

## **The Aporia of Narrative Subjectivation: David Lynch's Hollywood Trilogy and the Limits of Self-Narration**

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In contemporary culture, self-narratives have become a dominant mode of subject formation, shaping personal identity through storytelling. However, this mode of narrative subjectivation is fraught with contradictions. David Lynch's Hollywood Trilogy—*Lost Highway* (1997), *Mulholland Drive* (2001), and *Inland Empire* (2006)—offers a radical aesthetic critique of the notion that subjectivity can be fully constituted through self-narration. By systematically dismantling classical cinematic storytelling and replacing it with a fragmented, post-narrative aesthetic devoid of a coherent fabula and self-identical protagonists, Lynch's films expose the inherent aporia of narrative subjectivation: the moment when self-narration collapses into incoherence, disintegration, and ultimately, post-narrative chaos. As narration is both an aesthetic and a social phenomenon, cinema—and especially Lynch's neo-surrealist work—provides a particularly apt medium for interrogating the mechanisms and limitations of narrative subjectivation.

Drawing on philosophical aesthetics, film theory and critical theory, this paper argues that Lynch's films deconstruct the ideological premise that individuals can achieve coherence through autobiographical storytelling. Instead, they reveal that self-narratives are always haunted by the very contingency and incoherence they seek to overcome. In *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*, the protagonists' identities fracture under the weight of their own narrative constructions, leading to uncanny loops of repetition and self-destruction. *Inland Empire* radicalizes this theme on a formal level, dissolving narrative continuity altogether. The film portrays a subjectivity no longer bound to a structured plot but instead existing as a series of fragmented, free-floating moments. In doing so, it exposes the traumatic consequences of losing one's self-narration—a trauma that, paradoxically, is generated by the subject's very attempt to narrate itself.

However, *Inland Empire* does more than merely depict the collapse of self-narration; it also gestures toward its utopian potential. The film's post-narrative aesthetic does not signify mere dissolution but rather opens up new possibilities for subjectivity—ones that embrace receptivity, multiplicity, and affective intensities beyond the constraints of storytelling. By situating Lynch's aesthetics within broader debates on subjectivation, narrativity, and the ethics of self-representation, this paper contributes to the transdisciplinary discourse on the limits of self-narratives. It suggests that self-narration, rather than offering a stable foundation for identity, is marked by inherent limitations and moments of rupture. By tracing these limits in Lynch's films, this paper also explores how post-narrative subjectivity—while unsettling—can open up new, less constrained forms of self-relation and experience.