

ENUNCIATING DAVID LYNCH : NOTES

'I just came from Deep River, Ontario, and now I'm in this dream place!' — Betty Elms

- §1 This analysis shows what has not been discovered about *Mulholland Drive* before this point: that it employs the method of mnemonic places, which is chiasmic, and the two stories created with its application constitute a chiasmus. This is revealed not just through a placement of story elements along the Λ -shaped diagram but an analysis in terms of discourse/enunciation and the idea of the (Lacanian) extimate. The three mathemes show that the story's three layers — (1) the diageitic narrative of Adam's film, (2) the supernatural death-dream narratives of Diane Selwyn and Camilla Rhodes, and (3) the link between the story's content and its own chiasmic structure — an echo of Poe's technique in 'The Purloined Letter' — identify memory with the 'key element', metalepsis, the metonymy of metonymy, and its successive 'escape', analepsis (recovery). These are our familiar elements, R2 (defect, ∂) and R1, the two versions of the real (internal and external, respectively), keys to the obversion plays of the extimate.
- §2 The structure of *Mulholland Drive* is determined by the functionality of efficient cause. Efficiency is, according to Aristotle, whatever can set the work in motion. It is associated with the artistry of the artist. At the same time efficiency is 'efficient' — it optimizes the use of labor and materials with respect to an 'economy' by which an outcome is regarded as not only appropriate and just but clever. The artist avoids the obvious way of accomplishing something and conceals techniques and strategies; secrets as such have been a traditional component of artistry. The secret is the truth of death that Diane and Camilla cannot recognize. Their fantasy defenses, the characters of Betty and Rita, result from the momentum of life past the point of the first death, and they seek resolution in the fantasy but cannot find it in the fantasies' successes but, rather, in its failures. Points of extimacy (the blue box, Club Silencio, the parking lot of Winkies) direct the topology of the efficient cause along its lines of least resistance. This topology is suggested in the topography of Los Angeles, with Adam's house crowning the highest point, the downtown occupying what Reyner Banham called 'the plains of id', and Mulholland Drive serving as the 'idiotically symmetrical' (intransitive) place of conversion of effects into causes, ghosts into characters.
- §3 There is a proliferation of sites that can be considered the *templum* of *Mulholland Drive*'s chiasmus. This is because narratives are fragmented and dispersed. There is no single diageitic, continuous story line. There are multiple mid-points because each narrative is built around a sacrificial center. The 'A' cause (i.e. the real bomb in the example of the bomb scare) is represented by the many cases of *mi-dire*: mumbled, fragmented, enigmatic, aggressive utterances (*énoncés*). In the Simonides story about the invention of artificial memory, the twin gods Castor and Pollux allow Simonides to live *on the condition of their own absence* because they themselves have that arrangement — one twin lives while the other is dead. The fragmentation of *énoncé*, cause, 'obverts' the effect so that it becomes the sufficient (and efficient) cause. This obversion of a material substrate is the logic of sacrifice, which must first kill its victim in order that a 'language of the gods' be revealed. *Mulholland Drive* is about this sacrifice.
- §4 Comparing Lynch's film to Simonides' method, Poe's odds-and-evens method, and Roussel's *procédé* shows that Surrealism, especially in its precedents and earliest days, was not a break with history but an effort to remember it under the extreme conditions of amnesia. This highlights the point of artificial memory's artificiality: the mnemonicist gives his 'natural' memory over to the artificial system, in effect taking an oath renouncing personal memories, which can be exclusive and selective. Artificial memory, as automaton, is 'put into nature' through its method of places. These fully externalized objects become subjective, partial, when coupled with memory contents. The logic of the extimate transforms them into thinking machines. Interpretive attempts to decode the film fail because the film in fact is an unconscious, a means by which the 'film watches us', the audience. We do not watch it in the usual sense of spectatorship. We do not suspend judgment. We are under the spell that allows us to think we are alive and capable of judging between reality and illusion. *Mulholland Drive*, in the end, breaks that spell. The efficiency of the Lacanian reading is its recognition of the spell-structure of the film.
- §5 **Standard Rider 1 in the contract of the extimate:** The method of places is a rigid automaton that allows its 'reality contents' the maximum amount of contingency, variation, and inconsistency. As S1, the method of *topoi* is 'idiotically symmetrical' — symmetrical in its open Λ -structure, pairing places with random contents to be remembered — and idiotic in the open blank space where places and contents are fused, anamorphically, into prophetic 'monsters', one of whom becomes the 'tell', or internal inconsistency R2 that points the way to the ultimate truths of the system, R1.
- §6 **Standard Rider 2 in the contract of the extimate:** The Lacanian image of signifiers, S2, as 'sliding past each other' is inverted by the reader who creates the sliding by his/her own physical act of recalling. The traveler's POV, in other words, creates sliding, just as the landscape is made to 'slide by' the car or train window. In this sense, S1, the master signifier, is able to quilt the signifiers in a rather literal and direct way in Lynch's work: by creating a web of anamorphic monster-bridges that encode one side of the text through mirror images in the other. The memory system (S1) is the frame of the window 'past which' images of the landscape 'slide past'.