The spectator as transtextual detective in the metaphysical detective films of David Lynch

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It all starts here

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Abstract:

The Transtextual Detective in the Metaphysical Detective Films of David Lynch

The filmic oeuvre of auteur director David Lynch has a reputation among average spectators as being too "difficult" to understand. In particular, the Lynch films *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive* are considered by the average spectator to be devoid of any real meaning. Spectator theory provides insight into the structures through which spectators find or fail to find meaning in films. Spectator theory explains that the average spectator has a set of schemas for "reading" and understanding film, and that these schemas are shaped by the conventions of popular Hollywood cinema. The films of David Lynch do not adhere to these conventions, and thus challenge the average spectator's competency with regard to their ability to emplot a coherent and meaningful narrative from these films. In the case of *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*, the films present the spectator with multiple mysteries, yet never provide any solutions to these mysteries. If a spectator is to find meaning in *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*, then such a spectator needs an appropriate schema for interpreting these films. This dissertation aims to develop one possible schema which can be used to find meaning in *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*. To this end, the films *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive* are shown to qualify as metaphysical detective films, a genre of narrative which playfully interprets the conventions of classical detective narrative. Under the neologism "transtextual detective" this dissertation traces the characteristics of a spectator who would assume the role of a detective figure, existing outside of the borders of the film text, and calling upon a diverse collection of texts and schemata to solve the mysteries identifiable in these metaphysical detective films. In order to test the applicability of the schema of the transtextual detective, the writer undertakes a demonstration of an investigation into the films *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive* while assuming the role of a transtextual detective. The writer firstly indentifies the mystery of identity as a salient mystery in both films, before demonstrating how solutions to this mystery can be found in *Lost Highway*.

Key words: transtextual detective, metaphysical detective film, spectator theory, David Lynch, *Lost Highway*, *Mulholland Drive*, identity

Opsomming

Die transtekstuele speurder in die metafisiese speurfilms van David Lynch

Die film oeuvre van die auteur-regisseur David Lynch het ŉ reputasie onder deursnee filmkykers dat dit te "moeilik" is om te verstaan. Dit is veral Lynch se films *Lost Highway* en *Mulholland Drive* wat deur die gemiddelde kyker beskou word as van enige betekenis ontdaan. Volgens kykerteorie het die gemiddelde kyker vasgestelde skemas waarmee ŉ film "gelees" en verstaan word, en hierdie skemas is gevorm deur die konvensies van populêre Hollywood rolprente. Die films van David Lynch bly egter nie getrou aan hierdie beginsels nie en gevolglik daag dit die deursnee kyker se bevoegdheid uit met betrekking tot sy/haar vermoë om ŉ koherente en betekenisvolle narratief vir hierdie films te ontknoop. In die geval van *Lost Highway* en *Mulholland Drive* kom die kyker voor veelvoudige raaisels te staan, maar daar word geensins enige oplossings verskaf nie. Indien die kyker betekenis wil vind in *Lost Highway* en *Mulholland Drive,* het hy/sy geskikte skemas nodig om die films te interpreteer. Hierdie verhandeling het ten doel om een moontlike skema te ontwikkel wat aangewend kan word om betekenis in *Lost Highway* en *Mulholland Drive* te ontsluit. Vir die doel hiervan word die films *Lost Highway* en *Mulholland Drive* geklassifiseer as *metafisiese speurfilms*, ŉ narratiewe genre wat die konvensies van die klasieke speurverhaal op speelse wyse interpreteer. Met die neologisme *transtekstuele speurder* as grondslag, volg hierdie verhandeling die karaktereienskappe van ŉ kykerwat die rol van ŉ speurder aanvaar; ŉ figuur wat hom buite die grense van die filmteks bevind, en steun op ŉ uiteenlopende versameling tekste en skemas om die raaisels wat in hierdie metafisiese speurfilms geïdentifiseer is, op te los. Ten einde die toepaslikheid van die skema van die transtekstuele speurder te toets, onderneem die skrywer ŉ demonstrasie van ŉ ondersoek na die films *Lost Highway* en *Mulholland Drive*, terwyl hy die rol van die transtekstuele speurder aanneem. Die skrywer identifiseer eerstens die raaisel van identiteit as ŉ opvallende raaisel in beide films, voordat daar gedemonstreer word hoe oplossings vir hierdie raaisel in *Lost Highway* gevind word.

Sleutelterme: transtekstuele speurder, metafisiese speurfilms, kykerteorie, David Lynch, *Lost Highway*, *Mulholland Drive*, identiteit

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Notes on the text

1. Throughout this dissertation (with the exception of Chapters 5 and 6) the reader/spectator/transtextual detective is referred to as female. This was done to acknowledge an awareness of sensitivity surrounding gender issues. I hope that this does not cause any offense. Please read as male if desired.
2. Throughout the dissertation, films in David Lynch's oeuvre will be abbreviated as follows if discussed:

Eraserhead (EH)

The Elephant Man (EM)

Dune (D)

Blue Velvet (BV)

Twin Peaks (TP)

Wild at Heart (WAH)

Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me (FWWM)

Lost Highway (LH)

The Straight Story (SS)

Mulholland Drive (MD)

Inland Empire (IE)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUALIZATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This dissertation traces and explores the relationship which exists between spectator and film. Specifically, it is concerned with the relationship between spectator and metaphysical detective film[1]. Two metaphysical detective films by director David Lynch, namely *Lost Highway* (1997) and *Mulholland Drive* (2002)[2], will be analysed in order to explore this relationship in which the roles of both spectator and film will be considered. Working with the films under consideration, the dissertation is concerned with how Lynch encodes and constructs these films in order to lead the spectator to assume a certain role when interpreting these films. It will be argued that this role is that of a detective who simultaneously draws from and also exceeds the techniques of a classical detective, in order to emplot a narrative for the films and "solve" their meaning. This role of detective, played by a spectator, will be designated with the neologism "transtextual detective"[3]. When the spectator assumes the role of transtextual detective, the spectator actively participates in the creation of meaning for these films. Both spectator and film therefore contribute to the creation of meaning, as meaning can only be achieved through a process of co-creation.

Auteur[4] director David Lynch himself considers his films "mysteries" in which the spectator – whom he wants to become a "detective" – has to follow his "clues" in order

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[1] Metaphysical detective film is the filmic counterpart of metaphysical detective fiction.
[2] Hereafter abbreviated as LH and MD.
[3] In Chapter 4 the exact intentions of the term "transtextual" will be explained. Since the particular choice of term reflects the findings of further study undertaken in the next chapters, the reader will have to bear with some unclarity for now.
[4] If a director is considered to be an auteur, he is seen as the author of a film. Auteurs have specific stylistic and thematic elements that are constant throughout their films and become trademarks of the director and identify the director as the author of a collection of films (Naremore, 1999:10). The author is aware that the term *auteur* director is a contested term. The film making process is a collaborative one, and no single person can create an entire film on his/her own. Yet in the case of auteur theory the director is viewed as the leading force behind the film because he/she imprints a personal style. An auteur

to solve the "mystery" of the film for themself: "We are all detectives. We mull things over, and we figure things out. We're always working in this way. People's minds hold things and form conclusions with indications" (Wilson, 2007: 137). What does it imply when Lynch calls his films "mysteries" to be solved by a spectator who becomes a "detective"? Lynch does not want the spectator to be a passive receiver of meaning, but rather to be an active spectator, one who participates in the creation of meaning of his films. The film is a mystery in the sense that its meaning is unfixed and unsettled. The spectator is a detective who has to solve the mystery – the film – by gathering the film's clues and arriving at meaning.

Lynch's statement thus suggests that his films of mystery stand in contrast to the films that people generally think of as mystery or detective films. Such films are generally based on the genre of classical detective narrative, the most highly codified of all genres[5] (Cannon, 1980:42). Due to this high degree of codification, the text that adopts the genre awakens certain expectations in the spectator; mainly, that a detective, by applying logic and reason, will successfully interpret a series of clues which leads to the inevitable solution that diagrams the crime and explains its motive (Gregory & McCaffery, 1979:39). Although the spectator is "invited" to play along and try to solve the mystery before the end, these films never expect the spectator to be solely responsible for solving the mystery in order to achieve closure. Rather, the spectator depends on the figure of the detective to explain what has happened and 'whodunnit'. It is through the figure of the detective that the spectator is thus able to achieve closure.

In contrast to these traditional or classical detective films, Lynch's mystery films do not adhere to the same codified rules. In LH and MD, there is no detective to elucidate everything to the spectator; the solution to the mystery is thus not *directly* explained. If the spectator wants to find a solution and achieve closure, the mysteries of these films must be solved by themself. The spectator will have to search for clues and evidence,

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director can be seen as a kind of implied filmmaker (Wilson, 2009: 167), and implied version of the filmmaker expressed in the movie's detailed articulation.

[5] This codification began with Wright's *Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Fiction* (Rzepka, 2005:13).

and just as a detective, connect these together in order to create a narrative that explains what happened. In this way meaning will be found and closure will be achieved. This is what Lynch wants a spectator as detective to do. In this way, these Lynch films can be seen as metaphysical detective films, in that they are examples of metaphysical detective narrative.

Metaphysical detective narrative recalls the conventions of classical detective narrative and yet, serves to subvert them. As such, classical detective narrative provides metaphysical detective narrative with a readymade framework within which to develop an investigation into the way in which humankind confronts the elements of its existence and tries to organise them into meaningful patterns and wholes. The metaphysical detective narrative seems to insist that fragments of experience (reality's "clues") no longer add up to anything but an arbitrary pattern which is likely to disintegrate before our eyes. In classical detective narrative, options are gradually narrowed down until only one solution remains possible – the ultimate right answer. Metaphysical detective narrative rejects this and subverts it by gradually expanding options until no single solution is possible, but rather, manifold solutions are both possible and feasible (Gregory & McCaffery, 1979:43). Through these measures, it calls on the reader or spectator to act as the co-creator of meaning for the text, for our "reading" and interpretation are the major means of lending coherence to the narrative (Pyrhönen, 2008:103).

As examples of metaphysical detective film, the films under consideration therefore subvert traditional notions of filmic "gameplay", and do not provide a definitive sense of closure directly provided by the film. Since these films are designed to short-circuit the spectator, they are constructed in such a way to make it difficult for the spectator to create a narrative from its parts. Answers are not provided directly; rather, in order to obtain a sense of closure, to gain answers to the questions posed, the spectator must unravel the "clues" of the film to solve the mystery of it. It is not that the films have no meaning at all, but rather that they have neither one primary nor definitive meaning. They present the spectator with a manifold of meanings, and one must be chosen

based on the spectator's own interpretation or "solving" of the text, in order to co-create meaning. The relationship between spectator and metaphysical detective film thus calls for a detective figure which exists outside of the film to solve it. The responsibility of solving the film therefore falls on the spectator, and must become a surrogate detective.

Yet, as section 1.2 in this chapter will expound, it seems that the majority of spectators were not able to become such detectives, as most people found the films to be meaningless. Why is this the case? Why did the average spectator not accept Lynch's challenge and attempt to solve the mysteries of LH and MD themselves? This is largely due to the fact that these films challenge the competency of the spectator. The competency of the spectator depends on the ability to understand the language of film in order to negotiate meaning. The films under consideration do not meet the expectations that spectators have built up through years of watching traditional and popular film. The average spectator has built up a collection of schema which allows film to be understood and meaning in them to be found; the more schema the spectator has, the more competently a film is understood. However, for the majority of spectators, these schema are based on traditional and popular film which are not designed to challenge the spectator to take an active part in – and take responsibility for – the co-creation of meaning. Burch's (in Nelmes, 2003:102) term, Institutional Mode of Representation (IMR), can be used to explain why spectators have difficulty understanding films that challenge their competency. The term attempts to capture the idea that a normative set of ideas became established around about 1915-1917 as to what constitutes a mainstream feature film - and has remained the dominant conception of the feature film ever since. It presents an apparently 'common sense' notion of how a film should be constructed and how it should communicate with an audience. Mainstream film has thus endowed the spectator with certain codes and conventions which make a film easily understandable. The codes and conventions established for film by the IMR form schemata which enable spectators to understand a film; they establish a common ground on which the film and the spectator can meet. They have become a loose set of rules by which a spectator identifies and interprets the essential components of the narrative film (Kearns, 2008: 66).

Most spectators have the same skills and strategies for watching – and understanding - a film. Spectators are familiar with the structures and formulae of popular culture forms - the plots, settings and character types of different genres, as well as the language of popular cinema as codified by the IMR. These conventions are recognised and transformed through imaginations, 'suspending our disbelief' (Nelmes, 1999:139-140). As spectator theory explains, spectators behave more or less the same way because, other than in personal detail, their formations and competences are very similar within a given society (Nelmes, 1999:155).

Popular or commercial cinema, which invokes 'traditional' conventions of narrative (IMR), is the dominant form in cinema. When the spectator buys into the experience of such a film the promise of pleasure is bought into by implication - the promise offered by a form of cinema that can be handled comfortably because its familiar form is understood (Nelmes, 1999:142). Even though the form is familiar, there is still a negotiated reading of the film. The spectator may disagree with some aspect of the film, or feel that some of the questions created were not properly answered. However, these disagreements do not result in preventing the spectator's general understanding of as a meaningful whole. Therefore, although all films place some responsibility on the active participation of the spectator, responsibility varies in degrees, depending on how narrowly the film follows conventions. The more conventional the film, the less active the spectator's participation.

However, not all films follow the "rules of the game" as the spectator may expect. Many films deliberately manipulate the conventions and rules of traditional cinema in order to short-circuit the spectator; such films employ techniques which are unfamiliar to the spectator, and make it difficult to create a whole from its parts. They may short-circuit closure by leaving many of the gaps intentionally unfilled, not answering the questions posed by the film. While traditional cinema makes it relatively easy to emplot and create a narrative (because it sticks to the schema of plot), films such as these make it difficult. It becomes difficult to connect the parts causally to each other in a fashion that makes sense. In so doing this, these films subvert traditional interaction between spectator

and film and construct new rules which the spectator must figure out, in order to be a more active participant. Such films can be viewed as playful narratives which foreground *paidia*. *Paidia* is an informal activity which allows players to make and break their own rules, and it does not present a computable outcome. Playful narratives foregrounding *paidia* evoke the spirit of play: the dynamic creation and subversion of rules (Ryan, 2008:355). This is typical of postmodern narratives. For meaning to be co-created (a whole formed and closure obtained) between the spectator and such films call for a more active spectator, one who participates more fully in meaning creation by adapting to the playful nature of these films.

Therefore, if a spectator desires to find meaning and achieve closure in metaphysical detective films – such as LH and MD –a new schema must be adopted, one which allows the spectator to move beyond the confines and limitations set by traditional Hollywood cinema. The schema held forth in this dissertation is that of a transtextual detective. This type of detective, as already explained earlier, simultaneously draws from and also exceeds the techniques of a classical detective. By assuming the role of a transtextual detective, the spectator takes the responsibility of solving the metaphysical detective film's mysteries upon themself. In this way, a new relationship is thus created between spectator and film.

It can be concluded that, when dealing with metaphysical detective film, the degree of participation that is needed is much greater than that of popular cinema. These films challenge the spectator's competency by short-circuiting expectations, causing the ability to negotiate meaning to be inadequate. Because the average spectator has been encoded by the IMR, their competence for dealing with more difficult films, such as metaphysical detective film, is not up to the task. In order to solve these films, the spectator's competency needs to expand. The spectator has to become more active and even play the role of the detective themself. Through the course of this dissertation,

the characteristics and techniques of this surrogate detective will be clarified under the term transtextual detective.[6]

1.2 HISTORY AND RECEPTION OF *LOST HIGHWAY* AND *MULHOLLAND DRIVE*

The theoretical knowledge needed to understand how spectators find meaning in films and what constitutes their competency to do so has been reviewed. Continuing, it is important to consider the actual reception the films LH and MD from the average spectator. In order to better comprehend the films' reception, the history of the films' creation will also be considered.

LH, Lynch's "21st century *noir* horror film" (Lynch & Gifford, 1997:1), was released in 1997, five years after Lynch had delivered the critical and commercial flop *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*. The initial spark for the film came from the novel *Night People* (1992) written by Barry Gifford. In the novel, a character uses the phrase "lost highway"; the phrase stuck a cord with Lynch and he "loved" the idea of using it as a title. Lynch (In Rodley, 2005:221), describes his attraction to the phrase: "It's just a dreamy thing - 'Lost Highway'. It evokes all kinds of things in your head". Lynch mentioned this to Gifford and suggested that they should write a screenplay together (Rodley, 2005:221). Despite initially not agreeing on what *Lost Highway* should be, Lynch and Gifford eventually came upon a path which would direct the way forward for the project. The way forward was a result of some Lynch ideas dating back to the filming of *Fire Walk with Me*. Lynch (In Rodley, 2005:222) recalls:

> Then I told Barry about this series of things that came to me one night. The very last night of shooting Fire Walk with Me these things shot into my head. I was driving home with Mary Sweeney and I told her about them, and what I told her sort of scared her and it sort of scared

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[6] The rationale behind the naming of this term will be expounded upon in Chapter 4.

> me too. And when I told them to Barry he said, 'Jeez, I really like that,' and that was the start of a brand new direction […] This thing I had went all the way up to the fist hitting Fred in the police station-to suddenly being in another place and not knowing how you got there or what is wrong.

Lynch himself, contrary to his usual approach, actually provides a clue which provides insight into LH. While the initial spark for LH came from the Gifford novel, the genesis for the film's story and thematics was planted, as Lynch would later recall, during the infamous O.J. Simpson trial ("Lost Highway" DVD material). Lynch recalls that while watching the trial, he began to think about how a mind could trick itself to put a brutal act, like murder, in a place where it no longer had any horrific power over the individual. Linked to this thought is the term *psychogenic fugue*. Often wrongly attributed as the inspiration for LH, neither Lynch nor Gifford were aware of the term as they started writing. It was Deborah Wuliger, the unit publicist, who came upon the term during filming, and the co-writers subsequently incorporated aspects of the term into LH. As Lynch recalls, "The person suffering from it creates in their mind a completely new identity, new friends, new home, new everything - they forget their past identity."

Despite this clue which might facilitate interpretation and understanding, LH was met with critical and commercial indifference. Casual spectators were baffled by a film that was considered too weird, too bizarre, and which seemed to be completely devoid of any meaning. Critical response was no better. The critic Roger Ebert, well known for his general dislike of Lynch's films (Rombes, 2005:62), was on his part not impressed with the "empty stylistic façade" (Hainge, 2005:147) of LH, and said that:

> David Lynch's *Lost Highway* is like kissing a mirror: You like what you see, but it's not much fun, and kind of cold. It's a shaggy ghost story, an exercise in style, a film made with a certain breezy contempt for audiences. I've seen it

> twice, hoping to make sense of it. There is no sense to be made of it. To try is to miss the point. What you see is what you get (Hainge, 2005:143).

MD may have performed better critically than LH,[7] but the film was also viewed as being too confusing and difficult for (and by) the average spectator. The production history of MD cannot be ignored when discussing the film, as the transformations MD went through as it modulated between mediums - from rejected television series pilot to feature film - had a great impact on the final version of MD. In the process of having to "salvage" (Le Blanc & Odell, 2007: 109) the project, Lynch created a metaphysical detective film. Since typical spectators had no schema for dealing with such a film, it was ignored by the general public.

The name MD was first mentioned right after *Twin Peaks* went off the air. The original idea was to create a spin-off series which would be called MD. The suggestion for doing a spin-off show did not yield any success, but the name struck a cord with Lynch, just as the phrase "lost highway" had done. As Lynch (In Rodley, 2005:270) explains:

> It was just those words "Mulholland Drive". When you say some words, pictures form, and in this case what formed was what you see at the beginning of the film-a sign at night, headlights on the sign and a trip up a road. This makes me dream, and these images are like magnets and they pull other ideas to them.

Despite Lynch's complaints about the limitations of the television medium, and his problems with working within the constraints of the medium experienced during *Twin Peaks*, there is one aspect of the medium which does resonate with Lynch and draws him to television: the ability to tell a continuous story. According to Rodley (2005:155-156), the continuous story format of a television series afforded Lynch the ability to sink into the world of a story much more than is possible in a feature film and expand much more on themes and a larger group of diverse characters. The possibilities of a

[7] Lynch won the best director prize at the 2001 Cannes Film Festival and was also nominated for best director at the Academy Awards.

continuous story with a larger cast of characters than possible in a feature film, is what led Lynch initially to do the *Twin Peaks* television series, and which later made him want to return to the medium with MD.

Lynch (Rodley, 2005:270) recalls that during his initial pitch for the series to ABC, he had just two pages he read to them, focusing mainly on trying to convey to them the intended “mood” of the project. Lynch did not give many details about the story, only explaining that the show would be about a woman trying to become a star in Hollywood, and at the same time finding herself and becoming a detective and possibly going into a dangerous world. Lynch also described the basic beginning of the story, with Rita emerging from the car crash with a purse containing money and a blue key, but with no idea of who she is.

ABC bought the pitch and Lynch filmed the pilot. However, when ABC executives saw the first cut of the pilot, they “hated” it (McGowan, 2007:194). The pilot was deemed to be too long and boring, too weird, and too violent. Despite the fact that ABC had had no problems with the shooting script, the intervening period between script approval and pilot completion had seen a change in attitude about was acceptable on television, primarily in response to the so called “Columbine High School Massacre”. The media were very much in the spotlight, and taking the brunt of the criticisms (Le Blanc & Odell, 2000:84-85). Not only was MD not going to be picked up as a regular series, ABC was not even going to show it as a stand-alone film (McGowan, 2007:194).

But Lynch was not ready to let the project just disappear. He (and others) had worked too hard on the project and Lynch believed in his vision. Lynch hated the idea of leaving it unfinished (Rodley, 2005:281), as he explains (“Lost Highway” DVD material): “When you make something and it’s not completed and it lies in a half completed form, it would always be like a trauma, and you would have to make it complete. And so it’s like a loose end.” Lynch obtained the help of Studio Canal+, which bought the pilot from ABC and provided Lynch with additional funding. Lynch reassembled the cast and shot an additional 45 minutes of material. The old material and the new material was edited together to create the feature film version of MD (Le Blanc & Odell, 2007:109).

By having to tie up all the loose ends of the pilot in one film, Lynch created a complex metaphysical detective film that most spectators could not comprehend. "*Vertigo* on Valium" and "Raymond Chandler in *Alice in Wonderland*" (in Rodley, 2005:266) are just two of the journalistic sound-bites that have been used in order to describe the unusual and difficult nature of the film. MD did poorly at the box office and Studio Canal+, the French production company which funded MD, hoped to counter this by making the film more accessible to spectators by asking Lynch to provide the public with ten clues which could help a spectator to make sense of the film. This illustrates that Studio Canal+ was aware of the fact that it was the complex and un-conventional nature of MD which "scared off" spectators. Despite their attempts to make the film more accessible – by helping the public make sense of it – the film continued to be ignored by the majority of spectators.

In terms of the theory discussed thus far, the poor reception of the films can be ascribed to the lack of adequate schema available to spectators.[8] LH and MD present such a challenge to the average spectator because they do not conform to the spectator's expectations of narrative structure. In terms of gameplay, these films can be seen as 'games' that the average spectator finds too difficult to play. In terms of genre convention, they short-circuit the spectator's expectations that a detective figure in the film will solve the mystery and provide closure. The essential difficulty experienced by the spectator watching LH and MD is thus based on their lack of an appropriate schema.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In light of the context provided above, the following question will provide the focus for this dissertation: Given the complex and unconventional nature of the metaphysical detective films LH and MD, how is the spectator to approach their interpretation so as to find them meaningful? Furthermore, what schema could provide the spectator with the

[8] Of course, the films might also just be non-sensical. This dissertation nonetheless works under the assumption that the films offer an opportunity for insight and the question is rather what kind of schema would answer to the challenge.

competency to successfully negotiate with the film in order to emplot a coherent narrative and achieve closure?

1.4 THESIS STATEMENT

As an answer to the question provided above, this dissertation develops a schema adequate to finding meaning in the films LH and MD. In doing so, it is shown how these films can be classified as metaphysical detective films. It is suggested that the appropriate approach to interpreting the mysteries presented in the films, is that of the transtextual detective. A "transtextual detective" is a spectator who assumes the role of a detective, using techniques appropriate for solving the mysteries in the films, which will be explicated through the development of the study.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

In a sense, the question of an appropriate methodology is the object of the dissertation's study. It is after all the aim of the study to develop an applicable schema for the films LH and MD, where "schema" refers to the way in which the spectator interprets the films. Perhaps one way of defining the "methodology" of this dissertation is by briefly describing the schema that is put forth as the dissertation's thesis statement: the schema of the transtextual detective. It has already been noted how the transtextual detective draws from the techniques of classical detective fiction, while nonetheless exceeding them (the adaptation of these techniques is clarified in Chapter 4). It is worthwhile to note here that by exceeding the limitations of traditional techniques of detection, the transtextual detective is offered the freedom to eclectically incorporate ideas and theories from a theoretically infinite range of possibility. In the demonstration of the transtextual detective's method (Chapters 5 and 6), interpretations are drawn from moreover trauma theory, the uncanny and narrative theory of personal identity.

Perhaps another way of answering to the methodology of this dissertation is by explaining the rationale behind its chapter development. In the attempt to develop an appropriate schema for interpreting LH and MD, the first step is to determine and

explore the genre to which the films belong. In other words, the code provided by the text itself towards the space of negotiation is to be explicated. This first step is the aim of Chapter 2. The second step is to imaginatively design a schema befitting to this genre. This is the concern of Chapters 3 and 4. The third step is the affirmation of the theory put forth in the first two steps, by demonstrating its application to LH and MD. Chapters 5 and 6 answer to this need for demonstration.

1.6 CHAPTER OUTLINE

In order to present the investigation into the metaphysical detective films of David Lynch, this dissertation will be organised into two broad sections. The first section is comprised of three chapters, namely: Chapter 2, Chapter 3, and Chapter 4. These three chapters serve to lay the necessary foundation from which an investigation into LH and MD can take place. This foundation is laid as follows:

Chapter 2 is concerned with establishing whether considering LH and MD as examples of metaphysical detective films is justified or not. To this end, the chapter will extrapolate the characteristics of metaphysical detective film by comparing and contrasting classical detective narrative with metaphysical detective narrative. These characteristics will be applied to LH and MD in order to illustrate that they can be viewed as examples of metaphysical detective films.

Chapter 3 is concerned with identifying why the average spectator struggles to find meaning in these metaphysical detective films. It will be suggested that the problem lies with the average spectator's inadequate schema – the result of classic Hollywood cinema – which lacks the necessary scope to be able to successfully interpret metaphysical detective films. It will then be suggested that metaphysical detective film requires a spectator to employ a new and adaptable schema in order to solve it. The schema that will be held forth is that of the transtextual detective.

Chapter 4 will lay the final foundation for the investigation into LH and MD. This chapter is concerned with defining the term transtextual detective, as well as identifying the characteristics of such a detective. The chapter will firstly consider the two implications

of the term transtextual as used in the neologism “transtextual detective”, by considering the relation between detective, reader or spectator, and narrative, as well as considering the connection between the term transtextual detective and Genette’s term transtextuality. The chapter will then consider how the requirements set by metaphysical detective film are met because of the transtextuality of the transtextual detective, before presenting the characteristics of the transtextual detective as elucidated through this discussion.

The second broad section of this dissertation presents the actual investigation into the metaphysical detective films LH and MD. This second section is comprised of two chapters, namely Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

Chapter 5 will present the first part of the investigation. It will primarily be concerned with illustrating how the transtextual detective is led to consider the mystery of identity as a salient mystery to solve in both films. From this, two questions are identified that will guide the analysis and investigation in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6 presents the final part of the investigation, and as such is concerned with solving the mystery of identity identified in the previous chapter. This chapter will answer the two questions identified in Chapter 5 as they appear in LH. This analysis is meant to serve an exemplary function, and will illustrate how the transtextual detective completes the investigation through the emplotment of a narrative that serves to provide a meaningful solution to the mystery of identity.

Chapter 7 is the final chapter of this dissertation, and will present an overview of what was discovered throughout the course of the investigation, as well as providing suggestions for possible future study.

CHAPTER 2: METAPHYSICAL DETECTIVE FILM

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 is the first of three chapters which lays the foundation from which an investigation into LH and MD will take place. The previous chapter illustrated that the spectators' reception of the two films shows they had difficulty finding meaning in the films. This is largely because their schemata could not help them emplot the films as a shift from classical detective film to metaphysical detective film rendered the schema for the former inappropriate with regards to the latter. This shift not only implies a shift in the nature of the mysteries, but also a shift in the nature of solving these mysteries in the films. This holds certain implications for the spectator in terms of how LH and MD are approached in order to solve the mysteries; in other words, it holds implications for the *investigation* into these films. Therefore, the spectator who wishes to solve and find meaning in these two films, needs to approach them with a new schema. Chapter 3 will provide one possible approach to developing a schema with which meaning can be found in the films. This schema could be developed by spectators considering the films as metaphysical detective films, and by approaching their interpretations as a transtextual detective.

Before we can consider the characteristics and function of a transtextual detective, however, this chapter must firstly determine the following: the characteristics of metaphysical detective narrative – in comparison and contrast with classical detective narrative – must be identified in order to determine how one would approach an investigation of such a text. Secondly, it must be established whether approaching LH and MD as metaphysical detective films is justified or not. As no critical work has been done[9] on metaphysical detective *film*, the characteristics of metaphysical detective *fiction* as identified in prose fiction will be used to derive a description of metaphysical detective film. By comparing and contrasting metaphysical detective fiction with classical detective fiction, a number of aspects can be identified that characterise the

[9] The author has not found any work on metaphysical detective film.

shift from one to the other. These aspects which characterise the shift from classical to metaphysical detective fiction, will be applied to LH and MD in order to determine whether one can speak of metaphysical detective film in each case.

The fact that the characteristics of metaphysical detective fiction as found in prose is applied to film does not betray the assumption that the conventions of prose narrative and those of film narrative are one and the same. As Neupert (2007:534) explains, in narratological terms, narrative "in any medium is a double process of what is told, the represented story, and how it is told, or the narration". Due to the difference in medium, prose narrative and film narrative will thus present (or tell) their stories differently. Film narrative will, for example, employ aspects such as "musical interventions, *mise en scène*, sound-to-image relations and editing strategies" (Neupert, 2007:534) that are not found in prose narrative. Despite the differences in the *telling*, both prose and film are narratives that convey a story. In the case of metaphysical detective fiction and metaphysical detective film, we find that the same *type* of story – representative of a specific genre – is told by both. Therefore, it is possible to apply the narratological theory found in a specific type of prose fiction to a different medium – film – that tells the same type of story.

This chapter will accordingly take shape thus: Firstly, metaphysical detective film will be defined by comparing and contrasting metaphysical detective fiction with classical detective fiction. Through this process, a number of characteristics of metaphysical detective fiction will be highlighted. Secondly, these characteristics will be used as criteria to determine if LH and MD can be considered to be metaphysical detective films. Furthermore, the following characteristics of metaphysical detective fiction will be analysed in relation to the films: the text as (rhizome) labyrinth; the ambiguity and sheer meaninglessness of clues and evidence; doubles; alter-egos; and missing persons; and the absence of clear closure.

2.2 THE GAME'S AFOOT; BUT THE GAME HAS CHANGED: THE SHIFT FROM CLASSICAL TO METAPHYSICAL DETECTIVE FICTION

2.2.1. Classical detective fiction

Before a film can be identified as a metaphysical detective film, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of what this concept entails. In order to fully appreciate the unique nature of metaphysical detective fiction, it needs to be compared and contrasted with classical detective fiction. The shift from classical to metaphysical detective fiction needs to be identified, and how this shift has changed the mysteries found and solved in these texts. The game of detection changes[10] needs to be considered in order to identify the implications of the shift.

Detective fiction generally falls under the umbrella term of crime fiction, as the majority of detective narratives feature some form of crime that leads to a mystery that drives the narrative forward (Rzepka, 2005:9). There are a number of different types, modes, genres and, sub-genres, of detective fiction, such as American hard-boiled, Italian Giallo, British "puzzle" narratives of "'whodunit?", spy narratives, police procedurals, and so forth. The different types of detective fiction have many similarities, but just as many differences, which makes the definition of classical detective fiction more difficult to formulate than it may at first seem. For the purpose of this dissertation, a definition of classical detective fiction nonetheless needs to be outlined in order to aid understanding of the complex nature of metaphysical detective fiction in relation.

The term *classical detective fiction* is used to narrow down the field of detective fiction in general to stories that have the following characteristics in common: 1) the narrative features at its centre forms some sort of unsolved mystery (which does not necessarily have to be the result of a crime); 2) the story features a detective figure who attempts to solve the mystery; 3) the investigation undertaken by the detective figure proves to be

[10] Due to time and space restrictions, this investigation into the shift from classical to metaphysical detective fiction is basic, and will not be a complete investigation into its detailed history

indubitably successful[11]. I use the term classical detective fiction, instead of “golden age” detective fiction, which refers to the period in the 1920s and 1930s during which detective fiction reached its peak. Classical detective fiction refers to any detective fiction in which the three characteristics identified above are present. This is done in order to move beyond the constraints of a specific time frame and to include texts outside of the historical period identified. This definition then, on the one hand, broadens the field of possible texts to include narratives that do not feature a crime of some sort, but has at its core a mystery that needs to be solved. On the other hand, it also narrows the field by excluding narratives that may feature a crime and a detective, but is not driven by the need to solve a mystery, such as many hard-boiled, spy, or police procedural narratives.

Apart from these three characteristics, the classical detective text's relation to the reader also takes on an identifiable character. Rzepka (2005:10) refers to this as the “puzzle element”, which is the "presentation of the mystery as an ongoing problem *for the reader* to solve"[12]. Thus, these texts not only present the reader with a detective's investigation into the mystery, but invite the reader to attempt to solve the mystery before the detective reveals the solution at the end. Therefore, this type of classical detective fiction can be viewed as a type of game which the reader can choose to play. Sherlock Holmes' famous exclamation to his companion, Dr Watson, that "the game is afoot!" (Doyle, 2007:711), reflects the spirit of game play that characterises this definition of classical detective fiction.

As with any game, there are rules and, there are rules that govern classical detective fiction. Juul (2005:38-39), states that one of the salient characteristics of a game is that it is rule-based. These rules need to be clearly defined so no confusion surrounds how the game should be played. The reason why players accept the rules of a game is, according to Suits (2005:39), because rules make the activity of playing a game possible; without rules, there can be no game. Classical detective fiction is very much

[11] Rzepka (2005:10) provides a more thorough overview of these characteristics.
[12] My emphasis added.

rule-based. The conventions of the genre become the rules that govern how these games should be played; both in the way they are constructed by authors, as well as in the way that readers participate in an attempt to solve them. In this way, rules also serve to structure the game (Juul, 2005:58). In classical detective fiction, rules not only structure the game of detection, but they also allow for “fair play” between the author and reader. Van Dine[13] (1939:5), in his seminal *Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories*, states that "[t]he detective story is a game [...] [a]nd the author must play fair with the reader [...] [f]or the writing of detective stories there are very definite laws". These "laws" or rules of fair play have been codified to such an extent that these texts are firmly bound to their “rules of play”. In no other genre are the rules of the game as clearly defined as in classical detective fiction, and no other genre is so dependent on a set of formal rules for its success. As Cannon (1980:42) points out, classical detective fiction is the most highly codified of all genres[14], and therefore, he argues, it is also the most game-like out of all the genres.

Despite the widespread acceptance that classical detective fiction can be seen as a type of game, no work has been done[15] to actually analyse classical detective fiction in terms of game theory, called *ludology*[16]. This (as well as the shift from classical detective fiction to metaphysical detective fiction), presents a gap in research concerning classical detective fiction. This type of investigation can provide useful insight, not only into how these narratives are conceived and structured, but also how the reader reads – or plays – them. The presence of rules – and the high value equated to them by both its authors and readers – signals these classical detective fiction narratives as examples of playful narratives[17] that foreground *ludus*. The term *ludus* was first used in relation to game theory in 1938 by Huizinga, whose book *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (1949), is a seminal text in the field of game theory (Josephson, 2009:302). In his book Huizinga investigates the role of play

[13] Willard Huntington Van Dine used the pseudonym S.S. Van Dine.
[14] This codification began with Van Dine’s *Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Fiction* (Rzepka, 2005:13).
[15] That could be found at the writing of this dissertation.
[16] Broadly, *ludology* can be seen as the study of games (Juul, 2005:16).
[17] Playful narratives are narratives that feature and use game characteristics (Ryan, 2008:355).

in society and, as Josephson (2009:302) explains, Huizinga “writes that play is interwoven with culture” in that “all aspects of culture” develops from play. All modern game theory builds on the work of Huizinga. In the context of this current study, the term *ludus,* is applied as understood and used in modern game theory. According to Ryan (2008:354-355), *ludus* refers to a form of game-playing in which the game is "defined by pre-existing rules that players agree to observe". These rules identify a specific goal, they provide obstacles toward the achievement of the goal, and they provide the allowed means to reach that goal. If this definition of *ludus* is applied to an analysis of classical detective fiction, we can see that the genre is defined by pre-existing rules. These pre-existing rules are the codified conventions that raise expectations in the reader. There is a specific goal identifiable in such narratives, namely the solving of a mystery around which the narrative is constructed. Clues are provided which enables a reader to reach the goal of solving the mystery before the ending, where the detective figure reveals the solution. Obstacles, such as “red herrings” or, false clues are present in these narratives which are meant to lead the reader down a wrong path.

Although classical detective fiction seems to largely conform to the definition of playful narratives, and can be easily comprehended in terms of ludology. However, there are two other salient characteristics of a game that is not applicable to classical detective fiction. These two characteristics are identified by Juul (2005:38, 40) as variable outcome, and player effort. The first characteristic states that for something to be considered a game, the rules must provide the possibility of different outcomes; the second characteristic states that a player's actions should be able to influence the outcome of a game. The analysis of classical detective fiction in terms of ludology reveals their shortcomings as games in terms of these two features.

In the first instance, classical detective narratives cannot have different outcomes, as the solution of the mystery can never be anything different than the solution offered by the detective figure in the narrative. Indeed, one of the primary expectations of the reader is that such a narrative will provide one, definitive solution that is not ambiguous, and that does not allow for the possibility of a different solution being just as valid. As

the character, Unwin, states in Borges' short story "Ibn-Hakam al-Bokhari, Murdered in His Labyrinth": "[m]ysteries ought to be simple" (1998:256). In the second instance, the reader cannot influence the outcome of the narrative. When reading classical detective fiction, the reader continuously develops new hypotheses about a possible solution to the mystery, based on new information (clues) that are presented in the text. However, these hypotheses have no influence on the outcome of the narrative because, as stated above, the narrative has only one possible outcome and one possible solution to the mystery. No matter how much effort readers put into the investigation, they cannot change the inevitable outcome.

This raises an interesting question about the nature of the game of detection in classical detective fiction, namely: What reason does the reader have to play the game? According to ludology, the prime motivation for player effort is an investment in the outcome of the game (Juul, 2005:40). But, as has been explained, the outcome of the game of classical detective fiction – that is the solution to the mystery – is independent of the reader's own efforts. Classical detective fiction is a game that the reader cannot lose. Despite this shortcoming in terms of its being a game, classical detective fiction is still widely popular. Many readers do find reason enough to read classical detective fiction, despite the fact that their efforts at mystery-solving do not influence the outcome of the narrative. Even if their hypotheses proves to be wrong, it does not keep the reader from finding out what the real solution is, it does not keep them from finishing reading or watching the story.

It is widely concluded that the familiarity of patterns found in classical detective fiction is the reason for its continued popularity (Gregory & McCaffery, 1979:39; Holquist, 1983:151; Juul, 2005:55; Rzepka, 2005:10). Holquist (1983:151-153), explains that the familiarity of patterns in classical detective fiction is based on the rule-based essence (the high degree of codification) of its narratives. The rules of classical detective fiction are important with regard to the enjoyment of this genre, for as Juul (2005:55) explains, rules are "the most consistent source of player enjoyment in games". On what is the enjoyment of rules based? Rzepka (2005:10), explains that it is the promise made by

the text that the mystery will be solved by the detective figure and that the solution will be provided, that keeps the reader reading. In summary, the reader's expectations of a closed ending are always met. Closure is thus guaranteed. According to Kermode (2008:66), narrative closure arises "out of the mind's natural inclination to convert the raw contingency of narrative events into a shape that conveys order and meaning". The effort of figuring out the solution to a mystery coincides with this "natural inclination" towards closure. In classical detective fiction, however, the reader is relieved from the responsibility of achieving closure. Closure is an automatic part of the text. Whether the reader attempts to solve the mystery or not, closure is assured by the credibility of the detective figure who offers the solution at the end.

The end of a classical detective fiction text can therefore be considered as the most important part of the text for the reader, for it is at the end where the mystery of the narrative is solved. When approaching classical detective fiction, the reader expects that, when the narrative is over, all questions will be answered, all mysteries will be solved, and that a resolution will have been reached. It is this expectation above all else that determines how the reader will respond to the narrative. Either the reader will feel that the author has played by the rules, or will leave feeling cheated. There is thus a desire on the part of the reader to reach the end, for it is only at the end of a classical detective fiction narrative that the beginning and middle can be provided with meaning (Rzepka, 2005:24). This is important, because while reading and being presented with questions, mysteries, and clues, the reader is constantly creating new hypotheses about possible solutions. These hypotheses change as new clues are provided, or old clues are recognised as useless or as “red herrings”. The reader not only keeps asking how the narrative will end, but because of the game play structure of classical detective fiction, the reader also keeps trying to figure out how it will end by imagining possibilities. However, these will remain mere possibilities – until the end. The reader cannot know for sure whether their solution is correct, and is dependent on the text (and the detective in it) to reveal the correct solution. Until such time, the reader cannot feel closure, and the text as a whole will remain without meaning.

Apart from the rule that the classical detective text always meets the expectations of the reader that the mystery will be solved by the end of the narrative, another rule of expectations being met plays an equally important part. This is the rule which allows the reader the opportunity to attempt to solve the mystery by being provided with the necessary clues. As illustrated above, the reader has no responsibility to do this, but must still be allowed the opportunity to play the game if so chosen. This expectation is so important because it holds the author responsible to observe the rules of the game, which ensures the reader that there will be a sense of “sportsmanship”. This idea of “sportsmanship” in the game of detection is also what lead to Van Dine (1939:5) formulating his first rule, which states that “[t]he reader must have equal opportunity with the detective for solving the mystery. All clues must be plainly stated and described". The solution to the mystery is not allowed to fall out of the sky, but must be hidden throughout the narrative in the form of clues, following the codes of the genre. If an author does not play fair, this brings into question the reliability of the mystery's solution. The reader needs to feel that the author is trustworthy, as the reader needs to believe the resolution to be truthful in order to feel closure. The rules of fair play and the consistency they signal thus help the reader to trust the author, and trust that expectations will be met. There is thus, as Pyrhönen (2008:103) suggests, a "relationship of complicity" between authors and readers that resemble a game played according to a set of fundamental formal rules. This “contract” between author and reader suggests that the reader will tolerate authorial ingenuity and innovation as long as these do not interfere with the meeting of reader expectations. The deal-breaker for the reader concerning classical detective fiction, thus, ultimately remains as the absence of closure provided by the text.

It is only within this stable contract, where the text guarantees the reader a final solution and automatic closure, that variation within the genre of classical detective fiction is allowed. These same conventions, as Rzepka (2005:12) points out, also provide the opportunity for "authorial ingenuity" by playing around with the rules – subverting them – in order to keep such narratives interesting. Readers are attracted by the genre's consistency and familiarity, but at the same time they also want innovation. As Boggs

and Petrie (2008:473) explain, once we become "comfortable" with a specific genre, and once an individual text representing this genre has satisfied our basic expectations, we begin to be aware of – and respond to – "the creative variations, refinements, and complexities" that make each new text seem "fresh and original". The innovations, however, should never interfere with expectations; if they do, such subversions of the rules are not welcomed. Consider for example the initial response to the Agatha Christie novel *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926), which stars her famous Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot. The novel broke one of the rules of the detective game, namely that "[t]he narrator was never to be considered a suspect" (Rzepka, 2005:155). In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, it is revealed at the end of the novel that the narrator was in fact the murderer. This lead to extreme reactions from readers, who thought that Christie had gone "outrageously far" (Knight, 1980:112), by subverting this rule. As Bayard (2000:vii) explains, there was a feeling that Christie has "violated the tacit pact between the author [...] and her public" and that she had, in fact, "cheated".

The outrage that readers felt toward Christie thus stemmed from the fact that she had not "played" fairly, that she had ignored the rules, and that she had thus "cheated". When reading classical detective fiction, the reader assumes that the author will not attempt to manipulate them (as many felt Christie had done) by not keeping to the rules. As Van Dine's (1939:5) second rule states: “No wilful tricks or deceptions may be played on the reader other than those played legitimately by the criminal on the detective himself.”

If the author does not play by the rules, it becomes impossible for the reader to "win" the game of detection within the safe framework of the rules. Even though it is true that most readers never solve the mystery before the end (Knight, 1980:107), and that it is highly *improbable* that most readers would do so, they do feel that it should nevertheless not be *impossible* for them to solve it, when playing according to the rules of the genre. In the case of *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd,* it becomes impossible for the reader to solve the mystery and, because expectations were not met, the reader therefore feels "cheated" by the author. Innovation in classical detective fiction will be

tolerated so long as it does not short circuit the reader's rule-based expectations. It is the reader's expectations of the genre, and the belief (and certainty) that they will be met which provides a sense of consistency – and familiarity – on which the reader comes to depend.

To summarise, when the term *classical detective fiction* is employed, it is used to refer to narrative texts that feature an investigation by a detective to solve a mystery. This mystery lies at the centre of the narrative, and drives all action in the text forward. Classical detective fiction should be constructed in such a way that it presents the possibility that the reader can solve the mystery before the detective does, even though the reader has no responsibility to play the game of detection. As such, there needs to be a sense of fair play in the text. Van Dine's rules are aimed at the author rather than the reader. The author has the responsibility to observe the rules of the genre in order to make sure the game is played fairly. These classical detective fiction narratives evoke certain expectations in the reader which need to be met, the most important of which is that the mystery will be solved at the end of the narrative. Even if the reader is not successful (or interested) in solving the mystery, the detective figure in the narrative will provide one, definitive solution that provides a sense of resolution and closure. Classical detective film, as the filmic counterpart for classical detective fiction, is subject to the same rules and characteristics that classify the prose version.

The rules and patterns present in classical detective fiction provide reassurance not only because they create a sense of familiarity and consistency in terms of genre, but also, importantly, because they provide reassurance that order exists in the world (Holquist, 1983:156). These narratives articulate the hope that, in a chaotic world, if we were to act rationally and follow reason, if we pursue the clues logically, we may provide order to the world (Coats, 2001:185); there is then an assurance to readers that the disorder of the world can be contained (Knight, 1980:39). In many ways, classical detective fiction attempts to protect the reader from the harsh reality of the world. By creating a sense of consistency and familiarity, the genre actually serves to enclose and shield the reader from unpredictability. This protection of the reader can also be seen in

the gameplay structure of classical detective fiction because, as already illustrated, the reader cannot really lose the game of detection. No matter what the reader will always be provided with the solution and, thus, will always achieve closure.

Classical detective narratives feature detectives who “stand for law and order” (Pyrhönen, 2010:51-52), and who serve to protect the “moral boundaries” (Pyrhönen, 2010:51) of society. In this way these narratives can be seen to alleviate societal fear related to the breaking of social moral boundaries. Therefore, the majority of classical detective fiction features some form of crime that leads to the mystery of the narrative. Crime in society can be viewed as an articulation of the disorder and chaos that threatens the stability of the status quo. The comfort provided by classical detective fiction lies in the fact that these narratives create an idea about the control of crime (Knight, 1980:2) which resonates with the reader's desire for order, for the maintenance of the status quo, and thus these narratives act to console the anxiety felt towards crime, and the disorder it represents (Knight, 1980:37).

In this sense, classical detective fiction is structured in such a way as to maintain the notion of the *status quo* by having a detective figure restore order through rationality. The rules and patterns (codes and conventions) of classical detective fiction function to represent a *status quo*: as long as the rules are obeyed, order will be maintained. The gameplay structure of these texts also reflects this notion of the *status quo*; if the author observes the rules that have been set out, the reader will achieve closure, even if the game is not played. The fact that reader expectations are met every time, provides the reader with a feeling of not only reassurance, but also with the security that even though the mystery may not be solved in time, an authoritative figure (the detective) will; the reader does not have to do anything and will still win in the end. This then reflects the hope that the same is true of life in general, that there will be some figure to provide a solution to problems and to maintain order. The rules reflect the hope that the 'game' of life is fair, and that if you play by the rules, everything will work out fine.

2.2.2. The shift to metaphysical detective fiction

In this section, the shift from classical detective fiction to metaphysical detective fiction will be introduced in general terms. The genre is largely made up of twentieth-century narratives that have a complex relationship with classical detective fiction (Merivale & Sweeney, 1999:1). Metaphysical detective fiction and classical detective fiction are similar in that they both feature, at the narrative's core, a mystery that shapes the narrative and which the reader would like to see solved. The shift, however, changes the nature of the mystery in metaphysical detective fiction, and how this mystery is solved. As such, metaphysical detective fiction does not fall under the umbrella of classical detective fiction. The shift to metaphysical detective fiction is not part of the historical evolution of classical detective fiction in which different types appear that all maintain the genre's essential characteristics. As Knight (1980:4,105) argues, because of their different social reality, classical detective fiction authors in different periods of history present similar material dissimilarly. As society changes, so too must the figure of the detective in order to meet new challenges. Thus the bohemian gentleman detective of Doyle gives way to the detective unit in police procedural narratives of the 20th century. The essential characteristics of these different texts, however, remain the same, and their continuing popularity is due to their familiarity and consistency in meeting the reader's expectations.

The term *metaphysical detective fiction* is employed because, as Merivale and Sweeney (1999:4) explain, this type of narrative is concerned, essentially, with metaphysics. They further explain that these narratives aim to address "unfathomable epistemological and ontological questions: What, if anything, can we know? What, if anything, is real? How, if at all, can we rely on anything besides our own constructions of reality?" These concerns highlight the postmodern nature of these narratives, and through their mysteries they raise "profound questions [...] about narrative, interpretation, subjectivity, the nature of reality, and the limits of knowledge" (Merivale & Sweeney, 1999:1).

In this shift, metaphysical detective fiction does not maintain the *status quo* of classical detective fiction, but rather provides a new approach to mystery. How the mystery is

solved does not provide the familiarity and consistency that reader's expect, and does not reward their expectations; primarily the expectation that the narrative will provide resolution and closure. Whereas classical detective fiction is meant to stand as a formal antithesis to the chaos of human experience by providing patterns of reassurance (Bennett, 1983:265), metaphysical detective films aim to expose the chaos of postmodern social reality, and as such they subvert the rules and conventions of classical detective fiction. Metaphysical detective fiction then, according to Spanos (1999:3) and Tani (1999:8), frustrates the reader's expectations. These narratives, as Merivale and Sweeney (1999:1) state, have an unsettling effect on the reader, and this may explain why these narratives do not enjoy the immense popularity that classical detective fiction enjoys (Rzepka, 2005:235).

It is worth noting Merivale and Sweeney's argument (1999:3) that metaphysical detective fiction is not the same as anti-detective fiction (the term is usually preferred when speaking about postmodern texts which appropriate detective film)[18]. According to them, the term anti-detective film is misleading, implying a complete opposition to the conventions of the detective genre. As they state, (1999:3), these narratives do subvert the rules and conventions of classical detective fiction, but not in an attempt to negate the entire genre. Rather, it should be seen that these narratives apply the notion of detection to metaphysical detective fiction's investigation into the mysteries of a postmodern world. Metaphysical detective fiction does not negate the rules and conventions of classical detective fiction because it depends on these for its existence and success[19]. Classical detective fiction provides metaphysical detective fiction with a ready-made framework within which to develop an investigation into the way in which humankind confronts the elements of its existence. These narratives are constructed to raise expectations in the reader, and then subvert these by not meeting them. In classical detective fiction there is a concern primarily with problem solving, with tracing

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[18] Other terms that have been applied to these narratives include deconstructive mysteries, postmodern mystery, post-*nouveau roman* detective novel, and ontological detective story (Merivale & Sweeney, 1999:3-4).

[19] This recalls Hutcheon's (2002:301-303) claim that postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges. Because it is contradictory and works within the system it attempts to subvert, it becomes a site of the struggle of the emergence of something new.

the process of finding the answers to the questions that the narrative raises. These texts then trigger an impulse in the reader to seek sufficiently adequate knowledge and understanding in order to provide a plausible explanation for the questions posed. In classical detective fiction, the reader enters the narrative with the expectation that the questions will be answered, that the necessary knowledge will be gained, and that the mystery will be solved. In metaphysical detective fiction these expectations are still triggered, but resolution is never provided by the text itself. By subverting the rules of fair play found in classical detective fiction and the expectations they create, metaphysical detective fiction exposes how unreliable classical detective fiction is, and how useless these narratives are in a postmodern world.

In metaphysical detective fiction consistency and familiarity is not found, as the rules and expectations that provide reassurance to the reader are subverted. As Holquist (2005:233) explains, metaphysical detective fiction "exploits detective stories by expanding and changing certain possibilities in them". Metaphysical detective fiction, then, changes the rules of the game for detective fiction (Ewert, 1999:185). Therefore, not only does the way in which the game is played change, but the shift leads to an entirely new type of game. The rules of this new game are not as codified or dependable as those of classical detective fiction; rules are made and broken within a text constantly, and the reader needs to be adaptable in order to be successful. As such, these narratives can be viewed as playful narratives which foreground *paidia*. *Paidia* is an informal activity which allows readers to make and break their own rules, and it does not present a computable outcome. Playful narratives foregrounding *paidia* evoke the spirit of play: the dynamic creation and subversion of rules (Ryan, 2008:355), which is typical of postmodern narratives. Unlike classical detective fiction, metaphysical detective fiction – as an example of a playful narrative that foregrounds *paidia* – does not feature pre-existing rules which readers can observe. It is not that the genre does not have any rules, only that each text plays by its own rules; there is no permanent agreement between author and reader about the rules that will shape and structure the narrative.

When viewed from the perspective of *ludology,* metaphysical detective fiction has an advantage over classical detective fiction. Metaphysical detective fiction can produce more interesting games of detection, because it can produce variable outcomes which require player effort. In metaphysical detective fiction there is no detective that will provide the solution to the reader; the reader is responsible for providing the solution. The reader has to investigate the narrative in order to arrive at a solution. The action taken during this investigation therefore influences the outcome reached. This indicates the presence of player effort in the genre, as the player's actions can influence the outcome. Also, there is no single, definite outcome. Rather, the gameplay of these narratives make different outcomes possible. In fact, the narratives can theoretically generate an infinite number of possible narratives that are all equally valid. The player can play the same narrative more than once, and each successive reading can provide a new solution, thus a new outcome.

The shift from classical detective fiction to metaphysical detective fiction, and the changes in the nature of the game and gameplay that accompany it, no longer protects the reader, but rather exposes the reality of choice. Whereas the structured nature of classical detective fiction's game aided with shielding the reader from ultimate responsibility, metaphysical detective fiction is a game that requires the reader to make difficult decisions and take responsibility for the outcome of the narrative. As Rzepka (2005:233) states, metaphysical detective fiction includes all the "wayward possibilities of real life that the traditional detective story deliberately excludes from its highly rational, causally coherent universe". Metaphysical detective fiction does not present a mystery born of crime, but rather illustrates that life itself is a mystery. It seems to suggest that life experiences cannot be connected to form a coherent whole; these clues we find in life do not reflect order but rather, they reflect randomness and chaos. This stands in contrast to classical detective fiction, which suggests that the 'right' clues will always lead to the solution and restore order, as long as they are thought about in a rational and logical manner. In such narratives, the investigation progresses by eliminating possible solutions to the mystery until one solution remains, the definitive solution that is beyond question. Metaphysical detective fiction rejects this notion of a

definitive answer that cannot be questioned. As Holquist (1999:2) explains, metaphysical detective fiction "is not concerned to have a neat ending in which all the questions are answered". Metaphysical detective fiction subverts the belief in the reliability of clues and the resolution promised at the end by gradually expanding options until no single solution is possible, but rather, manifold solutions are both possible and feasible (Gregory & McCaffery, 1979:43). This is because in metaphysical detective fiction, clues do not have one, set meaning. Reflecting postmodernism, clues in these narratives can have infinite meanings, and can lead the detective to infinite possible solutions. It is not that between this mass of possibilities that one is truer, more feasible than the rest; all possibilities are feasible, and all solutions carry equal weight. The reader thus escapes the constraints – the rigid rules – that shape classical detective fiction. In this way the reader is also, in a sense, set free from the status quo that classical detective fiction represents.

The nature of the clues and endings in metaphysical detective fiction is another example of how the shift from classical detective fiction to metaphysical detective fiction introduces changes to the game of detection. With classical detective fiction, the metaphor of a labyrinth can be used to illustrate the nature of the game. A labyrinth is a confusing structure that often leads one in circles, and from which there may seem to be no escape. However, a labyrinth does have an exit, and the individual within the labyrinth can escape by thinking rationally and by following patterns and structures. This reflects the detective (and by extension also the reader) in classical detective fiction, who has to sift through many clues that can be worthless or, which can lead down a wrong line of reasoning. The detective has to use logic and reasoning to determine which clues are essential, and then emplot them in order to solve the mystery. While many possible paths to a solution present themselves, there is only one possible answer that is the definitive solution, just as there is only one possible escape from a labyrinth.

The metaphor of the labyrinth changes with metaphysical detective fiction into a metaphor of a rhizome labyrinth, as Ewert (1999:15) points out. The term, as defined by

Deleuze and Guattari (2007) is based on the botanical rhizome which, unlike trees or their roots, connects any point to any other point. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle from which it grows and which it overspills (Deleuze & Guattari, 2007:23). There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or a root. There are only lines (Deleuze & Guattari, 2007:9), and as Eco (1999:187) explains, the rhizome labyrinth is "so constructed that every path can be connected with every other one". The rhizome labyrinth thus allows for multiple, non-hierarchical entry and exit points. The most important characteristics of the rhizome is thus that it always has multiple entryways (Deleuze & Guattari, 2007:14). The rhizome labyrinth is heterogeneous and is also an articulation of multiplicity. Contrary to the traditional labyrinth, the rhizome is open to all sides. This then becomes a metaphor for the postmodern text which, as Eco (1999:187) states, has the possibility to have infinite meaning.

The rhizome labyrinth is a fitting metaphor for metaphysical detective fiction, in which both the detective and the reader have no clear centre from which to orientate themselves. The clues which are presented can have an infinite amount of possible meanings, and can lead to an infinite amount of possible solutions. There is no definite solution to work towards, and the end of the narrative does not provide a solution, or an escape from the labyrinth of the text. It parodies the notion of solution as closure, either by supplying inconclusive solutions or by refusing to provide one itself. As such, metaphysical detective fiction presents the text as a mystery to be solved. The plot manipulates temporal and causal relations without establishing the grounds from which to organise the pieces narrated into a coherent whole. The reader becomes trapped in a rhizome labyrinth created by the text, and struggles to escape by finding meaning.

It is clear that metaphysical detective fiction tends to be primarily concerned with postmodern life and the effect that this has on the individual. The lack of consistency, dependable structures and, rules, attempts to illustrate that life in a postmodern reality is also devoid of points of orientation, and that we are all trapped in a rhizome labyrinth; as Merivale and Sweeney (1999:16) state, these narratives often feature characters that

have difficulty in establishing what is going on around them because they are unable to position themselves in time or space (or even in their own narrative). These characters are unable to orientate themselves, just as the reader is unable to orientate themself in the unknown of metaphysical detective fiction. This also extends to illustrate how the individual has little sense of orientation in postmodern reality, as there are no rules which allow life to be fair, and there is no figure of authority to help the individual solve the mystery of their life.

The absence of rules and known structures leaves the reader in an uncertain position. Expectations are raised, but the expected outcomes are not met. There is no sense of fair play between author and reader, and the reader must be able to adapt to a narrative that constantly makes and breaks its own rules. It is also difficult for the reader to determine the worth of clues; in a world where it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between what is real and what is false, how can one judge the validity of a clue? To solve a mystery in such a postmodern world seems an almost impossible task. Even if you do solve it, how can you trust that the outcome is correct in a world of multiple possibilities? Metaphysical detective fiction is thus, in terms of both its form and its thematics, concerned with confronting the reader with the reality of the postmodern world.

The general character of metaphysical detective fiction should now be apparent. In order to concretize its themes, Merivale and Sweeney's (1999:8) six characteristics of metaphysical detective fiction that reflect the genre's postmodern inclination are identified: 1) the defeated detective who is unable to solve the mystery; 2) the world, city, or text as rhizome labyrinth; 3) the presence of embedded texts, *mise en abyme*, or texts as objects of inquiry; 4) the ambiguity or sheer meaninglessness of clues and evidence; 5) the presence of the trope of the double, the "lost, stolen, and exchanged identity", or a missing person; 6) the "absence, falseness, circularity, or self-defeating nature of any kind of closure to the investigation".

The above presents the characteristics of metaphysical detective narrative as found in prose. Thus far we have used the term *metaphysical detective fiction* to refer to the

prose version of these specific types of stories. However, the discussion will now focus on film. In this chapter we are specifically interested in determining whether considering the two films as examples of these types of stories (classical or metaphysical detective fiction) is justified or not. As explained in the introduction to this chapter, the characteristics found in metaphysical detective fiction applied to film is justified. We will use the term *metaphysical detective film* to refer to films that are examples of metaphysical detective narrative. In order to identify a film as a metaphysical detective film, the salient characteristics identified above can be used as criteria together with a comparison to a more holistic understanding of the genre's nature. The characteristics are not meant as necessary or sufficient characteristics, but can serve as a guide when identifying metaphysical detective films. It follows that it is not compulsory for all six characteristics to be present in order for a film to qualify as metaphysical detective film.

To summarise, when the term *metaphysical detective narrative* is employed, it is used to refer to narrative texts that feature at their core a mystery which the reader wants to see solved, but remains unsolved at the end. Like classical detective fiction, these texts also raise certain expectations in the reader, primarily that resolution will be reached as the mystery is solved. Metaphysical detective fiction subverts these expectations by not meeting them, thereby frustrating the reader who searches for resolution and closure. This short-circuiting of expectations identifies a change in the game play nature of classical detective fiction whereby metaphysical detective fiction has no fixed set of rules, but rather rules that change. As such, this type of narrative can be seen as a rhizome labyrinth which presents the reader with infinite possibilities. The lack of consistency in metaphysical detective fiction means that the reader has no certainty, and reflects the postmodern thematics which the genre is concerned with. The genre, in both its form and themes, presents the reader with postmodern reality, where clues can lead down infinite paths, where there is no certainty, where no detective will help find resolution, and where no solution is definite or final. It is a genre that, unlike classical detective fiction, aims to expose a fractured and seemingly meaningless reality to the reader by placing them inside a rhizome labyrinth. Metaphysical detective film, as the

filmic counterpart for metaphysical detective fiction, is subject to the same rules and characteristics that classify the prose version.

2.3 *LOST HIGHWAY* AND *MULHOLLAND DRIVE* AS METAPHYSICAL DETECTIVE FILMS

The following section is concerned with illustrating, through analysis, that both LH and MD lends itself to be considered as metaphysical detective films. The characteristics of metaphysical detective film present in both films will be analysed in order to illustrate their nature as metaphysical detective films. In general it can be said that LH and MD both present, at their core, the complex relationship with classical detective fiction that is essential to metaphysical detective film. Both LH and MD feature a number of mysteries across their narratives which raise in the spectator the expectation that these will, by the end of the film, be solved. There is the expectation, based on classical detective fiction, that the end of each film will tie all loose ends together so as to resolve each; the desire for resolution, closure, and meaning is aroused in the spectator. These films, however, do not meet the spectator's expectations. Instead, the spectator is presented with a number of mysteries for which the t film provides no final solutions. There are any number of feasible solutions to these mysteries suggested by the films, both explicitly and implicitly. The ways in which these films subvert and short-circuit the spectator's expectations will be made visible in more detail by analysing the following features typical of metaphysical detective fiction: the text as (rhizome) labyrinth; the ambiguity and sheer meaninglessness of clues and evidence; doubles; alter-egos; and missing persons; the absence of clear closure.

2.3.1 The text as rhizome labyrinth

The first characteristic of metaphysical detective film that is present in both films is the text as a rhizome labyrinth in which the spectator becomes "trapped", and from which they attempts to escape. As stated, the rhizome labyrinth has no clear beginning or end, but simply a middle. As such, it allows for multiple entry and exit points, and any point can connect to any other point. In a rhizome labyrinth there are thus infinite possible

paths that one can follow, and there is no clear point from which to orientate one's-self. The films in consideration become a rhizome labyrinth for the spectator in the sense that they are made up of a number of different parts, and it is difficult to causally connect many of these parts together in order to emplot a narrative. Each film does not present on first viewing a whole which is easily understandable and which provides immediate closure for the spectator. Rather, the different parts of the film create a labyrinth effect where the spectator must manoeuvre between different possibilities without having a clear point of orientation or stability. The various ambiguous clues and evidence lead the spectator down different paths, jumping from one possible solution to the next, thus drawing them deeper into the mystery of the film without presenting an obvious escape or an obvious solution to the film. As with a rhizome labyrinth, there are numerous narrative lines that can all connect to one another and create a different narrative strand. Depending on which lines the spectator connects, a different narrative will be emplotted.

In LH the spectator becomes trapped inside the film's rhizome labyrinth by creating a möbius strip; this is achieved by having the same opening shot to close the film. The film opens with a POV (point of view)[20] shot of a car speeding down a highway. It is dark, and the only illumination comes from the headlights of the car that light up a small section of the road in front of the car. This is all that the spectator can see, as the left and right side of the road, as well as the horizon, are shrouded in darkness. The music that accompanies this shot as the intro credits roll is David Bowie's song "I'm deranged". The film ends with Fred driving on a deserted stretch of highway as he is pursued by police. The action cuts away to the same POV shot that the spectator saw at the start of the film, and "I'm deranged" starts to play as the end credits roll. In this way, the beginning and the end of the film are connected together, and instead of creating a narrative that runs on a straight line from beginning to end, the joining together of beginning and end creates a loop or möbius strip which does not present an escape for

[20] This concept will be defined in more detail in Chapter 5.

either Fred Madison or for the spectator. The film simply doubles back in on itself as the end leads to the beginning again.

This connection between beginning and end, and the idea that a möbius strip is created, is reinforced by other aspects as well. For example, the line of dialogue "Dick Laurent is dead" also connects the beginning with the end. This phrase is the first piece of dialogue the spectator hears in the film. After the opening credits, the spectator sees Fred Madison sitting in his bedroom smoking. The intercom buzzer sounds, and Fred goes to hear who it is. As he presses the listen button, a nondescript male voice states that "Dick Laurent is dead". He tries to find out who said this, but he cannot see anyone. The spectator again hears this exact phrase at the end of the film. After Fred has killed Dick Laurent, he drives back to his house. Once there, he goes to the intercom and says that "Dick Laurent is dead" before driving off again. This phrase thus also connects beginning and end, as it is the first and last piece of dialogue heard in the film.

Lynch (the director of Lost Highway), further makes use of diegetic sound in order to connect beginning and end and creates a rhizome labyrinth; the sound of police sirens is used to establish a connection and supports the idea that the film is a möbius strip. It is important to keep in mind that sound is a very important aspect of Lynch's style (Le Blanc & Odell, 2000:12), and every aspect of sound is carefully considered and intentionally incorporated. Davison (2005:127) illustrates the importance of sound to Lynch when she states that "Lynch writes sound into his films' scripts and his direction of them". Lynch (in Chion, 1995:169) himself acknowledges the importance of sound to his cinema when he states that "[p]eople call me a director, but I really think of myself as a sound-man". The presence of the police sirens is thus not just a random sound, but one which serves a purpose in the overall narrative. At the end of the film Fred is being chased by a number of police vehicles. The sound of these sirens carries over to the beginning of the film; after Fred has heard that "Dick Laurent is dead", he wanders aimlessly around his house. As he moves from the corridor into the sitting room, the spectator can faintly hear the sounds of police sirens. The sound does not come from outside the house, but paradoxically, seems to come from inside the house, while at the

same time it sounds removed from Fred's surroundings. Fred himself seems to hear the sirens, and as he does so he looks around, as if he is searching for the source, before he dismisses it and moves on. The fact that the sirens seem to come from some other source, yet also inside the house suggests that Fred finds himself in a space without fixed beginnings or endings. The police are chasing him throughout the film regardless of where he finds himself. There is no end, no safe point, from which this threat is resolved. Beginning and end feature the same irresolution signified by the police sirens. In this way, the connection between beginning and end, and the creation of a rhizome labyrinth through a möbius strip is further established and reinforced.

The presence of the sirens also suggests that two ontologies co-exist at the same time, both continuing forward despite the other's presence. This notion is reinforced later in the film when Fred's first ontology breaks down and he is inside a police station being accosted by two detectives. Fred, already bleeding, is hit in the face by one of the detectives as he becomes aware of his new surroundings. The sudden jump to a situation that is already taking place suggests that, while this was happening, Fred's other ontology was never absent: the two ontologies were simultaneously present. This reinforces the notion of LH as rhizome labyrinth, as multiple narrative strands exist and continue at the same time, with connections happening at any random point. This happens throughout the film as different ontologies, as well as different points in time, intersect with each other, thus constantly re-structuring the narrative of the film as a new path is followed through the many pathways present in the rhizome labyrinth.

The film's beginning and end is therefore arbitrary; they do not represent an actual point of beginning or ending of the narrative, but rather, they simply represent points at which the spectator can enter into and exit the film narrative. The spectator enters *in media res* as LH starts in the middle, illustrated by the POV shot[21] of the moving car. The film starts with movement, with something that is already happening. Throughout the film, this POV shot appears at key scenes, for example, when Fred transforms into Pete,

[21] This is a very important shot in LH and contributes greatly to our understanding of the film. Therefore it will be discussed and analysed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

when Pete and Alice drive towards the desert where Pete will disappear, and when Fred runs away from the mystery man. At each point, this POV shot almost seems to announce that different points in the rhizome labyrinth (different ontologies and time frames) are intersecting. For example, the highway during Fred's transformation signals the beginning of a new ontology where Pete is the protagonist. When Alice and Pete drive to the desert, it signals another shift, as Pete will disappear there and Fred reappears. And when Fred runs away from the mystery man, the highway leads him to the point in time where he killed Dick Laurent. The film could very well have begun and ended at any one of these points, as they are random points on the möbius strip narrative. The image of never-ending movement is thus very fitting for the film, as there is no beginning or end. The narrative simply continues to move in circles, going nowhere specific. This is also reinforced in the POV shot; all the spectator can see is the road moving forward and nothing else. They do not see the horizon, and there is thus no indication that the car is headed somewhere. There is only the continuous movement on an infinite loop.

The structure of the narrative according to a möbius strip points to another characteristic of the rhizome labyrinth. The rhizome labyrinth recalls Ts'ui Pên's "paths" (Borges, 1998i:125) in which infinite possibilities are used to structure a labyrinth text. As explained in Borges' story:

> In all fictional works, each time a man is confronted with several alternatives, he chooses one and eliminates the others; in the fiction of Ts'ui Pên, he chooses – simultaneously – all of them. *He creates*, in this way, diverse futures, diverse times which themselves also proliferate and fork.

By presenting any number of possible narratives, the rhizome labyrinth simultaneously presents the reader, , with all narrative possibilities as does Ts'ui Pên's garden. As all clues and evidence is presented as equally viable and truthful, no narrative possibility (or solution) is privileged above another by the narrative. In the rhizome labyrinth created by the möbius strip narrative of LH, there are any number of entry points into the film’s narrative, and, consequently, a multitude of possible solutions present

themselves to the spectator. For example, one can ask if the film is the deranged imaginings of a man who killed his wife? Is Fred perhaps a figment of Pete's imagination instead of the other way around? Are Alice and Renee the same person, or are they different people? Who is the mystery man? Is he Fred's ally or his enemy? What happened to Pete the night he ended up in Fred's cell? Any and all narrative lines in the film can connect with each other and criss-cross across the vast network of possibilities in order to allow emplotment of a new narrative. Depending on how the spectator interprets key scenes and how the film's many clues are interpreted, the spectator can connect any of the threads together to create a narrative that will be valid. As a rhizome labyrinth then, LH articulates a multiplicity of narratives.

MD also creates a rhizome labyrinth out of the film text, although not exactly in the same way as LH. In MD the narrative is not structured as a möbius strip which twists back on itself. What MD does feature to create a rhizome labyrinth, is the fact that it also presents the possibility of a number of multiple narratives that can all be valid interpretations of the film. Just as in LH, there are a manifold of different entry points for the spectator who wishes to attempt to solve the mystery in the film and find meaning in it. What further contributes to the creation of a rhizome labyrinth is the fact that the film does not have an end that features the end of the film's narrative, but rather features an end that seems to suggest that the narrative will continue on without the spectator watching.

The film ends with a shot of Club Silencio's stage; it is empty save for a single microphone stand, and the curtains are drawn. The film cuts to a shot of an old woman with blue hair. This woman was also seen earlier during the magician's performance as she sits in a balcony seat looking down at the performance. The narrative never explains who she is, but there is a sense of importance or power conveyed by the woman. In the final shot of the film she is seated in the same position, again looking at the stage. There is a sense of anticipation conveyed. The woman says "silencio" (silence) before the film fades out. The fact that the blue haired woman asks for silence suggests that something is about to begin, not end; we do not ask for silence after a

stage show, but before it begins. This supports the idea that the end of the film is not the end of the narrative, as there is a suggestion of continuance; the narrative will continue on, and as with a rhizome labyrinth, there is no clear end, no definite point at which the narrative stops.

As with LH, in MD the spectator also has a number of different entry points for possible interpretation of the film. How the spectator attempts to solve the mystery – and emplot the narrative of the film – depends on which clues are chosen to focus on, how they are interpreted, and how the spectator connects them together. In MD there are many mysteries and clues which suggest a number of divergent solutions to the film. For example, one could choose to focus on the Betty/Diane and Rita/Camilla split: who is real, Betty or Diane? Why are there characters named Diane and Camilla Rhodes in Betty's ontology? Or other questions could present an entry point for the spectator: Who is Mr Roque? Why is he looking for Rita? Is he even looking for her, or for another girl? Why was there an attempt on Rita's life? Who is the cowboy? What do the Castigliane brothers hope to gain from taking control of Adam's film? Why is Ed's black book so important that Joe would kill three people just to get it? Does the magician have supernatural powers? What is the significance of the burned man behind Winkie's? These and other questions weave a complex web of possibilities that the spectator must attempt to unravel. Just as with LH, depending on how the spectator connects different narrative lines, the spectator can also emplot any number of different narratives that can all be seen as valid. There is no indication, no clue or guarantee, that one entry point, the endeavour of one single mystery above the rest, will provide a more valid or more satisfying solution.

2.3.2 The ambiguity or sheer meaninglessness of clues and evidence

Before LH and MD are analysed for the characteristic ambiguity of evidence, a closer look at how clues and evidence are used in metaphysical detective fiction is taken. The multiplicity of narratives and meanings that both LH and MD can generate are made possible because of the ambiguity of clues or evidence in the films. Unlike a classical detective film, the clues in metaphysical detective film do not have a fixed meaning

which leads to a fixed outcome. In a classical detective film, clues help the detective figure solve the mystery and emplot a narrative that provides meaning to all aspects. Not all clues are equally important. Some clues are discarded as being useless, while others are "red herrings” or, “false” clues designed to throw the detective – and the spectator – onto a false path. Despite these aberrations, there remains in classical detective fiction, a definite set of clues that do lead the detective to the truth. Once this set of clues is established, even the “false” clues make sense in terms of the final solution. Rzepka (2005:18), states that this type of clue should be understandable and interpretable by all individuals "sharing a common point of view, knowledge base, and powers of thought". These clues or evidence have fixed meanings and cannot lead to multiple solutions; they lead the detective to one, definitive solution only. In Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (1958), for example, the revelation that Gavin Elster (Tom Elmore) killed his wife Madeleine (Kim Novak) is the only possible solution; there can be no other solution that is validated by the narrative *and* complies with the genre rules. This is why, according to Rzepka (2005:18), providing the necessary clues to the spectator is "considered essential to ensuring fair play" in the detection game of the highly codified genre that is classical detective fiction.

As explained above, the clues in a metaphysical detective film function differently. Unlike classical detective film, there is not a specific set of clues which can help the spectator reach a definite solution. All clues are equally valid, and equally ambiguous, depending on how the spectator chooses to view them. Whereas the clues in classical detective film limit the possibilities of the detection game, the clues in metaphysical detective film open the game of detection up as they deepen and expand the mysteries of each film. In this way, this type of ambiguous clue continues to keep a metaphysical detective film interesting, as it can be "played" more than once because of its multiple possible solutions and narrative possibilities. The ambiguity of the clues therefore constitutes the narrative as a rhizome labyrinth. In like manner, the end of each film, unlike classical detective film, does not tie together all the narrative ends in order to provide final resolution. No set of clues is presented as a pre-ordained unit that is capable of rendering a final solution. These films remain, as illustrated by its rhizome

labyrinth-like structure, open, and there is thus room for a multitude of different solutions to be considered, and a multitude of different narratives that can be emplotted. The narrative emplotted will thus depend on how the spectator decides to “read” specific (ambiguous) clues, and how the clues are used to make sense of the film.

In LH, the multitude of mysteries is the result of ambiguous clues that, instead of helping to solve these mysteries, actually serve to constitute them. The mystery man, for example, is both a clue and a mystery. The first time the spectator sees the mystery man he is a frightening presence that threatens Fred. When next the spectator sees the mystery man - in Pete's ontology - he is seen together with Mr Eddy/Dick Laurent; he is still a frightening figure, and proceeds to threaten Pete. Later in the film, the mystery man actually helps Fred to kill Dick Laurent. There are no additional scenes featuring the mystery man that connect these three disparate scenes in a meaningful way. There exists an obvious connection between Fred and the mystery man, and the expectation that this connection will not only be explained, but will then also concurrently help to solve the mystery of Fred, is raised. The meaning of the mystery man, however, remains a mystery for the spectator to solve.

Another event in the film that is both a mystery and a clue, is the disappearance of Pete Dayton from his home. Throughout the film, it is never explained how Pete ended up in Fred's cell. However, certain characters keep referring to the evening that it happened, and the specific circumstances surrounding the event, which signals the importance of this mystery/clue. The spectator is shown a part of this event during Fred's transformation: there is a static shot which shows the front of the Dayton's home. Shelia, Pete's girlfriend, as well as his parents are standing on the front lawn. Lightning flashes as Shelia keeps calling Pete's name. Lightning flashes again and Pete's father starts running towards (presumably) the street, and towards Pete. This is all that the spectator is directly given about what happened to Pete. The event carries an air of importance, and the spectator is lead to expect that it will be explained, and that the solution of this mystery will provide some explanation or clue that can resolve the connection between Pete and Fred. But the explanation does not come, even when

characters refer to that night. For example, there is a scene where Pete's parents talk to Pete in their living room. His father tells him that the police have called, wanting to know if they remembered anything about the night Pete disappeared. Pete himself does not remember anything, mirroring the spectator's position as an outsider who is not privileged to the information necessary for final resolution. His father tells Pete that they saw him that night as he came home with Shelia, and with another man. When Pete asks his father who this man was, he replies that he has "never seen him before in [his] life". The spectator never learns who this man is; he could perhaps be Mr Eddy, the mystery man, or even Fred. Pete then asks his father what happened to him that evening. This is the question that the spectator is also left asking throughout the film, and the expectation is raised that it will now be answered or that, at least, the necessary set of clues for answering the question will be tied together by Pete's father's response. Pete's parents, however, do not tell him anything. They sit silently and then cry. The spectator is made aware of the fact that Pete's parents have important information that can at least begin to help solve the mysteries of the film (at best, offer a final solution), but just as Pete, the spectator cannot retrieve this information without it being clouded with ambiguity.

A last example of a clue from LH which fails to function as a clue in the mould of classic detective film is the photograph of Renee and Alice in Andy's house. Before Alice appears in Pete's ontology, the spectator is already aware that there is some connection between Fred and Pete. Alice's arrival strengthens this believe as both Renee and Alice are portrayed by the same actress, further suggesting that there is a connection between the two men. Many of Alice's biographical details are even similar to Renee's (how they both met Andy and did "jobs" for him). The photograph of Alice and Renee together seems suggests that there is a reasonable explanation for what has happened. This expected and hoped for explanation does not arrive. Instead, the mystery is only deepened. The second time the photo is shown to the spectator, Alice is removed from it and only Renee is left together with Dick and Andy. Detectives at the scene of Andy's death not only mention that Renee is Fred's wife but they also find Pete's fingerprints all over the room. This seems impossible, and there is no explanation provided to account

for this. The promise of an explanation that the photo seems to hold is never realised. The clue, as all others in the film, never leads to a clear solution.

In MD, just as in LH, the multitude of mysteries is the result of ambiguous clues and evidence. Consider for example the blue key and the blue box. When looking through Rita's purse, the women discover an elaborately designed blue key. The spectator is lead to assume that the blue key will open something, and that whatever it opens, will in some way help to explain the central mystery of the film. When Betty finds the blue box in her purse at club Silencio, the spectator is further lead to assume that the blue key will open it. The expectation that the key provides clarity on some other mystery is further raised. The mysterious circumstances under which Betty has found the blue box makes it unclear for the spectator as to what it could pertain to. In other words, the film does not offer the spectator a connection between the blue key and any particular mystery in the film. The spectator is lead to ask: Where did the box come from? Who put it there? Is it a supernatural object, as it appears to be? How else did it suddenly appear in Betty's purse if not through supernatural means? The presence of the magician, looking very much like the devil with his pointed beard, marks it as possible. When it is opened, it does not lead to an answer, but just more questions. Why did the woman disappear once it was opened? Why are they now called Diane and Camilla? Does the blue box open up into a parallel universe, or did it reveal the illusion of Diane's dream? During the second part of the film, the blue key is also ambiguous. Does it suggest that Joe has killed Camilla? Could it simply be the key to Diane's new apartment? Does it open anything? And if so, what does it open?

Another mystery generated by ambiguous clues and evidence, is the old couple that is featured in MD The spectator first sees the couple at the beginning of the film, during the jitterbug sequence. A shot of the old couple surrounding Betty – the old man to Betty's right, the old woman to Betty's left – is superimposed over the jitterbug dancers. All three are smiling, and the closeness of the three seems to suggest a close bond; perhaps they are family, such as an aunt and uncle, or perhaps they are her parents or grandparents. This notion of a close bond is further suggested the next time the

spectator sees Betty (the first time in the film she is properly introduced to the spectator). Betty is at the LAX airport, and is walking with the old couple. The old woman and Betty are holding hands. But the assumption that there is a close bond between the couple and Betty is short-circuited when it is revealed that the three don't know each other at all; they happened to meet on the plane. If this is the case, what does the first shot of the three together (during the jitterbug sequence) suggest? Why are they together? No answers are forth-coming when the old couple resurface at the end of the film, and there is no sense of familial closeness present. As Diane sits in her apartment, the creature behind Winkie's puts the blue box into a paper bag, and drops it to the floor. From the bag emerges a miniature version of the old couple. This miniaturised couple get into Diane's apartment by crawling through the opening under her door. Once inside, they return to normal size and seem to attack Diane, who cannot stand their presence in the apartment and kills herself. Why do the couple attack Diane at the end of the film? What threat do they present to her? What is the connection between the three?

There is also the presence of a number of characters in the film that suggest the promise of understanding, but who end up as mysteries themselves. These characters include, among others, Aunt Ruth, Mr Roque, and the Cowboy. For example, in the dream ontology, Aunt Ruth is away, working on a film in Canada. In Diane's reality, however, she is, according to Diane, dead. Yet when Camilla opens the blue box and the dream ontology ends, the spectator sees Aunt Ruth coming into her bedroom. How is this possible? Is Ruth perhaps not really dead? Is this woman even Aunt Ruth? Mr Roque also remains a mystery in the film. He is seemingly in control of the fates of all characters in the dream ontology, yet the spectator never learns anything about his intentions. The spectator is aware that Mr Roque is in control of something, but does not know what. Similarly, the spectator never discovers who (or what) the creature behind Winkie's is or what its purpose is.

2.3.3 Doubles, alter egos, and missing persons

Although both doubles and alter egos will be discussed in more focused detail later in the dissertation (the former in chapter 5 and the latter in chapter 4), for the purpose of this section, a brief definition of each term is needed. The double, according to Botting, (1996:131), is a dangerous presence which threatens the self; this threat is all the more terrifying because it is a threat that comes from within the self. This threat may be externalised as a physical presence, but the source is the self; it is the self in conflict with the self. As such, the double presents a threat to identity. An alter ego, on the other hand, stands in contrast to the double. As Botting (1996:121) explains, an alter ego represents a "better" or ideal self, an "externalised image of good conscience".

LH and MD are not the only of Lynch's narratives that deal with doubles. In BV, the protagonist Jeffrey Beaumont (Kyle MacLachlan) meets the sadistic psychopath Frank Booth (Dennis Hopper) who functions as his double by articulating Jeffrey's repressed desires, revealing these to himself. In TP, doubles take the form of demonic beings that exist in another dimension known as the Black Lodge. These beings possess individuals and use them as vessels with which to create havoc. In the Black Lodge, there is a demonic double for each individual, and in the final episode of the second series, the protagonist, Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan), is chased by his double in the Black Lodge. The double eventually catches Dale and takes possession of his body back on earth. LH and MD continue Lynch's fascination with the motif of the double and doubling, but present the spectator with more complex examples than in previous works.

In LH, Fred and Pete may be mistaken for doubles as the one turns into the other and a doubling effect takes place. However, working with the definition of doubles and doubling provided above, it will rather be argued that Fred and Pete are not doubles. Pete does not represent a darker aspect which threatens Fred’s identity. Rather, Fred willingly becomes Pete as a means of escape, and Pete represents a “cleaner” or “better ideal” self for Fred; thus, Pete is Fred's alter ego. Pete is younger than Fred and has an innocent quality about him that is missing in the melancholic Fred. While Fred is

a musician, Pete is a mechanic, a blue collar worker who leads a more simplistic life (he even lives in a home with the archetypal image of American suburbia, namely white picket fences). And while Fred is isolated and alone, Pete is surrounded by family and friends; he lives with loving parents, has a number of friends that are concerned about his well-being, and he has a girlfriend who is deeply in love with him (in contrast to the relationship between Fred and Renee). The actual double in the film, it will be argued later, is the Mystery Man, who represents Fred's murderous desires and impulses which he attempts to repress, as they remind him of the fact that they lead to him killing his wife. These repressed desires, when they surface in the form of the Mystery Man, threaten to destroy Fred (as well as Pete). The presence of the Mystery Man in the various ontologies Fred creates, threatens to destroy them – and the identities within these – by reminding Fred about his past actions. What is truly frightening is the fact that the Mystery Man comes from within Fred. Renee and Alice also present a problem for the spectator in terms of understanding the film: are they alter-egos or doubles? Both are revealed to be essentially evil characters who manipulate Fred and Pete, and neither one seems to be a better 'ideal self'. An air of uncertainty hangs around these two characters, and the film never clarifies for the spectator what their presence means. In whichever manner one chooses to distinguish between doubles and alter-egos, it is certain that the complex nature between the characters in LH showcase what is essential to both: characters cannot be assumed as separate and autonomous entities, as they often represent different aspects of one another.

MD also features a number of complex examples of doubles and alter-egos. In the Betty ontology, Betty and Rita function as alter-egos of Diane and Camilla. They both represent a better self; an idealised, dream version of how Diane wishes she and Camilla were. Betty is the complete opposite of Diane. Whereas Diane is melancholic, Betty is constantly upbeat and happy. Diane is a failed actress while Betty impresses the filmmakers she meets with her acting talent. The most important difference is that Betty is not rejected by Rita like Diane was by Camilla. Rita, likewise, represents an idealised version of how Diane wishes Camilla was. Whereas Diane was dependent on Camilla, Rita is now depended on Betty for her survival. Rita does not emotionally

manipulate and abuse Betty the way Camilla does with Diane and, perhaps most importantly, Rita returns Betty's love. While – it will be argued later – Betty is Diane's alter-ego in the Betty ontology, there also appears a double in the form of the burned homeless man that lives behind Winkie's Diner. This monstrous double, it will be argued, is a threat to Diane's already unstable identity as it reminds her of the reality of the fact that her life did not turn out as she had hoped, and that she has lost all sense of her own identity. As with LH, characters in the film cannot be assumed to be sole representations of themselves. The presence of doubles and alter-egos implies that different characters can be identified as one. The distinctions between them often mark distinctions within themselves.

2.3.4The absence of clear closure

The main expectation that a spectator has of classical detective film, is that closure will be experienced at the end. For the average spectator conditioned by classical detective fiction, closure is equated with resolution; the spectator expects that at the end of a narrative all the problems presented will be resolved. Resolution signals that the narrative has reached its end, and if successful, will tie together all the narrative strands so that the spectator is not left wondering about how any of the parts fit into the whole. When the spectator feels a sense of resolution, that no questions are left unanswered and no strings are left hanging, closure is experienced. That is why the end of a classical detective film is so important to the spectator, as it is only at the end where the mystery is solved, narrative problems resolved, and closure obtained. The end of a metaphysical detective film, in contrast, does not provide the spectator with a sense of closure. The presence of mysteries raises the expectation of resolution, but metaphysical detective film short-circuits this expectation by not providing any final answers or solutions (very often the end will add more mysteries), leaving the spectator feeling, in a sense, cheated by the narrative, when referring to the rules of classical detective fiction. This absence or lack of clear closure, however, should not be viewed as a defect of metaphysical detective film. Rather, it provides the spectator with a game of detection that, unlike classical detective fiction, has almost infinite replay value, as its

ambiguous nature allows the spectator to continue to investigate and generate new solutions, and emplot new narratives.

Both LH and MD short-circuit the spectator's expectation as there is an absence of clear closure. None of the films' mysteries are resolved because there is no authoritative detective figure in the narrative to provide the solutions. A scene in LH actually parodies and subverts the expectation that a detective will provide all the answers: after Fred has killed Dick Laurent, the film cuts to Andy's house where police are investigating the scene of his murder. A detective notices a photo of Dick, Renee, and Andy. Earlier in the film, just after Pete has killed Andy, he also notices the photo, but the version he sees has Renee and Alice in it. When the detective's attention is captures by the photo, the spectator is conditioned by classical detective fiction to expect that an explanation will follow. Four detectives examine the photo, Renee is identified, and the spectator also hears that Pete's fingerprints were found. This seems impossible, as Fred and Pete cannot exist in the same ontology, yet this is exactly what is suggested. One of the detectives then says the following: "You know what I think Ed? ... I think there is no such thing as a bad coincidence". The belief in a detective as a source of resolution is subverted with this statement, as it only illustrates these detectives' inability to solve the mystery, and exposes them as failed detectives. Traditionally, this would be the scene where the figure of the detective explains everything to the spectator so that it makes sense resulting in resolution and closure. But no explanation is provided, only an ambiguous statement which leaves the spectator unenlightened about what has been seen. This does not provide the spectator with closure, with what Smith (1992:19) identifies as the "absence of further continuation", which the spectator accepts as logical and correct. Rather, both films stress the idea of continuation at their respective endings: in LH, there is the image of the moving car, speeding down a highway with no apparent end; in MD, there is the image of a stage, and the suggestion that a show is about to begin, one that will continue even after the film has ended.

2.4. CONCLUSION

This chapter was concerned with establishing whether the two films under consideration can be approached as metaphysical detective films or not.In order to establish this, the chapter firstly identified the characteristics of metaphysical detective film; this was achieved by extrapolating these characteristics by comparing and contrasting classical detective fiction with metaphysical detective fiction. It was also illustrated how the shift from classical to metaphysical detective fiction heralded a change in the way the game of detection is played; in metaphysical detective fiction, responsibility for finding a solution to the mystery lies with the reader. Secondly, the identified characteristics of metaphysical detective film were applied to LH and MD in order to illustrate that they can indeed be considered to be metaphysical detective films.

Because of their nature as metaphysical detective films, both LH and MD were poorly received by an audience who did not have the schema necessary to emplot their narratives and find meaning in them. The question can now be asked: why does the shift from classical detective film (a genre the spectator understands and finds meaning in) to metaphysical detective film lead to this situation? Why is it that spectators have such difficulty in navigating the challenges of metaphysical detective film? Why won't (or can't) they play a game that promises more enjoyment than classical detective fiction? In order for this situation to be understood, the relationship between spectator and film needs to be considered; specifically, it needs to be understood how the spectator 'makes' meaning from film narratives, and why the shift to metaphysical detective film makes it difficult to do so. Chapter 3 will be therefore be concerned with firstly, determining why the shift from classical to metaphysical detective film holds challenges for the spectator. The relationship between spectator and metaphysical detective film will be discussed by considering the relationship between spectator and film, and how meaning is found in film narratives. This will be done by focusing on emplotment, schema theory, and the influence of Hollywood film on the spectator's capacity to understand film language.

Considering the relationship between spectator and film in this way, provides the necessary groundwork from which it can be determined how to approach metaphysical detective films. A second question can now be asked: how can we solve such films and find meaning in them? An answer presents itself in the figure of the detective. One of the most significant changes that occur in the shift from classical to metaphysical detective film is the loss or absence of the detective figure. It is this void that the spectator can choose to fill by becoming a transtextual detective. As such, it is necessary to define the concept transtextual detective. Additionally, the characteristics, and how a transtextual detective goes about solving the mystery of a metaphysical detective film, should be identified. Chapter 3 will thus secondly, be concerned with providing an outline of how metaphysical detective films can be approached as a transtextual detective. By comparing and contrasting with the classical detective, the characteristics of the transtextual detective will be elucidated.

CHAPTER 3: THE LIMITATIONS OF SPECTATOR SCHEMA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter was concerned with laying the first part of the foundation from which an investigation into LH and MD can take place. It achieved this by illustrating how these films are reasonably categorised as metaphysical detective films. It also illustrated how the shift from classical to metaphysical detective film left many spectators unable to make sense of such films. The poor reception of both LH and MD reflects the inability of the average spectator to find meaning in metaphysical detective films. As presented in the conclusion of the previous chapter, two salient questions can be asked: firstly, why does the average spectator struggle to find meaning in these films? And secondly, how can a spectator successfully interpret and find meaning in the films under consideration, considering that a reading of them can benefit from approaching these films as metaphysical detective films? Given that the majority of actual spectators[22] of both films struggled to find meaning in them, the assumption can be made that a spectator capable of finding meaning in them would have to differ from the average spectator[23]. The following chapter will respond to the first question by identifying and defining what prohibits the average spectator from finding these films meaningful. Thus, this chapter will lay the foundation from which the second question can be answered in the next chapter, and it will enable to determine what requirements need to be met by a spectator determined to solve a metaphysical detective film.

In order to accomplish this, attention will be focused on the spectator within the relation between spectator and metaphysical detective film. This chapter will aim to illustrate that the inability of the average spectator to find meaning in these films is due to their inadequate filmic schemata which lacks the necessary scope to be able to successfully make sense – through the process of emplotment – of metaphysical detective film.

[22] The term *actual spectators* is used here to distinguish the historical viewers of both LH and MD from the term "spectator" used throughout this dissertation.

[23] The term *average spectator* is used in this context to refer to the fact that, as Nelmes (1999:155) explains, the majority of spectators "behave more or less the same way because, other than in personal detail, their formations and competences are very similar within a given society".

These schemata are the result of classic Hollywood cinema, and as such are rigid and unable to adapt to the shift presented by metaphysical detective film. The outline of this chapter is as follows: Firstly, as LH and MD have been identified as metaphysical detective films, it will be determined why the shift from classical to metaphysical detective film holds challenges for the spectator. The relationship between spectator and metaphysical detective film will be discussed by considering the relationship between spectator and film, and how meaning is found in film narratives. This will be done by focusing on emplotment, schema theory, and the influence of Hollywood film on the spectator's capacity to understand film language. Secondly, this chapter will start to lay the foundation from which our second question can be answered by considering what requirements need to be met by a spectator that hopes to successfully solve a metaphysical detective film. It is suggested that such a spectator requires a new schema, and that one possible schema is that of a transtextual detective.

A brief note before we begin: throughout this chapter a number of different terms are used to refer to films that adhere to a normative set of conventions that render them easily understandable to the average spectator. These include: *mainstream cinema*, *Hollywood cinema*, and *classic Hollywood narrative film*. As these terms refer to the same type of film and they will be used interchangeably throughout the discussion on the limitations of the average spectator's schema.

3.2 Film language and the restrictions of Hollywood cinema

When confronted with metaphysical detective film, the average spectator finds such a film difficult to understand because of the reliance on fixed and static schemas for reading film which have been shaped by traditional or popular Hollywood film. These schemas do not allow the spectator to be adaptable in order to read films that present their narratives differently, such as so called "art house" films, foreign cinema, avant-garde films, and independent cinema; metaphysical detective films, such as LH and MD, can also be added to this list. These types of films offer an alternative approach to narrative film in contrast to the more dominant mode of Hollywood film narrative, exemplified by so-called "blockbuster" films. This marginalised or “alternative” cinema

tends to suggest to spectators films that engage in what Holmlund (2005:2), refers to as "aesthetic experimentation", which entails "a distinctive visual look, an unusual narrative pattern, a self-reflexive style". This cinema, according to Insdorf (2005:27), values a "leisurely narrative over breakneck, television commercial-style pacing, reflection over action, and a depiction of political realities over sex and violence".

The average spectator – familiar primarily with Hollywood cinema – finds "alternative" film difficult to understand because the spectator has not learned how to read them and has no schema for dealing with these films. The schema which the average spectator does possess is too rigid to allow adaption to different styles of film narrative. We find the same situation when a spectator is presented with metaphysical detective film for the first time; the spectator relies on a schema shaped by classical detective film when a film centred on mystery is encountered, and various expectations are based on this schema. Metaphysical detective film does not meet these expectations and the spectator's schema is rendered useless. Because the schema is too rigid, the spectator considers these films to be meaningless. The problem, thus, lies with the spectator's schema.

The following section will investigate the nature of this problem by considering how the spectator's schema for reading and making sense of a film has been shaped by Hollywood film. Firstly, the importance of emplotment to the co-creation of meaning between spectator and film will be illustrated. Secondly, the influence of a spectator's schema on the process of emplotment will be considered. Thirdly, it will be illustrated how the average spectator's ability to understand film language has been shaped by Hollywood cinema. In this way, this section will illustrate how the dominance of Hollywood cinema has shaped the average spectator's schema to such an extent that difficulty emplotting any film narrative that presents an alternative style of storytelling occurs.

3.2.1 Emplotment

Emplotment is an essential aspect of the co-creation of meaning between spectator and film, as it is the process through which narratives are created. When we emplot, we create a coherent whole that provides meaning to all aspects of a narrative, and thus, also to the narrative as a whole (Burger, 2008:133). Through emplotment, we aim to create a plot in the Aristotelian sense of the term. Plot is defined by Aristotle as the structuring of events. For Aristotle, this structuring of events must create a whole which has a beginning, middle, and end (Burger, 2008:124). This creation of a whole emphasises coherence as it implies an orderly organisation. Through plot, a connection is established between all events and information. It is through emplotment that meaning is given to each individual event and to the information these events carry (Burger, 2008:125). Thus, it is by being placed within the structure of a plot that events are connected causally with each other and gain meaning in a coherent whole. Emplotment, then, according to Ritivoi (2008:235), is an attempt to find and create meaning. This process is essential to the spectator, and wants the film to be a coherent whole that makes sense and provides meaning. The film must seem to the spectator to be meaningful, and emplotment is the process that aims to achieve this.

In order to emplot a film narrative in this way, the spectator is dependent on narrative closure. According to Kermode (2008:66), narrative closure arises "out of the mind's natural inclination to convert the raw contingency of narrative events into a shape that conveys order and meaning". Narrative closure, as defined here, is what makes it possible for spectators to comprehend sequential visual storytelling, such as comic book narratives and film. In the case of film, for example, it allows the spectator to make sense of film editing, one of the most important techniques through which film creates narrative, as the spectator is able to view shots that may not seem to fit together and convert these into a whole which makes sense. Ryan (2004:139), states that visuals on their own – whether a painting, comic book panel, or film shot – lack the ability to "explicate causal relations". Narrative closure is the process through which the mind creates causal relations between film shots, thus enabling the spectator to emplot

a narrative. As Perkins (1986:98) states, film shots should be "reassembled" in order in the spectator's "imagination" so that they make sense as part of a larger narrative.

This coherent whole that the spectator desires can only be created after the film has ended. As Burger (2008:124) explains, the events of a narrative can only be emplotted by the individual after all the necessary information from the text has been received. Thus, the spectator has to watch the entire film before it can be successfully emplotted. Naaman (2002:131), agrees that the complete story of the narrative is a product that a spectator commits to only after the perception of the film is over. Before the end of the film, the spectator does not have all the necessary information needed to emplot a complete narrative, and can, at best, only hypothesise about possible outcomes. Consequently, the conclusive narrative of a film is a post-perception product, and as such, the narrative is constructed from memories reorganised in a causal order so as to yield the most coherent story possible. As Lacey (2000:29) explains, the "beginning, middle, and end" of a narrative are not individual elements of a narrative but are defined in relationship to each other: the beginning, for example, can only be defined by its position in relation to the middle and end. Often information is provided at the beginning of a narrative that only gains relevance much later, often only at the end. As an example, let us consider the Italian *Giallo* film *Deep Red* (1975), directed by Dario Argento.

The beginning of the film provides the spectator with a piece of information which gains relevance only at the end of the film when it is explained. This information is presented halfway through the film's opening title sequence. The title sequence suddenly stops and the spectator is presented with a ground level, static shot of a room with a Christmas tree. The spectator sees the shadows of two people on the wall; they seem to be struggling. A woman screams and a bloody knife drops in front of the camera as the shadows move out of view. Finally, the spectator sees the feet of a young child enter the shot and stop next to the bloodied knife. The shot ends and the title sequence continues. For the majority of the film, this shot is never explained. Considering that the film is about 130 minutes in length, it would be understandable that many spectators

forgot about it before being reminded of it once its relevance is made clear. This happens only at the end of the film when it is revealed that it is actually part of a flashback in which the killer's motivation is made clear. Through emplotment, then, the relationship between the parts are established, and each part gains meaning through this relationship.

3.2.2 Schema

This process of emplotment described above does not come naturally to the spectator, but rather, it is a skill that needs to be learned and mastered. The spectator's competency with regard to emplotment is influenced by familiarity with film narratives. As a spectator watches more films, competency develops. This competency is dependent on the spectator's ability to develop a schema for the emplotment of film. As stated in the previous chapter, schema is a model based on experience. According to Jahn (2008:69), in order to integrate new information into larger conceptual frameworks, the "human processor" accesses a store of situational and contextual knowledge gained through experience – the mind’s schemas. As the individual experiences something new, it is compared to these models of experience, called schemas. The new information is understood and made meaningful in relation to the individual's relevant schema. When watching a film, for example, the spectator unconsciously accesses an array of schema – knowledge which has been gained through experience of watching film – and is able to understand the film and emplot the narrative. The spectator exists as someone already formed with expectations, based on schema, prior to the watching of a film (Nelmes, 1999:142), and thus always approaches a film with a certain level of competency. The greater the number of schema the spectator has, the more competent the spectator is in negotiating the meaning of a film.

This competency can be imagined as possessing both *depth* and *scope*. Essentially, this suggests that the more detailed (or experienced) a schema is, the greater its *depth* of competence, and that the more schemas one possesses, the greater *scope* one's competency has. The deeper one's competency, the better one would be able to interpret a film that relies on the corresponding schema. The further one's competency

stretches – the more schemas one possesses – the better one would be at interpreting a greater scope of films. In order to illustrate this particular use of the term competency, a hypothetical scenario is considered thus: a spectator grows up only watching films that belong to the Western genre. In this case, the spectator's schema for Westerns has great depth, and would thus be very competent in emplotting and interpreting such films. However, because the spectator has only seen westerns, the scope of schemas lacks; thus, the spectator's competency lacks scope. If the spectator were to be shown a classical detective film or a musical, there would be no corresponding schema to help, and it would be more difficult to make sense of such films. However, if the spectator watches a film that belongs to a different than the usual genre, the spectator's scope of competency expands, and in future would be able to better make sense of such films. As the spectator watches more of these films that belong to different genres, corresponding schemas attain greater depth.

The average spectator is able to develop a schema for the emplotment of a film narrative because the language of film has become codified over the years, and contains certain conventions which have been repeated and therefore, become schema that help to guide a spectator through a film (Nelmes, 1999:148). Thus, for example, the schema a spectator has developed from watching film allows understanding of a flashback sequence in a film or make sense of montage editing. In order to understand any film, no matter what type or genre, the spectator must possess a basic schema comprised of film language. This schema allows sense of the images seem to be made; it allows understanding of the relationship between images, to understand how they connect together to form a narrative. Without this basic schema, no film, no matter how elementary, would make sense to a spectator[24]. Burch's (in Nelmes, 2003:102) term *Institutional Mode of Representation* (IMR) can be used to define this basic film language schema.

The term attempts to capture the idea that a normative set of ideas became established around about 1915-1917 concerned with what constitutes a mainstream feature film,

[24] This will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

and this has remained the dominant conception of films ever since. It presents an apparently "common sense" notion of how a film should be constructed; this includes what types of stories can be told, what themes are acceptable, and how these stories should be communicated to the audience. Thus how the film looks – from the camera angles to the editing – is also based on this "common sense" approach to film making. Mainstream film has thus provided the spectator with certain codes and conventions which make such a film easily understandable. The codes and conventions established for film by the IMR form schemata which enable spectators to understand these film; they establish common ground on which the film and the spectator can meet. They have become a loose set of rules by which a spectator identifies and interprets the essential components of the narrative film (Kearns, 2008: 66).

Genre is another type of specialised schema which is a step removed from the basic schema discussed above; while all film requires this schema to be intelligible to the spectator, genre films also require another specialised schema in order for the spectator to make sense of them. This is because a specific genre is constituted, according to Bordwell and Thompson (2004:109-110), by certain generic conventions and characteristics, which can include: thematic concerns, plot elements, character types, setting, manner of presentation, use of film techniques, and iconography[25]. Thus, there are certain characteristics that mark a film such as *The Searchers* (1956) as belonging to the Western genre, or *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) as belonging to the musical genre. Genre not only helps the spectator make sense of different characteristics and conventions, but also creates expectations of what is supposed to follow. For example, when watching a classical detective film, the spectator expects, based on schema formed by watching previous examples, that the ending will provide closure by explaining all the mysteries presented. So for example, in *Murder on the Orient Express* (1974), when presented with the mystery of Mr Ratchett's death, the spectator's schema for classical detective film creates the expectation that Mr Ratchett's killer will be

[25] According to Watson (2003:157), iconography refers to "visual patterns of setting, dress, props, and style", which become "visual motifs" in genres. Bordwell and Thompson (2004:109), refer to these "visual motifs" as "recurring symbolic images that carry meaning from film to film".

revealed by the end of the film, and that the method by which detective Hercule Poirot solves this mystery, will be logical.

The spectator's schema is therefore essential in the process of watching a film, as it is what allows understanding of a film. This is especially relevant with regard to narrative gaps. The term *gap* refers, according to Naaman (2002) to the "spaces" in a film where narrative information is missing. According to Neupert (2007:534), most stories come to us with gaps and information narrated out of order. One of the spectator's primary tasks (according to the spectator) is to reconstruct the story not only in terms of its fictional time and space, but also to clarify the cause-effect relations between elements. Neupert (2007:534) carries his argument further and explains:

> Film studies often speaks therefore of the story not as a passive object, but rather as a dynamic text, full of clues, repetitions, false paths, parallels and contrasts that are only available to the viewer in bits and pieces that must be sorted through, extrapolated and reorganised to be fully understood.

The spectator, upon encountering these narratorial gaps, is required to devise a strategy in order to fill the gap and make the film coherent. Such a strategy generally involves coming up with hypotheses as to what is likely to have happened; to infer from the information provided by the film (Naaman, 2002:132). The spectator's schema facilitates this process as knowledge of conventional narrative can be called upon in order to 'fill in' the space left by the gap. Gaps in film can refer to the information left out of a film because it is not needed or does not need to be shown in order for the spectator to understand what has happened. For example, if a character travels from one point to another, the entire trip does not need to be shown in order for the spectator to infer what has happened, namely that a character has gone from one place to another. Gaps can also refer to information deliberately left out to heighten tension, create mystery and pose questions which the spectator wants answered. To return to the example of *Murder on the Orient Express*, the mystery of who killed Mr Ratchett is created by a narrative gap: the spectator is not shown that twelve passengers on the train killed Mr Ratchett. If the spectator was provided that information, there would be

little interest in watching the film. Gaps such as this one keep the spectator interested in the film, keeping attention focused on the narrative because the spectator wants to see how the gaps are filled, the questions generated answered, and how the film ends.

As with a mystery in a classical detective film, a film can only be completed when all the information needed to emplot a narrative is presented and the gaps filled. Until the gaps are filled by the necessary information, the spectator cannot create a whole from the narrative parts and obtain closure; emplotment is, as illustrated, a post-perception process. The film's gaps can either be filled by the film itself, or the spectator must rely on knowledge possessed prior to the film – the spectator's schema – in order to fill the gaps themself. If there is no evidence to the contrary, the spectator can assume that the gap is correctly filled. In this way, the spectator thus attempts to complete perceived narrative patterns in the film that allows for successful emplotment (Spolsky, 2008:193).

The above discussion illustrates how schema allows a spectator to emplot a narrative, and how this process allows meaning to be found in a film. But why is it that when the average spectator is confronted with an alternative mode of film narrative, emplotment a narrative is seemingly a struggle? Why, when presented with metaphysical detective film, can the spectator not find meaning and closure? It will now be argued that the spectator struggles with these films because the schema for emplotting film has been shaped by popular Hollywood cinema, which does not allow the flexibility needed to accommodate alternative modes such as metaphysical detective film. To understand the impact that this dominance of Hollywood cinema has on the spectator, the following section briefly traces the development of film language in order to illustrate how Hollywood cinema has helped to shape – and restrict – the spectator's schema, delimiting the scope of film that can be emplotted.

3.2.3 Film language

Film, like any other communication medium, has a language of its own, one unique to the nature and characteristics of cinema. And like any other language, the language of film is not one that a spectator is born with, but one that has to be learned over time

(Carrière, 1995:8). Modern spectators understand the language of film because it is one they come into contact with from a very early age. These spectators understand the juxtaposition of different shots and scenes; they are able to connect the parts together and emplot a narrative. For example, let us consider a hypothetical film sequence: a man moves towards a window and stares out. The following shot shows the street, where a woman is standing, looking forward. The last shot of the sequence shows the man's face staring out of the window. The average modern spectator can easily take this sequence and transform the parts into a whole narrative. Depending on the specialised context, the spectator can create or emplot any number of different narratives based on this sequence: the man and woman could be lovers who have had a fight, and the woman is now leaving the man. Or the two could be strangers, but the man is captivated by the woman's presence. Even without a specialised context, the spectator can, at the very least, connect the shots together and realise that the man at the window is looking down at the woman in the street. As Carrière (1995:9) explains, "We effortlessly and correctly interpret those juxtaposed images, that language. We no longer even notice this elementary, automatic, reflexive linkage; like a kind of extra sense, this aptitude is now part of our perceptual system."

Thus, because we have learned the language of film, it becomes a 'natural' part of our everyday vocabulary; Boggs and Petrie (2008:513), equate the spectator's watching of film with being as easy as "drawing a breath". This was of course not always the case. If one were to show a modern film to an early cinema audience they would not understand it, because it would communicate in a language they would not understand. This language would not yet be, as Carrière states above, "part of our perceptual system". The language of film we know today was not invented together with the technology of film, but followed later. Indeed, the language of early cinema (dating from around 1895 to 1915) is so different from what is now called classic Hollywood narrative that Burch (2003:59) terms it the *Primitive Mode of Representation*. Nelmes (2003:60) agrees that this language of early film is so different to what modern spectators know that they have difficulty in following the narrative of these films. These films draw strongly on a theatrical tradition which was known to spectators of early film, which explains why they

could relatively quickly learn to understand film, as film initially ‘borrowed’ the language of the theatre. Nelmes (2003:60) explains:

> These films are characterised by a succession of scenes recorded in long shot, square on to the action. Each scene begins with a cut to black and is replaced by another scene in a different (later) time and place. Characters walk on and off either from the side of the frame, or alternatively through stage doors in the frame […]. They appear to be shot from the ‘best seat in the stalls’, and represent a series of scenes, albeit short ones, without the need to wait for the scene to be lifted.

In the mid-1910s there occurred a dramatic shift in terms of the language of film, generally attributed to the work of director D.W. Griffith, who made influential contributions to the language of film, notably in terms of editing (Nelmes, 2003:60, 73). As Carrière (1995:8) expresses, it was not until the “birth” of editing that film truly created a new language. The release of Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) is considered to be one of the first films that illustrated the medium’s artistic and narrative capabilities (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2005:297), and can be seen in many ways as the “great grandfather” of the classic Hollywood narrative film we know today. With Griffith, as Mayne (1988:95) explains, film narratives begin to acquire an “increasingly institutional quality” which laid the foundation for classic Hollywood film narrative. By 1917 nearly all of the fundamental characteristics and aspects of the classic Hollywood film language were in place (Nelmes, 2003:97). From this point onwards Hollywood perfected a language of film which continues to dominate film production.

Without knowledge of this language, a film would be difficult to make sense of. Carrière (1995:7,8), illustrates this point by referring to the figure of the *explicador*, who was a common sight in Spain and African countries during the early stages of film. The duty of the *explicador* was essentially to explain the film to the spectators; he stood near the screen with a long pointer and identified the characters on screen and explained what

they were doing. This practise was necessary because the spectators in these countries did not have a grasp on the filmic language. Carrière (1995:7) explains:

> Even when they recognised a few of those images from elsewhere – a car, a man, a woman, a horse – they could not connect them. The action, the story, eluded them. Raised in a rich and vital oral tradition, they could not adapt to this succession of silent images, the absolute opposite of what they were used to. They were baffled.

When talking about the term spectator, we thus refer to an individual who understands the basic "grammar" of the film language to such an extent that the majority of Hollywood film narratives are understood. The inability of the people mentioned above to understand films is thus the result of their lack of knowledge of the film language that permeates through Hollywood film; they lack a schema for making sense of films. This language, as already stated, is primarily associated with popular, mainstream, or Hollywood film. But the normative set of ideas that became established between 1915 and 1917 – which the IMR refers to – remains at the core of the majority of film narratives, even beyond Hollywood. This specific language is the film language that the majority of spectators are familiar with; it is this language that forms the basis of the average spectator's schema which allows a film's narrative to be emplotted.

This prevailing film language grew out of the narrative tradition known as classic narrative cinema, or alternatively, classic Hollywood narrative, which dominated Hollywood until the 1960s (Roberts & Wallis, 2001:53). As with any living language, film language also evolved over time as new techniques became part of its grammar. Carrière (1995:10), describes the addition of new techniques and methods as "all part of the living and maturing of a language". But while the language may have evolved past 1960, the basics of classic Hollywood narrative still permeate the majority of mainstream cinema (Roberts & Wallis, 2001:57). As Mayne (1988:96) states, this classic Hollywood narrative model is "still very much with us". This film language was born and developed in Hollywood, and has dominated all other variants or alternatives

for more than a hundred years (Nelmes, 2003:4), which explains why it is this specific language or mode of representation that the majority of spectators is familiar with. Stam (2005:245), supports this view when he states that the majority of spectators regard "the fiction feature film *à la* Hollywood […] as the 'real' cinema". This film language is not just a language known to Americans, but as Carrière (1995:13) states, it is a language that has become a set of "conventional internal signs, a sort of planetary code". Actual spectators build up a number of schemata based on this "planetary" language, and this allows them to understand a mainstream film with ease; they are able to easily emplot the film's narrative because the film's language does not short-circuit the spectator's schema.

There are a number of principles around which classic Hollywood narrative is constructed, and which, as stated, remains present in the majority of mainstream, popular film. Roberts and Wallis (2001:53) identify the following principles of classic Hollywood narrative: the cinematic style focuses on creating verisimilitude; events in the film follow the basic structure of clear beginning, middle, and end, or of order, disorder, order restored; the narrative tends to be linear; events are clearly linked by cause and effect; the plot is character led, thus the narrative is psychologically and individually motivated, usually towards the attainment of some desire or goal; the role of the protagonist or "hero" is central; the narrative provides the spectator with a sense of closure. Pramaggiore and Wallis (2005:297) identify another important principle, namely that of clarity: the spectator should not be confused about space, time, or events, or at the very least, at the conclusion of the film, the spectator should not be confused about any aspect of the film (meaning closure needs to be achieved).

The film language described above is thus the language that the majority of actual spectators are used to, even if they are not consciously aware of it. The majority of spectators have the same skills and strategies, the same schema thus, for watching – and understanding – a film. They are all familiar with the structures and formulae of popular culture forms; the plots, settings and character types of different genres, as well as the language of popular cinema as codified by the IMR. We recognise these

conventions and transform them through our imaginations, “suspending our disbelief” (Nelmes, 1999:139-140).

The highly codified nature of the average spectator's schema has the advantage of being 'deep' enough to allow such spectators to comfortably and easily interpret a mainstream film. Its great disadvantage, however, becomes apparent only when such a spectator is confronted with a film that does not adhere to the conventions of classic Hollywood narrative. Only then does the rigidity – the narrowness of the average spectator's schema – become problematic. As MacDonald (in Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2005:8) points out:

> by the time most people see their first avant-garde film, they have already seen hundreds of films in commercial theatres and on television and their sense of what a movie is has been almost indelibly imprinted in their conscious and unconscious minds.

MacDonald’s statement suggests then that for the majority of spectators there is only one film language, and that this film language is learned at a young age. Because the spectator is most likely raised on mainstream film, there is little chance that a spectator will encounter alternative uses of film language frequently enough to understand how these work. By the time the spectator may begin to encounter such films, dependence on one type of film language is dominant and the spectator will experience alternative variations as “strange” and “difficult”. In terms of competency, the average spectator has depth but not scope. Boggs and Petrie (2008:513) support this view when they state that whenever a film does not employ the film language that a spectator is used to, they appear to the spectator to be the product of a different culture all together. The “strangeness” of such a film can pose formidable challenges not only to the appreciation of the film, but also to the spectator’s ability to understand it.

Understanding the way in which the narrowness of the average spectator's schema limits the scope of films interpretable to mainstream films, can help us understand the poor reception of LH and MD better. If an adequate schema is what renders a film

interpretable, then the average spectator's schemata, we can deduce, must have stopped short of what both films require. Assuming that the average spectator's schemata is limited to mainstream Hollywood cinema, it becomes clear that the poor reception problem of LH and MD can be formulated as follows: LH and MD require a schemata beyond the confined schema based on classic Hollywood narrative in order to be interpreted successfully. When confronted with the various mysteries in both films, the average spectator turns to the appropriate schema when faced with mystery in film, namely a schema based on classical detective film. Because of this schema, the spectator has a number of expectations; these, however, are not met by LH and MD, and the spectator's schema does not enable dealing with the ambiguity of these two films. The result is that the spectator is unable to emplot these films, and consequently does not find any meaning in them. Because the spectator's schema is not suited to the genre, the average spectator tends to simply ignore metaphysical detective film. But what of the spectator who *wants* to find meaning in these films, who wants to test their capacity for emplotment against LH and MD? What of the spectator that wants to play the game of detection that these metaphysical detective films provide? What is required of such a spectator in order to achieve this? By considering the work presented in chapters 2 and 3 we can begin to form a picture of the type of spectator that would be able to successfully navigate the game of detection presented by metaphysical detective film.

3.3 A NEW SCHEMA

In order to determine what type of spectator is needed to solve metaphysical detective films, requirements first need to be determined. The prose version of metaphysical detective fiction can be used in order to find a useful clue in the shift from classical to metaphysical detective fiction. As chapter 2 illustrates, one of the most important changes that this shift brings, concerns the figure of the detective. In classical detective fiction, the reader is dependent on a detective to solve the mystery of the narrative. The reader may choose to play the game of detection, but carries no responsibility for the outcome of the game. Even if spectators do not solve the mystery themselves, the

detective will always provide the solution, and subsequently, with resolution and closure; as such, the detective alone carries the responsibility. Achieving closure through resolution is one of the primary goals of the spectator, and because of the figure of the detective, the spectator will always achieve this goal in classical detective fiction. Classical detective fiction thus does not require the reader to actively partake in the solving of the mystery. In metaphysical detective fiction, in contrast, there is either no detective figure present, or a detective who is incompetent and unable to solve the mystery is present. Merivale and Sweeney (1999:10), state that the failure of a detective to solve the mystery of the narrative means that the mystery will remain unsolved, leaving the text incomplete and devoid of clear closure. This statement, however, seems to suggest that the reader is powerless in this instance, that the detective's failure must automatically be the reader's failure as well, and that this must be accepted. But why must this be the case? Why must the reader remain passive and simply accept the text's lack of closure? Can the reader not rather take an active role and attempt to find closure for themself? Metaphysical detective fiction thus requires a reader who chooses to actively fill the void left by the loss of the figure of the detective, in this way accepting the responsibility of achieving resolution and closure.

As the same situation is applicable to metaphysical detective film, a spectator that desires to solve one of these films can then also choose to assume the role of a detective. Such a spectator can look to the classical detective for guidance as these films require the void left by an absent detective to be filled, searching for clues and emplotting a narrative. However, the spectator cannot blindly rely on schemata for classical detective film or classical Hollywood cinema, as both will prove to be inadequate; the spectator cannot allow themself to be limited by these schemata, or will never be successful. Importantly, the spectator cannot limit themself by only searching for rational and logical clues and solutions that reflect an ordered and scientific universe. As chapter 2 illustrates, metaphysical detective film aims to question reality as something that is dependable, consistent, and ordered. It exposes the spectator to a chaotic world in which the “right” clues will not lead to a “right” answer that restores order. Whereas the classical detective film rejects the impossible, the metaphysical

detective film embraces it, and the spectator will have contend with this if the spectator hopes to solve its mysteries. Also, as each metaphysical detective film presents a unique game of detection, a spectator is required who needs to be adaptable in order to be successful; the spectator will have to use ingenuity and creativity in order to navigate these rhizome labyrinths. Again it becomes clear that such a spectator cannot allow being constrained as a result of limitations, and must move beyond the restrictions imposed by classical detective film and classical Hollywood cinema. A new schema is thus required if a spectator hopes to find meaning in metaphysical detective films, and a possible schema to consider is one that allows the role of a detective to be assumed in order to solve these films.

To summarise: In order to solve a metaphysical detective film, a detective is required. If a spectator wishes to see a metaphysical detective film solved in order to achieve resolution and closure, one possible approach is thus to assume the role of a detective themself. This will allow the spectator to actively take part in the meaning making process of the film by participating in an investigation into its mystery (or mysteries). This investigation is in many ways similar to the investigation found in classical detective film, but instead of a detective inside the text being responsible for finding relevant clues and emplotting a narrative that provides a solution, the spectator now becomes responsible for this. However, the investigation also differs from classical detective film, as metaphysical detective film does not reflect classical detective film's belief in a rational, logical, and scientific universe. The spectator can therefore not be bound to search for clues and solutions that reflect such a universe, and must consider that which is possible as well as that which is considered impossible. By assuming the role of a detective the spectator is also employing a new schema. As the spectator will be playing a game of detection that has no defined set of rules, these films further require that a spectator must be adaptable and creative in gameplay. For the purposes of this dissertation, the term *transtextual detective* will be used to account for the schema employed by this type of spectator.

3.4 CONCLUSION

The purpose of the preceding chapter was to continue laying the necessary foundation for an investigation into LH and MD as metaphysical detective films by considering why the average spectator struggles to play these games of metaphysical detection and find meaning in them. To this end it was suggested that the problem lies with the average spectator's inadequate schemata, which lacks the necessary scope to be able to successfully interpret metaphysical detective films. These schemata are the result of classical Hollywood cinema because they are rigid and unable to adapt to the shift presented by metaphysical detective film. It was then suggested that metaphysical detective film requires that a spectator employ a new and adaptable schema in order to solve it. It was suggested that one possible schema is that of the transtextual detective. Before this schema can be successfully applied to an investigation of both LH and MD, it is necessary to first define the concept of a transtextual detective and identify the characteristics. The next chapter will aim to expand on this by comparing and contrasting the transtextual detective with the classical detective. By doing this, chapter 4 will finish laying the foundation for the investigation into LH and MD.

CHAPTER 4

THE SPECTATOR AS TRANSTEXTUAL DETECTIVE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

At the end of chapter 2, two questions presented themselves, namely: why does the average spectator struggle to find meaning in metaphysical detective films such as LH and MD, and what type of spectator is then needed to solve LH and MD and find meaning in them? Chapter 3 responded to the first question by illustrating that the average spectator's filmic schema – the result of classic Hollywood cinema and classical detective film – is inefficient for making sense of these films. In doing so, chapter 3 laid the foundation for the answering of the second question. It was suggested that a new schema is needed, and that an answer could be found in the figure of the detective. It was illustrated that one of the most significant changes that occurred in the shift from classical to metaphysical detective film is the loss or absence of the figure of the detective. As a detective is required for the solving of a mystery, it was then further suggested that the spectator can choose to fill this void by assuming the role of a transtextual detective and solving the mystery of a metaphysical detective film themself. As such it is necessary to define the concept of transtextual detective and identify not only the characteristics, but also how a transtextual detective can go about solving the mystery of a metaphysical detective film. In this way the current chapter attempts to imaginatively define the type of spectator necessary for finding meaning in the films under consideration.

In order to achieve this, the current chapter will broadly unfold as follows: it will first consider the two implications of the term *transtextual* as it is used in the neologism *transtextual detective*. The relation between detective, reader or spectator, and narrative will first be considered by comparing the transtextual detective with the classical detective as found within classical detective narrative. In this way the void left by the absence of the classical detective in metaphysical detective narrative is

identifiable, and the implications that this holds for the reader or spectator who wishes to find meaning in such a narrative is considered. The second implication considered is the connection between the transtextual detective and Genette's term *transtextuality*. This discussion will highlight how a detective who wishes to solve a metaphysical detective narrative must not only appropriate aspects of the classical detective’s method, but must also adopt new skills. Through this discussion the spectator is able to gain insight into how the method of gameplay changes from classical detective narrative to metaphysical detective narrative, thus allowing better understanding on how to play the games presented by the metaphysical detective films under consideration. Secondly, this chapter will illustrate how the transtextuality of the transtextual detective meets the requirements set to the spectator by metaphysical detective film. Lastly, this chapter will conclude by presenting the characteristics of the transtextual detective as elucidated throughout the chapter.

4.2 IMPLICATIONS OF THE TERM *TRANSTEXTUAL*

4.2.1 First implication: The relationship between detective, spectator, and narrative

In this first implication, the use of transtextual refers to the transgression a spectator undertakes when taking up a role traditionally reserved for a figure within the narrative text. In particular, this refers to the shift from classical to metaphysical detective narrative described in chapter 2, where the absence of the classical detective in the metaphysical detective film invites the spectator to transgress the boundary between themself and the narrative of the film in order to play the game of detection. The act of detection is then not only a function of the enclosed narrative text, but is left open to the spectator. The text thus asks of the spectator to solve it, and leads the spectator to assume the role of what is now called the transtextual detective.

Why does the absence of the classical detective leave such a void to be filled by a transtextual detective? The answer can be found by considering the function of the classical detective within classical detective narrative. In classical detective narrative,

the figure of the detective is of central importance, as it is the detective who solves the mystery and provides the answers that the reader or spectator seeks, and it is thus the detective that provides resolution and closure to the reader or spectator. Although, as illustrated, the reader or spectator is invited to play the game of detection, these narratives never expect the reader or spectator to be responsible for solving the mystery. Rather, the narrative allows the reader or spectator to be dependent on the figure of the detective to explain what has happened and “whodunit”, thus placing responsibility on the shoulder of the detective. This detective, whether a professional or an amateur, uses logic and reasoning to uncover necessary information – the clues – which he or she then uses to rationally deduce the answer to the mystery; however improbable it may seem, just so long as it is not impossible.

Since his earliest incarnation, the classical detective has, as Knight (1980:39) explains, functioned to assure the reader that the chaos and disorder present in the world can be contained, as he or she uses reason and logic to establish order. As such, the detective can be seen, according to Holquist (1983:156), as a metaphor for the re-establishment of order and equilibrium. As such a metaphor, the detective articulates, according to Knight (1980:67), the faith that the reader has in scientific, rational, and logical thought as a means to "order an uncertain and troubling world". Knight goes on to explain that despite the reader's or spectator’s faith in rational and logical thought, they nonetheless do not feel that they have the necessary capacity to employ such thought to bring order to the world; thus, the figure of the detective – as a “hero” – stands in for the reader or spectator and accomplishes what is wished for, but cannot self-achieve. In this way then, the detective acts to protect the reader or spectator from the reality of a world where crimes go unpunished, and mysteries remain unsolved.

In the classical detective narrative, there is a general pattern where the detective tries to uncover the solution of a mystery by establishing the series of events that lead up to it. The end of the narrative is the point where the detective reveals this series of events as he or she provides a summary narrative (Rzepka, 2005:19) that connects each event together logically and, importantly, causally. This reflects Arthur Conan Doyle's (Knight,

1980: 68) belief (which resonates throughout his Sherlock Holmes tales) that all events are in reality linked in an "unaccidental chain", and that an "inquirer" or detective can establish the links. As the detective establishes the links between events, he or she is in fact creating a linear narrative, one that Merivale and Sweeney (1999:16) consider to be the solution to the mystery of classical detective fiction. This solution is arrived at through the process of emplotment thus: the detective takes the various pieces of information and clues he or she uncovers, and then re-arranges them into a structure. This structure is a narrative, which creates causal links between the information in order to establish the series of events that preceded the mystery. Each piece of information gains meaning as they are placed in narrative context that creates a whole. When the classical detective narrates the solution of a mystery, he or she not only narrates the events that transpired, but also narrates how he or she has arrived at this solution. In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, detective Hercule Poirot explains to Dr Sheppard – his companion on the investigation as well as the narrator of the novel – how he will reveal not only “whodunit”, but also how he solved the mystery of 'whodunit'. He states that: “I will take you the way that I have travelled myself. Step by step you shall accompany me, and see for yourself that all the facts point indisputably to one person.” (Christie, 1983: 243).

In the above, Poirot is essentially stating that he will provide a narrative that will supply the solution to the mystery of who killed Roger Ackroyd. The process that Poirot describes will not only provide the expected explanation of the series of events that lead to the murder, but will also explain how the detective went about solving the case. A dual process of emplotment presents itself: the emplotment of events that constitutes a solution to the mystery and the emplotment of the investigation that illuminates the path that the detective has travelled.

4.2.1.1 Method of the classical detective

In order to emplot such a narrative as described above, the classical detective uses a general method of detection that is representative of the genre. This method includes aspects such as observation, asking questions, and backwards reasoning or retrograde

analysis. In order to better understand how a classical detective functions, these three aspects will be briefly discussed. Our understanding of the classical detective's method is derived from the method employed by the most famous classical detective, namely Sherlock Holmes (Grella, 1988:90); this is because his method of investigation served as the template for subsequent classical detectives (Grella, 1988:90-91). Therefore, in the discussion that follows, Holmes will be used as an example in order to elucidate the aspects that make up the method of the classical detective.

The first aspect considered is that of observation. It is through the process of observing the crime scene that a classical detective such as Holmes is able to identify relevant clues that will allow him to determine what happened there. Without any clues, Holmes would never be able to solve any mystery he is confronted with; without clues, he would never be able to ask the necessary questions that allow him to come up with plausible hypotheses for what happened and, most importantly, that allow him to reason backwards from effect to cause. Without concrete evidence, he would also never be able to prove his hypotheses true. Holmes has to be able to prove that his hypothesis is not just conjecture, but is in fact the truth. In order to achieve this, Holmes must continue to observe and search for clues during the course of his investigation. Importantly, Holmes observes clues that may be hidden to the average individual; as he explains to Watson in "A Case of Identity", "you didn't know where to look, and so you missed all that was important" (Doyle, 1960:363). For the detective, to solve a mystery is to uncover something that has been hidden from sight, and the detective thus has to peer beneath the surface of appearance to discover the truth that is concealed. Observation is an important aspect of this process of unveiling, as valuable clues needed to solve the mystery are often hidden, or may appear to be seemingly irrelevant. Holmes for example, pays attention to clues that others may consider to be insignificant; he states, that "it has long been an axiom of mine that the little things are infinitely more important" (Doyle, 1960:358).

The second aspect considered is that of asking relevant questions. As Doyle and Crowder (2010:37) explain, it was one thing for Holmes to collect evidence, but "being

able to *reason*[26] what it meant was another". Once Holmes has observed and acquired clues, he needs to determine what the clues mean with regard to the mystery he is trying to solve. The clues on their own will thus not *solve* the mystery. It falls to an individual to "read" the clues and make sense of them, to determine their relationship to each other and figure out what narrative they reveal. This is achieved through the asking of relevant questions. According to Paavola and Järvilehto (2011:46), Holmes "is able to find key issues in problematic situations by framing strategically useful questions". Thus, it is by asking questions about the clues that Holmes is able to solve a mystery. This is because asking questions facilitates Holmes' ability to reason backwards from effect to cause; the smaller individual questions he asks all serve to answer the overarching question connected to the effect, namely how did this come about? (Paavola & Järvilehto, 2011:48).

The third aspect considered is that of backwards reasoning or retrograde analysis. This is an important aspect in the classical detective's method, as it is only by reasoning backwards from effect to cause that a detective is able to solve the mystery by answering the question: how did this come about? The process of backwards reasoning is concerned with taking a specific result and determining what steps led to it. Backwards reasoning thus aims to establish the relationship between events in order to illustrate how a specific cause led to its logical effect. In order to gain a better understanding of how backwards reasoning works, it may be useful to consider the gameplay[27] method of retrograde analysis, as it closely mirrors the process of backwards reasoning.

The close similarity between backwards reasoning and retrograde analysis is highlighted in Arturo Perez-Reverte's historical detective novel *The Flanders Panel* (1990). In this novel, an art restorer, Julia, discovers that the solution to a 500 year old

[26] My emphasis.

[27] The fact that retrograde analysis is a term largely connected with gameplay is significant, as in chapters 2 and 3 a definition of metaphysical detective film was provided that, amongst other aspects, highlighted its nature as a game that can played – if the spectator so chooses. This game of metaphysical detection can be viewed as a two player game between the director (in this case David Lynch) and the spectator as transtextual detective.

murder mystery is located in a 15th Century painting that she is busy restoring. With the help of her older friend or father figure César, and a genius chess player named Muñoz, Julia attempts to solve the mystery. The key to unraveling the mystery is in a chess game that the painting depicts. Muñoz is recruited by Julia and César to help them determine what the significance of the chess game is. The chess player uses the method of retrograde analysis in order to reveal what the chess game "means". He explains this method to César as follows:

> 'It's called retrograde analysis.'
>
> 'What kind of analysis?'
>
> 'Retrograde. It involves taking a certain position on the board as your starting point and then reconstructing the game backwards in order to work out how it got to that position. A sort of chess in reverse, if you like. It's all done by induction. You begin with the end result and work backwards to the causes.'
>
> 'Like Sherlock Holmes,' remarked César, visibly interested.
>
> 'Something like that' (Pérez-Reverte, 1995:73).

Muñoz so explains the basic nature of this method, where one takes a specific point – a specific effect – that is known and uses this as a starting point, working backwards from this point to determine the cause; thus, literally reconstructing the history of a game in reverse. A classical detective must perform a similar task when solving a mystery, namely reconstructing the history of what transpired.

In the above quote, Muñoz is describing a method used to *play a game*; in this case, chess. Despite the fact that this method can be employed to solve a mystery, Muñoz does not *explain* it as a method of detection. Retrograde analysis is generally not a term employed when talking about detection and mystery solving. Bouzy (2001:8) explains

that retrograde analysis is predominantly found in chess[28], and this method, therefore, can be seen as one that is principally discussed in terms of gameplay and game theory; it can be viewed as the gameplay equivalent of backward induction, and is employed in order to establish a chain of events. As such, it mirrors Holmes' analytical process. Smullyan (1980:xii) echoes this when he states that problems of retrograde analysis have "the psychological flavour of detective stories". Thus, even though retrograde analysis is generally used in connection with two player games such as chess, the nature of the method allows itself to be useful in the solving of a mystery.

This connection between retrograde analysis and detection is foregrounded when Muñoz's explanation prompts César to equate this method of gameplay with detection when he observes that retrograde analysis is similar to the method of detection employed by Sherlock Holmes. This equation draws attention to the similarity between retrograde analysis and detection, in that both processes are focused on reconstructing the past. Smullyan (1980:xii) states that retrograde analysis is not concerned with the future of a game, but is concerned "only with the *past* history of a game". Classical detective texts such as the Holmes tales are similarly not concerned with the future, but only with the past, as it is knowledge of the past that is essential to solving the mystery; what happens after the mystery has been solved is irrelevant. Both retrograde analysis and detection therefore takes place in reverse, as the detective has to work from effect backwards to cause, just as a player of chess can use retrograde analysis to reconstruct a game of chess backwards. Furthermore, just as the chess player who employs retrograde analysis has a specific position in the game to work backwards from, so too does the detective; specifically, the detective has a mystery which serves as the starting point. In an attempt to solve this mystery, the detective, according to Scaggs (2005:34-35), retraces "the causative steps from effects back to causes".

Therefore, as Pyrhönen (2008:103) explains, any process of detection or mystery solving has a "backwards structure", as the aim of this process is to establish a linear

[28] Bouzy (2001:1) states that retrograde analysis generally only found in two player games such as chess and checkers.

and chronological sequence of events that will end up explaining "its own baffling starting point". This "baffling starting point" which Pyrhönen mentions refers to the presence of a mystery which “baffles” not only characters in the text, but also the reader or spectator of such a text or film. As Pyrhönen (2008:103) further explains, the consequences – or effect – of a crime is made apparent before the events that led to it are made known; thus, the cause of the mystery is explained through a narrative[29]. The cause can only be revealed or made known after the detective has established a linear timeline. As Gregory and McCaffery (1979:39) explain, the process of detection is one in which the detective successfully interprets a series of relevant and meaningful clues which leads to a solution that "diagrams the crime and explains its motive". In describing the method of detection of the classical detective, Knight (1980:109) explains that it is a method based on "observing events, gestures, objects, and words, and *reasoning out a pattern which explains them all*"[30]. Therefore, the way in which a mystery is solved is by gathering relevant clues, asking questions about them in order to obtain information and, through backwards reasoning or retrograde analysis, using this to establish a linear and chronological sequence of events which illustrates the relationship between events and explains what happened. In this way a classical detective is able to emplot a narrative that serves to solve the mystery under investigation.

[29] It is important to note that not all texts that deal with detection follow this pattern. Often one finds a detective text in which the cause is not known to the detective in the text, but well to the spectator that watches. These types of texts cannot be considered as true mystery texts, as there is, in essence, no mystery for the spectator. Such detective texts can be termed false mystery texts: these texts do feature a detective solving a mystery, but for the spectator there is no mystery. As such, she cannot play a game of detection. This is in contrast with metaphysical detective film, which can be considered as the 'truest' mystery text, as the mystery remains such until the spectator – as transtextual detective – solves it. A popular example of such a false mystery text is the television series *Columbo* (1968-2003), in which Peter Falk stars as the eponymous detective. The general pattern of this television series rejects the traditional pattern or “whodunit” structure of classical detective film by presenting the spectator with the knowledge of who the killer is at the beginning of each film length episode; the spectator thus knows from the start 'whodunit'. The rest of the show was concerned with presenting a game of “cat and mouse” between the killer and Columbo, as the detective tries to figure out “whodunit”. Because this type of detective text inverts the classical structure, it is often, as Reilly (2011) explains, referred to as the inverted detective story (also alternatively known as the “howcatchem” or “howdunnit”).

[30] My emphasis.

4.2.1.2 The incompetent or missing detective in metaphysical detective fiction

The above discussion highlighted the importance of the role that the classical detective plays in the classical detective narrative, as is was illustrated that the detective is able – thanks to his method of detection – to emplot a narrative that provides a solution to the mystery under investigation. However, In Chapter 2 it was explained that in the metaphysical detective narrative, the reader or spectator either finds a detective that fails to solve the mystery, or finds that there is no detective figure in the narrative; whatever the case may be, metaphysical detective narrative is thus devoid of a competent and successful detective. What is the effect of this? As there is no classical detective within the story, there is thus no character that is able to emplot the narrative necessary to solve the mystery. In order to understand the implication that this holds for the individual hoping to find meaning in such narratives, some examples from metaphysical detective fiction are considered in greater detail.

Paul Auster's seminal collection *The New York Trilogy* (1999) contains three of his earlier novels that are all examples of metaphysical detective fiction, namely: *City of Glass* (1985), *Ghosts* (1986), and *The Locked Room* (1986). In all three novels characters who either assume the role of a detective (such as in *City of Glass* and, to a lesser extent, *The Locked Room*), or a character who is a detective (in *Ghosts*) are found. However, none of these detectives are successful, and they fail to find any solution to the mysteries they are confronted with. As Ramin (2006:1) confirms, in *The New York Trilogy* we find characters "who are not only incapable of solving the unusual cases handed to them but are continuously confronted with hesitation and uncertainty". The detectives in these metaphysical detective novels thus differ greatly from those found in classical detective fiction, who are never presented as being hesitant or uncertain, and who always solve the cases they are handed. Unlike these classical detectives, the detectives in *The New York Trilogy* are confronted by "the relativity of meaning as they search for it in a fragmented and detached world of multiplicity and instability" (Ramin, 2006:1). It is exactly because metaphysical detective fiction presents

a world that is "fragmented and detached", a world of "multiplicity and instability" that a detective – when present – fails to solve a mystery.

In classical detective fiction, the detective functions within a world that is presented as ordered and rational. When a crime occurs, the ordered world becomes momentarily disrupted. The grounding that an ordered world provides the detective with, allows him to confront the single point of disruption without fear of becoming disrupted himself. The detectives in metaphysical detective fiction such as *The New York Trilogy* confront a world that, to begin with, is disrupted and unordered, a world of fragments and multiplicity. Because these detectives have no solid grounding in such a world it becomes difficult for them to not get "lost" during the course of their investigation.

As a more detailed example, one of the novels in *The New York Trilogy*, namely *City of Glass* is considered. The protagonist of this novel is Daniel Quin, an author who writes detective novels under the pseudonym William Wilson. One evening Quin receives a telephone call from someone searching for the private detective Paul Auster. At first Quin simply states that he isn't Auster, but when it happens again, he pretends to be Auster, and ends up accepting a case from Peter Stillman and his wife Virginia. Initially the case does not seem to Quin to be too complex: when Peter was still a young boy, his father, also named Peter, had locked him up in a dark room for nine years. The only human contact the boy ever received during this period was the beatings his seemingly insane father administered. When a fire accidentally broke out in their home Peter jnr. was rescued while his father was sent to an insane asylum. However, after thirteen years, Peter snr. is being released, and Virginia is frightened that he will try to harm his son once again. Quin's job is to follow Peter snr. and report his activities to Virginia, warning her if he thinks Peter snr. may try to make contact with his son.

Quin does not think that the case will be very difficult; he is, after all, a writer of detective fiction. More than this, Quin associates very closely with his fictional private investigator called Max Work. He believes that "the writer and the detective are interchangeable", and as the unknown narrator states, Quin had "long ago stopped thinking of himself as real. If he lived now in the world at all, it was [...] through the imaginary person of Max

Work"[31] (Auster, 1999:8, 9). Thus, a simple case of observation should provide no trouble to Quin, as he can simply slip into the “skin” of Max Work. This, however, is not the case as Quin soon discovers; just because his detective is successful in structured narratives of detection does not mean that he will be successful in a reality that does not follow the structured plot of a novel. For example, Quin is provided with the date, place, and time that Peter's father will arrive by train, as well as an old photo. However, when Quin waits at the train station, he identifies two people who resemble the photo he has. This event completely catches Quin off-guard, as he did not foresee such an event happening as the narrator explains: “What happened then defied explanation. Directly behind Stillman, heaving into view just inches behind his right shoulder, another man stopped [...] His face was the exact twin of Stillman's” (Auster, 1999:55-56).

Unlike his narratives, Quin is not in control of reality, and events can happen that throw his plans into disarray, as real life is not ordered. Quin does not know how to deal with an event that does not follow his expected plot, as the narrator explains: "There was nothing he could do now that would not be a mistake" (Auster, 1999:56). As the novel continues, Quin struggles to keep a grip on the strands of the case. He desperately tries to solve the mystery of Peter Stillman snr. and, becomes obsessed with the idea that this human being can somehow be solved, like one of the mysteries in his novels. He applies the methods he has learned through reading classical detective fiction, and which he has refined through the writing of his Max Work adventures. Yet despite this, he is never able to solve anything. As Holmes (2005) remarks: “Quin never really solves the case he takes on. His methods of detection seemed flawed [...] The end of the story certainly does not give answers, as Quin disappears and the identity of the narrator remains a mystery.”

Quin is a perfect example of the incompetent detective found in metaphysical detective fiction. The lack of a competent detective means that the narrative itself does not provide the reader with a solution – with resolution – or with closure. In *City of Glass* for example, the reader never discovers what happened to either Peter Stillman, or what

[31] My omission.

happened to Quin. In contrast with classical detective fiction, the lack of the figure of a detective serves to expose the reader to the reality of the world, as there is no detective which can protect the reader from the disorder of the real world. If the reader desires to find closure and meaning, and chooses to confront the text, the reader must assume the responsibility of attaining them themself. The analogy between metaphysical detective fiction and metaphysical detective film, can conclude that the relationship between metaphysical detective film and spectator thus calls for a spectator that is suited to the task of investigation and interpretation involved; it calls for a spectator that is willing to don the hat (and trench coat) of a detective themself in an attempt to solve the mystery of the metaphysical detective film; it calls for a spectator that is willing to assume the role of a transtextual detective.

4.2.2 Second implication: The relationship between the transtextual detective and Genette's term *transtextuality*

At the end of the above discussion the conclusion is made that if a spectator wishes to find meaning in a metaphysical detective film the role of a detective must be assumed by themself and – from outside the boundaries of the text itself – attempt to solve one of its many mysteries. This leads to the question: how is the spectator expected to do this? Must the spectator, for example, become a classical detective who simply "stands" outside of the text? Can the spectator employ the method of detection used by classical detectives and hope to solve a metaphysical detective film? When the spectator starts to watch one of these films, a schema is employed that aids understanding. Because of the presence of mystery in these films, the spectator automatically employs the schema of classical detective film. Is it safe to assume, however, that this schema will work when applied to a mystery found in metaphysical detective film? The novel, *City of Glass,* provides an example of how someone who automatically employs the schema of classical detective narrative when faced with a mystery of an alternative nature (such as those found in metaphysical detective narrative) is confronted with the shortcomings of this traditional schema.

As already illustrated, in the novel Quin finds himself becoming embroiled in a case that resembles the detective novels he reads and writes. Quin is well versed in classical detective fiction. The narrator informs us that Quin "knew almost nothing about crime", but that "[w]hatever he knew about these things, he had learned from books, films, and newspapers" (Auster, 1999:7). Quin also enjoys classical detective texts because of their form (Auster, 1999: 8) and because of their relation to each other (Auster, 1999:7). Quin's schema for classical detective fiction thus has great depth. When Quin is caught up in a situation that confronts him with a mystery, he calls upon this schema in order to help him in his investigation. Theoretically, Quin should not have too much trouble solving the case; after all, he is an expert on classical detective fiction. Also, as illustrated earlier, it is easy for Quin to slip into the skin of his fictional detective, Max Work. During his investigation, Quin does everything expected of a private detective. He follows the schema for a classical detective closely, and expects that applying this schema will result in him successfully solving the case, just as it would in one of his novels. However, as illustrated earlier, Quin fails to solve anything. His application of this schema does not help him to solve a mystery in a postmodern reality; the problem he encounters is that reality is not like a classical detective novel with its rigid structure. Reality is unpredictable and complex, and does not follow the contours of a classical detective fiction plot.

Considering the above example, it would seem to suggest that the reader's schema for classical detective fiction is rendered useless when applied to the mysteries of metaphysical detective fiction. Ewert (1999:186), for example, states that the reader has to "give up her expectations of the methods of conventional detection, even though the novels deliberately invoke those expectations". This would further seem to suggest that there is nothing to be gained from this schema, that the transtextual detective cannot learn anything useful from it. After all, Quin applied the method of a classical detective to his investigation and it failed him. However, and this is imperative, Quin's failure was not due to his use of classical detective fiction schema, but rather due to the fact that he did not *creatively* adapt his schema to a mystery of a different nature. Quin expected that his schema would work as it does in classical detective fiction; but Quin is not living

in such a text. He fails to consider that he needs to *adapt* that schema to the reality that he finds himself in. The same holds true for the transtextual detective. A transtextual detective cannot simply apply the schema of classical detective narrative to metaphysical detective narrative and expect it to work. The schema has to be adapted to the new type of mystery being investigating. How the transtextual detective must exceed the confines of the classical detection method will now be considered, by looking at the second implication of the term transtextual detective.

4.2.2.1 Transtextuality, Genette, and creative gameplay

The term *transtextual detective* recalls Genette's term *transtextuality*, which refers to "all that which puts one text in relation, whether manifest or secret, with other texts" (Stam, 2000:207-208). In terms of "reading" a film, this implies that the text (the film) is never "read" in isolation, but always interwoven with other texts (film and other media). When "reading" the narrative of a film, the spectator relies on the schema – that can be viewed as texts themselves – to aid understanding and interpretation. As the schema is constituted by other texts that have been read and encountered, each new text is understood and made meaningful because of the spectator's knowledge of other texts. Consequently, the interpretation of one text always involves the interpretation of more texts. In classical detective fiction, for example, the interpretation of the narrative is dependent on having a schema for such texts. The schema (the rules of the game) can be seen as a master text that leads to the slave text, namely the token narrative itself, which is representative of all other texts belonging to the genre. The reader or spectator has to have knowledge of the master text – thus a schema is necessary – in order to interpret the various texts of classical detective fiction. Because of its high level of codification, the master text of classical detective fiction is fully delineated. The reader or spectator dealing with classical detective fiction might be tempted to treat the narrative text as the object of understanding and interpretation whilst the text of codes and conventions (its rules) as merely the means to understand and interpret it. In classic detective fiction, even though the rules determine the reader's or spectator's

expectations of a text, neither the nature of this text of rules, nor the text of the schema needs to be thought about in order to understand the narrative.

The metaphysical detective narrative, however, leads and compels the reader or spectator to interpret the narrative text in conjunction with the text of codes and conventions that would determine how the narrative is interpreted. Thus, the codes and conventions themselves become the object of interpretation in consultation with the narrative text, as the reader or spectator has to understand how each game of detection is constructed in order to figure out how to win the game and solve the mystery. In the metaphysical detective narrative, there is an absence of a detailed master text as found in classical detective fiction, because the notion of such a master text is subverted and short-circuited by the metaphysical detective text. However, the metaphysical detective narrative cannot completely escape the necessity of a master text, as there is still the need of minimal master texts – such as language, the basic conventions of literature, and detection – without which the text would not make sense. Unlike the token narrative found in classical detective narrative, in metaphysical detective narrative we find unique narrative texts with their own “identity” that cannot necessarily be superimposed on each other.

What now becomes clear is that if the reader or spectator wants to solve a metaphysical detective film, they will have to move beyond their set schema and search for new methods of detection to help interpret the narrative. This requires ingenuity and creativity on the part of the spectator, and has to call on transtextuality skills in order to find the necessary texts that can help; with no delineation, the spectator has to select from all available texts the necessary components that will help with interpretation. This is an example of what Danesi (2005:93) refers to as “insight thinking”, what more commonly is called thinking “outside of the box”. In this instance, it refers to using creativity and ingenuity to think beyond the confines of schema based on master texts. In this way the spectator can establish a new schema suited for the specific narrative attempting to be interpreted. While this schema may be designed specifically for an individual text, it feeds back into the vast store of texts that the spectator has so that it

can be used in the future to facilitate the interpretation when the spectator is confronted with a text that short-circuits conventional schema. Thus, the spectator's scope, in terms of competency, is increased; not only has the scope of schemata increased, but also the scope of possible texts which can be "read" and emplotted.

Each game of metaphysical detection thus requires a unique approach, or method of detection, that is determined by the text itself. This type of innovative emplotment can be likened to aspects of game theory. Juul (2005:95), states that games present challenges that the player learns to overcome. As he explains: "To play a game is essentially a learning experience where the player acquires the skills needed to overcome the challenges of the game."

The text itself helps the reader determine how it should be solved, as each game of metaphysical detection is constructed differently. This echo's the previous characterization of metaphysical detective narratives as playful narratives that foreground *paidia*, in that each text makes and breaks its own rules. In terms of game theory this is known as emergent gameplay. According to Juul (2005:76-77), emergent gameplay can be seen as a game that allows a player to play it using a great number of different strategies, generally ones that the game designer themself did not predict. In the game of metaphysical detection, the reader or spectator can solve the mystery in a number of different ways, as games of emergence can, according to Juul (2005:97), be "played to their conclusion many times". As a rhizome labyrinth, these texts contain a manifold of possible solutions. The reader or spectator can play the same game numerous times, with each time being different. As a transtextual detective of film, the spectator needs to navigate a path through the rhizome labyrinth, through the infinite number of possible routes – the possible narratives – by using the schema in new and creative ways.

Thus, the transtextuality referred to by the neologism "transtextual detective" connotes the innovative appropriation of different texts so as to guide the emplotment of the film under consideration. In this sense, it recalls Gennet's term *transtextuality.* There is no blueprint, or "master text", available to the spectator faced with a rhyzomatic text like a

metaphysical detective film. Instead, the transtextual detective creatively interprets the symbolic language of the text in the way one would the rules of game in emergent gameplay, taking cues from the text itself and then integrating them with other patterns of interpretation learnt by different texts.

4.2.2.2 A modern Holmes: assimilation of the classic detective method by the transtextual detective

Does the above discussion thus suggest that the classical method of detection is unreliable? Is there nothing to be gained from the method employed by the classical detective? Our discussion of the transtextual detective thus far seems to suggest just this, as it presents an image of a detective that is different from a classical detective, largely due to the nature of the mystery being investigated. The classical detective is confronted with a mystery rooted in physical reality, in a material world where material clues lead to one definite, logical solution. In contrast, the transtextual detective is confronted with a mystery that is immaterial (metaphysical) in nature[32], one that leads to the questioning the human condition – the very mystery of life itself – and one where a multitude of possible solutions are available. To search for a logical and rational solution to the metaphysical mystery will most likely not yield any meaningful results, as logical reasoning will only take the transtextual detective so far; the solution(s) that may be discovered are often illogical and irrational in nature, and thus the method of detection must be of such a nature which allows the discovery to reveal illogical and irrational solutions. Unlike the classical detective, the transtextual detective does not have a set of formalised rules that is "purely rational in nature" (Mandel, 1988:215) within which to operate. The “game” that the transtextual detective “plays” is devoid of such fixed and rational rules and, as such, must be adaptable in his or her method of detection, or else he or she will never be able to unravel each individual metaphysical detective film encountered. However, as has also been illustrated, both the classical detective and the transtextual detective are compelled to solve a mystery through the process of

[32] Although, it must be noted, the metaphysical mystery may have origins in the material world, resembling at first a mystery found in classical detective film.

emplotment. Though the nature of the mystery differs, the solving of both types of mystery requires a detective to emplot a narrative that explains what happens, providing closure to the spectator in the process. Thus similarities are found between the two types of detectives. To recall the discussion of *City of Glass*, Quin does not fail because he employs the classical method of detection; rather, he fails because he does not adapt the method to meet the requirements presented by his mystery. The classical method of detection can still be of use to the transtextual detective. Apart from having to also emplot a narrative, the transtextual detective must also observe and find clues, and ask questions to make sense of these clues, and must also reason backwards from effect to cause. It is because the nature of the mystery and the clues have changed that the method cannot be used in the same manner as found in classical detective narrative; it has to be assimilated by the transtextual detective and adapted to meet specific needs. It is not that the transtextual detective must do this; however, assimilating, adapting, and building on the classical method of detection can prove useful to the transtextual detective, exactly because of the similarities between the two detectives and how they have to go about emplotting a narrative to solve a mystery. The classical method of detection is after all one schema among many that can be called upon by the transtextual detective during the investigation of a mystery.

4.3 THE SPECTATOR AS TRANSTEXTUAL DETECTIVE: MEETING THE REQUIREMENTS OF METAPHYSICAL DETECTIVE FICTION

The following section will serve to explain how the transtextuality of the transtextual detective, meant in the two ways specified above, meets the requirements set to the spectator by metaphysical detective film. To reiterate, in the previous chapter two requirements were identified, namely:

1. There is a need for the spectator to take responsibility for solving the mystery of the film’s meaning.
2. In the spectator’s attempts to solve the mystery themself, the spectator needs to transgress the limits of the classical detective’s techniques. In particular, it needs

to be considered what would be impossible according to a classical detective method.

With regards to the first requirement, the first meaning of transtextuality as discussed above, namely as the transgression of the border between spectator and narrative, allows for the spectator to assume responsibility for solving a mystery encountered in a metaphysical detective film. As these film texts lack a competent detective who solves the mystery for the spectator, it is up to the spectator to solve it in order to gain resolution and closure. The schema of the transtextual detective asks of the spectator to transgress the boundary between themself and the narrative of the film and to assume the role of detective. The spectator thus cannot depend on a figure inside the text to solve the mystery, and therefore carries responsibility towards its solution.

With regards to the second requirement, the second meaning of transtextuality as discussed above, namely the appropriation of different texts and schemas, allows for the spectator to exceed the limits of the classical detective's techniques. As has been explained, the application of a spectator's classical detective film schema to metaphysical detective film does not automatically lead to a successful investigation. Rather, the schema must be creatively adapted to meet the needs of each individual game of metaphysical detection. It requires of the transtextual detective to innovatively appropriate different texts and schemas so as to guide the emplotment of the film under consideration. This can allow the transtextual detective to escape the limitations of the classical detective film schema and not become restricted to search for clues and solutions that meet the conventions of classical detective film, specifically the maxim that a solution can be improbable, just as long as it is not impossible. Through creative adaptation and the innovative integration of various texts and schemas the transtextual detective can expand boundaries to also search for and consider that which would be considered impossible in classical detective film.

4.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRANSTEXTUAL DETECTIVE

From the above discussion it is clear that the transtextual detective differs from the average spectator in terms of characteristics and function. However, they do share a number of similarities: both are dependent on a basic schema of film language in order to understand any film, whether a conventional Hollywood film or a metaphysical detective film; both desire to achieve closure; both have to achieve this closure through the process of emplotment. The differences between the two – which leads to our definition of a transtextual detective – can be summarised as follows:

AVERAGE SPECTATOR	TRANSTEXTUAL DETECTIVE
1. Limited scope of competency which tends to remain static.	1. Extended scope of competency which increases with each game that is played.
2. Uncritical application of genre-specific schema.	2. Creative integration of wide scope of schema depending on the text's demands.
3. Limited gameplay ability.	3. Creative gameplay ability.
4. Dependant on the figure of the detective, and thus carries no responsibility with regard to the outcome of a game of detection.	4. Carries full responsibility with regards to the outcome of a game of (metaphysical) detection. Is thus responsible for observation (finding clues and evidence); asking relevant questions; backwards reasoning or retrograde analysis; and importantly, the emplotment of a narrative that provides a meaningful solution to the mystery investigated.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The purpose of the preceding chapter was firstly, to finish laying the necessary foundation for an investigation into LH and MD as metaphysical detective films. This is done by considering one possible approach with which to find meaning in these films, namely by assuming the role of a transtextual detective. To this end, the chapter firstly considered the two implications of the term transtextual as used in the neologism "transtextual detective". We considered the relation between detective, reader or spectator, and narrative, as well as considering the connection between the term transtextual detective and Genette's term transtextuality. Secondly, the chapter considered how the requirements set by metaphysical detective film are met because of the transtextuality of the transtextual detective. Lastly, this chapter presented the characteristics of the transtextual detective elucidated in the discussion.

Now that a solid foundation has been provided, an investigation into LH and MD can be prepared. Before a transtextual detective can begin the investigation, needs to be determined which of the many mysteries present is going to be attempted to solve. As illustrated in the previous chapter, both LH and MD feature a number of mysteries that can lead to possible solutions. The transtextual detective needs to decide which one of these is the salient mystery, the solution of which is able to produce meaning for the text. It is not the purpose of this dissertation to present an exhaustive investigation of every possible solution to each film. Rather, the purpose is to illustrate how meaning can be produced for both films through an investigation by a transtextual detective. As such, only one investigation is needed to illustrate this.

The question thus becomes: which mystery will be investigated? For the purpose of this dissertation, the most important mystery worth investigating in both LH and MD is considered to be the mystery of identity. In the following two chapters, the mystery of identity will thus be investigated. This investigation consists of two parts. Firstly, the investigation will provide support for the claim that the mystery of identity is a prominent mystery in both films. This section will therefore consider the evidence that can be found

in each film that helps the transtextual detective come to the conclusion that the mystery of identity is salient. Secondly, the investigation will consider certain clues that can help the transtextual detective solve each film. This section will therefore feature an analysis of both films – guided by the chosen mystery – in order to find meaning in these seemingly meaningless mysteries.

CHAPTER 5

INVESTIGATION PART 1 – THE MYSTERY OF IDENTITY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous three chapters the foundation was laid for an investigation into LH and MD. This was achieved firstly by identifying these films as metaphysical detective films; secondly by determining the appropriate role the spectator ought to assume if intending to find meaning in these films as metaphysical detective films; and thirdly by elucidating the characteristics of what was found to be the appropriate spectator, the transtextual detective. In this way, a firm foundation has now been prepared which provides the transtextual detective with the solid footing needed for an investigation into both films. The following two chapters continue the proposed investigation. The aim of this investigation is to provide a demonstration of one plausible route a spectator may follow to finding meaning in the films under consideration, namely the route of the transtextual detective. The plausibility of this strategy is based on the aptness of identifying the films as metaphysical detective films. The films under consideration could plausibly be approached in a myriad of ways other than that of approaching them as metaphysical detective films. This dissertation, however, does not follow any of those routes. Its aim is to understand the relation between spectator and these films as metaphysical detective films. This investigation is therefore concerned with solving one of the many mysteries found in the *metaphysical detective films* LH and MD. In this demonstration the writer will assume the role of a transtextual detective[33].

The investigation into a metaphysical detective film can be divided into two equally important parts: the first part is concerned with how a transtextual detective becomes aware of a particular mystery; the second part is concerned with demonstrating how this mystery could plausibly be solved. The following chapter will provide the first part of my investigation into LH and MD, and will be concerned with demonstrating how this

[33] Thus, in chapters 5 and 6, the transtextual detective will be referred to as male.

transtextual detective becomes aware of *the mystery of identity* as a significant mystery in both films.

First, a review concerning why the delimitation of a particular mystery, or mysteries, is called for. As metaphysical detective films, both LH and MD are rhizome labyrinths, and as such feature multiple entry points which lead to multiple mysteries. This idea of multiple mysteries in a metaphysical detective film suggests that, unlike a classical detective film, there is a mystery surrounding the mystery of such a film. In a classical detective film there is no mystery about the nature of the primary mystery and what it entails; it is made clear from the beginning what the mystery is, and the spectator does not have to figure out what this mystery is. Recalling the example of *Murder on the Orient Express* discussed in chapter 3, for example, the spectator does not have to figure out for themself that the mystery that drives the film is who killed Mr Ratchett; in this instance, there is no other possible mystery. In any classical detective narrative, thus, there is a point of origin, something that starts the detective on his or her investigation. This point of origin could be a missing person, a missing item, or a corpse. In the example of *Murder on the Orient Express* it is the discovery of Mr Ratchett's corpse that serves as the point of investigation for Poirot. Whatever form it may take, the function the point of origin is the same: it is the evidence that signals to the detective the presence of a mystery that he or she desires to see solved.

In a metaphysical detective film, however, the spectator finds multiple points of origin that could each put the transtextual detective on the path of a different mystery. The spectator has to find the point of origin that signals a mystery compelling enough to put the spectator on the path of investigation. Therefore, the presence of multiple mysteries means that the transtextual detective first needs to establish which mystery to attempt to solve. An entry into the labyrinth needs to be established before the investigation can commence. Thus, before the transtextual detective can investigate a mystery in order to solve it, the film must first be investigated in order to find a mystery to solve. During this first part of the investigation, the transtextual detective has to search for evidence that

creates an awareness of certain questions, which in turn highlight a specific mystery which the spectator feels the desire to solve.

With the investigation undertaken by this transtextual detective, it will be argued, that it is a problem of *identity* that the protagonists of each film experience that acts as the point of origin for the investigation. In the previous chapter it was illustrated that in classical detective narratives there is a dual process of emplotment, as the detective not only emplots the solution to the mystery, but also emplots a narrative that explains the path that the detective travelled to reach the solution. The investigation into LH and MD offered in the following two chapters will emulate this dual process of emplotment as it will not only emplot a solution to the mystery of identity, but it will also illustrate how the transtextual detective went about solving the mystery; it will, to borrow from Poirot, take the reader step by step not only down the path that the transtextual detective has travelled to solve the mystery of identity, but also the path travelled to *arrive* at the mystery of identity.

In guiding the reader through this first part of the investigation, the outline of this chapter is as follows: Firstly, the chapter provides a definition of identity. Secondly, the investigation itself commences by examining three crucial pieces of evidence that identify the mystery of identity as prominent in both films. This investigation will firstly consider how identity is foregrounded in each film through the process of mindscreen. The second piece of evidence that will be considered is the splitting of identity, in particular, the way in which the protagonists create alter egos for themselves. Lastly, it will be illustrated how the problem of identity extends to the alter egos as the emplotment of new identities – the alter egos – fail. Because the films do not provide a forthcoming explanation as to why the alter egos fail – they thus do not provide a solution to the problem – the *problem* of identity in both films becomes a *mystery* of identity.

It is important to note that in this first part of the investigation the focus and emphasis is only on illustrating how the text leads the transtextual detective to the mystery of

identity. It is not concerned at this stage with solving the mystery of identity; this transpires in the second part of the investigation.

5.2 THEORY OF IDENTITY

The concept of identity is a contested one, with a great number of different understandings of the term based on diverse disciplinary approaches (Feinberg, 2009:X). Leary and Tangney (2009:X) have identified 66 different terms which refer to identity or some aspect thereof. It is obviously necessary to clarify the concept and the approach(es) guiding one's understanding of the concept, when one's main argument employs the term. For the purpose of this study, a concept of identity will be employed that highlights the combined importance of memory and emplotment with regard to the formation of a meaningful identity. This approach will combine two different, yet compatible, approaches to identity, namely the psychological continuity theory and the narrative theory of self. Such an approach to identity is necessary for the purpose of this dissertation. As has been illustrated in chapter 2, a mystery is solved through the process of emplotment. As identity is the mystery under consideration in both films, an approach is needed which allows for this mystery to be solved through emplotment. The combination of the psychological continuity theory and the narrative theory of self allows for this.

When we think about who we are we tend to think about ourselves as beings that exist extended throughout time. We have, according to Gallagher (2000:18), memories of past events and experiences and expectations and plans for the future. We tend not to think of ourselves as entities that only exist “in the moment”, but rather as entities that come from somewhere, namely our past, and who are going somewhere, namely our future. John Locke (2009:612), who is considered to have ushered in the modern debate about personal identity, is interested in individuals as entities persisting through time, capable of recognizing that they are now the same individual they previously were, despite the changes that unavoidably occur as children grow into adults. Locke’s interest in individuals as persistent entities which exist in time is related to a

philosophical concept called the psychological continuity theory of personal identity. This theory attempts to account for the fact that individuals are capable of recognising themselves as themselves across time. According to this theory, what makes it possible for individuals to say “I am me” are their psychological characteristics, and not their physical characteristics. "I" am the same person "I" was last year because there is a “cluster of psychological properties that exists continuously from then until now” (Litch, 2002:70). The capacity to sustain this continuous sense of personal identity, according to Bowie (2008:13), is memory.

Locke (2007:35) endorses a memory theory of personal identity, as he suggests that identity is constituted by memory. Ferguson (2009:51) echoes this theory when he places emphasis on “the importance of memory for anchoring a sense of individual continuity over time”. As he explains, it is the presence and consistency of memory, rather than a presence and consistency of actions, behaviours, or appearances, which constitutes individual identity. According to Hume, who built on the empiricist theory of Locke, (2002:75), the feeling of identity that one experiences is dependent upon memory, because the self is “not something we can perceive directly, either by looking very closely at our perceptions or by introspecting”. We have a consistent and continuing identity because we can remember things that happened to us in the past. According to Litch (2002:76), it is not necessary to have a direct link to oneself as a child in order to be identical to that child. That childhood version, however, needs to be “accessible via a series of narrative links”. To have a consistent identity, one needs to be able to link up with each time period of one’s previous self via memory. Memory is thus, according to Litch (2002:70), the transitive link that identifies an individual as identical to that person who was born years ago.

The psychological continuity theory therefore, according to Litch (2002:82), uses memory as the decisive determinant of identity:

> If person A can remember the thoughts and perceptions of person B, then person A is identical to person B. Memory according to this view can be applied transitively to establish

> identity; so, if I can remember the thoughts of person B (myself last year) and person B can remember the thoughts of person C (myself two years ago), the person A is identical to person C.

Litch, however, also emphasises the importance of narrative links between memories. The presence of memories alone is not enough. If we are not able to connect these memories in a sequence, they would be no more than a jumble of random memories that do not serve to create a sense of an identity across time.

A narrative theory of the self is employed to explain the nature of the links that need to be formed between memories in order for them to successfully constitute a transitive identity. Our memories, according to Feinberg (2009:XII), must be integrated into a “coherent self-related story” – and, as with any story, this is the outcome of a process of emplotment. When we use the process of emplotment to connect our memories, we are not only linking them together so that they exist extended across time, but we are also creating a meaningful whole. The narrative self achieved by this process of emplotment satisfies the need for a sufficiently stable identity without ignoring the fact that we are in a constant state of becoming (Gallagher, 2000:15).

Byatt (2008:XII) emphasises that the process of emplotment is never finished. It entails that we "*sort* and *arrange* memories", just to "*rearrange*"[34] them again. The individual needs to be adaptable because the self, as Feinberg (2009:XXI) explains, is an “ever-changing process”. Identity, thus, must be fluid in nature. This is because the self is constantly changing as it grows, develops, and matures from infancy to adulthood and onwards. With each new experience, the self develops (Carter, 2008:79). The self also exists in a postmodern world in which its survival is greatly dependant on the self's ability to be fluid. As Carter (2008:75) explains, the self exists in a social environment where "flexibility, adaptability and personal reinvention are [...] positively encouraged". The self cannot be the same in each experience it encounters; it must change and

[34] My emphasis.

adapt to each situation. Carter (2008:79) further explains that as the self moves from one situation to the next, from "one encounter to another", the self "that we project has to be altered [...] for each one". Thus, the self that exists at home as part of a family is different from the self that exists in a work space as part of a work force, or the self that exists on social websites such as Facebook or MySpace.

Beyond supplying us with a coherent sense of self, the process of self-emplotment provides meaning to individual events by placing them within the context of a whole and by stringing spurious bits of information together. In this sense, self-emplotment is part of the more general process of emplotment known as life (Burger, 2008:125). As Jackson (2007:4) explains, life itself, in actuality, has no real narrative of its own. He states that life "is serial and multiple: a million things happening at once, and then another million things happening at once, forever and ever". It is only when we emplot, when we provide "order to that unimaginable overabundance of information" that life becomes a narrative. And in this narrative, the self also has to narrate her own story through emplotment. Through this process of self-emplotment, explains Jackson (2007:8), the self explains and justifies herself to herself, and to other people. Through self-emplotment, the self becomes part of the larger narrative of life.

Philosopher of the mind, Daniel Dennet, similarly makes the point that self-emplotment conforms to human beings' general inclination towards narrativity. The creation of a narrative identity is, according to Dennett (2000:19), inevitable because human beings are “hardwired to become language users”. Language is the tool that allows us to make our experience – our memories – coherent and meaningful over extended time periods because we use language to create narratives and to tell stories. Through these narratives and stories we also create our own identities. Thus, argues Dennett, we cannot prevent from “inventing” ourselves, as the moment we are “caught up in the web of language [we] begin spinning our own stories”. This account of narrative identity should not suggest, as Hume does (2000:19), that when we emplot a life narrative we are creating pure fiction. It is true that emplotment is an imaginative process and that aspects of our personal narrative will inevitably be fictional in nature. As Smith

(2007:43) explains, remembering requires a reinterpretation of memories, which involves the modification of memory so some aspects of memories, or entire nuggets of memories, may, strictly speaking, be false or imaginary. However, as Gazzaniga (2000:19) argues, this process of reinterpretation is an attempt by the interpreter to make sense of events *that actually happened* to the person. As such, the "inventive fiction" is combined with "autobiographical fact" to create a narrative identity that is not wholly fictitious, yet "a bit fictional". Our narrative identities are thus based on the given actual events and our desire to make sense of and provide meaning to these events and to ourselves. Identity is therefore something which needs to have a basis in reality – in truth – and a meaningful identity cannot be based on complete fictions.

What the above discussion illustrates is that identity is dependent on an individual's memories being connected together across and extended period of time through the process of emplotment to create a personal life narrative. This self-narrative is serves a twofold function: it satisfies individuals' awareness of themselves and it provides structure and meaning to the various events that constitute experience. The plot structure of narrative – which demarcates a beginning, a middle, and an end – provides the individual with a sense of having come from somewhere, of being somewhere, and of going somewhere. All narratives need to be emplotted in this basic structure in order for all the interconnected events to be meaningful. The same is true of the individual and their life narrative, and the narrative identity this creates.

5.3 SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF THE MYSTERY: HOW THE MYSTERY OF IDENTITY IS FOREGROUNDED

5.3.1 Mindscreen

Throughout both LH and MD, the spectator is provided with certain evidence that highlights the fact that there is a problem surrounding identity, and that this is a significant aspect of the film narrative. The first piece of evidence that the spectator encounters is the use of a mindscreen in both films. Through this technique, the spectator is placed within the internal world of characters, and urged to identify with

them. Before one can examine how a mindscreen is created in each film, one needs to have a clear definition of what precisely this concept entails.

5.3.1.1 Definition of mindscreen

The primary function of the mindscreen is to connect the spectator with a character in a film in order to illustrate that what the spectator sees takes place in the mind of a specific character. A mindscreen is, according to Kawin (1978:xi), a "visual field that presents itself as the product of a mind". It is therefore an attempt to create a subjective point of view. This point of view is not the same as the subjectivity created by a POV shot. In film, the POV shot can be used to produce a subjective camera that shows what a character is *seeing*. This is because the POV, or point-of-view, shot is, at its most basic, used to show the spectator what a character sees, as the camera is placed roughly at the level where a character's eyes would be (Bordwell & Thompson, 2004:504). Film, however, can also show what a character is *thinking*, thus making visual the "mind’s eye" (Kawin, 1978:7). Mindscreen is the technique that audio visually presents to the spectator the field of a character's "mind’s eye". By visually presenting what a character thinks and imagines, subjectivity is signified within the film (Kawin, 1978:10). A mindscreen is therefore more capable of presenting the entire field of a character’s imagination than a POV shot, and this is what makes it possible for one character to occur as another character within the former's own mindscreen (Kawin, 1978:11).

As an example, consider the use of mindscreen in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). In the film the main character, Dorothy, is carried away from her home in Kansas by a tornado which drops her in the magical Land of Oz. Once there, Dorothy goes on a quest through this enchanted land in order to reach the Wizard of Oz so that he can send her back home. At the end of the film it is revealed that Dorothy's entire experience in Oz was just a dream. Oz is thus Dorothy's mindscreen, and she appears as a character within her own imagination. Even though she may appear as a character within her own mindscreen, Dorothy, as the creator of the mindscreen, exists beyond the visual field of the mindscreen presented on the screen; she is asleep somewhere, dreaming the

events represented through the mindscreen. The mindscreen thus represents its point of origin as someone (or something) that exists outside of what the spectator sees on the screen; the spectator is lead to imagine an off-screen speaker, or for example, a dreamer. Whatever the form, the creator of the mindscreen is an off-screen presence. When this off-screen presence appears as a character within the mindscreen, the competent spectator understands this to be an imagined self-portrait (Kawin, 1978: 12-13).

In order for a mindscreen to be successful, the average spectator needs to feel a direct link and connection to a character's experiences, which by extension creates a direct link to the character's identity. One method through which this “directness” is established is the process of suture. According to Chaudhuri (2006:49), suture literally means “stitch”. Originally a psychoanalytic term used by Lacan’s disciple Jacques-Alain Miller, suture, has been adopted into film theory to describe the techniques and methods by which a spectator experiences immersion, and is absorbed into the film narrative and encouraged to identify with specific characters. The filmic technique of shot/reverse-shot has been identified as central to suture, and is often used to illustrate how suture immerses a spectator into a film narrative. Shot/reverse-shot is a film technique where a series of shots are edited together to switch between characters, usually in a conversation (Bordwell & Thompson, 2004:505). The shot/reverse-shot technique is dependent on the 180° system which is used to ensure that "relative positions in the frame remain consistent" (Bordwell & Thompson, 2004:311). The 180° system can be seen, according to Bordwell and Thompson (2004:310), as a centre line or axis along which the action of a scene transpires. The shot/reverse-shot sequence takes place along this centre line of action, and in the case of two characters talking, cuts back and forth between them, showing "first one end point of the line, then the other" (Bordwell & Thompson, 2004:311).

To illustrate this, consider a hypothetical sequence in which two characters – a man and a woman – are talking in order to illustrate the shot/reverse-shot technique, and how a spectator becomes “stitched” into the film. The first shot features the man looking at the

woman as she is speaking. This shot can be a POV shot, or a shot taken from over the man's shoulder. This, according to Chaudhuri (2006:49), "aligns the [spectator's] point-of-view with that of a character". The result of this is that the spectator is urged to want to see the next shot, the one that shows where the original shot originates from. This happens because, as Keating (2008:441) explains, the spectator becomes aware of an "absence" when watching the original shot; the spectator becomes aware that the view is "incomplete", as there is a "framing enunciator". The “reverse” shot of the first reveals this "framing enunciator" as it shows the woman looking at the man as he is speaking; the point from which the first shot originated is now revealed. The “reverse” shot, according to Bordwell and Thompson (2004:314), is not "literally the reverse" of the first shot but rather, shows the opposite end of the line of action on which the conversation is taking place. In this process of cutting back and forth between two characters the spectator is, as Phillips (2003:119) explains, “stitched” into "the space between the characters", which produces "intense involvement". Through this process the spectator is, according to Chaudhuri (2006:49), "urged to identify with the gaze of the fictional character and to deny that he or she occupies a separate space". In this way a unity is created between the spectator and the character on the screen. Therefore, according to Keating (2008:441), suture leads to the spectator being absorbed or immersed in the fiction of the film narrative. Heath and Silverman (2006:49), however, have argued that the system of suture exceeds any particular shot formation and encompasses all the operations of classical narrative - including editing, lighting, camera movement, framing, and sound. So while shot/reverse-shot may be the most typical example of suture, in actuality any film technique can be used to 'stitch' the spectator into the narrative of a film.

In both LH and MD, the spectator is “stitched” into the narrative of the film and made to identify with the protagonists as their inner world is experienced by the spectator. In LH, the spectator is 'stitched' into the mindscreen of Fred Madison; in MD, the spectator is 'stitched' into the mindscreen of Diane Selwyn. Through this process the spectator's position in the film narrative becomes embodied by the protagonist, as the spectator permits the protagonist to 'stand in' for the spectator in their mindscreen. Everything the

spectator sees in the film is from the perspective of the protagonist. In this way the spectator can “enter” into the world of the film narrative through the protagonist. According to Silverman (1983:205), suture is successful the moment that the spectator so closely identifies with a character that the spectator says “Yes, that’s me”, or, “That’s what I see”.

The presence of a mindscreen in both LH and MD highlights the importance of identity in both films. The presence of a mindscreen is signalled at the start of each film by the use of a POV shot. In LH, the POV shot is of a car speeding down a highway, and in MD it is of a character falling asleep. The use of a POV shot in both cases is significant in establishing a mindscreen. The use of a POV shot creates what Bordwell and Thompson (2004:85) term "perceptual subjectivity", as it provides greater subjectivity by giving the spectator access to what a character sees. By using the POV shot, the director completely identifies the spectator's vision with that of a character’s, in that the camera is placed literally behind the eyes of the character (Chatman, 1980:160). As Branigan (1984:16) explains, the POV shot represents the “I” of a character who says “I see” in prose. Thus, through the use of a POV shot, as the character sees, so the spectator sees. By identifying with the character's vision, the spectator is also led to identify with that character.

This subjective POV shot is in contrast to relatively objective camera shots which show the spectator a character’s actions. Lynch could have used other, more objective shots to convey the same basic information to the spectator. In LH, he could have used a shot that shows a car driving down a highway; in MD, he could have used a shot that shows someone falling asleep on a bed. The POV shot conveys additional meaning as it suggests that subjectivity is important; the spectator asks themself: "whose point-of-view am I sharing?" In this instance it is not only important to the spectator what is seen on screen, but also establishing *who*, in terms of the narrative, is seeing it.

After establishing the presence of a mindscreen in both films, this presence needs to be reinforced throughout, since the entirety of both films is not seen through a POV shot. Both films employ different methods in order to maintain a mindscreen. In LH, this is

established by repeating the same opening POV shot throughout the film; in total, we see the same shot five times throughout the film. The first instance is of course at the beginning of the film; the second instance is during the transformation sequence when Fred turns into Pete; the shot is repeated for a third time when Pete and Alice drive to the desert cabin; the fourth instance is when Fred is driving away from the mystery man, and towards the Lost Highway Hotel; in the last instance, the film ends with the same shot. This repetition serves to reinforce the idea that it is the same subjective presence that 'sees' throughout the film, namely Fred. The repetition can be seen as suggesting the continuation of Fred travelling down this highway that exists in his mind. The beginning and end of the film creates, as has been illustrated in chapter 2, a continuous loop, binding everything together. In this way the subjective point-of-view is maintained throughout the film, indicating the persistence of a mindscreen.

In MD, the presence of a mindscreen is reinforced when the spectator becomes aware that the first two-thirds of the film was Diane's dream. This recalls the example of *The Wizard of Oz*, where Dorothy's awakening from her dream also indicates that the preceding events were part of a mindscreen. But whereas Dorothy returns to an objective reality upon awakening, when Diane wakes up, everything continues to take place from a subjective point-of-view, and the spectator continues to see Diane's mindscreen. The continuation of the mindscreen is signalled by the editing of this section, which resembles the disorientation of a dream, and does not feature the strict chronology that reality demands. According to McGowan (2007:195), this section of the film features editing that does not follow the "classic Hollywood" style, which he states sustains "the spectator's sense of spatial and temporal orientation". The editing of this section disrupts spatial orientation. For example, after Diane has woken up, she is in her kitchen making coffee. Suddenly, she notices Camilla is in the room. The first shot seen is of Diane as she notices Camilla. The reverse shot shows Camilla. The next shot again shows Diane, but the reverse shot of this does not show Camilla; instead, Diane is seen, who is now standing in the space that Camilla occupied. The editing in this section also disrupts any sense of chronology as it jumps between past and present, without providing any indication of which is which. For example, what happens directly

after the series of shots described above, after Diane has finished making her coffee, is considered thus: Diane, dressed in a bathrobe, takes her coffee and moves towards her couch. The camera follows her from behind and moves past her over to the couch, where Camilla is suddenly lying naked. Diane climbs over the couch, but is now dressed only in cut-off jean shorts. The camera focuses on a piano ashtray; this ashtray was removed from Diane's apartment moments ago by her next door neighbour, suggesting that this is the past. From this shot of the two women on the couch, the film cuts to a movie set, where Diane watches Adam directing Camilla in a scene. There is no indication of when this is taking place, and the spectator is left to speculate whether it takes place before the couch scene or after it? The entire section features this type of random jump cut[35] between past and present. The editing thus provides a dreamlike quality to this section, suggesting a continuation of Diane's mindscreen. The editing signals to the spectator that the internal confusion that Diane is experiencing is being viewed. Even though Diane may have woken up from her dream, the spectator remains stitched into Diane's mindscreen, and is seeing Diane's reality in the way that she experiences it.

It has now been illustrated how a mindscreen is created in each film, and also how this technique foregrounds identity as an important aspect in both films. While the presence of a mindscreen signals the importance of identity, it alone is not responsible for the problem of identity found in both films. The following section is concerned with illustrating how this problem of identity is established in both films by focusing on the second piece of evidence, namely the presence in both films of splitting identities in the form of alter egos. The presence of a mindscreen exacerbates this problem, as the spectator is stitched into a specific identity and led to identify with it. When this identity fractures and becomes another identity, the spectator also experiences this fragmentation. This highlights the problem of identity because, as Litch (2002:76) explains, one person can only be identical to themself, not to many distinct others. When the spectator is stitched into the mindscreen of Fred or Diane, the spectator

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[35] According to Boggs and Petrie (2008:G-4), a jump cut refers to a "disconcerting joining of two shots that do not match in action or continuity".

knows that what is being seen is the mind of one person, thus one identity. But when this identity fragments and other identities (in the form of doubles and alter-ego's) show up, the spectator experiences difficulty because the spectator is unsure of how these identities all belong to one individual, and significantly, becomes unsure of who is supposed to be identified with. As the spectator is stitched into the mind of the protagonist, the fragmentation of this mind leads to a problem of identification for the spectator, and in this way the problem of identity is foregrounded.

5.3.2 The emergence of alter egos in *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*

The multiplicity[36] and duplication in terms of characters in both films suggest that, as it takes place in a character's mindscreen, there is a problem surrounding these characters' identity, as they are fragmented through multiplicity. The following section will investigate this by illustrating how identity is split or fragmented through the emergence of alter egos.

As stated in Chapter 2, an alter ego is not the same as a double, which represents a threat to the self. An alter ego, instead, represents a better self. As Hemp (2006:6) explains, an alter ego can be viewed as "that hip, attractive, incredibly popular person just waiting to emerge [...] from an all-too normal self". An alter ego, then, represents a desire or a fantasy for an idealised self that is superior to an "all-too normal" self, and for one that is not inhibited by the limitations of this "all-too normal" self. In Dave Gibbons and Alan Moore's graphic novel *Watchmen*, the character Hollis Mason explains how reading his first *Superman* comic book story led to him creating an alter ego called Nite Owl in order to fight crime. He states that:

> It set off a lot of things I'd forgotten about, deep inside me, and kicked all those old fantasies that I'd had when I was thirteen or fourteen back into gear: The prettiest girl in the class would be attacked by bullies, and I'd be there to beat them off, but when she offered to kiss

[36] The term is used to suggest the presence of a variety of characters or, more specifically with regards to the two films under consideration, a variety of identities.

> me as a reward, I'd refuse. Gangsters would kidnap my math teacher, Miss Albertine, and I'd track them down and kill them one by one until she was free, and then she'd break off her engagement with my sarcastic English teacher, Mr. Richardson, because she'd fallen hopelessly in love with her grim-faced and silent fourteen-year-old saviour (1987:32).

This description captures the core essence of an alter ego: it can accomplish everything that the self desires and hopes for, but which it cannot accomplish in reality. What this description also highlights is that the desire for an alter ego betrays dissatisfaction with the self; an individual desires an alter ego exactly because the self is not capable of doing or achieving what the self fantasises of. An alter ego presents an escape from such a self, and thus suggests dissatisfaction with one's identity. What an alter ego represents, in essence then, is a desire *to be someone else*. The fact that both Fred and Diane create alter egos for themselves suggests that they too are dissatisfied with their respective identities, and want to escape somehow; they too have the desire to be someone else, and in both films they achieve this as they become – at least for a period of time – someone else.

In LH, the alter ego that Fred Madison creates for himself is Pete Dayton. At first glance Fred appears to live a fairly glamorous life: he is a musician who is rich and has a beautiful wife, called Renee. The reality of his life is quite different, however, as Fred seems to live a miserable life with his wife. Fred tends to walk around their home like a zombie, seemingly having no real purpose. His relationship with his wife is strained as the two are emotionally and physically distant from each other. What the spectator ultimately discovers is that Fred's life is filled with numerous problems, and that he finds no form of enjoyment in it. Pete, in contrast, seems to have a much better life than Fred. Pete is an average, blue collar worker: he is a mechanic who, unlike Fred, actually enjoys his work. He lives with his supportive parents, has a group of caring friends, and also has a loving girlfriend. Pete thus lives a very simplistic and ordinary life in contrast to Fred's more glamorous life, but his life provides him much more joy than Fred's. Pete's life is filled with friends and family, with care, support, and love; in other words,

everything that is missing from Fred's drab life. One can see why Fred would want to escape from his life, from his very identity as Fred Madison, and become someone else.

Fred finally chooses to escape when he is incarcerated in prison, when he actually physically becomes “trapped” in his life. Put on death row because he appears to have murdered his wife, Fred begins to suffer from extreme headaches which cause him debilitating pain. These appear to be a physical manifestation of an internal, mental pain caused by Fred's inability to be himself anymore; his life – and by extension his identity – have become too painful for him. This is thus a problem of identity Fred faces, and he chooses to escape by becoming Pete Dayton. As co-writer Barry Gifford (2005:215) says of the film: “I guess it's fair to say that it's really about a man who finds himself in a dire situation, and has a kind of panic attack [...] and this fractures him in some way.”

This fracturing of Fred occurs when he transforms into Pete, which happens one evening while he is in his cell. He is experiencing another headache, one that is more extreme than any of his previous attacks. It seems as if Fred has reached his breaking point. Fred looks at the door of his cell when suddenly it starts to part like a stage curtain, revealing another image beneath. Fred's “reality” is pulling away to reveal another one, another “option” perhaps. The image that is revealed is of an exploding cabin in a desert in reverse, moving from the apex of the explosion back to the cabin, still in one piece. From the cabin the mystery man emerges, stares into the camera, and moves back into the cabin. Immediately after this, blue lightning starts to flash in Fred's cell; he looks up and the light goes out. The film fades into the opening POV shot of a car driving down a highway. As the car is driving, it comes up to a figure standing on the right hand side of the road – it is Pete Dayton. The highway is the means which allows Fred to escape the cell – thus also his life and identity – by bringing him to his alter ego. Ganser *et al*. (2006:7), explains that a road can function as a means of escape as it is characterised by movement away from something. The use of the POV shot during the transformation is seen as significant as it allows Fred to move away from and escape his life and his identity of Fred Madison. Pete, functioning as an alter ego, can thus be seen as the manifestation of the freedom and escape promised by the image of a road.

The transformation from Fred to Pete is only hinted at in the film as it is not explicitly shown to the spectator. After Fred pulls up to Pete, the film cuts back to his cell, where Fred is rolling around contorting and screaming in agony on the cell floor as blue lightning flashes around him. Blood and other liquids – such as his melting skin – cover the floor, and smoke is rising from his body. This smoke fills the screen, only the blue lightning still visible. The smoke suddenly starts to disappear as it is being pulled into an opening: a split open head. As the smoke is sucked into the open head, the camera follows into the darkness. It can be plausibly argued that what this illustrates to the spectator is Fred transforming into Pete. While the film may present this transformation in an unclear light, making it difficult for a spectator watching the film for the first time to distinguish what exactly is happening, the original script states explicitly that Fred does indeed turn into Pete:

> Fred brings his shaking, tortured hand to his forehead. He pulls his hand down across his face squeezing it as it goes. As his hand passes over his face, Fred's features are removed leaving a blank, white mass with eye sockets...Fred's blank face begins to contort and take on the appearance, feature by feature, of Pete Dayton. Fred Madison *is becoming*[37] Pete Dayton (Rombes 2005:73).

The morning after the transformation, the prison guard discovers that Fred Madison is gone, and in his place is Pete Dayton, dressed in Fred's prison clothing, his face bruised and bleeding. Pete's parents take him home, and the next shot that the spectator sees of Pete is in stark contrast to the chaos and distortion that surrounded his 'birth': Pete is in the backyard, lying on a lounge chair. The sun is shining brightly, and the wind is blowing gently. The music is calm and relaxing, reflecting the visuals seen. Rodley (2005:229), refers to the scene as a "classic 'Lynch' shot", as it recalls similar shots in BV and TP. The scene presents the spectator with an idealised scene of peaceful suburbia, and Pete's enjoyment of it. Lynch (in Rodley, 2005:229), says the following of the scene:" It's like starting a new life. It's Pete's new life – like waking up [...] and

[37] My emphasis.

wondering about things". This scene represents what Fred was moving towards: a new life with a new identity, a life that stands in complete contrast to his old one, and an identity that allows him to escape himself.

The above illustrates how Fred's identity becomes fractured through the emergence of a new identity, namely that of Pete. A similar fragmentation of identity is also present in MD as two identities are present: Diane, the original identity, and Betty, the alter ego that emerges. The following section will illustrate how this fragmentation occurs in MD.

The importance and significance of multiplicity and doubling in MD is signalled from the very start of the film. As Nochimson (2005:197) explains of the jitterbug sequence that opens MD, the dancers are "doubled and tripled, creating a *doppelgänger* effect that prefigures the film's later development". MD not only has more forms of multiplication than LH, but also features multiplications that are more complex in nature: instead of a single alter ego as in LH, MD presents the spectator with two alter egos, as both Diane Selwyn and Camilla Rhodes are multiplied and have alter egos. Diane becomes Betty Elms, and Camilla becomes the amnesiac Rita. Both Diane and Camilla are further multiplied as they appear in Diane's dream ontology as other characters: Camilla Rhodes appears as a blonde actress that Adam is forced to cast as the lead in his film, and Diane Selwyn as a corpse that Betty and Rita discover. Other characters in the film are also multiplied as they appear in both Betty and Diane's ontologies. For example, Coco Lenoix (Ann Miller), is first introduced as the landlord of the apartment complex where Betty stays, but is later re-introduced as Adam Kesher's mother. This “re-casting” of characters from one ontology to another recalls *The Wizard of Oz*, and an awareness of this similarity can help the transtextual detective make sense of the complexity of MD's alter egos.

McGowan (2007:18-19), speculates that *The Wizard of Oz* informs many of Lynch's films and serves as a model for them. Lynch admits the influence that the film holds for him when he states that it "must've got inside me when I first saw it, like it did with a million other people". While MD does not feature such overt allusions to *The Wizard of Oz* as BV or WAH, it is in fact the Lynch film that most closely resembles it, specifically

in terms of narrative structure: both films feature a female protagonist that escapes from her unpleasant reality into a dream ontology. MD can, in fact, be viewed as a "Lynchian" version of *The Wizard of Oz*. In both films, the spectator finds two ontologies: one is the drab "reality" of the protagonist, the other is a literal dream ontology. In both films this dream ontology is a mindscreen that allows the spectator to witness the inner workings of the protagonist's mind as they create a fantasy world where they can go to escape from the reality of their lives. As such, this dream ontology features characters from the protagonists' lives that are re-cast in new roles. Both films also use specific film techniques to establish the difference between the two ontologies. In *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy's drab life in Kansas is presented in black-and-white, whereas the dream world of Oz is shot in bright Technicolor. As McGowan (2007:18) explains, the black-and-white photography is used to portray the "dissatisfaction Dorothy feels in Kansas", while colour is used to signify "the enjoyment that the Oz fantasy brings". While MD does not use the black-and-white/colour split to indicate the split in ontologies, the differences, according to McGowan (2007:19), are "between the drab social reality in which Diane exists and the colourful fantasmatic alternative where she becomes Betty become almost as conspicuous as Fleming's splitting through the use of different film stock."

Various film techniques are employed differently in both ontologies to signal the split. As has been illustrated, for example, the editing style between the two ontologies differs. McGowan (2007:195), points out that the mise-en-scène of the dream ontology adheres to the conventions of a popular or typical Hollywood film. He states that "the scenes are well-lit, conversations between characters flow without awkwardness, and even the plainest décor seems to sparkle."

In the second ontology – the Diane ontology – the film style changes; the style in this ontology seems to reject the conventions of a typically Hollywood film in order to reflect the drab reality of Diane's life. McGowan (2007:195) explains that "the lighting becomes much darker, almost every conversation includes long and uncomfortable pauses, and the sets become drab, lacking the ubiquitous brightness of those in the first part of the film."

By comparing *The Wizard of Oz* with MD, the transtextual detective notices that apart from the presence of these two ontologies, there is another significant similarity between the two films, namely that both feature a protagonist who is unhappy with her life, and who wants to escape from it. In *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy is unhappy with her life in Kansas where she feels unwanted and unloved, and so searches for a place "somewhere over the rainbow" where she can escape to. Oz offers this escape for Dorothy, as it is a place where, according to Wilson (2007:96)," all wishes come true"; it represents the conclusion to a "quest to find the ideal home" (2007:91), which, for Dorothy, is a "place in which one can comfortably love and be loved" (2007:91).

Just like Dorothy, Diane is also unhappy with her life and wishes to escape from it. It is during the last third of the film, when the Diane ontology is introduced, that the transtextual detective is provided with the evidence he needs to understand why Diane would want to escape from her life. In this section of the film we are introduced for the first time to Diane Selwyn, a young woman who went to Hollywood with the hope of becoming an actress. When the spectator first meets Diane she comes across as miserable, melancholic, and depressed. Her apartment reflects this mood, as it is drab, colourless, and only sparsely furnished, with most of her possessions in boxes. There is a sense of extreme isolation and loneliness in this apartment. This is highlighted by a shot of Diane standing in her kitchen making coffee: it is a long shot, with Diane standing in the left hand corner of the kitchen. The dreary kitchen takes up the most space in the shot, the emptiness of it dominating the shot. This cold space articulates not only Diane's loneliness and isolation from the world, as she is isolated in the corner, surrounded by an area of emptiness, but also her depression and melancholy, as the kitchen features muted, lifeless colours.

The comparison with *The Wizard of Oz* also helps the transtextual detective to identify a significant difference between the two films which illustrates the importance of identity – specifically, the problem of identity experienced by Diane – in MD. This difference is in terms of the respective dream ontologies: in *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy wants to escape her life on a farm in Kansas, but she does not want to escape her identity; in Oz

she remains Dorothy as she has no problem with her identity, only the place she lives in. In MD, on the other hand, merely escaping into a dream ontology is not enough, as Diane also wants to escape her own identity; she wants to escape who she is – the failure that she has become – and rather become someone else, the dream version of who she would like to be. For Diane, the problem is not so much the place she lives in – as L.A is also where she sets her dream ontology – but her identity in this place.

When the spectator first encounters Betty, she is the complete opposite of Diane Selwyn; whereas Diane is depressed and melancholic, Betty is upbeat and happy. As Mainon and Ursini (2007:308) state, Betty is "full of middle-American aspirations and naïveté". This sense of innocent naiveté in Betty strongly contrasts with the world-weary, cynical Diane, and this characterises Betty throughout the dream ontology as she continuously seems optimistic, even when faced with unpleasantness. Betty is also presented as a talented actress. When Betty goes for an audition, she impresses everyone with her acting ability, being referred to as "stellar" and a "slam dunk".

Another important difference between Betty and Diane is in the area of romantic love. Whereas Diane is rejected by Camilla, Betty and Rita fall in love with each other. Rita comes to depend upon Betty for her survival. As Mainon and Ursini (2007:309) explain, it is Betty who "takes the lead" not only the investigation into Rita's identity, but also in their relationship; it is Betty who is in control. Rita functions as an alter ego for Camilla, as she seems to be Diane's ideal version of Camilla; it is her dream or fantasy version of what she wants Camilla to be. The transtextual detective notices that in the Diane ontology, Camilla is presented as a predatory and manipulative person, who seems to enjoy the power she commands, and the pain she causes (at least to Diane). Unlike Rita, in reality it is Camilla who is the dominant personality. Her alter ego has to be the opposite of this, and so in the Betty ontology Rita has no power, and is dependent on the stronger Betty.

The above thus illustrates how in both films the spectator is presented with a protagonist whose identity becomes fragmented through the emergence of a new identity; specifically, an alter ego. This phenomenon leads to unsolved questions about

the explanations for and significance of the alter egos in the narrative. How the mystery surrounding the alter egos intensifies when the disintegration of these alter egos are added to the equation, will now be explored.

5.3.3 The disintegration of alter egos

It has been illustrated how both Fred and Diane create alter egos for themselves in order to escape from their problematic identities. In terms of the theory of identity outlined, they are trying to emplot new identities for themselves. However, in both LH and MD, the attempt to emplot these new identities – the alter egos of Pete and Betty – are not successful; in both films these alter egos, and their ontologies, come undone as the barrier between the old and new identity breaks down. The problem of identity therefore extends to the alter egos as they become unstable and fragmented, unable to maintain the divide between the original identity and the new one; unable to maintain the illusion of the alter ego as the true identity. In both films there is a specific moment that signals the start of the alter ego's breakdown: in LH, it is the arrival of Alice in the Pete ontology; in MD it is the Club Silencio scene in the Betty ontology. The following section will describe how the ontologies of the alter egos break down by referring to specific examples in both films. This will be done in order to illustrate how the problem of identity extends from the original identity to the new alter ego, and how this serves to create a mystery of identity in both films. This mystery is a result of the lack of explanation provided to account for why the alter egos fail.

In LH, the arrival of Alice Wakefield is the event that starts the breakdown of Pete's ontology. Before her arrival, the emplotment of Pete's identity seems to be successful. When she arrives, however, it signals the breakdown of the barrier between Fred and Pete's ontologies, slowly allowing pieces of his old identity to “spill over” into the new one. This causes the alter ego to become unstable as it cannot maintain the illusion that it is the true identity. The arrival of Alice is preceded – and the effect that she will have on Pete's ontology anticipated – by the first piece of Fred's ontology that spills over into Pete's: while at work, Pete hears music on the radio that gives him an intense headache. The music is the jazz music that Fred played at the Luna Lounge. The

headache he suffers recalls the headaches that Fred suffered while in prison, and his strong reaction to the music indicates an adverse reaction towards Fred's identity; the smallest presence of Fred causes Pete pain. Moments after this, Mr Eddy arrives to drop off one of his cars for Pete to work on. With him is Alice, who immediately captivates Pete: slow motion and Lou Reed's version of "This Magic Moment" is used to indicate to the spectator the strong effect that Alice's presence has on Pete. But even this first appearance of Alice, which seems innocent enough, is marked by visual indications of trouble and danger: while Alice is onscreen, electricity seems to flicker across her face. This flickering electricity can only be seen on Alice, and is significant because electricity (especially flickering electricity) is a Lynchian motif that runs throughout his oeuvre, and is generally used to signal the presence of evil and danger (Le Blanc & Odell, 2000:11). From this point on, Pete's ontology begins to gradually disintegrate.

The disintegration is presented to the transtextual detective visually as various disruptions occur. These disruptions start to increase in intensity as the barrier between Fred and Pete appears to grow weaker, as pieces of Fred's ontology and memory start to invade Pete's ontology, revealing bit by bit the illusion that is Pete's identity. The first disruption occurs after a conversation on the phone between Pete and Alice, and is signalled by a shot of the Dayton house as blue lightning flashes. Lightning is a variation of Lynch's motif of electricity, and also serves to indicate the presence of trouble or danger. In LH, lightning also carries a second meaning, as it is used to indicate the breaking down of ontologies, and signals the process of transformation from one identity to another. As an extension – and intensification – of electricity, lightning is an "untamed power" (Le Blanc & Odell, 2000:11), a powerful force that can destroy. The blue lightning is first seen in Fred's cell when he transforms into Pete. In that sequence, the transformation is immediate and complete, as Fred desperately wants to become Pete. When the spectator sees the blue lightning again before the phone call between Pete and Alice, it does not indicate that an immediate and complete transformation is going to occur shortly. Pete's identity seems to be stronger than Fred's, as it does not break down immediately. Rather, this process takes time, as the alter ego fights back against

the influx of Fred's identity. Paradoxically, Fred wants to remain Pete so that he does not have to be himself, yet he can't seem to maintain the alter ego as his original identity attempts to make Pete aware of it. The blue lightning we see is thus an indication that this process has started, and that Fred's identity is starting to invade Pete's ontology. The blue lightning signals the first disruption that is going to take place as Pete's ontology starts to become unstable.

Alice calls Pete to tell him that she cannot see him on that specific night, as she has to be somewhere with Mr Eddy. She also tells Pete that she thinks Mr Eddy suspects their affair. This troubles Pete, as he has seen first-hand how dangerous Mr Eddy can be. After the troubling phone call, the spectator sees Pete sitting in his room. The film cuts to a POV which starts to spin 360°. The shot goes out of focus and Pete's room becomes a blur. In the middle of the screen, an out of focus face appears. Blue lightning flashes on it as it comes into focus: it is Alice's face. Alice is at the centre of this distortion, reflecting her role in the breakdown of Pete's ontology: she is the source of danger to Pete, a threat to his ability to maintain the stability of his identity. The camera cuts back to Pete, who seems uncomfortable, before cutting back to a POV shot of Pete's room. The shot grows unfocused. Pete notices a black spider on the wall; there is an extreme close up of the spider, and the sound of its moving is amplified. The following shot, which is a POV shot of Pete looking at his room's ceiling light, goes out of focus as the sounds of moths trapped inside are amplified. The shot jumps to the inside of the light covering, and the spectator sees a number of moths desperately trying to escape, while the bodies of other moths line the bottom. This disruption that Pete experiences in his room reaches a climax as he stands up and the shot goes out of focus. There is thus an intensification in the loss of focus, as it moves from his surroundings to Pete himself. The loss of focus in these shots serves to visually illustrate how Pete's ontology – his surroundings – and his identity start to go out of focus.

The second disruption occurs a short while later. After the disruption in his room, Pete feels the need to escape its confines, but as he can't see Alice, he takes Sheila to a

motel in order to have sex with her. When he comes home, his parents are sitting in the living room. They ask him to sit down, and when they tell him that he doesn't look very good, he replies that he has a headache. This recalls the headaches that Fred suffered right before his transformation, indicating the effect that the breakdown of his ontology is having on Pete. His parents tell him that the police have called, wanting to know if he remembers anything about the night that he ended up in Fred's cell. He tells them that he still does not remember anything. His parents then reveal to him that on that night, Pete came home with Sheila, and a man that they have never met before. When Pete begs his parents to tell him what happened that night, they both remain silent, unwilling – or unable – to tell him anything. The film cuts to the shot of the Dayton house seen during Fred's transformation sequence: Sheila stands in front of the house, calling Pete's name as the blue lightning flashes. Pete's father runs from the front door. The film cuts away to the shot of a split open human skull which is also seen during Fred's transformation. Finally, the film cuts to a part of the video tape that Fred watched that shows the corpse of Renee. These shots show Pete becoming aware on some subconscious level of the presence of Fred's identity as it attempts to break into Pete's ontology and destroy his identity. Firstly, he remembers the evening he disappeared, though it does not reveal anything to him about what happened; it leads him to a dead end. Secondly, Pete somehow remembers a part of the transformation. Lastly, the sequence shows Pete 'remembering' Renee's death, which is a direct memory from Fred's identity. The series of shots are a more focused and direct attack on Pete's identity than the previous disruption, as it directly refers not only to the transformation, but also Fred's memories. Pete is thus coming into more direct contact with Fred's identity.

A brief disruption occurs shortly after this. Pete is at work when Mr Eddy shows up unexpectedly, and proceeds to indirectly threaten Pete. He tells Pete that he "loves that girl to death". Mr Eddy pulls out a gun and tells Pete that if he ever found out that somebody was "making out" with her, he would take the gun and “shove it so far up his ass it'll come out his mouth. And then you know what I'd do? [...] I'd blow his fucking brains out.”

Though veiled, this is a direct threat to Pete; his very existence is now coming under direct threat. The grip that he has on his identity is slowly slipping away. This is reinforced when the scene ends: the camera zooms in on Pete before the image starts to fade out, until it is so blurred that no clear detail is visible anymore. It is impossible to identify Pete in the shot as he fades away.

The various out of focus shots that appear throughout Pete's ontology all function to illustrate how this ontology is slowly fading away like a shot that goes out of focus, losing all clarity and detail until it is a blur. Another example of this is when Sheila confronts Pete about his affair with Alice. This happens after Alice has convinced Pete to rob Andy. When he gets home, Sheila is waiting for him in front of his house. She begins yelling at him, accusing him of using her only for sex, and demanding to know who he is sleeping with. She attacks him physically and he falls down. Pete's father comes out to calm her down. As Pete is lying on the ground, we get a POV shot of him looking up at his father and Sheila. Sheila tells Pete that "you are different". After she says this, the POV shot starts to go out of focus and blur. Being presented with the thought that he is perhaps not who he should be – that there is something wrong with his identity – further fractures his already fragile identity. The shot briefly returns to normal before going out of focus again. The film cuts to a shot of Pete, which is slightly out of focus; again there is the repetition of the notion that Pete himself is going out of focus.

The disintegration of Pete's identity intensifies after this confrontation, as Pete is once again directly threatened, this time by the enigmatic Mystery Man. After Sheila leaves, Pete's mother tells him that he has a phone call. It is Mr Eddy, who wants Pete to speak to a friend of his: the Mystery Man. Their conversation echoes his conversation with Fred at Andy's party. The Mystery Man also asks: "We've met before haven't we?" to which Pete replies, just like Fred did: "I don't think so. Where is it you think we've met?" The Mystery Man continues to echo his conversation with Fred when he replies: "At your house. Don't you remember?" The echoing of Fred's conversation with the Mystery Man not only reinforces the connection between identity and alter ego, but also serves

to alert the spectator to the danger that Pete faces. In Fred's ontology, the Mystery Man was a threatening presence, and shortly after meeting him, Fred's ontology comes undone. The Mystery Man resumes his role as a threatening figure as he proceeds to give an ominous message to Pete. He says:

> In the East, the Far East, when a person is sentenced to death, they're sent to a place where they can't escape, never knowing when an executioner will step up behind them and fire a bullet into the back of their head. It could be days, weeks, or even years after the death sentence has been pronounced. This uncertainty adds an exquisite element of torture to the situation, don't you think? It's been a pleasure talking to you.

Pete's identity is thus threatened, as the Mystery Man is essentially handing down a death warrant, warning Pete that he will die, but that he will not know when this will happen. This threat results in the illusion of Pete's life and identity falling apart even more. During the phone call, Pete continues to look at his parents for support. As soon as the Mystery Man's threat has been delivered, his parents are no longer there; they have simply disappeared. Throughout the film, Pete's parents serve to create a supportive and loving home for Pete, and they become symbolic of this safe place. With the Mystery Man's threat, however, his parents are removed as the illusion of a safe haven can no longer be maintained.

The assault on Pete's identity and ontology reaches its zenith during the robbery that Alice has planned. Pete, now completely under Alice's control, breaks into Andy's house. Once inside he receives a great shock, as he sees a large projection screen, showing a pornographic film in which Alice stars. This greatly upsets Pete, who stares at the image in shock. Pete becomes even more unhinged when he accidently kills Andy. This causes Pete to further lose his grip on his already fragile ontology. This is presented visually, as the POV shot of Pete looking at Alice starts to warp and twist, seeming to almost pull out of the film frame, revealing its dark edges; it is almost as if the stress of maintaining the illusion is too much even for the film itself. This twisting of

the shot illustrates how Pete's ontology is coming undone, as he can no longer keep it focused and straight, can no longer keep it 'in frame'.

Pete's ontology is now disintegrating at a much quicker pace, as the influx of Fred's ontology and memories becomes more pronounced. The transtextual detective becomes aware of this when Pete notices a photograph on a table. The photograph shows Mr Eddy and Andy, standing with both Renee and Alice. The photograph confuses Pete, who asks Alice: "Is that you? Are both of them you?" Alice comes over and says "[t]hat's me", as she points to the picture; she does not quite point to herself or Renee, but somewhere in-between. By placing Renee and Alice next to each other in the photograph, Pete is made aware of the existence of both women. The presence of Renee in the photograph is another piece of Fred's ontology that has made its way into Pete's. As soon as Alice has pointed out her 'position' to Pete, he suffers from an intense headache that causes his nose to bleed. The intense nature of the headache is a physical manifestation of Pete's identity being undone; as the spectator saw with Fred's transformation, the process is not only physical, but also extremely painful as the body too, literally comes undone.

After the incident with the photograph, Pete encounters one of the most intense confrontations with Fred's identity and ontology. Pete leaves Alice to go to a bathroom. He ascends the stairs, clearly in intense pain. As he begins to round the corner to go into the hallway, the familiar blue lightning starts to flash. Pete steps into the hallway, but it is no longer the hallway of Andy's house. Pete has been transported to somewhere else. The spectator sees a POV shot as Pete moves down this new hallway, which begins to warp and twist, recalling the earlier shot of Alice. Again, Pete is starting to lose his grip on himself, and the reality he exists in. Blue lightning continues to flash, and the spectator can see that there are numbers on the doors in the hallway. It is only later in the film that the spectator discovers where Pete is: he is at the Lost Highway Hotel, the same hotel where, it is later revealed, Fred followed Mr Eddy/Dick Laurent and Renee to. It is in this hotel where Fred kidnapped Dick, before taking him out to the desert and killing him. As Pete walks through the hallway, he briefly stops in

front of room 25, which is the same room that Fred stayed in while at the hotel. Pete continues down the hallway, with the blue lightning flashing intensely as heavy metal music plays, reflecting the distortion that Pete is experiencing. He stops before room 26, the room where Dick and Renee had sex together. Pete is thus busy experiencing Fred's memories. Pete opens the door. The screen starts to shake, and the blue lightning is replaced by an intense orange red light that colours the entire screen. In the room Pete sees Alice – or is it perhaps Renee? –having sex with someone. There is a mirror in front of her, and in its reflection she looks at Pete. The top part of the screen pulls to the side, like an old VCR tape that is broken. Just as earlier, it is almost as if the screen cannot contain what is on it. Pete's ontology seems to be pulling apart, like a broken VCR tape that can no longer maintain the illusion of the moving image. While she is having sex, Alice/Renee speaks to Pete: "Did you want to talk to me? Did you want to ask me why?" As Pete closes the door, everything returns to normal, and he and Alice leave Andy's house in order to visit a “fence” that will give them money for the stolen objects, as well as fake passports.

Using Andy's car, the two drive to the desert, where Alice says the fence has a cabin. The film cuts from the couple in the car to the POV shot of the dark highway. The POV shot is closely connected with Fred, and its use here signals the presence of Fred. The film then cuts to the reverse shot of a cabin exploding, which the spectator also saw during Fred's transformation. In Fred's transformation, the transtextual detective receives additional evidence as he sees the Mystery Man entering the cabin. The transtextual detective thus knows that the cabin is where the Mystery Man is, the same person who has threatened Pete with death. Alice is leading Pete to the Mystery Man, and perhaps also towards his destruction. Once they arrive at the cabin, they find that it is empty. As they wait, Pete asks Alice: "Why me? Why choose me?" Instead of answering his question, Alice responds: "You still want me, more than ever". The two make love in front of the car; the headlights serving to illuminate them, making it seem as if their bodies are disappearing into each other as details become unclear. While they are making love, Pete repeats the phrase "I want you" to Alice. She replies to this by saying: "You'll never have me". With those words she gets up and walks into the

cabin. Pete lies on the desert floor, seemingly in pain. He moves to get up, but the figure that stands before the car, however, is not Pete Dayton, but Fred Madison. Pete has disappeared, and will not be seen again in the film.

MD does not feature a series of disruptions to the alter ego's ontology as found in LH. In many ways, Betty Elms can be seen as a stronger alter ego than Pete Dayton. Unlike LH, the spectator does not see a gradual breakdown of the alter ego's identity, watching as pieces of the original identity begin to invade the new ontology, and threaten the identity existing in it. For the large part, in MD, the alter ego's identity and ontology remain fairly consistent; two-thirds of the film takes place in Betty's ontology. This ontology is much more stable than that of Diane, which only constitutes one third of the film. As in LH, the spectator finds a paradoxical situation in that Diane wants to be Betty because she is unhappy with her life and her identity, yet this identity does not want to be replaced by the alter ego.

In MD, there is one primary event that functions to breakdown or disintegrate Betty's ontology, namely when Betty and Rita go to Club Silencio. The impetus that leads Betty and Rita to Club Silencio comes to the two women during sleep. After they have made love, Betty and Rita fall asleep. Rita begins to talk in her sleep, saying the word "silencio" repeatedly, as well as the phrases "no haya banda" and "no haya orchestra". Betty wakes Rita up, and tells her that everything is okay, to which Rita replies "no, it isn't". She asks Betty to go somewhere with her, namely to Club Silencio. The club seems to be a threatening place; the first shot the spectator sees of it is a ground level shot at the end of an alley. The club is surrounded by tall buildings and seems to be in the middle of a labyrinth. There is ominous blue lighting, and wind blowing pieces of paper around. The effects are those of the traditional horror film, signalling it as a dangerous place. A taxi stops in front of the club and the two women get out. As they do this the camera suddenly springs up and rushes along the alley and into the club. The movement of the camera seems to suggest some external force or presence which waited for the women and now follows them inside to the club.

The inside of the club resembles an old theatre, and a number of patrons sit in the clubs seats. They do not respond to the presence of Betty and Rita, and give no indication that they notice them. These other patrons seem to be as much a part of Club Silencio as its stage, as if they belong there and are part of the show. In the back of the stage hang red drapes. These drapes recall the red drapes of the black lodge in TP, a place of confusion and danger. Paradoxically, however, the black lodge is also a place – or perhaps rather a space – where the protagonist, Dale Cooper, learns a number of important truths. The red drapes of Club Silencio evoke this paradoxical use in Lynch's oeuvre, as the club will be the place where Betty will be confronted with the truth that her identity is an illusion. Drapes and curtains, particularly red ones, are a recurring motif throughout Lynch's work: they are present in BV, in a number of different settings of TP, as well as in LH. As Paiva (1997) explains, these drapes often appear in places and spaces that carry an air of mystery; in these mysterious locations, the drapes and curtains function to hide certain things, which are almost always never revealed.

The stage of the club also carries specific meaning, because Lynch views the stage as a space that can present an "ideal dreamstate", but which also carries the realisation that this is not an actuality (in Le Blanc & Odell, 2000:11). The stage, then, presents something as real which in fact is not; it presents an illusion that convinces the audience for an amount of time to dispel their disbelieve and believe that the illusion is true. This process cannot be maintained, however, and the illusion is inevitably revealed for what it is. The stage in Club Silencio thus functions to reflect the nature of Betty's identity and ontology as illusions that are presented as reality. The presence of a magician on stage further reinforces the idea of illusion, for a stage magician is an illusionist; he works by creating illusions and presenting them as real. His power lies not in any real mystical power, but in fooling the audience. As illusionist Derren Brown (2007:132) explains, the art of the stage magician lies in creating a performance which draws the spectator’s view from the obvious – from the reality of the act – so that what is seen, appears to the result of supernatural powers. The magician functions together with the stage to stress the presence of illusion.

The show that Betty and Rita watch is designed to highlight the fact that everything in the show is, in reality, an illusion. The magician explains to the audience that even though they may, for example, hear a band playing music, there is no band; there is only a recording, a copy of reality that creates the illusion of reality. As the magician tells the audience, but aimed specifically at Betty and Rita, the show "is all an illusion". After this admission, the magician raises his hands in the air; thunder is heard, and blue lightning flashes. By using this Lynchian motif, danger is indicated, and the "victim" of this danger is revealed to be Betty, as she violently begins to shake in her chair. The magician disappears in a cloud of smoke as blue light fills the club. Betty stops shaking, and the show continues as the magician is replaced by a Spanish singer, Rebecca Del Rio, who sings a Spanish version of Roy Orbison's "Crying". As they listen to the song, both Betty and Rita begin to cry; perhaps because they are touched by the emotion of the singer, or perhaps because they realise that everything they have experienced together is an illusion, and that they are not real. While she is singing, Rebecca suddenly falls down and the singing continues. As with everything else in the show, this was nothing more than an illusion.

After Rebecca is carried off stage, Betty opens up her purse, and finds a blue box inside. Seeing that the box was not there before they went to Club Silencio, it can be assumed that it is placed in her purse during the show. This most likely happens as the magician 'attacks' Betty. At the beginning of the film, the two women find a highly ornate blue key in Rita's purse. The blue box is a logical choice for the object that the blue key opens, and Betty and Rita rush home to open it. The camera follows them as they enter the room: it follows Betty as she places the box on the bed, then moves over to Rita as she retrieves the hat box in which they hid her purse. The camera stays on her as she moves towards the bed, but Betty is no longer there. Rita calls out for her, but she has simply disappeared. Left with no other choice, Rita opens the blue box alone. As she opens the box, the camera zooms into the box's dark interior, before cutting to show how the box falls to the floor. The camera pulls back and up to reveal that the room is empty. Both Betty and Rita have disappeared. Seeing that it was created by the magician in Club Silencio, the box is an extension of its message, and as Rita opens it,

she is opening the truth that was locked away in the dream ontology. As soon as she opens the blue box, the truth is revealed and the illusion is destroyed.

As the above illustrates, in both films the protagonists attempt to emplot a new life narrative for themselves by creating alter egos. These attempts at emplotment, however, are not successful as their alter egos are both destroyed. The problem of identity that the original identities suffered from extends to the new identities, causing them to fail. Neither film directly explains to the spectator why the alter egos fail; there is no detective that clearly explains why the original identity sabotages the new one. The problem of identity is thus not solved, and the spectator is not presented with a resolution. As such, the problem of identity becomes a mystery of identity, and if the spectator desires a solution to this mystery, one will have to found by the spectator themself. This then creates a mystery in the metaphysical detective mode, as it is left to the transtextual detective to make sense of both why the alter egos emerge, and also why these end up failing.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The preceding chapter provided the first part of our investigation into LH and MD, and illustrated how the transtextual detective is lead to consider the mystery of identity as a salient mystery to solve. The chapter provided a definition for a narrative theory of identity that can help the transtextual detective make sense of the way in which identity is employed in both films. The chapter then moved on to the investigation by considering three different, yet related, pieces of evidence. Firstly, it illustrated how identity is foregrounded in each film through the creation of a mindscreen. Secondly, the chapter illustrated how a problem of identity is established in each film as the protagonists experience a split identity. In both films the protagonists – because they experience a number of different problems with regard to their identity – no longer want to be themselves, so they both choose to emplot a new identity and create an alter ego. Thirdly, it was illustrated how the problem of identity extends to the alter egos as the

emplotment of these new identities fail; in both films the protagonist cannot maintain the illusion of the alter ego, and it is eventually destroyed.

From the preceding chapter, the transtextual detective can identify two questions which articulate the mystery of identity found in both films, namely: “Why do the protagonists create alter egos?”, and “Why do these alter egos end up failing?” As such, the *problem* of identity becomes a *mystery* of identity, one that the transtextual detective will have to solve if he wishes to achieve closure. The following chapter will address these questions in one of the two films –LH –by undertaking the second part of the investigation, namely the solving of the mystery.

CHAPTER 6

INVESTIGATION PART 2 – SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF IDENTITY IN *LOST HIGHWAY*

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the first part of my investigation into the metaphysical detective films of David Lynch. It was concerned with demonstrating how a transtextual detective becomes aware of a particular mystery to be solved in these films. This was achieved through investigation of the two films, LH and MD, in order to identify a salient mystery that could give us entry into the rhizome labyrinth of the films. The theory of metaphysical detective fiction shows that, although there are many entry points to such a narrative, an entry point is still needed to start finding meaning and coherence in the plot (Chapter 2). LH and MD both presented the transtextual detective with what is identified as a *mystery of identity*. As identified in the previous chapter, the mystery of identity is articulated through two questions: why do characters create alter egos and why do they end up failing? This chapter will present the second – and final – part of our investigation as we pursue these questions in the film LH. The same type of investigation, following the same principles and methods, could be conducted on MD. The reason for choosing to investigate them only in LH is purely pragmatic: It would simply exceed the breadth of this dissertation to analyze the plot and character of both films to the extent that is necessary for the investigation set up by the previous chapter. Up to this point it has been possible to analyze the films in a more general manner, noting recurring themes and tropes. However, this part of the investigation necessitates a much more detailed account of character and plot. Another way of putting it, would be to say that the two questions attended to in this chapter will address the idiosyncrasies of the film's plot to a much greater extent than has been needed up to now. The analysis of LH presented here is nonetheless meant to serve an exemplary function, demonstrating how the transtextual detective concludes his investigation and finds

meaning in the film, by considering the film as a metaphysical detective film and, more specifically, one that offers the mystery of identity as a salient entry point.

Answering the questions “Why does Fred create an alter ego?” and “Why does Fred’s alter ego fail?” as a transtextual detective, entails two basic principles, discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. The first principle is that the spectator has to undertake the role of a detective, which implies taking the responsibility for finding a solution to the mysteries presented in the film. The second principle is that the spectator has to make use of transtextual reading techniques to solve the mysteries. The first principle will be satisfied in this chapter by the writer taking on the role of transtextual detective in solving the two questions presented by the salient mystery of identity. The second principle will be satisfied by drawing from a plentitude of theories (such as theory of home, memory, trauma, the uncanny, and so forth), films and interviews with the director and cast of LH, in order to solve the mystery of the film’s meaning. The investigation will proceed by first answering the question of why Fred creates an alter ego, and secondly by answering the question of why this alter ego fails. The chapter will then conclude, by emplotting a meaningful narrative for LH that serves, to provide a solution to the mystery of identity.

6.2 QUESTION ONE: WHY DOES FRED CREATE AN ALTER EGO?

To answer this question reason or reasons Fred may have for wanting to create an alter ego needs to be considered. What aspect of his life – of his identity – is so horrible that he needs to escape into a new identity? I believe that the answer to this question can be found in the following three connecting aspects. First, the broken nature of Fred and Renee’s relationship, in which Fred becomes increasingly paranoid about Renee’s fidelity. When Fred discovers that Renee is having an affair, his fear of emasculation is realized as the control he desires to exert over Renee, is undone. This leads to the second aspect, namely Renee’s murder at Fred’s hands. This traumatic ordeal – Fred’s loss of control over Renee and her subsequent murder – is too much for Fred to handle. The third and final reason behind Fred’s wanting to create an alter ego is his

unwillingness to accept the reality of what he has done, as well as the reality of the events that led to the murder. The following section will present the investigation into these three broad causes. Renee's murder is considered first. This is necessary to explicate as the film never directly shows Fred killing Renee. In order to proceed with the investigation justification in accepting Fred as Renee's killer must first be illustrated. Secondly, Fred's motives for killing Renee will be considered; thus the nature of the couple's relationship is investigated, and the effect this has on Fred. Lastly, how the film conveys to the transtextual detective that Fred is unwilling to accept his reality – the reality of his relationship as well as the reality of his actions – which ultimately leads to his creation of an alter ego will also be taken into consideration.

6.2.1 Renee's murder

In the above I state that the film never shows the physical act of Fred killing his wife. So why would one suspect that he does? What clues lead us to make this assumption? The first clue that leads the transtextual detective to the idea that Fred kills his wife is a videotape that Fred watches – which is the third in a series of mysterious videotapes that are placed on the steps to the Madison's front door. The first of these videotapes is found by Renee one morning. When the couple watches the tape together it shows an outside shot of the front of their house only, before cutting to white noise. Confused, Renee says that perhaps an estate agent made the tape, while Fred seems unconvinced. The second videotape is much more ominous. It starts exactly as the first video did, with an outside shot of the Madison's house. However, the video then cuts to the inside of the house, showing an overhead shot of their living room; someone managed to not only get inside their house, but also managed to seemingly be suspended above ground, moving through the house until reaching the couple's bedroom, where the video shows Fred and Renee sleeping. The couple is frightened and they call the police. Two detectives come to investigate the house, yet they are unable to account for how the tape was made. The last videotape, unlike the previous two, is found by Fred and not Renee. And unlike the previous two occasions, Fred watches the videotape alone, as Renee seems to be gone. The videotape follows the

pattern of the previous one: the outside shot of the house, the overhead tracking shot within the house. But as the camera moves through the house, getting closer to the bedroom, Fred starts to grow anxious. When the camera reaches the bedroom, it no longer shows the couple sleeping, but rather a gruesome scene: the bedroom is covered in blood and limbs; Renee is on the floor, dead, while Fred is on his knees, covered in blood. Fred gets up from the couch and calls out to Renee as blue lights start to flash around him. The film suddenly cuts to Fred being hit by one of the detectives that came to his house. The detective yells at him to sit down, and calls him a killer. Fred, bleeding, screams that he didn't kill his wife, before he pleadingly asks: "Tell me I didn't kill her".

It may at first also appear to be naïve to trust the validity of such an enigmatic videotape (who is filming it? How can they hover above the scene?). However, the validity of the videotape becomes apparent once what videotapes – and the filmic image in general – represents for Fred are considered. In Fred's mindscreen, videotapes and film images represent an unfiltered representation of reality. How do we know this? Fred admits this in the film. When the two detectives Al and Ed come to the Madison house to investigate the second videotape, they go with the couple to their bedroom. Once there, Al asks Renee if they "own a video camera?" and she replies that they do not own a video camera because "Fred hates them". When the two detectives look questioningly at Fred, he tells them that he likes to remember things his own way. When Al asks him to explain what he means by that, he says: "How I remember them. Not necessarily the way they happened". For Fred then a recording, such as a videotape, represents truth: the way that things *actually* happened. And to watch such a recording is to watch true reality as it happened. This view of Fred reflects the long held belief that an image, whether still or moving, represents a clear, objective representation of the truth. Carrière (1995:48-49), explains that the recorded image has a mysterious and compelling power to convince, and has possessed this power since its beginnings. Thus, even though the spectator may question the validity of the videotape because of its unusual nature, Fred does not. His belief that the recorded image represents truth

and reality suggests that in his mindscreen, the videotape that shows him next to the body of Renee is a representation of the truth, namely that Fred killed Renee.

The videotape is not the only piece of evidence that supports the interpretation that Fred kills Renee. A second piece of evidence is a dream Fred has. Dreams have always been a significant part of Lynch's oeuvre; Riches (2011:25), notes that dreams (and dreaming) is a recurring theme in Lynch's work, and one can list many works of Lynch that feature dreams or dreaming in order to illustrate this: we find significant dreams in many of Lynches other films.[38] One would thus be well served to consider and examine dreams in his films closely, as they often reveal crucial information to the spectator. As Stewart (2007:109) asserts, any dream "in a Lynch film will have a major impact on the character who experiences it". This is because, as Stewart (2007:109) continues, dreams are a way for characters to "unlock the secret of their own lives". In this way, dreams in Lynch's films often provide the spectator with insight into a character's innermost thoughts and emotions. Riches (2011:25-26), has a similar view on the significance of dreams in Lynch's work, and notes how dreams are often spaces in which characters – or as he calls them, "investigators", search for useful clues or information to help them solve some mystery. As LH is a metaphysical detective film, it is the transtextual detective who becomes the "investigator" searching through Fred's dream for useful clues and evidence.

The dream considered in this chapter, happens fairly early in the film. Renee and Fred both lie in bed after a failed attempt at making love. Fred, who appears despondent, recounts a dream he had the previous evening. He says that:

> You were inside the house. You were calling my name. I couldn't find you. And then there you were, lying in bed. It wasn't you. It looked like you. But it wasn't.

As he tells this to Renee, the spectator sees the dream unfold. We see Fred, wearing a black t-shirt and black pants, in the Madison home. He emerges from a dark corridor

[38] See EM, BV, TP, FWWM, LH, MD, and IE.

into the living room. As he steps into the room we hear Renee's muffled voice (as if she is speaking from outside the dream) calling "Fred … Fred, where are you?" The film cuts to a shot of their fireplace, with an intense fire burning inside. As Fred slowly turns around, seemingly searching for Renee, the spectator sees smoke slowly emerge from the stairway that leads to the living room. The film cuts to a tracking shot of the corridor that leads to the couple's bedroom. The camera cuts back to Fred in the living room, before returning to the tracking shot as it moves past a red curtain while it enters the couple's bedroom, just as Fred says "[a]nd there you were, lying in bed". The camera looks down at Renee lying in bed. The camera lingers for a moment, and as Fred says that "It looked like you. But it wasn't", the camera shoots forward towards Renee, as if some force is rushing towards her. When the camera is nearly atop of her, Renee wakes, throws up her hands in front of her face and screams. The next shot shows Fred suddenly waking up from the nightmare, clearly rattled. Renee wakes up and leans towards Fred. As he looks at her in the darkness, an eerie, spectral face of a man is superimposed over hers. Fred switches on the light, and the face disappears.

The dream contains a number of clues that illustrate its significance as a piece of evidence that supports the proposition that Fred kills Renee. Firstly, two Lynchian symbols/motifs in the dream that convey important information are considered. These are the fire and the red curtain. Fire is an image which appears in several of Lynch's films[39] and is always used to signal danger of some sort. Stewart (2007:111), explains that fire "is a dangerous element in Lynch films and any character associated with fire […] can be deadly". Consider for example BOB, the demonic killer from TP. Not only does fire often share the screen with BOB, he is also "marked" by a tattoo that says "Fire, walk with me". To see fire in a Lynch film is to know that danger lies ahead. Connected to this, fire often represents intense emotions, especially anger, rage, or murderous thoughts. In LH, the fire that burns in the fire place is very intense, burning beyond the confines of the fireplace itself. Firstly, this conveys the great danger that awaits Renee. Secondly, because dreams in Lynch films provide insight into a

[39] See EM, D, BV, TP, FWWM, WH and LH.

character's thoughts and feelings, it can be seen as a reflection of Fred's emotional state. The intense fire thus suggests the presence of intense feelings such as rage and anger. When Fred's motivation for killing Renee is considered, the motifs will be explored again.

The second clue that the dream provides is the red curtain that hangs in the entrance to Fred and Renee's bedroom. To those familiar with Lynch's oeuvre, the red curtain is a piece of intertextuality that recalls TP. In the television show and film there exists a place called the Black Lodge. This space exists as a dreamlike space beyond the borders of reality, and is home to a group of demonic denizens. In the final episode of the show, detective Dale Cooper becomes lost within this space, and witnesses a number of violent acts. He himself is the victim of a violent attack, and ends up being possessed by a demonic *döppelganger.* The Black Lodge thus functions as a space of danger, and also a space of violence. By placing the red curtain in the Madison's bedroom, and by drawing attention to it in the dream, Lynch is intertextually signaling the threat of danger and violence in this room.

Let us consider what the dream has provided thus far: Renee screaming in fear as someone or something seemingly attacks her; an intense fire that not only conveys danger, but also conveys Fred's intense anger and rage; and the red curtain that intertextually signals the bedroom as a site of danger and violence. These three pieces of evidence together already present a strong case for the idea that Fred kills Renee. But what of the spectral face that Fred sees just after the dream? What connection – if any – does it have to Fred? Does it in any way provide evidence for the theory of murder? As will be illustrated, the mysterious face – and the man it belongs to – is a central component to proving the murder theory. Further illustration of how the film conveys to the spectator that Fred murders his wife will be possible by understanding what the Mystery Man[40] represents.

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[40] The end credits identify the character by this title/name.

As explained above, the first the spectator sees of the Mystery Man is his face superimposed over Renee's after Fred has woken up from his nightmare. The second encounter that the spectator – and Fred – has with this Mystery Man is at a party Fred and Renee go to. It is here that both Fred and the spectator get some sense of the character's unnatural nature, which will later guide understanding concerning his function in Fred's mindscreen. The party where Fred encounters the Mystery Man is hosted by a man named Andy, an old friend of Renee's whom she met before Fred, when he "told her about a job". It is clear that Fred does not really like Andy very much and Renee, somewhat drunk, is very flirtatious towards Andy. Renee asks Fred to go get her another drink, and he goes to the bar. As he stands there, he notices a man in the crowd of people. It is the man whose face Fred saw. The man wears all black, and his face is deathly white. The Mystery Man walks over towards Fred. As he approaches Fred, the diegetic music and background noise of the party fades away, though no one seems to respond to it. This signals that there is something unnatural about the Mystery Man, as his presence is able to negate the external noise that could interfere in his conversation. This also signals to the spectator that the conversation that is about to transpire is significant.

This conversation between Fred and the Mystery Man may seem on first viewing to be enigmatic and difficult to make sense of. What further complicates matters is that this conversation introduces the presence of seemingly unnatural or supernatural aspects into a narrative that has up until this point been fairly realistic (despite it being somewhat odd). The following is the conversation between Fred and the Mystery Man in its entirety:

> Mystery Man: We've met before, haven't we?
>
> Fred: I don't think so. Where was it that you think we've met?
>
> Mystery Man: At your house. Don't you remember?
>
> Fred: No, no I don't. Are you sure?

Mystery Man: Of course. In fact, I'm there right now.

Fred: What do you mean? You're where right now?

Mystery Man: At your house.

Fred: That's fucking crazy, man.

The Mystery Man reaches into his coat pocket and pulls out a cellular phone and holds it out to Fred.

Mystery Man: Call me. Dial your number. Go ahead.

Fred hesitates, but punches in the number. The phone rings twice before being picked up. The voice at the other end is that of the Mystery Man.

Mystery Man (*phone voice*): I told you I was here.

Fred (*to the Mystery Man in front of him*): How'd you do that?

Mystery Man: Ask me.

Fred (*to the voice on the phone*): How'd you get inside my house?

Mystery Man (*phone voice*): You invited me. It is not my custom to go where I'm not wanted.

Fred: Who are you?

The Mystery Man standing in front of Fred starts to laugh.

Mystery Man (*phone voice*): Give me back my phone.

Fred hands the phone back to the Mystery Man.

Mystery Man: It's been a pleasure talking to you.

The Mystery Man walks away, and the diegetic music returns as everything seemingly goes back to normal. Frightened, Fred takes Renee and they leave the party. This scene draws the transtextual detective's attention to the Mystery Man, and signals him as a mystery that needs to be solved. Why is this? Firstly, his supernatural nature contrasts strongly with other characters in the film: the temporary loss of diegetic music and background noise has been identified. There is also the fact that he is in two places at once: both with Fred at the party, as well as at his house. How can this be unless he is a figure that is not bound by the laws of nature? Secondly, and perhaps of greater importance, is the fact that there seems to be some relationship or connection between Fred and the Mystery Man: I have already described how Fred sees the Mystery Man's face superimposed over Renee's after his nightmare. The Mystery Man seems to know Fred, and hints at a prior relationship of some sort between the two: he states that he has met Fred before in his house, and that Fred invited him in.

This connection between Fred and the Mystery Man is a key part of the murder theory. But how can it be established what this connection is? The transtextual detective is presented with the means to solve this mystery in a scene near the end of the film, when Fred killing Mr Eddy/Dick Laurent is witnessed. In this scene, the spectator sees how Fred has followed Dick and Renee to the Lost Highway Hotel. After the two adulterers have made love, Renee leaves. When he is sure she has left, Fred abducts Dick from his hotel room, throws him in the trunk of Fred's car, and drives with him out to a remote part of a desert. When Fred opens the trunk, Dick jumps out and attacks him. Dick straddles Fred and forces him down. Fred reaches out with his hand, and someone off-screen hands him a knife, which he then uses to slit Dick's throat. Dick doesn't die, and asks: "What do you guys want?" The film cuts to a shot which shows Fred and the Mystery Man standing side by side. It was the Mystery Man who gave Fred the knife. After Dick's question, the Mystery Man pulls out a small portable television, and hands it to Dick. The screen shows a party at Andy's house where a number of people, including Dick and Renee, are watching a snuff pornography film in which Renee stars. As they are watching, Dick and Renee become sexually aroused. The Mystery Man retrieves the television, pulls out a gun, and kills Dick while Fred

watches on, trancelike. After this, the Mystery Man goes over to Fred and whispers something in Fred's ear. The film cuts to a close up shot of Fred's eyes. When it cuts back to a medium shot of Fred, the Mystery Man has suddenly disappeared, and the gun is now in Fred's hand.

The relevance of the scene described above is that it provides the transtextual detective with insight into the relationship between Fred and the Mystery Man. The last part of the scene described above is considered as thus: the Mystery Man kills Dick, talks to Fred, and it then disappears, while the gun is now in Fred's hand (both hold the gun in their right hand). Why is the Mystery Man suddenly gone with no explanation? This is because the Mystery Man was never there; he does not really exist. Rather, he is a projection created by Fred's psyche that stands in for him and acts in his place. As the events witnessed take place in Fred's mindscreen, the Mystery Man is viewed as Fred sees him, an external figure that helps him to do what he cannot, namely, commit murder. This is why the Mystery Man tells Fred that he has met him before; he 'met' Fred when Fred created the Mystery Man to help him kill Dick and, as I will later illustrate, to kill Renee as well. The Mystery Man, dressed all in black with his white face, is akin to the figure of death. His presence in the film signals the presence of violence and death. Fred does not remember the Mystery Man because he is trying to escape from the memories connected to the enigmatic figure[41].

By understanding the nature of the Mystery Man and his relationship to Fred the investigation of a scene that provides strong evidence to support the theory is enabled. In order to fully grasp the significance of what this scene shows, its connections to the dream scene and the party scene, as well as what is now known of the Mystery Man needs to be considered. The scene under consideration takes place after the party scene, when Fred and Renee arrive home. As the couple drive up to their home, a shot of the house is seen. In the couple's bedroom a light flashes, and one can see the shadow of someone in the room. Fred, rattled by his conversation with the Mystery Man, thinks someone may be in the house, and tells Renee to stay in the car while he

[41] This aspect will be discussed in greater detail later in this section.

goes to investigate. Inside, Fred moves around cautiously. As he moves to the corridor that leads to the bedroom, the telephone in the bedroom starts to ring. After the first ring, the film cuts to a tracking shot that moves from the bedroom, past the red curtain, and to the corridor. After the second ring it stops. The soundtrack someone's muffled voice speaking briefly is faintly heard. The camera speeds towards Fred, who looks at it frightened, as if he sees something or someone in front of him. The film cuts to the outside where Renee is waiting. Fred comes back out, and they both go inside. Once inside, Renee is in the bathroom getting ready to go to bed. Fred watches her for a short while before moving to the bedroom where he takes of his jacket and puts it in the closet. As he closes the closet, he turns around slowly. He acts as if something has caught his attention, and in a trancelike state, he moves towards the corridor. He stands looking into the darkness of the corridor for a moment, before he walks down it, the darkness at the end seemingly swallowing him. The film cuts back to Renee in the bathroom, before it cuts back to Fred, who is now in a darkened room somewhere in the labyrinth home. Still in a trancelike state, he stands staring at himself in a mirror; it is almost as if he has difficulty recognizing himself. The camera cuts back to Renee who exits the bathroom. She notices that Fred is gone and walks towards the corridor. Frightened, she calls: "Fred? Fred, where are you?" The film cuts to a shot of the living room, where the shadows of two people walking behind each other are seen moving across the wall. The scene ends with a shot of Fred emerging from the dark corridor, still in a trance. The scene fades to black. The next scene shows Fred watching the third videotape.

As I have indicated, the scene described above has a number of aspects that connect it to the dream scene, as well as the party scene. By establishing these connections a clearer image begins to surface of what is taking place inside the Madison house – and also, inside Fred's mind. By going through the scene chronologically, the elements that connect to the two scenes mentioned are identified. The first scene presented is a shot of the Madison house; a flash of light and someone's shadow is seen, indicating that someone is in the room. This can be connected back to the party, where the Mystery Man tells Fred that he is in his home and, when Fred calls his own number, the Mystery

Man answers. The shadow seen in the room then suggests that the Mystery Man is indeed already in the Madison house. Moreover, as the Mystery Man is an external projection of Fred's psyche who acts in his place to commit murder, it is further surmised that some form of violent, murderous act will be the outcome of the Mystery Man's presence. The fact that the shadow is seen in the bedroom, a site identified as a space of violence, further strengthens this conjecture.

A second aspect that strengthens the argument that the Mystery Man (or Fred's murderous desires) is already in the Madison house, "waiting" for Fred and Renee, is the ringing telephone that Fred hears while searching the house. As described, the telephone in the couple's bedroom rings twice, and a muffled voice can vaguely be heard. This refers back to the conversation between Fred and the Mystery Man at Andy's party. At the party, the Mystery Man hands Fred his cell phone and tells him to call his house. Fred does this, and the phone rings *twice* before being picked up by the Mystery Man. Considering that time in the film is fragmented and overlapping (consider Fred telling himself that "Dick Laurent is dead"), the ringing phone that Fred hears is in fact himself calling the house. Furthermore, the fact that the Mystery Man talks to Fred over the phone shows that he is inside the Madison's house while Fred is searching for him. The ringing that comes from the telephone in the couple's bedroom suggests that the Mystery Man answers while in the room, furthering the identification of the bedroom as a future site of violence and murder.

The third part of this scene I would like to consider takes place while Renee is in the bathroom getting ready to go to bed. Fred takes off his jacket and seems drawn to the corridor that leads from their bedroom to the living room. It is suddenly as if he is no longer in control of himself and, like an automaton or zombie, he walks blindly down the corridor, swallowed by the intense darkness at the end of the corridor. One could view this as symbolic of Fred being swallowed by the darkness within him as he starts to lose control to his murderous desires. This idea that Fred is no longer in control – no longer himself – is enforced by the shot that shows Fred in a dark room, staring at himself in a mirror: Fred looks at himself and seems confused, as if he is unsure of who he is

looking at. Through Pullman's portrayal, one gets the sense that Fred does not know who he is. This suggests that at this stage Fred is already starting to lose control of himself, slowly falling under the control of his murderous desires as manifested by the Mystery Man.

It is significant to note that during this scene Fred is wearing a black t-shirt and a black jean, as this connects the events of this scene to Fred's dream. At the start of Fred's dream, he emerges from the darkened corridor that leads to the bed room, wearing the same black t-shirt and black jean when he is swallowed by the darkened corridor. The connection between the two scenes suggests that Fred's dream reveals what happens during the period after Fred has been "swallowed" by the darkness of the corridor. A further connection that supports this view is the dialogue spoken by Renee: in the dream Renee calls out "Fred, Fred where are you?" These exact words are spoken by Renee after she exits the bathroom and realizes that Fred isn't there. If the two can be connected then the connection can also be made that after Fred has finished looking in the mirror, he goes to the living room, at which point he hears Renee call to him. Because he is starting to lose control of himself – perhaps even thinking that he is in a dream – Renee's words sound muffled, as if they are coming from somewhere else, and not the bedroom close by.

Another significant aspect of the dream discussed earlier is the fire that burns intensely in the fireplace. As stated, the fire is representative not only of danger and violence, but also of Fred's emotional state. The fire that "rages" then suggests that Fred's emotions are raging as well, and the fact that the fire is burning beyond the confines of the fireplace suggest that Fred's emotions of rage and anger can no longer be contained; they are burning out of control. These emotions become physically manifested in the figure of the Mystery Man, who carries out the act of murder spurned on by these emotions. As illustrated, it is strongly suggested that the Mystery Man is already in Fred's house, and the scene under consideration provides a piece of evidence that further proves this. After Renee calls out to Fred, the film cuts to the living room, the space that is connected to Fred's out of control emotions, the very emotions that gave

birth to the Mystery Man. In this shot one can clearly make out two shadows moving through the room. By considering that the room is already connected with the Mystery Man, and that that he is already inside the house – as well as the fact that the Mystery Man acts in Fred's place to commit murder – it is safe to assume that the two shadows we see moving are Fred and the Mystery Man, on their way towards the bedroom in order to kill Renee.

The final piece of evidence I will consider is the last part of Fred's dream which shows someone or something attacking Renee in bed. In the dream Fred is heard telling Renee that he found her, but that despite the fact that it looked like her, it wasn't her. The camera here assumes a POV position, and speeds towards Renee, who holds up her hands and screams. After the shot of the two shadows moving across the living room, the film cuts to show Fred emerging from the dark corridor, slowly moving towards the bed room. He continues to appear as if in a trance, similar to what is seen at the end of the film when the Mystery Man whispers in Fred's ear, telling him what to do next. At this stage it is known that Fred is being lead or controlled by the Mystery Man, and that the Mystery Man will stand in for Fred and act on his behalf, just as he does when Dick is killed. The shot stays on Fred as he walks towards the camera, his face moving closer and closer until he blocks the screen completely. The film cuts away to the scene where Fred watches the tape that shows him beside Renee's body. As has been illustrated thus far, the dream scene and the scene under consideration are linked together, and the dream reveals aspects of the other scene that are not shown to the spectator at that time. If this is considered, then the end of both scenes can be linked as thus: Fred, being controlled by the Mystery Man, moves towards the bed room where he attacks Renee, as evident by the POV camera that rushes towards Renee who screams. It can be further surmised that the third videotape, representing truth for Fred, shows the result of this violent attack: Renee, dead and dismembered.

To summarize, by connecting the dream scene, the party scene, and the house scene together (while keeping knowledge of the Mystery Man in mind), establishes that the Mystery Man is present at Fred's house, and that he is connected to Fred's intense and

violent emotions, as well as being a figure connected to violence and death. The couple's bedroom is a space identified as a site of danger and violence, and that this violence is directed towards Renee. It can now be stated that the film provides the transtextual detective with enough clues and evidence to lead to the conclusion that Fred, overcome by his intense emotions of rage and anger, is taken over by the Mystery Man, a figure he creates to act in his place. In Fred's mind, he is led by the Mystery Man, who then violently murders Renee on behalf of Fred.

6.2.2 Fred's motives

Now that it has been established that Fred does indeed murder his wife, the subsequent aspect that needs to be considered, is Fred's motivation for killing Renee. This is important as the aspects that motivate Fred to murder Renee are part of the reality that he wants to escape. For the investigation to be successful it thus behooves to ask the questions: why does Fred kill Renee? What motivates and drives him to the point of killing his wife? The murder of Renee, it will become evident, is not accidental or incongruous. On the contrary, it is the culmination of a complex set of events and attitudes, which will be discussed in this section. Three interrelated aspects are crucial to understanding Fred's complex of motives. First, is what Rodley (2005:228), calls Fred's "obsessive character consumed by feelings of jealousy and fear of infidelity". Fred has a strong desire to exert control over all aspects of his life, including his wife Renee. Second, and not unrelated to the first, is the estrangement between Fred and Renee, or what Arquette (in Hartman, 2012), calls a "dead relationship". Third is the exacerbation of Fred and Renee's marital problems, if not its crises, when Fred is made aware of Renee's adulterous affair with Dick Laurent. Lastly, the effect Renee's infidelity has on Fred is investigated, considering what has been revealed about his desire for control. To this end, Renee will be compared to a *femme fatale*.

6.2.2.1. Fred's desire for control

The following section will investigate Fred's desire for control. Firstly, how the film conveys that Fred desires control over his life will be considered, before moving on to

consider how much of the evidence focuses on Fred's desire to control Renee. Throughout the first part of the film there are a number of significant pieces of evidence that illustrate Fred's desire for control. The most telling of these comes when Fred expresses his opinion of video cameras. As already explained earlier, in this scene two detectives come to the Madison's house to investigate the second mysterious video tape left at their front door. During their investigation, the detectives ask the couple whether they own a video camera, to which Renee replies that they do not because Fred hates them. Fred explains that he likes to remember things his own way. When ask to further explain, Fred states: "How I remembered them, not necessarily the way they happened". This line is extremely relevant to this investigation, as it provides great insight with regard to Fred's desire for control. When he states that he wants to remember things "my own way", Fred reveals to the transtextual detective that his desire to have control over his own reality is so extreme that he is not concerned with the reality of how events from his past actually transpired; he would easily ignore reality in favor of how he chooses to remember his past. In this way, Fred tries to re-'edit' his life narrative as he *wants* to remember it, not how it actually was. Thus, Fred aims to control his memories in order to control his life narrative.

The re-editing of memories to create a new, imagined or false memory is not exclusive to Fred. In reality, all instances of memory are in some way reconstructions that contains falsity. Foster (2009:72), explains that every time we recall a memory, we are in fact "constructing a memory from bits and pieces". Some of the "bits and pieces" are very close to the reality of what transpired; they are the pieces "that we actually remember". The other "bits and pieces" that make up the memory are filtered through general knowledge of events; in this instance we re-construct events by filling in "missing information based on [our] general knowledge of the world" (Foster, 2009:14). Foster (2009:72), further explains that this knowledge is our "semantic" knowledge "about how these bits [and pieces] should be assembled". Foster (2009:14), continues by stating that the memory we re-construct or re-assemble "may contain some actual elements of the past [...] but – taken as a whole – it is an imperfect re-construction of the past located in the present."

How then is Fred’s reconstruction of his past different from the majority of people’s, and how does this then reflect Fred’s desire for control? Fred differs from the average individual in that he consciously *chooses* to discard certain memories in order to re-write his life narrative. Foster (2009:14) explains that when the average individual reassembles their memories as described above that they are “consciously unaware that it has happened”. If a memory is changed somehow – if new information has been incorporated, for example – the individual is not consciously aware that this has happened. The individual thus does not actively choose to alter the memory and change it. Fred, in contrast, actively chooses to ignore the reality of the memory in favor of an imagined memory. In this way, Fred’s desire for control is highlighted, as he wants to control all aspects of his life narrative to fit his own vision of it. As memory is such an important aspect of one’s life narrative, the desire to control what one wants to remember and how one remembers it speaks of a desire for control.

Fred’s desire for control of his reality is also conveyed through his desire to be omniscient, to be aware of everything that is happening in his reality. Specifically, his desire for omniscience centers on his wife, as Fred wants to be able to ‘keep an eye on her’ even when he is not physically near her. This is conveyed through a series of tracking shots that show the inside of the Madison’s house during a phone call Fred makes to Renee, but which she does not answer. By examining this evidence, the transtextual detective becomes aware that Fred wants to be able to see where he physically cannot be; in essence, he wants to become a voyeur of his reality, and especially, of Renee.

The series of tracking shots in the Madison house will now be considered in greater detail. These shots are found in the scene where Fred is at the Luna Lounge. He has just finished playing his set, and goes to a pay phone to call Renee (who told him that she would be at home reading). The shot shows Fred at a pay phone; a light from the club colours the scene a bright red. Fred dials, and the phone starts to ring. The film cuts to the Madison’s living room, where the camera travels towards a ringing phone, before cutting back to Fred in the club. When the film cuts to the house again, we are in

Fred’s practice room, where the roaming camera moves across equipment until it comes to rest on a ringing phone. We cut back to Fred. He seems anxious. The film cuts to the last shot inside the house. The camera is now entering the couple’s bedroom, traveling across it until it reaches a third telephone next to the bed on the floor. The film cuts back to Fred, who looks at first dejected, before betraying a hint of anger as the scene fades out.

How does this scene convey Fred’s desire to be omniscient, to be able to see everywhere even when he is not physically present? As Fred calls home, the shots presented to the spectator convey how Fred imagines himself moving through his house. It has already been established how the use of a tracking shot in the film is connected to Fred’s point of view as he moves in his own mindscreen. As Fred roams the house, moving from one phone to the next, waiting for Renee to answer, the spectator sees him growing more and more anxious and paranoid. If, as Renee said, she was going to stay at home and read, how could she not hear any of the three phones placed throughout the house? The fact that these shots place emphasis on the phones is significant; firstly, it suggests that Renee lied and is in fact not at home. Secondly, the telephone is a tool used for communication across distance. The fact that Renee does not answer the phone reinforces the fact that this couple is at a stage in their relationship where communication between them is lost; Fred calls, but there is no one to answer the phone on the other side. Lastly, it suggests that Fred’s desire to be omniscient is a direct result of his paranoia and jealousy. As Wilson (2007:117) suggests, Fred wishes to know everything in relation to Renee and the overabundance of telephones in the house, combined with the shots of these phones, reflects, according to Wilson (2007:118), "Fred's true desire – to enjoy total omniscience so that he can monitor his wife's every move". Wilson (2007:117) explains that there is a need on Fred’s part to "unconsciously [...] know everything, especially in relation to his wife"; there is a desire on the part of Fred to "watch his wife's every move", to "dominate her" and "control her" (Wilson, 2007:120). In the scene under consideration, Fred’s “true desire” of “total omniscience” is driven by his paranoia, his mistrust of his wife. The spectator knows, for example, that Fred was very suspicious when Renee said she

would be staying home to read. When he calls home it is to check on Renee, to see if she is telling the truth. The lighting used in this scene – the color red – further re-enforces Fred's paranoia and jealousy as the impetus of his desire for omniscience. As already established, the colour red in LH is reflective of Fred's feelings of paranoia, jealousy, and rage. The fact that the colour red dominates the screen and envelopes Fred while he is calling home, suggests that he is enveloped by his paranoia and jealousy.

It can now be appreciated how Fred's jealousy and paranoia are manifestations of a larger issue that drives Fred's character, namely his desire to exert control over his life – his "reality". This aspect of Fred's character serves as a motive not only for the murder of Renee but also Fred's subsequent inability to accept the reality of his deeds. As Fred loses control of his 'reality' – of his very identity – he flees from it by creating a new identity in the hope of regaining control.

6.2.2.2. Fred and Renee's "dead relationship"

It can be gathered, from the observations about Fred's controlling and jealous character, that there are flaws in Fred and Renee's marriage. In this section a deeper look is taken into the rift between these two characters, as it reveals to the transtextual detective more about the reality that Fred wants to escape from. Fred's relationship with Renee is, like any marriage, very complicated in nature and Fred's jealousy and controlling ways is part of a graver and more complex state of affairs. Throughout the first part of the film, the transtextual detective is presented with clues that point to the fractured nature of Fred and Renee's relationship. Lynch (In Rodley, 2005: 225), states that LH is:

> about a couple who feel that somewhere, just on the border of consciousness – or on the other side of that border – are bad, bad problems. But they can't bring them into the real world and deal with them: so this bad feeling is just hovering there [...]It just becomes like a bad dream. There are unfortunate things that happen to people, and this story is about

> that. It depicts an unfortunate occurrence and gives you the feeling of a man in trouble.

The quote above provides the transtextual detective with useful information for this part of the investigation. Firstly, Lynch's description of what LH is about places the relationship of Fred and Renee at the center of the film's events; for Lynch, their relationship – and the subsequent effect that the nature of their relationship has on Fred – is central to the film's narrative. It thus behooves the transtextual detective to consider the nature of their relationship and how it could affect Fred. Secondly, Lynch states the couple is conscious of the problems in their relationship, but that they "can't bring them into the real world and deal with them". Thus, even though they may be aware of the problems present in their relationship, they are unable (or unwilling) to address these problems – to talk about them aloud to each other – and because of this their relationship becomes like "a bad dream". Patricia Arquette – who stars as both Renee and Alice – (in Hartman, 2012), echoes Lynch when she states that "the divorce word is always between them but they never say it". The transtextual detective is thus alerted to the fact that there are problems in this relationship, but that these are never explicitly specified. It therefore falls to the transtextual detective to conclude what these problems are, as they have a direct impact on Fred's actions in the film; the "unfortunate occurrence" that Lynch refers to. In order to convey these problems that hover in the air between Fred and Renee and that are felt "just on the border of consciousness", Lynch employs physical distance, dialogue, and acting.

In the scene that introduces the spectator to the couple, all three of these aspects mentioned above are utilised, and this scene provides the transtextual detective with his first look at the nature of the couple's relationship; that is, a couple who are married, but who no longer really know each other, who are no longer close on an emotional level, and who live in different worlds are witnessed. Yet they do not address this reality, and as such, it creates a "bad feeling" that hovers over them, and permeates the scenes in which they are together. In order to understand how Lynch employs these three aspects to convey the nature of Fred and Renee's relationship, this introductory scene is considered in greater detail.

The scene takes place shortly after the film has begun. Fred is packing his saxophone, getting ready to go to the Luna Lounge, when Renee enters the room. At the start of the scene the two characters are not shown together: the first shot is a medium shot that shows Fred packing his saxophone; Fred is positioned to the right side of the screen. The following shot shows Renee entering the room and standing at the entrance to the hallway. This is a medium shot which shows Renee watching Fred. In this shot, Renee is positioned to the left side of the screen. In the spectator's mind, the right side of the screen is reserved for Fred, while the left is reserved for Renee. This has the effect of suggesting physical distance between the two characters. The *mise-en-scène* of the Renee shot also helps to enhance this sense of distance. In the shot Renee leans against a wall which has a desk running alongside it. This desk creates two lines: one that runs along the wall, and a second line is created by the edge of the desk. What is interesting about these lines is that they do not run parallel to each other; rather, the two lines converge to create a vanishing point on the left hand side of the wall, exactly where Renee is standing[42]. The effect of this vanishing point created by these two lines is that it further manipulates the spectator's eye into imagining Renee as being farther removed from Fred than she actually is. The widescreen format of the film also contributes to increasing the sense of physical space between Fred and Renee. The two characters are also separated from each other by the camera: they both appear in different shots. As such, they are "cut off" from each other.

Throughout this scene, Lynch continues to create a sense of physical distance between Fred and Renee, even when they appear together in the same shot. In the first shot that shows the two characters together, the same shot set-up that introduced Renee is used. Renee is still standing in the same spot. Fred has walked over and moves into the screen, but only his back is visible, which dominates the right side of the screen. The effect of this is that it creates the perspective that Fred is "larger" than Renee as he dominates so much space. This is combined with the vanishing point described above to manipulate the spectator's eye into believing that the two characters are far apart

[42] Lynch designed all of the furniture inside the house.

from each other, when in reality they are not. Physical distance is maintained even when Fred and Renee are close to each other. At the end of the scene, Fred has moved to stand in front of Renee so as to speak to her. Even here, with the two characters directly in front of each other, empty space separates them. There is no contact, and no sense of closeness is established. The effect of all this physical distance is to visually reflect the emotional distance between husband and wife.

This scene does not only make use of physical distance to convey and enforce emotional estrangement, but also makes use of dialogue and acting. Indeed, it is the nuanced acting of both Bill Pullman and Patricia Arquette that is crucial to the film's success in establishing the nature of the couple's relationship. Throughout the first part of the film (the Fred ontology), there is an awkwardness between the two characters as they seem to be uncomfortable around each other, as if they no longer know how to act or behave around each other. As Jerslev (2005:151) observes, even when "placed in the same room, Renee and Fred communicate as if they were situated in different times and spaces". The acting and dialogue of this scene is considered in order to illustrate how both contribute to achieving the effect Jerslev observes.

Jerslev's observation, that it seems as if Fred and Renee are "situated in different times and spaces" when communicating, is an apt description of how this married couple interacts, and reinforces the sense that these two people live apart from each other even when together; they live, as it were, in different worlds, no longer emotionally connected. During this scene, it is the acting – especially on the part of Arquette – that conveys in a nuanced fashion to the transtextual detective the nature of this relationship. The introduction of Renee to the scene is considered first. As already described, Renee enters the scene while Fred is getting ready to go to the Luna Lounge. She enters the room from the hallway, and leans against the wall, watching Fred. Her body language conveys sensuality, but also aloofness. She does not go towards Fred, does not talk to him; she merely leans, and watches. The film cuts to a close up of her face. This shot provides the spectator with his first intimate look at Renee, and it is here that Arquette conveys fully the emotional separation of Renee: her

face is almost blank, devoid of any clear emotion as she watches her husband. Throughout the first part of the film, Renee often has this emotionless expression on her face, especially when around her husband. Arquette manages to convey to the spectator that Renee feels very little emotion for her husband.

Like Arquette, Pullman also succeeds in providing the transtextual detective insight into his character during this scene. It is during the conversation that Fred and Renee have in this scene that small glimpses are afforded into Fred's character. Fred walks towards the center of the room, and stops. He does not walk directly towards Renee to have a conversation, but does it from a distance. Renee asks Fred if he is okay with the fact that she is not going to go to the club with him. Fred seems to shrug off the question, but a slight hint of irritability appears across his face; it bothers him that Renee is not going with him. Instead of answering the question, he asks her what she is going to do while he is gone, to which she replies that she is going to stay home and read. Renee's answer seems to confuse Fred, and he disbelievingly repeats the word *read.* He walks towards Renee and when he is in front of her, he repeats the word yet again, again in a disbelieving tone. He then asks her: "Read … what Renee?" Renee gives a small laugh and Fred says: "It's nice to know I can still make you laugh". In delivering this line, Pullman makes it seem as if Fred feels saddened by the fact that he never makes his wife laugh anymore. Renee replies that she likes to laugh. Arquette mirrors Pullman and also delivers her line with a sense of sadness. It is here at the end of this scene that the spectator gains insight into the nature of this relationship, as Arquette and Pullman subtly convey how these two characters are aware of the fact that they are no longer the same couple that they used to be. The spectator becomes aware of the fact that the couple knows that their relationship has changed. It is especially the comments about laughter, and the way in which these lines are delivered, that convey this to the spectator: Renee likes to laugh, and Fred used to make her laugh. But this is no longer the case; Renee never laughs anymore, and the reminder of it fills both of them with sadness, perhaps regret. Yet they do not address this. They simply continue on, two people living apart from each other.

What does Pullman's performance in this scene convey to the spectator? What clues can the transtextual detective gather here? Firstly, it is suggested that Fred is irritated by the fact that Renee stays at home instead of going to the club with him. Perhaps Fred feels betrayed by Renee in this situation? Secondly, Fred does not seem to believe Renee when she says that she is going to stay home and read. This could perhaps suggest that Fred does not trust his wife, especially considering that he will not be there to keep an eye on her. Lastly, the conversation between Fred and Renee – specifically the lines about laughter – suggest that Fred is saddened by the reality that his relationship with his wife is no longer what it used to be, and that they have grown apart from each other. These three clues, conveyed through Pullman's acting, reveal – or at least at this early stage, suggest – something about the nature of Fred's character. A glimpse into his jealousy is received which, as mentioned earlier, is connected to his fear of infidelity as well as his obsessive nature. Clarity surrounding the characteristics hinted at is obtained throughout the course of the film, as other scenes provide the evidence that strengthen the ideas merely hinted at or suggested here. This will be considered in greater detail later when discussing Fred's desire for control.

The analysis presented above serves to illustrate how in only one scene Lynch employs physical distance, acting, and dialogue in order to convey the nature of Fred and Renee's relationship. These aspects are used effectively throughout the first part of the film in order to further enforce the idea of, to use Arquette's phrase (in Hartman, 2012), a "dead relationship". The physical distance between Fred and Renee, for example, is used in different parts of the film to reinforce the idea of emotional distance. Renee and Fred are very rarely close to each other throughout the first part of the film. For example, when the couple watches the first videotape left on their doorstep, they sit apart from each other on the sofa. Again, the *mise-en-scène* of the shot contributes to making it seem as if the characters are further apart than they actually are. The shot shows Renee and Fred sitting on the sofa, with Renee on the left and Fred on the right. The sofa they are sitting on continues beyond the right side of the screen, creating the impression that the sofa is very long. Because of this, the distance between Fred and

Renee seems much larger. Also, there is a painting on the wall behind them that hangs above the space between them which also contributes to creating the sense of distance.

Another example of the *mise-en-scène* of the shot being used to convey a sense of distance occurs when Renee finds the second videotape. She brings it into the house and a wide angle shot of living room is used. Renee is in the far corner of the shot, standing near the entrance to the hallway that leads to their bedroom. From the spectator's position, Renee seems far away. Fred speaks to Renee off screen; once again they are separated by screen space. Renee leaves the shot, and Fred enters the room from the right hand corner, stepping into the shot from behind the camera position. Perspective makes him appear large while the entrance to the hallway – the area Renee went into – seems far away. He continues to talk to Renee, whose replies are almost inaudible. This recalls Jerslev's statement that it seems as if "Renee and Fred communicate as if they were situated in different times and spaces". Once the couple is finally together in the same space – the sofa– they again sit apart from each other.

These examples all illustrate how editing, camera shots and *mise-en-scène* are used to create a heightened sense of spatial distance between Fred and Renee, emphasising their emotional distance. What is further interesting to note about these examples, is the fact that they all take place within the same space, namely the couple's house. This is a significant aspect for the transtextual detective to consider, as the house – the couple's home – is identified through these scenes as a space of importance in the film – the nature of Fred and Renee's relationship is revealed largely in this one confined space. It also gains further significance when it is taken into consideration what the concept of a home commonly represents. A home is generally seen as a "sheltering" space (Cavallaro, 2002:86), that provides stability and safety. Wenzel (2003:318), points out that the most important associations of the concept of home relate to an individual's "social relationships and networks" (such as family), the idea that a home is a space of refuge[43], and that a home provides the individual with "a sense of continuity" (thus it

[43] Botting (2005:84), provides a similar definition of the home as a space of refuge from outside forces that threaten the individual.

provides stability that helps to ground the self in his or her life narrative). Furthermore, a house represents, according to Bachelard (1994:7-10), the first world that the individual encounters, and as such can be seen as a "cradle" that comforts and protects the individual. This idea or image of a house remains with individuals throughout their lives, and the houses that the individual occupies later in life – and the homes they create in these houses – continue to function in a similar fashion.

However, in the Lynchian world, home is "a place where things can go wrong" (Lynch in Rodley, 2005:10). From the description provided above one would expect the home of a married couple to represent a safe, comforting space where they share and express their love for each other, and where they can build a life together. From the analysis of Fred and Renee's relationship, however, it is known that this is not the case in LH. Here, the home is a space that becomes the site for the couple's broken relationship, and all the aspects connected to this (such as Fred's jealousy and paranoia, or Renee's infidelity). It is thus significant that the Madison's home is the complete antithesis of what a home is generally considered to be: there is no comfort or protection to be found here (especially for Renee). The house that is their home ultimately becomes symbolic of the couple's relationship; it is a physical articulation of a relationship in trouble. Rodley (2005:227), for example, points out that the house is "full of deep rumbles" that seem to suggest "trouble from the very core" of the house, which one could see as being representative of the trouble within the relationship. Lynch (in Rodley, 2005:227), agrees with this assessment, and states that there is an "uneasiness" that permeates the house. This "uneasiness" is reflective of the mood between Fred and Renee; as illustrated, the interaction between Fred and Renee does not convey a sense of ease, but rather one of unease. Rodley (2005:225), also comments that the house has an "uncertain geography", and that it "seems that it might be endless". He continues that it seems as if once "you step into it, that you're entering some potentially vast, dark labyrinth". The house contains a lot of dark corners, rooms, and corridors. There is very little light within the house, and the light that is present is low-key. The presence of large amounts of darkness in the house reflects the darkness present in the relationship.

By thus considering the house as an articulation of the couple's relationship, the transtextual detective gains useful evidence in his investigation of Fred's motives, as it provides additional evidence that Fred and Renee have a "dead relationship". This is important as it suggests that the murder was not a random act; rather, the nature of Fred and Renee's relationship led to the murder. As Jousse (2010:77) observes, both Fred and Renee seem to suffer from an "unbearable malaise" that defines their relationship. The fact that neither Fred nor Renee seem able (or willing) to address the nature of their relationship only intensifies the "unbearable malaise" they suffer from, creating a "fault-line [...] within the couple's relationship" (Jousse, 2010:77). Due to the nature of Fred's psyche, this "fault-line" becomes increasingly unstable, resulting in his drastic actions. The breaking point that sends Fred "over the edge", is the realisation that his paranoia is justified, that his wife is indeed having an extramarital affair.

6.2.2.3. Renee's infidelity

While all of the examples presented above provide the transtextual detective with an image of a relationship on the rocks, it is not clearly conveyed that Renee is actually having an affair. Fortunately, the film provides an emphatic piece of evidence near its end, proving that Renee is an adulterer and that Fred has knowledge of this. The following section will briefly present this evidence.

The scene under consideration takes place after Pete has turned back into Fred. Before this can be considered, some context for the scene is provided: After his re-appearance, Fred is at first confused and discombobulated, and his original identity has still not fully resurfaced. This is evident when he enters the cabin into which Alice has gone. Instead of finding her, he is confronted by the Mystery Man. Fred looks around the inside of the cabin, and when he sees that Alice has disappeared, he asks: "Where's Alice?" This is an indication that Fred is not fully himself yet – and that a part of the Pete alter ego is still lingering – as Fred does not "know" Alice at all; he knows Renee. The Mystery Man reminds Fred of this when he replies: "Alice who? Her name is Renee. If she told you her name is Alice she's lying". A shot of Fred is then seen, who looks confused and uncertain, trying to make sense of what he has just heard. The film cuts back to a shot

of the Mystery Man, who holds a video recorder to his eye as he yells at Fred: "And your name? What the fuck is your name?!" The Mystery Man, video recorder still in place, starts to advance menacingly towards Fred, who suddenly appears to be frightened, and desperately tries to escape by running away to his car. Once inside his car, he escapes from the Mystery Man by driving away. He ends up on the lost highway and, in an example of the film's unconventional chronology, the transtextual detective is presented with Fred's past. It is this scene that provides the evidence of Renee's infidelity.

After Fred escapes from the Mystery Man, the film cuts away to the familiar POV shot of a car speeding down the lost highway; the film's motif that conveys Fred's journey within his own psyche. While the shot usually suggests that Fred flees from aspects of himself he does not want to confront, in this instance he ironically travels back to the past that he so desperately wants to escape from. The POV shot dissolves into a shot of the Lost Highway Hotel. This dissolve is significant; for a moment, the two shots blend together as they are superimposed on one another. The two different times are connected together and blend together; Fred's psyche is blending with his memories, and the transtextual detective now gains access to Fred's perception of this moment in time. The transtextual detective will witness what happened on the night that Fred killed Dick Laurent, and will also be presented with proof of Renee's infidelity.

The scene provides a number of clues that convey what Fred's state of mind was like at this point in time. For example, the shot of the Lost Highway hotel features a bright flash of lightning and the sound of thunder. In LH, lightning is a motif of danger, as well as instability in Fred's psyche[44]. This particular flash of lightning is so intense that the entire screen is engulfed in a flash of white. This suggests that the threat of danger is very strong, as well as suggesting that Fred's state of mind is very unstable at this point. The flash fades away and the film cuts to inside the corridor of the Lost Highway Hotel. A POV shot travels down the corridor as thunder continues to be heard. The POV shot stops outside one of the hotel rooms, room number 26. The film cuts to the inside of this

[44] This motif will be discussed in greater detail later in this section.

room, where the spectator sees Renee having sex with Dick Laurent. As they make love, lightning flashes outside the window. There is a connection established here between their lovemaking and the thunder: the act is making Fred unstable, which spells danger for Renee and Dick. Here the transtextual detective is presented with the evidence of Renee's infidelity, as well as the person whom she was having an affair with. The film cuts again to the corridor and shows Fred (dressed in all black) walking down the corridor. Thunder can be heard; Fred's face seems vacant, as if he is not quite aware of what he is doing. He enters room 25 as the screen fades to black. When the film fades in, we see Renee leave as Dick lies in bed. Fred meanwhile is in his room, looking out of his window; he sees Renee get into a car and leave. Moving like an automaton, Fred goes over to the bed stand and picks up a gun. He exits the room into the corridor. As he walks towards room 26 lighting flashes inside the corridor. He knocks on the door. Inside the room Dick is getting dressed. Thinking that it is Renee who has returned and he gets up and opens the door. As he does so, Fred hits him in the head with his gun. As he assaults Dick, the song "Rammstein" by the eponymous German industrial metal band plays. The heavy, violent music not only accentuates the violence portrayed on screen, but also acts to reflect Fred's violent state of mind; the rage that has been building up in Fred finally erupts. Fred drags Dick to his car and forces him into the trunk.

The scene described above provides the transtextual detective with the first solid evidence that Renee is having an affair. The scene that follows it also provides additional evidence of Renee's infidelity, as well as insight into how Fred perceives the nature of her relationship with Dick Laurent. After Fred has forced Dick into the trunk of his car, the film cuts to a shot of the car as it drives into an open stretch of empty desert. The scene that follows shows Fred (and the Mystery Man) killing Dick[45]. The portable television that the Mystery Man hands Dick is interesting in this scene. As already described, the camera shows Dick attending the party at Andy's house where a number of people, including Dick and Renee, are watching snuff pornography film in which

[45] This scene has been described earlier in this section.

Renee stars. The film is intense and graphic, and depicts the murder of one of the men involved. As they watch the film, Dick and Renee start to grope each other and kiss violently; the film seems to arouse them sexually. They also laugh when one of the men in the film is killed. Dick is still watching as the Mystery Man comes and takes the portable television away from him. What does this brief look inside the party convey to the transtextual detective? Firstly, it is important to note how the scene is presented to Dick. Fred does not tell him why he is going to kill him; rather, he uses a portable television to show him a recorded image of the events. As already established, the recorded image in LH represents absolute truth for Fred. As with the videotapes left in front of the Madison's house, the origin of this "video" is not clear: who shot it? Why is it edited like a film? Why does it cut from video to film? While interesting questions, they are rendered largely irrelevant because the fact that it is presented as a video image suggests that Fred *considers these images to be the truth*; in his mind, this is what happened. The depiction of Renee and Dick's relationship thus represents what Fred considers to be the truth of their relationship.

Since Fred considers the video to represent "truth", this thus also suggests that the video represents how he views the nature of the relationship between Renee and Dick. The party and the film being watched paints a picture of debauchery, and provides insight into how Fred views this relationship; namely, as being depraved. That Dick and Renee watch a snuff film emphasis this: generally, a snuff movie is a form of amateur pornography in which the torture and murder of someone is caught on film. The fact that Renee and Dick watch such a film, and are not only amused by the death, but also sexually aroused by it, conveys that these two people are depraved. The non-diegetic music during this scene is also used to reinforce the depravity of the couple. As the scene unfolds, the song "Heirate Mich" (also by Rammstein) is playing. This is relevant as the song is about necrophilia; thus, the song is about a connection being made between sex and death, similar to that of a snuff film. The relationship of Renee and Dick – in Fred's mind – is an unnatural and depraved relationship.

The fact that Renee could be part of such a relationship – and act in such a manner – must have been disquieting to Fred's mind, considering his innocent representation of Renee to himself as the girl he married because she "like[s] to laugh". This could explain Fred's dream; when he says that "it looked like you. But it wasn't you", it could refer to the fact that in Fred's mind, Renee changed, that she was no longer the person whom he married. It could also suggest Fred's desire to kill Dick: Dick has passionate sex with Renee (something Fred was not able to successfully do), and as Olson (2008:450) enquires, how "can the man who's capable of inflaming Renee's passion be allowed to live?" After all, Fred sees Dick as the person responsible for Renee's change. How is this known? There is a connection made between two scenes – one in the Fred ontology, the other in the Pete ontology – that reveals this belief of Fred. With regard to the first part of this connection – which takes place in the Fred ontology– when Fred and Renee are driving home from Andy's party, Fred asks Renee: "how'd you meet that asshole Andy anyway?" Renee replies that she met Andy a long time ago "at a place called Mokes". She continues by saying that they became friends, and that he told her about "a job". When Fred asks her "what job?", she remains silent for a moment, before answering that she cannot remember. The nature of this job is revealed later in the film, during a scene in the Pete ontology. In this scene Alice – who represents Renee in the Pete ontology[46] – is telling Pete that Mr Eddy (an alias of Dick Laurent) knows about their relationship, and she is afraid that he is going to kill both of them. When Pete asks her what they are going to do, Alice suggests that if they could get some money they could run away together. She tells him that she knows "a guy who pays girls to party with him", and says that he would be easy to rob. Pete seems upset, and asks her if she has "partied with him". Alice remains silent and looks away. Pete asks her if she enjoyed it, and she replies that she did not, but that she had to do it because it is "part of the deal". When Pete asks her "what deal?", she explains to him that the man she wants him to rob – whom we later learns is Andy – works for Mr Eddy, and that he makes pornographic films for him. Visibly upset, Pete asks her how she became involved with this group of people. Alice says that: "a long time ago I met this

[46] This aspect will be discussed in more detail later in this section.

guy at a place called Mokes. We became friends. He told me about a job". The two scenes are therefore revealed as referring to the same set of facts, by virtue of the dialogue spoken by Arquette as both Renee and Alice. Both Renee and Alice tell their respective male partners that they met Andy "a long time ago" at "a place called Mokes", and that Andy told them "about a job".

The nature of the job is revealed in the Pete ontology, when Alice describes her first meeting with Mr Eddy. Here, it is suggested that Alice "auditions" for Mr Eddy. Mr Eddy sits in a large room near a fireplace, while a number of other men stand around the room. One of the men holds a gun to her head, and Mr Eddy motions for her to take her clothes off. At first she does this reluctantly, but as she continues she becomes more comfortable and even seems to enjoy it. Pete confronts Alice, asking her why she simply did not leave. When she remains silent, he says that she liked it, and she continues to remain silent; she does not deny his accusations, but gives silent consent. The audition scene suggests that it is Mr Eddy who "initiates" Alice into this world. There is also additional evidence that connects Alice to Renee with regards to Mr Eddy/Dick Laurent's snuff pornography business. How the dialogue spoken connects the two characters and establishes a shared past has therefore been illustrated. In this way the dialogue also connects both Alice and Renee to Andy: both women are friends with him, and both women were introduced to Mr Eddy/Dick through him. Andy is identified as someone who makes pornographic movies for Mr Eddy/ Dick. These movies are distributed as video tapes. We learn this when Mr Eddy offers Pete a videotape: "You like porno?" Pete declines, but this exchange provides evidence of Mr Eddy/Dick's connection to pornography, and also connects videotapes to Mr Eddy/Dick's porn business. This explains why Renee seems extremely frightened when she finds the first videotape: her first thought is immediately that the videotape is one of her films, and is frightened that Fred will find out about her other life.

To summarize, the evidence analysed in the above section provides proof that Renee was indeed having an affair, and that she was having this affair with Dick Laurent. It also illustrates that Fred was not only aware of this relationship, but was also aware of

the depraved nature of their relationship, namely that Dick is involved in snuff pornography, and that Renee joined him in this. Thus, Fred not only blames Renee for her infidelity, but also holds Dick responsible for introducing Renee into his sordid world, and holds this against him: when Fred kills Dick, he shows him a video that illustrates Dick and Renee's depravity.

6.2.2.4. The effect of Renee's infidelity on Fred's psyche

In section 6.2.2.1 an attempt to make sense of Fred's desire for control, in order to understand how it drives his actions was made. The ways in which the film conveys this desire to the transtextual detective has been considered. It has also been established that this desire, is in large part centered on his wife as his desire to control is related to his paranoia and mistrust of his wife. Because of this, his desire for control extends to a desire to be omniscient so that he can constantly keep an eye on her. In the preceding section it is made clear that, despite Fred's desire to control Renee, he cannot and she has an affair with Dick Laurent. Both these motives – Fred's desire for power and the fact of Renee's infidelity – will now be taken into consideration, in order to gain a better understanding of what Renee's infidelity means to Fred's psyche and how it serves as a breaking point for Fred's identity and reality. It will be argued that by having sex with another man, Renee robs Fred of control and power. As this desire for control and power is a key aspect of Fred's character, when it is taken away it has a devastating effect on him – and fatal consequences for the person he views as responsible for his loss of control. The investigation here will benefit from the film's intertextual references to the figure of the *femme fatale,* as established by the *film noir* tradition, seeing as the *femme fatale* is a figure associated with male loss of control. The investigation will proceed by first defining the *femme fatale* according to the *noir* tradition, before illustrating how Renee can be viewed as one. The connection between a *femme fatale* and the male "hero's" loss of control will then be considered.

The following is a brief definition which focuses on the aspects of the *femme fatale* relevant for the investigation, and thus does not address all aspects of the figure (or all the ways in which she is read by critics). For the purpose of this investigation, the

definition of the *femme fatale* will be limited to the classic *film noir* context. The reason that the focus is limited to the *femme fatale* of this period is that, as McKenzie (2003) explains, it is the classic *film noir* that is referenced by Lynch in LH. Jerslev (2005:159), echoes this when he states that *film noir* has “strong textual resonances in *Lost Highway*”.

Though classic *film noir* is a contested concept, for the purpose of this investigation the term will be defined as referring to a group of crime/detective/mystery films that were made during the 1940s and 1950s; the period is identified as stretching from John Huston’s *The Maltese Falcon* in 1941 until Orson Welles’s *Touch of Evil* in 1958 (Conrad, 2006:1). These films are characterized by a number of formal aspects, such as

> the constant opposition of light and shadow, its oblique camera angles, and its disruptive compositional balance of frames and scenes, the way characters are placed in awkward and unconventional positions within a particular shot, for example (Conrad, 2006:1).

Apart from these formal characteristics, classic *film noir* also has a number of characteristic themes that identify them. Conrad (2006:1-2), identifies the following thematic issues that can be found in *film noir*:

> the inversion of traditional values and the corresponding moral ambivalence (e.g., the protagonist of the story, who traditionally is the good guy, in noir films often makes very questionable moral decisions); the feeling of alienation, paranoia, and cynicism; the presence of crime and violence; and the disorientation of the viewer, which is in large part accomplished by the filming techniques mentioned above.

One of the most “salient” characteristics of classic *film noir* was the *femme fatale* (Holt, 2007:27). The *femme fatale* is a mysterious, destructive figure who gains power from her overt sexuality (Richardson, 2005:81-82). Jerslev (2005:159), draws the comparison between the *femme fatale* and the "spider woman" who "ruins – or accomplishes the

(self) destruction of – the male main character by seducing him". Hirsch (1981:20), agrees with this view of the *femme fatale* as a destructive force portrays her as a "wicked, scheming creature, sexually potent and deadly to the male". Hirsch (1981:20), also identifies the social conditions behind the fiction of the *femme fatale* as “a fear of strong women, women who steer men of their course, beckoning them to a life of crime, or else so disrupting their emotional poise that they are unable to function.”

Taking the brief description provided above as a point of departure, it can now be determined if it would be justified to view Renee as a *femme fatale*. At first glance, Renee may not necessarily seem to encompass the characteristics of the *femme fatale*. In fact, Alice seems to be a much better representation of the *femme fatale*, in that she uses her sexuality to manipulate the naive Pete. However, upon closer examination, Renee does meet certain significant characteristics of the *femme fatale*. Formally, the way in which she is introduced, for example, connects her to the figure of the *femme fatale*. When she is first introduced, Renee cuts a classic *femme fatale* figure: she wears a deep red satin dress that accentuates the shape of her body and draws attention to her sexual nature. As Gledhill (2005:32) explains, in *film noir* the *femme fatale* is "filmed for her sexuality", while Hollinger (2006:246) states that “[t]he iconography of the femme fatale grants these beautiful, provocative women visual primacy through shot composition as well as camera positioning, movement, and lighting.”

Gledhill (2005:32), continues that the shot that introduces the *femme fatale* – like the one that introduces Renee – captures the male protagonist's gaze, and her dress is often used to emphasize her sexuality. This dress, according to Orr (1993:158) is very often white, as seen in such films as *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946), *Out of the Past* (1947), *Dead Reckoning* (1947), *Gilda* (1946), *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947), *Double Indemnity* (1944), and even the neo-noir *Body Heat* (1981). The whiteness of the dress acts to help ensnare the male victim by conveying a sense of innocence, suggesting that the sexuality he is attracted to and desires is not dangerous. Of course, it is dangerous, and as Orr (1993:158) states, "white turns to black as the darkness of

female motive becomes apparent". Renee is not introduced in a white dress (this is reserved for Alice), but in a dark red dress. Bellantoni (2005:5) notes that such a dark red is often representative of power. In this instance, Renee's dress thus communicates that she has the power that Fred desires, and thus, her dress signals her as a threat to Fred's desire for control and power. McKenzie (2003) also notes that the way in which Renee is formally introduced intertextually signals her as a threat. He notes that the seductive way in which she is shot "immediately conjures memories of femme fatale Kathie Moffett (Jane Greer) as she first appears from the shadows in *Out of the Past* (1947) or Kitty Collins (Ava Gardner) poised near the piano in *The Killers* (1946)." McKenzie (2003) continues and states that "either reference can only mean trouble".

Apart from these formal connections, Renee also evokes the classic *femme fatale* in that emphasis is placed on the effect that her sexuality has on Fred. This emphasis on her sexuality (also indicated in the above description of her introduction) connects her to the *femme fatale* and in the process marks her as a threat to Fred. This is because, as Oliver and Trigo (2003:41) explain, the danger that the *femme fatale* poses is "associated with her sexuality". In LH, Renee's sexuality does pose a danger to Fred, as her sexuality indirectly leads Fred to his "doom". Renee does not, in typical *femme fatale* fashion, use her sexuality to manipulate Fred to commit a crime on her behalf (as Alice does Pete). However, her sexual nature does play an important role in Fred's demise; after all, Fred's paranoia and jealousy – the emotions that fuels his anger and drives him to murder – are the result of Renee's sexuality. Fred is, for example, unable to sexually satisfy his wife. This is revealed during the first part of the film, after Fred and Renee have watched the first video tape. Fred is lying in bed. He thinks back to the previous evening's performance at the Luna Lounge. We see a shot of the crowd; at the back of the crowd, Renee and Andy are walking. They briefly look at Fred, before leaving through an exit. As the film cuts back to the bedroom, Renee un-robes and gets into bed. They stare at each other, and without saying anything, they begin to make love. However, this attempt at love making is a failure, and reveals where much of Fred's insecurity and paranoia stems from. Mactaggart (2010:100), describes their

lovemaking as a “brief, tense, and unreciprocated sexual encounter, which seems to offer neither of them, but particularly him, little pleasure.”

After this failed attempt, the spectator sees a shot of Renee's hand patting Fred's back, as if to comfort him, while she whispers to him – barely audible – that "it's okay". This gesture lacks any sense of comfort, and Fred's response illustrates this clearly to the spectator: a close-up shot of Fred's left eye reveals not comfort, but rather outrage at the gesture. As Mactaggart (2010:100) states, his response is one of "intense anger", while the screenplay (Lynch & Gifford, 1997:12) reveals that Fred's eye expresses "his horror and humiliation". The musical score also parallels Fred's response and emphasizes the impact of this act through heavy, moody music.

The scene described above illustrates that Fred is unable to satisfy his wife sexually. For Fred, this inability to satisfy his wife acts as a form of rejection from Renee, and this knowledge both humiliates and angers Fred. Thus, through the act of sex with his wife, Fred becomes emasculated. Fred therefore becomes insecure about his relationship with his wife and "assumes that she longs for other men" (Wilson, 2007:118). This is the foundation of Fred’s paranoia and jealousy, and leads to him "constantly engaging in jealous fantasies over his wife's infidelity" (Wilson, 2007:118). Renee does end up going to another man – Dick Laurent – for sexual satisfaction. The rejection Fred feels during the lovemaking is now made complete as Renee rejects Fred for another man. Thus, Fred’s fantasies of Renee’s infidelity become reality, further feeding his anger. This anger – in reality anger towards his own failure, his own impotence – is directed towards Renee, the cause of his humiliation. Renee thus, to recall Hirsch, disrupts Fred’s “emotional poise” to the point that he is “unable to function”. He must kill Renee; as such, her sexuality does contribute to Fred’s downfall.

Lastly, throughout the film there is a sense that, as McGowan (2007:157) states, Fred "has no idea what [Renee] wants, let alone how to give it to her". There is a sense that Fred is unable to understand his wife; he does not know what she wants, and, more importantly, he does not know *who she is*. As such, she becomes a mystery that he cannot solve. Jerslev (2005:153) contends that at the core of LH is the “obsession with

woman as unsolvable mystery". How does the film convey this to the transtextual detective? Consider for example the scene at the desert cabin where Fred is confronted by the Mystery Man. When he enters the cabin, he asks where Alice is (even though he does not know her). The Mystery Man responds by saying "Alice who? Her name is Renee. If she told you her name is Alice she's lying". Here is laid bare the fact that Fred literally does not know who his wife is. Or consider the framed photo in Andy's house that shows both Renee and Alice standing together with Mr Eddy and Andy. When Pete sees this he becomes confused and asks: "Is that you? Are *both* of them you?"[47] Pete never receives a clear answer to his question, and neither does the spectator. Near the end of the film the spectator is shown a police investigation taking place at Andy's house. One of the detectives notices the same photo that Pete noticed. However, Alice is now gone and only Renee is left in the photo. One could perhaps surmise that this means that both Pete and Alice never existed, yet one of the detectives note that Pete's fingerprints were found. Renee thus remains a mystery, not only to Fred (and Pete), but also to the spectator. These examples are representative of what Jerslev (2005:153) calls the film's "obsession with woman as unsolvable mystery". This idea of a woman as an "unsolvable mystery" is the third way in which Renee recalls the *femme fatale*. This is because, as Doane (1991:1) explains, the *femme fatale* is striking due to the fact that "she never really is what she seems to be", and is often "unknowable" (Doane, 1991:102). It is exactly because the *femme fatale* is "unknowable" to the male protagonist, because he can never fully understand her and know who she truly is, that she is able to lead him down a path of self-destruction.

The above has illustrated justification in considering Renee as a *femme fatale*: she is formally connected to the *femme fatale* because her sexuality leads Fred to his self-destruction, and she is presented as an unsolvable mystery. The next step in the investigation is to establish how Renee – as a *femme fatale* – can be linked to a loss of control and power on the part of Fred. Therefore, an investigation concerning how the

[47] My emphasis.

classical *femme fatale* is a figure associated with a male protagonist's loss of control and power is necessary.

By her very nature, the *femme fatale* is connected to male loss of control and power. After all, the entire idea of the *femme fatale* is that the doomed male protagonist is "helpless" (Oliver & Trigo, 2003:85) against her sexuality and mystery. In order to manipulate the male protagonist, the *femme fatale* has to rob him of his control and power. In her presence, the male protagonist cannot help but be manipulated; he cannot help but succumb to her and relinquish control and power. As Doane (1991:2) explains, the male protagonist in *film noir* suffers from "uncontrollable drives, the fading of subjectivity, and the loss of conscious agency". In other words, the male protagonist becomes so obsessed by the *femme fatale* – by her sexuality and her mystery – that he loses his very sense of self. The *femme fatale* is thus, according to Doane (1991:2), an "articulation of fears surrounding the loss of stability and centrality of the self". This male loss of control and power – the very loss of the self – in *film noir* is historically connected to male loss of power and control in the public sphere during the 1940s. Oliver and Trigo (2003:XIII) note that the "sense of fate or doom" in film noir is very much a response to "white men's sense of loss of control and authority, especially control and authority over women". As Hirsch (1981:19) explains, *film noir* "offers a symbolic social and psychological profile of its era". He notes that it is with the figure of the *femme fatale* that *film noir* "is most closely connected to its period" (Hirsch, 1981:19). This is because during the period of the Second World War, men were needed for the armed services. The result of this was that "women for the first time entered the job market in large numbers, and the place of women, both at home and on the job, changed radically" (Hirsch, 1981:19). Women could leave their designated sphere – that of the home – and function successfully in the public sphere previously reserved only for men. Women were thus "strengthened by their wartime experience" (Hirsch, 1981:20). But as these women gained strength – gained control and power – men lost it. It is in this that we see the white male's sense of loss and authority that Oliver and Trigo refer to. *Film noir* responds to this fear of the new role of women by turning it negative. McKenzie (2003) explains that to "the male giving vent to his fantasy, anxiety over this threat was

concretized into highly sexual images of beautiful women who often toted guns or enjoyed dominance in frame and freedom of movement."

These highly sexualized, violent images of women were thus the response to the "new woman" (Hirsch, 1981:20), those women that entered into the workforce and gave "femininity expression on a scale unheard of before the war" (McKenzie, 2003). Hirsch (1981:20) explains that this "'new woman' [...] emerged on screen as a wicked, scheming creature, sexually potent and deadly to the male*". Film noir* thus recorded "an abiding fear of strong women" (Hirsch, 1981:20), exactly because these strong women led to a loss of power and control on the part of men.

According to Jerslev (2005:159), one of the salient connections between LH and *film noir* lies in the fact that both deal, "to a certain extent, with the same fantasies: male desire and 'masculinity' in crises". These "fantasies" as Jerslev calls them are articulated in LH through the figure of the *femme fatale*; in this specific instance[48], Renee. Renee lies, for example, at the center of Fred's desires: to monitor her every move, to solve her, and to ultimately control her. Renee is also the figure that eventually leads to Fred's masculinity coming under threat: it is because of Renee that he feels emasculated. These fantasies are what regulate Fred into, according to Caldwell (1997:46), "a typical *film noir* hero" that inhabits a "doomed and desolate world". Fred is "doomed" because his desires with regard to his wife come to dominate his life. As he struggles to unravel the mystery that is his wife and gains control over her, his feelings of jealousy and paranoia grow. This leads to Fred's fear of "emasculation and loss of power" (McKenzie, 2003). When he finds out that Renee is being unfaithful his fear of emasculation is realized, and as a result he loses power and control. It is in this way that the transtextual detective thus sees how the *femme fatale* Renee leads to Fred's loss of control.

Before the final conclusion is made about why Fred creates an alter ego, a reflection on what the investigation has yielded thus far is necessary. The starting point – as the

[48] When investigating the breakdown of the Pete alter ego we will consider Alice as *femme fatale*.

effect – is the presence of an alter ego, namely Pete. I contend that the cause of this effect is the fact that Fred murders his wife Renee. As this was not directly shown in the film, the first task was to illustrate that Fred does indeed murder his wife. As Fred's motives for killing Renee also contribute to the creation of an alter ego, it was thus necessary to establish what these motivations were. Therefore Renee's murder was taken as effect, and the cause of her murder was sought out. It was discovered that the cause of Renee's murder is a combination of factors that link together: primarily, Renee's infidelity, as well as Fred's desire to have control over his life and, specifically, over his wife. The investigation into this first mystery has focused primarily on the first part of the film (before Fred's transformation into Pete), as it provides clues and evidence about Fred and Renee's relationship, as well as Fred's state of mind during this period. These are important as they allowed not only that Fred killed Renee, but also why he did it, to be identified.

By drawing together these various strands of clues and evidence identified and discussed in the above sections, it can now be attempted to emplot a narrative that illustrates the events leading to Fred's creation of an alter ego. Fred and Renee are a married couple whose marriage is far from perfect. They are no longer close to each other, and act more like strangers living in the same house. Fred is an obsessive individual who wants to be in control of all aspects of his life, including his wife Renee. Fred is therefore a jealous individual, and because of their broken marriage, Fred is paranoid that Renee is unfaithful. Fred fears infidelity because he fears becoming emasculated through this; if Renee cheats on him with other men, his masculinity comes under threat. Infidelity on the part of Renee would also mean that Fred cannot control Renee as he desires to do. Unfortunately for Fred, his fears of infidelity and emasculation become a reality as he discovers that Renee is having an affair with a man called Dick Laurent. Because of this, he loses the control that he so covets; consequently, he feels a need to 'punish' Renee, as her infidelity is the cause of his loss of control. Fred's psyche is not quite able to act on his murderous rage though, so it creates a figure to act on his behalf, namely the Mystery Man, an enigmatic, ghostlike figure that helps Fred to kill both Renee and Dick Laurent.

6.2.3 Fred's rejection of reality

The narrative emplotted thus far recounts the events leading to Renee's death, which in turn is responsible for Fred's desire to create an alter ego. The question that now needs to be answered is: why does Renee's death have this effect on Fred? Why does the act of killing his wife instill in Fred a desire to become someone else? I believe that Fred wants to become someone else because he desperately wants to escape his own reality. Why is this? Essentially, Fred neither wants to accept what he has done, nor does he want to accept responsibility for what he has done. This is because by accepting that he has murdered Renee, he would also be accepting the reality of everything that led to this murder. He would thus have to accept that Renee rejected him, robbing him of his desired control over her. By becoming someone else he is able to escape from this reality by emplotting a new life narrative–and in the process regaining the control that he has lost. How does the transtextual detective become aware of this? It is illustrated through the sequence following Renee's death when Fred is in prison. By investigating this sequence illustration of how the film conveys Fred's inability or unwillingness to accept responsibility for his actions is enabled.

The sequence of the film considered for this part of the investigation takes place after the scene were Fred watches the third – and final – videotape. This scene has already been described earlier in this section, so a brief review should suffice: the video reveals that Fred has murdered Renee. Fred jumps up from the couch, calls Renee's name as blue lights starts to flash, and is hit in the face by a detective who calls Fred a killer. Holding his bloody nose, Fred first whispers: "I didn't kill her", before whispering pleadingly: "Tell me I didn't kill her". Before considering what useful clues this scene may contain, I would briefly like to note the visual effects that accompany Fred as he jumps up from the couch. The flashing lights (similar to the lightning seen throughout the film) have already been noted, but the fact that the screen also starts to vibrate, almost seeming to "shake" Fred has not yet been referred to. These effects reflect the fact that Fred is losing his grip on his "reality", which is realised as the film suddenly cuts from the Madison's house to another space with no explanation provided; it is almost as

if Fred has been shaken from his reality. This scene in which Fred seems to move from one ontology to another provides a useful clue, found in Fred's second sentence. Fred's first sentence is one of denial as he states that he did not kill his wife. However, his second sentence shows that he does not believe this statement of denial. When he pleads with the detective to tell him that he did not kill his wife it illustrates that he does not want to accept the fact that he killed her. Even though it has been presented to him as the truth in the form of a videotape, he does not want to accept it as such. He wants someone to tell him that the videotape is wrong and that he did not commit the act that caused him so much distress. Here, for the first time, the transtextual detective receives a glimpse into the reason why Fred wants to become someone else following Renee's death, namely because Fred is unwilling to accept the reality of what he has done, or to accept responsibility for it.

This clue, and the information it reveals about Fred, is important to keep in mind as the following sequence is investigated which details Fred's stay in prison. It is important because it provides the context in which to make sense of Fred's experience while in prison, as here the film reveals Fred's unwillingness to accept what he has done. From the detective's office the film cuts to a shot of a prison. Fred is seen – in prison clothes – being led down stairs. As this happens excerpts from his trial are heard, and it is learned that he has not only been found guilty of Renee's murder, but has also been sentenced to be put to death. It is important to note that this sequence is the closest the transtextual detective ever comes to perceiving Fred's "reality" in LH (even though it is still presented through Fred's mindscreen), or as Olson (2008:450) calls it, the film's "base reality". This is because it allows us to understand why Fred is so desperate to escape from this reality into a reality that he creates for himself. Thus, the other sequences in the film all take place in various ontologies that Fred creates in order to escape from the "base reality". Olson (2008:450) for example, explains that the first section of the film "is as much a creation of Fred's imprisoned, streaming mind" as the Pete ontology. The first ontology that details Fred and Renee's relationship is most likely being played out while Fred is caught by the police and being interrogated. This is established by the film as it links its own beginning and end together. At the end of the

film, the transtextual detective sees Fred being chased by police down a highway. As he is driving, Fred begins to transform, signaling that he is entering into a different ontology[49]. The film cuts from Fred's transformation to the familiar POV shot of the lost highway. The film also begins with this shot, linking the beginning and end together to create a loop that feeds into itself *ad infinitum*. Additional evidence is also presented which connects the beginning and end of the film. For example, at the beginning of the film, Fred is inside his house and hears the buzzer for the intercom. As he goes to answer the intercom one can faintly hear the sounds of police sirens, seemingly emanating from within the house. Fred also seems to hear the sounds, but immediately ignores them. This connects back to the end of the film where Fred is being chased by police cars; together with Fred the sirens of the police cars that are chasing him at that very moment in another reality are heard. The ontology he has created to hide in is still somewhat fragile, and thus the sound briefly "breaks" through. Another connection is the first words that Fred hears in the film: "Dick Laurent is dead". These are also the last words of the film, spoken by Fred himself. This again not only connects the beginning and end of the film, creating the möbius strip narrative described by so many, but also illustrates that this ontology is still new; the last words Fred spoke are still on his mind and he recalls them. Therefore, the first part of the film up until Renee's death is an ontology created by Fred to escape the very fact that he has killed Renee, and that he is going to be punished for this. When he kills Renee again, reliving actions that have already transpired, his ontology breaks down and he returns to reality.

Why is Fred so desperate to escape from this reality? It is because while in this reality Fred becomes trapped, not only physically in prison, but more importantly, he becomes trapped mentally: he is forced to deal with the reality that he not only murdered his wife, but also has to confront the reality of why he did it. It is thus significant that Fred's reality is set in a prison; a prison is after all a space where a person is sent in order to contemplate the nature of their actions, as well as take responsibility for them. The prison is thus a fitting setting as it reflects how Fred views his reality, as a prison that

[49] This idea of transformation being connected to movement between ontologies will be discussed in more detail later in this section.

traps him, forcing him to confront that which he does not want to confront. These sentiments are conveyed by the film in the scene that takes place shortly after Fred has arrived at the prison. He is placed in his cell, and almost immediately he thinks about Renee's murder: the film cuts to a brief shot of her body parts sprawled on the bed. There is thus, very quickly, a connection established between his prison cell and thoughts of Renee's murder; being in the cell forces him to confront the murder. This connection is further enforced in the following scene. Fred is lying on his bed in his cell, staring at the bars that cover the cell light (a reinforcement of the idea of entrapment). Again the film cuts to a shot of Renee's body, signaling that Fred is thinking about the murder. The film seems to suggest that he is constantly confronted by the murder while in his cell.

The two scenes described above thus function to establish that in prison, Fred cannot help but think about his actions. The scenes following these functions to convey how Fred is unable or unwilling to confront his reality and his actions, accept them, and take responsibility for them. The first scene sees Fred in the prison court yard, leaning against a wall. He looks sick because of the effect that prison is having on his body and his psyche. As Fred is leaning against the wall he starts to sag down to his knees, before falling forward. One of the guards asks him what is wrong, and he replies, clearly in pain: "My head". The film cuts to the prison doctor's office where Fred is being examined. The doctor asks him if he is sleeping okay, to which he replies: "No. I can't sleep". By considering this comment in light of what is known about what Fred experiences in his cell, it can be assumed that he cannot sleep either because he keeps seeing images of Renee's murder, or because when he sleeps he has nightmares about it. Regardless, it is clear that being confronted by the reality of what he has done is having a negative effect on Fred's body and psyche. He is physically and mentally sick because of having to remember Renee's murder and the reality in which it happened, both aspects he does not want to accept responsibility for.

The longer that Fred is confined and forced to confront what he has done, the more intense his headaches become. They reach their zenith after the scene where Fred has

been to the prison doctor. It is in this scene that the transtextual detective will witness Fred transforming into Pete. This transformation scene has already been described in detail in chapter 5; this was done in order to provide evidence that Fred does indeed create an alter ego. However, even though the scene has already been described, it has not been analysed it in great detail. For the purposes of the current investigation, it is necessary to revisit this scene and examine it in greater detail. The scene begins with Fred is inside his cell, and he appears to be in extreme pain as he clutches at his head. He calls out for a guard and asks for some aspirin, but is denied. As the guard resumes his position he remarks to his fellow guard that Fred is "looking pretty fucked up". Back in the cell Fred sits on his bed, rocking back and forth. His body shakes and he is clearly having some form of attack. As he sits, music starts to fade in and become audible; it is the song "Song to the Siren" by This Mortal Coil[50]. The song, however, is also accompanied by the rumbling noise often heard in the Madison house, with the result that the song often fades away as the rumbling noise becomes more dominant. As the song and the noise continue, Fred is still in pain. He looks at the prison door, the very thing that keeps him from freedom. As he looks at the door the image begins to pull apart like curtains, revealing another image – another "reality" – behind it. Together with Fred, the transtextual detectives sees the image of a cabin on fire running in reverse until it reaches the point before it explodes into a ball of fire. The moment that the image reaches this point, the music stops while the rumbling continues. Fred stares transfixed at the image in front of him, disbelieving what he sees. The film cuts back to the cabin, and the Mystery Man exit it, stand and look at Fred, before he enters the cabin again.

What is significant about this sequence in reverse is the cabin's connection to the Mystery Man and Fred's out of control emotions. From the analysis of Fred's dream, it is known that fire is connected to Fred's out of control emotions, while smoke is connected with the birth of the Mystery Man (or alternatively, with the Mystery Man's entering into Fred's psyche). The image of the cabin begins with it in flames that burn out of control, while large amounts of smoke fill the sky. One could read this image as representing the

[50] This song is an important leitmotif in the film and will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

apex of Fred's rage filled emotions, the very point at which he killed Renee. When the image runs in reverse, the flames are being drawn in to a point before they raged out of control. Thus, this reverse scene could be interpreted as Fred's emotions – specifically those connected to Renee's murder – being reigned in, drawn back to a state before his jealousy and paranoia took control, before Renee instigated a loss of control. The connection to the Mystery Man is also significant, as the cabin is presented throughout the film as the Mystery Man's lair, the space where he exists until Fred has need of him. The last shot of the cabin seen in this context shows the Mystery Man going back into it; effectively, the Mystery Man – and all he represents – is being hidden away. Fred is thus attempting to reverse time by hiding away all the aspects of his psyche connected to Renee's death so that he does not have to be confronted by the death, or those aspects of himself that are responsible for it.

Thus, by "hiding" the Mystery Man and those aspects of his psyche responsible for Renee's murder deep within himself, Fred is able to escape from his imprisoned reality. What happens to Fred next is more complex than his first attempt at escaping reality. In his first attempt (the Fred ontology we witness until Fred awakens to reality), Fred ends up reliving the moments leading up to Renee's death. Nothing is really altered: his relationship with his wife is still broken, he is filled with jealousy and paranoia, he desires control over his wife, and Renee still rejects him, robbing him of his desire to control her. It is inevitable that Fred ends up killing Renee again because he is merely re-living what has already happened, despite his attempt to edit his life narrative. In prison, Fred becomes even more desperate to escape than before, as the knowledge of what has happened is physically hurting him. The desire to escape is so intense that something drastic occurs: Fred transforms into someone else. To escape from his reality Fred creates a new ontology and a new identity, an alter ego named Pete Dayton. This transformation occurs after the Mystery Man goes back into his cabin. With the truth of his actions locked away, Fred can now begin the journey to freedom. The prison cell is filled with blue flashing lights, a visual cue in the film for transformation or the crossing between ontologies (just as when Fred was pulled from his first ontology back into his reality). Fred's cell light goes black and the screen is plunged into

darkness, before the familiar POV shot of the traveling car fills the screen. However, this trip down the highway is different than the others in the film, because the car stops. The car's headlights illuminate a figure standing next to the highway: it is Pete Dayton. This is the point where Fred gives "birth" to the Pete alter ego, an identity he "picks up" on the lost highway. A close up of Pete's eyes bathed in blue light is seen. An image of the cell's ceiling is superimposed over this, before the film cuts to show us Fred, rolling around on his cell bed, screaming in pain. His flesh seems to be melting, and blood and puss covers his bed. The blue lights continue to flash, and smoke fills the cell. For a moment all that can be seen is white smoke and blue flashing light. The camera starts to move downwards as the smoke is seemingly moving towards an unknown source. The camera continues to move downwards, following the smoke into what appears to be the top of a skull that has been broken open. The camera moves into the opening, which we can assume to be Fred's skull, split open during the transformation. Just as smoke earlier in the film announced the presence arrival of the Mystery Man, in this scene the smoke moving into the exposed skull could represent Pete's essence or identity moving into a body where the skin has apparently melted off; the body is at a point where it can be remolded or transformed into that of Pete. The camera moving into the open skull together with the smoke also functions to signal that a new ontology, that of Pete Dayton, is being entered. The film fades to black, before an image appears. It is extremely out of focus, but appears to show someone sitting with his head in his hands. Close examination reveals what appears to be blood in the corner of the individual's head. Later, blood in the same spot on Pete's forehead will be seen. The out of focus shot is thus of Pete, newly created, but still unstable or "unfocused" as it were. The film cuts away to a shot of the prison. It is morning, and one of the guards is checking the cells for the morning count. When he reaches Fred's cell the guard stares in disbelief before running off. He brings a prison captain down to the cell and shows him who is inside. The captain asks: "That's not Fred Madison?", and the guard replies that it is not. The film cuts to a shot inside the cell, and Pete, for the first time, is seen clearly. He is wearing prison clothes. As he turns his face to the camera the bruised face of a young man is seen. There is a large wound over his right eye, and blood is

dripping from his nose. The right side of his face seems distorted; the cheekbone protrudes and the flesh on this side seems grey in color. In consideration of the fact that Fred has transformed into Pete, and that Fred's body had to be re-molded into that of Pete, the uneven and distorted right side of Pete's face is most likely the result of the transformation not being fully complete. Indeed, when Pete is seen again, his face is normal except for a bruise above his right eye.

The transformation of Fred into his alter ego Pete has been witnessed, and through the analysis of Fred's base reality it is now understood why Fred is so desperate to become someone else. The events that lead to Renee's murder have been emplotted, and it is also known why Fred killed her. Patricia Arquette (In Žižek, 2000:20), provides a similar emplotment of events, specifically with regard to Fred's inability to accept what he has done. Žižek states that Arquette believes that Fred "can't deal with the consequences of his actions, and has a breakdown in which he tries to imagine an alternative, better life for himself". Barry Gifford, the co-writer of the script, also supports the interpretation of events thus far. Gifford (in McKenzie, 2003) provides the following explanation of events in LH:

> Let's say you don't want to be yourself anymore. Something happens to you, and you just show up in Seattle, living under the name Joe smith, with a whole different reality. It means that you're trying to escape something, and that's basically what Fred Madison does. He gets into a fugue state, which in this case means that he can't go anywhere – he's in a prison cell, so it's happening internally, within his own mind.

Gifford supports much of what has been uncovered in the investigation thus far, namely that Fred wants to escape the reality of what he has done by becoming Pete in a new ontology, and that this process happens internally in his mindscape. In the above quote, Gifford mentions the term *fugue*, which can go some way in explaining what happens to Fred. In this context, fugue refers to a psychogenic fugue, a condition which, as McKenzie (2003) explains, is "closely related to a multiple personality disorder and sees

the creation of multiple identities and fantasy in order to cope with trauma." What is witnessed in LH is very similar to a psychogenic fugue, and the various ontologies that Fred creates are types of fugue states in which he creates a fantasy, either a fantasy version of his own life, or a fantasy life in which he is someone else entirely.

Finally, Lynch (DVD material) himself provides some information that supports the findings thus far when he provides some context to the origin of LH. Lynch recalls that he was very interested in the infamous O.J. Simpson murder trial. Lynch recalls while watching the trial, he began to think about how a mind could trick itself to put a brutal act, like murder, in a place where it no longer had any horrific power over the individual. Lynch was thus interested in how an individual could "trick" his mind into complete denial; he wondered how someone could edit their own memories to such a degree that they are no longer able to recall something that they did. This idea took root in Lynch's mind and found its way into LH, where Fred ”tricks" his own mind into believing that he is in reality, Pete Dayton.

The investigation into this sequence now allows additional emplotment provided earlier, to occur. After the murder of both Dick Laurent and Renee, Fred flees from the police. His desire to escape incarceration is not solely because he fears being physically confined. Rather, his desire to escape punishment reflects his inner desire to escape his own reality. Fred does not want to accept the breakdown of his relationship with Renee, does not want to accept that she rejects him, and does not want to accept that this leads him to kill her. He is unwilling to accept responsibility for his actions, and when it becomes clear to him that he will be caught by external forces (the police) that will force him to accept what happened, as well as force him to take responsibility for it, he travels inwards and creates an ontology in which he tries to erase what he has done and "resurrect" Renee. However, Fred's ontology ultimately fails as history repeats itself: Fred and Renee still have a troubled marriage, Fred remains obsessed with controlling his wife, and when Renee – through her sexual nature and infidelity – rejects Fred, he loses control over her, and he subsequently loses control of his life and murders Renee yet again. This leads to Fred's ontology being destroyed, and he returns to his base

reality. In his reality, Fred is sent to prison, and is sentenced to be executed. Here he has no choice but to confront his actions. Unwilling to accept what he has done, or accept responsibility, Fred becomes physically ill. Desperate to escape, Fred creates another ontology. However, unlike his previous attempt, in this new ontology Fred creates an alter ego for himself, hoping that by escaping from his own identity he can finally escape having to accept what he has done.

The first part of the investigation set out to answer the following question: why does Fred Madison create an alter ego? It is established through the investigation of numerous clues and evidence that Fred – due to various factors – kills his wife, but is unable to accept the reality of this act, and is also unwilling to take responsibility for it. Desperate to escape his own reality – and by extension, the identity connected with that reality – Fred creates an alter ego for himself in a new ontology where he can finally escape. Žižek (2000:20), states that in this new ontology Fred "imagines himself as a young virile guy, meeting a woman who wants him all the time instead of shutting him out". However, as with Fred's first ontology, this new ontology does not last and, as still to be seen, the illusion of the alter ego cannot be maintained. This leads to the second question that forms part of the investigation into the mystery of identity found in LH, namely: why does the Pete alter ego end up failing?

6.3 QUESTION TWO: WHY DOES THE PETE ALTER EGO FAIL?

In the course of the investigation thus far, the emplotment of a narrative that provides a solution to the question of why Fred creates an alter ego has been successful. Through this it has been established that Fred's desire to create a new identity is a direct result of his desire to escape from his reality, and the consequences he faces there. Initially this escape seems to be successful, as Fred is fully replaced by Pete, and no traces of the base reality or original identity can be found. However, as illustrated in chapter 5, Pete's reality systematically begins to break down around him, and the illusion of the alter ego cannot be maintained; in the end, Pete disappears, and Fred returns. Though chapter 5 served to highlight *how* the Pete ontology breaks down, it did not attempt to

find out *why* this happens. The second part of the investigation into the mystery of identity found in LH will therefore attempt to discover the answer to the question of why Fred's alter ego ends up failing; therefore, the *cause* of this *effect* will be determined. I contend that the cause in this instance is the presence of a traumatic memory that Fred is unwilling to incorporate into his life narrative; thus, Fred is unwilling to *accept* this traumatic memory. The traumatic memory in question is Fred's failed relationship with Renee, which culminates in his murdering her. This trauma continues to "haunt" Fred throughout the film as he is never able to escape from it. It always resurfaces and forces him to accept his reality, thus destroying any attempt at escape; thus it surfaces in both the Fred ontology and the Pete ontology. The traumatic memory is articulated differently in each ontology: in the Fred ontology it becomes articulated through the presence of the uncanny – articulated in the form of the double – while in the Pete ontology it becomes articulated through the presence of the *femme fatale* in the form of Alice.

The investigation will now focus on illustrating how the film conveys to the transtextual detective that it is this traumatic memory of Fred's relationship with and the murder of Renee that leads to the failure of the Pete alter ego. In order to present this investigation, the subsequent section will follow these broad steps: firstly, the concept of trauma will be considered, and how it can be understood with regards to the theory of life narrative provided in this dissertation. Secondly, how trauma affects the Fred ontology by investigating the presence of the uncanny in this ontology by specifically focusing on the presence of the double is also considered. Lastly, how the traumatic memory leads to the breakdown of the Pete ontology is considered. The specific focus will be on how Alice functions as substitute for Renee, and how she becomes a *femme fatale* who leads Pete to his end.

6.3.1 Trauma

Before how trauma is responsible for the failure of the Pete alter ego can be investigated, a definition of the term must first be provided. In addition, it is also essential to understand trauma with regards to the narrative theory of identity outlined in this dissertation. This is necessary in order to show that trauma has a direct influence

on the emplotment of a life narrative (as represented in LH). The following section will therefore firstly, provide a brief definition of trauma, before secondly, illustrating how trauma affects the individual's ability to emplot a life narrative, and the negative results that this carries for the individual.

Caruth (In Whitehead, 2009:115), a salient figure in trauma theory, describes trauma as:

> A response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviours stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (or avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event.

Caruth's emphasis on the structure of the experience or, more precisely, its reception, so that the event is not assimilated fully at the time but only belatedly, and her interest in the ways in which trauma returns in the form of precise and literal nightmares, flashbacks, and other re-enactments, are suggestive of dissociation[51]. Useful as Caruth's definition is, the most explicit description of trauma as dissociation comes from Van der Hart and Van der Kolk (In Whitehead, 2009:115). These neurobiologists argue that trauma is registered and encoded in the brain in a different way from ordinary memory. They place particular stress on the function of the *hippocampus,* which allows memories to be placed in their proper context in time and place. In traumatic situations, they argue, the working of this part of the brain is suppressed, which results in amnesia for the specific traumatic experiences but not the feelings associated with them. The memory of trauma is thus not subject to the usual narrative or verbal mechanisms of recall, but is instead organised as bodily sensations, behavioural re-enactments, nightmares, and flashbacks.

This basic definition provided above reveals that trauma refers to an event that so "overwhelms" (Whitehead, 2004:3) the individual that it is not incorporated directly into

[51] In psychiatry, this refers to the separation of a group of mental processes or ideas from the rest of the personality, so that they lead an independent existence, and the disintegration of consciousness that results (Whitehead, 2009:159).

the individual's store of memories; thus, the traumatic event is not *emplotted* into the individual's *life narrative*. Caruth (in Whitehead, 2004:5) explains that trauma is that event which, at the moment of its experience or "reception", is not encoded in one's memory as having happened; rather, it "registers as a non-experience". Consciously, the individual is not aware of the traumatic event as having taken place; the event is therefore not "experienced in its happening" (Keshgegian, 2006:102). Keshgegian (2006:102), echoes this understanding of trauma as she states that trauma "resists integration or dissolution". Van der Hart and Van der Kolk (In Whitehead, 2009:115) state that the traumatic memory is thus not subject to narrative recall. Keshgegian (2006:102) also supports this idea as she explains that the traumatic memory is not something that the individual can narrate. She states that the trauma "remains unintegrated into the ordinary ways in which we live our lives, based on a linear model of time in which the past, present, and future follow in sequence." What Keshgegian is referring to with the "linear model of time" is in fact the plot structure of a life narrative. The traumatic memory cannot be recalled or narrated as part of this narrative exactly because it has not been emplotted into this life narrative.

This inability to emplot the traumatic event into a life narrative holds certain implications for the individual. Primarily, the lack of integration into the individual's life narrative results in the individual's inability to escape from the traumatic memory, with the result that this trauma will continue to 'haunt' the individual. According to Caruth (1995:4-5), to suffer from trauma is to be "possessed" by the memory of the traumatic event. Moreover, she (in Whitehead, 2004:5) explains that because the traumatic event is not emplotted, it acts "as a haunting or possessive influence which [...] insistently and intrusively returns". To recall Caruth's (In Whitehead, 2009:115) definition of trauma provided earlier, the delayed response to the traumatic event takes the form of "repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts, or behaviors". These delayed responses thus constitute the haunting that the individual suffers. As such, trauma consumes the individual from within and causes, according to Keshgegian (2006:102) "profound harm": "[Traumatic events] "disrupt people's lives, including the ways in which people make sense of and find meaning in their lives". Trauma, then, has a profound

impact on the individual, and more specifically, on their identity. Van der Kolk (1987:5) states that because the traumatic memory is not emplotted into the individual's life narrative, the individual remains "fixated on the trauma". Despite the fact that the individual wants to forget the traumatic memory, it cannot be avoided. Van der Kolk, explains that even when pushed out of waking consciousness, the traumatic memory comes back in the form of re-enactments, nightmares, or feelings related to the trauma. Trauma is thus paradoxical in nature, as it is exactly because the individual does not want to remember, that the trauma cannot be forgotten.

As the above illustrates, trauma thus disrupts the individual's life narrative. Gobobo-Madikizela and Van der Merwe (2007: 27) explain the effect of trauma on identity as follows: "[t]rauma is a loss of control, a loss of understanding, a loss of identity". This loss of identity is witnessed in LH, as Fred is replaced by Pete. Despite the fact that Fred consciously chooses to create this alter ego, the act still represents a loss of identity; because of trauma, Fred abandons his very identity. As explained in question 1, Fred enters into a fugue state when creating his alter ego. According to Foster (2009:97), when entering into a fugue state an individual "loses track of their own personal identity". The transtextual detective witnesses this loss of personal identity realized at the end of LH, after Fred has returned. It has been described in question 1 how Fred enters the cabin, looking for Renee. The Mystery Man informs him that there is no Alice, only Renee. Significantly, the Mystery Man then yells at Fred: "And your name? What the fuck is your name?!" The Mystery Man, armed with a video recorder, becomes a walking, breathing video recorder. As such, he becomes a representative of truth. And the truth he reveals to Fred is that Fred no longer knows who he is; because of the trauma that haunts him, Fred has lost all sense of personal identity.

To summarise, the theory presented above holds that trauma occurs when an event is so "overwhelming and uncontrollable" (Van der Kolk, 1987:2) that it is not emplotted into an individual's life narrative, precisely because the event is too much for the individual to bear. However, by not being emplotted into the individual's life narrative, the trauma remains unresolved and starts to surface in a number of unpleasant and harmful ways.

Thus, by repressing the traumatic memory, the individual will never be able to escape from it. LH presents to the transtextual detective in filmic form the effect that trauma has on one individual, namely Fred Madison. The entire film is a catalogue of Fred's struggles to escape from the trauma that haunts him, trauma located in Fred's relationship with Renee and her murder. The film's unconventional structure – its möbius strip narrative, its temporal and spatial abnormality – is evidence of the presence of trauma. This is because, as Caruth (In Whitehead, 2004: 5) explains, trauma is "resistant to narrative structures and linear temporalities". This suggests, according to Whitehead (2004:6), that if trauma "is at all susceptible to narrative formulation, then it requires a literary form which departs from conventional linear sequence."

The unconventionality of LH's narrative is thus fitting as it serves to convey how trauma is experienced by Fred. This trauma is reflected not only in the film's unconventional narrative, but can also be found in both ontologies that Fred creates. As indicated, in the Fred ontology, the trauma assumes the form of a trope of the uncanny, namely the double, while in the Pete ontology it assumes the form of the *femme fatale* Alice. The investigation will now proceed to the exploration of both ontologies in order to illustrate how Fred's trauma is conveyed to the transtextual detective.

6.3.2 The Uncanny: The Mystery Man as double

The purpose in this section of the investigation is to consider how the uncanny is conveyed through the trope of the double. In order to do this, the investigation will unfold as follows: firstly, the term uncanny will be defined, and illustrate how it connects with the theory of trauma presented above. Secondly, the concept of the double will be defined as a trope of the uncanny, before illustrating how the Mystery Man can be viewed as Fred's double.

6.3.2.1 Definition of the uncanny

In 1919 Freud theorised the uncanny as that feeling which "relates to a dialectic between that which is *known* and that which is *unknown*" (Punter, 2007:130). According

to Punter (ibid), Freud locates the uncanny in the “remarkable convergence” which exists between the German word *unheimlich* (meaning unhomely or unfamiliar) and “that which is apparently its opposite” namely *heimlich* (meaning homely or familiar). According to Gelder (2000:49), Freud illustrated how these two words (*heimlich* and *unheimlich*) “seem somehow to ‘coincide’, as if inhabiting each other”. The effect of this, Gelder (2000:49) continues, is that the uncanny is “an example of misrecognition, when what is familiar has been so forgotten that it seems strange [...] when it suddenly ‘comes to light’.”

The uncanny is therefore that which is familiar, yet at the same time, also that which seems unfamiliar and strangely displaced; or, as Hogle (2002:7) states, that which conveys a sense of “unfamiliar familiarity”. Essentially, the uncanny effect occurs when, as Gelder (2000:49) explains, “something returns to consciousness that has long been forgotten”. Gelder (2000:49) continues that when that which has been long forgotten returns, “the ‘old and familiar’ can now seem disturbingly *unfamiliar*”. Jackson (1981:65), explains that the uncanny thus "uncovers what is hidden and, by doing so, effects a disturbing transformation of the familiar into the unfamiliar". This echoes Freud’s (in Jackson, 1981:66) statement that the uncanny “is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old – established in the mind and become alienated from it only through the process of repression.” Thus the uncanny is precisely that which, having been repressed, subsequently comes to light.

How can the above definition of the uncanny with the theory of trauma be connected? When discussing trauma, it is noted that trauma is related to an event that does not become emplotted into a life narrative, yet does not simply disappear either. Instead, it is repressed by the individual, who becomes haunted by the traumatic memory as it eventually resurfaces in the form of intrusive hallucinations and nightmares. It is in this way that the theory of trauma connects with the definition of the uncanny provided above. As with trauma, the uncanny is also concerned with that which is repressed by the individual. And as with trauma, that which is repressed returns to haunt the individual as it has become unfamiliar and disconcerting. This can be seen in the Fred

ontology: Fred's traumatic memory – his relationship with and subsequent murder of Renee – is repressed, as he does not want to accept the reality of what has happened. However, the traumatic memory cannot be escaped because it is repressed, and it eventually begins to surface in his created ontology. When it returns, this trauma seems unfamiliar and frightening to Fred. This is because when the traumatic event returns, it is articulated in the form of a double; in this instance, the Mystery Man.

6.3.2.2 The double defined

Before the Mystery Man can be investigated as a double, it must first be understood what the term means, and how it is connected to the uncanny, determined. Chapter 5 noted that a double is not the same as an alter ego. This is because the double, unlike the alter ego, can be viewed, according to Warner (2002:164), as "a threat to personality". Wolfreys (2004:241), identifies the double as a key aspect of the uncanny. As Laplanche and Pontalis (in Jackson, 1981:66) explain, the double is connected to the uncanny in that it is the personification of repressed memories and feelings. They state that whatever supernatural or paranormal figure is encountered in the "uncanny realm", whether this figure is a "spirit, angel, devil, ghost, or monster", it can be viewed as an unconscious projection of "qualities, feelings, wishes, objects, which the subject refuses to recognize or rejects in himself [and which] are expelled from the self and located in another person or thing."

The list of figures that Laplanche and Pontalis provide as examples of the uncanny double illustrates the fact that the double is perceived by the individual as a frightening figure which threatens its safety. However, as Botting (1996:131) explains, the real horror of the double is the fact that it is an internalised threat, in that it comes from *within* the individual. It is a threat which is born internally, and as such is extremely frightening because it becomes a physical articulation of internal or personal horror. The double exists, according to Jackson (1981:87), in opposition to the notion of the individual as whole, as the double breaks "the boundaries separating the self from other". Warner (2002:165) supports this interpretation as she views the threat of the double as the threat of "being multiple rather than being integrated [...] the threat to

personhood comes from [...] psychological multiplicity, the monstrous threat of the 'many-in-the-one'." The double thus articulates the fragmentation of the individual, as the double is the self, turned against the self. The threat of the double is presented as something other than that which exists exterior to the subject, yet it is part of the subject and comes from the subject's unconscious; it is something repressed which manifests itself as something monstrous which threatens the subject's personal identity.

Warner (2002:164) explains that the double can take many forms. It can be personified as a threat from the outside, or as a threat from the inside. An example of the former can be seen in one of the first important horror films, *The Student of Prague* (1913). In the film, a student sells his mirror image to the devil in return for a fortune. The mirror image is the young man's soul, and it begins to haunt him, finally leading to his destruction. In the latter case, as Warner (2002:164) explains, your double might be some foreign or alien body inside you, a "monster who claims to share your being, but something that you can feel does not belong to your body". This alien presence proceeds to take control of your body, while you yourself have no control over your body's actions. We can see this form of the double in films dealing with various forms of possession, such as *The Exorcist* (1973), which deals with demonic possession, or *Invaders from Mars* (1953), which deals with alien possession. Often this possession has a negative impact on the self's body, as the body acts out violently against itself. For example, in the horror comedy *Evil Dead 2* (1987), the protagonist Ash (Bruce Campbell) is invaded by an evil force that takes possession of his hand. The hand attempts to kill Ash and brutally beats him before he cuts it off with a chainsaw.

For the purpose of this investigation, a specific form of the double which, as Warner (2002:164) explains, relates to your "innermost, secret self, and act[s] epiphanically to unveil you to the world, and to yourself", is relevant. An example of this can be seen in the film *The Machinist* (2004). In the film, Christian Bale stars as Trevor Reznik, a machinist who has been suffering from chronic insomnia for over a year. Trevor begins to experience a number of strange and disturbing events, all centred around the appearance of an enigmatic individual named Ivan, who only Trevor seems to be aware

of. At the end of the film it is made clear that Ivan is Trevor's double, a projection of his guilt over having accidently killed a child when he hit him with his car. Trevor never accepted responsibility for his actions and erased the event from his memory. Ivan, as his double, is created in order to reveal to Trevor not only what he has done, but also to lead him to accept responsibility for what he has done. Once he has remembered the event – emplotted it back into his life narrative – and taken responsibility for it, Trevor is finally able to go to sleep.

In LH, a similar double is found like the one described above in the form of the Mystery Man. Through the investigation presented in question 1, it has been illustrated that the Mystery Man is a creation of Fred's troubled psyche, and as such, is a presence that comes from within Fred, yet exists external to him in his mindscreen. The initial investigation focused on the Mystery Man's role as an articulation of Fred's murderous desires; the Mystery Man was created by Fred to act in his place and do the things he desired, but could not bring himself to do. However, as Olson (2008:450) rightly points out, the Mystery Man is a paradoxical figure within LH. He states that the Mystery Man "is both a projection of Fred's shadow side, the part of him with a raging desire to punish those who hurt him, and the witness and recorder of deep, ugly truths". As a "witness and recorder of deep, ugly truths", the Mystery Man becomes a double that functions to reveal to Fred that which he tries to forget. In this way he threatens the ontology that Fred creates by forcing Fred to confront the truth of his life.

6.3.2.3 The Mystery Man as double in the Fred ontology

How does the film convey that the Mystery Man can be seen as such a double? In the Fred ontology an important clue reveals itself in the scene leading to Renee's murder. Question 1 described how, as Renee is getting ready for bed, Fred is "swallowed" by the darkness of the house. Somewhere in this darkness, Fred enters a room and stands before a mirror, looking at himself. Shortly after this shot, the shadows of Fred and the Mystery Man are seen moving through the house. The clue that signals the Mystery Man as a double is the mirror. Jackson (1981:45) explains that a mirror is often "employed as a motif or device to introduce a double [...] the reflection in the class is the

subject's other [...] illustrating self as other". Jackson (1981: 87-88) continues to explain that a mirror "establishes a different space where our notions of self undergo radical change". As the mirror presents an image of the self "in another space", it therefore also "provides versions of the self transformed into another, becoming something or someone else". When Fred stands in front of the mirror it thus signals the presence of a double, which is confirmed when we see the shadows of both Fred and his double, the Mystery Man.

The above illustrates that the consideration of the Mystery Man as Fred's double is justified. The following step in the investigation is to illustrate how the film conveys that the Mystery Man functions as a double who serves to reveal to Fred his traumatic reality. A useful clue in Olson's (2008:450) statement that the Mystery Man is a "witness and recorder of deep, ugly truths" is found. Specifically, it is Olsen's statement that the Mystery Man is a "recorder" that is interesting. As already described, when Fred confronts the Mystery Man in his desert cabin, the Mystery Man raises a video recorder to his eye before chasing Fred. By doing this, the Mystery Man provides the solution to one of the film's mysteries, namely the source of the three mysterious video tapes. Here it is revealed that it is the Mystery Man who recorded the video tapes, and also left them for Fred to see. Why does he do this? Because in this way, the Mystery Man systematically reveals to Fred the culminating event of his traumatic relationship with his wife, namely her murder. Olson (2008:450) echoes this reading when he states that the video tapes "were shot by the Mystery Man part of Fred's brain and showed the progression of a murderous thought into the house, down the hallway, and into the bedroom of Fred and Renee's final, bloody bedroom encounter."

It is thus through the Mystery Man that Fred's trauma resurfaces and leads to the dissolution of the Fred ontology. As illustrated, it is after Fred has watched the third video tape – revealing Renee's murder – that Fred "returns" to his reality. It is because the Mystery Man was present at the murder that he can function as a witness and a recorder. It is therefore fitting that it is the Mystery Man that serves to reveal to Fred

what he has done by returning to the surface of Fred's psyche, bringing with him the memory of the event that he participated in.

The transtextual detective can also connect the Mystery Man as double to Fred's trauma by considering what triggers the re-surfacing of the Mystery Man. As already described in question 1, the Mystery Man returns to Fred's psyche in a dream he has detailing Renee's murder. When Fred wakes up from the dream, the first image he sees is the Mystery Man's face, superimposed over Renee's, thus signalling the entry of the Mystery Man into the Fred ontology as a physical entity; before this he existed only as a disembodied entity that attempted to remind Fred of his reality through the video tapes. What happened to trigger this entry? As illustrated, the event that triggers the (re)birth of the Mystery Man is the failed lovemaking between Fred and Renee. Significantly, the failure of Fred to satisfy his wife – and her acknowledgement of it – recalls the trauma of his relationship with Renee, specifically her rejection of him; this rejection is after all connected to her sexuality, as she rejects him for someone who can satisfy her sexually. Her rejection of Fred is also responsible for his loss of control, which in turn leads to him killing her. When the Mystery Man becomes a physical presence in Fred's mindscreen, he brings with it this culmination of Fred's trauma. Fred thus relives this traumatic event, and when the truth of it is revealed to him through the third video tape, his ontology breaks down instantly.

To summarise, the investigation into the breakdown of the Fred ontology has revealed that for Fred, his relationship with and murder of Renee are traumatic events. As he does not want to face the reality of these traumas, he creates an ontology where they are not emplotted into his life narrative. In this way he hopes to hide from his own reality. However, these memories do not disappear; rather, they become repressed, and as such, Fred is unable to escape from them. The trauma starts to surface in his ontology in the form of the uncanny trope of the double; in this instance, the Mystery Man. The emergence of this double serves to reveal to Fred the very trauma that he tries to escape from. When the reality of the trauma is revealed to Fred, he is no longer able to maintain the illusion of his ontology, and he returns to his reality.

6.3.3 The *femme fatale* and the failure of the Pete alter ego

Now that it has been illustrated how trauma functions to destroy the Fred ontology, the final part of the investigation – why the Pete alter ego and ontology fail – can now commence.. In this section it will be investigated how LH conveys that trauma is responsible for the breakdown of the Pete ontology, and how it leads to this alter ego's demise. If the failure of the Pete alter ego is taken as the effect, then its cause can clearly be traced back, namely the emergence of Alice in the Pete ontology. As illustrated in chapter 5, the moment that Alice enters this ontology it slowly starts to break down around Pete, culminating in his own destruction as he literally disappears, to be replaced by a returning Fred. This effect that Alice causes is due to the fact that she – as a *femme fatale* – functions in the Pete ontology as an articulation of Fred's trauma. As such, her presence serves to bring this trauma to the surface, with the result that Pete has to confront the reality of it. In order to present this final investigation, this section will unfold as follows: firstly, justification in considering Alice a *femme fatale* is provided. Then, how this *femme fatale* causes the failure of the Pete ontology by considering how she brings Fred's traumatic reality to the surface of the Pete ontology will be investigated.

A brief note before this section commences: the systematic break down of Pete's ontology has already been documented in chapter 5. As such I will strive, as far as possible, to avoid re-treading on familiar ground. Thus, I will keep descriptions of shots, scenes, or sequences already discussed to a minimum.

6.3.3.1 Alice as *femme fatale*

In the investigation presented in question 1 the figure of the *femme fatale* has been discussed, and noted that while Renee may not come across as a typical *femme fatale*, she nevertheless does function as one. During that discussion it was also noted that in contrast to Renee, Alice conforms to the expectations of a typical *femme fatale*. McKenzie (2003) notes that Alice is the "highly stylised and erotically depicted second *femme fatale*", while Jerslev (2005:159) states that Alice is "straight out of 1940s *film*

noir". How is this conveyed? Investigation into, for example, how she is introduced into the ontology is plausible: as with most *femme fatales*, she wears a white dress, a false symbol meant to convey innocence. Reference to Alice as the *femme fatale* "spider woman" (McKenzie, 2003) in the scene where Pete hallucinates about Alice in his room is also plausible; during this sequence the transtextual detective sees a black widow spider. As with many *femme fatales* Alice is in a relationship that she wants to escape from, partially because (as she claims) her male partner is dangerous. And, significantly, as with all classic *femme fatales*, Alice uses her sexuality to manipulate Pete; as Jerslev (2005:159) states, Alice "seduces Pete to get him to do her dirty work". And finally, Alice succeeds in her role as the "spider woman" as she leads Pete to his destruction in the desert.

6.3.3.2 The *femme fatale* Alice as articulation of trauma

The above briefly illustrated justification in considering Alice to be a *femme fatale*. However, how does the fact that Alice is a *femme fatale* connect her to Fred's trauma? This question can be answered by considering that Alice represents Renee in the Pete ontology. McKenzie (2003) explains that during Fred's fugue state – when he becomes Pete – Renee and Alice "are spookily similar but different people". Thus certain connections are found between the two, such as Patricia Arquette starring as both women, or similar dialogue connecting them together (both explaining for example that they met Andy at a place called Mokes, and that he told them about a job). On the other hand, in the Pete ontology, they are also viewed as two separate people; this is reflected in the photo that Pete sees at Andy's house, which shows both Renee and Alice with Mr Eddy and Andy. Despite this however, McKenzie (2003) articulates that ultimately, Renee and Alice "are the same person". Thus, when the transtextual detective sees the above mentioned photo a second time, Alice has disappeared; only Renee remains, as Alice was simply a representation of Renee in the Pete ontology. During the scene where the photo is shown for a second time, the four detectives introduced throughout the film – the two detectives that responded to Fred and Renee's call to the police, as well as the two detectives that followed Pete after his release from

jail – are talking to each other. During this conversation the detectives mention both Fred and Pete. Why can this be seen as significant? Because in a space where both the base identity and the alter ego are mentioned, reference to only Renee is made, and not to Alice. Thus, even though Alice appears only in the Pete ontology, she is in reality a representation of Renee. The Mystery Man – the harbinger of truth – confirms this when he says the following to Fred in the desert cabin after he asks where Alice is: “Her name is Renee. If she told you her name is Alice she’s lying”. Thus, there is no Alice, only Renee. Why is this? Why, if Alice *is* Renee, does she appear as someone else? As mentioned, in a fugue state an individual often becomes disconnected from their memories. Pete, as the alter ego in the fugue state, becomes disconnected from Fred’s memories and thus does not remember Renee. However, as shown, Renee is at the centre of Fred’s trauma, and as also illustrated, trauma will eventually surface in unexpected and intrusive ways. Even though Pete cannot remember Renee, the thoughts and feelings associated with Renee start to surface. In this instance they become articulated in the form of Alice, who functions to represent Renee in the Pete ontology.

Alice is thus, as illustrated, a *femme fatale*; but she is also, as illustrated above, connected to Fred’s trauma. Therefore Alice – as a *femme fatale* – is the articulation of trauma in the Pete ontology. In this way she leads Pete to his doom by leading him to confront the reality of the trauma. How is this conveyed in the Pete ontology? This most clearly presented in two scenes: the first is the robbery scene at Andy’s house, and the second is the scene in the desert where Alice and Pete have sex. By briefly investigating both scenes it can be identified how Fred’s trauma surfaces in the Pete ontology and, importantly, how this leads to the failure of the Pete alter ego.

The robbery at Andy’s house is considered first. As already described, Alice tells Pete that she is convinced that Mr Eddy has found out about their relationship. She fears what he will do to them, and convinces Pete to rob her “friend” Andy. During this conversation, Alice recalls Renee when she recounts how she knows Andy. By recalling Renee, the trauma starts to surface in the Pete ontology more strongly than before. This

is illustrated when Pete breaks into Andy's house while he is upstairs with Renee. The first thing that Pete sees in Andy's house is a large projection screen (the same one witnessed in the scene detailing Dick Laurent and Renee's sordid relationship). What Pete sees on this screen shocks him: it is a pornographic film with Alice in it. This recalls the reality of Renee's relationship with Dick Laurent, which in turn recalls the rejection suffered by Fred at the hands of Renee; this aspect forms part of Fred's trauma. When the projection screen is shown, it fills the entire screen, reflecting the massive impact it has as it forces Pete to confront Fred's trauma. Through this pornographic film, the source of Fred's trauma –namely Renee – enters into the Pete ontology more directly, and with her, the trauma of Fred's relationship with and murder of her. Thus, shortly after Pete sees this film he sees the photo of Renee and Alice together. Here Pete is confronted by the cause of Fred's trauma. Just like Fred, Pete is unable to deal with the reality of the trauma, and just like Fred, Pete becomes physically sick through his contact with Fred's reality. Pete also gets an intense headache, and even his nose starts to bleed. Pete goes up the stairs to find the bathroom, but instead inexplicably finds himself in the Lost Highway hotel. Fred's traumatic memories are starting to filter into Pete's ontology more frequently, and more directly, as the illusion of the alter ego is starting to give way. Pete walks in the hallway of the Lost Highway hotel, until he reaches room 26, the same room where Dick and Renee meet to have sex. Pete opens the door, and sees Renee having sex with an anonymous man. As Pete watches, Renee yells at him: "Did you want to talk to me? Did you want to ask me why?!" Here Renee is openly mocking Fred's inability to understand her, to solve the mystery of his wife. As such, it recalls the trauma of Fred's relationship with Renee in which his inability to understand her or her actions, contributes to the breakdown of their relationship. Pete is thus confronted directly with aspects of Fred's trauma.

In the scene described above Alice serves as a conduit that leads aspects of Fred's trauma into Pete's ontology, forcing him to confront aspects related to it. This scene thus signals the beginning of Pete's destruction. This destruction is realised when Alice and Pete have sex in front of the Mystery Man's desert cabin. The scene takes place after Pete and Alice have robbed (and accidentally killed) Andy. Alice explains that she

knows a fence who will buy their stolen goods. They drive out to the desert and arrive at the Mystery Man's cabin. It has been illustrated how the Mystery Man functions to confront Fred with the truth of his trauma, to force him to accept the reality of what has happened. The cabin, as the Mystery Man's "home", is thus a space connected with truth. And it is here that Pete is fully confronted by the truth, by the reality of Fred's trauma. When they arrive, the cabin is empty. Alice explains that they have to wait, and the two make love on the desert floor. It is this act that functions to finally shatter the illusion of the alter ego. How? During the act of sex Pete is confronted by Fred's trauma. This is established through this sex scene being directly connected to the sex scene in the Fred ontology. This is achieved through the use of the leitmotif "The Siren Song" by This Mortal Coil. The song can be heard in both sex scenes, and acts to connect them together. It has been illustrated that the first sex scene between Fred and Renee plays a significant role in the breakdown of the Fred ontology, as it confronts Fred with the reality of Renee's rejection, which in part contributes to Fred killing her; it thus confronts him with the trauma he wants to escape from. When it is heard again during the sex scene of Pete and Alice, it signals to the transtextual detective that this scene will function in the same manner, confronting Pete with the reality of Fred's trauma. This transpires when Pete tells Alice that he wants her. Alice leans down and whispers in Pete's ear: "You'll never have me". She then gets up and walks away, disappearing completely from the ontology. Pete continues to lie on the ground for a while before getting up. But, as described, it is not Pete that rises, but Fred. This is because the alter ego has been destroyed, its illusion broken when Alice confronts him with Fred's trauma; when she states that Pete will never have her, it recalls Renee's rejection of Fred. This rejection is representative of the trauma of Fred's relationship with Renee, which culminates in her murder. Alice's "prophetic statement" (Jerslev, 2005:159), thus confronts Pete with the reality of Fred's trauma, which serves to shatter the illusion that Pete is real. The fugue state – the Pete ontology – is thus destroyed. Created as an identity behind which Fred can hide from his trauma, the alter ego of Pete ultimately fails as it cannot provide Fred the sanctuary he so desperately seeks.

What happens after the failure of the Pete ontology? What effect does this have on Fred and his unwillingness to confront and accept the reality of his actions? As described, when Fred “returns” he goes into the cabin searching for Alice. The Mystery Man confronts Fred, and tells him that there is no Alice, only Renee. The Mystery Man then combines with a video recorder, becoming in the process a figure that functions to confront Fred with his reality, with the trauma he wants to avoid. As a double, the Mystery Man does this in order to lead Fred to accept the traumatic event. Why is this important? Why does Fred need to accept the reality of the trauma? Why is it not possible for him to continue to run away from it if he chooses? This is because, as Caruth (1995:vii) explains, one will never be able to resolve trauma and escape from it by ignoring the reality of the traumatic event. She recalls Freud's earlier writings on trauma, in which he argues that in order for trauma to be resolved, the traumatic event needs to be integrated into a "series of associative memories". Van der Kolk (1987:2) echoes this when he states that trauma can be resolved through an "integration of the traumatic events into the totality of the person's life experiences". What both Freud and Van der Kolk are suggesting is that the way in which trauma can be resolved is by *emplotting* the traumatic event into an individual's *life narrative*. By running away from it – as he runs away from the Mystery Man – Fred will never be able to escape his trauma and it will continue to haunt him. No matter how many ontologies he creates, no matter how many identities he creates, Fred will never escape from the trauma. It will always resurface, as it does in both the Fred and Pete ontology, and it will always cause the failure of Fred’s creations. In comparison to *The Machinist*, as described, this film also has a protagonist who is forced by a double to confront his trauma. Unlike Fred, Trevor eventually confronts and accepts the traumatic event, and also takes responsibility for his actions. The traumatic memories are thus emplotted into his life narrative. The effect of this is that Trevor is no longer haunted by his double, or by the traumatic events. Through emplotment, he finds peace. Because of his unwillingness to accept the reality of his trauma, and to accept responsibility for his actions (like Trevor does), Fred will never be able to successfully emplot a life narrative. And as Van der Merwe and Gobobo-Madikizela (2007:2) remind us,

> [t]urning one's life into a narrative is a vital way of finding meaning: in discovering causal links between different events we create a coherent plot from our lives which leads to an understanding of how things fit together.

Unless he is willing to confront, accept, and take responsibility for the trauma that haunts him, Fred will never be able find meaning through the emplotment of a life narrative. He will forever remain lost on a never ending road that leads nowhere. The final image of LH is thus a fitting representation of this: the familiar POV shot of the dark, lost highway as Fred speeds down it, unable to find the escape he so desperately seeks.

To summarise, the investigation into the failure of the Pete alter ego has revealed that, just like the Fred ontology, the Pete ontology fails because of the influence of trauma. Unlike the Fred ontology, the Pete ontology does not feature any distinct tropes of the uncanny such as the double. Rather, in the Pete ontology the trauma is articulated in the form of the *femme fatale* Alice, who represents Renee in this ontology. When Alice enters into Pete's ontology, it systematically starts to breakdown. When Pete is confronted by Fred's trauma through the conduit Alice, the illusion of the alter ego cannot be maintained, and Pete disappears.

6.4 THE MYSTERY OF IDENTITY SOLVED: THE EMPLOTMENT OF *LOST HIGHWAY*

In the investigation presented above, two questions – why does Fred create an alter ego? And why does this alter ego fail? – articulate the mystery of identity found in LH, and have been successfully answered. By doing this, the narrative of LH can be emplotted, and thus, create a meaningful narrative for the film that serves to solve the mystery of identity. The following narrative presents the solution to the mystery of identity found in LH: Fred and Renee are a married couple whose marriage is far from perfect. They are no longer close to each other, and act more like strangers living in the same house. Fred is an obsessive individual who wants to be in control of all aspects of his life, including his wife Renee. Fred is therefore a jealous individual, and because of

their broken marriage, Fred is paranoid that Renee is unfaithful. Fred fears infidelity because he fears becoming emasculated through this; if Renee cheats on him with other men, his masculinity comes under threat. Infidelity on the part of Renee would also mean that Fred cannot control Renee as he desires to do. Unfortunately for Fred, his fears of infidelity and emasculation become a reality as he discovers that Renee is having an affair with a man called Dick Laurent. Because of this, he loses the control that he so covets; consequently he feels a need to "punish" Renee, as her infidelity is the cause of his loss of control. Fred's psyche is not quite able to act on his murderous rage, and so it creates a figure to act on his behalf, namely the Mystery Man, an enigmatic, ghostlike figure that helps Fred to kill both Renee and Dick Laurent.

After the murder of both Dick Laurent and Renee, Fred flees from the police. His desire to escape incarceration is not solely because he fears being physically confined. Rather, his desire to escape punishment reflects his inner desire to escape his own reality. Fred does not want to accept the breakdown of his relationship with Renee, does not want to accept that she rejects him, and does not want to accept that this leads him to kill her. These events become traumatic events for Fred, and as such, they are not emplotted into his life narrative; instead, they become suppressed. Fred is unwilling to accept responsibility for his actions, as this would mean confronting and accepting the traumatic events, and when it becomes clear to him that he will be caught by external forces (the police) that will force him to accept what happened, as well as force him to take responsibility for it, he travels inwards and creates an ontology in which he tries to erase what he has done and "resurrect" Renee. However, Fred's ontology ultimately fails as his repressed, traumatic memories surface in the form of the double, a trope of the uncanny. In this ontology, the Mystery Man becomes a double and serves to reveal to Fred the truth of what he has repressed. In this way, Fred is confronted by the reality of his broken relationship with Renee, with her rejection of him, and his subsequent murder of her. Confronted by these traumatic events, Fred's ontology is destroyed, and he returns to his base reality. In this reality Fred is sent to prison, and is sentenced to be executed. Here he has no choice but to confront his actions. Unwilling to accept the series of traumatic events that has led him to prison, or

accept responsibility for them, Fred becomes physically ill. Desperate to escape, Fred creates another ontology. Entering into a fugue state, Fred creates an alter ego for himself, hoping that by escaping from his own identity he can finally escape having to accept what he has done. Initially this attempt seems to be successful, as Pete is dissociated from all of Fred's memories. However, as Fred is still repressing his traumatic memories, he is unable to escape them for long. Eventually they surface in the Pete ontology. Unlike the Fred ontology, the trauma does not become articulated as a trope of the uncanny; rather, it becomes articulated in the form of Alice, a *femme fatale* who represents Renee. The introduction of Alice signals the return of the repressed trauma, and Pete's ontology slowly starts to come undone. When Pete is finally confronted by Fred's trauma, he is unable to cope, and the illusion of the alter ego is destroyed. Fred returns, and is confronted by the double, the Mystery Man, who attempts once again to confront Fred with the truth of his trauma in the hopes that Fred will accept it. However, Fred is still unwilling to accept the reality of his life, and runs away from the Mystery Man. Because he is unwilling to confront, accept, and take responsibility for his trauma, Fred is unable to emplot a meaningful life narrative. He will continue to be haunted by his trauma, and his identity will suffer because of this.

6.5 CONCLUSION

The preceding chapter provided the second – and final – part of the investigation into the metaphysical detective films of David Lynch, focusing specifically on the mystery of identity which was identified as a salient mystery in the previous chapter. The aim of this investigation was to provide a demonstration of one plausible route a spectator may follow to finding meaning in such films, namely that of the transtextual detective. In presenting the second part of such a demonstration, the preceding chapter was concerned with providing a plausible solution to the mystery of identity. In order to achieve this, the chapter presented an *exemplary* demonstration of an investigation into LH, focusing on answering the two questions that articulate the mystery of identity, namely: why is an alter ego created? and why does it fail? This investigation unfolded in the following broad steps: firstly, it aimed to answer the first question of why an alter ego

is created. This was achieved by firstly illustrating that Fred murders Renee; secondly by identifying Fred's motives for killing Renee; and thirdly by illustrating Fred's unwillingness to accept the reality of what happened, as well as his unwillingness to accept responsibility for his actions. The investigation then proceeded to answer the question of why the alter ego fails, and the trauma of Fred's relationship with and subsequent murder of Renee was held forth as the cause for this failure. In order to illustrate this, the investigation firstly defined trauma in terms of the theory of life narrative provided in this dissertation; secondly, it illustrated how Fred's trauma leads to the destruction of the Fred ontology investigated in the presence of the uncanny, focusing specifically on the Mystery Man as a double; lastly, it investigated how trauma is articulated in the Pete ontology in the form of the *femme fatale* Alice, and how this leads to the failure of the Pete alter ego. At the end of the investigation a meaningful narrative for LH was able to be emplotted that served to provide a solution to the salient mystery of identity.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In the introductory chapter to this dissertation, evidence was presented in order to illustrate that the average spectator did not respond favorably to the David Lynch films LH or MD, as they struggled to find meaning in them, as well as feeling “robbed” of the sense of closure they expect when watching a film. In Chapter 3 it was illustrated that this inability to find meaning or closure in these films was due to the average spectator’s limitations with regard to their filmic schema. The average spectator’s schema lacks the necessary scope to be able to successfully interpret films such as LH and MD that challenge their expectations. It was shown that this is due to the fact that the average spectator’s schemata are the result of classical Hollywood cinema, and as such are rigid and unable to adapt when confronted by a film that does not meet the expectations set by this type of cinema. LH and MD are examples of two such films that challenge the spectator, and in Chapter 2 it was illustrated that this is because both films can be classified as examples of metaphysical detective film. This type of film challenges the spectator as they recall the genre of classical detective film – a genre that the average spectator is familiar with – yet actively subverts spectator expectations. Metaphysical detective film attempts to challenge the spectator by not providing a clear solution or answer to any of the mysteries found within such films. In this way, they greatly differ from classical detective films where the figure of the detective serves to provide the spectator with the solution in order to provide the spectator with meaning and closure. Metaphysical detective film does not have such a figure that provides meaning and closure for the spectator through the solving of a mystery. It was suggested that because the average spectator’s schema is unable to adapt to the shift presented by metaphysical detective film, a spectator is required to employ a new and adaptable schema in order to solve it. The schema that was held forth was that of the transtextual detective.

Chapter 2 provided insight into the challenges which the transtextual detective faces in an attempt to find meaning in metaphysical detective film by investigating the nature and characteristics of this type of film. These challenges include the fact that the text becomes a rhizome labyrinth; the clues and evidence present in the text are ambiguous in nature; the presence of doubles and alter egos; and the absence of clear closure. By becoming aware of the complications found in metaphysical detective film, the concept of the transtextual detective was better able to be defined along with the characteristics that will allow meaning to be found in the film, in contrast to the average spectator who will only face frustration. Chapter 4 provided this definition of the transtextual detective by considering two implications of the term transtextual, as it is used in transtextual detective. Firstly, it was stated that a transtextual detective is that spectator who stands outside the film text and assumes the role of a detective in order to solve a mystery found within this film text, thus transgressing the boundary between spectator and film. It was suggested that if such a transtextual detective hopes to be successful, the mystery cannot be attempted to be solved in the same way that a classical detective would. This led to the second implication as Genette's term transtextuality was recalled, in that the transtextuality – referred to in transtextual detective – connotes the innovative appropriation of different texts so as to guide the emplotment of the film under consideration. It became clear that if the transtextual detective wishes to solve a metaphysical detective film, they will have to move beyond their set schema and search for new methods of detection to help interpret the narrative. This requires ingenuity and creativity on the part of the spectator, as their skill of transtextuality needs to be called upon in order to find the necessary texts that can help find meaning in the film.

One of the primary characteristics of the transtextual detective identified in Chapter 4, is the fact that full responsibility is carried by the transtextual detective with regards to the solving of a metaphysical detective film. Thus, by implication, the transtextual detective carries full responsibility for finding meaning and closure in the film. This is in contrast to the average spectator who can depend on the figure of the classical detective to provide a solution to a mystery, and thus meaning and closure. This suggests then that the transtextual detective faces a greater burden, as it requires more involvement with the

film to achieve the same effect as the average spectator. If assuming the role of a transtextual detective carries with it this burden of responsibility, what incentive is there for the spectator to accept this responsibility? One incentive is mentioned in Chapter 1, when it is explained that the spectator has a desire to solve the mystery presented by a film, as it is only by solving this mystery and finding an answer that the spectator can experience closure and find meaning. The transtextual detective solves a metaphysical detective film through the process of emplotment. In emplotting a narrative for the metaphysical detective film, the transtextual detective structures events to create a whole that generates meaning. In other words, if the spectator wants to experience closure and find meaning in these films, the responsibility for emplotting a narrative themself must be accepted.

A second incentive is identified in Chapter 2, when classical and metaphysical detective narrative is explained in terms of ludology. It is stated that even though classical detective narrative is often referred to as a game – in terms of ludology – these narratives do not make for particularly exciting games. This is because they lack two key components of gameplay, namely variable outcome and player effort. The first component states that for something to be considered a game, the rules must provide the possibility of different outcomes. The second component states that a player's actions should be able to influence the outcome of a game. In contrast to classical detective narrative, metaphysical detective narrative contains these two salient characteristics of gameplay. The understanding of metaphysical detective narrative reveals that it is possible for one text (or “game”) to have multiple outcomes; each metaphysical detective narrative has a multitude of possible interpretations, and a transtextual detective can revisit such a text and “play it again” in order to arrive at a different interpretation (or outcome). Metaphysical detective narrative also actively encourages spectator activity, and the spectator’s actions – the choices made – have an effect on what outcome is reached. In this way, metaphysical detective narrative provides gameplay that is much more exciting than that offered by classical detective fiction.

In Chapter 2 it is indicated that no work has been done to analyse classical or metaphysical detective narrative in terms of ludology, and that this presents a gap in research into both areas. Such an investigation can provide useful insight, not only into how these narratives are conceived and structured, but also how the individual interacts – or plays – with them. Even though some research into the matter is presented, it lies beyond the scope of this current research to provide a detailed investigation into this fruitful area of research. There is thus the potential for further study regarding this topic. One suggestion is to consider how the different types of gameplay presented by classical and metaphysical detective narrative described above, provides an alternative to Barthes theory of *jouissance*. There is an interesting parallel to be drawn between the gameplay implications of both classical and metaphysical detective narrative, and Barthes' contention that the "pleasure" provided by a conventional (easy) text does not match the "blissful intensity" that is provided by a text that leads the individual to take more responsibility with regard to the co-creation of meaning (thus a "difficult" text). Barthes (2009:19) explains that a "text of pleasure" is that text that "contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, it is linked to a comfortable practice of reading."

The text of pleasure thus understood is similar to that of the "safe" game provided by classical detective narrative. Barthes (2009:19) further explains that a "text of bliss" is that text that "imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his states, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language."

Barthes' definition of a text of bliss is thus similar to the "difficult" game of metaphysical detective narrative, which may prove to be more difficult than the "comfortable" game of classical detective narrative, but which ultimately proves to be more rewarding. The significance of such a comparison lies in the fact that Barthes' *jouissance* is, ultimately, a highly abstract concept. An investigation into the gameplay of both classical and

metaphysical detective narrative could provide a more practical example that reflects the same underlying concepts as Barthes' theory.

It has been indicated that despite the burden it carries, the role of a transtextual detective does carry incentive. However, if metaphysical detective films are as challenging as Chapter 2 illustrates, can the transtextual detective really hope to solve one? Is playing this type of game merely an exercise in futility and frustration? As this dissertation illustrates, it is possible to solve a metaphysical detective film and find meaning within its confusion and ambiguity, as well as achieve closure. In Chapters 5 and 6 the writer assumes the role of a transtextual detective in order to illustrate how an investigation into a metaphysical detective film may proceed. Chapter 5 served to illustrate how the transtextual detective identified a salient mystery to investigate among the many possible mysteries available. The mystery of identity was identified as an important mystery that is found in both LH and MD. The chapter illustrated how a problem of identity is established in each film as the protagonists experience a split identity. In both films the protagonists – because they experience a number of different problems with regard to their identity – no longer want to be themselves, so they both choose to emplot a new identity and create an alter ego. However, the emplotment of these new identities fail; in both films the protagonist cannot maintain the illusion of the alter ego, and it is eventually destroyed. Chapter 6 presented the investigation that served to solve this mystery of identity. While up until this point the dissertation had focused on both LH and MD, in Chapter 6 the investigation was limited to LH. The reason for this was purely pragmatic, as it would exceed the breadth of the dissertation to provide a detailed investigation into both films. The investigation thus serves an exemplary function, as it demonstrated how the transtextual detective concluded his investigation. By adopting the characteristics of the transtextual detective as identified in Chapter 4, the writer – as a transtextual detective – was able to solve the mystery of identity found in LH. The investigation was guided by two overall questions: why does Fred Madison create an alter-ego called Pete Dayton? And why does this alter ego fail? Through a detailed investigation into the film, that transtextual detective was able to emplot a narrative for the film that functioned to answer both of these questions. It was

discovered that Fred Madison, as a result of being driven by paranoia, jealousy, a desire for control, and fear of emasculation, murders his wife Renee when he discovers that she is having an affair. Following the murder, Fred is unwilling to accept the reality of the traumatic events (both the murder and the events responsible for the murder), nor is he willing to accept responsibility for his actions. In order to escape from these traumatic memories, he creates the alter ego Pete Dayton. However, the traumatic memories do not go away, they simply become repressed, and surface in unexpected ways that serve to reveal to Pete the reality of his situation, and he is eventually undone by the realization that he is nothing more than an illusion.

Is the solution provided through the emplotment in Chapter 6 the only solution that a transtextual detective could have arrived at? No; it is merely one of a plethora of possible solutions, all equally valid. Each different transtextual detective that investigates LH could come up with a unique solution to the film that provides them with meaning and helps them to achieve closure. Is the only way to find meaning in LH or MD to consider them as metaphysical detective films and approach them as transtextual detectives? Of course not; a search on David Lynch reveals a multitude of different approaches, methodologies, and theories that have been used to find meaning in not only LH or MD, but all of Lynch's enigmatic work. In a sense, all of these works were produced by someone who – despite them not knowing it – acted like a transtextual detective. All of these interpretations are only possible if the spectators take the responsibility on themselves to emplot a narrative, as well as setting up their own questions to answer from the text, without the expectation that the text (or film) will have the rules for interpretations codified within them.

However, in none of the other interpretations of David Lynch's work is emphasis placed on the role of detective played by the researcher. In this way, the schema presented in this dissertation is unique amongst the many methodologies that have been used to find meaning in Lynch's films. The schema presented is also unique because it presents a much more practical approach in attempting to find meaning in Lynch's work, which stands in contrast to the more abstract methods – particularly Lacanian psychoanalysis,

an approach that has proven very popular with regards to Lynch – that are generally employed. The schema of the transtextual detective, as illustrated in Chapter 4, draws inspiration from classical detective narrative and the classical detective, a genre and figure that most average spectators are familiar with. As such, it offers the average spectator a familiar entry point from which to transform into the kind of spectator that can find meaning in metaphysical detective film.

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