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The Unpleasure Principal in the Post-Modern
Cinema of David Lynch.

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CONTENTS

Introduction	Page 1 - 6
The Films	Page 7 - 22
Conclusion	Page 23 - 25
Bibliography	Page 26

The only possibility of renewal
lies in opening your eyes and
seeing the present-day disaster,
a disaster which can't be understood
but which must be permitted to come
in because it is the truth.

The above quote by Beckett best explains the meaning behind my usage of the terminology "The Unpleasure Principal", this to me means a strategy in art practice which eschews prescriptive approaches in the examining of avenues of production within a given artistic sphere of action. The Unpleasure Principals meaning as applied to the act of creating determines a course of action wholly unwilling in its execution of composition. This starting point for such an approach is an embracing of a realistically negative outlook, which poetically tackles the emotional and gritty side of human existence. The reality portrayed is experienced more strongly by the spectator because in a consciously artificial way emotions and feelings become manipulated by undetectable forces. Rather than the use of social-realism which attempts by verisimilitude to deal adequately with the contradictory character of 20th century life, The Unpleasure Principal however, lends itself towards a defining of a form of social and psychological surrealism, where all the elements, whether they are ideas and feelings, atmosphere and plot, all the elements of form and content do battle with each other. Knowledge is obtained not by a conventionally straight-forward and literal reading but is rather felt on a sensuously nervous level.

Living in an age where many diverse meanings proliferate, confusion is the obvious mental state of the individual since the advent of modernism this sense of confusion has accelerated progressively. In many ways this has ironical resonance particularly in the cultural arena, where manifesto after manifesto has failed to engender confidence, stability in visual meaning has never been in such a chaotic state despite the modernist gurus periodic claims to the achievement of purity. In the post-modern era the search for meaning must be re-examined, this could be a period of unforced creativity, a time where obstraction might lose its modernist associations with the anodyne and decorative, and be seen rather as a vehicle for the co-mingling of subjective and objective influences, a clash of opposites and an embracing of confusion and chaos. Only by surrendering to the subliminal aesthetic of chaos can any form of new meaning be excavated. The question of style should

be examined on a level (and with particular reference to film) of how powerfully and invisibly the atmosphere of a particular work infiltrated the consciousness of the viewer and not by the sum of its cinematic parts, the experience should become holistic and irreducible, criticism might then become more sensuously orientated rather than solely reductionist in nature, cinema might then become more violently poetic as opposed to conventionally narrative in its aims.

Some form of manifestation of The Unpleasure Principal in Western Art has probably always existed as an antidote to the aesthetic of beauty, with Romanticism in the 19th century, the connection between corruption and beauty becomes a form in which to examine the anxiety of existence and spiritual longing and also the connection between sexuality and death. These obsessional qualities went on to possess the imaginations of the Decadent and Symbolists towards the latter half of that century. Expressionism in the early 20th century again took up where symbolism had halted and this tradition of unease and brooding has passed on through the surrealists in the 1930's and 1940's and through an assortment of many other minor movements of the 20th century to reach us in the post-modern world of the 1990's in a variety of obvious and subliminally transformed ways.

Despite the rational and scientific aspect of most modernisms there still resides most strongly within Western Art practices, a strong anti-formalistic vein, it is however, important that we do not fall into the trap of interpreting the art of the present in a totally linear or traditional way, for example the unpleasure felt by the experienced in the work of someone like Franz Kafka is not comparable with say the early plays of Harold Pinter, for where Kafka's unpleasure comes from a feeling of existential isolation and helplessness, Pinter's comes from his own deliberate manipulation of this negativity in order to make absurdist drama which through its use of black comedy and exhilarated despair attempts a form of political allegory. Pinter can be seen then as a moralist in disguise, whereas Kafka is allegorising his personal feelings, which also impart a political dimension, but also allot more than that. It is probably correct to speculate whether without Kafka there wouldn't have been Pinter and similarly not Kafka without Dostoyevsky. But, their connectedness is one of acknowledged influences which are assimilated in order for any progression on a personal level to take place. This so called progression of formal and subjective influence has in the last two decades run into an impasse.

The Unpleasure Principal in the visual art of the 1990's exists in a masked form, weakened by cynicism and overstatement. In a consumer society, such as ours the climate for creating any work which attempts to expose possibly uncomfortable human situations is usually wrapped in a generic disguise. This disguise secures an outward facade of entertainment value against which a film has to struggle to make its own terms felt.

It is not surprising then that in the artificially created world of the entertainment industry, in which many contemporary artists find themselves situated they have had to develop the use of irony, which in itself has become one of the more deliberate conventions of the post-modern era. The outward embracing of pastiche and banality in current art is a self-conscious use of "cleverness" a prescriptive formula of self-protection and avoidance. This seemingly detached stance by the artist is used as a vehicle for supposed critical comment, but all too often ends up as appearing unmediatingly reflective and unengaging. For irony to work as critical interpretation it cannot become divorced from real commitment otherwise it becomes just a facade of distant coolness. Irony can really only engage by default, it is latent in the character of the most interesting current art, the tension created by trying to make sense out of nonsense and the impossibility of modern heroics. Using the American film director David Lynch as an example of an individual artist who has journeyed from a position of engagement to one of detachment. I will attempt to follow in brief his cinematic advancement from what would appear to be an initial modernist stance on into the realm of post-modernity while also examining in what way his subjective and technical style has been altered by this change. So, what actually makes David Lynch an interesting artist? Also in what way does his work embody the qualities of unpleasure?

To start with it is interesting to note that as a film director Lynch's formal education came not from any in-depth engagement in cinema studies but rather from his earliest training as a painter, this painterly sensibility, which he has brought to bear to some degree in all his work to date, is a clue to the understanding of his over all artistic methods. The creation of mood and atmosphere is the main objective in his films, these ends, he endeavors to create by his use of a wide variety of elements outside the primary considerations of character and plot, by his strengthening of the uses of sound, lighting and textural surfaces, ingredients which traditionally act as enhancers to the benefit of background credibility. Lynch attempts to give

primacy to the sensory, laying his faith in the power of tactile feeling, then the way in which the narrative interacts with the mood is best described on a level which compares with a dream structure. The characters are taken out of real time and placed in an environment which although strongly alligned with real space is nevertheless subtly altered, specific historical periods and their move recognisable artifacts exist in a state of unease with each other, reflected by this ambiance of discomfort are the players in the drama who seem to be acting in accordance with an unidentifiable force of fatalism, control over their own actions is limited to sub-dramas within a wider chaotic field.

The cut-off point in a Lynch film, that is the separating of form from content, is probably not a very helpful way of getting to the core of what is actually being attempted. This should not be seen as an excuse to help mystify Lynch's style, but rather as an acknowledgement of the way in which his work is structured. One prominent example of where this search for meaning has come into trouble is shown by the recent points of view, some critics have of Lynchs work as being concerned with social critique. In this they try to ascribe to Lynch the mantle of social commentator. Many reviewers in their efforts at categorising the agenda of Lynchs work have arrived at an interpretation, which I believe is a simplistic and generally incorrect one. This view is built on the premise of political allegory, but ignores the apoliticalness of the films concerned. If there is any hint of social criticism on the directors behalf then I believe that this is totally unwilling and incidental. What does become evident however, from listening to what Lynch himself has to say about this own protected middle class upbringing is that the gulf between the relative security of such an existence and the realisation of a much more unsocial and violent reality is a frightening discovery which must be engaged with, in order to transcend the fear it generates.

If there are any grand themes underlying Lynchs work to date, then I would suggest that the most obvious one has been to do with problems of having faith in the concept of the social individual when faced with the anxiety of accepting that the cithonian power of nature, and the arbitrary violence that this force embodies, is always present in some form or another, from the outside and also from within. It is then a red herring to accept in Lynchs cinema that because he uses stereotypes of opposing forces, these chiefly being the social and the anti-social, that he is trying to in any way examine the problem on a

socio-political level, what he is actually attempting, with varying degrees of success so far, is to show how we as individuals long for the safety of the secure societal structures of home and community. Yet, at the same time we are always longing to break free of them. By looking at four of Lynch's more personal films, I will attempt to examine how he uses the idea of discomfort and to what purpose.

Freud's unconscious is a Daemonic realm. In the day we are social creatures, but at night we descend to the dream world where nature reigns, where there is no law but sex, cruelty, and metamorphosis. Day itself is invaded by Daemonic night, moment by moment, night flickers in the imagination, in eroticism, subverting our strivings for virtue and order, giving an uncanny aura to objects and persons, revealed to us through the eyes of the artist.

(Paglia, 1990, P.4)

ERASERHEAD is a night film, a continuous dream which fluctuates between the efforts of its protagonist, Henry, to understand what he is doing in it, to his total incapability of actually doing anything other than existing by its own irrational laws. Has Henry been dreamed into existence by this nether world or is he the dreamer-creator of it. Both interpretations seem to be validated by the ambiguity of the film, and this might have been a deliberate strategh in order to reinforce the atmosphere of chaos. If we separate these two strands of intention and examine them separately for the mement what do we find? Taking first the idea of Henry haven been produced by this world the film starts with a gratesque swithch-man pulling a lever and into view glides the bewildered looking Henry, floatiing into an alien world without any power of individual action. One might speculate that he may have been extracted from a move ordered, previous, existence, but accepting his fate Henry, who although throughout the film seems agitated and unsettled by his surroundings and himself, sinks into his existence without question. This scenario can be further elaborated on by looking at the role of the switch-man and seeing him as an incarnation of some evil and sadistic god who pulls the meek and mild from their real homes, and watches with amused relish as his victims become thwarted by the irrational and murky reality in which they have been ensnared. The idea of confronting the indifferent social human with the ferocity of a primeval reality gives a feeling of a hidden pagan moralism. This archaic assault on man and his works becomes visualized in the films overt concerns with the decrepitude of the industrial landscape and also the biological human product. if Henry has been dreamt into existence by this nature force then this is done to show the extent of hisⁱⁿeffectvalness in the face of its arbitrary violence. On the other hand Henry as the dreamer is probably closer to the truth, though this idea also encorporates some of the above mentioned intentions. Robert Coombs in his article in FILM BULLETIN, 'Crude Thoughts and Fierce Forces', speculates that

Henrys dread, his fear of possessing
his life, generates this fantas'a of
creation gone wrong, of life
biologically and industrially on the
skids. What accounts for all

Lynchs cinema perhaps is a similar
irreducible innocence in its creator,

that clean cut "Gee Whiz" image
projected out of its time and, like
Henry's mooncalf odyssey, imagining
every horror in order to remain
untouched by it. (Coombs, 1987, P.102)

Lynch's own feelings about ERASERHEAD turned towards the viewing of it as a kind of abstraction, and that it should not be seen as lending itself to any one definitive interpretation but rather be accepted as a bricolage of many diverse elements of feeling and mood. This is probably the best way to take this particular film, as it does not seek any validation outside its own formal concerns, it is generated internally by one mood and its texture, connecting with another, in a progression of tactile accumulation. This is very much the painter's sensibility and one which Lynch in this case uses to great effect.

The use of bricolage and found object application is characteristically the working methodology of surrealism, but in Lynch's case it is a surrealism in a fairly broad sense of the term. Comparisons between Lynch and earlier masters of the surrealist cinema, such as Hans Richter and Louis Bunuel, are tenuous and overstated, for instance Bunuel's brand of surrealism was to be taken on a very definitely political level every spectacular effect was a coded meaning with concrete significance, while Lynch uses surrealist devices as just another element in the overall cinematic texture. The authentic surrealism of Bunuel is an innovative act in historic time and art history, with Lynch it becomes just another found object to add to the recipe.

ERASERHEAD is Lynch's first mature film and also I believe his most convincingly raw and visceral work, this is due perhaps to the immediate way a lot of the film's desperate mood comes directly from the director's anxiety about his own domestic situation. At the time of beginning ERASERHEAD Lynch was still trying to get used to living in a big city, having only recently moved from the country he found himself living by quite frugal means, supporting a wife and child in quite a rough area of downtown Philadelphia. The responsibility was more than Lynch could handle and the oblivion which was the end result of Henry's existence in ERASERHEAD became a projection of claustrophobic dread its creator was in some way living. These personal problems were fed into the texture of ERASERHEAD in a directly sub-conscious way and here again we see how these real-life anxieties were used as yet another found object to be mixed into the filmatic tableau of the cinematic work.

The obsessive and bleak demeanour of ERASERHEAD and its unsettling ungeneric form, ensured that its success could be of only cultish size, though arriving as it did towards the end of the 1970's, it went onto become a minor icon of the emerging punk sub-culture that was beginning to manifest itself in the American society of the time, and it then moved onto become a popular late night feature in the small art house cinemas of most cities. Though this film has now been generally accepted as a quite interesting first work by its then young director it nevertheless still seems to be viewed as a minor and eccentric piece of cinema. This reaction more than likely comes from certain critics who in trying to categorise the film into a generic pigeon hole, miss its real power, a power which I believe comes from the films convincing incorporation of many different artistic mediums, which in their breadth refer to everything from art-deco and German expressionism to the paintings of Francis Bacon and eastern European animation. What emerges is a form of visual poetry which attempts to register not on the audiences intellect but directly on its collective nervous system.

If corrosion and metamorphosis, and the impossibility of stemming the violent forces of nature are some of the themes which underscore ERASERHEADS intent, then these preoccupations are mirrored exactly in the formal rigour of its inception. The final scene of ERASEERHEAD depicts its protagonist, Henry, being consumed by his world. Comparing this outcome with the fate of future protagonists in Lynchs work tells us that salvation has become a viable option. These later works negate The Unpleasure Principals perhaps most logical result. Though unease is felt on most levels of cinematic action the unpleasure seems more artificial, it becomes created in order for it to be destroyed. In ERASERHEAD the protagonist from the very start is living in hell, the question of confronting the chaos is not even an option. There is no way out and no real effort made to even try.

This fatalism, though manifest in the subject and form of future work, is put there to be challenged by a form of selfrighteous evangelism which has entered the arena. This strain, which it must be said is typically American, has weakened in a obvious way, Lynchs subsequent work. The problem of externality attempting to control in an envirnoment where the unconscious presides has given his most recent films an air of pretentious contrivance. In his cinema becoming more willed than imagined Lynch has not really answered convincingly the

problems which ERASERHEAD hinted at. Transcendence cannot be attained by the concocting of spurious heroes to secure it

BLUE VELVET where 40' noir meets 50's diner culture meets a bricolage of many periods. BLUE VELVET is more evidently surrealistic than any of Lynch's previous films which may be part of the problem, he is starting to stockpile and catalogue his effects, the severed ear from Bunuel's UNCHIEN ANDALOU, the hose that continues working on its own from Hans Richter's DREAMS THAT MONEY CAN BUY, etc. One thing this violates is the rule Lynch constantly talked about in connection with ERASERHEAD that Henry's strange chaotic world was governed by its own internal rightness, that a certain rigour had to be exercised during filming to exclude what didn't belong. (Coombs, 1987, P.104)

In BLUE VELVET we follow the adventures of Jeffrey, amateur detective and budding voyeur, as he cuts a path from his stable and picturesque middle class existence, and journeys forth the midden of the working class under-world of crime and moral corruption. While en route (to broaden his horizons) he comes in contact with the masochistic Dorothy Vallens, who in turn brings him, by default, into contact with the sadistic psychopath Frank Booth, encouraged by the similarly middle-class girlfriend, promqueen, Sandy. He uncovers a sinister web of crime, involving among other things, kidnapping, drug dealing and sexual violence. This adventure though gives Jeffrey ample opportunity to discover more about himself while endeavouring also to restore some semblance of order.

BLUE VELVET is Lynch's first film set either in the present day or in a recognisable version of America, thus rendering itself more easily to a conventional reading. Unlike ERASERHEAD which created its own particular time-space continuum, or even THE ELEPHANT MAN which was shrouded in historical mystique, BLUE VELVET then can appear to seem

more upfront in style and meaning. However, this film also manages to hold onto a feeling of atmosphere which can enable it to counter a literal interpretation of definitive meaning. It is curious that although there seems to be a quite obvious moralism at work here this does not cancel out the way in which the film ultimately both repells and attracts to varying degrees. An example of where meaning has been ascribed in a particular way to the film is shown by, again, certain critical attitudes which see in BLUE VELVET an allegorising of the Freudian Oedipal complex, it doesn't take long though for one to realise that this is just a very obvious parodic gimmick, an effort if you like at lending a sense of meaningful gravity to what in essence is a very anti-theoretfical film.

The facade of a more naturalistic appearance (at least in comparison with ERASERHEADS delapidated mise-en-scene) is in itself an artistic play, created as a form of masking device to lure the viewer into Lynch's own very personally created chaotic world. In rejecting as secondary, the stock interpretation of BLUE VELVET as being a laboratory for the studying of sexual persona, it is however, important to put forward other ideas regarding the examination of the themes, for unlike ERASERHEAD, BLUE VELVET does draw more directly on elements outside its own immediate artificial reality. Apart from "quoting" other directors like Bunuel and Sturges etc, BLUE VELVET is charged by the memory of historical cinematic genres ranging from Film Noir to Hitchcockian thriller and shades of the moods from the most memorable of these films haunt the newness of Lynch's creation making it seem both alien and familiar by turn. Lynch, the dreamy 50's kid draws on the memory of earlier cinematic influences and mixes these residual traces with a vicious streak of modern violent reality, a reality which allows the professed introverted director to mix his own sexual fetishes and anxieties within a patched framework of a musty romance.

David Sylvester, while interviewing the English painter Francis Bacon, enquired as to a definition of realism in a contemporary context. Bacon's answer to this proposal was to infer that any realism in its modern manifestation could not help but be influenced by surrealism since the unconscious and the subconscious have a direct bearing on the way we now perceive reality. To stretch a comparison between Lynch and Bacon (qualitative judgement aside), I would forward the view that Lynch himself is in fact a type of realist, though quite obviously not

not a social-realist. His realism is an attempt, through the manipulation of sensory and tactile elements, to make reality more intuitively palpable, and so returning the viewer to life more violently. His realism is of a thwarted romantic type which posits the individual who dreams of escaping the banality of his mundane existence only to be confronted by the realisation that nostalgia is the land of the dead, inhabited by the civil caricatures who live on the other side of the white picket fences. The clash with the psychotic criminal, Frank, in BLUE VELVET is in fact a rush to reinforce a will to live. Again, the protagonist is trying to imagine the worst in order for him to purge his own dream. The down side of all this though is felt in the way one can detect a creeping form of fundamentalism. The fact that Jeffrey wears black clothes and accepts the idea of owning some dark areas of personality does not hide the fact that he can be viewed as a type of teenage moral crusader, his 50's innocence and propriety in open contrast with Franks, who reminds one of a 60's acid casualty, debouched by his own amoralism and excess. This clash of stereotyped opposites is repleated also in the depiction of the secondary characters, the polaric contrast between Dorothy and Sandy comes from their divergent roles as embodiments of cinematic female types. This is shown by Dorothy's association with the 40's femme fatale and Sandys with the 50's high school prom queen. Lynch being aware to some degree of this simplistic world view tries to soften it with a type of black comedy which, in the end, implies that though Jeffrey has been successful in his encounter with the dark side of life his return to domestic bliss within his own middle-class environment is such an artificial construct that his victory takes on a pathetic feeling of plasticity, thus suggesting that banal ordinariness may be a more intolerable hell than the one of sexual turmoil he has so recently conquered.

Though Lynch has denied it, it seems unquestionable that Jeffrey is in fact a direct projection of his creator. In his description of voyeurism Lynch talks about the attraction of looking in on other people and places, and that cinema enables us all to do this within the safety of relatively secure confines. he then goes on to speculate on what would happen if somebody actually wanted to take this further and started to spy on "real" people and this is exactly what Jeffrey does in the film. He has become a direct fantasy adventurer for Lynch's own delectation.

In ERASERHEAD it could be said that Henry was also a surrogate projection, generated by the insecure emotions felt at the time by Lynch, Henrys unresponsive attitude becoming the subliminal manifestation of his creators fear of responsibility. Jeffrey, though also being a surrogate for Lynch is a much more confident protagonist. He is eager to confront whatever fate puts before him, an archetypal pioneer bursting with eager resolve even if his alter ego is safe all the time in the film laboratory. Even though BLUE VELVET is less tactile than the grimy ERASERHEAD it is still no less true to what I believe is the painterly approach that Lynch has applied to the making of his films since his earliest student beginnings, the idea for BLUE VELVET came not from any indepth examination of sexual themes but simply from the images and moods suggested by a subjective reading of the sugary Bobby Vinton song. Atmosphere was the first thing to be realised in the creating of the film, it is then that the characters are conceived, born from the mood of the loose idea. This is an attempt at making form and content indivisible in that Lynch is trying to make a film which does not obviously present ideas about removed subjects but rather a complete cinematic experience with psychologically atmospheric intent. An overview of all Lynchs present work reveals a strong undercurrent of Romanticism and by looking at this trend we come closest to uncovering the real meanings behind the mood.

The Unpleasure Principal in BLUE VELVET is felt by the way in which a black and white world view does not deal adequately in the resolution of identity crisis. The villain of the film, Frank Booth, though on first viewing quite overpowering in his portrayal of moral corruption is, nevertheless, as much a victim in his deranged state of psychosis as Jeffrey is in his pristine form of moral superiority. But Jeffrey needs Frank in order for him to measure his own effective use as a moral individual. Jeffrey embodies the middle-class anxiety of being seen as neither hot nor cold but indifferent. Like the souls who in Dantes INFERNO are accepted by neither heaven or hell because of their inherent lack of any sensibility either positive or negative. Lynchs Romantic imagination is projected onto Jeffrey, who from the start is bent on action. He manages to escape the ordinariness of middle-class existence and its security and then finds himself confronting sexual awakening in the form of Dorothy Vallens, a woman who in her obviously dangerous and attractive way is most obviously an adolescent embodiment of sexual fantasy and fear, this is woman as danger and desire and so is acutely

threatening to the young male. But, Jeffrey is able to circumscribe this confrontation by the realisation that Dorothy is also a victim, this situation gives the eager youth the opportunity to subordinate the threat posed by the woman and thus to take on the mantle of boy wonder and consequently her means of salvation. One of the most telling scenes in the film comes towards the end when Dorothy appears, out of the blue, in front of Sandys home, she is naked and battered. She clings to Jeffrey who is obviously unnerved due to the fact that a part of another world has suddenly come into contact with the seemingly civilised one that he lives in with Sandy. At this point though Jeffrey remains composed enough to retain the moral high ground, his actions seem to, at this point, inadvertently suggest that Dorothy has been playing with fire and has now been more than sufficiently burned, the only thing now left to be done is to finish the job by exterminating Frank and so ensuring that normality can return.

Lynchs contradictory interjection of humour is an attempt at deflating the simplicity of his moralism, but future works, in particular TWIN PEAKS, reinforce his belief in the Romantic hero. Sexuality in BLUE VELVET, though dealt with in a more original way than most recent films, comes out as the boser, the final equation identifies it as the rock of all danger and something to be feared.

WILD AT HEART can be seen to operate on two distinct levels, it can be compared in somewhat similar terms to THE ELEPHANT MAN in so far as it is not Lynchs own personally created idea, yet it holds the potential for Lynch to bring his own unique style to bear on its creation. It also affords him the opportunity of distance and so a chance to polish up on his direction. Taking this view corresponds somewhat to the end result after all WILD AT HEART, was stylish if nothing else. The other line of thought, if the more relevant does not auger well for the quality of Lynchs artistic progress. This view sees in WILD AT HEART a breakdown of the Lynchian format of mood withing the more open mise-en-scene of the road movie. Here Lynch seems to lose his hold of what really belongs and what doesn't, he seems how to be deliberately contriving spectacle in order to make up for his lack of authentic mood manipulation. Perhaps this separating of possible intentions is too absolutist an approach. What maybe a more fruitful line of enquiry is to see in WILD AT HEART a definite strategy by its director to escape the claustrophobia of the unconscious, while trying at the same time to hold onto a thread of a thematic exposition. This film is also the most satirical he has produced so far, its examination of modern heroics leads one to consider that perhaps Lynch is beginning to adopt a more cynical attitude towards cinema in general.

Superficially WILD AT HEART is a Rock and Roll romance, a tale of teenage rebels (it could nearly be imagined as a musical) and their attempted escape from adult conformity. The heroine Lula is the archetepical little rich bitch, running from mothers clutches while Sailor, as the rebel without a cause, conforms to the staple heroic image of Rocks more popular and mythological male types. He is the Johnny B. Good of the Chuck Berry Classic, or a fugitive criminal from one of Johnny Cashes early Rockabilly songs. Together they set out on a road journey through the southern states of America, (birth place of Rock and Roll) intermittently stopping at seedy roadside motels to discuss the meaning of life and to engage in steamy sex sessions. Through the machinations of Lula's scheming and jealous mother their journey comes to a halt in a small ghost town in Texas. Here Sailor is forced to confront his past, though succeeding in this he ends up for a short time in prison. On his release he is posed with the problem of either staying a rebel or becoming a family man, after a quick crisis he opts for the role of father and husband, thus ending the film.

The satirising of these herotypes from popular pulp fiction is evident from the start through Lynchs direction though at the same time Lynch is quite affectionate towards them. If we compare Sailor, for instance, with Jeffrey or agent Cooper from TWIN PEAKS, it becomes clear that he lacks their sense of spiritual presence. Sailor is outwardly a great deal more primal than they are, he does in fact incriminate himself right from the start, where in the very first scene, when confronted by an knife-wielding henchman he manages to disarm him whereupon he proceeds to batter his assailants brains out against a wall. The grativity of this scene sets Sailor up as a violent hero whose charisma comes from his wildness alone. This violent charm is the defining quality of the sexual tension in the film. Lula's mother desires Sailor, because he embodies a certain form of freedom, which she does not have. Sailor rejects her and the corrupt world in which she lives, he prefers the freedom of the road and the companionship of her young daughter Lula. The mothers supposed interest in her daughters safety is merely a front disguising her own jealousy, a jealousy which is from a spiteful older woman yearning for youth. It becomes more obvious that the films seriousness is to be taken with a pinch of salt when the actual road adventure starts to unfold.

Sailor's character for instance is based on an assemblage of clichéd images ranging from Elvis Presley and James Dean to Sid Vicious and Clyde Barrow, even his snake-skin jacket is a borrowed symbol coming directly from the Sydney Lumet film THE FUGITIVE KIND which was based on the Tennessee Williams play ORPHEUS DESCENDING. In the film Marlon Brando plays a life hardened beatnik musician who dons a snake-skin jacket, an icon of his individuality, claimed also by Sailor. The major difference between these two characters is that Brando aspires, albeit in a hamfisted way, to being a poet. Sailor on the other hand is not so ambitious, his role is a kind of satirical homage to the Brando role. Lula is equally colored by clichéd forms of youthful aggression and escapism but her role is much more subordinated.

As their journey unfolds a clearer picture emerges of these two teenage rebels, their search for life is in fact no more than a form of escapism and denial. At one point in the film Lula is trying to tune the car radio in to a music channel, but the only stations she is able to find are those of a news and information type, one after another these news bulletins recite a litany of the most horrendous kinds of natural calamities, each outdoing the previous in their grievousness. In a fit of petulant rage she demands that Sailor should find some music. This he manages to do, then pulling the car over to the side of the road they both leap out and start to do a violent dance in tandem with the trash-punk music coming from the radio, their mock violence in open contrast to the stream of real horror spewed from the radio only moments before. A similar contrast of a real and artificial violence is shown when Sailor and Lula happen upon a road accident at night, while driving through the desert. Here they find a young woman bleeding to death among the wreckage of a car in which her family have all perished. This little slice of life takes on nightmare proportions in the minds of our two adventurers who are unable to bring any comfort to the dying girl. Of all Lynch's films to date WILD AT HEART (after DUNE at least) is the least concerned with Lynch projecting himself onto his character creations. The distance that Lynch uses is perhaps an attempt at scrutinising the whole role of the hero as he copes with the darkness in nature.

For Sailor and Lula there is no real home, the use of references to THE WIZARD OF OZ, in Lula's case show up this irony. Her home is the prison of her mother's madness, coupled with the memories of sexual abuse by her uncle and Sailor's is the world of petty crime and prison. In

the films final scenes, we see Sailor being released from prison, waiting for him is Lula and their son. Sailor is thrown into a dilemma should he accept a domestic role as father and family man, or return to the road. In a piece of kitschy theatricality the good fairy intervenes (a reincarnation of the mechanical Robin from BLUE VELVET). Sailor suddenly sees the light, he has finally found a real home. One gets the feeling by the end of WILD AT HEART that the whole hard-boiled milieu of the road movie has been sent up by its director. Even as bad as the villains appear they do become caricatures after further scrutiny. Everything becomes over-developed, at one stage Lynch even tries adopting the deliberate bad taste style used by directors such as John Waters. If you take the view that Lynch is deliberately lampooning the over emphasised Romantic heroes of the road movie, then the film seems to justify itself a little more. What is not clear however, is whether this satirical strain is as deliberate as it may seem. In ways already stated maybe WILD AT HEART, is a failure on Lynch's behalf, to deal with character and plot when they become necessary to sustain coherence. The use of satire may actually be an attempt, by Lynch, to cover up his own directional shortcomings. Lynch does seem to be at his best when dealing with his own subjectively created environments. In ERASERHEAD and BLUE VELVET, these environments are the direct manifestations of unconscious projection. They exist in their moodiness as much, if not more than, the people who inhabit them. This does not hold true of WILD AT HEART, Lynch does not "own" this world, it is obviously second hand and no amount of Lynchian filmatic mannerisms can cover up the void in which his two protagonists flounder.

In TWIN PEAKS, we are back on familiar territory, the journey from personal oblivion as represented by Henry in ERASERHEAD, on into BLUE VELVET where salvation is gained but not totally secured, has for the moment come to a halt in the form of this television serial. TWIN PEAKS, has yet again afforded Lynch the opportunity of projecting himself, thereby creating an alter-ego on screen. This time this takes form in the character of F.B.I. agent Dale Cooper. Lynch returns in TWIN PEAKS, to the north-west town life of his youth. He has posited in the role of agent Cooper (Cooper could be a more grown-up version of Jeffrey) the qualities of latter day Van Helsing, the vampire hunter and physician from Bram Stoker's novel DRACULA. Whereas, Van Helsing's dualistic talents come from his being both a physician and occultist,

Coopers gifts are manifested in his ability to transcend the polarities of city and country life, he brings with him to Twin Peaks the professional skills of his police abilities, gained from the realities of dealing with city crime. But coupled with this, is an ability to understand the more "spiritual" aspects of the country life. Twin Peaks can be seen as Coopers dream, a dream summoned by an individual who feels duty bound to be more than just a crime fighter, his talents must also be applied to the task of ridding this world of more ethereal forms of evil. TWIN PEAKS, is a world which is coloured in equal portions, it, exists both in a real and unconscious way, this is best illustrated by the now familiar Lynchian ploy of mixing period detail, on one extreme you have the stock 50's look, Wurlitzer juke-boxes and ice cream parlours black leather jackets and motor bikes and at the other end of the scale, we see contemporary style which for the most part is depicted negatively and in more human terms. It is the drug dealer and corrupt business, man who represent the ugly here and now, 50's innocence versus 1990's corruption. The films sound track even manages to incorporate this balance, Angelo Badalamenti's score is made up of a mixture between 50's pop and modern synthesiser music.

Thematically the most obvious failing of TWIN PEAKS is its adoption of a semi-mystical tone, this does not become overtly evident until well into the series, rather than adding to the atmosphere of intrigue it over melo-dramatises the mood making it less interesting as a thriller. If WILD AT HEART saw Lynch beginning to repeat himself in certain stylistic devices then TWIN PEAKS has finally exhausted his theme of the struggle between good and bad. In a way TWIN PEAKS undoes the feelings of mystery and atmosphere which surrounded the moods of previous work, it is an unsatisfactory conclusion in that it lends credibility to an exteriority of religious or mystical zeal. The primary given to Lynchs creating of atmosphere is not enough in the case of TWIN PEAKS to carry the over all project as much as it tries to seduce the viewer with its dreamy ambience. This serial, though excused under the guise of being innovatory as a piece of television drama, does not in the final analysis stand up in any real artistic sense, maybe this is due to the fact it suffers from too many different directors. The mixed media sensibility that Lynch has previously executed in the making of previous films is also missing here. It is as if he has accepted his calling as firstly

a film-maker and secondly an artist. This observation can be equally applied to WILD AT HEART in the way it aspired to being a stylish film rather than a Lynchian one.

TWIN PEAKS is familiar ground for Lynch, the problem however, is the way in which the search for ways of preserving the dream of transcendence by confronting the demons inherent in the act has become trivialised by the inclusion of too much periphery detail and also by the main protagonist himself. In his androgynous state of mental and spiritual deanliness agent Cooper shows very little of the veniality of previous Lynch protagonists. he may have the eccentric character qualities for real lack of emotional response.

The whole notion of good and evil has finally been reduced by Lynch himself, he has located the evil as being "out there", in the primal woods, the only way that this archaic force can be challenged is by gnostic spiritualism. It is unfortunate for Lynch that this strain of half-baked mysticism has finally gained an upper-hand because it does have a direct retrospective effect on the viewing of past work. The moods and atmosphere that seemed initially so strong and irreducible in the two earlier films appear, in the light of Twin Peaks, to be more open to scrutiny, the anti-septic purity experienced in TWIN PEAKS, makes one wonder about Lynch's ideas on good and evil in general. The villains of BLUE VELVET were seen to be those people from the lower side of town, this and the almost complete exclusion of ethnic peoples in any of his films to date tend to give a picture of Lynch's world as being curiously and exclusively white, male, Anglo-Saxon, whether this is a deliberate trend or not is, at this point hard to say but it does illuminate the fact that Lynch's world view, on one level, does seem quite narrow for some one who lives and works in a country made up of so many divergent nationalities, and social types. Lynch's first important films, ERASERHEAD and BLUE VELVET, were both originally explorative in style and theme. Both had indifferent ways a self-generating intensity which seems sadly lacking in his most recent work.

CONCLUSION

On starting this essay I attempted to define a strand of artistic mood which I labelled for convenience sake The Unpleasure Principal, this was then used to convey what I believe was a feeling of unease, perceivable in this particular case in the cinematic work of the director David Lynch. It is important though to clarify any misconception that the reader might have of how I view this unwilling and subjective idea as it is traced through Lynch's filmatic oeuvre, it must be made clear that this Unpleasure has, with in reference to WILD AT HEART and TWIN PEAKS become more evidently self-conscious and therefore less interesting.

By localising the terms Modern and Post-Modern to the placing of Lynch's films, I would forward the following speculation, that ERASERHEAD and BLUE VELVET are Modernist in so far as they are more formally autonomous in their aims, whereas WILD AT HEART and TWIN PEAKS seem to quote and refer directly to other films, in this they embody two of the major defining attributes of Post-Modernity in its cultural form, namely the use of pastiche and the use of quote. It is arguable that all of Lynch's films can be classed as Post-Modern in that they have been produced within a particular historic time period which has now come to be known as the Post-Modern, however, I believe that this is an unhelpful way of getting some kind of understanding of why and how Lynch has gone the road he has. The impetus for Lynch, in the early phase of his film making career, was fired by an intense interest in the substance of objects and things, this he combined with a feeling for the creating of specific ambiances, sound as well held a much more obvious importance, especially in the production of ERASERHEAD and THE ELEPHANT MAN, all mediums were controlled by Lynch in a very direct way he has also described how his forming of the film script came from his immersion in this visually and sensory heightened state, what emerged as text was usually in the form of a kind of free-form prose style, unspecific in an objective way, but highly suggestive in its cinematic implications. This unliteral style is also mirrored in the plotting of the films narrative structure, rather than the conventional procedure of story-boarding each individual scene, Lynch, having established a loose script, proceeds by contriving a series of seventy individual set-ups which become interlinked by unplanned directorial forming. In this

way the film becomes self-generating, the logic or anti-logic builds internally. This completely subjective creating is characteristically the working method of the modernist artist, the author of the complete work, who, though aware of a larger art world, is nevertheless working in a way which allows for the incorporating of elements not inherently to do with other art forms in particular, all influences are sublimated in order to make something which appears to be new.

Where Lynch first started to adopt, though maybe not deleiberately, a more openly Post-Modern attitude was, while involved in the making of the science-fiction film DUNE, Lynch's version of the Frank Herbert novel was a financial and critical disaster, his handling of an idea which was concerned with the portrayal of the vastness of space and time, became more than he could cope with, for a director whose powerw of feeling lay in the creating of contained psychological and unconscious micro-cosms, here the hugeness of everything became to over-whelming for him. The only real stamp he left on, the film was shown by those, few scenes in which his obsessive interest in biological corruption, imparted a typically Lynchian stain on this other wise undistinguished cinematic venture, but the important point to be made here is exactly the way in which he has started to send himself up even if, albeit, unwittingly. This becomes more clear when looking at the cinematic style of WILD AT HEART, however, it must be pointed out that although BLUE VELVET was made after the DUNE disaster, it does not belong in a Post-Modern class of description, even if it is more obviously influenced in style by other cinema. BLUE VELVET, inspite of its more interfered with conception (in comparision with ERASERHEAD), does not rely on a reference with it, to other genres to define its own artistic goals, it defies classification because it manages to transend the pigeon-holing of genre types. One negative defining feature of Post-Modernism is a view of it as a time of accute artistic laziness, in this way it affords the contemporary artist a chance to circumscribe the mental and spiritual agitation of actually engaging with reality in any serious way. In its coolness, artistic action is now distancing itself from, the uncomfortable task of trying to make some sense, out of the present cultural chaos, in the name of irony and deconstruction the Post-Modern artist can pretend that he or she is actually engaging with the problem when in fact, most of the time they are merely reflecting it without any effort to interpretation being attempted. This laziness has become

evident in Lynch's latest work, his films have become more governed by spectacle and self-conscious artifice, this has reached a most banal level in the serial TWIN PEAKS, by using the conventions of the Soap Opera format, Lynch proposes to use this as a device, to enable him to sneak in by the back door as it were, the more mysterious aims of his work. Sadly however, this does not quite come off, for on the level of Soap Opera, it is obvious that the characters are merely filling in time, in one superficial way they are simply covering up the space in between the surges of dramatic action, this makes them seem more lacking in real substance and they become simply two dimensional.

If BLUE VELVET was an attempt at ordering the chaos, even if this order seemed built on quite shakey foundations, then TWIN PEAKS is a surrender to it. One gets the feeling that Lynch is becoming tired of his own themes and this is not surprising, since the closure suggested by TWIN PEAKS, shows that Lynch may have become a Hindu. One wonders in what direction Lynch will now go, having seemed to have turned his back on the more rigorous artistic practices of his earlier directorial style. It is possible that future projects will find Lynch in the more American mode of director for hire, rather than the more European one of director as auteur.

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