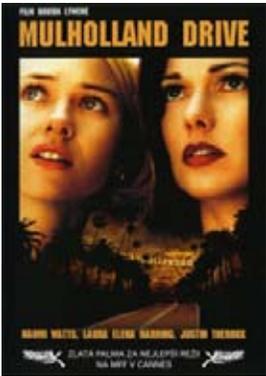


# DOUBLEFRAME : MULHOLLAND DRIVE

**FrameTheory Standard Paragraph:** Combining the Lacanian idea of 'extimiation' (*extimité*) with the (also Lacanian) distinction of *énoncé* (enunciation) and the *act* of speech (enunciating),<sup>1</sup> a '**visual protocol**' identifies vectors of perception, virtual movement, partial objects, and such standard visual landmarks as the point of view (POV) and vanishing point (VP). Critical to this protocol is the system of two frames, F1 and F2 (*encadrement*), demarkating an 'external reality' outside the framed field (R1) and some inconsistency or anomaly within the framed field — a defect ( $\delta$ ) that constitutes an inside version of reality (R2). The visual protocol aims to show how the imaginary operates within the symbolic by allowing the construction of fantasies (the 'structured imaginary') about how a 'disguised' subject may experience enjoyment directly (=Real). Frame Theory argues that these relationships can be observed in films, paintings, architecture, literature, and landscapes, etc., where frames manage actual and virtual crossings that allow for the fantasy's contrasting components of anxiety and separation. The visual protocol is derived from the 'calibration' of Lacan's enunciation theory with the Aristotelian causes, supplemented by the ideas of automaton and *tuchē*, natural accident and human affordance.

<sup>1</sup> 'Enunciating/*énoncé*' refers to Lacan's distinction between the speech act and the literal contents of words, meanings, and grammatical/syntactical relationships (*énoncé*). The extimate affects this distinction directly. Effect become cause and is associated with the 'unconscious' of the partial objects that form the basis of Aristotle's two 'chance' causes, automaton and *tuchē*.



**Mulholland Drive** (David Lynch, 2000). The salient 'frame aspect' of this film is its crisscross of death narratives. One takes seriously the accident in the opening scene, where hit men hired by Diane Selwyn are about to assassinate Camilla Rhodes but are killed in a car collision with reckless teenagers. The film shows Camilla surviving but this is optionally a death dream that will intersect with the post-suicide death dream of Diane. The film intertwines the two death narratives so that it is impossible to separate the dreamers. A diagetic 'marker' sequence, the business negotiations and auditions for the film-in-a-film, *The Sylvia North Story*, show Adam Keshner bullied by Mafia backers into selecting a blond Camilla Rhodes for the lead. This is the 'tell' that the brunette Camilla has died but imagines, in her death narrative, that she can disguise herself using a blond wig. The jealousy that drove Diane to hire an assassin, and the use of a blue key as a sign that the job had been accomplished, is also presented diagetically. The diagetic story has its concealed *poché* spaces: the control rooms where Mr. Roque directs actions against Adam, the corral where the Cowboy instructs Adam, and the space behind Winkies magicked by a hobo who releases agents in the form of tiny demons (the elder couple who befriend Betty Elms when she first flies into Los Angeles but who later frighten her into suicide). Lynch consciously constructs a code of objects: the telephones, ashtrays, the jitterbug contest in Deep River Ontario, satin sheets, lampshades. The cipher aspect of the anamorphic component is like the unconscious, which communicates *via*

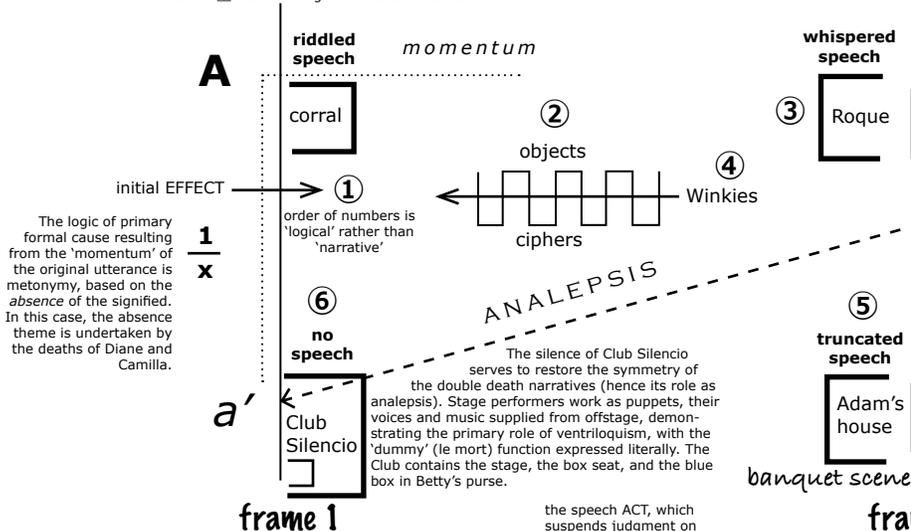
rebus. Speech is the key to the encadrement layout, because it defines the points at which the screens enclosing the fantasy (i.e. the crossed death narratives) break apart: riddled, *mi-dire* speech (cf. the Cowboy), whispered speech (Mr. Roque), truncated speech (engagement party at Adam's house), and the negation of speech at the Club Silencio. The momentum of the life-after-death narratives of Diane and Rita meets with resistance through the objects that 'remind' of the reality of Betty/Camilla. They 'partialize' both the space and time of the film, creating loops, short-cuts (cf. the steep footpath from the first scene to the 'last' at Adam's reception), and short-circuits (phones, keys, lampshades).

**énoncé (utterance):** "Could be that someone's missing." Narrative of the 'diagetic' story. The riddle put in the 'forward' direction: 'it was an odd evening' beginning with the limousine ride and 'failed' (but actually successful) assassination.

The *énoncé* of Mulholland Drive is the 'grammatical' structure of crisscrossed death narratives, geodesic markers set in place by Diane's jealousy and assassination of Camilla and, shortly after, her own suicide. The X-design takes place between the 'markers' defined as acousmatic precincts, where 'enunciating' meets with four kinds of failure (riddle, whisper, truncation, and negation). The twinned deaths establish the momentum into the fantasy space of the film, resisted by the objects that resist this motion through their cipher function. The 'currency' (1/x) of the death fantasies breaks down around these ciphers, which are always linked in some way to the four acousmatic precincts. The dropped-out cause (*énoncé*) is the fact of death. This drop-out creates a void, to which Betty/Rita return to death *via* the blue box. Before that, however, the enunciating acts continue the momentum of fantasy with their compelling linear sequence, guided by the story of casting and filming *The Sylvia North Story*. The theme of double inscription is embedded within such scenes as Betty's audition, where a good actress (Naomi Watts) plays a bad actress (Betty, rehearsing with Rita) playing a good actress (at the audition). While all contemporary interpretations agree that Diane Selwyn dies and has a dream-fantasy, no interpretations discover that Camilla/Rita is dead. This can be a fact of the diagetic action *or* a double negation of Diane's dream.

## initial CAUSE

The logic of primary efficient cause is to 'charge the signifier' with meaning, no matter what the substitutions. The film begins with signalling the possibility of death narratives that will be the cardinal directions crisscrossing the space of the film. The 'four quarters' of diagetic narrative are the corral, Mr. Roque's glass-enclosed control room, Adam's glass house at 6980 Mulholland Drive, and Club Silencio, all of which are places where speech 'fails' in some way, giving the film a quadrated acousmatic structure.



**point of view (POV):** can be taken up on either side of the field framed by F1 and F2. Life and death serve as the two POVs, with frames facing each other.

the speech ACT, which suspends judgment on the x/-x value of the initial cause (i.e. a real bomb) but constitutes a field of action and effect 'as if'.

**vanishing point (VP):** this is the limit of the pretended mastery of the image-fantasy, the point of failure where the Real breaks forth. Adam's house and Roque's control room also 'vanish' (banish) others.

**defect:** a blur or tear in the representation itself, akin to the vanishing point but portable, able to move freely within the visual field: clues as partial objects.

$\delta$   
**metalepsis:** the 'metonymy of a metonymy', a recursive, self-referential element that constitutes a mirror-within-a-mirror. In the film, glass is used on the F2 side, identified with the VP because of its relationship to control. Contrast F1 as a place where power is lost or conceded. Following  $\$ \circ a$ , the polarities of the fantasy space are defined by the contrast between anxiety (Adam's narrative) and separation (the death narratives).