

## Mulholland Drive – A love story in the city of dreams (Lynch)

*"It's a dangerous thing to say what a picture is. If things get too specific, the dream stops. There are things that happen sometimes that open a door that lets you soar out and feel a bigger thing. Like when the mind gets involved in a mystery. It's a thrilling feeling. When you talk about things, unless you're a poet, a big thing becomes smaller." (Lynch)*

1946 David Keith Lynch was born on January 20th in Missoula Montana  
1971 Eraserhead  
1980 Elephant Man  
1986 ["Blue Velvet"](#)  
1990 First Season of ["Twin Peaks"](#) airs on television.  
1997 ["Lost Highway"](#) released  
2001 Mulholland Drive

## 2. Characters

### 2.1 Adam Kesher

- His identity remains stable through the movie
- starts as a active director
- turning point of his self at scene when he sees betty and can't cast her for his movie, marks his decay
- at end under total control of industry, lost his identity (?)

### 2.2 The Cartel

- figures from a creep show
- references to the movie-industry, represents the oppression of "dream" by "factory"
  - o **Mr. Roque**, totally isolated, godlike position, unclear where located
  - o **The Cowboy**, archetypical character, metatron/riddler-like ("you'll see me once, if you do well, you'll see me twice if you don't")
  - o **The Castiglianis** – Mafiosi prototypes

### 2.3 Betty/Diane

- Betty begins the film/her story with everything it takes: blonde charm, talent and connections to "make it"
- helps Rita in regaining Rita's identity
- when she leaves Adam's set and he does not call her back, it is the end of her life
- after 2/3 of the film she "re-emerges" from the blue box with a newly darkened destiny and has a different name (Diane Selwyn)
- changes do not take place in a usual cause-and-effect plot
- ends the film drug addled, washed-out, scorned and vengeful

### 2.4 Rita/Camilla

- assumes the cinematic signifier "Rita Hayworth"
- she may or may not be an actress (but: "This is the girl.")
- begins the film as slick version of Betty
- appears as cute blonde but also injured and vulnerable starlet

- ends the film as Camilla Rhodes (as dark, vampiric, manipulative diva)
- lesbian temptress

### 3. Techniques of Lynch in Mulholland Drive

#### 3.1 Sound in Mulholland-Drive

"The picture for the most part dictates the sound - music or sound effects - but sometimes in the reverse."  
(Lynch)

- sound spans across shots (telephones-ringing "from" one location to another), there is not given any hint on a reasonable connection between the sounds
- often the sound of one shot is echoing in the next shot
- guiding theme - same motive repeated and varied, through its slowness the whole movie becomes surreal and dream-like
- diegetic/nondiegetic in a wider sense, sounds without a visible source, distinction of "real" and "artificial" sound becomes blurred
- subliminal sounds (the spectator is often threatened by deep growling sounds, which have no reference in the scene, make whole situation uncertain/unsafe)
- almost no "normal" environmental noises, characters seem to have a cocoon around them, also dreamlike
- the audience is terrorized by power/volume of the sound

Lynch denies viewer the knowledge of the sounds source, Picture and sounds are not necessarily connected

#### 3.2 Camera

- No real slow motion, but rather a gradual slowing of the whole Movie, untypical for beginnings
- Determines the speed of the movie, Creates surreal/dream-like atmosphere
- Subjectivity of Camera
- Selective Focus – but reveals nothing that helps viewer, compared to classical usage

#### 3.3 Editing

- domination of long shots and sequences in Lynch's films
- the cutting determines the films rhythm (for that reason, the few stretched shots define the slowness of the film)

Classic Hollywood " <b>Adhäsionsmontage</b> " Connects content and geographically separated things (two successive pictures belong together somehow) -> creates meanings -> spectator is used to this technique	Lynch " <b>Kollisionsmontage</b> " Lynch mentally blocks himself from connecting locations by cuts or narrative techniques -> no understanding of what's going on -> collision of shots confuses the spectator
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Classic Hollywood " <b>dramatic fading</b> " The camera fades when the actor leaves the scene	Lynch " <b>double fading</b> " After an actor left the scene, the camera rests for a short moment before finally fading out (rests longer than cinematic conventions demand) -> the act of disappearing is a unfinished and continual state
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#### 3.4 Narration

- the movies plot seems to expand to dozens of directions simultaneously
- therefore it is very difficult and almost impossible to retell the plot
- Lynch does not present the film cinematically as a traditional dream sequence
- Lynch permanently rejects to lets things happen how they would rationally

## 4. Conclusions, Theses, Questions

*"You may say that people look for meaning in everything, but they don't. They've got life going on around them, but they don't look for meaning there. They look for meaning when they go to a movie. I don't know why people expect art to make sense when they accept the fact that life doesn't make sense."* (Lynch)

- Lynch's movies pay big attention to little details, viewer is in danger of losing the overview, and the story is in danger of fragmentation.
- His movies deny recipients traditional patterns of interpretation and understanding.
- It remains unclear if the end is the end or the beginning and vice versa.
- Movie is shattered on all levels (logic, linearity, space and time).
- Viewer is in constant struggle of perceiving meanings.
- Big "bangs" might mean nothing, small unimpressive items might.

Is the viewer constantly/subliminally threatened (by editing, sound ...)?

Is "Mulholland Drive" a resigned movie, or is there still hope?

Why does the cartel want to dominate Adam's movie?

What does the blue box stand for?

Which "silence" does Club Silencio resonate?

Do Lynch's Protagonists have a chance of victory over oppressive social structures?

What's the difference between the open structure in Mulholland Drive and Mainstream Cinema?

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**Mike Hartmann "The City of Absurdity - the mysterious world of David Lynch" EESE 2/2002.  
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Psychoanalytic View

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Semiotic View

Daniel Coffeen "This is Cinema - The Pleated Plenitude of the Cinematic Sign in David Lynch's 'Mulholland Dr.'" EESE 3/2003 <http://www.film-philosophy.com/vol7-2003/n7coffeen> Jul 08, 2003

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**Main sources are printed in bold face**