

David Lynch's
***Lost Highway*:**

Perpetual Mystery or Visual Philosophy

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WITHIN THE PAST EIGHTY YEARS, the dialogue between American and European cinema gave birth to various interesting fusions of Hollywood's 'commercial aesthetic' with the more European concept of 'cinema as art'. While many European and then later also American independent film-makers turned away from their art-film origins in order to adjust their ability to a capitalistic comprehension of art, David Lynch, who had proven already to be capable of producing entertaining mainstream cinema, decided with *Lost Highway* (1997) again to turn his back on a successful goal-driven narrative conception; the conception that characterises Hollywood's history, valid for its early films of the classical period and still present in most of today's blockbusters.

Lost Highway offers an impressive self-reflexive example of an American filmmaker implicitly questioning his own background and cultural basis. An attitude that would be more closely related to Jean Baudrillard's post-modern discussion of America as a 'hyperreality' and supporting in parts perspectives of European scepticism towards America. In the independent filmmaking sector of the United States, the influence of British, French and German art-cinema is apparent. This short study is concerned with an interpretation of *Lost Highway*'s non-linear elements and what I see as its cinematic critique of a fundamental contradiction at the heart of Western capitalist countries: on the one hand, the immaculate realm full of possibilities and, on the other hand, the ground for distorted existential nightmare and profound anxieties.

Its combination of both sceptical deconstruction and overcoming of scepticism, undermining and questioning the central notion of progress in America's history and culture, is constructing the discourse of *Lost Highway*. David Lynch's \$15m production enjoyed more success in Europe than in his home country and one reason for that is definitely *Lost Highway*'s textual deconstruction of cinema as pure entertainment that can easily be consumed by the modern spectator. *Lost Highway* is offering 'onto-logical', European style art-cinema, questioning man's existence itself, in presenting a pessimistic and much more challenging screen experience.

Introduction

Detached from its creator since its release in 1997, David Lynch's latest picture *Lost Highway* caused great controversy and confusion among audiences and critics all over the world. Many reviews have been composed over the last couple of years and the conclusions

are oscillating between “...there is no sense to be made of it”¹ and euphoric criticism, which described *Lost Highway* as an “eerie, dream-like masterpiece”².

David Lynch, who always took great care to avoid a definite classification of his films, placed a four-line preface to the film’s screenplay. Although this study will not exclusively interpret *Lost Highway* within a positivistic method, these lines can be seen as first hints that may lead to a deciphering of the picture’s complex and sophisticated design, and serve also to elucidate a compulsory heterogeneity that is paradoxically necessary for an understanding of the film’s text. ‘Meaning’ can only be extracted in accepting an entanglement that cannot be resolved in terms of traditional logic and ratiocination. In contrast, this organic unity, irresolvable in itself, is carrying the picture’s much more fluid philosophy. First of all, the author’s introductory notes ‘categorise’ *Lost Highway* as

A 21st-century noir horror film.
A graphic investigation into parallel identity crises.
A world where time is dangerously out of control.
A terrifying ride down the lost highway.³

These distinctive features introduce a text that did not gain as much success as many of those mainstream American movies that have been produced over the last few years. The main reason for this can be found in the non-linear plot that made it extremely difficult for an audience to follow the picture’s ‘leaps in time or space’ and its ‘loops’ in body and mind.

If this ‘road-movie’ sticks to any realism at all, it might be discovered ‘within’ or ‘hidden beneath’ our world but not on the same ‘realistic’ surface as we move around in other gangster, horror or ‘violaguh’⁴ movies like for example Tarrantino’s *Pulp Fiction*. Though it is a well known device to break up time-schemata and to tell a film’s narrative in fragments—moments and episodes that are arranged against the linearity of incidents—pictures like *Pulp Fiction* can be systematised into a plot with exposition, climax and ending. Therefore, meaning is more or less revealed straightaway because the laws of nature, mankind is used to trust in, are followed, like for example the law of cause and effect. — On the contrary, *Lost Highway*’s narrative audaciously breaks these laws and denies access to its world, if the spectator is not willing to enter an ontological journey where he is not the ‘premillennial, post-modern, twentieth-century autocrat’ who is in control over his world.

The aim of this study cannot be a coherent solution for *Lost Highway*’s enigmas even if this was possible; this would dissolve the driving force behind what I see as its visual

metaphysical system grounded in mystery. In the first section I will summarise and comment on the given screen ‘facts’. In section two I shall discuss like the image of the ‘yellow-lined road’ before relating the film’s circular structure to the idea of an ‘Eternal Return’. In the final section I will try to offer possible starting points for more extensive interpretations, which would go beyond the scope of this essay.

The Coded Text on Screen

Due to the fact that *Lost Highway*’s meaning is not easy to determine and requires a close examination to extract as many necessary details as possible, a summary has to be provided. This will be the basis for later analysis.

The first scene of the film shows Fred Madison, a saxophone player, at his intercom listening to the strange message: ‘*Dick Laurent is dead!*’ The final scene will reveal the identity of this mysterious messenger to the audience: it is Fred Madison himself who will speak, and spoke, this line into the intercom, who will jump—and did this previously—in his car and will flee—and fled—from the police officers who pursue him ‘eternally’ in their car. Many critics have argued that *Lost Highway* is depicting a circular action that is going to repeat itself again and again with only some changing fact. They consider the final police hunt as a new detail that is added to the plot before the circle recommences once more. This is a misinterpretation that would provide a kind of linearity; because then *Lost Highway* would have a development in its procedure. If one turns up the sound after Fred listened to the intercom in the opening scene, two cars drive off the road and the sound of a police horn can be heard in the background before Fred is able to see anything through his window.

With this scene the first world is entered already. It is the world of Fred and Renee in their Philippe Starck style Los Angeles apartment who live out their marriage in an atmosphere of suspicion and estrangement. Colour, furniture, sound and speed of the film create an atmosphere that is already reminiscent of *Blue Velvet*. Renée Celeste describes the effect of language as “*each word that passes between them roars out into a void like a lighthouse beacon.*”⁵

On three successive days the couple receive unmarked, brown envelopes each containing a videotape with recordings of the facade of their flat. On the second tape they see yet another high-angle shot of themselves asleep in their bed. After they informed the police and their subsequent official investigation, Renee and Fred attend a ‘heaving’ party at Andy’s

house, where Fred meets the Mystery Man.⁶ With his cellular phone he proves that he is at Fred's house and at the party at the same time. Fred has seen his face in his dreams and panicking, he forces Renee to leave the party at once.

Back in their street there is a short, bright light and a fast moving shadow inside the house. Fred checks the interior but cannot find an intruder. In the last scene, before both the audience and Fred, witness Renee's murder on a TV screen within the picture, Fred is walking along a dark-red floor in his bedroom and then in a split second he is facing the Mystery Man. As Fred returns the spectator is reminded of his resemblance to 'Special Agent Dale Cooper' after his visit to the Black Lodge. The walls are covered with red curtains.

Sentenced to death for murder, Fred is haunted by serious headaches and insomnia while awaiting the electric chair in his cell. During one night a transmutation takes place and Fred seems to merge with Pete's body, mind and world. This whole scene bounces between the 'initiate Fred' in his cell and Pete Dayton's front garden, where Pete's parents and his girlfriend Sheila try to prevent a horrifying happening that the audience is unable to see. The next morning Pete Dayton is found in Fred's cell with partial amnesia and he is soon back at his house with his biker parents and the white, picket-fenced back garden. With this image the spectator sees the American middle class dwelling of *Blue Velvet*. "*It's Pete's new life—like waking up and seeing children and wondering about things...*"⁷

Pete starts working in his old job again and while repairing cars for Mr. Eddy—he is identified by the police as 'Laurent'—he meets Alice Wakefield, Mr. Eddy's mistress. Alice looks like a blonde incarnation of Fred's 'murdered' wife Renee, and both Pete and Alice seem to stand between the dimension of the vanished Madisons' and 'reality'. In order to hide their sexual affair from Mr. Eddy the couple want to run away. Alice plans the robbery of her friend Andy, who is already known from the party as a former friend of Renee; shortly before the theft takes place Pete receives a phone call from Mr. Eddy and his friend: the Mystery Man.

Accidentally, Pete kills Andy and while Alice is gathering the prey, time and coherency seem to fly away again: Renee and Alice are on the same photograph framed by Andy and Laurent; Andy's corridor transforms into the hall of the Lost Highway Hotel, where later on re-transmuted Fred will attack Dick Laurent after his sexual intercourse with re-transmuted Renee Madison.

The young couple is driving through the desert to meet a friend of Alice to sell the loot. This friend appears to be the Mystery Man who is living in a perpetually exploding and

re-materializing sanctuary. After a love scene in the desert—where the mysterious friend has not yet arrived—Alice changes from the beloved girlfriend into the cold, Renee-like and unaffected *femme fatale* who tells Pete that he “*will never have her.*”

After the arrival of the Mystery Man and Alice’s disappearance, Fred, who is no longer Pete, heads off towards the Lost Highway Hotel. There he overcomes Laurent and throws him in the boot of his own car.

At the final showdown in the desert, Dick Laurent—already injured due to a fight with Fred—is shot by ‘his friend’, after he had to watch scenes from his own perverse and sado-masochistic life on the black and white screen of the Mystery Man’s video camera. Finally—or first of all—Fred flees from the scene, drives to his house and speaks a few words into his intercom: *Dick Laurent is dead.*

In the very last sequence the camera focuses on Fred’s face while he is driving along the yellow-dotted desert highway, pursued by four police cars. His face is distorted by a mixture of hate, sadness and madness. The accompanying contorting sound rises towards the insufferable, he is screaming deliriously—and then silence; his voice dies away but the yellow-dotted road is still running through the pitch black night.

The Yellow-Dotted Road

As already mentioned in the first chapter the viewer should resist the ambition to solve *Lost Highway’s* mystery, even if it were possible to extract its creator’s thoughts and concept.⁸ The first detail drawn attention to will be the image of the road, which offers a framework for *Lost Highway*. In the background of the opening credits and the final credits, the spectator is confronted with the moving road, separated and ‘split’ by yellow dots that are painted on the road. The audience could expect everything and this image, a *Leerstelle*⁹ of a flying road is not enriched with substantial and specific knowledge unless Fred can be viewed while driving through the desert. This dark road is leading into black darkness and even in the end of the picture the reader does not really know the aim of this sinister journey.

To illuminate the given *Leerstelle* it is necessary to have a look at the image of the road in the context of American history and then particularly at its use in film. The metaphorical use of the ‘road’ is very important throughout the history of America. Reni Celeste formulated the importance of the road-metaphor as a metaphysical basis for the development of America:

The American landscape was always well-mapped for metaphysical and theological metaphor. A nation founded on a journey West, an escape through the desert of adversity toward the Promised Land of a mythic California. The wagons that bulldozed across native soil, stopping only to wipe the blood and flesh off their wheels, marked the highway, and dusty earth became asphalt...The road has always been the chief vehicle of this metaphor of progress, origin and destination.¹⁰

Adapted many times, the metaphor of the road and especially as a road with yellow marks on it, was used in Victor Fleming's *Wizard of Oz*. There, the protagonist Dorothy had to follow the 'yellow brick road', which finally lead her to Emerald City, the town where the key for her journey back to the 'promised home' is hidden. After her flight from the sad, 'black and white' home, she finally found her way back to her family that welcomes her in a good, coherent and still progressing 'reality'.

The *Wizard of Oz* was used by Lynch on various occasions and he admitted in several interviews, that this book meant a lot to him and that he carried the motion picture with him 'until it echoed later in my films *Blue Velvet* and *Wild at Heart*. The *Wizard of Oz* is very much like a dream that has an enormous power on us'¹¹. The road that leads towards a 'telos' is fundamental to the Western tradition at least since the Jews left Egypt to reach their 'Promised Land': Israel. The positive character of linearity and the belief in an entity beyond this world, humanity is living in, provide the explanatory source for these thoughts. Although it can be questioned if religion is still alive within the enlightened, Western society where man has declared himself as ruler of the world, the moral superstructure inherited from Christianity is still occupying the minds of society, even if the religious basis has died out already.

In his films David Lynch is constantly deconstructing and remodelling this 'telos' myth and sends his characters towards places like Big Tuna in *Wild at Heart* or the Black Lodge in *Twin Peaks*. Whereas the journey of Sailor and Lula still ends up in celebrating a new 'religion of love', Special Agent Dale Cooper becomes the condemned 'carrier of the evil'. Even in *Blue Velvet* the audience is confronted with a final close-up on a white picket fence under a deep blue sky, immediately after horrifying events had happened within the borders of this picturesque world.

Applied to *Lost Highway*, this movement away from a telos-tradition is driven to extremes and is simultaneously overcome. The focus no longer seems to be on 'direction' or 'aim' but on man itself. The flickering road will always lead back to the Madison's

apartment, “near the observatory”¹², where Fred and Renee are living a life in the privacy of their own little world, under the watchful eyes of two voyeurs: the Mystery Man and the audience.

Reni Celeste concludes that “*Lost Highway takes the road film one toll further around the loop to reveal the mad dislocation that was already implicit in that American journey.*”¹³

If *Lost Highway* discards the ontological position described above, what is it offering instead? In order to come closer to its metaphysical approach, the circular structure of the narrative and the thought of recurrence have to be examined.

The Recurring Narrative

Although a psychoanalytical examination of *Lost Highway* could deny the assumption that the depicted action is of a circular or a cyclical nature¹⁴, this study will deal with it as one possible interpretation.

Fred Madison, in front of his intercom inside his apartment, is listening to exactly the same message he will speak / is now speaking into his intercom. Every single detail that will happen from now on in his life will recur / has happened before and will repeat itself ‘eternally’. The flickering yellow road will be his companion and time and space have ceased to be. Thoughts that appear vertiginous.

The thought of an ‘Eternal Return’ proves to be as old as humanity and is originally used to explain the cyclical worldview of the archaic man and must therefore be treated as entirely religious.¹⁵ The archaic man lived his life in constantly repeating the myth of creation and changed ‘profane’ time into ‘sacred’ time. Mircea Eliade describes this archaic type in his study *The Myth of the Eternal Return* as follows:

We might say that the archaic world knows nothing of “profane” activities: every act which has a definite meaning [for their lives]—hunting, fishing, agriculture; games, conflicts, sexuality,—in some way participates in the sacred...the only profane activities are those which have no mythical meaning, that is, which lack exemplary models. Thus we may say that every responsible activity in pursuit of a definite end is, for the archaic world, a ritual. But...the majority of these activities have undergone a long process of desacralization and have, in modern societies, become profane.¹⁶

According to his diagnosis it can be summarised that Greek logocentric teleology and its hermeneutics by Christianity established a system that was completely different to the

archaic. Humanity was now created at a fixed point in time, falls from God's grace and will, from now on, strive towards a hereafter.

This control of man by religion¹⁷, Christianity's focus on a hereafter and its devaluation of worldly life ushered Friedrich Nietzsche in a major attack against Christianity and the Western Tradition. Nowadays, he is seen as one of the most influential precursor of modernism and subsequently 'post-modern' developments. In the course of his 'experimental philosophy', after his deconstruction of metaphysics, Christianity and morality, Nietzsche puts the words about an 'Eternal Recurrence' into Zarathustra's mouth.¹⁸ In the third book Zarathustra tells about a dwarf, the spirit of gravity, that gave him company on his strenuous walk along a lonely path in the mountains, and that this 'dwarf dribbled a dwarfish version of the Eternal Recurrence into his brain':

"O Zarathustra," it whispered scornfully, syllable by syllable, "thou stone of wisdom! Thou threwest thyself high, but every thrown stone must—fall!"...

"halt, dwarf!" said I. Either I-or thou! I, however, am the stronger of the two-: thou knowest not mine abysmal thought! It-couldst thou not endure!"...[They come to a gateway]

"Looke at this gateway! Dwarf!" I continued, " it hath two faces. Two roads come together here: these hath no one yet gone to the end of.

This long lane backwards: it continueth for an eternity. And that long lane forward-that is another eternity.

They are antithetical to one another, these roads; they directly abut on one another:-and it is here, at this gateway, that they come together. The name of the gateway is inscribed above: 'This Moment.'

But should one follow them further-and ever further and further on, thinkest thou, dwarf, that these roads would be eternally antithetical?"-

" Everything straight lieth," murmured the dwarf, contemptuously. "all truth is crooked; time itself is a circle."

" Thou spirit of gravity!" said I wrathfully, "do not take it too lightly! Or I shall let thee squat where thou squattest, Haltfoot,-and I carried thee high!"¹⁹

For Nietzsche the idea of 'Eternal Recurrence' was a consequence of an accepted nihilism. The world without aim and sense, without a final towards nothingness²⁰. It referred to the most extreme form of nihilism: an empty nothingness, eternally; empty because there are no transcendent grounds left. According to his later writings and with regard to his concept of the 'Übermensch' (Overman), the idea of Recurrence must be understood ethically: happiness and purpose of life spring from the congruity of 'moment' and sense in life. A 'moment', which is freed from false 'dominators' such as religion, moral or transcendence in general that depreciated present, is in itself the sublimest meaning.

Problematic, hardly thinkable thoughts, that made Nietzsche himself fall silent, mentally 'deranged'.

One possible way of reading *Lost Highway* would be to perceive it as a visualisation of the horrifying thought of an eternal return of life in a world of estrangement; a perpetual motion machine without beginning, ending or a possibility of escape. The distorted face of Fred Madison at the end might stand for this kind of ontological cognition.

The whole of the world that is depicted lacks 'moral' and real values, except material ones.²¹ Habits and life style are oscillating between indifference of the Dayton family, sitting in front of their TV set, and morbid hedonism that is 'voyeured' at Andy's villa. Characters that ask for values, like Sheila when she blames Pete for having an affair, are portrayed as very weak and disappear as fast as they entered the scenario without having any influence. Is *Lost Highway* a funeral reflection of the Western world, especially the American world, just before turn of the millennium? Has Nietzsche's prediction of the advent of nihilism and of moral and cultural relativism come true in *Lost Highway's* L.A.?

This question could be answered in the affirmative if the world in question was that of Verhoeven's *Starship Troopers*. Its enhanced and 'perfectionist' world already lacks those elements that are fundamental for a Lynchian world: dreams, love, mystery, the unexplainable, pain, sorrow, mistakes, tragic flaws and questions. *Starship Troopers* manages to exist without these: even the two sexes have no problematical and therefore, no more magical force of mutual attraction, and as a consequence no longer a complex relationship.²²

David Lynch, however, is shrouding his cosmos in mystery where one is confronted with dreams, secrets, good, evil, 'women behind radiators', witches, 'men from other places', 'Log Ladies', fairies, 'Black or White Lodges', 'Mystery Men' and many others. They indicate, that, for Lynch, there is still an outside, something more powerful than the world with which his characters have to cope. This is what can be diagnosed as an overcoming of the Nietzschean nihilism, realized above. There is again a metaphysical world that interferes from time to time.

The Mystery Man

Lost Highway's 'representative of another world' is the Mystery Man. He is not dependent on time and space, has the ability to travel distances within split seconds and is even able to be at two different places simultaneously. He comes across as the mightiest power and seems to

be timeless and immortal. Maria Warner describes him in her essay *Voodoo Road*: “He has a satyr’s pointed ears and eyebrows, and in whiteface and crimson lipstick looks Mephistophelean: he’s a trickster figure, gifted with divine ubiquity and omniscience; he lives...in a desert hideout that spontaneously combusts only to reassemble perfectly, and it is he who is the source and the master of the video camera that has anticipated—or perhaps prompted—the murder of Renee.²³

He is always present as the plot develops and is in control of what is going to happen. In the night of Renee’s murder we see him facing Fred in the dark corridor. There is no evidence that Renee is also affected by his power but, while she is in the bathroom, she seems to sense the strange intruder and terror grips her when she calls for Fred.

Further information on the Mystery Man is scattered throughout the film’s plot. Initially, he is a friend of Dick Laurent but the meaning of the ‘signifiant’ *friend* does not carry that same ‘signifié’ to which we are accustomed. In the end Dick Laurent is killed by the Mystery Man. Then, the audience receives information directly from him. He is talking to Pete on the phone and tells him that they have ‘just murdered a couple of people’. To Pete’s question as to ‘what was going on’, a question the audience is also very interested in, he answers as follows:

Great question!! 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.²⁴

Is the world of Fred and Renee, Andy and Dick Laurent, Alice and Pete a prison, where they live awaiting their execution? Are they all imprisoned in a Dantesque hell, where prisoners are categorised due to their crimes and sins awaiting purgatory—or is this speech a hint that we enter Eastern religion and, on the one hand Pete and Alice are reincarnations of Renee and Fred and they will ‘simply’ get another chance to purify their souls? On the other hand a Dick Laurent who has failed and is condemned ‘forever’, expected by some sort of ‘black angel’?

Within this atmosphere of ‘returning’ fear, violence and estrangement the Mystery Man does not kill Renee or Fred but Dick Laurent, who unites various extreme perversions in his character. Maybe, that after innumerable loops, Laurent loses the power over Renee and

Alice, and Fred does not have to worry about him that much. Perhaps *Lost Highway's* system it is not a static and exact return of the past, present and the future but an organism that can still find the power to heal itself.

The idea of rebirth preoccupied David Lynch's 'screen thoughts' since *Eraserhead*, where the 'Man from another Planet' changes Henry Spencer's life and places him onto a happier level where he can meet the kindred 'Woman behind the Radiator', leaving behind his tragic destiny. The recurring metaphor of the exploding hideout in the desert would allow this 'cadence' to a piece of art, which does not necessarily have to be only a visualization of a 'psychogenic fugue'.²⁵

In the final question of an interview on his latest film David Lynch was asked about his attitude towards truth and metaphysics. His statement should end a study aimed at sending a few rays into the mystery of *Lost Highway*:

I believe it is not the end when we die. But that's my word against somebody else's! It's just the way I believe. It's like going to sleep: you wake up in the morning and you start a new day. That could be a symbol for a bigger picture: you die and you have a little time in a dream and, by golly, you come back... We're not experiencing the ultimate reality: the 'real' is hiding all through life, but we don't see it. We mistake it for all the other things. Fear is based on not seeing the whole thing and, if you could get there and see the whole thing, fear is out of the window.²⁶

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1999

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Notes

¹ Roger Ebert, "Lost Highway Review" *Chicago Sunday Times* 2 (1997).

Source: <http://www.mikedunn.com/lynch/lh/lharticle.html>

² Anthony C. Ferrante. *Film Threat Review* 4 (1997).

Source: <http://www.mikedunn.com/lynch/lh/lharticle.com>

³ David Lynch & B. Gifford, *Lost Highway*, London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1997, p. 4.

⁴ My term to categorize recent popular films like *Pulp Fiction* or *Fargo*, that present strong violence in an ironic and comic way; violence in order to achieve laughter.

⁵ Celeste, Reni, "Lost Highway: Unveiling Cinema's Yellow Bridge Road", *Cineaction* 43 (1997). Source: <http://www.mailbase.ac.uk/lists/film-philosophy/files/paper.celeste.html>

⁶ The screenplay calls him 'Mystery Man'. R. Celeste calls him the 'Nameless Man' which leads to a few audacious interpretative leaps.

⁷ *Lynch on Lynch*, ed. Chris Rodley, London, Faber and Faber, 1997. p. 229.

⁸ David Lynch on *Lost Highway*: "[The story] needs to be a certain way (...). Mystery is good, confusion is bad and there's a big difference between the two. I don't like talking about things too much because, unless you're a poet, when you talk about it, a big thing becomes smaller. But the clues are all there for a correct interpretation, and I keep saying that, in a lot of ways, it is a very straight-ahead story. There are only a few things that are a hair off." (ibid., p. 227)

⁹ I use the German terminology here taken from Wolfgang Iser's in *Der Implizite Leser*, München, Fink, 1972: a gap that cannot be filled with information by the reader unless the piece of art reveals its nature.

¹⁰ Reni Celeste, *Cineaction* 43 (1997).

¹¹ Compare Fischer, Robert, *David Lynch. Die dunkle Seite der Seele*, München, Heyne, 1993, p. 282.

¹² Lynch & Gifford, p. 16.

¹³ R.Celeste, p. 2.

¹⁴ Celeste makes this distinction without any reference to the text.

¹⁵ And thus, even if it provoked its opposition and the denial of religion, as will be seen further down.

¹⁶ Eliade, Mircea, *Cosmos and History—The Myth of the Eternal Return*, New York, Harper & Row, 1959, p. 27.

¹⁷ and its moral dogma which works against instincts that are, according to Nietzsche, inherent to all human beings.

¹⁸ Compare Gianni Vattimo, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, Stuttgart, Metzler, 1992.

¹⁹ Translation by Thomas Common in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, ed. O.Levy, London, T.N. Foulds, 1911, p. 188-191. Original in *Nietzsches Werke*, ed. G. Colli und M. Montinari, vol VI, p.195ff.:

>>Oh Zarathustra, raunte er höhnisch Silb' um Silbe du Stein der Weisheit! Du warfst dich hoch, aber jeder geworfene Stein muss fallen!<<(...)

>>Siehe diesen Torweg! Zwerg! Sprach ich weiter: der hat zwei Gesichter. Zwei Wege kommen hier zusammen: die ging noch Niemand zu Ende.

Diese lange Gasse zurück: die währt eine Ewigkeit. Und jene lange Gasse hinaus— das ist eine andre Ewigkeit.

Sie widersprechen sich, diese Wege; sie stossen sich gerade vor den Kopf: — und hier, an diesem Torwege, ist es, wo sie zusammenkommen. Der Name des Torweges steht oben geschrieben: >Augenblick<.

Aber wer einen von Ihnen weiter ginge—und immer weiter und immer ferner: glaubst du, Zwerg, dass diese Wege sich ewig widersprechen?<<

>>Alles Gerade lügt, murmelte verächtlich der Zwerg. Alle Wahrheit ist krumm, die Zeit selber ist ein Kreis.<<

>>Du Geist der Schwere! Sprach ich zürnend, mache es dir es nicht zu leicht<<

²⁰ Vattimo, p. 80.

²¹ It is striking that this ‘old’ morality is still embedded in our minds. It can be seen how brilliant manipulation, according to Nietzsche, worked.

²² I refer here to the shower scene in Veerhoeven’s film.

²³ Maria Warner, “Voodoo Road” *Sight and Sound* 8 (1997).

²⁴ Lynch & Gifford, p. 118. Passage in [] only contained in the screenplay and was not used for the final cut of the film.

²⁵ Several psychoanalytical readings of *Lost Highway* use this term—a term that strikes me as too subjectivistic and reductive.

²⁶ *Lynch on Lynch*, p. 243.