

The Fugue of the Five Senses and the Semiotics of the Shifting Sensorium

Selected Proceedings

from the 11th International Conference of the Hellenic Semiotics Society



editors:

Evangelos Kourdis
Maria Papadopoulou
Loukia Kostopoulou

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The Fugue of the Five Senses. Semiotics of the Shifting Sensorium

MEDIA & MULTIMEDIA



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Celle-ci n'est pas une chanteuse

The deception of the senses
on Lynch's film *Mulholland Drive* (2001)

May Kokkidou

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN MACEDONIA

ugenius@otenet.gr

Christina Tsigka

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN MACEDONIA

christina.tsigka@gmail.com

Abstract

David Lynch's film Mulholland Drive (2001) has puzzled many viewers and film scholars concerning its narrative content and structure. Lynch offers to audience an intricate experience when he unveils the cinematic conventions and builds a surrealistic world of non-linear narratives. This paper discusses the 'felt unity' which characterizes the cinematic experience and the collapse of the traditional boundaries between diegetic and non-diegetic music. The analysis focuses on the interaction of the semiotic visual and acoustic modes in the "Silencio Club" key-scene of the film. Through the deception of the senses (seeing and hearing), the director addresses questions, such as: what we perceive is what really happens? What are the boundaries between fiction and reality? The separation of the sense of hearing from the sense of seeing gives birth to the notion that the what of representation as opposed to the how of representation creates new meanings and requires new tools for interpretation. The "Silencio club" scene creates a new meta-diegetic context and operates as a synecdoche of Lynch's critique for the capitalist film industry. The analysis draws on Metz's conceptualization for the cinematic diegesis, on Winters' suggestion for the non-diegetic fallacy, and on Yacavone's perspective where a cinematic work may choose to self-consciously draw attention to the processes by which it creates a world. The interpretation will focus on the signs of a cappella and technical devices (as signifiers of plausibility); color (as signifier of antithesis between fiction and reality); and proximity (as signifier of on-screen and beyond-screen relationships).

Keywords [David Lynch](#), [Mulholland Drive](#), [deception of senses](#),
[trans-diegetic level](#), [Silencio](#)

Introduction

David Lynch can be regarded as a cinematic philosopher-artist. He is renowned as one of the most creative cinematic auteurs of modern times. His inexhaustible cinematic ideas, liberated from a purely narrative function, evince a complex cinematic reflexivity. They are imaginative representations which escape our attempts to determine any possible definitive meaning (Sinnerbrink, 2005). Moreover, Lynch's films reflexively explore cinematic world experience from the phenomenological perspective of the viewer and self-consciously draw attention to the processes by which it creates its world (Yacavone, 2008). The Lynchian filmic world is consisted of multiple non-linear narratives which communicate polysemic and abstract meanings across different times and spaces. Lynch himself refuses to explain any of his own movies, preferring them to speak for themselves.

David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* (2001) is a multi-layered, atmospheric, neo-noir movie with avant-garde aesthetics, and a complex symbolic narration. The film, rather than following a strict narrative, makes us ponder the limits of cinematic language and its interminable wrestle with meanings.

The story is from the viewpoint of Diane Selwyn (Naomi Watts), an aspiring actress who comes to Hollywood to become a movie star, though the majority of the film has to do with her dream persona, Betty Elms. In her fantasy, Diane/Betty comes to Hollywood and falls in love with a woman named Camilla Rhodes (Laura Elena Harring / Melissa George). But Camilla steals the lead role and Diane gets a minor one. Camilla has also an affair with a Hollywood director named Adam Kesher (Justin Theroux). Diane, angry, betrayed, and heart-broken, having lost her dream role and her lover, hires a contract killer to murder her former lover Camilla. The murder is executed, but Diane, chased by hallucinations, kills herself.

The "Silencio Club" stunning scene

The "Silencio Club" stunning scene comes approximately two-thirds into the film (1:42:37) after Betty and Rita have made love. We see them sleeping, becalmed and satisfied. Their sleeping is interrupted when Rita, in the middle of the night, starts talking in a foreign language in her sleep, repeating the words "silencio" and "no hay banda". She wakes up and asks Betty to take her to the club Silencio: "go with me somewhere ... Right now." They took a taxi and arrive at an "underground" night Club-Theater that bears the name "Silencio."

Betty and Rita enter the half-empty cabaret-type venue, a turn-of-the-century theater, where the master of ceremony (Richard Green), who seems to wait for them to arrive before starting the show, announces that "there is no band": "No hay banda! There is no band! Il n'est pas de orchestre! This is all ... a tape recording. No hay banda! And yet we hear a band." As he speaks, he raises his hand and a cane magically appears.

After tossing aside his cane, which makes no sound as it exits the film frame, the MC raises his arms in the air and the sound of musical instruments is heard though without a visible source. He manipulates the sonic world of the stage and the audience as well. He informs the audience that the music they hear is an illusion, telling that there is no orchestra, that everything we hear is recorded: "It's all recorded, it's all a tape". He acts as an imaginary conductor who directs an invisible orchestra. The instruments (clarinet, trombone, trumpet) perform rather melancholic ambient jazz melodies. The two girls cannot identify the origin of a sound. Thus, the line between the real and the fictional begins to blur.

To further confuse the audience, the MC continues to speak using all three languages ("If we want to hear a clarinet... Listen", "Un trombone a coulisse, un trombone con sordina" e.t.c.). He calls on stage a trumpet player who appears from behind the curtains and begins to improvise. Then, even before completing his melody, he removes the trumpet from his mouth and raises his arms in the air (still holding the trumpet in one hand) while his music continues to be heard. By this, Lynch gives music a loud non-diegetic presence. The MC looks at the audience, who is stunned, and repeats with a confident tone that there is no orchestra: "It's all a tape". After moments of silence, he continues his monologue with a "Listen". Then he summons a thunderstorm, showing his power over the audience. We see a flashing blue light and hear thunder sounds and a muffled explosion which seem to be created from the force of his arms and we see the uncanny, expressionless enigmatic figure of the Blue-Haired Lady (Cori Glazer) sitting in a high booth by the side of the stage. At that time, Betty starts shaking uncontrollably in her seat and the two girls appear frightened. Blue smoke rises, invading the scene, and the magician vanishes in this cloud of smoke.

After this, a presenter announces a female singer saying "La Llorona de Los Angeles, Rebekah Del Rio" ("The Weeping Lady of Los Angeles"). Rebekah Del Rio, the real Rebekah Del Rio, enters the stage and sings a cappella "Llorando", a Spanish adaptation of the song "Crying", composed by Roy Orbison. She sings, or really, as it turns out, she is lip-synching over a tape recording. Her vibrant highly expressive voice brings tears to Betty and Rita. Through close-ups shots, we are able to see her fancy make-up (her eye shadow is a mixture of dark pink and yellow with black eyeliner) and the decorative fake black tear on her cheek. Del Rio continues, somehow, the work of the MC when all of a sudden, in the midst of the song, falls startlingly to the stage while singing, either unconscious or dead. But the song continues to be heard. The presenter carries her off the stage but we still hear her disembodied voice reaching an ethereal crescendo. Being absent from the singing she performs has a dramatic function and the effect is much larger than the previous episodes with the trumpet. The two girls are aware of the illusion of Del Rio's 'unseen' music yet they continue to cry, holding their hands tight, mesmerized and strongly moved by the beauty of her singing. Their engagement is not a matter of pretense.

The deception of the senses of sight and hearing in *Mulholland Drive*'s Silencio Club scene

The system of human senses governs our perception, cognition (understanding, misunderstanding), imagination, and self-understanding. For David Howes (2014), the senses function as mediators of experience. Sensing involves a fusion of perception and signification, of stimulus and meaning.

The Silencio scene creates crossings among visual and aural elements. It is a sensory microcosmos inside *Mulholland Drive* –both autonomous and interdependent with the rest of the film– that creates crossings among visual and aural elements. It might be considered uncanny, surreal, and even grotesque, because the deception of the senses is the central idea of the episode. The MC emphasizes again and again that what we see it is not real. The “no hay banda” motif appeals to the idea that there is no connection or causality between the music we hear and the musicians we see. Any assumed causality is merely an illusion (Burningham, 2010, p. 44). When we hear the sound of a muted trombone playing, the MC says “J’aime le son du trombone en sourdine”. His message is clear: you must not believe what we see or hear. It may sound like a trumpet, but it is not one. She may look like a singer, but she is not one. It is only a tape. He is like saying: “Be aware! Everything you experience is fiction; it is an illusion.” The mismatch that takes place between the senses of seeing and hearing guides our interpretation about the meaning of the scene.

The separation of the senses signifies the notion of loss and the borderlines between life and death and may imply two other things: 1) the way we experience spaces of urbanized culture in our western postmodern hyper-civilized societies, and 2) the promise of disorder, chaos and mutation. This separation also evokes the indeterminate zone between the conscious and the unconscious experience, and between fantasy and reality. With respect to the first aspect, Howes (2014) notes the separation of sight from the other senses in the sensory model of modernity and the denial of a multi-sensory understanding of our world. This separation reconfigures the relationship between self, time, and space. For McMahon (2011), the main theme of Club Silencio sequence focusing is the one of self-deception and the ways people may escape absurdity through the lies they use to tell themselves.

When MC throws his wand into the audience, in a theatrical manner, and says in French “Je le sens!” (“I feel it”), he makes us realize the importance of “feeling”. After the episode with the thunder sounds, and before his disappearance in the blue smoke, he crosses his arms over his chest like a body in a casket. This part of the scene guides us to recall the archetypes of life and death. As it is already mentioned, the MC repeatedly says that “Everything is an illusion”. But this illusion is so strong that seems more real than the reality itself. Del Rio makes the two girls crying even when they discover that

they hear a non-person voice. Decoding the scene with Magrillian keys, *Celle-ci n'est pas une chanteuse: she is not a singer* although she appears to sing: *she is not a person* though she appears to exist.

In the Silencio scene, the experience of music becomes experience of pastness, when music operates in the intersection of the presence and absence; memory and amnesia; intuition and explanation; the human and the technological. Trying to hold still what has already happened, it puts the subject into temporal flux, and breaks the subject-object symbiosis. All these result to the deception of the senses. Following Yacavone's thinking (2008), we may say that the scene's (self-)reflexive aspects are largely based on the notion that the acoustic practices involve not just the ear but a corporeal body that senses and responds to sound, and furthermore, seeks to investigate the symbolic distance which separates the real from the represented.

When senses dissolve in a virtual and fictitious mode, many questions emerge, such as: Did that really happen? Does the experience given by the senses is the only source of truth? Do we have to trust our senses even if they give us something we find hard to explain? What are the boundaries between fiction and reality, between dreaming and waking life while dreaming? Through the deception of the senses, Lynch takes us to the edge of what we perceive as real and urges us to become less 'innocent' regarding everything we experience through our senses; to go beyond it; to seek for the inner truth that lies beyond, or within, the world. Why so? Because reality is comprised of humans' ideas about reality. Thus, his intention is not simply to show the illusionism of cinema, but to make us think about what we take to be 'real' in real life. In this vein, the Silencio scene raises a dialectical tension between seeing and hearing; past and future; between music and non-music; conscious and unconscious.

Silencio Club scene: signs and signification

Understanding film works is largely a matter of recognizing and decoding their signs. From the point of view of semiotic methodology, the conventional elements of narrative structure (i.g. characters, plot, setting, temporality) can be regarded as systems of signs which are structured according to different codes. Each of these signs communicates specific messages which relate to the story-world in diverse ways (Stam et. al., 1992, p. 70).

The Silencio scene has a particular meaning in the economy of the narration. It gains its meaning upon the projection of a hypothetical or dreamed future. An obvious interpretation of the scene would be that Hollywood enterprise is deceitful. In this basis, Lynch points to the greater illusion which encompasses and defines cinema. He achieves this through the disintegration of the audiovisual contract. Yet, there are other cues that help decoding the scene. This stage performance operates as text-into-a-text; the theatrical text into the filmic text. Thus, we need to decode this stage language within the aesthetic sign systems of the cinematic language.

Firstly, we can examine the representational codes of time and the one of presence-absence relation. When Del Rio's voice is dislocated from her body –and the music becomes non-diegetic– we experience a confusion regarding the meaning of the situation. Where does her voice come from? To whom does this voice belong? This hybrid state encourages us to consider and reflect on questions about absence and presence. When the conception of the present is re-directed to the one of the illusion, we may contemplate the “now” as a signifier of a time that seems not to exist. What we perceived is not a presence but a reproduction of the past. The non-corporal Del Rio's voice connotes the emptiness of subjectivity and operates as a metaphor of the fright of living in a world where things are present at the same time that they are not. The scene, thus, becomes a way of reflecting upon the relations between the past, the present and a dreamed or hypothetical future, in a world where the present is meaningless.

Secondly, the presenter announces Del Rio as “La Llorona de Los Angeles.” “La Llorona,” “The Weeping Woman,” is an old Mexican folk tale. It represents the ghost of a woman mourning for her two dead children whom she herself murdered, drowning them in the river, in despair after being abandoned by her lover for another woman. Then, after nights of weeping in remorse, she drowns herself. Her ghostly sobs are often heard in the night and her appearance is held to foreshadow death (see Willet, 2009; Shaw, 2004). The Mexican tale can be associated to Diane's story where she, overwhelmed by anger and eventually by despair and fear, becomes homicidal and suicidal. Similarly, the melancholic lyrics of “Crying”, which refer to an abandoned lover, communicate a sense of loss and express existential emptiness. The point of this performance, for Burningham (2010), is to lull the viewers “into a false sense of interpretive security.”

Thirdly, it is the paradox of language. Why does Rita talk in a foreign language in her sleep? Why does the MC talk in three different languages (Spanish, French, and English), repeating the same words that Rita had previously uttered in bed? According to McGowan (2004, p. 82): “By having the emcee speak in different languages, Lynch suggests the unimportance of the signifiers themselves relative to what they cannot capture the absence of the *objet petit a*”. From this Lacanian perspective, he adds further that: “[...] the fact that she [Del Rio] sings in Spanish indicates that the words here are not the heart of the matter: what is crucial instead is Del Rio's voice – the voice detached from her body as an object, the voice as an impossible object.” (McGowan, 2007, p. 214). For Shaw (2004, p. 85), the key clue to MC's revelation is that the false thing should not be believed whether it is speaking in English, in Spanish or in French. Once we accept the certainty of language, we may no longer try to explain the things. In our view, the name “Silencio” gives rise to the idea that language cannot always help in understanding what is really going on. The foreign languages may imply the enigmatic unknown and question the idea “I signify therefore I am.”

A cappella singing and gestural expressions as signifier of plausibility

The musical voice is a semiotic entity built on sonorous signs and on subjectivity or every singer. However, in the “negative” aural context of the fictional present, Del Rio’s voice becomes de-materialized and de-sensualized and appears to be a negating voice, like something ghostly or hypothetical. The image appears to belong in reality while the sound belongs to memory and emotion. This implies the idea of estrangement and brings into the fore the distance between the materiality of the voice as object (level of the signifier) and the aesthetic experience of the voice. It also operates as resistance to a cause-effect logic. Ironically, Rebekah del Rio is the real name of this singer.

The a cappella singing signifies three things. First, it establishes a pure acousmatic frame located in the here-and-now of the story, emphasizing the materiality of the sound. Moreover, it highlights the uniqueness of the artistic endeavor. Finally, it makes stronger the singer’s subsequent collapse. Initially, Del Rio’s song comes as a moment of relief: music seems to have found a body (Willet, 2009, p.116). But when the corporeality of Del Rio’s figure dissolves in a broken body, which still can sing within the filmic space, her voice becomes a fictitious entity, the incarnation of a sign. Thus, she appears as a technological avatar. Her performance stands for a gestural irony as it moves between the ridicule of karaoke singing and the emotional expression of an on-stage musician.

Technical devices as signifier of plausibility

Postmodern fiction is a kind of meta-fiction that analyzes the constructive resources of fiction itself (McHale, 1987). Lynch reflects on the modes of cinematic perception which are linked to contemporary uses of technology, attempting to uncover that the illusion of reality in cinema is achieved by tech devices. His position holds that cinematic images reproduce the reality via tech devices, but they still remain persuasive and emotionally strong. The *Silencio* scene invites us to re-consider the status of cinematic verisimilitude and to be aware that cinema is a visual, acousmatic, and technological art. It lives and develops within the technological world. Crucially, the only tech device we see in the *Silencio* scene is Del Rio’s old-fashion mic. However, Del Rio’s close-miking strong voice, alongside her soulful rendition, makes us feel that we are part of her despair.

We must see technical devices as distortions of authenticity? Does our tech-mediated life create a new absent-presence reality? The source-less sound, that is the separation of sound from its origin by means of recording technology suggests a present with no explanatory power. Because sound is assumed to proceed from a physical source, listeners automatically search for the material body that generates the sounds they hear; this is a natural reflex that governs sonic perception, but Lynch undermines it when in effect “there is no band.” The obfuscation of causal relationships between source, sound, and signification engenders cognitive dissonance in audience (van Elferen (2012, p. 180).

Technical devices may create a new form of perception located between the time of the lived experience and the time of the recording. We experience the present through its echo. This form is highly popularized in the media world of propaganda and advertising, and may lead to a dislocation of one's self-consciousness.

Proximity as signifier of on-screen and beyond-screen relationships

The idea of proximity in the *Silencio* scene can be illustrated through the difference between the nature of a live performance and the quality of a recording one. When the non-diegetic music enters the score it creates a new acoustic space. The recorded sound connotes the distance between the original and the copy, between the genuine listening to music and the make-believe status of listening to a pre-existing reality. For instance, when the MC announces the solo trumpet player, the volume of the trumpet sound increases as he enters the stage. Apart from that, the notion of proximity arises from the close-ups and long camera shots. Del Rio's close-ups function as a magnifying glass which provides us with further "evidence" about the authenticity of her performance. When the camera zooms even closer into Del Rio's face it reveals a flawless singer with her lips vibrating and her breaths being in accordance to the pauses between verses. Del Rio's song appears intentionally both on diegetic and non-diegetic level, demanding new interpretation.

Metz (1974, p. 10) used the term diegetic to indicate the 'reality' of the fictional world, "a reality that comes only from within us, from the projections and identifications that are mixed in with our perception of the film". Metz defined diegesis in typically semiological terms as "the sum of a film's denotation: the narration itself, but also the fictional space and time dimensions implied in and by the narrative, and consequently the characters, the landscapes, the events, and other narrative elements, in so far as they are considered in their denoted aspect" (p. 98). Yet, for Winters (2010), film operates according to different rules: we construct cinematic diegesis not according to the everyday rules of our (real) world but rather with reference to the conventions of film (p. 243).

The Lynchian sound design, in general, enables an overlap of diegetic and extra-diegetic sound and music, and reveals important inversions of cinematic convention of musical signification. For instance, silence in a Lynch movie never automatically connotes absence, just as sound is not to be confused with presence (van Elferen, 2012, pp. 79-182). The *Silencio* scene questions the conventional notion that diegetic and extra-diegetic levels should be regarded as separate, and replaces it with the idea that there are cinematic time-spaces that music, and narration as well, is somehow "in the air". This exemplifies Lynch's aural-visual deception and could not be understood from the level of the material signifier. Del Rio's non-corporeal voice does not justify the exclusion of music from the diegesis and might be considered as a transformation of the soundscape implying the notion of an outside world. Clearly, the song operates according to different

laws (Winters, 2010), at a trans-diegetic level. At this level, we may have the chance to investigate the Lacanian knot of Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real. The trans-diegetic level defies signification and yet gives new birth to it.

By shortening the distance between diegetic and non-diegetic sound, Lynch, instead of providing a realistic soundscape, creates a simulacrum of one, in Baudrillard terms. This conceptualization of proximity communicates disorder and disintegration, giving a sense of instability. Paradoxically, proximity indicates a suspension of time. It conveys features such as irony and pretense, and serves as a mutating framework within which the narrative's fragments are perceived as reality with no rules.

Silencio Club scene

as a metonymy of the (Hollywood) show-business and dream-factory world

Many Lynch's works explore the limits of cinematic signification. van Elferen (2012) articulates that "the Lynchian uncanny unveils the repressed of traditional cinema: the unspeakable possibility of unstable signification and reality leading to the destabilization of truth and self" (p. 178). *Mulholland Drive* critiques the Hollywood film industry from inside by showing the potential tragic consequences of fantasy and desire within the capitalist film mechanism, particularly for female actresses who seek to become stars within the system (Mactaggart, 2014). The Club Silencio sequence is a perfect Lynchian cinematic idea, synthesizing the aesthetics of pre-conscious experience with a self-conscious reflection upon cinematic illusion (Sinnerbrink, 2005), connoting the metaphysical dimension of the cinematic image.

Film worlds, according to Yacavone (2008), are complex object-experiences with both symbolic/cognitive and affective dimensions. In Yacavone's view, Lynch creates meta-cinematic world-spaces. In this token, the mysterious Club Silencio scene dramatizes and itself exemplifies the film experience within which viewers are intellectually and affectively immersed. The two girls' reaction in Del Rio's song mirrors the time-space film's viewers are trapped. In this time-space, the filmmaker's subjectivity meets the viewer's subjectivity in and through the film.

In a broader view, Silencio scene functions as a metonym for the Hollywood dream world in many ways. At first, MC is a representational figure of film directors. The role he plays is the very same to the role that cinematic directors play: to orchestrate the imaginary world; to hypnotize our senses. The way MC acts is also rich with gestural signification. His gestures connote authority to the audiovisual shifts. Sinnerbrink (2005) notes that the devilish MC unmasks what we are seeing and hearing as illusion, implying the aesthetic illusion of cinematic performance. According to Thomas (2006, p. 92) the lines "it's all recorded, it's all a tape" should point us to an interpretation of the very "tape" we are watching as yet another self-referential critique of Hollywood as a soul-murdering dream factory.

The red color (red room and the red-curtained Club Silencio, Del Rio's red dress and so on) is symbolically representative of the stage world as a whole. The blue color, which dominates the scene and stands as a motivic element in the film (i.e., the blue box, the blue key), functions as a metaphor for Hollywood's visual basis (blue screen), its mystery (the blue-hair-lady can be said to signify the unconscious) and its 'cold' practices. It also links the inner (Club) and external reality (neon lights of the cities). For Shaw (n.d., p. 34), we may consider the blue color with respect to the blue shimmer in electricity that Lynch alludes to as Hollywood's power source.

Del Rio's fancy make-up serves as a metonym for the glamour of Hollywood. Finally, Del Rio's collapse can be said to anticipate Diane's hallucinatory mental-emotional breakdown and suicide. This can be interpreted as a fantasy about her own death. In this vein, the whole scene may project the idea that in Hollywood the 'nobody' can become a 'star' but the star, also, can become another nobody.

Concluding Remarks

Mulholland Drive can be considered as a film which calls into question the dark side of the American dream (Burningham, 2010) and creates a cinematic space where the illusion is continually unmasked. Lynch intentionally blurs the dividing line between dream and reality. In the Silencio scene, the audiovisual dissonance changes the reception of the unfolding images. Images and sounds float in an indeterminate zone between fantasy and reality (Sinnerbrink, 2005). The powerful features of hallucination in the Silencio scene generate a new level of diegesis where the spectators find themselves enclosed within the film's soundscape while, at the same time, are released from the filmic boundaries. The music-image paradox suggests a new semiotic function of the film music, the trans-diegetic one. This inconsistency opens the possibility for new signification.

In our opinion, the key-word of the scene is "Silence". In the first part of the scene, the silence of Rita's and Betty's sleep is broken by the word "silencio" which has something to do with the language of music (Thomas, 2006, p. 91). The unified aural-visual part of the scene gives its place to a contradictory one. Music and image begin to split from one another. This split appears to overturn the Hollywood film conventions.

The sounds are not tied to the circumstances of an 'I-hear-it-now.' In this basis, sounds function as falling signs of the capacity of a present consciousness. Thus, sound becomes an "echo of the nothing", following the poetic expression of John Cage (1939/1973, p. 131). The idea of silence emphasizes the surrealistic dimension of the film, connoting the distance between people and operating as a representation of solitude and alienation. It also connotes the timeless space and the spaceless time, a recurring theme in Lynch's works (*Twin Peaks*, *Lost Highway*, *Blue Velvet*, *Inland Empire*).

Cook (1998) writes that "the very fact of juxtaposing image and music has the effect of drawing attention to the properties that they share, and in this way constructing a new

experience of each; the interpretation is in this sense emergent” (p. 73). In the Club Silencio scene, the use of sound, though performs as a narration by itself, is significantly guided and enhanced by the ambiguity inherent in the visuals. With regard to the synergy of the semiotic systems, it can be argued that the cinematic patterns of gestures, lighting, colors, and sounds operate into a space which is posited between life and death, being and transcendence.

The Club Silencio scene serves as a major turning point in the film, representing a dynamic time-space territory where the spheres of reality and fiction inhabit one another. Yet we may conceive these polarities not as dichotomies but instead as qualities of life that slide into one another. Moreover, the scene signifies the unknown, permitting a host of possible parallel discourses and raising questions about the reliability of sensorial experience and semantics. Interestingly, the final scene of the film is also at Club Silencio. We see the blue-haired lady, now being alone in the empty theatre, whispering the closing word “Silencio”. This word is a poetic metaphor for the end of Diane’s life story, her ultimate “Silencio” (Burningham, 2010; Sinnerbrink’s (2005). Bataille, in his essay “Inner Experience” writes that “the word silence” is “the abolition of the sound which the word is; among all words, it is the most perverse, or the most poetic: it is the token of its own death” (as cited in Thomas, 2006, p. 94). For Shaw (2004), the idea of silence seems now to involve the concept that “nothing more can be said”. In his view, Lynch pays homage to Shakespeare, as we are reminded of Hamlet’s dying words to Horatio, “The rest is silence.”

All in all, we may think of Silencio scene as a constructive set of ideas that generate new possibilities for cinematic awareness (the “how of representation”) and consider how filmic strategies intersect with broader philosophical and aesthetic issues, and symbolic audiovisual forms as well.

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