

Starting from Scratch:
Turntables, Auditory Representation, and the Structure of the Known Universe
in the Films of David Lynch

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ABSTRACT

Starting from Scratch: Turntables, Auditory Representation, and the Structure of the Known Universe in the Films of David Lynch

Randolph Jordan

The films of David Lynch are considered here in terms of their use of sound and the presence of sound technology within their narratives. Drawing on recent work in media theory, sound theory, Lynch criticism, and the philosophy of music, it is argued that approaching Lynch from the perspective of sound yields highly productive ways of understanding his work. It is demonstrated that Lynch's films illustrate an awareness of the development of sound technologies in the 20th century and the effect these technologies have on human psychology. His obsession with phonograph turntables is a specific case in point. Lynch's films are also considered in terms of artistic traditions that have embraced the use of sound recording technology as instruments of music production, particularly late 20th century sample-based art. The theoretical implications of sampling are considered in detail, and these implications are applied to detailed analyses of Lynch's works as a way of understanding his place in contemporary sampling culture. Finally, it is argued that Lynch's films explore the state of anxiety that has arisen around the technological separation of the senses of hearing and sight, both from each other and from their grounding in the human body. As such, his films explore the very birth of cinema itself, and how people have responded to a medium which takes the separation of the senses as its basic operating paradigm.

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Introduction:

Audiovisual Separation Anxiety

The technological developments for recording both sound and image, and how they came to be joined in the cinema, continue to be of special interest to film historians. Tom Gunning suggests that Thomas Edison's stated goal for the Kinetoscope to "[do] for the eye what the phonograph does for the ear" is indicative of two concerns in early 20th century life: the separation of the senses popular for studies of perception, and "a desire to heal the breach" resulting from anxiety surrounding this separation.¹ In the context of the spiritualist traditions alive and well at the time, Gunning holds that the technological separation of the human voice from the body was often considered to be unnatural; some even understood such use of technology as evidence for a spirit world which could be contacted electronically. For many, this separation was akin to the work of the devil and demanded a re-stitching of the isolated elements. "In the popular imagination of the initial phonographic craze," Gunning says, "devices of visual simulation were immediately suggested," illustrating people's anxiety over having one sense suddenly ripped from its dependence on the body, an anxiety matched by a desire to counter the imbalance.²

Of course, such descriptions of early phonograph culture are only a small part of cinema history. However, there is great significance to the idea that people were aware of the unnaturalness of separating the senses from one another. Such awareness has undoubtedly had some influence on the way recordings of sound and image have been created and perceived over the years. Gunning suggests that there is a continued

tendency towards thinking of the senses as being separate, and thus a tension between sound and image in the cinema remains. The purpose of this thesis is to delve into David Lynch's cinematic representations of the gulf that exists between sound and image in order to elucidate how he explores the anxiety that comes from this persistent separation. Lynch is clearly interested in the interaction between people and their sonic environments as mediated through technologies of sound recording and transmission. As will be demonstrated, attention to sound and the technology that brought it to the moving image opens a doorway to Lynch's work that can yield productive ways of understanding the worlds he creates. Because of his awareness of the anxiety occupying the gulf between sound and image, he is in the forefront of a small group of filmmakers interested in pushing the medium into a higher realm of audiovisual holism. I suggest that what Lynch's films explore, more than most others, is the breach out of which cinema was born and the results of this breach on human consciousness. His uses of sound and the presence of sound technology within his narratives illustrate contemporary manifestations of audiovisual separation anxiety and will be the subject of the analysis to come.

Crucial to my approach in this analysis will be the understanding that Lynch's use of sound is often associated with his interest in the materiality of cinema. The "scratch" that is referenced in the title of this thesis can thus be understood on two levels. Firstly, the presence of the phonograph as one of the main precursors to the development of cinema should be considered in light of the resurgence of popularity in turntables and vinyl recordings in contemporary music culture. One of the reasons for this interest lies, I believe, in the tangible materiality of the medium that is often absent from digital technologies. The sound of a vinyl scratch is the signature of the medium's materiality,

just as a scratch on film is the hallmark of its own material qualities. Contemporary DJs use the sound of scratching vinyl as musical expression, much as certain filmmakers like Stan Brakhage have scratched celluloid for its aesthetic qualities. So, “starting from scratch” implies that we begin examining Lynch’s work from the perspective that the material qualities of cinema are a major motivation for his filmmaking, a fact which is evident in the way he treats all the elements of his cinema, not the least of which being his soundtracks.

The title here also relates to an idea put forth by Joachim Ernst-Berendt in his book *The World is Sound*. Berendt argues that because of the historical privileging of vision, we now need to relearn to experience the world from a less sight-based perspective.³ He effectively suggests starting over from an approach to life that does not separate the senses from one another, an approach that would hold all the senses in a non-hierarchical balance. Thus, the idea of the scratch can be likened to Berendt’s belief in the need for sensory balance. The scratch transcends hearing and seeing, becoming instead a signifier of the similar materiality that can exist within both these senses. Thus, the scratch refers to a more general material imperfection, one that is seized upon by artists like Lynch as an extension of the materially organic qualities of human experience and expression. As will be demonstrated, equating human materiality with technologies of representation is very important to Lynch; all of his films explore, to some degree, heightened states of awareness resulting from interactions between human and machine. More often than not, the machines in question emphasize sound, and attention to the sonic environments Lynch creates can yield a better understanding of how he treats film as a more unified audiovisual whole.

As a starting point, Chapter One will consider the influence of Edison's work with sound technology on Lynch's films, in particular Lynch's recurring obsession with phonograph turntables. This chapter will focus on *Eraserhead* (1977) and the *Twin Peaks* (1989-92) universe. Special attention will be paid to Lynch's attempts to unite the formal aesthetics of sound and image through the object of the turntable: a visually fascinating instrument that is clearly associated with sound. The chapter will also explore how the turntable has become an emblem of a non-linear understanding of time, facilitated by the nostalgia associated with the technology, the spiral form of the record itself, and the turntable's potential for temporal manipulation in the hands of contemporary DJs. Crucial to this chapter will be the work of Paul Théberge in *Any Sound You Can Imagine*, positing simultaneous production and consumption as the hallmark of the era of recording technology used for musical expression.⁴ When used by a DJ, the turntable is a medium for both the consumption and production of music, thus creating an interesting relationship between the DJ and the turntable through the co-existence of ideas that are ordinarily considered to be contradictory. The idea of simultaneous co-existences will then be expanded through the concept of the rhizome as put forth by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*.⁵ As will be suggested, the form of the rhizome makes an excellent conceptual template for examining Lynch's interest in exploring the simultaneity of co-existing worlds. Here the concept of recontextualization will be introduced as a key point in understanding Lynch's exploration of non-linear time, and how the mind works by co-mingling memories from different points in lived experience and places them side by side with the experience of the present moment. Thus memories are subject to constant recontextualization in

relation to the present, a fact which can lead to a very destabilizing perception of the world. The turntable is a powerful symbol of the past united with the present. Its presence in Lynch's films often occurs in conjunction with an unstable meeting between times and spaces, and this chapter will examine some important instances of such instability.

Chapter Two will move from turntables to a broader look at Lynch's interest in domestic technologies of representation. It will begin by examining recent trends in sound theory expressed in the work of theorists Rick Altman, Michel Chion, and James Lastra. This theory will then be applied to an understanding of Lynch's more generalized interest in the presence of representation technology within his films and the effect such technology has on his characters. Lynch's use of sound will be crucial here, particularly as it relates to the delineation of space and domestic auditory experience within *Lost Highway* (1997) and *Mulholland Drive* (2001). This chapter will also consider the importance of understanding Lynch's films as holistic audiovisual works where no one element, such as the image, is dominant over any other. Here I will be drawing on the work of Noël Burch, David Bordwell and Mario Falsetto, all of whom argue for a cinema free of the hierarchies of dominant elements such as image and narrative. Finally, in light of the fact that recording technology is the basis for sampling, (the art of re-arranging and layering bits and pieces of recorded material), I will suggest that Lynch has much in common with contemporary sample-based art. The idea of recontextualization through recording technology is of critical importance to the worlds Lynch creates on film.

Chapter Three will then explore the concept of recontextualization in much greater detail. Key authors Joachim Ernst-Berendt, Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari have

explored the notion that the universe can be understood on musical, and thus sonic, terms. Within the history of this line of thought it is tempting to conclude that musical forms can provide a kind of unified field theory for the structure of the universe. However, in *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch's Lost Highway*, Slavoj Žižek argues against using the idea of such an underlying order to things as an interpretative model for approaching Lynch's work. In particular, Žižek feels that the idea of a Jungian collective-consciousness accounting for some of the vagaries in Lynch's universe is little more than a New Age escape from dealing with Lynch at face value.⁶ However, I will illustrate how the thinking of Berendt, Deleuze, and Guattari offer ways of understanding music as being the structure on which the universe is based while maintaining an open concept of the universe's ever shifting and evolving nature. Again, the key here is recontextualization, and Berendt, Deleuze, and Guattari suggest that all things in the universe constantly seek to re-invent themselves through interaction with all that exists around them. The concepts of recontextualization through interaction with the world are primary concerns for Lynch. With the help of Michel Chion, Kenneth Kaleta, and Martha Nochimson, I will end by illustrating how Lynch's *Dune* (1984) clearly expresses these concerns through his treatment of sound in the film.

Throughout these chapters the theme of multiple co-existing worlds will be examined, whether it be those of sound and image in the cinema, the co-mingling of past and present within the human mind, the transcendence of space through technologies of representation, or the infinite possibilities for creation and evolution through an open concept of the universe where all things can instantly connect to each other. Also of great importance in each of the chapters will be R. Murray Schafer's concept of

“schizophonia,” a term he uses in *The Tuning of the World* to express the distress human beings encounter when sound is separated from its source through electroacoustical transmission.⁷ Schizophonia is another way of understanding the separation anxiety that Gunning suggests is central to the treatment of sound and image in the cinema. As such, Schafer’s concept will provide an excellent basis for exploring Lynch’s interest in technologies of sound transmission as they relate to the sense of anxiety and paranoia that runs through much of his work.

These discussions will also briefly examine Lynch’s relationship to filmmakers such as Ingmar Bergman, Stan Brakhage, Maya Deren and Jacques Tati. Lynch has been drawing on a small but long standing field of cinematic exploration that shares his desire for pushing the boundaries of the medium to its full potential. Just as Lynch has been influenced by so many great filmmakers, so too has Lynch been a major influence himself. This flow of interaction between filmmakers is exemplary of the constant search for recontextualization that many suggest is at the heart of life itself, and which is certainly at the core of Lynch’s filmmaking. As will be illustrated, Lynch consistently manages to engage with a rich heritage of experimental, avant-garde, and otherwise creative cinema through the making of truly original works of audiovisual art, thereby formally demonstrating the kind of awareness of environment and drive towards evolution that his characters regularly exhibit.

Finally, recontextualization is a key concept that ties this analysis together. Lynch’s use of sound and his interest in representing technology on screen is often linked to characters caught between worlds and who are trying to find ways to embrace contradictory realities. They don’t always make it, but it is the journey that is central.

Lynch's films are nothing if not journeys into the void between simultaneously co-existing realms of experience. As will be suggested, these co-existing realms can be resolved through active interaction between them, bringing together what has often been kept separate. Lynch's use of sound in relation to image provides clear examples of his exploration of the interaction between co-existing realms of experience, and this sound/image interaction will be the basis around which all the analysis here will revolve.

Notes

¹ Gunning, Tom. "Doing for the Eye What the Phonograph Does for the Ear." *The Sounds of Early Cinema*. Richard Abel and Rick Altman, eds. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001:16.

² *ibid*:19.

³ Berendt, Joachim-Ernst. *The World is Sound: Nada Brahma: Music and the Landscape of Consciousness*. Helmut Bredigkeit, trans. Rochester: Destiny Books, 1987:7.

⁴ Théberge, Paul. *Any Sound you can Imagine: Making Music/Consuming Technology*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997:3.

⁵ Deleuze, Gilles + Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Brian Massumi, trans. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987:7.

⁶ Žižek, Slavoj. *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch's Lost Highway*. Seattle: The Walter Chapin Simpson Center for the Humanities, 2000:3.

⁷ Schafer, R. Murray. *The Tuning of the World*. Toronto: McLeland and Stewart, 1977:90.

Chapter One:
“It Is Happening Again” :
Rituals in Transfigured Time

*At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.
I can only say, there we have been: but I cannot say where.
And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.*

- T.S. Elliot, *Four Quartets – Quartet No. 1: Burnt Norton*

*Time, from creation to now, tugs toward all yesterdays almost as strongly as the
unborn tomorrows that stretch toward all eternity. Someday man will strike a balance
between these two great universal forces: the past and the future. And then will man
make a fantastic journey to the center of time.*

- *Journey to the Center of Time* (1967)

Journey to the Centre of Time

The use of turntables as musical instruments in contemporary musical practice is a current manifestation of something much older: the quest for a new understanding of time. As Elliot’s verse exemplifies, there has long been a romantic element to the idea of existing outside of time – or better yet, within the center of time. However, artistic exploration of the nature of time reaches much further than a seemingly endless array of science-fiction treatments of the subject. Without question, changes in our understanding of time have been greatly accelerated in the electrical age, if for no other reason than the

simple disruption of our biological clocks by the introduction of electric light. The electrical age has also facilitated the proliferation of reproduction technologies, which in turn have further accelerated our changing thoughts on the subject of time. The electronic transmission of the human voice over long distances has allowed instant contact between vastly different areas of the world, creating a heightened awareness of the difference in time zones across the globe. At the same time, these technologies demand a parallel existence across these zones so that people may communicate with one another no matter what the time in any given place. In the digital age, instant communication has resulted in a world that never sleeps. The hypertextual environment of cyberspace, where seemingly infinite planes of existence co-mingle simultaneously, is matched by the human operators who mingle with one another online despite vastly differing environmental realities. This sense of simultaneous existence across differing planes of temporal experience has been the subject of much of the music that has been created using sound reproduction technologies in the latter half of the 20th century; the use of the phonograph turntable in this context is no exception.

“No longer valid is the old music-hall joke about the man who, on being asked what musical instrument he plays, replies, ‘the gramophone!’”¹ As Paul Théberge has astutely noted in *Any Sound You Can Imagine*, with recording and replaying machines has come a new mode of artistic expression: the creation of works through the simultaneity of production and consumption.² Théberge refers to the simultaneity of production and consumption as being the hallmark of the digital era, the epitome being the digital keyboard which acts as a musical instrument which plays recorded material. The keyboard is a sampling machine that must consume sound in order for it to produce

sound. This digital hallmark of simultaneous production and consumption comes in conjunction with another signature of digitalism: non-linearity. It should come as no surprise that the simultaneity of production and consumption occurs in conjunction with increasing understanding of time as being the simultaneous existence of various planes of experience as enhanced by global communication networks.

The simultaneity of production and consumption that exists in the act of using consumer reproduction technology for productive purposes puts the operator in the middle of a tug-of-war between competing forces. There is a middle ground between these forces that can be observed in many facets of early 21st Century life. We are now at a crossroads between analog and digital technologies exemplified by the phonographic turntable and celluloid-based cinema. Both mediums can, in fact, function without electricity, yet both now rely on electrical impulses for their propagation. Both film and phonography are also analog in nature, yet are the templates for the newly emerging digital domain of audiovisual arts. A tug-of-war also exists between technologies of the past and future which defines our experience of the present. This is one of the key reasons that I believe the turntable has the power to evoke a strong sense of temporal disruption – it exists as a physical marker at the center of the shift from past to future taking place in the world of reproduction technology. Thus the turntable becomes an embodiment of the center of simultaneously existing times, the co-existence of analog and digital technologies.

This chapter will explore how phonographic turntable technology has been used to explore the concept of temporal simultaneity in contemporary DJ music, and how this music shares a deep affinity with the filmmaking practices of David Lynch. With a

specific look at turntable presence in Lynch's works, I will examine the role of reproduction technologies in his exploration of a shifting understanding of time. In so doing it will be demonstrated how Lynch can be understood as an artist whose ongoing oeuvre concerns humanity making its way through the technological revolution of the late 20th century, and how we are all, at heart, seekers on a journey to the center of time.

The Turntable

The turntable's visibility as an object and its tactility as an instrument of manipulation in combination with its status as the (almost) first sound recording technology make it a subject of intense fascination.³ Very often, the mutual interest in turntables shown by filmmakers and DJs involves a humanist approach to understanding the relationships that exist between modern subjects and their technologies of production/reproduction. Phonograph technology has been at the forefront of humanist thought seeking to liken technological processes of production/reproduction with physical processes found within the human mind and body. In *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Friedrich Kittler examines many instances of early 20th Century writers drawing on phonography as an analogue for various physical processes. He suggests that the basic functioning of phonograph technology has been likened to the "recording" and "playback" of human memory, while sonic imperfection inherent in this functioning has been equated with the sonic byproducts of human physical imperfections.⁴ Not surprisingly, Kittler also mentions how contemporary DJ interest in the materiality of turntable technology and its musical potential is specifically related to humanist interest in the relationships between the physical body and phonography.⁵ In *Gödel, Escher,*

Bach, Douglas R. Hofstadter brings similar interest in phonography into discourses on modern genetics by, amidst other elaborate flights of humanistic imagination, producing a graph illustrating one to one relationships that can be made between phonographic processes and the processes of DNA replication.⁶

Observation of the turntable's mechanical processes suggests shared likenesses with physical processes beyond those of the human body as well. The spiral formation of a record's groove, the spinning of the disc on its axis, the centrifugal predisposition of the needle constantly being drawn inward - all of these visible characteristics of the turntable's inherent design invite comparisons with no less than the machinations of the cosmos, the observable micro/macrocosmic relationships between phenomena that surround us at all times. Whether equating the spiral on a snail's shell with the arms of our galaxy, or the inward flow of water in a whirlpool to the disappearance of light within a black hole, the sense of wonder and quest for knowledge that such comparisons have ignited in people from all walks of life illustrates the spiral's symbolic power of analogy, a power that has driven many an artistic pursuit. The presence of turntables in the works of David Lynch draw on this power of analogy to make strong associations between the technology itself and the people that co-habitate with it.

The spiral, along with its powers of micro/macrocosmic analogy, is also a symbol of simultaneous temporal co-existences. Filmmaker Sorel Etrog describes the ubiquitous shape as it relates to his film *Spiral* (1975):

The spiral is a single continuous line that creates within itself the parallel that exists conventionally between two lines. Therefore, you can have on this single line moments in time and space that signify the past, the present, and the future – and these moments occur in this unique situation as parallel. Time and space are collapsed. Chronology is obsolete.⁷

The fact that the turntable operates around the spiral shape of the record's groove makes it an obvious choice for use as an instrument of temporal experimentation. On a more fundamental level, however, there is a concrete link between all sound reproduction technologies and the quest for timelessness.

R. Murray Schafer, founder of the World Soundscape Project, coins the term "schizophonia" which he describes as "the split between an original sound and its electroacoustical transmission or reproduction."⁸ In *The Tuning of the World* Schafer discusses the role of reproduction technologies in creating a disjunction between original sounds and their propagation through space, and the effect this disjunction has on humans within their sonic environments. Schafer suggests that the technological enhancement of the spatial characteristics of sound is characteristic of late 20th century attempts to "transcend the present tense," again a symptom of the schizophonic mind-set.⁹ Schafer's point is that with the artificial creation of sonic environments, any environment can stand in for any other, thus removing the natural context (both temporal and spatial) for the sound's original propagation. His argument is echoed by Frederic Jameson's description of the negative aspects of schizophrenic mind-states in *The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Jameson argues that the fragmentation, isolation, and surface re-assemblage of experience characteristic of postmodernism amounts a loss of historical context. He likens this loss of context to a breakdown in the signifying chain of memory that schizophrenics exhibit in the form of "a series of pure and unrelated presents in time."¹⁰ The role of spatial environments as they relate to technologies of sound reproduction will be explored further in the next chapter. For the moment, the crucial element is the role of

sound reproduction technology itself in the concept of linear time being broken down through acts of recontextualization.

For Schafer, the negative connotations of the prefix “schizo” are used intentionally to describe a world which he feels has been drastically altered by the invention of technologies capable of pushing a sound well beyond the limits of its original source. Escaping the linear flow of time is part of what Schafer and Jameson lament. However, a shift in our understanding of time and embracing the simultaneous co-existence of the three tenses might better serve the dissolution of anxiety caused by the elements that make up schizophonia. As Eugene Holland observes, Deleuze and Guattari seek to shake loose the associations so often drawn between schizophrenia and the horrors of the insane asylum.¹¹ In the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* books,¹² their goal is to illustrate the positive aspects of schizophrenic experience, one of which is the embracing of multiplicity - even in the event of paradox.

As illustrated by Schafer and Jameson, the concept of time is one of the main areas of experience disrupted by symptoms of schizophrenia. As has been suggested, however, this confrontation does not have to carry with it any baggage of negative associations. In his book *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi notes that one of the most reported sensations in states of optimal experience is the loss of awareness of the passage of time - the experience of an everlasting present.¹³ Indeed, many a philosopher and artist also believe in the sense of an everlasting present as being a positive state.

As Claire Colebrook illustrates in *Deleuze*, he has described cinema itself as a medium capable of restructuring our understanding of time. He suggests that “memory is

real and exists virtually alongside the present” and can interrupt that present as a result, an idea developed from Henri Bergson.¹⁴ For Deleuze, the cinema at its most cinematic (embracing the materiality of its medium and not trying to copy other arts) can give us a direct experience of the “virtual/actual split” that the co-existence of past and present creates.¹⁵ Deleuze’s thoughts are reminiscent of Gene Youngblood’s *Expanded Cinema* in which he discusses the simultaneous perception of harmonic opposites, invoking the eternal present conceived in the Hopi language and illustrating how certain filmmaking practices provide the tools to explore this understanding of time.¹⁶

The interconnections between past and present in the mind that Deleuze discusses in relation to the cinema can also be considered in terms of his discussion of the “rhizome.” In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari develop the notion of the rhizome through several analogies relevant to the present discussion. To begin with, they suggest that “any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be.”¹⁷ Conceived in this way, memory can be understood on rhizomatic terms in that any memory can be connected to any other at any point, and it is simply our own hierarchical organization of these memories that keep them from existing on equal terms within the experience of the present. Using the rhizome as a model for the way their book might be read, Deleuze-Guattari scholar and translator Brian Massumi suggests that the myriad concepts put forth in the text are the plateaus of its title. As such, these plateaus can be connected in any number of varying ways, and need not be approached in any linear or hierarchical fashion. As an analogy, Massumi describes Deleuze’s suggestion that the book be read as one can listen to a record: “When you buy a record there are always cuts that leave you cold. You skip them.”¹⁸ Elaborating, Massumi evokes the image of

jumping from one plateau to the next, grabbing hold of the concepts that one likes and skipping with them to their next incarnations as one might skip to similar portions spread out across an album.¹⁹ Thus Deleuze invites active recontextualization of portions of the text based on the reader's engagement with the material. Recontextualization, in the end, is the key to the idea of memory functioning on rhizomatic principles: memories constantly interact with the present, informing that present, and changing both the memory and the present as a result. If taken to an extreme, this co-mingling of past and present can yield the breakdown in the signifying chain of memory that Jameson speaks about, where differentiation between past and present experience no longer takes place.

The idea of rhizomatic form being likened to schizophrenic mental states is most overtly expressed by Lynch in *Blackout*, the third episode of his television series *Hotel Room* (1993). The story concerns a married couple, Danny (Crispin Glover) and Diane (Alicia Witt), who have travelled to the city to see a psychiatrist concerning the woman's difficulty in dealing with the death of their son. Over the course of their long conversation we become aware of the fact that Diane mingles memories of the past with her experience of the present, often believing that it is presently the summer of two years past, the summer that their son drowned. Her lack of ability to confront the present in the context of her son's death is indicative of a breakdown in the signifying chain, a free mingling of memories with the present that creates an unstable mental environment.

The character of Diane in *Blackout* stands in stark contrast to that of Alvin Straight in *The Straight Story* (1999) in which Alvin exhibits an unwavering awareness of the relationship between the past and the present. In his recounting of wartime experiences, he mentions the fact that the faces of all his friends who have died are still clear in his

mind, but that they are stuck in the past, never to age another day. The fact that they don't ever age in his memory makes his own ageing process all the more difficult. He lives in a state where the definitive pastness of his memory of friends lost cannot be undone, making him all the more aware of his existence in the present and how the gulf between these two realms cannot be breached. This awareness is further established when Alvin is asked by a young cyclist what the worst part about getting old is. Alvin responds: "The worst part about getting old is remembering when you was young." Alvin cannot bridge the gap between the fixed place of his memories in the past with his experience of the present. He does not suffer from a breakdown in the signifying chain of memory that would allow him to believe he is living in the past. He remains painfully aware that his memories are of things long gone. Even though his memories do exist along side his experience of the present, they do not interrupt the present in such a way that would allow him to bridge the virtual/actual split as Diane does in *Blackout*. Thus Alvin retains a hierarchical structure to his memories rather than a rhizomatic one.

For our interests in this chapter, however, we are more concerned with the use of musical and cinematic form to explore the concept of rhizomatic experience (as was Deleuze himself), rather than direct expression of this experience through character psychology development that could exist just as easily in other forms of art. A useful example of rhizomatic exploration through sound production is provided by Electroacoustic musician Pauline Oliveros. Her concept of "Deep Listening" is an excellent example of the idea of rhizomatic existence within an ever-present state of mind based on engagement with one's sonic environment. Deep Listening began as Oliveros' name for the creation of music within large reverberant spaces, music designed to use the

reverberations as part of the compositions themselves. Describing one such experiment inside a cave with echo delays of up to 45 seconds, she explains:

The sound is so well mirrored, so to speak, that it's hard to tell direct sound from the reflective sound. It puts you in the deep listening space. You're hearing the past, of sound that you made; you're continuing it, possibly, so you're right in the present, and you're anticipating the future, which is coming at you from the past. So it puts you in the simultaneity of time.²⁰

This simultaneity of time, the co-mingling of past, present, and future within an experience of the ever-present, is the crux of rhizomatic form and the schizophrenic mental states that follow its pattern.

As will be demonstrated, the rhizomatic simultaneity of time through active engagement with the production of sound is at the heart of contemporary DJ practice through the use of the turntable. This symbolic power of the turntable as time machine is also of great importance in the works of David Lynch. Lynch draws on the power of the turntable as a material signifier of the various simultaneities discussed thus far: the space between past and present technologies; the schizophrenic breakdown of time and space through the technological propagation of sound; and the quest for timelessness fostered by human interaction with technologies of simultaneous production and consumption. With this in mind, the presence of turntables in his films will be considered in some detail. First, however, let us turn to a closer examination of the importance of the turntable to contemporary DJ practice.

Turntable Manipulation

The desire to reach Elliot's "still point of the turning world" is akin to the desire of the DJ to master time through the art of turntablism. When operating a turntable, the

flow of linearity can be altered through the manipulation of the turntable's mechanics. When using two or more turntables, the intermingling of eras can be achieved through the recontextualization and juxtaposition of existing recorded material. By taking control of the rotation of the turntable, the DJ can thus isolate segments of songs, repeat them, and juxtapose them with other segments. At the heart of this temporal manipulation lies an interest in the qualities of the medium of phonography itself. The "scratch" is the basic practice that underlies most of the manipulations that DJs employ, and is also the signature of the turntable's sonic imperfection. By yielding to the imperfection of the technology and exploring it for expressive purposes, the DJ in turn acknowledges the imperfection inherent in being human. Thus by embracing the materiality of the medium the DJ equates humanity with the technology itself.

We can often learn as much about human beings as we can about technology itself through the examination of the unintended by-products of the machines we design. Machines are extensions of humanity and have always inherited a lack of perfection as a result. So it is no surprise that many new forms of creative expression and technological design are born of these imperfections. Friedrich Kittler observes that the phonograph was, in part, developed as a result of human impairment. He describes Thomas Edison, screaming into the bell of his phonograph machine for the purpose of recording his voice onto the cylinder.²¹ Edison yelled in part because his recording device was not amplified, but also because he was half-deaf. As an extension of the human practices of speaking and hearing, his sound reproduction device served as a surrogate for his own physical material defects. Thus, as Kittler notes: "a physical impairment was at the beginning of mechanical sound recording."²²

The interaction between operators and technology hinges on the imperfections in both. When operators seize upon the expressive possibility of a technology's by-products to explore their own human condition, a rich dynamic is formed that reflects a different understanding of the world than simply trying to correct nature's "mistakes" through the utilization of perfect machines. In *The Passion of David Lynch*, Martha Nochimson puts forth the idea of the Lynchian seeker, that hero in a Lynch film that succeeds only by losing control of his/her world and being shown a new way as a result, "the rewards of letting 'something else' speak to [them]."²³ The concept of the seeker can also be applied to Lynch's own seeking, his process of artistic creation whereby 90% of the time he "doesn't know what he is doing," relying on his mediation with the medium to find the way through to the finished work: "the will to lose one's will."²⁴ When the control that many people try to exert over their world fails, new ways of interacting with the environment can be learnt, ways that unite people with the world rather than being grounded in a constant power struggle based on the "unreal dependence on the boundaries we have created for ourselves."²⁵ Ultimately, human interest in exploring our own imperfections through those observable in technology illustrates a desire to transcend boundaries between human and machine, and in turn to transcend established notions of what it means to be human.

The kind of transcendence at issue here relates constantly back to the idea of bridging worlds often thought of as separate, such as those of production and consumption, human and machine, or sound and image. As discussed, the turntable is a powerful symbol of transcending such gaps. However, there is another reason why the turntable is so evocative, particularly when it is used within the diegesis of a film. As

discussed in the introduction, Tom Gunning's "Doing for the Eye what the Phonograph Did for the Ear" suggests that technology's displacement of some very basic human experiences (such as the removal of the voice from the body) has resulted in a persistent anxiety surrounding such technology.²⁶ The turntable as an object evokes Thomas Edison and the anxiety of the early days of phonography, and Lynch's films demonstrate both an Edisonian presence as well as a more general sense of technological anxiety through his use of turntables on screen.

Enter David Lynch playing FBI Chief Gordon Cole in *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* (1992), head of the Blue Rose cases to which the mystery of Laura Palmer's (Sheryl Lee) murder belongs. The first recognizable human form in the film is Gordon Cole, hearing aids armed and ready, hollering at his secretary who stands not three feet away: "Get me Agent Chester Desmond out in Fargo North Dakota!" Then, having secured Agent Desmond (Chris Isaak) on the phone, Cole identifies himself by screaming into his receiver, causing Desmond to pull the hand-piece away from his ear as Cole's voice audibly distorts through the tiny speaker. This scene is remarkably similar to the description Kittler gives of Edison hollering into the bell of his phonographic cylinder recorder as a result of his hearing impairment. It is almost as if Lynch is positing himself as a kind of re-incarnation of Edison, placed in charge of investigating the otherworldly by-products of so many electrical devices that populate Lynch's spaces. Just as Kittler suggests that Edison's recording device was born out of human deficiency, Lynch foregrounds Cole's dependence on hearing aids and the telephone distortion resultant from his compensation for this dependence. In this way Lynch unifies the concepts of human and machine deficiency in the context of sound reproduction technology.

The desire to interact with technological imperfection is one impetus behind the turntable manipulations of the contemporary DJ. This usage draws on a number of different influences. Certainly, as Tricia Rose's *Black Noise* examines in detail, the development of turntable manipulation within the context of hip-hop culture marks an important relationship with black cultural expression in urban America.²⁷ Similarly, early experimentations with electronic music production (such as the tape manipulations of Steve Reich, Terry Riley, and Karlheinz Stockhausen), provided another important backdrop for turntable manipulation. Even earlier on, collage and cut-up practices were evident in the Dadaist movement which went on to influence beat generation authors such as William S. Burroughs, whose work is often cited as being the predecessor to modern musical sampling techniques. The found footage films that emerged in the 1950s can also be added to this list.

As an example, Joseph Cornell's *Rose Hobart* (1936), credited as being the very first found footage film and pre-dating later exploration in this area by many years, prefigures DJ turntable use in several ways. Cornell's film rearranges visual samples from a Hollywood film to create a new work that removes all sense of linear temporal and spatial progression from the original. The soundtrack he provided to the film was made up of various different popular songs of the day. The recontextualization of popular culture through sampling is a major drive behind contemporary DJ music. The current manifestation of *Rose Hobart* on the *Treasures of the American Film Archives Vol. 4* DVD includes an approximation of the soundtrack Cornell would have used, complete from old vinyl recordings that clearly reveal their material particularities. The specific sound of vinyl is very important to the DJ aesthetic, and on the DVD it is clear

that the soundtrack of the film comes from the jockeying of old pop tunes, understood anew in the environment of Cornell's visual recontextualizations.

Central to the turntable's use as a tool for exploring the creative potential of recontextualization is the fact that it is an instrument of both production and consumption. Though Paul Théberge concentrates on the digital era when he discusses this simultaneity, the turntable is a clear pre-cursor to the same kind of duality. Friedrich Kittler notes that, while Edison separated the recording and playback functions of his gramophone into two units for practical purposes, the recording and playback functions of the technology hinge on the one stylus that is used to perform both operations. In this way Kittler sees the simultaneity of production and consumption as being inherent in the technology itself despite the lack of recording functions on most consumer turntables.²⁸ The simultaneity of production and consumption puts the operator in a constant give and take relationship with the technology, creating a more holistic approach to the use of technology as a means by which human experience can be expressed.

Along with simultaneous production and consumption, three other concepts are crucial to my discussion of human/technological interaction as it relates to turntable manipulation. In *Black Noise*, Tricia Rose describes flow, layering, and ruptures in line as being the three central concepts at work in hip-hop culture.²⁹ I believe that flow, layering, and ruptures in line, like the use of the turntable itself, are at the heart of the world of expression through technologies of reproduction which transcends any one particular artistic movement. We will now explore how the interaction between human and turntable illustrates flow, layering, and ruptures in line within the simultaneity of

production and consumption. These concepts will illustrate more clearly how DJ turntable manipulation can be understood as part of the quest for timeless existence.

The act of scratching (in the DJ sense of the term), in addition to exploring the textural possibilities of this unique sound, allows the isolation, fragmentation, and recombination of small portions of recorded material. Often the isolated segment of a record will be repeated several times, or looped indefinitely through the use of the backspin, a process of constantly turning the record backwards to the beginning of the desired segment whenever it reaches its end.³⁰ The DJ can also manipulate the record so as to repeat segments with variations on their start and end points. The sound of scratching is often a by-product of backspinning which involves the forcible movement of the record against its intended grain, a sound that is an aesthetic counterpart to the creation of “breakbeats” (the isolated and repeated bit of a record). As Rose notes, the creation of breakbeats through backspinning is most often practiced to yield “an endless collage of peak dance beats” from the “obscure instrumental breaks” found in many songs.³¹ The breakbeat is a clear example of attempts to stop the flow of time. It allows the DJ to take a favourite portion of a record and extend it indefinitely. Through simultaneous production and consumption, the DJ creates a space in which a few seconds can last hours, and the interplay between recorded material and its manipulation creates a new space where the two exist in a symbiotic relationship.

Though taken to a new level in DJ turntable manipulations, the concept of the breakbeat, and its relationship to the repeating and alternating between isolated portions of recorded material, can be observed in many works that predate turntablism. Maya Deren’s *Ritual in Transfigured Time* (1946) is one such example. Portraying the ritual of

black tie dancing, Deren constructs the film out of repeating segments that alternate between one another, changing only their start and end points. This repetition and alternation of a fixed number of isolated segments, manipulated in their start and end points, is very much in the spirit of the breakbeat found in DJ music. Deren's work, itself drawing on the traditions of earlier filmmaking and literary practices, is a clear indication of the fact that DJ turntable manipulation is indeed no more than a current manifestation of an older desire to manipulate our sense of time.

As the breakbeat illustrates, repetition of isolated elements (through the backspin) and alternation between simultaneously co-existing materials (through cross-fading between turntables) are central to the concepts of flow, layering, and ruptures in line. These processes can be understood in rhizomatic terms, where different points on a given record are taken out of their linear progression through the act of scratching, and points between two or more records are made instantly accessible to one another through cross-fading.

The concept of the DJ as a selector of segments is important here. Much like the jumping from one plateau to the next that Deleuze likens to the act of selecting portions of a record, DJs can be understood as plateau jumpers drawing connections between the portions of their material that interest them the most. The breakbeat itself, as an infinitely extendable moment in time, is the centrality that one experiences at any plateau within a rhizome: the middle ground that any position within a rhizome embodies by way of its interconnection with all other positions. So the turntable evokes the quest for timelessness through its embodiment of rhizomatic centrality in both its inherent functioning and the uses to which this functioning is put by contemporary DJs. We will

now examine Lynch's use of the turntable to evoke the quest for rhizomatic temporal simultaneity through medium-specific materiality, thus drawing connections between his filmmaking and the art of DJ musical practice.

Turntable Presence in the works of David Lynch

Eraserhead (1977) paves the way for turntable presence in Lynch's work and in so doing also highlights many of his more general concerns with domestic reproduction technology and its effect on the environments his characters occupy. The turntable itself is prominent in several scenes, and goes hand in hand with Lynch's interest in the textural qualities of sound in its own right. After unpacking his grocery bag, the first thing Henry Spencer (John Nance) does when he comes home at the beginning of the film is fire up his old record player. Dropping the needle, the air is filled with the distant sound of Fats Waller's organ stylings amidst the distinctive crackling of the old disc. Not satisfied with the portion of the tune he initially selects, Henry skips the needle to another portion, and to yet another before allowing the record to play out. Michel Chion refers to Henry's action here as performing "live sound editing...well before the invention of scratch music."³²

Speaking of this performance as "carving out islands of sound" (Chion 1995:44-45), Chion puts his finger on another of the film's distinct tie-ins with DJ practice: the art of cutting. As Henry and the X family are seated around the dinner table, Henry is presented with the honor of carving up some bizarre "man-made" mini-chickens. Unsure of how to approach these new fangled birds, he turns to Mr. X and asks: "Should I just cut 'em up like regular chickens?" The response: "Sure, just cut 'em up like regular

chickens.” The art of DJ scratching is often referred to as “cutting up,” and Henry’s use of that term was evocative enough of DJ practice to prompt sample-artist Amon Tobin to include those lines of dialog in a piece entitled “Regular Chickens” (on his 1997 album *Permutations*). Chion’s description of Henry’s turntable manipulation as being the carving of sound relates nicely to Tobin’s use of the concept of carving to refer to the cut and paste practices of audio sampling.

Indeed, *Eraserhead* has been an influence on new forms of music well beyond Tobin’s use of thematically relevant audio samples from the film. Lynch’s interest in the texture of old vinyl is part of his general interest in machinic soundscapes; the crackly record player in the corner of Henry’s room is but one part of the film’s now legendary industrial acoustic environment. It has been suggested that *Eraserhead*’s concern with the texture of machine noise also catalyzed the industrial music movement that arose shortly after the film’s release. Paul Schütze, former Australian-based soundtrack composer and current electronic musician, notes that *Eraserhead* “gave a voice to the whole industrial, land-grounded, earth-ambient genre.”³³ Describing the industrial sounds that many bands developed in the years following *Eraserhead*’s release, Schütze suggests: “I think you’d be hard-pressed to find a fully developed example of this that predated that film.”³⁴ Mick Harris, who has created works using source sounds from fridges and radiators, also acknowledges Lynch’s influence on him: “I’m a big fan of *Eraserhead*...that type of radiator drone drift sound.”³⁵

In *The Elephant Man* (1980) Lynch goes back a little further into the history of sound reproduction technology. After kidnapping John Merrick (John Hurt) from the hospital where he has found respite, the nasty Mr. Bytes (Freddie Jones) brings him to a

circus side-show in France. The site of the show is introduced with a burst of lightning, and we are shown a little man cranking a large music box with a horn that looks very much like one belonging to an early gramophone. The conjunction of the music box and the flashing lightning is significant when considering Lynch's obsessions with flickering electric lights and electrical sound reproduction technology. Here Lynch take on a Frankensteinian role, blasting electrical life into the hand cranked music box so that it may put forth its music to the world without human assistance, a premonition of the electrical sound reproduction technologies to come.

However, the phonograph turntable finds its strongest presence in Lynch's television series *Twin Peaks* (1989-91). As Kathryn Kalinak has observed, "is there another fictional town on television with as many record players as this one?"³⁶ Here we will explore this turntable presence in some detail, drawing on three specific scenes from the series found in episodes 2, 14, and 29 (all directed by Lynch).

In episode 2, Leland Palmer (Ray Wise) finds himself desperate for a dance partner. Since the death of his daughter Laura (Sheryl Lee), he has become obsessed with the idea of dancing and frequently puts on old records to get him moving. Inevitably he finds himself without a partner, isolated, and dances as though with a ghost. In this scene we find Leland in the Palmer living room where he puts on a record of "Pennsylvania 6-5000." Looking around for something to reach out to, he picks up a picture of Laura, holds it out in front of him, and begins to spin around in circles. Lynch intercuts point of view shots wherein the room appears to spin around as though the viewer is holding Laura's picture while dancing. Sarah Palmer (Grace Zabrizke) then rushes into the room, wrestles with Leland over the photo causing it to fall and shatter the glass frame. Sarah

runs over to the turntable and violently whacks the needle off the record, an action accompanied by the typical scratching sound. Leland, having cut his hand on the broken glass, now caresses the photo directly, smearing Laura's image with his own blood in the process.

Several key issues are raised by this sequence. Firstly, it is significant that Leland's need for dance is accompanied by his desire for music on vinyl. One of the primary uses to which DJ manipulations are put is the act of dancing. The use of the body as a kind of mediation between the production and reception of music can be seen as a function of the physical nature of music as the propagation of soundwaves through space. Just as sound moves through the air, so too do bodies in the act of perceiving it. Dancing is a way of becoming the music that suggests a kinship between musical and human corporeality, and the idea of humans as inherently musical beings will be addressed further in Chapter Three. Secondly, the tune on the record sings about the act of making contact between human beings through telecommunications technology. Here the turntable joins with the telephone as the technological presences involved in Leland's struggle to fill the hole left in his life by the absence of another human being. Thirdly, Leland's dancing needs are a factor of his having lost someone close to him, causing him to seek a partner. In this scene he chooses a photograph of his daughter, an act akin to the use of a sample to recontextualize material stripped of its original place in the world. Like Henry in *Eraserhead*, Leland acts as a selector, and here he extends his sampling into the visual realm by using an image of his daughter in conjunction with the portion of music he chose to try and regain the past within the present. Lastly, Lynch addresses Leland's act of audiovisual sampling by having Leland's dancing movements mimic the movements

of the technology playing the music. It is as though Leland wants to join with the technology that fuels his nostalgia in order to travel back to a happier time, bridging the gap between past and present through human/machine interaction. Here the joining of sound and image through technologies of representation is further emphasized by the violence of the scratch sound in conjunction with Leland's hand being cut by the broken glass. The materiality of sound, image, and human flesh are all foregrounded here in the context of their interaction for the purposes of recontextualization.

The second example, this one from episode 14, also involves the turntable in the Palmer living room, and again concerns the act of Leland dancing to a vinyl record with a facsimile of his daughter. Having once been very close with the family, Maddy Ferguson (also played by Sheryl Lee), the cousin and spitting image of the deceased Laura, visits the Palmers in their time of grief. An early scene finds Maddy sitting on the couch between the Palmers whereupon she tells them that she'll be driving back home the next day. An old tune is heard, carrying with it the distinctive sound of ageing vinyl. The scene is comprised of one medium distance shot that begins to the left of the couch and tracks to the right very slowly. As it tracks, the shot passes behind the Palmers' floor-standing turntable cabinet, coming to rest with the spinning record it plays squarely in the foreground beyond which lies the centrally composed trio on the couch. Here the stage is set for Maddy's murder at the end of the episode, occurring in the same room, with an ambient soundtrack provided by the sound of the vinyl on that turntable looping at the end of a record.

The presence of the turntable thus provides the center around which the murder takes place. As will be demonstrated, materiality is again a primary concern here.

Repetition and alternation are also important here, and these formal elements join with materiality to suggest the bridging of worlds and quest for timelessness that have been discussed. Just prior to the murder scene, we find Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) witnessing the appearance of a Giant (Carel Struycken) on stage at the Roadhouse bar; he advises the detective that “it is happening again.” Beginning with the Giant’s warning setting up the idea of repetition, followed by the manifestation of such repetition through the turntable’s looping action, the murder sequence unfolds in a formal pattern of alternation through which the theme of repetition runs. The idea that Laura Palmer’s murderer is still on the loose, and that the act of murder will be repeated, has set up the anticipation of the return of Killer Bob (Frank Silva) since the beginning of the series. Thus Bob becomes a manifestation of repetition within the series. His reappearance in episode 14 begins with his face looking back at Leland as the latter’s reflection in a hallway mirror. The reflection is itself an embodiment of repetition - the repetition of light rays as they bounce off the reflective surface, the visual equivalent of an echo. Maddy then enters the room and sees Bob standing in the hallway. Maddy is also a kind of reflection in so far as she is the spitting image of Laura Palmer. So one reflection looks at another, and the murdering begins.

During the attack sequence, the fact that Bob and Leland both inhabit the same flesh is suggested through a system of technical devices resulting in alternate appearances of the two. Once Maddy has been partially subdued, Leland begins to dance with his victim in a circular motion echoing his dance with Laura’s picture in episode 2. During the dance, Lynch uses quick dissolves to make Bob appear in Leland’s place. When Bob is dancing with Maddy, the film runs in slow motion with complementing slow-motion

sound, and the lighting changes to a bright spotlight on the subjects contrasted against a darkening of the rest of the room. When Leland pops back into the picture, the regular speed is resumed, as is the more normative lighting style. This alternation between Bob and Leland happens several times before Maddy is finally killed.

One of the most important things to note about this scene is that, while most of the soundtrack slows down to complement the slow-motion imagery when Bob is present, the sound of the looping record remains unchanged throughout. The material texture of vinyl, with its powers of evoking the past, acts as a kind of timeless grounding to the scene unaffected by the other fluctuations in time Lynch introduces through slow-motion. The sound of the looping record is like a conduit between worlds, a line that extends between the territory of Leland's world and that of Bob. It also suggests the early days of phonography, laden with the anxiety of separating the senses that Tom Gunning suggests is at the heart of cinema. Bob can be understood as a manifestation of the anxiety of being caught between separated worlds; in this scene he exerts his most powerful efforts yet to force his way into the material world through the medium of Leland Palmer.

The fact that it is the sound of vinyl which Lynch uses to "score" this scene alludes to a time when spiritualism was alive and well, with many people believing that the spirit world could be contacted by way of sound reproduction technology.³⁷ The idea of a medium, or material, through which such contact takes place is crucial here. Spiritualist beliefs posit important connections between the material and the spiritual. Many spiritualists gravitate towards technologies that have a strong sense of the material while also demonstrating the power to move beyond, such as through the transmission of sound through space. As I have suggested, the materiality of the phonograph turntable is one of

the main reasons it has become so popular for DJ manipulations. Lynch not only foregrounds the materiality of the phonograph here, but also of cinema through his juxtapositions of image and sound speeds along with the lighting styles. Many of the cinematic manipulations Lynch employs here are similar to those used by DJs, most notably in their formal and aesthetic consequences: Lynch seeks explore the intersection between worlds, an extended breakbeat of the repeating vinyl texture opening up a new space where Leland and Bob co-exist simultaneously. The three formal elements of hip-hop the Rose describes are clearly illustrated here. The brief moments of superimposition that formally indicate the co-existence of Bob and Leland can be understood as the layering of worlds; the alternation between Bob and Leland suggest ruptures in line – ruptures between worlds; finally, this rupturing and layering allows the flow between worlds that is so strongly suggested here. The cinematic expression of this flow between worlds is a function of Lynch’s exploration of cinema’s materiality, a materiality ultimately equated with that of the human body through the scene’s startling violence.

Although a turntable does not actually appear in the final example to be considered here, episode 29 can be understood as providing an inventory of the key concepts described thus far. The final portion of the episode (Cooper’s journey through the “Red Room”) is one of Lynch’s most overt explorations of the idea of simultaneously co-existing worlds, and is structured around a pattern of repetition and alternation within the context of extensive cinematic manipulation. Here the foregrounding of the physical processes of the film medium once again work with the narrative function of the piece, fusing its materiality with its subject.

First of all, attention must be drawn to the now infamous cinematic particularities of the Red Room. Lynch's technique in dealing with these scenes is to have the actors speak and move in reverse while filming them in reverse. When the film is then played out in standard fashion, the movements and speech of the characters come out in forward motion, but with some indexical characteristics of reverse-motion. What this technique effectively illustrates is the simultaneity of forward and backward motion, expressing a kind of timelessness as a result of being caught between two vectors of movement. This simultaneous forward and backward motion is the perfect formal device in which to ground the many other spatial/temporal simultaneities suggested within the Red Room that will be explored momentarily.

The Red Room's depiction of forward/backward movement here is most notable in the speech and sound effects. As Michel Chion suggests: "aural phenomena are much more characteristically vectorized in time, with an irreversible beginning, middle, and end, than are visual phenomena."³⁸ Each sound event is a little narrative, and the reversal of these narratives, being found nowhere outside of technological reproduction, calls attention to itself immediately. Lynch plays with our inherent recognition of reverse sound in the Red Room. The words being spoken can be understood, but their reverse feel is unmistakable. This is an example of his interest in making the familiar seem strange, an interest that will be considered in great detail in the next chapter.

Throughout the series, suggestions have been made that the Red Room is actually the Black Lodge, a place of mythological importance to the geographical region in which Twin Peaks is supposedly found. Because of the fact that the Red Room is expanded to multiple rooms in episode 29, I will refer to it from here on in as the Lodge. Upon entry

into the Lodge, Cooper is first confronted by a narrow hallway that serves as the dividing line for his alternating movements between the rooms that lie at each end. Cooper walks to the end of this hallway and enters the first room on his journey. Here he finds jazz singer Little Jimmy Scott serenading him to the tune of “Under the Sycamore Trees,” a hauntingly beautiful ballad written by Lynch and Badalamenti. As Scott sings, the lights drop down and a strobe begins to play across Cooper’s face, illuminating it alternately from the left and right. The close-up of Cooper’s face being lit by the strobe is itself repeated three times during the course of the song, intercut with shots of the singer. Thus from the very start of Cooper’s Lodge experience, the importance of repetition and alternation is put forth.

A little further into episode 29, Cooper finds himself seated next to the Little Man (Michael Anderson) in one of the Lodge’s rooms. Here repetition is again introduced in a number of ways. The first words the Little Man speaks are: “When you see me again, it won’t be me.” He thus sets Cooper up for the fact that the latter will be encountering him repeatedly throughout his Lodge journey, but that this repetition will be marked by difference, and thus by recontextualization. Shortly after saying this, the Little Man continues: “Some of your friends are here.” Then the empty chair next to him becomes occupied by several characters from previous episodes. The presence of these characters in the series is thus repeated here one final time. One of these characters then gets up to offer Cooper some coffee, repeating the word “coffee” five times very deliberately. As the episode continues, Cooper is confronted in other rooms by more characters from the past, furthering his confrontation with repetition in the context of the series’ narrative. This repetition is, more than anything else, a sign of the way the Lodge organizes time

and space. These characters are from a variety of different eras within Cooper's memory, and come from a variety of places. In the Lodge, however, they all exist simultaneously, samples recontextualized and layered together within this space. This simultaneous co-existence amounts to a kind of breakbeat, where linear time stops and an ever-present is created in which isolated fragments of Cooper's experience can blend together.

Just before Cooper moves from the first room, the Little Man states two very distinct phrases: "Wow. Bob. Wow," and "Fire Walk With Me." The first is interesting in its status as palindrome. This, of course, is how the Lodge itself works, and the phrase being spoken in the backward/forward manner of the Lodge thus adds another layer to this contradictory simultaneity of movement. Also notable is that the term "wow" is used in mechanical engineering circles to describe the slow fluctuations of speed found in turntable mechanisms.³⁹ Such fluctuations are a sign of the technology's imperfection, and its evocation here relates distinctly to Lynch's interest in the exploration of such imperfection in the context of human experiences of temporal disruption.

Lynch's interest in palindromic form can be understood in terms of musical experimentation with similar structures. Musician Kay Gardner describes a flash of insight she had regarding musical structure. She envisioned a "circular form" for composition which "would progress to a point in the middle and then would reverse direction with the same notes in reverse order, repeating the process by which it arrived at the mid-point, only backwards."⁴⁰ Though she doesn't make any reference to him, experimentations in this area were conducted by early 20th century composer Messiaen. In his discussion on the influence of Messiaen on the thinking of Deleuze and Guattari, Ronald Bogue describes one of his key rhythmic innovations as "the use of 'non-

retrogradeable rhythms,' which may be defined simply as palindromic rhythmic patterns with a common central value."⁴¹ What these rhythms create is "'a certain unity of movement (where beginning and end are confused because identical),' a unity of movement that discloses a time at once circular and reversible."⁴² His goal was, in part, to "articulate a 'timeless time,' ametrical, nonteleological, reversible, and unlimited," a time which, in Deleuze and Guattari's words, "has neither beginning nor end, neither origin nor destination; it is always in the middle...It is a rhizome."⁴³

Of course the similarities between such musical structure and the Lodge are striking. The Lodge is rhizomatic in its use of simultaneous backwards and forwards motion – a palindromic strategy clearly articulated when the Little Man utters "Wow. Bob. Wow." If the "wow" that the Little Man speaks about indeed refers to the fluctuations in the spin of a turntable, then the connection between the Lodge and the earlier turntable presences is clear. As discussed, it is the "imperfection" of phonograph technology, audible in the form of scratches and crackling, that seems to provide a conduit between worlds. It is partly due to the turntable's potential for temporal manipulation that it can evoke a sense of timelessness, one marked by the interplay between backwards and forwards motion. At one point, the Little Man describes the space he occupies as being "the waiting room," a space between worlds marked by palindromic structure. Thus the Lodge can be understood as a logical extension of the turntable presence described thus far.

The Little Man's utterance of the words "Fire Walk With Me" is also important to consider. Originally encountered in the pilot episode when it was found written in blood at the scene of Laura's murder, this phrase has been repeated several times throughout the

series and becomes the title of the ensuing film. Thus, “Fire Walk With Me” is perhaps the penultimate repetitive element of the *Twin Peaks* universe. It thus seems fitting that this is the phrase which sends Cooper deeper into the Lodge, an environment that governs his movements in a strict pattern of alternation within the context of Lynch’s cinematic manipulations recalling the materiality of the phonograph turntable and its relationship to the transcendence of time and space.

After the Little Man says “Fire Walk With Me,” Cooper gets up and begins his process of passing between what appear to be two rooms, located at either end of the hallway he first encountered upon entry into the Lodge. The rooms change slightly with each entry, as does the hallway. Although he appears to enter each room from the same point in the hallway, once inside the rooms Cooper finds himself at different points of entry. Thus the rooms appear to rotate with each of Cooper’s successive entries, suggesting a circular motion that Lynch has explored in the above examples through turntable presence. This rotation creates a disorienting effect which Lynch represents through a simple shot/countershot structure: cutting between a view of Cooper in the hallway entering the room, and a view of Cooper’s entrance from inside the room. When the cut is made from the hallway shot to the room shot, Lynch has the opportunity to alter Cooper’s entry point. The apparent rotation of the room is further illustrated by the pattern of jagged black and white lines on the Lodge’s floor which change their orientation along with the furniture in the room. As with the quick dissolves used to bring Leland and Bob into the same space in episode 14, Lynch uses a simple cut to make manifest the mysteries of the Lodge, thus illustrating the tremendous power of cinema to create disorienting space through very simple means. He then furthers the sense of this

disorientation through another series of shot/countershot strategies which make it increasingly difficult to keep track of Cooper's movements within the Lodge.

Lynch's use of simple cuts to suggest disorienting space within the Lodge is reminiscent of similar techniques used by Maya Deren in *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943). Deren's film features a turntable front and center, suggesting a connection between technological presence and the spatial/temporal disorientation she examines through her editing strategies. As I have suggested, Lynch taps into cinema's ability to explore transcendence between the ordinary boundaries of space and time, and he does so through a foregrounding of materiality as embodied by the phonograph turntable. In the Lodge he creates *Twin Peaks*' highest moments of worlds folding in on themselves through techniques that are extensions of earlier scenes involving turntable presence. As filmmakers and DJs have been demonstrating for some time, reproduction technology is making the exploration of time and space more pervasive, and this exploration is dependent on the materiality of the medium being manipulated.

Lynch's interest in the texture of vinyl as it relates to cinematic explorations of disorienting time and space continues. In *Lost Highway*, a typical DJ scratch is heard in the midst of Barry Adamson's "Something Wicked This Way Comes," the song playing at the party as Fred Madison (Bill Pullman) encounters the Mystery Man (Robert Blake) for the first time. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this initial meeting between Fred and the Mystery Man illustrates some crucial concepts when considering the film's representation of time and space. So it is fitting that a DJ scratch is heard at this moment. Indeed, *Lost Highway* also has some relationships to the palindromic formal strategies discussed above. Just as Messiaen's rhythmic structures are designed to evoke

timelessness through the confusion of beginning and end, so too does *Lost Highway* blur the boundaries between its start and finish lines. This blurring is well illustrated, albeit unintentionally, by Stuart Mitchell in “David Lynch and the Road.” He gives a description of the film, stating that it starts with David Bowie’s voice singing the line “funny how secrets travel” before the beat kicks on Bowie and Brian Eno’s “I’m Deranged” during the opening credits.⁴⁴ However, it is the song’s reprise that begins with Bowie’s solitary voice coming in before the beat, and this isn’t heard until the end credits. With this minor error, Mitchell has literally confused the beginning of the film with its end, thus illustrating the effectiveness of Lynch’s work.

Mulholland Drive (2001) also makes use of the sound of vinyl. As Mario Falsetto suggests in “Thoughts on David Lynch and *Mulholland Drive*,” the sound of a needle dropping on a recording of “Maybe Baby” by Sonny Boy Williams further emphasizes the kind of “rough texture” that Lynch employs to foreground film’s material qualities.⁴⁵ As will be discussed in the next chapter, this kind of emphasis on sound’s material texture in *Mulholland Drive* has a lot to do with the film’s excursions into non-linear time and space.

As all the instances of turntable presence in Lynch’s films illustrate, his interest in exploring cinema’s potential for conveying rhizomatic experiences of timelessness is clear. The *Twin Peaks* Lodge in particular is a place where all points intersect, whether they are points in time, space, or points of contact between people themselves. Everything exists in simultaneity. Lynch’s approach to creating this rhizomatic space relies equally on form and content, a full embracing of the medium with which he is working. This interest in medium specificity is perhaps his clearest link of all with the

world of DJ turntable manipulation. Lynch's filmmaking practices and those of the DJ often share an interest in timelessness, but this interest is founded on a desire to explore the full potential of their mediums of choice. The turntable is, in the end, a powerful symbol of the material qualities of sound technology and the way these qualities can be used in the quest for the still point of the turning world. The turntable embodies the idea of simultaneity in the spiral form of the record's groove, its status as intermediary between technologies of the past and present, its use as instrument of simultaneous production and consumption by contemporary DJs, and its ability to bridge the gap between sound and image through its use by Lynch as a visible embodiment of sound itself. This chapter has emphasized the manipulation of our sense of time. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, Lynch also uses sound technologies as powerful tools for the manipulation of our sense of space.

Notes

¹ Toop, David. *Ocean of Sound: Aether Talk, Ambient Sound and Imaginary Worlds*. New York: Serpent's Tail, 1995:212.

² Théberge, Paul. *Any Sound you can Imagine: Making Music/Consuming Technology*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997:3.

³ Edison's phonographic cylinder is most often recognized as being the first sound recording device, with the phonographic disc coming shortly thereafter.

⁴ Kittler, Friedrich A. *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz, trans. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999:36.

⁵ Kittler 1999:50.

⁶ Hofstadter, Douglas R. *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*. New York: Basic Books, 1999:536.

⁷ Etrog, Sorel + Marshall McLuhan. *Images from the Film Spiral*. Toronto: Exile Editions, 1987:123.

⁸ Schafer, R. Murray. *The Tuning of the World*. Toronto: McLeland and Stewart, 1977:90.

⁹ *ibid*:91.

¹⁰ Jameson, Frederic. *Postmodernism, or, The cultural logic of late capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991:27.

¹¹ Holland, Eugene W. *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: Introduction to Schizoanalysis*. London: Routledge, 1999:2.

¹² Deleuze, Gilles + Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane, trans. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983.

_____. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Brian Massumi, trans. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

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- ¹³ Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: Harper Collins, 1990:62.
- ¹⁴ Colebrook, Claire. *Gilles Deleuze*. London: Routledge, 2002:33.
- ¹⁵ *ibid*:31-33.
- ¹⁶ Youngblood, Gene. *Expanded Cinema*. New York: P. Dutton & Co., 1970:83.
- ¹⁷ Deleuze + Guattari 1987:7.
- ¹⁸ *ibid*:xiii.
- ¹⁹ *ibid*:xv.
- ²⁰ Toop 1995:249.
- ²¹ Kittler 1999:22.
- ²² *ibid*:22.
- ²³ Nochimson, Martha P. *The Passion of David Lynch: Wild at Heart in Hollywood*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997:46.
- ²⁴ *ibid*:21.
- ²⁵ *ibid*:35.
- ²⁶ Gunning, Tom. "Doing for the Eye What the Phonograph Does for the Ear." *The Sounds of Early Cinema*. Richard Abel and Rick Altman, eds. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001:16-19.
- ²⁷ Rose, Tricia. *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994.
- ²⁸ Kittler 1999:33.
- ²⁹ Rose 1994:38.
- ³⁰ *ibid*:53.
- ³¹ *ibid*:51.
- ³² Chion, Michel. *David Lynch*. Robert Julian, trans. London: BFI, 1995:44-45.
- ³³ Toop 1995:266.
- ³⁴ *ibid*:266.
- ³⁵ *ibid*:181.
- ³⁶ Kalinak, Kathryn. "Disturbing the Guests with This Racket": Music and *Twin Peaks*." *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to Twin Peaks*. David Lavery, ed. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995:86.
- ³⁷ See Jeffrey Sconce's *Haunted Media* for a comprehensive study of spiritualist beliefs surrounding electronic presence.
- ³⁸ Chion, Michel. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. Claudia Gorbman, trans. New York: Columbia UP, 1994:19.
- ³⁹ Rossing, Thomas D. *The Science of Sound*. 2nd ed. Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1990:437.
- ⁴⁰ Gardner, Kay. *Sounding the Inner Landscape: Music as Medicine*. Stonington: Caduceus Publications, 1990:192.
- ⁴¹ Bogue, Ronald. *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts*. New York: Routledge, 2003:27.
- ⁴² *ibid*:27.
- ⁴³ *ibid*:28.
- ⁴⁴ Mitchell, Stuart. "David Lynch and the Road." *Lost Highways: An Illustrated History of Road Movies*. Jack Sargeant + Stephanie Watson, eds. Creation Books, 1999:245.
- ⁴⁵ Falsetto, Mario. "'Strange to be calling yourself.' 'Maybe it's not me?': Thoughts on David Lynch and Mulholland Drive." *Bridge*. Vol. 2. No. 2. (Winter/Spring 2003):207.

Chapter Two:

“As a Matter of Fact, I’m There Right Now”

In *Twin Peaks* episode 5, Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan), Sheriff Truman (Michael Ontkean), Deputy Hawk (Michael Horse) and Doc Hayward (Warren Frost) discover the cabin out in the woods where Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) spent some of her last remaining hours. They are greeted upon entry to the sounds of a Julee Cruise record playing on a turntable within. As soon as Cooper opens the door, the arm on the player reaches the end of the record and automatically returns it to the beginning. The turntable presence here is again reminiscent of the turntable in Maya Deren’s *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943), spinning away in the corner of a room only to be manually stopped by Deren as she enters the space. Though originally a silent piece, the music later created for the film by Teiji Ito stops at the moment that Deren’s hand removes the needle from the record. Here we are allowed to postulate for a moment that the music heard throughout the film has been coming from the phonograph all along. Just before Cooper stops the automatic turntable in the cabin, he is reminded of what the little man (Michael Anderson) told him in his dream: “The birds sing a pretty song, and there is always music in the air.”

The concept of air is very important in Lynch’s work. In *Twin Peaks*, frequent attention is paid to wind blowing through the trees, the light rocking of a traffic light, transmissions being received via satellite from the forest, etc. Bob (Frank Silva), the mysterious figure that can only be seen by “the gifted and the damned,” is an embodiment of the idea that something can materially exist without being visible. Such invisible existence is most prevalent in our daily lives in the form of the air that surrounds

us. We could also understand the materially invisible in terms of the human nature that hides beneath the surfaces we put forth in our daily behaviours. It is sometimes thought that the human spirit is a physical substance that cannot be seen, that the soul is an object that can exist independent of the body in physical space. These ideas about spirit and soul can be tied to early thoughts about the material nature of the air itself. As Donald MacKenzie notes, “the ether was a paradoxical substance...believed to pervade the universe and to be the medium for such phenomena as electromagnetism, gravitation, and nervous impulses” while being “devoid of the qualities that made the grosser forms of matter easily perceptible.”¹ Thus the ether plays the role of a medium, a material through which other materials can pass. Bob’s main purpose in *Twin Peaks* might simply have been the search for human mediums through which he could exert his physical presence on the material world. As physicist Sir Oliver Lodge noted, the ether was “the primary instrument of Mind, the vehicle of Soul, the habitation of Spirit.”² Bob the spirit inhabited the souls of his victims in order to control their minds: a traveler upon the human ether.

Of course, when thinking about things that are materially extant but remain invisible to the human eye, sound should jump immediately to mind. Indeed, if we could see the air it would be an interminably complex web of interactions between all the soundwaves that fill it on a continuous basis. In many ways, the grand project of the sound cinema is to make visible what we hear, and vice versa. The movie screen acts as a kind of ether through which we can see the traces of the sounds we hear. But in executing such a basic task, a monumental stack of theoretical and practical concerns have arisen which complicate the ways that sound and image have been treated on film.

When examining contemporary film sound theory, the concept of space is front and center. The audiovisual delineation of space is also of crucial importance to David Lynch. This chapter will explore how Lynch's films engage with theoretical work seeking to elucidate the relationships between sound and space in the cinema, particularly in the instances of *Lost Highway* (1997) and *Mulholland Drive* (2001).

Of special interest here will be the way Lynch explores the sound of domestic space and the technology that exists within it. The turntable found in the cabin unites its mechanical rotation and repetition with the concept of music occupying physical space within the air, within the ether. This union of the concepts of turntable and ether is made within a domestic structure: the cabin. The turntable is one of the basic components of the home stereo, that collection of electronic gadgetry designed specifically for the consumption of electronically processed audiovisual signals within the space of the home. The role of such sound reproduction technology within the home occupies a special place in film sound theory, and will be considered in some detail here. First, however, it will be necessary to discuss the most prominent issue when considering the recording and replaying of sound: fidelity.

A Question of Fidelity and the Construction of Meaning

In *Sound Technology and the American Cinema*, James Lastra reminds us that one of the oldest sound technologies known to humankind is architecture.³ Sound needs space to exist, and architecture is the shaping of space. Issues of fidelity have been at the forefront of contemporary film sound theory, and, as Lastra suggests, architecture's role in shaping the way sound travels through a given space is an important consideration in

this area. As will be demonstrated, the theoretical implications of architecture's influence on notions of sonic fidelity can be applied not only to Lynch's sonic representations of space, but also to the narrative function of fidelity issues within his stories. Rick Altman's ideas on the relationships between sound, space, and technologies of reproduction will serve as a good starting point for this discussion.

In "The Material Heterogeneity of Recorded Sound," Altman spells out what has been one of the main problems with the theorization of film sound: "the apparent assumption that all film sounds have the nature of musical notes...[that] they are single phenomena, produced instantaneously, emitted from a point source, and perceived in an immediate and direct fashion."⁴ Discussing the problems inherent in applying Western music theory to examinations of sound in film, he continues: "musical notation diverts attention from sound's discursive dimensions, concealing the fact that sound is in reality multiple, complex, heterogeneous, and three-dimensional."⁵ Thus, for Altman, every sound is a unique narrative event that is not heard identically by any two listeners. Adding the level of recording to this understanding of sound, he then notes that "when we listen to recorded sound we are therefore always listening to a particular account of a specific event."⁶ Evoking the "proverbial tree falling in a forest," he continues: "By offering itself up to be heard, every sound event loses its autonomy, surrendering the power and meaning of its own structure to the various contexts in which it might be heard, to the varying narratives that it might construct."⁷ So, he brings the role of perception to the forefront of discussions on sound.

The narrative analysis of sound that Altman speaks about is an analysis of what he calls the sound's "spatial signature."⁸ He refers to the subjectivity of interpreting these

narratives, based on the listener's spatial position with respect to the source of the sounds, as the *Rashomon* phenomenon (in reference the ubiquitous Kurosawa film – 1950 – and its play on the idea of subjective realities).⁹ To complicate matters, Altman notes that in addition to spatial signature, sound recordings also carry signatures of their own, “some record of the recording process, superimposed on the sound event itself.”¹⁰ Given all these factors, Altman's main conclusion is that every sound is effectively a heterogeneous event that can never be heard by any two listeners in the same way. Thus, when analyzing sound, great care must be taken to pay attention to every little nuance since it is in the nuances that key information about the sound's production and propagation through space will be found.

In his chapter on sound theory, James Lastra confronts the issues in film sound that have been laid out by theorists over the decades. He finds the concept of the “original” vs. its “copy” to be at the heart of many discussions. He places Rick Altman in the category of non-identity theorists (with the likes of Alan Williams and Thomas Levin) whose basic premise is that “even the original itself is intrinsically multiple and internally differentiated – a fact we recognize every time we choose between “good” and “bad” seats in an auditorium.”¹¹ Indeed, wherein lies the coveted original sound at a concert consisting of multiple sources playing to potentially thousands of different points in the space of the hall? Given this lack of an identifiable original sound, he notes that Levin argues for a “critical analysis” of the sound apparatus to understand what transformations a sound undergoes in the act of reproduction. However, Lastra feels that it would be problematic to base such analysis on the assumption that an original sound can in fact exist and be measured against its reproduction, given the stance of non-identity theorists

that no original can actually exist.¹² So he asks the question: “Why, then, is the [idea of the] ‘original sound’ so persistent?”¹³

He finds that the answer lies with Theodor Adorno’s work in “The Radio Symphony” from 1941. Here Adorno argues that the technological transformation of certain kinds of music, in this case specifically a Beethoven symphony, can serve to tamper with the structure of the piece itself and thus degrade its essence.¹⁴ The idea of the loss of essence in a mechanical reproduction (calling to mind Walter Benjamin’s important essay on the subject)¹⁵ lingers to this day and can be found in the kinds of questions posed about sound in relation to film. As Lastra suggests: “By defining sound recordings as partial, transformed, or to some degree absent with respect to the original, they present an almost Platonic theory of recording, where both truth and being decline as one moves toward the copy.”¹⁶ However, he also notes that:

Non-identity theorists assume their own equally biased model of listening – one that universalizes the acutely sensitive symphony listener...Such sensitivity is not characteristic of the way we engage with most sounds...They are functions of a mode of listening appropriate to a particular situation, and need to be analyzed as such.¹⁷

Thus, Lastra maintains that, for most people, not every nuance of a sound’s characteristic is inherently meaningful. This also harkens back to Adorno’s work, since for him some music is not as affected by electronic transmission or recording as others, and it depends on the particular nuances of the piece in question.¹⁸ Thus, the extreme attention to detail called for by non-identity theorists like Altman seems to detract from the more important task of analyzing how sound is being used in film to put forth meaningful information. Lastra suggests that this latter perspective is more in line with Christian Metz’s ideas about the minimal difference between the experiences of real or recorded sound if the

legibility of the sound allows us to understand what it represents.¹⁹ In this model, the idea of an original is manageable if it is taken to refer to a sound's legibility rather than the minute details of all its possible variances based on the listener's spatial orientation.

Given the vagaries inherent in various arguments about original sounds and their copies, the final upshot of Lastra's argument lies in understanding sound recording as "representation" instead of "reproduction." With this distinction Lastra eliminates the onus of recording technology to actually reproduce a sound in favor of simply representing it. This is why Lastra's terminology has been adopted here, referring to the technologies in question as "technologies of representation" wherever possible.

As Lastra suggests, the conceptual difference between reproduction and representation is clearly articulated in the way that recording sound for film has brought together two contradictory, though not necessarily incompatible, traditions of representation: those of the phonographic industry and those of the telephonic industry. So, for Lastra the question of fidelity comes down to two main perspectives on the subject: the phonographic model, which emphasizes perceptual fidelity, and the telephonic model, which emphasizes intelligibility.²⁰ Perceptual fidelity refers to the idea that the sound represented remains faithful to the sound as it might be heard if the listener were occupying the space represented. Telephonic intelligibility, as one might guess, gives prominence to the treatment of narrative elements, in particular the spoken word. Thus, the telephonic model of representation seeks to render the human voice as clearly as possible, most often at the expense of other noise that would ordinarily be heard in the space represented. Indeed, this removal of background noise and the enhancement of the

human voice has become the holy grail of telephone designers in the age of digital transmission, hence the appropriateness of the term “telephonic.”

Lastra notes how these two models can be seen at work in many individual films; one scene will call for the use of the telephonic model, while another will use the phonographic. This co-existence of the two models within a given film can, in and of itself, be understood in terms of the shifting perspectives that the representation of sound in film can yield. Like the elusive original sound that non-identity theorists say does not exist, and which Lastra suggests is pointless to search for, a single foundational model for sound representation may also be difficult to locate. Given these varying perspectives on sound, it is not surprising that filmmakers interested in exploring the vagaries of human experience can latch onto these inherent contradictions and subjectivities to enhance their forays into the nether regions of consciousness. For Lynch, the complexities of the issues raised by the recording of sound for film constitute a gold mine of creative potential that he exploits more effectively than most. As we have already discussed in the previous chapter, the simultaneous co-existence of multiple worlds is a major concern for Lynch. The phonographic and telephonic models of representation provide just another set of worlds that Lynch can juxtapose against one another in order to blur the boundaries between them. As will be examined, Lynch uses these juxtapositions to explore questions of an “original” vs. its “copy” with respect to identity crises within his narratives.

Also important is Lynch’s approach to the question of meaning construction through sound. As Lastra suggests, the acutely sensitive symphony listener is not the standard, and Altman’s call for attention to every detail of a given sound is often

unnecessary in the search for meaning within a film's soundtrack. However, I suggest that in a Lynch work, the Altman approach is extremely relevant. Lynch's worlds are composed of hypersensitive people in extremely nuanced environments where meaning can be found in every detail. In "Thoughts on David Lynch and *Mulholland Drive*," Mario Falsetto suggests:

As in most of Lynch's other work, the film asks us to attend to every aspect of its construction from color schemes to camera movement, from music and sound to performance, from lighting to editing patterns, from set design to costume and make-up. In short, every element of the film's construction can be a container of possible meaning.²¹

Each of these elements is a complex entity with an abundance of nuances, and sound is no exception. So it seems that the symphony listener might be the ideal model for receiving a Lynch soundtrack, should the entirety of a film's soundtrack be considered a symphonic composition. I suggest the consideration of a film soundtrack as a symphonic composition should be extended to Lynch's films in their entirety, with all the elements Falsetto illustrates being considered part of the orchestral unit. As Falsetto notes, in a Lynch film, "the hierarchy of significance that we associate with most movies, where some things are to be attended to more than others, is abandoned."²² Indeed, would we consider a symphony to be made of certain elements that are more important than others? Not likely, as a good composer would not include an element that did not work in perfect tandem with all the others.

This symphonic understanding of Lynch's work is relevant to David Bordwell's "The Musical Analogy" in which he discusses the persistence of musical models in film theory. Like Rick Altman, Bordwell acknowledges the pitfalls of drawing on Western music theory in discussions of film. However, he notes that the concept of music can

nevertheless be applied to cinema studies in a way that does justice to the complexities of the totality of film sound, as well as to the totality of sound/image relationships within film as a whole. He draws on Noël Burch's correlations between certain cinematic forms and the concepts of atonality and serialism. Basically, serialist composition argues for a form that treats all its elements as equal, instead of engaging in the hierarchy of melody and accompaniment.²³ Bordwell describes Burch's suggestion that, in the serialist vein, film be considered "an organized interaction of all pertinent dimensions, a cellular structure."²⁴ The major implication of this idea is that, in such a governing system, no one element need dominate another. As we know, the image in film has dominated since the medium's birth. Within the soundtrack, dialogue has dominated. Within the form that image and sound take on, narrative has dominated. Bordwell suggests that filmmaking and film analysis alike would benefit from a more holistic understanding of the medium where all elements are treated with equal importance.²⁵

However, he poses the question: "What particular principles will organize the entire work? If no hierarchy determines the function of each parameter, what makes the work distinguishable from disorder?"²⁶ Bordwell describes Burch's answer to this question which comes in the concept of open form:

Burch conceives each parameter as an opposition: hard focus versus soft, spatial continuity versus discontinuity, direct sound versus studio recording, and so on. If we grant all these parameters equality, we can combine them in strictly varied ways. One scene can use soft focus, discontinuity editing, and direct sound; another scene can retain direct sound but use hard focus and continuity editing; a third scene can retain sharp focus but use continuity editing and studio sound. The result is a rigorous *combinatoire* that resembles the variation form in its "repetition, alternation, elimination, progressive proliferation."²⁷

In the previous chapter Lynch's interest in exploring repetition and alternation as it relates to a changing understanding of time was discussed in some detail. In the context of the present chapter, the importance of having an open form for the employment of differing filmmaking strategies is important when considering Lynch's interest in the juxtaposition of differing perspectives of experience.

Lynch revels in toying with juxtapositions between filmic devices such as telephonic and phonographic models for representing sound. Within the concept of the open form film the potential for exploring the myriad possible combinations and recombinations of such filmic devices is huge. Within open form, each film must be taken on an individual basis, looking only for the relationships between systems, not the underlying governing structure that holds them together. Indeed, the only underlying structure may well be the desire to play with structure itself. Altman's call for recognizing the material heterogeneity of recorded sound can be extended to entire films, allowing for the viewer and listener to examine any given film to discover its own particular nuances and complexities. So it is no surprise that Bordwell concludes his discussion of the use of musical analogy in film theory by suggesting that:

If we want to know how cinema may work upon the social and suprasocial, the musical analogy must persist, for it crystallizes the drive of film form toward multiple systems. But these systems must be situated within the process of cinema's heterogeneity.²⁸

Very few filmmakers have come as close to achieving the ideals of the open form film than David Lynch, and as such his work will benefit particularly well from an analytical approach based on the understanding of cinema as a musical system with heterogeneous variances within each individual film. Drawing on the confusions inherent in discussing

original sounds and their copies, the resultant call for attention to the material heterogeneity of recorded sound, and the idea of the open form film with its potential for multiply differentiated juxtapositions between cinematic strategies (such as telephonic and phonographic models for sonic fidelity), I'll now turn to an examination of *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*.

“Dick Laurent is Dead”

We'll begin with the consideration of how Lynch's use of sound is suggestive of the bigger picture of cinema as an audiovisual medium. *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive* are particularly complex treatises on the material heterogeneity of sound representation. The heterogeneous experience of sound is expressed through one of Lynch's main strategies: making the familiar seem strange. In *Lost Highway*, he explores the idea of not recognizing one's self when the self is mediated by domestic technologies of representation. *Mulholland Drive* continues this theme. Falsetto draws connections between Lynch's latest and “the perplexities of a Maya Deren film” with respect to the recontextualization of various filmic elements from one section of the film to another. He suggests that “we get a sensation of de-familiarization; we think we know something but at the same time it feels strange.”²⁹ This is also true of *Lost Highway*, and the key to the present exploration of these two films will be the concept of identity crisis mediated by technologies of representation, technologies which are agents for the recontextualizations of that which they represent.

In *Lost Highway*'s opening scene we are immediately confronted by issues of fidelity as they relate to telephonic vs. phonographic models of representation. First off it

should be noted that a subtle but very present musical score accompanies the entire scene. It begins with Fred Madison (Bill Pullman) sitting quietly smoking in the dark. A sustained mechanical sound, the source of which is unknown, is heard for a moment. As the sound is heard, light gradually enters the frame and illuminates Fred's face, suggesting a correlation between this illumination and the mechanical sound. Then a buzzing is heard, and there is an insert shot of the intercom on the wall to which Fred then walks. The sounds of his clothes rustling as he moves are clearly audible. With his finger on the "listen" button, the sound of the exterior space is then heard filtered through the intercom's limited frequency range, in the midst of which comes a voice saying: "Dick Laurent is dead." Fred then moves anxiously towards the large windows in the living room while sounds of screeching tires and police sirens are heard. When he arrives at the windows, however, there is nothing to be seen on the street below.

The voice is a very minor part of the sonic make-up of this scene. Yet when it is heard, it stands out distinctly amidst the relative quiet. One of the most common incarnations of the telephonic model of representation has come to be known as the "cocktail party effect." This is when a loud environment, such as a cocktail party, is suddenly reduced on the soundtrack when someone begins to speak. In this opening scene, Lynch has designed the soundtrack to be quiet overall, despite the wealth of sonic information it contains. So, the voice comes through loud and clear without any sudden alteration in the rest of the soundtrack. Thus right from the beginning Lynch demonstrates his interest in blurring the lines between telephonic and phonographic modes of representation, since both are simultaneously at work here.

An important concept here is that of “on-the-air” sound as described by Michel Chion. Referring to “sounds in a scene that are supposedly transmitted electronically as *on-the-air*,” these sounds “are not subject to ‘natural’ mechanical laws of sound propagation...[and] enjoy the freedom of crossing boundaries of cinematic space.”³⁰ Lynch takes the intuitive understanding of telephonic devices as being those which foreground intelligibility and here makes a connection between that intelligibility and the transcendent potential of electronically propagated sound. The intercom literally brings two separate spaces together as can be heard by the sound of the “air” outside the house that is let in along with the mysterious voice. Chion goes on to discuss the fact that on-the-air sound can be treated a number of different ways to emphasize either the source of the sound being propagated or the material qualities of its electronic transmission:

If the sound being listened to has technical qualities of directness and presence, it refers back to the circumstances of its original state. If it has aural qualities that highlight its “recordedness,” and if there is emphasis on the acoustic properties of the place where it is being listened to in the diegesis, we tend to focus on the moment where the recording is being heard.³¹

Chion here is leaning towards Altman’s call for attention to every nuance contained within a sound event. In the case of *Lost Highway*’s opening scene, extreme attention to sonic detail is indeed crucial in the search for meaning.

As suggested by Chion’s description of on-the-air sound, the question of the source of the voice and the time of its original propagation (vs. that of its transmission through the intercom) are very important within the concerns of temporal instability and shifting identity that the film presents. At the end of the film we see Fred speaking the same words into his own intercom, thus offering the potential reading that the voice on the intercom in the opening scene is actually his own, possibly from a different point in time.

The film is obviously concerned with the overlap of multiple planes of existence, and in this opening scene the role of the intercom is that of an electronic mediator facilitating the merging of two spatial and temporal planes. This is an extension of the very simple idea that the intercom itself allows the transcendence of space because it allows what is on the outside of the house to be heard from within, and vice-versa.

Architects Gabi Seifert and Goetz Stoeckmann have elaborated on the idea of blending interior/exterior sonic space with the creation of a house wired with microphones and speakers both inside and out, allowing sound from each sphere to pass freely into the other. As Brandon LaBelle notes, “this relay between street and living room...frustrates the architectural imperative of an exterior-interior divide, insisting instead on a more permeable structure.”³² Such permeable structures clearly interest Lynch, whether they are the structure of a house, the human body, or the entirety of the universe as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Lynch further explores the dissolution of boundaries between interior/exterior spaces in his manipulation of the on-the-air status of the voice on the intercom. The qualities of the electronic transmission of the voice are foregrounded, thus calling attention to the temporal aspect of its reception by Fred within the time of the fiction. However, there is also an emphasis on the space of its original transmission. Since the voice is little more than a whisper, it does not have the presence to fill the space of Fred’s house enough to be marked by the spatial signature of that environment. So, it retains the spatial signature of its point of origination outside the house while still emphasizing the material nature of its electronic transmission. Again, a simultaneity of differing sonic strategies is at work here, blurring the lines between the two poles of on-the-air sound

that Chion describes, thus setting up the increasingly blurred boundaries between characters and narratives within the film as a whole.

When Fred moves towards the living room, the sounds of the screeching tires and police sirens are treated as any conventional offscreen diegetic sound would be. Yet after having been through the whole film those sounds can be understood as coming from another point in time: Fred being chased away from the house by the police in the final sequence. The spatial signatures of the sounds accurately reflect their origin outside the house, but the space is potentially a different one insofar as it comes from another time. The use of a technology of telephonic intelligibility, in conjunction with strategies associated with perceptual fidelity, allows Lynch to layer simultaneous planes of existence with a subtlety that suggests a perfectly normal scenario on first viewing, and a radically different one upon subsequent viewing: the familiar made strange. Falsetto's point about the recontextualization of *Mulholland Drive*'s first 100 minutes with the hindsight of the last 45 is just as applicable to this opening scene from *Lost Highway* with respect to the film's final sequence.

Later in the film, Lynch hits us with a decidedly less than subtle demonstration of the intelligibility model of sonic representation in conjunction with on-the-air sound. I am referring to the party scene where Fred is first introduced to the Mystery Man (Robert Blake). Fred stands at the bar, pounding back a couple of double scotches, neat. The music is quite loud, and the crowd noise is audible. When the Mystery Man approaches, the music and crowd noise are pushed completely out of audible range and are replaced by an eerie drone. This is Lynch essentially punning on the "cocktail party effect," and stands in stark opposition to his treatment of a similar environment in *Fire Walk With Me*

(1992) where instead of pushing down the sound he simply added subtitles so that the nearly unintelligible dialogue could be comprehended above the roar of the music. The two different treatments of the “cocktail party” scenario in *Lost Highway* and *Fire Walk With Me* are a prime examples of the heterogeneity of individual films and the fact that contradictory approaches can be taken with equal zeal by any given director.

The Mystery Man’s introduction in *Lost Highway* riffs further on the concept of telephonic intelligibility by having the interaction between he and Fred revolve around a cellular phone. Again Lynch is interested in how a technology of telephonic representation, here literally a telephone, can be used to illustrate the transcendence of space and time. The Mystery Man uses his phone to prove that he is both standing next to Fred at the party while also being inside Fred’s house. The difference in the material qualities of the Mystery Man’s voice when he is on the phone vs. in person again call attention to both the original spaces of his voice’s origin as well as its electronic transmission. The telephone, like the intercom, is essentially a technology designed to transcend space by bringing two distant parties into the same sonic environment. Lynch takes this simple idea and turns it into an element of unsettling destabilization for both Fred and the filmgoers who witness the event. When the Mystery Man laughs maniacally just before requesting the return of his phone, the sound of his voice becomes highly reverberated well beyond what the acoustic properties of the room should allow for given the treatment of the rest of the sound in the room. This moment of reverberated laughter is the final punctuation to Lynch’s point about the use of on-the-air sound to denote unnatural transcendence of space. The Mystery Man laughs after he has proven his

ability to be in two places at once, and the sound of the laugh further suggests this transcendence of space because of its heightened reverberation.

The transcendent qualities that Lynch endows the voices of the man on the intercom at the beginning of the film and that of the Mystery Man at the party should be considered in light of another of Chion's key concepts: the "acousmètre." This is a presence in a film that hovers between onscreen and offscreen space; the voice that speaks over the image but is also forever on the verge of appearing in it.³³ Chion gives examples of acousmètre characters such as the Wizard in the land of Oz, Dr. No, and various other master criminals whose voices we hear and whose presences we feel but who cannot be seen. Chion suggests that these characters have powers of omniscience, omnipotence, and most importantly, ubiquity.³⁴ In the case of the invisible voice on the intercom, there is an ominous presence to it that gives it a sense of power, a sense of the qualities of the acousmètre.

This ominous quality is enhanced by the fact that the source cannot be found even when looked for. Chion uses the term "acousmatic" to refer to sound whose source is invisible, and "de-acousmatizing" as the revelation of the sound's source.³⁵ So this opening scene, in fact, is about Fred trying to de-acousmatize the sound of the voice through the act of looking. Again, in the context of the film as a whole, the acousmètre quality of the voice comes from our understanding that it truly may be a voice of someone who has the power to be in different places and times simultaneously. The sounds of screeching tires and police sirens aid in our understanding of this possibility of simultaneous parallel existences. Both the acousmatic car chase sounds and the voice on the intercom are eventually de-acousmatized. The usual purpose of visually revealing a

sound's source is to settle the off-putting effect of the unidentified sound. However, for Lynch, de-acousmatization often further enhances the uncertainties surrounding the source of his sounds and plunges us deeper into his world of the strangely familiar.

Lynch also plays with the idea of creating unsettling environments through delayed revelation of a sound's source in *The Straight Story* (1999). After the film's opening montage of establishing shots, the camera comes to rest on a high angle wide-shot of Alvin Straight's (Richard Farnsworth) house. It then slowly begins to move down and in towards the side of the house, turning left to move into a close-up of the side-window. The sound up until this point has been very subtle, consisting mostly of the sound of light wind through the trees marked by the punctuation of occasional human activity in the neighborhood. Then, all of a sudden, a sound of breaking ceramic is followed by a strange thump. Finally, a very quiet drone comes in reminiscent of Trent Reznor's sound work in *Lost Highway*. For a few moments there is an atmosphere of palpable dread before the sound is de-acousmatized through a cut to the interior of the house revealing that Alvin has fallen and can't get up. This dread is built up by our expectation of the horrors Lynch often reveals along with the sources of his acousmatic sounds. In this case, along with so many other self-references within the film, the dread turns into a genuinely comic moment as we are introduced to Alvin's entourage. However, Lynch manages to follow through on the intensity of that original moment of sonic uncertainty. By the end of the film it becomes clear that Alvin's fall was no laughing matter, given its implications for his state of health, and that the journey he makes to his brother's house over the course of the film is likely to be his last.

In keeping with Lynch's subversion of the usual strategies for the use of acousmatic sound, I would argue that the Mystery Man in *Lost Highway* is a rare instance of a fully visible character who maintains the status of the acousmètre. In other films that make use of an acousmètre, the omnipotent powers associated with that figure are dependent upon the source of the voice never being fully revealed. When the Wizard of Oz emerges from behind the curtain his power is gone. In *Lost Highway*, the Mystery Man's powers are all the more potent for his visibility. After all, it is because he stands right in front of Fred that hearing the Mystery Man's voice on the telephone from Fred's house is so unnerving.

The Mystery Man's visibility may also be unnerving because of various suggestions made in the film which seem to posit him as an extension of Fred's own consciousness. When Fred asks "How'd you get inside my house?" the man replies: "You invited me. It is not my custom to go where I'm not wanted." This is, in part, a reference to legends that hold that a vampire cannot enter a victim's home without having first been invited over the threshold. In turn, this aspect of the vampire myth suggests that the lost souls are little more than the dark sides of our own consciousnesses, dark sides that can wreak havoc when entertained.

The idea of the Mystery Man as the dark side of Fred's consciousness has a certain logic within the film if we consider the Mystery Man as the external embodiment of Fred's jealousy over his wife Renée (Patricia Arquette). During the party scene, the Mystery Man appears just after Renée sends Fred off to get drinks so that she can have some alone time with Andy (Michael Masee). Towards the end of the film, the Mystery Man appears to aid Fred in murdering another of his wife's suspected lovers: Dick

Laurent (Robert Loggia). It is the scene of this murder out in the desert which most clearly suggests that the Mystery Man may be little more than a voice inside Fred's head. After Laurent is shot, the Mystery Man (still holding the gun) leans over to Fred and pulls his head down to whisper something in his ear. There is a cut to a close-up of Fred's eyes as he listens, and when we return to the wide shot the Mystery Man is gone and Fred is left holding the gun. As the repetition of the phrase "Dick Laurent is dead" suggests, there is at least one level of interpretation in which Fred can be seen as having been talking to himself throughout the film, guiding his own actions in the guise of an alter-ego. Indeed, it could well be that Fred merely imagines the voice on the intercom at the beginning of the film, perhaps hearing his own thoughts as though they existed outside of his head. Whether he hears the voice on the intercom through his ears or from within his own mind, one thing is clear: Lynch is addressing the notion of fidelity as it relates to the idea of self-recognition when the voice is mediated through technologies of representation.

Sampling the Fidelity of Sonic Memory

So, by the end of the film we could adopt the interpretation that it is Fred Madison who speaks the words "Dick Laurent is dead" on the intercom at the beginning of the film as the result of some kind of disruption of linear time that allows him to be both inside and outside the house simultaneously. Yet if we compare the voice at the beginning with Fred's voice at the end they do not quite match up. Lynch plays with the notion of fidelity here in an interesting way. Upon first viewing we have to rely on our memory of the voice at the beginning of the film to try and figure out if it is indeed Fred's as the end

of the film may be suggesting. But memory can prove to be very faulty, as Fred himself notes with his comment about not liking video cameras because he prefers to remember things his own way, “not necessarily the way they happened.” So Lynch’s plunges us into the nebulous area of the fidelity of sonic memory.

Given the theme of identity crisis in the film, it becomes even more interesting when we consider the idea that most of us do not recognize our own voices when electronically represented. Rather, we hear them as some kind of altered version of ourselves. There is a sense that the represented voice is sort of right, but wrong as well, the familiar made strange. So the opening scene of the film could be a situation where Fred hears what may be his own voice, but when heard in the form of on-the-air sound he might not recognize it as such. As individuals, we are the only ones who hear our own voices from within the space of our bodies. So, naturally our voice sounds different to us than to those who do not hear it with the acoustical properties of our inner environment. So what does this suggest about fidelity in the realm of representation technology? The fact that a representation of our voice does not match the voice we hear when we speak gives an otherworldly sense to the act of this representation. Part of this otherworldly quality relates to its displacement from its source, and is thus related to R. Murray Schafer’s concept of schizophonia as discussed in the first chapter. It is also as though something has been taken away from the voice, an idea akin to the loss of essence, or aura, that Adorno and Benjamin have talked about. Lynch alludes to this concept of the loss of aura to suggest such a loss within his main character that spends much of the film trying to reconcile himself with an apparent identity split.

It is especially significant to consider the title of “non-identity theory” as being a reference to the notion of endless subjectivity in our perception of sound – the lack of a tangible original sound by which to compare all other representations of it. Fred’s questioned identity here is indeed related to the subjective differences in his (and our) perception of the sounds he hears within his environment as exemplified by the voice on the intercom. Even if we take the approach to the film that he only imagines the voice on the intercom, the notion of sonic memory comes into play once again: the recording of sounds within our minds may not necessarily be accurate representations of the sounds being remembered. Both the mind and the intercom amount to essentially the same thing: technologies of representation that can significantly alter our perception of the world. So we’re back to the conflict between “original” and “copy,” with either external or internal recording devices acting as the medium through which the boundaries between the two are blurred.

In *Lost Highway*’s opening scene we have a complex exploration of the perception of sound through technology as it relates to the concept of personal identity. This is put forth through the very simple act of making the voice heard through the intercom prompt us to question whether or not it belongs to Fred. We’ll now spend some time discussing the implications of the technical process by which Lynch achieves this. As noted, there is a sense that the voice belongs to Fred because of the nuance and cadence of his speech. However, upon direct comparison between the voice at the beginning of the film and Fred’s rendition of the same words at the end, it is clear that the first voice is different, most notably in that it has a lower register. With the help of a little computer analysis it

becomes evident that, in fact, the first voice is indeed that of Fred Madison: it has simply been electronically pitched down by a factor of two semitones.³⁶

Lynch is performing sampling here. The idea of making the familiar seem strange through representation technology is at the heart of contemporary sample-based art, where little morsels of sound or image are taken out of their original contexts, altered, and placed into new environments. In sample-based art there is often an interplay between our recognition of the original samples combined with our understanding of how they have been changed, thus allowing the familiar to become strange. Fred's voice on the intercom can be understood as a sample that has been electronically altered to make it less recognizable, then dropped into a context that heightens this strangeness, displacing it from Fred by having it come through the intercom while he is seated right next to it. So the phrase "Dick Laurent is dead" takes on another level of significance as the emblem of Lynch's interest in the idea of recontextualization in sample-based art. Lynch has a clear desire to incorporate the idea of recontextualization into his work so as to explore how this idea can open up the kinds of blurred boundaries that are so important to his filmmaking.

Ultimately, the processes of post-production in cinema are based on sampling: film is born of the cutting and pasting of bits and pieces of recorded material into new juxtapositions. The mind itself works by constantly re-arranging the material contained within; memory can be likened to an ongoing process of sampling, all the little bits and pieces of our experience being wrestled free of their original contexts and re-combining in ever changing ways independent of linear notions of time. This is why thinkers like Gilles Deleuze believe that the cinema has great potential to act on our processes of

thought. As discussed in the previous chapter, Deleuze works with the Bergsonian idea that “memory is real and exists virtually alongside the present” and can interrupt that present as a result.³⁷ This thinking about cinema can be directly related to Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the rhizome: a form for which linearity does not exist and in which any point can be connected directly to any other. Mario Falsetto discusses the use of “retroactive technique” (such as the recontextualization of *Lost Highway*’s opening scene through new information provided at the end) as “approximat[ing] how the mind and perceptions work, moving from one space and time to another, disregarding linear temporality.”³⁸ The Lodge in *Twin Peaks* is a clear example of how cinema can be used to express the mind’s capacity for maintaining simultaneous multiplicities of times and spaces. The kind of cinema Lynch presents in the Lodge sequences can be extended to include his many other forays into the concept of virtual memory, at the heart of which lies the recontextualization strategies of the sample artist.

I suggest that cinema’s potential for exploring the processes of human memory can be understood as part of a change in thinking that needs to occur about how we relate to our world, and what role technologies of representation play in this change. As Lastra suggests, we need to move from thinking about recording technologies as being agents of “reproduction” to being agents of “representation.” This move could be interpreted as a shift away from faith in the indexicality of film as a photographic medium to understanding it on more iconic terms, film being a no less mediated representation of the world than a painting or sculpture.

Part of the de-familiarization Lynch achieves in his films comes from the tension that exists between the desire to believe in the cinema’s powers of reproduction while

also inherently understanding it as a representational art form. This tension is akin to the anxiety Fred Madison expresses over the use of video cameras: he expects that the recording apparatus of his memory will not be in line with that of the camera, and he prefers the strategies employed by his mind over those of the supposedly unflinching camera-eye. His attitude towards video cameras suggests a strong faith in that medium's ability to reproduce reality, not just represent it from a biased point of view. Yet he is confronted by the possibility that the camera might not be an accurate reproduction of reality when he sees himself on tape amidst the bloodied remains of his wife, an event for which he seems to have no memory: "tell me I didn't kill her." So, Fred has to come to terms with the fact that the camera might be no less biased than his own memory, each representing a version of reality not necessarily able to correspond with each other. In fact, if we adopt the interpretation that the Mystery Man is a part of Fred's own mind, then the video camera actually becomes Fred's own flawed memory in the hands of the pale-faced videographer. This equation of physical space with psychological space is dealt with very effectively in *Lost Highway*. As has already been suggested, the strategies Lynch uses for exploring the propagation of sound through space (in light of telephonic vs. phonographic models of representation) are linked to his apparent suggestion that much of what we hear in the film might be the externalization of Fred's own internal consciousness.

Lynch furthers this idea by positing the question of marital fidelity in the framework of home video technology and its relationship to human consciousness. Fred equates video reproduction with the notion of fidelity to reality. The tapes he receives seem to add to his paranoia over his wife's possible infidelities. However, the images

presented on these videotapes are rich in the characteristic instabilities of the video medium, full of grain and “snow” such that the “reality” they purport to represent is barely visible. The importance of the texture of recorded sound as related to the co-existence of multiple worlds has been well established by this point, and can now be extended to his use of the recorded image as well.

Lynch’s use of video and television texture here can be considered in light of some ideas that Stan Brakhage has expressed about the medium. In *Light Moving in Time*, William C. Wees has explored the connections Brakhage has made between the television image and human consciousness. Speaking of how the television image radiates outward toward its viewer, Brakhage states that the viewer becomes “en-meshed, or made-up-of, the television scanning ‘dots’ which closely approximate his most private vision...and, thus, make-up the picture being re-membered as if it were a slide cast from the brain against the closed eye-lids.”³⁹ To this Wees adds that “the television screen supplies literal equivalents of the electrical activity of the visual system as well as of the brain and nervous system as a whole.”⁴⁰ As a result of this kinship between television and the human visual apparatus, Wees notes that Brakhage was concerned with the medium’s “power to infiltrate the viewer’s memory processes,” citing Brakhage’s thought that the viewer could “feel as if what he’s watching had always been stored in his own memory banks, as if he ought to act on instructions from T.V. as surely as he would on his own experiences as remembered.”⁴¹ The connection between Brakhage’s thought and *Lost Highway*’s depiction of video is striking.

When Fred watches the third videotape, he sees himself amidst the grain of the noisy image in what appears to be the throes of the bloody murder of his wife. He

doesn't remember this event, but with the appearance of the police and Fred's subsequent prison sentence, it can be assured that the tape was used as evidence to convict him of the crime. Seeing himself on the screen, combined with the disappearance of his wife, and his prosecution for her murder are enough to make him wonder about whether or not he really did kill Renée. The notion of television being as real as one's own memories is explored here in the context of Fred's disbelief in the reality of memories and the supposed incontrovertible evidence that documentary footage provides. A clear link is thus established here with the questioning of sonic memory discussed earlier.

As indexically related to the outer world, the processes of photography and videography are still widely accepted as being capable of showing us the "real" world in a way that other representational processes cannot. Brakhage's equation of the grains inherent in film and video with the "noise" of the visual apparatus suggests an even deeper indexical relationship between the world it represents and the world we experience. Suggesting that television can so closely resemble the way its viewer sees that it can subsume and reconfigure the viewer's own memory processes, Brakhage is advocating a new understanding of documentary filmmaking as resulting from the similarities between the mediums we use to express ourselves and the medium of our own bodies. Reality can be understood as all that we experience, which for Brakhage means the embracing of all that we are trained to ignore about our perceptions of the world. Again there is a strong connection with points made here about Lynch's films demanding attention to all their details, and how this demand relates to Rick Altman's call for extreme attention to be paid to every nuance of a represented sound. Similar to the idea of heightened awareness of minute details in the transmission of sound, Lynch

explores the idea of “reality” being the entirety of human experience where no single element should be considered any more “real” than any other given the existence of all elements within the realm of experience itself.

As for the aggressive nature of television’s infiltration into the human mind, *Lost Highway* presents the Mystery Man as the documentary videographer from Fred’s subconsciousness. As the little voice that Fred hears inside his head, Fred sets out to express his jealousy by murdering the man his wife has been sleeping with: Dick Laurent. As Fred’s videographer, the Mystery Man is also an agent of the video image, equated with Fred’s mental processes. Finally, as a modified acousmètre, the Mystery Man is a powerful embodiment of sound’s power to transcend space and time in the realm of cinematic representation. Thus, the Mystery Man can be understood as a clear embodiment of Lynch’s exploration of the relationships between sound and image, and the power of technologies of audiovisual representation to transcend notions of inside and outside, especially when it comes to the human mind and its relationship to the world.

In the end, Lynch seems to suggest that there is little difference between camera and mind. As we have already explored, the *Rashomon* phenomenon that Altman discusses in terms of the endless subjectivity of our perception of sound can be well applied to the more general concept of representation illustrated by Fred’s relationship to the video camera in *Lost Highway*. Any medium capable of representing the world is also a medium of recontextualization; to replay is to sample - to re-contextualize - and this is one of the major foundational concepts at work in Lynch’s films.

David Lynch in the Tradition of Late 20th Century Sample Art

We'll now elaborate on how Lynch might be understood in terms of sampling and the sample-based music being produced in such abundance these days. Many have discussed the pastiche elements of Lynch's work, referencing all kinds of time periods, styles, etc. and blending them to create a vaguely reminiscent yet unfamiliar atmosphere.

Falsetto discusses the Cowboy in *Mulholland Drive* on these terms:

It feels weird because *Mulholland Drive* is contemporary in time and place, yet the cowboy seems like a throwback to an earlier era when real cowboys were used as stunt men or minor actors in 1930s movies. We feel a sense of displacement, of a time warp, a juxtaposition of elements that don't belong together.⁴² ...

A similar feeling arises in *Lost Highway* when Fred is replaced by Pete Deighton (Balthazar Getty). The Pete section of the film can be understood as a kind of flashback to Fred as a young man, falling in love with his future wife for the first time. This interpretation is supported by Patricia Arquette playing the love interest of both Fred and Pete. However, the Pete section of the film is not strictly a flashback in conventional terms: the time and place are contemporary, and Pete's introduction to the story carries on from when Fred disappears. So there is a simultaneous co-existence of time periods that make for a very peculiar feeling in Pete's world. He exists both in the "now" as himself and as an embodiment of Fred's past, a simultaneous existence in two worlds that results in him becoming increasingly anxious as the film progresses.

An example of Pete's anxiety can be found in the scene where he becomes distressed at the garage while listening to the radio. The song heard is the saxophone number Fred performed at the Luna Lounge earlier in the film. Pete gets up from his work, holding his head as though in considerable pain, and changes the station. Lynch

again uses sound representation technology to indicate the cross-over between worlds, much as he used the turntable in *Twin Peaks*. Hearing Fred playing the saxophone on the radio after his disappearance is another example of Lynch employing a sampling technique, here literally taking a musical segment and recontextualizing it in order to suggest transcendence between worlds.

Both Pete and the Cowboy are akin to samples that have been brought forth from their past contexts and recontextualized within the present. Lynch's use of popular singers (David Bowie, Chris Isaak, Marilyn Manson, Henry Rollins, Sting, etc.) as actors within his films can also be understood as a kind of sampling, literally imbuing his narrative spaces with musical presence removed from its typical context. These singers retain their status as musical beings because of their iconic positions within their musical milieus, but this musical presence is made strange in Lynch's work by virtue of the fact that these singers do not actually sing within his spaces. Their marked lack of conventional musicality when acting within Lynch's films is further enhanced by his frequent use of their music in films other than those in which they appear as actors. Isaak's music, for example, is featured in *Blue Velvet* (1986) and *Wild at Heart* (1991), after which he appears in *Fire Walk With Me*. Bowie, on the other hand, is featured as an actor first in *Fire Walk With Me*, followed by his music being heard in *Lost Highway*. Thus if we take Lynch's entire oeuvre as an environment of intertextuality, his acknowledgement of these singers' musical work within the context of his films serves to increase their de-familiarization when they appear in other guises. Similar de-familiarization takes place when well recognized actors (such as Nicholas Cage and Isabella Rossellini) are transformed into singers by Lynch.

Ultimately, this back and forth recontextualization of singers and actors is highlighted by Lynch's just as frequent use of singers who appear as themselves (Julee Cruise, Rebekah del Rio, Jimmy Scott etc.). By having singers appear as themselves, Lynch acknowledges the world of music outside of his films, thus making it even more strange when this acknowledgement is usurped by removing other singers from their musical contexts or, vice versa, imposing a musical context on actors not known for their singing. Marilyn Manson has the distinction of being the only singer employed by Lynch to have both his own music and a non-singing appearance within the same film (*Lost Highway*), perhaps suggesting the multiple personalities that actor/singers can embody as an echo of the themes of multiple-identity within the film itself. Such strategies of recontextualization, related to sampling, are very important to Lynch's work and create an intertextual dialog between his individual films as well as their relationship to the world outside them. Such strategies may also be part of the reason he has been popular as a source of material in the works of many other sample artists.

As noted in the previous chapter, Amon Tobin uses elements from *Eraserhead* (as well as *Blue Velvet*) on his album *Permutation* (1997). In addition, DJ Shadow uses the vinyl textures from *Twin Peaks* episode 14 on *Endtroducing* (1996); DJ Spooky uses *Eraserhead*'s industrial soundscapes mingling with Fats Waller's organ stylings on *Songs of a Dead Dreamer* (1996); The Future Sound of London, on *Dead Cities* (1996), uses the sound of the gunshot that kills Johnny (Harry Dean Stanton) in *Wild at Heart*, along with various elements of the film's heavy metal songs by Powermad; Mr. Bungle uses snatches of *Blue Velvet* along with a full-on vocal parody of Frank Booth (Dennis

Hopper) by singer Mike Patton on their self-titled debut album (1991); and the list could go on.

This wealth of electronic referencing is in keeping with Lynch's own filmmaking strategies. Not only does the concept of sampling and recontextualization as discussed above appear in Lynch's work, but Lynch is actively engaged in referencing the history of cinema. Falsetto discusses Lynch's appropriation of genres and sub-genres. I suggest that Lynch also makes direct references to specific films. It seems clear that Lynch has a profound consciousness of film history, though the director frequently seems to suggest otherwise.⁴³ I believe he has been most influenced by the realms of the American Avant-Garde and other experimental areas of world cinema, a speculated position I take based on the kinds of examples I'll now describe.

There are the obvious nods towards Bergman's *Persona* (1966) in the dual-woman identity conflicts of *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*. These nods are most apparent in two particular instances. First is when Patricia Arquette tells the same story twice but as two different characters in *Lost Highway*, creating a similar situation to Alma (Bibi Andersson) repeating her story twice in Bergman's film. The second instance comes just after the sexual encounter between the two women in *Mulholland Drive*. Lynch sets up a shot of them asleep from an angle that merges their two faces into one, effectively reconstructing Bergman's infamous shot combining the faces of his two protagonists through a modified superimposition. Indeed, *Persona* is one of the few films Lynch cites as an influence.⁴⁴

Beyond *Persona* there seem to be a whole host of films that Lynch addresses, whether consciously or otherwise. The opening silhouetted dance sequence in

Mulholland Drive is decidedly similar to Peter Kubelka's *Adebar* (1957). *Lost Highway* is reminiscent of Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* in its exploration of disorienting domestic space populated by technologies of sound representation. Stuart Mitchell also suggests many thematic similarities between the two films:

Unanswered phones generating suspicion; strangers appearing at the roadside; protagonists looking out of windows to see themselves running away; mirror faces breaking to reveal Magritte-style voids; and suddenly appearing knives used to slash throats.⁴⁵

Lost Highway also bears startling aesthetic and thematic similarities to Stan Brakhage's *Wedlock House: An Intercourse* (1959). Both films feature a couple experiencing marital tension as they wander in and out of the shadows of their unusually dark domestic spaces. Countless films revolve around marital tension in the home, but the aesthetic similarities between parts of *Lost Highway* and *Wedlock House* are too striking to be ignored.

Such examples stretch farther back into Lynch's career as well. *Fire Walk With Me* features a brief moment of striking similarity to the aesthetic premise of David Rimmer's *Variations on a Cellophane Wrapper* (1970). Towards the end *Fire Walk With Me*, when Leland Palmer (Ray Wise) stretches out the sheet of plastic he will use to wrap Laura's (Sheryl Lee) corpse, Lynch shoots the killer's face through the translucent material with shifting strobe providing the illumination, just as Rimmer's film shows a factory worker shot entirely through a sheet of cellophane while undergoing a variety of aesthetic treatments. *Wild at Heart*'s dog running off with the feed store clerk's severed hand is more than a nod to Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* (1961), while the film's car crash sequence on the road to Texas alludes to Godard's *Weekend* (1967). In *Blue Velvet* Lynch's use of the title song in the context of a film that clearly demonstrates his fetish for automobiles suggests that he has been exposed to Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising* (1967), featuring

the use of Bobby Vinton's crooning voice over highly glamorized shots of glistening muscle cars. Indeed, Lynch's connection to Anger has been explored in further detail by Michael Moon in his article "A Small Boy and Others."⁴⁶ Finally, there is little doubt that *Eraserhead*'s pulsing steam jets, ominous industrial soundscapes, and peculiar machinery were somehow born of Lynch's exposure to the sequence in Jacques Tati's *Mon Oncle* (1958) when the pipe machine at the Plastac factory goes awry. Yes, Tati is another of the precious few that Lynch readily cites as a direct influence.⁴⁷

Again, the list of apparent references and homages that Lynch incorporates into his films could go on and on, not to mention the myriad times Lynch references himself, adding yet another layer of complexity to his explorations of recontextualization. Lynch has often been accused of reducing himself to self-parody, a criticism used to suggest that he has undergone a mid-career loss of originality and has found recourse in the rehashing of earlier material with an air of reflexivity. However, as we have been trying to make clear here, the act of referencing, whether himself or others, is an integral part of the way Lynch's films work.

With this in mind, we might consider *The Straight Story* to be his most blatantly self-referential and self-parodying work to date. This is an especially important consideration to make in light of the number of people who responded to the film in complete bafflement regarding its place within Lynch's larger oeuvre. It must be admitted that when I first heard the title of the film, I too was convinced that it was intended to have the double signification that Clélia Cohen discusses in her assessment of the film.⁴⁸ Indeed, the last thing we might expect from Lynch is a "straight story." However, after seeing the film, it is clear with even the most surface observations that the

apparent straightness of the film does not make it out of place within Lynch's entire body of work.

Superficial examination reveals a great many of Lynch's trademark obsessions, whether it be highway travel, burning buildings, lightning bursts playing rich shadows across faces and walls, revving car motors, telephone communication, domestic unrest, etc. Each of these recurring themes in Lynch's career are treated in *The Straight Story* with a clear bent towards de-familiarization. Here, however, the twist is that what is usually a marker of the strange in his other films is made familiar once again in the story of Alvin Straight. In place of narrative twists he gives us a very straight road indeed. Instead of having cars chasing each other at high speeds down the road to indeterminate territories, he gives us a man traveling so slowly we can't help but become firmly rooted in the context of his surroundings. Domestic disturbances are only hinted at: a pregnant teenager (Anastasia Webb) running away for fear of her parents' reaction to her "little problem;" the fire that resulted in Rose's (Sissy Spacek) children being taken away from her; or the unspoken event which caused the estrangement of Alvin from his brother Lyle (Harry Dean Stanton) in the first place. The only thing that gets killed in the movie is a deer (after which a reference to Public Enemy – the pioneering DJ and sample-artist group - is made!). But there is much more Lynchian material here than simply some humorous winks and nods to his other films in order to play with our expectations. While watching the highway lines pass under the camera at a snail's pace does yoke some chuckling from Lynch devotees, Lynch's treatment of Alvin Straight's journey is also to be taken "thoroughly seriously" (as Slavoj Žižek would say).⁴⁹

In his article “Poursuivre le chemin,” Erwin Higuinen has already explored some of the deeper thematic connections between *The Straight Story* and Lynch’s other work, suggesting that it follows Lynch’s path quite faithfully if we look past some of the departures the director seems to be taking in the film.⁵⁰ To add to the discussion, let us consider here the idea of Alvin Straight as an extension of the Lynchian seeker proposed by Martha Nochimson that we discussed in Chapter One. As noted, the Lynchian seeker is that hero in a Lynch film that succeeds only by losing control of his/her world and being shown a new way as a result, “the rewards of letting ‘something else’ speak to [them].”⁵¹ This would seem to be in direct opposition to Alvin Straight, characterized by his absolute stubbornness to do anything in a way other than his own. However, Alvin also exhibits a keen awareness of his place within the world, and demonstrates a way of being in this world that allows him to travel through it while not trying to dominate it or conquer it. He does not allow himself to transgress boundaries in the ways that other Lynch characters do. Rather, he knows exactly what his mission is: to heal a breach created between himself and his brother many years before. This is the final boundary for Alvin Straight, and it is the only one he need cross for his life to be complete. The reconciliation he seeks with his brother is a sign of his willingness to “let something else speak to him,” to let go of his stubbornness and come to terms with the fact that he cannot fight against the flow of life which is almost at an end for both he and his sibling. In many ways, his journey here is in preparation for the crossing of the largest threshold that humanity knows: that between life and death.

Alvin’s ultimate goal, to find his way across this pronounced gulf, is the same as for so many other occupants of Lynch’s worlds. The difference here is that Alvin feels the

void between himself and his brother very strongly, knows how to get across it, is patient enough to take the time necessary to do so, and is acutely aware of his environment as a result. It is almost as though he is free of the bondage of linear time altogether as evidenced by him losing track of the date along the way. He exists in a mind-set not bound by the need for speed, but rather the need to experience the journey for its own sake in order to prepare him for the next: his voyage to the heavens suggested by the film's final camera tilt upwards from Alvin's face to the starscape above. Thus he removes himself from the severe anxiety suffered by the Fred Madisons and Laura Palmers of Lynch's universe, the likes of which are in constant struggle with their environments, and manages to find peace on the course of his journey. So for Clélia Cohen to title her article "The Last Highway" is very telling indeed, for *The Straight Story* may well be the film that shows where the plight of Fred Madison might someday end if he can learn to leave the lost highway and head for friendlier territory.

The comparison of *Lost Highway* to *The Straight Story* inherent in Cohen's title is most certainly inspired by the fact that the more recent film references the previous one in important ways. One such way is the difference between the way Alvin Straight and Fred Madison deal with the transgression of domestic space in their respective environments. One poignant example is Alvin's constant awareness of his surroundings and unwillingness to be distracted by transgressing boundaries unnecessary to his ultimate goal. This awareness is exemplified by the scene in which Alvin asks to use the Riordans' (James Cada + Sally Wingert) phone while camped out in their back yard awaiting the repair of his riding mower. Wanting to call his daughter, Alvin specifically asks for a cordless phone so that he need not enter the Riordans' personal space. Even

after repeated invitations he refuses to come inside, as though not wanting to suffer the same fate as Fred Madison resulting from the latter's poor choice in house guests (whether he remembers them his own way or not). Alvin also makes sure to inquire about the area code of his present environment so as not to mistakenly invade another's private space through the dialing of a wrong number. Finally, acutely aware of the cost of communication across a long distance, Alvin makes sure to pay for the call so that he does not become accountable for the space travel at a later date, even if this accountability only manifested itself as a feeling of guilt from having imposed on the kindness of others.

As we will find in our discussion of *Dune* (1984) in the next chapter, the cost of communication between bodies separated in space can be very high indeed. Alvin would not have wanted to reach his daughter telepathically nor fold space to his reach his brother's house. Both of these actions would involve an unnecessary invasion of spaces that he probably feels are kept separate for a reason. Most likely this reason is so that the journey required in bringing the spaces together yields the preparation necessary for the union to be successful. Such preparation can avoid the kinds of extreme paranoia and psychological distress exhibited by so many other Lynchian heroes.

Ultimately, Alvin Straight is a man determined to respect space in all its formations. In turn, Lynch formally emulates this respect for space, most notably in certain shots of Alvin in the Riordans' back yard which, taken from a distance, have the accompanying audio match the visual point-of-view despite the fact that this auditory distance impedes our ability to understand the conversations being conducted on screen. In so doing, Lynch puts an ironic twist on conventional film language. By respecting the distance

between the camera and its subject on both the auditory and visual levels, Lynch actually transgresses one of the most powerful laws of mainstream film: to respect the intelligibility of the spoken word at all costs. Again we witness Lynch's interest in playing with intertextuality, whether by putting a twist on conventions established within his own corpus or those established within the larger range of mainstream Hollywood film. As these examples illustrate, *The Straight Story* is a rewardingly complex entry in Lynch's oeuvre that demands attention in the context of the director's authorial vision in order to understand its reflexivity, while also enjoying the benefits of working extremely well as an individual film in its own right.

While Lynch's referencing strategies discussed thus far are not of the true sampling variety (ie. involving the use of actual footage from the films he references), they still evoke similar feelings to those who use technological sampling techniques in their artistic recontextualizations. The notion of quoting artistic works has come about largely due to the emergence of recorded arts through 20th century technology. People have been referencing each other's works for centuries, whether it be a musical phrase from one composer transposed into the work of another, or a storyline from one novel re-configured elsewhere. However, it is only with the ability to copy an artwork through sampling technology that issues of appropriation and copyright have exploded into one of the most hotly debated topics of the day. This says much about how strongly we seem to believe in the ability of sampling technology to accurately reproduce original material.

The power that artists wield when using samples is very great indeed. William C. Wees' book *Recycled Images* explores the art of found footage filmmaking, the visual equivalent of sample-based music. Wees lays out a number of approaches that found

footage filmmakers can take when creating their sampled works, most notably being compilation, collage, and appropriation.⁵² I believe that Lynch explores hybrids of these areas even in the absence of true technological sampling of other people's work. Wees suggests that compilation films rely, in part, on the "assumption that there is a direct correspondence between the images and their profilmic sources in the world."⁵³ As has been demonstrated, Lynch takes great interest in exploring the idea of faith in the indexicality of the recorded image and sound. Collage films, on the other hand, critique their sampled material through creative juxtaposition, "a recontextualizing that prevents an unreflective reception of representations as reality."⁵⁴ In the context of Lynch's referencing of other films, the idea of collage is relevant in that his references do call attention to themselves, though at the same time exhibiting qualities of appropriation whereby the references are thoroughly entwined within his own aesthetic constructions. Again, Lynch's use of found footage strategies as described by Wees can be understood in terms of his desire to blur the boundaries between worlds. Lynch frequently draws simultaneously on ideas inherent in the three categories of found footage filmmaking within the space of a single work.

Working at Home: The Technologies of Domestic Disturbance

The idea of Lynch's relationship to sample art also calls attention to the aspects of sound recording technology featured in both *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*. In *Lost Highway*, one of the Madison bedrooms has been converted into a soundproofed home studio. Not much of this room is seen. One of the brief glimpses we get into this inner sanctum comes as Fred calls home from the club at which he is performing. As the

telephone rings, the camera tracks in on the three different phones of the house, one of which sits next to Fred's keyboard in the practice room. It is never made clear if Renée is home or not, but here the act of communication through technology is placed within the context of the home, and the home studio. The relationship between this home studio and Fred's marital situation is important to consider.

Many commentators have suggested that the domestication of communications technology has resulted in the increasing isolation of individuals within the confines of their own homes. In *Any Sound You Can Imagine* Paul Théberge notes that, particularly with male hobbyist pursuits, greatest satisfaction is achieved through the complete removal of the work from the mainstream traffic of family life.⁵⁵ With respect to the home studio in particular, Théberge suggests that the notion of musical pleasure is best achieved "through isolation and an almost ascetic devotion."⁵⁶ This is not very good practice for a marriage. He also explains how the digital technologies that have made home studios far more accessible are based on concepts of isolation within their very designs. The multitrack recorder, for instance, revolutionized recording techniques by making it possible to separate individual performances which themselves can be separated into small fragments and re-constructed at will.⁵⁷ It is significant that Alesis, the first company to bring the multitrack tape recorder into the domestic realm, chose as its recording medium the ubiquitous VHS cassette which already had a firm presence in the home.⁵⁸

As illustrated, the VHS cassette and the home studio both figure into the world of *Lost Highway*. As a tale of the growing distance between a married couple, there is a profound sense pervading the film of being isolated within one's own home. Fred's main

concern is with the fidelity of his wife, whom he suspects is sleeping with other men. Tellingly, fidelity is also the main preoccupation among enthusiasts of home stereo, home studio, and home theatre technologies. Of course, as it can be in relationship situations, the question of what comprises fidelity is a complicated one.

In *Audio-Vision*, Michel Chion laments the current trend in multi-track film sound engineering that seeks to isolate every possible sonic element from every other in order to achieve a certain state of cleanliness and purity. With specific reference to THX theatre sound standards, Chion refers to this sonic purification and banishment of coloration as “inflated personal stereo sound.”⁵⁹ Chion places this comment within the context of his nostalgia for the imperfections caused by sound reproduction in the large acoustical spaces of older theatres. Hi-Fi stereo technology has been obsessed with accurate reproduction of music within the space of the home, and it is only relatively recently that this obsession has extended to the realm of film with the introduction of home theatre technologies. Chion suggests that THX eschews notions of sonic fidelity in favour of standardization, linking his idea of fidelity to the characteristics that real-world sound possesses in real-world space.⁶⁰

What is interesting, however, is that in the years since the publication of Chion’s book, THX has developed a certification program for home theatre components which ensures that the use of these components will result in the same sonic reproduction one experiences in a THX theatre. In turn, the THX theatre itself is designed to deliver the same reproduction heard by the soundtrack’s mixing engineers. What THX does, therefore, is provide fidelity to the original soundtrack, which will be heard on equal terms in any theatre, home or commercial, that has THX certification.⁶¹ As discussed, the

question of what constitutes an original sound has been all but completely disregarded by the non-identity theorists. However, if one did go in search of some original standard by which to compare one sound to another, the idea of the soundtrack as heard by its mixing engineers would be as close to an original as one could hope to get. THX's home theatre standardization project seeks to solve, at least in part, Altman's dilemma: "every sound I hear is thus double, marked both by the specific circumstances of recording and by the particularities of the reproduction situation."⁶² With THX standardization, the recording (mixing) circumstances become one and the same with those of reproduction, essentially merging the two spaces together so that no sonic differentiation between them can exist. As such, THX standardization can be understood as an extension of the effects of Schafer's schizophonia: the space of one sound can be transferred to any other space, thus removing the original spatial context of both.

With respect to music in particular, the question of fidelity in home stereo technology has been directed more towards the attainment of the closest possible replica of a live performance. However, as Altman suggests: "To record is to call to mind, as the dictionary would have it, but like most mnemonic devices, sound recordings must heighten some aspects of the original phenomenon at the expense of others."⁶³ So he asks: "Which acoustics am I listening to? The Hollywood sound stage or the Rialto? Severance Hall or my living room? For that matter, which sound am I listening to? The original sound event or its loudspeaker reproduction?"⁶⁴ *Mulholland Drive* raises similar questions in the "Club Silencio" sequence at the nexus of the film's interpolating narrative streams.

It is interesting to note that the relationship between the two lead women in the film is almost entirely confined to the space of Betty's (Naomi Watts') temporary apartment, setting the mystery surrounding Rita (Laura Elena Harring) as one enclosed within Lynch's typically unsettling domestic atmosphere. After their relationship grows to the level of sexual intimacy, they then take their seats in the mysterious Club Silencio where they are treated to a demonstration of the illusionism that recording technology can perpetrate. The Magician (Richard Green) on stage exclaims "No aye banda! There is no band! Il n'est pas de orchestra [sic]!" When a trumpeter (Conti Condoli) appears to provide a visual source for the sound of the trumpet we have been hearing, he instantly undermines the audiovisual relationship by pulling the instrument away from his mouth while the sound continues to soar. "It is all recorded," says the Magician; "It is all a tape." It is this transitional scene that then gives way to the film's turning inside out. The narrative of the first part is broken up by little vignettes that present all manner of characters whose importance have not yet been established. Each of these scenes are then recontextualized one by one as Lynch wrestles each and every character and event from their original places and shuffles them around to present the whole story anew. We recognize everyone, but also recognize their new position as a result of the recontextualization. Along with *Lost Highway*, *Mulholland Drive* clearly illustrates Lynch's interest in laying bare the basic techniques of cinematic narrative so that all may understand their malleability and capacity for disorientation.

The Club Silencio scene raises many issues relevant to the present discussion. To begin with, it calls into question our understanding of performance as it relates to the recording arts. When Rebekah del Rio takes to the stage and starts her powerful Spanish

rendering of Roy Orbison's "Crying," the familiar becomes very strange indeed – all the more so when she drops dead while her voice carries on in full force. This moment is a reference to the now infamous Memorex ad featuring Ella Fitzgerald in a similar circumstance, and is yet another instance of Lynch's art of recontextualization. Schafer's concept of schizophonia is again apparent here: that mysterious process whereby sound that we understand as having a particular source can be perceived by us in the absence of that source - the magic of recording technology. The evocation of presence and absence here might be understood in terms of the connection that can exist between two people when they are physically intimate but not necessarily psychologically in tune. The fact that the two women's domestic lovemaking gives way to this illustration of schizophonia, and in turn to their story of betrayal and heartbreak, suggests a link between the relationship we share with representation technology and that which we share with other people.

Significantly, the Club Silencio scene also calls attention to the importance of space as it relates to the experience of sound. As discussed in relation to questions of fidelity in home stereo technology, recording engineers work intensely to create particular sonic environments evocative of performance spaces with specific acoustic properties. In the case of recording sound for film, the main objective is frequently the conveyance of a sense of space to accompany the appropriate images. In this scene, the physicality of sound in space and its effect on the people inhabiting that space are illustrated in at least two ways. Firstly, as the Magician walks around the stage he speaks loudly to project his voice into the auditorium. However, at one point he speaks the phrase "J'aime le son du trombone..." in the middle of which he slides over to the shiny microphone that has been

conspicuously standing there all along. As he slides in, he changes his voice from being very loud to very soft. The sound of the voice shifts into an on-the-air quality as it becomes amplified through the microphone, gaining presence in the space as indicated by an increase in reverb.

This moment illustrates an important conceptual paradox in technological transmissions of the voice. While the Magician speaks more quietly into the microphone, the sound of his voice is louder within the space of the hall than when he previously yelled at the top of his lungs. The invention of the microphone has allowed an increase in intimacy to words spoken in public spaces and marks one of the major differences between live theatre and the cinema. Through technologies of voice transmission, projected speech is no longer necessary to make voices heard in large spaces. Lynch draws on this simple fact here to illustrate yet another of his simultaneously co-existing worlds – soft speech having the physical properties of projected speech within an expansive space.

At another point in the scene, the Magician begins demonstrating his powers of evoking sound from thin air by gesturing dramatically in synchronization with audible trumpet blasts. He then goes a step further and summons a thunderbolt outside the hall whose light and sound can be seen and heard within. As the rumbling carries on, Betty begins to shake violently in her seat while Rita holds her. Betty's response here suggests associations with the idea of the *Rashomon* phenomenon discussed earlier. Firstly, something within her mind could be causing her to experience the sound of the thunder differently than Rita, thus resulting in the former shaking while the latter does not. Perhaps she even suffers from an anxiety attack over exposure to the schizophrenic

environment demonstrated by the Magician. Or, it could be that she has chosen a seat that captures the sound of the thunder better than the one next to it, calling to mind the idea that no original sound can really exist in a concert hall where every seat responds to sound differently according to its position within the space. Both of these possible reasons for her shaking are appropriate within the context of the “magic” of sound representation technology illustrated in the scene. Perspectives are indeed important. As the Magician suggests, assumptions we make about the nature of a sound and its source can easily be played upon to create disturbing psychological reactions, perhaps even a drastic shift in identity much like the one that seems to take place after they leave the club and return home.

Lynch continually equates the concept of exterior physical space with that of interior mental space. The domestic tension that Lynch sets up in *Mulholland Drive*, culminating in a bitter feud between lovers, calls attention to the role of domestic technologies of representation and the schizophrenic anxiety they can create. The fact that relationship between the two women turns inside out after being directly confronted with a schizophrenic breakdown in the Club Silencio indicates more clearly than ever the connections Lynch draws between technologies of representation and domestic anxiety, particularly as they relate to the disjunction between sound and image. In both *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*, the recontextualization of character identities occurs in conjunction with character exposure to technologies of sound representation. Confronted with the familiar made strange through the ability of such technologies to transcend the boundaries of time and space, Lynch’s characters (as well as his audience) are forced to rethink the worlds he creates and posit the simultaneous co-existence of realms usually

thought to be separate. Finally, the connections between people that Lynch constantly calls into question are a large part of his interest in technologies of sound representation. So, let us now turn to a detailed examination of Lynch's treatment of such interpersonal connections and their importance in relation to his sonic representations of the known universe in Frank Herbert's *Dune*.

Notes

¹ MacKenzie, Donald. *Knowing Machines: Essays on Technical Change*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998:68.

² *ibid*:68.

³ Lastra, James. *Sound Technology and the American Cinema*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001:133.

⁴ Altman, Rick. "The Material Heterogeneity of Recorded Sound." *Sound Theory, Sound Practice*. Rick Altman, ed. New York: Routledge, 1992:15.

⁵ *ibid*:16.

⁶ *ibid*:16.

⁷ *ibid*:19.

⁸ *ibid*:24.

⁹ *ibid*:24.

¹⁰ *ibid*:26.

¹¹ Lastra 2001:125.

¹² *ibid*:127.

¹³ *ibid*:127.

¹⁴ Adorno, Theodor W. "The Radio Symphony." 1941. Reprinted in *Essays on Music*. Richard Leppert, ed. Susan H. Gillespie, trans. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002:258.

¹⁵ Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." *Illuminations*. Hannah Arendt, ed. Harry Zohn, trans. New York: Schocken Books, 1968:217-252.

¹⁶ Lastra 2001:131.

¹⁷ Lastra 2001:132.

¹⁸ Adorno 2002:252.

¹⁹ Lastra 2001:126.

²⁰ *ibid*:138-39.

²¹ Falsetto, Mario. "'Strange to be calling yourself.' 'Maybe it's not me?': Thoughts on David Lynch and Mulholland Drive." *Bridge*. Vol. 2. No. 2. (Winter/Spring 2003):202.

²² *ibid*:202.

²³ Bordwell, David. "The Musical Analogy." *Yale French Studies*. No. 60. 1980:141-156:150.

²⁴ *ibid*:151.

²⁵ *ibid*:156.

²⁶ *ibid*:151-152.

²⁷ *ibid*:152.

²⁸ *ibid*:156.

²⁹ Falsetto 2003:204.

³⁰ Chion, Michel. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. Claudia Gorbman, trans. New York: Columbia UP, 1994:76.

³¹ *ibid*:77.

³² LaBelle, Brandon. "Walls Have Ears." *The Wire*. No. 201. (November 2000):32.

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- ³³ Chion 1994:129.
³⁴ *ibid*:129-130.
³⁵ *ibid*:130.
³⁶ The computer analysis I speak of here consisted of recording the “voice on the intercom” into a sound editing program and raising the pitch until it matched the sound of Fred speaking the same words at the end of the film.
³⁷ Colebrook, Claire. *Gilles Deleuze*. London: Routledge, 2002:33.
³⁸ Falsetto 2003:202.
³⁹ Wees, William C. *Light Moving in Time*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992:97.
⁴⁰ *ibid*:97.
⁴¹ *ibid*:98.
⁴² Falsetto 2003:200-201.
⁴³ Chion, Michel. *David Lynch*. Robert Julian, trans. London: BFI, 1995:24.
⁴⁴ *ibid*:25.
⁴⁵ Mitchell, Stuart. “David Lynch and the Road.” *Lost Highways: An Illustrated History of Road Movies*. Jack Sargeant + Stephanie Watson, eds. Creation Books, 1999:255.
⁴⁶ Moon, Michael. “A Small Boy and others.” *Comparative American Identities*. Hortense J. Spillers, ed. New York: Routledge, 1991.
⁴⁷ Chion 1995:25.
⁴⁸ Cohen, Clélia. “Last Highway.” *Cahiers du Cinéma*. No. 540. (Nov. 1999): 38-39.
⁴⁹ Zizek argues for taking Lynch “thoroughly seriously” in *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch’s Lost Highway*. Zizek’s ideas about Lynch’s seriousness are explored in detail in Chapter Three of this thesis.
⁵⁰ Higuinen, Erwan. “Poursuivre le chemin: *The Straight Story* dans l’œuvre de David Lynch.” *Cahiers du Cinéma*. No. 540. (Nov. 1999): 75-76.
⁵¹ Nochimson, Martha P. *The Passion of David Lynch: Wild at Heart in Hollywood*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997:46.
⁵² Wees, William C. *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films*. New York City: Anthology Film Archives, 1993:33.
⁵³ *ibid*:36.
⁵⁴ *ibid*:47.
⁵⁵ Théberge, Paul. *Any Sound you can Imagine: Making Music/Consuming Technology*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997:137.
⁵⁶ *ibid*:125.
⁵⁷ *ibid*:228.
⁵⁸ *ibid*:249.
⁵⁹ Chion 1994:101.
⁶⁰ *ibid*:100-101.
⁶¹ Johnson, Lawrence B. “Harmonic Progressions.” *Stereophile Guide to Home Theatre*. Vol. 5. No. 2. (February 1999):104.
⁶² Altman 1992:27.
⁶³ *ibid*:27.
⁶⁴ *ibid*:28.

Chapter Three:

“The Birds Sing a Pretty Song and there is Always Music in the Air”

There is no greater and more living resonator of sound than the human body. Sound has an effect on each atom of the body, for each atom resounds.

- Hazrat Inayat Khan, *The Music of Life*

All I know is something like a bird within her sang.

All I know she sang a little while and then flew on.

- Robert Hunter, *Bird Song*

The goal for this chapter is to examine how the work of David Lynch would benefit from being considered in the context of the main premise of a seminal book by Joachim-Ernst Berendt: *The World is Sound*. At the very foundation of the claim that the world is sound lies the notion of “sound” itself. We will examine how a wide variety of thinkers believe that the concept of sound is the finest paradigm with which to understand and describe the universe as we know it. Much of this understanding depends on the perception of what sound is. As will be demonstrated, much of the “sound” that is at issue here is not audible with the human ear, but is nevertheless capable of being perceived and interpreted by human beings. This amounts to developing a conceptual strategy for the hearing of inaudible noises which would allow us a greater understanding of the workings of the universe and our place within it.

The films of David Lynch are, among many things, epic audiovisual illustrations of the relationships between the microcosmos and macrocosmos, a distinction which depends on our human place in between these two poles. His films depict quests to come to new levels of understanding about the world. I suggest that the level of understanding

sought in Lynch films amounts to being in touch with the fundamental sonic qualities of the universe – being able to reach that level of perception where the inaudible reveals itself as the audible, where established boundaries of perception are dissolved.

Of all Lynch's work, the most overtly demonstrative of the concepts to be dealt with here is *Dune* (1984). As such it will be the primary cinematic focus for this chapter, and will be examined with regards to how Lynch's treatment of the film's form and content reflects concerns that run through his entire body of work. In establishing a theoretical framework we will be drawing principally on the writings of Joachim-Ernst Berendt in *The World is Sound: Nada Brahma*, and Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* as interpreted by Ronald Bogue in his recent book *Deleuze on Music, Painting and the Arts*. These writings will then be applied to Lynch's work with the support of Lynch criticism provided by Michel Chion, Kenneth Kaleta, and Martha Nochimson. However, considering that Slavoj Žižek concludes *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch's Lost Highway* with the suggestion that Lynch's entire oeuvre be understood as an incitement to "the hearing of inaudible noises,"¹ we will begin with a consideration of certain key elements of his thinking about David Lynch and how they relate to the discussion of the world as sound which will follow.

Ultimately the goal here is to explore the notion that "sound," as a concept, can be applied to all the machinations of the universe as we know it, and that Lynch's films are powerful explorations of the need to come to terms with the idea of such a sonic premise for understanding the world. Birdsong will emerge as a crucial link between territories of the human and the surrounding world, the conflict between which is an ongoing theme for Lynch. Birdsong also works as an illustration of the micro/macrocosmic

interconnections between things that interest all of the authors here. Finally, the interconnected nature of the universe can be understood as being a sonic nature. This idea suggests that there is always music in the air, exemplified by the fact that the birds do indeed sing a pretty song. Whether we choose to hear it or not is up to us.

Knowing the Universe

Slavoj Žižek begins his *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch's Lost Highway* by commenting on two of the most prominent branches of response engendered by the film: those responses “emphasizing the thoroughly artificial, ‘intertextual,’ ironically clichéd nature of Lynch’s universe,” and the opposing New Age readings focusing on “the flow of subconscious Life Energy that allegedly connects all events and runs through all scenes and persons, turning Lynch into the poet of a Jungian universal subconscious spiritualized Libido.”² He denounces both, saying that “there is a level at which Lynch’s universe is to be taken thoroughly *seriously*,” and cites scenes of particular extremes suggesting that “their ‘seriousness’ does not signal a deeper spiritual level underlying superficial clichés, but rather a crazy assertion of the redemptive value of naïve clichés as such.”³

Ultimately I agree with Žižek’s idea about the redemptive value of clichés as such – taking Lynch at face value. One of the main ideas at the basis of this chapter is that through an understanding of the world as sound, the interconnections that exist between all things suggest that there is no deep underlying structure guiding everything. Rather the interconnections themselves form the structural foundation of the universe. Because everything is interconnected, there are no deeper meanings, and there are no secrets.

Everything is equally open to everything else, and sound acts as an excellent metaphor for the ways that many different levels of the universe can be understood on the same terms.

As noted, Žižek ends his treatise by suggesting that “Lynch’s entire work [is] an endeavour to bring the spectator ‘to the point of hearing inaudible noises’ ...”⁴ My job here is to recontextualize Žižek’s statement in light of ideas about sound expressed by Berendt, Deleuze and Guattari. However, it is important to first understand what brings Žižek to this claim. So, let’s take the briefest of possible looks at his approach to Lynch’s work before trying to wrestle his thinking free of its psychoanalytic constraints and providing it with a line of flight into simultaneously co-existent theoretical territories.

At the crux of the matter for Žižek is the importance of using Lacanian psychoanalysis to engage with Lynch’s *Lost Highway* (1997). However, he first makes sure to point out the limitations of some psychoanalytic strains of thought that have tempted people towards certain interpretations of the film. The two main readings Žižek rejects are those that posit the middle section of the film as a representation of Fred’s (Bill Pullman) hallucination, and those that suggest that all the characters in the film are “mere projections/materializations of the different disavowed aspects of Fred’s persona.”⁵ As he suggests at the beginning of the paper, the opposing “New Age” readings must also be discounted, one of which he describes as the “leftist, anarchic-obscurantist, anti-theoretical insistence that one should renounce all interpretive effort and let ourselves go to the full ambiguity and richness of the film’s audio and visual texture.”⁶

At this point it should be clear that Žižek and I are somewhat at odds, since I have argued for the extreme importance of texture in Lynch’s work as a form of content

containing meaning, and I have also argued for an understanding of the various characters in *Lost Highway* as being “samples” of Fred’s personality spread across the audiovisual canvas of the film. I like to think, however, that by placing this idea about Fred’s various personality manifestations within the context of a discussion on technologies of film sound, I have not regressed to naïve Freudian analysis but rather have suggested how using sound as the gateway to appreciating Lynch’s work provides a new understanding that does not suffer from the legacy and weight of the kind of theory Žižek grapples with.

So, what is left for Žižek? He suggests that what is “much more productive is to insist on how the circular form of narrative in *Lost Highway* directly renders the circularity of the psychoanalytic process.”⁷ He latches onto the repetition of the line “Dick Laurent is dead” to illustrate the film progressing in the form of classic psychoanalytic treatment, beginning with a man troubled over some indecipherable message (the symptom of his psychological problem), and ending with the man’s ability to understand that this problem comes from within himself, thereby beginning the process of recovery. So, Žižek concludes that “the temporal loop that structures *Lost Highway* is thus the very loop of the psychoanalytic treatment in which, after a long detour, we return to our starting point from another perspective.”⁸ As will be examined, thinking on circular form is paramount to an understanding of the harmonic structure of the universe. Thus, the circular form of the film’s narrative is very important when considering the idea that the world is made of sound. Ultimately, Žižek’s interest in the film’s form is the most interesting part of his work for the purposes of this chapter. His psychoanalytic component is just another matrix within which to understand a structural form open to many angles of interpretation.

The final upshot of Žižek's argument against New Age readings of the film comes with his evocation of rhizomatic hypertext as the logical art form of "a new 'life experience' [that] is in the air, a perception of life that explodes the form of the linear centered narrative and renders life as a multiform flow."⁹ Citing the line of thinking that suggests the film "moves at a more fundamental psychic level...than that of the unconscious fantasizing of a single subject," Žižek suggests that "the fantasmatic support of reality is in itself necessarily multiple and inconsistent."¹⁰ Žižek's point here is that he renounces the idea that a fundamental order links all things in the cosmos, and that even the world of fantasy, that Lacan suggests is the support for the Real, is lacking in any consistency that would allow us to posit a harmony of the spheres. As such, he suggests that *Lost Highway* is best understood as a tracing of the psychoanalytic model that allows for such an understanding of reality, an understanding which stands in opposition to the Jungian thinking of the New Age interpreters. So this idea can be combined with Žižek's suggestion that, like the clichés that are important in their own right (not for some deeper underlying meaning), reality exists on the same surface as the fantasmatic support that Lynch puts alongside it.

This point about reality and fantasy existing on the same surface is important when considering Žižek's suggestion that Lynch seeks to confront us with "the hearing of inaudible noises." Inaudible noise suggests a realm that exists beyond our perception. As Žižek puts it, "it is the voice which the subject cannot hear because it is uttered in the Other Site of the fundamental fantasy."¹¹ The fundamental fantasy is that which presents itself after every potential eventuality in a given matrix is played out.¹² When Lynch brings us to the point of hearing inaudible noises, he is confronting us with "the comic

horror of the fundamental fantasy.”¹³ So, is this horror that of being presented with a closed-matrix whose entirety is perceivable and knowable – something Žižek suggests is impossible?

Here the concept of randomness becomes important. Žižek invokes Robert Altman’s *Shortcuts* (1993) and Krystof Kieslowski’s *Veronique* (1991) and *Red* (1994) in his insistence on the inherent multiplicities of both reality and fantasy as the key to denouncing ideas about a single current joining all things together. In *Shortcuts*, random series’ of events interact with one another and illustrate the chance operations of the world lacking in any consistency that would allow us to uncover some deeper structure.¹⁴ In Kieslowski’s films, “different versions/outcomes of the same plot are repeatedly enacted” as if illustrating “parallel universes” or “alternative possible worlds.”¹⁵ He suggests that “even in the domain of ‘hard’ sciences (quantum physics and its Multiple Reality interpretation)... we seem to be haunted by the randomness of life and alternate versions of reality” as expressed by these kinds of films.¹⁶ So, he asks, how can there be an ultimately knowable underlying structure which would, as he finally suggests, allow us to hear inaudible noises?

Let us now turn to the thoughts of Joachim-Ernst Berendt, whose book *The World is Sound: Nada Brahma* seeks to illustrate in great detail a world of sound that we cannot hear, but which is there none-the-less. What is most interesting to me when juxtaposing Berendt with Žižek is that for Berendt, and many of the thinkers he draws upon, uncovering the sonic nature of the universe is not a matter of finding deeper meaning. It is simply a matter of understanding what is already directly perceivable, an act perhaps analogous to Žižek’s call that we take clichés at face value. In this case, the music that

we create as humans is considered to be an audible form of the sound that the rest of the universe is made up of. There is no mystery. It is all there. It is just the connections that need to be made to reinforce what we already, if unconsciously, understand in the very act of creation.

One of the first questions Berendt raises is: if the world is sound, what kind of sound is it?¹⁷ He suggests that “to ask this question means the same as to ask about the prime substance of the world.”¹⁸ Indeed, that’s what he sets out to do over the course of the book. One of the fundamental tenets he lays out is that humans are vibration, “just as everything else is.”¹⁹ However, he makes an important distinction between vibration and sound:

From the standpoint of physics, there are billions of different possible vibrations. But the cosmos – the universe – chooses from these billions of possibilities with overwhelming preference for those few thousand vibrations that make harmonic sense (and in the final analysis, that means: musical sense).²⁰

So, when he speaks of vibrations, he speaks of those that can be understood as making “harmonic sense,” thus avoiding the problem that not all theoretically conceivable vibrations might be based on harmonic structures. However, also inherent in his statement is that the vibrations observable in our universe seem to be overwhelmingly based on harmonic principles, thus allowing for the postulation that a musical structure holds this universe together.

He draws on the law of resonance which teaches us that “anything that vibrates reacts to vibrations, even (as recent discoveries have shown) to the most minute vibrations, and to those that only a few years ago could not be measured – brainwaves, for instance – and hence logically also to vibrations that have yet to become

measurable.”²¹ So we have the beginnings for the suggestion of inaudible sound, or non-measurable sound, and that we are affected, as sonic entities ourselves, by this realm of the inaudible. Consider the following passage from Vilayat Inayat Khan, son of Hazrat who is the source of one of this chapter’s epigraphs:

We live on several planes at the same time. It is said in the *Heikhaloth*, the Jewish book of the heavenly spheres, that each time a new soul descends in the ocean of the manifested realm, it generates a vibration which is communicated to the entire cosmic ocean...Each creature is a crystallization of a part of this symphony of vibrations. Thus we are like a sound petrified in solid matter which continues indefinitely to resound in this matter...²²

This idea of human beings as sonic entities whose vibrations are in constant interaction with those of other humans, and the whole of creation itself, is the basic paradigm I suggest will be useful in applying to the works of David Lynch. Though this postulates a fundamental underlying current to life, it need not come into contradiction with the suggestion of randomness that Žižek postulates as being the countering element to New Age readings of Lynch’s works.

Berendt discusses the importance of shifting away from linear thinking when learning to approach the world as sound. He suggests that circularity and analogy are key factors in undoing the linearity that has emerged with modern science. He calls on the emerging science of cybernetics to illustrate how Western rationalism is finally giving way to ways of non-linear thinking that have been around for centuries in other cultures. He speaks of “control loops” used to govern artificial intelligence machines, loops that are not developed according to Aristotelian logic of cause and effect, but rather function in circular motions “whereby an effect can become a cause and where the past can be controlled by the future.”²³ Illustrating how something as new as cybernetics can reveal something very old, he notes that “thinking and speaking in a circular motion has always

been part of the Japanese language, tradition, and spirituality.”²⁴ That the process of thinking itself might be able to collapse linear time suggests what many already understand: that time is a function of perception, of our own thought.

Similarly, Berendt suggests that “thinking by analogy is much more effective in harmonic contexts” than linear approaches can be.²⁵ The reason that thinking by analogy is a useful approach when trying to come to terms with harmonic constructs is that harmonics are about relationships. Thinking in terms of analogy opens the mind up to relationships beyond cause and effect, since cause and effect will only lead us step by step along a linear path. Analogy, on the other hand, can establish relationships between all manner of things in a much more open form where all things can be connected to one another at any time, as in the rhizomatic hypertext that Žižek invokes when suggesting the “perception of life that explodes the form of the linear centered narrative and renders life as a multiform flow.”²⁶ So we can see that Žižek and Berendt share an interest in drawing on new developments in science to illustrate their points about changing perceptions of the world.

After establishing that we might understand the world as sound, Berendt sets to the task of explaining how we might go about finding all the sound that our ears don’t hear. He draws on Jean Gebser who suggests that “we must attempt to render audible certain specific and highly differentiated primordial sounds...The question is, how do we find these values? It would not be amiss if we were to seek them in the sound of the word-root.”²⁷ Berendt thus conducts an examination of the role of the word in our understanding of the world as sound. He notes that the Latin *cantare* is usually translated as “to sing,” but has an original meaning: “to work magic, to produce by magic.”²⁸

Following this he notes that “Mexico’s Huichol Indians use the Spanish word *cantor* to mean ‘magician, shaman.’”²⁹ So he touches on the idea that the word, spoken or sung, has been understood as a powerful tool capable of magic.

Žižek also notes the importance of words and phrases in Lynch’s films: the now all-too-familiar “Dick Laurent is dead” in *Lost Highway*; “the sleeper must awaken” in *Dune*; “the owls are not what they seem” in *Twin Peaks* (1989-91); “Daddy wants to fuck” in *Blue Velvet* (1986).³⁰ He suggests that these phrases are crucial elements, each one a basic formula that “suspends and cuts across time.”³¹ Žižek suggests that the entire narrative of *Lost Highway* takes place in a suspended moment of time between the two utterances of “Dick Laurent is dead.”³² As already noted, the circular form of the film is what is most important to Žižek’s analysis, insofar as it emulates the circular flow of psychoanalytic therapy. However, the circularity resultant from the suspension of time connected to vocal utterances is also a key concept in terms of Berendt’s explorations of the world as sound. The suspension of time for the Western logical mind would indeed be a thing of magic. As Berendt goes on to suggest, the dissolution of time and space into one and the same thing is a key component to understanding the world as sound, and as human beings within this world it is the use of our voice which is the most readily accessible sound that can put us in touch with all the less audible sounds from which the cosmos is created.

Berendt demonstrates how, through relatively recent technological developments, the cosmos that was once thought of as the epitome of stillness is now understood to be a very noisy place indeed.³³ He cites the sounds of pulsars, some of which “sound like

bongo drums, others like castanets, still others like the scratching needle of a record player.”³⁴ He continues:

some pulsars emit their pulses with a frequency so high that the human ear is unable to hear their rhythm. You can hear the rhythm, however, when you tape that interstellar message drummed millions of light-years away and then play the tape at half speed.³⁵

This illustrates the importance of sound recording technology in the growing understanding of the cosmos as sound, thus tying into the ideas expressed in the first chapter of this thesis: such technology is an extension of ourselves which can, in turn, show us ourselves in an ever greater light. Discoveries of the sounds of the universe also illustrate that the materiality of our sound representation technology is also evident in the natural world. That a pulsar can sound like a crackling vinyl record suggests another level at which the turntable can be symbol for the transcendence of worlds separated by vast distances: as above, so below.

The notion that the world is sound has been around for centuries, awaiting the technological capabilities to reveal ever greater nuances of this notion observable in the knowable universe. The fact that technology has helped in understanding the world as sound should be considered in light of some of Žižek comments. He speaks of writers like Dickens who seemed to be using cinematic devices (such as cross-cutting and the close-up) in their prose before the invention of cinema, “as if a new perception of life were already here but was still struggling to find its proper means of articulation until it finally found it in cinema.”³⁶ He says the same thing about cyberspace hypertext allowing us to finally understand what filmmakers like Altman and Kieslowski have been aiming at for some time through their explorations of interconnections and parallel universes.³⁷ Similarly, in a discussion of composer Edgar Varèse, Ronald Bogue explains

that the development of technology eventually used by Varèse was called for by the composer fifty years earlier: “The technology of sound manipulation, far from generating an aesthetic, simply reinforced it.”³⁸

The key point about this pre-visualization of worlds now realizable through technology is the role played by analogy and metaphor. As Berendt says about the sound of the cosmos, or music of the spheres: when spoken of by Plato, Pythagoras, or Johannes Kepler, it “was understood metaphorically at best. Now we are finding out that all this is to be taken literally.”³⁹ So, thinking by analogy can allow for an understanding of things not yet realizable in the external world. Consider also a comparison Gilles Deleuze makes between Henri Bergson and Karl Marx. Marx’s comment that “humanity only sets itself problems that it is capable of solving” is offered a kind of corroboration by Bergson: “The truly great problems are set forth only when they are solved.”⁴⁰ To these we could add the words of French physicist Pierre Solié: “Do you believe physicists could have ever discovered the laws of the atom if they themselves did not consist of these atoms?”⁴¹ The transformation of abstract thought into the technologically possible can thus be understood as a process of uncovering what we already inherently know: we are made of the same stuff as the cosmos, so to know ourselves is to know all. This idea is of major importance when considering Žižek’s insistence that Lynch’s many worlds exist on the same plane.

Berendt offers further speculation on the idea that all things are one, relating to our discussion here about closed systems that are ultimately knowable in their entirety. Being among the few elementary particles that do not disintegrate, electrons can be understood as the primary stores of memory. They exist for some time as part of a tree,

then a human, then an animal of some kind, and on it goes, bringing the stored information of each of those existences along with it to the next. Further, Berendt notes evidence that each progression of an electron's spin yields an increase in information, and these progressions occur in whole number jumps comparable to the intervals of harmonics as displayed on a struck monochord. So, Berendt discusses how electrons might interact with each other in the language of harmonic progression.⁴² Not only is this an illustration of how we can understand some of the smallest elements of the universe as operating in sonic terms, it also suggests the kind of unifying element flowing through all things that Žižek takes issue with in certain readings of *Lost Highway*. Indeed, the idea that electrons contained in our bodies have also existed in a multitude of other beings and objects gives some validity to a reading of Fred's personality being spread across all the characters in the film. Again I suggest that this kind of underlying sonically-based foundation to the universe need not counter Žižek's thinking about the importance of randomness and circularity in Lynch's film. In fact, I believe Berendt's suggestions help support Žižek's basic concerns.

The notion of all things in the universe being made up of materials resonating and interacting according to harmonic principles is a wonderful paradigm for understanding Lynch's universe. Beings wander the world, interacting and affecting each other, sometimes in terms of harmony, other times in terms of dissonance. But here is where perception becomes important. Who decides what is dissonant and what is harmonious? Lynch himself has said that he doesn't differentiate between the horrible and the beautiful, that it's all just texture.⁴³ Lynch's words here support the non-interpretative approach that allows the spectator to simply let go and experience his work as

audiovisual texture, one of the approaches denounced by Žižek. As my work here proves, though, I'm not in favour of abandoning interpretation when dealing with Lynch. However, I am in favour of dissolving boundaries between things like form and content so that his works may be understood as cinematic wholes, every part of which demanding equal attention. There has been an evolution in thought, as will be shown, that can be mapped in part by humanity's gradual shift in perception of the differences between harmony and dissonance. Such variation in the understanding of the harmonic structure of all things is characteristic of the multiple possibilities Berendt and Žižek suggest are essential to the workings of the universe.

Berendt notes Euclid's observation of a deviation between the golden section (that recurring shape, related to the spiral, which has led so many down the path towards seeking a unifying principle to the entirety of creation) and the precise harmonic proportion to which it supposedly corresponds.⁴⁴ As we move from this golden ideal of perfection, itself flawed when considered in harmonic terms, Berendt notes that "the 'deviations' become more and more frequent as the music of nature gets closer and closer to human music, most of all in the song of birds, which is one of the main reasons why the sounds of the birds can be directly perceived by human beings as music."⁴⁵ Thus: "a person living in unison with nature also lives in unison with what we have called its 'deviations,' with its imprecision and unpunctuality."⁴⁶ So the idea of perfection in the universe starts to fall away.

He then establishes the theory of harmony suggesting that every dissonance tends towards becoming harmonious:

If it is true that the harmonic relationships in music reflect the harmonic and mathematical relationships in the planetary system as well as in the cosmos,

the microcosm, the biosphere, and all the other fields we have talked about, then this rule must be valid also outside of music: All dissonances gravitate toward becoming harmonies.⁴⁷

However, he clearly illustrates that the very ideas of “dissonance” and “harmony” are open to interpretation. He notes that “throughout the Middle Ages, the third was considered to be a dissonant.”⁴⁸ This idea has gradually given way to a way of thinking exemplified by the fact that “modern concert music had reached a point in the 1950s, where composers felt that dissonances could be achieved only by so-called clusters (the simultaneous sounding of all tones across the entire keyboard).”⁴⁹ Clearly the notion of dissonance has had little to do with any hard facts about the structure of harmony, and more about our own perceptions and changing ways of thinking. In this way, a tendency towards harmony in the universe could easily be mistaken for a tendency towards dissonance, and as will be discussed further on, it is the grey area between these that Lynch skilfully navigates in his films.

There are four key points that should be emphasized in Berendt’s overall thesis. First and foremost is that harmonic structure, defined here as music, is what the universe is based on, and that because of this all things in the universe seek harmony as their ultimate goal. A second key point (that saves him just as he starts to head off into dangerous territories about perfection, the golden ratio, and the role of the “healthy” human as an embodiment of that perfection), is that differentiation and deviation from harmonic perfection support the overall harmonic structure of the universe. A third key point is that perception largely governs how we interpret the world, and that concepts like dissonance (and other things that appear to deviate from harmonic perfection) actually change according to our own thinking, and thus there is no one perfect system with which

to construct our Earthly musical explorations of the structure of the universe. Finally, the idea of the universe being based on musical principles is not incongruent with multiple pathways for evolution (or other elements that seem to defy an established order). Let us now explore how these four points are all part and parcel of the idea that what the universe is really about is the intermingling of elements. The universe constantly seeks out of new combinations of existing things (be they people, spaces, objects, etc.) in order to illustrate that nothing is ever separate from anything else – a grand organism whose perpetual purpose is to break down boundaries between the separate and prove over and over that nothing exists in isolation, that all is truly one.

In Ronald Bogue's study of Deleuze and Guattari's thoughts on aesthetics, entitled *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts*, he gives a thorough analysis of how the pair come to terms with the age-old ideas about our relationship with the universe as understood through the analogy of music. There are many conceptual intersections here with the work of Berendt, but Deleuze and Guattari take some of the material a step or two further. As will be demonstrated, the pair provide adequate room for both an understanding of a unifying life force that runs through all the universe and the randomness that Žižek suggests denies the palpability of such a force.

As Bogue notes, in chapter 11 of *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari posit music as "an open structure that permeates and is permeated by the world."⁵⁰ He continues:

They offer a reading of the relationship between the cosmos and music not as mechanical and mathematical but as machinic and rhythmical. Their point of departure is birdsong...[allowing] them to situate music within the general context of sonic and rhythmic patterning in nature and to suggest a continuity among human and nonhuman species in their modes of

occupying space and establishing interspecific and conspecific relationships.”⁵¹

Important in their thinking is that rhythm is not a function of repetitive sameness, but of difference. They differentiate between measure and rhythm: “measure implies a repetition of the Same, a preexisting, self-identical pattern that is reproduced over and over again, whereas rhythm ‘is the Unequal or Incommensurable...’”⁵² The main reason that rhythm occurs as differentiation is because it is the result of interaction between what they call “milieus.” Using the human body as an example, Bogue explains that “the heart’s regular measure, for instance, fluctuat[es] in response to neural and hormonal stimuli, changes in breathing rate, alterations in the external environment, and so on. In a sense, the heart’s periodic repetition produces rhythm, but not by reproducing an identical measure and not in isolation from other milieus.”⁵³ So rhythm is a function of the interaction between a given element with those that surround it.

Music, for Deleuze and Guattari, is “the active, creative operation which consists of deterritorializing the refrain.”⁵⁴ The idea of deterritorializing the refrain illustrates Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of the workings of the universe, whereby differentiation occurs through the interaction of all the various elements of the universe, and that the music of the universe is the act of opening these elements to one another so that these interactions may occur. Rhythm is the product of such interaction and is the sign of the constant differentiation that the universe is based on. In this way we can understand that it is not a mathematical kind of perfection that governs interactions, but rather the interactions themselves which govern each other. Drawing on the understanding of birdsongs as “basic components in the delimitation of bird territories” and how human territories can also be delineated by regional musics, a basic connection

is made between nature and humanity which allows Deleuze and Guattari to abstract a notion of the refrain as being “any kind of rhythmic pattern that stakes out a territory.”⁵⁵

So, at base what we have here is a concept of a musical universe based on the infinite potential for varying combinations and interactions between milieus and territories. This concept of the universe allows for music to be understood as the governing factor while maintaining the openness to the multiple potentialities that so much of theoretical physics is leaning towards and which Žižek uses as his arguments against understanding Lynch as a “poet of the Jungian subconscious.” The changing nature of our perception of the universe and the differentiation that results are the bases on which Berendt allows for those aspects of the universe which seem to contradict the idea of harmonic perfection. For Deleuze and Guattari, this differentiation becomes rhythm, that embodiment of “unmeasured time” which is created by the interaction of all of the universe’s elements.⁵⁶

Bogue then goes on to describe how Deleuze-Guattari apply the three basic principles of the refrain to three major movements in music history: Classicism, Romanticism, and Modernism. For present purposes it is the modern movement that is most interesting. The Modern composer, they suggest, is the one who seeks to create a line of flight from their music to that of the cosmos. In Bogue’s terms: “Cézanne’s concern is not to represent apples or mountains, but to render visible the generative forces that infuse apples, the seismic forces that shape mountains. Similarly, the task of Modern music is to render audible forces that are inaudible.”⁵⁷ Sound familiar? He speaks of Hoene Wronsky’s definition of music as “the corporealization of the intelligence that is in sounds,” a notion that led Edgar Varèse to think of “music as spatial

– as moving bodies of sound in space.”⁵⁸ In the context of the first two chapters here, the relevance of moving bodies of sound in space should be clear.

Here we find extensions of some of Berendt’s key concepts. The intelligence that exists in sounds is related to the idea of a cosmic intelligence existing even at the level of tiny particles such as electrons, and that our human music is the rendering audible of what these electrons might have to tell us. Thus we’re back to Žižek who likens the hearing of inaudible noises with the ridiculousness of being able to perceive a sub-layer of reality containing some universal consciousness. Also crucial to note here is that Deleuze and Guattari essentially speak of the dissolution of analogy with modern music. As Bogue explains, composers have always sought to “render audible inaudible forces. The difference is that in Modernism forces are seized directly, whereas in Classicism and Romanticism they are ‘reflected in the relations of matter and form.’”⁵⁹ This is another way of conceiving of what Berendt spends so much time discussing: moving from the use of analogy as a means of understanding the cosmos to transcending the need for analogy and becoming one with that cosmos. This is akin to Žižek’s comments about the technology of cinema actualizing what was only imagined before in writers like Dickens. Imagination gives way to reality, thus breaking down the boundary between the two as Lynch so often explores in his films.

Both Berendt and Bogue discuss the idea of birds being sophisticated musicians.

For Bogue,

this conjunction of birds and music points in one direction toward a conceptualization of human music as a cosmic art, one that is directly in touch with the differential rhythms of the natural world. But it also points in another direction, toward a biological contextualization of music and the other arts. Are birds musicians?⁶⁰

Bogue suggests that the answer for Deleuze and Guattari stems from the concept of “natural drift as satisficing bricolage – an assembling of parts ‘simply because they are possible.’”⁶¹ This understanding of natural drift, coming from Varela, Thompson and Rosch, suggests that *creation* is the primary force active in evolution. Bogue notes that in *Tree of Knowledge*, Maturana and Varela posit that “love is the controlling principle of evolution, thereby stressing the cooperative values of mutual enhancement and interdependence as opposed to the competitive values of struggle and domination that reign in neo-Darwinism.”⁶² By postulating the bird as a musician, through its embodiment of the concepts of deterritorializing the refrain, mutually interactive elements inherent in this deterritorializing, and the random nature of the interactions which result in creation for its own sake, Bogue shows how Deleuze and Guattari postulate the universe as music while avoiding the idea of a fundamental structure guiding the whole process.

The use of birdsong as an example of deterritorializing the refrain is particularly apt for consideration of Lynch’s work, so much of which can be summed up by the words of the Little Man (Michael Anderson) in *Twin Peaks*: “the birds sing a pretty song and there is always music in the air.” The example of the birds, for Deleuze and Guattari, is one of the primary indications that there is a connection between humans and the natural world. By extension, this offers some validation for the idea that we are part of the music which governs the universe. Thus there is always music in the air, a fact made apparent by the pretty, and thus musical, qualities of birdsong.

There is an important conjunction between the conclusions of Berendt and those of Deleuze and Guattari concerning this music that is always in the air. For Berendt,

harmony is the goal of the universe. For Deleuze and Guattari, creation is the goal of the universe. Creation is manifested in the interaction between elements (territories, milieus, etc.) made possible by the lines of flight that allow these elements to come into contact with one another. This deterritorialization is, essentially, recontextualization. Harmony is also the interaction between two or more elements (or notes, in the musical sense). Thus, inherent in the concepts of harmony and deterritorialization is that of creation through the joining of two or more elements: the third that is more than the sum of two parts.

As suggested in the first two chapters, the concept of recontextualization is very important in the films of David Lynch. In the context of Berendt, Deleuze, and Guattari, recontextualization is both creation and harmony, the goals of the universe. What I propose is an understanding of Lynch's works as explorations of this constant drive towards creation through recontextualization motivated by the quest for harmony. To bring this down to earth a little, I suggest that we focus on the role of the human body in Lynch's work as a sonic entity in constant flux and differentiation within its environment, like a tuning fork sending out waves of resonance which interact with the resonances of all the other tuning forks in the world.⁶³ In this way, the idea of Lynch using singers as actors to imbue his narrative spaces with musical presence (as discussed in the previous chapter) can be extended to include all beings that appear in his films. Sometimes the results of the interaction between these physical embodiments of music can be interpreted as dissonances, other times they seem harmonious. However, they are always systems in which the process of interaction can be understood as a thing of beauty in its own right.

The Known Universe

In *True Hallucinations*, Terrence McKenna writes: “when we inspect the structure of our own deep unconscious we will make the...discovery that we are ordered on the same principle as the larger universe in which we arose.”⁶⁴ He suggests that one of the best analogies to illustrate this point comes through the observation of sand dunes:

The interesting thing about such dunes is that they bear a resemblance to the force that created them, wind. It is as if each grain of sand were a bit inside the memory of a natural computer. The wind is the input that arranges the grains of sand so that they become a lower-dimensional template of a higher-dimensional phenomenon, in this case the wind....In my thinking, the genes of organisms are grains of sand arranged by the ebb and flow of the winds of time. Naturally, then, organisms bear the imprint of the inherent variables in the temporal medium in which they arose.⁶⁵

McKenna thus articulates many of the key points of this chapter, most importantly being the connection between the invisible and the visible elements of the world, and that both are readily observable on the same plane of existence if one knows what to search for. His use of sand dunes as an example couldn't be more appropriate here, as we will now turn to an examination Lynch's interest in the connections between all things within a very particular *Dune* of his own.

In so far as many of the concepts in *Dune* were not invented by Lynch, the “known universe” that is the subject of the film becomes a very Lynchian place indeed, if not yet fully formed. The story is replete with Lynch's trademark obsessions, even as the film precedes most of his more extravagant explorations of these. Like his homages in so many other films, he also manages to make the *Dune* universe very much his own despite its preconceived origins. With this in mind, though the analysis here will be largely

based on the concepts inherent in *Dune* from the legacy of Frank Herbert, the discussion will be geared towards Lynch's cinematic treatment of these.

When examining Lynch's *Dune* in the context of the notion of the world as sound, some initial observations and comments from Michel Chion and Martha Nochimson are relevant. Chion suggests that the most "audacious" element of Lynch's adaptation is in the structuring of the story: "He devised a kind of spiralling structure, described by him as circular, in which all the information needed to understand the story is given from the start rather than being doled out progressively."⁶⁶ Chion suggests that at the heart of this spiralling structure is a concern for connections as they relate to the foundation of the universe. Recall Sorel Etrog's description of the spiral discussed in the first chapter, understood as a form in which points in time, dissociated from one another on a linear trajectory, are placed parallel to each other. The spiral is linked to the Golden Section, that form which seems to be the most ubiquitous in all the universe. As such the spiral is also illustrative of the connections that can exist between things seemingly kept apart by linear notions of time and space.

Lynch's spiral narrative structure can be understood as part of his desire to understand the *Dune* universe in terms of connections. Chion notes a comment made by Lynch in an interview upon the film's release: "In *Dune* there is a basic question: what makes the universe function? What exactly are the relations between people and what connects them to Paul?"⁶⁷ We see here in Lynch's basic thinking about the film that *Dune* concerns uncovering the secrets of the universe through tracing the connections between things. As I will suggest, this uncovering is really just a revelation that there is no cover, that all things are connected, all things are one: THAT is the secret that can be

found on the surface of all things, and which Paul Atreides (Kyle MacLachlan) finds on the surface of Arrakis.

Now consider Nochimson's suggestion that the film ultimately fails because the plot of Paul having to conquer the known universe is hopelessly un-Lynchian: "The Lynchian seeker and secret cannot rejoice in the victory of an administrator of a closed system, which is what Paul becomes in Herbert's novel."⁶⁸ The idea that all things in the universe are knowable, and thus conquerable, is the basis of the closed-system that Nochimson speaks of, and is in contradiction to the differentiation and deterritorialization that are the basis of arguments put forth by Žižek, Berendt, Deleuze, and Guattari. Although Nochimson's approach is quite different, she does find some common ground with Žižek: Lynch's films generally explore the fact that the universe is not a closed-system that is ultimately knowable, but rather an environment of constant flux through which the characters must sometimes come up against the absurdity of trying to know all - and their ultimate failure in so doing. This is perhaps the biggest lesson learnt from *Dune*: the hearing of inaudible noises is not ultimately about mastering a closed-system, but rather being in touch with the perpetual evolution of an ever-changing matrix.

Keeping in mind the idea of recontextualization as being fundamental to differentiation and deterritorialization, let's examine how Lynch's *Dune* reflects his interest in exploring the cross sections between territories that make up the known universe. One of the first things many critics note about *Dune* is the mixing of styles in the film's visual aesthetic, particularly where set and costume are concerned. Referring to Lynch's "grafting of eras," Kenneth Kaleta quotes David Ansen: "No science fiction film has ever been so inspired by the past, or so audaciously eclectic."⁶⁹ Kaleta suggests

that “*Dune*’s future utopia is a telling illustration not only of Lynch’s aesthetic vision, but of contemporary nostalgia,”⁷⁰ a nostalgia that can be seen in all of Lynch’s work. Michel Chion observes that “Lynch and [production designer Anthony] Masters decided to create the unknown from a novel combination of the known,”⁷¹ thus emphasizing the role of recontextualizing elements in order to make the familiar seem strange.

Martha Nochimson also discusses the mixture of elements in the décor and costuming of *Dune*, calling it a “riot of styles, historical periods and resonances.”⁷² In this context I think her use of the term resonances is particularly interesting. Part of understanding the world as sound is to understand how sonic resonances interact with one another, constantly mingling to create ever new harmonic structures and musical refrains. She continues that “the effect is both ornate and shallow, as if a full-sized cathedral were constructed of thin metallic plate.”⁷³ Indeed, the idea of a lack of depth beneath surfaces is one of the criticisms against sampling and related forms of recontextualization associated with postmodernism. Again this is interesting in light of Žižek’s suggestion that Lynch’s work is not about delving deep into hidden substructures, but rather laying all of its elements out on the same surface.

When speaking about surfaces, particularly with respect to the costuming, there is a significant parallel between *Dune* and *Lost Highway*. As Nochimson observes: “The Emperor sports a uniform that combines the bourgeois style of a business suit with the cut and decoration of a Tsar’s uniform and the black and silver colors of a Nazi officer.”⁷⁴ This stylistic cross-breeding of the Emperor’s uniform is a clear link to concepts of sampling reborn in *Lost Highway*. The suggestion that Fred embodies several personalities is manifested in his accoutrements by the end of the film: he has resumed

his role as Fred while wearing Pete's clothing and driving Mr. Eddy's car. In *Dune*, Nochimson suggests that the "texture [of stylistic crossbreeding] is entirely Lynch's creation, having no precedent in the novel or indeed in futuristic films..."⁷⁵ So it comes as no surprise that we can witness Lynch re-visiting such textures throughout his career.

Of course, the most commented upon aspect of Lynch's *Dune* is his treatment of voices in the film. Kaleta notes the global sound in the dialogue "tinged by so many accents that the future world amalgamates a language unhindered by contemporary national boundaries,"⁷⁶ a touch which adds an aural element to Lynch's mixing of visual styles. However, it is through the combined use of internal and external voices that Lynch sets out to explore the connections between the people in *Dune*, connections that he feels are at the foundation of the known universe.

Chion notes that while sound plays an important part in the story (vibrations luring worms, the Bene Gesserit voice, etc), "the soundscapes accompanying the action offer nothing out of the ordinary...The masterful sound atmosphere of *Eraserhead* and of parts of *The Elephant Man* is lacking, though fortunately the music and the actors' voices generate a grave, peaceful atmosphere."⁷⁷ Nochimson concurs with Chion's assertion that *Dune* offers the potential for interesting sound which has gone largely unused by Lynch:

In both the novel and the film, sound takes on unusual, Lynchian importance....However, sound in the film loses its potential power because, like the worms, it is forced into an un-Lynchian position in which what is essentially strong due to its receptivity is represented as the essence of aggression.⁷⁸

All agree, however, that Lynch's use of voices in the film is the strongest aural element.

Chion considers “the recurrent use of a generalised inner voice” to be no less than a major innovation.⁷⁹ As he notes:

In the film, there is a continuum between the sentences spoken aloud and the inner reflections, without any corresponding sound code to distinguish them. The film’s inner voices, often spoken softly, belong to the same space as the externalised voices, thus blurring our relation to reality. The reality on show rests on a discourse proffered as if in a dream.⁸⁰

As discussed in the previous chapter, Lynch explores the blurring of lines between inside and outside space in much of his work, not the least of which is the line between dreaming and wakefulness. In the context of this chapter, the blurred lines relate to the co-mingling of territories and that everything can be understood to exist on an equal plane. This equal plane is exemplified by the idea of the rhizome, where connections between all things are constantly open. Such openness to connection is the subject of *Dune* as Lynch understands it.

Kaleta observes that in the words spoken in this undifferentiated inner/outer space, “lines have a rhythm,” and he speaks of the phrases “Am I the one?” and “Is he the one?” as auditory refrains, the cadences of which make it musical, “a refrain of sounds fluidly carrying the film forward.”⁸¹ Kaleta’s idea of recurrent phrases is very much in line with observations Chion has made about Lynch’s use of recurrent images in the film: “the literal reuse at different moments of the film of one particular image or micro-scene, as if shots, regardless of their surfeit of concrete details, could function as the equivalent of words or notes of music.”⁸² Indeed, these could also be understood as samples, continually being reused but within different contexts, thus illustrating a constantly shifting audiovisual environment which uses repetition to call attention to difference.

Chion also suggests that “Lynch savours and exploits an ambiguity from which others shy away: that of making scenes, shots and faces which are both subjective (meshed in a character’s speech, generated by his or her words) and objective (existing for the senses themselves).”⁸³ This idea of simultaneous subjectivity and objectivity is also apparent in the blurred boundaries between internal and external voices, a simultaneity of differing perspectives that is at the heart of Rick Altman’s discussion of the heterogeneity of recorded sound as discussed in the previous chapter. So the voices in *Dune* become the focal point for a number of important issues in sound theory as well as within Lynch’s work in general.

Of course, by now the notion of the refrain should be quite loaded, especially when put in the context of rhythm as Kaleta does here. He uses the words “rhythm” and “refrain” in their most common senses, and are perfectly valid for his evocation of the “musical” quality of the speech in *Dune*. But there is another role that rhythm plays within the film’s narrative that should be addressed here. It is said that the worms of Arrakis are drawn to vibrations, particularly those of spice mining. However, they are also easily lured by “thumpers,” devices designed to produce measured beat repetitions to distract the worms away from the repetitive vibrations of spice mining. These repetitive beats created by machines, and thus by humans, are indicative of an inorganic rhythm which Deleuze and Guattari would term “measure.” As discussed above, “rhythm” for Deleuze and Guattari is not recurrence with equal intervals, but is recurrence marked by unevenness – by life.

When Paul and his mother (Francesca Annis) are alone in the desert after the crash of the craft in which they were prisoners of the Harkonnen, he tells her to “walk without

rhythm” so as not to attract the worms. However, from Deleuze and Guattari’s perspective, he might have said “walk without measure.” It is interesting to consider the worm’s reaction to measure since it is almost always the product of spice mining. They do protect the spice, for as we later find out, worms and spice are one and the same. So it is not humans they attack, but signs of the machines used for spice mining which are detectable through their measure. The worms are surely sensitive to all vibrations, but they attack only those which work against the natural flow of life in the universe: against rhythm. When Paul and his mother walk without measure, they are actually walking *with* rhythm, and thus according to the way of all life.

This is even more interesting when considering Lynch’s recurrent interest in the sounds of machines, often industrial, marked by their measures. As suggested, the presence of these unnaturally repeating mechanical measures often occurs in conjunction with a character’s slip between spaces of existence the simultaneous conjunction of multiple worlds - as in the repeating loop at the end of the record facilitating Bob’s (Frank Silva) entry into Leland’s (Ray Wise) world in episode 14 of *Twin Peaks*. Their measure calls attention to itself because of its lack of organic rhythm, and thus this rhythm also becomes heightened in contrast. Lynch is interested in poles, and the spaces between these poles. Sometimes it takes the presence of a polar opposite to make the characteristics of each pole stand out in relation to the other. Lynch’s use of measured repeating mechanical sound serves to highlight the rhythm of life that surrounds it, and allows an ability to flow with the rhythm of life as a result. To come to terms with something one must first be aware of it; Lynch exploits the contrast between “measure” and “rhythm” as a way of creating awareness of the difference between the two.

Nochimson notes that despite the overall failure of *Dune* to illustrate Lynch's mastery of sound, he nevertheless occasionally "fascinates us with his use of 'the voice' in the film and sometimes dramatizes sound so successfully that it assumes momentary Lynchian force, even though it is always tied to the heroic strategies of the plot."⁸⁴ She gives an example in the scene where Paul teaches the Fremen the "weirding way," demonstrating how the use of their voices can obliterate a concrete object, thus illustrating "Lynch's delight in the process of representing the unexpected power of thin air – sound – over the seeming solidity of rock."⁸⁵ He begins the training session by explaining to the Fremen that "some thoughts have a sound equivalent to a form," suggesting the tangible physical connection between interior and exterior space that is the overarching theme within *Dune*, and illustrates Lynch's interest in discovering the connections between things that tie the known universe together. The fact that it is sound that acts as the mediator between internal and external worlds is very Lynchian, and he adds the aspect of sound representation technology through the use of the "weirding modules" which amplify the voice for use as a weapon.

Nochimson takes issue with the idea that sound in *Dune* is used largely for aggression. However, an interesting correlation can be made between the weirding modules and a technology known as a lithotripter currently being used for healing purposes. In *Sounding the Inner Landscape* Kay Gardner describes the use of the lithotripter to destroy kidney stones without surgery:

the patient is placed in a large tub of water with the kidney area just above a 'belt' through which explosions of sound are aimed. Within these explosions are the frequencies, or vibrations, which duplicate the frequency of the kidney stone mass.⁸⁶

So the aggressive power of sound here is used to heal, much as we might consider the Fremen's use of the "weirding way" as a means to the healing of Arrakis from the poison of extraterrestrial forces.

The use of the voice in the weirding way is significant when considering the power that many cultures ascribe to the spoken word. Gardner quotes Jill Purce: "In the original mantric language, the name of a thing is the sound of the thing itself."⁸⁷ The lithotripter can be understood as a device which duplicates the sound of the stone it seeks to destroy by reproducing the form of the stone through sound - thus naming it. Gardner also invokes the ideas of Hildegard von Bingen, a nun and composer who "believed that the human voice, when singing music with words, could arouse sympathetic vibrations in the body and allow the words to directly enter the soul."⁸⁸ Given Lynch's obvious interest in the power of the human voice, is it any wonder that he chose to produce an album of the music of Hildegard von Bingen (sung by Jocelyn Montgomery)?

This idea of words entering directly into the soul by creating sympathetic vibrations can be understood in terms of the use of the voice by the Bene Gesserit women to control other beings. If all things are sound, then sound would make the perfect tool, properly used, to transfer one's own will to that of another. But most importantly, the idea that sound stems first from thought and can take the form of a material object is crucial to understanding Lynch's use of the voice in *Dune* as the vehicle through which transcendence occurs between people, places, and things. It is through the voice that deterritorialization of the refrain occurs within the known universe of *Dune*, illustrating Lynch's fundamental desire for the exploration of recontextualization through an understanding of the world as sound.

A key point to be made about Lynch's work is that while he explores transcendence, his characters often do not fully achieve it. Many of his characters are aware of something, but they are often not sure what, and thus this "something" manifests itself as paranoia and fear of the unknown. *Dune* explores states of severe paranoia at the same time as it chronicles Paul's quest for awareness. As they are the primary signifiers of the paranoia in *Dune*, we'll spend some time now illustrating the importance of how Lynch treats the sounds of the voices in the film.

The paranoid atmosphere of Lynch's *Dune* is set right from the opening scene in the Emperor's hall. First we are treated to the sound of the Guild's craft at rest while the Guildsmen disembark; the sound here is one of the only remnants of sound designer Alan Splet's work on the film. In the meeting between the Emperor (José Ferrer), the Guildsmen, and the Navigator that follows, the roles of the voice, sound representation technology, and telepathy all converge to set the tone for the rest of the film. When one of the Guildsmen asks the Bene Gesserit (Sian Phillips) to leave the Emperor's hall, she exits out the back to another area supposedly out of hearing range. However, due to her telepathic powers, she can still monitor the proceedings within the hall.

Lynch establishes this telepathy simply by having us hear certain sounds on almost equal levels in both the hall and the area where the Bene Gesserit is seated. For instance, once she has left the room, the Navigator opens the metal shield surrounding the large glass tank in which he is housed. In the midst of the shield opening, there is a cut to the Bene Gesserit seated in the other room. She has her eyes closed and seems to be concentrating very hard, trying to connect her mind to the space within the hall. The ambient soundscape where she is seated is quite different from that in the large hall, thus

emphasizing her separation. There is no other sound in her space until, all of a sudden, the sound of the shield opening becomes apparent just before a cut back to the large hall. Announcing a shot sonically before the image is a common bridging strategy used in mainstream Hollywood. Here, though, Lynch brings it into the realm of the metaphysical, making this cutting a strategy for suggesting the Bene Gesserit's powers of telepathy and their connotations for sound's power to disrupt our usual understanding of space. It is one of Lynch's gifts that he can take such a basic cinematic convention and imbue it with otherworldly power simply by using it unconventionally.

Later in the scene we see the Bene Gesserit listening to the words of the Navigator, indicated by the fact that we hear his voice as we watch her face. This shot, however, also illustrates the fact that she "hears" only the voice, and not the hall's soundscape, nor the various noises associated with the Navigator's tank, including some strange Lynchian procedure one of the Guildsmen performs at the side of the tank resulting in some of the director's trademark repetitive industrial sounds. When placed in the context of the Bene Gesserit's telepathy, these industrial sounds become more than just a little nuance Lynch throws in for good measure (so to speak); they become one of the strongest signifiers of space in the scene and help to establish exactly what the Bene Gesserit can hear and what she can't. These sounds also call into question the sound bridge which seemed to suggest telepathy just moments before. Since she seems only to hear the voice of the Navigator, not any of the other sounds associated with the large hall, perhaps Lynch's use of the sound bridge to announce the shot of the Navigator's shield opening was really just a cinematic convention after all, and not an indication of the Bene Gesserit's telepathy. As will be demonstrated, such ambiguity is important in the context of the film as a whole.

Another point of interest in this scene comes when the Navigator assures the Emperor of the great need for secrecy surrounding their meeting by concluding with these words: “I did not say this, I am not here.” Of course, we are meant to believe that he is simply denying his involvement in any interplanetary collusion with the Emperor. Nochimson suggests that this sentence is indicative of the overall “burlesque” tone of the scene, replete with bad acting and cheesy lines that undermine the seriousness of the narrative situation presented.⁸⁹ However, Nochimson actually misquotes the Navigator’s words, illustrating the mind’s amazing capacity for correcting incongruent elements of memory with a bit of distance from the remembered event. Nochimson’s version of the Navigator’s words reads: “I never said this; I was not here,”⁹⁰ thereby bringing both sections of the sentence into the same tense. As it is spoken in the film, the sentence contains two tenses, immediately calling attention to contradictory notions of time. By saying “I *am* not here” instead of “I *was* not here,” the Navigator calls into question whether or not he really is there at that present moment, a loaded question given his power for folding space. The Mystery Man (Robert Blake) in *Lost Highway* re-iterates a similar situation in his initial meeting with Fred, using the cell phone to suggest his powers of being in more than one place at a time.

Additionally, the Navigator’s words question not only his own presence in the room, but whether or not the words were actually spoken in the first place. Žižek’s suggestion that Lynch’s work be taken at face value could be applied to the Navigator’s words here: maybe by saying “I did not say this” the Navigator means that he did not actually speak. This interpretation is supported, in part, by the use of translation technology by the Guildsmen when they speak. Kaleta notes the “anachronistic 1930s

microphone system” that the Guildsman uses as a translator when he asks the Bene Gesserit to leave.⁹¹ Lynch’s treatment of the voice through the microphone clearly illustrates that the English voice we hear is not that of the Guildsman, but is rather an electronic interpretation of it. The Navigator’s voice, on the other hand, seems to transcend the need for the translation technology, much like Paul transcends his need of the weirding module at the end of the film. This suggests that the Navigator either speaks English, or may be communicating by telepathy, or perhaps may not even be the source of the communication at all.

Of course, the fact that we don’t hear a voice in the Guild language preceding an electronic translation could simply be due to the fact that he is sealed in the glass tank, and that only the translated version of his words passes through the microphone/speaker housed on its front. If this is the case, though, why then is the Navigator’s voice different from that of the Guildsman? The Guildsman’s translated voice has an on-the-air quality to it emphasizing the loss of fidelity associated with electronic transmission, along with a lack of inflection suggesting an artificial translation technology of some kind. The Navigator’s voice, on the other hand, has the full frequency presence and organic inflection of an unmediated delivery.

Given these vagaries, we could interpret the sound here as suggesting some ambiguity as to the source of his voice. Indeed, though we get close-ups of what seems to be an oral orifice on the Navigator’s face, we can never really be sure if any words are emanating from him at all. As an additional factor, when the Emperor speaks his voice has a consistent reverberation to it indicating the acoustic properties of the hall. However, the Navigator’s voice does not. The sound of the Navigator’s voice is softer

than the Emperor's, but as his words suggest, the lack of reverberation within the space may be an indication that he is actually not "speaking" at all.

In the end it is the ambiguity raised by Lynch's treatment of the sound in this scene that is most important here. The paranoid climate of the film is set up as soon as the Emperor asks the Bene Gesserit to conduct telepathy during the Navigator's visit, a paranoia matched by the Guildsman when he tells her to leave the room. The confusion that follows from not knowing precisely what the sources of given sounds are, and not being able to tell who is hearing what, lends itself well to the uncertainty the characters in the film have about each other. This ambiguity also suggests an open form to the film, where Lynch's use of sound illustrates the breaking down of spatial boundaries allowing for a myriad of connections to occur between people, places and things that would ordinarily be kept separate. This breaking down of boundaries ultimately works in favour of recontextualization.

Lynch's treatment of voices in the film also suggests multiplicity and, in turn, an instability to the universe. With the Guildsman speaking into the translator, we hear his original voice plus the English translation simultaneously. The Bene Gesserit voice has a similar effect, being made up of several layers of differently pitched voices occurring in unison. This kind of simultaneous multiplicity of voices inherent in the Bene Gesserit's vocal powers is echoed in the way that the voice repeats itself long after the original utterance has been made. The repetition of the initial utterance suggests that part of the power of the Bene Gesserit voice is its ability to remain in the air and thus keep its hold over the victim for an extended period of time.

I agree with Nochimson that one of the finest sonic moments in the film comes when Paul's mother uses the voice on the Harkonnen who are flying them out into the desert to be killed.⁹² It begins with Paul trying out the voice for the first time. He achieves the unnatural echo, thus emphasizing the direct relationship between the voice's ability to hang in the air and its power to influence people. He gets the Harkonnen to undo his mother's gag, freeing her to use her more developed voice to influence their captors further. The texture of the voice here is definitely some of the nicest sound work in *Dune*; the richness of the multi-layered voice combined with its unnaturally slow repetition cycle creates a sense of transcendence through sound, a true command over the element of the air, an ability to undo the physical properties of space itself and to create a reverberation where none would normally exist. As discussed in the previous chapter, spatial signature is a crucial part of how sound is used and perceived in the cinema. Here Lynch plays with the idea of spatial signature to illustrate the power of sound as harnessed by the Bene Gesserit voice.

The voice is another indicator of the importance of transcending space in *Dune*. Obviously such transcendence is an important part of the plot as it relates to the Navigator's ability to fold space. Through his treatment of the Bene Gesserit voice, Lynch creates something like an aural equivalent to the visual folding of space as seen in the scene where the Navigator takes the Atreides family to Arrakis. The multiplicity of voices within the one voice suggests superimposition, which is the main strategy Lynch uses to visually represent the Navigator's folding of space. On a conceptual level, the voice transcends time and space by its reverberation in the absence of the appropriate acoustic properties of the space in which the voice is heard.

R. Murray Schafer's concept of schizophonia, "the split between an original sound and its electroacoustical transmission or reproduction,"⁹³ has been important throughout this thesis. As noted, Schafer considers the electroacoustical transmission or reproduction of sound to be one of the factors in a growing sense of disjunction between human beings and their sonic environment. The Bene Gesserit voice has the power to create schizophonic circumstances in the absence of reproduction technology, a fact that Lynch emphasizes when he invents the weirding modules through which laymen must transmit their voice in order to achieve the Bene Gesserit effect – the need for which is transcended by Paul at the end of the film. Acoustic space is extremely important to the concept of schizophonia. This is exactly what gives the Bene Gesserit voice its power, being split both into multiple voices at its source and then repeating in a physically impossible echo to further its presence within the space.

In the discussion of schizophonia in the first chapter it was also suggested that it need not be the hallmark of a disintegrating world as Schafer suggests. Rather, the transcendence of space and time that Schafer says are the negative aspects of schizophonia can be understood as the beginning of the reconciliation between humans and technologies of sensory isolation. These suggestions drew on the work of Deleuze and Guattari who wished to remove negative connotations from the symptoms of schizophrenia. In their discussions on deterritorializing the refrain as explored above, the importance of transcending space and time is clear: the goal of all life is to move out of the boundaries of its own existence and merge with life from other territories. Technologies of representation can help facilitate such territorial transcendence, and

perhaps teach us in turn how to transcend the need for this technology: the very cycle of Paul's development in *Dune*.

At the heart of the matter in *Dune* is the idea of being connected to all points in space simultaneously, allowing the ability to travel without moving as epitomized by the folding of space by the Guild Navigators through their use of the spice. The spice, in the end, is the foundation of *Dune*'s known universe, and is thus the fabric that holds and connects everything together. In this sense, the spice truly does facilitate travelling without moving, for to hold one grain in the hand is to hold the universe entire. Birdsong as discussed by Bogue acts in a similar fashion: the bird need not travel itself for its song to reach into outer territories, a song which both Berendt and Bogue identify as being a kind of template for the music which makes up the entire universe and which can be observed on every level of its existence.

This section began with Terence McKenna's description of the interaction between wind and sand dunes as an analogy expressing the well known cliché: "as above, so below." Speaking of the end of *Blue Velvet*, Nochimson suggests that the appearance of the robin with the insect in its beak "encapsulate[s] a vision of an interconnection between above (air, bird) and below (ground, insect)."⁹⁴ It is one of the mysteries of the air that something invisible can have such a profound effect on the visible.⁹⁵ So it is with the dunes that McKenna describes, and so it is with sound as well. Ultimately it is the awareness of that which we ordinarily do not perceive that lies at the heart of Lynch's work, an idea that finds perfect expression in the phrase "the birds sing a pretty song and there is always music in the air." In our universe, it is the birds which are suggested by Deleuze and Guattari to be the intermediaries between humans and the natural world. In

the known universe of *Dune*, the worms hold this designation. They are the musical beings who are acutely aware of the differences between rhythm and measure, and who are the keepers of the spice which connects all things in the universe together. They also exist both above the sand and below, forming a bridge between what walks on the surface and what transpires beneath it, ultimately signifying that there is no difference between the two.

Finally, the idea that there is no difference between above and below ties in with the concept of travelling without moving, of the inherent mobility within stillness. Lynch is a master of audiovisually illustrating such active immobility. As Chion eloquently suggests:

No moment is ever as intense as when there is no more outward bodily agitation to hide the infinitesimal speed of an inner movement animating him, which makes him grow or take root. This static quality contains a great deal of violence, and Lynch's films seem able to capture it.⁹⁶

Maybe this is the "stillness in the Formica" that the One-Armed Man (Al Strobel) screams about in *Fire Walk With Me* as he accosts Leland and Laura (Sheryl Lee) in their car – a stillness that contains all the movement one could possibly imagine, if only we were properly geared to perceive it. Perhaps Lynch seeks the cinematic equivalent of a few too many drops of adrenochrome, described by Hunter S. Thompson in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* as resulting in total bodily paralysis while the mind races at a violent pace.⁹⁷ Of course, Frank Herbert's novel was certainly inspired by psychoactive chemical experience, and there is no lack of evidence for this in Lynch's visionary cinematic treatments of spice and water-of-life ingestion, and the place of these treatments within the larger form and narrative of the film. The human tendency to seek altered states of consciousness through drug use is often conducted with the desire to

become aware of the world in new ways. *Dune* is more or less reflective of this human tendency in that it explores acts of learning to perceive that which is everywhere but has remained imperceptible. It is about breaking down the boundaries between people, spaces, and time itself. The concept of recontextualization being the motivating force for the universe is very apparent in *Dune*, a story which illustrates Lynch's interest in the idea of people connecting with each other. *Dune*'s strongest element, in the end, is Lynch's use of sound to explore people's inherent need to connect with each other, and the difficulties, paranoia, and anxiety that can result from people entering each other's sonic spaces too quickly.

Lynch lays it all out on the same surface, a surface on which infinite possibilities for recontextualization exist. For Lynch, the importance is not a search for deeper meaning, just the quest for searching out the possibilities themselves and exploring their consequences on our understanding of life. Finally, the hearing of inaudible noises may indeed be a symptom of paranoid schizophrenia. However, such hearing can also be understood as an awareness of things that exist but require a certain mind-set for their perception. Hearing inaudible noises need not be a sign of trying to experience a closed system, as Žižek suggests. Rather, such hearing might be the beginnings of accepting an open system where life progresses through constant recontextualization, the eternal evolution of the music of the cosmos that is always in the air if we choose to listen.

In *Twin Peaks*, Laura Palmer was said to be "filled with secrets." However, if the people around her had paid more attention, perhaps there would have been no secrets for her to keep, and she might have been spared the torment that provided the main substance of the series and ensuing film. In some un-filmed moment of her life she might have

even been heard to exclaim “the sleeper must awaken!” in the hopes that those around her might wake up to her plight and provide some much needed support and human connection. Of course, this phrase is the rallying cry of *Dune*, the film that marks a major turning point for Lynch in his explorations of the need for human connection. He uses the science-fiction basis of the original story in order to more overtly illustrate the power of sound to cross boundaries of space and time and bring people together through a heightened awareness of their environments. From here on in, Lynch brings his illustrations back down to earth where their subtlety and nuance grow increasingly profound.

Notes

¹ Žižek, Slavoj. *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch's Lost Highway*. Seattle: The Walter Chapin Simpson Center for the Humanities, 2000:44.

² *ibid*:3.

³ *Ibid*:3.

⁴ *ibid*:44.

⁵ *ibid*:17.

⁶ *ibid*:17.

⁷ *ibid*:17.

⁸ *ibid*:18.

⁹ *ibid*:39.

¹⁰ *ibid*:41.

¹¹ *ibid*:44.

¹² *ibid*:42.

¹³ *ibid*:44.

¹⁴ *ibid*:39.

¹⁵ *ibid*:39.

¹⁶ *ibid*:39.

¹⁷ Berendt, Joachim-Ernst. *The World is Sound: Nada Brahma: Music and the Landscape of Consciousness*. Helmut Bredigkeit, trans. Rochester: Destiny Books, 1987:19.

¹⁸ *ibid*:19.

¹⁹ *ibid*:30.

²⁰ *ibid*:90.

²¹ *ibid*:40.

²² *ibid*:34.

²³ *ibid*:48.

²⁴ *ibid*:49.

²⁵ *ibid*:49.

²⁶ Žižek 2000:39.

²⁷ Berendt 1987:51.

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- ²⁸ *ibid*:53.
²⁹ *ibid*:53.
³⁰ Žižek 2000:17.
³¹ *ibid*:17.
³² *ibid*:17.
³³ Berendt 1987:59.
³⁴ *ibid*:59.
³⁵ *ibid*:59.
³⁶ Žižek 2000:39.
³⁷ *ibid*:40.
³⁸ Bogue, Ronald. *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts*. New York: Routledge, 2003:47.
³⁹ Berendt 1987:59.
⁴⁰ Deleuze, Gilles. *Bergsonism*. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, trans. New York: Zone Books, 1988:16.
⁴¹ Berendt 1987:74.
⁴² *ibid*:73.
⁴³ Lynch discusses this in an interview in *Pretty as a Picture: The Art of David Lynch* (1997), directed and produced by Toby Keeler.
⁴⁴ Berendt 1987:88.
⁴⁵ *ibid*:88.
⁴⁶ *ibid*:89.
⁴⁷ *ibid*:112.
⁴⁸ *ibid*:113.
⁴⁹ *ibid*:113.
⁵⁰ Bogue 2003:14.
⁵¹ *ibid*:14.
⁵² *ibid*:18.
⁵³ *ibid*:18.
⁵⁴ *ibid*:16.
⁵⁵ *ibid*:16-17.
⁵⁶ *ibid*:23.
⁵⁷ *ibid*:44.
⁵⁸ *ibid*:45.
⁵⁹ *ibid*:52.
⁶⁰ *ibid*:55.
⁶¹ *ibid*:68.
⁶² *ibid*:68.
⁶³ The particular analogy of the tuning fork was suggested to me by Carole Zucker, an analogy which couldn't be more appropriate in the present context. Thanks Carole.
⁶⁴ McKenna, Terence. *True Hallucinations*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993:200.
⁶⁵ *ibid*:201.
⁶⁶ Chion, Michel. *David Lynch*. Robert Julian, trans. London: BFI, 1995:68.
⁶⁷ *ibid*:69.
⁶⁸ Nochimson, Martha P. *The Passion of David Lynch: Wild at Heart in Hollywood*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997:124.
⁶⁹ Kaleta, Kenneth C. *David Lynch*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993:72.
⁷⁰ *ibid*:73.
⁷¹ Chion 1995:72.
⁷² Nochimson 1997:127.
⁷³ *ibid*:127.
⁷⁴ *ibid*:127.
⁷⁵ *ibid*:127-128.
⁷⁶ Kaleta 1993:72.
⁷⁷ Chion 1995:76-77.
⁷⁸ Nochimson 1997:133.
⁷⁹ Chion 1995:69.

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- ⁸⁰ *ibid*:70.
⁸¹ Kaleta 1993:75.
⁸² Chion 1995:69.
⁸³ *ibid*:69-70.
⁸⁴ Nochimson 1997:134.
⁸⁵ *ibid*:134.
⁸⁶ Gardner, Kay. *Sounding the Inner Landscape: Music as Medicine*. Stonington: Caduceus Publications, 1990:29.
⁸⁷ *ibid*:49.
⁸⁸ *ibid*:180.
⁸⁹ Nochimson 1997:127.
⁹⁰ *ibid*:127.
⁹¹ Kaleta 1993:76-77.
⁹² Nochimson 1997:134.
⁹³ Schafer, R. Murray. *The Tuning of the World*. Toronto: McLeland and Stewart, 1977:90.
⁹⁴ Nochimson 1997:122.
⁹⁵ *ibid*:119.
⁹⁶ Chion 1995:81.
⁹⁷ Thompson, Hunter S. *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Frogmore: Paladin, 1972: 121-127.

Conclusion:

“The Hum of Changing Opinion”

This thesis began with Tom Gunning’s suggestion that the technological separation of hearing and seeing, both from each other and from their grounding in the human body, has been a source of great anxiety in the 20th century. Throughout the paper it has been demonstrated that David Lynch has a major interest in exploring the effects of the kind of separation anxiety that Gunning speaks about. Chapter One examined Lynch’s use of the phonograph turntable as a symbol for the genesis of feelings of distrust surrounding technologies of representation and the ability of such technology to open bridges between worlds. Chapter Two expanded the discussion of technology to include various examples of how sound representation within domestic space relates to Lynch’s concern with anxieties surrounding marital fidelity. Chapter Three explored the paranoia often found in Lynch’s films in terms of sound’s ability to transcend the normal boundaries of time and space, collapsing notions of “inside” and “outside.”

Ultimately, the separation anxiety that arose around phonograph technology relates to an inability to reconcile the notions of human and machine, a fear of machines being capable of accomplishing what was once the strict domain of the human being. Witnessing a machine that speaks is akin to stepping outside oneself, a displacement of one’s inner processes to a location outside the body. Essentially, this displacement amounts to the stress R. Murray Schafer relates to his idea of “schizophonia”: the technological separation of a sound from its source.¹ In Chapter Three, it was suggested that an understanding of the world as sound can yield the awareness that all things in the universe are connected, and that boundaries between “inside” and “outside” can be

thought of as functions of perspective. With a change in perspective, people might be able to get outside themselves just enough to transcend the separation anxiety born of artificially imposed boundaries. Such transcendence ultimately amounts to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of deterritorializing the refrain: breaking down the established borders between hearing and seeing, inside and outside, or time and space, and actively engaging with our environments through constant recontextualization.

The three main elements of the refrain that allow for its deterritorialization are the "organizing point, territorial circle, and cosmic vector."² If one were to draw a diagram illustrating these three elements, there would be a central point, a surrounding circle, and a line stemming from this point radiating outwards across the boundary of the circle. Now think of a turntable whose central point is the unmoving axis, surrounded by the territory of the circular disc with the material recorded on it, and the line of flight to new territories delineated by the tone arm which, in reality, serves this very function by transferring the recorded material to locations well beyond the disc itself. This analogy provides yet another example of the power of the turntable as a symbol for the transcendence of time and space through recontextualization. Throughout this thesis we have discussed the status of the turntable and related technologies of representation as powerful signifiers of recontextualization and have examined how they have been used as such by Lynch and many other artists. Lynch's interest in the concept of sampling has been clearly addressed, illustrating his many strategies for exploring recontextualization and its relevance to the changing awareness of the world that his characters often exhibit.

In Lynch's films, characters struggle with knowledge of themselves and their environments. Those who come close to transcending the ordinary territories of human

beings often become lost, self-destructive, and paranoid. All three of these things are symptoms of schizophrenia, but they need not be considered in strictly negative terms. Paranoia is often nothing more than a heightened awareness of one's environment beyond what is sanctioned by society; self-destruction is often a desire for intense change; and being lost is often the best way to get somewhere you've never been.³ Lynch's films often illustrate concepts associated with the schizophrenically paranoid, such as having characters hear voices and being constantly aware of everyone eavesdropping on everyone else. However, such awareness is also a sign of how connected everyone is. This connection between people is often illustrated through Lynch's depictions of auditory environments suggesting that, on some level, he is dealing with the idea of the world as sound. The fact that the paranoia surrounding this connection between people is deemed to be a negative state of mind is indicative that many of us are not yet ready to fully join with our environments, to transcend the established boundaries that have provided comforting structure for so long.

Nochimson speaks of the recurrent conflict in Lynch's work between "nature," with all its "unseen balances and...mysterious, nonconscious economies," and "conscious culture marked by the reductive linearities of language, with its fierce, logical coherence."⁴ She suggests that Lynch's strategy is to seek out moments of balance through the collision between nature and conscious culture: "These rare moments of balance imply the shape of the arc in their temporary interface between human determination and natural energies, but they do not abolish the perpetual vivacious tendency in life toward dissonance and apparent disorder."⁵ Lynch's films do seem to gravitate towards contemporary conceptions of dissonance, but it is in these moments that

some of his most beautiful harmonies between sound and image are found. Lynch is at the forefront in examining the roles of tension and conflict in the cinema. The darkness that permeates so much of his work need not be seen as expressions of pessimism and despair, but rather the positivity inherent in learning new ways of thinking about the world, which he in turn displays through his art.

It is the act of coming together that is important for Lynch, whether that coming together is understood as being harmonious or dissonant. It's all coming together in the end, even if many of Lynch's characters don't quite find their way within the space of his stories. As Nochimson notes in her Coda on *Lost Highway*: "Fred [Bill Pullman] retains eternally the possibility of reaching the humanizing level of the subconscious with its power to connect in a wholesome way. In Lynch's words: 'The movie just wasn't long enough.'"⁶ Lynch's work suggests that if our own lives are long enough we can free ourselves of the shackles of imposed isolation and find our lines of flight – to finally hear the inaudible noises that are a part of the very fabric of our existence.

Lynch's movies are rarely long enough to show the final outcomes of the fates to which his characters seem destined. This is, in part, because Lynch isn't interested in fate as pre-determination. He doesn't explore the end result of people learning to connect with the world in new ways, but seems more interested in the process of changing perspectives and the symptoms of such change. Interactions with technologies of representation, particularly those of sound recording and transmission, are a major part of the environments in which Lynch's characters experience changing awareness. The idea of technological imperfection being an extension of human imperfection allows

interaction with such technology to help Lynch's characters increase an awareness of themselves and their environment.

Finally, perhaps the sonic by-products of technology in Lynch's films, so often associated with transcendence between isolated worlds, might best be understood in terms of a lyric from Paul Simon's "Changing Opinion" (written for Philip Glass' *Songs from Liquid Days* - 1986). Searching all over an old apartment to find the source of a mysterious electrical sound, Simon's lyric postulates that "maybe it's the hum of changing opinion." As so many of the examples given in this thesis suggest, the sonic environments of Lynch's worlds can be understood as existing both within the minds of his characters as well as on the outside. Indeed, many of these sonic environments are illustrative of the changing awareness that his characters often struggle with, awareness that dissolves boundaries between inside and outside. Maybe all the auditory anomalies that Lynch so often associates with electrical technologies of representation are mere extensions of the buzzing taking place in the minds of people grappling with new ways of being in the world - ways that can embrace the wholeness of human experience without anxiety surrounding the technological separation of the senses. This would entail an embracing of the technology responsible for the separation in the first place. Starting from scratch, in the end, refers to an understanding of the connections between humans and the technologies we use to re-create ourselves outside the confines of the body. One of the main connections made between human and technology comes through observing the similarities in our mutual imperfections. Just as the "scratch" transcends sound and image, so does it transcend the boundaries of inside and outside, between human and machine. Indeed, a scratch on human flesh is also a fundamental marker of our own

materiality, a materiality we try both to escape and to embrace through interaction with technologies of representation.

Notes

¹ Schafer, R. Murray. *The Tuning of the World*. Toronto: McLeland and Stewart, 1977:90.

² Bogue, Ronald. *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts*. New York: Routledge, 2003:51.

³ In the *Seinfeld* episode where J. Peterman (John O'Hurley) makes his first appearance, he bumps into Elaine (Julia Louis-Dreyfus) wandering the streets aimlessly in the middle of a downpour. Upon asking her if she's alright, she says "I'm lost," to which he responds: "That's the best way to get somewhere you've never been." My repeated exposure to this episode is directly responsible for my inclusion of this line here, so it would be unprofessional of me not to cite the reference.

⁴ Nochimson, Martha P. *The Passion of David Lynch: Wild at Heart in Hollywood*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997:201.

⁵ *ibid*:201.

⁶ *ibid*:216.

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