

DAVID LYNCH: MOMENTARY CONSEQUENCES

DAVID LYNCH: MOMENTARY CONSEQUENCES FOR A FIRE WALKING
IDENTITY: AN INQUIRY INTO THE FANTASTIC/SYMPTOMATIC SELF AND ITS
COMPONENTS

By

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ABSTRACT

My thesis examines the ways in which the art of David Lynch and Slavoj Žižek intertwine. My research has led me to the discovery that the absent Žižekian 'big Other' that is responsible for maintaining symbolic cultural frameworks finds a direct representation in the character Bob from David Lynch and Mark Frost's *Twin Peaks*. The major emphasis of my thesis examines the idea that time does not exist outside of the human consciousness and that our lives exist in a symbiotic relationship between the symbolic universe — the world in which we are theoretically existing currently — and the post-symbolic universe of the Black Lodge. Within 'our' world the big Other is theoretically absent apart from its representation within the camera's lense. Within Bob's world, the big Other is Bob: Bob is the symbolic logical excess that cannot find a place within 'our' world yet exists theoretically nonetheless. Bob governs a dimension in which the inversion and convolution of the boundaries structuring symbolic reality — words becoming corporeal, bodies becoming linguistic — find a physical formulation. My thesis' contribution to knowledge lies in its extensive analysis of *Mulholland Drive* and its demonstration of how *Mulholland Drive* and *Twin Peaks* can be thought of as coincidentally occurring within and without of the temporal and spatial dimensions of each other. My development of the process of Fire Walking and its relations to Lynch's films also offers an interpretive tool that can be used to analyze several of Lynch's works. My thesis also offers methods through which an individual can understand his or her identity and cultural relationships.

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Chapter One: (In)Formal Lynchean/Žižekian Beginnings

My admiration for David Lynch dates back to an evening from December, 2000. During that evening, a snow and lightning storm struck Hamilton and I was forced to spend the night at a friend's house. My friend had copies of the last five episodes of the *Twin Peaks* television series which we proceeded to watch. I was immediately enthralled with *Twin Peaks'* bizarre narrative structure and proceeded to purchase the entire series and accompanying movie. The pleasure I gained from watching *Twin Peaks* was then transferred to the rest of David Lynch's repertoire as I avidly sought out the majority of his works. Several of the similarities between Lynch's narratives gave me the idea that Lynch is continually recycling a bizarre, uncanny theme throughout his texts. The criticism I read regarding Lynch's art also alluded to the several ways in which his narratives flow within and without of each other; however, none of the critics I encountered explicitly suggested that the process of Fire Walking is the underlying kernel or element uniting Lynch's texts. Hence, I felt compelled to write this thesis in the interests of offering something to the Lynchean interpretive community. Additionally, the recent release of *Mulholland Drive* has provided me with a contemporary Lynchean work

to analyze and one of the goals within my thesis is to demonstrate how Fire Walking allows us to understand what is happening in *Mulholland Drive*.

The leading Lynchean critics — in my opinion — are Slavoj Žižek and Michael Chion. Chion's analysis of Lynch's films is far-reaching, rigorous and meticulous while Žižek's work places Lynch within a broad political, ethical, ideological and cultural framework. The most salient and compelling features of Žižek's work are found in the way in which he incorporates critical egalitarianism within the structure of his texts. Žižek incorporates the history of philosophy, juvenile jokes, various contemporary political events, and films such as *My Best Friend's Wedding* into his arguments in order to suggest that every object has some kind of critical and cultural value. His embrace of political events, Marx, Lacan and the manifold textures of Pop Culture allows him to formally interrogate the Lacanian Real by highlighting the commensurate nature of everything or the fact that everything necessarily exists in a symbiotic relationship, a symbiotic relationship that prevents us from directly accessing the Real.

In my thesis, I have employed a framework which embraces a point of view in which everything works with and against everything else to attempt to forge an impossibly complete relationship with the Real. Our inability to obtain platonic completeness causes our need to appear like we are complete to become all the more significant. The public 'big Other' maintains a sense of completeness insofar as it attempts to justify its actions in the name of Justice. In other words, the actions of the Party or the political big Other are correct due to the appearance of completeness the

Party embodies. At the same time, the public supporting the party supports its appearance of correct behavior insofar as it uses the party as an icon of completeness through which to find a role model to aspire towards. Thus, the party's pseudo-completeness is supported by the public's belief in its just actions and the two work with and against each other to sustain the illusion of wholeness within an empty dimension.

Within the void of the dimension we inhabit, fantasy plays an integral role. Fantasies allow us to have fleeting moments of completeness that relate to the appearance of completeness upheld by the political big Other. Fantasies create systems for the satisfaction of individual desires, systems that allow subjects to maintain brief moments of hypothetical completeness. Thus, when I fantasize about having a piece of pie and then have that piece of pie I can have a moment of completeness, of satisfaction, of worry-free congeniality. The moments following the satisfaction of a desire often reinforce the *hollow incompleteness that remains within individuals after they have satisfied their desires*. Thus, fantasies are layered on top of one another in the form of goals, of possibilities, of what we are not and what we hope to be. The fleeting moments of completeness we gain through the satisfaction of our desires constantly lead us toward divergent fantasies that both create and rupture the completeness of the incomplete individual.

Within my thesis, symptoms are closely related to fantasies. I examine Žižek's argument that subjects within society develop symptoms which correspond to the ways in which they relate to their respective cultural frameworks. Two of the ways of examining

this phenomenon are provided by Lacan's different viewpoints regarding the big Other. The big Other can be thought of as the centered point holding society together, the political figurehead and party around which a culture develops. The political structure of a culture's party resonates throughout that culture causing individuals to form a conception of how they should relate to their culture in order to avoid being ostracized. If an individual fails to find a place within his or her cultural framework, then they can be thought of as containing a symptom that prevents their institutional integration. In order to find a place within their cultural framework the afflicted individual must confront his or her debilitating symptom in order to recognize and overcome that which is destroying his or her relationship to her or his culture. Afflicted individuals must find a way to create and attempt to achieve fantasies that are quasi-commensurate to those of their fellow citizens in order to convalesce. This is the viewpoint that corresponds to Lacan's earlier thoughts regarding a subjects relation to society.

According to Žižek, as Lacan's thought developed, he moved away from a system involving one principle focal point to one where that principle focal point was simply another point within an egalitarian system where every point worked together in the same way that each word within a language works with other words to support a linguistic structure. The important aspect of this viewpoint to remember is that the structures are open-ended. Thus, the Master Narrative with its constitutive elements and derivative symptoms is one narrative among many. Malfunctioning individuals may have misplaced their sanity or the methods through which they align themselves with their surrounding

institutions not because they are unable to abide by the dictates of a master-narrative, but because their fantastic sublimated idiosyncratic tic — their fantastic tic that forms their identity and allows them to function within society, their constitutive particular symptom — has been discovered, has been brought back from the depths of their past to confront them within the present and disrupt the layers of secondary material built upon its omnipresent absence. The de-sublimation of an individual's foundational quality, the quality that does not necessarily have anything to do with his or her society's dominant narrative, causes the foundation to become the goal, the origin to become the ending and derivatively collapses all of the secondary material — the individual's personality — that has been manufactured in between. Both of these symptoms or big Others are at work within the individual: the individual relates to his or her master narrative through the sublimation of their original constitutive personal quality, and from this forgotten quality the individual finds ways through which to relate to their surrounding environment. Other constitutive points are forged within an individual and as an individual develops it is important for them to move away from these constitutive points by forming other points that strive toward the future. Obsessing about the past causes people to recycle past events in the present and allows no room for personal development.

At the same time, individuals often have to confront their lost symptoms in order to challenge their established personality. Occasionally, the past is an individual's future insofar as similar patterns occur throughout an individual's lifetime that both allow and disrupt personal growth depending upon the individual's reaction to the confrontation.

Within my thesis, I argue that within the post-symbolic reality of *Twin Peaks'* Red Room, this is precisely what individuals encounter. During the process of Fire Walking, individuals must face and overcome the hidden symptoms within their personality in order to develop a quasi-infinite consciousness: one that can consciously function in both the symbolic and post-symbolic dimensions. In *Mulholland Drive*, Diane Selwyn approaches such an identity but is unable to negotiate the symbolically irrational consequences of actually being two people at once (rather than being two people at once theoretically through your influence upon others). Fred Madison's disappearance at the end of *Lost Highway* suggests that he has returned once again to the beginning of his reality after failing to sustain the consequences of symptomatic collision.

Within my thesis, I argue that *Twin Peaks'* Red Room forms its spatial and temporal boundaries in opposition to those from the symbolic plane. Both the symbolic and Lodgian worlds exist with one another in a relationship that attempts to reconstitute a union with pre-conscious Reality: with the feelings of completeness associated with a world in which I am unaware of my status as a thinking being. Within both dimensions, challenges exist, fantasies are generated and significant events traumatically disrupt the symbolic unity of an individual. The relationship between post-Realistic and post-post-Realistic reality is incomplete as well and the two realms exist with one another in an attempt to find that forgotten moment, that fundamental idiosyncratic tic that segregated humanity from a whole relationship with its surroundings.

My thesis suggests that one of the ways to collapse the dimensions between space

and time and bring us back into the eternal Present is to personalize the de-psychologized big Other. The personalized big Other makes it extremely difficult to negotiate established frameworks insofar as its personalization challenges the belief that hierarchical structures are concrete by exposing the fact that they are composed of capricious individuals. What I am suggesting is that humanity is not approaching some teleological end but the foundation of their forgotten beginning. In order for the beginning to begin an accidental event must trigger some kind of egalitarian chain reaction that results in everyone's simultaneous recognition of the equality of everyone else or the fact that there is no big Other. Without such an occurrence, I agree with Michael Chion's claim that *Eraserhead* and by extension *Twin Peaks*, *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive* are films about the impossibility of death.

Beginnings

In the opening moments of the television series *Twin Peaks*, Laura Palmer's corpse is discovered washed up on shore and wrapped in plastic. In the ending scenes of *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*, the last installment in the *Twin Peaks* series, Laura's dead body is once again found washed ashore and wrapped in plastic. *Twin Peaks* begins where it ends and concludes where it commenced and this process of beginning films/television programs at their end only to arrive at their ending through their beginning is characteristic of several of David Lynch's works. At the same time, where these works

actually begin and where they truly end is impossible to discern due to the several layers of beginnings and endings that are present within Lynchian creations. However, although the endings to these films are impossible to locate, they each occupy a distinctly conjoined place in an asymmetrical Lynchian universe. The structure of this universe is composed of extreme melodrama, obsessive violence, an atmosphere of the macabre juxtaposed with one of sentimentality and an encompassing awareness of a palpable yet amorphous strangeness — what is referred to in *Twin Peaks* lingo as “the evil in these woods.”

Lynch’s wilderness is populated by creatures whose nature continually fluctuates. The subtle ambiguity employed in the creation of Lynch’s characters resists designations such as protagonist or villain. Simultaneously, it is quite evident who the villains and heroes are in Lynch’s world even though their personalities and idiosyncracies often coincide. For instance, in *Blue Velvet* Frank Booth appears to be wicked. He is a drug dealing murderer who has kidnapped a woman’s husband and child in order to force her to engage in sexual relations. Jeffrey Beaumont (Frank’s counterpart) is an ingenuous youth who avidly desires new situations and experiences. Jeffrey defends Dorothy from Frank (in the scene where he asks Frank to leave her alone and then punches him) while coincidentally treating her in a similar manner (in the scene where he slaps her twice). Jeffrey may be the hero of *Blue Velvet* but the line between protagonist and villain is extremely ambivalent in this film.

In *On Blue Velvet*, Charles Drazin suggests that Frank is not evil but an immature infantile man who has had a traumatic childhood and can “communicate deep feeling only

through violence”(53).¹ Drazin points out Lynch’s suggestion that the most enduring aspect of Frank is that “he’s for real”, or that he is honest in every situation, never concealing his viewpoint beneath the veneer of propriety (53). He is Frank. He does what Frank wants and he will immediately tell you what he thinks about certain behaviors and actions with no regard for feelings or repercussions. At the same time, he is concerned for the well being of his friends, and, oddly enough, as Slavoj Žižek suggests, is an “enforcer of the fundamental respect for the socio-symbolic law” found within the unwritten rules of society (2002, 19). From Frank’s point of view, such unwritten rules include never consulting or telling the police anything (unless the police officers are corrupt themselves) and always ensuring that those who abide by similar rules — his friends — are treated respectfully.

Jeffrey, in contrast, breaks Frank’s unwritten rules. He engages in independent surveillance work for the police and does not have any friends to whom loyalty is required. Jeffrey subverts a number of society’s unwritten chivalric rules by stealing the partner of the highschool quarterback and threatening his Aunt Margaret. Unlike Frank, Jeffrey is consistently dishonest in his actions as he frequently lies to his partner, her parents and his own parents: Jeffrey’s behavior can therefore be thought of as quite “unreal.” In relation to Frank, Jeffrey’s transgressions are doubly subversive insofar as he undermines the advice of a police officer in order to undermine Frank’s unwritten rules and uphold the rules of the police officer (in the same way that Audrey Horne and James Hurley behave in *Twin Peaks*). Jeffrey’s transgressions allow him to save Dorothy from

Frank even though, as Michael Chion suggests, Frank's criminal actions also had Dorothy's best interests in mind.ⁱⁱ

The concurrent relationship Lynch establishes between Frank and Jeffrey contains the following characteristics as well. Both Jeffrey and Frank are in contact with police officers whose relationship to the law is ambiguous.ⁱⁱⁱ Frank and Jeffrey both treat women disgracefully, both Jeffrey and Frank are extremely petulant (notably during the oedipal scene where Jeffrey spies on Frank making love to Dorothy while calling her mommy) and both Frank and Jeffrey are honorable and dishonorable according to the different principles they uphold. Perhaps the relationship between Jeffrey and Frank represents Lynch's way of suggesting that people who undermine the principles which they uphold by embracing the principles they oppose in order to uphold the principles they believe in are the true heroes, for the one striking difference between Jeffrey and Frank is found in Frank's unrelenting adherence to his values (as opposed to Jeffrey's consistent subversion of his principles). Nevertheless, the ambiguity surrounding the heroic status of Jeffrey and Frank in *Blue Velvet* illustrates the numerous interpretative possibilities found within the wilderness of David Lynch.

Realistic Kernels

The palpable yet amorphous strangeness of the Lynchian dimension finds one of its most peculiar features in the way in which his works seem neither to begin nor end. The

beginnings and endings of Lynchian objects can be located in an infinite number of concrete locations depending upon the resources and ambitions of the researcher as well as several cultural, political, social, economical, situational and educational biases.

Coincidentally, I can say that the beginning of this thesis was found in my admiration for David Lynch's art, the support of James King and a paragraph about the impossibility of finding beginnings in the work of David Lynch. Nevertheless, my love for David Lynch and desire to incorporate his texts primarily into this thesis may stem from my appreciation for slasher films, the way in which we both enjoy reading Kafka, the similarities between Lynch's movies and several Faulknerian narratives, or the several years I spent watching *Cheers* and *The Simpsons*. Discovering the origin of something is like finding the owl that is responsible for an incessant hooting that travels through the wind and is 'realistically' transmitted by a revolving phonograph. Everywhere you search is simultaneously both the incorrect location and the burrow of emanation.

The designation 'kernel' can be used to describe the essence of a thing or the origin/beginning of a thing's Being. Of particular importance for this thesis is Slavoj Žižek's suggestion that "'Trauma' is that kernel of the Same which returns again and again, disrupting any symbolic identity" (1997, 95). In order to explain this point and how it relates to the Žižekian conception of the 'origin' of the human being/society/conscious ontological reality (as well as its relation to this thesis) we must examine Žižek's conception of the Event as it is described in *The Fragile Absolute*. For Žižek, "the Event is the impossible Real of a structure, of its synchronous symbolic order, the engendering

violent gesture which brings about the legal Order that renders this very gesture retroactively 'illegal', relegating it to the spectral repressed status of something that can never be fully acknowledged—symbolized—confessed”(92). The Event is the impossible Real of a structure because it represents the act that produced the foundations of the structure upon which the symbolic order of that structure and its components (the Law, Public authority, the Family) were institutionalized. The imaginary social harmony derived from the institutional symbolic order cannot directly acknowledge the actual Event that constitutes its first principles for in order to sustain the illusion of harmony within the established Order the foundations of its creation must be suppressed. Žižek is not simply saying that Events such as the French Revolution and the ensuing Terror it engendered will be erased from our memories or that we blindly ignore the acts of violence that maintain our symbolic structures. On the contrary, he asserts that we transfer our knowledge of the brutality underlying and subjugating our constructed social congruity onto the intangible body of the 'big Other.' The 'big Other' becomes the institution upon which we conceal our knowledge of the primary contradictions sustaining our culture's framework(s) and it is through belief in the general benevolence (and occasional malevolence) of the 'big Other' that we are able to suppress and inevitably forget about the Event constituting our ontology.

One of the ways in which the Event is institutionalized western societies is through Biblical stories such as the Garden of Eden. The Garden of Eden myth does not acknowledge the possibility that our World is one of manifold “absolutely idiosyncratic

pathological scenarios” that could have arisen from the pre-ontological ashes of pre-conscious Reality (Žižek 2000, 82). Instead, it constructs a fantasy that suggests that we have fallen from the *ONLY* refined spiritual state into a degraded situation that can *ONLY* be overcome by submitting our will to that which is designated as GOOD by religious institutions. By submitting to the logic inherent in such mythological constructions, we lose sight of the original Event constituting our existence and discover our ‘purpose’ in life [redemption, retirement income] through the principles of the ‘big Other’.^{iv}

Žižek proceeds to complicate things by designating Eternity as “the name for the Event or Cut that sustains, opens up, the dimension of temporality as the series/succession of failed attempts to grasp it” (Žižek 2000, 95). Žižek equates eternity with trauma and states:

Trauma is ‘eternal’; it can never be properly temporalized/historicized, it is the point of ‘eternity’ around which time circulates — that is to say, it is an Event accessible within time only through its multiple traces. Eternity and time (in the sense of temporalization/historicization) are thus far from being simply opposed: in a sense, there is no time without eternity: temporality is sustained by our failure to grasp/symbolize/historicize the ‘eternal’ trauma. If trauma were to be successfully temporalized/historicized, the very dimension of time would implode/collapse into a timeless eternal Now. This is the point to be made against historicism: that it fails to take into account the reference to some traumatic point of Eternity that sustains temporality itself. If, then, we claim that each concrete historical constellation generates its own eternity, this does *not* simply mean that Eternity is the ideological myth generated by historical reality: Eternity is, rather, that which is *excluded* so that historical reality can maintain its consistency(96).

In this citation, Eternity is equated with the original necessarily suppressed Event responsible for the maintenance of time. Eternity is responsible for temporalization

insofar as it is the Event that creates humanity's self-consciousness, in the sense that humanity becomes conscious of itself as humanity after and only after the Event of Eternity severs our immersion within pre-symbolic Reality (the awareness that we exist within reality destroys our complete, symbiotic immersion within it). Temporalization leads to historicism insofar as an awareness of symbolic reality allows us to recognize *time passing and to create a history of that time as it passes* (whether that history be written or oral). Trauma can never be historicized insofar as we cannot locate the precise moment in time (the Event) where trauma began (in the same way that the commencing moment of a Lynchean narrative cannot be permanently pinpointed). Trauma is the disorienting result of humanity's self-consciousness and necessarily accompanies every temporal epoch and historical constellation due to its constitutive (indescribable, necessarily forgotten) place within our ability to generate conceptions such as 'epoch' and 'constellation.' Trauma exists innately within us insofar as it allows us to *maintain an awareness that we have been segregated from a pre-conscious state that provided us with a complete integration into Reality: trauma is the persistent reminder that we can never be entirely temporalized or historicized — we cannot become a linguistic sign — because of the fact that our self-consciousness negates our ability to integrate into social life ideally* (thus the importance of maintaining the appearance of ideal integration within the symbolic order and a healthy belief in the Goodness of the 'big Other').

The traumatic kernel of the Same that diligently re-establishes itself is the constitutive Event's persistent reminder that time is dependent upon Eternity (Eternity

being the Eternal moment that generated time's structure that is forever present within manifold traumatic forms) and that time and eternity are directly interrelated. Eternity is also that Event which can never be fully realized or acknowledged because our direct confrontation with it would force us into a frame of mind that simultaneously recognizes both the continuous structure of time and its obscene underlying support: the trauma inherent within the idea that time flows continually within the symbolic realm and nothing Really happens. The simultaneous recognition of time and the original Event constituting its traumatic nature would collapse the dimensions of the space time continuum and cause us to directly confront the symbolically unbearable/unattainable presence of the Now. In short, a total dissolution of the interstices maintaining the interplay between Eternity and Time would collapse our symbolic world and force our feeble identities to acknowledge the deafening pressure of a moment.

Purpose

In the subsequent chapters of this thesis I will examine several of the interrelations between the cinema of David Lynch and the work of Slavoj Žižek. In Chapter Two, I will expand upon Žižek's conception of the 'big Other' as well as the de-psychologized individual and demonstrate their relationship to Lynch's *Eraserhead*, *The Angriest Dog in the World* and Patrick McGoohan's *The Prisoner*. I have chosen to incorporate *The Prisoner* into this thesis because its form offers us an excellent tool for understanding the

'big Other.' The second part of Chapter Two will discuss Žižek's differentiation between fantasy and reality by focusing on his interpretation of *Lost Highway*. Some of the other themes and motifs that will flow throughout Chapter Two include the individual's relation to society, the subject's empty identity and the constitution of the Lacanian Real. Chapter Two sets out to clarify the relations an individual has to society, their identity, time, reality and fantasy.

Chapter Three will provide a comprehensive analysis of Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* and an introduction to the framework of the Red Room from *Twin Peaks*. I will demonstrate how *Mulholland Drive* relates to the 'big Other' while examining its affinities to the traumatic kernel of the eternal return of the Same by situating it within *Twin Peaks*. In order to do this I will offer a detailed analysis of 'Fire Walking' that will also illustrate the ways in which *Twin Peaks* and *Mulholland Drive* (and several other Lynchian narratives) can be thought of as separate episodes in a continuous/static narrative. We must always bear in mind the traumatic relationship the individual has with Reality and the ways in which the 'big Other's' absent presence constitutes our social relations. I will examine how the dimensions of the Black Lodge/Red Room support infinite temporal and spatial de-stabilization within the post-symbolic transcendental confines of a symbolically realistic temporal and spatial excess. The Fire Walking individuals occupying the Lodge must face the ultimate paradox of unlimited freedom as they encounter the irrational force of Bob, who is the post-symbolic corporeal embodiment of the 'big Other.' I will argue that the events taking place within Bob's dimension exist symbiotically with our own and

that only through the personalization of the 'big Other' can we collapse the distinction between our dimensions and enter the body of the Now. In order to explain this point, we will see how the events taking place within the Lodge's boundaries relate to symbolic reality and occur within a discontinuous simultaneity unbeknownst to their respective Fire Walkers. My thesis can be thought of as an attempt to demonstrate the ways in which our reality resembles a twirling stick hovering overtop of the vertex of an open-ended cone, the stick symbolizing social reality and the post-symbolic dimensions of the Lodge, the cone depicting the void from which everything heretofore has originated.

Preliminary Ideas

But before I can clarify these points, I will conclude Chapter One by offering a more thorough analysis of some of the kernel(s) of David Lynch's cinema. In locating the kernel of something, describing an artist's work as either X or Y or both Y and W, critics often focus upon the striking features of the work they are interrogating. The striking features of a work of art vary from person to person — as do the striking features of a piece of criticism — and manifold interpretations of artistic objects arise. Two of the salient features of Lynch's art that I find intriguing are the general ways in which his works (as I have mentioned before) neither begin nor end (while beginning and ending) and the ways in which he transposes different worlds on top of one another (notably in David Bowie's scene from *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*).

In "Appendix D: A *Twin Peaks* Calender" from *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to Twin Peaks*, the first entry is from Sunday February 5th and states that Laura Palmer gives James Hurley half of her necklace (Lavery, 204). In the *Twin Peaks* realm, this point can be taken as the starting point of the *Twin Peaks* saga or where the phenomenon began. However, a more accurate description of *Twin Peaks'* beginning refers to the first scene from the pilot episode where a close up is shown of Josie Packard applying lip stick. Josie's scene is the first actual *Twin Peaks* action although I suppose the first *Twin Peaksian* moment occurs at the opening of the credits where a Bewicks wren fades into a pulp and paper mill. Then again, chronologically speaking, the first *Twin Peaks'* moment occurs in the prequel *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* where a television set's destruction signifies that *Twin Peaks* has entered the realm of film. At the same time, the beginning of *Twin Peaks* can be thought of as the first actual *Twin Peaks* episode, aired on April 12th 1990, or the conversation between Mark Frost and David Lynch at Du Pars coffee shop in Los Angeles where they both suddenly had the image of a body washing up on the shore of a lake.^v

Yet, it is difficult to consider *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* as the beginning of *Twin Peaks* since it is the last installment in the *Twin Peaks* series. Coincidentally, the action within *Fire Walk* unravels before, during and after the end of the *Twin Peaks* television program. Nevertheless, *Fire Walk* does finish *Twin Peaks* and is actually its ending, even though it is the beginning. As Mariá M. Carrión suggests, "inevitably, Cooper's last dream brings us back to the first, that exciting and also intense moment of

creativity that *Twin Peaks* offered its true readers during their . . . honeymoon period. The circular ruins of fiction come to an end. And yet, it is an unreal end. Because as we know, the labyrinth only has one end: the exit”(245).

The ending of *Fire Walk* recognizes the questions surrounding *Twin Peaks*' asymmetrical structure as Lynch places the scene from the first half hour of the *Twin Peaks Pilot* where the plastic is unraveled from Laura Palmer's dead corpse near the end of the film. At the same time, there is a sense that the end of *Twin Peaks* takes place in the last episode of *Twin Peaks* where Agent Cooper enters the Black Lodge. Within this episode, the scene from the *Twin Peaks Pilot* where the waitress Heidi enters the Double R Café and Bobby and Shelley ask her why she is late is repeated almost word for word even though she has not appeared in any of *Twin Peaks*' intermittent episodes. The uncanny repetition of Heidi's scene suggests that *Twin Peaks* has come full circle, although Heidi appears again in *Fire Walk* with a broken nose, a detail that symbolically indicates that such an interpretation is incorrect.

Many similarities exist between *Twin Peaks*, *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive* as well, similarities that suggest that the *Twin Peaks* narrative has continued in a different form, transformed from the world of *Twin Peaks* to that of *Lost Highway* or *Mulholland Drive*. As Maximilian Le Cain suggests, in each of these three films, “fantasies can be interpreted as vain attempts to escape from events too horrible to handle. Rather than relating the facts of what has happened, Lynch's films play out like dreams inspired by them”(1). Concurrently, affinities can be found between all of Lynch's films suggesting

that *Twin Peaks*' dream world may have commenced with his short film *The Grandmother* from 1970. After all, both the Grandmother and Grandson from *The Grandmother* return to Lynch's universe in *Twin Peaks Episode 9* and *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*. The important thing to remember is not that the beginning of *Twin Peaks* cannot be located but that *Twin Peaks* did begin. Lynch may be suggesting that the inability to discover the beginning of *Twin Peaks* reflects the individual's inability to KNOW their self, although such individuals can certainly know that they are thinking, breathing, knowing beings.

The interrelations of Lynch's works and the ways in which his films seem to be continuing an ever-flowing narrative gives his audience the sense that different worlds are being transposed onto one another. In *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*, we find an explicit example of this Lynchian characteristic in David Bowie's cameo appearance as FBI agent Phillip Jeffries, a scene that (in)directly transposes one Lynchian world on top of another. Bowie's scene also presents several clues relating to the mysterious Black Lodge from the final episode of *Twin Peaks* and epitomizes Lynchian cinema in general.

The David Bowie or Phillip Jeffries scene is four minutes and 20 seconds long and takes place at the FBI's Philadelphia offices. The scene begins with Agent Dale Cooper entering Gordon Cole's office at 10:10 am on February 16th. Cooper informs Cole (played by Lynch himself) that he "was worried about today because of the dream [he] told [him] about" (Lynch and Engels, 1993). We then see Dale entering and leaving a hallway in order to discover whether or not his appearance remains in the hallway on a video camera

when he is no longer present within that hallway. We are uncertain whether or not these actions are Dale's description of his dream or actually taking place. Dale eventually looks at the video camera only to see that his presence remains frozen in the passageway as Phillip Jeffries passes him. Time's current for the duration of Jeffries' stay has ceased (as is suggested by Dale's frozen presence on the video camera) and it becomes evident that he entered the building through electric wires that placed him into the elevator and allowed his presence to arrest time.

Jeffries enters Gordon Cole's office and pronounces an odd statement about a woman named Judy. As his dialogue continues, it is interrupted by a concurrent scene developing within an empty wooden room. The two scenes proceed, interlaced with each other, with many of the characters from the Black Lodge appearing (the focus of the scene is upon the characters from the Black Lodge and we hear Jeffries' dialogue overtop of theirs; static blurs the lines between the scenes as they unravel). The dialogues from the scenes occur as follows:

Jeffries (we no longer see Jeffries but we can hear his voice): I sure as hell want to tell you everything.

Man From Another Place: Garmonbozia. This is a Formica table.

Jeffries: oh believe me I followed.

M.F.A.P: Green is its colour.

Jeffries: It was green: we live inside a dream.

Grandson: Fell a Victim.

M.F.A.P: with this ring I thee wed.

Jeffries: it was above a convenience store.

A mouth with a giant tongue: Electricity.

Jeffries: Listen all, listen carefully, I've been to one of their meetings.

Bob signals the end of the meeting. The wooden room transforms into the Black Lodge.

Jeffries: oh God baby damn no I found something.^{vi}
Grandson is shown looking out from behind a mask^{vii}
Jeffries: and then there they were.

Jeffries is then shown screaming within the Black Lodge and it is revealed that there is no record of his entry into the building and that he appeared from and vanished into thin air. As he disappears, the camera focuses on electric wires which suggests that Jeffries' spirit traveled through an electrical conduit joining two separate dimensions, entered the elevator, briefly spoke with Dale, Gordon and Alfred Rosenfeld and then disappeared into the wires again. After Jeffries' disappearance, Gordon mentions that he has been missing for two years.

The potential Lynchean kernels present within the Philadelphia scene and their relationship to the epitome of Lynchean cinema revolve around the following characteristics. First of all, there is the number of different ways that the scene can be interpreted. Is it a dream? Is it Phillip Jeffries' way of telling Cooper about the Black Lodge, of warning him about the adversaries he will face during his stay in *Twin Peaks*, of preparing him for his Fire Walk with Bob? Does it represent Lynch's life in Philadelphia, the city he credits for giving him his first original script idea, Phillip Jeffries representing a young, impoverished Lynch, Gordon Cole an older wiser version of his self trying to understand the forces underlying his conception of what he was like when he lived in Philadelphia? Does it represent Lynch's endeavour to obfuscate cinematically the constructed boundaries between Time and Eternity and confront us with the presence of the Now?

Lynch has described ideas as being “the strangest things, because they suddenly enter into your conscious mind and you don’t know really where they come from — where they existed before they were introduced to you. They could mean something, or they could just be there for you to work with”(Rodley 1997, 48). Lynch’s description of how an idea enters the mind resembles Jeffries’ sudden entrance into the Philadelphia FBI offices in *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*: he enters, has an odd conversation, is challenged by the forces from the Black Lodge and then disappears. If Phillip represents one of Lynch’s fledglings ideas, then the Man from Another Place could symbolize the doubt that accompanies the individual who is unsure of himself, the person that lacks the necessary confidence to transform his developing ideas into a furiously creative conflagration. The Man’s lines are “garmonbozia” or pain and sorrow — the pain and sorrow that accompanies never following your dreams, which as Phillip Jeffries suggests, we live inside of; “this is a Formica table” — Formica being a strong laminated plastic material with a hard, smooth, shiny heat-resistant surface, a hard cold surface resistant to the vibrance of creative energy; “green is its colour” — green being the traditional colour of jealousy, jealousy being something that characteristically hinders rather than develops; and “with this ring I thee wed” — or if you do not break the pattern it will return perennially and Phillip will always present himself to the mind but will never occupy a permanent residence. Then again, Lynch has stated that “all my films are about trying to find love in hell” and perhaps Phillip is simply that: Love in Hell (Olson, 44).

If Phillip is thought of as being the Grandson, then we should note that he has found a way to occupy two places at once, a logical impossibility. At the same time, Cooper is occupying two places at once as is shown by his frozen image on the video screen. The process of creation in certain ways allows individuals to occupy two places at the same time spiritually if not corporeally. Perhaps this is Lynch's ultimate message: we do inhabit things even when we are not there and there are pervasive presences that are associated with while being dissociated from individuals. These presences are difficult to note but occasionally an epiphany unfurls that enables us briefly to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of them, a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying mysteries of reality.

In his analysis of *The Grandmother*, Michael Chion states that "David Lynch's . . . disconcerting world is based upon . . . a very peculiar logic requiring us to renounce all *a priori* interpretations of behavior and facts, whether taken separately or in succession"(Chion, 21). Chion's point is that in order to understand the art of David Lynch we must learn how not to understand the very foundations through which we have learned to understand. After achieving this not-understanding perhaps we can enter the unattainable realm of the Now concealed by the traumatic kernel of the return of the Same. Perhaps we can confront the Platonic form of the Good, or discover that there can be Love within Hell.

As the Log Lady notes in *Twin Peaks Episode 5*: "shut your eyes and you'll burst into

flames”(Frost 1993).

End Notes

i. Frank's intensely violent love is illustrated when he informs Jeffrey passionately: “I'll send you a love letter, straight from my heart, fucker. Do you know what a love letter is? It's a bullet from a fucking gun, fucker. You receive a bullet from me you're fucked forever”(Lynch 1990). After uttering these lines, Frank proceeds to pummel Jeffrey, and, as some critics have suggested, rapes him. Frank's actions suggest that this is his way of telling Jeffrey that he loves him or has a deep respect for Jeffrey's unruly behavior.

ii. Chion points out that Jeffrey's line “I think Frank cut the ear I found off [Dorothy's] husband as a warning to her to stay alive” suggests that Dorothy is suicidal and “Frank prevents [her] from becoming depressed and slipping into the void by beating her, kidnapping her child and husband and then cutting off the man's ear”(95). What Chion means here is that Dorothy prevents herself from committing suicide by becoming convinced via Frank that if she kills herself, her child and husband will die as well. While she was still with her husband and child, their lives did not depend upon the continuation of her own.

Dorothy's refusal to phone the police illustrates how Frank upholds a certain kind of socio-symbolic law. In certain circles, the police are depicted as ruthless villains not to be consulted under any circumstances. Such circles prefer to deal with things internally and anyone who disregards this (un)written rule and appeals to the police for assistance is regarded as treacherous. Žižek suggests that “the paradoxical role of unwritten rules is that, with regard to the explicit, public Law, they are simultaneously *transgressive* (they violate explicit social rules) and *more coercive* (they are additional rules which restrain the field of choice by prohibiting the possibilities allowed for — guaranteed, even — by the public Law)”(1997, 29). Unwritten rules are more coercive because the police cannot protect individuals at all times. The police inhabit the world of public Law, a world that can be appealed to for assistance in times of need while remaining outside of the domain of the private citizen. People who exist outside of this framework are surrounded by pervasive unwritten rules that will be enforced when the police are absent. Unwritten rules exist regardless of the presence of a symbolic authority and in this way are more coercive than written laws. Thus, Dorothy's refusal to phone the police because of her adherence to unwritten rules demonstrates Frank's metaphorical role as a more coercive socio-symbolic law than the public Law itself.

Additionally, at the end of *Blue Velvet*, Dorothy is shown playing with her son after Jeffrey and the police save him from Frank's gang of thugs. The police are unable to save Dorothy's husband or Frank and both are murdered (the former by Frank and the latter by Jeffrey). In this way, the socio-symbolic law upheld by Frank is undermined, which suggests that Dorothy may commit suicide upon being reunited with her family. However, because Dorothy's husband (metaphorical public Law) is murdered by the unwritten socio-symbolic law (Frank), Dorothy is able to overcome her attachment to the public Law, the attachment that was itself causing her to commit suicide (Dorothy's husband can function as a public law figure because his relationship with Dorothy provides her with the symbolic identity that is credited as being 'normal' and 'acceptable' by frameworks that provide a positive public image for people ensconced within the institution of marriage. Public Law indicates that marriage abides by socially acceptable principles and so forth). Dorothy's relationship with Frank or the unwritten socio-symbolic law is possibly suicidal as well, and Jeffrey's murder of Frank breaks her attachment to that law. Jeffrey represents both the public Law and the socio-symbolic law insofar as he upholds the public Law while coincidentally subverting it. By murdering Frank, Jeffrey sets Dorothy free because she no longer has to adhere to either the public Law or the socio-symbolic and can aptly abide by the dictates of both, as is represented by her relationship to Jeffrey. Thus, from this line of argumentation it seems like the only thing saving Dorothy from suicide is becoming "one and the same spectator, split in [her]self" rather than one and the same spectator solidified in herself (Žižek 2002, 5).

iii. The "good cop" (Detective John Williams) appears to uphold the law and assists Jeffrey in defeating Frank in *Blue Velvet's* denouement. However, Detective Williams is also extremely creepy, so creepy that Michael Chion has accused him of being incestuous. The "bad cop", Gordon/The Yellow Man, is assumed to be underhanded because of his association with Frank, but he could have simply been working undercover for he ends up with a bullet in the head before we learn anything about him. The main argument for the corruption of The Yellow Man finds its support in a conversation Frank has with Ben where he describes how he and a certain Gordon murdered a drug dealer. However, whether or not The Yellow Man is the Gordon from that murder is not explained. Further, he could have murdered the drug dealer in order to gain Frank's trust, infiltrate Frank's world, and arrest the king rather than one of the pawns. This theory coincides with the position of his body after he is shot in the head insofar as he stands motionless with pieces of his brain showing, an illustration that suggests Frank shot him after he "stood up" for the law. Further, when his police radio makes a noise, he knocks a light over with his left hand, suggesting that the police radio is "shedding some light" onto his real involvement in Frank's life. At the same time, his motionless stance could represent the unyielding nature of the law and the bullet in his head may suggest a warning to those who

undermine that which they are theoretically supposed to uphold — the idea being that contradicting the solid foundation that theoretically upholds your society and pays your wages is equivalent to putting a bullet in your head. Jeffrey would be excluded from the Yellow Man's fate since he does not directly contradict the foundations of his symbolic identity. Detective Williams is excluded from this fate as well by maintaining his appearance as "good cop" in the eyes of Jeffrey. When the police radio suddenly jars the atmosphere, and the Yellow Man knocks the light over he may be indicating that "the lights are out" on his underhanded double dealings.

Detective Williams may have been The Yellow Man's partner as is suggested when they go out for dinner. When Jeffrey shows Detective Williams the pictures of Frank and The Yellow Man together, Williams immediately asks Jeffrey if anyone else has seen the photographs. Jeffrey mentions that the developers have seen the pictures as well and Detective Williams must take this fact into account when considering whether or not to dispose of Jeffrey (if we think of Williams as being involved with The Yellow Man and Frank). Because Jeffrey and the photo lab have both seen the pictures, Detective Williams could see this as an excellent opportunity to double-cross his partners and save his own reputation (rather than killing Jeffrey and the developers and continuing his relationship with The Yellow Man and Frank).

iv. Žižek uses several examples to demonstrate the effectiveness and importance of believing in the 'big Other' in order to avoid directly confronting the viscous underlying principles upholding our symbolic structures. In *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, Žižek evidences this idea by analyzing the suicide of the arch-Stalinist writer Alexander Fadeyev. In his analysis, Žižek inverts the standard notion that Fadeyev's suicide demonstrated his honest faith for Stalinism proper. Upon hearing a detailed list of Stalin's serpentine engagements in Khrushchev's secret report at the Twentieth Soviet Congress, Fadeyev was confronted with the horror of "who" Stalin actually was; however, "in all probability, he was fully aware of the utter corruption of [Stalin's] system" (Žižek, 72). According to Žižek, Fadeyev's suicide was the result of the Soviet party's official recognition of Stalin's atrocities and the way in which such a recognition publically exposed the underlying monstrous nature of the Soviet Stalinist 'big Other.' At the same time, the Soviet 'big Other' was recognizing its own fallacious foundations publically. If Fadeyev truly believed in the official status of the Soviet 'big Other' that Stalin symbolized, then he would have realized that his support for the theoretical 'big Other' (in the form of Stalin) was the paramount factor constituting his belief. His suicide exposed his direct disbelief insofar as he refused to support the 'big Other' as soon as the 'big Other' publically contradicted his subjective construction of the 'big Other.' When Khrushchev denounced Stalin, he was representing the same 'big Other' Stalin previously embodied, and, therefore, if Fadeyev 'truly' believed in Stalin, he would have openly transformed his Stalinist admiration into disgust in order to continue upholding the same

structure Stalin himself upheld. As Žižek states in *The Plague of Fantasies*, “when, to put it in Hegelese, Faith loses its substantial weight — it becomes crucial to *maintain the appearance* of Faith”(158).

v. Rodley 1997, 157. It should be noted that *Twin Peaks* is also the creation of Mark Frost and several different writers and directors were employed throughout the duration of the show. Lynch directed the pilot, episodes 2, 8, 9, 14, 29 and *Fire Walk With Me*. *Twin Peaks*' other directors are Tina Rathbone, Tim Hunter, Duwayne Dunham, Lesli Linka Glatter, Caleb Deschanel, Mark Frost, Todd Holland, Graeme Clifford, Uli Edel, Diane Keaton, James Foley, Jonathan Sanger and Stephen Gyllenahaal. The other principle writers are Mark Frost, Harley Peyton, and Robert Engels and Jerry Stahl, Barry Pullman, Scott Frost and Tricia Brock wrote for the series as well.

vi. What Jeffries is actually saying here is difficult to understand. His line within *Fire Walk With Me* is definitely different from that within its script although what he is truly saying is somewhat of a mystery.

vii. Independent film director Brandon Moll has suggested that the Grandson is Phillip Jeffries' bodily form within the Black Lodge. After Jeffries mentions that he has found something, the Grandson is shown looking out from behind a mask made of clay and this coincidence evidences the idea that they are the same person. Further, the Grandson is present at the meeting of evil forces (Bob and the Man From Another Place) even though he assists Laura Palmer and Donna Hayward throughout *Twin Peaks*. His goodness is symbolically demonstrated in this scene by his mask which is not molded to his face (as is the identical mask that is shown on the face of the wicked man in red jumping up and down). It seems as if Jeffries has infiltrated Bob's gang unbeknownst to Bob and has not been destroyed by Bob's malice.

Chapter Two: Beware: Your Other is Insubstantial. Fantastic!

The first part of this chapter will focus on Žižek's discussion of Lacan's notion of the 'big Other' and will culminate in an examination of *Eraserhead*, *The Angriest Dog in the World* and *The Prisoner*. The second section will discuss Žižek's differentiation between fantasy and reality by examining *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch's Lost Highway* and *The Fragile Absolute*.

Constructed Emptiness: Symptomatic Lynchian and McGoohanian Idiosyncracies

And then there is nothing, nothing but free-floating signifiers in a hypothetically constructed world that has no concrete relation to what designates it as "democratic" or "capitalist." The definitions, the rules outlining the ways in which we construct frameworks and systems (whether they be VCR instructions or the inner workings of an established government) are called into question and labeled as either either/or or both/and and both either/or and both/and depending on the position of the individual. Basically, the theoretical world can be thought of as a post-structural either/and continuum where an everlasting altercation between those believing that there is

“something”(matter?) and those believing that there is “nothing”(anti-matter?) disseminates and pushes us forward under the pretense of progress or a lack thereof.

Whether or not reality is post-structural (in constant flux) or platonic (things actually do correspond to the definitions they have been given — a temporal cat in fact relates to the Platonic transcendental one) is a fascinating question that continually bewilders the mind. Is there a center within the human being? A kernel designating his or her essence, an X that states he/she is *this*? Is such a *this* simply an illusory fabrication, a fantastic caricature grounded by a wind whose breeze blows across the abyss of eternity? Should we search for this kernel in order to discover who we *are* or is the search for this kernel merely a distraction to prevent us from becoming what we can be (therefore we should not worry about knowing ourselves but should ponder who we actually are not)?

In *The Plague of Fantasies*, Slavoj Žižek offers an answer to these questions by describing what can be thought of as the void at the heart of reality: the ultimate unattainable X whose definition we view as demanding our immediate attention (this X corresponds to the Event discussed in this thesis' Introduction). When a definition for the unattainable X does not present itself immediately, fantastic constructions are created to explain its characteristics. An example of this process that Žižek frequently mentions is the role of the Jewish person in anti-Semitism. The unattainable X that the anti-Semite seeks is social harmony or a higher degree of respect for his or herself within the socio-symbolic order. Žižek suggests that “the anti-Semitic demonic image of the Jew, the Jewish plot, [is] an evocation of the ultimate Horror which, precisely, is the phantasmic

screen enabling us to avoid confrontation with the social antagonism”(1997, 40). The anti-Semite demonizes Jewish persons and blames Semitic peoples for the failure of society to achieve a higher level of congruity. From this point of view, if the Jewish race is exterminated, society will come closer to reaching the anti-Semite's utopic vision, and the anti-Semite believes he or she will find more respect within the socio-symbolic order because the (theoretically prestigious) positions once occupied by the Jewish race will become vacant.

The anti-Semite overlooks the idea that what he or she has labeled as “the Horror” is nothing more than a fantastic screen concealing the unsettling traumatic void at the heart of existence (or the realization that social harmony is an idealistic construction that can never be actualized). It is certainly much easier to believe that X (social harmony) can be achieved if and only if Y (the anti-Semite's depiction of the Jew) is eliminated. And since Y is something that can never be eliminated (and even if it was, another Y would replace it until the world destroyed itself) the anti-Semitic fantasy reverberates perennially. After all, if the anti-Semite ever attained what he sought then he would cease to be who he is — his direct confrontation with fantasy would automatically negate his established reality — he would find what he seeks to be more sickening than that which he already has insofar as it would force him to encounter the disgusting (necessarily incomplete) nature of his convoluted point of view/“big Other”.¹

Žižek equates the horror inherent in ideological constructions such as anti-Semitism with the “screen masking the void”(1997, 40). Žižek illustrates his conception

of the void with “the uncanny power of the motif of a ship drifting along alone, without a captain or any living crew to steer it. This is the ultimate horror: not the proverbial ghost in the machine, but the machine in the ghost: there is *no* plotting agent behind it, the machine just runs by itself, as a blind contingent device”(40). In this example, we find one of the ways in which to read the Lacanian mathem of the subject, the ‘barred subject’(\$). In a discussion of how subjects relate to the symbolic order, Žižek states that the subject emerges by displacing “his innermost self-experience onto the ‘reified’ symbolic order”(2002, 27). The subject becomes someone by accepting the symbolic order as real: by living in it and being born into it the symbolic order becomes a direct extension of your identity. However, by accepting the symbolic order, or internalizing the institutional ‘big Other’, the subject becomes a barred subject(\$), a subject that is empty or necessarily separated from his identity, his innermost fantasmatic kernel having been transposed onto the ‘reified’ ‘big Other’ (society, the Law, the symbolic order). The center of the human being subsequently becomes a void, a machine (the symbolic order) within a ghost (\$). Derivatively, if society is thought of as being composed of machine ghosts adhering to a constructed symbolic order, then it functions like a ship, drifting along without anyone’s guidance, mindlessly reproducing or devouring itself for no other purpose than to reproduce itself.ⁱⁱ The void at the heart of humanity, the horror underlying social reality is that we are constantly recycling the same images and ideas one after the other, purposefully/randomly replacing X with Y and Y with XC — and that X, Y and XC do not relate to any particular Thing or have any definite purpose apart from maintaining

the appearance that there is some paramount Olympian precipice that we are attempting to reach. The latent content of our reality manifests itself in a random array of images having nothing to do with what the latent content IS and everything to do with championing this or that theory as the closest possible example of what reality IS (whatever is championed today as representing reality being easily replaced by whatever society classifies as the most *en vogue* realistic depiction tomorrow, even if these separate realistic designations are almost identical).ⁱⁱⁱ

At this point, an expansion of what is meant by 'symbolic order' or Žižek's conception of Lacan's notion of the 'big Other' will complement our examination. In an investigation of reality, Žižek maintains that:

the ultimate reality is NOT the gap between subjective pathologies and the "objective" pathology inscribed into the ideologico-political system itself: what the direct assertion of this gap leaves unexplained is how the "objective" system, independent of subjective psychic fluctuations, *is accepted by the subjects as such*. That is to say, one should always bear in mind that the difference between "subjective" pathologies and the libidinal economy of the "objective" ideological system is ultimately something inherent to the subject(s): there is an "objective" socio-symbolic system *only insofar as subjects treat it as such*.(2002, 26).

From this line of argumentation, that which cannot be known — the underlying incomprehensible nature of reality (the Lacanian Real that existed prior to the symbolic order's constitutive Event and still exists in the eternal return of Trauma^{iv}) — is not the space between my subjective conception of myself and the objective definition of myself built into the ideologico-political system itself. Žižek is saying that there is no space between the objective socio-symbolic system and subjective empirical interpretations of

that system: our subjective conceptions of self are based upon our (dis)identification with that system insofar as we are ensconced by it.^v There is no gap between ourselves and the system: we are the system and the system is us, dialectically, ontologically, and, naturally, theoretically. We are the system whether or not we choose to abide by or segregate ourselves from its rules. The refusal to abide by the rules or identify with the system can result in either severe penalties (prison) or great benefits (urban legends about computer hackers being hired by the government to defend computer networks). Of course the benefits can be thought of as the penalties and vice versa depending on your relation to the system at the time in which you are contacted by them. Additionally, the gap between the system and ourselves is an inherent part of ourselves and is a principle (absent) coordinate of the void within our being (our conceptions of our relationship to the system being an unanswerable X [we cannot Realistically become an institution although we can ACT on its behalf] and our theoretical existence outside of the system being another unattainable X [we can only exist outside of the system if we never become self-conscious and if we never become self-conscious we can never have any knowledge of the system])). Coincidentally, the system through which we form our identity is hypothetical, requiring us to believe in it in order for it to thrive and continue. As Lenora Ledwon suggests, “definitions, like old mansions are inclined to be haunted — haunted by past definitions and grey areas. Further, such definitions all too often reduce and trivialize a complex subject”(261). We can be thought of as reduced and trivialized subjects to a certain extent insofar as our conceptions of self — our mansions — are based upon beliefs in a system

supported by opaque definitions that often contradict that which the system itself theoretically upholds.

In order to expand upon these Žižekian ideas let us examine a majestic illustration. In *The Plague of Fantasies*, Žižek states that “subjects who hail a certain person as a king are not aware that this person is a King only insofar as they treat him as one, not vice versa”(100). As long as subjects believe or act as if they believe in the symbolic order the King is in fact a King, regardless of the point that the King’s ‘Kingliness’ has no direct physical foundation.^{vi} If the King’s subjects dismiss their King by refusing to acknowledge his ‘Kingliness’, then he is actually no longer a King, even though he was never a King in the first place. The idea of the King certainly produces Kings as long as subjects are willing to abide by the theoretical framework that upholds the foundations of the King’s Kingliness. If the symbolic order of the King’s subjects transfers from “King ruling” to “the people ruling” to “the price of oil in Siberia ruling”(or maintains varying degrees of these displacements simultaneously), then the King loses his status as King and can no longer perform his Kingly function.^{vii} Concurrently, from this line of argumentation, the King never performs his Kingly function, he merely occupies a dignified position within the symbolic order.^{viii}

In Žižek’s *Fragile Absolute* we find two other ways of examining the King’s Kingly function. The first idea examines the effects of the traditionally ‘masculine’ (patriarchal) logic of law and its relationship to the Master-Signifier that maintains the dependability of the ‘big Other.’ Žižek states that “the Master-Signifier which guarantees

the community's consistency is a signifier whose signified is an enigma for the members themselves — nobody really knows what it means, but each of them somehow presupposes that others know, that it has to mean 'the real thing', so they use it all the time"(115). Members within a community do not know exactly how the framework(s) supporting their social and economic structures (the frameworks that ensure supermarkets will contain food, truck drivers will have an unlimited supply of gasoline, paycheques will be converted into some kind of monetary form for spending) remains solid yet they assume that someone else does: that someone else knows exactly how everything fits together within society as if society is a gigantic three-dimensional puzzle whose pieces are held together by an omniscient 'big Other'(the real thing or ultimate Master-Signifier — the ultimate point of origin from which and by which our reality is derived). The traumatic presence of the wraith-like 'big Other' bonds everyone together insofar as they are united in a belief that some Thing with a superior awareness is guaranteeing the maintenance of their community (people who consistently win are generally equated with the presence of the Thing and given the symbolic authority of the 'big Other' by people who generally lose). Hence, many people tend to ignore the idea that nothing bonds our reality together (it simply IS) and prefer to assume that some presence (divine or otherwise) is guaranteeing the structure of our communities (regardless of whether or not that presence is identifiable).

The traditionally 'masculine' logic that endows the 'big Other' with patriarchal qualities (the King/Father) is one of the spectral presences Žižek examines. He writes that

in Lacan's earlier writings, Lacan interpreted symptoms (human deviations from a culture's traditional frameworks) as corresponding to "the series of *exceptions*, disturbances [and] malfunctionings, measured by the ideal of full integration into the symbolic order [such as having a happy family, two cars]"(116). Lacan maintained that something had cracked within these 'deviations', something which disrupted their ability to desire/consume in a commensurate way to 'normal' individuals within their culture (individuals with a minimal degree of Agency). An example of this phenomenon is provided by *Eraserhead's* enigmatic ending. In the final moments of *Eraserhead*, Henry Spencer is quite ecstatic because he has recently murdered his deformed son/daughter/thing and thus removed the symptom ruining his life. Here, we can assume that Henry's elation is the result of his return to the symbolic realm (which is ironically re-entered after Henry destroys his symbolic parental authority).

Lacan's developing thought led him toward a different view of the subject's place within the socio-symbolic system. This divergent position severs the individual's relation to a (theoretically) universal 'big Other' and de-centers the 'big Other's' ontological "quilting point"(an 'original point' constituting and maintaining symbolic reality as well as the individual's situation within that reality)(114). Žižek writes:

later, however, with his notion of the universalized symptom, Lacan accomplished the paradoxical shift from the 'masculine' logic of Law and its constitutive exception towards the 'feminine' logic in which there is *no* exception to the series of symptoms — in which there are *only* symptoms, and the symbolic Law (the paternal Name) is ultimately just one (the most efficient, the most established . . .) in the series of symptoms (116).

From this 'feminine' point of view, reality's symbolic framework is built upon a matrix whose structure is maintained by points/symptoms possessing an equivalent value (each point being a symptom of reality which maintains its symptomatic presence by its links to other symptoms [cowardice, courage, drywall, mythology] which it is different from yet reliant upon for its constitution). Social/Political/Economic/Symbolic reality is not upheld by one predominant phallic factor. Lacan's developing thought purloins the phallic masculine signifier of its quasi-transcendental status and situates it within a symbolic series where it is commensurate to that of the vaginal (while also exposing the fact that is always has been).

Žižek discusses Lacan's notion of 'non-all' in order to demonstrate how Lacan's thought moved away from a system where a quasi-transcendental theoretically 'solid' focal point maintained reality's consistency to one where no such dominant principle exists. In a discussion of Lacan's *Seminar XX*, Žižek describes Lacan's "logic of 'non-all' and the exception constitutive of the universal"(115). Žižek writes:

The paradox of the relationship between the series (of the elements belonging to the universal) and its exception does not lie only in the fact that 'the exception grounds the [universal] rule', that every universal series involves the exclusion of an exception (all men have inalienable rights — with the exception of madmen, criminals, primitives, the uneducated, children . . .). The properly dialectical point lies, rather, in the way a series and an exception *directly coincide*: the series is always the series of 'exceptions', of entities which display a certain exceptional quality that qualifies them to belong to the series (of heroes, of members of our community, of true citizens . . .). Recall the standard male seducer's list of female conquests: each of them is 'an exception', each was seduced for a particular *je ne sais quoi*, and the series is precisely the series of these exceptional figures(115/6).

..

Within this example, the traditionally masculine 'big Other' loses its predominant situation within the continuous series of particulars upholding reality (the series in which everything equally relates to and is defined by everything else) insofar as it is presented as directly coinciding with its established oppositions. At this point, Lacan moves beyond a Universal system where the components constituting the Whole/Universal are caught in a dualistic abeyance, a series in which the positive constituents (heroes, true citizens) maintain their symbolic status precisely because they do not possess the destabilizing symptoms of the negative members (madmen, criminals: people whose public agency has been revoked due to a personal characteristic that prevents them from integrating into one of their culture's dominant institutional establishments). Žižek maintains that both sides of the Universal series (of symbolic reality) occupy the same fundamental place and remain in a congealed symbiotic relationship (a both/either/and/or situation) — that is not to say that the binary oppositions do not exist or that the oppositions do not support each other. *The oppositions are themselves symbolic depictions of an identical number, both the hero and the criminal, the genius and the fool being commensurate parts of a multifarious infinite Whole.*

Žižek's description of the depsychologized 'big Other' illuminates the relationship between subjects and the ideological connotations within a de-centered symbolic reality. Žižek describes the non-psychological 'big Other' in *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch's Lost Highway*⁴:

the "big Other" is the dimension of non-psychological, social, symbolic relations

treated as such by the subject — in short, the dimension of symbolic INSTITUTION. Say, when a subject encounters a judge, he knows very well how to distinguish between the subjective features of the judge as a person and the “objective” institutional authority he is endowed with insofar as he is a judge. This gap is the gap between my words when I utter them as a private person and my words when I utter them as someone endowed with the authority of an Institution, so that it is the Institution that speaks through me. . . . The Institution exists only when subjects believe in it, or, rather, act (in their social interactivity) AS IF they believe in it. So we can well have a perverse global politico-ideological system and individuals who, in the way they relate to this system, display hysteric, paranoiac, etc., features (26).^{ix}

The gap between the ‘objective’ public institutional world and the private world is evinced by the logic inherent in a system that requires a centered ‘big Other’ to establish some kind of ideological consistency. In order to examine this point let us look at the relationship between a centered ‘big Other’ and David Lynch’s cartoon *The Angriest Dog in the World*. In *The Angriest Dog in the World*, a malevolent dog is chained to a pole in his owner’s back yard. The frames for the cartoon are identical each week as is the accompanying introductory text: “the dog is so angry he cannot move. He cannot eat. He cannot sleep. He can just barely growl. Bound so tightly by tension and anger, he approaches the state of rigor mortis.”^x The only aspect of the cartoon that changes from frame to frame are the accompanying words that the dog hears his owners uttering inside their house, phrases such as: “Bill . . . Do you know of any sections in this four dimensional space-time continuum which represent ‘now’ objectively?” “No . . . at least not at the present time.”^{xi}

The dog’s immutable stance symbolizes the dimension of non-psychological, social relations that are an important factor in maintaining the symbolic presence of a

centered 'big Other.' No matter what this dog hears his or her owners discussing he remains unalterably framed in the same position. The dog's unchanging position represents non-psychological relations because the 'big Other's' presence is supposed to be designated as having no personality. We act on behalf of the 'big Other' in the form of Judges, Kings, Police Investigators, Managers at Burger King and so on and while occupying these roles we are given institutional authority. If you are speaking on behalf of the institutional 'big Other', subjects regard your presence as authoritative and because of the symbol you represent they will (to a certain extent) obey the proclamations you support (at least publically for the 'big Other's' symbolic authority relies upon people publically behaving as if they believe the 'big Other's' words to be true [regardless of whether or not they truly support them. Recall footnote number four from Chapter One]).

The belief in symbolic authority and a public display of that belief (especially if you occupy an authoritative place within the structure) is essential for establishing the unyielding presence of the 'big Other' and its supporting symbolic system. The institutional 'big Other' contains both benevolent and malicious sides, each supporting its symbolic status. Of course, the malicious attributes of the symbolic realm — or the *constant reminder to abide by the rules* — are necessary for *de-personalizing* the 'big Other's' presence as well as maintaining the gap between the public person representing the institution and the private person that must follow the institution's guidelines (even if they are the same person).

The 'big Other's' unalterable status is occupied by people who misrepresent its

non-psychological dimension by bringing their private life into the realm of their symbolic authority. Authoritative public representatives who behave in this fashion dissolve the boundaries between symbolic authority and private person. By behaving in this way, they create an extremely confusing authoritative framework insofar as its representatives expose the fragility of its construction by publically displaying their personal idiosyncracies. A public display of the personal problems individuals fight with while creating institutional policy tarnishes the effectiveness of that policy insofar as the symbolic authority it upholds is itself undermined by the personal idiosyncracies of the institutional representatives. Basically, by publically displaying the human side of the 'big Other', by directly acknowledging its symptom, the 'big Other' loses its status as the *foundational signifier maintaining the dimension of the symbolic realm*.^{xii} The ideological connotations within a de-centered symbolic realm are neither negative nor positive as long as we remember to appear as if we believe in political figureheads regardless of who they are or whether or not their policies are effective.

We find the 'big Other' depicted in a different fashion than *The Angriest Dog in the World* in Patrick McGoochan's television series *The Prisoner*. In *The Prisoner*, the individuals constituting the 'big Other' change from episode to episode while its presence remains the same. In order to demonstrate how *The Prisoner's* non-psychological 'big Other' maintains its ideological hegemony a brief examination of its basic premise must be related. In *The Prisoner*, a secret agent whose name we never learn resigns from his job without providing any particular reason. Afterwards, he attempts to go on vacation but

before he can do so he is abducted and taken to an island known as “The Village” where he is given the name number 6. On this island he is interrogated by the local authorities and in particular by a number 2 whose identity changes from episode to episode (and occasionally within an episode). The authorities attempt to uncover number 6's reason for resigning while he consistently thwarts their efforts with his assertion that “I am not a number, I am a free man.”^{xiii} At the head of the Village's hierarchical structure is a mysterious number 1 (the ‘big Other’) who makes his first and only corporeal appearance in *The Prisoner's* concluding episode, *Fall Out*.

In each episode of *The Prisoner*, number 6 attempts both to escape from the island and to discover the identity of number 1. At the same time, number 1's bureaucracy attempts to discover why number 6 resigned. A nationality is never given to number 1's institution, which suggests that it is an allegorical representation of every ideologico-political agency and their subsequent symbolic order(s). Correspondingly, as the identity of number 2 changes from week to week, so does the composition of the Village.^{xiv} Only a fraction of the characters that appear in an episode ever return in another and if they do they are often playing a different role. Eventually, number 6 is given a prestigious position within the Village's hierarchy and the chance to meet number 1, who ends up being a vapid version of himself.

In *The Prisoner*, the ‘big Other's’ significance and that of the symbolic order is directly displayed as is the idea that the subject's innermost kernel is beyond our comprehension. As the inhabitants of the Village change from week to week, number 6

remains the same. Number 6's integrity is 'irrationally' unyielding as he remains true to his *conception of self and embraces his exceptional symbolic role. In order to remain true to his identity, number 6 tenaciously avoids (directly) entering the Village's symbolic order even as the Village changes that order from episode to episode in an attempt to destabilize 6's unrelenting intransigence (the Village's King cannot remain a King since 6 refuses to believe in its Kingliness). In order for number 6 to become an inhabitant of the Village he must leave behind his rebellious spirit and embrace the symbolic order of Village life (as we all must accept certain basic rules in order to integrate within society). The qualms associated with the fluctuating nature of Village life must be patiently ignored if 6 is to become a contributing member of the system.*

6 refuses to internalize the symbolic order of the 'big Other' and thereby allegorically maintains his innermost kernel. However, in *The Prisoner's* conclusion 6 discovers that the person governing the village is in fact himself. 6's personality is responsible for the pursuit of trying to discover his personality or the reason why he resigned from his established personality (his fully integrated life within the symbolic order) in the first place. Number 1 is number 6 but 1's persona is empty and colorless, lacking the manifold textures of 6's vivacious personality. Number 1 symbolizes the void at the heart of number 6's contumacious behavior, the void at the center of 6's identity that his emersion within the symbolic order of language cannot overcome. After 6 is confronted with his absent innermost kernel (which is ironically present in this case although its presence designates its absence insofar as it is outside of 6) he realizes that he

has always been a barred subject(\$)^{xv} and that the freedom he obstinately gripped was nothing more than an attempt to recover a conscious state that was disregarded upon entering the 'big Other's' symbolic framework. After accepting the freedom presented by the symbolic institution, 6 promptly leaves the Village and returns to London where he presumably departs on his overdue vacation. Whereas *The Angriest Dog in the World* directly resembles the impeccable big Other, *The Prisoner* shows how that big Other's shape is frozen in an amorphous particle of a intangible dimension.^{xvi}

The Prisoner's final moments correspond to the viewpoint of Lacan's early symptomatic thoughts. From such a viewpoint, Number 6's confrontation with his absent innermost kernel represents his direct engagement with the symptom that is preventing him from obtaining a 'fully integrated' place within the 'big Other's' symbolic framework. 6's inability to harmonize with the Village results from his belief in freedom and only after directly engaging with the lost aspect of his identity that was sacrificed in order for 6 to create an identity (and become freely subjugated) does 6's place within the symbolic order return (6 returns to London where his flat and car remain and resumes his place amongst the well-adjusted citizenry). In short, 6 realizes and overcomes his symptom and is able to rejoin "Village" life (in this reading, the Village's constant presence refers to the 'masculine' ideal of a persistent system with established supporting guidelines that can be adhered to in order to maintain symbolic consistency).

Had 6's encounter with his symptom corresponded to Lacan's later 'feminine' considerations, 6 would have promptly lost his mind. Žižek mentions Jacques-Alain

Miller's conception of Lacan's universe in *Seminar XX* as one where there is a

radical split . . . between signifier and signified . . . in which no a priori Law guarantees the connection of overlapping between the two sides, so that only partial and contingent knots — symptoms (quilting points, points of gravitation) can generate a limited and fragile co-ordination between the two domains [the world of the personable 'big Other']. In this perspective, the 'dissolution of a symptom', far from bringing about the non-pathological state of full desiring capacity, leads, rather, to a total psychotic catastrophe, to the dissolution of the subject's entire universe (2000, 116-7).

Had 6 inhabited this symptomatic realm, where there are only 'subjectively objective' arbitrary quilting points maintaining the individual's sanity (some bizarre idiosyncrasy allowing the subject to maintain his or her cultural integration — her or his relation to the 'big Other' within society) rather than one prominent ABSOLUTE point, 6's confrontation with his symptom would have shattered his conception of self. However, if we invert the interpretation of *The Prisoner* that regards it as a program focusing on Number 6's identity to one that focuses on that of Number 1, then the fluctuating nature of the village does correspond to a world where there are constantly fluctuating symptoms with nothing but an empty signifier maintaining their consistency (insofar as each new Village and new number 2 is a different symptomatic 'big Other' confronting Number 1 who has lost the ability to negotiate the manifold symptoms of his symbolic framework. Number 6 is simply a symbolic exception upholding a tenuous relationship with Number 1's surrounding symbolic reality). Hence, Number 6's escape from the Village in *Fall Out* is not an example of direct symptomatic navigation but Number 1's revitalization through his direct ingestion of an arbitrary symptom which he uses to return to an 'actual' reality

constituted by extremely fragile points of stability.

Within this line of argumentation, we find another way of interpreting *Eraserhead's* concluding section. In order for this interpretation to make sense we must consider that The Man in the Planet symbolizes Henry Spencer's accidental symptom as well as his relationship to the big Other. We see The Man in the Planet at three points: during *Eraserhead's* opening moments when he pulls a lever that transfers Henry into symbolic reality, briefly during Henry's adventure inside his radiator, and near the resolution when that lever sparkles and coruscates after Henry murders his deformed child. The disintegration of The Man in the Planet's lever suggests that Henry is experiencing something pestiferous or confronting something which the symptom maintaining his relationship to reality cannot mediate. Perhaps Henry's tenuous hold on reality is sustained by his leisurely bachelorhood as is suggested by his permanent vacation and promiscuous behavior. The moment Henry is confronted with the responsibilities attributed to baby and live-in girlfriend his indolent reality begins to disappear. By the time Henry abolishes the disrupting company time has run out: he has already candidly confronted his symptom and completely abandoned reality. Big other's control has been vanquished.

"Who Do You Think This Is Here"?: Reality, Fantasy, *Lost Highway* (Lynch and Engels, 1993)

Fantasy: vibrant ruminations with colorful, exciting consequences once reified; thoughts that lead to fleeting moments of revitalized completeness.

Symbolic Self-Conscious Reality: existence within symbolic consciousness where one is aware of oneself and others. The needs of the individuals must be satisfied through some kind of self-conscious mental exertion where the needing person knows that THEY are satisfying THEIR needs. Within self-conscious symbolic reality we are limited to the confines of our body.

Without fantasy, reality is extremely mundane. Without reality, fantasy can be excessively frightening.

In "Finding Ourselves on a *Lost Highway*: David Lynch's Lesson in Fantasy", Todd McGowan maintains that *Lost Highway* "opens up a clear divide between fantasy and reality that we never actually experience and that the filmic experience usually obscures"(53). McGowan is referring to the way in which *Lost Highway* is divided into two seemingly separate halves. *Lost Highway's* first section features Fred Madison and is characterized by an aura of banality (social reality with its fantastic structure stripped away). Fred drinks his scotch neat, lives in a colorless house, has passionless/quasi-impotent sex and engages in a monosyllabic dialogue with everyone he encounters. *Lost Highway's* second act unfolds as Fred transforms into Pete Dayton and his life becomes colourful and vibrant. Not only is Pete promiscuous and virile, he also possesses an excellent knowledge of the intricacies of automobiles and is taken care of by a boisterous gangster named Dick Laurent. Both McGowan and Žižek have pointed out how Pete represents Fred's fantasized caricature of his self: Pete is Fred's "manly" man who adequately exemplifies a vulgar cultural construction of the stereotypical male. However,

as *Lost Highway* descends into pure fantasy, Pete is unable to maintain his form and reality returns in the shape of Fred Madison.

Fred's inability to sustain his fantasy comes from his realization that we are barred from ever obtaining any "complete" knowledge of the Other. That is, we can only ever truly "know" our selves because we are the only person that we can absolutely BE due to the obvious fact that we are our selves. At the same time, we can never really know anything about ourselves apart from the knowledge that we are privy to several characteristics of our own personality that assist us in forming a conception of self whose content is built upon a foundation of absent first principles that follow predictable symbolically constructed patterns. We are driven to obtain knowledge of the Other, to predict how they will behave in certain circumstances, to form stereotypical constructions of their personality based upon our conceptions of how they will react to predetermined stimuli. But we can never absolutely "know" them, we can only know our personal formulas in which we have encapsulated their identity, formulas that often hinder rather than nurture the growth of personal relations when they are instituted dogmatically.

In *Lost Highway*, Fred Madison cannot find a formula to accurately situate his wife. She is an enigma, someone to whom he cannot relate on a mental, physical or spiritual level. Eric Bryant Rhodes suggests that "the two parallel stories of *Lost Highway* are two manifestations of one essential story: a man obsessed with possessing the *wrong* woman"(59). Fred's desire to "know" or absolutely "understand" Renée's essence, to possess that which he can never understand results in his psychosis. Fred and Renée are

incompatible to the degree that he cannot even figure out how to begin not beginning to understand her personality.^{xvii}

Fred's mind is split between reality stripped of its fantasy and fantasy stripped of reality. *Lost Highway's* first act shows us Fred as he tries to relate to his wife and his surroundings. The overt reality of the situation is found in Fred and Renée's drab, lackluster marriage. Fred and Renée have nothing in common, cannot relate to one another and basically should end their relationship immediately. Fred and Renée's inability to communicate combines with Fred's inadequate sexual performance (from his point of view) to cause Fred to imagine that Renée is sleeping with another man. Whether or not Renée is adulterous is unclear and Fred and Renée's absent dialogue prevents him from alleviating his fears and suspicions. Instead of looking for the answer to his questions within Renée's mind (questions such as what is the secret of your sexual passion?, are you cheating on me?, what is your favorite book?) his delusional obsession causes him to mutilate her body in a physical search for her innermost kernel/objectified answer to his questions. Afterwards, he enters a 'purely' fantastical world in order to avoid the reality associated with his wife's murder.^{xviii}

The communication barriers between Fred/Pete and Renée (who has now taken on the form of Alice) is objectified in *Lost Highway's* second act in the form of Dick Laurent. The only hindrance preventing Fred/Pete (from the point of view of Fred's fantasy) from attaining or knowing Alice/Renée's innermost kernel is an external embodiment of the superego. As Žižek points out,

the key point here is that, in this displacement from reality to fantasized noir universe, the status of the obstacle [preventing Fred from knowing Renée] changes: while in the first part, the obstacle/failure is *INHERENT* (the sexual relationship simply doesn't work), in the second part, this inherent impossibility is *EXTERNALIZED* into the positive obstacle which from the outside prevents its actualization (Dick Laurent)(16).

In Fred's fantasy he believes he can "have" Alice as long as he kills Dick Laurent: as long as "Dick Laurent is dead." When Alice tells Pete "you'll never have me" (and are incapable of understanding me) after they have sex in the desert, Fred is no longer able to maintain his fantastic construction and Pete transforms back into Fred again. Fred then drives to the Lost Highway motel, drags Dick Laurent out of bed and watches as the Mystery Man kills him. Fred's fantasy having completely dissolved (the external impediment preventing him from knowing Renée having been internalized once more), he re-enters reality (or once again enters his 'actual' place within the symbolic order) and promptly disappears (his place within that reality having completely dissolved after confronting his pathological symptom, after perniciously encountering the foundations of his identity^{xix}).

In *On Blue Velvet*, Charles Drazin describes a conversation that relates to these considerations. The conversation occurred between the Czech writer Milan Kundera and one of his female friends. Numerous times during their conversation, Kundera's friend excused herself to go to the washroom. While she was in the washroom, Kundera's thoughts strayed into the realm of fantastic ownership of the Other's being:

the noise of the water refilling the tank practically never let up, and I suddenly had the urge to rape her. I know what I'm saying. Rape her, not make love to her. I

didn't want tenderness from her. I wanted to bring my hand brutally on her face and in one swift instant take her completely, with all her unbearably arousing contradictions: with her impeccable outfit along with her rebellious guts, her good sense along with her fear, her pride along with her misery. I sensed that all those contradictions harboured her essence, that treasure, that nugget of gold, that diamond hidden in the depths (Drazin, 8).

In this situation, Kundera believes that the unattainable X of his friend can only be found by brutally raping her, by dissolving the fantastic courtship rituals involved in sexual interplay.^{xx} Kundera is suddenly obsessed with discovering the "secret" kernel of his friend's identity and decides that the only way to discover it is through direct, violent, sexual objectification: a vain attempt to reconstruct the dissipated wholeness of his friend's and his own relationship to the Real (his construction of the sexual relationship telling him that this is what his friend searches for beneath the level of fantastic sexual innuendo).

Kundera's fantasy is supported by a perverse kind of logic that, according to Žižek, provides the schematics for the male/female sexual relationship. In *The Plague of Fantasies*, Žižek provides an explanation of what he labels as "fantasy's transcendental schematism"(7). He states that "a fantasy constitutes our desire, provides its co-ordinates; that is, it literally 'teaches us how to desire'". Fantasy tells us that we desire things, that we want external pleasures. It bridges the gap between the positive objects we encounter in reality and the definitions we associate with them via the symbolic order and "provides a schema according to which certain positive objects in reality can function as objects of desire, filling in the empty places opened up by the formal symbolic order." That is, our

entry into the symbolic order causes us to sever our complete relationship with our external surroundings and fills us with emptiness. We consequently attempt to fill this emptiness with objects of desire (cake, television) that fantasies tell us we desire while providing us with a roadmap through which to navigate a path toward the satisfaction of those desires (it is important not to confuse the process of creating the roadmap with the notion of fantasy's transcendental schematism: fantasy's transcendental schematism tells us that we know we desire an object and then leads us toward a discovery of the desired object). The acquisition of the object provides a pseudo-reconstitution of a sense of completeness between the internal and external world of the desiring subject while also providing a theoretical moment of connection between the subject's body and mind.

For Žižek, the role of fantasy's transcendental schematism relies on the notion that there is no sexual relationship. When people are engaged in sexual activity their union must eventually come to a climatic conclusion that negates the completeness of their sexual relationship. *From this point of view, sex can never be eternal — there is no sexual relationship — but it certainly can be Eternal in the sense that the lack of a pure sexual bond (as well as the moment following a sexual engagement) causes definite feelings of Trauma.* Fantasy's transcendental schematism allows people to form a matrix which constitutes their criteria for the ideal sexual relationship from which they can obtain a (wonderfully) fleeting sense of completeness. As Žižek states, “for a [couple], the [sexual] relationship is possible only inasmuch as [they] fit [each other's] formula (1997, 7).” Žižek supports this idea with “two standard common daydreams: that of a woman

who wants a strong animal partner [an ape], . . . not a hysterical impotent weakling; and that of a man who wants his female partner to be a perfectly programmed 'doll' who fulfils all his wishes, not a living being [a female cyborg]"(2000, 66). He then combines the two fantasies into the "*the unbearable ideal couple of a male ape copulating with a female cyborg*" to demonstrate that universal constructions or "the normal couple" are supported in their normality by an abnormal fantastic creation, an abnormal construction that is commensurate to the construction of the normal sexual relationship (desiring my partner to enjoy the works of William S. Burroughs is commensurate to wanting my partner to be a female cyborg. Both fantasies provide a roadmap toward the fulfillment of my desire). Both relationships are constructed in order to fill the emptiness produced by our entry into self-conscious institutional life, to provide a momentary sense of completeness. The "normal" sexual relationship symbolizes our position within symbolic frameworks insofar as it is what the order publically designates as acceptable sexual relations while the fantasy of purely sexual objective lust provides a roadmap to that sense of brutal, raw, Realistic completeness associated with the narcissistic objectification of your sexual partner in your attempts to know them.

In order to make this point clearer, we must examine how fantasy constitutes the structure of the identity of an individual (from a materialist point of view) within *The Fragile Absolute*. In order to describe such an individual, we must first provide additional constituents to the principles governing Žižekian reality. We can consider our starting point to be the Event that happened insofar as it is responsible for the

emergence/beginning of the symbolic structures constituting our realities and identities. Coincidentally, we must accept that this Event cannot be remembered or symbolized due to the fact that if it was to be revitalized — Realistically presented to us again through some kind of serendipitous reconstitution of its manifold traumatic particles — its revitalization would negate its beginning (insofar as it would destroy the symbolic Universe it had previously built by forcing that Universe to forget the manifold characteristics derived from its previous beginning by forcing it to relive its beginning over and over again as in the Myth of Sisyphus) and result in an endless proliferation of static repetition. As Schelling notes in *Weltalter*, “once done, the deed is eternally done. The decision that is in any way the true beginning should not appear before consciousness, it should not be recalled to mind, since this, precisely, would amount to its recall. He who, apropos of a decision, reserves for himself the right to drag it again to light, will never accomplish the beginning” (Žižek 2000, 181-2). From Schelling's point of view, the person who constantly questions his motives and actions by continually searching for the reasons why he acted in that specific way at that juncture in time will never move beyond that epoch and will remain its perennial *prisoner*. In Fred Madison's case, he cannot understand how not to begin searching for the essence of his partner's identity. Fred's unrelenting search for Renée's essence reverberates over and over again within *Lost Highway* for he cannot understand that in order to move forward from a point the constitution of that point must be forgotten. If the constitution constantly remains present within an individual's mind (in Fred's case, the constitution being “who IS Renée”

rather than who IS NOT Renée) then they remain eternally confined by that point in time.

In order for symbolic reality to arise, its foundations must have been forgotten for if they were not time would not have developed and neither would have Eternity (both time and Eternity being intertwined axes of symbolic reality). If time's current had not begun flowing, then we would still be present within the point of the Real, within the beginning's beginning, never moving away from the foundational Event. The important thing to remember is that this beginning has simply begun: it is not founded upon a definite pre-ontological chaotic orgy of violence. Žižek maintains that any theory that grounds the foundations of the universe in a kind of excessively violent necessarily discontinuous altercation is simply "a lure, a trap to make us forget where the true horror [within symbolic reality] lies"(2000, 73).

The Žižekian horror constituting reality includes the idea that nothing is complete. Every/thing is incomplete and caught in a cycle of attempted reconstitution. Individuals create fantasies to ignore and conceal the traumatic impact of the paucity inherent within symbolic reality after that reality has already begun. In other words, fantastic conceptions of the pre-ontological cosmos are post-ontological fantasies generated in order to provide a pseudo-sense of completeness within the symbolic individual. The foundational violence within the constitution of such fantasies functions as a screen masking the necessary subjective incompleteness symbolic existence engenders. In short, we are what we are not and our attempts to discover who we are by endlessly recycling the images of the past disables us from ever beginning our "'impossible' relationship between [our]

empty, non-phenomenal [self] and the phenomena that remain inaccessible to [our self]" (yet become accessible in fleeting fantastic moments that bridge the linguistic gap between people and objects) (85). The very core of our identity exists in a commensurate relationship to that of the universe: we are deprived of our "most intimate 'subjective' experience, the way that things 'really seem to [us]', that . . . fundamental fantasy that constitutes and guarantees the core of [our] being, since we can never consciously experience and assume it"(84) (although we can create fantasies to explain it in order to reconstitute our complete sense of self [fantasies that can never actually reconstitute our self for they are created after the dismissal of our fundamental fantasy [the reconstitution of which can destroy the symbolic existence of the individual when they confront it directly [which is what happens to Fred Madison]]).^{xxi} Coincidentally, we can create fantasies to have a sexual relationship even though such a relationship cannot be sustained Realistically [note the relationship between this line of thought and Pete Dayton's excessive sexual activity in 'Lost Highway's' second act. Within Fred Madison's sexual fantasy the sexual relationship cannot be sustained]).

The beginnings of our symbolic realities as well as our identities are created by what Žižek refers to as the vanishing mediator. The vanishing mediator is the necessary step that provides our passage from "'prehuman nature' to [the] symbolic universe" and constitutes the beginning of that universe (and derivatively must disappear) (82). The disappearance of the factor linking the pre-symbolic and symbolic dimensions corresponds to the absent fundamental fantasies within the constituted symbolic

individual. The subsequent fantasies created by the individual throughout his or her lifetime relate to this forgotten point which then becomes its omnipresent background. If this background is (accidentally) exposed within the individual then the consistency of his/her symbolic frame is critically ruptured.

In Kundera's case, this is precisely what his imagination desires from his friend. By brutally raping her, he believes he can discover the quintessential 'nugget of gold' structuring her personality. However, if Kundera successfully raped his friend he would expose the Traumatic Real of her identity rather than engendering its discovery. Kundera's daydreams represent the underlying violent excess of the relationship he maintains with his friend. That is, Kundera and his friend remain friends due to their avoidance of sexual activity. Their lack of sex generates Kundera's sexual daydreams because of his inability to repress his sexual desire and remain within the symbolic limits of their friendship (insofar as they are not 'sex friends'). Kundera's sexual thoughts are the result of his perception that there is something lacking in his relationship with his friend, a tangible incompleteness which he believes can be filled by violent sexual contact (or a direct confrontation with his conception of the [theoretical] underpinnings of their relationship [in order to discover the 'other' side of his friend]). Kundera's violent ruminations create a fantastic veil that accurately demonstrates the Real associated with the lack already established within their friendship insofar as his attempts to discover the Real of his friend's identity through sexual contact (which will eventually produce a commensurate lack) demonstrates the necessary 'incompleteness' of his conception of her

identity within their existing friendship (as well as the 'incompleteness' of that friendship). Kundera's abstract attempts to discover his friend's vanished mediator/fundamental fantasy demonstrate the intangible Realistic emptiness of her identity insofar as the violent veil theoretically used to bring about a sense of her completeness corresponds to post-ontological violent theories attempting to explain the completeness of the symbolic order (while overlooking and attempting to occupy the place of the necessary absence of the mediator sustaining that order). At the same time, Kundera's projected violence "serves as a fantasized protective shield . . . AGAINST the Real" insofar as its mental/theoretical nature allows Kundera to "take refuge in [a] catastrophic scenario . . . [that] avoids the actual deadlock (of the impossibility of sexual relationship)"(2002, 34).

Lost Highway's different acts examine an individual's torturous attempts to understand someone as well. Unlike Kundera, Fred/Pete objectifies his desire to know Renée/Alice and consequently finds himself in a catastrophic scenario that directly displays the deadlock of sexual relationship. Fred is consequently destined to inhabit a dimension where he is the perennial *prisoner* of unleashed Reality insofar as his severed relationship to symbolic reality shatters his symbolic self and exposes him to the terrifying consequences of being symbolically real while living within the dimension of Reality.

i. Within this line of argumentation lies one of the reasons why human beings find industrious insects — such as ants — so repellent. Ants are not disturbing and abhorrent, they are quite beautiful insofar as they have overcome social antagonisms (theoretically anyway) that human beings (with all of our “progress”) are unable to negotiate. Ants remind us of our own inability to find harmonious social relations and how disgusting and creepy we are in relation to them (and we consequently designate them as being disgusting and creepy).

ii. An interesting example of the image of humanity being composed of beings created by a contingent symbolic order that devours them without a transcendental purpose or order is found in the obsession with cannibalism in several post-modern novels. *Riddley Walker*, *Foe*, *Sexing the Cherry*, and *The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr. Hoffman* all contain or refer to cannibals. Perhaps these novels are suggesting that we have “thought” ourselves to the end of a logical asymptote (or close enough to the end to be considered the end) and have nothing left to do but devour and regurgitate other stories and ideas in a blind devotion to post-modern pastiche.

iii. The relations between identical interpretations of a similar conception of the ‘big Other’ can be illustrated by examining someone’s patio in their backyard over a fifty year period. When the patio is built, it is usually leveled so that it can withstand the changing patterns of the earth through the years. As time passes, the earth effects the patio by corrugating its once level structure. The original patio and the corrugated one are both the same patio although the original patio’s framework has shifted slightly due to the pressure exerted upon it by time and the earth. Individuals will presumably use the patio throughout the 50 year time period regardless of its form. A different patio can displace the original as well while still occupying the same space and symbolic presence as the original. The change in the patio occurs extremely slowly and to the unvigilant eye advances unnoticed. The oneness of the patios reflects the oneness of the Canadian ‘big Other’ insofar as Left Wing and Right Wing platforms are different yet their differences are extremely diminutive; one is a corrugated version of the ‘big Other’ that is different from its counterpart on a symbolic level yet identical insofar as both support the same institutional ‘big Other.’ At the same time, in year one the patio can correspond to both Left and Right Wing Canadian governmental institutions while in year fifty it can simultaneously represent a corrugated version of them both. Hence, over a fifty year period, the infrastructures supported by the Canadian ‘big Other’ corrugate slightly (producing minuscule differences while remaining present) regardless of whether Right Wing or Left Wing governments are in power.

iv. The following allegory will elucidate the way that Trauma and Reality function within symbolic reality. When a raindrop (a hypothetically complete raindrop) contacts the

ground it explodes. The raindrop's explosion causes its particles to spread out over the ground and its once unified form becomes multifarious. If the ground is thought of as being symbolic reality and the raindrop the Real, the raindrop's presence exists within reality although it is significantly deluded and difficult to detect. Similarly, we are reminded of the Real's presence within symbolic reality by the omnipresent yet undetectable presence of Trauma/Eternity. The Manifold incorporeal particles of Trauma represent the Real's spectral existence within the symbolic domain and if they were ever to reunite they would collapse the boundary between Eternity and Time or Reality and reality and force us into the presence of the Now.

Further, Trauma should not be thought of as a negative presence. In *The Fragile Absolute*, Žižek describes the Absolute (Reality/Trauma) as "something that appears to us in fleeting experiences — say, through the gentle smile of a beautiful woman, or even through the warm, caring smile of a person who may otherwise seem ugly and rude: in such miraculous but *extremely fragile* moments [such extreme fragility corresponding to the Traumatic particles separation from the disintegrated whole], another dimension transpires through our reality. As such, the Absolute is easily corroded; it slips all too easily through our fingers, and must be handled as carefully as a butterfly"(128). Trauma is therefore present within those beautifully frightening moments of unclassifiable awareness where a transcendental presence can be detected even though its detection often leads to its disappearance.

v. I have placed a (dis) in front of identification in this sentence to allude to the manifold individuals that form their conceptions of self by not identifying with their respective symbolic orders. However, these individuals are still products of their ideological upbringing even if their personality is generally recalcitrant insofar as their identity is created by reacting against the form and content imposed upon them. Naturally, such individuals often play a role in shaping the objective symbolic order which they rebel against.

vi. What I mean by this can be illustrated by comparing the concept King to a tree. A tree has a foundation insofar as it is rooted within the earth, insofar as it is grounded by something. The concept King or ruler has no such foundation and basically floats around the linguistic continuum like a detached balloon. Of course, the designation "tree" has created another balloon, although balloon is probably the wrong image to be using here. A balloon with infinite dimensions perhaps . .

vii. In a similar way, in *David Lynch* Michael Chion notes that in an interview with Michel Denisot Lynch was asked about his affinity for repulsive things such as dead flies. Lynch replied "that it is the name we give, the associated word (dead flies), which prevents our seeing them as beautiful, and that all we have to do to see differently is to

erase the word"(173).

viii. In *The Plague of Fantasies*, Žižek discusses how the "objective" socio-symbolic system is more effective precisely at the moment when subjects consider themselves to be separate from it. In other words, it is in moments where subjects who consider themselves to be free of the King's authority must perform a Kingly function that ideology manifests itself impeccably. In his discussion of Robert Altman's *M*A*S*H*, Žižek writes:

Let us further illustrate this gap between an explicit texture and its phantasmatic support with an example from cinema. Contrary to its misleading appearance, Robert Altman's *M*A*S*H* is a perfectly conformist film — for all their mockery of authority, practical jokes and sexual escapades, the members of the *M*A*S*H* crew *perform their job exemplarily* and thus present absolutely no threat to the smooth running of the military machine. In other words, the cliché which regards *M*A*S*H* as an anti-militarist film, depicting the horrors of the meaningless military cynicism, practical jokes, laughing at pompous official rituals, and so on, misses the point — this very distance *is* ideology(20).

The *M*A*S*H* example demonstrates how attempting to maintain a distance toward your dominant ideology (in this case military discipline) results in a higher degree of ideological sublimation. Hence, in *M*A*S*H* Frank Burns, the intractable military doctor, is incompetent and goes insane because of his adherence to the military's established code of conduct. His desire to follow the rules is insurmountable and causes him to ignore the underlying ideological framework within the rules he is following: in this example, in order to follow the rules effectively, you must maintain a pretense of hostility towards them in order to uphold them more stringently. Trapper John MacIntyre, Hawkeye Pierce and the rest of *M*A*S*H*'s cast each demonstrate a high degree of contempt for the ideological edifice encompassing them. It is for this reason precisely that they represent subjects who illustrate the predominance of the 'objective' socio-symbolic system — by dissimulating their exceptional medical abilities (their excellent surgical techniques, and, by extension, the fact that they are excellent products of their symbolic order's educational structure) beneath a veneer of contempt for their predominant ideology, and then behaving in a way that is exemplary of the symbolic order they attempt to undermine, they manifest ideology in its purest form.

ix. Dave Thomas and Rick Moranis' *Strange Brew* contains a scene that evinces the final line of this citation. Near the end of *Strange Brew*, a police officer informs Bob and Doug Mackenzie that it will be difficult for them to prove to a Judge that they are not mentally incompetent. The McKenzie brothers are then immediately released from their potentially detrimental predicament by their friend Pam who gives them both jobs. Thus, even

though the McKenzie brothers are mentally incompetent alcoholics who relate to their symbolic framework hysterically, they manage to avoid a return trip to the mental asylum because they have an occupation or a place within the perverse global politico-ideological system (that is perverse insofar as it provides incompetent people with symbolic authority as long as they maintain symbolic appearances such as an occupation rather than assisting them in alleviating their mental problems).

x. This information can be found in Chris Rodley's *Lynch on Lynch*, page 122.

xi. *ibid.*

xii. To operate within society, individuals must deal with manifold appearances of the symbolic institution. In order to support the 'big Other' subjects act as if they believe its attributes to be physical manifestations, corporeal, reified ideas with some kind of innate quality of organic regeneration. Whether or not individuals truly believe these attributes hold some kind of transcendental significance is inconsequential. The fact that they behave as if they do even when they attempt to maintain a distance toward them is the important point. The *Angriest Dog in the World* never changes and neither does the fact that the internalization of the 'big Other' and its subsequent attributes (treating a judge as a judge) is a necessary consequence of existing within society. However, complicating the dog's anger by overtly depicting its pathological idiosyncracies (idiosyncracies everyone knows exist yet are willing to ignore as long as the individual represents the symbolic institution and does not display or refer to them within the public eye) transfers those idiosyncracies to the 'big Other's symbolic representation. Such a transfer dissolves the 'big Other's' one-dimensional symptom and exposes its commensurate relationship to every other symptom within symbolic reality's constitution (the underlying arbitrary attributes maintaining the absolute presence of the Law are directly exposed thereby tearing down the absolute presence of the Law itself).

xiii. This line is part of the title sequence from the majority of *Prisoner* episodes.

xiv. For instance, in *Many Happy Returns*, the Village is empty apart from a cat. In *The Girl Who Was Death*, the village has disappeared entirely and been replaced by a mental experiment.

xv. At the end of the first 16 *Prisoner* episodes number 6's face is shown behind bars. The bars are ironically removed from number 6's countenance in *Fall Out* after he accepts that he is "barred" from every discovering his absolute identity.

xvi. The Freudian references at the end of *Fall Out* should also be noted. In *Fall Out*, 6 is given a prestigious seat in a court of law located below the Village's surface or inside of

6's body/mind. The court of law has a judge (superego) who is in the process of trying two prisoners (an infantile number 48 (Id) and a defeated number 2 (ego)). The jury is composed of a large number of people each wearing a black and white mask and sitting in groups under different headings such as "entertainment." The judge incarcerates 48 and 2 before giving up his podium to number 6. 6 is told that he has won, his individuality has vanquished their organization. 6 then addresses the jury only to find that they yell a nonsensical word repeatedly overtop of his oration. Number 6 fails to realize that he has taken the place of the superego and the surrounding jury has decided to rebel against his structure in the same way that he once rebelled against theirs. Thus Number 6 has found his individuality by accepting the fact that precisely because he is a number he is a free man.

xvii. The inability of the human being to ever completely understand the Other is aptly demonstrated by the abrasive nature of a dripping tap. The tap drips, drips and drips until the individual can stand it no longer and must arrest the dripping. The dripping of the tap resembles a heartbeat or an other whose corporeality has been stripped away. A tap that continues to drip symbolizes an Other without a body, an Other that can never be known because all there is to know is a resounding beat, the traumatic kernel of the eternal return of an empty sameness, an interstice that will forever separate you from the Other's personality, and from your own personality as well.

Additionally, the 'not beginning' in the concluding sentence from the paragraph to which this endnote is attached will be explained later on in this chapter.

xviii. Fred's attempts to avoid remembering murdering his wife cause him massive headaches while he is in prison. We get brief glimpses of reality trying to break through his headaches in the scene where he sees himself surrounded by his wife's dismembered corpse. Seconds later, electricity strikes and he becomes his fantastic construction, Pete Dayton.

xix. The foundations of Fred's personality (his establishing symptom) can be thought of as a petulant ideology that believes it can know the absolute identity of women. Fred's encounter with this aspect of his personality is sublimated within *Lost Highway's* first section as he refuses to acknowledge his wife's murder. As Fred descends into the fantastic realm, his symptom returns during a beautiful sexual moment, a beautiful moment that is all the more terrifying afterwards due to its disgruntling symptomatic de-sublimation (Fred overtly recognizes his integral symptom within his fantasy and transforms from Pete into Fred).

xx. Kundera's logic directly relates to that of the malicious Nazi who believed the only way to create 'pure' social relations (discover the essence of social relations or the 'nugget

of gold' underlying society) was to brutally unleash his/her confined hatred of various Others by tearing down the constructed principles surrounding mutual racial differences (principles that guarantee that latent racial hatred will not be reified in the form of death camps). From such twisted logic, the Nazi tricks him/herself into believing that the essence of the 'perfect' society can be discovered in the same way that Kundera sought to find the absent innermost kernel of his friend. Both Kundera and the anti-Semite/Nazi see the secret of an unanswerable question within overt impropriety while failing to notice that such impropriety is constructed according to the same linguistic/ontological guidelines as propriety.

xxi. Throughout my thesis, I have been using brackets within brackets extensively in order to clarify the meaning of certain points. The form of the brackets within the brackets is also meant to reflect how fantasies are layered within subjects.

Chapter Three: *Twin Peaks* and *Mulholland Drive*: Lynchean Symptoms Exposed and
Transposed

In the introduction to this thesis, specific attention is given to Phillip Jeffries' scene within *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*. The importance of this scene is found in the way it directly transposes one Lynchean world — that of the Black Lodge/Red Room/White Lodge — on top of another — social reality. Within this chapter, we will investigate the relationship between Lynchean worlds and Žižekian symptoms. In order to depart upon this investigation, the fantastic/realistic structure of Lynch's Black Lodge and the ways in which it resembles 'our world' will be undertaken. The depsychologized inhabitants of the White Lodge and their hierarchical relations will also be explored as will the individual's initiatory Lodgian 'Fire Walk.' After all of these threads are woven together, we will be able to see how *Twin Peaks* and *Mulholland Drive* can be thought of as different episodes in a (dis)continuous narrative. This chapter will also provide insights into how theoretical interpretations of David Lynch's films can assist us in understanding our relationship to time, eternity and the Lacanian Real. In addition, bear in mind the dimensions of time,

eternity, reality, Reality, the Now, the beginning and the denouement.

Post-Symbolic Lodgian Reality

Lynch's obsession with alternative worlds is present within the majority of his repertoire.

In *Eraserhead*, Henry enters the fantastic realm of his radiator and in *The Grandmother*, a boy escapes from his alcoholic parents by growing himself an imaginary companion.

Frederick Treves rescues John Merrick from a life of callous degradation in *The Elephant Man*, and space and time can be manipulated to allow individuals to travel without

moving within *Dune*. Lynch's works perpetually examine the interrelations of the realm of pure thought and that of empirical reality while displacing and establishing the boundaries

between fantasy and reality. As Chris Rodley notes in *Lynch on Lynch*, Lynch

"characterizes himself as a 'radio' attempting to tune into ideas and images" in order to express the dramatic combination of "a pine tree and a cup of coffee"(1997, xi and 19).

The Black Lodge/Red Room/White Lodge from *Twin Peaks* is one of the Lynchean places where spatial and temporal boundaries dissipate and disappear. Lynch recognizes the quasi-absent temporal and spatial characteristics of the Lodge by referring to it as "a free zone, completely unpredictable and therefore pretty exciting and [terrifying]"(Rodley1997, 19). In order to explain this point and reestablish a minuscule degree of temporal and spatial consistency within the Lodge, we must examine the advice of Deputy Hawk from *Twin Peaks Episode 18*, the process of Fire Walking and how it

relates to the Lacanian 'big Other' and the Lodge's camouflaged hierarchy.

The ambivalent confines of Lynch's Lodge find their first explanation in *Twin Peaks Episode 18*. In this episode, Deputy Hawk describes the White and Black Lodges to Agent Cooper by stating:

you may be fearless in this world but there are other worlds. . . My people believe that the White Lodge is a place where the spirits who rule man and nature here reside. . . There is also a legend of a place called the Black Lodge, a shadow self of the White Lodge. Legend says that every spirit must pass through there on the way to perfection. There you will meet your own shadow self. My people call it the dweller on the threshold. But it is said that if you confront the Black Lodge with imperfect courage it will utterly annihilate your soul (Pullman 1992).

Deputy Hawk's delineation of the Black and White Lodges establishes a dualistic relationship between the two dimensions. Hawk's point of view corresponds to a post-ontological notion (one which occurs after symbolic reality's inauguration) that was created in order to explain the forgotten dimensions of reality's constitutive Event. From Hawk's point of view, symbolic reality's cornerstone was founded by the spiritual entities from both the Black and White Lodges respectively. If we compare Hawk's point of view to that of Alice Kuzniar, Martha Nochimson and the "*Twin Peaks* Collectible CardArt", then we can form a more comprehensive (realistic) structure for the White/Black Lodge.

In "Double Talk in *Twin Peaks*", Alice Kuzniar suggests that the black and white tiling from the Red Room's floor indicates that the Black and White Lodges are the same place. Kuzniar's theory makes sense considering that the Giant (an entity from the [theoretical] White Lodge) sits next to the M. F. A. P (an entity from the [hypothetical] Black Lodge) and states "one and the same" in *Twin Peaks'* final episode (the midget and

the Giant are also placed beside each other on the petroglyph discovered in Owl Cave). In “Desire Under the Douglas Firs: Entering the Body of Reality in *Twin Peaks*”, Martha Nochimson mentions Lynch’s assertion that “those places in the Red Room segment where split-second images of various characters appear to emerge from one another should be construed as lots of people running around the same room as the lights are blinking on and off”(159). For Nochimson, “this suggests that, in the Red Room, more than one body may occupy the same space at the same time”(159) or the spatial/corporeal limitations associated with temporal existence have been deconstructed within the Lodge (within temporal/historical existence we can definitely enter each other’s bodies mentally and spiritually but never corporeally [outside of sexual activity]). Nochimson’s Lynchian interpretation connotes that bodies within the Lodge engage with one another in reified post-structural relations where physical presences displace and mold with one another physically in the same way that words and ideas congeal within language in the conceptual temporal plane. Therefore, Lynch’s Lodge can be thought of as a place where the relationship between abstract conceptual ‘things’ and physical ‘determinate’ ‘things’ (from pre-Lodgian reality) is inverted, symbolically realistic linguistic relations becoming post-symbolic realistic physical relations. Additionally, note how the structure of words within the Lodge is the inversion of their form within the terrestrial plane (the words uttered by several of the entities inhabiting the Lodge being objectively displayed).

The inversion and convolution of the boundaries structuring symbolic reality within the Lodge — words becoming corporeal, bodies becoming

linguistic/transitory/evanescent — indicates that the Lodge is a zone where the excesses of symbolic reality are physically present. That is, certain earthly logical impossibilities (the excesses of logical relations) are firmly established within the framework of the Lodge. For instance, individuals define themselves through recourse to abstract empty linguistic referents that are constructed in order to generate an ontological consistency within their symbolic reality (a consistent framework that allows people to form generalities and assume the moon will be present each and every evening). If linguistic definitions can be transferred from one symbol/word to another and humans define themselves according to such referents, then human identities are as transferable as linguistic ones. The symbolic/temporal/historical plain does not permit random identity transformation and neither do the rational guidelines upholding its frameworks. Thus, the excessive logic — the logic that cannot be objectified within symbolic reality — generated by our ontological framework finds its physical place within Lynch's Lodge. Lynch's Lodge can be thought of as where the impossible finds a situation, where the frustratingly rational consequences of being human can finally be confronted: where the fantastic excesses generated by and constitutive of symbolic reality find their realistic formation.

An additional piece of evidence supporting the theory of the Lodge's excessive place within a (post) symbolic reality (a place that is not symbolic reality as we know it yet exists within the same confines of reality insofar as it does not reconstitute ourselves with the Real) is provided by the "*Twin Peaks* Collectible CardArt." In "The Semiotics of *Cobbler: Twin Peaks'* Interpretive Community", David Lavery points out that Bob's birth

date, according to his collectible card, is the beginning of time (9). This seemingly trivial fact directly relates Bob with the origins of symbolic excess. In other words, after the constitutive Event severed our relationship to the Real (thereby transforming the Real's absolute presence into manifold undetectable traumatic particles and engendering Time), a series of dimensions was created each of which exists coincidentally/symbiotically with the other. Bob symbolizes the excess of the temporal/historical plain or that which cannot be openly acknowledged within symbolic reality yet finds a place in post-symbolic excessive reality (a place that began with the beginning of time and Eternity). Bob IS the realistic 'big Other' generated by the insubstantial fantastic appearances of the 'big Other' in the temporal dimension. Bob's unrelenting *jouissance* is terrifying in the sense that he physically embodies the temporal appearances of the 'big Other' and displays the underlying pathology inherent within political figureheads. Coincidentally, it is important to remember that Bob's excessive reality is only excessive in relation to the temporal-spatial symbolic realm: in relation to Reality, both the post-Realistic and the post-post-Realistic realms are equally excessive.

The traumatic relationship between the post-Realistic realms is displayed formally and narratively within Phillip Jeffries' scene in *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*. Its brief appearance within the *Twin Peaks* narrative symbolically depicts fleeting emotionally traumatic Realistic contact for individuals inhabiting the symbolic realm insofar as both phenomena (both Phillip Jeffries' scene within *Twin Peaks* and Trauma within the individual) occupy an extremely ephemeral and disconcerting place within their

respective narratives (Phillip's scene within *Fire Walk* is one of the primary reasons for the vitriolic critical response the movie received). At the same time, Phillip's artistic display of Trauma does not reflect ACTUAL Trauma insofar as it is a representation of Trauma and therefore its distinguished counterpart (an artistic display symbolizing a Traumatic presence [eventually] negates its relation to actual Trauma [if it ever had one to begin with]).

The content of Phillip Jeffries' moment within *Twin Peaks* reflects the Traumatic/Eternal relationship between the post-Realistic realms while also establishing the spatial/temporal consistency of the Lodge. Phillip enters Gordon Cole's office after finding a way to arrest the flow of time. Phillip basically creates a non-temporal bubble from the elevator on Cole's floor leading up to Cole's office in which time ceases to flow as it normally is recorded within symbolic reality. We then watch Phillip's disconcerted presence as it tries to maintain a concurrent existence within both symbolic realities (that of 'our' reality and that of the Lodge). Naturally, attempting to maintain the form of both the Grandson and Phillip Jeffries in two separate dimensions is somewhat traumatic as Phillip's harrowing scream demonstrates near the end of the scene when the Lodge encompasses him once more. Phillip's establishment of the non-temporal bubble around Cole's floor and the brief interrelations between the two dimensions allows him to briefly return to the form of Phillip Jeffries (as the Grandson's presence returns to our symbolic realm).

The inversion of our temporal/historical flow of time (the excess generated within

post-symbolic reality by time's constant flow and historical stasis within our symbolic realm [time always flows but nothing Ideally changes]) is presented by the Lodge's ability to maneuver throughout the different time periods established within our dimension (time's absent current within the Lodge objectively depicts the excess of the synchronous repetitive structure of time within our symbolic reality). The concurrent scenes within Phillip Jeffries' scene combines with the lack of time within the Lodge to expose the Lodge's symbiotic relationship to pre-Lodgian reality insofar as the direct display of the subsequent realms engenders their coincident relationship (they are each constituent parts of a series and each of them support a universal [in their opposition] that cannot be ideally reached [for if it was the unbearable presence of the Now would reconstruct everything]). Inhabitants of the Lodge can navigate spatial and temporal boundaries precisely because the inhabitants of symbolic reality cannot. Nevertheless, the inhabitants of the Lodge remain bound by diminutive spatial and temporal designations insofar as their constitutive lack of spatial and temporal guidelines is generated and sustained by a reality that is framed by such guidelines. Both symbolic and post-symbolic reality are linked together by a series of spatial/temporal oppositions that attempt to reconstitute a complete relationship with the Real.

The uncanny temporal and spatial guidelines within the Lodge also allow us to understand the bizarre hierarchical relationship between entities from the Lodge and the process of Fire Walking. Perhaps the best place to begin this complicated investigation is to examine what I mean by Fire Walking so to its examination we will turn.

Branded

The easiest way to understand *Fire Walking* is to note its relation to Deputy Hawk's description of the Lodges in *Twin Peaks Episode 18*. Hawk asserts that individuals entering the Black Lodge must successfully pass a spiritual test by confronting their shadow self with perfect courage. The guidance of Hawk's legend suggests that if an individual vanquishes their shadow self, they will be rewarded with safe passage to the White Lodge. However, what is meant by safe passage to the White Lodge is difficult to discern.

Our preliminary investigation of the White Lodge/Black Lodge characterized it as one and the same place. Such a characterization indicates that both Lodges occupy concurrent dimensions of post-symbolic reality. If the dimensions of both Lodges inhabit the same spatio-temporal location and are juxtaposed on top of one another (neither being cognizant of the other's presence while occupying the same space), then it follows that certain entities would be incapable of detecting the presence of others. From this point of view, the successful candidate of a Fire Walk would pass into the realm of the White Lodge's consciousness unbeknownst to the Black Lodgian inhabitants. The Black and White Lodges can be thought of as one and the same place ontologically speaking while remaining separate from the perspectives of their inhabiting entities. The absent spatial and temporal boundaries associated with Lodgian identities (the ways in which different

identities are able to displace one another) indicates that different Lodgian beings can occupy the same form (the same presence as when Annie Blackburn, Windom Earle, Caroline Earle, and Laura Palmer occupy the same place in *Twin Peaks Episode 29*) and remain unacknowledged by their counterparts.

At the same time, what or perhaps where the Black and White Lodges actually are is an enigmatic question. We know that there is a White Lodge insofar as David Lavery mentions that the Giant's education took place entirely within the White Lodge; however, the form and location of this White Lodge and whether or not it significantly deviates from the Black are questions to which we find highly ambiguous answers within *Twin Peaks'* narrative (9). The Giant may have been educated in the White Lodge but he freely occupies the realm of the Black, assuming that the Man From Another Place occupies the Black Lodge himself. Then again, it seems like we are examining the Black and White Lodges in Black and White terms and the designations Black and White are merely arbitrary names bearing no meaning whatsoever in the post-symbolic Lodgian realm (therefore it makes no difference that the Giant was educated in the White Lodge for the White Lodge is no different from the Black). Such an argument would evidence the sameness of the Giant and the Man From Another Place (they are both de-personalized spiritual entities inhabiting the Lodgian realm consistently displacing one another) while rupturing the continuity of Hawk's legend and its unrealistic demand for PERFECT courage. Further, the successful/unsuccessful Fire Walker may simply enter another Fire Walk (a white one rather than a black, a red one rather than a purple) for there is no telling

how many Fire Walks Lodgian individuals will have to endure.

Hawk's legend can be thought of as a myth created in order to understand or displace the void at the heart of symbolic reality. Within the legend, an analysis of the unknown is described to explain the inconsistencies between established theoretical definitions (theoretical symbolic reality) and inadequate practical referents (the [absent] constitution of symbolic reality). Hawk's legend attempts to transcend the spiritual lack engendered within individuals by symbolic life by replacing it with perfect/ideal fortitude in the post-symbolic (by post-symbolic I mean the plane of existence that is entered after the temporal dimension is vacated: the post-symbolic Lodgian dimension is still governed by symbolic guidelines to a certain extent although those guidelines are extremely warped and twisted [like time and space within the Black Lodge]). However, within the domain of the Black/White Lodge perfection itself cannot be achieved for the Lodge is an extension of symbolic reality and is therefore severed from a perfect relationship with Reality. Therefore, impeccable bravery is not a necessary aspect required for passing a Fire Walk: the Fire Walk can never be 'passed' for it likely exists outside of the vapid win/lose dichotomy. The Fire Walk is something that simply must be endured and your relationship to its form will depend upon your ability to overcome symbolic confinements (my body is my own, time is passing).

The form of the Fire Walk can be thought of as being commensurate to that of Fire. Fire has no definitive shape as it consistently fluctuates from one form to another. In "The Knowing Spectator of *Twin Peaks*: Culture, Feminism, and Family Violence", Randi

Davenport describes fire as containing “associations of injury, sexual longing and power to reforge both psyche and material self”(257). Fire's vicissitudes adequately reflect Martha Nochimson's claim that “Lynch's detective is one who can only function if he is not fearful of physical indeterminacy”(159). Nochimson is referring to Agent Cooper's inability to function during his Fire Walk in *Twin Peaks Episode 29*. Cooper's spirit remains bound by the temporal and spatial limitations of symbolic reality upon entering the Lodge and he cannot open his mind to the possibility of directly penetrating interpersonal relations.¹ If we extend Nochimson's argument to everyone entering the Lodge, then it becomes apparent that in order to Fire Walk an individual must be able to navigate the boundaries of time and space by manipulating his or her form and behaving like Fire. In order to achieve this inflammable consciousness, the Fire Walker must overcome several symptoms while continually forging a Lodgian identity.

The differentiation between Lacanian symptoms can now find its way into the structure of the Lodge. Fire Walking within the Lodge forces individuals to encounter that forgotten idiosyncratic aspect of their self constituting their identity in symbolic reality. In order to embrace the incorporeal structure of a Lodgian identity, your pathological tic must be de-sublimated in order to shatter/invert your temporal conception of self. As noted in Chapter Two, people existing within the confines of the temporal realm require a sublimated fundamental fantasy in order to support the structure of the subsequent fantasies their personality forms to achieve moments of pseudo-Realistic reconstitution. From such an idiosyncratic sublimated disposition, subjects form their

conception of self after transferring their innermost kernel onto the 'big Other.' However, the 'big Other' is not a political, cultural or social entity through which the individual structures his or her personality.

The political environment in which an individual is nurtured relates more specifically to the secondary elements constituting her personality. The fundamental fantasy is produced by transferring your personality onto the 'big Other' yet the arbitrary nature of linguistic signifiers designates that such a transfer is not necessarily onto the political 'big Other' (the vigilant eye of the Law); your fundamental relationship to the 'big Other' is *idiosyncratic* insofar as your constitutive 'big Other', your first encounter with the slippery, transitory nature of language, could be something as simple as "sand" or "tree" or "cat." Thus, you transfer your innermost kernel onto the 'big Other' but this 'big Other's' position within the symbolic plain and its manifold commensurate signifiers/symptoms indicates the arbitrary nature of your fundamental constitution. Subjective symptoms upon symptoms upon symptoms develop in an *elaborately viscous* individual identity, and certain particular encounters with symptoms are more damaging than others (as in the case of Alexander Fadeyev in the fourth footnote of Chapter One). The Fire Walking individual must traumatically navigate his or her manifold temporal/historical symptoms in an attempt to encounter their fundamental fantasy. If the Fire Walker successfully meets his fundamental symptom and is able to preserve a sense of self (within other selves), then she will encounter the ultimate irony maintaining the Lodge's reality: Bob's incomprehensible authority.

Windom Earle collides with Bob's de-personalized presence during *Twin Peaks Episode 29*. Earle has manipulated his Fire Walk with an enormous amount of success as is demonstrated by the fact that the words he speaks take on a corporeal form while those Agent Cooper utters do not. Moreover, Earle is already able to overcome the temporal and spatial limitations restraining him within the terrestrial realm, a fact that is illustrated by the space he shares with Annie Blackburn, Caroline Earle, and Laura Palmer. Earle's vibrant free-flowing presence within the Lodge logically assumes that his power is unlimited and he attempts to take Agent Cooper's soul (or become Agent Cooper). Upon doing so, Bob immediately terminates his efforts and thus acquires ownership of Earle's presence.

Bob's authority within the Lodge is generated by his embodiment of realistic excess. Bob's inversion of the appearance of the 'big Other' (the Law, the Party) within symbolic reality allows him to BE corporeal authorial presence within the Lodge. Bob is the Law, Authority, the ideal version of Frank Booth or the Baron Harkonnen. His identity is the Rock which the most successful Fire Walkers (those who are able to free themselves from manifold temporal/spatial symptoms) cannot surmount. The limitations Bob places upon freedom are comparable to the symbiotic relationship between the symbolic dimension and the post-symbolic. As stated previously, Phillip Jeffries' scene within *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* demonstrates the way in which the seemingly absent temporal and spatial dimensions of the Lodge maintain a relationship to symbolic time and space insofar as they are dependent upon symbolic time and space in their

opposition to them. That is, the Lodge's absence of temporal and spatial demarcations ($\sim x$) are the realistic excess of symbolically real time and space (where time flows and bodies cannot become one another)(x). Both the Lodgian and symbolically real time-space continuums coincide in a series that approaches the absent temporal and spatial dimensions of the Real, the unbearable presence of Eternity or the Now (X). Thus, ideal freedom does not exist within the Lodge even though its framework suggests that it would support such an axiom. Hence, Windom Earle's belief that he had found freedom is confronted by the presence of Bob, who reminds him that Bob is the closest possible asymptotic link to Reality and Freedom. Bob is the rock preventing absolute freedom from unraveling within the Lodge, the hindrance freely maintaining the Lodge's framework. At this point, we must realize that the most important clue (realistically speaking) the Man From Another Place provided Agent Cooper with during the dream sequence in *Twin Peaks Episode 2* was his introductory remark: "Let's Rock."

Bob's embodiment of the ideological big Other freely reigns as the boulder holding some kind of logical structure within the Lodge's reality. Other Lodgian entities we encounter such as the Grandson, the Grandmother, the Giant, the One-Armed Man and the Man From Another Place demonstrate their opposition to Bob and attempt to halt his carnal pursuits. In the words of Scott Pollard, "each of [these] fragments attempts to increase the space it occupies: to enlarge its limits while keeping them intact"(302). However, their efforts are ineffectual and cannot hinder Bob's constrained emancipation. Therefore, when Bob purloins Windom Earle's soul he provides Earle with precisely what

he wants: the highest possible degree of realistic freedom. Bob's position at the top of an uncanny Lodgian hierarchy guarantees the permanence of his and Earle's unrelenting *jouissance*. Ironically, the closest Earle can come to re-establishing his innermost kernel (the re-establishment of which is prevented by the confines of reality even for expert Fire Walkers within the Lodge) is to transfer himself onto Bob, or displace his entire body onto that of the 'big Other.'ⁱⁱⁱ

At this point we should remember that Lacan's thought moved away from a universe structured by a transcendental quilting point towards one where that quilting point was simply another point in an egalitarian linguistic system. The transcendental quilting point moved away from being THE symptom to becoming another symptom in an infinite chain. Inversely, in the Lodge the Fire Walking individual must attempt to enter the infinite chain before eventually colliding with Bob, the transcendental quilting point.

Divergent Lynchean Dimensions: *Mulholland Drive* and the Black Lodge

In *Mulholland Drive*, we find the universe of *Twin Peaks*' Lodge transformed into a different form. Bob has been replaced by a befouled vagrant; the Man From Another Place is known as Mr. Roque; the individual Fire Walking is one Diane Selwyn; Diane's Fire Walk is divided into the two different acts within the film. In the opening moments of her Fire Walk, Diane enters a fantastic realm that completely overlooks its fundamental construction. However, as her Fire Walk proceeds and she confronts its/her symptom, her

initial fantasy is displaced by a harrowing reconstitution of symbolic reality.

In her review of *Mulholland Drive*, Martha Nochimson notes that within its narrative “Lynch continues to pursue dreams by making the logical temporal, spatial and psychological mechanisms of ordinary narrative defer to dream non-logic, which reflects the malleability of time, space and identity”(2002, 37). In order to unravel the spatial and temporal mysteries of *Mulholland Drive* we will move along and diverge from the following path. We will begin by examining the relationship between Diane Selwyn, Rita and Betty. A preliminary analysis of the contours of Diane’s Fire Walk will then be presented and assisted by both David Lynch’s 10 clues to the secrets of *Mulholland Drive* from TVA International’s 2002 release of the *Mulholland Drive* DVD and his omniscient camera. The reasons why Diane can be thought of as inhabiting Lynch’s Lodge will then be explained. But first, in order for us to understand *Mulholland Drive* adequately we must assert one of its constitutive features. To paraphrase Charles Dickens, “there is no doubt that [Diane Selwyn is] dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the [interpretation] I am going to relate”(Dickens, 5).

Diane’s death or absent temporal presence within *Mulholland Drive* is symbolically represented before the opening credits. As David Lynch mentions, “pay particular attention in the beginning of the film: at least two clues are revealed before the credits”(Lynch, *Mulholland Drive*, 2002). *Mulholland Drive*’s opening sequence depicts a group of people dancing the Jitterbug without a dance floor in front of a purple background. At first, only the outlines of the dancers are shown and their features are

completely black. As the scene progresses, the dancers acquire distinguishing characteristics while their darkened shadows accompany their entry into a more luminescent plain. The dancers appear and dissolve into each other as do their shadows and none of the couples manage to occupy any definite space for a significant period of time. Eventually, the colourful couples become the predominant focus while their darkened counterparts fade into the background. Overtop of the dancers, we see Diane's smiling face highlighted by a lustrous glow and accompanied by an elderly couple. The image of Diane and the old couple fades in and out of focus as another image depicting only Diane overpowers it in the background. In the final seconds of the overpowering image's presence, the elderly couple join Diane once again before everything disappears. After the Jitterbug ends, we are left with an opaque picture of Diane's deathbed.

From this opening sequence, nine aspects of *Mulholland Drive* are foreshadowed. The absent dance floor indicates the incorporeal nature of *Mulholland Drive* or the idea that the entire movie takes place within a transcendental anti-secular plane. The dancers represent the Jitterbug contest Diane has won, the contest which provides her with a chance to become a Hollywood star. The empty, colourless dancers refer to Diane's unsuccessful career while symbolically representing her death. The overpowering, vibrant, picturesque dancers that follow the empty caricatures symbolize Diane's entrance into fantasy, "her" creation of an imaginary world in which she can overlook the reality of her previous failures. The ambiguous relationship between form and space found between the empty and colorful dancers alludes to *Mulholland Drive's* ambivalent plot

line, a plot line whose linear qualities disintegrate in Act II. Diane's beautifully highlighted face is originally depicted with the elderly couple who we eventually discover are entities inhabiting the Black/White Lodge. Their appearance with Diane foreshadows their appearance with Betty (the 'purely' fantastic side of Diane's personality) in *Mulholland Drive's* first act. The elderly couple also represent the numerous spiritual entities/Lodgian inhabitants who are present within Diane's fantasy. The elderly couple eventually disappears from Diane's side and is replaced by another illustration of Diane. The departure of the elderly couple alludes to the way in which they depart from Betty at the airport while Diane's singular caricature represents the unification between the two halves of her identity after Betty leaves the elderly couple and discovers Rita. In the final moments of Diane's solo illustration, the elderly couple returns thereby forerunning their ominous reappearance near the end of *Mulholland Drive*. Finally, the close-up of Diane's death bed indicates that after the elderly couple's return, Diane will once again recognize her deceased status.

An introductory examination of the structure of *Mulholland Drive* will assist us in discerning the various details foreshadowed in its opening moments. First off, in *Mulholland Drive's* opening act we find Diane Selwynn occupying two identities simultaneously. Her identity has separated into the forms of Rita — the component of her personality more in tune with Diane's realistic identity — and Betty — her fantastic projection of her self. In Act II, we find Diane reconstituted in herself and reliving the final moments of her life. As Diane's Fire Walk continues, it becomes increasingly

frightening and eventually the Lodgian spirits coerce her into directly reliving the symptom she is unable to successfully surmount in Act I.

In *Mulholland Drive's* first act, Rita and Betty are Diane as she attempts to bridge the gap between subject and other/object by actually becoming both herself and the object of her obsession (thereby achieving what Fred Madison could not in *Lost Highway*). Diane's theoretical sublimation of her desired Other (Camilla Rhodes) as well as her ability to occupy two different forms concurrently transcends the spatial/temporal boundaries established within symbolic reality and evidences her presence within Lynch's Lodge. Diane's ability to manipulate her form suggests that upon entering her Fire Walk her mind is able to negotiate suavely two of her concurrent debilitating symptoms: her obsession with Camilla Rhodes and the memory of her suicide. Diane's initial spiritual fortitude is rewarded by the Lodgian inhabitants as they assist her in maintaining her fantasy. However, Diane's stalwart symptomatic navigation diminishes as *Mulholland Drive's* narrative unravels. Consequently, the Lodgian inhabitants within her narrative dissolve her post-symbolic reality.

Diane's corporeal occupation of both Rita and Betty finds its first piece of evidence in Lynch's fourth clue to *Mulholland Drive's* narrative dilemma: "an accident is a terrible event. . . notice the location of the accident." The accident's location is present within two places in *Mulholland Drive*: in the beginning when Rita escapes the clutches of two gangsters and near the end as Diane meets Camilla during the dinner party pool scene. During the dinner party scene, Camilla evinces her departure from her relationship

with Diane by announcing her upcoming marriage to Adam Kesher and kissing another woman (the announcement is not actually made but we are lead to believe that Adam and Camilla's marriage is the subject of the meeting). In "Amnesia, Obsession, Cinematic U-turns: On *Mulholland Drive*", Arash Abizadeh and Kirsten Ostherr note that during this scene "Camilla is portrayed as a seductive but exploitative opportunist who encourages physical affections only to further her own ends"(4). Diane immediately understands that Camilla's marriage to film director Adam Kesher will coincidentally assist her career and end their monogamous association.ⁱⁱⁱ Consequently, the location of the dinner party pool scene relates to the scene from *Mullholland Drive's* first act insofar as in Act II it is where Diane and Camilla's union is separated — it is where Diane accepts that her relationship with Camilla has been concluded — whereas in Act I it is where it is corporeally sewn together — as Diane becomes Rita/Camilla during her Fire Walk.^{iv}

The other half of Diane's personality is known as Betty and her introduction within *Mulholland Drive* is accompanied by extremely bright lighting and a congenial ambience. As she takes center stage, the dreary darkness that has dominated Act I's action up to this moment is replaced by an uncanny romanticism. Betty's beautiful and ingenuous personality is immediately assisted by a taxi driver who graciously lifts her luggage into his trunk before asking where she is going. Betty's attitude radiates charm as she affably discusses her dreams of becoming a movie star with the elderly couple. Each of these attributes indicates that she is Diane's platonic counterpart — the gorgeous young actress destined for the success Diane was unable to achieve. The plastic,

depsychologized, mannequin-like faces found upon the elderly couple's countenances in the succeeding scene combine with their robotic movements to question the realistic qualities of Betty's character.

Moments later, the camera depicts the entrance way to the courtyard in Aunt Ruth's residence where Rita is staying. The camera's swift movement suggests that it is directly preceding Betty; however, Betty is subsequently portrayed at a significant distance behind the camera's previous position. The camera's hasty entrance into Ruth's courtyard indicates that Betty, or Diane in the form of Rita, is already present within Aunt Ruth's home, and, therefore, Betty is already well aware of where she is going. The movement of the camera during Betty's entrance to Ruth's courtyard provides us with a preliminary indication of her direct relationship to Rita and Diane.

After Rita and Betty establish their acquaintanceship and Betty discovers Rita's amnesia they attempt to discover Rita's true identity. As their investigation proceeds, they consistently demonstrate that they are two different embodiments of Diane or Diane split into two. Rita's initial discovery of her purse, its large sum of money and the infamous key results in Betty and Rita's mutual bemusement. Rita displays her close ties to Diane's symbolically real self by demonstrating that she intuits but cannot remember the hidden meaning within the purse. Afterwards, Betty and Rita enter a Winkie's restaurant where Rita notices that the waitresses' name tag states Diane. The waitresses' name engenders an epiphany for Rita who subsequently remembers the name Diane Selwyn. Rita's revelation allows them to discover the apartment of D Selwyn to which they eventually

break in.

However, before entering Diane's apartment the dimensions of Rita and Betty's/Diane's Fire Walk begin to dissipate. The symptoms constituting her Fire Walk — the symptoms existing coincidentally with the symptoms of time and space that she has been able to overcome by splitting her identity in two — are her death and her role in Camilla's murder. The Lodgian inhabitants admire the way Diane has been able to overcome the spatio-temporal boundaries of her secular reality (her spatio-temporal symptom). Thus, at the beginning of her fantastic reconstruction of reality, Betty and Rita remain sure of their selves (confident that they are separate people) and Diane remains sure of her self. Derivatively, Adam Kesher (the principle individual responsible for Diane and Camilla's separation) is transformed from a powerful independent film director into a floundering marionette.⁹ As Rita and Betty's journey continues, the Lodgian entities ironically challenge Diane's spatio-temporal convalescence by forcing her to acknowledge the necessarily forgotten component of its constitution. As Bandar notes at *Silencio*'s: "it's all recorded." Rita and Betty must confront the necessarily forgotten component of their personalities and traverse/confront their repressed fundamental fantasy. The challenge within their Fire Walk is that they must recognize that they are two halves of the same identity (become aware of what/who they are simultaneously) in order to strengthen their ability to transcend time and space within the Lodge. Betty and Rita must acknowledge that they are both Diane and that Diane is dead while simultaneously maintaining their status as Betty and Rita in order to enhance their "interpersonal" relationships within the

Lodge.

Betty and Rita search for the identity of D Selwyn while the distinctness of their separate personalities is challenged. Up to this point, the entities within Diane's Fire Walk have been dealing exclusively with Betty or the fantastical component of Diane's identity. Rita is ignored by the Lodgian spirits initially but as she moves closer to confronting her constitutive symptom (by discovering the identity of D Selwyn), the spirits within the Lodge attempt to circumvent Betty in order to contact her. One way of examining this point is provided by Rita's relationship to Aunt Ruth. Aunt Ruth is Betty's Aunt and it is in Aunt Ruth's apartment where Rita and Betty meet in Act I. Rita breaks into Ruth's apartment as Ruth departs for a vacation in *Mulholland Drive's* first act. As Rita enters Ruth's apartment, the camera angle suggests that Ruth watches her enter and that Ruth is aware of Rita's presence within her residence. Ruth subsequently does not acknowledge Rita's presence within her dwelling and therefore demonstrates that she is aware of what is happening within Diane's Fire Walk. Following this scene, after Coco tells Ruth that someone else is staying in her apartment, Ruth mischievously phones Betty to discern the identity of her roommate. Ruth's association with the exaggerated side of Diane's personality illustrates her attempts to assist the construction of Diane's fantasy. Ruth allows Rita to enter her apartment unabated and then proceeds to acknowledge Diane's purely fantastic construction directly.

Ruth's relationship to Louise Bonner evidences the idea that Ruth is aware that Betty is not Betty while also demonstrating her attempts to deconstruct Diane's fantasy.

During Louise's brief scene, she and Betty have the following conversation:

Louise: Someone is in trouble. Who are you? What are you doing in Ruth's apartment?

Betty: She's letting me stay here. I'm her niece. My name's Betty.

Louise: No its not. That's not what she said. Someone is in trouble, something bad is happening.

Coco interrupts their dialogue but before Louise departs she looks in the doorway, notices Rita and says: "No, she said someone else was in trouble." Louise challenges Betty's identity by suggesting that Ruth mentioned to her that Betty is not actually Betty. Ruth sends Louise to demonstrate her awareness of Rita's presence within her house, her knowledge of Betty's real identity, and her insight into the currents of Rita's situation. Louise's presence indicates that as Rita and Betty unravel the mystery of D Selwyn's identity, Ruth arrests her acquaintance with the fantastic side of Diane's identity. Therefore, in order to intensify her challenge of Rita and Betty's simultaneous separation and conjunction, Ruth attempts to confront the side of Diane's personality more in touch with what happened during Diane's actual life (or at least the depiction of that life we are presented with in Act II).

Rita's more intimate relationship to Diane's social realities within *Mulholland Drive's* second act is frequently suggested within Act I. For instance, Diane's fantasy begins with Rita. Rita is the original member of Diane's dual identity within *Mulholland Drive's* narrative and Betty's presence is secondary to her own. As mentioned previously, Rita possesses an awareness of the events from Act II that Betty does not and this fact is brought to its climax at *Silencio's*. Rita dies her hair blonde and Betty begins to disappear

— note her violent convulsions at *Silencio's* — as Rita gradually realizes her close relationship to Diane.^{vi} Moreover, Diane attempts to consume Camilla Rhodes within her Fire Walk by sublimating Camilla's identity into her own while separating her own into two constituent parts. Diane's consumption of Camilla allows her to suppress her involvement with Camilla's murder while also directly confronting her with its presence. Rita's Camillian depiction of Diane symbolizes her direct connection to Diane's situation from Act II insofar as she directly displays the absolute goal of Diane's psychotic actions. Unfortunately, as Rita moves closer towards an understanding of the personality constituting both her and Betty's existence she is unable to adequately understand the liberating effects of her dualistic corporeality. Hence, before she opens the box near the end of Act I, Betty disappears entirely and Rita and Betty return to their previous situation rather than embarking upon a completely different Fire Walk. Consequently, Louise Bonner's warning that someone in is trouble can be thought of as referring not to Betty or Rita but to Diane. Louise's warning indicates that Rita's inability to comprehend and suppress the direct knowledge of her relationship to Betty and Diane will hinder the development of Diane's consciousness within the Lodge (insofar as her Fire Walk will move backwards rather than forwards) (she will be prevented from manipulating her form in a comparable way to Phillip Jeffries).

The moment when Rita and Betty directly confront their symptoms (their shadow selves) occurs when they view Diane's rotting corpse. After viewing Diane's dead body, Rita and Betty run from Diane's home and as they move their movements fade into one

another. Rita and Betty momentarily become one person after viewing the absent foundation of their identit(ies). Their direct confrontation with the symptom structuring their Lodgian reality provides them with an opportunity to enter an entirely new realm of consciousness insofar as the successful negotiation of their fundamental symptom will deconstruct the framework establishing their identity. After the destabilization/depsychologization of such a framework, the individual's perception of her self is theoretically shattered (as mentioned in part two of my second chapter). Such subjective entropy is precisely what Diane's Fire Walk hopes to engender; however, this entropy must maintain an awareness of an I, a residual constitutive point of individual classification, even if this I is composed of several different components. Diane's inability to shatter and maintain a conception of self simultaneously (her inability to transcend the beginning by directly bombarding and successfully traversing the beginning) causes her to return to the beginning of that conception of self in Act II of *Mulholland Drive*.

Dan and Herb

One of the opening scenes within *Mulholland Drive*'s narrative is the most difficult to situate within any interpretation of the film. At the same time, it (in)directly congeals *Mulholland Drive* and *Twin Peaks* insofar as its dialogue describes a realm that is neither black nor light, night nor day.

Dan and Herb's scene takes place in a Winkie's diner where Herb and Dan discuss

Dan's recurring dream. Dan states:

it's the second one I've had but they're both the same. They start out that I'm in here but its neither day nor night. Its kind of half night, ya know? But it looks like this except for the light and I'm scared like I can't tell ya . . . Then I realize what it is. There's a man in back of this place. He's the one whose doing it. I can see him through the wall. I can see his face. I hope that I never see that face ever outside of the dream(Lynch 2001).

Dan's description of his dream relates to Alice Kuzniar's representation of the Black and White Lodge as one and the same place insofar as his dream takes place somewhere between the realms of day and night/black and white/good and evil. Additionally, Dan is reliving the same dream over and over again or theoretically caught in a Fire Walk containing a symptom which he cannot overcome. Dan can see through the wall in his dream which means he can visually penetrate certain contours of his dream's framework or overcome certain secular symptoms. The bum is responsible for the creation of Dan's dream ("he's the one whose doing it") and can be thought of as the shadow *self/symptom* Dan must face.

The bum's integral appearance within Dan's dream is commensurate with Bob's place within Laura Palmer's nightmares, the Mystery Man's situation within *Lost Highway*, and The Man in the Planet's role within *Eraserhead*. The vagrant's position at the top of a spiritual Lodgian hierarchy and derivative relationship to Bob is indicated by his possession of the enigmatic box (the box that links *Mulholland Drive's* acts) in the film's concluding moments. The elderly couple's emergence from the vagrant's box and their diminutive size in relation to his suggests that he has the ability to control other

Lodgian spirits. Additionally, in *Mulholland Drive's* ending, the vagabond's face is depicted behind the same red curtains outlining the entrance to the Lodge in the final episode of *Twin Peaks*. The direct relationships between *Mulholland Drive* and *Twin Peaks* and the vagrant and Bob are illustrated by these similarities.^{vii}

Dan's encounter with the Man behind Winkie's suggests that he is continually confronting one of the Lodge's principle inhabitants. The vagrant's relationship to Bob indicates that he is also one of the ultimate ironies structuring the union between symbolic reality and the excessive post-symbolic Lodgian dimension. Therefore, Dan's confrontation with the bum is one where he collides with the ridiculous consequences of maintaining an open mind within the Lodge. Dan must realize that no matter how open his mind remains, the vagrant's power within the lodge is insurmountable. The coincident notions of quasi-absolute freedom and necessary submission to the presence of an irrational 'big Other' are likely what result in Dan's apprehension. In Act II, Dan appears again while Diane discusses Camilla with Joe and during his salient reappearance his demeanour bears a triumphant smile. Dan's sudden re-institution within *Mulholland Drive's* narrative combines with his content persona to suggest that his Fire Walk from the beginning of the film has been successfully traversed. In direct contrast to Diane, Dan has achieved another level of Lodgian consciousness.

The institution of Dan within Diane's Fire Walk relates to the relationship between time, space and awareness within the Lodge. That is, every Fire Walker from every epoch present within the Lodge must be Fire Walking coincidentally due to the quasi-absence of

temporal distinctions. Thus, an (in)determinate amount of Fire Walkers are interpenetrating each other's levels of consciousness simultaneously and while some Fire Walkers can recognize their role as Fire Walker within certain Fire Walks other Fire Walkers are not aware of their place within others. The manifold levels of consciousness and awareness within the Lodge indicates that at different times different Fire Walkers will occupy an oblivious awareness, an aware obliviousness, an awareness, or an obliviousness of their relations to each other.

Stationary Concerns

The spatial dimensions of *Mulholland Drive* shift in and out of focus in order to highlight the ambiguity surrounding a location's place and shape within its narrative. The principle subjects within *Mulholland Drive* are aware that they are occupying some kind of world; however, they remain oblivious to the absent dimensions or the lack of 'actual' movement that often accompanies their journeys. In *Dune* terminology, they are ignorant of the fact that they are "travelling without moving." We find this element of *Mulholland Drive* highlighted by Lynch's tenth clue to its discontinuous narrative: "Where is Aunt Ruth?" Aunt Ruth directly accompanies two scenes, indirectly appears in another and is referred to as dead in Act II. Ruth's indirect appearance occurs as Betty and Rita search for D Selwyn in Act I. Betty and Rita locate the residential complex where Diane is staying and upon arriving notice a well dressed body-guard standing in the courtyard. Rita and Betty

hide from the body-guard's view and then quietly survey the situation. Their observations detect a woman who resembles Aunt Ruth departing from the courtyard in a similar manner to Ruth's earlier departure in Act I. The parallel relationship between Ruth's second and first appearances suggest that the residential complex she is leaving during appearance number two is the same residence she vacated in appearance number one. The content of Ruth's second residence has drastically changed while the form remains somewhat similar. In Ruth's second dwelling, Betty and Rita encounter the defunct intrinsic element of their identity whereas during their first encounter they symbolically revitalize that identity. Thus, Betty and Rita's original meeting demonstrates the spatio-temporal symptom Diane has successfully overcome within her fantasy.

As Betty and Rita confront their dead body they collide with another symptom with which they must contend in order to further the development of their Lodgian consciousness. The second symptom is of paramount importance for it represents the beginnings of their identity and must be recognized and subjugated in order to enhance their mutual/singular development within the Lodge. The parallels between the first two Ruthian moments and Selwynian residences — the first being Diane's vibrant dwelling, the second her moribund abode — symbolize that they are one and the same spatial location. Ruth and Betty basically leave their residence (where their symptom is traversed) in order to return to their residence (and encounter their fundamental symptom) in order to return back once again to the same residence (and deal with the effects of their symptomatic confrontation). If we strip away the colour and scenery from *Mulholland*

Drive's narrative, then Rita and Betty's traumatic venture from house to house represents Agent Cooper's original/eternal Fire Walk in *Twin Peaks Episode 29* or the contents of an individual's mind: he/they continually enter/s the same room only to find its components meaningfully rearranged.^{viii}

We find the waiting room from *Twin Peaks* eloquently rearranged in the opening moments of *Mulholland Drive*. Mr. Roque's 'office' closely resembles the location Agent Cooper enters in *Twin Peaks Episode 29* as well as the insides of the cabin from *Lost Highway* and Henry's lobby within *Eraserhead*. The affinities between these waiting rooms symbolically connect *Mulholland Drive*, *Twin Peaks*, *Lost Highway* and *Eraserhead* insofar as they offer us different artistic representations of the same fantastical position. If we think of the dimensions of the Lodge as supporting infinite temporal and spatial de-stabilization within the post-symbolic confines of a symbolically realistic temporal and spatial excess, then the events taking place within its boundaries can occur within a discontinuous simultaneity unbeknownst to their respective Fire Walkers.

Naturally, the simultaneous layering and interpenetrating subjects within the Lodge can have particular aspects of their own respective narratives overlap one another as well. Hence, we can think of the separate Acts of *Mulholland Drive* as flowing together coincidentally unbeknownst to Diane Selwyn. David Lynch's second clue to *Mulholland Drive's* narrative — “notice the appearance of the red lampshade” — guides us toward an understanding of this idea. The red lampshade is present on two different

occasions: in Act I it is shown after one of Mr. Roque's associates phones the Back of The Head Man who then phones The Arm Man and tells him "the same." After hearing these words, the arm man phones the residence containing the red lamp shade. In Act II, we discover that this lampshade is within Diane's residence and that The Arm Man was therefore phoning Diane.

The Back of the Head Man's use of the words "the same" suggest several different interpretations for the red lampshade's appearance. Rita is sleeping while The Arm Man's phone call takes place and immediately after his call Betty arrives within the narrative. Therefore, The Arm Man's phone call can be thought of as suggesting that Betty and Rita are the same person. At the same time, The Arm Man phones Diane's residence from Act II within Act I thereby directly connecting the Acts and indicating their commensurate relationship.

The red lampshade's appearance in Act II connotes direct contact between Diane's dead corpse and Mr. Roque. In order to understand this point we must remember that in *Mulholland Drive's* opening moments, Rita falls asleep within Aunt Ruth's abode. Rita is the half of Diane who has directly consumed the object of Diane's desire by becoming Camilla Rhodes. Rita's consumption of Camilla demonstrates Diane's traversal of certain spatio-temporal designations and the spiritual entities from the Lodge subsequently assist her spatio-temporal navigation by introducing another spatio-temporal impossibility (from the viewpoint of symbolic reality) in the form of Betty/Diane. As Rita/Diane slumbers within her Fire Walk, she enters the open-plain of the Lodge and develops the other

component of her identity. Dan and Herb's scene also takes place while Rita slumbers which indicates that while/if (depending on the development of your consciousness: the Grandson would likely never sleep) you slumber within the lodge you obviously enter other Fire Walks.^{ix} Mr. Roque and his associates assist Diane's Fire Walk by phoning her as she sleeps and producing the other component of her identity that is itself part of the same identity. The red lampshade's situation within Diane's apartment from Act II highlights Rita and Betty's commensurate relationship to Diane.^x

The second appearance of the red lampshade indicates Diane's unsuccessful Fire Walk. Diane's initial success within her Fire Walk is the result of her engulfment of Camilla (her direct embodiment of her other and her transcendence of certain spatio-temporal guidelines from the symbolic plain). Camilla is on the phone the second time we are shown the red lampshade in Act II. Camilla's separation from Diane highlights the fact that she was unable to think her way through the conundrum associated with being both the direct interrelation between herself and her other (Rita) and two other different people at once (Betty and Rita) simultaneously. At this point, we can understand the hidden clue within the Cowboy's message to Adam Keshner: "you will see me one more time if you do good, you will see me two more times if you do bad." Adam Keshner is a one-dimensional construction within Diane's fantasy and the message the Cowboy presents him with is actually directed towards Diane. Diane does see the Cowboy on two other occasions after she cannot sustain her double identity. The first encounter takes place between the Cowboy and Diane's dead corpse (the symptom Diane was unable to

face and overcome) and the second after Camilla phones Diane and she proceeds to Camilla's Dinner Party. Shortly after the Cowboy's second appearance, Diane's Fire Walk concludes under the insufferable weight of its beginning.

The commensurate relationship between *Mulholland Drive's* Acts which the red lampshade highlights provides us with a tool for understanding *Mulholland Drive's* form. That is, if we take *Mulholland Drive's* first act and transpose it on top of the second and think of the two simultaneously, then we discover the form of Diane's Fire Walk. Within that form, she stalwartly confronts the Lodge's convoluted epistemology only to tragically succumb to the pressure of its irrational demands. When she commits suicide again in *Mulholland Drive's* concluding moments, she returns to the beginning of her reality only to attempt to confront that beginning again and overcome the impossible consequences of simultaneously beginning and concluding a moment in time. Of course, whether or not Diane's actual life has anything to do with *Mulholland Drive's* narrative has now been directly scrutinized.^{xi}

Conclusion

Where to begin this conclusion is a difficult point to consider. We have traversed the dimensions of realities within realities in order to examine how David Lynch transfers epistemological linguistic consequences from a mental to a physical dimension. We have defined and explored the contours of Lynch's Lodge in order to suggest the implications it

holds for the Fire Walking individual. Whether or not Fire Walking is confined strictly to Lynch's Lodge is the question that remains to be answered. As our starting point for this examination we will return to Bob's status as corporeal 'big Other.'

The argument put forth earlier within this Chapter suggests that Bob's identity arose at the beginning of time after the constitutive Event that shattered our relationship to the Real. Our complete bonds within the wholeness of non-being lead us into the symbolic dimension through which we have been forever separated from the limitless confines of right Now. Subjects immediately detected time's traumatic presence and were forced to deal with the eternal presence of an imaginary identity responsible for the maintenance of our incomplete universe, known heretofore as the big Other. The big Other does not function in a commensurate way to God. However, God's construction within symbolic reality functions in a commensurate way to the big Other.

God itself can be thought of as the unbearable consequence of non-being or that which cannot be confronted due to the ways in which it severs our pernicious relationship to the empty constructions through which our universes have been solidified and glorified. God is Reality insofar as our reconstitution with it would result in an obliteration of our consciousness and a reunion with the unthinkable consequences of unreality. The Lodge or Heaven/Hell is the symbolic realistic excess that exists in a post-symbolic dimension governed by the spirits of bygone beings who must face the terrifying consequences of absolute freedom in the presence of Bob. As the One-Armed Man tells us in *Twin Peaks Episode 13*: "he is Bob, eager for fun, he wears a smile, everybody

run"(Pullman).

The Lodge is parasitic upon the symbolic domain in the same way that Bob is attached to Leland Palmer, the Mystery Man to Fred Madison, The Man in the Planet to Henry Spencer and the enigmatic Vagrant to Diane Selwyn. The Lodge exists as that which cannot be physically achieved due to the limitations and constraints of the bodies we inhabit. Our excessive Dionysian and Apollonian pursuits can bring us extremely close to the pinnacle of Being, to the Reality constituting our existence, to our respective narratives, to the point at which the Lodge and symbolic reality self-destruct; however, the traumatic impact of the symbiotic relationship between Heaven and Earth or the Earth and Hell cannot be overcome nor can the retrieval of the innermost kernel of our being.

Naturally, we are free to pursue such ambitions and must make the best of our time here in Earth. In order to do so, certain frameworks have been constructed through which fortunate individuals have accidentally received the status of Good or Agent. Constitutive symptoms can prevent us from achieving the blind elation presented by constructed frameworks while offering a completely different type of non-conformist contentment as well. Then again, precisely what is meant by conformity and contentment can never be objectified or known.

Bob's existence as the actual de-psychologized being arose in response to an absent realistic presence responsible for the maintenance of symbolic reality: the big Other. Thus, the belief and maintenance of the viscous unrelenting strength and power of that big Other's appearance is necessary for Bob to remain within his position of post-

symbolic authorial dominance. Individuals such as Alexandr Fadeyev destroy the power of the big Other and relinquish that of Bob as well. The personalized big Other represented by authority figures who cannot distinguish between their public and private lives is a significant threat to the frameworks they uphold. Coincidentally, it the highest honor they can bestow upon the Real insofar as their careless de-sublimation of the big Other's absent foundation transfers the big Other's ambiguity to the minds of its constituents and breaks down the barriers between symbolic reality and the Lodge (by decreasing Bob's excessive presence). As Bob's presence weakens so do the confines separating our physical existence from the post-physical and only through the complete personalization of every political big Other can we deflate the degrading separation between eternity and time, Bob and the big Other, mental and physical, theoretical and actual. The personalized big Other's chaotic effects damage the symbolic unity of the system insofar as it directly acknowledges the pounding promiscuous void governing cultural frameworks. The personalized big Other strips apart hierarchical authorial structures by penetrating their palpable emptiness. At the same time, the post-modern obsession with the camera lens does suggest that we have found a way to objectify the appearance of the big Other insofar as the lens's quasi-omnipresence provides us with an actual presence of the big Other (whether that presence is being watched [making us the big Other] or watching [being the big Other itself]). Derivatively, the objective big Other ruptures Bob's predominance in the post-symbolic realm and occludes the separation between the two dimensions (cyberspace being similar to symbolic Fire Walking).

By extension, the argument can be made that the personalized big Other is precisely what is required for the beginning to begin: for the historical world to arrest its incessant and traumatic recycling of the same moment in time; for 'us' to move beyond "this mysterious/monstrous in-between which is no longer the Real of prehuman nature . . . and not yet the horizon of Clearing and what comes forth within it" (Žižek 2000, 82); for us to vacate what Michael Chion has labeled a "forever scene" which is "an evening/[eternity] spent by a group, steeped in endless music and during which a commonplace or stupid remark [humanity] seen through the prism of alcohol, takes on a fascinating . . . value" (Chion 98); for something actually to occur. Through such a process we can accurately locate where a Lynchean creation begins or move past the moment within which we have been stuck for all of eternity. Of course, through such a process we can never actually locate the opening moments of a Lynchean creation insofar as we will be caught in the unbearable incomprehensible consequences of freedom, of completeness, of the Now, the world's Fire Walk having finally reached an egalitarian orgasm. The personalized big Other leads us toward the theoretical foundations of the universe by directly linking us with a nothing that we cannot understand due to its synchronous envelopment of everything. We must personalize the authorial big Other's symptoms in order to personalize everything else in order to expose its inherent trauma and destroy our links with time and Bob.

The Lynchean symbol depicting these possibilities is found in *Blue Velvet*. Within *Blue Velvet's* narrative Jeffrey Beaumont briefly holds Dorothy's son's hat in his hands.

His hat includes a cone shape overtop of which hovers a twirling rectangle. In order to personalize the big Other ideally we must reach that idiosyncratic egalitarian traumatic moment where the particles of the Real reconstruct themselves and the rectangle's spinning is arrested. Basically, we must slowly melt down the rectangle into the cone in order to meld the two and congeal them within emptiness.

Please forgive me. I must confess that during our time together I've developed something of a fondness for you. Sounding board. Companion. Ever disobedient and faithful. An overt exclamation will be necessarily put forth. Although I'm somewhat satisfied about the release of our little secret into the critical world. We must therefore make sure not to tell anyone.

End Notes

i. Agent Cooper's Fire Walk discredits Hawk's legend insofar that, after he encounters his 'shadow self' or one of his manifold symptoms, his soul is not utterly annihilated.

ii. For clarification's sake, we must remember two of the differences between big Others. The big Other is the constitutive symptom upon which you place the innermost kernel of your identity (the constitutive symptom that exposes the big Other's place in an egalitarian linguistic chain by de-centering its central location). At the same time, the political big Other represents those cultural codes or guidelines that must be followed in order to maintain the spirit of the Party.

iii. Camilla's marriage to Adam provides an answer to Lynch's eighth clue to *Mulholland Drive*: "did talent alone help Camilla?" Camilla's flamboyant sexuality suggests that her willingness to engage in numerous sexual liaisons definitely assisted her career.

If we think of Lynch's clue as referring to the Camilla Rhodes from *Mulholland Drive*'s first act, things become more complicated. In Diane's fantasy, Camilla's new

lesbian lover from Act II becomes Camilla Rhodes. The Castigliane Brothers work with Mr. Roque in Act I to force Adam Keshner to cast the replacement Camilla for the starring role in *The Sylvia North Story* (here we find the answer to Lynch's third clue: "can you hear the title of the film that Adam . . . is auditioning actresses for? Is it mentioned again?")

The title is mentioned for the second time during the dinner party pool scene where Bob Booker is given directorial credit). Thus, in Act I, Camilla's career is assisted by Diane's fantastic gang of wealthy thugs. The second time *The Sylvia North Story* is mentioned we discover that Diane was auditioning for the role Camilla received. Kirsten Ostherr and Arash Abizadeh point out that in Act I, "the parting glance between Betty and Adam suggests that if she had put her own interests first, Diane could have become 'the girl'—she could have become Camilla Rhodes." Diane seems to acknowledge this possibility during the dinner party pool scene as she notices Camilla's glamorous life and compares it to her own (her state of affairs being the result of her naive devotion to Camilla).

iv. The dinner party pool scene can also be thought of as the point where Diane decides to hire Joe to murder Camilla. Whether or not Joe kills Camilla is a debatable point; however, in Act II the police are searching for Diane in order to question her and we can assume it is them knocking on the door when the elderly couple crawls underneath and compels Diane to commit suicide. We also see Diane hiring Joe with a picture of Camilla in Act II. As Diane hires Joe, he tells her that the key will be found after his job is finished. The key's presence within Diane's apartment when the police are searching for her in Act II suggests that Joe successfully murdered Camilla.

In addition, Rita and Betty consistently try to avoid gangster types in Act I, gangsters who can be thought of as a fantastical form of the police chasing Diane in Act II (note that the gangsters are searching for Rita and not Betty thereby illustrating Rita's more intimate relationship to Diane. The gangsters also plague Adam Keshner throughout Act I. Adam likely mentioned Diane to the police [a fact of which Diane is likely aware] after Camilla's death. Hence, within Diane's fantasy we find the gangsters chasing Adam as well). The actual police from the beginning of Diane's fantasy make only one appearance, a fact that indicates that their direct presence within Diane's fantasy is suppressed (although Diane's suppression cannot prevent them from taking on different authoritative forms). Moreover, in Act I Joe is somewhat of a fool insofar as he cannot find Rita, the girl for whom he is presumably searching. Joe's inability to discover Rita in Act I suggests that Diane is suppressing the realization that her obsession lead her to indirectly murder the subject of her affections. By becoming Rita, Diane overcomes a spatio-temporal symptom while necessarily refusing to address the symptom constituting her fantastic spatio-temporal transcendence.

The scene where Joe hands Diane the key provides an answer to Lynch's fourth clue to *Mulholland Drive*: "who gives a key and why." Joe gives Diane the key and upon receiving it she asks what it will open. He responds with a burst of laughter thereby

demonstrating that he knows the secrets the key will unlock. Diane discovers the key just before the elderly couple drives her to shoot herself in the head. Hence, the thug's laughter indicates that he knows the key will end this element of Diane's Fire Walk insofar as its discovery opens the key to her symptoms within Act II (as the police knock on her door) and causes her Fire Walk's suppressed symptom (her suicide) to be reactivated. The thug's laughter also supports the idea that Act II takes place within a transcendent realm that poses as Diane's secular reality insofar as he is aware of the key's ominous framework (thereby demonstrating his spiritual qualities).

v. Adam's one-dimensional, constructed character (he is not himself, he is a constructed caricature being manipulated by something else) is illustrated by the camera movements after his discussion with Cookie. Adam and Cookie discuss Adam's financial situation with Adam situated within his apartment and Cookie standing in the hall. Adam retreats into his apartment as his discussion with Cookie ends and the camera's movement from the hallway to the room proceeds unobstructed. The camera passes through the wall and focuses upon Adam in order to illustrate the hollow nature of his identity: its lack of an internal and external personality. The camera work ruptures the boundaries between Adam's inside and outside worlds thereby connoting that someone else is determining his fate in the movie's action.

vi. Betty's convulsions at *Silencio's* help us to comprehend Lynch's seventh clue to the mysteries of *Mulholland Drive*: "what is felt, realized and gathered at the club *Silencio*?" At *Silencio's*, Betty and Rita's relationship to Diane is felt and Betty's fantastic particle of that relationship is realized. The box that potentially leads to the heart of the matter is gathered.

vii. Within this line of argumentation we also find the answer to Lynch's ninth clue to *Mulholland Drive*: "note the occurrences of the Man behind Winkie's".

Additionally, in *The Complete Lynch*, David Hughes points out that *Mulholland Drive* started out as a spin-off from *Twin Peaks* (237).

viii. Bob's deconstruction of the Convenience Store during *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* represents this process of tearing away the ambience of *Mulholland Drive*'s narrative. Lynch's *Hotel Room* deals specifically with this subject as well.

ix. A subtle leitmotif present within *Mulholland Drive* is that of the doorway and the hallway. Lynch continually focuses our attention upon doorways suggesting that his narrative unravels within the unconscious and the conscious, the real and the fantastic, the Lodge and symbolic realities effects within, the subject and the (big) Other. Thus, sleeping individuals enter other narratives which coincidentally enter and effect their own.

x. The Arm Man's use of the phrase "the same" also deviously suggests that the Man From Another Place is Mr. Roque. In *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*, The Man From Another Place is described as The Arm which means that he is the arm of the One-Armed Man. We see the One-Armed Man and The Man From Another Place reunited during *Fire Walk's* denouement. Thus, when Lynch focuses upon the Arm Man's arm within *Mulholland Drive* after introducing Mr. Roque, he implicitly highlights the sameness of Mr. Roque and the Man From Another Place. Mr. Roque's name also sounds like "rock" and The Man From Another Place's first line in *Twin Peaks* is "Let's Rock."

xi. Lynch's remaining clue— "notice the robe, the ashtray, the coffee cup" — assists us in attaching a linear quality to *Mulholland Drive's* second act.

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