Lost Highway" (2006). *Graduate Theses and Dissertations*.

<http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/3758>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact [scholarcommons@usf.edu](mailto:scholarcommons@usf.edu).

Altered States of Reality: The Theme of Twinning  
in David Lynch's *Lost Highway*

by

Alan Edward Green, Jr.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
Department of English  
College of Arts and Sciences  
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Phillip Sipiora, Ph.D.  
Member: Elizabeth Metzger, Ph.D.  
Member: Victor Peppard, Ph.D.

Date of Approval:  
February 1, 2006

Keywords: moebius strip, psychogenic fugue, film noir,  
postmodern directors, identity crisis

© Copyright 2006, Alan Edward Green, Jr.

## Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1-The Madison House and Videotapes	3
Chapter 2-Fred's Metamorphosis into Pete Dayton and Other Twins	14
Chapter 3-The Fantasy Unravels	24
Conclusion	33
Endnotes	34
Bibliography	36

Altered States of Reality: The Theme of Twinning  
in David Lynch's *Lost Highway*

Alan Edward Green, Jr.

ABSTRACT

As a postmodern director, David Lynch makes films which are innovative, evocative, and uniquely his own. The theme of twinning, in particular, is recapitulated throughout the director's oeuvre; however, it is with *Lost Highway* that the thematic element he addresses takes center stage. The film's main character Fred Madison (Bill Pullman) is unable to cope with the trauma in his life. After killing his wife and finding himself on death row, he has a parallel identity crisis; he manages a metamorphosis into a younger, virile Pete Dayton (Balthazar Getty). The method which allows this transformation is the psychogenic fugue: a fantasy which creates an alternate reality caused by the subject's refusal to see objective truth(s).

As the plot progresses, there are several more characters who develop alter egos. These other important twinings include Fred's wife Renee/Alice (Patricia Arquette), Mr. Eddy/Dick Laurant (Robert Loggia), and the Mystery Man played by Robert Blake. Of all the doppelgangers, the Mystery Man is vital to the unraveling of the story; he is an abstraction and can exist in several places at one time. He is a symbolic function of the superego which allows Fred to carry out the mission.

Lynch also uses the Moebius Strip as another tool to interweave reality and fantasy into the plot. The story can have a litany of meanings because of the twist in the strip. It allows overlap in the space/time continuum. The use of this concept is invaluable in applying certain types of analysis to the film. Among others, Jacques

Lacan , Sigmund Freud, and Slavoj Zizek are central to defining the film. Lynch shows the audience that fantasy cannot subvert reality. It is only a temporary fix. Fred Madison's twinning is unsuccessful in the end. He is forced to continue riding his own lost highway until another new reality is created.

“We've all got a secret side. I hope you don't think I've been lying to you about other things.”-Nicolas Cage as Sailor in *Wild at Heart*

“Oh, the day we met, I went astray, I started rollin' down that lost highway.”  
-Hank Williams

### **Introduction:**

With the opening line of *Lost Highway*, “Dick Laurant is dead,” David Lynch takes his audience on a whirlwind journey into the darkest depths of the human psyche with 135 minutes of visual stimulation and overload.<sup>1</sup> This film is cyclical because the ending turns back on itself; it is an effect of Lynch's use of disjunctive narrative. Additionally, the film follows the general principles of a Moebius Strip which allows for effective manipulation of narrative. In short, it adds variation to the story ad infinitum because of the twist in the strip. As a postmodernist director, Lynch has thwarted the Hollywood standard of trite, homogenized film making. In turn, he has followed other rogue filmmakers in producing works of great artistic merit. *L.H.* makes the audience realize that reality is, itself, fractured; moreover, Lynch addresses the issues which other mainstream directors are unwilling to explore. In essence, just under the world of the normal domestic space a la suburbia, there is the potential for the dark underbelly of existence to manifest itself. By using Los Angeles, California as a backdrop, this theme is specifically addressed in *L.H.* and continues with *Mulholland Drive*. Stuart Mitchell aptly states the appropriateness of Lynch's setting, “America is a nation founded on the journey West...toward the promised land of the mythic Californian paradise.” Furthermore, Mitchell comments, that the road theme in Lynch's films denote an “identity loss, a sense of foreboding, and unreliable memory”(qtd. in Sargeant and Watson, 243). Lynch is not one to

abandon a conceptual idea. *Inland Empire*, set for release in 2006, continues with the same California landscape.<sup>2</sup>

The storyline of *L.H.* is not easy to decipher. Nevertheless, Lynch does leave his audience with a bit of an idea of the contextual framework. About the movie, he states, *L.H.* is “a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Noir Horror Film. A graphic investigation into *parallel identity crisis*. A world where time is dangerously out of control. A terrifying ride down the lost highway” (Hughes 224, emphasis added). This identity crisis is the heart of the matter for *L.H.*'s main character, Fred Madison; his inability to deal with reality creates parallel lives and distortions of truth. In many respects, this movie is Fred Madison's story with interlocking subplots. The duality of this disturbed character is a direct reflection of his psychological frame of mind. Along with screenwriter and novelist Barry Gifford, Lynch is able to masterfully hone this conceptual ideal with the twinning of several major characters. Although doubling and parallel realities are not a new avenue of approach in the Lynch universe, it is elevated to new heights in *L.H.*

Since the beginning of David Lynch's career as a filmmaker, he has always fought an uphill battle with critics. Sometimes the audience understands the basic assumptions in his works. The wildly popular first season of the television show *Twin Peaks* (1990-91) is a prime example of his ability to reach people. Other times, it has been a miserable outcome. The film prequel to *Twin Peaks*, *Fire Walk With Me* (1992) along with commercial failure of *Dune* (1984) show how Lynch has not always struck box-office gold. His films always spark great debates and *L.H.* is no exception. The infamous film critic Roger Ebert states his contempt for Lynch.<sup>3</sup> He

comments, “There is no sense to be made of it. To try is to miss the point. What you see is all you get”(1). Moreover, his tirade ends by stating that “at the end of the film, our hands close on empty air”(2). Edward Guthmann of the San Francisco Chronicle takes a more middle-of-the road approach. He notes that Lynch's films look like “variations on a single theme.” In praising his work, Guthmann does assert that “Lynch deserve[s] our admiration for creating new cinematic idioms and exploring new ground”(2). Unlike other directors, Lynch wants to make films that are unique. To ensure his vision, he controls every aspect of the film making process. It is similar to a signature stamp which makes a film have specified Lynchian criteria. Along with his own twin, Barry Gifford, Lynch creates a visually stimulating piece of art in *L.H.*

### **Chapter 1: The Madison House and Videotapes**

David Bowie's song “I'm Deranged,” drifts in the air while the opening credits are rolling; this song is included on the *L.H.* soundtrack.<sup>4</sup> Like the movie, the soundtrack splits the title song in half. It is not in two parts, but rather a continuation. Bowie sings prophetically, “Funny, how secrets travel, I start to believe, as if I was a dream.” This lyric is the crux for Fred Madison and his self-created microcosm of reality, because dreams will become central to his universe. When the first half of the song fades, there is not an immediate line of action in the movie. The notion of *real time* is something that Lynch will play with throughout the duration of the film. He uses it effectively to juxtapose the past to the present as it relates to the characters; furthermore, he shows how fragmentation exists when people are trying to remember things from their own perceptions; the past and the present intersect in the mind. It allows for the subsequent twinning aspect to take hold. Reality is subverted and an

altered state is created allowing for two actions to coexist at the same time.

In this first sequence, there is no dialogue for several minutes. The audience only has glimpses of light from the illumination of a cigarette coupled with darkness and ominous ambient/ethereal noise(s) in the background; the cigarette/flame motif is an obsessive thematic device explored throughout Lynch's oeuvre. The whole of *Wild at Heart* (1990) would exemplify his concern with fire(s). Fred Madison (Bill Pullman) sits in the dark smoking. After a few tense moments, there is light in the film when the window is opened. Lynch shows a close up of Fred's face to enhance the deep contemplation of a memory/dream. There is bit of camera trickery on the director's part. Fred's face is shown from two opposing angles; it is a message to the audience on the duality of his personality. Like two sides of a coin, his face represents a split while remaining the same. He has anxiety written all over his face; his body language suggests agitation and perplexity; the smoking of a cigarette acts as a calming agent for the distressed. Fred's intercom buzzes, and he goes to answer it. The ensuing message is that "Dick Laurant is dead." Outside of the frame of the Madison residence, there is the sound of a car speeding off followed by police sirens. The background cacophony of sounds will have implications for the end of the movie. The action takes place out of the range of the viewing eye; it is auditory and not visual. Lynch wants to "suck his audience in," and this is one of the main ways it is accomplished. Along with *L.H.*, this Lynchian motif is prevalent in *Blue Velvet* (1986), *Twin Peaks: Fire, Walk With Me* (1992), and *Mulholland Drive* (2001). Lynch sets up the entire sequence with a dream-like quality that borders somewhere between the conscious and unconscious. In an eerie real life event, Lynch explains

the genesis of the opening dialogue of the film:

And then the opening of the film-'Dick Laurant is dead'...I woke up one morning and the intercom rang, and a man says, 'Dave!' and I said, 'Yeah,' and he says, 'Dick Laurant is dead,' And I said, 'What?' and there was no one there. I can't see the front of the house unless I go all the way to the other end and look out a big window. And there is no one there. I don't know who Dick Laurant is. All I do know is he's dead (Rodley 222-23).

Lynch, in effect, plays this scene as if he were an actor in his own movie; he is living out the reality of being David Lynch and espouses that truth is stranger than fiction. This action is emulated by Fred when he goes to the window, and no one is there. It reinforces the notion that actors like Bill Pullman and Kyle MacLachlan are de facto stand-ins for Lynch; he can indirectly infuse his movies with autobiographical implications while maintaining a safe distance.

Soon after this experience, the first package arrives outside of Fred's house. The padded envelope is picked up on the steps by Fred's wife Renee, played by Patricia Arquette. It is obvious that she is anxious about the videotape and possibly concerned about the content. Fred walks up on her. The subliminal implication is that she may have hidden the videotape if he did not see the envelope. When they view this tape together in their living room, there is a shot of their house on it. Renee mistakingly thinks this mysterious package is left by a realtor. Fred replies with an ambiguous "maybe" to cast doubt on the videotapes origin. Lynch is big on ambiguity, and this is one of many open-ended suggestive interpretations; no

explanation is given as to why a realtor would leave a package on their doorstep. The audience, as detectives, have to rely on their own inferences. There are other concerns for Renee and this package. The videotape could have some sort of damaging material. She seems relieved by the content. There is distance between Renee and Fred when they sit on opposite ends of the coach. This is important because a couple in a healthy relationship would want to sit close to each other. What is effective is the juxtaposition between the Madisons' physical movements, position, and their domicile as a personified Gothic enclosure. In his study of *L.H.*, Todd McGowan notes, "Everything seems to be taking place on the surface without any depth...where we expect to find depth, we find only a void (silence or darkness)"(3). Lynch displays particular *clues* for the audience to formulate a picture. Jungian researcher Delia Doherty makes an interesting note concerning the *house* as a metaphorical trope. She posits, "The house is your psyche...right away you see he's [Fred] being invaded by something from the outside"(qtd in Cochran,1). Because they are being videotaped, it seems to denote an external presence/force at work. The nature of controlling one's environment is tenuous, at best. Somehow, the tape (which is external to the house) invades their domestic space.

Lynch continues with the dream/memory recollection. Fred, who is an avant garde saxophonist, remembers a gig that he played at the Luna Lounge. There is no music playing in the background. The audience can see him playing, but there is no sound wafting in the air. In the back of the room, Renee leaves the club with another man; however, it is hard to discern if this is a real event or Fred's *recollection*. As she walks away, it is extremely important in noticing the manner in which Fred plays his

instrument. The exit sign (a clue for the audience) is displayed prominently in this shot. Fred seems to be in conversation with his instrument. As a sexual object, the exasperating playing shows his expressiveness and sensuality; he wants to communicate through music to his partner the pain and frustration of their inability to articulate emotion. On the other hand, he calls home to check on his wife. This particular episode seems to take place in real time. Of course, there is no answer. His wife is supposed to be home reading; it reinforces his belief that there is extramarital activity, or that paranoia is starting to take over.

This transition is followed with a scene of Fred and Renee making love. Lynch sets the mood of the room again by playing ominous music in the background; this music is “Song to the Siren” by This Mortal Coil.<sup>5</sup> Coincidentally, the song plays two more times in the movie. The song is vitally important to the issue of Fred's twinning; the lovemaking between these two (with the accompanying music) is inverted with Pete and Alice in the desert towards the end of the film. He takes what should be a normal part of human activity and turns it into something unreal; thus, it prescribes a lack of emotion. In the background, the audience sees a flash of light. It has the effect of someone taking a picture and trying to encapsulate a moment in time. The scene is further enhanced by the fact that Renee's face is hidden by shadows and darkness. Because her body is so obscured by her husband, it is similar to erasing her essence; furthermore, he has no control over a supposedly emotionally fulfilling activity. This is in direct opposition to the aforementioned saxophone playing where he wields power and control. Renee whispers in a barely audible voice, “It's okay.” As well, her fingernails are painted pitch black, and her hands are spread wide apart;

it is, as if, she has claws instead of fingers. In addition, the motif of hands as claws/talons is again reinforced when the audience is introduced to Alice later in the film with black finger nail polish. Renee lightly taps Fred on the shoulder in a lackadaisical gesture.

On the issue of communication between the married couple, Lynch comments: “It's about a couple who feel that somewhere, just on the border of consciousness-or on the other side of that border-are bad, bad problems. But they can't bring them into the real world and deal with them”(Rodley, 225). Jacques Lacan's theoretical stance further illuminates their problems. In short, there are obstacles inhibiting the sexual relationship because of the human immersion into language.<sup>6</sup> As Lacan proclaims, “No relationship gets constituted between the sexes in the case of speaking beings”(66). The couple are unable to express their desires which leads to fantasy. The fantasy also causes another emotional void. Moreover, this scene has a two-fold effect. On one hand, Renee is acting like the nurturing wife comforting her husband. On the other hand, she is a wife who is patronizing, and disappointed that her husband cannot perform sexually. It is evident because of the gaze in her eyes; she has a longing to be somewhere else. On her role in the film, Patricia Arquette explains, “This is a role about the darkness of woman. The destructive element of woman”(Rodley, 8). This darker element of the female role continues to manifest itself as the plot thickens. As of yet, it is only boiling under the surface waiting to explode.

To show the ensuing darkness and duality of his character, Lynch shows Fred skulking in the shadows. Renee calls out to him. Her voice takes on a strange

undertone. It echoes in the distance as opposed to being in the forefront of the room. Fred states, "I can't find you." Lynch does a fast cut to a scene where there are hands looming in front of Renee's face as she is sleeping. There seems to be some sort of violent action taking place; however, Lynch cuts this short to leave the scene open to speculation. This is a strange event because Fred wakes up from a nightmare to blur reality. The scene is also significant because of the initial appearance of the Mystery Man, played by Robert Blake; his role is pivotal to the unraveling of the mystery. Lynch, in a tactically clever move, acknowledges the Mystery Man in the ending credits; he is never referred to by name in the film, and it reinforces his abstract character and otherworldliness. Fred turns to look at his wife in bed and the Mystery Man's face is superimposed onto her face. In allowing his audience to be detectives, Lynch shows that Fred is looking back at himself. The mirror motif reflects his unconscious nature, and a cue that he is not comfortable with what he sees.

By the first twenty minutes of the film, it is painfully apparent there are a litany of problems for this couple. Lynch uses many elements to build this disjuncture between the Madisons. The aforementioned sex scene and the personification of the domestic sphere are important conventions; however, the most noticeable way to show ineffective communication is the method of delivery in their speech patterns. It takes effort for Fred and Renee to have a conversation. They are uncomfortable in their own home. With no one around to hear, they still cannot be expressive. Bernd Herzogenrath explains how their voices are not animated. He exclaims, "The voices of Renee and Fred almost seem to enact an absence of sound, or better-an absence of room, of the acoustics of space: it's as if they are living in a

recording studio covered in acoustic tile”(10). Like their relationship, the speaking voice is dead and carries no conviction. Gifford and Lynch create a powerful image of speech as ineffective and severely lacking.

After this foreshadowing of the lack of effective communication between the couple, there is the arrival of a second package with another videotape. The sound of a dog barking is heard from outside the Madison house. Lynch paints a picture of suburbia with this normal outside noise; however, he inverts this on its head. Fred asks, “Who owns that dog?” It seems like a simple statement, but the deeper implication is that Fred, as a neighbor, does not even know his immediate surroundings. This is followed by another tense dialogue between Fred and Renee. Fred asks Renee if she wants to watch the tape. It seems that her husband may unconsciously feel the tension. He asks because (maybe) she does not want to see the content. It is a (subliminally suggestive) way for her to opt out of viewing the content. They think it is the same tape, but as they are watching it, something happens. The tape is of them sleeping in their bed at night. Lynch is able to show a heightened sense of fear and paranoia by showing an extreme close-up shot of their faces. In particular, the camera lens is zoomed on their eyes to show the real horror they are envisioning which only increases the claustrophobia.

In the meantime, the detectives arrive to investigate; they are external to the house but just as lost. In rehashing scenes from *Blue Velvet* and *Twin Peaks*, the detective story is common in Lynch's universe. Lynch portrays the detectives, who are supposed to be intuitive, as a couple of Keystone cops spewing out a deadpan routine; the detectives never really resolve the situation. The audience does receive a few

clues from this sequence. While in the bedroom, the detectives ask Fred and Renee if they sleep there. The question is asinine, but the inference is that the couple are distant from one another, and not sleeping together in their own bed. When one of the detectives learns that Fred is a musician, he asks, "What kind of sax do you play?" The street lingo is an association with his saxophone while the doublespeak is a murder weapon. A situation which is paramount to the plot-and one of the most important lines of dialogue in the film-is when the detectives ask the couple if they own a video camera. Lynch is foreshadowing in two ways: Renee states, "Fred hates video cameras." Fred retorts, "I like to remember things how I remember them, not necessarily how it happened." This statement is prophetic because he will do exactly that during the movie. His own reality is fragmented because he is remembering events from a slanted perspective. In short, perception becomes perceived reality; he reinvents scenarios to his liking as a means of control. It is strikingly similar to Rita's story in *Mulholland Drive*. Where Fred prefers his own type of memory, she seems to misplace her own memory through a case of amnesia. She has no relative past.

The next event is at Andy's (Michael Marsee) house party. The audience learns that he is a friend of Renee's; also, he is the same man Fred saw her leaving the Luna Lounge with in his dream. Lynch makes this event a slice right out of Friday night Americana. It could be a swanky cocktail party in the valley around Los Angeles. In turn, the party is complete with hipsters, beautiful women, and cocaine. Lynch even has the requisite party music in the background. The party takes a dark turn when the music stops playing, and the Mystery Man walks up to engage Fred in conversation. In this surreal exchange, the Mystery Man tells Fred the following:

“We have met before...at your house...you invited me.” To disorient Fred further, the Mystery Man has Fred call his house using a cell phone, and the Mystery Man answers on the other end; this is while he is standing in front of him at the same time. He is occupying two different locations without an explanation. The rules of space/time continuum do not seem to apply to his character. Herzongenrath's take on the Mystery Man is that he-not Fred's metamorphosis into Pete-is the twist in the Moebius Strip, because the Mystery Man is “inside and outside the action.”<sup>7</sup> Also, he “can be read at the place...where opposites meet”(8). Additionally, this abstract being comments to Fred an obvious clue. He states, “It is not my custom to go where I'm not wanted.” He is following the archetype of the vampire/incubus character; he has to be invited into the host house, or Fred is *allowing* him to enter his psyche.

As soon as the Mystery Man walks away from Fred, the music starts again. Barry Gifford comments on the interaction between these two characters. He laments, “It's the first visible manifestation of Fred's madness. No one else can see the Mystery Man” (Biodrowski, 3). It is a turn back to reality when the visitor leaves the stunned Fred. This exact occurrence is a theme which Lynch recapitulates in *Mulholland Drive*. The interaction between the movie director, Adam Kesher (Justin Theroux) and The Cowboy (Monty Montgomery) is a mirror of the Mystery Man and Fred's first conversation. The Cowboy and the Mystery Man both come from a parallel universe. In borrowing heavily from Freud, Todd McGowan feels that the “superego provides an alibi for the failed sexual relationship”(12). Both of these characters act as figurative forms of the superego. Freud believes, “the part which is later taken on by the superego is played to begin with by an *external power*, by parental

authority”(77, emphasis added). This conceit is how characters like the Mystery Man, the Cowboy, et al, can be simultaneously internal and external. They force the other character through “pressure to enjoy” the situation(s) at hand (McGowan 12). Lacan's suppositions also ring true in this case: “Nothing forces anyone to enjoy except the superego. The superego is the imperative of jouissance-Enjoy”(3). In many respects, BOB (*Twin Peaks*) and Ben (*Blue Velvet*) embody many of these same similarities. At this point, it is uncertain as the character represents an enigma. On the Mystery Man's identity, Lynch posits, “He is a hair of an abstraction”(Rodley 229). This type of comment is to be expected from a director who is evasive in answering questions from critics. Fred quizzes Andy on the Mystery Man's identity. The audience finds out that he is a friend of Dick Laurant's. On the way home, Fred discusses the relationship between Andy and his wife. She tells Fred that he turned her on to a job and that he was alright. She is being ambiguous and evasive in answering her husband's questions. Fred does not want to delve any deeper and lets the subject drop.

Because of this inability to speak, they are back in the enclosed, dead space. After the party, they arrive back home. Because there is a flash of light upstairs, Fred thinks that someone is in his house. The phone rings, and he does not answer it. Fred is encapsulated in the darkness of the house. He can not effectively *see* anything. This has the image of a nightmare in a dreamscape; there is no one in the home. Fred disappears in the darkness. Renee washes her face, and there is subtle music in the background. She calls out to Fred, and he does not answer. Fred comes out of the darkness briefly, but his face is still obscured in the darkness. His facial features are only partially in the frame. As if out of thin air, a third videotape materializes in his

hands. Fred *watches* the tape again, but Renee is no where to be found. Fred is watching the truth of his actions. The content of the videotape does not lie. There is a fissure on the tape which doubles for a lapse in memory. Fred looks at his hands as the instruments of destruction. There is only a brief view of Renee. She is naked on the floor of their bedroom covered in blood. It appears there are multiple stab wounds and that she has been dismembered. Also, Fred's body is covered in blood showing his unspeakable rage. Lynch cuts away from the shot quickly because it is too horrific to witness; he does not want the audience to see too much. As Martha Nochimson poignantly notes, "The tape of the murder is Fred's message to himself about how his possessive rages obliterate Renee and leave him alone with only his malignant desires"(213). It is hard for Fred to deal with this reality and (equally) as hard for the audience to watch; he gets physically ill and calls out for a wife who is no longer there. With this segment, ends the first story within the movie.

## **Chapter 2- Fred's metamorphosis into Pete Dayton, and other twins**

Lynch begins this part of the film by having Fred being punched by a guard. The guard calls him a murderer. Although the trial is never witnessed, the audience hears it drifting in the air as Fred is being lead to his cell.<sup>8</sup> It is thematically important for Fred to be cut off from any human interaction. Although there are other prisoners mentioned, there are none seen by the audience. Fred is isolated in the jail. As a metaphor, his incarceration is a self-created hell. In his jail cell, Fred stares up at the light and is fixated by the bars on the window. Fred complains that he cannot sleep and that his head hurts. He is taken to the prison doctor where he is prescribed medicine to sleep.

When Fred is back in his cell, he cannot sleep because the headaches will not stop. He asks for aspirin as he holds his head and screams. In a dream, Fred sees the Mystery Man at a cabin door. The music of *This Mortal Coil* is playing again, but the sound is wafting in a vast, wide open space; it has a reverberation effect similar to music being played backwards. David Roche, applying Gilles Deleuze's precepts of the "image-crystal," feels this is the way Lynch has "an image [in] which the movie reflects itself"(46). This is how two images in the movie can (in effect) coexist. The next shot cuts back to the highway at night. This is the first appearance of Pete Dayton, played by Balthazar Getty. Pete is standing beside the road. Also, there is a dream within a dream. Pete is standing in his yard. His girlfriend is screaming in terror, but for an unknown reason. There is no inclination of what the event could be other than a flash of light. The guard suspects something is up and they check on the prisoner. One of the strangest moments in the film occurs in this segment: Fred is no longer in his cell. Pete is there and Fred is gone. Like David Cronenberg before him a la *The Fly* (1986) and *Naked Lunch* (1991), Lynch has a character change through an inexplicable metamorphic process. This is the first major twinning episode which allows for others to follow. In an interview with Gerad Delorme, Lynch implied that this scene is the break in the Moebius Strip. It relates to the transition in respect to both ends of the band on the strip. In an atypically telling moment, Lynch comments, "That beyond any doubt [it is] an important transition [Fred into Pete] for the character"(3). Pete is let go by the authorities without any causality. They have the *wrong man* in their prison. He is picked up by his parents and goes home.

Pete hangs out in his own backyard to show a transition in the film. This

picturesque moment is the antithesis of what has previously been witnessed by the audience. The scene borders on the fantastical. It is a heightened reality as opposed to the dark aura that surrounds most of the first 53 minutes of the film. The color palette is bright and the hues are overpowering as opposed to the previous usage of monochromatic colors. Lynch complements this sequence with Muzak, lawn chairs, and the requisite suburban, white picket fence; this setting is a parallel to *Blue Velvet*. In this film, Jeffery Beaumont (Kyle MacLachlan)-after traveling his own sort of lost highway- finds contentment at the end while relaxing in the back yard. The placement of the supposed tranquil surroundings in *L.H.* is misleading. Pete seems to pose like everything is normal. It is the perfect afternoon where there is no care in the world; he should be enjoying the perfect moment in time. It is in stark contrast to the things that plague Fred in the first section of the film; nevertheless, the moment is short-lived.

Pete's actions and movements are strikingly different from those of Jeffery Beaumont. While Jeffery has inner peace in this same setting, Pete seems anxious and out of place; moreover, it echoes the opening scene with Fred's general disposition. Pete does manage to look into his neighbors yard. In the yard, there is the same kinked water hose and Jack Russel Terrier dog from the opening scene of *Blue Velvet*. Lynch is creating his own universe by having these two houses next door to each other. In actuality, this scene in the backyard demonstrates the beginning of Fred/Pete's psychogenic fugue: "a form of amnesia which is a flight from reality"(Rodley 239). Stuart Mitchell's article has a more evolved definition of the psychogenic fugue. He states, it is a "temporarily delusional, yet fully aware, state of

mind, of which the subject retains no subsequent memory; the adoption of a new identity and personality, creating its own history and associations”(qtd. in Sargeant and Watson 250). Fred and Pete both seem to have major lapses in their memory. However, Lynch is quick to note that “Pete is a guy who leaves his own safe world voluntarily for a universe full of jeopardy”(Henry, 4). The yard is a safe haven and the world holds danger and confusion. It is evident (given his demeanor) that the familiar surroundings will not be a shelter from the storm.

Pete's friends show up that evening at his house to show a “return” to reality. In another absurd moment, Pete's parents are watching a documentary where strawberries are being filled into a bucket. Pete's dad Mr. Dayton, (Gary Busey) has no concern that his son was just in jail and that something traumatic has happened. His parents are disconnected and unable to deal with the reality of their son's situation. Lynch has Pete interact with his peers as an effort to resume normalcy. He hangs out with his friends and dances with his girlfriend Sheila (Natasha Gregson Wagner); this shows the average life of suburban youth.

In typical Lynch fashion, he shifts gears and the carefree view of society is eroded away. Pete works at an auto shop as a mechanic. Arnie, his boss, is played by Richard Pryor. Although his role is small, he is a nice comedic addition to the transparent world Lynch has created. With the ensuing gangster music in the background, Mr Eddy is introduced. Mr. Eddy (Robert Loggia) represents another dynamic in the film. His role is power and authority and it is felt the moment he steps into the frame of action. Mr. Eddy is the archetypal mob boss; he comes complete with a decked-out suit, black car, and thugs. It is one place in the film where Lynch is

paying homage to the film noir tradition.<sup>9</sup> In another bit of foreshadowing, Mr. Eddy comes to Pete's shop to have his car inspected. He states, "I don't like the sound of something." Pete adjusts his car, and it runs better with the simple turn of a wrench. Pete is invited by Mr. Eddy to take the car on a test run. While riding in the mountains on Mulholland Drive, Mr. Eddy is tailgated. He allows the driver to pass and receives a rude hand gesture in the process. He pursues the driver and runs him off the road. In the ensuing mayhem, Mr. Eddy beats up the unsuspecting driver while critiquing his bad driving skills. In a moment of showing the statistical reality of bad driving, he states, "50,000 people a year are killed on the highway because of tailgating." It is ironic because the gangster/mob boss wants to be the voice of moral authority.

In *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime*, Slavoj Zizek states, "Mr. Eddy is one of those Lynchian figures who embodies both poles: on the one hand, he strictly enforces the rules, representing the enactment of the socio-symbolic Law, but on the other, he does so in such an exaggerated, excessively violent manner that his role exposes the inherently violent and arbitrary nature of the law."(x). Zizek continues, "Lynch shows that evil is mediated, that there is a speculative identity to good and evil, that instead of being a substantial force, evil is reflexivized and composed of ludicrous cliches"(xi). Zizek's suppositions are spot-on because this character shows both the exaggerations and cliches. Mr. Eddy takes Pete back to the auto shop after the incident; he offers Pete a videotape with pornography on it; Pete turns it down. Videotapes keep being displayed prominently. They first entered Fred's world and continue into Pete's world. Conversely, the tables turn because Pete-as Fred's alter

ego-does not want to view it. Renee, in the beginning, is apprehensive about the contents, and it is a transferal of roles. In the meantime, Pete is watched by the detectives because they are trying to *find* Fred Madison. When they see him with Mr. Eddy, the detective states, “Hey is that Dick Laurant.” Mr. Eddy and Dick Laurant are the same person. Another bit of twinning has occurred. In Fred's other universe, it reinforces the two-in-one personality of various characters. Mr. Eddy can be “Mr. Nice Guy” while Dick Laurant (with the obvious Freudian implications) is the type who will beat up pedestrians who break the law; he is both power/dominance and a caricature of toughness.

Pete is now in darkness; he grabs his head (like Fred before him) to show the headache getting the best of him. After Pete is making out with Sheila, she asks, “Why don't you like me.” This is ironic (since it is an insecurity) and something Fred could not ask Renee because of his inability to articulate thought and feelings; moreover, he calls out her name twice. In comparison, Fred did the same thing previously when he called out for Renee, but she did not answer. Similarly, when Pete is back at the garage working, he hears the saxophone solo of Fred (from the Luna Lounge) on the radio causing another headache. Pete tells another coworker that he does not like it. While Pete is working, Mr. Eddy/Dick Laurant makes another return visit to Arnie's Garage. The film takes another twist when Renee is sitting in Mr. Eddy's car. Lynch initially has her face distorted by the camera. Although she has not yet been identified, Renee has transformed herself into another vivacious woman. Her hair is blond instead of black. Subsequently, she goes from the role of conservative house wife to the sensuous trophy of Mr. Eddy. During this section,

there is the interaction between the Renee look-a-like and Pete. Lynch completes this sequence with the sexy sounds of Lou Reed coupled with slow motion editing and facial close-ups. In another bit of foreshadowing, after their unspoken intense moment, the area around Mr. Eddy's car is shrouded in darkness when he returns to it. It is a foreshadowing of things to come in the latter parts of the film.

When she introduces herself to Pete, the audience learns that Renee Madison is rechristened as Alice Wakefield. This theme is reinserted into the plot of *Mulholland Drive* when a transformation occurs between Rita (Laura Elena Harring) and Betty (Naomi Watts). Rita, to hide her identity, changes into a blond version of Betty. In a pivotal scene, they stare at each other in the mirror as a reflection of their oneness. In another prime example, Lynch is directly influenced by the work of Alfred Hitchcock. As many critics have pointed out, *L.H.* is a homage to Hitchcock's classic film *Vertigo* (1958). Paul A. Woods notes, "Kim Novak's character [like Patricia Arquette in *L.H.*] drive[s] James Stewart to the edge of sanity"(180). Likewise, the mirror of Renee, Alice, for no discernible reason, shows up at Pete's garage at night in a taxi. She asks him out to dinner. Pete thinks twice and initially turns her down; he knows the ramifications of getting involved with a mobster's girl; however, he is unable to avoid the temptation after he sees her walking off in an all too revealing outfit. This trope is another homage to film noir tradition: the man who falls for the wrong woman which leads to ruin. Lynch brilliantly displays these two characters with animal magnetism. In effect, they are already undressing each other while standing in the parking lot. Alice states, "Maybe, we should skip dinner." Pete has no qualms about going off with her. They are in a moment of unbridled passion

which hints at a fantasy as opposed to perceived reality. Lynch juxtaposes this scene with dark and red images in the background followed by close-ups of the eyes. The background disappears in the ensuing encounter. Even with their clothes back on, they are still trying to ravage each other because their sexual appetite is overpowering. Alice excitedly tells Pete, "I want more." It seems as if she is the platinum blond bombshell with an insatiable longing for physical contact. Moreover, it is ironic considering that Pete's lovemaking is the antithesis of Fred's. As opposed to Fred's awkwardness, Pete is forceful and passionate. It is exactly like Fred's saxophone playing except the instrument is a substitute for the wife.

In the next shot, Lynch returns to the lost highway motif with the road whizzing by in a repetitive motion. In this regard, the film is a synecdoche. They are driving nowhere in particular to show that reality is not at work and has been suspended; they are only lost in the world of each other; the theme of the highway represents all aspects of the film to the whole meaning. In the introduction to Zizek's *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime*, Marek Wiezorecek explains the obvious parallel between Fred and his alter ego. He comments, "What follows is a bizarre shift from the dull, drab existence of the impotent husband and his brunette wife, to the exciting and dangerous life of the younger virile Pete who is seduced by the sexually aggressive femme fatale reincarnation of Renee, a blond named Alice"(qtd in Zizek 4-5). Fred (as Pete) can live out his fantasy with a woman who is into him, so to speak while traveling a dangerous highway. With respect to to the fantastical elements of the fugue state, Zizek's *The Sublime Object of Ideology* states the following:

Fantasy functions as a construction, as an imagery scenario filling out

the void, the opening of the desire of the Other: by giving us a definite answer to the question 'What does the other want?,' it enables us to evade the unbearable deadlock in which the Other wants something from us, but we are at the same time incapable of translating this desire of the Other into a positive interpolation, into a mandate with which to identify(114-15).

This inability to be rationale is one of Fred's major problems and the reason for the transformation. He is unable to communicate with his wife in the first half of the film. He could not fulfill her desires because of his ineptness. Now, as Pete, he will have a *second chance* (in the fantasy state) to correct the mistakes of the past.

The phone rings back at Pete's house. Alice is on the other end of the line. Lynch only shows her mouth. Her lips move with a seductive red gloss painted on them. The entire area surrounding her silhouette is blackened out. She tells Pete that Mr. Eddy is becoming suspicious. Alice and Pete meet for a secret rendezvous. Again, the background is pitch black. There is a red tinge on Pete's face when he is having sex with Alice. It looks like the face of a possessed man as opposed to that of a lover. In an interview with Bob Strauss of Eonline, Lynch explains the dynamics of human behavior and experience in *L.H.*:

A lot of stories deal with people's struggles and the strange things their desires lead them into. Their mind may tell them that's not a good place to go, but people sense things. And instead of the truth coming, imaginary paranoia starts growing, and they misperceive the truth of things. Then a demon starts growing. All these things are

part of the human experience(2).

This manifestation of paranoia is what Fred/Pete has done. The example, by Lynch, shows that Fred as Pete cannot hide from the demon. He is very much incorrectly interpreting the *truth of things*. The red tinge shows the evil side coming to the surface. Even in the fantasy state, evil rears its ugly head, and he is unable to suppress it. At best, he can only temporarily keep it at bay.

Pete finally has a talk with his parents about the mysterious evening in question. The police called the Daytons to inquire if Pete “remembered anything.” He has a bout of amnesia and cannot recollect the event. This amnesia conveniently takes form because Pete has a headache. It is identical to the headaches Fred has in prison. He finds out that he came home with Shelia and another man. Mr. Dayton states, “I never seen him before in my life.” Lynch is being intentionality ambiguous on the identity of said individual. Nevertheless, it can be reasonably inferred that this is the same Mystery Man who plagues Fred Madison. Pete's parents are so horrified by the event that they will not discuss it. As the *role* of the parents, they are unable to provide an obviously confused and troubled son with emotional support. The only thing which occurs is another memory gap. There are a series of flashes in the background and Sheila screaming; her screams are not audible. Lynch loves to toy with these notions of abstraction. Lynch states, “The whole might have a logic, but out of its context, the fragment takes on a tremendous level of abstraction. It can become an obsession”(qtd. in Rodley 231). It also allows the audience to arrive at multiple explanations.

### Chapter 3- The Fantasy Unravels

Mr. Eddy shows back up at Pete's Garage to show another unraveling of the fantasied state. He makes accusatory comments towards Pete, as if he seriously suspects that something is afoot. He asks Pete what he has been up to and during a highly Freudian moment pulls out an immense gun. Mr. Eddy is using the gun as a means to show his power. As well, it can be an example of his sexual prowess and emotional ineptitude. As a gangster, it is the way he solves problems. Pete continues the relationship knowing the outcome is not going to be good. Alice calls and asks Pete to meet her at the designated meeting place. Alice tells Pete that she now believes Mr. Eddy does know of their relationship. At this point, she proposes a plan. It would be for them to run away together. Her plan includes going back to Andy's house for a private party to commit a robbery.

Along with the plan concocted by Alice, Pete has to learn the truth. First, Andy is a porno king and she stars in his films. In comparison, the porno king role has analogue in *Wild at Heart*.<sup>10</sup> While staying in Big Tuna, Texas, Sailor (Nicolas Cage) and Lulu (Laura Dern) meet Bobby Peru (Willem Dafoe) who is a direct parallel to Andy in *L.H.* They are mirror images with the requisite slicked back hair, thin mustache, and leather jacket. Bobby Peru films his pornography in the trailer while Andy's location choice is a mansion. Secondly, he learns that Mr. Eddy, as Dick Laurant, initially forces her into the business; she is, in turn, pimped out to Andy. Fred previously inquires about Renee's involvement with Andy. He is met with a standoffish, evasive answer; however, Alice is forthright with Pete and tells him the story in a nonchalant manor. During her back story, there is a yellowish tinge

to the film. It has a dreamscape quality which is prevalent throughout the film. Lynch completes this sequence with Marilyn Manson's "I Put a Spell on You" playing in the background; moreover, Dick Laurant puts a gun to her head (similar to the exchange between Pete and him) and forces her to undress. The dark side of human nature is addressed when Lynch has her face change from fear to excitement; she is relishing in her inhibition in front of an audience. This is similar to the voyeuristic/sexual roles in *Blue Velvet* between Frank Booth (Dennis Hopper) and Dorothy Vallens (Isabella Rossellini). At times, Jeffery Beaumont has to play the same sexually domineering role as Frank Booth. The sad reality is that Alice-like Dorothy is playing a subservient role to a dominating male figure.

The music stops and brings Alice and Pete back into the real world. There is certainly the impression that Alice has learned to be domineering in her role as a sex goddess. She has to be submissive to Mr. Eddy/Dick Laurant, however, she can transfer roles and overtake Pete's vulnerability. She plays the victim and the femme fatale. Thus, her behavior typifies the notion of Lacanian theory and its applicability to this film. Žižek, noted for his use/knowledge of Lacan states, "The real is the hidden/traumatic underside of existence of sense of reality, whose disturbing effects are felt in strange and unexpected places"(8). Pete tells her he loves her, and her reply is, "Should I call Andy?" It is obvious who is being manipulated. She precedes to give Pete the instructions in a cold and calculating way. The directions are methodical, and no detail is left out. There is a disconnect. She is playing the role of the black widow, and Pete is the hapless victim. As before, Fred could not control Renee. Barry Gifford notes how these problems continue to occur in the fugue state.

On this dynamic he states, “He is no better at maintaining this relationship, dealing with or controlling this woman, than he was in real life. The woman is not who he thinks she is, really, so all the so-called facts of his known life with Renee pops up again in Alice Wakefield”(Biodrowski, 2). The audience understands that she has already planned this out and knows that Pete would play into her hands; he is trapped in her web. To show her evil persona, Lynch has half of her face darkened out. She is a distortion and Pete is unable (or unwilling) to see through her carefully crafted disguise.

Pete goes back to his house. Sheila meets him and knows that he is seeing someone. She tells him that he is different. Again, Martha Nochimson makes an astute observation. In regards to her character, she states, “Sheila is the only character in the film who is capable of consciously perceiving the duality of Pete's existence and who refuses to deny what she sees”(214). It goes to show how his nature has changed. The picturesque moment of familiar surroundings is short lived. Even as he tries to suppress it, his true nature continues to manifest itself. Pete's parents intervene and Sheila wants Mr. Dayton to tell Pete about the unspeakable event. As before, he is unable to discuss it with his son. After the confrontation, she leaves and Mr. Dayton tells Pete that someone is on the phone. Mr. Eddy is on the phone; he tells him that a friend of his is waiting to speak. The friend is the Mystery Man. In turn, the Mystery Man echoes what he had said to Fred at Andy's house party, “We have met before...at your house.” Like Fred, Pete is just as stunned by this conversation. The Mystery Man goes off on a metaphysical rant about the Far East and how death cannot be escaped. This recalls the payment for Fred's heinous crime.

Since Fred is a prisoner on death row, his death is inevitable. Another interesting distortion of reality is the fact that Pete's parents were standing beside him while the conversation was ensuing. By the end of the conversation, they have managed to disappear; it parallels Fred's third viewing of the tape where Renee disappears. The external elements-the family and emotional security-have evaporated leaving only the internalized self.

While Pete is on his way to Andy's house, his face has a blue tinge. It is a distortion of reality and encompasses the criminal activity which is about to occur. This blue spectrum is seen on the big screen when Pete walks into Andy's house. On the big screen, the audience sees Alice in one of her films. The film is playing on a loop; Alice's face is shown in close-up. It is a combination of pain and ecstasy. Her sexual activity is for everyone to witness in larger-than-life proportions. Pete hits Andy over the head when he comes downstairs for a drink. Alice comes stealthily down the stairs and tells Pete, "You got him." It seems like an easy plan, but Andy comes after Pete. In the battle, Andy is killed. This turn of events is surreal considering that Andy is impaled on the corner of a glass coffee table while Alice's film continues to role; it is two extreme opposites: sex and death. Alice shows no remorse and accepts no responsibility in the matter. She states, "You killed him." Her only other response is to let out a nonchalant "Wow." It is a laughable event by her estimation. She is not the least bit shocked or alarmed by this grotesque event; furthermore, she takes the valuables off of the dead corpse. Her initial transformation to Alice was as the seductress. She had a silk dress and white fingernail polish. Now, she is the transformed Renee and her fingernails are black. Her dark side cannot stay

hidden and Fred's fantasy is falling apart at the seams. It shows her as cold, calculating, and all consuming like Coleridge's *Christabel*.

After this grizzly event, the frame of the film is off center. Lynch is giving his audience a visual prompt. Pete sees a picture of Alice with Dick Laurant and Andy. Alice and Renee are both in the photo and Pete is unable to tell who is who. This is relevant because Fred initially states that he remembers things the way he sees them. Pete's nose starts to drip blood, and he goes upstairs to find a bathroom. When he opens a door, Alice is in the room having a sexual encounter with an unknown figure. The entire shot goes red. Pete comes back downstairs, and Alice proceeds to pull a gun on him. In a threatening tone, she asks, "Do you trust me Pete?" She has a smirk on her face as the music fades in the background; this portrayal of Alice, in particular, is vital in showing where the power resides in the relationship. In short, Pete is unable to resist her overwhelming influence as the doppelganger/femme fatale. She tells Pete that she knows a fence. They can convert their newly acquired goods to cash. They drive away in Andy's car and are back on the *lost highway* at night.

In the next scene, Pete asks Alice where they are going. On this drive at night, they wind up in the desert. The only light that is visible in the film is the two lights protruding from the car. There is also one light above the cabin door. Lynch manages to sneak a half second glimpse of a gun. Pete asks Alice, "Why me?" She evades the question by stating, "You still want me don't you?" Pete is helpless against her power. He replies, "More than ever." Lynch has sexy music playing in the distance while they are making love in the desert. On closer inspection, this is the third time that Lynch uses This Mortal Coil's "Song to a Siren." Elisabeth Fraser's

voice permeates the air: “Here I am. Here I am. Waiting to hold you.” The lyrics are prophetic because they will always be intangible for both Fred and Pete: love is out of reach and unattainable. The light from the car illuminates their bodies. Her face is so luminous that Pete cannot distinguish it. Pete twice repeats, “I want you.” The music turns eerie, and Alice states, “You'll never have me.” Alice walks off and heads towards the cabin; it is to signal the transition in his dream. Zizek insists that “a fantasy is ultimately always a fantasy of a successful sexual relationship”(117). Fred as Pete is trying to compensate for his sexual failure with the wife. Even in dreams, the fantasy walks off into never, neverland. It can never be realized because the fantasy is not reality. In his watershed case study, *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, Freud comments on the nature of neurosis. He proclaims, “Neurotics are dominated by the opposition between reality and phantasy. If what they long for the most intensely in their phantasies is presented to them in reality, they nonetheless flee from it; and they abandon themselves to their phantasies the more readily where they need no longer fear to see them realized”(101). This is true of Fred/Pete's neurotic state. His repetitive plea of “I want you” falls on deaf ears.

When Pete stands up, he has, once again, become Fred as he goes under another metamorphosis to his previous self.<sup>11</sup> Fred has a murderous look on his face. It is during the last fifteen minutes of the film where the disillusion of Fred's fantasy is realized. After the transformation, the Mystery Man appears again seemingly out of nowhere. The Mystery Man disappears into the cabin and Fred follows. Fred asks the Mystery Man where Alice went; he states, “Alice who...her name is Renee.” Fred should be asking for his wife, but he is looking for her alter ego. The Mystery Man

asks Fred what his name is (in a derogatory manner) and chases him with a video camera. As a symbolic object, the camera acts like part of the Mystery Man's body. Fred does not want to *see* what has been caught on film. Because of his fear, Fred flees and returns to the highway. He knows that the truth is always caught on camera. By running away, he is evading truth and the gathering of evidence.

It is not easy to discern the next segment because Lynch partially obscures a sign. The sign reads the Lost Highway Hotel. Renee/Alice is at the hotel with Mr. Eddy. Fred mysteriously winds up there after his encounter with the Mystery Man. Mr. Eddy is in bed and looks at his watch like he has lost sense of time. While Renee/Alice drives off, Fred knocks at the door. Mr. Eddy says, "Renee?" because he thinks she has come back. Fred finally meets his arch nemesis. Pete is young and afraid of the powerful mobster, but Fred is the jealous husband who is out for revenge. Fred takes Mr. Eddy hostage. In the hotel room, the Mystery Man appears as Fred pulls out of the Lost Highway Hotel parking lot. In effect, the Mystery Man was there with Fred during the encounter with Mr. Eddy.

Fred returns to the same desert scene where he just was with the Mystery Man and Alice, when he was Pete. Mr. Eddy/Dick Laurant fights Fred when he is pulled out of the trunk, and his throat is slit in the process; the knife is *handed* to Fred because the Mystery Man is able to assist him in a time of need. He is an emotional crutch which allows Fred the strength to overwhelm his mortal enemy. Mr. Eddy asks, "What do you guys want?" This is when The Mystery Man and Fred are standing beside each other. The Mystery Man hands Mr. Eddy a camcorder. On the tape, there is a smut film with Alice as the star. The Mystery Man takes back the

camera after allowing Mr. Eddy time to absorb the severity of the situation. The Mystery Man pulls a gun and shoots him. Afterwards, he whispers something into Fred's ear. Fred puts the gun into his belt. In the next shot, Fred is standing alone with the gun, and there is no Mystery Man in sight. On an unconscious level, he allows Fred the freedom to do what he is unable to accomplish. The whisper in Fred's ear serves only as subliminal words of encouragement. Like Pete, the Mystery Man serves as part of Fred's trinity; however, he is absorbed into Fred's psyche when the fantasy is rendered null and void. He accepts what is caught on tape, and no longer needs a third party.

The detectives that have previously been following Pete arrive at Andy's house. They look at the same picture the Pete was looking at earlier. In the picture, Renee is the only one visible. This obvious clue would explain why Pete/Fred would double Alice/Renee. He can justify to himself the reasons for his actions as opposed to trying to see the reality of the situation. It also shows Lynch's admiration for Stanley Kubrick and the corresponding scene in *The Shining* (1980). As the caretaker, Jack Nicholson's picture is mysteriously added to a portrait to distort fantasy and reality; the picture is not altered and is dependent only on who is looking at it. The detectives state, "There is no such thing as a bad coincidence." The detectives are able to perceive the truth. Alice never existed. She was a figment of Fred's universe. Renee was always present until her murder. To show the complete emptiness of this reality, Lynch has a still shot of the barren desert. The audience is absorbed in the infiniteness of this vast, open space. As a destination, it is where the lost highway will lead an individual: nothingness and isolation.

In the last sequence, Fred pulls up to his own house in Mr. Eddy's car. He whispers into the intercom, "Dick Laurant is dead." Like the beginning of the film, these are the last words spoken. The film comes back to the starting point, but from an opposing angle. The cops pull up and discover that Fred is there. The situation leads to a prolonged car chase. Early in the movie, this was the action taking place outside of Fred's apartment. The audience was not privy to the action, only the background noise of sirens and screeching tires. During the car chase, Fred drives from day into night. In essence, he is driving into the reality of full blown dementia. Lynch has a close-up of Fred's face with fast jump cut style editing. This process makes his back and forth head shaking into a blur of frenzied action. He is morphing back into his former self and reality is becoming frayed. Conversely, he could possibly be creating a new identity. He can continue his never ending trip on the Moebius Strip and create another fugue state. It is why Lynch states that "the story melts prior to the beginning to arrive at the end"(Henry, 3). Fred screams because he cannot escape the lost highway. Tim Lucas explains how reality is not escaped through fantasy. He laments, "After realizing what he's done, Fred cannot escape the overwhelming realities of the murder and his denial extends to the obliteration of his own identity"(31). This is why he fades into the distance, because reality is no longer buried in the subconscious. The second half of David Bowie's title song "I'm Deranged" is heard in the background. It brings the movie back in the Moebius Strip to an opposing point and obliterates all twins created in the altered state of Fred Madison's mind.

## **Conclusion:**

The film critic David Edelstein states about Lynch, “No living director can create a dream world so complete, to a molecule, and none can tickle the unconscious so directly. All surfaces are radiant or (irradiated) signposts to a deeper, more horrific reality”(1). Lynch states the position of Fred, “He's lost in confusion and darkness, where fear is in the driver's seat”(Rodley 243). This fear completely overtakes him. He is awaiting the next nightmare to come into existence. He will be perpetually lost on the highway. The road goes on forever in his mind. In accessing this dark masterpiece, Martha Nochimson comments that “Lynch shows us that should time and space turn themselves inside out, so long as a person cannot be free of his own will-to-power, that person will travel down the road to doom and destruction”(210). Overall, *L.H.* represents the level of where the human psyche can go on a conscious and unconscious level. As in real life, the character of Fred Madison is unable to deal with reality and has to invent an alternate reality to justify his existence. Alenka Zupenic believes “we cannot 'get beyond' the fantasy by giving up on the Cause that animates us, but, on the contrary, only by insisting on it until the end”(232). Fred must see his fantasy turned nightmare to the bitter, unfruitful conclusion. Lynch shows in this film that there are no easy answers in dealing with human relations, emotions, and existence. Additionally, Lynch takes the theme of twinning to breaking point. The degree in which it is exercised in *L.H.* is nearly incomprehensible.

## Endnotes

1. Financed by Ciby 2000, *Lost Highway* was green light-even after the miserable box office failure of *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me-* and the 54 day shoot began in December of 1995 and wrapped in February of 1996 (Woods). Also, Mary Swenney (one of the three producers of *L.H.* and wife of David Lynch) screened the film for 50 people. The original cut of the film was 150 minutes. After the screening, the film was edited down to 135 minutes (Hughes).
2. Currently in production and set for a 2006 release, *Inland Empire* is Lynch's first foray into a fully digitally shot film. As usual, Lynch is extremely tight lipped about the project. The film is set in California like Lynch's two previous releases and stars Laura Dern, Jeromy Iron, Harry Dean Stanton, and Justin Theroux.
3. Lynch used the familiar “two thumbs down” moniker against the film critics. It became a moniker used on billboard advertisements as a reason to see the film. Mark Kermode made a note on Lynch's revenge in the September 1997 issue of Q Magazine.
4. The soundtrack predates the release of the movie. Lynch wanted to use someone hip to head up the soundtrack. This task was given to Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails fame who had rousing success on Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers* soundtrack. In working closely with Lynch and Angelo Badalamenti, he turned his production talents to the musical pieces to accompany *L.H.*
5. This Mortal Coil's “Song to a Siren” was not included on the soundtrack to the movie; however, the song is vastly important in the movie. It is used in three different key scenes.
6. Thomas Caldwell feels that Lacan's methodology can be directly applied to *L.H.* He asserts that Fred's story has three separate orders. The start of the film is Fred in the symbolic order, while the middle of the film-Fred's transformation into Pete-is the imaginary order. When Fred becomes possessed by the Mystery Man, he is in the real order. See, Thomas Caldwell “Lost in Darkness and Confusion: Lost Highway, Lacan, and Film Noir.” Metro Magazine 118 (1997): 46-50.
7. Bernd Herzogenrath explains the model of a Moebius Strip: (1). Take a strip of paper (2) Make sure it has two sides (3). Take one end of the strip, make a 180 degree twist, and put it to the other end. (4). Tape...the two ends together. (5) As a result, you now have a one-sided figure instead of a two-sided figure. He explains the premise of the strip. Herzogenrath comments, “The Moebius Strip subverts the normal, i.e. Euclidean way of spatial (and, ultimately: temporal) representation, seemingly having two sides, but in fact having only one.” Herzogenrath notes that Lacan used this model to conceptualize “the return of the repressed”(8).

8. In one of the cut scenes, David Hughes notes how Lynch originally had a trial for Fred regarding the murder of Renee. It was left out and can be heard flowing through the air while Fred is lead to his cell. The impetus for the deletion was to make Fred's isolation more complete. It is also an easier transition for Fred to go into the fugue state.
9. Lynch is using many of the standard archetypes of the film noir tradition. A sample of other films references include *Double Indemnity* (1944), *The Killers* (1946), *Out of the Past* (1947), and *Kiss me Deadly* (1955).
10. Lynch managed to strike out on three separate occasions. He was nominated for an Oscar for *The Elephant Man*, *Blue Velvet*, and *Mulholland Drive*. Nevertheless, Lynch did win the Palm d' Or at Cannes in 1990 for *Wild at Heart*.
11. As David Hughes notes, see pages 246-47, Lynch has a life long dream to turn Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* into a film project. He has been obsessed with this project since the early 1970's. More so, than any film in Lynch's oeuvre, *L.H.* is a parallel to Kafka's classic text.

## Bibliography

- Biodrowski, Steve. "Lost Highway: The Solution." Cinefantastique 10 (1997).
- Blue Velvet. Dir. David Lynch. Perf. Kyle MacLachlan, Isabella Rossellini, Dennis Hopper, Laura Dern, and Hope Lange. Orion, 1986. DVD. MGM, 2005.
- Bowie, David. "I'm Deranged." By David Bowie and Brian Eno. Interscope, 1997.
- Cochran, Jason. "Psyching out Lynch." Entertainment Weekly (1997)  
<<http://www.thecityofabsurdity.com/losthighway/intlheweek1.html>>.
- Delorme, Gerard. "Lynch Highway." Premiere (1997)  
<<http://www.thecityofabsurdity.com/losthighway/intlhprem.html>>.
- Ebert, Roger. review of *Lost Highway*. Online posting. 27 Feb. 1997.  
<<http://rogerebert.suntimes.com>>.
- Edelstein, David. "David Lynch in Decay." Online posting. 26 Feb. 1997. MSN.  
<<http://slate.msn.com/id/3209/>>.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria." New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997: 85-102.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis." trans. James Strachey. New York: Norton, 1965: 77.
- Guthmann, Edward. "Highway Travels a Weird Route: David Lynch Film is Captivatingly Bizarre." review of *Lost Highway*. Online posting. 29 Feb 1997. San Francisco Chronicle. <<http://www.sfgate.com>>
- Henry, Michael. "The Moebius Strip." Interview with David Lynch Positif
- Herzogenrath, Bernd. "On the *Lost Highway*: Lynch and Lacan, Cinema and Cultural Pathology." Other Voices 3 (1999):1-23.  
<<http://www.othervoices.org/1.3/bh/highway.html>>.
- Hughes, David. "The Complete Lynch." London: Virgin Publishing Ltd., 2001: 205-224.
- Lacan, Jacques. "The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX:Encore 1972-1973" trans. Bruce Fink. New York: Norton, 1998.

- Lost Highway. Dir. David Lynch. Perf. Bill Pullman, Patricia Arquette, Balthazar Getty, Richard Pryor, Gary Busey, Robert Blake, and Robert Loggia. October Films, 1997.
- Lucas, Tim. "Kiss me Doubly: Notes on David Lynch's *Lost Highway*." Video Watchdog 43 (1998): 31.
- McGowan, Todd. "Finding Ourselves on a Lost Highway: David Lynch's Lesson in Fantasy." Cinema Journal 39 (2000): 51-73. University of South Florida Lib., Tampa. 22 December 2005 <<http://muse.jhu.edu>>
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Lost on Mulholland Drive: Navigating David Lynch's Panagyrical to Hollywood." Cinema Journal 43 (2004): 67-89. University of South Florida Lib., Tampa. 22 December 2005 <<http://muse.jhu.edu>>.
- Mitchell, Stuart. "How Secrets Travel: David Lynch and the Road." Sargeant and Watson 241-256.
- Mulholland Drive. Dir. David Lynch. Perf. Justin Theroux, Naomi Watts, Laura Elena Harring, Ann Miller, and Robert Forster. Universal, 2001. DVD. Universal 2002.
- Nochimson, Martha. P. "Wild at Heart in Hollywood: The Passion of David Lynch." Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997: 198-216.
- Pretty as a Picture: The Art of David Lynch. Dir. Toby Keeler. Perf. David Lynch, Jack Nance, Bill Pullman, Mel Brooks, Patricia Arquette, and Robert Loggia. Image, 1998. DVD. Image, 1998.
- Roche, David. "The Death of the Subject in David Lynch's *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*." EREA 2 (2004): 42-52. <<http://www.e-rea.org>>
- Rodley, Chris (Ed). "Lynch on Lynch." London: Faber and Faber, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Mr. Contradiction." Sight and Sound 7 (1996): 6-10.
- Sargeant, Jack and Watson, Stephanie. (eds). "Lost Highways: An Illustrated History of Road Movies." Creation Books, 1999: 241-256.
- Strauss, Bob. "America's Most Enigmatic Filmmaker Chases His Demons Down A Lost Highway." Interview with David Lynch. Eonline. <<http://www.eonline.com/Celebs/Lynch/interview2.html>>.
- This Mortal Coil. "Song to a Siren." By Tim Buckley. 4AD Records, 1984.

Wild at Heart. Dir. David Lynch. Perf. Nicolas Cage, Laura Dern, Willem Dafoe, Crispin Glover, Diane Ladd, Isabella Rossellini, and Harry Dean Stanton. Orion, 1990. DVD. MGM, 2004.

Williams, Hank. "Lost Highway." By Leon Payne. MGM, 1949.

Woods, Paul. A. "Weirdsville USA: The Obsessive Universe of David Lynch." London: Plexus, 1997: 176-87.

Zizek, Slavoj. "Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology." North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1994: 117.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: on David Lynch's Lost Highway." Washington: University of Washington Press, 2000.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Sublime Object of Ideology." New York: Verso, 1989: 114-15.

Zupanec, Alenka. "Ethics of the Real: Kant, Lacan." New York: Verso, 2000: 232.