

# Inside David Lynch: An Esoteric Guide to *Twin Peaks* (1990-92)



The sacrificial victim, Laura Palmer

*I learned that just beneath the surface there's another world, and still different worlds as you dig deeper.*

– David Lynch

If you've ever sensed the flimsy, thin veneer of what parades itself as the good ole US of A, and felt a bit like you've been sold a fake, then David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* is a series you must see. More like an initiatory experience than a mere television series, *Twin Peaks* functions as a hilariously terrifying vision of the real America lurking in the seedy underworld beneath the façade of white picket fences, much like the picturesque severed ear on the beautiful lawn in his celebrated 1986 comedic horror, *Blue Velvet*. *Twin Peaks* might even properly be titled an esoteric dark satirical soap opera. There are countless reviews, essays and analyses of Lynch and *Twin Peaks*, but almost all miss the complex system of symbols and hidden meanings that relate directly to high-level occultism.

Before we go there, we must discuss set and setting: *Twin Peaks* is aptly described as quintessential Lynch. Fans often speak of scenes being "Lynchian," but nothing stands out with that epithet better than this surrealist, neo-noir melodrama that magically captures the spirit of America itself. Differing from later Lynch focused on Hollywood (*Inland Empire*, etc.), *Twin Peaks* is more akin to his 1990 film, *Wild at Heart*, in its presentation of America in miniature. Like later Lynch films, however, *Twin Peaks* does share its deeper occult symbology with films like *Lost Highway*, *Mulholland Drive* and *Inland Empire*. In this analysis, we go even deeper into that unique place, the subconscious dreamscape of Lynch, and decode the scenes and images many still find mystifying 25 years later.

Worth mentioning before exploring the narrative itself is Lynch's preferred style. Part horror, part neo-noir, part comedy, part melodrama and part soap opera, the Lynch/Frost collaboration collates a vast array of Hollywood classics, from Hitchcock "doubling" to Otto Preminger's 1944 noir classic, *Laura*. Parallels between the myna bird from Hitchcock's *The Birds*, and the hard-hearted detective who finds himself taken with an apparently murdered Laura, abound, and Lynch intentionally includes countless parallels to sprinkle his work, derived from the Golden Age of cinema.

As we enter the world of *Twin Peaks*, protagonist Agent Dale Cooper (played by Kyle MacLachlan) arrives to investigate the enigmatic murder of popular high school blonde babe, Laura Palmer (played by Sheryl Lee). Based on an unsolved murder from *Twin Peaks* co-director and creator Mark Frost's hometown, Laura will function as the focal point for the show's arc. However, as Agent Cooper unravels the actual story of Laura's demise, the truth involves a much wider conspiracy than originally conceived. With his unorthodox divinatory methods of solving crime, Cooper astounds local law enforcement with the concept of utilizing synchronicity to associate similar names with inanimate objects in a game of rock toss. This odd practice will configure Cooper as both a classic pulp detective figure along the lines of Sam Spade, but also grant a mystical

side from which he will draw to peer into the psychosphere. Ioan P. Couliano writes, citing Eliade, of the shaman in descriptive terms that capture the spirit of a Lynch work:

Mircea Eliade defined shamanism not as religion properly speaking, but as a “technique of ecstasy,” a system of ecstatic and therapeutic methods whose purpose is to obtain contact with the parallel universe of spirits and to win their support in dealing with the affairs of a group or of an individual.<sup>1</sup>



Bad Laura and her double: the good girl Maddy Ferguson.

As I commented in previous analyses, Lynch, through Cooper, is drawing on a highly complex and deeply rooted Eastern notion of formal and essentialist association that extends beyond immediate space and time. The stage is thus set for Cooper to be much more than a clever detective, but rather we see the emergence of his role as an other-world traveling shaman. Later in the series, his spiritual “gifts” are noted by Native American deputy Hawk and General Briggs, where Cooper is eventually revealed to be the one who can travel to, and call, between the worlds, fulfilling the role of the magician from the series’ famed tagline below, “fire walk with me.” This is the role of the shaman in reference to Lynch’s *Lost Highway*, citing Levenda’s analysis:

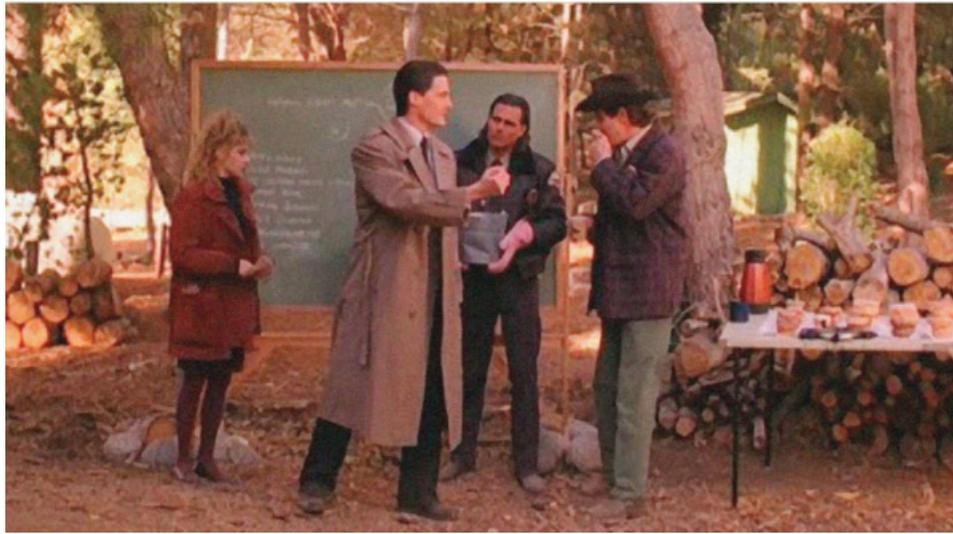
In *Twin Peaks*, it is the light in the morgue over the place where the body of Laura Palmer had been kept, and which is then visited by Mike, the one-armed man [played by Al Strobel], who recites the famous poem:

*Through the darkness of futures past  
The magician longs to see;  
One chants out between two worlds  
“Fire walk with me.”*

There, in a strange little verse, we have the key to unlocking the mystery not only of *Twin Peaks* but virtually all of Lynch’s films: the suspension of normal laws of time (“futures past”) and the idea that the magician lives “between two worlds.” The suspension of normal, linear narrative event in favor of a dreamlike, hallucinatory set of images that are taking place all over the fourth dimension is part of Lynch’s appeal as a director, and part of what makes his films so frustrating to the filmgoer. His realization that there are two worlds, and a place to stand between them, is what contributes to his aura as a modern, twenty-first century initiate of the Mysteries, for that is what “mystery” films are: elucidations of the core Mystery behind reality.<sup>2</sup>

And this forms the solution to *Lost Highway*, as well. The shamanic and magical elements are here in full force, as Fred is a character trapped in different psychical worlds that seem to unfold and envelop other psyches. Interpreting *Twin Peaks* accurately thus involves understanding the notion of “twilight language,” or Sandhyabhasa. It is my contention that *Twin Peaks* should be read in this way, as if the series itself were a yogic text, and this is natural given Lynch’s (and Agent Cooper’s) preference for eastern meditation. Indian scholar Vijay Mishra comments on the ambiguous semiotic discourse involved in twilight language as follows:

“Tantric texts are often composed in an intentional language (Sandhyabhasa), a secret, dark, ambiguous language in which a state of consciousness is expressed by an erotic term and the vocabulary of mythology or cosmology is charged with Hatha yogic or sexual meanings. According to Eliade...it is translated “enigmatic language” and Max Muller called it “hidden language.... All the works of Sahajayana are written in the Sandhyabhasa ... of light and darkness ... partly light, partly darkness; some parts can be understood, while other parts cannot.”<sup>3</sup>



Cooper's methods of reading dreams, visions and omens, become an insight into the metaphysics of Twin Peaks. From the film *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*, we are given the impression that Laura's spirit has summoned Cooper from the FBI to come and investigate. Consistently through the series Cooper receives messages and clues from this spirit realm, or what might accurately be called the *aether* or astral realm.

As he sleeps, his higher self enters this realm and communicates with an assorted cast of shades, ranging from Laura Palmer, a young version of David Lynch, a midget known as "The Man from Another Place" (played by Michael J. Anderson), and a giant. Channeling these entities, Cooper gradually unravels the twilight language script behind the wooded Washington city, and we, the viewers, embark on the same initiatic journey of decoding the script as Cooper.

From reading the simulacra within simulacra, Cooper begins to discover that the secret of Twin Peaks involves the black market, where town tycoon Ben Horne organizes and controls local prostitution, gambling and drug running through his private club, One Eyed Jacks. The nomenclature here is significant, as town oddball Nadine only has one functioning eye, and later dissociates to a younger version of herself, as well as possessing excessive strength. Nadine functions as a comic foil to Laura, but her initial psychosis and dissociation to a different persona is a key to Laura Palmer, as we will see.

One Eyed Jack's is the locale of Ben Horne's (played by Richard Beymer) control of vice, with connections to larger criminal mafia organizations personified in the characters of the Renault brothers. Horne's network includes the legitimate face of several businesses in town, from the Great Northern Hotel, to Horne's Department Store, while secretly there is a nearby casino and cathouse. While not directly involved in the occult, Horne is the archetypal 80s businessman, who had no direct involvement in the murder of Laura Palmer. While briefly accused of the murder, the reality surrounding Laura is much darker and complex.

Cooper discovers through the eventual disclosure of Laura's secret diary that she was raped since age twelve by her father, Leland, (played by Ray Wise), and a spirit named "Bob." Bob is a former killer who has become a demon in the afterlife and possesses individuals such as Leland, and later Windom Earle, to commit crimes such as pedophilia and sacrificial murder. This frightening process of dividing the psyche through trauma is an aspect of the oligarchical plan which is not to heal man, but rather to end man, as the Royal Society openly states.

Concerning alters and the split *psyche*, I noted:

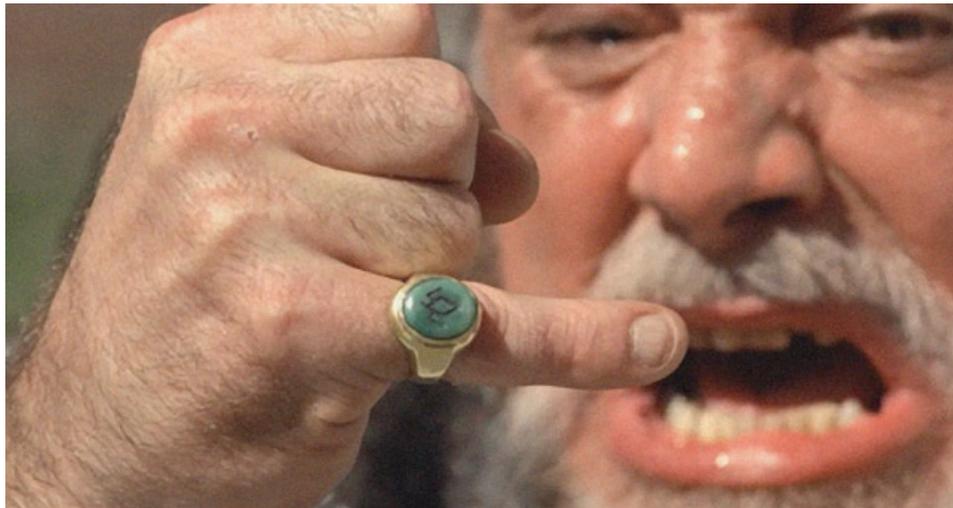
Considering specifically the fragmentation of the psyche, the extreme versions appear in the diagnoses of MPD/DID and schizophrenia, with the unifying factor being severe trauma, often in childhood.<sup>4</sup> Trauma later in life appears in "Post-traumatic Stress Disorder," with the same patterns of dissociation and fragmentation and psychosis often appearing.<sup>5</sup> What is almost never discussed, though the evidence surfaces daily, particularly with former military and pop star circles are the realities of ritual abuse. Having read several works on the subject, ritual abuse appears frequently in these cases, yet goes unmentioned in the mainstream. This tide appears to be changing with the case of Jimmy Savile and his network, as even the mainstream media has been forced to report on the avalanche of officials involved in occultic and ritual abuse."<sup>6</sup>

Not only is there a black market of prostitution and the luring of young girls into porn, there is a cult that exists amongst Twin Peaks' elite that formerly met in secret for ritual magick ceremonies. As the thread unravels, the spirit of Bob serves as the foot soldier for the Man from Another Place, organizing an occult marriage ceremony for the girls offered by Leland and other cult participants. Starting with drugs and porn, the girls are lured into prostitution and even hints of snuff films emerge.



Black market control of the vices through Ben Horne's One Eyed Jack's. Jack is a perennial term for the devil, and the single eye symbolism mirrors that of Nadine.

Behind the cult is the real dark power behind Twin Peaks, the Black Lodge. In-between worlds, the Black Lodge bears a striking resemblance to irregular forms of masonry, also known as Black Lodges, where dark arts are performed. The Black Lodge is also mentioned in Crowley's novel, *Moonchild* as members of the Golden Dawn, and the reports of Lynch asking his actors to speak and walk in reverse for filming the astral scenes in the lodge may have Crowleyan undertones, as well. All of this is told in striking detail in *Twin Peaks*, as Cooper's visions demonstrate a human sacrificial component. In other words, Bob is a demonic force subservient to the Man from Another Place, whose lust for "fun" involves rape, pedophilia and murder. Also consistent in the narrative is old men who have their way with young girls, touching on pedophilia.



The one-armed Gerard/Mike (Al Strobel) displays the cult's magickal ring.

In possessing individuals for the purpose of carrying out these acts, Bob captures the pain and misery stored in the "blood" of his victims and pours them out as a sacrificial offering to the Man from Another Place. In perennial demonology, this concept has many precedents, as the maleficent spirits parasitically feed on the pain and misery of the victims. Critic Justine Smith comments from an aesthetic perspective:

Then, of course we have Bob. For those unaware, the town of Twin Peaks is similarly populated by a spirit lodge that travels or is somehow engaged by electricity. One of its members, perhaps its leader is Bob, who menaces Laura throughout her life. She claims that he has raped her since she was twelve and is similarly violent. In this scene he is not only a stark contrast to the pink-childlike bedroom, but he is searching for her hidden diary. The fact that he mirrors her reaction is another mode of doubling commonly found in surrealist work, it suggests a deep connection between them, however unwilling. Finally, we have the end of the scene where Laura's father exits the house. Having already entered that space we are fairly certain that he wasn't there before. Is Laura's father and Bob one and the same?<sup>7</sup>



The Garmonbozia/cream corn is the “food” of the pain and misery of the ritual sacrifice.

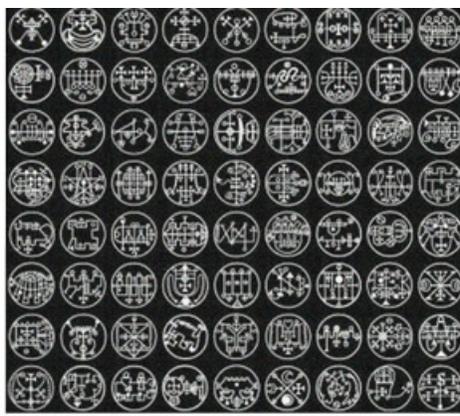
The answer to Smith’s question is yes. Specifically in the case of Laura, we find her youthful trauma from Bob/Leland has caused her to psyche to split into alters. This is revealed in the show explicitly, and more clearly in the film, where Laura demonstrates a duplicity of good girl/bad girl, detailing in her diary the trauma she was unable to cope with from her father’s own personality splits. Leland, just like Laura, was subject to a dual personality, with Bob eventually taking possession.

This is strikingly revealed in the driving scene in the feature film, where Leland encounters Gerard/Mike wearing the cult ring, functioning as a “trigger” for Laura and Leland to dissociate. Not only was Laura lured into the world of prostitution; she was subject to ritual abuse. In this regard, the symbology of the ring suggests both the goat and the demonic, with inverted horns, as well as a ring, which in another sense is a group or cabal. It also displays the different planes of existence and the portal between the two peaks, in a three-tiered sense of White Lodge, earth, and Black Lodge.

Note the sigil next to Cooper hanging on the chalkboard.



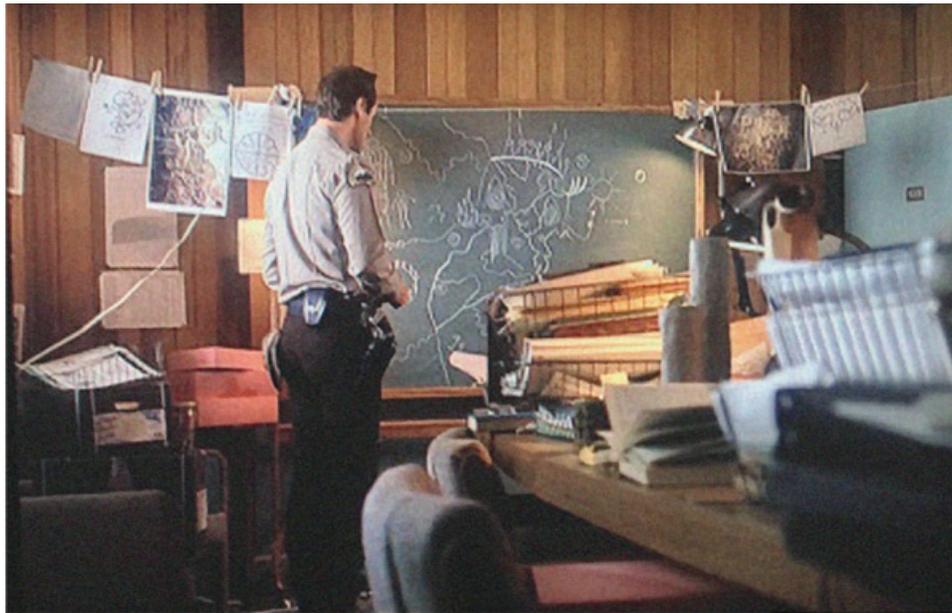
What almost all researchers have missed is the crucial imagery at the police station, where in the background Cooper and Sheriff Harry Truman have pieced together ritual magick sigils. Presumably connected to the crime scenes and former FBI Agent, turned psychopath, Windom Earle, the ritual magick sigils are explained in a video of Earle describing the tapping into the left-handed path power of the dark side, through the Black Lodge. The sigils in *Twin Peaks* are in fact sigils from Goetia, or the *Lesser Key of Solomon*, which specifically relate to the invocation of demons. Scorched engine oil throughout the series is a reference to the oil sludge found at Galstonbury Grove, the site of the forest portal, which includes a reference to Arthurian mythology.



Symbolic sigils from the Goetia, for the invocation of demons.

Earle arrives to capitalize on the dark forces in Twin Peaks, seeking the portal to the Lodge in the woods. Hovering over a pool of black, viscous oil, the portal is the site of ancient ritual practice, where gods and demigods are invoked. Lynch seems to be saying here that America is a land of primeval fallen forces that rule our present reality from just behind the veil. This is also the significance of the consistent red veil imagery, accompanying any entrance to the Black Lodge, and the planetary and astrological conjunctions that determine the opening of the portals to the next world. “Fear,” Cooper says, “opens the door to the Black Lodge, and love the doorway to the White.”

Also revealed in this association of dubious characters is Major Briggs, a military mystic whose belief in the supernatural leads to classified connections with Project Blue Book, and the military’s UFO research.<sup>8</sup> In reality, Project Blue Book was a cover story for advanced technological testing of aircraft, yet even here we have a curious association, as Major Briggs’ classified work involves occult research. Briggs seems to be an approximation of the kind of real programs Jon Ronson describes in his *Men Who Stare at Goats*, where high level military and special forces soldiers participated in occult activities through the First Earth Battalion.<sup>9</sup>



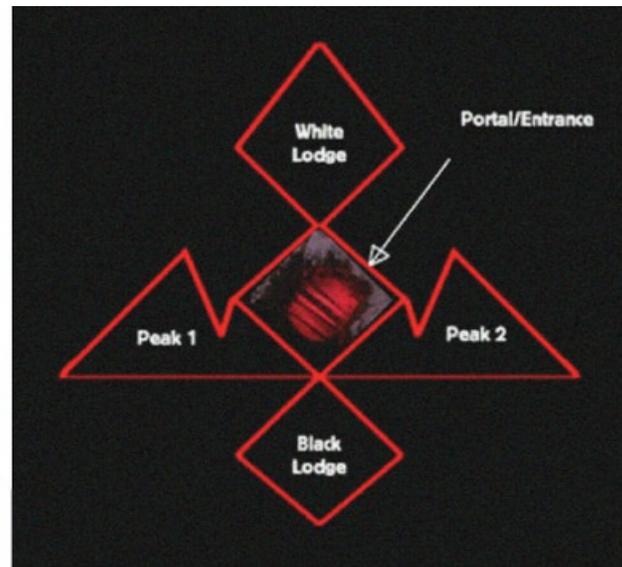
Yet another sigil on the other side of the board.

Also relevant are the recent stories of high-level ritual occultism and Satanism involving the Presidio and U.S. military elite.<sup>10</sup> With the associations of high level military, ceremonial magick and ceremonies conducted on the west coast in that beautiful forest, Bohemian Grove comes to mind, since one of the more famous taglines for the show is “The owls are not what they appear.” Lynch seems to be hinting that the real power structure in the soap opera charade that is America is actually subservient to dark forces beyond our plane of existence. Subservient to the demonic, the hypocritical face the establishment puts forward to cover the nefarious mirrors, the dual level of reality in the world of Twin Peaks, and the spirit world of the Black Lodge that undergirds it.

As Earle attempts to concoct his own ritual by sacrificing Cooper’s love, Annie (played by Heather Graham), Earle specifies that it must be done in the Grove in the magick circle. Entering the circle leads to the *aether*, where symbolically the death of the Queen fulfills Earle’s simulacrum of utilizing playing cards. The playing cards also hearken back to One Eyed Jack’s, where fortune and fate are personified in the series as elemental spiritual forces of nature.<sup>11</sup> This focus on the elemental

spirits is the reason for the Log Lady, whose sphinxlike intros to the show provide consistent clues to the overall narrative.

The Log Lady plays a minor role, but her comments on synchronicity, symbolism, and clues that point to forces of nature (Logs are wood, and thus the association with the hotel and the forest). In the background of *Twin Peaks* we thus have a mix of the elements of the classic world: air, earth, fire, water and *aether*. This elemental focus explains why Josie is trapped in the wood of the Great Northern Hotel, while others meet their demise in direct association with fire or burning exhaust and oil (Laura's death). In the ancient world, and equally true of the ancient Far East, nature was not a collection of chaotic atoms bouncing around, but a vivid landscape populated by countless spirits, angels and demons. It is this kind of world Lynch wants to be the backdrop for *Twin Peaks*.



The mystical toponomy of the land is laid out well in this graphic, where we see the portal in the midst of the 3-tiered planes of the lodges and earth.

The infamous climax of the series features a Cooper who has lost his way through fear, with the real Cooper trapped in the Black Lodge, and Bob possessing Cooper's body. Cooper's curiosity and desire for knowledge of the beyond, and in particular the dark side, would lead to his demise in much the same way as Fred Madison in Lynch's *Lost Highway*. Where the series began, with the possession of an initially good man, the series ends, with Cooper as a vessel of evil. What is described of Madison in *Lost Highway* is relevant in regard to Agent Dale Cooper.

*Lost Highway* is a non-linear, Neo-noir occult psycho-drama that looks at the dark side of the Hollywood underworld, where mafia, porn, crime and the occult are interwoven into a story about one man's psychic journey down a lost highway of his own stream of consciousness and thought. As the viewer travels with Fred Madison down this road, we are brought back to the very point he began, and the cycle starts again. Packed with dualism, illusion and mystery, *Lost Highway* is about life and the dark side of our own inner underworld, the subconscious, which Lynch mystically links to others.'



The good Cooper with Laura in the Black Lodge.

If we fail to realize the reality of these evils, such as possession and the mysteries of the subconscious, are we liable to be trapped like Fred in our own madness? His name itself is a clue – “Madison,” possibly symbolizing his descent into *madness*, as “Alice,” Renee’s alter, brings to mind *Alice in Wonderland* and alternate worlds and personalities. Was Alice a victim of mind control like Fred, or were they both willing accomplices of evil? Will our obsession with the Hollywood celluloid videodrome and its cousin, the now omnipresent surveillance society, bring us truth, or a descent into madness, depersonalization and dissociation, like Fred? Either way, Lynch is forcing us to examine that at bottom reality and the psyche are still mysteries to be decoded.

In the series’ strange ending sequence, Cooper discovers Bob has possessed Earle and has organized the last round of murders. Earle tries to steal Cooper’s soul, but Bob steps in to claim *his* rights on Earle’s soul. Cooper confronts his unconscious shade self, as well as facing up to his responsibility for past deaths. Cooper ends up trapped with Annie and Laura in the Black Lodge as a demonic Bob/Cooper takes possession of Cooper’s “vessel.” Worth noting here is that in the feature film, Laura’s initial journeys into the dreamscape/astral realm result in an encounter with Annie, who says she is “with Laura and Agent Cooper.” And as was the case with *Mulholland Drive*, electrical phenomena and static charges tend to accompany the manifestation of other-worldly spirits. The Black Lodge members appear to travel through electricity, and manifest in physical form like the Cowboy in *Mulholland Drive*.

In conclusion, the return of *Twin Peaks* seems to have even been predicted through Laura in the Black Lodge 25 years ago. Amazingly, Laura tells an aged Cooper “I’ll see you again in 25 years,” hinting that it would return. With the recent announcements of Showtime picking up the reboot, we can expect an even deeper foray into the unconscious – both of Laura and Cooper. Whether the show returns or not, with the original series and film, we have an amazingly precise window into the real America, a land haunted by the primal, elemental spirits of the past, and controlled by a cult that adheres to these ancient beliefs. The American power elite is really like Ben Horne, subservient to preternatural forces they cannot control, and behind this veil of obscurity lies an occult elite, whose power seems to derive from a Black Lodge.



I'll see you again in 25 years.

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<sup>1</sup> Eliade, Mircea. *Out of This World*. Boston: Shambhala, 1991, pg. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Levenda, *Sinister Forces* Bk. III, 151.

<sup>3</sup> Mishra, Vijay. *Devotional Poetics of the Indian Sublime*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1991, pg. 221.

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<sup>4</sup> "Dissociative Identity Disorder." *Psychology Today*. 24 November, 2014. Web. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/conditions/dissociative-identity-disorder-multiple-personality-disorder>

<sup>5</sup> Spiegel, David, M.D.. "Coming Apart: Trauma and the Fragmentation of the Self." *Dana.org*. 31 January, 2008. Web. [http://www.dana.org/Cerebrum/2008/Coming\\_Apart\\_\\_Trauma\\_and\\_the\\_Fragmentation\\_of\\_the\\_Self/](http://www.dana.org/Cerebrum/2008/Coming_Apart__Trauma_and_the_Fragmentation_of_the_Self/)

<sup>6</sup> Dyer, Jay. "Fragmentation of the Psyche and Nous." *JaysAnalysis*. 5 April, 2015. Web. <https://jaysanalysis.com/2015/04/05/fragmentation-of-the-psyche-and-the-nous/>

<sup>7</sup> Smith, Justine. "David Lynch and Surrealism in Twin Peaks, Mulholland Dr. and Lost Highway." *PopOptique*. 10 March, 2013. Web. <http://www.popoptiq.com/david-lynch-and-surrealism-in-twin-peaks-mulholland-dr-and-lost-highway/>

<sup>8</sup> Hynek, J. Allen. *The Hynek UFO Report*. New York: Dell Publications, 1977, pgs. 272-8.

<sup>9</sup> Channon, Jim. "The First Earth Battalion: Dare to Think the Unthinkable, Ideas and Ideals for Soldiers Everywhere." *Tgorski.com*. February, 2000. Web. <http://www.tgorski.com/Mind%20Control/First%20Earth%20Battalion%20010910.htm>

<sup>10</sup> McGowan, *Programmed to Kill*, 39-44.

<sup>11</sup> Guiley, Rosemary Ellen. "Elementals." *Encyclopedia of Magic and Alchemy*. New York: Checkmark Books, 2007, pgs. 86-7.



# Occult Brainwashing in Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* (2001)



The Academy Award-nominated 2001 film, *Mulholland Drive*, is remembered by most as a macabre, satirical nightmare dreamscape of Neo-noir centering around a typical girl-next-door's dream of becoming the next Hollywood starlet. That is basically the only thing viewers can agree the film is about. Reviewers speak of "surrealism," "imagination," "nightmares," and a few of the more philosophical pieces look at semiotics in relation to the performance at Club Silencio, yet no one seems able to truly crack the language of *Mulholland*, even with Lynch's clues and hints.<sup>1</sup> In my analysis, I want to propose something radically different – *Mulholland* follows *Lost Highway* as a story of Hollywood's dark side, but with a new twist, revealing actual occult brainwashing techniques. Not only that, Lynch's film will make "twilight language" references to a host of esoteric subjects, including the Manson murders and the CIA's MKUltra mind control programs.

Before delving into that topic, author Michael Hoffman defines "twilight language" as follows, in his *Secret Societies and Psychological Warfare*:

The path to unlocking this gnosis was centered in "twilight language," a once nearly universal subliminal communication system used in Egypt, Babylon, the Indian subcontinent and among the Aztecs, consisting of a combination of numbers, archetypal words and symbols, which in our time are sometimes embedded in modern advertising, and in certain modern films and music.... In Oriental Tantra, the mantra (including dharani, kavaca, yamala, etc.) is sonically calculated to induce a particular action. It forms part of the original Sanskrit concept of sandhyabhasa (twilight language). In Tantra, Sandhyabhasa ... is a language of light and darkness ... in this higher type of discourse, words have another, a different meaning: this is not to be openly discussed.<sup>2</sup>

In my *Lost Highway* analysis, I mentioned that David Lynch is a fan of Buddhist and Zen philosophy. Presumably, he is also aware of this Tantric conception of twilight language and its significance in terms of using and manipulating symbols and events. The opening of that analysis is appropriate for *Mulholland Drive*, as well:

The telling of the story is nonlinear, yet influenced heavily by classic 1940s Noir. *Lost Highway* is influenced by Zen philosophy and Jungian dreamscapes, but as for the deeper occult elements, it's necessary to understand why the stories are presented in an interlinking duality, as they are in *Mulholland Drive*. Zen philosophy is concerned with duality and its transcendence, as ultimate principles, as well as with the individual's particularized psyche, and its relation to the whole of reality. Zen is therefore a quasi-religious philosophy concentrated on ultimate metaphysical principles, known in philosophy historically as the problem of the one and the many. For Lynch, these philosophical questions are not just abstract philosophy, but also relate directly to the psyche in its conscious and unconscious/sleep states.<sup>3</sup>

In terms of decoding films and life in general, Lynch himself has said:

We all find this book of riddles and it's just what's going on. And you can figure them out. The problem is, you figure them out inside yourself, and even if you told somebody, they wouldn't believe you or understand in the same way you do. You'd suddenly realize that the communication wasn't 100 percent. There are a lot of things like that going on in life, and words just fail you.<sup>4</sup>

From this platform we can further posit that Lynch does have a secret significance for his films and the symbolism has a definite, although obscure, meaning, if the viewer is skilled enough at decoding the “twilight language.”

Before delving into the film, an important influence on Lynch should be considered. *Sunset Boulevard*, the dark 1950 film directed by Billy Wilder, shares many parallels to *Mulholland Drive*. *Sunset* is the famous story of a washed-up silent movie actress who loses her mind and becomes lost in an obsessive fantasy of her own making, leading to the death of a young screenwriter who becomes her consort. For its time, *Sunset Boulevard* was a challenging film, exposing the dirty underbelly of fame and fortune that most 1950s Hollywood fairy tales ignored. Though not entirely evident, it is arguable that Norma Desmond (the washed-up actress) dissociates into a completely fictitious psycho-nostalgic world where she remains a glamorous starlet. In the same way, Diane/Betty (Naomi Watts) in *Mulholland Drive* will embrace the same fate as Norma. This is why Rita/Camilla first stumbles onto “Sunset Boulevard” at the beginning of the film, following her car accident, and why Diane/Betty’s apartment features classic Hollywood posters adorning the walls.

We know the first half of the film is Betty’s mental projection or dream of what happened. What we can gather is that she went to Hollywood to become a movie star, but ended up a drugged-out whore. She won a dance contest that provided her an opportunity to move to Hollywood, and the first clue given is that, following the sock hop, we see the two old people, as the camera fades to the perspective of Betty crawling into bed to die (as she commits suicide at the end of the film). It is also the same bed Betty and Rita discover as they sneak into the apartment looking for “Diane Selwyn” (Betty’s real identity). As with *Lost Highway*, the end of the film is the beginning, with the split personality lead character becoming lost in a cyclical maze of her own delusions and dream realities. We know this because it is the same red pillow. When you crawl into bed, you do it to sleep, or die, which is an image of death, dreaming and dissociating into an alternate personality. In other words, Betty represents the aspiring American actress who has lost her identity in the Hollywood machine, which is something other than the illusory image presented to most.

However, there is a much deeper current at work here. Mulholland Drive, the actual street, has a connection to the Manson murders that few have noticed. Esoteric writer Peter Levenda explains in his *Sinister Forces, Book II*:

Helter Skelter was Manson’s “program” for the brainwashed murderers; it provided a context, and it also influenced their choice of bloody graffiti at each scene, thus attempting to lay the crimes off on the Black Panthers.... The brilliance behind these crimes had nothing to do with Manson himself. The brilliance was in selecting Manson and his assassins as the hit team, for it obscured the real motives and thus the real powers behind them. Further, due to the sensitive nature of the victims involved and their incestuous relationships with Hollywood, occultism, drugs, and “alternative” sexual practices-much of it captured on videotape-there was little danger of their friends running to the police with information that could get the real masterminds in trouble ... the blood had splattered all over Benedict Canyon in an aerial spray that reached Mulholland Drive, Beverly Hills, Bel Air, North Hollywood and Malibu, and the back lots of studios all over town. Drugs, murder for hire, sadomasochistic sex on videotape involving celebrities, and satanic rituals.... The “scarlet thread of murder” never ran so red as it did on August 9, 1969 at 10050 Cielo Drive.<sup>5</sup>

Levenda’s *Sinister Forces* trilogy is devoted to analyzing, among many other events, the Manson murders and Hollywood, noting the connections and associations in relation to the MKUltra mind control program of the CIA and covert intelligence agencies. Hollywood, Levenda argues, is a mass mind-control operation that ties into the occult and psychological warfare operations. His correlation between Manson and *Mulholland Drive* is echoed by famed Manson investigator Vincent Bugliosi, who quotes Manson associate Tex Watson:

They drove somewhere along “Benedict Canyon, Mulholland Drive, I don’t know [which street] ... until we came to what looked like an embankment going down like a cliff with a mountain on one side and a cliff on the other.’ They pulled off and stopped, and ‘Linda threw all the bloody clothes over the side of the hill...’ The weapons, the knives and gun were tossed out at ‘three or four different places, I don’t remember how many.’” (Helter Skelter, pg 245).



**CHARLES MANSON:** Famed American convict behind the Sharon Tate murder and 8 other “Manson murders,” committed by his devoted runaway and vagabond followers. Manson operated a small cult where mind control, drugs and brainwashing techniques were used to create willing assassins. The murders included occult themes and belief in a coming apocalyptic “race war” dubbed by Manson “Helter Skelter.” Manson was reportedly a “Theta Clear” level Scientologist while in prison, and according to some researchers, may have been handled by a higher level cult. Manson is currently in prison and, while still clinically insane, is arguably America’s most famous living convict.

I think it is highly likely Lynch has this in mind, as Levenda elaborates:

In January 1969, shortly after the discovery of Marina Habe's body in a gully off Mulholland Drive, several events occurred which are relevant to our study. CIA operation OFTEN was initialized by Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, based partly on documents which came into his possession after CIA Agent William F. Buckley (who would later be tortured and murdered by Arab terrorists) tossed the premises of Dr. Ewen Cameron, he of the "sleep room" and "psychic driving" experiments in Canada. Initially, Operation OFTEN was a joint CIA/Army Chemical Corps drug project...<sup>6</sup>

OFTEN was one of many MKUltra associated programs, relating to the infamous CIA goals of manipulating the psyche of soldiers and other unwitting subjects with the intent of determining whether a perfect spy could be created. Could an alternate personality be created that housed secret information that only a handler with the correct "keys" or code words, could unlock? As we can see from Hollywood itself, the programs were wildly successful, originating with wartime hypnosis studies. The names associated with the programs are Dr. Ewen Cameron, Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, Dr. Jose Delgado, Dr. Jolyon West, Dr. George Estabrooks, and others, as referred to earlier. The article mentions, first of all, Estabrooks' claim of the use of secret couriers and keywords that function as the triggers in the operative:

The "hypnotic courier," on the other hand, provides a unique solution. I was involved in preparing many subjects for this work during World War II. One successful case involved an Army Service Corps Captain whom we'll call George Smith.

Captain Smith had undergone months of training. He was an excellent subject but did not realize it. I had removed from him, by post-hypnotic suggestion, all recollection of ever having been hypnotized.

First I had the Service Corps call the captain to Washington and tell him they needed a report of the mechanical equipment of Division X headquartered in Tokyo. Smith was ordered to leave by jet next morning, pick up the report and return at once. Consciously, that was all he knew, and it was the story he gave to his wife and friends.

Then I put him under deep hypnosis, and gave him – orally – a vital message to be delivered directly on his arrival in Japan to a certain colonel – let's say his name was Brown – of military intelligence. Outside of myself, Colonel Brown was the only person who could hypnotize Captain Smith. This is "locking." I performed it by saying to the hypnotized Captain: "Until further orders from me, only Colonel Brown and I can hypnotize you. We will use a signal phrase 'the moon is clear.' Whenever you hear this phrase from Brown or myself you will pass instantly into deep hypnosis." When Captain Smith re-awakened, he had no conscious memory or what happened in trance. All that he was aware of was that he must head for Tokyo to pick up a division report.

On arrival there, Smith reported to Brown, who hypnotized him with the signal phrase. Under hypnosis, Smith delivered my message and received one to bring back. Awakened, he was given the division report and returned home by jet. There I hypnotized him once more with the signal phrase, and he spilled off Brown's answer that had been dutifully tucked away in his unconscious mind.

The system is virtually foolproof. As exemplified by this case, the information was "locked" in Smith's unconscious for retrieval by the only two people who knew the combination. The subject had no conscious memory of what happened, so could not spill the beans. No one else could hypnotize him even if they might know the signal phrase.<sup>7</sup>

Hollywood is also no stranger to the notion of mind-controlled subjects with alternate personalities, programmed with key words and triggers, as the 1962 film *The Manchurian Candidate* made evident. Another famous episode along these lines that relates to Betty is the story of Candy Jones, the famous model, who was also a mind-controlled subject, as Donald Bain's 1976 *The Control of Candy Jones* argues. Betty/Diane, like Candy, seems to blend between the 50s and present day, in her descent into mental illness, depersonalization and dissociation. This will provide the key to understanding the blue key Betty is given that unlocks the blue box in Club Silencio. The box and key are Betty's psyche and the key represents the key words and phrases, which her handler(s) possess.

My thesis is *Mulholland Drive* is the intersection of all of the above – from the demonic to MKUltra – with "twilight language," forming a revelation of the mystery of Hollywood itself, which is an occult *Inland Empire* (Lynch's third "Hollywood" film) of its own. The director thus functions as a kind of shaman, taking the viewer down a fire-walking path between these worlds. In particular, there is the world of reality, and the double – the world the alternate personality experiences. This is why Betty/Diane is the foil to Rita/Camilla, functioning as a doubled doubling.

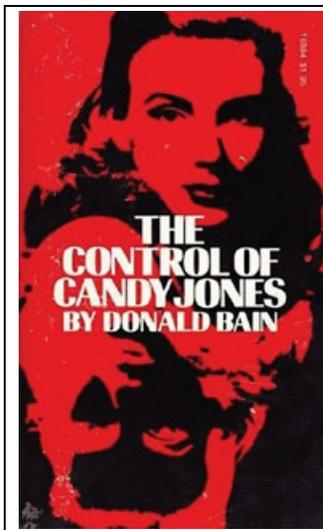
The film begins with Rita emerging from a limo wreck, dazed and confused with amnesia, following a hit man's attempt on her life. (It is significant that Pete in *Lost Highway* and Audrey in *Wild at Heart* also have amnesia after car wrecks). This limo ride is actually the dinner party later in the film where Camilla and Keshner (the young director played by Justin Theroux) are engaged. Camilla, Rita's alternate identity, is who ends up getting the part that Betty/Diane thought she would get in a film called *The Sylvia North Story*. While there is no real film by that title, there is a 1965 film called *Sylvia* about a beautiful blonde girl who has an alternate identity as a prostitute, whose name happens to be Sylvia West, calling to mind again the theme of good girl with a dark *persona*.



SIDNEY GOTTLIEB (1918-1999): American chemist and intelligence operative reportedly involved in regime change and assassination attempts, and later known for his participation in the infamous MK ULTRA projects. Gottlieb was known as the "sorcerer" and was directly involved in the development of LSD with the Sandoz pharmaceutical corporation.



George Estabrooks (1895-1973): Canadian-American Harvard psychologist and hypnosis expert known for hypnotizing soldiers during World War 2 and programming them with special "courier" messages that could be unlocked through "trigger" words. Estabrooks' work was also associated with aspects of the MK ULTRA program according to researcher John Marks in his *The Search for the Manchurian Candidate: CIA and Mind Control*.





ROMAN POLANSKI: Award-winning French-Polish film director known for many critically-acclaimed titles, as well as particularly revealing esoteric and elite perversion-related works like *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Ninth Gate* and *Chinatown*. Polanski's wife, Sharon Tate, was murdered in the Manson killings, while Polanski himself was forced to flee the U.S. over sexual abuse allegations.

The next day, at Winkie's Diner, two men are discussing a dream one has had. In the dream, the man in black says he saw a "man behind this place" that frightened him. As they approach the rear of the diner, they are confronted by a demon. This clues the viewer into the fact that the first half of the film, as most reviewers note, is itself a dream. The man/demon "behind this" is revealed in the next scene to be part of a secret club that appears to call the shots in Hollywood, deciding who gets what part in what film. Betty is then shown arriving in Hollywood with Aunt Irene and the old man who brought her, yet something odd happens again with the elderly couple. They ride away in a limo, in a scene reminiscent of something from *Rosemary's Baby*. Betty is left alone in an apartment complex with witchy, elderly people, like Mia Farrow in Polanski's film. Although this is a dream or Betty's fantasy, we get the impression that her elderly relatives have selected her for what she is about to endure. There seems to be a connection between Club Silencio and her Aunt Irene, whom Betty explains is also an actress.

As Adam Keshner tries to advance his Sylvia North film, the mafia shows up to tell Keshner who will play the lead role, contrary to his wishes. But remember: The mafia are actually controlled by the oddball elite Mr. Roque atop Ryan Entertainment (also from Club Silencio), who ultimately decided Camilla/Rita would play the part. Next, we see the hit man who asks a blonde prostitute if there are any new girls on the street. The prostitute is who Betty has really become, having hired the hit man to kill Rita/Camilla in the Winkie's. Rita explains to Betty/Diane that she was on the way to Mulholland Drive when the "accident" happened, but both girls appear to be amnesic. The money Rita/Camilla has is the money Diane/Betty used to hire the hit, which both girls hide away in a box. In other words, Diane/Betty has hidden away in her subconscious the plan to murder Rita/Camilla. It's not until the end of the film at Club Silencio that the two girls unite the key and the box to open it and discover that Rita is actually a projection of Diane/Betty's mind. This is why Rita begins to take on Betty's appearance, with blonde hair. Diane is revealed to be the waitress at Winkie's who ends up a failed actress and is the prostitute.

Keshner, however, does not want to cast Rita/Camilla, so he is forced to meet with the Cowboy, the otherworldly devil figure who tells Keshner he must cast whoever the occult elite decide. It is significant that the Cowboy appears and the lights go dim, and then disappears, proving he is not of this world. As Betty/Diane auditions for the part, it is not accidental that the part of Sylvia centers around a young girl who is sexually accosted by an older man – another hint that Betty/Diane is really a whore. Camilla gets the part and Betty begins to go insane, not yet realizing that her mind has split. When Betty and Diane have their homoerotic scene, Betty goes into a trance and starts to repeat what appear to be trigger phrases. The reason for the homoerotic scene is that Betty/Diane is in love with herself, not Rita – this is all a projection of her psyche.

Club Silencio. "It is all illusion."



Rita is merely an alternate personality of Betty/Diane. Rita chants, "silencio," "silencio," "no hay banda," and tells Betty/Diane she must accompany her to Club Silencio. Upon entering Club Silencio, the magician/emcee tells the crowd there is no band, only a tape recording. He asks what is real, since the Silencio performance is a tape – an illusion. As the magician creates a thunder effect with the elite members of Club Silencio looking on, Betty/Diane goes into convulsions. This hints at the likelihood of Betty being under mind control and Rita is her alter – as the Anton LaVey-looking magician disappears. Is this a reference to the Crowleyan subculture that undergirds much of Hollywood? Is Lynch using twilight language here to signify that there is a Crowleyan secret behind the meaning of *Mulholland*? Is this the meaning of Club Silencio? Club Silencio's entire performance seems to be about questioning the nature of Hollywood reality – that the reality spun by the theater is pure illusion, (an obvious reference once again doubling on reality). Following this scene, Rita inserts the key into the box, and the viewer enters it, and Betty/Diane is now back to reality – as a whore.

The Cowboy walks in on dead Betty and tells her it's time to wake up. Time is not operating chronologically here, as the entire film, like *Lost Highway*, is Diane/Betty's eternal recurrence of her destructive life. This is why the key is gone when

Diane is with Rita, and why Rita disappears and we discover Diane alone. The limo ride Diane/Betty takes to the party on Mulholland Drive is the limo ride at the beginning with Rita. Rita takes Betty down a “secret path” to the engagement party which leads to the final break for Betty/Diane. Coco, it is revealed is Coco, the witchy woman at the apartment complex. It is as if the entire scenario was engineered to bring Diane as a sacrifice by driving her insane.

The Cowboy briefly passes at the party, as Camilla’s alter appears to Diane. At this point we flash back to Betty/Diane as a strung out whore ordering the hit on Rita/Camilla. The hit man gives Betty/Diane the blue key that opens the box, as the camera pans to behind the restaurant where the demon from earlier opens the box and two tiny, demonic versions of the old couple emerge. Betty has now gone into a paranoid schizophrenia, and we discover that her mind has constructed an entire false reality, as Club Silencio elucidated. Betty/Diane then kills herself lying on the same bedspread we were shown at the beginning as the film concludes with Club Silencio’s blue-haired woman whispering, “Silencio.” Like Fred/Pete in *Lost Highway*, Diane/Betty is lost in a psychical prison of her own making. Yet, is Lynch also saying, on a deeper level, that Hollywood is an illusory reality – it is not a land of golden opportunity for the talented, but a mafia-style occult-run entity that uses mind control keys and triggers for useful dupes? Whether this is the aim of Lynch’s film, I cannot say, but I suspect it was not coincidental that “Silencio” is also the “sign of Harpocrates.” Is this the meaning of the twilight language?



Harpocrates.

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<sup>1</sup> “Lynch’s 10 Clues to Unlock the Thriller.” MulhollandDrive.net. Web. <http://www.mulholland-drive.net/studies/10clues.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Hoffman, *Secret Societies*, 207.

<sup>3</sup> Dyer, Jay. “Lost Highway (1997) - Esoteric Analysis.” JaysAnalysis. 17 February, 2014. Web. <https://jaysanalysis.com/2014/02/17/lost-highway-1997-esoteric-analysis/>

<sup>4</sup> Rodley, Chris, Ed. Lynch on Lynch. London: Faber & Faber, 1997, pgs. 25-6.

<sup>5</sup> Levenda, 103.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 87.

<sup>7</sup> Estabrooks, Ibid.