

**HAPTIC SPACE, ONEIRIC THEORY AND SURREALISTIC ASPECTS  
IN THE CINEMA OF DAVID LYNCH**

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Final Thesis

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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In this thesis I will analyze certain haptic theories and link it to the cinema of David Lynch. Subsequently I will argue that, although his work is far from limited to these theories alone, the surrealistic aspects and oneiric film theory could play an important part in this *triad* to understand how the nightmarish visions that has defined his cinematic style and which has subsequently been dubbed *Lynchian* numerous of times by critics and fans alike, are created so effectively.

For example, David Foster Wallace wrote an article “*What ‘Lynchian’ means and why it’s important*” where he even tries to give the term an academic definition. He states:

*“[The term] refers to a particular kind of irony where the very macabre and the very mundane combine in such a way as to reveal the former’s perpetual containment within the latter [...] [It’s a type of word] that’s definable only ostensibly – i.e. we know it when we see it.”<sup>1</sup>*

Another critic, Paul Taylor wrote on the term *Lynchian* that Lynch’s films are “to be experienced rather than explained”.

Although the cinema of David Lynch has already been studied extensively the theories that I would like to explore have not been fully utilized in discussions of his films. For example, in a recently published article by Michael Pattison “*In Dreams and Imagination*” he came to a similar conclusion when he stated that “given that surrealism is commonly cited as one of many artistic influences on David Lynch, attempts to view his films within this framework are surprisingly infrequent.”<sup>2</sup> I argue that the same can be said about the haptic and oneiric film theory linked to the cinema of David Lynch.

However not everyone agrees with the vision of Pattison. Adam Daniel Jones states that while deeming Lynch a Surrealist is a “step forward from the simple and more common determination of general weirdness” he also thinks that it is at best a qualification of the same drive to find a convenient context. The meaning surrealism originally had is completely lost when terms as “cult”,

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<sup>1</sup> Wallace, D. Foster. (1995) *David Lynch keeps his head*.

<sup>2</sup> Pattison, M. (2013). In *Dreams and Imagination: Surrealist Values in Mulholland Dr. and Inland Empire*.

“surreal” and “disturbing” are loosely thrown around when discussing Lynch. Next to that he finds the term problematic because “Lynch is by definition not a Surrealist (in the sense of Surrealism as an organized movement.)”<sup>3</sup>

These are valid points, and without any theoretical explanation behind the terms that I am using, they would indeed be empty. And although I certainly agree with Jones’ argument that Lynch is per definition not a surrealist, Jones also readily admits, “[Lynch] acknowledge[s] a tradition or allude[s] to Surrealist tropes or methods.”<sup>4</sup> Specifically these *aspects* of surrealist methods are what I have set out to explore.

Even more important than the discussion of the separate, individual theories is the fact that I have found no study at all on the triad haptic/oneiric film theory and surrealist aspects linked to the cinema of David Lynch. The usage of the combination of these terms are thus to create a new theoretical framework to understand the workings of *Lynchian* scenes more thoroughly, but this could only be accomplished by building on the foundations of different articles, essays and books already written on the cinema of Lynch.

I will start off by exploring the individual theories, giving a selective but comprehensive overview of these different concepts. Then I will discuss scenes from Lynch’ films MULHOLLAND DRIVE and LOST HIGHWAY and exemplify how the individual concepts should actually be seen as closely working together.

There are two reasons for choosing these two specific films. The first reason being that these two films (along with the tv-series TWIN PEAKS) are most commonly referred to as Lynch at his most *Lynchian*.<sup>5</sup> The second reason is that although most of his films have been discussed related to either the oneiric theory or surrealist aspects, I have found no study relating these two films with the haptic theory.<sup>6</sup> That makes for an interesting case, especially with the hypotheses that it is specifically with this triad of theories that we can understand more comprehensively how these *Lynchian* scenes are constructed.

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<sup>3</sup> Jones, A. Daniel. (2011). *Between Self and Other: Abjection and Unheimlichkeit in the Films of David Lynch*, 16.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Wallace, D. Foster, *David Lynch keeps his head*.

<sup>6</sup> The only article I found written about David Lynch and haptic visuality, by Justine Smith, relates this term to his films *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* and *Inland Empire*.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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### 2.1 ONEIRIC THEORY

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In ancient Greek *oneiros* (ονειρος) means dream and the first one who adopted this term in film studies was Vlada Petric using *oneiric cinema* to describe films that deal with various kinds of altered states of consciousness. Petric's interest in oneiric film perception exists mostly on a visual level, he states:

*On a purely cinematic level, oneiric implies film imagery that stimulates a paradoxical experience: while the event on the screen is perceived on a rational level as absurd and impossible, it is at the same time accepted as "reality," with full psycho-emotional involvement on the part of the viewer in the diegetic world presented on screen.<sup>7</sup>*

Thorsten Botz-Bornstein agrees with the notion that while analysing oneiric qualities, we should be looking at the visual level. Bornstein explains that to discuss dream theory in the context of film studies it means moving from the original context within which dream theory was initially developed, to an environment established by primarily aesthetic concerns.<sup>8</sup>

According to Bornstein the original focus was with Freud, and his dream research was to be used as a technical means of discovering essential facts concerning the development of neuroses, mental diseases, and other phenomena diverging from "normal" mental life. But aesthetic considerations had never been at the centre of Freud's elaborations just as they have never been central to psychoanalysis.<sup>9</sup> Laura Rascaroli also claims that the idea of a connection between film and dreams seems to be mostly grounded in Freud's theories. But she also readily acknowledges that the relationship with the visual language of

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<sup>7</sup> Petric, V. (1995). *Oneiric Cinema: The Isomorphism of Film and Dreams*.

<sup>8</sup> Botz-Bornstein, T. (2007) *Films and Dreams*, ix.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

film and Freud is vague.<sup>10</sup>

The dominant paradigm to study oneiric qualities in films is still with psychoanalysis. According to Fransesco Casetti there are two distinct possibilities to study film within this paradigm. First the psychoanalytic research of specific aspects of film and its apparatus, and second to analyse the content of film itself, a Jungian notion so as to read it as either a symptom or a dream.<sup>11</sup>

However this psychoanalytic analysis is not the methodological approach I'm going to pursue in this research. Even though it has been historically the dominant paradigm, it certainly isn't the only perspective. I return to Bornstein and his vision of dream theory as an aesthetic concern. He states that if we were to use dream theory in film studies then we are interested in dreams as aesthetic expressions and in the ways these particular expressions can be obtained. Thus we need to stray away from the context of Freud, and look further. We need to see dreams as a phenomenon in and of itself, not just because of its content but also because of its "dreamtense".<sup>12</sup>

Kelly Bulkeley's article on the oneiric qualities in the cinema of David Lynch forms a key aspect in this approach. In her article "Dreaming and the Cinema of David Lynch" she describes several specific means by which dreaming is woven into Lynch's approach to filmmaking.<sup>13</sup> These aspects will be properly explained in this thesis when I'll be discussing specific scenes from *MULHOLLAND DRIVE* and *LOST HIGHWAY*.

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<sup>10</sup> Rascaroli, L. (2002). Oneiric Metaphor in Film Theory, *Kinema*.

<sup>11</sup> Casetti, F. (1999). *Theories of Cinema 1945-1990*, 159-160.

<sup>12</sup> Botz-Bornstein, Films and Dreams, x.

<sup>13</sup> Bulkeley, K. (2003). Dreaming and the Cinema of David Lynch.

## 2.2 THEORIES OF THE HAPTIC

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According to Daria Berezhkova contemporary film theoreticians such as Vivian Sobchack, Laura U. Marks and Giuliana Bruno recognize the role of the embodiment of the film watching experience, and the importance of the 'haptic' in cinema.<sup>14</sup>

Vivian Sobchack, for example, created her own cinematic theory based on the ideas of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. What is most crucial to Sobchack's vision, according to Berezhkova, is the sensory embodiment of the film experience. She argues that it is bodily sensations that trigger thought and are responsible for conscious sense when we are in the cinema. Even though cinema is constituted by two-dimensional geometry, film can be perceived as multidimensional, thanks to the sensorial spectrum of the spectator's body. This allows us to see and understand film not (only) with our eyes, but experience it head to toe.<sup>15</sup>

She created the term "cinesthetic subject." It is a neologism comprised of two notions: *synaesthesia*, which is a term to describe an experience in which the stimulation of one sense causes a perception in another, and *coenaesthesia*, which describes how equal senses are set in a hierarchy depending on history and culture. During the film watching experience the sensory hierarchy is sometimes rearranged, leaving the optic function behind.<sup>16</sup> The fact that in cinema the sensual fulfillment is partial only enhances the experience. It is intensified by the constant 'rebound' of senses from the screen to the body. The spectator can see what is happening on the screen, and at the same time feels his or her own body reacting to the images.<sup>17</sup>

To Laura U. Marks cinema is not just a source of signs. She elaborates the term *haptic visuality* which is derived from art historian Alois Riegel, as a way of

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<sup>14</sup> Berezhkova, D. (2012). "Experiencing Moscow through Film: A study of the Contemporary City/Cinema Relationship." Phd.Thesis.Diss. Lunds Univeritet, 24.

<sup>15</sup> Sobchack, V. (2004). *Carnal Thoughts. Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*, London: University of California Press, 59

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

seeing and knowing, which calls upon multiple senses. The spectator interacts with the haptic cinema with the intelligence of the whole perceiving body.<sup>18</sup>

Interestingly, Brezhkova mentions that Marks also focuses on cinema's ability to evoke memories. They can be encoded audio-visually, but others are hidden from the sight and can only be delivered by the haptic ability of film. Marks characterizes the acts of watching a film as a mimetic experience; when we see a bodily similarity with the images on screen, we can relate to them and experience similar sensations. What allows this identification is again our memory.<sup>19</sup>

We do not actually smell or touch the image on screen, as Sobchack also points out. In cinema a synaesthetic experience occurs: images evoke memories, and they in turn evoke bodily senses. Due to the fact that previous experiences of all the spectators are not the same, each of them enjoys a different level of interaction with the film.

Although mostly referred to by Marks in relation to video art and experimental works, there are nonetheless narrative filmmakers over the years that have employed it. And Marks acknowledges: "many visual media are capable of these qualities."<sup>20</sup>

Giuliana Bruno criticizes the two previous writers. According to Brezhkova, Bruno states that the former writers neglect the haptic capacity of the *moving* image. The spectator would be a mere voyeur if we were to look at the optic qualities of film.<sup>21</sup> To challenge this position Bruno introduces the term "voyageur". According to her, film simulates the traveling experience, which in turn is stimulated by bodily sensations.<sup>22</sup> The image should be perceived as an act of physical contact and discovery of a certain space. Getting to know a place. Therefore, the viewers' activity is "site-seeing" as Bruno calls it, opposing the term "sight-seeing."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Forbes, A. (2006) *Haptic Visuality (Laura U. Marks' Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media)*.

<sup>19</sup> Berezkhova, D, 27.

<sup>20</sup> Marks, L. U. (2002). *Touch, sensuous theory and multisensory media*, 2.

<sup>21</sup> Berezkhova, D. 28.

<sup>22</sup> Bruno, G. (2002). *Atlas of Emotion. Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film*, New York:Verso, 107.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.



This haptic experience, according to Brezhkhova, brings us to the ideas of traversing space. The spectator follows the characters on screen and along with them becomes a traveler. Bruno mentions that when the spectator explores space in film, he or she feels it tangibly. The process of inhabiting a place involves not only seeing, but also touching it.<sup>24</sup>

I will argue that by employing this theory of the haptic, the Lynchian scenes that are referred to can be more comprehensively understood, specifically how these haptic qualities are appropriated in the scenes. These aspects are perhaps crucial for the effectiveness of the scenes.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 173.

## 2.3 SURREALISTIC ASPECTS

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Surrealism developed out of Paris in the 1920s, where Andre Breton in his “Surrealist Manifesto” used to describe surrealism as a “Pure psychic automatism by which it is intended to express, either verbally or in writing, the true function of thought.”<sup>25</sup> Influenced by Freud’s work on the unconscious and dream-work, the Surrealists attempted to represent the “strange forces” concealed in the human mind.<sup>26</sup>

According to Justine Smith surrealism can also be described as an artwork produced by drawing on the subconscious. However, it is different from art that is merely fantastic as surrealists made a sincere attempt to create a new mythology while stressing the inner-compulsion to release their subconscious fears and desires. An important point Justine Smith makes is that despite what many believe to be true, the movements ultimate goal wasn’t about making a complete break from reality, but rather breaking the boundary between conscious and subconscious in order to achieve a new reality.<sup>27</sup>

Kurt Lancaster concurs with this vision by stating that Breton presented the motive force of surrealism to be “a desire to deepen the foundations of the real [and] to bring about an even clearer and at the same time ever more passionate consciousness of the world perceived by the *senses*.”<sup>28</sup> Lancaster further adds:

*“Although interior reality and external reality are in the “process of unification, or finally becoming one,” Breton makes clear that these “forces” don’t act on each other “simultaneously” or even as a “contradiction” to one another, but rather they act “one after another, in a systematic manner, allowing us to observe their reciprocal attraction and interpenetration” so that we can finally perceive that they “become one and the same thing.”*<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Connelly, T. (2011). *Twin Peaks: Surrealism, Fandom, Usenet and X-ray Television*, 12.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Smith, J, *David Lynch and Surrealism*.

<sup>28</sup> Lancaster, K. (2005) *Robert Wilson and David Lynch: Contemporary Surrealist Storytellers*, 1.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

Similar to the idea of the interior and external reality is the focus of the Surrealist with the “marvellous”. Michael Pattison quotes the Surrealist Louis Aragon in saying “Reality is the *apparent* absence of contradiction. The marvellous is the *eruption* of contradiction within the real.”<sup>30</sup> Pattison believes this to be one of Surrealism’s chief strengths: to emphasize, through juxtaposition, that two apparently contradictory ideas comprise the same whole. The two juxtapositions would be shocking, convulsive; two entities otherwise assumed to be separate would be brought together so that a relationship is primed and its meaning shifted.<sup>31</sup>

Barbara Creed demonstrates that this could be the very reason why the early Surrealists were drawn to the world of cinema. It was because of cinema’s ability to render representations of time and space that deviate from the landscape of daily life. She notes that the surrealist filmmakers used cinema’s method of montage and odd juxtaposing images “to create shocking and fantastic associations in order to affect the viewer emotionally.”<sup>32</sup>

Having positioned and discussed all three of these theories, I can begin to formulate how they play an important role in the cinema of David Lynch.

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<sup>30</sup> Pattison, M, *In Dreams and Imagination*.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>32</sup> Creed, B. (2007). *The Untamed Eye and the Dark Side of Surrealism: Hitchcock, Lynch and Cronenberg*,115.

### 3.HAPTIC SPACE AND NIGHTMARES IN MULHOLLAND DRIVE

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#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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The film MULHOLLAND DRIVE and subsequently the Winkie's Diner scene have been analyzed extensively. This scene has been compared as a sort of *myse-en-abyme* to unlocking the secrets of MULHOLLAND DRIVE.<sup>33</sup> Another analysis focuses on "the ecology of MULHOLLAND DRIVE at its uncanniest in the breakfast at Winkie's Diner" The author states that the cinematography of this scene renders a very disturbing sense of *place and presence*.<sup>34</sup>

This last part is exactly what is most important about this scene if we analyze it with the haptic theory in mind. But I'll argue that Lynch combines this with other aspects as well; specifically dreams and surrealistic aspects are intertwined.

This Winkies Diner scene, only about fifteen minutes into MULHOLLAND DRIVE, takes place between the characters Dan and Herb, who are acquaintances, though the extent of their relationship isn't revealed. Herb is skeptical, but willing to hear what Dan has to say. Dan explains how in a dream that he had twice, he stayed at this very Winkie's, in a strange half-day/half-night circumstance. He was scared, even more so because in his dream, Herb, who stands at the cash register, is also scared. Dan realizes that there is a man behind the Winkie's that is "doing all of this". In his dream, Dan could see this man through the wall, and explains to Herb that he never would want to see that face again. This is when the explanation of the dream ends. When Dan is finished, Herb gets up and pays the bill, standing at precisely the same spot Dan dreamt about, and eventually leads Dan to go outside, to the back of the restaurant. Dan,

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<sup>33</sup> Robertson, A. (2013). Scene analysis: "Mulholland Drive" *Cinecatic* Accessed: June 2013.

Available at: <http://cinecatic.blogspot.nl/2013/02/scene-analysis-mulholland-dr-2001.html>

<sup>34</sup> Hageman, A. (2008). The Uncanny Ecology of Mulholland Drive. *Scope 11*.

walking ahead of Herb, reaches the corner of the building, when a dark, monstrous figure eventually appears. Dan collapses and passes out while Herb catches him. Then the scene fades to black, starting a new scene where one of the main characters is seen sleeping.

The Winkie's Diner and the figure that appears behind the restaurant become crucial elements if we were attempting to understand the (narrative) logic of the entire film, because the location as well as the monstrous figure returns later on in the film. But the two characters Dan and Herb are never to be seen or mentioned again, yet the way Dan's story unveils is crucial to not only this scene's, but also the overall, atmosphere created by Lynch.

### 3.2 ONEIRIC QUALITIES AND SURREALISM

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One of the most striking elements in this scene is how dreams are specifically mentioned. Kelly Bulkeley describes four ways in which dreaming and the cinema of Lynch are intertwined: Dreaming as narrative structure, dream scenes, discussions of dreams and dreaming and the way Lynch incorporates his own dreams (and the dreams of others) in his cinema.<sup>35</sup>

One or two of those elements are at work in this scene, namely and most obviously the discussions of dreams and dreaming, but also possibly dream scenes themselves. The latter is ambiguous because it remains uncertain whether or not the scene itself is yet another nightmare of Dan (seeing as how it exactly mimics his two earlier dreams) or that his nightmare turned out to be real, which raises yet another question: did the figure actually appear behind the dumpster or not? Another theory states that the entire scene is a dream within a dream of one of the main character of Mulholland Drive, which for example could explain why after the Winkie's Diner scene one of the main characters from Mulholland Drive is seen sleeping.

These last ambiguous points are exactly what could be deemed so *Lynchian*

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Bulkeley, K., *Dreaming and the Cinema of David Lynch*.

about the scene. Bulkeley describes: "the revelatory truthfulness of dreaming is continuously contrasted in Lynch's work with a sense of relentless, agonizing uncertainty about what is real and what is illusion."<sup>36</sup> This primarily works on a visual level and reflects the way dreams in and of itself work: the deep emotions that we feel, be it negative or positive, can be personified in our dreams and have a tremendous affect on us. Even when woken up, they can still haunt us, as they do with Dan, and perhaps that self-created image can return (as a figment of our imagination). Lynch thus embraces these elements of dreams. The content of the dream that is shown could be understood via a look at their surrealistic qualities that it possesses.

Barbara Creed describes that Surrealism is first and foremost an attitude of mind, a desire to liberate the unconscious to create room for the imagination, *to confront the abject*, to change the conditions of ordinary mundane reality.<sup>37</sup> The idea constructed here is clearly embraced in the film itself. In *Winkie's Diner*, Dan tries to get rid of "this god-awful feeling", which is created by the abject, monstrous figure that haunts him, in dream and in reality.

The Surrealist saw in film the unique ability to yoke together disparate images and to obliterate the distinction between the oppositions. What is dream and what is reality? Justine Smith sees a similar notion in this film and states that surrealism is very much about creating a new reality where dream and reality co-exist.<sup>38</sup>

The question remains, how is the viewer to be fully engaged in this perspective and not (just) be alienated by it? I will argue that looking at aspects of the haptic, we can find answers to these questions.

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    *ibid*, 56.

37  
    Creed, B. *The Untamed Eye*, 115.

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    Smith, J, *David Lynch and Surrealism*.

When Dan and Herb sit at the dinner and discuss Dan's dream, there is a sense of a classic shot-reverse shot sequence (see picture 1 and 2, appendix 1.1.) But something strange is happening. The camera, behind either Dan or Herb isn't static, but continues to float: sometimes going down to waist level, but other times floating above their head (pictures 3-5, appendix 1.2.) Especially when the camera focuses on Dan, it moves up and down, slowly but steadily, only being noticeable by the watchful eye. There is also a distinct (medium) close up of Dan, when he sees Herb standing by the cash register. It is here that his description of his dream and his reality fall into place and we are left uncertain whether or not this is actually (another) dream, or reality (pictures 6 & 7, appendix 1.1.)

Important to notice is the way *movement* is used in not only the previous example but more importantly in the next part of the scene. We get a close-up of Dan, after which we get a medium shots of him walking towards the back of the restaurant, interchanged by much longer point-of-view shots (appendix 1.2.)

According to Bruno, contact, exploration and communication are haptic activities. They involve the knowledge of surface, geometry, material, and location.<sup>39</sup> Although she uses this on a much larger scale, comparing it to grander architectural sites than here displayed, I argue that, certainly on a microscopic level, we become, using Bruno's terms, an active "voyageur."

According to Sandra Rosser, Bruno sees a commonality between the person who connects visual spaces as they wander through an architectural site and a film spectator who co-assembles a montage of views. By examining the relationship between film and architecture through the common element of traveling through space, the shifts in viewing position and in crossing spatio-temporal dimensions, film offers a practice of space that is "lived in", and as such architectural.<sup>40</sup> When discussing this specific form of a haptic journey "we are [...] sometimes on a bike, sometimes on a train and sometimes *just wandering*

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<sup>39</sup> Bruno, 254.

<sup>40</sup> Rosser, S.B. (2012) *Bodies in Motion: Maria Luisa Bemberg's Filmic Approach to Women and their Journeys*. Phd.Thesis.Diss. McGill University, 2012, 31.

*around on foot.*<sup>41</sup>”

Having linked film with travel, Bruno then links film with “transport” in the full extent of its meaning: to include the sort of carrying which is the carrying away of emotion, as in transports of joy that encompasses the attraction of human beings, a movement that thus incorporates emotion into the concept of journey.<sup>42</sup>” For Bruno this implies more than the movement of bodies and objects as imprinted in the change of film frames and shots, *the flow of camera movement, or any other shift of viewpoint.*

When looking closely at the scene, we see that the point of view shots are not static representations of what is shown, but actually re-create movement. The camera looks down when taking the first steps off the stairs, then looks left to caress the white wall and subsequently looks up and fixes on the wall where the monstrous figure is hiding; all the while the camera re-creates a body moving. According to Bruno motion pictures move not only through time and space or narrative development but also through inner space. Film moves, and fundamentally “moves” us, with its ability to render affects and, in turn, to affect.<sup>43</sup>

By embracing the oneiric and surrealistic qualities of showing a relentless, agonizing uncertainty about what is real and what is illusion, and by cloaking this in such a way that the scene should not be understood, per se, but rather experienced, via the haptic activities of being a “voyageur”, Lynch has created a scene where all of these elements are put together and trying to create an emotional response from the viewer. The Lynchian nightmare that is explained by Dan is thus actually recreated via these different techniques to engage the audience and make them experience the location as if they were actually present.

To exemplify that the haptic together with surrealistic aspects and oneiric theory could and for good reasons should be considered not only when analyzing this specific MULHOLLAND DRIVE scene, but also in other films of David Lynch, I will

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<sup>41</sup> Book review of Bruno’s *Atlas of Emotions*. Available at: <http://ifsa-hane.blogspot.nl/2011/04/atlas-of-emotions.html>

<sup>42</sup> Rosser, 287

<sup>43</sup> Lecture by Bruno on her book. Available at: [http://www.ville-en-mouvement.com/chaire\\_universitaire/telechargements/articles\\_parutions/publications/ville\\_av ec\\_flux/conferences/Guiliana\\_Bruno.pdf](http://www.ville-en-mouvement.com/chaire_universitaire/telechargements/articles_parutions/publications/ville_av ec_flux/conferences/Guiliana_Bruno.pdf)



now discuss two scenes from LOST HIGHWAY.

#### 4. THE AMBIGUOUS DREAM AND LOCATION IN LOST HIGHWAY

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##### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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In this analysis of Lost Highway I will begin with a scene where the character Fred and his wife Renee come back from a party and eventually get ready to go to bed. This scene is of importance because it serves as the last scene where Fred and his wife are seen together, because after this sequence Fred will subsequently be charged with the murder of his wife. A murder that is caught on video and which is then sent to Fred's house, even though Fred and Renee are still together when they receive said video.

I want to argue that to understand some of the crucial scenes in the universe that Lynch creates, we again should be looking at the triad of theories that I have laid out earlier.

The scene, where Fred as well as his wife Renee are searching for each other in their own home, makes little narrative sense. Fred walks through a dark hallway and subsequently seems to remove himself from the entire place, hence Renee's concerned words "Fred, where are you?" when looking into the hallway. We, however, follow Fred on what very well could be said is a short haptic journey (appendix 1.3.)

##### 4.2 INTERTEXTUAL REFERENCES AND THE HAPTIC

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The dark hallway and the red curtains that are shown in this scene are of essential importance. David Lynch has acknowledged that his tv-series TWIN PEAKS and LOST HIGHWAY are part of the same universe. Readers who are familiar with TWIN PEAKS should not find it difficult to see the intertextual reference of the red curtains. In their book on the cinema of David Lynch, Sheen and Davison also state: "The red curtain in Fred and Renee's house reminds us of the labyrinthine

structure in The Black Lodge.<sup>44</sup> In TWIN PEAKS, these curtains are shown to be an essential part of this black lodge, a strange netherworld, a place of darkness where giants and dwarfs can be seen, where the dead are alive and where everybody speaks backwards.

In TWIN PEAKS' series final, David Lynch already experimented with the exploration of an interior space that is undefined and a space that is seamlessly shifting shape and changing order (appendix 1.4.)

In LOST HIGHWAY, this experience of traversing space is again implemented, but in a less grandeur scale than in TWIN PEAKS. Nonetheless, Fred's house in an ambiguous place, just like the so-called "Red Rooms" in TWIN PEAKS.

Fred is seen entering the dark hallway, but at such a slow pace that the audience is situated in a position that it would want to explore the location that is presented. Discovering this place is even more dared when Renee is seen looking at the hallway, trembling in fear, and calling out to her husband. The camera then moves into this dark place, slowly blackening the entire image. We subsequently get to see where it leads: a place of mirrors, where Fred is seen contemplating his own image. The camera then moves away from this place, as slowly as before, now turning to the living room, where two shadows are seen moving, after which from pitch-black back to its original state, we are back at the beginning of the hallway, while we see Fred walk by (appendix 1.3.)

According to Bruno she sees motion and voyaging in multi-dimensional space as the origins of emotion in the film watching experience. Unlike the voyeur, the voyageur acquires knowledge by the means of traveling. The moving image can be perceived as an act of physical appropriation and discovery of a certain space, an act of getting to know a place. In this sense cinema's key tools are motion and texture.<sup>45</sup> The spectator apprehends and inhabits sites through them and I argue that Lynch with this scene wanted to specifically create an experience as such.

It wouldn't be *Lynchian* however if the space that is shown is not a comprehensive architectural site or landscape, but to be a dark and confusing

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<sup>44</sup> Davison, A & Erica Sheen eds. (2004). *The Cinema of David Lynch: American Dreams, Nightmare Visions*. London: Wallflower Press, 157.

<sup>45</sup> Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion*, 16

place. It should nonetheless, or rather perhaps therefor, engage the viewer in such a way that they feel like inhabiting this strange place.

#### 4.3 A SURREAL DREAM AND PLACE

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Interestingly, Lynch links the specific hallway, and actually the entire interior space of Fred's house, with dreams. This is done even before the sequence that was previously discussed. One of the four main aspects that Bulkeley describes of Lynch and dreaming, the discussion of dreams by characters in the film, is present in this scene.

Fred describes a dream to his wife that he had the night before. The way the dream is told is different than we saw in *MULHOLLAND DRIVE*'s Winkie's scene, in that we now clearly cut to a visual depiction of Fred's dream, while he narrates it. Ambiguity is still around though. Fred describes that he heard his wife calling for him, but that he couldn't find her in his own home – think of the labyrinth structure already being foreshadowed. A furiously burning fireplace is shown, continued by a medium close-up of Fred when all of a sudden grey smoke is shown to come from the hall (see pictures 1-5, appendix 1.5.)

What is interesting about the depiction of the dream is the way the camera moves in point of view shots, creating an ambiguous subject that is clearly not representing the views of the main character. For example, these shots show significant speed (movements) when Fred is seen to be actually walking slowly, and the camera floats around on either low or high perspectives when Fred is just shown standing.

Justine Smith describes this scene by saying that through the use of interior space, especially the dark hallway leading up to the bedroom of Fred's wife, Lynch is able to highlight Fred's delusions.<sup>46</sup> Thus, even before we see Fred and Renee lost in their own house, this interior space including the red curtains is already present and important (pictures 5-7, appendix 1.5.) In retrospective, the audience was thus already engaged to explore this space. However, by conflicting

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<sup>46</sup> Smith, J, *David Lynch and Surrealism*.

the location and outcome of the hallway the audience is engaged multiple times to try to explore this interior space and inhabit it.

The dream that Fred describes hasn't ended though: In another point of view shot, we see Renee lying in bed after which the camera floats and zooms towards her, as she starts screaming, and the dream ends. The ambiguity remains because the approach of intertwining what is real and what is fake, what is a dream and what isn't, is again employed. A surrealist aesthetic often reveals a truth hidden in plain sight. In this case, Fred's search for identity and responsibility (as said, he is later charged with murdering his wife) points to himself as the source of horror and brutality.

In the next sequence we see Fred wake up in terror from the nightmare that he was actually just *discussing* with Renee. We see his wife look up to see why he is so scared at which point we see the face of a "mystery man" superimposed over her face (picture 14, appendix 1.5.)

In this moment we see what Pattison would describe as the "marvelous". This is the eruption of contradiction within the real and when two entities otherwise assumed to be separate are brought together so that a relationship is primed and its meaning is immediately open to enquiry.<sup>47</sup> This moment of superimposition could be identified as the description Fred gives of his dream: this woman looks like his wife, but she is different, hence the different face. She consists of two people at once.

Yet the peculiar thing is that he didn't saw this in his dream, he saw this in a supposed state of awareness - he wasn't sleeping: he just woke up. Or did he? Is this last part also a dream or did his dream come back to haunt him in real life, just as the mysterious figure did with Dan in the Winkie's Diner scene? The answer is that the dream world and reality are not separate entities in *LOST HIGHWAY*, nor are they hardly ever in Lynch's world.

This last part is key to understanding or rather experiencing his cinema to its full extent. This reality-or-not idea is not only the case for strange figures, but also for the locations and surroundings they inhabit. Lynch, through the means of

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Pattison, M, *In Dreams and Imagination*.

haptic experiences lets the audience explore these certain spaces, activating the viewer to “site-see” rather than “sight-see”, so that it can eventually also create emotion in the viewer. However, these are not easily identifiable experiences and are, per usual with Lynch, situated in a strange uncomfortable journey.

## 5. CONCLUSION

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In this thesis I have hopefully clearly demonstrated that the Lynchian scenes can be explained and understood through the use of the three theoretical approaches that I have outlined. Dreams and dreaming form a primary inspiration in the filmmaking of David Lynch and the two films that I have analyzed use the dream world to such an extent that certain surrealistic aspects as the “marvelous” and the ambiguity of an interior and exterior reality can be found. Next to that, the movement of the camera through these different dream worlds invites the audience to a haptic journey, to explore these confined spaces and to inhabit them.

I propose that further research is needed though, specifically focusing on a more extensive phenomenological approach to the cinema of Lynch. In this essay I have tried to show that with the use of surrealistic aspects and oneiric qualities, Lynch creates certain haptic journeys that are unique in its kind, specifically because he situates them in this nightmarish surrealistic Lynchian way, rather than confiding to the conventional.

However, even though I have tried to show the haptic aspects of these scenes by using the theories of Bruno, this study did not intend to explore the exact audience response to these sequences. Specific research into this topic could definitely prove to be beneficial.

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## 7. APPENDIX

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### APPENDIX 1.1

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APPENDIX 1.2



APPENDIX 1.3



APPENDIX 1.4





