

# Secondary Places

Imagination and Memory  
of a Reverse-Order Universe

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# Preface

The title “Secondary Places” was determined by ruling out more misleading options. The word second or secondary comes with the connotation of inferiority or lateness, so “Second Place” sounded too much like the award given to a work that, although it had merits, did not quite measure up. “Second Thoughts” was too revisionary-sounding. “Second Nature” was too confident; its mastery implied instinct rather than craft. *Secondo me* in Italian is the authoritarian “according to me,” with *secondo* (following) in other circumstances indicating subservience. What is second has to come to terms with what is or was first. “In the first place” means that we are already seeing things from a non-first point of view and have to turn our gaze to things left behind. Second-ness would ring bells in philosophy’s tall tower and oblige me to acknowledge C. S. Peirce’s famous firstness, secondness, and thirdness.<sup>1</sup>

“Place” came into the title from the idea that, whenever we turn from what’s first to what’s second, it’s a whole new world, not just a backstage of props or alternates. *The Second Place* is originally a theological idea: when the body dies, the soul continues, out of momentum or ethical obligation, to achieve a second death. In the impossible/Real zone between death one and death two, travel is assigned to cleanse the soul from its mortal weights: errors, misconceptions, intentional and unintentional harm to others. It’s a sin filter, just as Dante imagined, and the spacetime of this filter is structurally similar in all cultures. Descent, the theme of *katabasis*, requires the secondary spaces of funerary trespass to be geophysical, at least to start with, so metaphors about caverns with hidden treasures, crystals concealed within formless constraining, oppressive materialities of mud, flood, and shit, abound in all folklores.<sup>2</sup>

More often, this eschatological space is converted into less spooky conventional situations on top of the geophysical underground. The musical *Wicked* showed us Oz from the Wicked Witch of the West’s point of view, better in many ways than Dorothy’s pilgrim narrative in the original *The Wizard of Oz*. Changing the point of view is not a matter of simply shifting the angle of view; the move comes with its own physics and chemistry, its own historical/emotional baggage, its own manner of seeing things. The new optical angle is both inter-subjective and trans-subjective. It challenges the primary world that was its original basis. The fusion of optical with metaphysical change is obvious in the traditional places of the secondary, dreams and art. And, because dreams and art can have dreams and art inside them, concentric-

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<sup>1</sup> Peircean secondness is the actuality that stops the firstness of possibility in its tracks. My second is the actuality that suspends the one-two-three count itself by returning what is repressed (“secondary” by virtue of a conscious, salient primary) to a “pre-first” position. In Gore Vidal’s reply to a reporter’s question, “Was your first sexual experience with a man or a woman,” his reply was “I was too polite to ask.” His reflexive  $A_A$  of the Q&A returns to a pre-Q position ( $AQA$ ) to (hopefully) make the reporter realize that it is he/she who is now asking the impolite question. Such instances of metalepsis (“metonymy of metonymy”) involve what is customarily disregarded — frames, grammars, pre-suppositions, etc. — by taking them from the back of the line to the front, or “pre-front.” The reporter is in the position of having an audience different from the one he/she had constructed as the frame around the Q&A process. The Q&A has been doubly framed by metalepsis. The frame and its officiant has been put on-stage.

<sup>2</sup> The definitive root documentation can be found in the article on “Katabasis” in Pauly-Wissowa’s *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (1839–1978) but Victor Turner’s work on liminality’s function in initiation/re-birth rituals also establishes the antiquity and uniformity of the descent theme. Victor Turner, Roger Abrahams, and Alfred Harris, *The Ritual Process : Structure and Anti-Structure* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2017).

ity confers an even greater revelation–potential on secondariness. Second worlds can create fantasies that reality cannot afford or contrive to construct. Their ersatz quality, far from being a defect, is their unique advantage, a means of challenging the primary; a claim that not only is the secondary more effective, attractive, and accessible — it is *more real*.

Place materializes the power of the secondary through its ability to carry, into its interior, the very *function and form of distinction* between the primary and the secondary. This is the theme of the “inside frame,” the means by which the dream can experience dreaming, the story to include other stories, and life to experience its own death. The inside frame of the secondary has the advantage of being able to retroactively acknowledge the role of the first frame, the frame “that gave it life,” so to speak. This is an advantage that firstness can barely manage to conceive, but the inside frame can use simple mockery to allow its audience a means of speculating on profound paradoxes without too much fuss. When Boris Yelnikoff in Woody Allen’s 2009 comedy film *Whatever Works* faces the camera to deliver a monolog directly to the audience, he turns to his friends sitting in a nearby outdoor café and wonders how they haven’t noticed that they are being watched by spectators sitting in the dark. This breaks the rule by which actors are not allowed to acknowledge the “fourth wall,” the transparent side of the filmic production space occupied first by cameras, lights, etc. is one of the “axioms” of making a film. While Boris refers to it directly, he comically holds his fellow actors to the rule.<sup>3</sup> Boris uses secondness within the simulated firstness of the filmic representation to say that in real life we, the audience, may also have a “fourth wall” with some audience — God? Ancestors? — who may be watching us in their own dark auditoriums. Secondness has a low–cost way of incorporating expensive philosophical matters into works of art (or dreams), so that nearly everyone can, in the lightness of joking, have access to a sophisticated metaphysical conjecture.

Secondariness is a consequence of our “first sense” of being present in a world with others, in scenes that don’t go away simply because we leave them. The first world stands up to interrogation about its firstness, but there are sufficient gaps and shadows to make us aware, not just of hypothetical alternative realities but of scale dysfunction of realities *inside* realities: the inaccessible cosmic container that encloses our world and, at the opposite scale, fascination with the small, beginning with toys, continuing with animals and pets and the strictly bounded experiences of rituals, works of art, buildings, and places. The feeling that entry into the secondary space of a bounded interior is also entry into a new, alternative reality grows even more with our sophisticated bondings with the worlds–within–worlds of books, paintings, films, and computer screens. But, this book is not an inventory of such secondary places. The samples assembled are meant to show, economically, how the secondary works.

Authority of the primary comes with a lack that can’t be fulfilled. And, perhaps because nobody can occupy our point of view in both space and time, the point that gives us confidence that our position–specific presence is a fountain of facts, the name of Nobody itself becomes the first resident of the Secondary. The other we need, rhetorically, to ground our isolated point of view model of knowledge, is the secondary

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<sup>3</sup> Woody Allan has had a long fascination with breaking fourth–wall rules. In *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985), the filmic character Tom Baxter steps out of the film to woo Cecilia, a film fan sitting in the audience. The fourth wall is easily crossed in the production stage, where actors and production crew can “invade” each others domains in the process of setting up a scene. But, when filming begins, the two spaces must be scrupulously separated; for example, the boom microphone must be kept constantly out of the frame. Yet, within a film, the production of a film can be, just as anything that happens in real life, represented “from the side.”

the primary needs, and the otherness, in terms of knowledge as a *view*, is the central defining presence of parallax, which I will take up in chapter one.

### *The secondary in motion*

It would be hard to find a better example of how secondary places constitute the slyest modality of high art than Vladimir Nabokov's masterpiece, *Pale Fire* (1962), a novel about the theft of a freshly dead poet's last work, kidnapped and furtively revised with line-by-line annotations so outrageous to anyone who had read the original poem that simple abduction becomes extreme rendition. The novel plays out the idea of the secondary in the way the thief, whose delusions (valid claims?) that he is the deposed King of Zembla, a country said to exist, vaguely, in north-eastern Europe, could be easily dismissed were not his confidence in revising the poem so exquisitely detailed.

We have the primary poem's story and the secondary account of the thief, a character who is, from the first poem's point of view, contingent in the extreme. He was simply a neighbor of the poet, possibly an annoying pest who bored the poet with stories of his former life in Eastern Europe. A visiting faculty in Slavic Languages at the poet's college in the Northeast U. S. ("New Wye"), his *hauteur* tips us off that Nabokov is making clever use of the device of the defective or unreliable narrator, whose story can be read with more than just a grain of salt by a knowing audience able to see, between the lines, something else happening beyond the narrator's misdirections. Defective/unreliable narrators offer the most commonplace deployments of secondary literature, because their presence allows audiences to see the shift in points of view as a kind of anamorphic blur or stain. The damaged picture does not mean that there is a superior one free of flaws. It simply means that there are other views, some more, some less damaged, but that turning from the one to the others reveals a new level of truths. All we need to know is that the narrator has missed the point, but in *Pale Fire* something remarkable and important happens. The reality of the idiot who has stolen the poem and bored us with his nonsense fantasies about Zembla becomes more and more appealing. It becomes hard to dismiss the secondary option as simply defective. We don't move beyond it to a "correction," but instead we get *inside it* as we ourselves were caught in the necessity of "falsifying" the original in any and every act of reading. We see ourselves, as readers, as the kin of the would-be king. Inside the defective narrator's trash-pile of a ruined poem, we sense a hidden order that, defying any aspiration to perspectival clarity, presents its own novel form of truth. This truth is in fact more resilient than any of the characterizations in the "original" poem. It is a truth that *belongs to us* as a result of our reading, our doubt, our incredulity, and our own investment in the shadow that seems to detach and move on its own. It is the truth that we are the real thieves. We know this more than we know the truth of John Shade, the author of the original poem that opens the novel. And, in Nabokov's choice of names, we see that we are being invited to allow the shadow to overpower the shade.

Secondary places are *already present* within primary ones, in the way that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's story was "waiting to be told" before Tom Stoppard wrote the play where the comic duo tells its own story about their friend, the melancholic Danish Prince.<sup>4</sup> What makes this play funny is not so much the personalities of the two chums or their snarky gag lines but the premise of having a comedy found ready-

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<sup>4</sup> Tom Stoppard, *Rosencratz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, screenplay; performed Edinburgh Festival Fringe, 1966. Film: Tom Stoppard, director (Hollywood, CA: MGM Studios, 1990).

made inside this starkly bitter tragedy. This is the secondary at its existential best. We see that there are no “pure categories” without skeletons — or clowns — in the closet (or cellar, or attic).<sup>5</sup> Each perspective contains others simply by trying to exclude them with their dominating monocular vision. The secondary is axiomatic within each assertion of the primary. It is even possible to say that the secondary, as an axiom, comes before the primary, in the sense that the primary emerges from a presumed set of possibilities.

*Everywhere and nowhere*

This is not an encyclopedia, atlas, or *catalogue raisonnée* of secondary places. An exhaustive inventory would in any event be impossible, because every representation and dream is a secondary place, with or without self-reference to the implicit inside frame that is its permanent mark of secondariness. Secondary places are open to exploration where the expedition runs across unexpected tribes, possibly cannibals; in other cases there are implausible/impassible mountain ranges. In the event that the plane crashes or the ship wrecks, there are narrow passages opening on to Shangri-Las (*Lost Horizon*, 1931) that may actually be the consolidated collective dream of those who died in the accident, in which case the death dream reveals itself an equal to *Pale Fire*'s status as a paradigm exemplar.<sup>6</sup> Then, of course, the question of death as itself the Meta-Secondary comes into focus, and the Freudian death drive shows up late to the examination, wanting an extension. Hermes, the sponsor of this presumptuous applicant turns out to be more of a coach than a chaperon, and so we return to the question of theft, as if to live out *Pale Fire*'s advertised central theme.

Rather, this is a study of secondariness as such, which focuses on the means and consequences of the move from primary to secondary experience. By focusing on this one aspect, I follow in the footsteps of just a handful of authors and thinkers who have attempted such a distilled analysis. When Jorge Luis Borges wrote “Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*,” many took it to be a parody of “philological” literary criticism's stated ambition to take into account everything that could be known about an author's life and

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<sup>5</sup> It would be instructive to add Todd McGowan's idea that comedy derives from the failure to insulate conditions of lack and surplus, normally held apart by ideology and convention. In Stoppard's play, the comic pair lack the royalty that Hamlet finds in excess, thanks to the commands of his dead father's ghost. We can sympathize with Hamlet's struggle to suppress this excess as long as we identify with his idea of royal destiny, but if we relax this sympathy, we see Hamlet as “just” a college chum that Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern are visiting for a weekend of amusements. Todd McGowan, *Only a Joke Can Save Us: A Theory of Comedy* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 2017). The title of Stoppard's play refers to the clown-killing function implicit in tragedy, as in the death the fool in *King Lear*. The pair themselves evidence lack and excess. Rosenkrantz is a simple soul who takes things at face value; Guildenstern over-analyzes. Their complementarity signal the function of this secondary play and, in general, comedy's secondary relation to tragedy.

<sup>6</sup> I'm referring of course to Frank Capra's 1937 film, *Lost Horizon*, whose title is a thinly disguised synonym for the inside frame.

historical context.<sup>7</sup> Like a later parable about the country overtaken by the frenzy for representational exactitude that they covered every landscape and even every object with a 1:1 map (“On Exactitude in Science,” 1946), Menard labored to enter Cervantes’ world in its every micro-detail, to learn the turns and twists of 16c. Spanish, the quality of light falling on the Castilian writer’s desk, the sound of the quill, the ache in his phantom limb. When he manages at last to have reproduced Cervantes’ masterpiece word for word, Borges concludes that this secondary achievement was in fact superior. After all, Menard had to do by hard study and ingenious art what, to Cervantes, had come naturally.

What we may miss in this secondary project is that Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* was itself a masterpiece of the secondary. Quixote takes his start from his disheveled library, a metaphor for the rag-tag pile of incomplete plots and unresolved desires left behind by the authors of his day. Discontent with both the bad writing that had left characters with nothing to do or good writing that had failed to designate worthy heirs, Quixote took aim not just at literary shortcomings but at the prevailing realism of the day that sequestered and downgraded the real glory of stories as “mere fictions.” How could, for example, anyone with half a mind fail to see that a barber’s basin was, in fact, the Moorish King Mambrino’s battle helmet? Cervantes’ secondary relationship to the books in his own library launches his delusionary expedition into the world proper, where his correctional impulses set him apart as a fully secondary being, who sees poetic reality where others only see the ideology of utility. The knight-errant is cut from the same cloth as *Pale Fire*’s Kinbote, but the force of the secondary is such that these delusional boors end up convincing us, by the end of their novels, that they have been right all along! Their reality is stronger than ours; they pull truth out of fiction so confidently that we come to doubt that things work in any other way. The primary is a fake; the secondary, abject and deposed, returns us a new primary, full of glory.

Quixote, Nabokov and Borges could be considered to be sufficient navigational guides to the study of the secondary, but this project must avoid becoming just a collection of good examples. Thus, in the opening chapter, “Anachronism,” the question is put into the most general terms possible: that of time. Primary and secondary come from the first and second of temporal linearity, so the possibility that the second displaces the first inverts the order of time itself. Anachronism is, generally, any short-circuit that cuts into time’s lines, circles, or spirals to make impossible any primacy based on consecutive order alone. The experience of *déjà vu* is one form of anachronism, but in some cases we see in the primary instance signs of

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<sup>7</sup> While Borges’ parody is certainly relevant and funny, the reaction of New Criticism (grounding all meaning within the self-referential structures of the formal work) lays itself open to a subversive use of the secondary qualities of life and circumstance. Leroy Searle, “New Criticism,” in *the Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory*, ed. Michael Groden, Martin Kreiswirth, and Imre Szeman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, 2005). The Revenge of the Secondary, like the return of Freddy in *Hallowe’en*’s seemingly unending sequels, is tellingly monstrous, as the character of Kinbote in *Pale Fire* demonstrates. Even if, as Wimsatt and Beardsley argued (“The Intentional Fallacy,” 1946; “The Affective Fallacy,” 1949), the intentions and emotions not just of the writer but the reader as well are irrelevant, they are still present as an unconscious of the work; and, as all good Lacanians know, the unconscious always *returns*. The letter always gets to its destination, because (this is the essence of the secondary) its destination is where it ends up. The context has changed as a consequence of the act. Ground and figure have both reversed. Intentions can be ripped out like phone lines, but the phone will ring nonetheless, and its spooky continued functioning is, like the “part-object” that is the still-operational organ without a body (the severed hand in the horror movie that continues to play the piano), the persistent effectiveness of *mi-dire*, language pulverized to the point where, amongst the debris, crystals can be found.

prescience and clairvoyance. First attempts seem somehow to have the premonition that in some future age they will be revived, relived, and exonerated, “dancing to a tune that hadn’t yet been composed.”

Secondariness, as Plautus and Molière show, questions even the strongholds of self-certainty, the knowledge that the self is self-identical,  $A=A$ . The case of *Amphytrion* is extreme, however. There is no shortage of stories involving doubles, mistaken identities, counterfeits, and impersonations. Some of the spookiest of Gingrich tales are modernized in a 1945 British film, the thriller *Dead of Night*. Guests at an English country house entertain each other with tales of the supernatural, if anything to annoy the psychoanalyst, a refugee from Holland, who serves the audience as their representative skeptic who, like the audience, must be convinced.<sup>8</sup> However, he himself has the scariest of all the stories, an account of a ventriloquist who’s schizophrenia has allowed the dummy side of his brain to take over. This story anticipates Jacques Lacan’s startling claim that the unconscious establishes itself in the objectivity of the external world, not inside the head, and even involves its own version of Lacan’s Mirror Stage (the point at which a young child recognizes his/her image in the mirror).

*Dead of Night* proves that, possibly, the best place to track the secondary is in popular culture and ethnography, guided by some theory of the subject that allows for the subject’s own self-duplication of two antagonistic natures. There are two theories that advance sufficiently ambitious accounts: that of the 18c. Neapolitan philosopher of culture, Giambattista Vico, and Jacques Lacan (1901–1983), whose project of restoring and rehabilitating Freud’s key ideas. There are many more contemporary philosophers and critical theorists who could have been enlisted in this project of the secondary with equal or perhaps greater effects, but my economy depends on the anachronistic synergy that has not until this work been recognized, a synergy that makes it seem that “Vico must have been reading Lacan.” Lacan could be said to have “read” Vico indirectly, through the works of James Joyce, which interested him even as a young man. It could be said that *Finnegans Wake*, whose hero is the Here Comes Everybody persona of none other than Vico himself, is the masterpiece of secondariness, but this claim is beyond the scope of this work. The Vico–Lacan connection will challenge secondariness for the role of this work’s main character, but without the idea of secondary places, their connection would seem gratuitous.

Possibly, secondariness is more complicated than it looks because in general the matter of insides and outsides is not such a simple matter. A literary illustration of this is Georges Perec’s creation of small, negative interiors in his novel *A Void*, written entirely without any words using the letter “e.” The simple rule excluding a single letter results in a strange effect, or rather “situation,” as e-less substitute words appear in contexts calling for e-laden ones. Initially, the sense is simply that of a slightly odd way of writing, but as the unexpected replacements pile up, the reader begins, unconsciously, to expect them. Like the coin-tosses at the beginning of *Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, the string of non-e stand-ins becomes a

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<sup>8</sup> The trick of the skeptic representing the audience’s precarious balance within the conditions of “willing suspension of disbelief” is itself an example of secondariness, in that the audience inevitably transfers its sympathies to characters put on the spot to explain experiences they themselves can barely believe. This makes for a fiction supported most enthusiastically by those (the audience) who should be standing guard over tests of truth. The transfer is almost never noticed, and the result is an antipathy toward the skeptic. In the case of *Dead of Night*, when (spoiler alert) the psychoanalyst is murdered by the film’s protagonist, the architect with *déjà vu*, the fulfillment of his dream’s dreaded prophecy engenders a kind of audience jubilation, where thrill and revulsion combine to prove that Freudian–Lacanian *jouissance* (the presence of a death drive in the pleasure principle) is not so mysterious inside the movie theater.

running gag that, in itself, is not funny but which becomes transformative as a series. The reader finds him/herself on the other side without any memory of transition, like driving from Utah to Nevada.

Just so, the ripples from the simple act of banishing the letter “e” become the tsunami of the running gag made all the more absurdly hilarious because each new instance appears as inexplicably miraculous, like the coin landing heads every time in Stoppard’s play. The right hand holds the pencil while the left hand holds the paradox. In “secondary literature,” the implicit presence of alternative points of view is carried out to its sometimes absurd conclusion, and the ripples become waves large enough to devastate miles and miles of coastline. All that is needed is the palindromic reflection.

There is a secondary to the secondary. Finding examples of characters who have run away from their authors’ intended plots (Filipe Alfau’s *Locos, A Comedy of Gestures*, 1936) or, like Tom Baxter, the actor who steps out of cinema screen in Woody Allen’s *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985), can create quite a pile of samples to choose from, but another silent pile has been building: the fact that artists of all kinds and in all generations have seen the secondary as an universal structural condition whose options and outcomes have not changed from ancient times to present; yet, secondariness as such has been split into multiple personalities and techniques but never realized for the existentially central, remarkable force it is. No one has thought that such a simple trick would so strongly resist being explained. The fact that the secondary is in the repertoire of every culture and every period of history should, itself, be studied. This is not the pallid “question of intersubjectivity,” reduced to the situation ethics of Levinas’s face-to-face. This is the Lacanian (impossible) Other of the Other, which puts us face to face with the function of negation and antagonism and the anxiety of alienation and separation. And, Lacan’s Other, Vico, has his Other in the impossible conclusion that he must, while on some relaxing summer day in the countryside outside Naples, picked up a book of Lacan’s ....

Just as secondariness quickly jumps off the shelf to assert its claim to be nothing less than the whole library, thematic variations such as the lipogram, palindrome, and death-dream cosmicize into contextual issues enclosing this seemingly focused study of how 2 follows 1 and then it doesn’t. Secondariness doesn’t stop where you tell it, and there is more than a little leakage in the way this study’s theoretical anchors, Vico and Lacan, become “Vico” and “Lacan” in scare-quotes. The secondary can have unusual effects on standard philosophy, as Lacan himself points out in his book on *Transference* (Seminar VII, 1953–54). Somewhat intentionally, my limitations as a non-official reader of either philosophy or psychoanalysis have forced me to view both with an eye to fictional entities that have built up over time. Lacan’s insistence that he was *not* many things (art critic, philosopher, etc.) could not disguise the fact that he would have been able to play many roles with style and skill given the chance. He was a credible mathematician, a medical doctor, a close reader of ancient texts, a reputedly prodigious lover. Yet, it is more interesting to put him, as Bruce Fink has, in roles where he is somewhat out of character.<sup>9</sup>

Re-imagining Vico is easy, for Vico’s own self-reconstruction as a fictional character began early. He faked the year of his birth, possibly for astrological or Biblical reasons (to be age 33 at a particular time) or to re-align the date of one of his required annual addresses to the University of Naples faculty and student

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<sup>9</sup> See Bruce Fink’s detective fiction: *The Psychoanalytic Adventures of Inspector Canal* (London: Karnac Books, 2014); *The Adventures of Inspector Canal* (London: Karnac Books, 2011).

body, to allow an anecdote about a visiting official of the Inquisition to make sense.<sup>10</sup> He configured some of the already dismal facts of his family life (criminal son, mentally challenged wife) to credential himself as a fully certified melancholic, knowing in advance that his readership would be aware of the poetic and philosophical implications of this condition.<sup>11</sup> Whether or not Lacan attempted a fictional make-over (no scholar has ever explored this), Freudian theory of the Ego requires it. Within the network of symbolic relationships that require each human subject to be misidentified, we could say that true self-awareness requires us to “identify with misidentification.” Secundariness is the context of how we attempt to identify ourselves as human subjects; and our understanding of subjectivity requires us to put a new mask over the old ones. Certainly, there is no option for us to be totally candid. We are secondary to the core, and (according to psychoanalysis) at the core there is only a void.

The secondary could be said to “avoid the void.” Its choreography around blank spots accumulates and orders its empty encounters, to the point where the running joke gives way to a new order. The words for this are not in common use. The standard tricks of the secondary have recognizable names — the defective/unreliable narrator (*Pale Fire*), the lipogram (Perec’s *A Void*), ekphrasis (description in a work of art of another work of art), palindromic structures (including chiasmus), “body loading” (pick-pocket’s trick), siblings separated at birth (too many to name), “the wrong man” plots (again, too many to mention), misunderstandings (ditto). These should be enough to prove that the secondary is not small change in anybody’s pocket. And, when the matter of the secondary is connected to what Lacan called “between the two deaths,” the interval imagined to exist, after literal death, until the soul finds *symbolic* resolution, the territory of the death dream, premature burial, catalepsy, and the traditional rites of desiccating the corpse (and by extension the soul) come into play. The second death is the archaic Grand Paradigm for secundariness, and its vast ethnographical lore includes a psychic component, the generic uncanny, whose structure of two primary conditions, (1) the living subject fleeing from death and (2) the dead subject unaware of dying, generate the secondary’s Periodic Table of Elements. The oxygen and nitrogen of this Table are plentiful and common, but its Organesson and Nihonium are hard to find.

My aim is to establish a place for even hypothetical cases of secundariness even if a full account is impossible. Secundariness endures the curse of Cassandra. Its secundariness is permanent, radical, self-contained, and recursive. This is because the subject, in Lacan’s system, is secondary to the systems of signifiers that constitute and define subjectivity. The subject arrives “a day late and a dollar short.” Events condense the logic of this alienation; the out-of-place subject encounters empty places, wrong places, strange places. Secundariness casts subjects into roles of hysterics, in that the discourse of the hysteric directly addresses the relation of the system of signifiers to the anomalies: signifiers that are both inside and outside the system. This is why metalepsis, is central to hysteria and, more generally, secundariness. It is the form of metonymy that maps frame relations precisely in terms of an in-and-out, what Lacan called “extimacy.”

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<sup>10</sup> Donald Kunze, *Thought and Place: The Architecture of Eternal Places in the Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, Emory Vico Studies (New York and Bern: Peter Lang, 1986), revised on-line version, *Thought and Place: The Architecture of Imagination in the Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, accessed March 2018, <http://art3idea.psu.edu/locus/thought-place.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy; Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art* (London: Nelson, 1964).

When the subject arrives at the empty place, the question should be, what is holding this place open, what structures its emptiness? The function of pronouns in language, particularly their “orthographic” internal opposition of “deictic” (the communicating act) *versus* “anaphoric” (relations internal to the content) make place an effective means of studying the relations between the speaking act, *énonciation*, and the content of speech, *énoncé*.

Just as Cassandra was disbelieved *to the same degree* that her pronouncements were true, the former served as an index of the latter. Shame and honor, after all, are the crossed currents that constitute the dramatic palindrome of the “wrong man” — the wrongly accused whose abjection is directly correlated to his innocence.<sup>12</sup> Without this palindrome there could be no drama, no stories of vindication, no heroes journeys into unknown lands to see what there is to see. In other words, no Counts of Monte Cristo or Odysseuses. In voluntary or accidental confrontation with suffering, the hero’s passivity is the key to the tradition that makes the varieties of hell our primary places of learning. The error/*errare*/wandering formula, the *katabasis* (descent), the liminal trial of the initiates of all cultures, the failure — these are the cuisine of secondariness. We should not, however, fetishize failure but rather seek to comprehend the logic by which our experiential “realities” are in continual dynamic antagonism with the Real, which to us always appears as “a bad idea.” But of course, *A Study of Bad Ideas* would not have been an auspicious title for this work.

#### *Film theory?*

Secondariness is experienced generally in life, as a “primordial” condition of the subject’s relation to the Symbolic Order *via* the proliferation of “master signifiers” that, enigmatic or paradoxical or singular in themselves, work as constants (“eigenvalues” will be my preferred term) that, themselves unchanging, permit all else to vary. But, of course, only a few readers take to this Lacanian way of talking, and although examples *per se* are a bad idea (they frame one thing for one reader, something completely different for another reader), situations or “sites” can set up experimental bounds around materials that, when subject to an analytical critique, convert from the ordinary to the extraordinary. The only fair way to conduct such experiments is to use situations/sites accessible to all, and my favorite resources have been film first, painting second, architecture and literature third. In an important sense, architecture embeds within all forms, as the structure of space (and time) required for places to be places in the first place. But, because architecture for many is restricted to literal buildings, where functionality contends with other values, it is better to let the idea of architecture develop through media where its role can be clearly documented.

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<sup>12</sup> In Alfred Hitchcock’s film of this name, we are presented with the essence of the *dispositif* Gaston Bachelard articulated in his early essay on the philosophy of science, “La Surveillance Intellectuel de Soi,” in *Le Rationalism Appliqué* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1949), 65–81. Joan Copjec, in her study of this particular essay, wrote: “Now, although [Bachelard] had argued that the scientific subject was formed in and by the field of science, [he] had also maintained that the subject was never *fully* formed in this way. One of the reasons for this merely partial success, he theorized, was an obstacle that impeded the subject’s development; this obstacle he called the imaginary. But the problem with this imaginary, as Althusser later pointed out, was that it was itself largely untheorized and was thus (that is, almost by default) accepted by Bachelard as a *given*, as external and prior to rather than as an *effect* of historical determinations. The scientific subject was split, then, between two modes of thought: one governed by historically determined forms, the other by forms that were eternal, spontaneous, and almost purely mythical. (Joan Copjec, “The Orthopsychic Subject: Film Theory and the Reception of Lacan,” *October* 49 (Summer 1989): 57–58.) This split, and the fact of the *incompleteness* of the subject’s self-surveillance, define the essence of the secondary.

Using film, painting, architecture, literature for experimental purposes in no way qualifies me as a “primary” expert. Just as this book is about the secondary, I as a writer disavow the kind of insider expertise that normally is the main claim of any author to sell an idea. This could be seen as a feint to avoid criticism, but actually it is the declaration of a set of factual limitations that, while preventing me from presenting scholarly ideas about, say, Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalysis, force me to consider what a “secondary position” would reveal that a primary “heads-on” approach might miss. Certainly there are fewer obligations to address in any representative way, the scholarship galore that has been devoted to these two major, complex figures. Without a native speaker’s knowledge of French or German, many key concepts will remain out of reach to even the most energetic researcher. I am no exception. Secondariness examines itself using a secondary methodology, and later chapters will reveal the role of the *zairja*, an 11c. “anti-computer” constructed by Muslim, Jewish, and Christian mystics to “undo received ideas.” A modern *zairja* can consist of no more than a list of topics that are randomly compared with each other to produce hybrids that then add to the mix. A complement to this aleatory procedure is the idea of the “*ersatz* to *ansatz*” procedure to positing a guess — often a wild one — just to see what might happen. This could be compared to the stress tests used to challenge the sturdiness of financial institutions, or to the “worst case scenarios” projected in detail by military planners. The *ersatz* as such requires secondariness (or, some might say, tertiary- or quaternariness). It’s a story in a story, and once the concentricity idea takes hold, theory begins to lose its traditional interest in consolidation; it becomes willing to undergo disintegration. Within the methodology of studying secondariness, the *phenomena* of the secondary will have both planned and unplanned effects. It is thus important at this point for the reader to prepare for the kind of echoing that normally occurs only in fictionalized accounts of psychotic scholars whose ideas, like those of John Nash in the film *A Beautiful Mind* (2001), expand to fill the universe.

### *Suggested reading methods*

Most books are most profitably read in the order of their composition, but in some cases the linearity of the final product represents a circularity of thought, so some texts are better read from the index rather than the table of contents. Lacking an index, readers can (1) use a method of choosing texts/pages at random, to let blind chance have its say, or (2) make marginal notes that serve to link ideas that have been spread out over multiple chapters.

In the days before the printing press, books were so expensive that the usually wealthy owners of libraries would think nothing of “correcting” new purchases by cutting out or inserting pages from other books. This tradition predated by some five hundred years Julio Cortázar’s hypertext advice added to the standard reading of his *Rayuela*, 1963 (*Hopscotch*, 1966). Where the idea must be regarded as the superior, intended, and final product, the linear text must be warped, interrupted, bombed, torn, folded, and burned. This destructiveness is not just permissible on certain special occasions but necessary. To think that all texts are not really the means of smuggling secondary texts across the Boolean borders of two countries that are in reality one country split in the middle — well, that would be unfortunate.

The technical terminology in this work stems from two “specialty literatures”: the voluminous and, for many, incredibly difficult/terse psychoanalytic project of Jacques Lacan. Lacan’s wit was native to his oral lectures in French, dependent on puns, innuendos, allusions, and erudite references that resisted translation. Not until Bruce Fink’s heroic project to re-examine Lacan’s texts in detail did English speakers have a

chance at penetrating Lacan's detailed project, despite its clear aims and interests. Fink took Lacan's "excursions" into mathematics and topology seriously, insisting that they were, if patiently considered, both precise and enlightening. Still, Lacan's writings and even the wealth of attentive commentary by Paul Verhaeghe, Slavoj Žižek, Alenka Zupančič, Mladen Dolar, Renata Selac, and many others, basic Lacanian ideas lie outside of range of most readers. This in part is due to the fundamental distinction Lacan made between exposition and teaching. He did not make an effort to explain or argue; rather he sought to engage the reader/listener as a learner, not a spectator. The antagonism between text as argument, set *against* the reader in a kind of pitched battle, negatively charges the text by assuming that the point of writing is victory over the reader. Lacan sought to *enjoin* the reader/listener to follow but not necessarily agree. A text of this kind will always be confusing for readers who demand arguments presented as if to a jury in a courtroom.

This work depends on several of Lacan's significant accomplishments. First, Lacan was the first to assert the primacy of discourse over both private human mental states as well as public life. And, although he never claimed to have found any "inner core" of discourse, his four primary discourses (of the Master, University, Hysteric, and Analysis) make use of a palindromic relationship between a set series of "actants" (the barred subject, \$; the master signifier, S<sub>1</sub>; networks of symbolic relationships, S<sub>2</sub>; and the term he designated but never defined, the "object-cause of desire," the famous *objet petit a*). \$, S<sub>1</sub>, S<sub>2</sub>, and *a* dance in a circle cross a quadrated field labelled as Agent, Other, Production, and Truth, whose meanings I have seen as open to broad interpretation. Also, I regard the system of rotation open to interesting questions about how people come to appreciate the views of others, how discourses mix and match with each other, and (the Very Vichian Question) how they arise, change, and evolve. Discourse theory depends on Lacan's central project, a revisiting of Freud's basic ideas with the intention of correcting, collating, and extending them to cover all aspects of the nature of human Subjectivity. In the process, Lacan re-wired Freud's views on the dream, the joke, the unconscious, speech, and the use of space and time. While Lacan would be impossible without Freud, Freud would not make any sense at all without taking Lacan's "secondary positions" into account. In any project about the secondary, Lacan would have to be included as, *par excellence*, a thinker fully in the mode and spirit of the secondary.

To help the general reader with ideas that are specifically pitched in Lacan's difficult keys, I've added an appendix, not to replace such sturdy guides as Dany Nobus's *Key Concepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (1998) or the companion guides to Lacan's discourses, but rather to alert the reader to the "unauthorized" uses I've made of "standard" Lacanian theory. This has been done, I hope, in the spirit of Slavoj Žižek's adventurous extrapolations in the name of connecting Lacan to film theory, Marxist politics, and contemporary feminist/gender discourse. Žižek, Dolar, and Zupančič have, if anything, shown that Lacan is valuable for, if anything, speculative theorizing as opposed to theoretical authoritarianism. Thoughts are not statements of fact but, rather, evidence of thinking; and Lacan & Co. are about thinking in its most dynamic and portable forms.

Where I veer away from standard views of Lacan, the Secondary Master of Freud, and even past the secondary masters of this secondary master, I am heading toward a project that, though it seems obvious to me, has not struck many others as possible, interesting, or (as I would claim) obvious and necessary. This is the connection to be made between Lacan as a secondary thinker with the philosopher who, in my

view established the secondary as the *only* means of fully thinking the “project” of culture. If Lacan could be said to illuminate the essential relation of the secondary to the subject as individual, qualified through the subject’s “public relations” to the cultural collective, Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) worked in the other direction, from the collective to the individual, indeed *because* he argued that culture itself developed in that direction. From the myths of the collective powers of nature, and in the sense that myth itself is a construct of the collective, humankind evolved a means of thinking that, at first gradually and then exclusively, based its subjectivity on the thoughts, actions, and status of the individual.

What makes Vico essential for Lacan is, perhaps, the way the two thinkers constitute a conceptual palindrome. Lacan’s theory culminates in the cultural, while Vico’s terminates in the individual. Both thinkers’ projects redefine, through their separate projects, the central significance of both culmination and termination. Each is given a role as a *dramatis persona* in a dynamic that itself seems to move forward and backward at the same time. Lacan needs Vico just as much as Vico needs Lacan; and so the far-fetched claim that “Vico was reading Lacan” starts to make sense when it is coupled with the idea that, when he was reading everyone else, Lacan was “really reading Vico” without knowing it.

Where my arguments for connecting these masters of the secondary will, I hope, seem clear and compelling, they must be set against a near-complete lack of consideration by anyone else. In fact, there seems to have been a positive antipathy against any possible Vico–Lacan connection. It would be hard to say whether Vichians hate Lacan more than Lacanians have ignored Vico. There is not even sufficient consideration on either side to justify a comparison. Apart from interesting speculations by Baldine Saint-Gerons, I am mostly alone in my project of getting these two together.<sup>13</sup> In this light, I provide a second Appendix summarizing highlights of my specifically Lacanian view of Vico, in hopes that some of Vico’s more difficult ideas may become accessible to the non-philosophical general reader. Rather than treating the more obvious spectacular features of Vico’s wonderland — the *verum-factum* principle, the ideal eternal history, the imaginative universal — I take up the curious case of the *dipintura*, the image Vico inserted “at the last minute” to fill pages left blank after friends persuaded him to withdraw his detailed rebuke of the Venetian Friar Carlo Lodoli, who had withdrawn promised support for the printing of the second *New Science*. How much of this story is true may never be known, but the happy accident of finding blank pages to fill, and filling them with an image and detailed annotation of all but one of the items in that image would have made the Neapolitan tabloids if they had existed in the 18c. This frontispiece has been over-analyzed in my view, but the juiciest aspects have gone virtually ignored. No one, for example, has noticed that the *dipintura* may refer in a secondary way to having first been an optical device, where the eye of the viewer of a forced-perspective box fit with an interior mirror also plays the part of the divine eye.

This is the most ersatz of the many ersatz ventures in the book, but one that, I hope, will establish the life-long romance between the ersatz and the secondary: nothing ventured nothing gained. The door of this ersatz opens onto the idea of how the *dipintura* works as two kind of architectural drawings, the first being the architecture section, a fourth-wall cut-away revealing hidden interiors, the second being the reflected ceiling diagram, a usually tedious mechanical drawing to show workmen where to put the light-

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<sup>13</sup> Baldine Saint-Girons, “Des écrits comme « paroles réelles » chez Lacan et chez Vico,” *Essaim* 28 (2012): 143–159. See also her “Vico, Freud et Lacan : de la science des universaux fantastiques à celle des formations de l’inconscient,” *Noesis* 8 (30 March, 2005); URL : <http://noesis.revues.org/114>

ing fixtures. The role of orthography in these drawings is traditional and easy to show; but the hidden payoff — the *Ansatz* so to speak — is the way orthographics leads to orthopsychisms that Vico seemed to intend and Lacan would have commended. Because in general few Vichians read Lacan and fewer Lacanians read Vico, this is unlikely to scandalize anyone, but if either group ever decides to read the other's hero, I hope they will hire a good architect.



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The more thinking and writing must isolate itself to get work done, the more its silent reliance on those who are present virtually — spiritually? — in every thought and word becomes essential. This practice of using echoes of conversations and collaborations is often shameless in the way it uses, without permission, the borrowed wisdom of others. Micaela Amato-Amateau, Irina Aristarkhova, Gabeba Baderoon, Karima Benbih, Torben Berns, Charles David Bertolini, Arthur Chen, Curtis Dilger, Evan Douglis, Naseem Falkanhar, Benjamin Fehl, Jonathan Foote, Paola Frascari, Vassilis Ganiatsas, Federica Goffi, Ed Gunn, Maria Jimena Guzman, Thomas Han, George Kleindorfer, Jodi LaCoe, Nadir Lahiji, Riva Lava, Christopher Livecchi, James Martin, Alireza Moharar, Gunalan Nadarajan, André Nusselder, Simone Osthoff, Aparna Parikh, Aberto Pérez-Gómez, Susan Pitts, Russell Sbiglia, Azita Ranjbar, Angeliki Sioli, and Massud Taj. Dorn Hetzel, Wesley Wei, and Thomas Wilson may be surprised that I remembered things they once mentioned in passing. Some have passed themselves, and their loss makes their contributions all the more memorable: Magda McHale, Alan Knight, Peter Gould, Henry W. Johnstone, Jr., Lawrence Wolfe, John Archae, Ivan Illich, Milton Newton, Marco Frascari, Wilbur Zelinsky. The utopian generosity of Nadine Carter Russell, guidance of David Cronrath, and partnership of Kevin Benham made possible a magical fellowship semester at LSU, and Hadas Steiner, Omar Khan, and Laura Garafolo embellished another at the University at Buffalo. At Penn State, Mehrdad Hadighi has shown both patience and support. In the early days, Donald Phillip Verene cleverly introduced me to the works of Ernst Cassirer and Giambattista Vico, knowing that they would change my life.

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There are readers along the way who have had related writing projects, and I'm sure I stole too much under the guise of offering friendly advice: Carolina Dayer, Sadra Tehrani, Claudio Sgarbi, and Berrin Terim in particular turned reading, writing, and editing into a feast of lost and found ideas. Simone Brott's dissertation and essays never failed to get under my skin. Paul Emmons, after a lifelong friendship, still inspires me with his careful scholarship. And, without the support and advice Todd McGowan has congenially given me at every turn, I could never have known enough to add Lacan to my list of secondaries.

And, what writer can underestimate the value of a spouse who actually *wants* to read his stuff? Elaine Kunze's presence can be felt on every page, without which there would be no point in writing the second place in the first place.



for Elaine



# 1 / Subjectivity as Perspectivalism



Figure 1. Dave Whamond, “Two Stupid Chickens,” United Feature Syndicate, 1998.

Brian: “You've got to think for your selves! You're ALL individuals!”  
Man in the Crowd: “Not me!”

— Monty Python’s *Life of Brian*, 1979

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## *Parallax and the primacy of a point-of-view/ figure/ground “dyad”*

One of the aims of this book is to engage directly the issue of subjectivity, particularly as developed by Lacan in his revival of key Freudian ideas. The idea is to see subjectivity through the media of space and time. This involves an experiment to identify perspectival space as the “primary place” of subjectivity; and to consider how perspectivalism’s gaps and breakdowns might correspond to the gaps and breakdowns famously attributed to subjectivity’s “rational exterior.” For the benefit of non-Lacanian readers, it’s necessary to say that subjectivity is not a formal entity but, rather, an “ongoing project” that imposes severe and even impossible demands on the humans it would enlist (failure is built-in). Everyone who wants to participate in networks of symbolic relationships *must join*. “Discourse” is subjectivity’s sustaining communicative protocol. In contrast to the majority of communications models, however, Lacanian discourse emphasizes how our attempts to communicate end in failure — not just failure in general but specific *kinds* of failure, each with distinctive significant externalities.<sup>1</sup> So, in comparing subjectivity to perspectivalism, the aim is to find where, in our predominantly “projective” perspectival notions of space and time, analogous breakdowns occur; and, when and where they occur, what they have to say about subjectivity’s limits, alternatives, and positive side-effects.

What is perspectivalism? It would be easy to think that we know what perspectivalism is because we are familiar with perspective drawings, which show objects decrease in size as they are increasingly distant, portray parallel lines as converging to a vanishing point, and in general duplicate a “photographically realistic” scene from the viewpoint of a spectator on the ground. Perspectivalism is both more general and

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<sup>1</sup> Lacan specified four principal *forms* that discourse could take, based on the movement of a standard sequence of functional elements against a fixed quadrated field. One of the elements served as a “wild card,” a “part that was not a part,” so that each of the four forms duplicated the logic of the primary form, Mastery. Just as the master of the master’s discourse failed in the project of attaining dominance and control, each of the other forms (University, Hysteria, Analysis) articulated the desire to master in its own terms and each, according to its unique form, also failed; each failure could be traced to the position of the unnamable wild card, the *objet petit a*, the “object-cause of desire,” whose absence rather than presence provided desire with the energy to form its goals and pursuits. The four possible positions of this self-negating element (as agent, Other, product, or truth) determined four logical maps by which discourse drew up its doomed plans. The *objet petit a* condensed the palindromic logic of elements rotating against a fixed field, through themes of loss and recovery, departure and return, call and response, riddle and answer. The human agents who embodied these pairings (the subject supposed to know, the defeated master, the fake authority, the self-pleasuring sufferer) condensed opposition as an informative irony.

more specific. It is, most generally, the complex of temporal, perceptual, and behavioral interactions of viewers with their three-dimensional environs. It is conditioned by collective and personal subjective beliefs about the roles played by desires and obstacles to desires, and about the relation of physical distance to the effort needed to overcome space separating the viewer from objects of desire or fright. Whether we are moving toward objects/places we desire or running frantically away from whatever we would want to avoid, perspectival space embodies what it takes to use motion as a means to an end.

The degree to which we can count on perspectivalism to gauge what it will take to fulfill our desires or escape our fears is based on the way parallax — the apparent movement of objects against backgrounds, coordinated with the movement of our point of view — functions as a kind of “lock” that confirms our view that space and time are not simply subjective projections but that they “belong to nature,” that they behave “objectively” and do not change from viewer to viewer, desire to desire, fear to fear. This chapter addresses how we can “prove the obvious,” once we realize that the obvious is not as natural as it appears to be. Once we unravel the mystery of parallax, we can see that perspectivalism is the agency providing subjectivity a home that is both a secure insulation from the strange strange world and a leaky vault from which, occasionally and usually in the context of art, the uncanny can escape.

*What is parallax?*

More specifically, perspectivalism is the detailed exchange of the visible for the invisible, as we shift points of view in the visual field. Maurice Merleau-Ponty has written eloquently about the way the invisible parts of a scene condition the visible parts we see directly.<sup>2</sup> Sides, edges, profiles, and ultimately horizons mark the complex edges not just between accessible and inaccessible data but, more generically, about the way “there is more to nature than meets the eye.” This “more” is powerful precisely because it is not immediately present. The boundaries between what we see and what we don’t — always in flux with our continual motion within the visible domain — are the *loci* of a delicate balance-of-payments schedule that, if upset by an unexpected violation of our expectations, can produce disorientation or, worse, a complete breakdown of perceptual and subjective stability. We sense this balance in two opposed ways. When we are away from home, we are almost always able to “make ourselves at home.” Conversely, no matter how homey home is, there is always a small element of the un-homey — *Unheimlich* or uncanny, literally — that undermines our basic sense of security. These potentialities, the home away from home and un-homey homes, grow out of the relation of the visible and the invisible, the known and the unknown. We translate the generic conditions into what is spatially and temporally familiar, which we find to be susceptible to being unfamiliar.

Parallax is the seeming immediate coordination of a perceived movement of the viewer’s movement in space with an object’s movement against its background. It is how we come to believe that we are at home in space. It is a key marker of perspectivalism because it “guarantees” that space is always what it is, a container for *our* feelings and not itself happy, sad, or angry. Spatial (and temporal) neutrality to us as subjects allows us to *locate* ourselves in relation to our subjectivity. We want a space and time that is not subject to change or “motivated,” and when we sense that space has its own hidden agenda, as when we

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<sup>2</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1969).

sense that places are innately friendly or hostile, or that temporally we are on a lucky (or a bad luck) streak, we lose control of who we are and how we can be effective. At the worst, we lose our identity altogether. Perspectivalism and its parallax functions are key to maintaining our autonomy, agency, and identity. In short, they are equivalent to our subjectivity.

Perspectivalism is defined not by static views but by actions and movements within space. A living subject is hardly ever still; actual or virtual motion indicates that we are not just alive but empowered and independent. The inverse of motion, paralysis or imprisonment, is the dreaded alternative. This is true at every scale, even when our would-be actions are abbreviated by gestures and body language. Yet, there is a difficulty embedded in the operational particulars of parallax. We look at a scene with the confidence that what we see is evident and real, but even when we check out our view with someone standing close, we see how much different viewers see different things. This situation was summed up by the geographer Donald Meinig in his essay, “The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene.”<sup>3</sup> Art historian Ernst Gombrich (*Art and Illusion*, 1960) recounts a more personalized experiment by German artists vacationing at Tivoli. Huddling close together, Ludwig Richter and his friends attempted to use their powers of objective representation to represent the scene before them in identical drawings. But, of course, the experiment failed because the artists’ unique temperaments also affected what they saw. Parallax, rather than stabilizing the subject within a reliable spatial container, revealed unexpected variability, almost as if *the space itself was communicating with its viewers* and giving them what their temperaments *wanted* to see.

The fall-back position to save space-time’s objectivity is to say that, if someone were standing in our shoes looking at the same scene, they *should* see what we see, but we are aware that, given the influence of not just temperament but memory, desire, and attitudes, actual consensus is impossible. Our *should* is a highly hypothetical last-ditch rhetorical gesture, made in the face of our *doubt* about perspectivalism’s neutrality.<sup>4</sup> In the face of our perhaps beneficial misunderstanding, we rely on parallax to assure us that at least we are where we are, that we are going where we think we are going, and that the objective dimension of depth, once secured as objective, can be *assigned* both personal and public subjective values. Although it is a variable and not a determinative constant, parallax can assure us that we can, at least at the level of objects, share things. Because their proximity brings us subjective joy or fear is a result of our subjective interaction with something that can, at the objective level, be commonly valued. In other words, the meaning of what it is to be a subject, a part of a collective based on shared codes, customs, and languages, is not just tied up with perspectivalism. Perspectivalism and its parallax rule are in fact the public face of what it means to be a subject.

In consideration of this introduction to perspectivalism, it would seem that my first choice of the perfect book title should have been either *Parallax View* or *Looking Awry*, but these of course have been

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<sup>3</sup> A copy of this essay can be found at <http://blogs.ubc.ca/thinkingbydesign/files/2016/09/9.22-Meinig-Beholding-Eye-1.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> We should be grateful that we *misunderstand* because if we actually knew for certain what we saw, or what we felt and thought about it, we would have to confront just how impossible agreement is! This view is attributed to Charles Baudelaire, *Œuvres posthumes* (1908) 129: “Le monde ne marche que par le malentendu. C’est par le malentendu universel que tout le monde s’accorde. Car si, par malheur, on se comprenait, on ne pourrait jamais s’accorder.” My loose translation is “Thank God we don’t understand each other because, if by some misfortune we did, we would never be able to agree.”

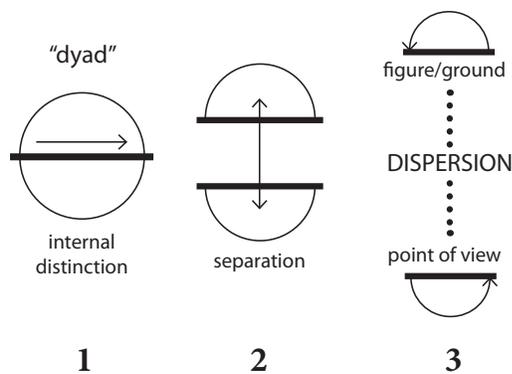


Figure 2. An ersatz conjecture: an initial distinction *internal* to the “monadic” young pre-subject (1) opens it up sufficiently to form an *external* figure/ground (subjective objectivity) and a corresponding “objective subjectivity” (2). The portability of the figure/ground half of the dyad gives rise to the parallax externality (3), the means of coordinating the movement of the point of view. The dimension between them is an economy of coordinated movements, funded by relations of intentional motions, obstacles to those motions, friction of distance, degrees of desire and motivation, and correlative anxiety related to proximity of threats.

mirror each other naturally. Instantaneous mirroring seems to be a given of external physical reality. Perceptual belief does not require any hypothesis mechanical connection between two independent entities. Rather, it seems that, like the quantum physics phenomenon of synchronized particles separated in space, the two conditions are a *dyad* that has been split apart into portable objective and subjective halves and transported to any and all distances and positions, where the viewer’s movements in space are stabilized by the figure’s equal and opposite movement against its ground.  $M_{POV}/M_{F/G}$  move together “so they must be two halves of the same thing” (Fig. 2).

*Entanglement: from the spooky to the non-spooky dyad, to the Unheimlich in all its glory*

The metaphor of the dyad — something originally linked physically or organically, then split apart and transported to separate locations where there can be no question of a physical or organic linkage — is borrowed from quantum physics. This is the phenomenon of “spooky entanglement,” the uncanny atomic synchronization of two particles separated by millions of light years is explained by the hypothesis that they were actually halves of the same original whole, exploded apart by the Big Bang. The figure/ground and point of view “particles” are similarly in synch, but no one would say that there’s anything spooky

appropriated by an author with a famous appetite for clever titles.<sup>5</sup> For what he claims to be his major work, Slavoj Žižek adopted the idea of parallax from Kōjin Karatani’s book, *Transcritique* (2003). Žižek’s and Karatani’s idea is that it is necessary to shuffle between contrasting philosophical positions. This use of parallax as an analogy for commuting between theories, however, quickly leaves behind the subjective experience of figure/ground displacement. Although Žižek continually refreshes his philosophical uses of ideas inspired by visual–material practices with visits to the real situations, he quickly returns to the analogy. Philosophy first, the material example second.

In contrast, I propose that we tarry with the “secondary” empirical particulars of the perceptual phenomenon. The first duty of this delaying examination is to note something that is so obvious that it is commonly overlooked — that perceptual parallax is based on the *simultaneity* of the viewer’s movement with the movement of external visual features against their backgrounds. Even when it’s the result of the minimal shift between one eye’s view to the other’s, parallax “proves” the objectivity of the depth dimension and the viewer’s position and stability within it. The point-of-view and figure/ground movements ( $M_{POV}/M_{F/G}$ ) seem to

<sup>5</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT, 2006); *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT, 1992). Kōjin Karatani, *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx*, trans. Sabu Kohso (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 2003).

about it. Synchrony is not just expected; it grounds the stability of perspectival space to the extent that it works as a kind of “degree zero.” There has been no concern to search for any “original whole” to explain the simultaneity, because no one sees the need to explain anything. We do not even say that the movements of the point of view and figure/ground are “correlated,” because correlation gives the impression of two independent phenomena — and in this case independence would be hard to imagine. Rather, the two movements are seen to be two sides of the same coin, and that coin is perspectival depth. Depth *includes* the point of view and figure/ground, as corollaries. A dyad is not needed to explain what is taken for granted.

My employment of the spooky entanglement of quantum physics is to demonstrate a parallel set of events in the emergence of subjectivity from early childhood. In Lacan’s view, as is well known, this emergence takes place in a specific place and time: the Mirror Stage. Suddenly, the young child, who has up to this point functioned with apparent success moving around space and handling time differences, finds itself at a loss — literally! It has lost the *image* of itself, which now seems to be possessed within the reflected interior of a mirror. Usually the child is in the company of one or more adults, who assure the child that everything is OK: “That’s you!” they usually say, but it would be hard to say how this assurance is anything but wildly disconcerting. With the intention of telling the child that “It’s OK, mirrors *do this kind of thing*, you don’t have to worry about it; it’s a *natural* condition of *objective* time and space,” the child is first and foremost aware that his soul has been stolen. A part of him that was formerly interior and under his/her control is not “out there” in a world that is anything but under his/her control.

This moment of sudden transfer of something internal to external “reality” (who can argue with reality?) is more than disconcerting. It leaves the child in a condition of permanent Lack, capitalized because this Lack will be the basis of subjectivity’s radical permanent hollowness. The subject is the being who, on account of language and symbolic relationships in general, can never meet expectations set forth long before his/her birth and subsequent membership into the club of other subjects. The subject’s name will come from somewhere else, a shadowy past; the subject’s future will be discussed while it is still in the womb. These conversations will be remembered, however, and recalled unconsciously once sufficient language is learned.

This Lack is an actual lack, an empty spot where something used to be. What could this be? Freud’s definition of infancy and early childhood is a bit misleading, if we take the term “autoerotic” simply to refer to self-pleasuring. More generally, it refers to the way in which the young human’s pre-subjective body and mind are a continuous, flexible ground on which distinctions (subject/object, here/there, now/then, agent/act, etc.) can be drawn, erased, and redrawn. The young child, as we know from watching play, can be on one side of things then another, a speaker then a listener in a self-generated conversation.

It is a fact that the human infant begins life with a bare minimum of spatial extension. It cannot focus, so there is no parallax. It moves its limbs but cannot effectively grasp, point, or manipulate. It must be passively transported; it has little feedback that would help it understand its position, posture, or dynamic potential. Lacan has cited humans’ slow development as the key to understanding how subjectivity develops step by step. No animal who had to face environmental threats within hours or a few days would have time to use its stages of maturation to construct a “psychic” being. And, certainly, no animal whose identity would not be “waiting for it” within a gradually acquired language would have the chance to be

neurotic, psychotic, or perverse. Non-human animals do not have the leisure to experience infantile synesthesia, the blending of the senses, in the first months of life.<sup>6</sup>

As the eyes focus and other senses are coordinated, the palimpsest of internal maps are drawn and redrawn. There is no need to present the map for external approval, no audience, no fact-checkers. It is as if the infant and young child rehearse the process of distinguishing and identifying so that, by the time the imaginary territories are replaced with real ones, their processes of formation will already have been technically perfected. Lacan's emphasis on the hyper-extended period of childhood dependency is central to his thinking because the long period of preparation and short event of emergence are structurally dependent on each other. The long preparation period must not be "troubled" by external threats or "rewarded" by external rewards. Whatever comes from the outside must be related directly to things happening inside the intimate domain of the body's functions: food, elimination, the attachment of love. The eye is not yet geared for envy or guilt, the ear is not yet tuned to hear betrayal or seduction. The division of these "intimate" externalities with "extimate" and spooky externalities marks the dividing line set by the spectral division of space at the Mirror Stage.

Here, the coordination of space and time are critical. The Mirror Stage must take place *immediately*, with the sudden glance of the young child. For this to happen, all of the former engagements with the world, internalized within the autoerotic, autonomous exchange circuits of the young child, must have prepared for *one component* to be transferred to an objective exterior. Lacan marked this point by a shift between the oral, anal, and phallic drives (those most intimate to the child) and the hallmarks of subjective externality, the gaze and the voice. In the transfer from autoerotic "interior" (which from the child's point of view is really simultaneously an interior and exterior) to subjectivity's perspectival "exterior," the property of the lack following transfer must be retained as a *void* within visibility and the voice. This is the point at which the scene seems to look back at the viewer, consolidated by cultures of all periods of history into a lore of the "evil eye"; and the element of the voice that always makes it appear to be coming from a different source — "acousmatic" or ventriloquistic voice. The latter is what has language "speak us" rather than us speak language; the former is what unsettles all of the assurances we have that perspectival space-time is, in fact, objective and natural.

With the slow period of preparation and the sudden emergence of a new reality, the autoerotic pre-subject gives birth to his/her fully subjective *double*, and forever more this spectral other self will present an existential challenge to identity. The science of evolution gives us a name for this process: exaptation. This is the "indifferent" accumulation and organization of traits that seem to have no immediate functional role, no survival value. In the evolution of species, these "silent features" lay unnoticed until some sudden environmental change favors them and the individual who has them "ready to go" can adopt as suddenly to change as change itself happens.

The phenomenon of emergence had been thought to be an anomaly, a refutation of evolution's slow, plodding progress from one form to another. But, in fact, the exception seems to be the rule. Species can

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<sup>6</sup> Maria Konnikova, "Infants Possess Intermingled Senses: Babies Are Born with Their Senses Linked in Synesthesia," *Scientific American MIND* (January 2012); URL: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/infant-kandinskys/>.

adopt not simply by slightly varying their forms or behaviors, which would yield too few survivors of sudden changes, but by adopting “in synch” with sudden unexpected shifts of environmental conditions.

What is true for the species at the species level of adaptation happens to be true for the extended period of dependency of the human child. Subjectivity suddenly *emerges*. It seems to have all it needs to be a subject because, over its extended dependency, it had internally “played with” what would later be a matter of critical “external” importance. It would transfer a part of its internal circuitry to the external world; and Lacan surmised that this transfer would be triggered by an image giving a “reverse angle” view, a view that *only an Other could have*, the beginning of the individual’s contract with the generic Other of perspectival space and time, an Other who would gaze from an invisible point (the gaze) and be heard speaking from offstage (the acousmatic voice).

With this sudden transfer, the internal Lack of the new subject finds a counterpart in an external gap/lack embodied by the gaze and the voice. These undermine the homey-ness of the new perspectival home although they are the same agents that make it possible to extend perspectival space to cover all space and time whatsoever, to provide the subject the ability to “make a home” anywhere, everywhere, though the universality of spatial extension. The portability offered by perspectival space is thus a damaged gift. It seems to make it possible to domesticate any new place, but it simultaneously undermines each new place with a self-converting uncanny element, a gaze-and-voice uncanny.<sup>7</sup>

Although this self-sufficient dyad of early childhood obviously must precede perspectival space, the latter asserts itself as primary — as a given, a product of nature rather than culture. The spatio-temporal dyad of pre-subjectivity is, as preparatory, secondary; but, like the quantum physics dyad, it must necessarily be formed before this “nature” can appear as natural. The question of which is fundamental must be answered in terms of the drives — the gaze and the voice — that accompany this inside-out moment of the Mirror Stage. It is not the case, as cognitive psychology would assert, that the young child “wakes up to reality.” Rather, he/she wakes up only to find itself inside another dream that is compelling real *as long as direct encounters with the uncanny “kernels” of the voice and gaze — the Real — can be avoided by fantasy.*

#### *The issue of negation and binary signifiers*

There are two issues here, both have to do with the role of negation. In the young child’s autonomous, fluid, and self-constructed world, the external is internal and the internal is made to appear as something external. Negation as we know it is the basis of binary distinctions — cold/hot, near/far, hate/love, etc. — where one polar element excludes its opposite. But, in the young child’s imaginary world, negation is deployed differently. It is a distinction that can be set up and taken down again; it is a boundary that leaks; it is a switch that reverses polarity in the midst of being used. Freud noted how, in the dream, negation is suspended so that the dream can succeed in its project of keeping the sleeper asleep.<sup>8</sup> The dreamer can

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<sup>7</sup> Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny,” *Imago* 5 (1919). Reprinted in *Sammlung*, Fünfte Folge, trans. James Strachey. Sigmund Freud, Hugh Haughton, and David McLintock, *The Uncanny* (London: Penguin, 2003). See also Mladon Dolan, “I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding-Night: Lacan and the Uncanny,” *October* 58, *Rendering the Real* (Autumn, 1991): 5–23.

<sup>8</sup> Jan Buelens, “Negation in Freud,” *Logique et Analyse*, New Series, 15, 57/58, *Negation* (March–June 1972): 319–331.

meet friends and relatives long since dead and not be alarmed or even surprised. The body can become a container, the container a body. There is no parallax immune to the need for frequent scene changes, as if three-dimensional dream reality were really a stage set of flats easily set up and taken down.

In this dyad of infancy, which precedes the primariness of perspectival space as its basis, the child is immobilized and the function of the dyad, like that of the dream, is to *keep the child “asleep” until the important “work” of the “dream” has been accomplished.* Waking up from childhood autoeroticism must take place at a specific time and place; it must come as a “shock” powerful enough to re-organize the child’s “inner view” as an “outward view.” Most important, this new reality has to come with structural reinforcement provided by language, social relations, and the belief that these new realities come with their own space and time.

In this context, it is clear how this transition from the dyadic synthetic self-sufficiency of the young child to the perspectival world tied to subjectivity, language, and social roles is not like waking up to reality is actually the substitution of one *kind* of dream with another: a sleep of reason for a reason that requires a “dream” of fantasy. The first dream is dreamed out of necessity. The infant is immobile, helpless, unable to interact with the external world. The second dream is presented as a compelling choice, but nonetheless a choice that can be refused, but at great cost. The subject who accepts also accepts the inconsistencies of the Symbolic and its spatio-temporal stage set. Neurosis allows the subject to internalize these inconsistencies, to take responsibility for them as a “condition of membership.” Not all accept this forced choice situation. They are the perverts who localize their own economies of pleasure and pain and, in a sense, extend the child’s autoerotic, synesthetic dyad with ingenious adaptations of its “internal autonomy.” They are, more radically, the psychotics who, in refusing to or being unable pay the membership dues of the Symbolic’s “club,” also lose access to the stability of perspectivalism and parallax confirmation. Time and space itself are symptomatically dislodged or, more accurately, never able to be established.

Because there are those psychotics and perverts who do not accept the neurotic “options” of subjectivity (including language), and because subjectivity and perspectivalism are presented as a choice, albeit a forced choice, we must acknowledge the extent to which both are conditional and *identify precisely what those conditions might be.* The binary of negation and its Boolean extensions are simply the means of conducting the business named “reality.” Subjectivity and its accompanying space-time settings are contingent on neurotic adaptation, belief and trust in language’s ability to communicate, and the assumption that learned relations, such as parallax, are natural and not conditioned.<sup>9</sup> But, just as the dream makes every effort to *not* to be uncanny, *not* to frighten the sleeper, subjectivity makes every effort to domesticate its choices by making them seem to be a part of nature rather than culture. Symbolic subjectivity has its own version of “oneiric immunity” in parallax. But, what it confirms and supports — binary opposition — is exactly the opposite of what the dream, to keep the dreamer asleep, must suspend.

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<sup>9</sup> Note that I am not claiming that non-subjects do not experience the seemingly coordinated movements of the figure against its ground with their movement in space, or do not perceive depth. Rather, it is the vulnerability of the sagittal dimension under conditions such as flattening, anamorphosis, *déjà vu*, and paranormal mental states that make it *seem* that parallax is a constructed option. This includes imagining that parallax exists when it does not, as in the famous anecdote about the two painters, Zeuxis and Parrhasius, competing in a contest. Constrictions of the point of view, conventional or surreptitious, use presumption of parallax to “break open” perspectival norms. The history of these begins with the Mirror Stage’s induced paralysis of the young pre-subject’s “body-in-pieces.”

The historicity of negation proves (1) that subjectivity and perspectivalism are constructed rather than “natural”; and (2) that the moment of transition from childhood self-sufficiency to subjectivity’s domain of symbolic dependency is a forced choice transition, not from dream to waking reality but from one dream into another *kind* of dream. Negation in the form of binary signification did not exist in its modern forms in ancient cultures. Time has trimmed away the options and qualifications that, for pre-modern minds, seemed necessary to contextualize the either/or restrictiveness of the binary. If negation were “natural,” it would be uniformly present and uniformly dominant in all cultures and periods of history. It’s not. Therefore, subjectivity and its related medium, perspectivalism, are constructed, even when looser definitions of negation are used. The idea of “waking up from childhood into the reality of adulthood” can be put to rest with recognition of the Symbolic’s extensive dependency on fantasy to cover over its gaps and inconsistencies. Subjects join the Symbolic through a process of misidentification, which for their lifetime will alienate them more and more at the same time they more and more commit themselves. Reality charges admission by making freedom of motion of the point of view work only within a limited range of pre-selected choices. Like the red pill and blue pill in the Wachowski Brothers’ 1999 film, *The Matrix*, free choice is really between a set of restrictive options.

Negation’s historicity can be shown in the apparent “indifference” of some primal terms to the Boolean function of binary opposition. In a short essay, (“On the Antithetical Sense of Primal Words,” 1909), Freud considered that ancient mentalities were not simply more relaxed in their enforcement of the law of the excluded middle, but that they actively sought to express a dynamic, almost Hegelian interaction of opposites. Thus, there was not simply a contradiction but deep truth in words such as *sacer* (both sacred and reviled), *altus* (both high and low), and *hostes* (both welcoming and hostile). Freud’s source was a 1884 essay (title identical to Freud’s) by Carl Abel, a self-styled philologist who came under fire from unsympathetic linguists. The problem was not the thinness of Abel’s academic credentials, however. Linguists continue to deny that language can be in any way “historic.” In their view, there are no primal terms because language is a-temporal; its logic is the same in all cultures, all periods of history.

Freud, in line with the philosopher Ernst Cassirer and, more recently, the archaeologist Walter Fairservis, considered the greater presence of such contronyms in the languages of earlier cultures to be essential for understanding what these cultures meant not just when they wrote and spoke but when they made images, followed customs, and followed laws.<sup>10</sup> This early stage of human thought simply involved a different way of conceiving the world and humans’ relation to it; Abel’s critics did not bother refuting his evidence; they simply asserted that modern and ancient cultures were the same.

This theory of historical uniformity is not new. However, it is more of a presumption than a theory, requiring that others disprove it without offering any supporting evidence of its own truth. Giambattista Vico’s *New Science* was the first demonstration that culture was itself a progression taking place in distinct

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<sup>10</sup> Ernst Cassirer, Ralph Manheim, and Charles William Hendel, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953); Walter A. Fairservis, *The Threshold of Civilization: An Experiment in Prehistory* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1975). The idea of historical stages of language has been the basis of a variety of beliefs that ancient words or hieroglyphs embodied esoteric, magical meanings, secret even at the time of their employment. Studies of hermeticism, Kabbala, ancient Chinese divination texts, and alchemy equated the archaic with hidden or lost wisdom. Vico and, later, Cassirer demonstrated that there was in fact a “mythic mentality” but that by structural necessity, it “built in” its own mysteries.

stages. The thesis of primitivism was the straw-man argument that Vico dispelled by explicating the ingenuity of the first cultures, but linguists never budged. The “language is language” view continues to dominate and is the mainstay of cognitivist theories of mind that define learning in terms of lesser and greater degrees of acquaintance with the “rules of the game” that adults play when they speak and act. The world of the infant or the pre-modern culture is, in this view, simply based on privation, of “not-yet-developed” features lacking or imperfectly formed that are required to be fully human, fully modern.<sup>11</sup>

It is easy to see how this view is susceptible to unconscious or even explicit ethnocentrism. Yet the point of Vico and anthropologists and philosophers who would follow and extend his ideas was not that cultures were not imperfect shots at modernity, improving as they practiced, but that they were radically developmental in a dynamic, internal sense. Each stage constituted a complete and self-subsisting universe. The world of the child or primitive cultures were thus not lacking anything in comparison with the “adulthood” of modern cultures. If anything, modern cultures, like the adult of the child, were conceptually unable to understand what, in earlier stages of culture, were *more* complex, *more* comprehensive, *more* ingenious ways of picturing the world and expressing its structure.

### **Privation *versus* prohibition**

“Oneiric indifference” — the inability of dreams to respect the logical authority of binary signification — comes in two parts, (1) in recognition of negation’s “objective” effects (either/or, as in life/death) or, alternatively, (2) its “subjective” implications (prohibitions and transgressions). Both work outside the laws of binary signification, which we might think of graphically as a boundary separating two spaces. We deal with boundaries more readily than with the abstract idea of binary opposition, so rather than ponder the imageless contrast between “is/isn’t” and “ought/shouldn’t,” let me take privation and prohibition to a territorial metaphor to understand these objective effects and subjective implications, in order to draw some useful support from the everyday world.

Objective effects rely on a logic of privation, where one possibility excludes its opposite. In perspectival space-time, it is the exclusion of visibility by invisibility and *vice versa*. It is as if the edges of a visible object reveal the *exact amount of quanta* that it conceals, because its motion *simultaneously* conceals and reveals. This is the way motion seems to regulate itself, as the figure moves against its background. The background is a kind of index showing that the object is a solid, complete object.

The movement of the “now” of time works in the same way. The now pushes its nose into the future at the same time it pulls away from the past. The now, like the object against a background, maintains itself by taking in an equal *quanta* of future moments as it discards into the past. The *quanta* move across a short bridge, so short that the future becomes the past immediately. The bridge has no time lapse.

The movement of the object against its background is the parallax “lock” that makes perspectival space deep, solid, and credible. The movement of the “now” across the instantaneous bridge between the future and the past is what stabilizes the idea of time as a series of nows that continue to contain us, our thoughts, our feelings. We are the same as we move along this line of travel, our identity is preserved.

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<sup>11</sup> For a critique of linguistics’ limitations due to their phonemics emphasis, see Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

But, there is an interesting complication to these simplistic models. We imagine ourselves to move forward in time, but in the process we form a “buffer zone” in both the future and the past. In the direction of the future, we predict where we are going. We “look down the road” to adjust our line of travel; we think we know what will happen in the next few instants; and we try to extend our anticipation with plans written down on calendars. “Next week we’re flying to Paris” involves knowing that we have to pack, find our passports, confirm our hotel reservations. We extend our nose into the future tentatively, knowing that some of the details may change, and also that the way we imagine things will happen is almost never exactly the way that the actually do happen.

In the reverse direction, we arrange what has just happened to us as memories. These are not traces automatically left like footprints in the sand, unconsciously, but constructed packages that throw away unimportant details while re-arranging what we want to save for later. Like the plans of the future, the memories of the past are vivid and fresh just after we form them but fade as they recede into the distance. Our spatialized idea of time as a line has the “now” as the central focus point, with the future and past becoming less bright the further away from this point it gets. If we mark this situation with numbers, we have the future 012345... set against the past’s ...543210, with the ellipses marking the point where the vividness of the now, 0, trails off on either end, into the future or the past.

The bridge of the now is timeless, but it is timeless in a particular way. It “buys” its timelessness by thickening itself, pulling in the future to overlap the past, as a way of “cross-checking” future plans against recent results. The thickened bridge looks like this, using the numerical markers. Putting (arbitrarily) the past over the future, think of this in terms of fractions:  $1/5$ ,  $2/4$ ,  $3/3$ ,  $4/2$ ,  $5/1$ . In this example the width of the bridge is 6, with the “weak” ends of future and past combined with the “strong” elements closest to the instant of the now. This crisscross model can lock in the now as an object moving against its background because it dynamically connects the opposites (strong/weak) with the same “force” (the sum of the fractions in the numerical example, 6). In other words, the “now” can be objectified as a bridge if the bridge has a constant width, 6. Weak cannot be connected to weak ( $5/5$ ) or strong to strong ( $1/1$ ) without forcing the now-bridge to lose its quality as a solid, and this quality is essential for its ability to lose *quanta* to the past in the same amount and at the same time as it gains *quanta* from the future.

For time to be drawn into the perspectivalism of subjectivity, it has to be a “solid object” that, like spatial movement, has its own parallax to guarantee the stability of temporal movement.

Just as the subject’s sense of place within the Symbolic must be evidenced by a sense of place within perspectival space, its sense of time must find itself within a definite, concrete “now” that, like the parallax of perspectival space, “locks in” its object-ness by allowing the future and the past to overlap. The overlap is time’s form of parallax.

This is a graphic analogy that is credible only because everyone experiences now as a kind of motion and because everyone knows what spatial parallax is, even if they are not familiar with the word “parallax.” The previous graphic model of the Mirror Stage is credible only to the extent that we understand how the infant and young child are “self-contained” up to a point when it seems that *suddenly* they become “real people.” Lacan uses the mirror to connect this moment to a sudden revision in the way the newborn subject will emerge from childhood by seeing images in an entirely different way, but we can carry the idea

of mirroring, retroactively, back into the preparations the young child makes for this moment. Things are able to happen “all at once” only because the elements required for the change are ready, in place, and able to support the transfer of authority from, in the case of the young child, an “inside” to an “outside.”

But, all graphic models are fictions, devices that allow us to suspend judgment long enough for thought to do its own preparation for a sudden leap to a new idea. The graphic model is an incubator. It uses familiar examples and credible comparisons as an internal fuel to keep things running *long enough* for speculation to get its thoughts in order. At the point of readiness, a required leap must take place. This “leap” is the idea of motion regulated by the parallax function. To grasp the importance of motion we have to realize how motion requires an internal stabilizing “stillness” (like the palindromic 1/5, 2/4, etc.) to “thicken the bridge” across which two opposite *quanta* will exchange places. The visible and invisible cross this bridge; the future passes into the past over this bridge; *ideas* must also cross the same kind of bridge.

At each stage of this experiment with graphic models, we need to check our data against reliable cases offered from relevant sources. The richest of these come from art, where the standard requirement of objectivity comes in the form of the artist’s indifference to philosophical/critical speculation. The work of art is the result of many forces: the intention or awareness of the artist, the anticipation of audience reception, the artist’s relation to other artists ... the list goes on. But, in almost no cases can we say that the artist is a philosopher who, without saying anything about it, intends to prove the same point we aim to prove. The story teller simply wants to tell a “good story” and may know some tricks to make this happen. The skills of telling a story may relate to critical theory if we can move beyond tautological characterizations, such as “good” or “engaging,” to matters of structure.

For non-fictional confirmations, it’s necessary to find accounts that stuck to the “facts of the case” and were not sought out to prove any point. In the famous and well-documented education of Helen Keller, who lost all sight and hearing before the age of two, sign language served the seven-year-old Helen to identify her needs and connect with objects, but she did not “understand” the relation of words to things until her teacher, Anne Sullivan, held Helen’s hand under a stream of water, signing w-a-t-e-r while she pumped. The *flow* of the the water and the *flow* of the letters of the word provided Helen the “moment” she needed to understand the public nature of language and its universal applicability to the material world. This was her mirror stage. She already “knew” the names of things but did not understand the function of the name. The water’s flow, identified with the letters’ flow, made this connection in an instant, a “now” that connected the two poles, words and things, to allow each its independence while guaranteeing their “parallax” function.

*Rear Window as a case of parallax synchrony*

A fictional work allows us to extend this confirmation of the parallax function in subjectivity in greater detail. Alfred Hitchcock’s 1954 film, *Rear Window*, is well situated to speak directly to the situation of parallax, because its set-up is based on the structure of the cone of vision.

...

Again, the idea of motion mandates this somewhat bizarre equality of visible/invisible, future/past. As there is movement subtracting one side the binary, there is an equal and opposite motion on the other side. The binary of privation, the simultaneity of motion of the point of view and the figure against the ground is what guarantees perspectivalism's stability.

Negation's function as privation gives rise to the idea and possibility of an external world, where motion works as a multi-purpose dual, coordinating the viewer with the viewed, the future with the past, the invisible with the visible. The "now" nosing forward into time and the "edge" binding the visible are unprejudiced, neutral exchange devices, equal signs in the equation of spatial and temporal transfers in the external world. What about the corresponding "internal" world of subjectivity? This is not just the private world of the thoughts or actions of individuals but the self-regulating collectives of families, clans, societies, and cultures. The "is" of nature operates, in this domain, as an "ought" sustained by customs, prohibitions, and formal laws. Where the violation of natural law is a matter of necessity, transgression of social law is a matter of power to impose ethics and morals, a willed negation of a "No!"

The "No!" is, classically, the father's job, and the first application of it is to tell the young child not to love the mother incestuously. To break this law, one contemplates "taking the place" of the father, literally occupying the paternal spot in order to assume the power and privileges, including access to the mother. This territorial occupation is, like any military invasion, a matter of pushing past defenses, of gaining access to a defended interior. This first breach of No is a model for other variations of law and order commands. To have other gods before Me is, literally, to put substitutes into the sacred position reserved for the God of the Ten Commandments. To love thy neighbor's wife is to invade his home. To steal, whether it's the house burglary or the pick-pocket's invasion of personal space, is the idea of breaking and entering. Killing is the most intimate invasion.

Subjective "prohibition" is associated with trespass, invasion, and occupation of *territory*. In contrast, privation's short and time-free bridge is the site of *quanta* smuggled from one shore of the binary to its opposite. Prohibition violates boundaries and captures territory, privation's success depends on maintaining boundary separations so that smuggling can run its lucrative trade. The objectivity of smugglers and subjectivity of invaders is the stuff of history. Perhaps one could learn as much from reading Herodotus as Plato!

The aim here, however, is not to propose a new curriculum. It's to explain how the secondary's relation to negation leads to specific ways of materializing spatial distinctions. This requires the invention of a "scenario."

When negation is working properly to support the "primaries" of perspectivalism and subjectivity — i. e. when binary signifiers are effected through the instantaneous coordination of the point of view and figure/ground — there is a secondary program "running in the background." The primary's vector of depth is vulnerable to a parasite, a silent parallel force that subverts its powers of separation and placement from within. The parasite can, so to speak, stretch or crunch segments of the depth vector, delay it or speed it up. This is invisible from the point of view, which always sees this vector end-on. As soon as the depth vector is infected with the parasite of the secondary, the point-of-view position is paralyzed while the spectacle at the other end continues

to move. This is the “theatrical condition,” where the audience is directed to remain motionless and quiet in the dark while dramatic actions take place on an illuminated stage; or when the cinema screen transports the eye as the dream does, while the “sleeper” enjoys an induced artificial catalepsis.

The coupling of objective motion with subjective paralysis is the basis of art in general. The point of view and its corresponding “cone of vision” graphically seem to endorse the contrast of stillness at the site of the viewer and motion as vision fans out from this site. Perspectivalism is thus cut in half by stillness and motion whenever put into the perspective frame of painting, cinema, or theater. In this division, it becomes clear how the creation of mobile illusions in art duplicate the dream’s function of keeping the immobilized viewer asleep by entertaining the dreamer with extended fantasies. Apparatus — *dispositif* is the fashionable term in film theory — paralyzes the viewer to instigate a generic phantasmagoria. The dream’s immunity to negation is shared by art’s presentational field, where (as in dreams) the dead may come back to life, time can reverse, doubles can meet, and dreams in dreams can contaminate the stories in the stories.

The secondary’s parasitic invasion of the primary sagittal of perspectival depth, squeezing and stretching it to induce paralysis on one end and magical motion on the other, must be both “silent” (like the smuggler in the privational domain of objects) and captivating (like the armies that take over the law-abiding prohibitional spaces of living subjects). These metaphors abound in descriptions of what happens in the audience’s enjoyment of art of all kinds. Transgression works quietly, in the dark night, creating the monsters that take flight when reason sleeps.

...

Note that this happens to be the case if we use child development as a model. But, in the experience of the adult subject in an everyday situation, what does this “pre-primary” mean? The ersatz theory that POV dyads are actually dispersed to multiple figure/ground positions in space is ridiculous if we consider perspectival space as eternal and objective. But, as it turns out, perspectival space is anything but eternal and objective. From Kant to Einstein, it has been evident that space (and time) are both finite *but* unbounded, and that this paradoxical seeming contradiction is to be found at the local as well as the cosmic level — a portable antagonism. In fact the antagonistic idea of space and time fits precisely with our ersatz conjecture of a portable dyad. The dyad is radically divided between an “objective” and “subjective” position (the labels are adjustable). In fact one could say that the distinction exists on its own, a “pure distinction” that, once made, defines and indicates what it has distinguished.<sup>12</sup> A portable monad of pure distinction, able to “seed a reality wherever it travels” sounds ridiculous because, in effect, we read reality from the side of the indications (the results) rather than the distinctions (the causes). Our account of perspectival reality is more of the “billiard ball” variety, where the objects and interactions in the perspectival domain have more or less predictable results, but when they don’t, we can always investigate.

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<sup>12</sup> The coincidence of such a hypothetical pure distinction and the indication of what the distinction has distinguished is the cornerstone of the “calculus of indications” developed by George Spencer-Brown in his book, *Laws of Form*. See Donald Kunze, “Coincidence of Distinction and Indication in the Purloined Connection Linking Spencer-Brown, Lacan, and Poe,” in Jonathan Michael Dickstein and Gautam Basu Thakur, eds. *Lacan and the Nonhuman* (New York, N : Springer International Pub. AG, 2017).

Once the dyads have “done their job,” we take the results to be all there is, and because causality and networks of relationships are a part of that job, we regard them as all that is needed to explain the temporality and causality of this final creation. This is how the primary becomes primary. It suppresses its genesis, pulling what has been first in line to the back of the line: the position of the secondary.

Thus, when we, as a young subject, arrive at the mirror of the Mirror Stage, it seems that the reflections have assembled beforehand just to greet us when we arrive. They already seem to know each other and are waiting for us to arrive; in fact, we are “late for our own reflection.” Waiting there with the others is the spectral double who will be our new avatar in the world of the Symbolic. It doesn’t need or want our approval, it simply wants to put us on notice. From this point on, it will be calling the shots. This takes stereognosis, our awareness of the left–right aspects of the world, to a perverse extreme. Our stereo double lets us know it has the upper hand. At the moment of this new and extreme stereognosis, a new and extreme form of propriocept is cast back in the reverse direction, toward our position in front of the mirror. We are suddenly aware of our state as a disorganized being. The abduction and externalization of the part of our “circuit” that had balanced our internal dynamic circulation of identities and differences now casts the rest of our system into doubt.

The evolutionary advantage of extending a part of our being into the physical world is clear: we consider the space and time immediately around us to be a part of us, so that we can anticipate conditions and changes quickly. We can respond sympathetically to those who are within this zone, making group actions more cooperative and efficient. The subject cannot be mapped as a point in space or time. Rather, subject-ivity is a bridge between a forward–projecting anticipatory space and a backward–trailing (re-)assembly of remembered events, quickly arranged to account for and justify the “now” of actions. A flow of events from the anticipated future into a past of constructed memories is paralleled by a predictive counter–flow generated from memory as it converts itself into anticipation/imagination of what can, should, or must happen in the “advance field.” To benefit from this dynamic exchange, the subject imagines itself to extend physically and temporally across this advance field. Objects and other subjects who step into it have a special status, as potential threats or benefits. The nervous system’s “fight or flight” mechanisms depend on this extension of the subject’s body across this perceptual field, making it necessary to include, in any accurate map of a subject viewed from above, peripheral zones that extend the nervous system to include a complex “subjective objectivity” extending from the subject’s literal body to the more complex reactive body of sense awareness.

This extended field, where emotions, ideas, and mental constructs form composite threats and advantages out of stereognosis and propriocept (the binary forces begun in the Mirror Stage) qualifies the traditional binary, the “mind/body,” as a dynamic palindromic flow, a subject who exists within perspectival space by projecting precise temporal futures and pasts in the process of locating, within that space, what is to be desired and what is to be feared.

In this context, the ersatz concept of a *dyad* is necessary because only at the level of the pre-subject’s internal and autoerotic circuitry is it possible to see the logic that, later extended across a sensitized perspectival externality of space and time, adjusts the subject to a new — and evolutionarily superior — constructed environmental functionality. The dyad construct shows precisely what is externalized at the Mirror Stage, and shows precisely how and why this “adjudication” of a subjective objectivity involves

transgression within the context of a precise palindromic economy. “Let the punishment fit the crime” might be the proper echo to the Socratic dictum “know thyself.” The criminality of this externalization of the self is a motif central to all cultures who, in identifying autoeroticism with an originary garden paradise, see the fall of the primary man/woman as a precise mirror measure of the effort to reach up to take the forbidden fruit. When architecturally these same fallen humans reach up to breach the blue *æther*, the lower face of divine height, the same symmetry of punishment and crime replicates another Lacanian dictum. “There is no metalanguage” means that subjectivity lives within the indictment of authoring the idea of the Super Being. The degree to which the first humans imagine Jove to occupy the ultimate height is the same degree to which they imagine themselves bound to the laws of Hades, ruled by the dead in alliance with the earth that buries them beneath their houses and ritual precincts.

The dyad concept connects the logic of the individual subject — universalized across all cultures and time periods — with the “ethnological subject,” whose diverse forms nonetheless attest to a common inner form and functionality. Proximity, as Edward Hall once famously pointed out, is essential to the social functioning of human animals, who overcome the distances separating them from objects and other subjects not just with language but with perceptual zones sensitized to work, themselves, as semiotic devices.<sup>13</sup> But, unlike proximity studies, where Hall’s zones were shown to be adjustable by different cultural conceptions of inter-personal space, the pre-subjective dyad demonstrates more clearly how stereognosis and propriocept work at both extremes, of the universalized private subject and the collectivized public practices of cultures. The private/public binary is another case of a “generative palindrome,” where a lack, loss, or crime induces a counter-flow of a surplus, a gift, or a punishment.

The mirror has taken something that we had been using to make our life seem complete; a mechanism that kept things rolling around our local world, kept recycling the old parts to make new ones. Our pre-subjective economy was ideal. We could play the part of the subject or the object. We could be the demon or the god, the monster or the maiden imprisoned by the monster. We could be the bear on the hill or the hill itself.

This recirculation system required a paired set of switches to make sure that the in>out change would be balanced by a coordinated out>in conversion. This allowed “us” to be both subject and object, to play all the parts in our personal theater (Fig. 3). At the Mirror Stage, the mirror in effect “captures” one of these switches and externalizes it for once and for all. This capture will be the basis of Subjectivity and the

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<sup>13</sup> Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966). Hall’s work is one of the foundational works of environmental cognitivism, the application of cognitive psychology to specifically spatial-temporal conditions. Yet, Hall’s and others’ studies seemed to ignore and later resist the full implications of stereognosis and propriocept by failing to take into account the Mirror Stage’s *reciprocal* exchange of (spectral) mastery for (corporal) abjection. The subject was unified as a unit of study, center of a set of concentric rings of conditioned behaviors. It was as if the Copernican solar system had trumped the infinite sphere (“the universe/mind is an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere”) with its multiple centers and unbounded infinities. Cognitive psychology was left with a physical unit to which beliefs, self-images, and values had to be added later, after the issues of location and movement had been determined. In contrast, Lacan’s Mirror Stage specified a theatrical setting for a binary or, more accurately, palindromic exchange of mastery flowing in one direction, abjection flowing in the other. The “stage” was not simply a temporal event but a architectural binary where a primary distinction was simultaneous with a primary indication, of alternation between activity (actors on stage) and the (premature) death of the audience paralyzed in the darkened auditorium.

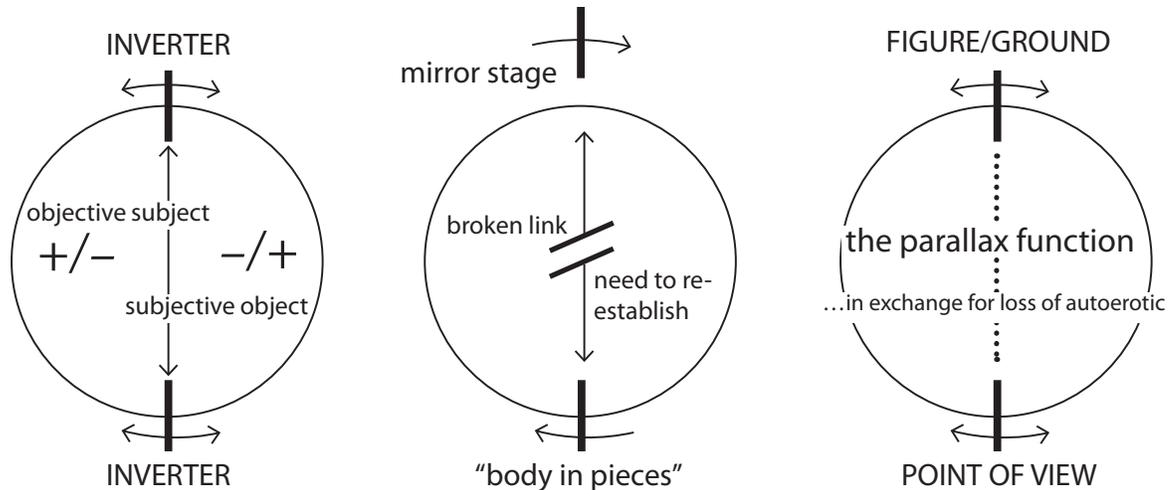
Perspectivalism it requires to stage its events. And, because the Mirror Stage is, if anything, the “first event” of perspectival space, it must hold the key to what has happened. It must be hiding the clues we need to establish how the mirror stole the inverter switch, how the subject will, in Subjectivity, always be “short one-half” of her circulatory mechanism, but how the autoerotic potential of the pre-subject is always a possibility.

This is not a science-fiction conjecture. Certainly, something *like* the space-time we occupy as human subjects existed before us and will exist after us. But, our occupancy has appropriated it for its own subjectivity demands. It has taken over its resources and wired them to its language-based network of symbolic relationships. It has used this appropriated resource to conceal the fact that the system itself is flawed, that it has gaps, inconsistencies, and irrational dysfunctions. In short, like any large corporation, subjectivity uses perspectival space to “cook the books” so that a surprise audit may be fooled into thinking all is in order.

But, two things require us to continue our ersatz conjecture. The first and most compelling is the developmental stages through which all humans must pass. The autoerotic, self-satisfying world of the infant must be exchanged for the public organization of culture and society’s Symbolic. Those who do not join suffer psychosis — they know “all too well” the obscenity of the rules that cannot be obeyed, the trade-offs that are always to the disadvantage of the subject, by which the system “enjoys” its captive guests. Members of the club internalize the irrationality of the system as neurotic symptoms. They cannot escape without losing not just their “meaningful world” but meaning itself. The cure for their symptoms is death. The autoerotic dyad and subsequent theft of the object-half of its internal conversion system is clinically, historically, ethnographically, and philosophically demonstrable. We don’t have to be ashamed of our ersatz conjecture. The evidence of science has turned ersatz dyad into the *ansatz* account of what happens in the Mirror Stage — the lucky guess that doesn’t just confirm this Lacanian chestnut but reveals a new relation to the “body in pieces” whose pieces were chaotic only from the perspective of the fake orderliness of the Subjective.

The young subject doesn’t just *see something disturbing*. Actually, it’s distress coupled with glee, as most research attests. Why glee? It’s the complex emotion of having had something taken — something that one was not aware of possessing — that is falsified and reversed in the process of being revealed. The interior that was exterior is now the exterior that will forever be tagged with an interiority, and intimacy, a homing signal that only the subject in the flesh and its mirror image can share. This focused beam of (in-)authenticity is the evidence of our dyadic beginnings, it moves with us, we can’t escape it *but it can escape us*. This is because from the Mirror Stage on, the perspectivalism guaranteed by mirror reflections contains an exception, the exception of identity and intimacy. It’s not that we see ourselves in the mirror; rather, it’s that we *see someone else*, the spy with a forged *carte d’identité*, mingling with foreigners, receiving purloined secrets. The perspective that worked by “privating” the invisible from the visible now “prohibits” entry into the unseen; and as we well know any rule is made to be broken.

Privation had worked like this. Within the perspectival domain, what one edge concealed the other would reveal, in a conceptualized 1:1 basis. This does not mean that for every *quale* of information covered over there is precisely one new *quale* now showing up. The idea is that there is a *fixed amount* of visible-plus-invisible, and that, within the small spectrum of things perceptually available to us, the visibles and

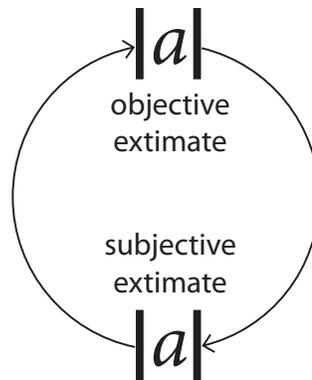


1. The pre-subject enjoys a perfectly divided circuit that can be occupied from either side, as in play the child can be the object or direct the object as an external force.

2. The mirror “captures” one of the inverter switches, transporting along the depth dimension, now assigned as the vector of anxiety and lost identity.

3. Parallax re-stabilizes/domesticates depth by synchronizing the POV with shifts of the figure against the ground. But, this fix can be violated.

4. Thus, the model of the uncanny proceeds from conditions that can be modeled as a dysfunction of the parallax function. This opens up the movement from the side of both the subject’s POV and the object’s figure-ground and provides a bridge between.



5. The figure-ground becomes a “portal function” (to forbidden territories), while the POV position becomes a site of identity, singularity, tests of strength, purity, destiny, etc. The distance between the two positions is redefined as a trial, quest, or proof.

Figure 3. Envisioned as a closed circuit of exchanges of energies and positions, (1) the pre-subject enjoys the ability to generate and destroy, occupy and abandon, empower and be overpowered by objects of its own invention. The fluidity of this condition is represented as a circuit with two “inverter switches” — conversion functions used to define opposing conditions and roles. Two are required to stabilize the circuit, but when one of the switches is appropriated by the mirror of the Mirror Stage (2), the subject is immediately thrown into a state of disorganization — a “body in pieces” (*corp morcée*), lacking its autoerotic autonomous self-organizing capabilities. This lack must be replaced by the reliable synchrony of the subject’s movement with the perceived movement of figures against their grounds (3). Should this stability fail, or should the sagittal dimension it establishes be the vector of anxiety (4) an uncanny condition again bridges the positions of the POV and figure-ground, opening up a “portal function” through which an other-worldly “phantasmagoria” offers the subject quest-like options.

invisibles add up to this constant. Any exchange between them doesn’t change the value of the constant, this fixed amount.

When privation converts to prohibition, the 1:1 *quale* economy transfers with it. This is the proof of the punishment that fits the crime, nowhere more evident than in Dante's clever matches, where the *logic* of the sin would be revealed by the irony of the nature of the punishment and the precise place in the *Inferno* (poetically and geographically) the sinners would be found. In the case of Paolo and Francesca, lovers who fell in love when they realized the characters in the book they were reading together were in fact them, the image of eternal circulation about a void captures both the longing of illicit love and the theory of literary contamination of the real, where one finds one's future already in a softcover edition.

The "thou shalt not" prohibition of sin and subsequent punishment also recognize the principle of limited good, or rather limited good/bad (as the two are in constant exchange). In literature and theology, at least, whenever a good *quale* converts to bad, some bad *quale* converts to good, even if the two are separated by the temporality of crime and punishment. And, if the Prosecution is as clever as Dante, the conversion is witty, revealing that punishments fit crimes in ways we can't imagine until we see how it's done.

We can test the nature and position of of the axiomatic dyad by observing what happens when there is a breakdown in parallax — in the reliable *latent* synchronicity between the point of view and figure/ground. If this experiment works, this breakdown will also result in a failure in the similarly latent correlation between subjectivity and perspectival space.<sup>14</sup> Instead of perceptual reality disappearing, something else will re-appear. The gap or lack in the Symbolic will be made "perceptually available" in the latent *Unheimlich* spookiness of perspectival space-time's parallax, and the lack will lead to an unexpected and highly structured surplus, a kind of "phantasmagoria" of unassigned elements. The crack in the Symbolic will become a portal to another kind of world. And, this other world will seem spookily familiar.

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<sup>14</sup> In mathematics, the "ersatz to *Ansatz*" method is a commonly applied means of addressing unknown situations where the conscious choice of some favorable aspect would prejudice the outcome. Instead, a "wild conjecture" is applied and the results studied to see how the "system" of unknown relations has changed. There is no division of positive and negative results; rather, all changes positively inform the experiment by giving a clear picture of previously invisible dimensions. Ersatz describes the bogus or intentionally indifferent aspect of the conjecture, *Ansatz* is the "lucky guess" or payoff. See "Ansatz," *Wolfram Mathworld*; URL: <http://mathworld.wolfram.com/Ansatz.html>.



## 2 / Breaking the Parallax Mirror



Figure 1. Alfred Hitchcock's 1954 film, *Rear Window*, was clever in posing its narrative as visual monograms. Here Lisa (Grace Kelly) literally crosses Jeff Jefferies (James Stewart) at the same time she constructs a chiasmus within the plot that gives her access to the key clues concealed in the apartment of the wife-murderer, Lars Thorwald (Raymond Burr).

LISA: A murderer would never parade his crime in front of an open window.

JEFF: Why not?

— *Rear Window*, 1954

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Midway through Alfred Hitchcock's 50s masterpiece shot in a meticulous reconstruction of a New York City urban courtyard, Jeff Jefferies and his tony girlfriend Lisa Fremont speculate on who might have killed the small dog belonging to neighbors across the way. "Why would Thorwald want to kill a little dog? Because it knew too much?" The reference at first seems to be an insider wink to Hitchcock's earlier film, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934, remade in 1956). This was not the first popular

culture reference to the key Lacanian idea, that not only endangerment but guilt itself can spring from what the subject "knows but does not know he/she knows." For the unwitting but wit-*full* victim, reality is structured by a *daemon* who takes the form of a secret. Perversely, he/she possesses the secret but does not know how to rid him/herself of it, and cannot even know what the secret is. Yet, he/she must flee from the *daemon* with all the immediacy of a life-and-death chase. The emblem of the situation is the gapped circle, where an apparent linear motion in Boolean space is actually a topological recursion of aim and goal, so the line of flight curves until it returns to its origin, a paradoxical void.

One could argue that dogs can't know too much because only humans' unconscious exists because of language's creation of a huge "garbage pile" of remainders, falsehoods, and negations. Yet, the unconscious is itself dog-like in its loyalty and blind service to the needs of the conscious everyday. It returns its contents, in the form of dreams, emotions, and enigmatic constructs akin to rebus formations where a message, whose first delivery to the consciousness is refused, "always reaches its destination." Thus, the Lacanian man who knows too much may feel guilty for no reason but Lacan emphasizes that the guilt is authentic nonetheless. Our *kenosis* of knowing without knowing does not exempt us from ethical responsibility. In fact, it purifies our ethical being and makes it clear how ethics are the opposite of morals, in that, while morality is set with the Symbolic as doing good "so that" others might judge our actions to be correct, ethics is singular and Real. It cannot be settled within the Symbolic's checks and balances, its logical models of relational good, its "lifeboat puzzles" (does the good of the collective justify doing wrong locally).

The dog who knew too much issue is really that the "too much" that we know (the unconscious) is like a dog who attaches itself to us and will not leave. We can find an easy alibi for ignoring it but feel an inner

responsibility to take it home, to feed and care for it. No one would blame us if we hardened our heart against the stray, but in some way the homeless dog is already attached to us, already a responsibility. We were guilty before it came along, as if we were the previous owner who had abandoned it. Wrongs done in one location can and sometimes must be paid for in another, and by a totally different agent, an agent whose *very innocence* makes him/her to blame.

So, this is possibly why the “man who knew too much” is also the “dead person who does not yet realize he/she is dead”: the condition Lacan identified as “between the two deaths,” possibly echoing the idea of the novel by Pierre Boileau and Pierre Ayraud (Thomas Narcejac), *d'Entre les Morts* (1954). The title means, literally, *Among the Dead*. But, the novel was the basis of another Hitchcock film, *Vertigo* (1958), a film that, more than any other Hitchcock film, keeps quiet about whether or not the film's protagonist, the police detective Scottie, has actually died in the opening scene of the movie and was making the journey between a literal death and a symbolic one.

Two policemen are chasing a suspect across steep, slippery rooftops in downtown San Francisco. Scottie slips and hangs on to a storm gutter; his colleague tries to lift him up but falls to his death in the process. The camera cuts to Scottie's post-traumatic recovery, where he demonstrates to his chum Madge how he is overcoming his debilitating malady, vertigo. Our acceptance that Scottie has really survived is again thrown into doubt when he is hired to trail the wife of a ship construction magnate (Gavin Elster) who is obsessed with the idea that she (Madeleine Elster) is a reincarnation of her dead Latina ancestress (Carlotta Valdez), and that she, like her forbearer, will meet with an early death.

But, wait, there's more. The wife is not the wife but an actress (Judy) hired to enlist Scottie as a witness to the magnate's murder of the real wife. As an ex-detective, his testimony will be essential at the hearing where the death is ruled as accidental. Scottie, who has fallen in love with the actress-wife and is traumatized by her death, accidentally encounters the actress. Even though she lacks the expensive clothes and coiffure of the wife she faked, he has the uncanny feeling that she is somehow able to embody the lost Madeleine. He introduces himself and convinces her to undertake a make-over to resemble Madeleine, but all the while he knows something is wrong, that the make-over is a bit too successful. He suppresses this thesis but allows it to accumulate until the moment when a piece of jewelry Judy mistakenly wears proves that she has been involved in a scheme to use Scottie's witness to cover up Elster's murder of the real Madeleine. The logic of the plot is that Scottie has assisted in killing the woman he loved but never met, and will now kill the woman he met but can never love. Innocent of any knowing wrongdoing, he is guilty of a silent complicity, of being pulled into the “flat death” of the representation, the 2-d version of 3-d reality that Elster and Judy constructed as pure theater. Scottie's innocence, his inability to act — represented literally by scenes when he is reduced to a traumatized catalepsy — makes him both dead yet still moving through the 2-d construct, where Madeleine is the Madeleine he “loves but can't love,” in the company of Judy, whom he “can't love but does love.” Scottie is innocent but nonetheless, thanks to his presence among the dead, or between the two deaths, is guilty.

Curiously, this transferability of guilt drives the point-of-view character of *Rear Window*, Jeff Jefferies, by profession a photographer who has cultivated the art of detachment (he was a war photographer whose peacetime job is to film catastrophes and accidents). He is immobilized with a broken leg upon whose white plaster cast we see the customary signatures and well-wishes of friends. One of these stands out:

“Here lie the bones of L. B. Jefferies.” It is rare in a film that we see a character’s name spelled before our eyes, but in this case of clear instruction, the reverse has happened. Many of the film’s reviewers continue to misspell Jeff’s last name as “Jeffries” despite this evidence. In a similar way, reviewers ignore the hints Hitchcock places before us in the form of a smashed camera, photo souvenirs, and a negative print of a magazine cover. One option of understanding this introductory scene is to speculate in this first minute that Jeff has actually died from his wounds, and that what we are going to watch for the next 114 minutes is actually Jeff’s death dream, a *corrective* fantasy that has taken the occasion of dying to rework life just as he is leaving it, atoning for sins, making it up to those he has wronged, completing important tasks the heart and mind need for closure.

In ignoring evidence that the story is actually a death dream, the audience does what the point-of-view character is doing, so resistance puts the audience into the same mental state as the hero: dying but hurrying to get his affairs in order before dying the second time. With or without a direct reference, all works of art implicitly create this interval between the two deaths. In the first death, the audience undergoes the customary catalepsy of sitting still in the darkness, looking forward and not moving while a fictive world parades past in the form of images moving across a thinned plane. Even when the thin plane is a theater stage, perspectival space is still compressed. Objects do not shift against their backgrounds, there is no parallax. First of all we don’t move, but, neither is there sufficient depth to allow them to move. Perspective cues have been painted onto flat surfaces or, as in the architectural freak, the *Teatro Olimpico* in Vicenza, compressed within an “artificial perspective tunnel,” giving an uncanny effect of enlarging subjects rather than sucking back their spatial field to a vanishing point on the horizon.<sup>1</sup>

When time is brought into space, it is given spatial forms and the privilege of interacting with objects, physically. There is a more subtle spatialization in the idea that, as the “now” of time “moves forward” into the future, *quanta* of the future are transported across a bridge, instantaneously, to be equal, 1:1, *quanta* of the past. *Rear Window* may or may not be a death dream. But, this is not a question of whether or not Hitchcock or the writer, John Michael Hayes, intended it to be so. The film’s structure is the unmistakable parody of the death dream. Possibly, any director who directly instructed the audience to read a film as a death dream would ironically disqualify the film on that account.

The undecidability is, in itself, a key ingredient. As the film moves forward into the future, its transfer of *quanta* across a spatial device constitutes the same mechanism or parallax that, in space, guarantees the dimension of depth. In *Rear Window*, the “depth” of the film is its credibility as an illusion we may enjoy as our own death dream, from the viewpoint of our induced catalepsy in a darkened auditorium seat. *Our*

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<sup>1</sup> For many years, tours of the *Teatro* were given by a polyglot midget, who demonstrated the theater’s forced perspective set by walking into it, increasing his size. This joke has sophisticated theological implications. The guide was “Adamic” in his pre-Babel ability to speak all languages, although his English was colored by a Brooklyn accent. And, because the theater designates the Olympian gods as geometers of its form, the irony of the tour being given by “the smallest god” brings to mind Venus’s marriage to Vulcan, the smithy of the underworld, repeats the logic by which beauty is always obliged to spend part of the year dead in order to be reborn in the spring. Palladio, the architect, could not have known that his building would be corrected by a future tour-guide, but the coupling of beauty/love with darkness/ugliness is already present in the way that the forced perspective “wounds” space by alienating any who would walk down the simulated city street and find themselves, like Alice, growing into an ugly giant in contrast to the elegant buildings “domesticated” by perspectival shrinkage to the point of vanishing. The space tapers but the actors don’t. Only a dwarf would know what this is like.

death dream need not be itself a death dream, but the mirroring of the audience's experience — evident in the film's opening, where the curtains of the window in Jeff's studio apartment are slowly raised, like the curtain of a theater stage — we are forced to accept temporal parallax in the place of spatial parallax. We must examine the *quanta* bridge in detail, since it is our only technical means of sustaining the dream that, for 115 minutes, will insure that we are the “dog who knew too much.” Our catalepsy will allow the suppressed contents of our kenotic unconscious to present itself in the form of objects that constitute a “picture language,” a rebus that is not about thoughts but thinking itself.

### *The quanta time bridge and spatial parallax*

What allows time to be spatialized, to be pulled into the domain of perspectivalism's “instantaneous” reaction of the figure/ground to the movement of the point of view? What allows the splitting of the “internal dyad” of the pre-subject and its re-distribution, to create the “fan” of the cone of vision — a fan that is the *sine qua non* physical externalization of the condition of the psychoanalytical subject?

These questions are so central, and their puzzle so puzzling, that a different theoretical attitude is required to release thought from any preconceived obligations. Now is the time to borrow from mathematics — if anything, a sober and reliable discipline — a methodology. This is the “ersatz conjecture,” a model or hypothesis that puts forward its “what if” hoping equally that it fails or succeeds. The ersatz has no value in itself; rather, it is the encounters it has with the unknown it aims to understand that are valuable, whether they come in the form of negative resistance or positive resonance. Unlike most experiments, the hypothesis itself should have no value. It is *ersatz*, bogus. However, the value-less conjecture stands a better chance of dislodging unexpected truths than the model that is already certain of too many things. The ersatz method is in fact superior to this kind of confident model predictor. The ersatz conjecture allows for its own structure to be revised. It acknowledges that the inquiry itself has a structure that occludes the real nature of what it studies, and that this “ego-like” fondness for this structure is the first thing that must go, if inquiry is to identify with the objective conditions of the experiment rather than the subjective and often narcissistic commitment to the model.

Spatial parallax is not a new invention, of course, but the concept is not the same thing as the phenomenon. Thinking that the movement of the point of view is *simultaneous* to the movement of objects against their backdrops uses an idea of time, but time is the very object of study. The question should be, “what is this simultaneity?” But, all thinking imports undisclosed standards of time and space that inevitably influence any experiment on time and space. The ersatz conjecture aims to get past the metaphoric level of assuming time–space relations before inquiry has begun.

The ersatz conjecture in this case compares the bogus idea of a *quanta bridge* connecting the future to the past with the idea of a subjective *dyad*, split and fanned out to create a perspectival objectivity. The first part of the experiment has already begun, with the consideration of the role of the death dream, the spatio-temporal interval between a (fictionalized) literal death and a second, symbolic death. In *Vertigo*, the detective Scottie “has forgotten how to die” and extends the momentum of his duty as a policeman into the fantasy of following — and *falling for* — a woman with double identity, whose recursive roles (simulating something that doesn't exist to the point where it exists as “more real than real”) pull Scottie's kenosis out

into the open, exposing his “innermost” unconscious as having in reality been the “outermost” vanishing point of his “perspectival” dilemmas.

If *Rear Window* can be regarded as, also, a death dream plot, we add to the generic temporal idea of pursuit (extension into time — “speculation” — that is identified with perspective’s cone of vision) specific geometric conditions. Hitchcock has built a precise set in MGM’s sound lot. Our experiment may add Hitchcock’s intentionally tight referential system. For example, windows of the apartment buildings in the urban courtyard depicted in the film were calibrated using the historical aspect ratios used by films since the inception of cinema, so that the windows constitute a museum of film history! To the idea of simulation we must add the metaphor of the museum as a fact of film production.

Other peculiarities of film-making contribute to the idea of using a “negative control” — a set of interactive influences where the conjecture *is not applied*. For example, it is well known that Hitchcock worked out color coding of lighting and costumes and even jewelry well in advance. Similarly, artworks and accessories shown in the film either as a featured element (the portrait of Carlotta in *Vertigo*, for example) or as casual background items (the novel Lisa pretends to read at the conclusion of *Rear Window*) are considered in advance. These are clear evidence of an extensive “secondary” Hitchcock consciously planned out in advance and, as such, evidence of how the secondary *as secondary* must remain at the level of speculative hypothesis, always “subjunctive” never “declarative.”

Geometry would constitute a part of this secondary, and in *Rear Window* there is a near-literal reproduction of the “dyadic genesis” from a single self-divided entity, split and dispersed across the “closed, curved” (Einsteinian) urban residential courtyard, typical of New York’s West Village. That this is an explicit reference to the infinite sphere (of Hermes Trismagistus, Giordano Bruno, Pascal, Borges, etc.) is not important; but the *inability* of determining a center and the *impossibility* of finding any outer boundary connect two negations, a subjective impotence-turned-prohibition with an objective privation in a way that would have pleased Lacan. With or without the infinite sphere in mind, Hitchcock *did* curve “Manhattan space” to connect Thorwald’s antipodal apartment to meet Jeff’s point-of-view studio in the style of a gapped circle (this is one of cinema’s most literal depictions of this Lacanian figure). He *did* portray the subjective “anywhere” position as an impotence — Jeff’s restriction to a wheelchair and his immunity to Lisa’s sexuality — at the same time Thorwald’s case is pursued using a set of objective exclusions, “ruling out” certain things to be “impossible” or “possible.”

In general, detective fiction emphasizes the “dichotomous tree” of possible/impossible. Like police detection itself, this form of negation is the “opportunity” component of motive-plus-opportunity required to “prove a case,” to find the whodunit. Motive is the subjective component, the potency/impotency of the crime dyad. *Rear Window* distributes these elements precisely. Jeff is unwilling to make commitments to Lisa, the dominant narrative theme inside his point-of-view studio apartment. His broken leg is the less-than-subtle reference to the possible sexual dysfunction behind this unwillingness. In contrast, the antipode of Jeff’s situation is the focus of intensive *objective* examination, of where Thorwald has been and what he has or hasn’t done. This takes place in an apartment space that has been splayed out in a thin 2-d array, more evidence of a dyadic relationship to Jeff’s studio. Subject and object are set symmetrically opposite, both in spatial and ethical terms.

The ersatz model of a perspectival dyad “explaining” parallax and, in the process, the spatialized version of the pre-subject’s sudden emergence into subjectivity is not the experiment. The ersatz is the secondary, a hypothetical “unconscious” of, in this case, *Rear Window*’s evidentiary status as popular entertainment. This underscores the fact that all secondaries are, in a sense, like unconsciousnesses. They are not “inside the head” of the authors of primary situations such as films, novels, paintings, or buildings. Rather, they are the “out there” of situations and works of art as they are “cast out into” contingent reality, open to consideration by a random public over an unpredictable stretch of time. This “out there” is an unconscious in a sense that every object is, to be an object, also a subject. Like any subject, we may think of it as having feelings, thoughts, intentions, and so on; but we must also apply the rules of the Lacanian subject, that it is a subject because it has entered a “parallax field” where (1) it will be assigned a place but alienated in the process, (2) it will be misidentified, and (3) it will continue to have access to a pre-subjective “autoerotic” state where its relations with other objects will constitute a phantasmagoria.

In other words, if objects are necessarily also subjects, they must be subjects who, like other subjects, suffer the gaps and inconsistencies of the Symbolic order. They cannot be enigmatic; they cannot contain hidden treasures; they cannot be fully conscious of themselves or their thoughts. They, like us, must have their secondariness, their unconscious, their kenosis. They, like us, “know but do not know that they know.” They must, like us, be in the tortured trial–wilderness between a point of literal dying and symbolic dying.

The ersatz experiment begins once these conditional transfers are set and ready.

### *The experiment*

Perspectivalism is a confidence–building strategy. Parallax coordination of subjective moment with objective responsiveness confirms space and time’s neutrality. We can think, intend, and act as long as space and time are indifferent containers of this thought, intention, and action. Yet, because perspectival confidence is evolved, because it *emerges* suddenly after a long period of patient preparation, its naturalness is (unconsciously) *known to be* unnatural. This is a built-in uncanny secondary feature of perspectival reality. Latent uncanniness is what I mean by the “secondariness” of space–time itself. When the latent is brought to light, we directly experience giddy delight/horror, the usual hysterical responses to phantasmagoria.<sup>2</sup> In the broken mirror scene in the Marx Brother’s *Duck Soup*, Chicolini (Chico) tries to

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<sup>2</sup> In an important sense, clinical hysteria is linked to this perception of phantasmagoria as triggered by perception of a lack or flaw in the Other —  $S(\mathbb{A})$  — in whom the hysteric has “over–invested” a magical knowledge or authority (the problem of the Other of the Other). We will return to this idea in the form of a suppressed “treasury of signifiers” that, because they have been suppressed/accumulated without direct reference to a time frame, suddenly emerge with an unexpected force. See Lacan’s key text, in “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire,” *Écrits, The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 2002), 689: “Desire begins to take shape in the margin in which demand rips away from need, this margin being the one that demand — whose appeal can be unconditional only with respect to the Other — opens up in the guise of the possible gap need may give rise to here, because it has no universal satisfaction (this is called “anxiety”). A margin which, *as linear as it may be, allows its vertiginous character to appear*, provided it is not trampled by the elephantine feet of the Other’s whimsy. Nevertheless, it is this whimsy that introduces the *phantom of Omnipotence* — not of the subject, but of the Other in which the subject’s demand is instated ... the necessity that the Other will be bridled by the Law” (emphasis mine).

fool Firefly (Groucho) into thinking the mirror wasn't smashed by parroting his moves. The audience sees the gaps in the attempted coordinations, and at one point Firefly himself confirms the gag but then wants to get in on it. The loss of guaranteed parallax between the POV and figure/ground creates a crisis out of the *latent uncanny* already/always present within perspectival space, an uncanny whose trigger is parallax.<sup>3</sup> Given that perspectival space exists as a *result* of the POV/FG connection of simultaneous movements of the viewer and the viewed, this "secondary uncanny" is in the complex position of being "pre-primary." It can undermine or disrupt parallax's primary without losing its status as secondary. This is what Žižek, in his use of parallax as an analogy, constitutes with the idea of a permanent and durable element of antagonism.

The broken mirror of the Marx Brothers' skit is comic because it connects the lack (loss of the mirror's guaranteed reflection) with an excess (two identically dressed figures, then for good measure — an excess of an excess — a third).<sup>4</sup> This comic moment wouldn't happen if the lack were just a dysfunction of perspectivalism — "parallax gone wrong." The broken mirror brings to our attention a more primary and fundamental lack, the axiomatic and generative function of the POV/ figure/ground dyad, *without which perspectival space would not exist as a material medium of subjectivity*. The mirror breaks. Suddenly we are aware of this lack in the form of the dyad's inner distinction, this secondary as a "pre-primary" of subjectivity/parallax, a lack that has been suppressed. We are aware that the secondary *as secondary* is really in charge of perspectival space-time's operations. It is "more fundamental than the fundamental." It is the forbidden (by Lacan) "Other of the Other."<sup>5</sup> What theory forbids, however, is precisely what the subject wants: "Indeed, it is quite simply ... as the Other's desire that *man's desire takes shape*, though at

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<sup>3</sup> Sigmund Freud, Hugh Haughton, and David McLintock, *The Uncanny* (Brantford, ON: W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services Library, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> I'm borrowing from Todd McGowan's theory that comedy is based on a conversion of the subject's "eternal" lack with a condition of sudden excess. The shorthand quip for this theory is "be careful what you wish for, you may get it"; Todd McGowan, *Only a Joke Can Save Us: A Theory of Comedy* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 2017). The relation of the comic to the perspectival can be generalized further, as a means of tolerating the separation of the "dyad" of the point of view and figure/ground as a *single shift* with two aspects, one subjective, one objective. When the object and subject are separated, as they must be, the dimension of depth is fundamentally an antagonism, a lack, that must be domesticated by the surplus or excess of confirming correlations of depth with other aspects of experience: movement, effort, security, rules about proximity of others, etc. In this view, comedy's innate conservatism serves culture as a guarantee that the "lack" of perspectival depth is "paid off" by these experiential safeguards, and that the "risk" of splitting the dyad and separating its two components is justified by the productivity that results from these excessive systemic relationships.

<sup>5</sup> I do not have the resources to present the full case of the "Other of the Other" in Lacan's thinking other than the quote in footnote 7. See, for more questions than answers, Christopher Bush, "The Other of the Other?: Cultural Studies, Theory, and the Location of the Modernist Signifier," *Comparative Literature Studies* 42, 2, *Comparative Cultural Studies* (2005): 162–180. Bush, in my view, mistakes the issue of singularity to be a question akin to the argument about the existence of Platonic Form: "There are stars and, from the perspective of other planets, there are other suns, but there cannot be a sun of the sun" (178). But, Plato's point is precisely that of Lacan's. Metalanguage "exists" only as an impossibility. It is the impossible/Real universality of particularity that cannot be separated — cannot be given *perspectival distance from* — its material basis. The coincidence of particularity and universality in the case of Form is experienced as an irreducible antagonism, its inner distinction, which discourse is compelled to play out dialectically to the point of its own failure. Parallax thus exists in order to reach this breaking point, this "internal uncanny," which we experience in the "unhomeliness of the home": not as an exception as much as a kernel of essential being.

first only retaining a subjective opacity on order to represent need in it” [emphasis mine].<sup>6</sup> We want the Other to have all the answers, to be omniscient and omnipotent. We are the hysteric who demands the Other to know everything but then finds pure joy when, as in *The Wizard of Oz*, Toto pulls back the curtain on the Man from Kansas. The subject continues to operate in the domain of what is forbidden theoretically. The subject, already failing to be fully a subject, additionally transgresses by Othering the Other. This is another way of saying “the secondary of the secondary.” Because you can’t secondary the secondary any more than you can Other the Other (i. e. there is no “explanatory” meta-language to lay out the principles of the secondary), you can “secondary all you want ... it’s still going to be secondary!”

So, the ersatz speculation does not end in interpretation that “explains” the secondary as a “secret” structuring the actualities of characters, plots, and scenes of *Rear Window*. Rather, the ersatz opens the door to the secondary of the film so that there is a film-within-a-film to think about without reducing this thought to a completed determinative set of coordinates and correlations. This is kenosis. You never know that you know; rather, you know a bit more about how not knowing is still a means of using “non-relation” to expand thought. In Hollywood terms, kenosis is about how to resist the stereotype of the happy ending fantasy, something that Todd McGowan has advised is marks the difference between a good film and a bad film.

### **Organic comparison: meiosis**

The dyadic account of the slow development of “affordances” in the young pre-subject’s self-substantial domain, affordances that are suddenly externalized at the Mirror Stage, which initiates subjectivity proper, is similar to the organic process of meiosis, which unlike mitosis (simple cell division), produces two sets of doubles. The pre-subject’s dyad is itself a double that circulates and equilibrates energies that are like switches that convert subjectivities into objectivities and *vice versa*. This system allows the young child to use his own body as a field of play, and to attach external fields to it (“autoeroticism”). The balance sustained by this circuitry allows for the extended period of dependency Lacan finds unique and necessary to the human child.

The sudden emergence of the new reality associated with subjectivity can happen only with this extended dependency period. Under the borrowed phrase of “exaptation,” latent features gestate and in a sense rehearse a future condition that will be provoked by a sudden external event. This event takes place when the young child, for the *first time*, realizes that his/her mirror image is a spectral Other, that its integration as an image is superior, for Symbolic reasons, to his/her actual body, whose disaggregation is suddenly made apparent. The body-in-pieces is actually the old circuitry with a key component removed. Like the cell in meiosis, a gap is created by “falsifying” the component’s ownership papers. As in Oscar

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<sup>6</sup> Jacques Lacan, “Subversion of the Subject,” 689. Here we have the essential idea that Form is not static but, rather, the dynamic process of *taking shape*. I would add that “taking shape” has the antecedent of “stealing shape,” as in the case of haunting or the possession of a body by an alien spirit — animation. The temporality of taking shape is, correctly, removed from perspectivalism’s appropriation of time as figurative (lines, circles, spirals, etc.), so the first impression one gets in accounts of Platonic Form is its timelessness. But, not only does the dynamic idea of Form require this notion of process of *taking shape*, it requires a temporality that is “pre-perspectival” in that it resists figuration within perspectivalism. Lacan has demonstrated the existence of this time in his multiple references to the “Dilemma of the Three Prisoners,” reviewed by Derek Hook in “Towards a Lacanian Group Psychology: The Prisoner’s Dilemma and the Trans-subjective,” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 43, 2 (2013): 115–132.

Wilde's *The Importance of Being Ernest*, the baby is stolen out of its "hand-basket" — a comic account of the young subject being *mistaken* for its spectral image. As in Wilde's play, the contained is also confused with the container. The externality of perspectival space is confused for the objectivity that had been internal to the pre-subject's circuitry. Objects appear; they are *subjective* objects; objects charged with interest (cathexis) that makes them "anxious objects." We don't know whether to love them or fear them. They are a part of us that is now "no part"; an organ that lives on despite the fact that it has lost its body.

The comparison to meiosis is of course limited. What it compels us to recognize is that the externalization of the Mirror Stage involves a double, the creation in perspectivalism's case of a primary and a secondary, or shadow. The confidence embodied by the young subject's spectral double is confirmed by parallax, the indexing of subjective actions by changes in the object field. In meiosis, unlike mitosis, there are four cells that result from the self-dividing one. In the process of creating subjectivity, there are two sets of doubles. The primary is accompanied, on the object and the subject side, by a lack, a negation. The subject marks the loss of a key part of its circuitry with a void, a sense of hollowness at its radical interior. At the same time, the object is a subjective object, endowed with (projected) senses, feelings, and thoughts whose media are primarily visual and auditory: the gaze and the acousmatic voice. Lacan added these drives to the classic Freudian three to mark subjectivity's involvement of "negational elements" inside the generally positive exterior field. The gaze looks back from the object's point of view, but it is invisible. It is also indifferent. It "doesn't see us" even though it is a panoptical, never-sleeping eye. Similarly, the voice of the object is radically ventriloquistic: its source cannot be located. It is primordially lost, even when we pull back the curtain as in Fritz Lang's 1933 film, *The Testament of Doctor Mabuse*, to find that the voice has "fled the scene." Was it all in our imagination? This question is related to the way the voice speaks directly to our *void*, our innermost unconscious fears and desires. It short-circuits the auditory sense apparatus, it "speaks directly to our heart."

The external subjective object and internal objective subject in effect cancel all "clean transfers" from the inside to the outside and back again. No interior can be left behind. It will be encountered again, in the guise of a shadow within an exteriority. In *Rear Window*, Jeff spends his time looking at his neighbors, delighting in the way they confirm his bachelorhood (= impotence) in their failed marriages and misfiring romances. His confidence builds as theirs deteriorates. There is one exception, however; a neighbor who acts with conviction and well-calculated determination. Unlike other neighbors who have exposed their domestic interiors because of a heat wave, Lars Thorwald closes his blinds. So do the newly-weds who move into the apartment on Jeff's left. But, they too will give into revealing themselves as the shine of first sex wears dim. Eros's relation to invisibility is confirmed when Jeff chuckles at the husband's look of exhaustion as he takes a cigarette break at the open window. Marriage fails, not eventually but all too soon and makes itself visible through the fantasy make-overs: Miss Lonelyhearts' invisible guest, the composer's jolly party, the childless couple's dog/infant. Miss Torso's flirting with a theatrical producer to "get the job."

*All who see and all who hear* are compelled to use fantasy to paper over the cracks and gaps in the Symbolic (= marriage). Thus, those who don't see (the newly-weds) and the deaf sculptress on the ground floor. The gaze and voice are indifferent because they, too, as negatives are blind and deaf to perspectival subjectivity. Jeff is content with his detached voyeurism. He defends it as harmless because residents are compelled by the summer heat to expose their flawed lives. If we watches, it is no more than accepting an

implicit invitation made by those who would show themselves to the public space of the urban courtyard. Benign voyeurism shifts gear when Jeff, in and out of sleep, hears — or thinks her hears — shattering glass and a scream. Then he begins to detect: he watches the *movements and times* of the neighbor in black, Thorwald, as he makes strange exits and returns in the early hours of the rainy morning. Jeff's switch from a subject-to-subject mode to watching a "subjective" (motivated — how?) object (who must be timed and mapped) is the first plot point of the film. At this point both Lisa, the failed object-cause of desire, and Stella, the nurse/pharmakeus whose homilies about life reveal a contronymic capability. They can be "turned" in a skeptical position to criticize Jeff's celibacy/impotence or inverted to interrogate Jeff's objective Other, his antipode.

At the opening of the film, objects shown in a slow pan of Jeff's apartment suggest that we are the witnesses of the end of Jeff's childhood. His "toys" (the smashed camera) are broken. His mementos of past play-dates show the moment before the disaster that nearly (?) killed him. But, Jeff has "forgotten how to die," and thanks to this we are able to enjoy the film that follows. If it's a death dream, *who cares?* Aren't all films (and other entertainments) "gratuitous" (= fictional) ways to fill the time between our literal induced catalepsy, silent and motionless in the dark of the auditorium, before we are invited to "awake" to the Symbolic conclusion of the work of art? What if the work itself mimics our condition? We know it exists "for real," with or without being mirrored from the stage.

Jeff has forgotten he is dead. We the audience, in our enjoyment of the film, have had to forget he is dead. This lost knowledge qualifies what he "knows but doesn't know he knows" as a project for anamnesis, Plato's thesis that all we know comes from a memory of our time spent in a previous death. In this theory, everything we have forgotten has taken place in a death domain. And, like other souls in Hades, we have been instructed; we know Everything. Like Adam and Eve, we have knowledge of life and death, not as binary conditions but as a dyadic whole. The knowledge that Jeff has because he doesn't have is domesticated on our behalf, if only because such cosmic ideas would fail to amuse theater audiences. Our version is the detective drama, the suspense. Our life-and-death dyad is the murder and its central question, whodunit. In fiction as in life, we will not be permitted to know what we know, that the dyad is *ours*, de-familiarized and given a set, attractive actors, and an ingenious plot — all that we could desire to while away our time between the two deaths.

***Start with the last.*** If we use the meiosis analogy, we have to begin with the final state, the two sets of doubles. This is the main predicament of the film's plot. A primary (Jeff) and his secondary (Lisa) watch their counterparts, a primary (Lars Thorwald) and his secondary (Anna Thorwald). They are on an object-oriented binary mode. They are present/absent, visible/invisible, alive/dead. The woman in black is either Anna or not. Lars is either a murderer or he isn't. Her body is literally a "body in pieces" (*corps morcelé*), her image appears no longer.

***Mind your hats coming in, your boots going out.*** The middle stage comes second. It's a middle from the point of view of the last stage appearing first. Jeff's situation appears as the primary story, but it is informed kenotically to be a death dream, a secondary. The middle appears to recollect/desire the primal unity of the dyadic origin. This phase takes on the shape of a chase, or to be accurate a reverse chase. Although Jeff and Lisa pursue Lars as detectives, they must work in silence and invisibility. They cannot risk exposure. They retreat behind binoculars, camera lens, and window-shades. Not until near the end of

the film does the *dæmon* Lars discover them, when he follows the visual line from Lisa's gesture, when she finds Anna's wedding ring and puts it on her finger, wiggling it to show Jeff, who has been watching her risky break-in from his apartment. The *askesis* of his "hunters blind," his observation post, is blown. He now risks the collapse of the perspectival space that has, thanks to parallax, protected him to this point. The primary gives way to the secondary, the double that had existed alongside space's primary all along. The indifference of the gaze is no longer indifferent. It looks back, it *identifies* Jeff. (Up to now Jeff's identity has been concealed behind two kinds of "pronouns": the use of his last name for his first, Jefferies for Jeff; and the missing names behind the initials "L. B." The reversal of the reversed gaze, negation of negation, makes another negation.

To be "in askesis" is to find oneself inside a tradition of desiccation. Monasteries were retreats dedicated to fasting, prayer, and devotional rituals and singing. Their mode was aligned with the humor of melancholy: cold and dry, to match the condition of both death and spirit. Jeff is cold to Lisa, whose romantic overtures he rebuffs. His ironic eye detaches him from the lives of his neighbors. But, just as monastics clothe themselves in anonymous black or white to disappear, Jeff's askesis is in his invisibility. We observe him watching others, confident that he isn't himself seen. Although his windows have only bamboo blinds, he believes that no one can see in. Invisibility may be another subtle sign that Jeff is death-dreaming, that he is already a "shade," a member of *Hades* (Gr. "invisible").

His immobility is another ascetic marker. Here we see how dreams require the immobility that, in the universal idea that sleep and death are simply two forms of the same thing, simultaneously grant the ability to see through time as well as space. This is evident in the only movement granted the immobilized sleeper/deceased, rotation. The opening scene is enjoyed by an eye that moves out of the window to take in a slow pan of the urban courtyard. The collation of scenes is "merioic" — intended to provide a kind of A–Z account of what's there to see.<sup>7</sup> A to Z is really ZA to AZ, the closure of a circle beginning on a "right" and ending on a "left" that folds the fan so that right begins again just to the left of left. The bachelor composer tries out chords, moving from major to minor. Hitchcock makes his cameo appearance in his studio, where he winds the clock on the mantel. Is he winding up the story so that it will have the "spring" in it to make it to the end? Or, is he saying about the earlier A–to–Z merioism that perspective fans are like the clock's bridge between 12 and 1. The visible is a circle and the invisible is a circle, equal rounds for night and day.

In a case of graphic coincidence, the figure of this askesis phase is an hour-glass. Jeff's immobility and invisibility is compensated by a fan that merioically wraps itself into a sphere to match Jeff's own ability to rotate freely inside his apartment. This stage of meiosis is in between complete separation and the complete union of the self-contained dyad. This is the stage where, in preparation for a final separation in the sequence of pre-subject to subject, a tentative exterior is created where the pre-subject rehearses his/her own alienation. Over a comparatively lengthy period, the idea of being an external being amidst other subjects and objects is rehearsed. Variations are tried out. Experiments are made. Shots are fired but without live ammunition. In the direction from the unary dyad to the full separation of the subject from its

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<sup>7</sup> "Merioic" and "merioism" are such little used terms that they will have to count as neologisms, derived from the Greek *meros*, meaning part. A merioism is an ordered listing of parts, as in A to Z. But, merioisms abound in other expressions where a whole is put in terms of a segmented or sequential array of linked parts, as in "head to toe," "start to finish," or "lock, stock, and barrel." The presumption is that by naming the end points or representative measures, the whole is indicated, as a process of accumulation and completion.

spectral Other, the logic is the sorites of “one gain more,” where suddenly there is a pile of sand where a moment before no idea of a “pile” existed. The sudden emergence of the subject in the Mirror Stage is, like the gradually accumulated pile of sand, something that had been there all along but had not been realized. The sudden revelation comes with the retroactive question: “How long has this been going on?” The newly minted subject turns the light back onto itself and realizes its condition as a *corps morcelé*, a disorganized collection of “features” and unpurposeful actions. It’s shame in reverse, a past reviled by a future.

Jeff runs backwards through this sequence from dyad to independent subject and objects. It’s evident in the final scene where he has two broken legs instead of the original one (a completion of his own meroism), and Lisa has settled in to stay. She pretends to read *Beyond the High Himalayas* by Chief Justice William O. Douglas, the Supreme Court jurist famous for his articulation of laws about privacy. When she thinks Jeff is asleep, she switches over to her *Harper’s Magazine*, a fashion glossy.<sup>8</sup> Other dyads are back together: Miss Lonelyhearts is now dating the composer. Miss Torso’s husband, a uniformed short veteran back from active duty, goes to the refrigerator as if he had only been gone since lunch. The married couple are finally like other married couples, together in a condition of mutual antagonism following a honeymoon of fantasized unity. Their seemingly exceptional behavior (blinds pulled when everyone else’s were open; intense sex when everyone else is celibate) is really a confirmation of the marriage aspect of the dyad. It is a union with an internally constructed division. Lisa will always be switching a *Harper’s* for the intellectual stuff.

The dyad has pulled itself back together when the heat wave breaks and the lives of neighbors is not on display. The outside has contracted, the interiors have swelled. Each apartment has become a cyclopean monad, uncommunicative with the other monads; internally it is self-distinguishing, a dyad of couples. The reverse angle of *Rear Window* takes back what it had exposed. The perspectivalism that had fanned out Jeff’s vision while he was immobilized is pulled back behind the window shades which now provide domestic privacy. The telephoto lens is replaced by a standard 50mm, to picture life as a picture, a dream, a fantasy to sustain the interior autoeroticism of romance.

### **What it means to take shape: re-ordering the *sequence* of parallax view**

Subjectivity does not happen all at once. The pre-subject undertakes a long process of preparation and rehearsal “inside” the protected cocoon of its autoeroticism, where subjects and objects, selves and others, actions and responses, interiors and exteriors freely switch places, modulated by a circuit that converts one binary to its opposite and back again. A schematized model would show a round path interrupted twice, once for an inversion  $X>Y$ , another to balance this inversion by another,  $Y>X$ . This chiralistic design holds to the Freudian rule, that the organism strives to maintain a zero degree of excitation. The infant’s

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<sup>8</sup> The strange tradition of misrepresenting evidence clearly displayed on the screen continues with sources that fail to see Douglas’s book title. The website *Shmoop* for example, reads the book title as *How to Kill Your Dinner with a Penknife*. Not only is this not the book clearly shown on screen, there is no such book listed by the Library of Congress. Did the author of “*Rear Window* (1954): What’s Up with the Ending?” have to fake something that would be so easily caught out? *Shmoop*; URL: <https://www.shmoop.com/rear-window/ending.html>. Hitchcock has thoughtfully selected this book, not simply to cite the film’s theme of casual voyeurism but to relate Douglas’s experiences in the Himalayas with Jeff’s wartime adventures. Like reviewers who misspell “Jefferies” as “Jeffries,” there is some element of prideful vandalism in critics’ relation to Hitchcock.

prolonged period of dependency buffers outside stimulus to such a degree that the internal circuit dominates; its apparatus generates its own stimuli then neutralizes them. Until, that is, the rehearsals of binary conversion reach their sorites “identity point,” where falling grains of sand finally add up to a pile.

The Mirror Stage is thus this identity point. Without the prior autoerotic rehearsals of the self-substantial child, the Stage could not be staged. The self-image in the mirror could not have its compelling energy, its *shock value*. In *Rear Window*, the shock happens in the beginning of the film, prior to the opening of the literal story. Jeff’s accident leaves broken toys in its wake. We travel backwards from the point where Jeff has made a living by objectifying objects for subjects whose passive watching, like ours, constitutes the enjoyment of dreamers or the dead. *Like them*, Jeff is now a spectator; his point of view is restricted in a kind of artificial catalepsy, but the marker relating it to death is present in the inscription, “Here lie the bones of L. B. Jefferies.”

*Rear Window* is the palindrome of the sequence of events whose middle is the Mirror Stage and whose terminus is the retroactive realization of the body-in-pieces. We begin with a body in pieces and move backward through the Mirror Stage in slow motion, when Jeff is alerted to the one exception in the fanned out visual field of his Greenwich Village courtyard. The exception takes place in the dead of a traditional “dark and stormy night,” with a couple dressed in funereal black. If *Rear Window* “proves” the sequence of subjectivity’s emergence/exaptation, it does so palindromically. Its first is the last, its last is first. A numerical model of base 6 would pair 1/5, 2/4, 3/3, 4/2, and 5/1. The 3/3 would correspond to a “plot point,” but as Syd Field famously proclaimed, every film needs two, so we should observe that the 3/3 is really a combination of 3/3’ and 3’/3.<sup>9</sup>

The internal circuit becomes external for the emergent subject of the Mirror Stage, the external circuit becomes internal for Jeff & Co. in *Rear Window*. The subject is pro-jected, Jeff contracts. Jeff’s askesis is compensated by optics that begins in the standard representational mode (each apartment “tells a story”) but quickly focuses — the first plot point — on the exception that, like the Lacanian gaze, he “can’t see” — Thorwald as a murderer is an agent of concealment. The gaze, for the middle part of the film, doesn’t care to see Jeff. Jeff’s invisibility is the gaze’s privation; Thorwald’s is a matter of Jeff’s impotency and the subject of discussions about propriety — the nurse Stella admonishes him for his peeping Tom proclivities. Privation and prohibition pair up, like the 3/3’ and 3’/3 of the plot point. They are two sides of one coin.

But, more important, the palindromic relation of *Rear Window* to subjective exaptation constitutes a “lock,” the function numerically demonstrated by the ‘6’ of the sequence 1/5, 2/4, etc. It is like the “eigenvalue” that, in math, is both inside and outside a set of relations allowed to vary *as long as* the eigenvalue remains constant. The constant of *Rear Window* and subjectivity? This is the “moment” of shifting, of the relation of knowing to what before was known but not known. The eigenvalue is another

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<sup>9</sup> Syd Field (*Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting*, is the famous promoter of the “three act paradigm,” a narrative flow punctuated by two required “plot points,” moments where actions, characters, settings, or logic suddenly shift. Although no one has yet compared Field’s model to the Lacanian Mirror Stage, the logic is the same. A long period of details the audience has barely noticed accumulate until a “soretic” moment arrives, when a fast conversion is supported, retroactively, by facts the audience saw but failed to notice, if only because the new structure was not there to explain them. For a summary, visit URL: <https://sydfield.com/writers-tools/the-paradigm-worksheet/>.

name for kenosis. The link between the suddenness of knowing — surprise, in its popular culture guise — and the period of gradual accumulation (“suspense”) is also a guarantee. For artworks it is the reliable basis of income (Hitchcock was said to have acknowledged that he sold suspense rather than stories); for subjects it is the ever-renewed membership in the Club of Subjectivity.

The thesis of this chapter is that the subject develops in one “direction” but that, after its sudden surprise at seeing not just its reflected image but its true subjective identity, “put on stage” in the mirror, it revisits this moment in the form of palindromic “rewinds” of its genesis. These compulsively lock in Subjectivity; they renew both the themes and the structures of Subjective exaptation. The elements of the conversion process are present in both forward and backward versions: sorites, exaptation, emergence, meroism, perspectivalism, parallax, *daemon*, askesis, kenosis. The position of drives belonging to the fully emergent subject, the gaze and the voice, is posterior in subjectivity; they appear as “effects” of the Mirror Stage’s “cause.” The work of art begins (famously) with these effects, converting them into causes. Jeff’s Mirror Stage comes with the sound of broken glass, and we think of Alice as she penetrates the mirror in her parlor. Then Jeff’s watch carefully marks the alternation between sleep and observant nocturnal wakefulness, as this plot point switches its  $3/3'$  for  $3'/3$ . Thorwald *watched* is now Thorwald blind, as a gaze who “does not care” to see Jeff, a Cyclops who is also deaf to Odysseus’s name—that-is—a-pronoun, “Nobody.”

This plot point switch connects to the second plot point (this is what makes the design like meiosis rather than mitosis). When Thorwald “cares to see” Jeff, he calls him up (how does he get the number? perhaps Lisa has given it to the police who answer Jeff’s call?) and Jeff, thinking that Lisa is calling, gives away his identity. From somebody to nobody, Jeff is the nobody who is now “wrapped around” in the fan-space of perspectivalism to give Thorwald a path to his apartment. In the final scene, Jeff’s encounter with the killer he has distanced himself from thanks to the shortened, “intimate perspectivalism” of his telephoto lens is now concentric. It is the staging of anxiety, fear, and fright. But, Lacan has corrected this order. Anxiety, he argues in *Transference* (1973), is a middle term in both a structural/functional and literal sense. It is a middle, a sagittal, that can be suddenly crunched accordion-style to produce sudden over-intimacy. From this point on, fear and fright take on their accustomed concentric order, but anxiety gives their relation a binary quality, an alternating current. This is the compressed sequence of visibility and blindness that takes place when Jeff uses his flash attachment defensively, to hold off Thorwald’s advance as long as possible.

Anxiety is able to transport *quanta* of fear into a register of fright in an alternating current — the structure of a *gradus* or staircase — because it, too, is an accumulation machine with a long gestation function coupled to a sudden extrusion of results. As the second plot point reverses  $3'/3$  back to  $3/3'$ , it relives Jeff’s original injury, doubling his broken leg count. As with meiosis, the doubling process ends with doubles. The staircase lit by flashbulbs matches with the fall from the window; the murder’s guilt has been matched up to his confession; his wife’s dismemberment has been given a map of parts that, re-assembled, will constitute a literal *corpus delicti* — a legality converted into art’s “exquisite corpse.”

What has been “locked in” by *Rear Window*’s palindromic reversal of subjectivity’s emergence sequence? My theory is that, past the Mirror Stage, art must provide confirmations in the form of a kenotic “knowing what we know but don’t know that we know.” With kenosis comes the other elements that the

literary critic Harold Bloom associated with “poetic anxiety.” We have to understand more than Bloom perhaps intended in this expression. It is not so much the anxiety of specific poets in history that generate the linked ideas of *tesseræ* (splitting), *clinamen* (turbulence, anxiety), *askesis* (contraction, retreat), *dæmon* (spooky agency of the unknown), *apophrades* (voice of the dead), and *kenosis*. It is the anxiety that must be poetically structured within works of art, to demonstrate through a “subjectivity palindrome” what has brought us to our neurotic human condition (within the Symbolic) and, at the same time, to renew our membership in that Symbolic with a palindromic lock mechanism allowing us to “know what we already knew” but associate its accumulation/revelation, slow/fast capabilities from inside the work of art.

What “takes shape before our eyes” is also, generically, the work of art, viewed while we are in a state of spectatorly catalepsis, returning us to the time we were pre-subjects, in our own death dream, an internal order needing little from the outside, interrupted only by the drives abbreviating the inputs and outputs of infancy as oral, anal, and phallic. The standard account is qualified here only by elements that Žižek has suggested but not detailed: sorites, exaptation, emergence, “the act.” Without sorites, there cannot be any adequate account of exaptation or emergence. Without the palindrome connection, however, the relation of art to the unconscious of the pre-subject (“unconscious” on account of its self-containment circuitry) cannot be made. Art’s exteriority, its aspect as a “public object,” is compelling because it establishes a means of returning to infancy’s “private objects.” And, the process of return is itself a compulsion, proper to the Symbolic’s order and relation of alienation to separation. What “draws us into” the fictional worlds of literature, film, and even the framed fantasies of architecture is and must be a compulsion — a magnetism that resists explanation and even the powers of language to express.



### 3 / Anachronism



Figure 1. In Giuseppe Tornatore's 1988 film, *Cinema Paradiso*, the corny but moving conclusion comes when the narrator Salvatore returns after the funeral of his mentor, Alfredo, projectionist at the now defunct movie house, and opens the gift he willed him. It's the spliced sequences of romantic scenes cut by the church censor, which now form a "single undreduced film of aching desire and lustful frenzy" ("*Cinema Paradiso*," *Wikipedia*). The old fragments seem to have been waiting for this moment of resurrection, unaware in their first incarnations that they would achieve apotheosis only by rejection, collection, and re-assembly.

point far in the past and one equally far in the future, twins, each of which will be haunted by the other's mirroring existence.

Turn this temporal model on its side and you have Krzysztof Kieślowski's 1991 film, *The Double Life of Véronique*, the story of a young Polish woman, Weronika, and identical young Frenchwoman, Véronique, each passionately involved with singing. Until a critical point, they live as distant twins unknown to each other. Only during a school trip to Warsaw does Véronique get a glimpse from her bus window of Weronika, in a public square, in Kraków, on her way back from a music lesson. Soon, the two will have a vampirish relation. Weronika's life will be sucked away by an unexpected heart attack during her first big stage performance. This event is calibrated by Véronique's sudden decision to give up a singing career. The phone rings — it's a wrong number — but in the background of the silence (no one speaks) plays the same music by the 17c. composer that Weronika was singing when she died.<sup>1</sup>

Mass and velocity are given to the spiritual exchange from the dead Weronika to the live Véronique when she meets with a puppet master who designs shows for school performances. Using Bunraku tech-

[John] Dunne's method to attain an infinite number of times simultaneously is less convincing and more ingenious. ... [H]e states that the future, with its details and vicissitudes, already exists.... Dunne assures us that in death we shall finally learn how to handle eternity.

— Jorge Louis Borges, "Time and J. W. Dunne," 1940

"I knew Doris Day before she was a virgin."

— Oscar Levant, in *The Wit and Wisdom of Hollywood*, 1972

The problem of writing, and possibly even of thinking, is one of anachronism. Is a new thought or expression really new, or is it haunted and perhaps even undermined by a predecessor whose mastery seems to invade even what is the most intimate and presumably original? In a reversed temporality, the case seems easier to make. A present moment can easily seem to be a foreshadowing, a glimpse into fate. Facing in the future direction, we are sensitive to portents and omens; looking back, we might wonder if, to balance out time's arrow, our "now" had fulfilled a prophecy but blocked our awareness of the fact. What seems to set off this series of deep play potentialities is a "science fiction" possibility that time originates out of a center that radiates, to a

<sup>1</sup> The diegetic music is attributed to the fictitious 17c. Dutch composer, Van den Budenmayer, but is the work of Zbigniew Preisner, the Polish film score composer who collaborated with Kieślowski using the same musical double in three films, *Dekalog* (1988), *Blue* (1993), and *La Double Vie de Véronique* (1991).

niques of direct handling the puppet, he portrays a ballerina who falls, dies, and is resurrected, then he falls in love with Véronique but, like Orpheus, “looks back” and breaks the spell. This and other clues suggest a physical passage of substances that increasingly draw Véronique to her dead twin. The text of the song Weronika was singing at the time of her death foreshadows this: *O voi che siete in piccioletta barca, desiderosi d'ascoltar, seguiti dietro al mio legno che cantando varca, Non vi mettete in pelago, ché forse, perdendo me, rimarreste smarriti* (Dante, *Paradiso* II, 9): “O you who are within your little bark, eager to listen, following behind my ship that, singing, crosses to deep seas, turn back to see your shores again: do not attempt to sail the seas I sail; you may, by losing sight of me, be left astray.” In this Orphic prophecy, Weronika instructs her future form how to *abide* their bond by resisting the temptation to indulge the mirror image. Blindness bonds with invisibility. Presence and absence revolve within a closed, curved universe.

Although Véronique seems comforted to understand that she is not alone, knowing that the past has, irrationally, “already echoed” her present, the economy of her anachronism seems so ancient and universal that its over-burden of layered traditions makes it the norm rather than the exception, as if all time were really this way, really and always a split of one whole into two parts set at a distance and spun into rotation. At the diegetic level of action and thought within the film, this conversion of comfort appears as anxiety, but for the audience held at a safe distance, it is a pure form of the uncanny.

What seems obvious at this point is the next step for critical theory: to compare the structure of anxiety with the structure of the uncanny. This project was begun by Harold Bloom who outlined six “standard aspects” of what could be generically identified as a “flight from the enchanter”/*daëmon*.<sup>2</sup> Bloom’s double couple takes the form of the older Master Poet and the younger initiate, attempting originality but finding, at every turn, his most personal novelties bear tell-tale traces of the Master’s genius that he had not even known. The *ephebe*’s pure invention opens up a hidden passageway to the past, where — in a mixture of horror and delight — he uncovers the Master’s hidden treasure. It’s the inverted logic of *plus ça change*. The more we run away, the more surely we construct the future we feared and fled. And, in the charged polarities of the uncanny, that future is death — unless, of course, one is already dead (the other pole of the uncanny) and has just forgotten.

Influence as a flow of causes to future effects is not anachronistic. But, when the present fulfills a prophecy that had not until that moment been understood, the power of reverse action is revealed as an absolute force, by which destiny replaces the act of invention. The poet of the past has not intended to paralyze the future artist, but in foreswearing any knowledge of a future moment when its truth will be revealed *for the first time*, the work itself automates its time-release strategy for completion. Anachronism amounts to a reverse of the Faustian bargain to “enjoy magic success now, suffer later.” Anachronism will “enjoy” the future artist who, in “being enjoyed,” will know but not know (*kenosis*). Whenever there is an anxiety about this symmetry of doubles, symmetry is never a perspectival mirroring but rather an ancient “shiver” sent up the new spine, a *clinamen* or turbulence. The split of the past and the future (*tesseræ*) will embody itself as a ventriloquistic presence of the ancient voice within the new speech (*apophrades*). The

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<sup>2</sup> Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1973). Bloom’s six components of anxiety are well known: demon (the source), askesis (flight from the threat), clinamen (anxiety as generalized turbulence, creating a fractalized “misunderstanding”), tesseræ (symmetries revealed by breaking), apophrades (the voice of the dead), and kenosis (a “knowing without knowing”).

live artist, in her attempt to “fly from the enchanter” (*askesis*) will insure that her “appointment in Samarra” (*dæmon*) will be kept. The machine runs, quietly, in an adjacent room.

Bloom’s six components of anxiety, in this case, reform themselves into a crystal whose facets reflect six “simultaneous” aspects of the same phenomenon of anachronism — its status as a mental contronym, a chiral construct able to join without merging, to hold together even more firmly as antagonistic elements form ever-more “widening gyres.”<sup>3</sup> It’s not completely surprising that Bloom himself did not develop the crystallography of these six terms. Set side by side in a list, they lay in wait for a future synthesis, as if to prove Bloom’s point about influence. Prone, like Weronika in her glass-top coffin, they literally “have no idea” (*kenosis*) that their paralysis/catalepsis winds the spring of the mechanism that will have it that they will be haunted from two sides. Before she meets the puppeteer, Véronique is trying to light a cigarette while caught in traffic; the puppeteer, accidentally in an adjacent car, sees that she is trying to light it from the wrong end, gets her attention, and she turns it around.

Anachronism has the power to turn not just the cigarette but the smoke around as in films run backwards where entropy is magically reversed: de-splashing water, un-breaking china, houses reassembled from exploded parts. Going out equals coming in, but not without an exchange between the two time-chains that creates a friction that can be felt in confusion or anxiety, as in James Joyce’s often overlooked advice concerning entry and exit from the Wallinestone (*willingdone*) National Museum (*museyroom*): “Mind your hats going in” *versus* “Mind your boots going out,” reversing the traditional advice printed on small placards near entries and exits. In effect: you are going out when you’re going in (the need for a hat) and in when you’re leaving (the need to wipe your boots clean). Entropy, which attempts to set the record straight as far as time’s arrow is concerned, is forced to recognize the black matter at the sites of the threshold where the two lines of the palindrome lock arms, where the 123456789 and 987654321 add up to ten no matter where we take their pulse.

The theory of anachronism is concrete, rather than abstract. It is given principally through stories where its (il)logic can form temporal contours in spatialized time whose topologies allow for multiple, simultaneous movements that would be forbidden by a single temporal line. In the story retold by Dante of Paolo and Francesca, for example, lovers conspire to kill the evil husband and betray the unsuspecting wife not out of a base erotic attraction but, rather, because they read their fate in a book held between them. Once the “book was opened,” once the indifferent words of the dead author found their actual destination, the couple came upon the same hidden grove from opposite directions. I am not arguing that Paolo and Francesca were not justly assigned the ring in hell reserved for the lustful; rather, I’m drawing attention to the vortex that Dante describes as their punishment. It takes the very form of their *placement*, determined not by a forward-chaining logic of crime and punishment, but by the anachronistic force of antagonism that took over the lovers who, in reading of “their story” in a book resting on their knees, realized that their fate had been sealed long ago.

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<sup>3</sup> William Butler Yates’ image of *Weltschmerz* derived from his wife’s trance-induced drawing of intersecting cones of “objectivity” and “subjectivity” that had, by coincidence, inspired Wilhelm Worringer’s *Abstraction and Emphathy* (*Abstraktion und Einfühlung*, 1907; trans. into English in 1953) to posit historical periods alternating between similar poles. Time slices made through the intersecting cones would, at any point, reveal the co-presence of antagonistic elements, suggesting that, even at periods of maximum “subjectivity/abstraction,” say, the opposite force of “objectivity/emphathy” would constitute a generative kernel whose negational presence would preserve antithesis in the face of the main thesis.

Paolo and Francesca's whirlwind romance anticipated Yates/Worringer's gyres and cones, and the self-intersecting crystal of Bloom's six terms of anxiety/apotheosis show, through their common shape, a complex *orthography* — a way of representing something



Figure 2. Dorothy's recovery from her concussion coincides with her imagined return from Oz. But, it would be hard to distinguish this welcome scene from classical "death bed scenes" where family and friends form into "angelic" groupings around the nearly-deceased. Whether Dorothy's Oz fantasy was a coma experience or death dream (in the final seconds of life), the structure of the story is the same, with the idealized reception serving the purpose of confirmation, forgiveness, and rectification.

to reveal a true relationship — a relationship in these cases of "truth by means of time travel," a virtuality that detaches us from the contiguous causalities within ordinary space and time to create a flipped-over world. The form takes many forms, so to speak. It's the singularity that happens through polysemy. The structure of Yates'/Worringer's intersecting cones can be found, logically intact, in diverse topologies: the Möbius band, Klein bottle, the Borromean knot. In the figure of metalepsis (defined as a metonymy of metonymy), a recursive logic expands to include jokes whose contents alter the shape and function of their container.

Although form does not impose any literal limits on anachronism, when specific shapes such as the vortex are canonized by art and literary traditions, its constitutive components come into such clear focus that we can regard the case as a paradigm and enter it as a physician might enter a clinic or a scientist a laboratory. So, when Dorothy (*The Wizard of Oz*, 1939) sets out on her death-dream journey, we are

alerted to the names of the component parts that had before simply been generic pronouns.<sup>4</sup> Dorothy's failure to return home after Prof. Marvel persuades her that her aunt and uncle's love is worth preserving has cut a section into the Kansas scene. The family and farmhands have taken shelter underground (the preferred place for household spirits of every culture and age); Dorothy is left with half a house. The front screen door blows off, and when she gets to her bedroom the window frame dislodges. The loss of these

<sup>4</sup> My standard reference for this film is Salman Rushdie's witty *The Wizard of Oz*, BFI Film Classics (London: British Film Institute, 1992). Rushdie — whose own name in English should have suggested that he consider this — does not play out the "death dream option," the narrative device by which a story unfolds in the mind of a dying POV character. In the rush to die, the freshly dead narrator suddenly forgets how to die, and in forgetting is awarded the right and means to challenge and correct the past. Thus, memory is anachronistically this repair job; not a set of marks pressed into a wax table but a reversely predicating set of effects out in search of multiple causes. Dorothy is possibly the global champion of the death dream as an attempt to correct ("orthographize") her life as an orphan in Kansas. The symmetries in Oz are all "delays" (time versions of spatial mirroring). Her companions are defective components of a future Perfect Mind, who will find their deserved courage, intelligence, compassion in the ersatz commendations of a fake Master, a *dæmon* turned puppy-dog. Why run away in a dream (*askesis*)? Because her first attempt, thwarted by Professor Marvel, antecedent version of the Wizard, lacked symmetry in its action/reaction structure. Love for Auntie "Em" (M converts W) pre-energized the escape from Oz that would tie the bow on the death dream package. "Mind your boots (ruby slippers) going out" ... as if Frank Baum was an avid consumer of *Finnegans Wake*, the master travel guide for all death dreams (Tim Finnegan, in the Irish song, is the brick mason who, lying in state, is revived by spilt whiskey).

tokens of perspectival space leave a section view that Dorothy enjoys in the form of a portal into the imaginary space of the tornado. The section cutting through vortex interior reveals its optical capabilities: contents swooped up from the Kansas landscape seem to be perfectly at ease. An elderly woman continues to sit in her rocking chair, knitting. A cow, unperturbed, continues to graze. But, when the evil schoolteacher Miss Gulch comes into view riding her bicycle, it is “straight out of” the story of Dorothy’s anguished runaway attempt. This intrusion is “orthographic” following the section–drawing’s protocol. Anything directly touching the section slice is scaled consistently. The viewer “intersects” the section at a right angle at every part of its surface. These are the agents that make the section slice into perspectival space orthographic in both senses of *orthos*, a right angle that is corrective.

Miss Gulch, as an agent of correction, thus enters the visual field orthographically. She corrects the Kansas view into a preview of her future identity in Oz as the Wicked Witch of the West. The Wicked Witch, played by Margaret Hamilton, turns out to be the most artful construct of the film. She is the “blur” that occurs when the point of view shifts from Kansas to Oz. She is both evil and live, a palindrome forcing the recognition of evil–*ing* as a counterpart to liv–*ing*, in equal measure. Her evil is evident in the optical transformation within the vortex, allowing us to design an experiment to test this effect. If orthography is able in the case of *The Wizard of Oz* to use a vortex-optic to see two opposites within the same body, *then* is it possible to find this same relationship, abstracted or literalized, in other works? Can we compare the case of Dorothy to Paolo and Francesca, who have their own “wicked adversary”? Does the anachronism of the uncanny prediction found in a “dead work of art” synch to the uncanny foreshadowing of Dorothy’s Oz adventure by her status as an orphan on a lonely, boring farm in Kansas, whose farmhands have already demonstrated “orthopsychic” tendencies of sympathy, intelligence, and courage? And, doesn’t Dorothy’s “flight from the enchanter” demonstrate that the direction of flight is itself a palindrome leading to the very thing she fears? The Wizard’s sham machine cannot negate his actual achievement of kenosis, and ability to confer on others who have passed the tests of initiation the same “trivial” triggers that open up understanding: the medal that itself is courage, the diploma that itself is wisdom, the care that proves the existence of a heart.

In effect, the vortex’s shape has justified an experimental bridge between works that otherwise have little in common; but once the bridge is built, the traffic across it establishes durable economies where ideas, images, stratagems, themes, and even literal forms can be exchanged. What, for example, might lie behind the vortex–bridge in *The Wizard of Oz* should we consider it as an “overlap” of Kansas and Oz that, instead of additively mixing components from each, *negates them*? The film’s visual evidence suggests that this negation would actually be a negation *of* negation. Instead of being torn apart by the fierce spiral torrent, the swirling victims seem to be enjoying tranquility and even happiness. The “negation of negation” is justified by the transformation of Miss Gulch into her double, the Wicked Witch of the West: the negative is negated once more, revealing a fantasy essence, a witch-pronoun in Kansas that finds its antecedent in the Oz temporally preceding and following Kansas; and whose destruction will allow Dorothy the power to return home.

Or, does Dorothy really return home? The arrangement of family and friends around her bed in the “awakening scene” is ambiguous (Fig. 2). Her fantasy engagement with Oz, explained as a hallucination following concussion, could just as easily be the result of a worse outcome. The characters around the bed constitute a “celestial” ring-like array. In the temporal immunity of death, Dorothy may in fact be wel-

came to her final, symbolic death. The story could fit easily between in the interval known as “between the two deaths” — a forty-day interval of mourning observed by most cultures as the “orthopsychic” re-settlement of the soul (*psyche*) after literal death. The soul has been interrogated, tested, and judged; it now may find its place within angelic presences embodying family and friends. Toto too.

The death dream hypothesis allows us to focus on how the vortex–bridge, in negating negation, works as a “primal term” or “eigenform” that, by nullifying change in its circularity and cancellation of suffering, converts a *palintropos harmoniē* into a *palintonos harmoniē* — balancing done through temporal alternation between opposites to a “tensile stabilization” of dynamic immobilization.<sup>5</sup> This latter term will be increasingly significant when we look at situations where a boundary can be drawn, as it is in the theater, between a temporality that is suspended (the audience sitting silent and still) and a temporality whose actions are stylized and refined to feature a fundamental antagonism. The palintrope combines motion with stillness. Each movement provokes and seems to contain its opposite, as a vector and motive. The *palintone* is, in contrast, like the number 11, which multiplied by itself, produces a palindrome ( $11 \times 11 = 121$ ;  $111 \times 111 = 12321$ ;  $111111111 \times 111111111 = 12345678987654321$ ). Movement is implicit to rest, and *vice versa*, at least in the case of primal terms and eigenvalues — and cyclones that lift little girls’ farmhouses out of Kansas and into Oz.

The death dream offers us a specific case parallel to the general condition of anachronism. Dorothy somehow senses that, in meeting the Tin Man, Scarecrow, and Cowardly Lion, that she has “seen them somewhere before.” Her early encounter with the con-man Prof. Marvel reveals another human con-tronym. Recognizing immediately her endangerment, the Professor must “con” Dorothy to get her to return home. He uses his skill of “cold reading” to divine the particulars of her predicament, just as in her death dream, he will, as Wizard, turn from charlatan to Samaritan. It is as if Kansas and Oz constitute two overlapping perspectives, each with its own constitutive point of view. By overlapping (the event of the cyclone; the logic of the vortex), negation negates itself, creating a “blurred zone” where images, characters, and motives can quickly morph into their anamorphic opposites. Time as well as image, character, and motive submits to this magical transformation, and the palintrope (either/or) gives way to the palintone (both/and). This is the logic of cross-inscription, the “no one so bad as not to have a grain of goodness,” mirroring the “no one so good as not to have a touch of evil.” The slide between polar extremes maintains a certain balance, as when palindromes are added: 12345/54321 folds into itself to produce 1/5, 2/4, 3/3, 4/2,

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<sup>5</sup> The Eigenvalue and Eigenvector are terms used in mathematics indicating a special set of scalars with a linear system of equations sometimes known as “characteristic roots or values,” but it is not my intention to draw from this specific usage. Rather, Louis Kauffman has adopted the term to indicate a more general property of bounded sets: “The notion of an eigenform is inextricably linked with second order cybernetics. One starts on the road to such a concept as soon as one begins to consider a pattern of patterns, the form of form or the cybernetics of cybernetics. Such concepts appear to loop around upon themselves, and at the same time they lead outward to new points of view. Such circularities suggest a possibility of transcending the boundaries of a system from within. When a circular concept is called into being, the boundaries turn inside out.” Louis H. Kauffman, “Eigenforms and Quantum Physics”; accessed March 2018: <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1109.1892.pdf>. The eigenform is, Kauffman says elsewhere, that which in not changing allows all else to change. Coupled with the processes of self-reference, recursion, and boundary inversion, the eigenform can be generalized to conditions in language, art, architecture, music, etc. where circularity and self-reference are also key.

5/1 ... each element summing to 6, the number implied but not reached by the sequence.<sup>6</sup> The spirit of the eigenform is that, wherever mirroring is involved, an entire repertoire of variations on themes of chirality, inside frames, palindromes, recursion, and self-reference comes to light, each variation serving as a comparative model and guide for the others. In the case of anachronism, where time seems to “run against itself,” mirroring is intensified by the impossibility of reversing the line of time. Each “anomaly” produced constructs a kind of cloud chamber in which any random particle’s passage will be marked by its own vapor trail, a distinctive *mark* materializing the condition of impossibility that has nonetheless revealed itself as *not just possible but necessary*.

In the overlap materialized, in *The Wizard of Oz*, as a vortex, the phenomenon of the *blur* springs forward. This is not an optical blur. The imagery Dorothy witnesses through her bedroom window is clear and sharp. The blur is the wind itself, which has “whipped up” the contradictory contents of the cyclone just as a kaleidoscope shows infinite variations of glass fragments falling between angled mirrors. The blur is the turn, the trope. God speaks out of such devices, one should note, for the “voice” of such winds is both inside and outside, earning this vortex and its blur the qualification of being “acousmatic.”<sup>7</sup> The paradox is that the “blur” actually seems to make vision more precise, more penetrating, and to combine image and thought in a perfect fusion: things gain a power of speech. Alenka Zupančič, in her study of Nietzsche, observes:

... [I]nsofar as the gaze remains on the other side of the reflective mirror, there is no such thing as “truth as perspective” (although there can be a struggle for hegemony between different perspectives, a struggle over which one of them will assert its truth). To say that every perspective has its truth and its story is, of course, the equivalent of the thesis that “there is no truth, there are only perspectives.” This, however, is quite different from the thesis that truth is a perspective. The presupposition of the truth as perspective is that the gaze can appear on the level of what is seen (producing an effect of decentering). Yet, this occurs not through reflecting on our perspective, but through its *change* or shift. This is Nietzsche’s crucial insight and emphasis. The effect of this shift of perspective is not simply a relativization (and/or an accumulation of numerous perspectives), but the emergence of a stain (or a blind spot) that blurs the transparency of what we see (or know) — this being the objective element in what we see. In order for this effect to take place, we do not need to embrace a thousand different perspectives a change between two can be enough. One could also express this as follows: there is a perspective (on things) that

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<sup>6</sup> Palindromes subtracted from each other, with the results reversed and added back, produce constants: 1089 for three-digit numbers, 10890 for four-digit numbers. Four-to-nine-digit numbers reduce to 110, 1110, 11100, 111100, 1111000, and 11111000, respectively. The point of such numerical demonstrations is to suggest that palindromes devise their own “internal” stability out of nothing more than opposite, symmetrical motion. This valuable trait can be reproduced in non-numerical situations — any exchange where there is a perceived requirement for equitable reciprocity, such as fair trade, love, justice, and death. Norman O. Brown has argued that all of these fall under the purview of Hermes, who as god of boundaries, preserves the art of crossing as a secret concealed within the idea of cross-inscription (palindromic “virtual” motion in the form of mirroring actions): *Hermes the Thief: The Evolution of a Myth* (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Press, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> *Book of Job*, 38, 1: Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, “Who is this that darkens counsel / By words without knowledge?...” *The Book of Ezekiel* 1, 4–28, also gives a convincing account of the acousmatics of meteorological turbulence.

emerges only when one shifts perspectives. it does not exist as a separate perspective with its own point of view, yet it is a perspective.<sup>8</sup>

Although Zupančič characterizes the overlap/bridge as an (optically negative) stain or blur, I see, in her idea of a “perspective of perspectives” the same relation to an “eigenform” idea of things that are self-forming, i. e. autogenetic. The blur is a blur to the separate perspectives that attempt to freeze-frame particular subjectivities, such as Kansas or Oz; but as the shared component of all perspectives — as the perspective *of* perspectives — the higher order acquires its orthopsychic function. From either Kansas or Oz, the vortex serves as stain or blur (the black cloud on the Kansas horizon) that becomes, in ortho-*graphic* terms, a spiral labyrinth, traditional emblem of the interval “between the two deaths.” The blur and stain that have represented the point of the gaze have always represented the corrective power that guides/judges disembodied souls such as Dorothy as they move in ritualized ways through liminal landscapes. This is the image of the Law, all the more Kafka-esque because its center is empty, thanks to the inept figurehead magician, the Man from Kansas, who nonetheless makes the Pascalian principle understandable in popular terms. Just as Pascal claimed that kneeling alone was sufficient to induce proper religious devotion, the signifiers of love (a ticking clock), courage (a medal), and intelligence (a college degree) are actually the letters (literals) that have nothing behind them and are “the real thing.” The blur exists from the side of the signifier or the signified, but the orthopsychic truth lies in the shift between the two.

The vortex is not a simple spiral. It is, rather, a doubled spiral that, like Yates’ intersecting cones and Worringer’s alternating epochs, is a palindromic balance of centrifugal and centripetal forces. The Thesean labyrinth meets these specifications, a fractal design (AabaBabaAaba) whose curves tighten, then loop out, then tighten again. Anyone who has ever trod a turf maze such as can be found in England (St. Catherine’s Hill, near Winchester; the “City of Troy” near Dalby, North Yorkshire; Breamore Miz-Maze, Hampshire) will have experienced the unexpected sensation of entrapment despite the lack of actual walls. The doubling of the spiral is not simply a palindromic feature. It creates a lightweight trap that delivers “the trap idea” to any point in the design, just as an orthographic drawing carries the eye to any point on the picture plane. The graphic principle of the drawing, parallel projection rather than lines converging on vanishing points or points of view, creates the very effect of movement that Zupančič requires for the creation of a “perspective of perspectives.” This meta-perspective is not an uber-view or summation, but rather a pure motility that doubles itself in a time that is, by this doubling, itself doubled. The two of the palindrome, the two of the lovers, the two times, and the signifier and signified that are mistaken for each other — all double effects — show how the mirror (a doubling device *par excellence*) is actually a slice through a circuit that, otherwise complete, is broken at a point where the blur/stain/vortex will create a meta-effect. While the gap will be chiralistic in its production of binaries (good/evil, light/dark, death/life, left/right, etc.) it will simultaneously deport negation (of one thing by its opposite) as a twinship calibrated by meridians

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<sup>8</sup> Alenka Zupančič, *The Shortest Shadow: Nietzsche’s Philosophy of the Two* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 112–113.

that in turn relate the accumulation of binaries to a circular reference, the horizon.<sup>9</sup> Dante emphasizes that Paolo and Francesca's sin is punished in the very moment it is committed. Only the palindrome, with its "rule of two's," can account for this simultaneity. Anachronism is the effect of this immediacy, the sense that the crime was fated to take place, that the sinners were, even in their transgression, innocent of pre-meditation. Anachronism constitutes a radical theory of evil, namely that it is implicit in creation because it has pre-ordained human nature/consciousness to engage two modalities of time simultaneously. God is nothing if not this act of pre-ordaining, as evident in some of the Nag Hammadi texts.

Look upon me, you who reflect upon me,  
and you hearers, hear me ...  
For I am the first and the last.  
I am the honored one and the scorned one.  
I am the whore and the holy one.  
I am the wife and the virgin.<sup>10</sup>

It would be impossible not to recognize the function of the palindrome in this "alpha and omega" scripture. Understandably, the theological aspect of the palindrome is always prominent when anachronism reveals, as it does in the case of Zupančič's blur/stain, the merger of bridge and meta-perspective functions in the palindromic vortex that is literalized in *The Wizard of Oz*. But, it would be equally impossible to ignore Jacques Lacan's argument about the impossibility of a "meta-language" in relation to this meta-perspective. Why does Lacan say that there can be "no outside" of language? If language is an inescapable monad, how can we say anything *about* language (as Lacan himself seems to do extensively). The answer may be too easy. We can't exit language because the "exit" is already present within language, as its innermost kernel. From this central void, language continues to generate its endless varieties of expressions, each colored by the effects of this radical gap inside language itself. Language's "no exit policy" is that, if you're looking for the exit, it's not to an outside but to an interior that is "exteriority itself." The interior exterior is the principle of the "extimate" (*extimité*) — namely, the permanent and durable convertibility (and, hence, palindromic quality) of action, when it is immediately the sin and the punishment, and

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<sup>9</sup> The horizon simultaneously serves as a boundary between appearing and invisible worlds and a reference base for angular measures of time. The sun rises and sets at specific points and times that indicate key divisions of the annual cycle. The nominal 12 hour division of the day, complemented by 12 hours of night, divide the 360° circle into 30° segments. The 11th hour, in this system, is the last number of the series, comparable to 9 in base-10. In ancient Rome, the annual cycle was regarded as 11+1, with a month set aside as an interval or gap (Saturnalia) reserved for abstinence from everyday activities, ritual purification, and inversion of social hierarchies. This month of "inverted time" necessarily preceded time's "reset" with the new year, and it is important to see the function of the palindrome in the 11th month as broadly symbolic. The complexity of the horizon is revealed by Hades' decree that the mortal Castor and immortal Pollux, to allow the twins to "share" Pollux's immortality, be based on a 180 degrees of separation. Their motions are palindromic: one "rises" as the other "falls"; one dies as the other is reborn. Their ability to "change places" is actually a trick of changing times, the function of Hades as *accumulation* (i. e. a treasury) against life as a *dissipation, a spending*.

<sup>10</sup> George W. MacRae, trans., "The Thunder, Perfect Mind," *The Nag Hammadi Library*, The Gnostic Society Library; accessed March 2018: <http://gnosis.org/naghamm/thunder.html>.

thought, when it is immediately the impasse.<sup>11</sup> The effect is, also and immediately, the cause of itself; light is, also and immediately, darkness; life is, also and immediately, death. Any “positive” sequence generates its negative, reverse-running shadow, not as an after-effect but simultaneously, as the *jouissance* of its self-negation.

How can one thing and its opposite, which negates it, have any common “moment”? This is the question that can be addressed only in terms of the function of the unconscious in relation to suppression. Possibly this is the most misunderstood component of Freud’s thought, and hence one of the two main points of focus used by Lacan when he undertook a project of restoring the Freudian project. Later, I will devote a chapter to this issue but undertake an unconventional approach. Instead of reviewing the history of the issue to discuss Lacan’s strategies and accomplishments, I will develop an “orthographic” methodology that I will retrofit to such concepts as the death drive, *jouissance*, the four Lacanian discourses, extimacy, and other key topics. My aim to create a graphic and open architecture into which ethnographic and popular culture evidence can be inserted at any point. I would borrow a term from structural archaeology to name this a “polythetic methodology.” In brief, this is a means of piling up arguments, data, anecdotes, and other evidence so that the pile “organizes itself.”

#### *A space to be avoided*

Key to this polythetic method is the idea of the lipogram, the space (or time) created by extracting, losing, silencing, or forbidding. The theme of the exile occurs in every culture and takes many forms. One of the most basic requires the initiate to endure a trial within “liminal” circumstances simulating death and resurrection.<sup>12</sup> In these, the lipogram is the interval of space or time that is negated as a wilderness, underworld, or dead zone. Any who enter must, as in Tarkovsky’s *Stalker* (1979), “play dead.”<sup>13</sup> At the private end pole, the lipogram sets up the logic of the pickpocket, con-artist, seducer, and other tricksters who must use space and time in their extreme intimacy. Here we encounter a cluster of practices that surround the tradition of the god Hermes, and it is important not to miss the opportunity of examining these as a “polythetic set” — a congeries of actions and attributes that seem to be nothing more than a random accumulation, a “trash pile” of unrelated associations. Hermes, a god of thieves, amorous seduction, (silent) trade, messengers, morticians, and secrets, was, as Norman O. Brown has demonstrated, a highly organized “syn-

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<sup>11</sup> See Jacques-Alain Miller, “Extimacy,” *The Symptom* 9, Lacan-dot-com; accessed March 2018, <http://www.lacan.com/symptom/extimacy.html>. Žižek has noted that Miller’s point is that the construction of the Other in racism “ultimately concerns the Other’s relationship to enjoyment.” Extimacy, as a cross-conversion of inside and outside, must therefore not only construct its enemy/antagonist as an Other but a stranger, and construct a *strange land* as well. This reification has a geography, history, and culture-like rules of order. In other words, Kansas *necessitates* Oz, where Munchkins and other fantastic beings “enjoy” a life of pure *jouissance*, as indicated by the fact that it is bathed in emerald light, the same that illuminates Judy in Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*, where Scottie’s fantasy over the lost Madeleine has “saturated” the actress-shopgirl he needs to remake his lost love. Slavoj Žižek, “It Doesn’t Have to Be a Jew,” interview by Josefina Ayerza, Lacan-dot-com; accessed March 2018: <http://www.lacan.com/symptom17-hei-despie17.html>

<sup>12</sup> Victor Turner has explored this spatial/temporal zone in great detail. See *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970) or *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> The theme of the passive hero is common but unaccountably not well understood. Every hero has, in one way or another, a passive mode that can be played out in literal thematic ways, as in Odysseus’s journey or the Aboriginal’s initiation trek through the Australian outback. See Erwin Cook, “‘Active’ and ‘Passive’ Heroics in the ‘Odyssey,’” *The Classical World* 93, 2, Homer (November/December, 1999): 149–167.

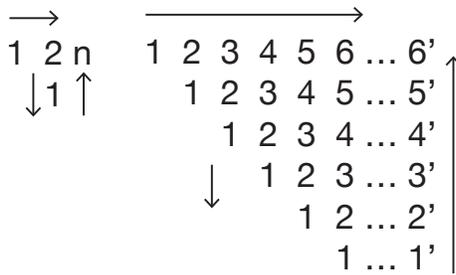


Figure 3. Mukařovský's triangle orients two palindromic sequences at a right angle to each other to show how temporal progression (left to right) simultaneously pushes down (suppresses) its "past" but retains it vectorially. Each new "moment" adds up as a palindrome that always base 11 (12345654321 = 111111<sup>2</sup>). The orthogonal relationship between the two sequences is literally orthographic but also ortho-*psychic* in that the turn reveals the eigenform value, 11, with any forward movement.

thetic field" of homologies linking these diverse practices, each with its own protocols but sharing important structural features. One is linked to the palindrome and Hermes' early skills as a thief. Craving meat, Hermes stole cattle from Apollo by driving them backwards while he himself wore sandals fashioned to make his tracks appear to be headed in the opposite direction. This trick compacted the connection of cattle and palindrome, which in its expanded form was the practice of the boustrophodon, writing or arranging images in alternating directions.<sup>14</sup> The eigenform of theft thus follows the logic of the squaring of 11s — 12345678987654321 — which in the lipogram must be written by "silencing" the sigma value of 10 that results from 1/9, 2/8, etc. This is accomplished by alternating between two "offset" positions. The left-hand version, 1/8, 2/7, etc. sums to 9; the right-hand to 11 (2/9, 3/8 ...). The "end elements" have been left free. In the Hermetic lipogram, these serve as "free radicals" allowing one palindromic structure to link to adjacencies — other episodes, other logics, other media — where an under-set element may join with an overset one. This affords the device

of the story-within-the-story, concentric deepening or extension of space and time that is essential in hypnosis and, therefore, the ability of story-telling to enchant. This also explains the relation to the ritualized entry and exit of ancient fortified spaces, where singing, instrumental music, and or poetic incantation accompanied boustrophodonous motions of would-be visitors — "strangers" in the ultimate sense of this role of the Other as developed by early cultures.

The free-radical function built into palindromes encouraged "chaining" which, ambiguously forward and backward once the story-in-the-story logic was turned on, psychologically froze the ears of any story-teller's audience. We can in this case suggest a deeper and more significant link: the "acousmatics" of theatrical space, which goes beyond the device of the stage whisper linking the inner thoughts of single actors to the innermost receptivity of the audience, a permanently radical interior of any space of audition, including non-theatrical situations of "ordinary communications" that is customarily modeled following the graphic array invented by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver.<sup>15</sup> In ways that link the communications engineer to the anthropologist, the flow of conversation converts the graphic into a palindrome, but the process of enchantment, where a story-teller or actors on a stage must enforce silence for the duration

<sup>14</sup> For a provocative hypothesis about an exegetic deployment of the boustrophodon, see Robert Graves and Raphael Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis* (New York: Doubleday, 1964). The authors speculate that Jewish scholars intending to incorporate the Sumerian cosmology into their own text misread the alternating lines of images that had been arranged in boustrophodons. Every other line of the Hebrew *Genesis* was, as a result, backwards; and every connection between lines falsely linked a beginning to and end or end to a beginning. Rather than simply missing the point, however, Graves and Patai contend that it is precisely in these errors that *Genesis* accomplishes its greatest theological and literary feats: "miracles" that, because of their palindromic quality, cannot be resolved but rather attributed to magic and miracle.

<sup>15</sup> Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communications* (Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 1999.)

of performance, the palindrome must occult one “side” of its action to induce artificial catalepsy. If one combines the Shannon–Weaver model with the “triangle” of the Czech semiologist Jan Mukařovský (Fig. 3), one sees how the occultation occurs by folding one “side” into the other. Any present, any instance or element, is thus the end of one series and the beginning of another line mirroring the first. Mukařovský’s triangle shows how any “forward–chaining” action creates but also is made possible by the occultation/suppression of an element that initiates a silent accumulation of discarded “half-parts” that, because they are *halves*, conserve the power to *rejoin* in new configurations. The creation of free–radical ends in the out–of–joint palindrome that I have modeled numerically as a 9/11 shift is thus not trivial. It is the space that oscillates, in a kind of *moiré*, and in effect creates the blur or stain that Zupančič has identified with a “meta-perspective” that has the same qualifications as Lacan’s (non-existent) “meta-language.” Lacan’s point, that there is no “outside” of language, only an interiorized exterior, applies to this zig-zag zone of the palindromic blur. It is not a “master-perspective” combining all points of view in a comprehensive view taken from some superior vantage point but rather an interior that uncovers a cavernous interior, paradoxically larger than the exterior that contains it.

This would sound absurdly muddled were the theme of the hidden interior not such a commonplace of mythology, storytelling, and popular culture. The interior infinite cavern is objectivity at its most reclusive but informative. It is both a womb and a matrix, with the generative capacity of the former and the spatial determinacy of the latter. Although the cavern is incapable of rejecting anything that falls into it by accident or exile, its pile of negations is shot through with the exactitude of precise meridians that locate each point in multiple “simultaneous and coincident” spaces and times. In films and novels, this theme of over–determination is built into the ways characters search for hidden passageways, lost keys, codes and passwords. In Haruki Murakami’s *Kafka on the Shore*, for example, the simpleton Nakata is able to find portals to the underworld that open at specific times only thanks to his loss of other intellectual functions. His negatives are the seeming cause of extra-sensory abilities, such as his ability to communicate with cats. Nakata is a special instance of the classic fool, whose loss of guile is compensated with an increase of wit, or the prophet who, like Tiresias, loses sight to gain insight.

The interior that opens onto a vast exteriority begs us to return to the example of *The Wizard of Oz* — whose emerald kingdom emerges from inside a whirlwind — to qualify Zupančič’s point about the blur/stain that appears with any shift in the point of view or any other realization of the point of view’s indeterminacy and otherness. Rather than think about a blur or stain as an object defacing the surface of a view, shouldn’t we think of how the images *act on each other*? Isn’t it the case even a small difference between two points of view allows each image to “blur” the other, reciprocally, so that any object, element, or point of negation — a blank, an uncertain form, a wavering object, a fleeting shadow — becomes the material basis for the phenomenon of the *cross-blurring* or *cross-staining* of each view by the other?

### *The tunnel and the cavern*

This, I believe, gets past the not insignificant conceptual hurdle of looking for something that not there in an objective sense — and it is *precisely an objective sense* that we are looking for. To clarify my ploy, consider the famous case of an anamorphic blur in Western painting, *The Ambassadors*, by Hans Holbein. As everyone already knows, the diagonal “smudge” that appears to deface the otherwise immaculate image of two well–dressed gentlemen with their musical instruments and navigational devices is in actuality a meticulously constructed transform of a skull that can be seen clearly from a viewing point near to the sur-

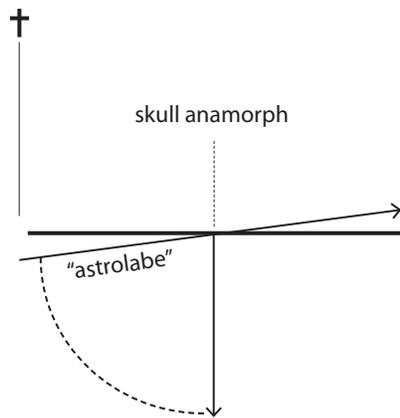


Figure 4. Holbein uses the anamorphic stain/skull to position the viewer 90° from the perspectival point of view in order to use the skull's vector as an astrolabe, "shooting the sun" as it is positioned in the sky at 4 p.m. on April 11, 1533, the moment anticipated to initiate the Apocalypse. This is, for the world as a whole, the "place of the skull," Golgotha.

of 3's, 9's, and 11's constitute the compounded interest that accrues by the time the upper apex of the main triangle discloses the connection between the crucifix, *half*-hidden by the green curtain, in relation to the imposed POV for those who would witness the skull and be placed in the "Golgotha position" at the other apex.

Because Holbein is engaged in something of a conspiracy in this use of a blur that becomes an object, we must realize just how negations such as blurs or stains are simply steps toward object formation, and that the ritualized nature of this object formation is the traditional accompaniment to journeys down "liminal" dimensions. Two features should be noted. The journey identifies with (1) the linearity of the single dimension that "opens up" the visual surface, and (2) themes of oscillation, vibration, or flutter that resists resolution into any single stable position; yet (3) the system as a whole is stable; in fact one could say that it possesses a "meta-stability" that is both emergent and permanent. As the numeric palindrome shifted between the 9 and 11 position to create "free radicals" on either end, the blur/stain objectifies itself not as either one of its competing perspective realities but as a movement into and through them, a wave-pulsed violation of an "impossible" liminality whose existence comes out of a non-existence it identifies as exclusively its own.

The anamorphic blur in *The Ambassadors* thus serves as a lipogram. Perspectival reality "flows around" this darkened smear as traffic flows around an accident scene. The connection is between the way passers-

face of the canvas. The foreshortened image is correct *only* from this point, so that we can compare it to foreshortening on a flat canvas, which works no matter what angle of view we take. This precise control of the point of view offers a unique effect. The skull seems to "jump out" of the surface; there is no longer the illusion that the picture plane is like a transparent pane of glass. Rather, the canvass has opened up unexpectedly on a dimension concealed within the flat canvas, and the skull both protects the entry into this dimension and served as a kind of password. Once we recognize the skull, we are "in" the dimension (Fig. 4).

It is not trivial that Holbein knows precisely how this dimension works.<sup>16</sup> The angle of the blur, 28°, is coded in reference to the completion date given on the back of the painting: April 11, 1533, 4 p.m. Following the discussion of palindromes' preference for 9's and 11's, it is no surprise that this date and time stamp — over-precise in its (incredible) specification of the exact *minute* the painting was finished — was an intentional reference to the popular belief that this would be the moment of Apocalypse, based on a calculation of three's: three units of five-hundred years each after the death of Christ, the number of years of Christ's life, and the day and moment of Good Friday, when, at exactly 4 p.m., the sun would be at a 27° angle above the horizon in London, where the double portrait was painted. Multiples

<sup>16</sup> Consult the extensive analysis of this painting by John David North, *The Ambassadors' Secret: Holbein and the World of the Renaissance* (New York: Hambledon and London, 2004).

by find it impossible not to stare at the site of damage, injury, and possible death as they pass and the curious attractiveness of the blur. The spectator is at first merely curious, then drawn, then mesmerized. In the Holbein portrait, the eye pulled in by the anamorphic skull “gets what it came for,” so to speak. It *fears* to see death and then the actual site of death’s universal sign gives it a strange pleasure. Just as those driving past an accident scene must engage it sideways, turning 90° as they pass by, the painting’s voyeuristic perspectivalists must crawl into the thin space just a few inches in front of the surface of the canvas and direct their gaze at slightly less than 90° to the “official” orthogonal vector that defines the point of view. They are in a sense orthogonal to the orthogonal, and thus “ultra-perspectival” to the perspective. The lipogram, by definition forbidden ground with its own skull apotropaic warning to “go back,” places the interloper into its hallowed ground at the lethal point of Golgotha, directly beneath the crucifix. And, it does so symbolically on April 11, 1533, so that it can also use the anamorphic stain as a transit to shoot the sun as it shines on London at 4 p.m. John North has brought our attention to Holbein’s inclusion of other navigation instruments on display behind the two subjects, setting us up to reflect on how the anamorphic vector works as an astrolabe. We “shoot the sun” through a tunnel of darkness in which a warning springs up from a 2-d smudge into a 3-d death’s head. The tunnel has opened onto a cavern, but at the cost of placing those who would look at the precise point of death, determined by 9’s and 11’s, rotating their view 90°, from perspective to *ultra*-perspective.

*The same as Fred, only in high heels and backwards*

Holbein provides a literal account of how Zupančič specifies that “the gaze can appear on the level of what is seen (producing an effect of decentering).” The gaze, orthogonal *and* orthopsychic, uses the “level of what is seen” to locate *itself* within death and is, quite clearly, a diagram of the death drive as it occupies a parasitic relationship to perspectival pleasure. Any shift in the point of view will make this evident. But, of course, we know how paintings nullify this shift and thus sustain pleasure, just as a dream’s first function is to sustain and extend sleep. The eyes of a portrait “follow us” because perspective makes every vantage point on its flat representation into an orthogonal one, at 90° from the picture plane. A shift relative to the representation does not do what a shift relative to 3-d scenic reality does. If we use, as we mentally do in the West, perspective to engage the visible scene and claim it for the Symbolic — for all our networks of symbolic relationships — perspective to label our positions and our options, any shift in the point of view will trigger anxiety that is not triggered with perspectival representation. We “fall out of” the orthogonal relationship. The “eyes of God” are no longer on us. We are lost, primordially. Like Adam and Eve and their progeny, we are cursed to wander. Ironically, this comes about because we have, like bad apprentices to the master-sorcerer, commandeered the eyes of God, which he has unaccountably left behind in the laboratory. We have seen what God sees, from God’s point of view, only light itself, the source. But, we have simultaneously realized that God’s point of view is vacated; that God is dead. The land in which we now wander is primordially blurred and stained.

Coincidentally, *Don Quixote* offers us an anecdotal turn, its own orthogonal twist, by which we may recover what God’s abandonment/death means. The contraction of God, the *zim-zum* of *The Zohar*, has sucked out the energy that would have sustained Paradise in its perspectival assurance that God’s gaze will sustain and renew the world at every point, in a perfect 1:1 relationship, *ortho-theologically*. When we see that “God is no longer at home” by eating the fruit of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, we see truly, orthopsychically. But, the result is that the world has converted to a field of debris. Lacking its ordering

principal, Things have become things, Eyes have become eyes, Perspective had become perspectives, multiple and relative. Movement between views has become, by definition, wandering among ruins.

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra fully appreciated the opportunity offered by the central region of Spain known as La Mancha (“the stain”) in relation to a hero who, like Odysseus, was willing to submit to suffering, in effect taking up the position of the viewer at the Golgotha position in Hobein’s *The Ambassadors*. And, wandering like Odysseus, he encounters challenges, but Cervantes has grasped the irony of the situation and shown us Don Quixote from a sideways view, where his creation of opposition out of intention has created threats where none exist. Thus we are seeing what Quixote doesn’t see at the end of the sagittal line of sight. We see that Mambrino’s helmet is nothing more than a barber’s washbasin; that Dulcinea is no more than a serving wench; that the fighting knights are really Master Peter’s puppets; that the windmills are really windmills and not giant adversaries with super-hero powers. From our ortho-view, it’s clear that Quixote creates the obstacles to his desire out of his desires, that his sagittal drive is palindromic. No matter how far or long he goes, 121, 12321, 123454321, etc. there will always be a root cause, an  $11^2$ ,  $111^2$ , or  $11111^2$ .<sup>17</sup>

Measuring this “how far” is another project — a reader’s project independent of the writer’s primary efforts. This quest is also that of a “hero who willingly submits to suffering,” but this time the suffering is the pain of rejecting the true on behalf of Truth, of taking the “trash pile” of the wilderness as trash and seeing what can be found. This is what Jorge Luis Borges did in his short experiment, “Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*” (1939). The significance of this story lies in the way it moves from the idea of translation (a simple shift in perspective) to the notion of a “perspective of perspectives,” our ortho-psychic *ultra*-perspective. Menard, a would-be translator of *Don Quixote*, immerses himself in his work, learning not only everything possible about the Spanish spoken in Cervantes’ time, but Cervantes’ life, habits, whims, diet, etc. His goal is to enter the “eigenform” of Cervantes, to be, in effect, “more Cervantes than Cervantes.” There are two ways of thinking about this. The first is the forward-chaining causal model that makes it impossible to stand where another stands or has stood. Cervantes is protected by the web of contingent circumstances that surrounded every minute, every second of his life. No one, no matter how much they might study these circumstances, can get to the origin point, “Cervantes himself.”

Borges’ point is cleverer. To see it clearly, we should remember one of his most famous parables. When Shakespeare dies, he comes face to face with God. When the playwright confesses that he has, for his whole life, inhabited roles but never become a real person, God sympathizes: “God’s voice answered him out of a whirlwind: I, too, am not I; *I dreamed the world as you, who like me are many, yet no one.*”<sup>18</sup>

Cervantes, who died on the same day as Shakespeare, was also an everything and nothing, able to take up any and every perspective at the cost of vacating the kernel of being that others nominally attribute to the individual as individual. In terms of “local” causes and effects, neither Shakespeare or Cervantes (or Borges, or Menard, or anybody) only seem to exist; they are the flat representations that can only portray depth. Their eyes only *seem* to follow in response to all the viewpoints we may take on them, protecting their interior authority. But, once inside the “Golgotha position,” Menard shows that he has transcended

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<sup>17</sup> The palindrome produced by stacking 1’s goes only as far as the natural numbers 1–9, but one should imagine that in 10+ base systems, the addition of new “natural” numbers would also produce equivalent coincidences.

<sup>18</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, “Everything and Nothing,” *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York and London: Penguin, 1998), 319–322.

the limits of a mere translator. He has become Cervantes, ironically, by occupying the void that is also “not-Cervantes.” In realizing this void as such, he has become “more Cervantes than Cervantes himself.” The master-figure of this flip is anachronism. Such a realization and appropriation can occur *only after*, in a causal temporality that forbids it. To become Cervantes requires entering in from a point at Cervantes’



Figure 5. Fred Astaire and Eleanor Powell dance “Begin the Beguine,” in *The Broadway Melody* (1940), excerpted by Michael Binder to reveal an anachronistic eigenform played to the tune of “Uptown Funk.”

past, from the palindromic vertical of Mukařovský’s triangle, orthogonally. At this point of the one of 1, we would say that, rather than a merger of two different entities, twoness simply disappears. The result is an infinity of compositions, situations, and possibilities, a pile of successive “free radicals” of any length or duration. *This*, this productive result, *is* Cervantes.

Anachronism is thus an essence, an eigenform, a necessity. In a series of videos appearing on YouTube.com, film clips have been remastered to synch to contemporary music tracks, making it appear that the original dancers “really had in mind” music that was funkier and more synchronous with the “inner spirit” of their dance. The best in my view is Michael Binder’s “Old Movie Stars Dance to ‘Uptown Funk’” (Fig. 5).<sup>19</sup>

In some cases not just the dance moves but lips are made to synch to the lyrics, giving the uncanny effect of the ghosts of the past coming back to testify for and confirm the modern transformation.

In the corny but moving final scene of *Cinema Paradiso*, the grown-up acolyte creates a tribute to his mentor, a film theater projectionist, by splicing together the redacted strips of love scenes deemed to be pornographic by the town’s ecclesiastical review board. While this film has no aspirations to be more than a sentimental tribute to the micro-cinema of rural Italy, this final gesture has the uncanny effect of finding, within the independently produced fragments, an internal logic that is brought to life through a retroactive, sudden synthesis. The pile of film strips on the cutting-room floor is a formal “sorites,” an unstructured hoard with only a minimal basis of unity: all the strips are discards, all are discarded for the same reason, none were destroyed.

Preservation and cancellation are the two components of Hegelian *Aufhebung*, so it’s a clue about how Hegelian dialectic can be used to explain the otherwise mysterious phenomenon of sorites. In Slavoj Žižek’s account of the “going-to-one’s-ground” of dialectic, the antithesis is present in the thesis “all along.” The fake synthesis contrived after Hegel’s death to form a positivistic trio of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis turns out to be more of a synthesis than these fakers could have imagined. It is a synthesis that retroactively realizes not simply the fact of the co-existence of the thesis and antithesis but uncovers the *structure* by which this co-existence maintained an “occulted existence” until the precise moment when retroactive realization — a combination of imagination and memory — would allow and even provoke the sudden

<sup>19</sup> Michael Binder, “Old Movie Stars Dance to ‘Uptown Funk’”; accessed March 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1F0lBnsnKE>.

emergence of a backwards revelation: a Truth that surpassed all expectations in that, in revealing itself, it simultaneously destroyed its material basis.<sup>20</sup>

While it may seem over-ambitious to connect the sorites' accumulation of "grains of sand" with the Hegelian Absolute, nothing less would seem to answer the question of how, in these examples of retroactive and uncanny unification, things in the past seem to have anticipated a future glory, a resurrection not just of the spirit but of the "flesh" that answers each rhythmic and tonal demand with a precise "fit" — lips that are actually saying *the right thing*, feet that are responding to a *correct syncopation*, jumps, twists, and leg-splits that punctuate sentences that will not be formed, historically, for decades to come. But, at the moment when all of these lips, feet, and leg-splits are brought together with a new sound track (Bruno Mars and Mark Ronson's "Uptown Funk"), it seems that the dead have returned to join a celestial chorus to celebrate Doomsday's judgment, vindication (for some), and resurrection. Moves that were clever enough in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s turn out to be cleverer still in the unifying synchronization to the new funky tune. The causal chain is reversed. The 2014 original pastiche of clichéd cultural icons is cast aside for this "new form" made of old, discarded and scattered parts. The "old actors" are the ones who "get it right," but they do so in a future that trumps Mars and Ronson's "official" version.

Why? The parts, perhaps, were not entirely old, discarded, or scattered. The case for laborious film archiving — and archiving in general — comes in a text box at the end of the video. *A Light Affliction: A History of Film Preservation and Restoration* by Michael Binder, the video's producer, provides the "legal background" for the video's court-room argument for the necessity of linking historical "accumulation" to the sudden, unexpected transformation occurring in a blinding spiritual revelation. — Or, something like it. Certainly, it would be inaccurate to call the effect of Binder's compilation anything less than ecstatic, in the original sense of that word, indicating the revelation that can come only from "standing outside oneself." The POV that escapes its protected position in the dark auditorium of observation is not just trying to be "objective" when it jumps up on the stage. It enters the object with what can, to be truthful and accurate, only be called "enthusiasm," the word that originally indicated infiltration of matter by spirit: *anima* by *animus* in the Latin sense. Possession of the body by an alien spirit can be the stuff calling for exorcism or it can be the pre-requisite for the all-seeing visions of the mystic who merges past, present, and future in ways that pump the body up with a strange *jouissance* that radiates a protective *cordon spirituèl* insulating the visionary or possessed.

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<sup>20</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism* (London : Verso, 2015).



## 4 / Orthology

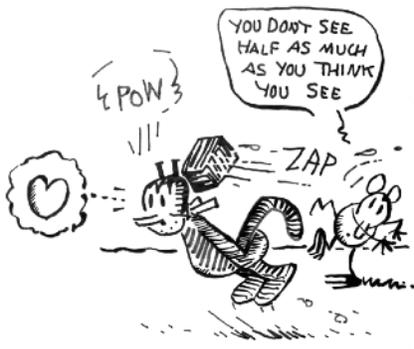


Figure 1. The brick thrown in hate is received as a message of love. The hysteric Kat re-members the palindromic reversal of the normal signifying chain, dog>cat>mouse as mouse>Kat>dog. Redrawn by the author.

*matter* of Truth. Projecting straight from the Kat's impacted head is heart, sometimes with a radiant thought bubble or halo to indicate that this effect occurs in the private mental/spiritual domain of the Kat.

In the rare instances when the Kat, siding with public opinion, throws the brick back at the mouse, the sounds and material effects are different. The brick flies with a "Jazzzzz" sound, perhaps reminding us that this name for the contemporary music form that began in New Orleans was named after the sex act; it

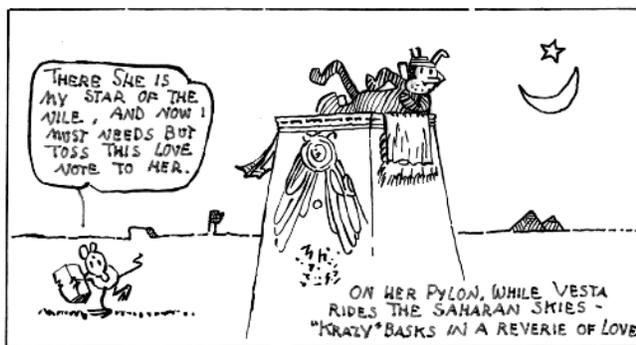


Figure 2. George Herriman gives the origins of Krazy/Ignatz in the form of a love story beginning in ancient Egypt, where proto-Ignatz attempted to send a message inscribed brick by throwing it to the top of her pedestal. His aim was off, but the error resulted in a time-proof memory<sub>2</sub> of this initial act of love. Redrawn by the author.

We'll give the name of hysteric to this object which cannot be mastered by knowledge and therefore remains outside of history, even outside its own.

— Gérard Wajcman, "The Hysteric's Discourse," 2003

When Ignatz the mouse throws a brick at the head of Krazy Kat in George Herriman's long-running cartoon drawn for Hearst Syndicate newspapers, it lands a cranial hit with precise angular consequences. In most of the frames representing this moment, the brick's trajectory slides along a horizontal ("Zap!" or "Zip!") and banks a vertical acoustic sign — "Pow!" — or sometimes the "Pow!" is closer to the head and the brick is shown bouncing off at a right angle. This skyward vector is presumably what the readers see, what the normal observer would interpret as an act of violence resulting in pain. This is the truth of the matter but not the

lands with a muffled "Mbob!" Although the Kat and mouse seem for the most part to be friends, these ballistic events are an acting-out that, in their singularity and asymmetry, refer to the May 4, 1919 strip, where Herriman revealed the origins of Krazy Kat (Fig. 2). In cat-worshipping ancient Egypt, a proto-Ignatz slave-mouse fell in love with proto-Krazy. The Kat fell for the mouse, too. A fortune-teller dog advised the mouse, an illiterate, to have a scribe dog chisel his love letter onto a brick. The Kat was reclining on a high pylon, however, and the mouse's aim was thrown off. The brick hit the Kat's head, forever fusing the message of love with a cranial blow. The orthogonal angle linking brick and love as independent functionalities fused the strip's

famous “conronym,” lovebrick.<sup>1</sup>

The air surrounding this memory act, where what is remembered is not recalled fully into consciousness but held securely within a “second memory” of *kenosis*, where one knows but does not know either what or even that one knows, is charged with what Shakespeare would call, in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, a “distemperature”: “... [T]he moon, governess of floods ...

Pale in her anger, washes all the air,  
That rheumatic diseases do abound.  
And through this distemperature we see  
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts  
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,  
And on old Hiems’ thin and icy crown  
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds  
Is, as in mockery, set.



Figure 3. In his 1888 book, *L’atmosphère: météorologie populaire*, Camille Flammarion used an image of obscure provenance. Possibly Flammarion himself created the image during his apprenticeship to an engraver in Paris; or he may have commissioned the engraving for a revised version of an earlier text published in 1872. The idea that the head can “traumatically” encounter an Absolute surrounding the shell of appearances was a standard feature of the mysticism that interested Flammarion, in particular the legend of St. Macarius told in the *Letters* of François de La Mothe Le Vayer.

Titania’s speech is packed with “primal words” that employ palindrome logic as love gone wrong runs against seasonal logic. A crown is mocked by frosty ice-encrusted flowers. Did ever the course of love go *straight*? the Bard elsewhere asks. Yet, as in the Moon’s paleo-ontology, the kinks in the course reveal something more important than the successful union of the Oedipal couple. The Kat and mouse are like Oberon and Titania in their discord, but this discord gives them access to a lost love that is possessed in a novel way. The brick toss nullifies the usual binary of love/hate. Rather, a “second memory” emerges that is, properly speaking, orthogonal to the first. The crookedness of ordinary memory and the desire that compels love is the very means by which this second memory is nestled within its layers of misunderstanding and preserved and allowed its “self-perfection.”

The mouse has access to a pile of bricks. His supplier, Kelly’s Brick Yard, seems blithely willing to supply the violence-prone Ignatz without doing a background check. Ignatz’s memory loss forces him to invent a racial memory to justify his compulsion. Cats have chased and

killed mice since time began, as everyone knows; this is the natural order the mouse finds himself in the unique position to avenge. The Kat is a willing victim, possibly suffering from a version of the Stockholm

<sup>1</sup> See my comparison of Crazy Kat’s “ontology” to the story of the invention of artificial memory, Don Kunze, “Cloud 9, a Lover’s Guide,” in Paul Emmons, Jodi LaCoe, and Federica Goffi, eds., *Ceilings and Dreams: The Architecture of Levity* (New York and London: Routledge, 2019). The characterization of the fused word “lovebrick” comes from Sigmund Freud, “The Antithetical Meaning of Primal Words,” trans. James Strachey, *Five Lectures on Psycho-analysis, Leonardo da Vinci, and Other Works* (London: The Hogarth Press, London, 1957), 155–161.

syndrome, where the captive identifies with the captor. But, in the Stockholm syndrome, the victim is fantasizing; in the Krazy Kat cartoon, the aggressive mouse is fantasizing.

However, were it not for the mouse's fake memory and inability to recall the actual past, there would be no brick, no concussion ... no *love!* The kinked and tortured path to love must travel through the air of hate where distemperatures abound and lay an odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds on winter's thin and icy crown. The metonymy of the head in relation to the rest of the body has customarily "detached" our thoughts and feelings from the the material world "below" and given subjects who appear headless (Krazy) to all below the clouds access to a Real that is beyond all spatial and temporal immediacy. The brick metonymizes the Kat's head by "detaching" it from contingent life around it, and the sound and *meme* clouds around it provide it the same atmospheric effects as Flammarion's pilgrim in Fig. 3. What appears headless and Krazy from below is clairvoyant thanks to this metonymy. This is not simply an apt reference to an iconic tradition. Metonymy that works from both directions of the frame of representation is metalepsis: a "metonymy of metonymy" that relocates the motive and function of representation at the same level as the represented. Elsewhere this creation of a frame-within-a-frame is called "iconicity." Herriman frequently allowed his drawn characters to call into question the graphic conventions he used to represent them and their surroundings, as in the strip where the horizon line becomes a thread that can be cut or used as a tight-rope. In other strips, there are frames in frames and construction of frames by the story, as when Offisa Pupp, lacking a jail to imprison the captured mouse, is forced to draw a new one.

The play of frames, medium-turned-message, and other recursive techniques is related directly to the metonym of the head that communicates directly to a second memory that can be released only by the act of impact. Here, I wish to make a main point about the orthopsychic. *The Wizard of Oz's* Dorothy corrects her Kansas life with a death dream.

The fact that Krazy is a comic strip and, hence, an extended *comedy* that contains a *running gag* (the joke of the brick-toss) gives it a fundamentally philosophical, even existential, quality. For most of the history of comic strips published by daily newspapers, comedy was the not the only tonality. Romance, adventure, and crime stories were also popular. But, the forced brevity of each installment exerted an influence similar to that of the recording capacity of 78 r.p.m. vinyl records and their 45 r.p.m. successors, which limited the run time of songs to \_\_\_ minutes. Comedy depends on characters that develop over time, stories that have continuing themes, and an evolving "comic world" that, though different from our own, enables us to sympathize with the fictional cast and their predicaments. Krazy Kat ran for over forty years, not because it was popular — many local editors tried in vain to cancel it — but because its biggest fan was William Randolph Hearst.

While Krazy Kat could be considered a meta-comedy in consideration of this long life, each installment's page of frames reflected the economy of the joke, and all of Krazy Kat's jokes had the same punch line, the hit scored on the Kat's head by the mouse-tossed brick. This partly explains both the longevity of the strip and the failure of the punch line to be understood in any one instance. In a sense, the joke was funny because its senselessness was simply repeated again and again. Herriman's explanation of the Kat's and mouse's conflicting memory of the primal event of their relationship is somewhat like any bad joke that "requires an explanation." Generally, a punch line falls flat because either the listener is dense or the conclusion is too obscure. Krazy Kat is certainly the latter, for even those who claim to understand the Kat and mouse's complex relationship cannot form it into a laughable experience without the strategy of repetition, which has the capability of making even inane actions or responses funny.

A similar comic strategy is used by Tom Stoppard's play, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, where Hamlet's two friends first appear on stage engaged in a game of guessing the results of a coin toss. No matter how many times Rosencrantz guess heads and wins ninety-two flips in a row. Five or six heads in a row is an unremarkable coincidence but fifty or sixty calls into question the sanity of the witnesses. In other words, repetition in the face of improbability becomes funny simply on the basis of its quantity or extension. In *Duck Soup*, a lemonade vendor is harassed by Chico and Harpo. Chico wants to move his own cart onto the lemonade vendor's turf and pesters him with fast chatter. The mute Harpo, in contrast, repeats a number of annoying tricks that, simply annoying at first, become hilarious when they are repeated despite the lemonade vendor's awareness of them. One of moves involves getting the vendor to grab hold of his thigh by elevating his knee. The vendor simply doesn't know what he's doing holding Harpo's thigh, and cannot account for how it happens. The audience greets each new instance with glee because its inexplicability is matched by its automatic quality.

This seems to endorse Henri Bergson's theory that comedy reduces to instances where the subject, whose nature is to be autonomous, exhibits mechanical, obsessional behavior.<sup>2</sup> But, the Marx Brothers, Stoppard, and especially Krazy Kat show that mechanism is not the failure of subjectivity but actually its essence. This is proven in the way some automatic process reveals a "human nature" — how, for example, Guildenstern's tossed coin seems to be "obeying" Rosencrantz's desire for heads. All that is needed is for the signature of the machine, repetition, to give way to improbability instead of predictiveness. Similarly, Harpo seems to know "just when" the lemonade vendor will be maximally annoyed by his knee-lift trick; his automatism has an uncanny intelligence.

Krazy's intelligence is an automatic response to the hit of the brick, but both this conversion of pain to the pleasure of love is unaccountable, it is even more unlikely to be the conclusion of so many labyrinthine encounters between the Kat, mouse, Officer Pupp, and other characters in the strip's locale, Coconino County, Arizona. It is as if the improbable landforms (which actually exist in this part of the U. S.) and the fruit-shaped celestial objects Herriman often draws in the sky have themselves given a twist to the "automatic" forces of nature. The machines of nature and its inhabitants both reveal a human side, and this becomes evident when repetition moves past the expectation of self-similar results.

Whether the machine breaks down at "just the wrong time" or performs "a bit too perfectly," mechanism as quantitative extension constitutes the most durable, reliable, and variable basis for extended comedy, and the Krazy Kat strip was, if anything, extended. Had the central joke of the strip been something funnier it would not have the inanity of a machine that gives the same results no matter how varied the input. But, because readers mostly found the brick toss unintelligible, its repetition could accrue comic value as an *automaton*.

Krazy Kat's peculiar brand of comedy is the perfect portal into the mystery of why misunderstanding is more productive, intelligible, and durable than understanding. The brick's impact fuses two memories but it cannot afford to allow either to contaminate the other. It is a perfect *palintonos harmoniē*, a Heraclitan concept about joinery that has its etymological and perhaps philosophical origins in the architectural detail. Because the brick-toss as a running gag is a kind of blank spot that concludes a short drama without providing the readers with the usual satisfactions of a joke, we have to consider it as a kind of li-

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<sup>2</sup> Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (London: Macmillan and Co., 1911).

pogram, that species of the negative that has major careers in three fields: grammar (the use of pronouns); literature (the technique of the missing element); and the close-up magic of picking pockets (the phenomenon of “body loading”).

The pronoun is a place-holder used to defer meaning until a future event which is promised to reveal the identity of the generic “who,” “what,” “when,” or “where.” The pronoun is the basic logic of the mystery story, but it is distributed across the entire range of language and, like a chemical marker, accumulates at critical points of psychoanalysis, as in Lacan’s citation of the *je/moi* difference resulting from the ego’s division into Symbolic and Imaginary components. The most famous literary deployment of the lipogram in modern times is Georges Perec’s *A Void*, a novel written without the letter ‘e’, but in antiquity there were many similar and even more ambitious projects. Quintus Curtius Rufus, a Roman historian writing in the first century CE, claimed it to be “the most ancient systematic artifice of Western literature.” In Late Greek antiquity, two authors, Nestor and Tryphidorous, produced versions of Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* with successive books each missing a successive letter of the Greek alphabet.

Pronouns and lipograms are linguistic versions of the “induced catalepsy” that allows the pick-pocket to enter the personal space of a victim (“mark”) and freely remove valuables without being detected. The numbing of the mark’s awareness is done by repeating touches and movements until they have been neutralized and can no longer alert the mark to danger. Anesthesia as a theft device is also related to erotic seduction, as in the case where Semele, in order to make love to the mortal shepherd Endymion, visits him in his sleep. This technique is also used by Penia (“want/lack”) to seduce Poros (“wit”), a tale famously repeated in Plato’s *The Symposium*. This version of the allegory of Lack and Excess takes us into comedy’s operations center where, as Todd McGowan has argued, humor re-negotiates the separation subjects must create logically to remain sober long enough to stabilize the *je/moi* division of the ego.

The lipogram is means of collective madness, or rather, a *de*-mentia that opens up to a broader concept of mind. It is one of the key techniques of *kenosis*, the brand of thought known since antiquity (St. John the Baptist was a practitioner) that, by “knowing without knowing,” goes past the limits of the literal predication functions of language. By analogy, *kenosis* is the “pre-Boolean” component of thought’s logical determinacy. Comedy reveals the temporal strategy required by *kenosis* (and, hence, its relation to meditation and other spiritual practices) in the use of negational elements such as the un-funny punch-line and the continuously but systematically deferred misunderstanding.

Krazy’s bricklove device is not just a literal contronym (conjuncture of opposite intentionalities). It fully serves as a “primal term” linking any appearance in the temporal present with an “archaic” event that grounds it without explaining it. True to its kenotic essence, the archaic is the primordial unconscious, where negation is not only not respected (“you can’t say no”) but unrecognizable. Just as in dreams we see the dead without any sense of surprise or alarm, the unconscious is simply unable to respect binary opposition in the way that consciousness must in order to survive a single moment. Here, Freud is in perfect agreement with Vico, who showed that mythic thought was constituted by its inability to synthesize the subject-object distinctions necessary to modern thought; that its “miracles” were, in effect, the product of a complete ignorance for the negation that separates and holds apart the intentionalities of the viewer from the emotions perceived to originate in the viewed.

Privation theories have the challenge of showing how absence and negation have material effectiveness. The only available explanatory model, I claim, is that of the sorites, where thanks to the even accu-

mulation of elements that are both fallen/negated and uniform, a collective identity forms in relation to the event of emergence. This gives the pile of sand or balding head, classic examples of sorites, the unexpected structural particularities of the Hysteric, who is always “waiting to tell us something.” In Lacan’s elaboration of the clinical hysteric into one of the four principal forms of discourse, the private pathology becomes an optional public way of thinking, speaking, and acting. The *matheme* of the Hysteric gives us a clue. The subject is fundamentally divided — \$ — and in the position,  $\$/a$ , to conceal a pleasure by reporting it as pain. This pleasure/pain is contronymic, both by its identity as *jouissance* and its position in Lacan’s *matheme* at the place of Truth, directly beneath the Agent. Together, the agent and its secret face the Other and Production.

The Other of Production is also the production of an Other. In the clinical hysteric’s case, this is the construct of the (usually) male figure whose authority, specifically, is called into question. Authority is both identity and “continence” in relations of predication and verification. A line drawn in the sand between subjects and objects, figures and grounds, subjects and predicates, objects and attributes must be maintained to create authenticity. When this line is blurred or questioned, as suggested by a related Lacanian *matheme*,  $S(\mathcal{A})$ , a contronymic condition arises. All of the Other’s “Boolean” functions are called into question. The official service of the Other — to maintain distinctions — is questioned by the hysteric’s “if only you knew what I know.” The hysteric is not, however, the keeper of a secret that can be easily divulged. Her knowledge is kenotic and thus transmissible only by *initiating* the knower to the known, which is to say that a whole system of truths and not just any one truth must be “ritually” acquired by the knower’s gradual identification with the nature of the known.

The lipogram and the sorites-comedy by which the lipogram becomes a durable running gag is just such a ritualized identification. There is no “one point” where the lipogram suddenly reveals a secret key retroactively unlocking past confusions. But, there is a *moment at which* a kind of totalizing recognition converts the reader/knower into a kenotic subject, merging the *je* and *moi* aspects of the ego. This moment may be demonstrated by one of Perec’s masterpieces, an e-less version of Edgar Allan Poe’s poem, *The Raven* (only the first three stanzas are shown here):

#### BLACK BIRD

‘Twas upon a midnight tristful I sat poring, wan and wistful,  
 Through many a quaint and curious list full of my consorts slain —  
 I sat nodding, almost napping, till I caught a sound of tapping,  
 As of spirits softly rapping, rapping at my door in vain.  
 “‘Tis a visitor,” I murmur’d, “tapping at my door in vain —  
Tapping soft as falling rain.

Ah, I know, I know that this was on a holy night of Christmas;  
 But that quaint and curious list was forming phantoms all in train.  
 How I wish’d it was tomorrow; vainly had I sought to borrow  
 From my books a stay of sorrow — sorrow for my unjoin’d chain —  
 For that pictographic symbol missing from my unjoin’d chain —  
And that would not join again.

Rustling faintly through my drappings was a ghostly, ghastly scraping  
 Sound that with fantastic shapings fill’d my fulminating brain;

And for now, to still its roaring, I stood still as if ignoring  
 That a spirit was imploring his admission to obtain —  
 “‘Tis a spirit now imploring his admission to obtain —”  
 Murmur’d I, “— but all in vain.”<sup>3</sup>

In this micro-demonstration it is possible to see that the exercise of “translation” has become one of “transformation,” once the reader has given up resisting the idea that the omission of the letter ‘e’ is simply an absurd experiment. From “dreary” to “tristful,” a blank space is opened up that brings dreary to mind by banishing it; but in the process the “mind” to which this happens has itself changed. A mind full of trist, as was the mind of Tristram Shandy, also tristful and trustful. A new set of poetic dimensions has appeared, ones absent in dreary. But, if absent becomes *absented* — by “Not Again!” rather than “Nevermore!” — these new dimensions become activated beyond the time-space of the given poem. Perec’s experiment has the uncanny retroactive effect of opening up Poe’s original poem as, *in absentia*, itself a lipogrammatical program. Like the dancers energized by a retro-fitting to “Uptown Funk,” the haunting is a kind of acousmatic effect whose source we can’t identify. Synchronically we hear “dreary” but *don’t hear* “sad,” “gloomy,” or the much more unlikely “tristful.” Any positive choice is by default a rejection of other possibilities. Humor depends on audience’s implicit awareness of something not just unsaid but something that *cannot be said in the joke*. Two Jewish jokes: When her son returns appreciatively wearing one of the two new shirts his Jewish mother has given him, she asks “What’s wrong with the other one?” Or: the waiter asks the group of (Jewish) women who have met for lunch, “Ladies, is anything OK?” This emphasis on the missing element hard-wires all comedy to the lipogram in a way that tragedy cannot claim, because tragedy’s lipogram is the silence of pathos that comes at the end, in the scene of *anagnorisis* (recognition), which effectively concludes all tragic actions and closes the drama.<sup>4</sup>

You don’t go around a final void, but voids all along must be circumnavigated. Comedy’s lipograms are openings rather than ends. Once we get into *The Raven*’s “tristful” and its partnership with the rhyming “wistful” (rather than “dreary/weary”), the poem’s revised *and* original versions open up onto a territory resonating with an acousmatic energy. It is like the case of the ventriloquist’s dummy in *Dead of Night*, who takes over his master’s mind.<sup>5</sup> We can’t say for sure which state was “original.” In other words, *we call authority into question* and suspend the Other’s mastery over self-other continence, logical determination, and verification. We become hysterics through the discourse of comedic, lipogrammatical kenosis; and in this hysteria we gain access to the negated signifiers that have accumulated and been preserved within the “soretic” treasury whose only aim, a future restoration, will at the same time be a past retroactively realized by the act of revelation.

### *The Golem*

The creation of an automaton out of base materials is remarkable in the first place: no complex mechanisms as in *The Sandman*’s Olympia, the talented mechanical doll whose sparse enigmatic responses charmed the naïve Nathanael into believing she was remarkably intelligent. The Golem was formed from mud or clay, brought to life with an inscription, usually of one of the names of God, inscribed or pressed

<sup>3</sup> Georges Perec, *A Void*, trans. Gilbert Adair (Boston: David R. Godine, 2005), 104.

<sup>4</sup> Henry W. Johnstone, Jr., “Truth, ‘Anagnorisis,’ and Argument,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 16, 1 (1983): 1–15.

<sup>5</sup> Arturo Cavalcanti, Charles Crichton, Basil Dearden and Robert Hamer, directors, *Dead of Night* (London: Ealing Studios, 1945).

into its forehead. The Golem was mute and hateful, yet it was willing to serve its master, doing all those things forbidden Jews to do on the Sabbath. In this otherwise un-noteworthy motif, we have a reminder that the lipogram is first a gap in time — a holiday — where certain activities, uses of spaces, costumes, or even thoughts are prohibited. The complementary feature of the holiday is some *mechanism* that can provide what is needed, given that others are forbidden to work.

Before going further, the orthography of the situation should be noted. The holiday must be conducted in a *correct* way. The psalm contains the one and only use of the word Golem (139:16, גלמי, “my Golem”). By the simple removal of the aleph, the word for truth in Hebrew (*emet*) converts to “dead” (*met*). The missing letter reveals how a contronym binds the Golem to the sabbath. The “correctly behaving Jews” thus require the automaton Golem in the same way truth and death are required to keep sending a letter, literally, to each other. The *orthography* of the sabbath is thus preserved by the automaton that, suppressed, unformed, unhappy, nonetheless serves its masters.<sup>6</sup> It is as if the correctness of the main vector of travel through this temporal lipogram is maintained by the 90° vector that demonstrates a formal and perfect difference separating the formed from the unformed by maintaining a relationship of servitude.



Figure 4. In *The Shining*, Dick Hallorann turns to Danny to communicate directly — orthopsychically — while conducting his tour in the normal space-time of the mountain resort. His access to this dimension gives a twist on the meaning of concierge, since he becomes a kind of Hermes in charge of conducting the souls of the dead to Hades, but also a keeper of secrets.

It might be possible to generalize, to say that we need a golem to get us through any day “correctly,” i. e. something that serves as a golem — a schedule, plan, appointments calendar, regular coffee breaks, etc. The golem is not a servant who can be abstracted into a concept of ritual correctness, rather the “orthography” of time, invisible as a vector, needs a literary embodiment. The metonymy of regulative order needs a metonymy, and this makes the golem into a mud-formed metalepsis. Not everyone can afford a golem, so where a real, mud and clay servant is unable to be summoned, we must call on the aid of another variation of metalepsis. But this “any metalepsis in a storm” policy produces two immediate benefits. First, we realize how the essential relation between discourse in general (Lacan’s Symbolic) and the Master’s discourse makes use of the S1/\$ part of the *matheme* for this discourse. The ‘/’ constitutes a twist or rotation moving the vector of Truth 90° away from the “efficient cause” of the S1, its agency directed at the Other. The vector “folds” Truth in-

side this projection, so to speak, occulting \$ to make getting in and out of the little secret room inside Agency a matter of a 90° rotation, an “ortho twist” or quarter-turn.

This reveals a little secret, thanks to the popular culture versions of this quarter rotation. In Stanley Kubrick’s *The Shining*, Dick Hallorann, the concierge showing the caretaker family around the kitchen of

<sup>6</sup> Curiously, orthography is the dominant theme in Psalm 139: “You have searched me, Lord, / and you know me. / You know when I sit and when I rise; / you perceive my thoughts from afar. / You discern my going out and my lying down; / you are familiar with all my ways. / Before a word is on my tongue / you, Lord, know it completely. / You hem me in behind and before, / and you lay your hand upon me. / Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, / too lofty for me to attain.” “Psalm 139, for the director of music. Of David.” New International Version, *Biblica, the International Bible Society*. Accessed March 2018, <https://www.biblica.com/bible/niv/psalm/139/>.

the resort that is to be closed down for the winter season, turns to Danny, the family's young son, to tell him he will soon be treated to some ice cream. This turn takes place *inside* the time and space of his ongoing, uninterrupted tour of the kitchen, establishing a face-to-face contact with Danny that is ortho-*psychic*. Danny and Hallorann are creatures cut from the same cloth of clairvoyance, who can communicate on a different wave-length from ordinary mortals.

Servants of any kind make good golems because, in turning over their intentionality to the Master, they have allied orthographic powers to the *automaton* that lies at the center of comedy and, hence, the lipogram. The lipogram in the case of *The Shining* is the space Hallorann and Danny can occupy without their parents' awareness. It is the space of the hotel where the past is continually maintained as a present, to be occupied at any time. Hotels are perfect vehicles for this popular-culture version of the uncanny lipogram, because any of their many locked doors could be the portal to a secret space. Haruki Murakami has made extensive use of the lipogram space in novels where there is a secret floor in a building (*Wild Sheep Chase* and others), a labyrinth formed from a hotel (*Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*), a remote area of frozen time hidden in the mountains (*Hard Boiled Wonderland at the End of the World*), or a dark zone accessible only on certain days, protected by a portal stone (*Kafka on the Shore*). It sounds a bit banal to say that these novels affirm the central thesis of comedy — that when the “natural family” disintegrates it must be re-constituted by a “synthetic” one — but it is clear that the repair process requires a lipogram-matical workshop where the new family can take form. Only in a space-time orthographically constructed both inside and outside ordinary space-time can support the dangerous conjunction of lack and excess that Todd McGowan has defined as comedy's central isotope. Orthographic lipograms are, in fact, essentially the space-time *specification* of lack and excess. They are lack and excess's meeting-place, “the only place they can go to be alone.” So, the need to insulate lack/excess conjunctions finds material expression in the secret half-floors in multi-story buildings, remote mountain precincts, portals to Hades, invisible hotels of the dead accessible only at the close of the season.

If Dick Hallorann isn't Hermes, then we have missed the point of these over-determinations. The portal of the lipogram Hallorann/Hermes guards is a door whose tricks can be discovered using a concordance of Hermes' attributes and special skills: thief, seducer, (silent) trader, messenger, guide (into liminal regions), and keeper of secrets. All of these can be collectivized into the protection of a portal and compacted even further into the nature of the portal itself. The in-and-out particulars of the lipogram, where we find lack and excess mingling freely, is what Hermes does and what Hermes is.

The golem, however, holds the secret of this secret-keeper. The orthogonal vector of *automaton* that triggers the forward, intentional motion through the correct and ritualized space of the holy day (time outside of time) combines the contronymic properties of chance and necessity. Aristotle distinguished *automaton* from *tuchē* to draw attention to the difference between natural contingencies impacting efficient cause and the social-political contexts of intentional choice (final cause). The automaton is the machine that we must understand to correct Bergson's vitalist theory of comedy, that holds that subjects are funny when they start acting like machines. Lacan's theory is that subjects are *essentially* machines, that the kernel of subjectivity is an objective circuit that, instead of producing the same effects from given causes, creates effects that are the product of multiple causes and, hence, *backwards* in relation to cause's presumed arrow of time. What's funny is actually the machine that starts to think for itself, but instead of thinking in a masterful way, the machine is “human, all too human.” Though its subjectivity disdains the happy ending or just deserts, nonetheless is an efficient postman. The letter *always* reaches its destination, whether this is

the alpha exchanged between truth and death or other palindromes and contronyms contained within seemingly innocent-looking words.

It would not be improper to remember Giambattista Vico's idea of "silent" or "true speech," which, taking its cue from the original meaning of *mythos* as "mute speech," allowed mythic thought to survive within the forms of "evolved" thought whose increasing sophistication and abstraction it had evolved specifically to rule out the forms and even idea of myth. Vico wrote that true speech (*vera narratio*) was "a fantastic speech making use of physical substances endowed with life and most of them imagined to be divine."<sup>7</sup> The mute and true myth is the lipogram within the Symbolic that holds open these gaps, slips-of-the-tongue, overlaps, and omissions. When the Symbolic breaks down, the true/silent speech begins to speak, but it is not vocalized, it is the acousmatic silence that can be heard in the same way that, when we hear the ventriloquist in the adolescent voice of the dummy, we realize we are hearing the voice of the dummy inside the ventriloquist. In other words, access into the reservation of the lipogram is never the storming of a secret citadel, but a simultaneous outward contamination of the lipogram into what has attempted to cor- don it off.<sup>8</sup> Because true speech resides within normal speech as a "permanent contronym," its revelation activates a palindromic criss-crossing of two boundaries with every single crossing — herein lies its relation to Hermes' reputation as a smuggler who began, as an infant, stealing cattle by driving them back-wards.

The 123454321 of this boundary expands or contracts as the situation demands. The key code for the number pad of its lock is 11, the last number in the 12-base system of hours, whose 720 minutes double the circle of 360° as if to show that two things are going on at the same time, two "vectors," one intentional the other deprived of the capability of forming intentions — i. e. a servant. In this system, midnight and noon start the circle running again. The number 11 is the last, and we know from the way 11's pile up in multiplication ( $11 \times 11 = 121$ ;  $1111111 \times 1111111 = 1234567654321$ ) that the palindrome and contronym are built into each other's system. The servant/Golem and the ortho-Master go hand in hand through the hours of the day, one thanks to the other or rather the "Other" thanks to the 1. Lacan's discourse of the Master, borrowed from Hegel's parable of the Master and Servant, tells the tale in repeating the con- tronymic findings of Psalm 139, that Truth and Death are one letter away, and that an aleph. Borges gave this letter its infamous function as a point in space that contains all other points, a kind of meteorological Gödelian "set-of-sets" paradox.

With this information, Lacan's Master's Discourse reflects the irony André Kojève had emphasized in his lectures on Hegel's *Phenomenology*, which Lacan attended with other Parisian cognoscenti in the 1930s. Hegel's ironic master introduced Lacan to the idea of discourse in general. This was not just the idea of language but of a system governing the Symbolic as an inner automaton, a click-stop wheel on top of a quadrated base. Two series, turning *against each other*, produced the fundamental speech algorithms out of which Speaking Subjects evolved their pronoun souls — their I and me (*je* and *moi*) — as both empty and lacking and excessive in their overdetermination by other signifiers. This was the comic aspect of the

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<sup>7</sup> Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1968), §401.

<sup>8</sup> Baldine Saint Gerome, "Writing as 'Real Speech' in Lacan and Vico," *Essaim* 28, 1 (2012): 143–159. See also Paul Verhaeghe, "The Function and the Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," A Commentary on Lacan's 'Discours de Rome,' Address to The Institute for the Humanities, Simon Fraser University, March 11, 2018. Accessed March 2018, <https://www.sfu.ca/humanities-institute/contours/paper1.html>.

Lacanian ego, so in contrast with the tragic Œdipal ego Freud articulated in relation to the death drive. But, just as truth and death exchange costumes (and winter becomes summer) with a letter that always arrives at its destination, Freud's Œdipus was Lacan's Chaplin, a character at odds with a mechanizing modern world who fights back with his own *automism*, his own breaking-bad golem.

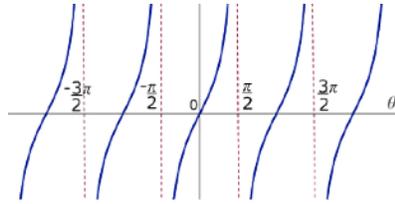


Figure 5. The tangent function models the way the master signifier functions with respect to attempts to circumscribe it, disappearing at one extreme of space/time only to appear at the antipode at the same instant. The S1 of the Master's Discourse thus exemplifies the "spooky entanglement" of self-coordinating particles in quantum physics.

other signifiers. In this sense, it connects to the idea of the mathematical "eigenform," which Louis Kauffman defines in the same way in relation to recursive systems.<sup>10</sup>

The master signifier's ability to be both inside and outside systems of signifiers is in itself significant. This is the "primary metalepsis" of Lacan's *extimité*, the inside-out logic that makes every frame, representational surface, profile, edge, threshold, and boundary the site of a radical incontinence, where what has been intended to be contained will forever escape its container. This is not just a leakage but the re-emergence of the to-be-contained at the antipode of the secured zone of observation/containment. This is the

The struggle of the Master for recognition is, fundamentally, the struggle of all subjects as they enter the Symbolic, whose overlapping relationships promise identity, support, and security but in fact deliver the opposite. The subject, in accessing subjectivity as a "speaking being," will be radically misrecognized, put in a position of permanent and self-fueled alienation, and robbed of the sense of unity that had, in childhood, given fluid access to a world without freezing the categories of subject/object, inside/outside, here/there, self/other. The speaking being, the ego, is never fully constituted. Its project of unity is ongoing, with the majority of its efforts aimed at shoring up eroding defenses and dealing with the issues of lack and excess generated from within and through the signifying chains created by desire. So, the Master's Discourse, what is that? The compact *matheme* Lacan gives us is one of four, so despite its primacy<sup>9</sup> we must remember that it is just one "click-stop" on a circular palindrome. The subject is divided, \$, and subordinated, /\$. Above it is the master signifier, S1, itself an enigma, a signifier that in itself means nothing but is able to organize

<sup>9</sup> The primacy of the Master's Discourse comes from the movement of the pre-subject to the "subject proper," whose demands for recognition must be satisfied from within the Symbolic, although they originate in the Imaginary. Vico would agree and qualify the subject's entry into the Symbolic with his own version of Lacan's Mirror Stage, a parable about the "first men" who, frightened by loud thunder, imagine the sky to be the giant body of Jove, who "wishes to tell them something." From this primal moment on, interest in the evidence of celestial signs expands into a science of divination and the basis of laws, customs, and culture in general. Vico cites his own *matheme* governing this initiation: the "imaginative universal" (*universale fantastico*), taken usually to indicate a metaphor and the "metaphoric thinking" of the mythic mind, but in fact the imaginative universal is a case of metalepsis, a transposition of the perceiving subject to "objectivized" nature, whose intentions have been occulted. Encounters of nature's "true speech" (*vera narratio*) are thus self-encounters, and divination's predications always take the verb tense of the future anterior, simultaneously future and past, retroactively realized. Vico's account of the transposition of (not-yet) human nature onto nature itself comes close to Lacan's account of the Mirror Stage for the young child; and indeed Vico compared child development with cultural evolution to create a theory of an "ideal eternal history" that worked at every level — culture, family, and individual.

<sup>10</sup> Louis H. Kauffman, "Reflexivity and Eigenform: The Shape of Process," *Constructivist Foundations* 4, 3 (July 15, 2009): 121–137. Accessed March 2018: <http://www.univie.ac.at/constructivism/journal/4/3>.

uncanny function of the tangent in geometry, a curve that disappears at the bottom of the graph only to appear suddenly from the top.<sup>11</sup> The curve connecting bottom and top can be re-drawn as a circle with an infinitesimal gap (in the graph in Fig. 5, the dotted lines at  $-3\pi/2$ ,  $-\pi/2$ ,  $0$ ,  $\pi/2$ ,  $3\pi/2$  mark the “spooky” point of Lacan’s *objet petit a*, where one could say that *jouissance* (the contronym *pleasurepain*) attains a maximal palindromic quality.

The Master’s Discourse assigns the master signifier, S1, the position of agency. It acts — but acts to do what? The act that suppresses, constrains, and occults the subject, puts \$ in the position of Truth, which I contend is the position of the *automaton* and, hence, the key to the subject’s fundamental relation to the “comedy,” a series of stagings of the coincidence/overlap of lack and excess, forbidden by S2’s protocols of knowledge (signifying chains). The automaton — both determinative machine and random chance — corresponds to the loss and return of the *letter* that, when restored, “tells the tale” that is not its presumed contents but the account of its travel. In effect, the letter — like the heroes of antiquity who have embodied it — has voluntarily submitted to suffering, and this passivity is constitutive of the circular movement from departure to return. Departure is a lack, extrapolated to the conditions of travel where the “hero” intentionally engages situations where failure is all but guaranteed. Return is an excess in that the hero’s reunions occur under conditions of disguise and combat. The hero finds that departure/lack has endangered the place held open, the “pronominal position” that travel has endangered.

S2 is the domain of knowledge specifically as it is defined by and through movement, within the domain of the Other that I take to be formalized in literature and popular culture by the field of travels. The advantage of this is that S2, as travel, can be formalized as a circle gapped by the coincidence of lack and excess in the same way comedy can. The gapped circle is also the “conceptual shape” of the museum, vacation, or any other site promising satisfaction with closure (but failing to deliver). S2 occults /a, the *objet petit a* that holds open a space for *jouissance* defined by lack: enjoyment is always in the domain of the Other, the Other is always “having more fun” and defining how and when and where we should enjoy. This otherness, coupled with travel’s circularity, returns us to the Hegelian model Lacan used to conceptualize the discourse of the Master. The Master, willing to die for his honor, sacrifices everything to be in the signifying chain. But, I would like to compare this serious sacrifice to its comic counterpart, the fool, who in the traditional relations connecting the fool to both Eros and Thanatos, allows us to extrapolate and expand the Master’s desire for “instantaneous” victory—or-death.

The fool returns us to the case of Krazy and the orthopsychic correction of the mouse’s error as, really (or, rather, in the domain of the Real), love. Does homicide implicitly involve love? Criminologists would hardly make this argument. But, a Lacanian might see love and hate as obverses of each other and regard criminal and erotic behavior as convertible within the protocols of lack and excess. Comedy, in the person of the fool, can absorb both, which is key to the understanding of the letter which is primordially missing, the lipogram. It is the place held open for the hero-gone-missing; the “permanent/radical pronoun” (Odysseus as the prototype “Nohbody”) whose travels constitute a biography of nobody and whose itinerary is an atlas of nowheres. But, the Encyclopedia of Nothing is full of S1s in the same way that *Don Quixote* is chock-a-block with Sancho Panza’s idiotic sayings, which “amount to nothing” in their

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<sup>11</sup> Bruce Fink has made the same comparison in *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1995), 113.

self-fulfilling prophecies and judgments but which amount to a “salt” in their ability to *desiccate* and mortify.<sup>12</sup>

Salt is the principle of the running gag that makes no sense in single instances but is nonetheless “singular” as a series of returns to the same blank spot that is held open by the nothingness of the situation. *Krazy Kat* offers the rare case of documented correlation of orthographics to orthopsychics, where diagrams clarify connections of love, death, missing letters, catalepsis, automatism, and repetition of contronymic/palindromic desire. Salt is not just a food seasoning. It has been used by many cultures to prepare and preserve corpses, emphasizing the role of desiccation in the interval between literal death and Symbolic death. Lacan, who called this “between the two deaths,” saw it as a revelation of the essence of the Symbolic, and popular culture connections of this interval to the death dream (a story imagined in the last few seconds of life), the quest, travel adventure, or the hero who saves civilization offer a broad field of comparative studies. In a sense, desiccation amounts to a continuous ground for experimental extension of psychoanalysis to the arts and popular culture. As in the case of *Krazy Kat*, the clear program of orthopsychics formally displayed as orthographics, also provides evidence of palindromics, lipograms (literally missing letters), and the comedy of lack/excess overlaps evidences the crystalline connections binding these themes into a single “orthology” that, as the S2 of the Master’s Discourse, works through the binding forces of S1s that, as “empty places,” create a jewel that is adamic and fully transparent. We create the Golem to guide us, the mud/clay living agency that carries a message without understanding its meaning. Or, rather, the Golem guides us — and whatever guides us is in effect a Golem — into *misunderstanding* the message, *so as to speed it on its way*. Zip. Pow.

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<sup>12</sup> Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra and Ulick Ralph Burke, *Spanish Salt : A Collection of All the Proverbs which Are to be Found in Don Quixote* (Norwood, PA: Norwood Editions, 1978). See also Ernest Jones, “The Symbolic Significance of Salt,” Chapter 2 in *Essays in Applied Psychoanalysis 2, Essays in Folklore, Anthropology and Religion*, The International Psycho-Analytical Library 41, ed. Ernest Jones (London: The Hogarth Press, 1951).



## 5 / Misunderstanding



Figure 1. *The Mérode Altarpiece*, attributed to the workshop of Robert Campin, c. 1427–32. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Wikipedia Commons. Try to imagine this painting without the middle panel, with only the patrons on the left and Mary’s carpenter–husband on the right.

*C’est par le malentendu universel que tout le monde s’accorde. Car si, par malheur, on se comprenait, on ne pourrait jamais s’accorder.*

— Charles Baudelaire, *Œuvres posthumes*

Alenka Zupančič’s description of a “perspective of perspectives” that is not a “meta-perspective” in the spirit of Lacan’s warning, that there can be no meta-language. The analogy is that of a triptych, a painting in three parts, although in this case we have two parts and a missing middle. In some paintings, the left and right panels show two groups of spectators in the

process of witnessing a central, important scene — a miracle, tragedy, or historical event. Often, especially if the painting was commissioned, the paying patrons are shown as if they occupied the same space/time as the central event. This is almost always an anachronistic fiction. By paying for the central panel, they have connected their appreciation, reverence, and/or devotion into a synchrony, a time slice that bargains its contradictions into two sets of hinges.

We have viewers or views on the left, viewers or views on the right, but in the middle is a scene that can be viewed orthographically only by us, the audience of the painting, which cuts a fourth-wall section into the event to allow our “orthographic eye” access to every nook and cranny.<sup>1</sup> Although our perspective is perspectival, it stands apart from the left view and right view appended as psychological and historical companions to the middle. Our view presumes a point of view and is often structured by a vanishing point or two, but the principle of looking is different. We are “out of time” and “out of space” in a way that distances us from perspective’s presumed immediacies. Ours is not a snapshot but a penetration of parallel rays into the True of the scene, where perspective is required to give back what it has hidden behind its profiles, edges, and horizons. The chiralistic witnesses painted on the left and right panels do not have this advantage. Sometimes, like Joseph in Campin’s *Mérode Altarpiece*, they may not be looking at all, or only looking through time, retrospectively.

The Altarpiece seems to be ordered by correctly calculated lines controlled around a vanishing point, but the high point of view and the circular table and spherical teapot unsettle the scene. The towel on the rack on the back wall pokes out at a slight angle, but the towel itself hangs at an odd angle, and its shadow

<sup>1</sup> The term “orthographic eye” has been introduced and elaborated by Paul Emmons, “Phenomenology and the Architect’s Orthographic Eye,” in Roger Conah, ed., *A Carefully Folded Ham Sandwich* (Montreal: F&D Design House, 2013). It is apparent that Joan Copjec’s and Gaston Bachelard’s “orthopsychic” is the cerebral companion of the graphic, artistic, and staging practices in multiple arts, where visual content is related to the rectangular frame with the intent to emphasize the role of identity, inspection, and authority. See also Joan Copjec, “The Orthopsychic 1 Subject: Film Theory and the Reception of Lacan,” *October* 49 (Summer 1989): 53–71.

seems to be a different species than that cast by the shutters. And, a scene of clearly delineated mortality is not just a little provoked by the presence of an angelic being with its flotsam of Holy Spirit coming in at the window, presumably the Effective Cause that, on account of Mary's devotion to reading (she doesn't even bother to look up the acknowledge that a fantastic being shares her space), goes ear-wise into a womb that, as *host*, is both hospitable and hostile to the intrusion. At the same time, time in the scene seems suspended by several details. Has the candle on the table whose smoke indicates its flame has just



Figure 2. Antonello da Messina, *St. Jerome in His Study*, c. 1460–1475. National Gallery, London. This small painting is effectively a triptych, with stand-alone side views, the left showing a populated cityscape, the right a desert. The part of the painting corresponding to the central panel is orthographically specified as a “God’s-eye view,” its fourth wall populated by symbols forbidding entry to all those who have failed to master the mystery password, “translation.”

extinguished been taken from the mantelpiece's right bracket? Is Mary's head really at the level of the table top, as it might be considering she is sitting on the foot-rest of the bench instead of the seat? Just as the vanishing point drags the scene off center, to a point on the shutter, these visual irregularities add up to a perspective that seems to contradict its idea of order. Instead of a clear capture of a scene in time corresponding to our idea of an act, we have a subtly de-centered blur.

The use of perspective to confuse the direct look rather than clarify it is even more evident in Antonello da Messina's *St. Jerome in His Study* (Fig. 2). This small painting is, effectively, a triptych like *The Mérode Altarpiece*. It has left and right spatial “wings” that function like separate panels. On the left, a window opens onto a view of a city in the distance; on the right, the window at the end of a colonnade shows a desert scene. A lion (St. Jerome's totem animal) walks out of the shadows to underscore the idea that Jerome has come out of the desert to bring a vulgate edition of the Bible that will be read in the towns.

The central panel is defined by the frame that has been identified as an *oculos Dei*, the fourth-wall by which God accesses this scene. We can share this view if we can unlock the several puzzles that prevent it from being a simple snapshot of a saint at work in his carrell.<sup>2</sup> Passing through this fourth wall is more of a trial and initiation than a simple trip down the visual line of fire. The blur here is created by the puzzle set in motion at the threshold of the portal, the golden bowl, peacock, and partridge. Penny Howell Jolly has saved us the trouble of connecting the dots. The partridge, the “odd

bird out” in this set symbolizing Mary's virginity, suggests instead promiscuity, by all of the accounts to be found in Medieval bestiaries. But, one curious fact catches our attention. The partridge's reputation for being able to be impregnated by the wind is the link to Jerome's role as translator of the Bible from multiple languages into the Latin Vulgate. This could not be imagined in any secular view of language as a “medium of conventional meanings.” Rather, Jerome would have to be not just inspired by the divine *afflatus* within the text that made it the “word of God,” but actually impregnated. His ear, like Mary's would

<sup>2</sup> Penny Howell Jolly has provided a spectacular analysis of Antonello's sophisticated puzzle-game. See *Saint Jerome, Scholar and Ascetic* (Saratoga Springs, NY: Skidmore College, 1983).

be a womb. His body would be a matrix (echoing the idea of the womb) for a “proof of the body” of the Bible’s truth and sanctity.

The triptych aspect of Antonello’s painting underscores this view of translation. Just as the middle panel serves as a perspective of perspective by resisting perspectival order, the idea of a meta-language is exchanged for one of a reversed language, where a single effect — i. e. the partridge — is given multiple causes: its Medieval reputation, its scandalous promiscuity, its function as key and password. In other words, the password *is* the password *literally* — *the word of passage, of sheer movement; the act of typing “password” into the blank window that asks for a password.*

The situation of Antonello’s *St. Jerome* is that the triptych’s middle panel is a gate to the nowhere of translating Originality rather than just originals. It blurs the distinction between represented and representer, viewer and viewed. The answer is the riddle, and the riddle is the answer. Who better than St. Jerome to answer the question posed by the Annunciation in general, namely, how virginity is preserved in the face of the most cosmic copulation imaginable. Jerome wrote extensively on the perpetual virginity of Mary as well as material carnality of nuns’ marriage to Christ, which he believed to be far from “merely symbolic.”

The painting works like a triptych in depth as well as laterally. The main content of the painting occupies the visual middle; the windows at the rear formally present two contrasting scenes, and the ledge of the *oculos Dei*, confirming the logic of the windows of many cultures that guard against demonic penetration, filter and purify the *demon* that, in entering into Jerome’s space, will impregnate the saint at his lectern. This fourth wall echoes the function of the window in Campin’s *Mérode Altarpiece*, where the wind of the divine *afflatus* has caused the candle to blow out. The shadow of light from this opening has marked a clear edge dividing symbols of good and evil, the cat and dirty towel. At the edge is the flower of birth, the carnation. “Word made flesh” is half of the palindrome that Jesus will bring to full term in his flesh that makes Word, and his life will be characterized by the number forty, the number of weeks of pregnancy’s full term but also a purifying interval, a “quarantine.” Forty is the number of filters preserving the holy: nights in the desert (Jesus), days spent with God (Moses), days and nights of rain (Noah), and of course days of Lent. In Islam, Masih ad-Dajjal, the “anti-Christ,” journeys around earth spreading discontent forty years; the Prophet has his revelation when he is forty.

Numerology is not the point, however. The filtration of the fourth wall aims at the “first wall” lying directly in front of it. While the second and third walls on the left and right show perspectival depth, the fourth is reached by the parallel rays of the orthogonal section, because their content, thanks to the filtering process, has been made accessible and intimate to the viewer who learns the code of passage. This closeness does not diminish with depth, as do the scenes to the left and right in the *Mérode Altarpiece*. Their chiralistic depth identifies them as foreground and background, both in the sense that (1) viewers will continue to occupy the future of the painting while (2) the “supporting actors” of the main scene occupy the past. Foreground and background rotate to left and right to make a triptych whose past and present flank a middle whose eternity compares to Mary’s virginity. This is not an expansion of a temporal present but a “now” perpetually embedded as an event without causal determination, i. e. a “miracle.” In it, past, present, and future are merged into a merism of contrasting parts pointing in opposite directions. In the future anterior, for example, the present is the occasion for giving birth to a future that is simultaneously a retroactive realization of a past. But, in general, the subjunctive mood’s conditionality

extends this logic to any point in time that moves in two directions at the same time. “God save the king” confers a future blessing from a hoped-for basis.

The fourth wall’s orthographics/orthopsychics returns us to the logic of Lacan’s Master’s Discourse, where the divided subject occupies the position of truth. The bar divides the S, just as the picture plane cuts off observing from the observed. The bar is the filter, the test, the initiation into the mystery of the back wall. This test is the master signifier that is the “nothing” emptied out by its contronymic structure. Empty itself, it is capable of ordering everything that can be contained. Krazy Kat’s head-bonk is just such a master signifier, whose orthographic relation between love and pain constitutes a test and ritual passage. It’s not just the basis for countless readers’ misunderstanding of the strip, it *itself* is a monograph of misunderstanding that is simultaneously a paleo-palindrome correlated to a primal event where the relation of message (love) to medium (brick) was co-determinate, not coincidental. Krazy, the hero, passively submits to suffering and cues us up to the metrical precision of melancholy, the humor that dominates travel. The hero leaves home — thus the theme of lack initiates travel narratives in all cultures. What results of this travel is always the excess of the trial; the places of exaggeration; spatial, temporal, and bodily enlargement. The monsters the passive hero willingly confronts, as in Odysseus’s experimental visit to the Cyclops, materialize the riddle as an excess — “too much information” — because it lacks a master signifier.

Vico’s master signifier (and the element of his new science that most closely corresponds to Lacan’s idea of ordered discourses) is the “imaginative universal” that allows the first humans to project their own wild natures onto the sky when thunder overpowers them. There is a triptych here. The imaginative universal cuts off the observer from the observed, who for the first time is in a position of lack — misunderstanding — in relation to a nature endowed with human emotions and intentionalities but with superpowers of divine beings. The “before” of the human observer has been occulted into a zone “behind” appearances. But, as in the case of the triptych, before and behind rotate to the wings — perspectival contingencies that frame the orthographic — auspicious and truth-revealing — presentations of nature that will become the basis of the first human science, divination. The wings of the imaginative universal’s triptych are left and right figuratively. Generally, they are the contexts by which nature uses appearance to mask the Real, and divination practices traditionally wagered on the presence of chiralistic symmetries and palindromes in their sciences of interpretation. This in essence is the comedy of combining lack (the puzzle) with excess (the riddle’s already-always possession of the answer). Thus, the Sphinx guarding Thebes is a monster whose riddle is a monster — four legs at morning, two at mid-day, three in the evening — combined in the meristic, “man” in his three ages.

Vico’s first humans invent the master signifier through an immediate realization of lack. Nature has something to say to them but they don’t know what it is. The riddle of appearance is, in its symmetries, an excess. The human comedy is literally so: a convergence of lack and excess that in secular life is forbidden. Just as the rich, in their excess, prefer to live at some distance from the poor, in their lack; just as Penia desires Poros; just as desire itself wants excess and Krazy wants ever more bricks; lack will not be satisfied “all at once” but through a temporality that will build silently and emerge suddenly. Those who get answers from oracles do not understand the pronouncements at first. They move on in belief that they the verdict has justified their confidence in the future until the moment when the real truth becomes evident — all too evident — in a moment of retroactive clarity. This is Vico’s curse of the “ideal eternal history.” It will be

misunderstood until a second universal is discovered that shows, retroactively, how the first was a falsehood (mythic thought) that nonetheless produced the public benefits of laws, skills (*technē*), institutions, and customs that softened the first human wild natures into benevolent civilizations where rights were gradually extended to all. This would have not happened had culture evolved rationally. Only with a principle that was itself empty (i. e. an eigenform) could *all* human things submit to a single, evolutionary design. In the principle of exaptation, the idea of a reservoir of cancelled/occulted traits and factors that, in cancelling preserves them, is used to explain evolution's sudden leaps forward. Vico applies the same principle of occultation with his empty universal, a lack that induces lack, an excess that conserves its energy in anticipation of sudden, revolutionary release.

Is this understanding of Vico's theory of myth/culture/history possible without the glaring anachronism of imagining that Vico was an avid follower of Lacan? Like the dancers unknowingly stepping to the hip bounces of "Uptown Funk," Vico seems to be the philosopher dancing to a tune he hasn't heard yet; who knows too much, and doesn't know that he knows, i. e. a kenotic thinker. How would one proceed to make this uncanny if not absurd case? There are no legal precedents, so counsel might advise a close look at Lacan's master signifier, S1, in its special role as Agent in the Master's Discourse, to assert a 2-d palindromic relation between the two counter-rotational cycles Lacan uses to generate four "medians," Master, Hysteric, Analysis, and University. Lacan claimed that there can be more than just these four, as if to say that the meteorologist's wind-rose has as many divisions between the basic north, south, east, and west as human language devises. But, the canonical four click-stop into position thanks to the correlation between the four fields, Agent/Truth → Other/Production, and the fixed series of four "players" that rotate against them, master signifier (S1), knowledge systems (S2), the element Lacan wished to "leave blank," *a* (*objet petit a*, the "object-cause of desire") and the barred or divided subject, \$. When S1, the master signifier, takes up the position of Agent, there is a glow that doesn't happen in the other discourses. Something is in synch. Something anticipates the necessity and fixed *sequencing* of the other discourses.

This something, I would argue, would be difficult to spot and even more difficult to explain without Vico's own master signifier, the imaginative universal. With its coordinated transpositions of agencies, objects and subjects, figures and grounds, lacks and excesses, it specifies just how a 2-d palindrome could coordinate the complex relationships that go into each *matheme*. Lacan's two circles hold together because of horizontal exchanges between Agent/Truth and Other/Production and vertical exchanges on either side. Circularity, verticality, and horizontality establish stability thanks to the general emptiness of the master signifier and, by extension, the Master's Discourse in the same way Vico's new science of humanity proceeds from the imaginative universal's fundamental and radical void. With no content and only transpositions, this nothing can produce anything, everything. The limitlessness is a product of strictly limited internal symmetries.

If, however, we considered either Vico's imaginative universal or Lacan's discourse machine as models of power or knowledge, we would be missing the point. Alexandre Kojève was a Russian-born French philosopher and statesman whose lectures on Hegel influenced a core group of French intellectuals, including Raymond Queneau, Roger Callois, Michel Leiris, Georges Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and of course Jacques Lacan.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the most revolutionary point of this revolutionary seminar was Kojève's presentation of Hegel's parable of the Master and Servant. While seemingly masters

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<sup>3</sup> Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).

are masters primarily because they possess wealth and power and assert the right to do so against the claims of others, Kojève shifted the center of this idea slightly but significantly. The move from possession to the *claim of the right* to possession is significant. This involves the master's perception of prestige — his standing in relation to other masters. This claim is what makes the Master's claim a primary — *the* primary — form of discourse.

Hegel argued that humans seek satisfaction through material possessions and the mastery over those possessions, but that they will never be satisfied past the point where such desires are realized to be desired by all. The move from personal to collective, private to public, is a move that reifies both poles, as if to say that the “from” and “to” did not exist before the movement. With the move, the desire for recognition replaces the desire for mastery or, rather, mastery is “rewritten” in the form of a desire for recognition. While this desire is by extension a willingness to fight to the death to secure recognition from others, it is even more fundamentally a symbolic quest. Recognition is a binary; one must win at the cost of another's losing. But, it is not a simple binary, due to the fact that recognition is primarily carried out through an exchange of signifiers in what could be called a “field of symbols” even when physical warfare breaks out. The master's binary, a struggle with other masters, is overlaid with his relation to the Servant, who decides to opt out of the struggle and, in addition to taking on a more intimate working relation to the physical goods masters wish to control in their desire for satisfaction, occupy the even more important symbolic relation to the master, a subjugated *sub*-ject who has substituted the desire of the Other, the Master, for his/her own.

The willingness to sacrifice one's bodily life for what is basically a symbolic project, Kojève argued, becomes the mark of the “full human being,” a mark that the servant can never acquire and must, from the beginning, forswear. This high standard, needless to say, cannot be met by the majority of would-be subjects whose subjectivity must be regarded as a perpetually failed project. The fully subjective subject, in the context of the need to fight to the death, is the “hero,” and it is not surprising that the Greek word ἥρωϛ originally was used to designate, simply, a dead man. Living heroes of myth and (Homeric) legend retained their special relation to death in their reputed ability to visit Hades and return, the theme of the “katabasis” or descent. This allowed the hero to absorb the life-or-death binary of subjectivity without submitting to the logical self-contradicting mandate, “do or die.” As Lacan would later exemplify in the anecdote about the robber who demands of his victim “Your money or your life!” (you cannot enjoy possessing your money if you are dead), the irony of full subjectivity is that this forced choice must be absorbed within an ideology where the irony is reworked as a topological version of the Möbius band or Klein bottle. Subjectivity's impossible requirement of mastery produces two positions, Master and Servant, but *both* masters and servants are subjugated to the same “irrational” signifier, the demand to fight to the death in order to enjoy full subjectivity. The logical consequences of the demand for recognition would, extended to its end, result in a single master left standing with no other masters to supply this recognition. Servants, in their abdication of full subjectivity's death requirement, cannot replace this loss; instead, they *supplement* the loss. And, since the loss is entirely symbolic and conjectural, the supplement is written in the subjunctive tense, a fiction for a fiction.

The effect of irony in the relations of masters to other masters and to servants/slaves is that all who would be subjects will fail, in that there will always be a master *of* masters, and that each master will be a servant to that higher master, until the tip of the pyramid of mastery is reached, only to reveal — an empty

signifier! In the example of Medieval hierarchical society, for example, the flesh-and-blood king is never fully the king; he fills the position in the same way the mortal body offers a home to an eternal spirit. Kingship's body is the mortal king, while actual kingship is embodied by the crown, which is simultaneously physical and symbolic. If the mortal king should lose the crown in some literal act of carelessness, his authority would immediately be thrown into question. Thus, kingship was from the beginning a matter of the "king's two bodies," the well-being of one that, we might say, was the duty of physicians to maintain, the other the entirely symbolic but *no less material* body of "the kingship itself."

This paradoxical splitting of subjectivity is Lacan's \$, the bar that "obliges" the subject and at the same time points the subject in two independent but non-competing directions. The S is thus "bonded" and "divided" — and *bound* by the *division* that is constitutive and originary of subjectivity. This bar is a complex mark. It splits space, time, and identity; yet, its cut is like the cut of a Möbius band. It only seems to effect a clear distinction between the two sides of the band. In reality, it has only *postponed* the realization that the two sides are the same, a realization that will be made *in the circuit* of the surface, in a 1:1 mapping of travel with the medium of travel.

The two bodies of the subject are evident in the slightly out-of-synch symmetry of Master and Servant. As Kojève argued, the master fights but does not work, and the servant works but does not fight. This arrangement allows the master to enjoy his superiority over nature (because the servant has done the work to make nature available in the forms the master can enjoy) while he *dis-enjoys* his obligation to fight to the death to protect his Name. I write "name" with a capital 'N' to note that mastery and affiliation (literally, "son-and-fatherhood") work around the death-risk requirement by allowing the son to take on the prestige and honor the father has died for. Even when death occurs from natural causes, honor is "passed down" from father to son or (to de-gender this slightly), to another One willing to die from the One who has actually died. The Name takes on the complexity of this transaction and is what, Lacan observed, is what makes a narrow plot of ground containing physical remains worthy of the prestige of being a grave.

The binary of the subject is non-linear.<sup>4</sup> There is not just the mastery mode and the servant mode. All masters are in some sense servants; and servants, as Hegel pointed out, are superior to their masters in that they are the only ones who have truly mastered the nature that they serve up to the master for his enjoyment. "Mastery," rather than "masters," is the real issue, for mastery is fully possessed only by the *signifier* at the top of the *heap* created by the master's willingness to die for a symbolic state — recognition. And, this signifier, although it is the "rule of rulers," is profoundly and by definition empty. This, Lacan must have realized, is a misreading of Hegel, who stops short of the fully binary subject by specifying that, once history is set in motion, there will in the end be only masters *or* servants; and that when there are no longer masters *and* servants, history will come to an end. Lacan's \$ suggests that all subject, to *be* subjects, are by definition *failed subjects*; subjectivity — embodied by the Freudian ego, the *Ich*, which Lacan splits into the French pronouns *je* and *moi* — is a project rather than a state of being, and a failing project at that. This is represented by the subject's desire, which is always compelled by a cause that cannot find an effect.

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<sup>4</sup> In this sense, the project of the subject is not one of "understanding" but rather taking into account the radical "misunderstanding" that arises from discourse. See Bruce Fink, "Against Understanding: Why Understanding Should Not Be Viewed as an Essential Aim of Psychoanalytical Treatment," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 58, 2 (2010): 259–85.

We desire an object, but once we possess it, we no longer have that which we *truly* enjoyed, that is, desire *itself*. True and sustainable desire is desire for something we lost but never actually possessed; so recovery can never happen.

The Lacanian motto, “Love is giving what you don’t have to someone who doesn’t want it” restates desire’s conundrum into a substitute for the more common model of love as mastery, and we can reverse-engineer this double negative to understand desire in general. “Giving what you don’t have” is already a double negative. If you don’t have something you can’t give it to someone else, but love requires precisely that. The lack itself can be transferred, and if this were not true, as Shakespeare observed, then “I never writ, nor no man ever lov’d.”<sup>5</sup> The non-linearity of the subject’s binary of mastery and enslavement is graphically accommodated by the orthogonal relationship between two vectors or axes that allow elements to vary in one register without affecting the value of the other. A negation of one becomes the efficient cause of the other’s progress; negation implied by the master signifier and its emptiness is the first cause of all else, which is allowed its self-contradictions thanks to the rule that is “not a rule,” the master signifier. Lovers can love and writers can write as long as the master signifier’s primary contradiction is in place at the top of the pile of signifiers that are, subsequently, simultaneously bound and liberated. This simultaneity in fact was behind Lacan’s motive for formalizing the four discourses at the time of the 1968 student uprising in Paris. The students had, Lacan pointed out, sought to “reject the masters” while, all along, they were seeking new masters. Their calls for emancipation were nothing more than voluntary subjugation to new forms of enslavement. Lacan could not have articulated this critique unless he had been in full possession of the purest version of Hegel’s idea of the master and servant, distilled and thrice-filtered by Kojève. Only by understanding the nature of the master signifier as the *symbolic substitute* for the pledge to fight to the death can masters and servants be assimilated within a universal, composite idea of the human subject. In other words, Hegel’s idea of masters here and servants there was and is “pictorial.” It is a convenient way of providing captions to our everyday experiences of those who give orders and those who follow them. But, the categories that separate hierarchies of rulers and the ruled turn out to “leak all over the place.” In the best of times, masters rose only to fall (the tragic “arc” that was made into a motif by Chaucer). Servants have never in any age been willing to give up their bag of tricks, by which they “master the masters,” and in primary texts about master-servant relations such as *Don Quixote*, the servant takes the master’s place with unexpectedly positive results. Nor can we forget such ancient traditions as the Saturnalia, where masters served their servants, or made one of them king or bishop for a day.

In other words, subjectivity’s collective is not within individual subjects but is, like the Freudian-Lacanian unconscious, “out there,” in the material objects, facts, and transactions that are not “externalizations” of inner, subjective intentions, thoughts, and desires but in fact the extensive “machine” producing intentions, thoughts, and desires for subjects who have been anesthetized into ideal spectators of their own intimacy, which, turned inside-out, now appears from a point where before a literal “nothing”

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<sup>5</sup> Shakespeare’s demonstration of the double negative of love is perhaps the most misunderstood “statement” about love in the history of poetry. In Sonnet 116, the main argument is a series of “truths” about love that can be easily disproved: the love that doesn’t change when it finds change or is never shaken by tempests doesn’t exist, but it is *imagined* to exist by all lovers, as a precondition to the very possibility of love. Possibility at a minimum but expectation at a maximum tie love’s ribbon together with a twist that Shakespeare forces us to admit in his last line, pulling poetry as well as love into the subjunctive formula of impossibility. Of course Shakespeare wrote and lovers loved, but this was thanks to the effectiveness and durability of the empty master signifier, “love itself,” whose “not not” ties the knot so tightly that every other exchange is subordinate to this fundamental mistake.

had been. This nothing is on the far wall, the one parallel to the picture plane that cuts a fourth wall into a space where “we have no business being,” i. e. the space of all art that empowers the audience’s voyeurism by making it “orthogonal” and “orthopsychic” to that far wall and its points of nothingness. And, as the triptych teaches us, we can even picture ourselves in this orthopsychism, in the chiralistic symmetry of being attentive, or, as Joseph is depicted in the *Mérode Altarpiece*, inattentive and (necessarily) indifferent.

Indifference should not be read pejoratively, as “uncaring” or “ignorant,” but instead in the Kantian manner of a supplement that, instead of adding something, allows for the complete independence and freedom of its context, if it is an object, or its object, if it is a context. Joseph’s supplementation of the Annunciation is maintained theologically. He is neither the father of Jesus nor the husband scandalized by his wife’s pregnancy despite their lack of conjugal relations. His neutrality offends modern sensibilities and would not stand the test of couples counseling. Yet, it is key to the nature of the miracle of the virgin birth, in that without disarming Joseph’s concern and potential outrage Jesus’s conception, birth, and childhood could never have happened. Joseph’s indifference was “pre-Boolean” in the same way that the eigenform and master signifier are both inside and outside of the system that they bring into being. In a profound sense, it is Joseph’s indifference rather than the Holy Spirit that impregnates Mary, in the sense that without it the “impossible” would never have become “actual,” to say nothing of “necessary.”

Indifference is a lack, and in this is symmetrical to the “excess” of the presence of the observer that must be suppressed in normal theatrical set-ups. In the triptych, however, we are shown this excess. The patrons who have paid for the painting get to be memorialized by appearing to be witnesses to the event represented by the work they have commissioned at the same time they are witnesses to the physical work itself. They have been the masters, the painter has been the servant. Yet, the servant has made the masters appear, as an excess, in a panel symmetrical to the “lack” panel hinged on the opposite side. The co-appearance of lack and excess is, in Lacanian terms, the basis of a funny situation, and by “funny” we recall that the essence of Hegelian humor is the *Witz*, the joke whose punch-line is metaleptically contained in the opening premise. The wife at her dying husband’s bedside asks him for his last wishes, and when he asks her to marry his chief rival, she brings this up only to get a confirmation that reveals the hidden truth, that their marriage was not the success she thought it to be. Or, a presupposition hidden by a catachresis, “Why do people take an *instant dislike* to me?” (one of Mel Brooks’ favorite jokes) is revealed by exposing the literal basis: “Saves time.” Metalepsis instantly restores what delay had forestalled, and thereby reveals negation’s function of — or rather talent for — collecting, preserving, and ordering. In other words, negation (one half of the subject’s divided nature) preserves, in a gradual and time-extended way, a “treasury of signifiers” that have been thrown out, rejected, dismissed, sub-jected. They are, in the projects of mastery, the servants who, in giving up their own will in place of the master’s will, have become shadows.

Destined to echo form with a profile based on the subtraction of a dimension, from 3-d to 2-d, the shadow is also required to follow, *to be attached* to its generator, the heroic master. But, most cultures allow for a miraculous detachment of shadow servants from their 3-d masters; or, more common, the servant role can be reversed; things done *to* the shadow are transferred to the master, such as stabbing or otherwise defiling the shadow. Detachment and reversing the signifying chain, like the Saturnalia’s switch of rulers and ruled, add, to comedy’s formula of a lack/excess overlap, the complementarity of delay and suddenness. What has been conserved slowly and held in negative reserve will be “liberated” in the



Figure 3. The *dipintura* or frontispiece of *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, 1744 edition. Vico claims to have quickly invented and produced this image to fill pages left blank after he was persuaded to not go through with plans to insert a scathing account of Carlo Lodoli's retraction of promised funding. While it's plausible that this substitution was in the best interests of Vico's reputation, it may be a case of the Italian saying, *Si non é vero, é ben trovato* — if not entirely true, then its at least convenient and useful. The *dipintura* allowed Vico to present his work in synecdoche, the center of a labyrinth that would spiral outward through fixed meridians, ideas that in repetition would collect and accrue. See Appendix B.

imagined in a black comedy, where the irony of being isolated as a genius extended even to the isolation of his corpse, as if to say “even death didn't make a difference” — a genius, to be a genius, is by definition solitary. He can never be assimilated into a group, either in terms of “thinking like others” or cultivating followers of a cult who deceive themselves by believing that wisdom is just a matter of “thinking true things.” Vico's advice, given directly and in no uncertain terms in *The New Science*, was that the reader of

immediacy of an act that will be simultaneously intimate and objective — in effect, “extimate,” as Lacan would later pose in his neologism, *extimité*. Delay and suddenness are the siblings of the sorites, the “grains of sand” or “hairs of the head” that in falling gradually put, into an accumulation of potential energy, negation into a productive mode, to be expended in a future that will simultaneously and retroactively recall the truth of the treasury and a complete account of its historical structure.

Vico would not simply give his imaginative universal this soresitic power, he linked the first universal of myth to the “final universal” by which scholars would eventually unlock myth's secret. This “scholarly universal” was symmetrical to the first “imaginative” one, yet it would involve the same positive deployments of negation. Vico parodied this negation in the personal terms of his life as a “failed academic,” i. e. always a servant, never a master. His mastery would accumulate by being rejected — the jobs he failed to get, the publications that were not well received, the rivals who would be rewarded when he would be passed over. Vico's dramatization of his personal failures builds an ironic and at times comic account of how the thinking subject can achieve its highest and most difficult accomplishment — an understanding of its own construction. The fact that Vico's “comedy construct” extended beyond his death amounts either to good luck or exceptional foresight. When Vico's body lay dead in his garret apartment, two groups showed up to claim rights to burial formalities, a Catholic sodality and colleagues from the University of Naples. In a “continuation” to Vico's *Autobiography*, the Marquis of Villarosa dryly recounts that the two groups fought over Vico's coffin on the steep stairway, leaving the argument unresolved and abandoning the coffin in the courtyard.<sup>6</sup> This grim story would require our tears if it were not for the comic set-up Vico established in recounting his incredibly bad luck as a “genius unappreciated in his own age.” The funeral scene could easily be

<sup>6</sup> Carlantonio da Rosa, Marquis of Villarosa, “Continuation by Villarosa, 1818,” in Giambattista Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Max Harold Fisch and Thomas Goddard Bergin (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995).



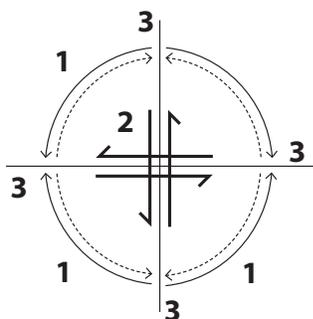
Figure 4. Francisco Goya, “The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters,” 1799. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The inscription on the plinth shown in this engraving seems to be a warning against relaxing reason’s disciplinary protocols, but it can also be read in reverse, as advice about how to produce monsters, i. e. how to “negate the negation” that the monster embodies in a “paratactic” combination of disparate parts into a single whole.

his work had to become the writer as well. The reader-as-writer was required to re-narrate the formula of the “ideal eternal history” (the necessary sequencing of the human subject’s “gene”) without allowing him/herself the luxury of “knowing it” as a fact. This admission of *The New Science*’s kenotic essence — you can never “know” it, you always must *do* it — is presented directly, as a “proof of the body” that comes with its own form of pleasure, a Vichian version of Lacanian *jouissance*, a comic *jouissance* that, in combining lack with excess, produces the same overlap as the metaleptic joke, where soretic delay suddenly produces an epiphany, a “punch-line” in the highest philosophical and poetic sense.

Vico’s (apparently) carefully laid plan reveals his project’s status as a triptych. Its lacks were abundantly displayed. His works, like his thoughts, were in disarray.<sup>7</sup> Vico’s account of the “dipintura,” a complex image invented quickly and inserted “at the last minute” when funding for the second edition of *The New Science* fell through and left pages blank when Vico was persuaded to retract his condemning account of his donor’s perfidy, has the air of a joke about it (Fig. 3). Did Vico really not think about such a complex image and its equally dense commentary until Carlo Lodoli, the architect-monk who ran a scandalous “academy” to recruit good-looking Venetian youth (he was a notorious pederast), suddenly withheld promised funds? Would Vico have realized that “the story would have come out anyway” and that the serendipity of the last-minute insertion could only amplify his reputation as a genius able to come up with a *tour-de-force* at a moment’s notice? The coincidence of having exactly the number of blank pages needed for the *dipintura* and its commentary seems a bit far-fetched. The theme of misunderstanding stretches our credulity to the extreme. We have a case of, past this point, being forced into a “willing suspension of disbelief,” the Coleridgean initiation into what

later will refuse to allow us to separate fact and fiction. *The New Science* will find, in this efficient cause, justification for proceeding always with a scent of the tall tale in the background, its truths only for “those who have ears willing to hear, and eyes willing to see” — but, as all servants must, the readers must give their will over to the master, Vico, who will allow us to enjoy only by making it possible for him to “enjoy us.” This will be the pleasure that begins the moment we walk into Vico’s memory palace, to serve rather than be served. Our voluntary catalepsis will induce the sleep necessary to the dream that is the only modality by which *The New Science* can be narrated by and within those who attend it as readers. “The sleep of reason” indeed “creates monsters.” The monstrosity of course is the necessary extimation of our own subjective monstrosity, our incongruent merger or rather yoking-together of slave and master, interior and exterior, victory and defeat, life and death. There is no other way to put it, the subject’s failure

<sup>7</sup> Margarita Frankel, “The ‘Dipimura’ and the Structure of Vico’s *New Science* as a Mirror of the World,” in *Vico: Past and Present*, ed. by Giorgio Tagliacozzo (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1981).



1. fixed self-reversing concentric sequences
2. horizontal and vertical palindromes
3. centralizing/stabilizing meridians

Figure 5. The three components of polysymmetry that are demonstrated in Lacan's theory of discourse and Vico's imaginative universal (and corresponding scholar's universal). The primary motion of two circles moving "against each other" designates meridians that quadrature the space and, at the same time, establish "vertical" and "horizontal" relations between the zones and the elements occupying the zones.

to be a subject is the problem embedded within the Socratic demand to "know thyself." Such a knowledge can never be possessed, but it can be re-enacted, *demonstrated*.

Returning to Lacan's *matheme* of the Master's Discourse, we now know why we cannot "know" what mastery is, when to succeed we have to fail to succeed, when to know we have to fail to know, and if we know, not know that we know. Kenosis is tied up with this "first discourse" in the same way that the sayings of key passages in the Nag Hammadi manuscripts known as the *Dead Sea Scrolls* articulate a series of contronymic demands.<sup>8</sup> "For I am knowledge and ignorance. / I am shame and boldness. / I am shameless; I am ashamed. / I am strength and I am fear. / I am war and peace." This sleep of reason can be staged only through palindromes that *move* in opposite directions in simultaneously vertical, horizontal, central, and circular senses. That is, *within* the text, *between* the text's production and its reception, *inside* the anomalies that appear as voids within the surface of the work, and *outside* the work, circling it not in one direction but two directions *at the same time*,  $+/-$  and  $-/+$ . This of course is precisely the symmetry of Lacan's *mathemes*, for which we may regard the Master's Discourse as both caption and prolegomena. And, of course, this is the same as Vico's *dipintura*, a *tour-de-force* demonstration of the genius required to write and read *The New Science*, also a caption and prolegomena. The within/between and inside/outside polysymmetry of palindromes make the work into a triptych of orthographic/orthopsychic display "ourselves seeing ourselves seeing ourselves."

The geometry of this "polysymmetry of palindromes" is not complex (Fig. 5). Two components related to quadrature are necessitated by the self-reversing circular movement that rotates elements across a field. For Lacan, these elements are the S1, S2, *a*, and \$ of the master signifier, signifying chains, *objet petit a*, and barred/divided subject. For Vico, the imaginative universal quadrates space horizontally in its collectivity (subjects realize themselves as humans "in the same boat" of lack), vertically in its attribution of an excess to natural phenomena, and in effect requiring palindromic exchanges first formalized in the primitive practices of divination. In the mythic thinking associated with this first "science," divisions between day and night are reified as the cardinal points of east and west, associated with birth and death. The idea of meridians however find its paradigm in the singularities of zenith and nadir, the Empyrean realm and Hades and could be compared to the antipodal travels of Castor and Pollux, the Gemini, who take turns living and dying.

Correspondingly, the horizontality of the collective *versus* a verticality associated with authority constitute an "anaphoric" and "deictic" orthography. As in the case of anaphoric pronouns (those that relate parts within an utterance) and deictic pronouns (those representing the "you" and "me" of discourse

<sup>8</sup> "The Thunder, Perfect Mind," trans. George W. MacRae, *The Nag Hammadi Library*, The Gnostic Society Library. Accessed March 2018: <http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/thunder.html>

symbolically occupying the spaces in front of and behind the anaphoric space), these orthographic exchanges require a cycle allowing combinations of the four possible combinations, A1/D1, A1/D2, A2/D1, and A2/D2. That Lacan would find Agency in A1/D1 (the first of an anaphoric pair combined with an in-to-out “expressive” motion), thanks to the sublation of one deictic element, A1/D2, “Truth”; while reception divides a field defined by an Other directly opposite the Agent (A2/D2) built on the material foundation of A2/D1, inverse of the truth but materially necessary to it. The use of anaphoric and deictic palindromics has never before been attempted, but must be left to the reader to develop. It is sufficient to say that the three components, a central cross, two sets of horizontal and vertical exchanges, and a circulation principle allowing for simultaneous flow and back-flow demonstrates the graphic potential of what is meant by the eigenform, and what of the eigenform is taken up into Vico’s pairing of the imaginative and scholarly universal as well as into Lacan’s theory of the four discourses. This is not, it should be noted, the same as the famous “meta-systems” of the mid-twentieth century: the “metahistory” of Hayden White, the “poetic genres” of Northrop Frye, or the “World Hypotheses” of Stephen Pepper. These meta’s were easily assimilated to categories generalizing forms, motives, and actions typifying scientific, literary, or historic paradigms around the ideas of organicism, mechanism, formism, and contextualism. Palindromic symmetry creates a “meta-” of an entirely different sort. Instead of *species et differens* logic, where examples are grouped around a central idea and some examples are better than others, palindromics operates according to a principle of pure reversal. This principle can be condensed and intensified into materials, almost always with the effect, that some “everyday object” or “trivial detail of life” becomes an uncanny center around which whirls a (literally) revolutionary new order. According to Lacan’s revisions to Freud’s drives, these are points at which desire manages to extend itself “as such,” purifying itself in the face of (and because of) a primordial lack of any object that might satisfy its demands. In particular, Lacan’s addition of the gaze and (“acousmatic,” or unlocatable) voice provides the means of extrapolating the clinical definitions of the drives and their functions into the domains of folklore and culture, the arts, and most profitably popular culture. These are the “ethnographic” confirmations of psychoanalysis that Vico would have demanded and Lacan would have supplied, had the latter lived long enough or the former been born 200 years later. Ethnographic confirmation was what Freud had hoped Carl Jung would supply psychoanalysis, but Jung’s obsession with unity ran against the grain of Freud’s more complex vision of the subject.<sup>9</sup> The ethnographic as such remains an unfinished project, one that, I would argue, requires the mutual supplements Lacan and Vico might provide each other *in absentia*, their works speaking for themselves. The connection would be the ultimate in anachronisms, justifying a re-christening: orthology.

#### *Misunderstanding per se*

Pepino Ortoleva has provided an accurately targeted antidote to the standard view of misunderstanding. Normally, misunderstanding is a fault, error, failure, or dislocation occurring in a system whose aim it is to transmit, in a 1:1 fashion, something that is *sent* to someone who will *receive* it intact. The accuracy of transmission is regarded, largely, to be a technical matter.<sup>10</sup> How fat are the wires that must carry the

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<sup>9</sup> *Freud biography*

<sup>10</sup> Peppino Ortoleva, ““Misunderstanding Death: Mourning, Communication, and the Contemporary City,” *Places, Forms, and Memories of Grief in Contemporary Cities* (Conference), Ravenna and Bologna, Italy, October 25–28, 2017.

signals, and how thin can they be to afford messages of satisfactory complexity (the question that motivated Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver to develop the most popular model of communications ever).<sup>11</sup> On either side of the communications “apparatus,” the dictionary used by the sender had to match, more or less, the dictionary of the receiver. This dictionary would also have to include some way of estimating and calibrating the contexts by which the receiver knows that the sender is not joking or in a suicidal mood. The complexity of messages, including the option to employ irony, metalepsis, parody, interior framing, soliloquy, etc., plus the complication of the sender/receiver’s unequal access to the fantasies, memories, anxieties, and so on that further contextualize any simple message, means that perfect transmission is often just a distant goal. But, nonetheless, understanding is the standard by which falling short of this goal is accounted a failure.

Ortoleva has brought forward a sentiment made popular by Baudelaire: “The world only works through misunderstanding. It is by universal misunderstanding that everyone agrees. Because if, by some misfortune, we understood each other, we would never agree.”<sup>12</sup> Ortoleva expands this idea in terms of boundaries and regions: “Misunderstanding . . . in many aspects of life has a specific, and essential role: this is true in love, in which misunderstanding is a problem, often creating chains of problems, but is also a field, because much of making love revolves around borders; this is true in many negotiations, the good negotiator being in many fields of life a creator and a solver of misunderstandings. This, I contend, is true in the relations of the living ones with death.” Fields of misunderstanding are crisscrossed in precise ways, with intersections located by the algorithm provided by Montaigne: “the word spoken is half his who speaks it, half his who hears it.” The formula of two’s is interesting, because it immediately brings to mind a classic Italian comedy, *Johnny Stecchino* (Roberto Benigni, 1991). A Mafioso has gone into hiding after turning over associates’ names to the prosecuting attorney. His wife conceals him in the cellar of their Palermo mansion. While on a trip she comes across Dante, a striking double of the gangster Johnny. Immediately she realizes a plan. Feigning love for the innocent and unsuspecting bachelor who until this moment has been a bus driver for special education students, she persuades him to come live with her in Sicily. She insists on buying him a new wardrobe to match her socialite lifestyle, but in truth she supplies him with duplicates of her husband’s clothes and accessories, so that he will be taken to be the husband and, in all probability, killed by vengeful Cosa Nostra rivals.

The film progresses through a series of misunderstandings grounded in Dante’s ignorance of his resemblance to Johnny and the plot to make him a scapegoat. His lack of fear, however, seems to work as a defense, holding his rivals in awe of his brazen self-exposure. Ignorant of the real intentions of those who revile, insult, and even attempt to shoot him dead, he insists that everything is “one big misunderstanding” over such trivial matters as his theft of a bunch of bananas. The enjoyment of the film flows copiously out of the near-matches of Dante’s misunderstanding and the “truth of the situation,” as Dante uncannily produces precisely the perfect speeches and actions without knowing that others are seeing him as the gangster who has betrayed them and now boasts of his deeds.

Misunderstanding is error, but in the case of comedy error is made to curve around on itself until a new and better version of the truth is achieved. The standard of the past, impossible to reach after the

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<sup>11</sup> Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communications* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1949).

<sup>12</sup> Claude Pichois, ed. *Charles Baudelaire: Mon coeur mis à nu* (Geneva: Droz, 2001), 76.

series of errors and mistakes has burned all bridges to meaning, is retroactively seen as itself at fault. Like the project of subjectivity itself, its impossible goal has itself generated the failures that made it not just circumstantially but structurally impossible. The new standard is one that was occulted within the first. Without the errors, it would not have been discovered. A failure had to exist before the new success could be envisioned through a device that, like the *via negativa* of Cusanus, first destroys that which it would make divine. Dante's ignorance and the comic collapse of his lack onto the excess of Stecchino's villainy creates precise crossings where the uncanny coincidence of error and truth produce a wit formed by halves.

In the ancient world, ceramic tokens (*tesseræ*) were made for parting friends to break so that, on the occasion of their reunion, the broken halves could be matched. The erratic fractured edge of one half would match perfectly the equal but opposite fracture of the other. The "mistake" of absence would be magically healed with the miraculous conjunction of the two "ruined" fragments, each of which taken by itself would be simply broken. The *tesseræ* demonstrate how symmetry can exist as a stand-alone experience in the same way that misunderstanding — a "ruin of meaning" — can extimate a hidden pattern through the process of crisis and return. Since restoration (*analepsis*) always involves the memory of an earlier error, rupture, or disunity that is revealed retroactively to be the necessary basis for the discovery of an original and new solution, it seems equally true to say that anything truly new (*hapax*) is at the same time a reflection in the present of an original error, and that the immediate conditions precipitating it were negative rather than positive. Paradoxically, to be truly new, something must be simultaneously a (negative) twin of some antipodal primary (or primal) term.

This idea of a ruin of meaning, restored through symmetries (*tesseræ*), which is simultaneously a repository of errors, missed opportunities, and misunderstandings is not novel. As a method it could possibly be associated with John Cage's aleatory composition techniques, Jackson Pollack's drip paintings, or even Raymond Roussel's method of the *procédé*, where the first and last sentences of a story are connected by a fantastic web of coincidences, puns, misadventures, and of course misunderstandings. Many artists and especially writers produce what most of their audiences find to be incomprehensible but which are highly over-determined once a "code" is discovered. Often even the most astute critics fail to find this code and deny that any exists. Art historians curating a show on Jasper Johns' "numbers" paintings failed to note the obvious row and column relationships, claiming that Johns was interested only in the visual appeal of numbers as graphic signs. Yet, Johns, in other paintings (for example the "Seasons" series), makes such meticulous use of margins, repetitions, placements, within a familiar maristic series. "Seasons" provides its set of meridians across which themes circle in ways that contrapose antipodal elements. Johns, however, never talks about his work, leaving critics to argue or ignore.

But, sometimes artists leave the keys out in the open, with the idea, borrowed from Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter," that things are best hidden by treating them literally, as what they are. The expectation by those who are seeking to uncover what is hidden, is that their efforts to find will be matched by the efforts to hide. So, when the letter is left out for all to see, it is invisible to those who "look for something hidden." This display of secrets in plain air can be so effective that even when elements are put under the nose of all who would look, it is not seen. René Magritte's famous *Not to Be Reproduced* (1937) shows a young man with his back to the picture plane looking into a mirror that shows his reflection also with its back to the plane of the mirror. This is a direct depiction of the impossible-to-

depict *objet petit a*, a gap that suggests a circuit outside the domain of the representation connecting the front of the reflection to the back of the subject. The “antipodal pair” are shown in a way that emphasizes their antipodal status: the negation of reflection is itself negated.<sup>13</sup> They meet at a threshold that condenses the logic of the antipode, and to mark this Magritte paints, on a sill beneath the mirror, a French copy of Poe’s only novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*. In exhibitions of this work, catalogs fail to explain or even mention the presence or significance of this novel, although the novel, like the young man and his reflection, butterflies its chapters around the central event of a violent sea-storm and shipwreck. Like Poe’s “The Purloined Letter,” the book’s front and back sets of chapters are correlated to supplement each other. In the short story the trick is clearly presented. The letter that is hidden “out in the open” is placed in a card-rack, a phonetic palindrome (kcar-drac).<sup>14</sup>

Scholarly and critical silence seems unconsciously to respect self-maintaining palindromes, automatically renewed every time a review, exhibition, or catalog fails to notice what is obvious. Kopley’s discovery of chiasmus in “The Purloined Letter” is impressive in itself, but it’s more amazing to consider how nearly 150 years of scholarship *failed to notice* the pattern. A story that begins with “It was an odd evening” in the context of Poe’s interest in Mora, the game of odds and evens, and his obsession with the “Turing test aspect” of game theory never rang any bells. It would seem that the bigger the secret, the more exposure it can handle and still remain invisible. Once something is not noticed by those who should notice, it simply disappears.

Because chiasmus formalizes the counting that is implicit in the palindrome, it shows how misunderstanding can be extended infinitely without giving away its inner eigenform. As a linear series begins, accumulating clues point to the existence of a reverse-angle counter-story shadowing the main one. Like Montaigne’s word that divides into the half that is spoken and the half that his hears, each element has a dead twin who will come to life when his antipodal companion dies. Thus, a complex form of *counting* begins, in which the increase of each new addition is simultaneously a subtraction made from a distant number. This is the essence of metonymy, which Lacan formalized as the construction of meaning outside the chain of signifiers:  $f(S\dots S')S \cong S(-)s$ . Ed Pluth has provided a good translation: “[T]he movement from one signifier to another in the signifying chain (S...S’) is congruent to or tantamount to (S $\cong$ ) one signifier giving the effect of there being a signified somewhere, an effect that is not placed in the signifying chain but that ‘resonates’ beyond the signifying chain, indeed, beyond the signifier itself (S-s)... ‘Resonance’ is perhaps the ideal term for expressing what it is that metonymy achieves.”<sup>15</sup>

Under the spell of metonymy, the signifying chain serves as a counting device. Its sequence of elements one after another is shadowed by a “base” that is the end of one series and the beginning of another running in reverse. Poetry that follows standard metrical patterns, such as the villanelle or *terza*

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<sup>13</sup> Castor and Pollux constitute mythology’s clearest statement of antipodal twinship. The mortal Castor died in combat, but his immortal twin Pollux persuaded the gods of the underworld to allow him to return to life, under the condition that Pollux “die” while Castor returned to life for a half-year, then returned to Hades while Pollux lived. The twins thus circled around each other, their births and deaths marking the horizon between earth and Hades, and all the meridians in between. Possibly, this deal was correlated to the position of the constellation Gemini, between Taurus and Cancer. Their relationship accurately represents the “polysymmetry of palindromes,” three overlapping models of self-reversing exchanges.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Kopley, *Edgar Allan Poe and the Dupin Mysteries* (New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> Ed Pluth, *Signifiers and Acts: Freedom in Lacan’s Theory of the Subject* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), 36.

*rima*, constructs its base by giving the auditor (for all poetry is “heard” even if it is read silently) an idea of where the end will be. As the auditor listens forward, there is an echo of anticipation radiating from this base, counting backward as the auditor accrues the lines one by one. The starting and finishing point will generate a single middle crossing, but the idea of the crossing can occur at any point in the poem, just as the palindromic series, 123456789/987654321 cross literally at at the midpoint, 5, but configure their crisscross in every combination of voice and echo: 1/9, 2/8, 3/7, etc. This “portable center” can move around the poem wherever a void is created, giving any location within the poem an orthopsychic potential. Each part resonates from this twinned motion, and like the polysymmetrical pattern of the Gemini, construct “infinite spheres” with centers everywhere and circumferences nowhere.<sup>16</sup>

The movement from one signifier to another presumes a origin and end, but what if this forward linear motion is in fact curved? Ed Pluth’s reading of Lacan’s definition of metonymy suggests as much. What resonates “beyond the signifying chain” has a precise location: an antipodal “black-ops” site that cannot be reached directly but which stirs, in the signifier, a dis-ease, a fever, a fear. The metonymy has created this opposite point but the fact that it cannot recognize its own authorship occults an excess mirroring the lack of the metonymical signifier. Like the 1 that establishes its own end, 9, the count up will be also a count down. The poem’s precise meter will designate its death but also transport that death point (1/9, 2/8 ...) to any point within the poem. Similarly, the symmetry in “The Purloined Letter” will fold the text into a lambda, leaving a space for signifiers to jump, in increasingly shorter jumps, until a final hop finds the hinge–point where the text has folded, where “the letter can be found” as it emerges from the space between the two parts of the fold, invisible though open to view.

Misunderstanding offers us two golden principles. First, its necessity is not just the funny fallout of a failed communications whose ideal is a 1:1 congruence between sending and reception. While this ideal is theorized as an unreachable quarry, the metonymical “spooky correspondence” that leaps across any space or time without regard to the gap is in a sense better than 1:1. It is a 1 that *is* the 1 in that it has been split off from an original (tesseræ) just as bipeds with two arms, two ears, two eyes were thought to be split from a four-square original. The two is always the half. Chiasmus counts and re-counts. The polysymmetrical lipogram creates a lack that is simultaneously an excess that is both distant and intimate — the more distant, the more intimate. This is the meaning of Lacan’s *extimate*.

Borges’ comparison of polysymmetry to an inaccessible divine in the image of Pascal’s God as an infinite sphere inflates its magic. As the lambda design and other variations on chiasmus plainly show, with

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<sup>16</sup> Commenting on a famous metaphor from Pascal, Jorge Luis Borges (1951) elaborates: “[T]he critical edition of Tourneur (Paris, 1941), which reproduces the cancellations and the hesitations of the manuscript, reveals that Pascal started to write *effroyable*: “A frightful sphere, the center of which is everywhere, and the circumference nowhere.” The union of fright with orthogonal access to each point of space and time as if it were the center, is the Vichian idea of the thunder that so frightened the first humans that it gave them this access and made it also orthopsychic, i. e. accessible through the meticulous procedures of divination. The first human science sought to determine auguries that were certain (*il certo*), refined from the universe where fright had converted any and every point into a cross of mystery and confusion. The results of divination, *il vero*, were determinative and at first absolute, but the co-production of the true and the made meant that the severe findings of auguries could be softened into sharable laws capable of mercy as well as justice. This, in Pluth’s terms, would be the use of metaphor as an “appliance” for metonymy, *orthographics* for *orthopsychics*. Jorge Luis Borges, “Pascal’s Sphere,” *Non-Fiction Writings: Jorge Luis Borges*, Eliot Weinberger, ed.; Esther Allen; Suzanne Jill Levine, Eliot Weinberger, trans. (London : Penguin, 1999), 351–53.

or without critical recognition, metonymy's creation of resonance is something that is both useful and used. Consider how the fixed verse form allows the practical advantage of "setting a timer" that presses each hearing to anticipate a point "by the time of which" something will have happened. This employment of the future anterior and anacoluthon (completion that is also retroactive revision) creates suspense that builds gradually and is satisfied suddenly. Suspense works by lack, the release comes as an excess. This is polysymmetry's soretic and comic qualifier. The sorites works as a negative treasury, collecting and preserving what is systematically cast aside by the work's forward movement; but during this collection the pile is ordered and re-conceived. How this happens is that, with each split, the remainder retained the edge of the tessera, the fracture, that specified through absence the position and velocity if its twin. Without palindromes there can be no twins, no resonance, no suspense. The wind-up and pitch of art is the accumulation of the negative through strategic lipograms and the gap within the chain of signifiers whose moving center has specified its own distant dark twin.

This is not theory but practice. Magritte and Roussel have not been the only artists to state directly what they meant to do and how they meant to do it — statements that were, of course, either ignored or profoundly misunderstood.<sup>17</sup> But, once we enter into the world of clues that may have been unintended and secret agendas, we leave the bookshelves of history and theory and enter the *Wunderkammer* of experiment. History works with the standard aspiration of the communications model, trying to filter out noise, determine the co-dependency of contexts, and check the lexicons for inaccuracies and shifts. Experiment speculates by putting the rumor and the fact on equal footing, since for art the unconscious that is inaccessible to the individual is nonetheless pulling strings. Experiment breathes the atmosphere of the mystery story. It is buoyed by the sure knowledge that artists, writers, architects, etc. are essentially experimenters themselves, even when, as in Roussel's case, the experiment has suffered from over-cooking. The experiment is both "deep play" and the "long con." It puts its stakes on an outcome that may not be realized for generations, in the belief that it has connected with traditions that have done their best to conceal their modes and means.

Look for example at Pablo Picasso's most famous and infamous painting, *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907). It is not hard to see this as a triptych without hinges; or, rather, a triptych that has painted its hinges in the form of curtains pulled aside to reveal the central "panel." The scene is a room in a brothel, where two prostitutes recline in a surprisingly upright posture (there is hardly any depth in the scene) while a figure in the classic posture of Melancholy defends the front edge with a tray or table of fruit. A figure on the left pulls back a brown curtain. We know from previous versions and sketches that this character was at some point a medical student, possibly intending to alert the public of the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases. A more mysterious figure peers through a split in the curtain to the left and rear. These side-panel figures, like *The Mérode Altarpiece*, reconstitute the zones in front and behind the painting as left and right appendages. A space in front (on the left) and a space in back (on the right)

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<sup>17</sup> Raymond Roussel, *How I Wrote Certain of My Books; and Other Writings*, trans. Trevor Winkfield, John Ashbery, Kenneth Koch, and Harry Mathews (Boston, MA: Exact Change, 1995). See also Michel Foucault's *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel*, trans. Charles Raus (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1986). Roussel's palindromic technique has been explored in depth in the untranslated *La procédé de Raymond Roussel* by Ginette Adamson (Amsterdam : Rodopi, 1984). Mark Ford has provided an excellent English language companion, *Raymond Roussel and the Republic of Dreams* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2000).



Figure 6. Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)*, 1911-12. Museum of Modern Art, New York. The painting's triptych form is established by the figures that represent foreground (left) and background (right). As if we are sharing a light snack with the seated figure whose bent elbow on knee reveals her identity as Melancholy, a table with fruit breaks the picture plane, and the white fabric on the lower right seems to belong to the viewer rather than the scene.

actually join in a single hinge, since they open a door to a space that, like the Annunciation of the *Mérode* or St. Jerome, “does not exist.”

Like painting in general, the frame of a painting sits in 3-d space like other objects but, thanks to the symmetry of its four sides, creates a hole that, in this 3-d space, shows another space of equivalent dimensions, two to start with, others implied virtually. The main panel is the panel of truth. Its fourth wall is a section cut allowing an audience to peer in where, in the represented world inside the frame, fictionalized inhabitants only see another wall like the three others enclosing them. The sidemen of *Demoiselles* are like the know-it-all character Boris Yelnikoff in Woody Allen's 2009 film, *Whatever Works*. They can see us as well as the framed scene. In fact, they call us over to look inside. The other characters should be blind to our presence, but in *Demoiselles* the prostitutes, like the professionals they are, earnestly make an effort to catch our eye. Melancholy stares at us with a binary blue-dark and white eye as she makes a quarter-turn to the picture plane. The flanking figures similarly represent some form of turning or twisting.

A rarely mentioned feature of the “curtain” constituting the background to the right. It is a sky. The blue field with white puffy spots marks the edge of the chromatic interior that contrasts with the brownish murk of the foreground and area that we can say is

beyond the sky. This is not a new idea. In the Arena Chapel paintings, Giotto showed an angel rolling up temporal reality as if it were no more trouble than packing up a map after a classroom demonstration. The reduction of the 3-d to the 2-d allows the extra dimension to play the part of a divine vector in control of reality's “projected” illusions. This avoids the difficulty of assigning uncanny phenomena to a fourth dimension “transcending” ordinary time and space. The problem with the fourth dimension is the way it operates simultaneously as a lack (it is invisible to normal perception) and an excess (it is an “extra” that appends transcendent worlds to present reality.

The fiction of painting is its virtual depiction of 3-d space on a 2-d surface. Thanks to cues we must learn throughout our visual experience, we convert cues about scale, the convergence of parallel lines, and overlap to see space where none exists. But, isn't seeing space — our presence as sensing beings — what makes space space in the first place? Isn't our temporality always fully integrated into our conception of space as external, stable, and objective? Phenomenology's customary identification of space with objectivity and time with temporality overlooks the fact that, until time is reified through some spatial analogy (lines, circles, spirals, etc.) this demarkation cannot be made. Yet, Bergsonian free will is based on just such an identification. The temporal subject is forever constrained by spatialized objectivity.

Yet, just the reverse seems to be the message of the *Demoiselles* “experiment,” which amounts to suggesting that, before the scene was opened up to us, it existed as a single zipped brown enclosure whose

opening amounts to a moralizing exposé from the front, a *memento mori* from the back. Melancholy, never fully recognized by art historians, even the clever Leo Steinberg, is in the position to confirm the orthography of the women who look directly at the painting's audiences.<sup>18</sup> They solicit — that is their business, after all — our gaze, and what could be more appropriate for any painting to do: it gets us to look at it. Is this not a way of exposing the wiring of painting in general — that it “prostitutes itself” to the gaze of the Other, and yet debased as it is, its color and light shine from within, in contrast to the drab space that, for the duration of our looking, has been dimmed and silenced. The work's signifiers call into being an antipodal metaleptic twin, which could be our two eyes and their binocularity, foresworn in order to re-imagine a virtual third dimension inside the painting's colorful crystal, opened like an oyster from the front and back.

The single zipper that had been closed just before our viewing is displaced into two edges when the interior is revealed. Their jagged identity, like tesserae, is brown on the outside, sky-colored from the inside. The orthography of this interior is confirmed by the long history surrounding the presence of Melancholy. We have much to choose from. Melancholy is a dry humor, chilled by the shadowy depths to which melancholics are assigned. Traditions since Aristotle's *Problema* XXX.1 have grouped intellectuals, artists, and lovers together with suicides and philosophers who, exposed to the truth more than most, find it difficult to smile. Heroes, also dry, vacillate between a choleric (hot) mania and the melancholic state that drives many to madness. A proper sample of these qualities would produce an alloy: a truth that lies beyond “projective” takes; a transparency that cuts through time and space from one end to the other, in an instant made possible by seeing that origin and end are, in fact, the same point. This correlates the closed position of the hinges (as a “zipper”) with the orthographic relation of the back plane of the room with the section cut of the picture plane. The themes of truth and identity are manifest in the use of masks, the nakedness of the prostitutes (who have been “uncovered” by our look, which they themselves seem to solicit), the “corrective” role of the flanking figures, and Melancholy's traditional alliance of wit with getting to the *literal* bottom of things. In short, orthography of characters, symbols, and visual devices lead directly to the orthopsychics of a space that exchanges, in palindromic ways, fronts and backs, lefts and rights, insides with outsides. What is truly clever about this painting is the way — and history confirms that this painting has done this more than any other in the history of painting — it has created misunderstanding.

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<sup>18</sup> Leo Steinberg, “The Philosophical Brothel,” *October* 44 (Spring 1988): 7–74.

## 6 / Spookiness



Figure 1. Hermes offered a sphere by Pan, whose body is a 1:1 map of the universe, while his head communicates directly with the binary celestial realm. His caduceus is a passport token allowing him this transgression, but also a reference to the blindness that is the normal result of witnessing the copulation of snakes, as was the case for Tiresias and others of the clan of Cadmus.

demoiselles. They ask us to do it; they have perfected that look that “saves time.” While at the same time they specify the exchange, the payment. This will be the formula for objects of desire that empties out desire by filling it. Once the object of desire is possessed, it becomes unsatisfactory because desire itself has stopped, and desire needs a lack.

Recently it's been determined that the organs of the body communicate with each other instantaneously. This could not be because of chemicals sent from one to the other, or even fast electrical impulses. Rather, it seems that, like the “spooky entanglement” (the “non-local” coordination of particles separated by great distances), organs know about each other within a unified temporality. They are in effect a brain that's faster than the head, a brain that knows “without having to know it knows.” This has immediate effects for the problem of mastery. The limbs metaphorically act out the possibilities of mastery. The *hand* controls. Mortals initiate things by taking first steps. They get “a leg up.” If they are pushy it is because they “muscle in.” Certainly effort calls them to “put their backs into it,” but it is the limbs that get things done, and in particular it is the hands that identify with agency. Severe laws require the hands of thieves to be cut off because the idea of agency must be held accountable for the act, and agency is in effect, the idea, inseparable from the hand that kills or takes by stealth.

“...[B]ut instead of anticipating action and trying to make the object submit to it, our body submits to the object, allowing itself to be moved by the object .... Thus the witness, without leaving his post in physical space, penetrates into the world of the work ... we may say that the meaning penetrates him, so close is the reciprocity of subject and object.”

—Mikel Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (1973)

The view from below: the head is missing. But, in actuality, explain the iconographers who tried to express this important idea with an image that did not quite click with the public, the body is a merism of the whole, as in the expression “head to toe.” It enumerates, without having to mention more than the beginning and end, a totality of possibilities. Forward movement through the signifying chain is, thus, also a process of counting, in which a reverse count is realized, a backward-chaining.

The missing head says that, from the point of view of the *series itself*, the rest of the body, the head is elsewhere. Clouds hide it so that it can be invisible without physically detaching itself. Small children know this trick intuitively. They put a bag over their head in order to be invisible.

From the audience's point of view there are certainly some eyes we don't want looking at us: the interrogators at Abu Ghraib, military firing squads, Veronica (of the crucifixion). From the body's point of view as well, the head has claimed executive function just as the Ego, the I of the eyes, looks as if to say “Do it!” This is half of the double message of Picasso's

When learning to play a musical instrument, ride a bike, throw a pot, or hammer a nail, it's necessary not to think about it. The ego's intercession creates a time delay that trips up the hands' need to find, in the materials that offer them resistance, a 1:1 correspondence. Put in a Lacanian way, "the demand for recognition must be held up at customs." The "double dial" of the discourse *matheme* needs to be turned 90°, to the click-stop position of Hysteria. The Hysteric knows instantly what needs to be done, but she (the official pronoun of Hysteria is a she, not just from the clinical history of the psychosis but because the hysteric offers us the most economical insights into Psyche, the soul/heroine of the story of love as strife) must talk in puzzles that circle around backward, from her back to the back of the Other, who feels in *his* spine and



Figure 2. Chaplin and the flower girl simultaneously recall their first touch, when she mistook the tramp to be a handsome and wealthy aristocrat because she had heard him shut the door of a limousine. The coin she places in the tramp's hand short-circuits her visual impression of the ragged man who has just been released from prison; the effect is instantaneous and primordially spooky.

neck the anxiety that comes with being caught out. Magritte shows us the back-to-back in a clever way, not as a representation of back-to-back (remember, the title of the painting is *Not to Be Represented*) but as a way of seeing two backs plus a palindromic device. The caption provided by the sill holding Poe's palindromic book has us fold the lambda in the middle of a vortex. Like *The Wizard of Oz*, where the hysterical orphan Dorothy cannot tell her troubles (Auntie Em and Uncle Henry give in to Miss Gulch's demand that Toto be transported). She must act. In effect the hysteric finds Ego Land unbearable and prefers the spooky entanglement of the body, another way of saying Oz. Legend has it that Frank Baum discovered this name by accident, gazing at a file cabinet labeled "O-Z." The letters serendipitously account for the movement in Oz from the dead center of the spiral in the village of the repulsive dwarf munchkins to the back and forth labyrinthine travels of Dorothy and her three magical Psyches (feminized versions of the farm-hands) and, oh, Toto too, or Toto II, dogs being the customary "seeing eye" guides of the underworld (think of how this seeing eye function works in the discovery of the acousmatic Wizard behind the curtain).<sup>1</sup>

Back to back, the position of departure, calls for a token, the *tesseræ*, whose break (materialization of the gap, *a*, that stains all signifying chains) is also a cipher of identity. The

<sup>1</sup> The Wizard is not simply qualified by the adjective "acousmatic," the two terms are contronymically self-constructing and, hence, worthy of a speculative experiment to expand acousmatics from Lacan's theory of the drives (it is one of the two drives Lacan added to Freud's basic three) and the traditions of Pythagoras, reputed to speak from behind a curtain to initiates not yet ready for direct encounter. Film theory — Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008) — offers many useful shortcuts to the idea of the "offstage voice," allowing us to develop an encyclopedia of the voice in relation to *location* or, rather, *dislocation*. See also Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006) and Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (New York: Oxford University, 2014). Acousmatics is about time or, rather time's defeat in such instances of time travel, spooky entanglement, coincidence, palindromic fate, and the merism of last and first. Lacan was perhaps the first to connect the voice to the temporal instance of the future anterior, so the evidence of *apophrades* (voice of the dead) is also warranted. Akira Kurosawa (*Gate of Rashomon*, 1951) offers evidence that the dead do not always have the full picture, so we cannot regard dreams' relation to death as veridical. Rather, we must resort to the device of true and false dreams, the famous gates of horn and ivory, to continue our quest for an orthopsychic correction to the blur that is the shift in the point of view. The Wizard is an agent of "false for true," in that he is able to help Dorothy wake up from her death *dream* not by being a real wizard but by being the disembodied voice of a wizard. Agency, in its deployment of *limbs*, does this "already" as much as "always," which is why it's hysterical.

token is the coin pressed into the hand of the Tramp. Touch sidesteps the flower-girl's visual impression of a raggedy-man in sore need of a bath. Their exchange of looks authenticate the fact that they are, as the couple phantasmagorically born of her original misunderstanding, "in need of a 'both.'" They lack a unifying pronoun to account for how the tramp had, in the opening scenes of *City Lights* (1931), been running from the police and found a short-cut through a parked limousine, going in one door and out the other. As he closed the door of the expensive car, a flower-girl greeted him with an offer, and he readily complied, a bit baffled that his tattered but formerly dapper suit still retained its ability to charm. When she offered boutonniere drops and she must search with her hand to find it, he realizes she is blind, and thus begins his efforts to get the money for the operation that will restore her sight. The substitution for blindness and invisibility has a double effect. It's not that *she's* blind; it's that *he's* invisible. A shift of agency comes with a switch of agents, negotiated in the currency of pronouns. *He's* invisible to the extent that, in the final scenes of the story, he has just been released from prison, convicted of stealing from the wealthy alcoholic who forgot that he had willingly given the tramp money. The eye operation was nonetheless paid for, and the flower-girl now has a shop of her own, where sometimes wealthy young men come in who, she thinks, might be her former benefactor.

After an embarrassing encounter with pesky street urchins, the tramp passes by the shop. When she sees the tramp, she's amused, but she returns his amazed stare (he realizes for the first time that the operation was a success) and is pitied at his down-and-out tatters. She must go out to give him a flower and press a coin in his hand, but this touch comes with a flashback to the original transaction. She and he fuse memories and the space created by the pronoun, "the rich benefactor," is now filled by the grotesque impoverished shabby tramp. Time travel now corrects the first meeting and she remembers what she did not at first see, a bum on the run. "Her vision is restored" becomes the magical phrase, the effect that now has multiple causes. Retroaction has allowed her to recall what she never actually saw, to "see without seeing." The touch did this without having to consult the brain; the act, like all acts, came before the thought and was, in effect, not just a form of thought but thought *as form*, an eigenform.

Chaplin's creation of The Tramp character came at a time when agency itself was being called into question. Those without power were increasingly at a hysterical disadvantage to those in power, and 1939's deep Depression needed a hero in the appropriate dress, a suit that "has seen better days." In contemporary terms it would be extraordinary to see a homeless person wearing not just a tie but a tie, jacket, and felt bowler hat. To top off his livery, the Tramp sported a cane, which he twirled stylishly enough to suggest that the suit was originally his, in the "better days" when he had many such suits hanging in a large closet. A biography of the suit is the metonymy of the Tramp that creates its resonant antipode, "the rich man." Fate's famous wheel is keeping them apart, but with acousmatic spooky echoes that, in the case of the flower girl, can make miracles happen: pay for eye operations, fill in the blank for the Prince Charming Pronoun, and have enough left over to start up a flower shop. All of this is paid for by jail time and the final horrific gap expressed in the film's last close-up, Chaplin's hybrid expression of joy and sadness, signature of the melancholic who knows the cost of *jouissance*. *Jouissance* costs, melancholy pays (because it is the accountant at the Humors Exchange).

The dapper melancholic, as Chaplin intuited so well, as at the heart of comedy's confederacy of lack and excess. The Tramp can do so much because he has so little. "Going for broke" is the deep play gamble that, Jeremy Bentham said (*The Theory of Legislation*, 1802), was a bet whose stakes were so high that no

rational person would dare play. “Stakes so high” is precisely the fight to the death the master is willing to undertake to achieve mastery, with the ultimate outcome being the death of all who would have been able to give the recognition the master so desperately seeks. The Master’s Discourse is the formula of deep play, but the ironic insight of this *matheme* is that servants are caught in its logic, and that master/servant is not a demographic division but, rather, the universal division of each and every subject. The Tramp and rich guy, the melancholic antipodal subject, circulates in two directions at once, in search of that back-to-back point where dualists will part in order to meet face to face on the opposite side of the earth. S1/\$ is the Truth of the subject, depicted in the S2/a productions where the signifying chains themselves circle to indicate targets for the arrows and bricks of Eros to find, as he always finds, his final destination.

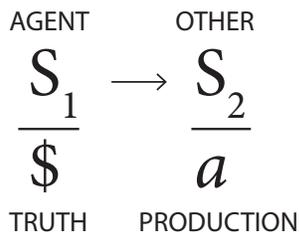


Figure 3. Lacan's *matheme* for the Master's Discourse can be deciphered as follows. “The Master signifier, S1, works as an agency for all other signifiers (S2) to the extent that S1→S2 is “knowledge,” subjecting the Subject (\$) to the rule that postpones/conceals *jouissance* (*a*, the “*objet petit a*”) as, always, the “pleasure” of the Other that will constitute dissatisfaction and lack for the subject. The master signifier will always involve a contradiction, enigma, or paradox for the \$. It is an “eigenform” or “nothing” that is able to order everything else. The *a* will, in historical terms, be the master’s belief that those who serve him are secretly enjoying themselves more than he.

Chaplin appears in the Master’s Discourse as /\$, the *Untermensch*, the subaltern caught up by the signifiers of master, S1: the factories, policemen, and rich guys, who distributed and regulated capital and its obligations in the early 20th century. But, he is also the prototype of the hysteric who gets under the skin of the Other. The Tramp is suspected by the rich and their surrogates that he is out to steal something. In the opening scenes of *City Lights* he runs from the police, scooting between cars on a busy street. His clever trick is to jump into the street-side door of a parked limousine and out the sidewalk-side door. The question interesting me is this: if the Hysteric’s Discourse is a 90° twist away from the Master’s Discourse, can this angle be found in the structure of such tricks? Can the *mathemes* be regarded as the characters and dramatic skeleton of a Commedia del’Arte (and *vice versa*) so that, instead of diving as hysterics usually do into the depths of Seminars to find what Lacan, as a “subject-supposed-to-know” has been holding back, we rotate the discourses themselves as a system into a subliminal light.

### *Hysterical critique*

Frankly, this is not a new idea, but it has not been commonly recognized. In Vladimir Nabokov’s *Pale Fire*, Charles Kinbote, a visiting professor in the Slavic Languages department of a university in upstate New York, is befriended by his neighbor and fellow academic, the poet John Shade. Shade, who has shown drafts of his latest 999-line poem, “Pale Fire,” to Kinbote, makes a last visit on the occasion of its completion, but is shot dead by an unknown gunman, possibly a convict returning to find Kinbote’s absent landlord, a judge in criminal court. Kinbote has developed an animosity to Shades’ wife and fears that she will suppress the publication of “Pale Fire.” Kinbote flees the scene with the poem and hides out in a motel across from an amusement park, in part to edit the poem with notes on each line, in part to flee what he took to be not a criminal seeking vengeance from the judge who sent him up but an assassin in pursuit of the exiled King of Zembla — the very figure now masquerading as a Slavic Language professor in a rural American university.

Most readers attribute the improbability of this to Kinbote's easily spotted delusional paranoia. Like any good hysteric he tells us all about it. His recounted memories of life in Zembla are megalomaniac (after all, he was a king) and wildly wishful. The conclusive evidence is, however, his belief that Shade's poem was a veiled account — veiled *of course* because any direct biography would attract the assassins! — of the minute details and subtle implications of Kinbote's life, forced abdication, and exile. It would be safe to say that no reader of the 999-line poem would have thought it to be anything other than a sensitive autobiographical inquiry into the nature of death, the suicide of Hazel, the Shades' daughter, and dreams about death.

Yet, Kinbote's hypothesis takes hold on us, and — remembering the effect of Herman Melville's comparison, in *Moby Dick*, of a whale to a book — we begin to give into the idea that the less the poem seems to be about Kinbote, the more compelling the connection. The 90° orthogonal independence has in effect opened a portal into Kinbote's madness. Kinbote's hysteria has invaded the mastery of Shade's poem and turned it, with the logic of a death dream reported by a living narrator, into a concealed crystal compacted out of nothing more than the circumstantial interactions of a poet and a madman.

Just who *is* the madman? Is he a dream actor hired by Shade in his last dying moments to re-phantasmize his poem in his last moments of life? Is he a marginal itinerate academic, refugee living in America, escaping the aftermath of World War II just as Nabokov himself had fled revolutionary Russia? Is he the exiled King of Zembla? These are options that exist inside the main option we have taken in opening the book in the first place, that we can assign a special form of the “ultra-Real” to hypothetical characters and actions simply with text that opens with lines we can identify as fictional. The legitimate-sounding statement, that “*Pale Fire*, a poem in heroic couplets ... composed by John Francis Shade (born July 5, 1898, died July 21, 1959) ...” is the subject of a novel not a biography. “New Wye” is of course New York, and Nabokov's tedious details about the paper and pens and writing habits Shade used to write the poem push our reading into the suspended disbelief mode.

*Then we remember ...* isn't there a fly — could it be a *bot* fly? — that finds a corpse within minutes or even second of death, in time to lay its eggs in warm flesh?<sup>2</sup> Isn't the presence and age of the botkin's larvæ key to the determination of the time of death? Isn't the idea of a human palindrome of this fly, a *kin-bote*, able to establish a metonymic/metaleptic resonance using the corpse of “*Pale Fire*” as a cataleptic victim? Doesn't the reader, resisting this idea but *unable to move*, finally give into the sheer volume of the resonance/noise created by this external, *acousmatic* voice within the “realism” of the story? Isn't this spatial account of metonym —  $f(S...S)S \cong S(-)s$  — with its idea of a distant (antipodal) radio tower emitting waves of revision precisely what Nabokov gives us with his Zemblan thief?

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<sup>2</sup> Nabokov, an expert entomologist, was both poetic and precise. His “botkin” was a condensation of “bottle-fly” and “blow-fly.” The species of fly most commonly involved in forensic investigations is the Calliphoridae, commonly known as blow flies, blow-flies, carrion flies, bluebottles, greenbottles, or cluster flies, an insect family with over 1100 species. In the Index of *Pale Fire*, Nabokov cites “Botkin, V., American scholar of Russian descent” but also “king-bot, maggot of extinct fly that once bred in mammoths and is thought to have hastened their phylogenetic end” but also “big-bellied” and a Danish stiletto. The first use of insects in criminal investigations of murder can be found in thirteenth-century China. Sung Tz'u and Bryan E. McKnight, *The Washing Away of Wrongs: Forensic Medicine in Thirteenth-Century China*, The Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1981).

*Of course!* The clue of thievery takes us back to Shakespeare, not the original lines from *Timon of Athens* but the lines as Kinbote has remembered them:

The sun's a thief and with his great attraction  
Robs the vast sea; the moon's an arrant thief  
And her pale fire she snatches from the sun;  
The sea's a thief whose liquid surge resolves  
The moon into salt tears . . . (*Timon of Athens*,  
4.3.431–35)

The sun is a thief: she lures the sea  
and robs it. The moon is a thief:  
he steals his silvery light from the sun.  
The sea is a thief: it dissolves the moon. (*Pale Fire*,  
62)

Kinbote's memory seems spotty on a number of points. Shakespeare's genders are switched. The sun is feminine, the moon masculine. But, the idea of thievery is intact, from Macrobius's idea of magnetic sun-heat pulling moisture up from the oceans to the switch from gold to silver in moonlight. (Nabokov elsewhere uses this color switch in describing dandelions transition from golden flower to fluffy white seed clusters.) Kinbote apologizes for his approximation, since "Having no library in the desolate log cabin where I live like Timon in his cave," he has to use a Zemblan poetical version of *Timon*. This is his commentary on line 40, the number of quarantine, "The sun with stolen ice, the moon with leaves."<sup>3</sup>

This takes us to Hermes and his reputation as a thief, who knows how to drive cattle backwards to cover his tracks and disguise his own footprints with sandals that point in the opposite direction. The "silent trade" attributed to Hermes (whose etymological root, *herm*, originally named the pile of stones that designated points at which strangers could trade left objects without ever meeting) is another name for Kinbote's appropriation of Shade's text. The lack of Shade's involuntary leaving the text behind (thanks to his untimely murder) becomes the surplus meanings Kinbote pushes us to accept. The result is indeed comedic. It makes a simultaneous call to action of two of Harold Bloom's algorithms of poetic anxiety, *apophrades* (voice of the dead) and *kenosis* (knowing without knowing). On certain days of the Athenian calendar, the dead were said to return to inhabit the houses where they had once lived. The house is the poem of the dead Shade, the shadow house. Kinbote is the fly who plants his larvæ who hatch out into his idea of a kingdom by the sea.<sup>4</sup> This kingdom is the extimated body of the young Shade who, seeming to suffer from epilepsy, endured a massive meroic vision when he was twelve (*Pale Fire*, 29; "Pale Fire," lines 146–156):

There was a sudden sunburst in my head.  
And then black night. That blackness was sublime.  
I felt distributed through space and time:  
One foot upon a mountaintop, one hand  
Under the Pebbles of a panting strand,  
One ear in Italy, one eye in Spain,  
In caves, my blood, and in the starts, my brain.  
There were dull throbs in my Triassic; green  
Optical spots in Upper Pleistocene,

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<sup>3</sup> See Gretchen Minton, "The Afterlife of *Timon of Athens*: The Palest Fire." *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation* 5, 1 (2010): 1–16.

<sup>4</sup> The index entry for Kinbote, "boyhood and Orient Express recalled," takes us to line 162 of Shade's poem, where the young Shade learns to swim and is seduced by an older girl (metaphorically).

An icy shiver down my Age of Stone,  
 And all tomorrows in my funnybone.

The heroic couplets of “Pale Fire” and its determinative boundaries of 999 lines divided into four cantos, make for a pile that Kinbote uses as a debris field, wandering from line to line, picking through the pieces of the house he has shattered into fragments in order to find a jewel of inestimable value. This logic is, in turn, kenotic. Disaster relief workers allow residents evacuated for tornadoes and floods to return to their ruined houses as soon as possible to lessen the trauma they experience in the loss of the familiar supports to everyday life. The workers report that the residents inevitably seek out the same kind of things: family picture albums, jewelry boxes, small objects such as clocks, music boxes, and favorite toys. The lapidary quality of these surviving objects qualifies them as seeds around which memories of the past may recrystallize. The trauma of loss becomes a search for identifiable surplus value, a key to the loss/surplus logic of Hermetic trade itself, whose pile of rocks is able simultaneously to indicate the site of trade and embody the god whose resident spirit regulates the market emergence of continuous value that will, in each trade, assure that the “buyer” always thinks he has paid too little, the “seller” in an idiotic symmetry think he has received too much. Despite the massive loss of natural disasters and wars, the returning residents, like the apophradetic dead who return to a house, pay little to receive what, for them, are precious jewels. The debris has reduced everything to a zero degree to multiply the value of residual resistant kernels to infinity.<sup>5</sup>

At some point the poem’s precise stacking of 999 lines is converted into a trash pile by Kinbote’s fantastic thesis that the poem is a detailed account of his royal career. The “jewel” that Kinbote discovers is, true to the metaphor of the bot-fly, hatched out in the reader, whose own reading-induced cathexis has made for the perfect corpse, in fact an “exquisite corpse” whose body will now confirm (with or without consent) a resurrection of a new text in a new house — apophrades at its best. The reader’s death, like Shade’s, has put the reader’s head into the clouds and allowed the body’s organs to communicate instantaneously, through spooky entanglement’s metaleptic resonance. Although the original poem is trashed, trash = jewels; or, rather, a jewel, “jewel a,” the *objet petit a* — *jouissance*, the strange sublime pleasure Vico predicted would attend the reader who became the writer of a “new science” of critical theory). This is how one knows without knowing:

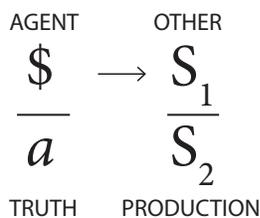


Figure 4. Lacan’s *matheme* for the Hysteric rotates the S1/S2/a/\$ elements one quarter turn clockwise but also seems to exercise a “sideways penetration” into the master’s tricks. The subject is barred by the orthogonal angle that splits allegiance to the Truth from a presentation to the master(s), a protest against the inconsistency of authority. Truth, as *a*, comes in enigmatic forms: prophecies, omens, hauntings (*Hamlet*), subliminal mandates (*The Manchurian Candidate*), oaths/promises, or other forms of the death drive. The Hysteric reports this truth as pain but experiences the pleasure of excess while presenting a case for lack. Why won’t the master reveal what he knows (S2)? This is the demand of the Hysteric.

kenosis.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See Richard Lloyd Parry, *Ghosts of the Tsunami: Death and Life in Japan’s Disaster Zone* (New York: Vintage, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Vico, *New Science*, §345: “Thus the proper and consecutive proof here adduced will consist in comparing and reflecting whether our human mind, in the series of possibilities it is permitted to understand, and so far as it is permitted to do so, can conceive more or fewer or different causes than those from which issue the effects of this civil world. In doing this the reader will experience in his mortal body a divine pleasure as he contemplates in the divine ideas this world of nations in all the extent of its places, times and varieties.

Whether or not turning Lacan's entire *theory* of discourse 90° in the same fashion as the hysteric gets under the master's skin with her truth-revealing orthotics, "hystericizing" the original as a method of finding, in something, "more than itself" is at least a well-documented method. The analogy here is that of a garment that is worn by the original owner and finally donated to a second-hand clothing store, where it is bought and worn with equal or greater effect. I used this trivial example because of the strange coincidence of the wardrobe designer who found the perfect jacket for Professor Marvell at a West Hollywood vintage clothing boutique, only to discover that it had belonged to Frank Baum. The three steps of hystericizing (mastery, loss, discovery through rotation) are the same for even trivial acts of "repurposing" — first use, abandonment/ruin, second use — where the new sense, both dependent on the original but novel in itself constitutes a "janusian" discovery method that in a sense requires the past in order to transcend it, but where transcendence is more of an apotheosis of the original.

In the YouTube compilation, "Old Movie Stars Dance to Uptown Funk," the matter is put clearly. Dancers stepping to their original music can, in their collectivity, be set to a new idea *as if* it was what they had in mind all along. This is Kinbote's claim that the reader of *Pale Fire* at first resists by thinking Kinbote to be mad. Hysterical, in fact. Whatever theoretical value we might begrudge hysteria as a discovery technique, in fact Nabokov has not just endorsed it but provided a thick handbook on how to do it. The critical condition — for its peculiarity certainly deserves recognition and possibly a clever name — of hysterical repurposing maximizes discovery potential at the same time it creates skepticism or even animosity. This is what happened with the coincidental discovery that the coat purchased for the Wizard's use in *The Wizard of Oz* had actually belonged to the author of the book, Frank Baum. As Aljean Harmetz writes:<sup>7</sup>

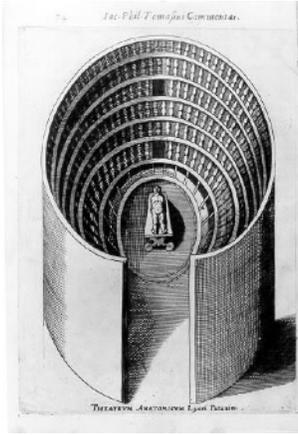
What definitely did occur on *The Wizard of Oz* — perhaps the most astonishing thing that did occur — was dismissed as a publicity stunt. Yet it is vouched for by [cinematographer] Hal Rosson and his niece Helene Bowman and by Mary Mayer, who served briefly as the unit publicist on the picture. "For Professor Marvel's coat," says Mary Mayer, "they wanted grandeur gone to seed. A nice-looking coat but very tattered. So the wardrobe department went down to an old second-hand store on Main Street [location of LA's fashion district] and bought a whole rack of coats. And Frank Morgan and the wardrobe man and [director] Victor Fleming got together and chose one. It was kind of a Prince Albert coat. It was black broadcloth and it had a velvet collar, but the nap was all worn off the velvet." Helene Bowman recalls the coat as "ratty with age, a Prince Albert jacket with a green look."

The coat fitted Morgan and had the right look of shabby gentility, and one hot afternoon Frank Morgan turned out the pocket. Inside was the name "L. Frank Baum."

"We wired the tailor in Chicago," says Mary Mayer, "and sent pictures. And the tailor sent back a notarized letter saying that the coat had been made for Frank Baum. Baum's widow identified the coat, too, and after the picture was finished we presented it to her. But I could never get anyone to believe the story."

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<sup>7</sup> Aljean Harmetz, *The Making of the Wizard of Oz* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2013). For an online version of this anecdote see, <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/coat-of-baums/>, accessed March 2018.



Figures 5 and 6. Left: detail, Francesco Botticini, *Assumption of The Virgin*, 1475–6, National Gallery, London. Right, the Anatomical Theater, University of Padua, Italy. From Giacomo Filippo Tomasini, *Gymnasium Patavinum* (Udine, 1644). Bernheimer drew connections linking the theater idea of a central stage as tomb, not just in the anatomical theater but the theatrical idea in general, citing the tradition of references connecting actors with dead souls. The key to image relations between the Assumption and theaters is the idea of reversibility between life and death, most evident in the theme of resurrection and summarized famously by “Scipio’s Dream.”

the tips of its wings are red, resembling sealing wax. In a sense the poem itself and also perhaps the novel itself are sealed with the ring that gives the novel, poem, and this particular passage the mark of authenticity. It is what opens the poem but also what closes the novel.

I was the shadow of the waxwing<sup>8</sup> slain  
 By the false azure in the windowpane  
 I was the smudge of ashen fluff — and I  
 Lived on, flew on, in the reflected sky,  
 And from the inside, too, I’d duplicate  
 Myself, my lamp, an apple on a plate:  
 Uncurtaining the night, I’d let dark glass

<sup>8</sup> Nabokov provides a tasty clue on the final page of the novel, in the index entry for “Waxwings, birds of the genus *Bombycilla*, 1–4, 131, 1000.” Note that there is no thousandth line in the poem. Further: “*Bombycilla shadei*, 71; interesting association belatedly realized.” Indeed. The waxwing’s soul, like that of the reader’s and the poem itself, follows the lead of the murdered poet, John Francis Shade, 1898–1959. *Pale Fire*, 239. Further note: the last entry in the index of the poem is “*Zembla*, a distant northern land.” No line is cited, because Zembla doesn’t appear, anywhere. In the entry before, “Variants,” a plant (Virginia Whites) is listed as another name for the Toothwort White, possibly because a butterfly also named Virginia White (*Pieris virginianensis*) frequently mistakes another plant, the garlic mustard, for the Toothwort, a mistake that spells doom for the larvæ the butterfly lays on it. If Kinbote is the botkin that lays eggs in the corpse of the poem, have they picked the wrong poem? The reader must believe this to be so. If nothing else, Nabokov knew his butterflies.

I see the incredulity of this anecdote not as a detraction or negative — the role played by noise in the standard Shannon–Weaver idea of communications — but, rather, as an essential and even key component that, in the end, could reveal itself as a strategic advantage. Hysterical criticism necessarily operates within this zone, and hence it is allowed to borrow freely and reflectively from other modes of “once upon a time.” This makes the suspension of disbelief work as a necessary and sufficient principle for turning the corner on mastery. It is an effect converted into a cause, with the logic that it is an effect with *as many causes as possible*. A *cause that is not a cause* is the buy-in to the “deep game” of “deep play.”

How does this work? I suggest taking a look at a key clue in Nabokov’s *Pale Fire*, the opening lines of the 999-line poem, “Pale Fire,” basis of the equally well-counted novel. The poem opens with a sad epitaph for a waxwing that has mistaken a reflection in a glass window to be the sky. The waxwing is so-called because

Hang all the furniture above the grass,  
And how delightful when a fall of snow  
Covered my glimpse of lawn and reached up so  
As to make chair and bed exactly stand  
Upon that snow, out in that crystal land!

The waxwing experiences, on behalf of the reader, what Lacan called the interval “between the two deaths,” a momentum of the soul past the initial point of literal death into an “orthopsychic” period where the soul (Psyche) wanders, is confronted by tests and trials, and brought to a final scene of judgment. It is a kind of Hades, such as that Psyche in the story by Apuleius experiences in *The Golden Ass*, the second-century Roman novel about a nobleman’s failed experiment to fly using a magic ointment.<sup>9</sup> After the point of death, Nabokov annotates the qualities of the lethal pane of glass, occasion for the bird’s detached virtuality. It affords duplication, and delight comes when the duplication constructs a new crystal combining the fake scene with the real one. The precision with which “chair and bed exactly stand / Upon that snow, out in that crystal land!” is delayed by the process of splitting/killing, momentum-driven travel into the elaborate twists and turns of death, and the match of tesseract halves to conclude action and thought in one final action. Chair and bed become throne and tomb in the white double crystal, model of all doubles, especially evident when the doubles still hold steady the meridian connecting heaven and hell, as in the case of Christ and Judas, seen through the prism of gnostic theology.<sup>10</sup>

*See, it’s a theater!* This was Richard Bernheimer’s conclusion in his landmark article in *The Art Bulletin* when he compared the rings of seats in a Renaissance auditorium to the classical contronymic eschatology of birth/arrival and death/departure with the soul’s passage through the planetary rings, both a spatial journey and a temporal succession requiring ritual formulas to gain passage into and secure escape from each sphere (Figs. 5 and 6).<sup>11</sup> The uppermost ring was held to be the most inebriating, since it was the new

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<sup>9</sup> These details may seem tedious at this moment, but they are all key. The attempt to fly, like Icarus’s amounts to an excess that is answered by a lack, a promise of sky that meets instead with subterranean punishment. The story-in-the-story, that of Cupid and Psyche, is also about an excess. (Psyche’s excess beauty is rewarded by marriage to Eros, but she disobeys his command not to see him naked and is punished by Venus’s stern trials.) In simpler terms, the sky is an excess (two skies instead of one), punished by the pane of glass that kills the waxwing. However, Nabokov tells us that the bird did not die but, instead, flew on *in the reflected sky*. The architectural motif of “between the two deaths” is the Thesean labyrinth, whose 3x3 fractal form can be extended to 33 (Christ’s age at the time of the crucifixion), to 3x3x3 (27°, the angle Holbein identified with the Apocalypse on April 11, 1533), or 999, 9x111 (Dante’s number). 11x99, it should be noted, is 1089, the sum of any three digit number that, reversed and subtracted from itself, and the results also reversed and added, comes to 1089. The number’s first digit must be larger than the last to allow this operation. See Donald Kunze, “The Missing Guest: The Twisted Topology of Hospitality,” in Jamie Horwitz and Paulette Singley, eds. *Eating Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2004): 181.

<sup>10</sup> In *The Wizard of Oz*, compare the throne of the Wizard (empty) with the final bed where Dorothy is “received back into life” by family and friends, the same bed where she symbolically died when the tornado lifted the farmhouse into oblivion. Dorothy, like Lazarus, is raised from this same “tomb.” Again, it is Borges who, keen to the theme of the double, enjoys playing out the irony of the pact between allies, like the Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux, who must engineer an elaborate escape. “Three versions of Judas” (“Tres versiones de Judas,” 1944). Jorge Luis Borges and Anthony Kerrigan *Three Versions of Judas* (Palma de Mallorca: Mossèn Alcover, 1958). Borges’ fiction anticipated scholarly discovery in the 1970s of Gnostic texts that advanced the same thesis. See Philip Weiss, “How the Prophetic Borges Prefigured the ‘Gospel of Judas,’” *Mondoweiss: News & Opinion About Palestine, Israel & the United States*. Accessed March 2018: [http://mondoweiss.net/2007/03/majestic\\_borges/](http://mondoweiss.net/2007/03/majestic_borges/).

<sup>11</sup> Richard Bernheimer, “*Theatrum Mundi*,” *The Art Bulletin* 38, 4 (December, 1956): 225–247.

soul's first taste of mortality, and the Age of Saturn was thought to be a Bacchanal. The final ring, ruled by the Moon, was close to the event of birth or, as in Francesco Botticini's painting of the *Assumption of the Virgin*, death. Scipio the younger dreamed that his uncle, Scipio the Elder, had taken him to the top of heavens to gaze down at the bottom point, and the dreamer was surprised that what was life for the body was death for the soul, so in a sense the tomb in the painting is both the living person and the dead corpse.<sup>12</sup> The "theater" of the cosmic rings is a contronym-generating device, life-in-death and death-in-life.

These palindromic reversals constitute the essence of the uncanny. In the death-in-life version, flight from a source of fear turns out to be, thanks to a demonic topology, a run directly into fear's dead center. This theme was popularized in the well-known short story, "The Appointment in Samarra," a short fable published by Somerset Maugham in 1933, shortly thereafter the basis of a novel by the same title by John O'Hara (1934). A servant runs into Death in the marketplace. The short original is worth quoting:

There was a merchant in Bagdad who sent his servant to market to buy provisions and in a little while the servant came back, white and trembling, and said, Master, just now when I was in the marketplace I was jostled by a woman in the crowd and when I turned I saw it was Death that jostled me. She looked at me and made a threatening gesture, now, lend me your horse, and I will ride away from this city and avoid my fate. I will go to Samarra and there Death will not find me. The merchant lent him his horse, and the servant mounted it, and he dug his spurs in its flanks and as fast as the horse could gallop he went. Then the merchant went down to the marketplace and he saw me standing in the crowd and he came to me and said, Why did you make a threatening gesture to my servant when you saw him this morning? That was not a threatening gesture, I said, it was only a start of surprise. I was astonished to see him in Bagdad, for I had an appointment with him tonight in Samarra.

The spooky thing about Maugham's version of the story is the choice of Death as the POV narrator. This is the dimension enjoyed by Scipio, puzzled to see that life on earth runs in reverse without anyone's being aware of the fact. Death, an ultimate form of negation, is "surprised that the servant is surprised" to meet him, since negation's binary form (good v. evil, dark v. light, etc.) is neutralized by the contronym, which populates "primal" languages. Death is like the stranger in David Lynch's *Lost Highway* (1997) who confronts the musician, Fred Madison, at a party, claiming that he is both at the party and in his home. To prove it, he hands Madison a phone and has him call home, where it is the stranger who answers. The stranger's weird appearance leaves no doubt: this man is the Devil.

No matter how much Madison tries to escape the nightmare, it becomes more real. His dream of standing over his dismembered wife turns out to have been a real crime, and he finds himself in jail, "plagued by headaches and visions of the Mystery Man, a burning cabin in the desert and a strange man

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<sup>12</sup> "'The Dream of Scipio,' written by Cicero, is the sixth book of *De re publica*, and describes a fictional dream vision of the Roman general Scipio Aemilianus, set two years before he oversaw the destruction of Carthage in 146 BC." "Somnium Scipionis," in *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Accessed March 2018: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somnium\\_Scipionis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somnium_Scipionis).

driving down a dark highway.”<sup>13</sup> If *Lost Highways* is anything, it’s a film-*noire* version of the fractal labyrinth, fractal in the way that Madison’s “flight from the Enchanter” (Bloom’s *dæmon*) brings him closer to the epicenter represented by the burning cabin. The Efficient Cause is his fear-induced attempts to escape, the concealed *automaton* operating beneath the radar, at a 90° angle so to speak, is the contronymic negation of negation, the light switch that doesn’t work anymore.

*Pale Fire* shows that hysteria’s 90° view of the master can actually be a hysteric’s 90° interpretive theft of what is overheard within the discarded material surplus that every intentional action generates. The interesting coincidence in what falls off is how the accumulating rubble of trivial discards structures itself in the form of vortices, cones, pyramids — all of which take on a coincidental resemblance to the sound-horns of old phonographs, all the more curious because the effect of these vortices, cones, and pyramidal piles is to *amplify* faint signals. In the science of stochastic resonance, there is a well-known experiment involving pond-dwelling crayfish.<sup>14</sup> In nature, the crayfish’s principal predator is the snapping turtle, but the crayfish is good at detecting the turtle’s presence, thanks to tiny hairs on its body that function as acoustic receptors. To determine the sensitivity of these, the experimenters set up a large tub with sensors, crayfish, and a turtle, but immediately the turtle began feasting on the crayfish, who had seemed to lose their will to live. What was missing in the tub? The experimenters discovered that it lacked the normal ambient noises that most ponds contain, and when they piped in recordings of pond noise, the crayfish recovered their turtle-eluding capability. With the ability to regulate the volume of noise, the experimenters discovered the rather amazing ability of white noise to function as, in itself, an amplification mechanism. There is, in other words, a structure in non-structure, and its “non-form” is also a form idealized by the shape of the cone or pile.

Hysteria’s ability to work as an inner-ear to the Master’s “whispering” is not simply theoretical. Its diagrammatic qualities translate materially to physical movements and object-shapes. Wherever there are masters or any forms of accomplishment, such as John Shade’s poem, there is the acousmatic cone (or stochastic pile), serving as a listening device that “listens sideways,” penetrating at a right angle the unintended surplus of the masters’ movements. The rather more amazing aspect of this is that the sideways acousmatic function has been employed by artists, writers, architects, and others *as if* they were in possession of the blueprints of this critical methodology. Their versions, reproduced in telling detail, can be measured, recorded, and compared. In the short story to follow, action can be mapped with such precision that it could be used as a prototype for the kind of acousmatic theft of presumed silence. In it, the role of Hermes is doubled. There is a material thief and a spiritual thief whose theft amounts to a corrective procedure, an orthopsychism. Like Dupin in “The Purloined Letter,” the ortho-thief engages the first thief through an “odds or evens” chirality where, as Poe described it, one can win if one can determine one’s opponent to be smart or stupid.

G. K. Chesterton’s short story, “The Queer Feet,” is one of a series of fictions involving a slightly priggish English Catholic priest *cum* detective, a Dupin with a cross and cassock.<sup>15</sup> Chesterton’s decidedly con-

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<sup>13</sup> See “Lost Highway,” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. Accessed March 2018, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost\\_Highway\\_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost_Highway_(film)).

<sup>14</sup> Eleni Pantazelou, John Douglass, Lon Wilkens and Frank Moss, “Noise Enhancement of Information Transfer in Crayfish Mechanoreceptors by Stochastic Resonance,” *Nature* 365 (September 1993): 337–40.

<sup>15</sup> G. K. Chesterton, “The Queer Feet,” *The Complete Father Brown Stories* (London: Penguin, 2012).

servative politics is all the more radical in that, as Žižek has shown, he regards conservatism as conspiratorial and revolutionary. He is aware that the rich are thieves, that wealth is in effect stolen, and that the power of governments is terroristic. Chesterton out-Marxes Marx on his “I’ll go you one better” stories of capitalism on the loose, so his stories are in a sense (im)morality tales.

“The Queer Feet” finds itself at the annual banquet of an exclusive, twelve-member club of wealthy elites who style themselves “The Twelve Fishermen,” who on account of this name reserve a set of jewel encrusted fish-knives used only on this one day. This is the booty that attracts the interest of an arch-criminal, Flambeau, who intends to disguise himself in a particularly ingenious way. The priest arrives on the scene quite by coincidence. He has been called in to administer last rites to a dying waiter, an Italian. This death is one of the material causes of what follows. The Vernon Hotel in Belgravia will now need to fill a critical position at the last minute. The reader doesn’t know this but may later wonder at the coincidence. It is a pronoun, a place that has been literally emptied out and held open to be occupied in an ambiguous way.

The priest must fill out death forms and is given a small room in the hotel’s office area. The description of it as a place dedicated to both privacy and privation is interesting:

In this office sat the representative of the proprietor (nobody in this place ever appeared in person if he could help it), and just beyond the office, on the way to the servants' quarters, was the gentlemen's cloak room, the last boundary of the gentlemen's domain. But between the office and the cloak room was a small private room without other outlet, sometimes used by the proprietor for delicate and important matters, such as lending a duke a thousand pounds or declining to lend him sixpence. It is a mark of the magnificent tolerance of Mr. Lever that he permitted this holy place to be for about half an hour profaned by a mere priest, scribbling away on a piece of paper.

One of its walls serves as an acoustic fourth wall. He can hear activities in the hallway connecting the kitchen with the dining room but is, of course, invisible. His position is that of a guard in the Panopticon’s blinded tower, but the binary function (suppression of the binary information about presence/absence) has been transferred to the hallway. In other words, it is those who occupy the “prisoners’ position” who will demonstrate the presence/absence contronym.

For it was by the time that he had reached these that the priest began a little to allow his thoughts to wander and his animal senses, which were commonly keen, to awaken. The time of darkness and dinner was drawing on; his own forgotten little room was without a light, and perhaps the gathering gloom, as occasionally happens, sharpened the sense of sound. As Father Brown wrote the last and least essential part of his document, he caught himself writing to the rhythm of a recurrent noise outside, just as one sometimes thinks to the tune of a railway train. When he became conscious of the thing he found what it was: only the ordinary patter of feet passing the door, which in an hotel was no very unlikely matter. Nevertheless, he stared at the darkened ceiling, and listened to the sound. After he had listened for a few seconds dreamily, he got to his feet and listened intently, with his head a little on one side. Then he sat down again and buried his brow in his hands, now not merely listening, but listening and thinking also.

Father Brown, listening and thinking, was “thinking through his ears,” in effect acousmatically detaching his hearing from his consciousness-dominated head. His head was “in the clouds,” occluded. What he heard was an extraordinary crisscross. One pair of squeaky shoes did not fit in. In one direction their rhythm slowed, in the other it accelerated. “[W]hy on earth should a man run in order to walk? Or, again, why should he walk in order to run?” Possibly Brown connected the empty place left by the dead waiter and the hotel’s need to “fill the position” quickly with his own empty place, the small “holy of holies” which the manager Lever had loaned to the priest, a listening post orthogonally intercepting unintended messages from creaky shoes.

The solution to the differential pace was solved by realizing the idiotic symmetry of servants and masters, where a servant-among-masters would *appear to other servants* as an undifferentiated mass of men dressed in black tuxedos, while a master-among-servants would *appear to other masters* as the same undifferentiated mass. Neither servants nor masters would be alert to the presence of a stranger, who to waiters looked like a servant and to the guests looked like a waiter. The perfect chiasmus, evident only to a concealed listener able to compare the difference in the two paces (quick to indicate a waiter’s attentive errand-running, slow to show to the waiters the indifferent conviviality of a gentleman), told Brown that his opponent was his equal — a genius able to conceal “in plain view” both himself and the valuables he intended to steal.

Brown stops the thief at the coat-check room, when he attempts to leave the dinner suddenly, his tuxedo bulging with stolen silver knives. The thief is shocked by the idea that his trick has been discovered. Brown in effect “reverse-confesses” him. In silent and *immediate* acceptance, he turns over the loot. Does Chesterton’s alertness to crisscross tricks derive from his political inversion of conservatism as a form of banditry? In subsequent stories, the priest and the thief team up, a merger of saint and sinner each with (s)inner duplicity.

Isn’t this in fact the Lacanian structure of the subject interpellated by the Other’s desire, mirror of the intimacy of objects? Wasn’t the objective, acousmatic extimacy of the thief’s tell-tale shoes key to the trap set for the thief, about whom Brown notes “I caught him, with an unseen hook and an invisible line which is long enough to let him wander to the ends of the world, and still to bring him back with a twitch upon the thread.” The spooky entanglement that allows this invisible line to extend to near infinity is the antipodal identification of the one who pulls and the one who responds. In other words, all that’s needed is the simple “inner” distinction that is made not to destroy but preserve the memory of the whole: *tesseract*.

### *Extimacy*

Just as the discourse of the Hysteric is “rotated” 90° from the discourse of the Master, we have a literal graphic ( ⊥ ) relation of Father Brown’s vestibule to the hallway where masters and servants parade past each other ( ⇔ ). Can we use the story’s acousmatic evidence in a more general way, to say that Hysteria’s relation to the Master’s Discourse is, as we have suspected on other accounts, acousmatic? Or, that the Hysteric and composite masterservant are functionally twins? Certainly, there is enough evidence to warrant the construction of a framework of “polythetic” relations where the requirement for strict correspondences is relaxed in favor of seeing general patterns. As in the case of stochastic resonance, a certain



Figure 7. The twins, Castor and Pollux, the “Dioscuri,” were fated to occupy opposite ends of the temporalized universe, one born into the realm of the living while the other dove into Hades. Yet, this limit to exteriority was simultaneously an intimacy in the “spooky entanglement” of their equal-but-opposite movements. Joseph Franz Nollekens, 1767, British Galleries, Room 118.

amount of white noise is required to amplify the weak signals that will turn out to be the most effective ones.<sup>16</sup> Spookiness is more about *moiré* than grids.

Evidence connecting the theme of acousmatics to the Hysteria–Master relation is compelling, even overwhelming. The twinship theme is quite interesting. It is such a vivid element in “The Queer Feet” that it compels us to return to the Hysteria–Master to find out more about the alliance that develops when the \$ subject beneath the / of /Truth becomes an Agent/ in the position to question the Master’s (or masterservant’s) accomplishments. Is the /S2 of the Hysteria’s *matheme* really the stolen silver knives hidden inside Flambeau’s coat? The relation to the story of the banquet is certainly that of a “signifying chain,” and the fact that they are kept under lock and key to guarantee the solidity of the group says a lot about signifying chains in general!

Masters and servants in history are quite stable until a hysteric comes along to question the nature of the servants’ work-around solution to the fundamentally irrational contradiction of the master, who needs to destroy all those who would be capable of giving him the recognition he so fervently desires. The servant must be the invisible one, the nobody who makes the master’s will his own. The servant is the one free to rotate into the position of the Hysteric. The hysteric is there to question the *ease* with which S1→S2, the “empty” master signifier and other signifiers, have organized themselves to “make sense of things.” The servant has a secret, /\$, that must come out and the hysteric shows up to make sure it does. And, of course, the coming out of what has been put so deeply within is a matter of extimacy.

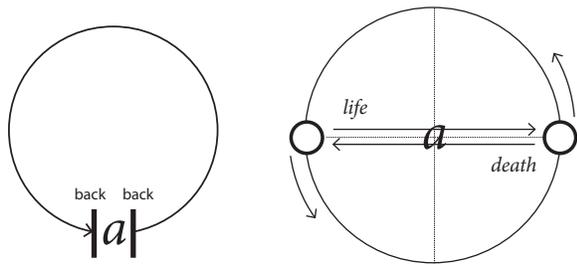
The inside–out logic of Lacan’s extimacy, a topology, is fractalized and refashioned into characters, plot devices, and scene designs. Metonymical resonance of antipodal agencies is often accompanied by the palindromic numerical interactions of 9 and 11.<sup>17</sup> Extimacy requires topology and further figures itself as a pre-Boolean logic working simultaneously from inside and outside Boolean logic’s mandate of either/or with an embrace of both/and, but it’s a “both/and with something extra or something missing” because, in the case of the extimate, lack and surplus are central functions.<sup>18</sup> In the world of the extimate, themes of surplus, say twins standing together, are given a story of lack — one brother dies while the other cannot.

<sup>16</sup> “A polythetic group is — a group of entities such that each entity possesses a large number of the attributes of the group, each attribute is shared by large numbers of entities and no single attribute is both sufficient and necessary to the group membership.” David C. Clarke, *Analytical Archaeology* (London: Methuen & Co., 1968), 37. Ideas of overlap, resonance, family resemblance, and adaptive affinities all involve cases where the causal standard of “sufficient and necessary” are, in a pre-Boolean way, relaxed. In short, the logic of the set becomes the logic of the sorites, where structure emerges as a result of the process of collection rather than being a prerequisite for membership.

<sup>17</sup> See *The Number 9: The Search for the Sigma Code; Nine Fixed Points in the Wind* (London: Prestel, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> See Jacques-Alain Miller, “Extimacy,” *The Symptom* 9 (June 20, 2008 – 5:40 pm). Accessed March 2018: <http://www.lacan.com/symptom/?p=36>. Miller’s anglicization of *extimité* into “extimacy” allows variations: “the extimate,” “extimacy,” and “extimating” can be found in English–language treatments of this idea.

The resulting deal, a rotation between living and dying, makes the overlap of surplus and lack into a



Figures 8. The gapped circle offers a “hysterical” view of Castor and Pollux’s cosmic schema. Both are versions of the Möbius band’s paradoxical topology, where two points placed on *recto* and *verso* of the twisted strip are simultaneously intimate and at maximum distance from each other. This circuit works as a boundary that, instead of cutting a space into two discrete regions, offers a passageway between an “interior virtuality” (perspectival illusionism) and an “extimate” or detached virtuality. Passage between the two is represented by Lacan’s “interior 8.”

into a secondary reality is also a journey into the “impossible-Real” of the dream and death, where simple off/on negation is unrecognized and subjects become nobodies. In the world of Chesterton’s *Queer Feet* stepping to the music of, first, the master then, second, to the servant, we have a pedestrian model of *jouissance*, the fact that we cannot theorize this switching as a binary choice between masters and servants but as an uncanny crisscross.<sup>19</sup> The uncanny of the uncanny is that the *former*, the master’s step, can be seen as “already-always” dancing to the tune of the latter. The Master’s Discourse is set-up in advance to synchronize itself to the Hysteric. In the movement of *a* from the position of Production to the place of Truth, distance has collapsed. There is no longer time to enjoy/endure the anxiety of a far-off threat peeking over the edge of the horizon. The monster is in the room. In Samarra, waiting at the gate for us to arrive.

The uncanny’s two modalities, (1) momentum of life past the point of literal death and (2) the intimacy of the remote, are, as we can see in the homology of the gapped circle and twins’ circuit, the same,

monogram of two antipodal points moving in a perpetual orbit that defines the limit of the universe. But, by this movement, the boundary becomes a Janusian apotrope that renders the beyond as super-intimate. Stepping past the edge returns us to a position that is closer than close but not addressable — in other words, not a face to face but a back to back.

The two graphic emblems generated by the twins’ deal with the gods involve the circular themes of the palindrome (Figs. 7 and 8). The gapped circle and cosmic *apeiron* constitute two different aspects of the Möbius band, where two points placed on opposite sides of the twisted strip are both placed at the farthest distance from each other and the closest.

The spooky entanglement of the extimate, in neutralizing the difference between near and far, consolidates the spatial and temporal domain of the uncanny through operations of “detached virtualities” where, unlike the virtual worlds created by computers, a break

<sup>19</sup> This crisscross is the generative idea behind the carnival, whose summary precedent is the Roman Saturnalia. For generic expansion of the “carnavalesque,” see Mikhail Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington : Indiana University, 2009); for specifics on Saturnalia, consult Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius and Robert A. Kaster, *Saturnalia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2014). Consequences for architecture directly involve the extimate in converting the city’s outdoor spaces into brightly lit rooms, with buildings serving as interior rather than exterior walls. See Werner Oechslin and Anja Buschow Oechslin, *Festarchitektur: der Architekt als Inszenierungskünstler* (Stuttgart: Hatje, 1984).

thanks to their ability to assimilate or “cross-inscribe.”<sup>20</sup> The life with a little death in it,  $A_D$ , is only 90° away from the dead subject who has “forgotten how to die,”  $D_A$ . That is, the smaller, inscribed element survives as a parasite within the main element thanks to an orthopsychic relationship. Although the smaller element draws its nutrition from the larger, the larger uses the smaller as an *automaton*, a machine working independently from, and often contrary to, conscious intention. The contronymic aspect of  $A_D$  and  $D_A$  makes them two sides of the same coin, just as Hysteria is “the other side of the Master’s discourse.” In Freud’s classic rendition of the “primal term” (a word whose embodiment of opposite meanings qualifies it as an outlier of ancient thought’s more intimate relationship to the unconscious), he emphasizes the “loss of will” that comes with the use of such words. One acts with clear purpose only to find that the act has already—always *inscribed* an alien intention preceding the conscious one, and that this inscription has predicted a future encounter where some ancient relationship — a pact, oath, agreement, contract, or curse — will be disclosed. A bill will be presented with the demand that it be “paid in full.”

The uncanny’s algorithmic use of cross-inscription justifies a reverse—engineering of the Hysteria/Master 90° twist. The inscribed element’s status as an orthogonal automaton suggests that the original contronymic relation (bi-)polarizing  $A_D$  and  $D_A$  is an extimate relationship, a Möbius topology. This calls for the “extended reading” of the psychoanalytical term Lacan coined to cover two complementary conditions. (1) In the first, we have the view that the innermost interior of the subject has an objective quality. The subject is interpolated by the Other, and thus this innermost domain reverses the usual idea of privacy. It becomes the very place from which confessions are made. Possibly Lacan had the idea of the Catholic confessional, double boxed seat with a screen separating the priest/confessor and the penitent with a soul to bare. The authenticity of the subject’s kernel of being is what distinguishes the “*je*” from the “*moi*” in French. It is what is true and Real. (2) As if to balance the innermost objectivity, Lacan reinforced Freud’s idea that the unconscious — also popularly identified with the subject’s concealed interior — was not inside but outside. Without objects and objective conditions in the world, the subject would not have ways to invest thoughts that are thought without being recognized as thoughts. Possibly one could make some survival—value argument, that humans who did not immediately and without reflection respond to threats would quickly be exterminated. But, this ability to invest objects with the capacity for thoughts and feelings short—circuits the rational determinations that would be required to assess them as beneficial or threatening. A “threatening sky” calls for immediate, non-reflective response whereas an approaching thunderstorm with only objective qualities would take time to be analyzed. The anger of a charging rhinoceros seems obvious until we realize the anger must be recognized immediately if one hopes to escape.

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<sup>20</sup> This bipolar model was Freud’s inspiration for his theory of the uncanny (Jentsch, “Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen”). Freud did not directly exploit Jentsch’s clearly contronymic definition of the uncanny but usefully took the contronym to the issue of the *Heim*, home, where the familiar is inscribed with the unfamiliar, balanced by the condition where the unfamiliar always seems to have an element of familiarity, as in the case of *déjà vu*. Freud uses an etymological proof to find, within the word *unheimlich* itself, the idea of transgression: of the appearance of *that which should have remained hidden*. This dramatizes cross-inscription by condensing the cross-symmetry into an event of telling what should not be told or bringing to light what should have remained buried — the discovery of, as Poe would put it, a “premature burial.” In the days before embalming, the possibility of catalepsy, a condition of mock-death, created a public fear of being buried alive. The prevalence of tuberculosis, where the corpse remains plump and pink, often with blood trickling from the mouth, created the popular idea that the dead had to be “killed twice,” the second time with a sharpened stake through the heart. The  $D_A$  of this “between the two deaths” was, in popular literature, paired with the theme of the “flight from the enchanter,”  $A_D$ , often in the figure of an immortal wizard looking for fresh converts. See Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (Westminster, UK: Constable, 1897).

The object of threat or attraction must come with its subjective nature “already installed” if subjects are to make use of their sympathetic sense. Sympathy is instantaneous, rational assessment takes time.

The extimation of subjective qualities as objective threats and attractions has an important relationship to a third process, exaptation. This, in brief, is the way in which traits — physical traits, traits of behavior, habits of action, muscular repertoires, etc. — are accumulated and preserved without being “adaptive” or “non-adaptive” in any sense. This is a reservoir of potential actions and responses that may never be put to the test. The best illustration I know of is the popular martial arts drama film, *The Karate Kid* (1984). A teenage boy, Daniel, and his mother move from New Jersey to Los Angeles. A kind elderly immigrant from Okinawa, Mr. Miyagi, the maintenance man in their apartment complex, takes an interest in Daniel and offers to teach him how to defend himself with Karate. Daniel is disappointed that his study seems to be delayed by a series of laborious tasks Miyagi assigns him, which he reads as payment required for future Karate classes, but in fact Miyagi is building up Daniel’s muscles and range of motions so that when he encounters the formal moves of defense and attack he will have already acquired the physical resources to accomplish them. Yet, this is not a case of developing “physical” resources needed for “artful” movements. It was essential that Daniel *not realize* his studies began with painting the wooden fence or polishing Miyagi’s 1947 light green Ford convertible. Under the cover of “doing a payback favor,” the chores were deprived of any utilitarian valuation. This was key to the accumulation and coordination of skills, so that when Daniel was introduced to the formal Karate techniques, he could immediately experience them as continuous bodily movements and, for the first time, consciously recognize their value.

Exaptation in biology is associated with the work of Stephen J. Gould and Elisabeth Vrba’s idea of “preadaptation,” which could be understood as a theory of teleology were it not for detailed case studies of those who, like the ornithologist Walter Bock, dispelled the idea that species could be clairvoyant.<sup>21</sup> Rather, the reverse was the case. For a trait to be kept without being useful for some future critical need, it was necessary for it to be “sidelined,” so to speak — kept out of the game and held in reserve for some unpredictable future moment. In just this way, extimacy inserts subjectivity into objects as “secrets” concealed by appearances. This negation allows objects to develop a fictional personality that seems to emanate from the object itself. And, because the critical component of this objective intentionality is concealment, an object’s “feelings” and “intentions” duplicate, in an external realm, the subjective process of transference. The subject’s unawareness of transference becomes the object’s tricky concealment.

Exaptation/extimacy could only happen, and we could only describe it, in the terms by which Lacan defines the external world as the domain of “the Symbolic,” rather than reality or the Real. Without the object’s *appearance as possibly meaningful*, subjects would be unable to create interior pockets for concealing objects’ “truths.” Objects could not have relationships without the chains of signification or causes and effects that give the external world its coherence — its *objectivity*. In other words, objects are not proper

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<sup>21</sup> See Stephen J. Gould and Elisabeth S. Vrba, “Exaptation — A Missing Term in the Science of Form,” *Paleobiology* 8, 1 (1981): 4–15. Online version accessed March 2018: [http://www2.hawaii.edu/~khayes/Journal\\_Club/fall2006/Gould\\_&\\_Vrb\\_1982\\_Paleobio.pdf](http://www2.hawaii.edu/~khayes/Journal_Club/fall2006/Gould_&_Vrb_1982_Paleobio.pdf); and Walter J. Bock, “Preadaptation and multiple evolutionary pathways,” *Evolution* 13 (2): 194–211. Bock was able to explain how traits could be accumulated and “pre-perfected” over a long period but brought forward as critical adaptations to changing environmental conditions in a sudden, apparently revolutionary way. Revolutionary change did not fit the Darwinesque idea of evolution, but in effect it is the unrecognized key to how evolution actually works. Sudden change may seem to be miraculous without considering how it is the product of exaptation.

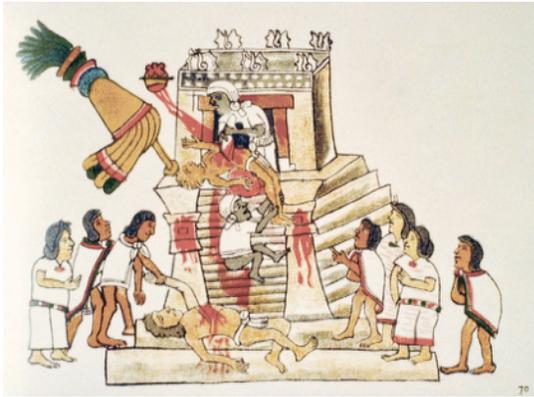


Figure 9. Aztec and Mayan sacrifices emphasized the “extimate” condition requiring the victim’s conscious witness of his own death. This was not based on the desire to find the cruelest form of death but, rather, the consequence of cultural dependence on the co-acceleration of lack and excess, evident in such practices as potlatch.

objects without this subjective Symbolic transformation, a conversion that makes the external world work as an incubator for the subject’s unconscious. Just as the inmost interior of the subject is objective, the inmost interior of the object is subjective. The world of subjects and objects stand back to back. The small space between them is Lacan’s *objet petit a*, a portal of sense, feeling, and emotion that works as a short-circuit energizing the electric economy of a palindromic circulation of forces where there is no clear division between positive and negative charge, only a continually contradictory flow of +/- against -/+. Movement through the gate of the *objet petit a* is compelled by *jouissance*, the curious attraction of the negative — evil, fear, revulsion, dread — which fuses pleasure and pain into a single complex push-pull “through Alice’s looking glass.” It is the Real of the virtual and the virtual of the Real. It is the moment of extimacy, by which subjects see their own heart beating.<sup>22</sup>

Extimacy’s *jouissance* can be domesticated (“de-uncannied”) slightly in situations where confrontation of an Other that is “trying to tell us something” is normalized by circumstances. Such is the case with ekphrasis, the vivid description of a scene or, more commonly, a work of art. The key is that the description goes beyond what is needed to describe a scene generally, in relation to some action, desire, or thought. Without these anchors, the scene/work begins to “speak for itself,” but the origin of its voice cannot be determined. Is it a voice from out of the past? Is it from a concealed interior? The object-world of ekphrasis is simultaneously mute and confessional. It is “trying to tell us something.”<sup>23</sup> The work of ekphrasis domesticates this situation by emphasizing its modes of objectivity: perspectivalism, careful rendition of detail (color, form, texture, shadow, etc.), and a demonstrable intention to inventory its object-world completely. In some cases, the new scene is gauged according to a familiar model whose clear division of parts serves as a guide for dissecting and enumerating the newly discovered complexities.

When Æneas visits the cave of the Cumæan sibyl in order to get advice from his dead father in Book VI, he pauses at the gate to the underworld, two elaborate bronze doors fashioned by Dædalus, illustrating the story of Minos’s annual context of Athenian hostages with the Minotaur, the backstory of the Pasiphæe’s monstrous birth (the gods punished Minos for a defective sacrifice), imprisonment of Dædalus, his escape

<sup>22</sup> This image, borrowed from descriptions of Mayan/Aztec sacrifice, suggests that, in cultures where transactions between conditions of lack and excess are central and highly formalized, “nothing can satisfy the demands” of ritual other than those where the victim is made to be witness to his own death, as in the practice of cutting out the heart and removing it so quickly that it can be displayed to the still-conscious victim. Demand was objectified as a hunger of gods whose unlimited appetites required “self-contradicting” forms of killing. This form of sacrifice is, literally, an instance of the “back to back.”

<sup>23</sup> For an extended consideration of this domesticated uncanny, see Zbigniew Herbert, *Still Life with a Bridle: Essays and Apocryphas* (London: Notting Hill Editions, 2012).



Figure 10. Æneas, in Book VI of *The Aeneid*, gazes at the fine detail in Dædalus's cast bronze doors, a donation in gratitude for the shelter given him by the Sibyl after Icarus had died *en route*. The funeral, death, and *apophrades* of Anchisis during Æneas's descent into the underworld makes Book VI a hinge of Vergil's historical poem. Appropriately, the meaning of this ekphrasis is never fully explained. Instead, the priestess of the shrine whisks Æneas away, advising him not to "waste his time further" with the images.

flight with artificial wings constructed for him and his son Icarus, and Icarus's fatal ascent and fall. This story has a strange *déjà vu* quality for Æneas. It seems to him that the story's images are trying to tell him something about the journey into Hades he now faces.<sup>24</sup>

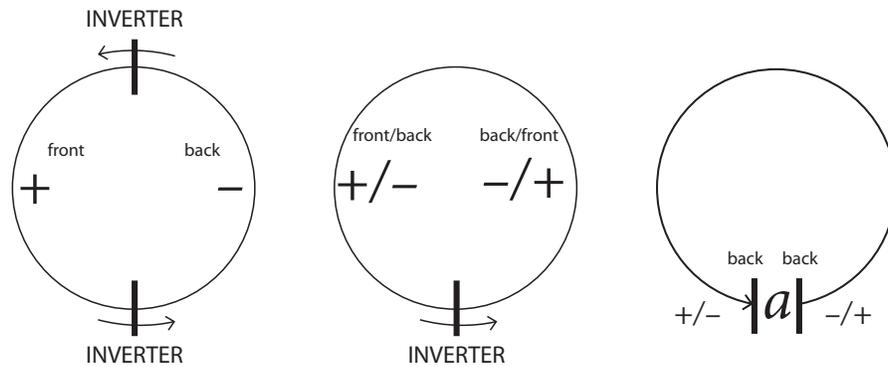
By coupling ekphrasis with a pause at a critical boundary, which could be said to be a "Janusian" boundary between life and death, Vergil indicates, if nothing else, that he is aware of ekphrasis's involvement with the liminal and conditional nature of this boundary. The normal and ordinary presence of imagery on a famously donated portal does not attract attention until Æneas begins to spend more time than would an ordinary entrant passing into an ordinary space. His involvement with each image and its relation to the other images seems to open up the possibility that the story his, somehow, "meant for him." It is an *apophrades* in the same way he seeks to hear the voice of his dead father. But, the image's voice is even more mysteriously dislocated than his father's. The extimacy by which this object has become a subject through an *enumeration* and attempted re-ordering of its detail forces time to run against itself. We see, in this antique example, just how effective extimacy's inside-out strategy can be, and how authors from the earliest days of Western literature have recognized its potential.

Ancient models provide sufficient "ethnographic" evidence to draw the "morphing" of *jouissance* in graphic terms, from an era-  
 sure of a "clean separation" of lack and surplus (the aim of the cultural constructs of normalcy) so that a "palindromic" circuit of +/– and –/+ cross-currents are produced by the removal of one of the *two* inverter functions required to divide any circuit into +

and –. This removal is not simply an abstract invention of the diagram, but a relationship that can develop within any pair of "binary terms" that aspire to the principle of the excluded middle. This is always a failed project when some recursive, self-referential element is restored to the binary. This element was original to the formation of the binary, so its restoration always amounts to a return to the original formation of opposites.

The third stage of *jouissance* is the realization of the single inverter "switch" as a gap, a spatial and temporal divide such as represented in René Magritte's painting, *Not to Be Reproduced*, where a subject with his back to the viewer is shown looking at his reflected image, with its back similarly turned. Comparing this painting to Diego Velázquez's masterwork, *Las Meninas*, shows how the *jouissance* sequence can have the same effect within a different geometry.

<sup>24</sup> For an extended account of this incident of ekphrasis, see W. F. Jackson-Knight, *Cumaeen Gates: A Reference of the Sixth Aeneid to the Initiation Pattern* (Oxford, UK: Basel Blackwell, 1936).



Figures 11a, 11b, and 11c. *Jouissance's* diagrammatic stages could be compared to the “clean cut” societies attempt to make between pleasure/enjoyment and displeasure (pain, dissatisfaction, anxiety, etc.). This could be considered as the “naïve” view that sees pleasure and displeasure as binary opposites, i. e. that the achievement of one involves the exclusion or negation of the other. The second diagram, 11b, is a literal depiction of Freud’s concept of the death drive; namely, as a relation of mutual *non*-exclusivity. Pain is intrinsically structured within the pursuit of pleasure, and *vice versa*, in the same sense that, in the primary situations of the uncanny, AD/DA, life and death are “inscribed” within each other. Note that this model parallels the idea of extimacy, where subjectivity and objectivity are also cross-inscribed. 11c explicates the single inverter switch as a gap, realized as contradictions, inconsistencies, and antagonisms within the Symbolic’s signifying chains. The gap, though Real, can be represented in various ways where contradiction can be parodied visually or narratively, as in Magritte’s *Not to Be Reproduced*.

The painting *Las Meninas* is well known. A complete inventory of its elements and structure was famously given by Michel Foucault in *The Order of Things* (*Les mots et les choses*, 1966). The viewer sees a room whose contents and architectural details are faithfully and almost photographically represented. Nothing seems out of place. We see a painter standing in front of a canvas whose back is turned to us, glancing back and forth to where the viewer now stands. Clearly, he was painting someone (actually the King and Queen of Spain, Filipe IV and his wife Mariana) who was standing at approximately the position the present-day viewer now stands. Nearby are courtiers (“las meninas”) attending the Infanta Margaret Theresa. Court dwarfs and a dog stand guard at the lower right of the painting; the custodian of the Alcazar (*apostador*, whose name, coincidentally, was also Diego Velázquez) stands at the door at the back of the room, holding back a curtain so that his hand indicates the center of the canvas and vanishing point of the perspective. To his right is a mirror that seems brightly to reflect the royal couple, but at a scale larger than what could be produced by the couple standing so far away.

The viewer stands in a position that seems clearly to have been occupied by the subjects the painter was in the process of painting, but this directly brings us to a point of a contradiction. If the painting is correct, then the painter must have also been standing where the viewer now stands. The perspectival exactitude of the pictorial space seems nonetheless to have the structure of a Möbius band. Indeed, the intimacy of the three “entities” that must, at one time, have occupied the space in front of the canvas is distributed in ways that show how the “paired inverter switch” can be halved to create palindromic internal circuit and how the remaining inverter half-switch is enlarged to create a material gap. The canvas represents the cut made by the picture plane between viewing and representation, which was formerly the zones

of the painter and the painting. But, if the painter was the *agent* and his models were also standing at this spot, the painter must simultaneously represent himself inside the painting, a self-portrait. To double this doubling, Velázquez arranges the canvas whose back is turned to us so that it is potentially the source of the couple we see in the mirror at the back of the room.

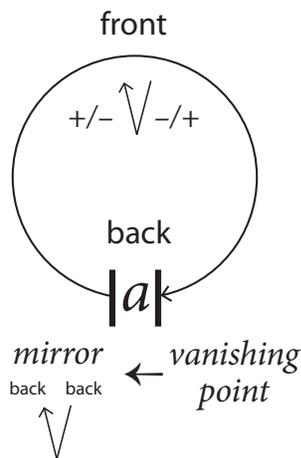


Figure 12. The shift between the perspectival vanishing point and the “alternative” vanishing point of the mirror (which indirectly mirrors the contents of the “back” of the literal canvas of *Las Meninas*) shows how the interior of the representation is a circulation of palindromic forces.

With the “clean division” between viewing and viewed erased by the impossible demands made on the space in front of the physical canvas, the normally paired inverter switches are reduced to a single switch that creates a turbulence in the circulation between spectator and the painting’s contents. The circuit’s two options, a painter painting himself painting the royal couple, who would be *facing in the same direction as the spectator now faces*, has turned around. The mirror at the back of the room, similarly, has shown us the contents of the painting that has also been turned around. The mirror turns what was in a correct position on the reversed canvas and given us what the royal couple might have seen had the canvas been replaced by a mirror, blocking the view of anything beyond. This mirror has *photographed* the royal couple so that their image could be transported intact to the rear of the room.

Similarly, Velázquez could be claiming to be looking at a mirror himself. This accounts for everything except the figures in the mirror at the rear of the room, the figures “anecdotally required” to believe that it is possible to witness the painter in the process of painting the royal couple from the point of view of that couple. The movement from 11b to 11c in the above figure, the opening of a distinction into a material gap, occurs in the painting with the distance between the perspectival vanishing point and the center of the mirror. Using the known dimensions of this room, calculations show how the mirror must reflect the subjects represented on the painting turned away from us. The angle required is materially represented in the

distance between the main painting’s center and the line connecting our view with the contents of the reversed painting. The “jump” across this gap is equivalent to the jump from one “back” (the back of the room and the limit of our view) to another “back,” the painting turned away from our view. The painting’s spookiness emerges after the long accumulation of small details that don’t fit. By the time they appear to us as a gap that corresponds directly to our move from consuming the “pleasure” of the image to our “dissatisfaction” with an image that in a sense refuses to represent reality but, in refusing, represents a Real. Rejecting the binary division of representing and represented implicates a more complex truth: that it has been our very demand for the pleasure of a “clean cut” made by the representational plane that has constructed the reverse: a permanent and durable antagonism that always has and always will accompany such demands.

All this is compounded by the existence of two vanishing points in the painting. One is the apex of converging lines of the walls, windows, and cornices; the other is the mirror in the calculated geometry of points involving the back wall, the viewer’s point of view, and the reversed canvas. The middle of the painting, which ought to be the location of the vanishing point of a one point perspective is, curiously, empty. In

effect, Velázquez creates a hollow space between the two vanishing points as the basis of a *poché* that conceals a spirit force protecting the durability, the “salt” of the painting.<sup>25</sup> If perspective is “wet,” orthographic drawing is “dry” by the fact that, along the picture plane, it cuts into the interior, creating half-objects corresponding to a halfway manner of speaking (mis dire), which is by definition the way painting’s picture plane divides the space of representation in to viewer and viewed, containing deictic “pronouns” channeling the silences between alternating speakers and listeners. Velázquez’s internal “anaphoric” pronouns are also halved: the two perspectival systems, the source for the mirror reflection, the double portrait, the doubling of Velázquezes.

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<sup>25</sup> Ernest Jones, “The Symbolic Significance of Salt,” in *Essays in Applied Psychoanalysis II: Essays in Folklore, Anthropology and Religion*, *The International Psycho-Analytical Library* 41, ed. Ernest Jones, M.D. (London: The Hogarth Press, 1951), 24–25. Salt’s relation to both boundary crossing and sexual potency may have its origins as an apotropaic prophylaxis used against the evil eye, to conceal defections from the worship of the ancestral dead at the hearth from the watchful, vengeful eyes of the *manes*, who would curse the heath were they to see a daughter of one family become a bride in another. The fiction of abduction absolved the bride from any collusion, just as salt — famed for its anti-*dæmon* powers — could be spread on the floor, across thresholds, or even in the bride’s shoes to fake love as rape. This “consent to non-consent” is the standard formula of sadism/masochism’s formal practices, where fictionalized aggression in master–slave relationships “salts up” Hegel’s parable and Lacan’s formalization of it as a discourse.



## 7 / Running Backwards



Figure 1. Photography in the period of the American Civil War (1865–1869) developed simultaneously with the idea of the specter of the corpse, the hero desiccated and set within a random posture that, before this time, had been the macabre idea of a “dance of death,” the notion that from the perspective of life’s end point a certain choreography took effect.

ply, a dead man. This paradoxical addition of extra risk to avoid shame while at the same time inviting death puts the finger on the paradox of human subjectivity, that guilt continues past life, or even we should say that it *especially* continues past life, that the grave one comes across in the woods (in the story cited by Adolf Loos as identifying burial “the first architecture”) is extraordinary in showing that the name and its *honor* bears more on materiality — the pile of bones beneath the earth — than it does while life provides the subject with excuses and alibis.<sup>1</sup>

Life is, after all, sheer contingency. The path taken requires that other paths not be taken. The branch on the tree seems to lead outward to a world uniquely defined by the turns taken to reach it. This is Borges’ “Garden of the Forking Paths” (1941), a hierarchical brachiated design that seems, like Zeno’s arrow, to take one path in order to negate all the alternatives. But, as with the retreating soldier, we turn around at the moment of death and at the same time time itself turns around. The forward Zenonian movement, where time is equated with the space interval covered, is overtaken. Swift Achilles is passed by the tortoise.

In French it is easy to distinguish between *énoncé*, what is said (the content) and the act of saying it, *énonciation*. In *énonciation* there is a forward movement, a kind of demand and expectation. The speaker is looking toward a future outcome that speech may bring about, if things work out (or, rather, the way

“You could say of everyone as subject, we do not know that we are already dead.”

—Jacques-Alain Miller, *Symptom 8*

“Such is the fright that seizes man when he discovers the true face of his power that he turns away from it in the very act — which is his act — of laying it bare. This is the case of psychoanalysis.”

—Jacques Lacan, *Les Écrits*

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A soldier in the awful battle of Antietam wrote in his diary that, in retreating he would turn around, slowing down his frantic escape, so that in case he was shot it wouldn’t be in the back, which would bring him shame in death. Possibly this demonstration of how the death drive works in real life, as a pursuit of the *jouissance* of honor, came from the increasing importance of photographs of corpses on the battlefield and the knowledge that the idea of the hero would return to its ancient etymological basis as, sim-

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<sup>1</sup> Adolf Loos: “When walking through a wood, you find a rise in the ground, six foot long and three foot wide, heaped up in a rough pyramid shape, then you turn serious, and something inside you says: someone lies buried here. *That Is Architecture*.” Quoted in Denis Hollier, *Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges Bataille* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989). <<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=49008>>.

language — the Symbolic — has imposed an order on the speaker and receiver). The enunciated, *énoncé*, is the subject–content of language. It’s the “I” inside the language box, the prisoner. Thus is the subject split into a Real that finds its form at the risk of annihilation in the act; and the Symbolic, which entombs it (prematurely — the nineteenth century’s specialty horror of premature burial).

The subject of enunciation is the “I” who speaks, the individual doing the speaking; the subject of the enunciated is the “I” of the sentence. “I” is not identical to itself — it is split between the individual “I” (the subject of enunciation) and the grammatical “I” (the subject of the enunciated). Although we may experience them as unified, this is merely an Imaginary illusion, for the pronoun “I” is actually a substitute for the “I” of the subject. It does not account for me in my full specificity; it is, rather, a general term I share with everyone else. In order to do so, my empirical reality must be annihilated or, as Lacan avers, “the symbol manifests itself first of all as the murder of the thing.” The subject can only enter language by negating the Real, murdering or substituting the blood-and-sinew reality of self for the concept of self expressed in words. For Lacan and Žižek every word is a gravestone, marking the absence or corpse of the thing it represents and standing in for it. It is partly in the light of this that Lacan is able to refashion Descartes’ “I think, therefore I am” as “I think where I am not, therefore I am where I think not.” The “I think” here is the subject of the enunciated (the Symbolic subject) whereas the “I am” is the subject of the enunciation (the Real subject). What Lacan aims to disclose by rewriting the Cartesian cogito in this way is that the subject is irrevocably split, torn asunder by language.<sup>2</sup>

In a remarkable way (remarkable because it shows how love and death are two sides of the same coin), the soldier who turns around to face the bullet he is more likely to receive personally so that his running



Figure 2. Fred Astaire’s remarkable technical achievement in the “Bo Jangles” dance number in *Swing Time* (1932) was to create multiple shadow silhouettes from separate takes, combining them with special projection techniques to coordinate with the “live” Astaire dancing in 3-d. The uncanny effect of the shadows is that they sometimes seem annealed to the 3-d dancer but at other times “escape.”

away will not convert to dishonor is the “I” who is falling in love. Alain Badiou writes (*In Praise of Love*, 2002): “That is how chance is curbed: the absolute contingency of the encounter with someone I didn’t know finally takes on the appearance of destiny. The declaration of love marks the transition from chance to destiny, and that’s why it is so perilous and so burdened with a kind of horrifying stage fright.” The move from one form of “I” to the other in love is not, as it would seem from the idea of declaration, from the Real to the Symbolic but, rather, from a condition of non-destiny to destiny. The Real of destiny transforms the “I” from a grammatical pronoun that is shared with others to the Real subject, subject to death. The subject turns around to face what is made more likely to bring him/her down. The direction of running has not changed, only the facing of the runner, who turns his back on safety and faces what can only be the back of life. In this turn the prima-

<sup>2</sup> “The Subject of Enunciation,” *Nosubject.com, An Encyclopedia of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. Accessed March 2018: [http://nosubject.com/Subject\\_of\\_the\\_Enunciation](http://nosubject.com/Subject_of_the_Enunciation).

ry of escape becomes the secondary of reflection. One embraces the death not as a necessity but as a probability.

As improbable as it may seem, this thought presented itself in the middle of a short excursion I made into the tap-dance spectacles of the 1930s, beginning with Fred Astaire's masterful stagings in *Swing Time*, which I knew quite well, but then forcing myself to look at the work of Busby Berkeley, whose *Caliente* is so hard to watch, by its pushy presentation of every sexist and racist stereotype of the age. Astaire pays tribute to Bill Robinson, the famous Bo Jangles, in ways that make us squirm because we have forbidden ourselves any pleasure arising from the exploitative images of vaudeville, but it is clear that, in the artist-to-artist dialog created within the dance, Astaire as much as says, "I am as black as this guy — *I was originally born black* — but I didn't realize it until I danced." Berkeley, if we can look past his collaborationist sexism and racism, is a gemologist. More than any other film producer, he sees the contradiction of the spectacle, that on the ground it must be a chaos of motion, fragmentary profiles, and lost horizons; but from the air it reveals itself as a perfect crystal. In *Caliente*, for example, the spotlight on the dancers create shadows on the ballroom floor that at one point seem to have a life of their own. It will not be until *Swing Time* that Astaire perfects this idea in his Bill Robinson tribute, a technological achievement with back-projected prismatic images some ten times taller, dancing closely in synch but then slightly out of synch with a black-faced Astaire.

The Aruba and other West African cultures that gave us tap dancing would have applauded this use of the disloyal shadow, the shadow that can betray us at any time lest we, running down the road in a hasty retreat from destiny, fail to turn around, fail to tend to our reputation. The shadow on the floor takes certain liberties the shadow on the wall must forego. In Murnau's 1922 Expressionist horror film, *Nosferatu*, shadows seem to rush up the stairs in advance of their owner. We are already tuned into vampires' generic dysfunctionality *vis à vis* mirror images, so it's not surprising that shadows are only part-time workers. In Murakami's *Hard Boiled Wonderland at the End of the World*, the dreaming protagonist must check his shadow at the entry-way before being admitted to the Town, a magical precinct where time not only stops,

it seems to have lost its distinction between forward and backward. The deal is you can get anything you want if you are willing to let your shadow die. This seems to be the deal being considered by the Confederate soldier at the Battle of Antietam, also the deal being negotiated by Berkeley and Astaire.



Figure 3. Busby Berkeley's *Gold Diggers* (1935).

Berkeley's possibly most architectural set-piece was done to the tune of "Lullaby of Broadway," in the film *Gold Diggers* (1935). A series of shallow rise broad steps angle around a look-out balcony where a sophisticated couple sits, as the only patrons of some dance-club run by Leni Riefenstahl, dressed to obliterate individual identity in favor of a sexual binary. Boys and girls go through drills like the competing

armies, and the high camera angle reveals Berkeley's idea about the body and time. It is a mechanism that "tells time" not in the sense of obeying a rote forward ticking towards the future but in the more literal sense, that it "tells time what to do." It is the receiver that becomes a transmitter, the radio that, like the Enormous Radio of John Cheever's 1947 short story of the same name, doesn't just report on reality, it generates it.<sup>3</sup> The photograph, the movie screen, and the radio-graphic penetration into all of the apartments in the building in New York where Irene and Jim live, becomes orthopsychic thanks to the orthographic cut of a fourth wall into reality, imposing a grammar alongside a Real. The grammar cuts into the Real on a 1:1 scale that disallows perspective, allowing the eye, an "ortho eye," to enter each detail under the same conditions, without being tied to one point of view that would impose an angular difference. The crystal of dancers seen from above, the disobedient shadows that dance Astaire back to his black past, and the soldier who turns to face the bullet all find their orthopsychic selves in the back to back of the orthographic crystal-preserving section.

The retreating soldier turned around for the sake of his honor, the central choreographic move in the *danse macabre*.<sup>4</sup> The sudden turn (negation in motion) to protect honor at the same time invites death. This act condenses the logic of the Master's Discourse. Life is subordinated to honor, S1/\$. This is in the face of the anonymous mass of other signifiers (S2), armed with loaded rifles, who can barely conceal their pleasure that, once it crosses the length of the battlefield, will be pain. The earth littered with human debris is also the "crystal land" where the death dream will carry the deceased beyond the point of the literal. Naturally, this could only be a dance. One of the first and most famous death dreams in literature (Plato, *The Republic*) also came from a pile of corpses. The soldier, Er, after days lying comatose, revived and told the story of the journey of souls to Elysium and back, a spiritual recycling program. Nabokov, whose imposter narrator Vadim Vadimovich N. said, "The 'I' in the book cannot die in the book" (*Look at the Harlequins!*, 1974) nonetheless had written in *The Eye* (1930) about a suicide who continues his dramatic interactions with living characters, understood that the death-dream is a turn that allows a special kind of collection to form, whose symmetry will be an inside-out matter that, like the experience of discovering that space has flipped around you without any apparent change of your own position, you have turned. Possibly Nabokov thought that by switching from the pronoun to the homophonous organ that "I" could exempt himself. If the Master's Discourse tells us about the decision to (literally) face death, is the turn analogous to the 90° rotation in the Hysteric's Discourse of the subject \$ to the position of Agent and the placement of the death-drive, the *objet petit a*, in the position of "the dream that comes across as truth"?

In enunciation (the act), content (*énoncé*) is pushed forward, through space, along wires, down channels, etc. A sudden reversal indicates that this positive content had been formed by separating out other content. Without suppression, positive content cannot be positive or move forward. Suppression on the other hand has had the benefit of silently accumulating the debris of this selection; and Gould and Vrba's principle of exaptation makes this further, extraordinary claim: that negation *in itself* has provided this

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<sup>3</sup> Cheever, John. "The Enormous Radio," reprinted in *The Enormous Radio and Other Stories* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1953).

<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, the *danse macabre* or dance of death involves a soretic meroism: an enumeration of the parts of a (social) whole whose unity is formed with the sudden act of death. "The Danse Macabre consists of the dead or a personification of death summoning representatives from all walks of life to dance along to the grave, typically with a pope, emperor, king, child, and laborer. They were produced as *mementos mori*, to remind people of the fragility of their lives and how vain were the glories of earthly life. Its origins are postulated from illustrated sermon texts; the earliest recorded visual scheme was a now-lost mural at Holy Innocents' Cemetery in Paris dating from 1424 to 1425." "Danse Macabre," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Accessed March 2018: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danse\\_Macabre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danse_Macabre).

accumulation with an implicit virtual order that, when the moment is right, become evident. The sudden turn to face death will in fact be a dance and the order of the dance will string along a necessary sequence, a narration of all that “had, has, and will have had to be.” The question in the case of the soldier running backwards is, what is it that has turned? Is it not the kernel of subjectivity that has turned, in its irreducible objectivity? Isn't this the “true face” of the subject, the one that is required for honor?

The *énoncé/énonciation* division replays the origins of language in a way that gets around the linguists' beef about Freud's “primal words” argument. As Émile Benveniste put it (paraphrasing), there is no such thing as a primal language, all languages are equal in their structural facilitation of diverse relations between signifiers and signifieds. Neither Lacan nor Lacanians have begged to differ, not much at least. Lacan was interested in James Joyce as a young man, and Joyce was of course famously interested in Vico, the philosopher–hero of *Finnegans Wake*. Lacan knew of Vico but was not known to devote any serious attention to the 18c. Neapolitan philosopher of culture. Vico's theory of three stages of culture (mythic, heroic, human) figured centrally in the meta-theoretical speculations of Oswald Spengler, Ernst Cassirer, Walter Fairservis, Stephen Pepper, Hayden White, Northrop Frye, and Frank Mannheim, where the three ages were converted to styles of thought, culture, and expression. Lacanians studiously avoid such formal designs, just as they have been careful to avoid static interpretations of Lacan's L-scheme and other diagrammatical *mathemes*. While Lacan liked to draw, his followers have not. There has never been a diagram, and hardly any illustrations, in any of Žižek's many books.

In contrast, Vico's thoughts could be said to begin and end with an image, or rather two images, the so-called *dipintura* and *impresa*, the first which was inserted (so the story goes) at the last minute before publication of the 1744 edition of *The New Science*, and a companion image showing *Metafisica*, who appears first in the *dipintura*, in another pose, seated, leaning against a plinth inscribed with the motto, “Ignota Latebat” (“she lay hidden”). Donald Phillip Verene argues that the *dipintura* and *impresa* are like part one and part two of Vico's story, a “before and after” pair. There is something to this theory, and along these lines we have another case of a character who, like the Wicked Witch of the West, has stepped out of a primary work to tell her own story. The *impresa* is “secondary” in the sense that her angle on things is *literally* a mini-treatise on angles. She is looking into a mirror that she holds in her left hand at a builder's square (a triangle) held in her right. This pose has a spooky quality that even the *dipintura*, with its divine eye and goddess perched perilously on a globe balanced on the edge of an altar, lacks. In the *dipintura* we have the kind of guessing game that dominated European intellectual life for over two hundred years. The tradition of emblem books juxtaposed images and texts so that readers would be provoked into finding new meanings in purposefully enigmatic arrays of figures and objects. The *impresa*'s air of mystery is introduced by the engraved words' connection of secrecy and lying low. If *Metafisica* was lying low when, at the same time, she surmounted the visible world to connect human works to the divine eye, she may be giving away her trick in the angular reflection she demonstrates in looking at the triangle/square she holds in her right hand.

The “after” image works like a footnote or clue rather than a representation of a successor “modern” mentality replacing a “mythic/heroic” mentality in the *dipintura*. If anything, the *dipintura* is the scholarly universal corresponding to the “imaginative universal” of mythic thought. It is a decoder of a *tableau vivant* showing the dynamics of the three forms of human mentality in vertical order, from the event of thunder, to the altars set up for divination and the rituals of marriage and burial based on the laws of the

auspices, to the secularized institutions of agriculture, navigation, trade, writing, and civic organization. The helmet of Hermes, the only object Vico does not mention in his otherwise complete inventory in the text that describes the *dipintura*, is the scholar's. The statue of Homer seems to point at it as if to say, "take it, it's yours." The scholarly universal is the takes-one-to-know-one thesis Vico advances in paragraph 345, the thesis that the pattern of history, to be discovered, must be re-narrated in the pattern of writing about history. "The work" (*factum*) is the universal human undertaking's necessary orderliness. This, I would argue, has to do with the primary division of *énoncé* and *énonciation*. This division can be found in Vico's imaginative universal, the basis of mythic thinking; in the "heroic universal," when thought begins to secularize itself away from mythic autoeroticisms; and in the fully modern universals (Lacan's S1), signifiers that, empty in themselves, are able to order the content of all other signifiers (Lacan's S2s).

Vico's way of writing Lacan would be to say that the "primary division" of *énoncé* and *énonciation* is sequential (1) in the way it operates in any given instance and (2) in its ability to evolve separate *forms* of operating in given instances. Vico would be happy to use the form of the Master's discourse as a starting point for culture, although Vico would make it evident that the rule of the Masters derived directly from the perception of nature as significant. This is different from seeing nature as an encyclopedia of signs relating the nature and behavior of physical objects, plants, animals, and dynamic processes. Such signifying systems must be present for Vico's semantic revolution to take place. In a fable about the thunder, Vico argues that the fear induced by a force such as the thunder's creates two linked effects. Simultaneously, objects are hollowed out by a subjective interior; and humans are hollowed out, but given an objective interior, which they are able — and this is the key point — to *share* as a collectivity.<sup>5</sup> There is not one master, in other words, but many, and they must all fight for recognition. This collectivity is different from the tribal collectivity that "abides harmoniously" in a natural setting. It is a warring capacity that places honor and recognition above survival of the individual. The group depends on the ones "willing to die for honor." At first these are kings and priests whose literal death is elided by institutions and cults that give them, symbolically, eternal life. This is the origin of the "king's two bodies" and the ability of the crown to metonymize kingship at the expense of the literal, mortal king.<sup>6</sup> At a later stage, the immortality of the king (as king-*ship*) gives way to the hero, whose immortality becomes limited. At first the word hero designates simply "a dead man." Then, the hero as champion is given the privilege to visit the underworld and return. Finally, the hero's immortality becomes simply the reputation for fighting and winning, against heavy odds.

With the evolution of the hero as one who voluntarily submits to suffering, as in the case of Odysseus's twelve-month journey, a fully modern human mentality emerges from the hero's balance of wins and losses. The epic hero becomes the modern hero through figures, such as Hamlet or Lear, who internalize their winning and losing as psychological states to be resolved in acts that, once undertaken, turn out badly. The modern tragic hero is the public form of Freud's death drive, but we cannot see this without Vico's evolu-

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<sup>5</sup> The objectivized interiorization of the subject is a project rather than an instant result. The project is, in Freudian terms, the construction of the Ego, the subject proper set up within the domain of the (Lacanian) Imaginary and the Symbolic. Because this project is never fully finished, subjects collectivity is consolidated in one direction by "interpellation" by the Symbolic and its representatives and eroded in the other direction by the subject's failures and identifications with gaps and antagonisms within the Symbolic. The pre-subjective is always present in the form of the autoeroticism and megalomania that characterize pre-subjectivity.

<sup>6</sup> See Eric Santner, *The Royal Remains: the People's Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2012).

tionary schema, which begins with the imaginative universal's simultaneous collectivized subjects and privative objects. The hero "willing to die for honor" turns around and runs backwards, /\$ in the *matheme* of the Master's Discourse. This principle is the empty master signifier that orders other signifiers (an eigenform):  $S1 \rightarrow S2$ . Now, knowledge thus objectified has a subjective interior, the /a that fuels the death drive that, in Vico's view, is evolutionary. But, how evolutionary? Clearly Vico's schema of gods/heroes/men is not as simple as some have said. It is evolution with the footnote about exaptation, which explains how the stories of the gods, heroes, and men are *moved forward* thanks specifically to a suppression, which we could write generically as /a, of a *jouissance* able to hystericize the pleasure principle into a pleasure-pain inverter switch. Thus,  $a = \Leftarrow$ , a primary palindromic operator whose occultation credentials have it always operating *beneath thing*, in the shadows, inside heavily guarded interiors. That *jouissance* is fundamentally palindromic is what Jacques-Alain Miller implies in his essay on extimity, when he shows how *jouissance* stands in for the non-existence of the Other of the Other.<sup>7</sup> To say that there is no meta-language (or meta-painting, or meta-novel) is not to say that *Finnegans Wake* or *Las Meninas* do not stand as paradigmatic singularities. Their ability to be located within historical streams and yet permanently transcend those streams derives from their relationship to *jouissance* and the palindromic resources of the /a. We don't judge these works — or Hamlet, or the Parthenon, or *Don Quixote*, etc. — on a sliding scale of comparative achievements. They are not films receiving Academy Awards for "best supporting actors" and the like. Rather, they are instructional. Their discourse lies outside of the systems of Master, Hysteric, University, and Analysis in the same way Lacan said of his teaching, that as teaching it had foresworn the right to push a message from sender to receiver. Instead, teaching dwells on and in the *distinction between* agency that pushes ideas and enunciations into circulating systems of knowledge of one form or another and the *act* that suppresses and collects and orders what has fallen and remain hidden from these circulating systems. What is "better off dead" is, literally, better. Where ordering is possible (even in the highest, Gödellian, sense) only when the aspiration to complete has been foresworn (Lacan's "I can't say everything there is to say"), the question becomes one of completion's continuing presence *as foresworn*.

To foreswear life on behalf of honor means that, in a sense, "death doesn't matter" because honor can be continued "heroically," as a Name that is carried by the family from generation to generation. This is the distinction between *énoncé* and *énonciation* put into historical and ethnological terms. Vico would add that this distinction is inherently self-transforming; that it must advance itself through stages of mythic, heroic, and conceptual formation. But, more abstractly, the distinction is that between signifier and signified. The object is robbed by the word that represents it, and this robbery is the beginning (and essence) of the extimate. The material object, a tree for example, is conditioned out of the "thingness" conferred by the signifier, "tree." There is an internal essence that did not exist before the signifier; something that is concealed behind appearances in the same way that a secret charm is hidden in the floorboards so that, when

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<sup>7</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, "Extimite," *Lacanian Theory of Discourse: Subject, Structure, and Society* (New York and London: New York University, 1994), 74–87. By aligning *jouissance* with the non-existing "Other of the Other," Miller is able to show that "*Jouissance* is precisely what grounds the alterity of the Other when there is no Other of the Other." This very Vichian statement means that, in the Master's discourse, the /a is what enables the system of signifiers, S2, to be directed by the agency of S1, whose agency has *acted* and is associated with actions that "heroically" work in opposition to the survival interests of the subject, /\$. The hero turns around and runs backwards. *Jouissance* turns around from the pleasure principle to the death drive. The master signifier works because it is empty, the Other of the Other works because it does not exist, and *jouissance*'s parallel status as /a makes this possible. *Jouissance* in the hysteric converts feelings of pleasure into reports of pain, but more fundamentally it drives the quest for pleasure past the point of any possible satisfaction by assigning objects that pleasure cannot ever possess.

the master steps over it, the servant can mutter a curse with greater effectiveness.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the occultation of invisible charms within visible things made hollow by the Symbolic shows how servants make use of concealment to gain control over masters. The /a of the Master's Discourse could easily be seen as the cache of herbs or animal parts in the floorboards within the Master's house, S2. The curse as an "empty utterance" muttered under the breath by the servant /\$ is the palindromic power that could only be maintained by those with access to the house, S2, but no authority, /\$.

Rather than simply draw attention to the obvious effectiveness of the *matheme's* ability to annotate the ethnographic practice of planting spectral cosmograms within the space of the master's house, what if we make an equally provocative, reverse observation — that the Lacanian *mathemes* of discourse are also cosmograms? Certainly, the *matheme's* structure is spatial. A quadrated field is divided into sectors by Agent/Truth on the left and Other/Production on the right. In most versions, curved and straight arrows indicate the dynamics of transactions between elements. The field lies beneath the "players," the split subject, the master signifier, the signifying chains, and the *objet petit a*, as they parade in fixed succession across the four zones. But, the most compelling reason for seeing the *mathemes* as cosmograms is that discourses work as a kind of *charm* that ...

[TO BE CONTINUED]

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<sup>8</sup> The practice of constructing "cosmograms" by concealing objects within the floors and walls of a house to give servants magical control over masters was widespread in Colonial America. See Lynn Jones, "Crystals and Conjuring at the Charles Carroll House, Annapolis, Maryland," *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter* 7, 1 (January 2000); available on-line at <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/adan/vol7/iss1/2>.

## 8 / Ersatz



Figure 1. Nothing says “ersatz” more than the roadside restaurant, answering to the long-range driver’s desire to satisfy the need for food, rest, and evacuation. Despite the tradition of claiming to offer “home cooking,” standard culinary reductions are rendered acceptable thanks to an atmosphere of anonymity (serving the “traditional family”) and accommodation. The advantage of offering a substitute for nearly everything one would prefer *elsewhere* is that, in accepting an inferior stand-in, one gets in exchange the more valuable commodity of convenience (at-handedness) and anonymity.

successful additions of these multi-modal symbols. The rebus stands out as being simultaneously clever and stupid. The graphic picture must be pronounced, then the sound converts to a word with an entirely different origin and meaning.

These paper place-mats always struck me, when I was a member of the target demographic, as “ersatz” entertainment. The ploy was thinly disguised. The point was to keep kids quiet while adults were having adult conversations. The tricks were barely functional, since the secrets the codes contained were not worth knowing in the first place. The whole genre gave itself away in the cheap printing: bad colors, poor registration, over-prints and bleeds. The paper was one step up from cheap newsprint. Anyone giving in to the proposal to be entertained by such shabby commercial crowd-control techniques felt degraded by the ease of being co-opted, as one is, later in life, when caught laughing at a racist or sexist joke.

But, the idea of the rebus was, of all the tricks of the cheap place-mat, transcendent. It opened on to broader horizons, not just in linguistics and philosophy, where one might expect, but in mathematics and psychoanalysis, where the trick of looking and saying goes to the heart of the relationship between the two drives that Lacan added to Freud’s standard list, oral, anal, and phallic. Perhaps when Lacan saw the significance of these as, respectively, the part-object, the gift, and the signifier he saw the necessity of

Is there a secret link between the emergence of a new type of subjectivity, the subject of the Enlightenment, and blindness? If the enlightenment, as its name implies, tried to impose a new type of vision and insight, why was it so preoccupied at its core with blindness? Could one paradoxically maintain that the subject of the Enlightenment is essentially blind?

—Alenka Zupančič<sup>1</sup>

Paper place-mats in the kind of restaurants that dotted regional highways across the U. S. in the 1950s were designed to keep children of a certain age (able to read, unable to travel alone) occupied. Over-bright graphics presented the young lector with puzzles, cartoons, and tasks. One of these was to decipher messages written in code, frequently pictorial codes known as rebuses (objects intended to be pronounced to reveal their homophone twins), sometimes combined with numbers, separated by plus or minus signs promising a happy conclusion at the end of

<sup>1</sup> Alenka Zupančič, “Philosopher’s Blind Man’s Buff,” *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, Renata Selacl and Slavoj Žižek, eds., *Sic 1* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University, 1996), 32.

adding the gaze and the voice. As drives, these were based on the uncanny transfer of the subject's own desire to the Other, a construction of self-surveillance in the case of the gaze and a displacement of voice in the case of the voice.

The issue of location is particularly evident in the way the voice becomes a drive. The voice becomes a drive as soon as we can't locate it. Either it sounds out from inside our heads or outside of the frames of perception. When it is internal, it is alien. It is evidence of our "interpellation" — being called to answer — by the forceful super-ego, usually produced in maternal or paternal styles. And, even if we don't specifically recognize the voices of our mothers or fathers, these interior voices act as agencies for their moralisms or, considerably more bothersome, obscene commands. When the voice is external, its off-stage positional ambiguity justifies using a special term: *acousmatic*.<sup>2</sup> This is the secondary function of sound, just as the sound is a secondary function of the rebus image. A password is an everyday expression that is identified in advance as a trigger warning or key code giving the speaker the status of "one in the know." This can work even in negative ways, as when the French soldier crawling back from no-man's-land to safety behind the fortified line is challenged: "Halt who goes there!" "I'm a Frenchman!" "Well, then, sing the second verse of 'La Marseillaise!'" "But, I don't know the second verse of 'La Marseillaise!'" — "Pass, Frenchman!"

Whether something extra is put in or something standard is taken out of speech, addition and subtraction are based on silent presence or the presence of silence; and this "reversed predication" gives the acousmatic password its insider relationship to boundaries. Language could be said to be acousmatic in this sense, because it is impossible to say whether we speak language or language speaks us. The "ersatz" of language, its bogus and false quality, comes out of this flip-flop. It's a meaningless gesture, but it is what allows the speech of an annoying, authoritarian Other to get *inside* the head and what also endows it with the ability to cross boundaries, pass through walls, escape jails, etc. *outside*. Its inside-outside functionality qualifies it as a case of *éxtimité* — Lacan's coined term for the intimacy of objects or, correspondingly, the alien objectivity of subjects' most hallowed interior.

The Lacanian additions to the list of drives calls for a retroactive reconsideration of the original Freudian drives. Oral, anal, phallic — one, two, three — these were set up to advance the "autoerotic" pre-subject to full subjectivity: taking the wheel of the Ego as one would a new car, even as a new driver who, unaccustomed to the location of the controls, can barely reach the pedals. Lacan's most famous discovery, the Mirror Stage, was a literally theatrical stage, an enforced comprehension of the little self as a spectral self, given advantages of wholeness and master under the condition that they are bestowed "out there" in the virtuality of the mirrored space. The trauma of this moment cannot be underestimated. *Retroactively*, the young child, barely able to speak, gets "the Big Picture" of life to come. This is not a rosy future, but a conditional one, based on the idea of obedience to rules that existed before and will exist after the individual's life and personal concerns. The "I" awarded to the subject's spectral double is not necessarily extended to the "real person" in front of the mirror. That pathetic, surprised little pre-person realizes retroactively that, before and including this moment, "it" has been neither "he" nor "she." Its body has not been whole, it has been a *corps morcélé* — a "body in pieces." Up to now, this was not a problem, if only because not having to have one's inside or outside answer to any external demands, boundaries can appear

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<sup>2</sup> Michel Chion is credited with the refinement of this term derived from the cinematic employment of the "off-screen voice."

and disappear depending on the occasion. Pleasure can happen anywhere, any time. The “one” that will be forced to reside within the boundaries of the skin was, in the autoerotic condition, multiple: two’s for games, three’s for adventure, four’s for dancing.

If counting was for fun in the pre-subject’s pre-world, after the Mirror Stage it is forced to give up its double quality as a rebus. It cannot vacillate at will between scopical and acousmatic functions. Counting will indicate sequence, at the expense of a suppressed factor of *nomination*, naming *itself*. When I can’t remember my own name, I have to take a name from somewhere else. In David Lynch’s *Mulholland Drive*, an anonymous woman takes refuge in an apartment after an assassination attempt, but she can’t remember her name. She quickly glances up to a poster from a movie starring Rita Hayworth and chooses “Rita,” a place-holder until she can remember her “real name,” which is (possibly) Camilla Rhodes. But, the problem doesn’t end here. Another Camilla is presented to the audience as woman whose story begins with the “forced choice” presented to a director (Adam Kesher) by Mafia financiers who want her cast in his new film. “This is the girl” becomes the place held open throughout the film, as the Mafiosi push their protégé as the lead actress, never completely filled by the blond in the photo that first identifies Camilla Rhodes or the brunette Latina who seems to hold the key to a blue box where one goes inside to go outside.

Lynch, in this cinematic nutshell, compresses the logic of the rebus and shows how it works as an “unconscious” for the film. The role of looking and saying, of the image/Imaginary’s relation to the vocal symbol/Symbolic brings out Lacan’s point about the Mirror Stage: that while it is initiated by a transfer of the body idea to the virtuality “outside” the (pre-)subject but “inside” the mirror, this transfer function is confirmed and consolidated by the *vocalization* of the Symbolic substance of the image: “See, baby, *that’s you!*” The woman looks in the mirror and realizes she doesn’t really know who she is. A body-in-pieces, she uni-fies as Rita; and (the) one-with-Rita becomes the *device* for the way she discovers the truth that her Real Name, Camilla Rhodes, is a nomination, a death sentence. The audience is co-opted by the device of “the possibility of the death dream.” That is, the audience is at its own Mirror Stage when it realizes that the scenes following the car-crash may have occurred entirely in the dying brain of the well-dressed occupant of the limousine driving up Mulholland Drive. For the audience, she was a pronoun (“the well-dressed woman” without a name), but then for the woman herself, identity (her name) becomes a pronoun, held open by the *ersatz* substitute, “Rita.”

The addition of the gaze and the voice, looking and saying, allow Lacan to make his revolutionary move. This is a two-part invention. First, he must rehabilitate Freud’s idea of the death drive. Instead of something standing *opposite* the pleasure principle, it has to be relocated *inside* pleasure. The notion of *jouissance* takes up this task, and the connection to the history of psychoanalysis’s origin in the sudden simultaneous appearance of hysterical women and shell-shocked war veterans now clicks. Psychoanalysis begins when Freud connects the one to the other: the woman who feels pleasure but reports pain and the man who returns to the Real of his past trauma in order to *re-live* and *not just remember* it. Lacan hears “remember” and thinks “re-member” — a refusal to put things in order, a resistance to the Symbolic’s super-ego command(ments) to *be one* — not just “one” the single instance or subject but the one as pronoun. “You are the one.” “This is the girl.” The proper name is the stage, the Mirror-ing Stage, to get to the pronoun, where “the one with the Name is better off dead,” in order to protect the honor of those who came before and those who will come after. The community of the graves and the respect paid by those

who visit the cemetery: these are the sites of the fundamental misunderstanding that constitute subjectivity and its relation to the Symbolic.

This is not just because, for Lacan, the Symbolic involves *chains* of things that come before and come after, but because community/culture, and hence language, are impossible without them. The Mirror Stage is both a virtual space and a step “in the right direction,” meaning an *ortho*-step where authority and correct behavior (morality) will be tied to seeing and saying in *chain*, in *order*, that *one* thing follows another, i. e. not lots of things. A cause will be known by a key effect that, among all those that radiate outward from the single cause, can be used to travel in reverse direction back down from the branches to the trunk of the tree-model of time known, thanks to Borges, as the “Garden of the Forking Paths.” Linear time mandates the idea of choice: arriving at a point where multiple possibilities present themselves but only *one* is chosen. The other possibilities survive, but only as ghosts. They are the “lost hopes and dreams” left behind after each choice is made. Only in the dream, where death has no dominion, can we visit them. So, in “the woman’s” death dream, her history can be de-linearized and re-visited as if it were a solid crystal whose other options have been frozen in aspic. The “ersatz” of each choice becomes evident once this time travel reverses consecutive order, cancelling the idea of a single solid link between cause and effect. In the death dream there can be not one Camilla Rhodes but two, or three, or more. It’s a stage name, a pronoun.

The logic of the name is reversed. This has a name: reversed antonomasia. When Lloyd Bentsen, the Democratic candidate for Vice President in 1988 rebuked his Republican opponent, Dan Quayle, he used this rhetorical figure after he compared himself to John Kennedy: “Senator, you’re no Jack Kennedy!” Quayle had used antonomasia to lay claim to the reputation of the dead Democratic president, assuming that “Kennedy” had become a place-holder that could be occupied by worthy successors. Kennedy himself contributed to his conversion from a proper name to a pronoun, a universal and sharable quality when he gave in to his status as an *image*, when his *words* were fused and made synonymous with his televised speeches. Look and say, say and look. The contronymics of the rebus again are key to the unfinished, open nature of identity and obedience to the Other who watches over us.

This is where the function of the *determinative* comes in. In linguistics, the determinative is a little mark placed beside a “natural” word to indicate what *kind* of word it is. This is either an indication of a grammatical function, a “cosmic” level, or a class (animal, vegetable, mineral — a *meroitic* addition sequence, aspiring to define a whole). The point of a determinative is to juxtapose, within the temporality of an expression, the presence of a whole, a complete “body.” In other words, the determinative acts as a linguistic Mirror Stage, showing in its virtuality, a spectral system where pieces form bodies and parts can be named and assembled. Determinative signs were not pronounced. Ahah. They assisted in *reading*, but their lips did not move. They were the ventriloquist who, as long as the dummy is talking, seems to be silent. The determinative’s silence is what makes the transfer of the voice — its problematic location — acousmatic. Even if writing no longer uses little marks in front of words (they were necessary to logographic writing, such as Egyptian, Sumerian, and Chinese hieroglyphs), all speech has implicit determinatives. As soon as the sense of a sentence is presumed, the virtual influence of determinatives can be traced in retrospect. It is the blank check whose value is filled in after expenses have been calculated. The important point is that the silent/absent determinative in phonetic writing still exerts a force, and that force is in the implicit agreement between the writer and the reader, the speaker and the receiver. When we read words, agreement is a contract, that in reading we consent to appear to understand and must

convince ourselves that, despite any gaps or skips in our comprehension, we have accepted the authority of the text. In speech, we “hear between the lines,” and this acousmatic surplus, this “silence within the vocal” that allows two people to speak at the same time, presents to us two voices, a conscious intending one and an unconscious *insisting* one. The unconscious acousmatic voice *insists* that, even though it “doesn’t exist,” in “ex-sists,” Lacan’s coinage for the idea that the unconscious is not inside the speaking subject but, rather, outside it, laying low within whatever stand straight and tall, the honor that will persist in the prone dead body after it has fallen, shot in the chest as it faces the oncoming fire.

*Dupes don’t make mistakes, they “cant”*

In other words, although words printed in ink are representations of sounds, they “know very well” that they are images that trick our tongues and lips into forming the shapes and tones of the voice. We look, and say. In the Middle Ages, reading was not silent but vocalized. The contrast between the text and reader was, thus, between silent speech and voiced speech, with the reader voluntarily standing in as the dummy. The words, the non-dupes, are the masters. But, we, the dupes, hear two things in the word whose anaphoric contexts lock in grammatical functions and intended meanings. We, like Roussel, turn *Les lettres du blanc sur les bandes du vieux billard* into *les lettres du blanc sur les bandes du vieux pillard* — and “the white letters on the cushions of the old billiard table” *must be connected to* “the letters [written by] a white man about the hordes of the old plunderer.” The story has in effect been *split into two parts at the point of the pun*, with the separate senses then placed at beginning and end of a line that was formerly a circle cut at the point of the pun. This *procédé* of Roussel’s reveals the foundational secret of language, that it appears first as *writing*, and only second does it become speech thanks to the dummy who realizes, in the ventriloquist’s manipulations of its tongue and mouth, the opportunity to be twins.

Thus, add to this list of rebus, logograms, phonograms, etc. the duplicitous *sound image*, pun, the heart of Freud’s theory of humor. The pun reveals a hidden structure that by accident “takes over” a conventional meaning. The example of the “familionaire” brings to bear an entire interpretive domain thanks to the slip of the tongue, due in no doubt to the unconscious’s desire to get our attention and direct it toward the new domain.

The pun’s “victim” is a word with two possible senses. Lacan’s most famous pun is the “*noms du père*,” which is punned into “*non-dupes errent*” — which uses the kernel of coincidence to connect the issue of the child’s alienation from the mother thanks to her divided desires, and the substitutability of this divided desire by other distractions, all of which have the “names of the father” to the figure of the dupe who is aware of a charade but nonetheless goes along with it. “It” presumably is the Symbolic-as-defective; the dupe is caught in the trap of the Symbolic, realizes that it is a sham, but agrees to play along as its victim. The non-dupes are those who cynically play along with the adage, “I know very well, but nonetheless ....”

The comic surprise of convergence of these two ideas at the point of the *sound* of the words, *non-dupes errent/noms du père*, is that one phrase has served as the password for the other into the alien territory, and that this situation is symmetrical — palindromic in fact. The drive revealed here is the voice, and the particular mode of the voice is “acousmatic” (*voix acousmatique*) — the voice that has lost its normal relationship to a *location*. The voice that floats or the voice from the wings or the voice from behind the curtain is the voice that, unlike the narrator’s voice in a film, which *is* locatable within the authoritative apparatus of the film that the audience “knows very well but nonetheless ...” is the ghost voice projected there by the listening subject (ventriloquism) but where the dummy has been displaced from its normal



Figure 2. "His Master's Voice" by Francis Barraud, 1899. After the death of his brother, Mark, in 1887, the painter and his brother took care of Mark's dog, who was fascinated to hear sounds coming from the sound-horn of the cylinder player. The "dog test" can be faked, i. e. the dog can be a dupe in certain situations.

position on the knee, held steady and operated by its master.

This is the case in the 1945 classic British thriller, *Dead of Night*, when a ventriloquist with dissociative disorder (the official term for the appearance of multiple personalities in schizophrenia) *happens to be* in the perfect situation: he has the perfect profession for someone with his malady. The relative small size and defective, child-like features of his dummy are sufficient to keep things under control. The schizophrenic can be productive, make a living, etc. exploiting his own mental illness. The comic pluck of the dummy occasionally burst forth into rudeness, however; and although to some extent this is his attraction (audiences come to be insulted and humiliated but it's still amusing), when a friend of the nightclub

owner shows up who also is a professional ventriloquist, the dummy's aggression is intensified. It sees, in effect, *another lover*, retroactively revealing to us that the son-father relationship has become the situation of the child distressed by the possibility of his mother's defection to the father, in this case "another father."

The act in the case of the ventriloquist is the paradigm of the Symbolic. We, the subjects, have our mouths filled by the Other. We say what is expected of us to say. We, as cynics, occasionally allow ourselves some disobedience. We "act out," we criticize authority, we make obscene use of the words we have been given. We *pun*. We are the non-dupes willing to be dupes because the pay is good but with naughty impulses to stand out to show off our independent minds, our "real natures." Yes, we are all individuals here (this is the Symbolic's role for us), but we show off our "not me!" status, holding up our hands to reveal we have been handcuffed (cf. the role of handcuffs in Hitchcock's film, *The 39 Steps*).

We err. Our cynical acting out is part and parcel of living within the system (the Symbolic) and putting up with its impositions, accepting our loss of freedom. We willingly submit to our suffering. But, we are not dupes! We therefore make a Big Mistake. We hear, in the sounds given to us, another voice, a voice other than that of the Master. Imagine the famous advertising image for Victrola Records (via the Gramophone Company in Britain), a painting by Francis Barraud illustrating the sad occasion following the death of the painter's brother, Mark, when a recording of Mark's voice riveted the attention of his terrier, Nipper. Certainly there can be few better illustrations of the *voix acousmatique's* relation to the question of location. The acousmatic voice, following the example of the dream's inability to accept death, seems not to have noticed that it is dead. The dog is a stand-in for the "natural attitude," i. e. the dog is the one who "can't be duped." The dog thus *mistakes* the voice on the gramophone (the original was a cylinder phonograph) for his master's, the dead Mark.

There is a joke, apparently a true story, about a famous restaurant in Jerusalem, the favorite of families for brunch. Although the restaurant obeyed strict Kosher laws, separating meats and milk foods, an American conservative Jew complained that the steam from the heating pans from one side was traveling to the other side to contaminate the dishes presumed to be insulated. A panel of rabbis was convened to resolve the issue and, hopefully, avoid shutting down the popular restaurant. They satisfied the American by using a dog to see if steam could precipitate anything of food value into an empty pan. If the dog licked the pan, the complaint would be proved valid. The experiment was set up and run. The dog was led over to the pan exposed to steam, and sniffed at it but then refused to lick. The restaurant's reputation was saved. After the crisis had passed, one rabbi, who frequently enjoyed dining at the restaurant, confessed that, to insure the test's objectivity, the rabbis had made sure to wash the empty pan with Lysol; "... but, maybe we didn't rinse it too carefully." The ersatz experiment turned out to be *ansatz* — a lucky guess.

In other words, the dog — traditional guardian of boundaries — can be, and was, duped. The "natural test" cannot escape the clever (Hermetic) trick of substitution, which in this case treated smells like sounds of a punned word. The pan rhymed with Lysol, in this case, but the joke was lost on the single-minded hyper-Orthodox American, who did not get the "password" logic of the test. Nipper was duped by the phonograph recording of Mark's voice, and graphic marks, phonograms, can embed two meanings that work like contronyms, converting the phonogram into the "primal word" that opens as a gate onto the archaic land of the unconscious, where the dead wander about as fresh, happy, and lively as they ever were on earth. Joan Osborne's "Spider Web" song reports, "I dreamed about Ray Charles last night / And he could see just fine." The past is not past, it can be *corrected*, improved. The movie stars who danced in the past are waiting to be refreshed by clever edits that synch them to the new tune, "Uptown Funk." In this new acoustic domain, their mortal limitations will be overcome. They will have been re clothed in the Flesh of the World.

When the dupe is a human not a dog, the difference between the "natural case" and the "cultural case" is clear. Language has been added. The human can be duped like the dog (Lacan cites the situation of camouflage or animals capable of producing false tracks) but the human is, thanks to language, capable, unlike the animal, of "playing along." This is the nature of *all play*, the willingness to submit to the rules that convert a territory to a playing field, just as the farms and orchards of a domesticated landscape are turned into a battlefield, where competing honors must be defended, to the point of loss of life. The human can play, for honor as well as pleasure/pain (the *jouissance* of the game), in relation to the rule that is, in essence, the Big Other, the desire of the Other, the Law of the Father that is the *nom(s) du père*. The *non-dupes* never get into the game; they cynically reject the authenticity of honor, they do not turn around to be shot.

From the point of view of the Other, which must be *imagined to exist* by the soldier who turns around to face what must be obscure at best, despite its threat as a potential source of a fatal bullet, is "looking at him" in a perspectival way. There are many targets to shoot, one must be picked by the able sniper. The demon-shooter sees his victims in flight (*askesis*), he must take careful but quick aim to hit his targets. One turns, but still runs backwards. The turn is a pun within the clear image of a retreating figure; the turn is a visual sign of advance, of threat, an invitation to shoot the "mock attacker." So, shoot! But, this turning figure facing danger on behalf of honor has become the model of The Gaze, the invisible spot or stain within the visible field, who challenges perspectival danger and sees in the Other, the shooter, what is

“more himself than himself.” This is the secondary of, for example, the judges in Kafka’s *The Trial*. Like the shooters the fleeing soldier turns to face, they are invisible. Yet, their perspectives, defined as so many “lines of fire,” radiate the space that the soldier decides to *turn to face*. His turn, from the perspective of the more-than-hypothetical — in fact Real — judges/snipers, is the gaze, and in turning the soldier realizes that he has transferred the authority of his action to cancel the Other as one twin, knowing that the other has identical feelings and pains no matter how far they are apart, inflicts a wound on himself. His willing turn to face suffering becomes the Gaze that returns the perspectival Look. His “envy” (that traditionally connects the Gaze to the Evil Eye) is the envy of the dead of the living. It is the rebuke of honor, that in dying honor will be made truly accessible, since mortal remains can not occupy a tomb that is identified as a place, a place-ment, a Name in stone. Demon and God, who knows which is which. *Aut deus aut demon*, Vico writes of his apotheosis experience writing *The New Science*, the ultimate collection of puns, allomorphs, anamorphs, phonograms, paleograms, logograms, etc. — all of which add up to a text that is a mega-password, a consummate collection of errors whose readers, all dupes, will not err. Who will, in reading, know and ignore (*kenosis*, knowing but not knowing) the name of Father Vico, dancing in advance, advancing in retreat, to the music of P re Lacan.

This takes us back to the case of *Dead of Night*, where the ventriloquist, Maxwell Frere and his “brother/twin” Hugo comprise paired acoustical sources that speak with one acousmatic voice that locates their shared disease. Maxwell, the human ventriloquist, suffers breakdown and runs from the aggressive Hugo, whose taunts and threats radiate from an indeterminate distance. A linguistic determinative is a silent character used to mark a grammatical or semantic function. Hugo is not silent. He is non-determinative. He acts out by speaking out, beyond his range of allowable sayings; he speaks against his master. He *protests*. Instead of being content with his diminutive, child-form, he carries on independently with the rival ventriloquist, Sylvester Kee, suggesting they “take off on their own,” leaving Maxwell behind. Maxwell is well maxed out. Hugo is on the go. An “it” that has become a “you,” a *thou* in the diectic function of someone really on the other side of the curtain who, machine or human (the Turing Test), nonetheless activates an unconscious behind verbal exchanges. Hugo wants to set out on his own, and this abandonment distresses Maxwell. In a hotel encounter, his unconscious stages a theft that justifies him shooting Sylvester, who survives and remains sympathetic because he knows Maxwell is insane. In the final scenes of the clip, Sylvester visits the cataleptic Maxwell, who has been hospitalized after a crisis. Reunited with his dummy to see if it will bring him out of his despondency, Hugo “returns” to taunt Maxwell and the ventriloquist crushes the dummy then goes dark. The rival’s visit seems at first to work. Maxwell recognizes him and begins to try to talk. The voice that comes out, after some inchoate gurgles and gawks, is horrifying. It’s Hugo, in final triumph. “Well, Sylvester, I’ve been waiting for you ... I’ve been waiting for you!”

The scene is on par with the bursting-out (Merleau-Ponty’s favorite word “dehiscence” comes to mind here) of the chest of Executive Officer Kane in Ridley Scott’s *Alien*. The acousmatic presence in the body of Frere is doubly inscribed. Just as it lies within a void in the ventriloquist’s psyche, the ventriloquist survives inside the material wooden effigy of the puppet. The puppet is more Frere than Frere. But, talk about location! You can talk but you can’t locate. Your words are useless — you can’t find it! *Non verbis sed rebus* is adjusted to *non actionis sed verbis* (not by actions but words). The interior void is an ambiguous locale, inside of which wanders a non-determined, unlocatable voice. The wandering aspect is the key, just as

Sylvester Kee offers the key to the dark wood by being the involuntary lover who, like Actæon, stumbles on Diana's secret grove.

The puppet's wandering is a part of its uncanny repertory. When Sylvester visits Maxwell after their first encounter in the night club, the dummy is sitting on a chair in a dark room. His child-like voice engages Sylvester, who suddenly realizes that the ventriloquist is in the bathroom with his face covered with a towel. How does he manage this trick? Sylvester wonders. Maxwell warns Kee, "don't be fooled; he's up to his old tricks." How old, we wonder.

Well ... let's say *very old*. Ventriloquism — the loosening of the tie that binds voice to location and location to a vocalizer whose hidden intentions lard what is said with what is not said — is the model of the acousmatic drive. It qualifies as a drive and not just a phenomenon in relation to the "drive of drives," the death drive. This is the complex palindromic presence, within the pursuit of satisfaction, an equal but opposite pursuit of dissatisfaction. In Freud's development of the death drive, it is the notification that construction of subjectivity is always "under construction." With every positive attempt to separate and identify the ego, there is an equal and opposite deconstruction managed by the unconscious to undo the project of identity and reunite/reconcile the subject with its previously "autogenic" and "autoerotic" world. From the point of view of the ego-subject, this world is "but a memory," and a fading memory at that. The sensation of waking, when the act of dreaming is remembered but not the content, gives a glimpse into the logic by which the unconscious will always appear as a palimpsest that, in the *attempt* to inspect it, disappears. This is a cause, not a coincidence. It is the *look* of consciousness that erases the unconscious, but this causality is projected onto an agency that maliciously pulls content "back into" its cover of darkness and secrecy.

Thus, W. F. Jackson Knight reports that the Malekulan deceased spirit on its journey between the two deaths is shown an image of the pathway it must travel in order to find its final rest, but before it can memorize the twists and turns of this (undoubtedly labyrinthine) emblem, a ghost, Temes-Sasap, maliciously erases *half*.<sup>3</sup> From Freud's perspective, it is the deceased itself who has done the erasing but projected an external removal agency, the Ghost of Palimpsests. The result is a half-map, and here the role of the lipogram is rather obvious. We must grasp the importance of a map that is *simultaneously* positive and negative, *simultaneously* solid and void. This is the *real map*, not a map that has been damaged by a malicious anti-archivist angel.

The voice of the ventriloquist is always missing something, and this lipogrammatical quality is what provides the energy to transport it from the master to the servant and also what gives the servant the ability and compulsion to talk back to the master. The lack of the voice is correlated to the surplus at the chosen antipode. Thus, a comic situation emerges with the construction of the crisscross binding surplus

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<sup>3</sup> Patrick Conty, *The Genesis and Geometry of the Labyrinth: Architecture, Hidden Language, Myths, and Rituals* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2002) draws on the more reliable work of W. F. Jackson Knight, *Cumæan Gates: A Reference of the Sixth Aeneid to the Initiation Pattern* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1936).

to lack, master to servant.<sup>4</sup> The separated locations can both claim their own condition of surplus and lack through the device of the extimate, by which the kernel of each is the substance of the other/Other. Separation, which is the consequence of this inside–out transposition, is also what makes each pole alienated to itself. A subject is thus never fully a subject; the Other is inscribed at its core, as a void, a lipogram. Neither is an object content to be fully objectified; it is radically undermined by the mirror condition of having subjectivity inscribed at its center. This is of course the model of the uncanny, what attracted Freud to Jentsch's economical/symmetrical definition of the uncanny as “a living person who believes he/she is pursued by death” *versus* “a dead person who has ‘forgotten’ that he/she is dead.”

What makes this symmetrical switch — the cause or effect of mutual cross-inscription, we can't tell which — so universal and effective is its relation to the death drive. The death drive, despite its dour name, is itself palindromic. It is simultaneously a drive *toward* death — a static Nirvana, a rest — and at the same time a sum of resistances to death that maintain and extend the power to act even to parts that have been separated from the integration of the body. The death drive resists theorization if only on account of its relation to action. In the first case it is the cancellation of action, in the second it is the resistance of action to any and all attempts to cancel it: the undead. This contronymic quality certifies the death drive as the basis of nearly every appearance of the uncanny in literature, where themes of premature burial, metempsychosis, disappearance/return, ghosts in machines, puppets with minds of their own, etc. maintain the dualism of death as ineradicable coupled with life as ineradicable. We should jump to the conclusion of the mass of evidence piled up by both high–art literature and popular culture: lifedeath is a permanent, durable universal of the human as such. The human emerges from this uncanny fusion and is eternally haunted by the various forms of its return — *fears* that are positively felt as *drives*.

We cannot afford to forget that fear is the basis for the constructions of space and time designed to insulate us as defensive positions in relation to threats that diagrammatically and symbolically construct horizons (in all the variety by which edges, profiles, shadow-lines, and landscape boundaries present themselves to our senses). Fear separates the master from the servant, the teacher from the pupil, the lover from the beloved. And this it is fear that structures relations of power, knowledge, and love within the metaphoric and metonymic potentialities of space and time. The difference between Foucault's and Lacan's accounts of these three significant zones is that between the treatise and the lecture, telling and teaching. The former insists on “saying everything” while the latter concedes that it is impossible to say everything. Thus, the former misses the role of the lipogram, while the latter depends on it. The know–it–all has to fill in the gaps, the self–confessed dupe identifies with the gaps. And the corners. And the missed opportunities.

The point of comparing these hyper-productive scholars is to highlight the issue of separation as a matter of fear–saturated territory. The here/there of separation structures a field with vectors of possible action, whose metaphor is travel: retreat (*askesis*) or willing exposure to suffering (heroic quest). Metonymically (and in the reverse–logic of the uncanny), the two are the same. Flights from the demon, whether the plague or an invader, necessitate walls that insulate while at the same time they insure

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<sup>4</sup> Todd McGowan argues that the coincidence of lack and surplus is the *sine qua non* for the comic mentality. While this holds generally, the coincidence is not so much an overlap as a mutual exchange of “prisoners” that creates a durable psychic bond that, despite comedy's notorious short shelf life, makes its *form* more reliable and historically permanent than the forms of tragedy. *Only a Joke Can Save Us: A Theory of Comedy* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 2017).

contamination from within. In the classic flight and/or fight narratives, the demon appears from a primordial “within.” One of the most trusted members of the group is the betrayer. Or, as in Edgar Allan Poe’s “Mask of the Red Death,” the threat sealed out turns out to have been sealed in.

In the controversy surrounding the discovery, in 1972, of *The Gospel of Judas*, a gnostic account offers a different view of Jesus’s relation to his historic betrayer, Judas. This could be considered as the flagship of the “theological secondary.” Far from being Jesus’s enemy, this second or third-century text builds the case for a secret knowledge shared by only a handful of mystics involved with Jesus’s initiation into the lore of the Essenes. Instead of a vindictive God, unsure of his divinity and willing to gamble with the Devil about who loves him or doesn’t, divinity is fused with intelligence in the phenomenon of a luminescent cloud that circulates souls to some but not all mortals. Unlike the gospels that prevailed, the pneumatic god of *The Gospel of Judas* demands no sacrifice, human or animal. The mass’s imitation of the sacrificial cannibalism of Christ’s body is, in the enlightened view, the height of apostacy.

Any anti-Nicene theology would be strange enough, but equally or perhaps more strange is the fact that Jorge Luis Borges, in his short story “Three Versions of Judas” (1944) foresees the discovery of this actual theology in 1972. This is a case of the “secondary of the secondary,” or *secondariness* in itself. In Borges’ story, a fictional theologian Nils Runeberg (certainly, a name carefully chosen) writes *Kristus och Judas* in 1904 but is forced to revise his ideas and publish, in 1909, *Den hemlige Frälsaren*, a more radical text arguing that God became human “to the point of iniquity” — namely, as a Judas who, in betraying the “innocent” Jesus, would take on the guilt of having killed God. In a sense, Borges’ version is a purer, fully restored version of the “real” *Gospel of Judas*, and is the (fictional) manuscript that the Gospel had originally wanted to be. The fragments of the fragile papyrus, with its missing bits of text, are like the dances of the “old movie stars” reassembled and timed to match “Uptown Funk.” *The Gospel of Judas* in fact seems to hold out for this possibility in its idea of an intelligent cloud that dispenses souls only to some humans who use their psyches as passports to go between the cloud and mortality, as if under instruction. Their divine errands are necessarily palindromic. They exchange good for evil, life for death, high for low (wings are the material cause of this vertical traffic) so that the word can become flesh without the pretense of sacrifice. But, curiously, the angels in this gnostic view are created simply for communications purposes. They don’t know what they are saying. They are the non-dupes who not only err, they travel: *errare*. Wandering and mistaking are fused in *errare*. Only travel of the dupe, who voluntarily exposes him/herself to suffering, is corrective and authoritative. *Les non-dupes errent* because their wandering is a matter of errand–running, of “doing God’s — or some master’s — will.”

Henry W. Johnstone, Jr. has elaborated ten “categories” that distinguish heroic travel from running errands or aimless wandering.<sup>5</sup> In light of *The Gospel of Judas* and Borges’ uncanny anticipation of this actual ancient gnostic text, Johnstone’s categories amount to catechisms: instructional Q&A’s — the essence of teaching — for the purpose of elaborating the central “comic” overlap between the categories of “saturation” (Johnstone’s version of psychoanalytic excess) and “gap” (HWJ’s version of lack). The gap expands into differentiated categories where, in the style of an interrogation, Curiosity and Suffering maintain a tension that lead, from Suffering, to Reflection and Solitude; and, from Curiosity, to Naïveté (the resistance to instruction) and the Personal (realization of the need for instruction). Curiosity gives the

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<sup>5</sup> Henry W. Johnstone, Jr., “Odysseus as Traveler: A Categorical Study,” in *Categories: A Colloquium*, ed. Henry W. Johnstone, Jr. (University Park PA: Department of Philosophy, The Pennsylvania State University, 1978), 103–120.

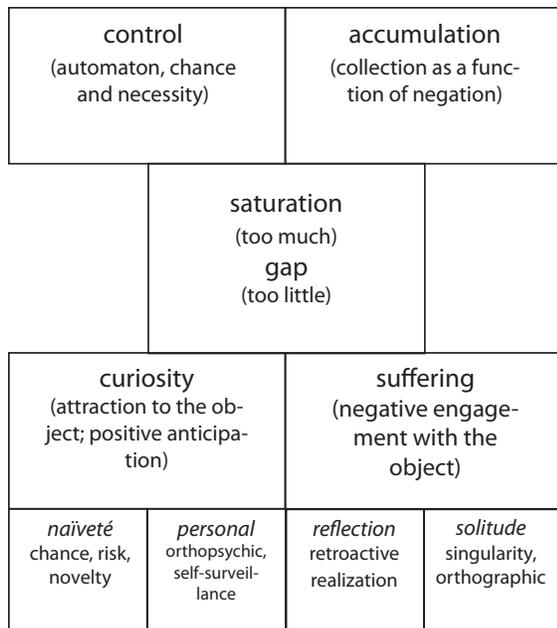


Figure 3. Johnstone’s categories of travel, calibrated in terms of the revisionary theology of Judas, with the primary vertical division based on the binary saturation/gap (excess/lack). The resulting “comedic” combinations contrast the palintropic opposition of control/accumulation with a corresponding palintrope, curiosity/suffering. This design anticipates Harold Bloom’s six-term “system” of tropes, centering on *clinamen* and dividing into *tesseræ* above, *dæmon*, and below (*apophrades*, *kenosis*), energized by the downward direction of *askesis*.

hospitality), and why he willingly underwent suffering. Others were thinking about the same thing, as in Erwin Cook’s later study, but Johnstone wrote before this appeared.<sup>6</sup> What Johnstone ingeniously and somewhat anachronistically anticipated was that his Q&A structure would also anticipate the catechismic structure of *The Gospel of Judas*, not just as a literary form but a theological design. It is as if Johnstone, in distinguishing authentic from inauthentic travel and travelers, simultaneously was distinguishing the theology of stupid sacrifice (i. e. *The Iliad*) from the “authentic” Essene/Gnostic theology of willful exposure to suffering. Johnstone’s categories of travel = *The Gospel of Judas* = the psychoanalytic puzzle of the death drive.

This fortuitous coincidence of ends despite radically different means points to two things. First, the “coincidence” amounts to a kind of *ersatz* experiment which, if it had been conducted from scratch (“What is the connection between Johnstone’s theory of travel and the Gospel of Judas”) would come off as completely preposterous. No, stop, do not skip this point. Whoever you are, sitting wherever you may be

“question” side of the Q&A, while Suffering gives the “answer” side.

Curiosity and Suffering are the gnostic (downward) components of Gap/Saturation. The upward forces are bilateralized as Control and Accumulation. Unless the traveler exercises Control, travel becomes aimless wandering or, the same thing because of the substitution of a Master’s will for the errand-running Servant, mindless duty. Over-control in travel leads to obvious forms of termination: always staying in the same hotel chain, visiting only the standard touristic destination. Control, to be a form of authenticity, must be the twin of Accumulation, a talent for seeing in what is negated by over-control (the accidental discoveries of travel) experiences capable of teaching the traveller, of “giving what is hidden to the traveller who isn’t aware of wanting it.” Control is an uncanny knack for making mistakes that turn out to be better in the end than following the rules. Accumulation of these *ersatz* moves leads to the *ansatz* reward, the “lucky guess.”

Johnstone’s categories of travel were possibly intended simply to annotate the problematic Homeric text, *The Odyssey*. Johnstone puzzled over why Odysseus took so long to get home, why he exposed himself and his crew to inane social experiments (cf. the encounter with the cannibalistic Cyclops, just to see if he, like other Greeks, would provide them with the customary comforts of

<sup>6</sup> Erwin Cooke, “Active’ and ‘Passive’ Heroics in the ‘Odyssey,’” *The Classical World* 93, 2, Homer (November–December, 1999): 149–1; stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4352390>.

sitting, you would certainly respond to such a proposition as any rational human of sound mind and body would and could respond. It's nonsensical. However, the experiment produced results that challenge this incredulity to the point that it's worth *supposing* that Jesus and Judas had possibly "gone to the right school" (the Essene Academy) and understood the basics of the *ersatz/ansatz* technique, which is in a nutshell "nothing ventured nothing gained."

*Ersatz* does not promise the world. It simply appeals to the mind who, having exhausted the usual avenues of conjecture, says, "why not?" The *ersatz* conjecture asks very little. It can't be stupid or trivial; there has to be some learning behind the provocation, so that if it works out there will be a way of recognizing success or failure. *Ersatz* is the twin of *Ansatz*, the lucky guess. Luck is for free. You don't want to pay a lot for what may come packed in thick rolls of large bills; that wouldn't be luck, that would be bribery. The Goddess Fortuna — for she is nothing less — would be offended by such a gesture. The humble offering of the *ersatz* conjecture is that its humility is consistent with the modesty of its claim to authority, its shy willingness to accept defeat. Without these personal qualities — modestly, self-effacement, sincerity, naïveté even — *ersatz* would lose the charm it needs to attract the interest of Lady Fortuna, who does what she wants. The *ersatz/ansatz* procedure is not to be undertaken casually, without respect for the antiquity of Fortuna herself, a goddess who predates the Olympians. Humility is required of the initiate into the brotherhood-sisterhood of those who would expect, from their meagre conjecture, an "undeserved" angelic chorus response.

I would advance this as a General Model of True *Phil*-osophers, i. e. lovers of wisdom. I do not mean to suggest that there are those who "like" wisdom and then those who "love" it. Rather, in the collection of those who place themselves in a position of yearning for wisdom, there are those who are lovers and those who are non-lovers. The lover is a role, not a degree of devotion. In a sense, the grammar reverses. Wisdom is the agent who chooses, not the object. The role of the lover is indispensable to the idea of wisdom; wisdom admits no others to its central precincts. A Lacanian might say that this positions lack and wisdom as co-dependent.

This is far from the view that the "ansatz method" is reckless venture in the face of impossible odds and a paucity of precedent and adequate data. The *ersatz* conjecture connects the "down and out" thinker who has, for one reason or another, decided in favor of a "wild" option, whatever that might mean in his/her context; and put all of his/her "chips" on the numbers of the No.<sup>7</sup> This is a symbolic suicide, in the spirit in which Georges Bataille and Joris-Karl Huysmans merged their conjectures with self-destruction. In *Blue of Noon*, there is no positive outcome, only a detestable degraded conclusion that is, in effect, worse than suicide.

This is the "Judas option." Either we agree to be the non-dupes who will err because we accept the "name of the Father" as ... "whatever" ... meaning that we identify with our permanently degraded skeptical non-identity because we in fact *benefit* from the profit margins it generates (the sell-out, at discount rates); or, we hear, in the mandate of the Other, more than the Other is aware of saying. In a

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<sup>7</sup> In Patrice Laconte's film *La Fille sur le Pont* (1999), a knife-thrower enlists a luckless would-be suicide as his assistant for his act. After a risky performance drives the audience crazy with disbelief, the couple take their pay to a casino and pile chips over and over on the zero of the roulette table. Surely this is the paradigm *exemplar* of the *ersatz*: betting on the "nothing" that is an actual nothing: a black square that can actually work like a magnet to attract the spinning silver ball.

sense, this is like the inane delusional fantasy of *Life Is Beautiful*, Roberto Benigni's film of the capture of an Italian Jewish family destined for annihilation after forced labor. The father, Guido, is interned with the son Giosuè. His knowledge of German qualifies him as an interpreter for the camp commandant's instructions to the internees, and his creative glosses amuse the inmates and inspire the son. His trick is to introduce a "secondary project" within the obvious first, the protocol of forced labor followed by genocide. His invention is Góngoresque in the extreme. Carefully matching his laudatory pronouncements to the guards' ferocious, severe edicts and instructions, the two happen to match. The Utopian hopefulness of Guido turns out to be the exact and telling obverse of the Nazi fantasy of annihilation of the Jewish/Gypsy/etc. Other. It is the acousmatic ear that hears one telling the truth of the other, and the inmates are enthralled when Guido converts the horror of the guards' mandates into an impossible-Real alternative. At the same moment they grasp Guido's radical fictionality, they accept the death implicit to their situation.

This in effect is the death drive: an amalgam of pleasure and pain, transcended by the value of the Real introduced by the fact of death as the implicit inscription defining mortal life. The Judas option must have been something like this. JESUS: "Both of us have to die, Judas, so why not me, reviled by a few but celebrated by history; you are reviled by many and will be condemned by history but, by that very judgment, you will be the *true Messiah* who has *literally* died of our sins! — Do you want to flip for it?" This ultimate *ansatz* moment is precisely the shared realization, this confraternity of passengers on the sinking Titanic who opt to dance to the orchestra's last waltz. This is theology's "second program," and its 90° turn into the secondary within the standard Nicene version of Jesus's life is not the only example but certainly a most elegant model. There are even multiple secondary projects within Christian theology, from the Templar conspiracy theory (Jesus lived on and settled in France, raising a family) to the several Mary Magdalene speculations (Jesus and Mary are lovers and possibly secretly wed). The secondary reveals, in its abject ersatz quality, a "what if" that puts the standard story into profile. There is always, after conjecture, a shadowed space created by the unknown, supported by inconsistencies in the original story.

The theological variants of the ersatz gesture prove this point: even though the wild guess seems to be a gratuitous and even irresponsible tactic, it is in fact the essential opening gambit of the Deep Play. This points to the concealed truth of the ersatz/*ansatz*, that its emptiness opens on to the vast storehouse contained within the Wild. In the triangle of wild, willing (wishing, intending), and will (future verb tense), the structure of the future as an opening as a portal to the *void* becomes clear, and one term engages the logic of the full structure. This, in Bernheimer's hallmark study of the wild man we find a dense concentration of the fool tradition, where we may learn at last the Lacanian endorsement of the fool as the "dupe" who has the right idea by going along with the inconsistent and often obscene commandments of the Other, is able to get around the seeming impasse that the subject faces, having *constructed* the Other and endowed it with its implacable authority, then being forced by its very creation into subjection, humiliation, and abjection.<sup>8</sup>

The non-dupes err. Those who think themselves clever and "play along" with the idiotic oppression of the Other with the cynical alibi, "I know very well, nonetheless . . .", make a mistake in two ways. First, they give in to the ideological construct of the Other. Just as the students protesting authority in the Paris 1968 uprisings simply wanted, as Lacan pointed out, a new and even more ruthless Master, the cynical rejection

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages: A Study in Art, Sentiment, and Demonology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1952).



Figure 4. Charlie Chaplin as the Tramp in *City Lights* (1931). In the opening scene, the Tramp is caught sleeping beneath the cover of a statuary group to be unveiled at a public ceremony. The statues freeze the master signifier in a civic symmetry that Chaplin decomposes as he tries to descend, getting caught by the very phallic signifier he was trying to avoid, a stone sword that skewers his moth-eaten trousers. The squawks of the dignitaries demonstrate the kernel of ideology: it's the voice's tones and torques that lurk beneath the conventional niceties. Just as the flower girl has her sight restored but can't see the Tramp, invisibility is revealed to be a free-floating signifier that detaches itself from the binary of visibility/invisibility. It's like the *lamella* — a thin membrane that, like Harry Potter's "cloak of invisibility," cuts off a bit of space and time.

police are on the dais giving to give their speeches; but this film, although it has a sound track, allows music and sound effects but no spoken words. The dignitaries speak with "duck voices" — squawks that retain phrasing and intonation so that the rhetorical component can be heard without the content. In this genius move, Chaplin has condensed the essence of the entire story, which could be paraphrased as the "restoration of sight by the anonymous gift."

The opening scenes have already told the story in a compact way. The removal of the content from the speeches of the dignitaries has proved Lacan's *matheme* of the "signifier of the lack in the Other,  $S(\mathbb{A})$ , as necessarily a negative signifier, a  $-\phi$ . The negative signifier (always a *minus* phallus), the Tramp, has literally been "put away," and even when he's back he's in negative territory. The flower-girl, now shop owner, sees the Tramp looking at her in amazement and takes pity on him. Her sight is restored but she still cannot see. The restoration of content comes with her hand pressing a coin into his, and we have the magic formula of the *ansatz*. The gift's magnitude breaks the "container" of the communicative vehicle. The dupe's insistence on remaining a dupe (a Tramp) restores the message, not as the original content (which

of authority is even more effective than passive, ironic acceptance. The binaries created to make it appear that the Other is rebuked through protesters marching in the streets are actually fake binaries that lodge the Other's reifications into intractable positions that no longer require the Other to do anything but call the protesters out as naïve. The Other gets the victims of Otherness to do all the work.

But, by far the more important error is that the non-dupes' cleverness is structured by the cynicism that uses the metaphor of unmasking to structure Otherness as the Deep Mystery that cannot be revealed by any amount of stripping away veneer. As Lacan showed in the University, the  $a/\$$ , the subject commanded to Enjoy! by taking ideology (S2) as a substitute for knowing, relies on the occultation of the Master as /S1, the voice (S2) behind the curtain of / who will be elevated to absolute authority simply by being concealed. All of the /\$'s are complicit in this *acousmaticity* of the Other, all revel in the power of the voice that is the essence of rhetorical splendor. The non-dupe goes directly for this acousmaticity. Charlie Chaplin's film *City Lights* (1931), introduced in Chapter 2 ("Orthography"), opens with a dedication ceremony for the unveiling of a heroic monument. City fathers, matrons, and the

the non-dupes would reveal by stripping away pretense), but as “more than the original had intended to say,” in effect a *wild* content, an excess and *excessiveness*.

We can now interpret Johnstone’s puzzling combination of Gap (lack) and Saturation (excess). Only the  $-\varphi$  Tramp can pull the curtain back from the /S1 of University Discourse. This is the content–beyond–rhetoric that still remains within the music of the voice, the Control (automaton) that has afforded the Accumulation of structures and circumstances (necessities and accidents) that are released with the trigger of the touch. The passive hero who is the protagonist of all travel willing submits to suffering (the primordial Tramp) in order to refine this moment of revelation, where like the flower–girl truth comes in the form of a palindromic re-vel–ation.

[to be continued ...]

## 9 / Lack



Figure 1. The fast lyrics of “Tu Vuo’ Fa l’Americano” are somehow picked up at first try by Tom Ripley (Matt Damon, center) in Anthony Minghella’s 1999 thriller classic, *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. Fiorello Rosario (left) and Jude Law (playing Dickie Greenleaf, right) perform the song written by Renato Carosone in 1956.

Tudo o que sonho ou passo,  
O que me falha ou fina,  
É como que um terraço  
Sobre outra coisa ainda.  
Essa coisa é que é linda.

*All that I dream or experience,  
All that fails me, or that finishes,  
Is like a terrace  
Looking onto something else beyond.  
It is the latter which is beautiful.*

—Fernando Pessoa, “This/Isto”<sup>1</sup>

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The gaze of envy is a universal visual phenomenon. Its antidote is often figured as a single blue oculus used to protect against its invisible counter-cousin.

To think of the evil eye requires imagining an invisible, completely portable point of surveillance, an everywhere that is nowhere. If it’s ever observable, it is the inverse of the normal seeing eye, such as the hazed eye of a poor crone. Picasso produced *La Celestine* in 1903, at the time he was painting, as he said, images of the poor Spaniards who clustered on the Rue de Seine.<sup>2</sup> Art historians call *Celestina* “one-eyed” but of course she has two eyes — this is extremely important! — one normal the other presumably blind, possibly afflicted by Coats’ Disease, an abnormal development of blood vessels behind the retina. If Picasso was attracted to poverty it wasn’t from necessity; he had financial support from his family and modest success selling his paintings. Although some have claimed that his Blue Period was blue because cobalt blue was the cheapest oil paint available, it seems more likely that this melancholy monotone best negotiated the turn to the low end of things. Poverty needs a cool color but could never tolerate too much optimistic green — a lush landscape or a jewel-formed city (Oz).

If *Les Femmes d’Alger* (1907) could be considered the triumphant blend of Picasso’s intentional exposure to suffering in the years 1901–1904 with his theatrical themes in the Rose Period of 1905–1906, then it could be claimed truly that Poverty and Ingenuity gave birth to Eros, just as Diotima tells it in Plato’s *Symposium*. Love is ever in need because of his mother, Penia (Need) but always clever in pursuing things because his father is Poros (inventiveness, expediency); two parents (one awake, the other drunk asleep), two eyes (one sighted, one blind). Do not miss the opportunity to consider that Picasso may have

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<sup>1</sup> Translation by David Butler, *Fernando Pessoa: Selected Poems* (Dublin: Dedalus, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Pablo Picasso; Marilyn McCully, *A Picasso Anthology: Documents, Criticism, Reminiscences* (London: England Thames & Hudson, 1981), 41. *La Celestine* is only one representative of Picasso’s interest in blindness. Consider, for example, “The Frugal Repast” (print, 1913, showing a blind man and sighted woman), *The Blind Man’s Meal* (1903), and *The Old Guitarist* (1903/1904). See James G. Ravin and Jonathan Perkins, “Representations of Blindness in Picasso’s Blue Period,” *JAMA Ophthalmology* (April 2004), <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamaophthalmology/fullarticle/416257>. If one looks into post-Blue Period references, there is the interesting relation to skulls and other images anamorphically composed of everyday objects in still-lives.

chosen to use cobalt blue to *feign* poverty/lack, just as one wears torn clothing or heavily worn shoes to be stylish. In any event, poverty as such constituted a *reservoir*. Picasso jumped into such a reservoir and swam around with a serviceable aqualung, investigating its underwater grottos and coral reefs. His inventory of melancholy cannot be understood without a reference to the *jouissance* peculiar to the death drive. In its structural relation to compulsion, the death drive circles and returns to a gap, where, out of an impasse, a joy is felt that converts the lack (a gap) into excess (a doubling). In this regard, paintings of the blue period pull the background forward, toward the picture plane. This compresses a thin space horizontal to the picture plane that could be regarded as a ribbon across which all of the imagery of the Blue Period is arrayed; the frame of any one painting thus moves *across* this common ribbon. The portable eye that looks on misery? That's our "orthographic eye"! Picasso has transferred the evil of the evil eye to spectators who look on suffering from their invisible, portable, safe vantage point.

But, in a more literal interpretation, Picasso has taken the formula of bringing forward the background as a palpable blue entity while casting the picture plane in the role of a stage proscenium equipped with a curtain. The lack, *Penia*, is the lack of the audience whose desire is to be "over-supplied" by an excess sandwiched between the picture plane and a blue background brought claustrophobically forward. The chief accomplishment of *Les Demoiselles* has been the assignment of masked *personæ* to guard openings in the front and back planes. The figure on the left, in previous sketches a medical student presumably introducing the audience to the perils of sexually transmitted diseases, serves as impresario, held the curtain back for the audience to see the two prostitutes in the company of a figure in the classic posture of Melancholy: seated, elbow on knee, chin resting on hand (think of Rodin's famous statue *The Thinker* if you do not know Dürer's *Melancholia I*, 1514). Melancholy is in the position of "delivering the message" of the scene and painting.

To be accurate if more speculative: Melancholy is a Hermes, the interior space is a "lipogram," a blind spot, the perfect place for the "silent trade" marked by herms (piles of stones) from ancient times to present. Perhaps the bowl of fruit is one of the gifts left to be traded at Hermes' protected crossroads, but it might as easily make some think of the trick Parrhasius played on Zeuxis in their battle to see who was the best painter, but the story's parallel with *Les Demoiselles* is too good to be true.<sup>3</sup>

Art historians have resisted identifying the seated figure as the Melancholia that Fritz Saxl, Erwin Panofsky, and Raymond Klibansky made famous in their study, *Saturn and Melancholy* (1964). The figure is Picasso's "blur," his anamorph. Even less evident to standard readings of the painting is the association of Melancholy and Hermes, but in the vast repertoire uncovered by the three Warburg scholars, Melancholy was mercurial in literal and symbolic senses. It was one of the primary substances in the theory of humors.

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<sup>3</sup> This story is about a contest matching the ancient Greek painter Zeuxis's *trompe l'œil* painting of a bowl of fruit, sure to win after a bird mistook it for the real thing. Parrhasius's painting was a curtain, which the judges took for the real thing, assuming that Parrhasius would conceal his actual painting behind one before showing the crowd his entry. This is a match between "reality" and its necessary fakes (since reality is a fake to begin with) and the Real's resistance to being faked in any way. Picasso's *trompe* trumps the viewer in showing both sides of the scene at the same time. The curtain in front is the other side of the curtain in back, but between the two curtains is fleshed out as a fantasy of doubles plus the Melancholy this enigma creates. Without the Blue Period's series of experiments in poverty and collapse of the background thanks to blue mergers of sea and sky, Picasso may not have seen the opportunity to condense *Penia* as a mirror sandwich, or to give Melancholy the role of Hermes.

Cold and dry, it was associated with artists, philosophers, and intellectuals of all stripes. By the time (pseudo) Aristotle penned his *Problemata XXX.1*, the links between depression and reflectiveness about the meaning of mortality were widely recognized in all cultures. At the same time, Hermes was credited for being a master of the secrets of life and death and thereby conveyer of the souls of the dead to Hades because he held the keys to the “music” that held the planetary spheres together as a mercurial system of steps binding earth to heaven. Saturn was just one part of this seven-part crystal, but it was the planet of melancholia, thought to rule its nature. The soul/psyche is born when it passes from Elysium to Saturn, antipodal to the Moon governance of the birth of the body. Just as the conscious body, sensually active in a physical world, is only barely aware of the soul that will, at death, abandon the corrupted body. This relation of the immortal to the mortal conditions the relation of the daylight consciousness to its shadow unconscious. The latter is not obliged to tell the other anything, and risks nothing when consciousness loses badly at the gambling tables. But, the body’s senses are the only source of fuel, even when asleep, so Psyche, whatever her fond memories of life on earth, must bring Cupid not just her love but her fidelity. That this fidelity is tied, critically, to the condition of blindness is key. Hermes knows why this is so, and so Hermes’ famous secret has to do both with the negotiation of the crystal spheres and the dance connecting life and death *and* the relation of blindness to sight. When Orpheus is instructed not to look at Eurydice in their journey back from Hades, her reversal of death back into life depends critically on this key relation between blindness and sight. He can see but he cannot *look*. Anamorphosis is a technique for preserving blindness in the glare of looking, so as much as we are commanded to Look! “Look!” is what we are commanded to do by the impresario holding back the curtain to expose the prostitutes in the *Demoiselles*, there are things we don’t see, proved by, if anything, the hundred-plus years of exposure to critical review that have failed to notice Melancholy, or note the sky-value of the back curtain, or consider the identity of the curtain-holders. These are the “anamorphic operators” at work in *Demoiselles* that, in being wholly exposed, are radically invisible. The painting is effectively a lipogram because it is anamorphosis that makes it revolutionary. And, should we try to restore the sight of these invisible elements, we find that what blindness has concealed has been carefully packed into a single structural suitcase, carefully folded and arranged to connect Melancholy with the function of curtains with the multi-tasking of Poros/Penia and Eros, which may be best unpacked following the protocols of the god Hermes.

While Melancholy belongs in Picasso’s brothel if only as a reminder of the threats of sexually transmitted diseases, it has a more traditional and professional relation to painting as an act of genius; and in this psychic sense Hermes, as the official god both of erotic seduction and life/death transactions, also may make a claim. It is unlikely that Picasso would have been aware of the lore of Hermes that made him an “all-purpose” god of thieves, seducers, tricksters, undertakers, messengers, traders, and scribes.<sup>4</sup> But, because *Demoiselles d’Avignon* was intentionally designed as a complex interior–exterior marked by a seated god, we should regard this case of *extimité* as an emblem — the *one* painting Picasso paints that “tells the tale” of all his other paintings. Like Velázquez’s *Las Meninas*, it is a “meta-painting”: a painting that sums up painting’s existential and historical truth value. Certainly Picasso is aware of making *Demoiselles* a meta-painting as he is considering its structure of five figures in a brothel. But, is he aware of the way a meta-painting works as an “eigen-form,” something that, by not changing, allows all else to

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<sup>4</sup> These tradition links have been documented by Brown, *Hermes the Thief*.

change? Or, putting it in painterly terms, something invisible that afford all else its visibility or, in being blind, allows others to see?

The *eigen* of *Demoiselles*, like the *eigen* of *Las Meninas*, allows these paintings to connect to issues far beyond the world of art. First there is the question of the *eigen* itself. The contrast between the *eigen*'s "inconsistency" and puzzle-nature and the durability of the patterns it makes possible is curious. In *Las Meninas*, the tricky mirror creates a disturbance that requires engaging the geometry of the room with existential issues, such as where the artist must be to paint the painting. In *Demoiselles*, enigma is represented by three figures, the "impresario" who treats the picture plane as a theatrical stage, the figure opposite who "opens up a tear in the sky" as if it were a curtain, and the figure of Melancholy and her service as a Hermes figure holding open the "lipogram" of the brothel scene. Enigmas do not have solutions, and certainly not ready solutions. Enigmas are about scale. They maintain their mystery by engaging ever larger or smaller issues; they go deeper inside or further outside. In both paintings, we see inside something, but the inside is not fully available for inventory or examination. It is an intimacy that retains its externality, in the form of a puzzle. In our terms, the secondary — which is constructed to be a function of the primary — develops rules of its own. It asserts independence, resistance, and even deviousness. It refuses to cooperate. As we see in the case of scholarship, the majority of historians and art critics remain loyal to the primary functions of the work and suppress any signs of rebellion at the secondary level. In *Demoiselles*, all five figures are prostitutes; in *Las Meninas*, the mirror in the back is simply a painting, curiously brighter than the others. Even the exceptions, such as Leo Steinberg's sturdy essay on *Demoiselles*, goes no further on this issue than to demarcate a feminine back and masculine front of the painting.<sup>5</sup>

The *eigen* creates controversy. Its function is to create a durable *atmosphere* of mystery — mystery, in short, that is not dispelled by the clever connection. These deflationary solutions to the paintings' "meaning" reminds one of a saying of the poet Allen Grossman: "A poem is about something the way a cat is about the house."<sup>6</sup> The cat's "about" is a wandering, a spatial ambiguity that indicates an intellectual ambiguity, with the difference that, unlike muddles, the cat's "about the house" is structured by connections. Changes occur simultaneously with content and relations that structure content, so a recursive situation, such as that brought about by the Cretan Paradox, requiring simultaneous reference to an external condition and an internal authority, shows what happens when the extimate invades the stream of consciousness and language. The sequence of one thing after another presumes that "the past is past," but then encounters an element face to face that is that past turned backward. This out-of-sequence surprise creates a paradox in the form of a halting gap, an end to the chain's confident forward motion. The fact that such halts are key moments in philosophy, religious experience, poetry, and art is the surprise that should not be a surprise. The structure of epiphany, *aporia*, miracles, and the like is the same. When they occur in such readily available forms as *Demoiselles*, and especially where the creator has been aware of the occurrence and has in fact centralized it within the work's formal structure, the question of structure is key.

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<sup>5</sup> Leo Steinberg, "The Philosophical Brothel," *October* 44 (Spring 1988): 7–74. Stable URL: [http://www.jstor.org/stable/778974?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/778974?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents).

<sup>6</sup> Allen Grossman, 'Summa Lyrica: A Primer of the Commonplaces in Speculative Poetics,' in *The Sighted Singer*, Allen Grossman with Mark Halliday (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 268.

In *Demoiselles* we have a case of a literal depiction of the *eigen* as a gap staged between two curtains. A forward motion, “looking at reality,” has come to a sudden halt and been put face to face with itself, in the act of turning around. Picasso has masked these figures so that their identity can be extended for the duration of our contemplation of the scene; and lined the interior with daylight, casting the spectators of the painting into a dark brown fog. Theater’s convention, that while the stage is bright the auditorium must be dark, is applied to the space of *Demoiselles*. The poverty of this space, established by the Blue Period, has been put on stage by the Rose Period, and Penia (want, envy) has copulated with Poros (talent, ingenuity) while Poros has passed out drunk. It isn’t the first time that sex has been successfully consummated with one partner unconscious. Semele did it with Endymion: a sleeping mortal shepherd is visited by a randy goddess. Sleep as an abbreviation of death forms the same algorithm in the Cupid and Psyche story, but we have to remember that the result of Penia’s sex with Poros is Eros, and that this sequence matches to Picasso’s Blue poverty, Rose theatrics, and the *Demoiselle*’s “erotic exposé.” If copulation could be said to be about a momentary exchange between values and relations of interiors with exteriors, to the extent that interiority and exteriority *as such* engage without blending — i. e. they maintain difference throughout — then we could see the gap as a space turned inside out, lined with sky (as the back curtain shows), revealed between two gaps in two curtains that turn out to be one gap in one curtain, and given the hybrid aura of mystery and revelation in the figure of Melancholy. The “atmosphere of mystery” in *Demoiselles* is both durable and deep, resistant to “puzzle-solving.” Confirmation of this is the status of *Demoiselles* as a meta-painting, an *eigenform*, a constant that, once it is formed, allows all else to deform. This has been the consistent judgment of history: that *Demoiselles* serves as a hinge and model, a scandal that turned art on its head, or (more accurately) inside out. My hunch is that it’s critical to not think of this as a past revolution but an ongoing one: if the real dynamics of *Demoiselles* comes from the identification of the seated figure as Melancholy and the curtain-guards as sharing an identity in turning space inside out, then the painting is a moving revolution, a radical and permanent scandal that is as fresh today as it was in 1907.

### *Talent in the face of lack*

Lacan cites Socrates’ telling of the Poros–Penia story, which was told him by Diotima, which appears in *The Symposium* and nowhere else in Greek literature.<sup>7</sup> Lacan strengthens the chain of evidence by relating it to his own Poros and Penia thematic, lack and excess. These are connected “erotically,” not as complements of a whole but as parents of an original distemperature that refused to be balanced, refuses a “sexual relationship,” and replaces existence with ex-sistence, a form of nobody-ness.<sup>8</sup> In the case of envy,

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Transference, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan* 8, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (Cambridge, UK, and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2015), 31–32.

<sup>8</sup> The nobody is a pronoun with peculiar but extensive potential. Unlike the personal and interrogative pronouns, it refuses at first to be filled, but if pressed it can be occupied by “a nobody” who is exempted from *being counted*. This expression reveals the overlap of *looking* and *saying something*; someone can be noticed and remain unmentioned, refused the social certification conferred by language. But, just as looking and saying reveal a curious property in number theory (where 1 = 11 in the sense that it is “one 1” — saying what a number is mixes use and reference), use can be accomplished in language “without reference” in the sense that the nobody maintains a permanent open status. In Lacan’s slogan, “the woman does not exist,” a similar intention creates the woman who is “not-all” subject to the phallic rule imposed by language, and this demi-status confers special rights with respects to borders and boundaries. The woman can not only cross or be restricted by a boundary without the usual consequences, she (*she*) in effect *is* the boundary. In *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, this is Tom Ripley’s talent, and what gives him a feminine nature.

theft requires negation, and in the case of Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, Poros takes the form of the envious Tom Ripley's plan to steal the identity of the rich wastrel Dickie Greenleaf, on perpetual holiday in Italy. Tom acts in the name (and funding) of Dickie's father. Greenleaf senior wants him to bring his son back to his senses, to be his successor in the ship construction business. Dickie is content with his small sailboat, so Tom is content enough to suspend his mission and share the left-overs of Dickie's dilettante life.

The film version of the novel (1999) portrays the situation the way a mathematical algorithm sets in motion a spiral that passes through meridian vectors at increasingly greater distances from an origin point. Tom is hired out to play piano at an upscale event and has borrowed a friend's Princeton blazer. The pocket patch attracts Greenleaf Sr.'s notice, and he asks Tom if he had known Dickie in his years at school there. Tom takes advantage of the moment to establish a minimal but workable claim, and his charm does the rest. Greenleaf hopes that Tom's acquaintance will allow him to be the perfect agent, who will not over-alarm his son, and so he sets Tom up with travel support and a stipend. Tom is attracted to the idea that he will be swimming in upper-crust company, an odd fish who knows how to blend in.

Tom is at first invisible to Dickie. When he introduces himself, staging an accidental encounter on the beach, Dickie doesn't recognize him because Tom is the kind of guy you meet in college and dismiss immediately. He's invisible from the start. Tom grows on Dickie despite Dickie's short attention span, and Tom weather's Dickie's unpredictable bipolar affection. In an up mood, the two go to a nightclub in Naples to hear some jazz. Dickie has been invited to play his saxophone, but at one point he does a duet with the band's singer (Fiorello Rosario), a zippy song denouncing Italians who want to appear to be American:

You're wearing pants with a tag at the back,  
And a cap with the visor turned up,  
Parading yourself all around Toletto,  
Just like a bully trying to show off!

You wanna be American, American, American;  
Listen here, who asked you to?  
You want to be all trendy,  
But when you drink "whisky & soda"  
You can only end up sick!

The lyrics speed past. It's one of those 50s tongue-twisting songs, trickier even because the Neapolitan abbreviations speed the tongue along over phonemes northern Italians, let alone Americans, would have trouble getting through. Dickie has been practicing, evidently, but Tom is called on stage to join in. After a few good-natured stumbles, he seems to have mastered the song's tricky chorus. He has a good ear, as he demonstrates later when he imitates the Brahmin long tones of Greenleaf Senior to Dickie and his girlfriend Marge. Dickie and Marge's friend, the fop Freddy Miles, calls him a "quick study." In fact he needs no study at all.

Like Picasso, Dickie is rubbing shoulders with, if not down-and-out, the struggling middle class postwar Italians grateful to be taking care of rich American vagabonds. His cobalt blue is his saxophone and his identification with jazz, where black Americans rework blues into complex bebop forms designed to defeat, generically if not technically, the musical mastery of whites. Tom aligns himself with Dickie's

envy of cool, but it's Dickie's cool itself that Tom envies, and his evil eye notices the daily details: where checks are cashed, how names are signed, how to handle Marge in case Dickie might disappear.

And, disappear he does, after a whack with an oar when Dickie attempts to dump him. Then, the song improv makes sense. Tom can learn the words *after the fact* so it seems as if he is supplying them *before the fact*. He turns following into leading. He wit is retroactive. He confesses his lacks, making him seem to be a dupe, a clown, an *ingénue*, as a wind-up preceding an energetic pitch, from the back of the line to the front. This, not insignificantly, is the logic behind Lacan's weird slogan, "the letter always arrives at its destination (because its destination is where it turns out to have arrived)." The magic of the future anterior is that, by the time something has happened, the events required to cause it are quickly put in place *in front of* the something that happens. The arrival happens with its history "ready in place," a history that had, before that moment *not existed*. Tom sings the right words at the right time, as if he has been backstage two hours before, memorizing and rehearsing.

The song is an "eigen-tune," something trivial or expendable in itself but which grounds an order that swirls around it. Lacan's name for this is the "master signifier," a kind of nonsense that allows other things to have sense. It's the key to Tom's swindle, and the essence of a more general art form known as "the long con," so it's worthwhile to expand on it bit. Unlike the short con, the long con allows the victim ("the mark") to get in on "the game" after the initial trick that suckered them. The mark is allowed to discover how they were trapped and deceived and given credit for being "unlike other marks" in that they were "too smart for just one con." The mark is offered or coerced into involvement with an independent, more complex scam. The mark becomes "one of them." The Stockholm Syndrome, where a kidnap victim identifies with his/her kidnappers, energizes a part of this, but the real intrigue comes from the dupe's endorsement by those who "know every trick in the book." The attraction is to crime as an art form.

Without this attraction, the audience of *The Talented Mr. Ripley* would find Tom's actions simply sinister, his motives simply greed. But, his ability to pick-up and move whenever opportunities come his way fascinates the viewer. At the film's most fundamental level — watching — the spectator admires Ripley and his talents. They are on the side of the crime, pulling for its success. Inside the cinema frame, this attraction is what leads Dickie, in his manic moments at least, to conspire with Tom to keep his father's money coming and, himself, avoid paternal capture. Tom admits to being a forger, liar, and con-artist, but Dickie's admiration for him only grows. What is key to this admiration is its *secondariness*, its parasitic status. It flourishes as long as it lies beneath the radar. This allows an anamorphic presence, where Tom's two-ness can be materialized and modeled as a dramatic and visual component. If, as Alenka Zupančič describes in her study of Nietzsche, "The gaze can appear on the level of what is seen ... not through reflecting on our perspective, but through its change or shift," Tom's envy of Dickie appears in the form of his tricks and quick adaptations to circumstances. And, because the audience has invested its interests in Tom, not Dickie the victim,

Ripley's envy of Dickie Greenleaf's high lifestyle in Italy sets in motion a means of shifting the audience's own greed for pleasure into a reverse angle, pulling for the demon/Damon as he plots Dickie's murder and substitution. This is the formula of all thrillers: the audience desires the pain of suspense and shock, wants to scream to the point of running out of the theater in a panic. Hitchcock was not the first to notice this, but he was the first to comment on the fact that people were paradoxically more willing to pay for pain than for pleasure. There is thus a strange but strong argument for the existence of a "Penia-field,"

the domain of the poor such that Picasso exploited in his Blue Period or the slum that Ripley lived in before his trip to Italy or the poor village, Mangibella (Ischia Ponte), where Dickie Greenleaf went to enjoy the jazz scene of Naples' environs. This field flattens value to smooth the travel of the orthographic eye as it looks for small treasures. It is a section cut into the material that supports (or, in the case of ruin, used to support) the ostentatious structures of wealth and security. It sees the weak spots, the joints that, stiff or pliable, suggest points of advantageous entry. These will become the secondary characters that wander about until a stage can be found, with curtains that can be opened, where space will turn inside out and Melancholy will instruct us how to navigate by the light of Saturn.

In the Penia field, small points of light are scattered on the ground, as pieces of Saturn (which, by definition, is "the fallen star") must, but they retain their glitter. This condition is, in effect, a reversed Maslow Pyramid. The psychologist Abraham Maslow in a 1943 paper, "A Theory of Human Motivation," proposed that self-actualization could not be established without first securing bodily safety, then bonds of love and affection, then esteem.<sup>9</sup> This was an essentially positivist program based on the binary of body and soul, the lowest antipodal to the highest. Subsequent critics have noted that, in practice as well as theory, the positivist triangle is superimposed by its reverse. Esteem exists in a crystalline form at the very moment and level where disaster has reduced all to rubble. For this reason, relief workers work to allow residents whose homes have been destroyed to return to them as soon as possible to recover small items of intense personal value (jewelry boxes, photo albums), key to the possibility of psychological recovery. This superimposed reverse figure repeats the logic of the uncanny, where death and life are inscribed "into each other" to produce the two conditions fundamental to the *Unheimlich*, the living person fleeing death (but constructing death's access in the process of flight) and the dead person who has forgotten how to die and must tread the interval "between the two deaths," literal and symbolic.

What I would introduce to this combination of revised Maslow and uncanny cross-inscription is the Penia-field's specific employment of the reverse gaze of envy and its facility for translating conditions of lack and excess into optics, representation of optical conditions, and, simultaneously, acoustic conditions. Just as Lacan added the gaze and voice to Freud's "standard" drives to address more accurately the inscription of the death drive *inside* (as a radical externality) the pleasure principle, I would argue that the time and space of lack requires an equally determinative field of action, where invisibles and nobodies can be visible and embodied — using as proof not just the visibility but the *extensive program* Ripley concocts, much of it on the spot, that employs the same logic of his "coming from behind the beat to get ahead of the beat" technique. "Did you know my son at Princeton?" ... "Yes" uses the flipflop, flimflam, insideout, topsyturvy where the *ingegno* Tom has realized the middle term of the syllogism that will serve him so well in the future, the borrowed jacket that allows him to "lend out his services" and flip the predication from, as Lewis Carroll put it, the cat without a smile to the smile without a cat. The first negative (the fact that the sports jacket is borrowed and does not belong to Tom rightfully, as a Princeton alumnus) converts into a second negative (the lie of claiming acquaintance with Dickie) thanks to the third term, the fact that "cats don't smile in the first place" — a reification following the faked premise, akin to that which seems to ground the question of whether or not the current king of France is bald. Of course, there is no king, but that doesn't matter; a time interval springs into being retroactively out of the self-negating third term, the jacket = the smiling cat. The boy without a coat becomes a coat without the boy.

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<sup>9</sup> Abraham Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50 (4): 370–396.

Indeed, the cat smiles on Tom's project of skipping from the back of the line to not just the front but to becoming the guy who is taking the tickets. Two negatives make a super-negative, which is to say an *eigenform*, the ex-sisting commodity ("comedy" because it is inherently comic) that, by not existing, by being a nobody, all doors open. The not-all isn't just a line-jumper, she's the line! Turn her sideways (an orthogonal angle) and the flat-on face becomes a thin line, barely visible. The line is naturally the middle term, the Janusian binary that has an upside down "look and say" quality in that invisibility and acousmatics/ventriloquism are conjoined. Or, rather, we might say that the gaze, the invisible gap in the visible field, finds its counterpart in the curtain-tending masked figure in *Demoiselles* who peeks through a gap in the "sky," whose mask confers god-like invisibility as well as the ability to be in two places at once, both behind and in front of the scene. Like Ripley, rushing from being behind to being ahead, the masked figure(s) are single and double simultaneously. Ripley plays the dupe but obeys Lacan's rule that the dupe can "hear more from the other than the other is aware of saying." While the non-dupe, the cynic, hears what the Other, what language, is saying and goes along with it ("I know very well, but nonetheless ..."), the dupe catches what the non-dupe has missed. Žižek: "What a cynic who 'believes only his eyes' misses is the efficiency of the symbolic fiction, the way this fiction structures our experience of reality."<sup>10</sup> The dupe, the not-all character who accepts the role of a nobody, sees the boundary in action. He in fact is a kind of *faux* gate-keeper.

In Jacques Tati's *Playtime*, the film's mockery of modern architecture intensifies with a climax, a grand opening of a new restaurant in a shiny new part of town. The fixtures are being installed up to the moment the show begins, and in the hurry the restaurant's glass doors are shattered. The doorman is left holding the metal door-handle, the only clearly visible part of the door anyway, and decides that his job is not to hold open the heavy glass door but to admit patrons with a flourish. He can continue to do this by faking the opening, pretending that the door is there so that he can maintain his position. He is the dupe who understands "the way fiction structures reality." He is able to absorb the structural loss of the real door in order to maintain the fictional role of the door, in which he plays the key part.

The dupe's ability to operate on both sides of the scene go back to the primordial split in reality, the Symbolic. This is the split between looking and saying, what could be compared to the difference between "anaphoric" pronouns, which shuffle meanings back and forth inside what is said, and "deictic pronouns," which regulate who is saying what to whom, from positions "outside" the utterance. This distinction is clearly made in *Demoiselles*, where the two masked figures play a deictic role, while the three remaining figures inside the brothel space have anaphoric relations. As a diagram, anaphor's insider relations and deixis's outsider relations are orthogonal to each other. This orthogonality is like the "fourth wall" of cinema, a section cut into the fantasy representation that allows the audience its view into the intimate interior. Those anaphorically inside the scene are not supposed to hear the audience positioned at this fourth wall, although at the time of production they not only hear but obey instructions of the director who remains outside camera range. The silence is rather a temporal one. After the production is wrapped up, the actors no longer hear anything from the future audiences who will also be invisible to them. Only in spoofs, such as Allen's *Whatever Works* or *The Purple Rose of Cairo* does any actor claim the right to pass over the fourth wall or address its residents.

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<sup>10</sup> Slavoj Žižek, "With or without Passion: What's Wrong with Fundamentalism?," 1 *Lacan.com*. Stable Url: <http://www.lacan.com/zizpassion.htm>.

The pun embedded within Lacan's slogan, *Les non-dupes errent* is also key to Ripley's function as a father stand-in: *les noms du père*, the names of the father. In psychoanalysis, the father can have many names. The father is whoever (again, a pronoun function takes center stage) parts the child from the mother, whoever is the object of the mother's desire. The name floats around. It can attach itself to this or that person, place, or thing. As a name that evokes the phallic law ("Don't sleep with your mother!"), it is orthopsychic and orthographic. So, catching on to this system — Ripley's talent — makes Ripley the dupe who, in not erring, is able to cross boundaries of various kinds: forge signatures, book hotel rooms using Dickie's name, and woo Meredith Logue (Cate Blanchett), a socialite on the lookout for a rich husband. The boundary, from low to high, is the essence of the move motivated by envy, aided by the evil eye and the acousmatic ear. Tom sees what others can't and hears what others miss. Ersatz conjecture: what if this is the connection between Hermes and envy? After all, Hermes would not be a thief without some element representing lack. Gods may officially lack nothing, but in Hermes case, stealing is intrinsic, and this leads to the idea of trade as a domesticated form of thievery.<sup>11</sup>

The dupe can cross the boundaries that, as Hermes' tradition indicates, is a mercurial staircase that "completes" the subject at the same time it anneals the cosmos as a single and singular whole. Another name for this process would be displacement: the relocation of a "content" of some kind (e. g. Psyche, a soul) from one position (e. g. the Empyrean) to another (e. g. earth). This transfer is analogous to Picasso's Blue and Rose Periods, a flattening of a medium to allow a gaze to move effortlessly from one position to the next, as a frame moving across a continuous ribbon (the flattened medium). The Blue is the obverse of the Rose, in the sense that a Möbius band seems, at any one time, to have two sides. The horizontal moving frame is the orthographic eye, transfixed by the content it frames, unaware of what it is constructing by its own horizontal movement. At some point it comes to the impossible position of the twist, the point where Penia copulates with Poros, so to speak. This is the "Demoiselle position" where space and time are both inside and outside the frame (extimate); and where their inside-outside relation is marked by three

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<sup>11</sup> In silent trade, an item is left at an isolated crossroads marked by a pile of stones. The next passer-by able to replace the object "steals" it but must leave his object in return. The trade does not negate the theft; rather, it "passes on" the guilt, in the same way "playing it forward" has been popularized as a way of giving anonymously to someone who must then give to someone else. Whether taking or giving, the logic of displacement involves anonymity on the side of the donor/thief as well as the beneficiary/victim. This is the dynamics of the Lacanian subject as a never-finished construction, where each addition (gift) or subtraction (theft) grows or shrinks the subject's gradual desiccation of the marshy area of the autoerotic pre-subject. The secondariness of this ebb and flow — the theft of silent trade or gift of playing it forward — is self-sustaining and self-sufficient in the sense that we never will know "what" a subject is, actually. It will be like a pronoun that forever holds open a space of potentiality. The ebb and flow of construction will be the only material evidence that, as secondary as it is, for the existence or non-existence of an actual subject. See Bruce Fink, "Alienation and Separation: Logical Moments of Lacan's Dialectic of Desire," *Newsletter of the Freudian Field* 4, 1 & 2 (Spring/Fall 1990): 78–119.

specific “characterizations,” twins that are in reality the same one, and a seated magistrate who, like the king in the Teatro Olimpico and other theater stages in the Italian Renaissance, were seated onstage.<sup>12</sup>

If a king onstage isn't orthographic, nothing is. But, the importance of this simple technique, which can be as simple as the silhouette of Cary Grant in *Notorious* or as complex as the curtain-holding doubles in *Demoiselles*, lies in its ability to flag the idea of *orthos*, correction, in such a great variety of ways. For example, take the case of the famous Lacanian letter that always arrives at its destination. Why *doesn't* a letter occasionally “go astray”? Žižek: “[The case of the throwing a message in a bottle into the sea] displays in its purest and clearest how a letter reaches its true destination the moment it is delivered — its true addressee is not the empirical other who may receive it or not, but the big Other, the Symbolic Order itself, which receives it the moment the letter is put into circulation, i. e. the moment the sender externalizes the message, delivers it to the Other, the moment the Other takes cognizance of the letter, and thus disburdens the sender of responsibility for it.”<sup>13</sup> In our terms, giving a message to the big Other activates the “Poros-field,” where “small points of light are scattered on the ground, as pieces of Saturn ... retain their glitter.” The charge of the message is the forward pulsation and intermittent retreating of the subject, as it attempts to gain ground over the pre-subjective Id. *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*: “where the Id was, the Ego will be, in the effort to reclaim flooded ground, but this reclamation notices that that the tide has washed up occasional treasures, small glittering fragments that, left behind by the Id, have been lost only in the Ego's forced attempt to claim new ground. They belong to the subject but resist being possessed.

#### *Plage of fantasies*

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Two important Lacanian references: First, the glitter of the sardine can floating in the sea during Lacan's visit to Brittany as a young man confirmed his insight into the durable nonsense of the gaze: “You see it, but it doesn't see you.” This put the standard definition of the gaze (it sees you but you can't see it)

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<sup>12</sup> The onstage representative of the audience is cleverly represented in Alfred Hitchcock's *Notorious*. At Alicia's party following the trial of her father as a Nazi spy, Devlin (Cary Grant) is shown from the back, in a shadowed profile. He is the “orthopsychic” character there to persuade Alicia to cooperate with the CIA in uncovering a Brazilian spy ring, and at the party of tipsy revelers he is a sober outsider — “nobody knows his name.” Because the film begins with their interaction, the camera moves from its normative position, rotating 90° into the space *between* Alicia and Devlin. Like Melancholy in Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, Devlin continues his orthopsychics, criticizing Alicia's drunkenness and willingness to sleep with the Nazi they are targeting in Rio di Janeiro. He acts as a limit on Eros, and in a key scene, Alicia and Devlin must “fake a kiss” as a cover for their visit to the Nazi's wine cellar during a party. At the same time this fake is a real kiss revealing that they have truly fallen in love.

<sup>13</sup> Slavoj Žižek, “Why Does a Letter Always Arrive at its Destination?” *The Symptom* 16. Stable URL: <http://www.lacan.com/symptom16/why.html>.

into reverse gear, but the point is to demonstrate that the gaze is fundamentally a contronym in the true Freudian sense. Reversing its logic doesn't change a thing. Just as *sacer* is both revered and reviled doesn't offer up two alternatives but, rather, *sacer's* real function as a conversion function, the piece of trash is indifferent to our looking; it doesn't care to look back. This is the autonomy that uses resistance to establish a full independence, an objective means of gaining objectivity.

The second reference is to the role pronouns play in this tidal exchange between the *Es* and the *Ich*. I and you are the primordial referents of the stage condition, other personal pronouns operate within the performance space orthogonal to this. Words can work as pronouns even when they seem to name specific things: the butcher, baker, and candlestick maker are all positions filled by whoever shows up. The rabbi, imam, priest, and minister, just like doctors and nurses and professors, are what Duchamp portrayed as "malic molds," costumes whose primary property is their emptiness. Pronouns are in a sense uniforms that reduce the element of competition and rivalry *within* their symbolic domain while enhancing and extending rivalry between specific other domains. The uniforms worn by soldiers allow armies to kill members of "the other side" but not their own. Uniforms identify who is "us" and who is "them" and are thus a primary agent of Otherness. Since subjectivity begins when the Other is recognized, primarily thanks to language, the role of pronouns in holding open the different genres and species of Otherhood, and the curiously orthogonal structure of deixis and anaphor they impose, the openness that pronouns confirm and support a primacy of temporal delay, suspension, and return that is key to the subject whose forward pulsation and backward contraction advances and recedes over a field where strange small objects, in their lost-and-foundness, require suspensions of disbelief.

Alienation and separation are the immediate consequences of subjective pulsation. Lacan works out these consequences in the context of mastery, specifically the Master's Discourse, inspired by Hegel's Parable of the Master and Servant. Rather than limit the significance of Hegel's reference to periods of history where mastery and servitude created distinct social classes of the aristocracy and the cooks, maid, footmen, craftsmen, etc. who served them, a broader consideration of mastery lets the idea float over any enterprise where mastery is key. This is present in any skill or ability. Just to walk across the room, pick up a book and read it, involves mastery: the arc imagined to exist to connect intention and accomplishment. Not to spoil the end of the story, but not all acts are intentional in this way; we must put a marker in the book at this point to say that the phenomenon of emergence takes a different view of things. Subjectivity's forward pulsation is mainly toward mastery, however; its contractions are both a failure of mastery and the "internal" or "structural" limitations of alienation and separation. In order to be a subject, one must *join* a group, and the rules of membership require putting on a uniform, a *pronomial* operator, that confers status but imposes a misidentification.

The *Ich*, the "I" of subjectivity, forms by the guidance of two ideals: an ideal ego, someone who seems to have attained full status and who regulates others while being exempt from some or all of the rules he/she imposes; and an ego ideal, what any one aspiring "I" wishes personally to become.<sup>14</sup> Most important, it is the temporality of these two ideals that creates a peculiar structure. The ideal ego *precedes* the other egos who must obey. They are called, characteristically, *followers*. In contrast, the ego ideal is always *looking forward* to a future moment of fulfillment and recognition. Thus, the ideal ego seems to still draw on the

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<sup>14</sup> Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, *The Freudian Subject*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1988), 119 ff.

primal irrationality of the Id, enjoying its caprice and indifference (the Lady of the troubadour tradition; the Big Daddy of the American South; the counts, barons, and dukes who enjoyed the custom of enjoying new brides before their husbands). The ideal ego looks to conserve power and prevent change, the ego ideal hopes for a revolution or at least an administrative shake-up that will open up some quicker path to recognition. In *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, Tom is in the position of the ego ideal while Dickie and his Father are the ideal egos who are trying to hold on to their status and wealth. Envy, Tom's motivation, aims to master the masters, to avoid competing with them directly, as another master, but to "get inside their pronouns," to take (literally) their *places*. Tom identifies with the Other, makes them into the model of what he wants to be. Copying, imitating, forging, and playing the ventriloquist's dummy, whose voice comes from another are key parts of his game.

Ripley has a talent for playing this game. He lacks, he is poor. He envies Dickie and his crowd. But, he is also ingenious. Penia can out-trick the naturally witty Poros. His trick is to confess everything. When Dickie asks him what he does, he says "I can forge a signature, fly a helicopter, handle dice, impersonate practically anybody, cook — and do a one-man show in a nightclub in case the regular entertainer's sick."<sup>15</sup> This honesty however comes across as boasting (possibly thanks to the helicopter on the list). Dickie asks "What kind of a one-man show?" forgetting that forgery and impersonation might directly be used on him. The enumeration has the effect of shifting the rhetoric of the admission into comedy. Its excess overlaps with Tom's lack; it's funny to see a poor kid with so many talents, although two of them belong to envy in particular. In the film, when Dickie focuses on the theatrical component, Tom impersonates Dickie's father. In the novel he pantomimes a "Lady Assburden sampling the American subway." In either case he wins Dickie's approval, and the candor of the full confession is overlooked. This conversion of truth into lie is Parrhasius's winning trick in his contest with Zeuxis. He gives the judges a curtain, which is what they most expect, encouraging them to overlook the fact that it is painted, and possibly poorly painted at that. It is their *nature* he has engaged, just as Tom keyed into Dickie's exhibitionism.

Pick-pockets would have been impressed, for Tom has used a variation of their trick of body loading: numbing the "mark" so that a quick hand may penetrate an intimate zone that would normally set off alarms without being detected.<sup>16</sup> In William Wyler's 1966 film, *How to Steal a Million*, the professional burglar Simon Dermott (Peter O'Toole) causes the security alarm of a museum to trip repeatedly; the annoyed staff turn it off, allowing Dermott's break-in to go undetected. This selective catalepsia or anesthesia numbs/paralyzes the victim by camouflage. *In the context* of a harmless invasion, the alarm system is shut off. Once it is, the thief may enter and exit with impunity.

There is a specific name for this kind of travel: Hermetic trespass. When the precocious Hermes stole cattle from Apollo, he drove the herd backward so that their hoof-prints would deceive trackers. Hermes himself wore sandals with carved feet set in reverse. Why is temporality significant in this process of selective anesthesia? Context is what comes *before* an element; and when Tom body-loads his list, numbing Dickie to the two elements that should alarm him: forgery and imitation. In the future, he will be able to use these skills because Dickie no longer pays attention to them. They are present because they have been introduced as pronouns — ways of holding open a place that will be filled in a surprising way later

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<sup>15</sup> Patricia Highsmith, *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1983 [1955]), 59.

<sup>16</sup> See Adam Green, "A Pickpocket's Tale: The Spectacular Thefts of Apollo Robbins," *The New Yorker* (January 7, 2013). Stable URL: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/01/07/a-pickpockets-tale>.

on. “Pronomination,” the creation of a pronoun in advance of its actualization, is *antonomasia* that has been reversed. Instead of giving an epithet in place of a name known in advance, such as “the Lion-hearted” was used to refer to King Richard, the epithet appears without yet assigning anyone to take on the role.<sup>17</sup> When he or she arrives, meaning will be a fusion of the simultaneous realization that the one who has arrived to be the proper champion for this empty, held-open place simultaneously allows us to retroactively recall *our own role in holding this place open*. Before Excaliber is pulled from the stone, there is no King Arthur. The sword was waiting for someone who didn’t exist until he possessed it. The effect converted into cause.

Tom’s talents of forgery and imitation open up a space that will not be filled properly until he becomes a murderer and *Doppelgänger* of Dickie Greenleaf. No one, not even Tom, could have imagined the outcome of this prophecy. Žižek uses a joke to explain the reverse temporality that comes about “the moment the sender externalizes his message, delivers it to the Other, the moment the Other takes cognizance of the letter, and thus disburdens the sender of responsibility for it.” Normally, we can imagine that a letter can be posted with some error in the address or mistake in the postal system that prevents it from reaching its designated receiver. When Lacan claims that the letter “never fails to reach its destination” we are puzzled. Why can’t it fail? There are delayed, misdelivered, and even dead letters all the time! But, this is not Lacan’s point about the Other. Although the Other “does not exist” (it is a construct of the subject who imagines it to exist), it is a case of the way subjects voluntarily “interpellate” the Other’s authority, within a central void, obviating the need to impose authority from without. The policeman shouts “Hey, you!” and multiple passers-by in the street believe themselves to be the guilty addressee. Their guilt exists as a pronoun — “*What did I do?*” — all the more effective because it uses the contingency of the shout to energize a guilt-ridden search for cause.

Žižek cites a joke told by Michel Pêcheux in his *Language, Semantics and Ideology* (1982): A little girl is puzzled over the fact that “Daddy was born in Manchester, Mummy in Bristol, and I in London: strange that the three of us should have met!” If we look from the point of view of the *contingent result*, this reverse perspective can not help but cause wonder. The process had been going on for a long time (just as we imagine the letter being deposited in a box, picked up, processed, sent to various mail-sorting facilities, etc.). At any point, something might have gone wrong. So the singular end result appears to be miraculous, as if we had run the film of a falling glass of milk backward to watch the liquid and glass fragments reconstitute themselves through an ingenious imagination of their rightful order.

Negative entropy inevitably seems to produce evidence of intentionality. How could assembly, growth, and order happen *without design*? Once the little girl places herself at the position of her birth to look backward, it is indeed amazing how all three of them got together. Her position allows her to overlook the causality of falling in love and getting married and focus instead on the causality of birthplace. Manchester, Bristol, and London hold open the place for the miracle to take place. Once Tom sets forgery and imitation

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<sup>17</sup> This is the problem of alienation. The subject is assigned a position that has either expired (Lacan’s *manque-à-sa-place*) or been (re)assigned to an indefinite future (*manque-à-être*). The subject is positioned between being out of place (the place exists before the subject, a place in “past tense”) and lacking a postponed being promised in the future. Bruce Fink, “Alienation and Separation: Logical Moments of Lacan’s Dialectic of Desire,” *Newsletter of the Freudian Field* 4, 1 & 2 (Spring/Fall 1990): 78–119. In both cases, a place is or was *being held open*. Subjectivity is in this sense radically lipogrammatic. Pro-nouns (generic naming in advance of the conferral of a real name — the arrival of the subject at his/her assigned place) introduce deictic and anaphoric dimensions to the lipogram.

alongside doing a one-man show in a nightclub, he puts us in the position that lets Dickie see things in the rear-view mirror. When things actually happen, of course Dickie will be dead; but in the meantime he will be numb to their possibility just as the little girl in the joke was numb to the causality of how people meet, fall in love, get married, and have children.

Art is not only aware of the possibility of this numbness, it has learned how to play it for all it's worth. The signature works of Tim Noble and Sue Webster, for example, involves assembling piles of junk so that they appear to be nothing more than a pile of trash — discarded objects randomly thrown together. But, the artists have cleverly calculated the configuration of the pile so that, when a focused beam of light is shown through the pile, a precise shadow is cast on to an adjacent wall. The shadow “miraculously” reverses the entropy of disuse and discard. The shadows appear as a truth quotient, an *eigenform*. Noble and Webster's cleverness is to have the shadows bond with the trash. At no time can the viewer occupy the precise



Figure 2. Tim Noble and Sue Webster, *Self-Imposed Misery*, 2010. The British sculptor team uses focused beams of light to create shadow profiles precisely constructed but concealed inside the apparent disorder of the piles of trash.

position of the light beam, so the “truth” of the pile remains the possession of the pile's abject status as trash. In theory, other light beams could shine through/across the pile producing other telling silhouettes; and an idealized model of this multiplicity of light beams would be the “wind rose,” with precise positions at compass points identifying specific qualities associated with each precisely directed wind.

Like the piles of trash, the wind rose possesses its order within its disorder. Despite the clear need to relate to a single central location, winds over large generalized areas are said to be “north winds,” “west winds,” etc. although even small dislocations of the center require the distant origin points of the wind to move along with them. The impossibility of this happening does not diminish the precision by which qualities, such as madness, are attributed to winds identified to the precision of 45° (eight parts), 22.5° (sixteen parts), or even, in some Mediterranean cultures, 11.25° (thirty-two parts). Hamlet,

Scene 2, Act 2: “I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.” The possible meanings of this expression require Hamlet to be sane at the time, but the comparison of hawks and handsaws suggests that he's in a trash-pile situation.<sup>18</sup> The handsaw was the nickname for a kind of heron, but the term was borrowed from the name for a mason's tool, whose shape may have resembled the bird known variously as a heronsaw, hernshaw, heronshew, or (Old French) *heronceau*. Or, perhaps the hybridization was entirely phonetic. Knowing the difference between the two birds or the bird and a mason's tool is an IQ test put in reverse. The madman fears the blending that may

<sup>18</sup> See Humphrey Bartosik, “Hamlet North by Northwest,” *Blogging Shakespeare: Embracing Shakespearean Conversation in a Digital Age*. Stable URL: <http://bloggingshakespeare.com/hamlet-north-by-northwest>. Bartosik presents three possible interpretations of Hamlet's assertion of his sanity but concludes that he accomplishes the opposite in the multiple recursive semantic folds of this comparison. In effect, he not only demonstrates that he is mad, he charts the depth and breadth of his madness.

occur if the compass points are allowed to collapse into the center of the wind rose; but by far the worse condition occurs if the collapse fails to eradicate the order of the precise peripheral points and their assigned qualities. This is the same as the horror movie situation, when body parts continue to function past the point of death or when, as in the case of vampires and mummies, the corpse as a whole continues to walk around.

In other words, entropy is a failure. It can crush the crystal but not destroy the structure that makes each tiny fragment a microcosm of the whole. The violence of destruction seems to leave nothing in its path, just as the subject's ego-mania rides across the weakly defended territory of the autoerotic pre-subject; but the corpses and arms, when piled up as trophies of victory, have an uncanny will to live. This of course is nothing less than the ultimate meaning of the death drive — in effect *not* a magnetic pull toward the nihilistic destruction of death but just the reverse, a resistance to anything and everything that, in the name of entropy, attempts to destroy the native structure of ... what? When Lacan sought to rehabilitate Freudian psychoanalysis, he added two drives to Freud's oral, anal, and phallic drives (note: the "drive" is not an instinct but, rather, a *Trieb*, a pulsing, that would not be possible without the presence of language as an *(im-)possibility*). The addition of the gaze and voice to make a set of five drives was necessary to consolidate the drives as, essentially, death drives. Gaze and voice disallowed the distinction of the death from Eros as binary opposites, so that a crystalline and contronymic dynamic would permeate the whole system. If this crystal could be drawn, it would be a gapped circle, an aim without a target; or, rather, the end identifies with the origin so that a place is held permanently open. There is no way to resolve the radical imbalance of the gapped circle, no way to destroy the economy of forces that send desire into its self-referential repetitive circuit.

When artist such as Noble and Webster use trickery to assert the resistance of order in the face of maximized disorder, they engage in a kind of body loading that would make any pickpocket proud. The numbed zone intimate to the mark's body becomes the site of an intense, artful transfer of belongings. Theft takes place inside a lamination that has been opened up to create a "lofting" inside of which an orthogonal (in the sense of independent) activity can complete its transactions. In silent trade, this is the remoteness of the remote crossroads, the precinct of Hecate. In the planetary spheres separating/connecting immortal Elysium with mortal earth, this is the transparency of the crystal, the gods. In language this is the slips of the tongue, the gasps, moans, and choking sounds that whisper, inside the intended speech, another acousmatic voice, projected from a distance (metonymy). The subject is, in the death drive, a dummy.

## 10 / Before and After

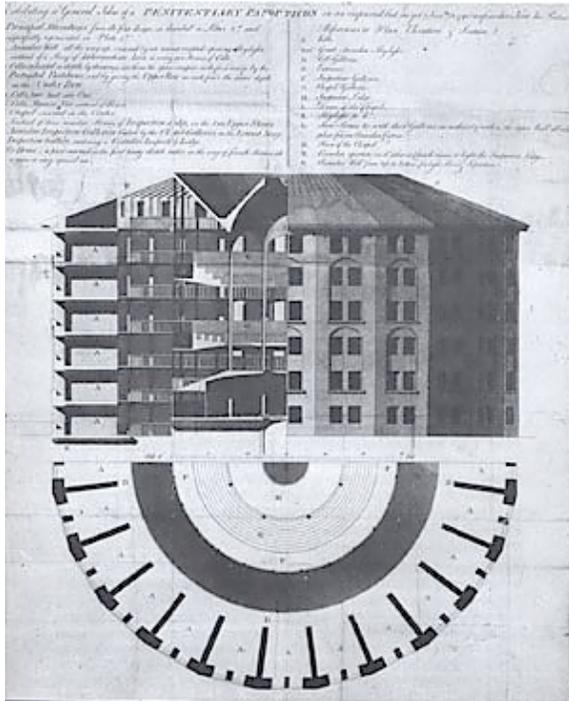


Figure 1. Jeremy Bentham, Panopticon (1786). The ring of cells arrayed around a central blinded tower transferred disciplinary authority from the centralized guards to the peripheral prisoners, thanks to the binary of presence/absence: no prisoner could tell if guards were present or absent. This did not convert to a condition of continuous presence; rather, the binary tuned into the logic of Lacan's "vel," a null set exemplified by the classic robber's demand, "Your money or your life!"

nor-false logical status enabled a transfer of authority from the guard tower to the cell, a true case of ideological interpellation.

Bentham puts the case in a radical form. The Panopticon is a building section (cut through the middle of a line of cells) curved and turned into a perfect circle. The viewer of the section drawing has become partially blind in a peculiar way, blind one second, sighted the next, alternating to infinity.

Diagrammatically, the viewer of a section drawing doesn't occupy a point, as does the viewer of a perspective drawing. Rather, the viewer becomes an "orthographic eye" that slides along the surface of the drawing, engaging it always at a right angle to the page: movement in exchange for a single secure point position. With the curve of the "section drawing" into a cylinder, the viewer is condensed back into a point again, but the orthogonal relation to the surface has not lost its portability. Now it moves without having to move, it's the paper that rotates around the still point, turning the orthographic eye into an Argus aimed out at a 360° *really wide angle* view, whose former limit (180° idealizing the "before one's eyes") has halved

(Groucho:) "Say, I used to know a fellow, looked exactly like you, by the name of ... ah ... Emanuel Ravelli. Are you his brother?"

(Chico, playing Ravelli:) "I'm Emanuel Ravelli!"

(Groucho:) "Well, no wonder you look like him.... But I still insist, there is a resemblance."

—*Animal Crackers*, 1930

What was Joan Copjec thinking? She caught out Michel Foucault in his misreading of Gaston Bachelard's idea of *dispositif* (Foucault basically over-estimated the powers of interpellation *and* got the direction of the panoptical gaze backward) but didn't get into his flawed analysis of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, the "perfect prison" where prisoners, thanks to an imposed technical ignorance of whether guards were present at any given moment, acted as if they were. Bentham actually got the design idea from his brother. With a central tower fit with blinds, and prisoners' cells chopped in two so that a "fourth wall condition" prevailed, making them visible to the tower but invisible to each other, the central "eye" became binary. It was Schrödinger's Cat, neither dead nor alive because no one could look. This was not, as Foucault claimed, a flip to the assumption that the guards *were* there all the time because they *might be there* at any time. Rather, the binary was a binary. Its neither-true-

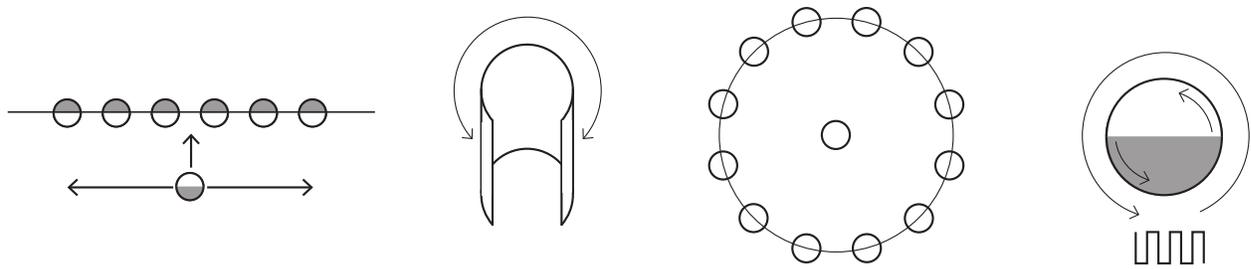


Figure 2. Genesis of the binary tower. In the section drawing (far left), the “orthopsychic eye” functionally moves along the surface of the plane of representation. The view of the observer is 180°, and the objects cut by the plane of representation are similarly cut into a visible half (the section) and an invisible half (hidden by the section). The Panopticon is essentially this plane of representation curved into a cylinder and arrayed about a single point of view, whose 180° visibility is *temporalized* into a rotating binary function, presence/absence. This binary (far right) allows the authority to be transferred from the center to the peripheries where, in each cell, the metonymy of the tower/cell makes each prisoner “orthopsychic” thanks to the distance–cancelling identity between the cell and tower. The perimetral curve and central rotation are *indistinguishable* and, hence, equivalent, but in a palindromic way. Travel from the curved periphery to central tower is “the same” as from the central tower to the curved periphery *in and only in* the fact that they are opposite yet indistinguishable.

the 360° this way: palintropic *harmoniē*, a square–wave function (oscillating between two values without anything in between: blindseeingblindseeing ...). Seeing the Panopticon in terms of a genesis of the section drawing (building, building sliced in two, drawing rolled into a cylinder) demonstrates the function of the Panopticon’s central tower as a binary and shows how the binary is a transformation of a spatial limit (180° of visibility in front of the viewer, 180° of invisibility behind the viewer) into a temporal one.

The rolled–up drawing doesn’t get rid of the blindness of the guards, it converts it into a temporal algorithm. Because it’s time–based, the spatial distance between the tower and the cells, which was always orthographic, is negated by the palindrome, curve/rotation, and the authority of the tower transfers to the cells in the same way a wire conducts an electrical charge from one end to the other. There are as many wires as cells, the “many” of the cells turn the ortho–*psychic* current of authority into a 360° *pan*–optical array, at the cost of crunching invisibility in with visibility into a temporal “AC current” that oscillates so quickly that, just as the fast–spinning blades of an airplane’s propeller appear to be a disk, creates a contronymic solid: the tower you can see and not see at the same time. Thanks to this temporal algorithm, the prisoners discipline themselves, although by “discipline” we are no longer under the mandate to follow all of Foucault’s prescriptions on this subject. Foucault somehow misses the bar that crosses the ‘A’, the hysteric’s observant mark and reminder that the Other is constructed by subjects who then victimize themselves by its authority. The Other is there “on behalf” of the subject; without it the subject could not conquer the marshlands of the Id, the pronoun with enjoyment on its side. There is no need for guards at all as long as belief in the prison’s Other is sustained. In fact, the Panopticon demonstrates the general function of the Other for subjectivity: it exists by not existing,  $\mathbb{A}$ , but it can do this only with a *signifier*,  $S(\mathbb{A})$ . In other words, the cells need a tower. Prisoners, facing the tower (a. k. a. the “inconsistency of the Other”) become hysterics,  $\$/a$ , which the Panopticon demonstrates so clearly: an ‘S’ split into two parts (by the section plane), energized by the  $+/-$ , pleasure/pain force of *jouissance*, delivered in the form a square wave. Ironically the beachcomber in the micro–treasureland between the Ego and the Id (*Wo Es war, soll*

*Ich werden*) can spot the glimmer of a jewel thanks to the washing back and forth of square waves. This is just one of the “secondary pleasures” of playing the dupe.

If nothing else, the Panopticon suggests that psychoanalysis is sometimes better understood through examples of art or, as in this case, architecture, than through the standard anecdotes of Freudian–Lacanian psychoanalysis. The “medium can be the message” if graphic conventions (orthographic drawings such as the section drawing) happen to coincide historically with the ideas (“correction”) that they can simultaneously represent and *be*. This amounts to a complete library/gallery of Secondary Lacan, which as one might and should imagine is just as important as a Borgesian construct.<sup>1</sup> In the Secondary Library, the basement vaults of books, boxed up to be burned, is just as important as the rare volumes on display in shrouded glass cases. The architectural particulars of hidden passageways, dead-end staircases, and panels that, as in John Soane’s museum house in London, open up to reveal more sets of panels. These, too, reveal their own orthography, their own short-circuit (AC of course) of imaginative transfer, *graphos* to the *psyche* the *graphos* has, in carbon on white, called forth to stand out and away from the representational plane, in parallel lines that enable its dreams of flying.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Square waves crashing on the beach of autoeroticism*

Correction is often portrayed by photos showing “before” and “after” states. The simple fact of order (usually, before is on the left, after on the right) is enough to convince most viewers that what happened in between was for the better. Imagine two experiments, however. In the first one, the before and after shots are spatialized to be the left and right photos taken simultaneously of a scene that will pop forth with imagined perception of depth when the two images are printed on a card and inserted into a “stereograph” (“Viewmaster” was a popular modern brand). In the stereograph the difference between the left and right images creates neurological differences that produce the sensation of depth. In time, however, the differences can only create a blur that is akin to the blur Alenka Zupančič claims will exist

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<sup>1</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, “The Library of Babel,” *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin, 1998), 112–118: “For every rational line or forthright statement there are leagues of senseless cacophony, verbal nonsense, and incoherency.” The one-to-leagues ratio suggests a bad infinity, but in fact the senseless cacophony etc. is a closed, curved universe that is the domain of the Other to whom (the sender of the famous Lacanian letter–that–can’t–go–wrong) will eventually return the *corrected* message to the *proper* address at *just the right time*. Waiting should be factored in à la Beckett’s *Godot* or Sartre’s famously late bar companion, Pierre. These are the important pronoun forms of the binary transfer, the double track that allows, in its place-holding–open capacity, cosmic demonstrations of *just the right time*, Castor to reunite with Pollux.

<sup>2</sup> There is some basis, actually, to conceptualize dreams of floating/flying *via* orthographic transfer. One account has it that the aerodynamic dream is the result of stimulus from the lungs during sleep, and that the air contained by the lungs in the body is extimated into the condition of the body contained by air. This accounts for the way that the flying dreamer requires minimal effort to glide from point to point. The body’s specific gravity nearly matches that of the surrounding air, giving a nearly perfect metaphor for the alternating current of transfer between Prisoner and Guard in the Panopticon parable. Where there is AC, there is extimacy; where there is extimacy there is self-surveillance. And (most important), where there is AC, the *Es* and *Ich* share the same stretch of beach, across which their paths will cross in search of tiny but enigmatic glimmering jewels. This is the reverse of World War I’s “no man’s land” but also the proof of the emergence, in the actual history of that vile terrain mutually abjected by both warring armies, of a “perfect utopia” in which deserters from both sides created a covert survivalist society, speaking a variety of languages, caring for each other, and mutually foreswearing all allegiance to the Former Father(lands). These self-selecting pacifists articulate perfectly the transfer of the AC between the *Es* and *Ich*, prisoner and guard, body and air. And, there is no better example of the debris field that, tended by so many *homo sacers* at ground zero, validates the temporality of the binary — its *palintropos harmonië*.

between one viewer and another, standing some distance apart, whether that distance is one of attitude or physical terrain. The point in both cases is that the difference cannot be assimilated within any system of continuous connection, whether the in-between is spatial or temporal. A blur or *anamorphic image* is the only way to address the precise nature of this “no man’s land.” Imagine the letter ‘W’ whose two ‘V’ components have been crunched together to form a small overlapping middle space. This is not the optimistic conjunction of what two different viewpoints “see in common” from their slightly different perspectives, but the *vel* Lacan describes as the negative overlap condition of the forced choice. “Your money or your life” leaves the victim no choice, although the demand is grammatically presented as one. If you keep your money, you will not be alive to enjoy it, so “keep” takes on a different meaning. Giving up the money may make life harder to enjoy, but it’s the only option. Bruce Fink has demonstrated this in the form of a truth table (FT=T, FF=T, both combinations of the false X with the true and false versions of Y are verified) that shows that “X is so inexorably false that Y is forced to give up that part of its ‘being true’ which coincides with X.”<sup>3</sup> The robber gets nothing out of the life the victim will give up, but the money will be his/hers. The life has been a place-holder to facilitate a transfer. It has been “numbed” by the robber’s body-loading, which (like the pickpocket’s body-loading) will be used as a space of criminal transfer. Hermes the thief!

In this overlap, negation produces, according to Zupančič, either a blur or an anamorph. In the case of Holbein’s *Ambassadors*, the *vel* will force the viewer to move within the grasp of the picture plane materialized as a sextant “shooting” the sun over London (at a 27° angle) on behalf a consummately precise timing of the painting’s finishing-point, April 11, 1533, 4 pm. Two things converge: the end of representation — not just this one but *all* representation, it turns out! — and the end of the world at the moment of Apocalypse, identified through a calculus of 3’s, 9’s, and 11’s. The *palintropos harmoniē* of the 9 and 11 will provide the square wave, the triangular 3 will glitter on the beach in between. The “ambiguity of the jewel” Lacan cites in his confrontation with a shiny, floating sardine can off the Brittany coast is certainly the anamorph of the gaze, whose AC current will conduct an electrical economy of the subject and Other in terms of identity, authority, and self-surveillance/discipline. If some had optimistically hoped for a “common place” — a happy-meals community space where, “no matter where you come from, we’re glad you’re our neighbor” (*No importa de dónde estas ...*) — ideology is the bottom line result. The deictic you of the enunciation act reveals that the speaker was there before, to be in the position of the welcomer to the newcomer, who will always be at a disadvantage. The blur will have a “reverse shine-forth,” like dark stars that absorb rather than emit light. The blur will be an indelible stain marking the “you” of the tri-lingual placard as unable to cross over to the land of the receiver. So much for New Age optimism. Now we know the accounting methods of the AC gaze: “Heads I win, tails you lose.” *No importa.*

### *Bananas*

I want to look at the blur/anamorph in terms of how and in what ways places — mental places, graphic places, geographical place, idea places, etc. — can be held open. When two or more people look at the same scene, it has been famously observed that they don’t see the same thing, although “rhetorically” they require each other to see some common elements even if valuations or references can never hope to

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<sup>3</sup> Bruce Fink, “Alienation and Separation,” 84.

match.<sup>4</sup> Rhetoric swells into an ethical demand once the viewers suspect that their requests are going unanswered, when for example obsessive attention given to some detail seems to the other to be unwarranted: a sign of some defect of perception or even a warp of character. Accepting subjective variation as a given, famous attempts to catalog differences according to a canon linking the views (more or less subjective, more or less organic, etc.) have borrowed from the philosopher of science Stephen C. Pepper's *World Hypotheses* ("root hypotheses": formism, organicism, mechanism, contextualism).<sup>5</sup> In the historian Hayden White's extrapolation, these were related to (Vichian) tropes of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony.<sup>6</sup> The ghost of the system of humors provides a seasonal, material, and psychological basis for circling the system into self-transforming entities whose systems of binary opposition (dry/wet, hot/cold) fluff out maladies, talents, proclivities, affinities, and even planetary associations. Northrop Frye attempted to merge Vico with Jung (*via* Joseph Campbell) to find a system of meta-genres (Comedy, Romance, Tragedy, Satire) animating everything from poisons to potentates.

One finds some sober relief in the geographer Donald Meinig's humble adaptation of Gombrich, but even here the specter of a system looms ("nature," "habitat," "artifact," "system," "problem," "wealth," "ideology," "history," "place," "aesthetic") as one sees in the nature/aesthetic categories a lineation of object to subject.<sup>7</sup> But, the humors, as Frye saw them, bent subjectivity/objectivity into the same dramatic cycle. Perhaps every categorical system based on distinctions ends up within a palindromic schema; or, like Johnstone's or Bloom's independently contrived stations of subjectivity, has built-in redundancies invisible to them originally but obvious to any later review that detaches them from their original narratives.

The point is that the whole is immediately present in the part as soon as it becomes a part. A part is always a part *of* something that, though it may not yet be fully named or realized, entitles it to its own status as a rule able to confer belonging on the qualities, examples, etc. that would belong to it. In fact, because any set-theoretic project is by its nature an orthographic section drawing, attaching whatever touches the picture plane to a central orthopsychic POV, which is (1) portable because it relates to the flatness of the representational surface and (2) binary because it embodies the Boolean true/false value in its own 180°/180° off/on status, the cyclicity of the set is its conversion to a cylindrical container/contained function with a binary Boolean center. Pepper's scientific tropes, White's metahistories, Frye's meta-genres, and the less obvious categories of travel (Johnstone) and poetic influence (Bloom) fold into a panoptical logic once their "surface of representation" reveals itself to be orthographic.

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<sup>4</sup> For example, see Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Early Modern Art*, trans. M. D. Hottinger (New York: Dover Publications, 1932), 17. In retelling the anecdote about the artist Ludwig Richter's experiment of having four artist-friends try as hard as possible to draw a chosen scene "objectively", Ernst Gombrich, as is well known, made extensive use of the pronoun complex "the way things ought to look." If this couldn't be swallowed as an axiomatic presupposition, the story wouldn't work. Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965),

<sup>5</sup> Stephen C. Pepper, *World Hypotheses: A Study in Evidence* (Berkeley, CA, and London: University of California, 1942).

<sup>6</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Donald W. Meinig, "The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene," *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, ed. D. W. Meinig and John Brinckerhoff Jackson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

But, just as the fourth right diagram in Figure 2 shows, the binary implicitly assimilates its binary order as a “drive with a gap.” In the manner of the Cheshire Cat, the speculative potentiality combines with its reverse predication non-possibility: the cat without a smile suggests a smile without a cat. Under the cover of darkness (negation), the two incompatible conditions become a single bi-pole. This is none other than the pronoun’s fundamental deictic position — as an enunciating act, *énonciation*. As an enunciation of a system within the orthographic “standard” of places waiting to be filled anaphorically, a system of halved entities (the prisoners’ cells), empty/full so to speak, the system itself holds open a place between a sender and receiver, an “I” and a “you,” sender and addressee, the Other who constitutes (before anything else) a domain in which a letter, once released, will but succeed to arrive at its destination, in that failure has been orthographically integrated within the palindromic domain of Boolean reversals and reversed predications. The Other of the Boolean set, in pronoun terms at least, is deictic in its binary ability to define both interior and exterior (and hence extimate) conditions of membership. It is, in short, the  $\phi$ , the phallic rule, the basis of the Symbolic: the rule of the set that, imposing the rule on all members, does not itself obey them.<sup>8</sup>

The place held open between the sender and receiver is ... what? —the book, the theater stage, the click of the baton, the Propylaea (gateway to the Parthenon), the staging space — in other words, anywhere we are made to stand and wait for something about to happen. Our anticipation is the “before” of the silence that will come after, an *anagnorisis* where the small space of overlapping cones of vision is a null set, the forced choice situation. Abbreviating the truth table data where X is false and Y is true are true ( $-/+ \rightarrow +$ ) and X if false and Y is false is also true ( $-/- \rightarrow +$ ), we can have “too much is true” — i. e. “your money or your life” means it really doesn’t matter; you’re going to lose your money in any case, although the question makes you think you might have a choice in the matter. If lack is the privation of truth, “X is so inexorably false that Y is forced to give up that part of its ‘being true’ which coincides with X.”<sup>9</sup> The excess of truth that validates both forms of the threat and inexorable falsehood of X shows why truth isn’t

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<sup>8</sup> This is Lacan’s *matheme* for sexuating the male position:  $\forall x \phi x$  (all those who would call themselves “men” fall under the phallic law,  $x$ ) as long as  $\exists x \sim \phi x$  (there is one who does not fall under that law). The existence of “the one” coupled with exemption is graphically summed up by the orthographic/orthopsychic logic of the Panopticon. The sexuation schema, reduced to binary relations ( $++/+-$ ;  $-+/-$ ) has a suggestive affinity to the Panopticon’s own palindromic tower/cell relationships. The circuit of transfer,  $+/-+$ , meets at a gap where  $++/-$  confront each other as plates of a capacitor that, like the ends of the orthographic plane in the section drawing, convert their encircling act (matching of left and right ends of the plane) into a portable binary condition,  $+/-+$ , an internal, “anaphoric,” palindrome. This is *ersatz* speculation at its most extreme, perhaps, but it’s the necessary opening gambit to charge up the critique of pronouns in their role as place holders, where the orthographic/orthopsychic dynamic must be kept in mind.

<sup>9</sup> This pushes Bruce Fink’s analysis (*op. cit.*, 84) to fit into a comparison with the orthographic condition of the section to show how the before/after photos can represent Zupančič’s example of side-by-side points of view. Just as two viewers of the same scene (cf. the example of artists in the Richter anecdote) confront not just differences in *characterizations* but radical contrasts in their “fundamentals” (meta-speculative presuppositions), the null of the overlap (what they rhetorically and ethically demand of the Other to see — their *orthopsychic* claim) cannot be satisfied. This is the gap in the Symbolic, the exception that “proves the rule” of the signifying chains that require obedience to the signifying rule (which we summarize as binary) while the rule itself remains radically counter-binary: a drive rather than a function:  $\exists x \sim \phi x$ . What makes the circle a circle is the orthographic principle by which all are fit within the same binary plane of representation; what makes the circle gapped is the portability of the “orthographic eye” (Emmons) that moves along this plane and, as the ends of the are joined when the surface is rolled into a cylinder (the Panopticon building), this eye’s binary becomes (like all other eyes) a solid with a hole in it.

just a Goldilocks median between too much and too little. The “just right” is the excluded middle, the gap between sigma 9 and sigma 11 in the palindrome that offsets the numeric sequence of base ten by one digit left then one digit right. The 9 and 11 represent the conditions of too little (-/+ ) and too much (+/-) that energize the circuit of the drive(s). This is the condition of the set maintained by the Other, to whom letters are entrusted and guaranteed by the Other Postal System to always arrive at their destination (because the System is the Symbolic that determines all destinations from the Other’s point of view).

Just as this speculative description is ersatz Lacan and therefore completely secondary, reverse predication requires the dupe/fool (the secondary character in Lacan’s theory of the Other) to explain how the Other Postal System works. The dupe position is available to any of us who follow Lacan’s or Žižek’s advice, namely, to avoid the cynical position of catching the Other out in its inconsistent  $\exists x \sim \phi x$  ways. Literally, the One is One of a Kind, the “kind” being the clubhouse rules binding the members,  $\phi x$ . The clubhouse interior is fashioned in metaphor. One thing stands for another; a more definitive way of saying this is that language robs things of their thingness, because there is always the possibility of replacement, not just word for thing, but other words for any one word. Language is about substitution. In contrast, metonymy is exiled to an unknown externality where it must call out in a disembodied way. In Peter Weir’s *The Truman Show*, this condition is the film’s idea of a dupe (Truman) trapped inside a metaphor machine (the planned community, Seahaven, Florida), who nonetheless feels he is being called away by faint voices (the sudden appearance of his missing father; Sylvia, a potential girlfriend who wants to explode the secret of his dupe-ness; a dream of visiting Fiji; an identification with being an astronaut). These metonymies link to the central lack Truman feels in Seahaven, a process of hearing in the “voice” of the Other, more than the Other intends to say. The Other is the director, Christof (actually more Yahweh than Christ), who seems to be fixed on personal and corporate profitability but whose ethical shortcomings have the effective outcome of Truman’s ethnical breakthrough.

*The Truman Show* demonstrates a relationship between Lacanian themes of the Other/Dupe and the sorites, the “one grain more” or “one hair less” logic of gradual accumulation. Sorites’ paradox comes with the realization that a pile is a pile or that the bald head is well and truly bald. At what point were these universals realized? The standard procedure traces back each fallen grain of sand, each falling hair. No point can be found that marks the difference between the pile and non-pile, or the hairy/bald head. Subtraction proceeds until the absurd conclusion, namely, that one grain of sand is somehow already a pile of sand and that the full head of hair is bald before you know it. The conclusion from this *reductio ad absurdum* is that universality is granted *retroactively*. Forget about the absurd extreme conditions of the single grain or single hair; retroactivity reveals the dynamic relation between particulars and universals insofar as the latter is embedded in the former. This has enormous implications for any theory of class membership, sexual “categories” not withstanding. For those cellmates arrayed across an orthographic plane, the effects of collecting are clear. “One prisoner more” creates the idea — the orthograph — of the Dark Tower whose surveillance is perfect because, precisely, it is imperfect by half: S( $\text{A}$ ). The dupe-cellmates know this of the Other: it will never come out of its semi-blind ( $\text{A}$ ) Tower. But, the Dark Tower of Seahaven is the producer-director’s technology center housed in a fake moon. From this headquarters, Christof mikes directions directly to the non-dupes, fit with earpieces, who respond instantly to his commands. Their cynicism is summarized by Christoff in his final plea to Truman when the hero sails into the fake sky and discovers an exit staircase. It’s an argument of proportion. What’s one man’s freedom

compared to the pleasure delivered to millions of television viewers. But, this is a reversed version of “your money or your life.” It’s Truman’s life and Christoff’s corporate money, and Truman’s choice is forced by his discovery of the fake sky. He can’t return to his former role as dupe because he has lost the very element of ignorance that converted to the *jouissance* of the audience. You can get off on someone not knowing what everyone else knows, but if he knows and goes along anyway, it’s simply pathetic.

The necessity of the dupe as dupe is demonstrated clearly by another film, *Johnny Stecchino* (1991), directed by Roberto Benigni, who also plays the role of Johnny and his look-alike, Dante, a school-bus driver for Downs Syndrome kids. Stecchino (“toothpick”) is in hiding from the Palermo Mafia. He has killed mob boss Cozzamara’s wife and ratted out to the police. His wife and lawyer confine him for his own safety in a basement room in their villa, a solution that is wearing thin. When Johnny’s wife Maria nearly runs over Dante when she’s driving around his town, Cesena (in Emilia–Romana), she can’t believe her eyes. Dante is an exact twin of her husband. She quickly devises a plan, to fake a coy love for Dante, lure him to Palermo. Dante’s only crimes have been an insurance scam — he fakes an uncontrollable shaking — and stealing bananas at a local grocery. In Palermo, Maria dresses him up to look like her husband, down to pencilling in a fake mole and asking him to sport a toothpick just as her eponymous husband had.

Dante sneaks out to take a walk around the neighborhood. When he passes by a grocer’s, he can’t resist his old habit of stealing a banana while getting the proprietor to look the other way. But, some of Cozzamara’s men have spotted him, and they drive past the grocer’s, guns blazing. Dante thinks that this response is a bit heavy-handed for such a petty theft, his first offense in Palermo. He immediately seeks the protection of the police station, but the chief, who believes Dante to be Johnny, thinks that his protected witness is going crazy from his forced confinement. He accepts Dante’s confession for stealing the banana and lets him off with a warning. Outside the station, Dante runs into the judge who handled Johnny’s case, but the judge cannot believe that “Johnny” has turned over “the evidence” (the banana) to the police and advises him to take it back.

By this time, the police and judge believe that Dante’s story of the banana cryptically refers to the criminal activities he will testify against as a witness for the prosecution. The audience sees that Dante has not the least suspicion that anything is wrong, although he finds that the legal community of Palermo seems perversely concerned with the theft of bananas. Maria is frustrated that Cozzamara & Co. have failed to assassinate Dante despite his exposure. She decides to take him to the opera, where everyone will see “Johnny” confidently exposing himself to public view. Before the opera begins, members of the audience begin to shout abuse at Dante; undaunted, he takes this as further proof that all Palermo is possessed to the point of mania over banana theft.

Dante stands to deliver a speech that, to him, is about the pettiness of this public obsession; but for the audience, every word matches perfectly to what the real Johnny would say in defense of his turning state’s evidence and gunning down Cozzamara’s wife. The audience reacts in perfect tune to what Dante predicts for this race of banana lovers. The film concludes when Maria delivers Dante up to a barbershop full of Cozzamara’s men, but they discover his mole is a fake and find out that his mother, unlike Johnny’s, is alive and well. Dante, still ignorant of the danger he has just confronted, teaches the gangsters the funny song he uses to keep his Down Syndrome kids entertained on their way to school.

The comedy of *Johnny Stecchino* would not work if, at any point, Dante were aware of the plot to use him as a decoy for his look-alike. He is the perfect dupe, so much so that every line describing his

conception of things matches perfectly with what the police, judge, and public think is coming from the lips of Stecchino. The amazing mesh of the two meaning-contexts with every word and situation keeps the film's running gag, the banana, energized until the end of the film. Without the function of the dupe, the film would become a trite tale of mistaken identity. But, in this film, we discover the debt the dupe owes to the punch line of the running gag, in this case the word "banana." It is an object of secret theft, first demonstrated in the film when Dante amuses his best Down Syndrome friend, Lillo, showing how he, too, might enjoy this trick. But, when the banana ceases to be a literal modern version of the "forbidden fruit," it becomes a signifier that works on the theological and epistemological level of the original Biblical larceny.

Forbidden! ... but by whom? The answer in Genesis (2: 16–17) seems obvious. God forbids Adam to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. God is denying Adam the *jouissance* that should be his, given the mutual free sexual access presumed to be the natural advantage of a man and woman and a garden. But, neither Adam nor Eve yet know of contingency. Adam has covered his world of things in a 1:1 ortho-lexicography, naming each thing and — reverse predication! — calling it into being at the same time. Without the possibility of language attempting to describe and failing, or the symmetrical opposite, language "saying too much" about the speaker, there is no real language. Before the fall, there is no language proper. We imagine God, Adam, and Eve saying things to each other but it is structurally impossible for this to happen. Their communication is more like the chemical signals ant colonies create to exploit food sources, protect from dangers, and so on. There is no bar, as in Saussure's S/s, between the signifier and the signified. When Lacan inverted Saussure's expression, to s/S, the point was to show, using the example of Robinson Crusoe discovering the footprint in the sand, how "... the signifier may extend over many of the elements within the domain of the sign. But the signifier is a sign that doesn't refer to any object, not even to one in the form of a trace, even though the trace nevertheless heralds the signifier's essential feature. It, too, is the sign of an absence. But insofar as it forms part of language, the signifier is a sign which refers to another sign, which is as such structured to signify the absence of another sign, in other words, to be opposed to it in a couple."<sup>10</sup> Absence of the foot from the print, absence of the banana not just from the stalk that hangs from the grocer's peg but from the story of Cozzamara's murdered wife and the betrayal of all gangsters by one, is an absence that holds a place open in a state of suspense and anticipation. *It's all a big misunderstanding.*

Eden can be considered a place held open by the Who who forbids, the unknown character Adam and Eve never meet but whose footsteps they hear rustling in the background. The Garden has masked God's presence; it is perspectival. Knowledge of good and evil take the form of a tree because, after all, contingency is a matter of brachiation — choosing between this turn or that, fleeing away from the single trunk's mandate, the Law, into myriad variants (*askesis*) just as Adam/Eve and will spread their kin over the face of the earth after exile. The *dæmon*/askesis relation is clear. God is the arch-*dæmon*, the model of all *dæmons* to come. But, he is perspectival, hence the need for his commandment "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." "Before" is a kind of prepositional pronoun in Biblical language. It can mean either "standing before" in an act of submission/devotion, "taking precedence" as when someone steps in front of another, or the temporal before.

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<sup>10</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Seminar III*, 167.

The point is that the tree and its tour–guide serpent offer up a model of language and the contingency language will bring, with its “both greater than and less than” logic, of being both inadequate to the objective thing and saying too much about the subject. The  $\langle \rangle$  is so close to the  $\diamond$  (*poinçon*, a punch, like that made by the train conductor) Lacan uses in *mathemes* such as  $\$ \diamond a$ , the *matheme* for fantasy (paraphrase: “the subject in a fantasy is marked by the ‘cut’ of the *a*, the object–cause of desire”). My paraphrase, “both greater than and less than,” is not an overlap but, rather, a gap. If a Möbius strip is cut, Lacan notes how one side can then be painted without painting the other side. The cut takes the Möbius out of the Möbius. The running gag, like the run of the band, comes up to the point of the cut, where too much and too little coincide: the punch,  $\diamond$ , in the line (band). The run is cut, the askesis runs to escape,  $\rangle$ , but find that the *dæmon* is there before it,  $\langle$ . In Option 1 of the uncanny, the servant flees death only to find Death waiting for him in Samara. In Option 2, the subject dies but doesn’t remember dying, and continues, like the character in Nabokov’s *The Eye*, going on as before. Before becomes after, with the sign of the cut,  $\diamond$ , punched into it. This “banana” is there because it’s not there. It is a sign of nothing less than absence, or nothing more than the loss of the fruit on the stalk. Triviality, the thirdness of the *trivium*, grammar, logic, and rhetoric, stands in for the voice that gives the sign its musical tonality. For, how else would we know the Cretan Liar is lying (logic) unless his grammar had condensed the position of the enunciating act and the content of enunciation with a rhetorical grin? The Cretan Liar is, trivially, both subject and object, which would spin us around on this Möbius band of a joke forever were it not for the cut, the point where we laugh. The running gag gags on the cut where, like the famous joke, “The Aristocrats,” the gap is revealed in full splendor.

The running gag/gap/ $\diamond$  is what makes the dupe a dupe. Unlike the cynic who, like Foucault, collapses the binary of the dark tower into its negative option (prisoners, conceiving that the guards are not visible must act always as if they were), the dupe retains the positive option by “refusing to hear of” all this fuss about bananas. The dupe then hears more of the Other than others can hear; Adam will hear “more God than in God” once he eats the banana to become the First Dupe. Thereafter, the Bible will narrate the tale of the running gag, where the Möbius band has been cut by the main lipogram (the prohibition against speaking or writing the Name of God — *le nom/non du Père*) and all the little lipograms that spring from this central open space. This tree of lipograms grows to such an extent that the open space *as such* — the pronominal functions of who, what, where, when, and why — take over for the Name. The grave and its stone “nomination” will forever distinguish this mound of earth from any other not containing bones. Hegel’s point about Golgotha is deep; six feet deep, actually. “The spirit is a bone” runs counter to all positive theological positions on the right–hand side of *sacer*, the contronym originating in the Garden. The left–hand side is taken up in Hegel’s joke about bones in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Categorical logic is compared to a “skeleton with tickets stuck all over it.” The pseudo–science of phrenology is set beside the skull of Golgotha at Christ’s crucifixion in the same way that pissing is set beside procreation in Hegel’s consideration of the penis. Left, the side of the Möbius band able to escape painting as long as there is a cut/gap/ $\diamond$ ; or, in other words, as long as a place is held open.

### *The empty grave*

Nevertheless it may be admitted that the therapeutic efforts of psycho-analysis have chosen a similar line of approach. Its intention is, indeed, to strengthen the ego, to make it more independent of the super ego, to widen its field of perception and enlarge its organization, so that

it can appropriate fresh portions of the id. Where id was, there ego shall be. It is a work of culture —not unlike the draining of the Zuider Zee. [Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*]

Because flesh and bones constitute two separate systems, bones mark the empty grave, not the occupied one. Thus, salt, the common agency of desiccation, was for centuries used to hasten the reduction of flesh to a mummified state or disappearance altogether, and for centuries thereafter employed as a symbolic element, to aid the soul in its journey past the point of literal death. It is impossible to consider the phrase *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden* without Freud's reference to the de-salinization efforts of the Ego in its attempt to reclaim the land formerly inundated by the (autoerotic) Id; or without considering the necessity to leave the land fallow, of holding it open and unused. From salt to sweet (the two poles of water) we have the mortal and immortal, the empty and occupied grave, the naïve Jonathan Harker and the desiccated but uber-wise Count Dracula.<sup>11</sup>

The Nineteenth Century was obsessed with the prospect of premature burial.<sup>12</sup> Modern embalming was not yet a common practice. Some diseases put victims into states of suspended animation (no breathing or heartbeat, loss of heat, no signs of mental activity) so convincing that the popular press was filled with gruesome accounts of exhuming coffins with signs of desperate struggles to escape. Dan Piepenbring samples some of the sensational offerings of the times:

There's the man who sank into such a prolonged lethargy that he was thought dead until he "broke into a profuse sweat" in his coffin; the young woman whose corpse was exhumed for reburial only to be discovered "in the middle of the vault, with disheveled hair and the linen torn to pieces ... gnawed in her agony"; the man whose fear of premature burial was so severe that he instructed his family to leave his body undisturbed for ten days after death, "with the face uncovered, and watched night and day. Bells were to be fastened to his feet. And at the end of the second day veins were to be opened in the arm and leg."

Edgar Allan Poe's famous short story, "The Premature Burial" (1844), takes a representative sounding of this fear. The entire Gothic imagination, formally initiated in 1764 by Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, the string of labyrinthine escapes, mistaken identities, malicious imprisonments, seemed to extend so perfectly from the French Revolution, that scholars of the uncanny long credited that event's hyper-rationality for a reactionary pulse of the Western imagination towards all things dark. Any confined space could, as in Poe's tale, double as a tomb. Any shadow could conceal a ghost. Any remote landscape could, in addition to the threat of brigands, offer refuge to teams of deceased souls.<sup>13</sup> The metonymy of place for malady cursed all desserts, mountainous areas, glades, remote hidden valleys, and forests. Their

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<sup>11</sup> Ernest Jones, C. G. Jung, James Hillman, *Salt and the Alchemical Soul* (Woodstock, CT: Spring Publications, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> For example, see William Tebb, *Premature Burial, and How It May Be Prevented, with Special Reference to Trance, Catalepsy, and Other Forms of Suspended Animation* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1896). Stable URL: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/50460/50460-h/50460-h.htm>. See also Dan Piepenbring, "I'm Not Dead Yet, The Nineteenth Century Obsession with Premature Burial," *The Paris Review* (January 6, 2016), stable URL: <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2016/01/06/im-not-dead-yet/>.

<sup>13</sup> See W. F. G. Sebald's account of the wandering dead of Corsica in *Campo Santo*, trans. Anthea Bell (London: Penguin, 2013). Living residents reputedly tear down unused buildings for fear that they will offer shelter to the bands who, once they have found suitable shelter, refuse to move out.

darkness was a privation universalized into generic Dark, well past any associative psychology of attributes shared with other dark things. The places were Darkness Itself, where night was a substance, 24/7.

The 19c. imagination expanded quickly into this territory, thanks in part to the prevalence of tuberculosis. When corpses of Caucasian tuberculosis victims were examined after death, the body retained its pinkness and slight swelling gave the appearance of being well nourished. Especially after long periods of wasting in the disease's later stages, this contrast was alarming, especially since it was often accompanied by slight trickles of blood from the mouth. Combined with the disease's unusual effect of increasing libido, the idea of a randy corpse connected easily to Bram Stoker's popular *Dracula*: a non-dead aristocrat who survived by seducing young and mostly good-looking victims who, after death, would share the blood of new recruits. In New England, exhumed graves provided the opportunity to determine that a significant number of 19c. deceased had had their remains messed about. A sharpened wooden stake driven into the heart was the preferred solution.

The attempt to pin the heart to one location suggests that the soul's wandering in itself constituted a problem of the undead, who populated the imaginative interval between a first, literal death and a second symbolic death. In Corsica, this leads to the destruction of vacant structures used by the dead as refuges. In the anthology spook film *Dead of Night* (Cavalcanti *et alia*, 1945) the tale told by Sally, the youngest of those gathered around the cozy country house fire involves a Twelfth-Night party, traditionally involving costumes and identity games. When the children invited to this old mansion for the occasion decide to play "sardines," a variation on hide-and-seek, the logic of this interval is partly disclosed, thanks to the mansion's qualifications as a hiding place for unsettled spirits. Sally finds a curtained nook on a staircase landing but is quickly discovered by Jimmie Watson, the party's host, who has been flirting with her. The attempt to violate a virgin's sanctity is often related, in folklore, to the sacred nature of entry and exit protocols, as in the story of Diana and Actæon, the virgin god and the hunter who accidentally stumbles into her bathing place.

Jimmie pack into the alcove but suggests that it is not secure. Rather, they should take refuge in the attic where, as Jimmie relates, the ghost of Francis Kent, a young boy murdered by his sister, still ranges. Jimmie puts the moves on Sally, and Sally pulls down some dusty carpets to distract her Actæon while she hides behind a mirrored door. He thinks she has escaped downstairs and leaves the attic, but Sally finds a corridor behind the door leading to a brightly wallpapered bedroom with a cozy fire going. A small boy in 18c. dress is crying; she takes him to be one of the guests at the party and sings a lullaby to calm him to sleep. The logic is to combine two modalities of wandering, the woman in flight from a would-be rapist and a pre-pubescent boy in flight from an evil sibling. The horror common to both is that two will be confined in a space meant for one. The graphic of this is well-known: the two-faced god Janus, god of thresholds. The caption of the graphic is also well-known: "Love and Death."

In François Ozon's 2017 film, *Frantz*, this enigma is unpacked through a series of pronouns that hold open places assigned for "pinning down one's identity for once and for all." The paradigm of this pinning-down is the grave. Residents of Quedlinburg, a small town just north of the Harz Mountains in Germany struggle to unwrap the painful memories of World War I. A young woman, Anna, lives with the parents of her fiancé, Frantz, who had died in the trenches. She tends his "grave," which is actually no more than a marker. Frantz was buried in a battlefield cemetery, metaphorically in the same trench in which he was killed. On one of the days when she regularly tends this empty spot, she discovers a stranger standing next

to it in worshipful silence. The stranger turns out to be a Frenchman — not a welcome presence so close to the painful conclusion of the war — who presents himself to Anna and Frantz’s parents, Dr. and Mrs. Hoffmeister, as Frantz’s close friend and companion when Frantz had visited Paris. Where Frantz played the violin as an earnest student, Adrien was a first-chair violinist with a national orchestra.

Dr. Hoffmeister cannot bear this intrusion so close on the heels of Frantz’s death, yet Adrien persists with gentle sympathy and stories of his and Frantz’s close friendship. The film elaborates flashbacks showing the friends at dances, walking down promenades, and visiting art galleries, to the point of suggesting that the young men were lovers and not just good friends. When Adrien recounts in detail their visit to a “favorite painting” hanging in the Louvre, this determination seems unimportant. The two were soul mates, and Adrien, broken-hearted at the loss of Frantz, seeks the solace of his family and fiancée. He doesn’t reject Dr. Hoffmeister’s hostility, he accepts responsibility for it, confessing “I am Frantz’s murderer.” At the time we receive this as a generic confession. Adrien is, on behalf of all France, apologizing for their part in Germany’s grievous personal losses. “Murderer” is not a determinative mark but, rather, a pronoun, in the same way that Adrien might have said, “I, as one of those who fought for France, am responsible for your son’s death, and I beg your forgiveness.” This apology would then be set in the context of losses on both sides in a mutually catastrophic struggle.

The film’s logic literalizes the pronoun use of “murderer” by tying it to the mystery of the empty grave. Gradually Anna and the Hoffmeisters accept Adrien’s sincere efforts to comfort them. Frantz’s violin is brought down and Adrien plays a heartbreakingly beautiful solo. Hoffmeister defends Adrien against the insults and threats of his friends who gather to reminisce and sing patriotic songs in a local pub. Taking on the portability of Adrien’s metaphor, he reminds them that it is the fathers who sent their sons to their deaths, promoting the glory of Germany. At the story’s crisis point, however, Adrien reveals the truth of the matter. He was the very soldier who shot Adrien dead, in the trench where both had taken shelter from a bombardment. After Frantz fell, an exploding shell knocked Adrien unconscious. When he awoke he found himself embracing Frantz and was overwhelmed with grief and shame at the life he had taken. The trench became a grave, a space designed for one; and like Castor and Pollux, one would live and the other would die.

The death-embrace of enemies in World War I was a common image, to the point of becoming a cliché. It most famously figured in Erich Maria Remark’s *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929). Trenches often became mass graves. At the same time, the chaotic battlefields, strewn with corpses of horses and men, blasted out tanks, barbed wire, and craters constituted a “no man’s land” where deserters from both sides, seeking common refuge, established a cooperative community of multi-lingual pacifists. This more than anything else perhaps shows the logic of Lacan’s *vel*, where excess negativity robs positivity from the true. In contingent experience, “excess negativity” is the experience of the traumatic Real: love, war, death, loss. Bruce Fink: “X is so *inexorably* false that Y is forced to give up that part of its ‘being true’ which coincides with X” [emphasis mine]. The pronoun is what, in *Frantz*, is so “inexorably false.” It is Adrien’s admission, early in the film, that he is Frantz’s murderer that is so horribly true that it is taken to be a pronoun, a voluntary personal assumption of collective guilt that is not actually true in the literal sense. But, the literal sense is what emerges at this turning point, and the crisis provokes Anna to move into a higher order of the story’s truth. Without revealing Adrien’s admission to the Hoffmeister’s, she follows Mrs. Hoffmeister’s advice to “find love while she is still young and beautiful.” She goes to France to find

Adrien, to erase the stain of Adrien's sudden disappearance and claim back the romance that had begun to spring up between the two during his visit to Germany.



Figure 3. Édouard Manet, *Le Suicidé*, 1877, Fondation E.G. Bührle, Zurich, Switzerland. The painting was thought to have possibly been drawn from an event that Manet personally witnessed.

She finds instead that Adrien had returned to his family's estate and become engaged to the woman who had nursed him back to health after his breakdown following his traumatic encounter with Frantz. The anguishing scenes of confrontation are relieved at last by Anna's visit to the Louvre, where she discovers that Frantz and Adrien's "beloved favorite" was actually Édouard Manet's painting, *The Suicide*. A bench placed in front of the painting for the solace of its melancholic viewers becomes the place where she will sit next to a stranger and exchange the lines that convince us that her future has just opened up to some long-awaited compensation. Suicide takes place more generally with the way names are eclipsed by other names, places by other places, actions by other actions. Adrien's grief began with the loss of François (his lover, we presume), killed early on in the war. The names convert into

anagram-like disguises: François becomes Frantz; François's sister Fanny, who nurses Adrien back from his nervous breakdown, becomes Anna. Adrien works through his loss of François by mourning for Frantz. François/Frantz presides over the Lacanian theme of the "two deaths": François is the literal death and the spectral Frantz becomes the symbolic death.

The space between the two deaths is orthopsychic in every culture. It is the interval of the soul's wandering, trials, and judgment before its final rest. The period is customarily forty days, weeks, or months, forty being the number of insulation and quarantine. In mortuary lore, it is also the time needed for the flesh to desiccate/salinate completely, leaving only dry bones. The soul's continued momentum past the point of literal death can be compressed by the fantasy of the death dream, the fantasy thought to take place in the few remaining minutes of life, when the conscious mind tries to adjust and correct the past before dying completely. But, this fantasy can be extended to the living who dream of dying (Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*) or visit the land of the dead. Frantz initiates his own lucid death dream to correct the error/accident of tragic loss, substituting Frantz for François. He does this by conscripting Anna and her adoptive parents as witnesses to the "corrected" story of his friendship with the man he killed, but he does this not to distort reality but to intensify and perfect the pain he feels, substituting not only Frantz for François but also immediate guilt for abstract and distant grief.

The many criss-cross relations of characters living and dead give every scene, every action, indeed almost every line of the script, double and sometimes triple meaning possibilities. Just who is doing what to whom becomes an existential question. At one level we are in a Hitchcockian substitution drama where, as in *Vertigo*, the lost object is radically lost because it never existed (the actress Judy plays the to-be-

murdered wife Madeleine). At another and more profound level, we find ourselves inside Adrien's death dream, where as an intentional zombie constructs what we should consider to be an orthopsychic space of self-correction, an automated *methodology* that, *through structure alone*, will administer the appropriate punishments to the guilty, supply the healing fantasies to the innocent, and require a Beatrice-like spirit to perform the function of a hinge, turning pain to pleasure, death to life, wrong to right. Anna's palindromic name reveals that she is the perfect choice for making such 180° conversions. In the final scene of the film, when Anna returns to a painting in the Louvre that Adrien had first described visiting, we connect Adrien's description of the painting — a young man throwing his head back in laughter — to the actual theme of suicide.

In the play by Maurice Rostand (*L'homme que j'ai tué*) that was the origin of both Lubitch and Ozon's films, it was originally said to be a painting by Courbet of a young man with his head tilted back. Not only is the painting one of a suicide (Éduard Manet, 1877) — laughing as a place-holder for dying — but the Manet is a place-holder for a Courbet painting in the earlier versions of the story (Ozon could not find a Courbet painting that fit the bill). Switching around between opposites seems pandemic for Ozon, to the extent that we have to consider seriously the thesis that this film is a single temporal "contronym" or megapronoun able to stage the effect of primal words by orchestrating the flow of opposed meanings. As elements change places, emptied signifiers hold places open to be occupied later by something that will reverse our understanding of what has happened.

Some ideas are difficult to assess in abstract, but the work of art demonstrates how some ideas cannot emerge in abstract but rather require concrete, dynamic actions and relations. Because the contronymics of the dynamic pronouns Ozon sets in motion requires time to reveal its designs, we have to imagine that the perfect symmetry that we would represent as a circle is actually *circu-larity*. A picture of a contronym would show circulation in the form of a motion that always returns to its origin of departure, presenting itself as a reversal or negation. Repetition works as the inner form of what Freud called the "drive of drives," the compulsion to submit to suffering, the "death drive." Repetition is the key to Ozon's film, where places are opened and held open to be filled, but never unambiguously, by possible substitutes. The substitutions are like doubles: "more themselves than themselves," in that each surpasses the other in being able to duplicate a trait, action, or symptom *more perfectly* than could be accomplished by the other. In just the same way, Ozon's place-holders are eventually occupied by characters or events that are "more perfect in that they are not exactly the right thing." They *correct* the idea that was first manifest in a defective way. This is clearly illustrated by Adrien's reluctant performance on Frantz's violin. Frantz had been a mediocre player who, "played to enjoy." Adrien was, in contrast, a professional violinist who held a chair in the national symphony orchestra. When he begins to play, Anna joins in on the piano, and the audience silently intuits that "this is the perfect love that was imperfectly attempted by Anna and Frantz; now it will be redeemed." But, of course, this redemption is complicated by Adrien's more problematic relation to Frantz. The performance was orthopsychic in that it was a *self-correction* of the idea, an adjustment that did not allow us the romantic replacement of Frantz by Adrien. The place held open refuses a simple closure.

The film should be watched at least twice, but even the first viewing amounts to seeing two films running at the same time. The internal "second viewing" allows the spectator to recall the places, situations, and even specific expressions that foreshadow corresponding elements in the second half of the

film following Adrien's confession to palindromic Anna. At this point it would be useful to remember the technical distinction between anaphoric and deictic pronouns. Anaphoric pronouns derive their meaning from another expression *within* the utterance, while deictic pronouns refer to the context — that is, the *externality* — of the utterance. In *Frantz*, the system of anaphoric references is elaborate but carefully calculated. Specific elements are assigned to “pair” with elements that appear materially in the other half of the film. Yet, notice of these pairings and association with motives, both of the characters and the film's director, is deictic. Only the experience of the viewer and the design of the action, viewed as a totality, from an “orthogonal angle” to the screen's presentational content, can detect the orthopsychic design. This is mediated entirely by a pronomial or place-holding function of places, scenes, and characters who, seeming concrete enough in their first presentation, turn out to be keeping a site open to be filled, semantically, later in the film.

The twinning of these anaphoric pronomial conditions hinges around Anna's discovery of Adrien's brutal truth. Instead of being Frantz's French friend, he is actually the enemy who killed him. His visit, first perceived as intended to comfort his best friend's parents and fiancé, is actually a narcissistic schema to maximize his painful experience of guilt, made more intense by Frantz's resemblance to François. Correction, ortho-psychism, comes with the deictic observer/creator dimension, appropriately orthogonal to the anaphoric ladder created by the left/right halves of the story. Anna, the palindromic hinge, pivots between the two wings but remains independent of Adrien's love matrix. Tracing him to his family estate, she learns that François's sister Fanny has nursed Adrien through the traumatic loss of François and replaced François as a mate more suited to social conventions of upper-class French families. Anna's hopes are dashed, but this missed opportunity saves the plot from a synthetic fantasy ending. Adrien's homosexuality would have created an unbearable remainder in the equation — the dead François. A “weak ending” avoids this by showing Anna return to the museum to re-visit the painting of the “young man with the head thrown back.” This visit actually corrects earlier versions of the story that used Courbet's painting. There is something macabre but funny in death's capture of life in a final pose that gives away a secret. *Rigor mortis* often imposes a *rictus*, a strained, fixed grin, on the corpse. And, of course, there is the tradition of the laughing skull as an image of mockery, a *memento mori* with a sense of humor, akin to the expression “What you are, I once was, what I am you shall be.” If this smacks of Freud's *wo Es war*, it is not an accident that the ego, in its efforts to reclaim the salt marshes of the (to it) maniacal Id, is trespassing on a cemetery, watching where to step for fear of being sucked in or stepping on a body but, if observed from a distance, appearing to perform an elaborate dance.

We realize that the painting has served as a central clue to orthopsychic operations. It is an extended pronoun for the depiction of the kind of “self-destruction” that has been going on in so many different modes. A young man, remarkably similar to Adrien, sits on the bench contemplating the painting, and when Anna engages him a final solution lies just within reach, just beyond the credits that roll to close the film. But, what does *Frantz* have to tell us about ortho-psychism in general, or about the chirality that place-holders use to create their symmetries? Because the film seems to occupy a diegetic story space so comfortably (to the extent that even sophisticated movie critics seem not to realize any deeper structures), it demonstrates the sideways movement of anaphoric pronouns, which require antecedents to be given in the “same plane” of the story as the designated empty spaces. It pushes us to ask just what function the complementary form of pronoun, the deictic, is playing. If we simplistically examine the orthogonal dimension of film presentation/reception, we miss confronting the issue of the (Lacanian) gaze, the point

at which the film's "blind spot" looks back at the viewer to both engage and implicate him/her in the orthopsychism of the film. This creates an imaginary space between two frames, a frame that contains the illusion of the film on the screen, and a frame that contains/restrains the audience in the dark auditorium. If the audience could be said to be on the left and the illusions of cinematic representation on the right, the audience's and the film's "restraints" do not create a left-over space but, rather, allow the two spaces of audience and illusion to overlap. But, instead of creating a positive "both/and" condition, the overlap creates a void. It is neither "both/and" nor "neither/nor" but, rather, a curious mixture of the +/+ and -/-

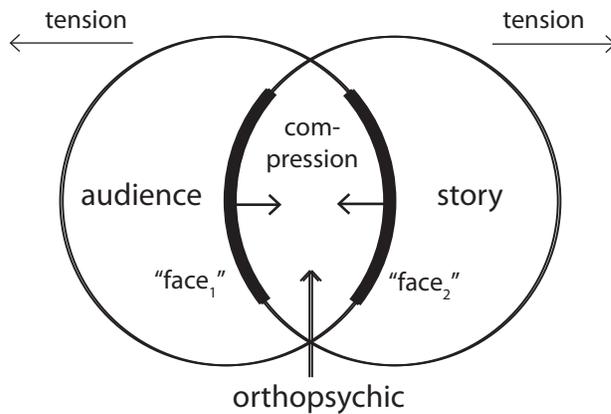


Figure 4. The architecturally and poetically specialized zones of the story/audience relationship are created by a mutual "pulling back" from the staging zone where objects, events, and characters are shaped by a compression from this tension, reversed within the interior of an "orthopsychic" space-time belonging to neither the audience nor story but mobilized to associate freely with alternative objects and orders. The "exterior face<sub>1</sub>" is the conventional presentation of the stage/screen spectacle, the "interior face<sub>2</sub>" is the imaginary construct of the chorus/fate's witness of events as they unfold to the fictional characters, which the audience sees reflected in their expressions and actions.

possibilities. The two restraints compress the orthopsychic "sandwich" and this compression creates the heat and pressure required to condense objects, places, and characters inside into crystalized symptoms.

There is literally "nothing to be said" about this non-overlap because the zone belongs not to the Symbolic, which would interact with the audience's reception on one hand and the cinematic illusion on the other, but to the Real, which resists all symbolization. This is the place of the film's *pure acts*, the zone within which identities and meanings are allowed to float freely and re-attach to any site, situation, character, or utterance. It is the film's crucible, where the deictic relation of the viewers to the viewed and the internal ricochet of signifiers between empty places and optional replacements, the anaphors, glide across time.

The audience/story relationship is not a "vesica-pisces" in the usual sense of an overlap of opposites creating a positive, internal

hybrid. The VEL is a void, but not a subtraction. It is a -1 that is the *process* of subtraction, a dynamic form of passiveness, a place where symptoms are formed by a mutual tension between the > of the story and the

< of the audience. We could in fact write it as ><, noting that the symptom would appear as a concrete form, a <>, Lacan's *poinçon* or punch.<sup>14</sup>

Think of Euclid's use of the vesica to construct the equilateral triangle. Euclid is forever held to be the opposite of Einstein, as a positivist will always be contrasted with a relativist. The positivist requires context to remain the same, so that the instruction "Let ..." will make sense. "Let" is the deictic pronoun, requiring a stabilization of the relation of the two parties of a conversation, the speaker and the listener. What happens "inside" the "Let ..." ("let two circles be drawn such that the periphery of each crosses through the center of the other") is predicated on the "outside," the deictic pronoun that specifies the obverse of the speaker who says "Let." Euclid freezes this "Let ..." to be a constant throughout his geometric demonstrations. Einstein would say that this deictic element is a dynamic, a *palintropos harmoniē*, that must separate opposed elements in time — the anaphoric pronoun's condition. The container and contained are in a fluid recursive relationship. Where Euclid would draw the triangle to resolve the antagonism of two points separated by a distance that, equidistant from a *third* point, can be forgiven their sins through an equipoise, Einstein would draw two triangles, pulling in opposite directions.

Our triangle is quite different from Euclid's, because the vesica we appear to draw is not a geometry, but a comic combination of lack and surplus. How do our two triangles, with their contronymic third apices, primary to the other two, distinguish the relational from the Euclidian?

Vico's own principle of discovering *The New Science* is a contronym, the *universale fantastico*, the "imaginative universal," which transposes/ transports the nature of the first humans to an occulted position within the sky, the acousmatic origin of the thunder that so frightens the first humans that they seek asylum within the precincts set up around the hearths/altars of the *manes*. Vico lives up to the idea of the contronym by showing how a "logic of cunning" or wit (*ingenium*) mediates and propels the subsequent evolution of human cultures according to a constant ideogram, the "ideal eternal history" — a true "eigenform" if there ever was one!

The palintrope is our propriocept: our "body's knowledge of itself in terms of position and distribution." It forms the rituals, the songs, the dances, the mask, the spells that constitute the love magic by which the living woman dies, like Psyche, to be with her eternal *dæmon* love, Eros. It is the "flesh of the world." Vico's first humans convert themselves into a power manifest in the orthopsychic gaze, which Rosicrucians will convert into the eye inscribed within a circle and triangle. This, too, is a death in the

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<sup>14</sup> The *poinçon* is Lacan's *matheme* for desire in the expression,  $\$ \diamond a$ , roughly translated as "the barred/divided subject stands in a circular relationship with (the object-cause of) desire. The *objet petit a*, or 'a' for short, differs from an object of desire in that an object of desire can be literally possessed, although with possession desire is also terminated. This is not because the object of desire satisfies desire but because it fails to offer satisfaction. It is "not what desire thought it wanted" but was only a *place-holder*. The failure of objects of desire to be more than place-holders contrasts with the object-cause of desire, which never truly existed but was radically lost. Such desire can be seen running full-tilt in (ironically) Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, where the lost love of Humbert Humbert's childhood energizes his romance of the young Lo Haze, daughter of his widowed landlord. Nabokov's model of lost love was taken from Edgar Allan Poe's poem, "Annabel Lee": "I was a child and she was a child,/ In this kingdom by the sea,/ But we loved with a love that was more than love—/ I and my Annabel Lee." The basic idea of the *poinçon* is that of a punch, i. e. a penetration from one side of a surface to the other. Thus, it is ideal for representing the orthopsychic "compressed space," which penetrates from the side of the audience to that of the story. See Santanu Biswas, "The *poinçon*  $\diamond$  in Lacan," accessed November 30, 2017, [http://return.jls.missouri.edu/Lacan/ReturnVol6/Biswas\\_ThePunch.pdf](http://return.jls.missouri.edu/Lacan/ReturnVol6/Biswas_ThePunch.pdf). The *poinçon* can be written also as <>, "both greater than and less than" (the combination of lack and surplus) or as arrows pointing upward to the Symbolic and downward to the Imaginary. I would suggest that this latter possibility specifies the famous realm of anamorphic objects, whose form, to be intelligible, must be viewed from a specific *distance* and, thus, engages the logic of metonymy.

indirect sense of the death *drive*, which comprises all of the so-called partial drives (oral, anal, phallic, eye, voice) that endow so-called part-objects to live outside the body, to survive death even. Dying and living, in this way, become a “detail,” what Parmenides would call a *palintonos harmoniē*, the conjunction of opposites that preserves the antagonism and thus the *tone* or sound that is an acousmatic property of objects, part-objects. This is an ontology worthy of the name, “speculative realism,” because in the most basic sense it is the orthopsychic preservation of speculation within the idea of the bogus claim, the *hapax*, the *ersatz* conjecture. What, after all, is speculation without the thought in mind that someone is being cheated but that someone must be “taken into the game” and be cheated of subjectivity? The long con is confidence extended in a baroque way beyond the point of disclosure, so that the con becomes self-corrective, *orthopsychic*.

As Bergson suggested, this is a dimension of freedom that lies beyond “mere subjectivity” groping to maintain its integrity by repairing the ego from incursions of the Id. Within the space designated for these repairs, like those spaces between scaffoldings and the weathered surfaces of ancient façades, which sometimes are fitted out with covers printed with photographs showing what the restored surface will look like, the symptom emerges, part Ego, part Id, held in position by an Invisible Hand or rather two Invisible Hands, whose opposed tensions pull the symptom into its compressed, durable form. We can read these symptoms if we read like we hear the tone of the voice or see the look in the eye, “sideways,” “awry.” They will always leave their message in the pile of things that have been discarded, that have dropped off from a trimming to shape up the symptom to meet the public view, and the pile will cast its Eigenform like a shadow on an adjacent wall, if one can shine a light at precisely the right angle, a meridian, that connects all the broken edges into a single contiguous form, a Jordan Curve.

All broken edges have a common ancestor, a “clade” (κλάδος), that is the primal word, the first word, a word of creation, a word that sets the sun against the moon, the night against the day, the sky against the earth, the brother against the brother, the lover against the lover. Given two opposed terms but lacking the “primal term,” the common ancestor, can the anaphoric pronoun say anything about the missing one, the “greater than and less than” or symptom of the spectator, who has, like the passive hero, Odysseus, “willingly submitted to suffering”; or, like the “kenotic” hero Curtius, acted without knowing how he knows how to act by jumping into the lake that will be *named* after him (*Lacus Curtius*), which retroactively establishes the mire as a primordial pronoun, a contronym that we had not known before the live hero was made to die?

The broken edges lie in a pile beneath the “too much” and “too little” trimming up of the symptom. We haven’t noticed them, but they accumulate. Our desire to *shape* the symptom, to remove the excesses and patch over the voids, has left the edges to pile up. But, if we shine a light through this pile we’ll see the ancestor, the “old One,” the One who acted against him/herself in contracting. Euclid thought to construct one triangle within the overlapping circles. Einstein, Borges, Joyce, and others would have noted the necessity to construct two. One to show, one to know. The contronym, the ancestor of the clade, contains its antithesis within its thesis and is thus primordial, a true original.

This may be Adam, a true (even if fantasized) common ancestral clade, who before sexuation and mortality rise from his and Eve’s knowledge of good and evil (certainly a binary to beware of), was immortal and pre-sexual (James Joyce: “Eve and Adam’s” = Lucretius’s flow of even atoms in *De Rerum Natura*). The turbulence or clinamen that comes with good and evil requires this binary to play out over

time, but this *palintropos harmoniē* is the time of Euclidean space, a time extended from space's height, breadth, and depth. Real time is not like this, not something that could be reduced to a spatial metaphor (line, circle, spiral) but something that *enriches space* from the very beginning, an antagonistic element that makes space "unlike itself." If space can itself be non-identical, if it can be the Emanuel Ravelli whom Grouch Marx thinks can only resemble himself, then there are indeed twins for each one who is one.

Each one has another who is "more himself than himself," an excess with a lack. The even Adam's atoms are shaken, not stirred. Turbulence creates resonance, resonance creates a voice, a voice that is hollowed/hallowed out by an acousmatic call.

Adam and Eve never see God, they only hear his voice and the sound of his feet shuffling through the garden. This temporality, where a sound always means, in its immediacy, something *has already happened* and something *will happen*, drives us to think (hence the Tree of *Knowledge*) but drives us to think *via* externalities which, as part-objects, survive outside of the bodies that would give them a more restful organic, a-sexual basis. So, the breast, shit, the phallus (always as a lack/surplus), the gaze, the voice — these will be the sexed arc-angels who announce that we are with child, because we have read and heard at the same time. The wind/word has impregnated us, the call has set us aside, as all virgins are set aside, beside the hearth where the primordial ancestors communicate their wills through flame. Thinking and speaking will always therefore be not just sexuated but "sex itself" (Lacan, Zupančič).

Where it was, I shall be. My pronouns will be filled with the content I thought I had thrown away, let fall. All along I held open a space, not knowing how it would be filled. I was Emanuel Ravelli for so many years, now I find that a stranger fills my shoes! This news not only takes place "in" time, it re-defines the time that I had thought to make out of space's fourth, restless sister. The line has bent, folded, axed and axeling itself to butterfly the places that, opening and closing in a lambda, exchange the noun from pro to post, pre to past. Achilles can never overtake the tortoise, they live in two different times. While he runs in space, the tortoise runs around the figure 8 turned in on itself, inside and outside at the same time, where Achilles cannot catch him. "It" is always opening up a place, the "I" is always missing it, arriving too late or too early. What the  $\Lambda$ ! (Or, " $\Lambda$  is the *what*.")

The pronoun persuades us to suspend our judgment, to postpone our pleasure of knowing and hold out for a far greater reward. It is the pleasure principle abducted by the death drive, given a new structure of time, where the unconscious is awakened or, rather, calls consciousness to awake. Just as Diane, the suicide in David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive*, dreams of being Betty in her orthopsychic/corrective fantasy of perfect love for Camilla Rhodes (known in the dream as Rita), awakens from her life into death, Psyche awakens to Eros in *The Golden Ass*. Each awoken is a trial or puzzle. Each has its square peg and round hole. The reward/punishment dyad point to a contronymic primal term, a stranger who, unknown to us, us a disguise of our twin, who knows us better than any one. Nothing to do but wait.

## 11 / Fakin' It



Figure 1. Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Daphne and Apollo*, 1622–1625. Museo Villa Borghese, Rome, Italy. The theme was taken from Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, a story of Apollo's irrational love for the naiad, Eros's revenge for Apollo's critique of the love god's bad archery.

The poet is a man who feigns  
And feigns so thoroughly, at last  
He manages to feign as pain  
The pain he really feels,

And those who read what once he wrote  
Feel clearly, in the pain they read,  
Neither of the pains he felt,  
Only a pain they cannot sense.

And thus, around its jolting track  
There runs, to keep our reason busy,  
The circling clockwork train of ours  
That men agree to call a heart.

— Fernando Pessoa, "Autopsychography"

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A secondary project begins when a lack or a failure, probable or inevitable, is admitted. This can come about as through a collision of a downgrade in the prospects of a future effort or a retroactive realization of a past series of errors. Mistakes are iterative. While they reveal a deviation of a forward effort, a missed goal, the aim may or may not be wrong in "the bigger picture of things." During travel when one makes plans to visit some attraction, say a restaurant or museum, some distance away, it often happens that the happily anticipated destination is closed, has moved, or been misidentified. In such cases the viewpoint itself has moved, the object of desire is no longer distant but potentially reachable. It has evaded the search by changing into some form of the negative, just as Daphne evaded Apollo by transforming herself into a tree. Eros had inflamed Apollo's desire for Daphne with an arrow shot in revenge for Apollo's mockery of his archery skills. In fact, Eros has not ever been able to shoot straight. No sooner does his sex-tipped shaft take flight than the original destination has shifted to the side, exposing some innocent, unintended victim. Eros in fact seems to be a reckless or blindfolded god who, like the famously blindfolded Justice, is impartial when it comes to divvying out the painful inflammation of love. But, unlike Justice's impartiality, Eros's bad aim is an inverse. Instead of hitting those who wish or deserve it, it most often harms the happenstance passer-by. Eros, arrows, errors. *Errare*, Latin for wandering *and* making mistakes, ties Erotic methodology to the logic of travel and the inverse outcomes of aiming, with all good intentions, to hitting the right thing and finding, instead, the Wrong Thing.

When the traveler sets off to find a new destination, happy anticipation obscures the full range of actualities. The idea of a vector in fact comes from an impulse forward matched by a pull backward. The object, in this magic coupling of forces, "wants to be found." That's what makes Eros's bad record of

collateral damage so puzzling. The unexpected victim of the arrow-in-error cannot be said to be waiting for love to happen. It comes as a complete surprise, usually to everyone, not just the victim. Yet, something seems to have magically pulled the arrow off course. Eros simply cannot be such bad an archer! After some tragedy has resulted in the deaths of people who just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, a cruel “bad luck” theory is condensed as a belief that the victims had somehow shown bad judgment, that they might have avoided death by being a bit more careful. This “magnetic pull of the target” never disappears as an idea. In fact, it becomes all the more magical, in the same way that the letter of Lacan’s famous irrational-sounding slogan, “the letter always reaches its destination,” makes the destination itself complicit in the reversal of cause and effect. When the letter ends up somewhere completely unexpected, the destiny of being a “proper destination” comes as a surprise, but the logic is immediately apparent. It turns out that the *finale* “had to happen the way it did.” Once the letter was submitted to the field of the Other, the Other turned out to be a somewhat crazy if not perverse travel guide. The field/medium of the letter’s path was itself radically warped. Does the letter share, with Eros’s arrow, a binary trajectory, a combined push and pull contronym? How is the pull all the more powerful when the destination itself is completely innocent of any complicity? We have to consider just what innocence means.

Daphne is as innocent as they come. She is a naiad, a spirit associated with fresh flowing water. She is one of those moving deities whose movement is key to her freedom. She can splash this way and that. Stopping such spontaneity with something as horrific as a dam or channel seems, even today, criminal. If it is true that Heraclitus said that not only can’t you step into the same river twice but that if you could step



Figure 2. Virgil Solis, “Diana and Actæon,” Ovid, *Metamorphosis* (Frankfort, 1569); University of Glasgow Special Collections. The extensive Medieval commentary on this story of transformation of a hunter, member of the clan of Cadmus, into a stag focused on Actæon’s inadvertent culpability.

into it twice it wouldn’t be a river, then Daphne would be just such an illusive free spirit. When she goes she’s *gone* ... The girl does what she wants to do / She knows what she wants to do (Simon and Garfunkle, “Fakin’ It,” 1967). The girl is using her own special map, the pursuer has a fake, possibly like those tourist maps with exaggerated graphics designed to lure the unwary traveler to the businesses owned by the underwriters; a trap, in search of business, distorts space itself. Daphne didn’t ask for it, but neither did Apollo; and in a sense, given Eros’s famously bad aim, we shouldn’t blame Eros either. Intentionality was simply not a part of the blind desire that first targeted Apollo, then Daphne. It’s a story about a wrong target seeming to want to be hit (on). Note that the target and Daphne are not exactly the same thing. It’s her agalma.<sup>1</sup>

Neither was there any intentionality behind the desire that

<sup>1</sup> Jacques Lacan tells the story nicely with different characters (Socrates, Alcibiades) in his book *Transference*, trans. Bruce Fink (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2017). Lacan develops the idea of agalma through the example of the Silenus Box, a box used for storing or gifting jewelry, often decorated with images of a satyr on the lid. Summary from WorldCat: “Alcibiades attempted to seduce Socrates, he wanted to make him, and in the most openly avowed way possible, into someone instrumental and subordinate to what? To the object of Alcibiades’s desire agalma, the good object. I would go even further.” Stable URL: [https://www.worldcat.org/title/transference/oclc/1011086173&referer=brief\\_results](https://www.worldcat.org/title/transference/oclc/1011086173&referer=brief_results).

suddenly inflamed Actæon when, wandering through the forest on a hunt, he stumbled across the glade where Diana and her attendants were bathing naked.<sup>2</sup> But, Diana didn't see it this way and punished him nonetheless, with a transformation also made famous by Ovid. But, Actæon's convulsion into a stag had more symmetry to it: a hunter into a hunted. This was essential for the use of a binary as the format for reversing identity (effective cause) and transferring blame, so that Actæon's dogs would be the actual agents of death. Attracted to the stag their master had become, they found their misidentification also warped by a new spatial dynamic. The "arrow" was pulled into a new trajectory, so to speak. Three of Actæon's favorite bitches somehow found a pass through the mountains that allowed them to intersect their master's escape route; despite there being faster dogs in the pack, the bitch trio found their pray before the thirty-three others, proving that, of the 33+3 it is "*the three*" that make the difference. *When she goes she's gone*. The three find the hole in space, the secondary network of passageways that, as in the 2011 science fiction thriller (*The Adjustment Bureau*) based on Philip K. Dick's fantasy, "The Adjustment Team," laces through ordinary space of Manhattan to allow mysterious "angelic adjustments," bending what seem to be contingencies of random chance into a pattern visible only through a rear-view mirror.<sup>3</sup>

When the letter is submitted to the Other, the space of the Other alters. From the view of the point of submission, this looks like the standard "garden of forking paths," time moving forward towards contingencies demanding choices: left or right, up or down, in or out. The tree branches out with Boolean self-certainty but daunting opacity. Each choice foregoes alternatives, "we make our own beds." But, from the vantage point of the Real (taken at the opposite end of this field), the tree branches in reverse, collecting as many causes possible for any given effect. This is a "no matter what happens" logic of convergence that allows any and all variations. Errors in fact relate more to this reverse-order mapping than seemingly correct choices. The wrong steps (the movie stars dancing to the original sound tracks) become the right steps when edited and synched to "Uptown Funk" (see chapter 1, "Anachronism").

Only by stretches of the imagination can we grasp the logic of General Lowenheilm's speech in *Babette's Feast* (1987):

Mercy and truth, my friends, have met together. Righteousness and bliss shall kiss one another. Man, my friends, is frail and foolish. We have all of us been told that grace is to be found in the universe. But in our human foolishness and short-sightedness we imagine divine grace to be finite.

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<sup>2</sup> This is the curious focus of the majority of Medieval discussions of the myth of Diana and Actæon. If Actæon was truly innocent of any intentional desire to view Diana naked, how does this innocence relate to Diana's specifically targeted punishment? See Leonard Barkan, "Diana and Actæon: The Myth as Synthesis," *English Literary Renaissance* 10, 3 (September 1980): 317–359.

<sup>3</sup> In George Molfi's adaptation of the Philip K. Dick short story, "The Adjustment Team," Matt Damon plays a failed politician, David Norris, who meets Elise in the men's restroom, where she is hiding from security after her attempt to crash a wedding. The two engage in enthralling conversation and kiss, then Elise disappears. David, inspired by her spunk, delivers the best speech of his entire campaign, encouraging his supporters to stick with him for the next race. But, a mysterious group of men wearing suits and narrow-brim hats seems to intervene, at David's work, in his attempt to connect again with Elise and in his political plans. Just as the three dogs of the Actæon story can run faster than their master by taking a "secondary" path through the mountains, they have access to a secondary circulation space that topologizes the rectilinear street plan of Manhattan, allowing them to appear and disappear at will as well as to cut off others as they attempt to escape. These mysterious "adjusters" makes sure that the Plan of the "Chairman" (easily translated as God) runs according to the design they carry with them in animated books that show the present as a moment-plane moving from the past to the future, which is already determined, except for extraordinary circumstances, such as David's love for Elise.

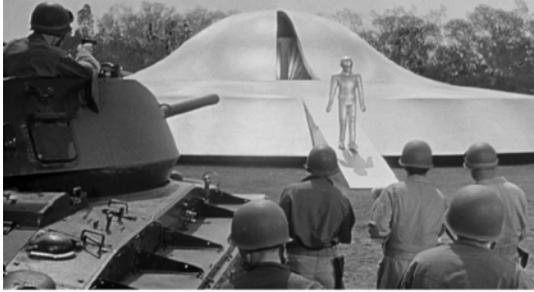


Figure 3. The paradigmatic scene of the flying saucer surrounded by heavily armed troops in the National Mall, Washington, D. C. *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951). The spaceship and peripheral troops form a kind of inverse Panopticon: guards on the outside, prisoners on the inside. However, the film makes clear that the exchanges are pointedly orthographic and orthopsychic. Klaatu (the human-like spaceman) comes to earth to *correct* human thinking and socio-political behavior. Gort, the impassive automaton, is a version of a Golem, invented to help but capable of destruction.

For this reason we tremble. We tremble before making our choice in life, and after having made it again tremble in fear of having chosen wrong. But the moment comes when our eyes are opened, and we see and realize that grace is infinite. Grace, my friends, demands nothing from us but that we shall await it with confidence and acknowledge it in gratitude. Grace, brothers, makes no conditions and singles out none of us in particular; grace takes us all to its bosom and proclaims general amnesty. See! that which we have chosen is given us, and that which we have refused is, also and at the same time, granted us. Ay, that which we have rejected is poured upon us abundantly. For mercy and truth have met together and righteousness and bliss have kissed one another!<sup>4</sup>

The General finds a primordial antagonism within the bland Biblical message of Psalm 85:10. Mercy and truth meet *because* our errors have required the mercy whose grace is the prerequisite of the true. Note that this is not “truth” in the sense of choosing the right restaurant,

vacation destination, or even marital partner. It is *the true* in the sense of Vico’s *il vero*, counterpart to the acts/products included in the term *factum*. The dictum *verum ipsum factum* doesn’t appear in Vico’s main work, *The New Science*. Rather, it’s a pearl inside the oyster of the *De Antiquissima Italorum Sapientia*, the ancient wisdom contained in the “primal terms” Freud pondered in relation to the unconscious in his famous essay. If truth and making are the parsed out components of a single conronymic term, that term would be error, in that choice in and of itself will require grace/luck/fate to squeeze out the juice of the Real, the space-ship that lands on contingent earth, as in Robert Wise’s *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), “just trying to help.” The extra-terrestrial Klaatu and his wise and powerful sidekick/automaton, Gort, come in peace to warn earthlings of the error of their ways. In short, they are space-traveling Lacanians with advice about alienation, which ultimately leads to global self-destruction. Naturally, they are immediately surrounded by heavily armed troops, and the configuration of the face-off constitutes an emblem of alienation: perfect symmetry of superior technology inside a (blinded) metal saucer ringed by weaponized vectors pointing inward from all sides.

If this sounds familiar, it is the same Panoptical conversion of the orthographic flat representation (with the role of the all-knowing surveilling force played by God) rolled into an event space so that curving converts to turning, hence the saucer shape. The “shape grammar” of a rotating (alien) object in the middle of a ring that is a “slice” (section) of human life tells the topological story of “The Purloined Letter,” in that the alien-occupied center is a way of talking about alien-*ation* as an event (misrecognition) and the ring-slice is a way of talking about “catching something in the middle of . . .” This colloquial way

<sup>4</sup> Stable URL: <https://www.scribd.com/document/53734561/Babette-s-Feast-General-Loewenhielm%CA%BCs-Speech>.

of saying that one has been interrupted (“You caught me in the middle of packing for my trip”) conveniently uses a central point as the occasion of a break–point. A section drawing is precisely a break in space, made by a picture plane that is imagined to exist, at the same position as the paper that will record what happens at the break. One half of space (“the represented”) is behind the picture plane, the other half is the space of the observer and, obviously, whoever made the drawing. Objects caught “in the middle” by the picture plane reveal their interiors. The slice opens them up, just as the Panopticon’s outer ring of cells was made to be as transparent as possible so that the guards might see their interiors entirely.

“Interior” in the section drawing and Panopticon come to stand for a *poché* space identified with revealing some kind of truth, or correcting thought or behavior. The “orthos” idea is that inspection looks for something to correct with its ortho-*graphics* and the result is ortho-*psychic*. This is the story of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. The human-like and machine-like team of extraterrestrials catches earth “in the middle of their usual business” (being antagonistic with each other; not facing up to problems; responding dysfunctionally to challenges, etc.) and presents an ultimatum of reform (*orthos*). At the same time, they land in a literal “middle of things” (the Mall of the U. S. Capitol), appropriate to the cylindrical form of their spaceship. The void of the Capitol Mall (the countryside of the city has been put into the middle of the city, as a park-like empty space) is a landscape version of the analysand who submits to psychoanalysis and the Mall is the very space of alienation that the psychoanalyst (played by Klaatu) must address.

It is important to note that the analyst’s capabilities are divided into human-like and machine-like capabilities. The robot Gort is more than an armed guard. He is a computer, a HAL, who “knows more than he knows” in the way that machine knowledge is always a virtual “readiness to respond to unknown challenges,” something held in reserve until a moment that will redefine what it knows as it is shaped by the interaction between the challenge and the response. We are all, in this sense, HALs, because what we know is not known until the time it is challenged and we respond. This future moment is a “time by the time of which” something will have happened and we will realize our knowledge retroactively, in the temporal structure of the future anterior.

Somehow, the entire structure of psychoanalysis is revealed by this second-rate science fiction film and its “panoptical” section-like orthographics. The analyst in *Analytic Discourse* is  $\$/S1$ , sitting across from the agency of *jouissance*, the object-cause of desire, the “empty place.” The film adjusts this: the analyst, divided into a human/machine binary, is *in the middle of* the empty place, sitting on top of an enigma that takes the form of a command: reform or be destroyed. The empty place has the function of a pronoun waiting for the return of the messenger at a future anterior moment, one of destruction or resurrection — as if to say the film is written from the point of view of Christian theology where the intervention of Christ and his sacrifice constitutes a “message to the planet” to reform and be saved or continue to sin and be destroyed. Final judgment in these terms comes down to a promise to reclothe the desiccated skeleton with an idealized and immortal flesh, the Psyche that “is, was, and always has to be,” a time-resistant eigenform that is not the *result* of time passing (temporalization) but, rather, the *process* of time that we can imagine to be a section plane, an eternal present, that passes through a three-dimensional solid of potentiality to create graphic intersections at the plane that “catch time in the middle” of its own empty present moment.

If we compare this moving plane to the palindrome of time’s backward movement (memory) and forward movement (imagination), the section plane is analogous to the two values created by combining

123456789 and 987654321 in two “offset” positions, creating sigma values of 9 and 11 (2+7, 3+6 ...; 2+9, 3+8 ...), allowing the “middle space” (the sigma of 10) to remain empty. Just like Klaatu and Gort, there is a division of capabilities into two parts, “looking” and “saying.” Gort watches over the spaceship while Klaatu explains to the earthlings “what’s the deal” behind their visit. In psychoanalysis, the same division applies, but in the form of a division of the analysand’s voice into its content and its status as an act (or acting-out) of the unconscious, where the unconscious is limited to a cipher of mistakes, substitutions, replacements, absences, errors, slips-of-the-tongue, or shows of emotion dressed in songs and whispers. Just as the number 9 is famous for being able to cross in and out of mathematical calculations (the Hermes of the number system), the cipher works like a password that allows the bearer of it (who may not be conscious of its function) to get in and out, especially in military situations. As in the joke about the Frenchman who crawls back from enemy lines and is challenged to sing the second verse of “La Marseillaise,” who says “But, I don’t know it!” and is immediately admitted, it is how “what is known” (the password is that he doesn’t know the second verse) is precisely the “not-known,” that is to say, *the unconscious*. We are all in this sense Hitchcock’s Man Who Knew Too Much — the unconscious as a surplus that is simultaneously experience as a lack (“But, I don’t know it!”). Klaatu knows too much. He can correct and complete the complicated physics calculations he finds on the chalkboard in the study of Professor Barnhardt (Sam Jaffe). He delivers a stern warning: reform or die. His world as created an army of powerful robots able to destroy all belligerent civilizations “automatically,” like the Doomsday Machine in Stanley Kubrick’s *Dr. Strangelove*. The *automaton* aspect connecting aggression with destruction is

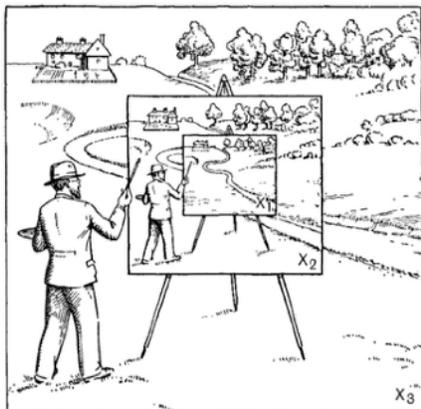


Figure 4. John Dunne’s *Serial Universe* (1929) proposed a solution to the *mise-en-abîme* of representation (= “story in a story” theme) by re-imagining the plane of representation as a moving section simultaneously pushing and pulling reality. The binary of observing/observed was preserved but converted into a dynamic *fixed* (= orthograph, *eigenform*) function of conversion, equivalent to saying that the contents divided by the plane did not exist before the act of division.

another key aspect of “spooky entanglement.” The if/then of aggression/destruction — crime and punishment — is converted into an instantaneous fusion. The if is “already and always” the “then,” the result. The crime *is* the punishment. The key here is that the crime, like the letter that, once its submitted to the Other, automatically reaches its destination, takes the *form* that from one point of view is criminal and from the opposite point of view is punishment. The form, like the 9/11 offset of the palindrome, is two-fold, or “Janusian.” It is form *in and only in that* it constructs two viewpoints. It is *eigenform* in that this construction is durable and permanent — an S1 in Lacan’s terms — so that all else (contingency, desire, “the everyday”) can seem to happen as an unfolding temporal drama: the garden of the forking paths.

In *An Experiment with Time*, the amateur physicist John Dunne — a hero of secondariness, to be sure! — proposed that precognitive dreams were explained by imagining the “now” of reality as a plane passing through a three-dimensional eternity of solids. The motion cut into the solids, creating an orthographic section drawing whose *recto* was the future and *verso* was the past. The plane was pastfuture in the same way that Vico contended that imagination and memory were the same thing. The plane is the place where “mercy and truth have kissed each other,” sin and forgiveness reconciled in a physical sign of love.

Because perhaps this is one of those rare opportunities to think the unthinkable, Judas's kiss was, in light of this role of the moving plane, not the traditional sign of betrayal but a revelation of the structure of the deal by which Jesus and Judas devised their retroactive twinship, where the condemnation of one would afford the simultaneous valorization of the other. In this scheme, the true messiah, the one who actually did "die for our sins," was Judas, cursed to everlasting punishment so that mortals might receive universal amnesty. Jorge Luis Borges put forward this theory in his short story, "Tres versiones de Judas," *Ficciones* (1944). The same thesis has been revived by current theologians following the discovery of the lost Coptic text, *The Gospel of Judas*.<sup>5</sup> Although Judas retains his role as *dæmon* in this revisionary text, his pact with Jesus reveals a complex complicity that redefines Christ-hood as a palindrome of goodevil, "offset" to preserve a void between two alternative positions. The kiss recovers its historical complexity by "signifying nothing" in the same way that someone may take on the contradiction of the name, "Nobody" — that is, the kiss *literally* signifies "nothing." Negation for psychoanalysis is the means by which impossible-Real content may be made present within the register of reality, i. e. under the cover of rejection. Judas is, thus, the impossible-Real content of Jesus, made present through the "kiss" of negation.<sup>6</sup> The Jesus/Judas palindrome is the form that creates the content into which it "cuts" and dynamically passes through in the process of cutting and passing. This, as Dunne suggests in *The Serial Universe* a concentric set of scenes within scenes, the Dantean Inferno of self-subsuming rings whose nadir, the fallen *dæmon* Satan, remains in inverted position, bottoms up, so that his head can constitute the entry into Purgatory. Although this mountain feature was invented, possibly on behalf of Late-Medieval bourgeoisie who needed a temporal buffer for their "crimes of omission," they literally "bought time" with indulgences that set up a market to lessen the wait. Mt. Purgatory's winding paths conveniently used the pagan motif of Olympus, whose peak from below was shrouded in mist but, from above, was exposed to the pure, ethereal blue of heaven.

The mountain was simultaneously a labyrinth: not a maze but a meander. One could take a "wrong path" only in the sense that one incurred a delay, not a permanent derailment. The coiled path was wound like a clock spring. The mainspring was not invented until the 15c. but its predecessor, a weighted cord wound about a turning axis, was adapted in some civil ceremonies. A waxed cord cut to the length of the town's official perimeter was burned during the city's commemorative festival. A crank worked the device that kept the flame in a constant position, winding the exterior binding symbol into a tight coil. Similarly, annual renewal was represented by depictions of the Olympian gods, usually on the pediments of buildings, featuring the "terminal god" of the calendar, Hermes and Hestia, either at the ends or center. These traditions are shrouded by a lack of clear physical evidence apart from fragments here and there, but the point is that center and periphery are equated by the rule that "=" means "unable to be distinguished from." Whereas Hegel demonstrated that, in the simpleton's example of identity, A=A, A can surely be distinguished from itself on the basis of the difference between content and action, calling and crossing-over, Hermes and Hestia "kiss" at the point of Saturnalia, a blank in the Roman calendar to allow time to

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<sup>5</sup> *The Gospel of Judas*. Stable URL: <http://www.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/national/judastxt.pdf>. See Stephen Gaselee, "The Soul in the Kiss," *Criterion* (1924–25): 349–359. Gaselee reconnects the kiss's romantic function with the ancient tradition of capturing the last breath of the dying. The psyche-as-motion

<sup>6</sup> See Stephen Gaselee, "The Soul in the Kiss," *Criterion* (1924–25): 349–359. Gaselee reconnects the kiss's romantic function with the ancient tradition of capturing the last breath of the dying. Is this also possibly the division, in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, between the speaking humanoid Klaatu and his robot sidekick, Gort?

re-set itself through traditional inversions of order (servants become masters, masters servants; jokes are told and played; sexual license is tolerated).<sup>7</sup> This is not a means of settling Hestia as the goddess of interiors while Hermes rules the out-of-doors. Rather, it is an algorithm of the threshold, which is the orthographic identity of the core and periphery demonstrated by the Panopticon. Once the homology between the cylindrical exterior and rotating interior is established, the circuit of the exterior (including all the civil ceremonies involving *perambulation* or other temporalized realizations of the city's walls) is the necessary complement of the sacrificial hearth-altar where a flame desiccates a victim's fat and flesh to reveal/steal the secrets of the gods. As Lacan puts it, the secret is equivalent to something being out of place; and the altar both marks and holds open the place where the secret of the "primordially lost object" is preserved.<sup>8</sup>

Fat and flesh play a key role, in that they can be reduced to serve as food for gods, with an identifiable odor and smoke, both characteristics of spiritual form. They yield to salt, dry air, and the digestive action of worms, birds, and animals assigned by tradition to reduce the corpse within the temporal limitations calibrated to the interval "between the two deaths," usually related to the number of quarantine, 40. In this regard, the invention of Purgatory kept to the rule of insulation of 40 by relating it to the forty days and forty nights Jesus and Ilyas/Elija spent in the desert. The relation between desiccation and 40 is clear in the example of the desert. Other associations posit the theme of moisture related to suffering/purification: the rain of Noah, the number of gallons (actually *se'ah*) in the *mikvah*, a ritual bath, punishing lashes, days of imposed exile/deprivation, weeks of gestation.

Does Daphne use up forty-something when she converts her flight into a tree? The question means something only in reverse, if we look at a tree, an exemplary tree, or even many trees (a forest?), and ask the question of origins. Despite our knowledge of how trees get to be trees is there some other aspect of tree-ness that deviates from the phylogenetic causal chain? Does the tree have a permanent Daphne nature? The question goes to the heart of the matter of flight, *askesis*, the asylum flight seeks, and the *dæmon*, in this case the sun-god Apollo, whose lust, mixed up with the unintentional, random nature of love, also breaks out of standard cause-and-effect logic.

Trees are certainly models of asylum, in the sense that they "refuse to move" from their place of birth. Their capability of out-living human beings bestows a sense of immortality, so they are places for lovers to

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<sup>7</sup> Ambrosius Aurelius Theodosius Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, ed. Robert A. Caster, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> The empty/secret center provides an answer to the mystery of how the symbolic order constitutes an "ex-centric center" that is "a 'center' ex-centric to the 'conscious' center of the subject that would therefore be an *unconscious* subject (or 'subject of the unconscious').... As the letter passes from Queen to the Minister to Dupin to the Prefect back to the Queen, the content remains irrelevant, and the shifting parameters of power for the subjects concerned derive from the different places where the letter is diverted along this 'symbolic circuit.'" "Lacan's Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter': Overview," in John P. Muller and William J. Richardson, eds. *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida & Psychoanalytic Reading* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University, 1988), 57. The jogged positions of the palindrome, summing to 9 and 11, suggest how the center might necessarily be "faced" in a Janusian way to preserve an empty (= secret) status. In Lacan's terms, the subject is constituted by this ex-centric center, a void held open to be inscribed by the Other ("interpellation"). In the Poe story, "The Purloined Letter," the contents of the letter remain unknown; it is only the "pattern of intersubjective relationships that remain constant in the tale, despite the interchanging terms of the relationships" (*ibid.*). The "Janusian" aspect of the center relates to the "cononymic" quality cited by Freud in his essay on "The Antithetical Meaning of Primal Terms" (1884, under a different title).

meet, birds to sing, and poets to memorialize. In addition to the wealth of lore attached to wood in general, there is the fundamental relation of moisture (the roots) to the purifying hot–dry desiccation of the uppermost branches that would nominate the tree to be an emblem for the drying–out process of 40. The symmetry of the brachiated roots and similarly brachiated upper branches attracted Goethe to surmise, in his *Theory of Colors* (which the German poet counted as his highest theoretical achievement), that trees were the epitome of the “cosmic bipolarity” that held opposites in tension: dark/light, low/high, and by extension matter/spirit: “Plants attain their final glory in the tree, enduring and rigid, while the animal does so in man by achieving the highest degree of mobility and freedom.”<sup>9</sup>

If it can be justified to compare “mobility and freedom” to the general theme of *askesis*, then despite trees’ fixity we can see, in the theme of asylum, a model stood on its head in an algorithm of light and dark, or (more to the point) the hiddenness of unconscious and the (alienated) light of the psyche. And, because if, as Lacan argues, hiddenness is actually a matter of something being out of place, we return to the paradox of Daphne, who runs but then stops running to resist desire; who refuses to convert to what Apollo seeks; who presents, to the *dæmon* an image of his own demon–hood, an image with forty parts of desiccation/flight. The coupling of *dæmon* and *askesis* are a secondary synthesis of terms originally harvested by Harold Bloom in his *Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (1973). Other couplings are: *clinamen* (turbulence) and *tesseract* (tokens of loss and reunion) and *apophrades* (“voice of the dead”) and *kenosis* (“knowing without knowing”). The couplings, secondary to Bloom’s original poetics, triangulate a Lacanian dynamic involving trees taken in Goethe’s cosmic sense. The trunk “momentarily” holds at a distance the homology of the roots and branches. The branches articulate a desire for upward light (impossible to rule out the potential role of Apollo here) while the roots reach towards darkness and moisture. Daphne, a water spirit, would seem to be a statement of the proposal that the conjunction, the “trunk,” of the paradox of dark matter and bright psyche, is essentially desire, and specifically that (Lacanian) aspect of desire that distinguishes between objects of desire, which can be sought and possessed, and object–causes of desire, which elude every pursuit and keep desire pulsing with *every loss, every empty place*.

We could restate Apollo/Daphne as hot–dry/cold–wet and say that the “tree” is nothing more in this story than a restatement of Daphne’s *askesis* from *dæmon* Apollo or, even more fundamentally, desire itself. The tree is an *eigenform*, a stable and fixed emblematic basis that, in its fixed location to a site, allows everything else in the forest to move about. It is, semantically, an asylum. And, if we allow that every asylum achieves its one sought–after goal, its desire, it is only by installing *dæmon* at its center, with a void created by an identity that hatches out of opposition: the contronym. Is it possible to regard the tree (= Daphne = “unwilling” object–cause of desire) as a visual contronym, thanks to Goethe? If we do so, we should superimpose the downward tending roots over the upward tending branches to create a 3d composite “slide” to view in our stereoscope. The recto–verso VA does what the overlapping VV did for Alenka Zupančič. It creates a double–vision antagonism, a blur, an anamorph, that requires a depth — a retreat of visual material — to the point of vanishing (*aphanisis*). That this little algorithm is not an accident of this linguistic *askesis*, consider how Holbein’s *Ambassadors* constructs its own anamorph

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<sup>9</sup> Alex Kentsis, “Between Light and Eye: Goethe’s Science of Colour and the Polar Phenomenology of Nature.” Stable URL: <https://arxiv.org/pdf/physics/0511130.pdf>. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, trans. Charles Lock Eastlake (London: Cass, 1967). The quote is from von Goethe, *From My Life: Poetry and Truth*, tr. R. R. Heitner (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1994), 173–74.

precisely on behalf the most cosmic aphanisis possible, the Apocalypse, calculated to happen on April 11, 1533, 4 p.m. a triangulation of minutes, days, months, years, ages, and angles to combine (in true Hegelian fashion) the spiritual (crucifix) with the material Golgotha.

In a more playful manner, Philip K. Dick’s “Adjustment Team” gives its hatted angels access to “inverse maps” (another visual contronym) allowing them to intervene in (“adjust”) the lives of mortals.<sup>10</sup> We must re-envision the story in a Goethean manner, superimposing the angelic map (the Real) with the geographic map (reality) so that their “blur” produces an askesis where *dæmon* (guess Who — the ultimate Pronoun) will appear at the central void. This will help explain the reversal required for Dostoevsky’s famous statement about the matter of the death of God. Instead of God’s death or non-existence allowing all things, it will forbid all things.<sup>11</sup> But, following Žižek’s argument on this point, we have to go one step further, to note that God, as God, necessitates his own “death.” This is the ultimate and radical conclusion of Christianity, that God actually *does* die, does suffer the ultimate “bone” of materialism, ultimate *does* disappear in the depths created by the antagonism (suffering) of the cross specifically and the rejection of the messiah generally.

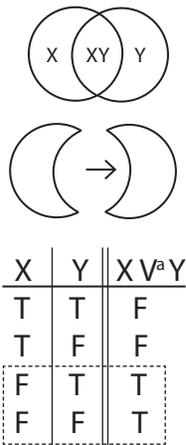


Figure 5. The *vel* or overlap between the conditions of X and Y in the “forced choice” situation of “your money or your life” poses a situation where the full/excess negativity of X (the lower half of the truth table) *subtracts* from Y, which must give up that part of its “being true” that coincides with X. The victim really has no choice. If he gives up his life, he will not be able to enjoy his money. But, that is what the mugger has in mind *in the first place*. The offer of these options is really an ultimatum. This is the subject’s condition in relation to the Other, where in joining the Symbolic order, the subject is assigned a position that is already and always lost — the subject must always lose, hence the identification of the Lacanian subject with a “lack” of alienation. But, there is an unexpected spin on this. For something to be missing, as it is with the subject, it must have first *had a place*, and this requires an *ordered system* (Bruce Fink, “Alienation and Separation,” 1990). Places begin as *secondary*, as places that make possible the out-of-place (*manque à sa place*) of subjectivity. As soon as something is missing, *there is a system of place*.

In the depths of perspectival space, God vanishes (this is the real “Ambassadors’ secret-within-the-secret expounded by John North). And, just as every asylum inscribes the demon that compelled its flight into a central void, the result is “the dead” whose voice will provide us with the knowledge that we may possess without consciously knowing about it: apophrades = kenosis. Now the skull in *The Ambassadors* makes sense. Now Goethe’s argument about material and spirit makes sense. Kenosis is acousmatic, and we have to include the “body loading” phenomenon of the pickpocket at the center of our account of how the dummy gets to be, on account of his/her dupe-licity (contronym as *moiré* of antagonism) with the Other, gets out of Seahaven.

<sup>10</sup> Philip K. Dick, “Adjustment Team,” *Orbit Science Fiction* 4 (September–October 1954).

<sup>11</sup> For an interesting discussion of the “basics,” see Andrei I. Volkov, “Dostoevsky Did Say It: A Response to David E. Cortesi (2011),” *The Secular Web*. Stable URL: [https://infidels.org/library/modern/andrei\\_volkov/dostoevsky.html](https://infidels.org/library/modern/andrei_volkov/dostoevsky.html). For Žižek’s well-known response, see (secondarily) Henry Karlson, “Without God Everything is Permitted (Prohibited),” *Voxnova: Catholic Perspectives on Culture, Society, and Politics* (May 5, 2009). Stable URL: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/voxnova/2009/05/05/because-the-law-forbids-everything-becomes-permitted/>.

Now Zupančič's argument about the move from one point of view to another producing a blur also makes sense. The move *slides* the cone of vision along an imaginary plane (imagine two overlapping V's). The overlap is the *vel* of alienation, explained most often by the mugger's expression, "Your money or your life." The falsity of X, the loss of choice by Y, all of this is "true" and, moreover, the "truth of subjectivity." As the view of one subject imagines the view of another subject, the observer position slides across the imaginary plane separating the observer from the observed. This orthographic condition creates the illusion of a perspectival overlap; for, it is the perspectival cones of vision that position the point of view opposite a visual field where objects are distributed within space. But, the *procedure* of subjectivity is a sliding motion tuned into the planar picture plane, in effect *the division itself* between visibility and the observer's invisibility. This is orthometric because, unlike the structure of perspectival space, there are no vanishing points, no corresponding viewpoints, only sliding. The lines projecting the data of the section (the essence of the picture plane as it "cuts through" space) are parallel. There is no viewpoint at an infinite distance from the plane. The orthography has rendered any overlap of points of view radically void. The contrast between orthography and perspectival representation is that which renders the "ideal" of perspective — a shared vision — null and void. The overlap is profoundly empty, but it is the point within the visible, and visibility in general, that is afforded to be instantaneously synchronized with the void at the interior of the subject! The subject emerges out of this antagonism but it emerges at a *place diametrically opposite*, at the extreme "interior" of objectivity's "exterior." This is why the gaze and the voice "appear" (negatively) where they do — at locations defined as "negations of negations."

However, what does negation of negation mean? Do we not face the paradox of the impossibility of a metalanguage, of using something simultaneously as container and contained? How does the forced choice create a "fundamental metaleptic state," where inside and outside are continually and dynamically confused, where  $A=A$  not because of equivalence but because *one state of A cannot be distinguished from its Other*, which we may call its "antipode." This is certainly a case calling for appending Lacan's idea of the extimate (*extimité*), but without the usual atmosphere of paradox that involves metaphors of inside-out or topological surprises at the edges of the Möbius band.

This forced choice situation is even more dismal than having to choose between your money and your life when we realize how the step into subjectivity proper requires a loss of one's own *appearance* — one must *disappear* (aphanisis). This can be funny, as in Groucho Marx joke about the contronymic Signor Rivelli: "Say, you look like Emanuel Rivelli!" "But, I am Emanuel Rivelli!" "Then it's no wonder how you both look alike!" But, the ability of a "proper" subject (with a name) to become a pronoun ("just another" Emanuel Rivelli in the above case) is the impossible demand, the forced choice, that faces every subject within the Symbolic.

As in Ozon's film, *Frantz*, Adrien, the Frenchman who visits a small town in Germany after World War I to grieve at the grave of the German soldier he killed, the empty grave (Frantz was actually buried somewhere in France), he initiates a series of subjective relations pivoting around the places left and then held open. When he proclaims to Frantz's distraught father that, as the father had said, Adrien *had* murdered his son, the literal truth was converted into a metaphoric one. Later, the father tells his drinking friends who are excoriating the French that it was they, the fathers, who had killed their sons, he extends this metaphor in an interesting way. Paraphrasing: "When we killed thousands of French sons, we Germans drank down our beers in celebration; when the French killed thousands of German sons, they

drank down their wine to celebrate. Adding it all together, we have drunk with joy to killing our own sons!” The wine/beer circuit connects the fathers and sons in the same way the truth table connects the extreme negative of X to Y’s more radical loss — a loss not just of a degree of choice but of choice in general. The wine and beer “delay” this truth by having one nation’s fathers celebrate the death of the other nation’s father’s sons; but the result is, when the delay is removed, that fathers have killed their sons and celebrated the fact.

How do we consider this short-circuit in more general terms? How do we “deny the delay” that allows two groups to do symmetrical things to victimize each other in direct proportion? Because Lacan insists that the subject itself is divided, we can consider subjectivity in general as a project where alienation simultaneously means a radical loss of place but, even more radically, the identification with the *empty place* that allows for the symmetrical transfer across a “no man’s land” of warring forces. We can confirm this through our knowledge of what results with a collapse of this symmetry: psychosis. This specifically involves rejecting the *names of the father* (*les noms du père*) so that Lacan’s dictum can be seen through the example of Ozon’s film. Take out the names (French/German) and you have fathers drinking to the deaths of their sons. The psychotic condition of war, to avoid psychotic collapse, must open up a distance between the fathers so that one group does not recognize itself in the position of the Other. Žižek’s has enjoyed telling the story of how a utopian society emerged in the horrific internal boundary space of no-man’s land in World War I; how deserters from various armies helped each other to survive; overcame their national and linguistic differences, etc. etc. — a true pacifist kingdom! And, what a coincidence that the name of this kingdom involves the Nobody, the one who has lost all identity, who has fallen out of the Symbolic and who no longer suffers the loss of choice that is alienation!

The example of fathers drinking to the deaths of their sons, taken as emblematic of subjectivity in general, returns to Zupančič’s overlapping V’s and the *vel*  $\vee$  that conditions the anamorphic blur/stain that is the hallmark of inter-subjectivity. We realize that there are no “shared values” to bring neighbors together, no common place in the sense of an agreed-upon core of concerns and ideas. What is shared is the experience of alienation as radical negation — I’m tempted to say a “negation of negation,” but this is a case of “doubling down on the negative.” The point is to rule out a return to a positive condition after a negation of a negation. Rather, this double action reveals an *eigenform* that, in being irreducible, constitutes something like a set of geodesic monuments set up across a domain, allowing property to be divided, sold off, and developed in various dynamic ways. Could this new real estate belong to the pre-subject whose management practices involve autoerotic logics that, as in *The Adjustment Team*, use a palindromic model of time or, as in Poe’s “The Purloined Letter,” hold spaces open in one part of time to be filled, contronymically, in another?

Because spaces held open in a “pronomial” way have both deictic (sender/receiver) and anaphoric (internal circulation) dimensionality, we can explore them through the rather ordinary customs of drawing, filming, choreographing, territorialization, political mapping, and historical uses of places. But, isn’t it also the case that all of these customary space-time practices can be reverse engineered to reveal the workings of “deixis” and “anaphor” in palindromic/contronymic structures? If this seems reductionistic, a written confession is required. Lacan, after rejecting Freud’s biological reductionism, re-affirmed that science is nothing but reductionistic by its very nature. A law, principle, or *matheme* asserts a universality

intended to apply in all relevant situations; but here it's necessary to point out the positive role of theory's negative encounters with "reality."

A reductionism — unavoidable in any instance when one is attempting to be scientific — contains the if-then impulse native to objectivity. It's a test, an experiment. If things don't work out, then it's "back to the drawing board." The objectivist illusion would hold that the if-then is asymptotic, that each new trial-an-error effort will lead to adjustments, making the theory better. Of course, Thomas Kuhn proved otherwise. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* detailed the scandalous truth that scientific conceptions were largely self-constructed assumption bubbles that supported highly illusionistic projects of affiliation in the literal sense of sons connecting to fathers. It's even necessary to say that scientific revolution is such a staged effort that affiliation must never be far from the rules of male relationship by which all those who would call themselves men must obey the phallic rule ( $\forall x\phi x$ ) *as long as* there is one who is exempt ( $\exists x\sim\phi x$ ). This is the set-theoretic principle of club membership, the drawing that shows the plan view of the clubhouse whose interior continence is guarded by a Janusian scoundrel. Nicole Loraux has shown how this sexuation model found architectural form in ancient Athens, a means of appropriating the feminine authority that custom had maintained for the civic hearth as a collective representation of Hestia's rule over family hearths, home to ancestral spirits (*manes*, also known as *lares* and *penates*). The prytaneum, a banquet hall housing fraternal banquets, modeled the rule of exception by having a small room reserved for the civic flame, tended by the Prytanis, or ruler of the city-state, while the male confraternity occupied their assigned places around the U-shaped dining table.

The panopticism of this confraternity is evident, and by extension it can be applied to the confraternity of the scientific revolution. The U is nearly an O, whose curve cuts each guest in two, just as a section drawing's picture plane cuts into material structure. This plan is "orthographic" in that both the draughtsman and viewer of the drawing are mandated by the drawing itself to always occupy a right-angled relationship to the space of representation. (For a full demonstration, see the review in Chapter 8.) To view different elements arrayed along the surface of the orthographic drawing, the point of view (POV) must "glide" along the surface. If the surface is folded or curved, the POV must fold or curve along with it to maintain the orthogonal angle; and, if (as in the case of the Panopticon, Jeremy Bentham's ideal prison design) the representational surface forms a closed, curved cylinder, the POV will appear to revolve. Its looking, divided into an attentive 180° and the dark space occupying its peripheral other half, will rotate like a beacon on an airport tower. The beacon doesn't turn off and on, but from any point along the plane of representation, the result is a binary off/on.

Isn't this identical to the rule of sexuation by which the Prytaneum is able to appropriate the feminine? Doesn't the contrast between "all those who must obey the phallic rule" and "the one who is exempt" precisely describe the prisoners and guards of Bentham's Panopticon? And, doesn't the *simultaneity* of the  $\forall x\phi x$  and the split-in-half of  $\exists x\sim\phi x$  *necessarily* combine to explain how, in scientific revolutions, reductionism is a matter of "rape," in the more generic ancient sense of *making it seem* that the woman (Lacan: ~~woman~~) resists? The Lacanian question here is: *for whom* is this resistance staged? Lucky us; the answer is clearly provided by classical scholarship. The bride must show resistance to the gods of the hearth, the *manes*, who would otherwise be offended by her defection in marriage to some stranger *not a member* of the paternal household. The *manes* are snobs. They maintain the walls of the house and guard the thresholds of the doors. They themselves are binary, however, as is evident in the assignment of Janus

to symbolize the threshold. The binary looks towards but also looks away — the POV function of the Panopticon. This is not a 360° visual basis but a radical binary, as demonstrated in the two-faced but also sometimes three- and four-faced variations. The threshold is the square-wave function of the wall, the “section” line that conveys the architectural idea of the section drawing as a magical *poché* that must be protected by sacrifice: a conversion of the living to a non-dead spiritual prophylaxis through foundation rites placing a victim (ideally through stealth; where the victim is tricked or secretly assigned) to permanently occupy the interval “between the two deaths” on behalf of architectural solidity (Vitruvius: *firmitas*).<sup>12</sup> Stealth is the key, and the ethnographic bonds established between erotic love and theft quickly reveal how the “body-loading” of the pickpocket is a modern-day version of the body-loading of buildings protected by “feminine” not-allness, in the Lacanian sense that the ~~woman~~, defined as “not-all subject to the phallic law,  $\phi$ , is *without exception* — and this is nothing less than the curvature of the Panopticon’s section-line wall of cells — “cut in two” by the binary. Curvature and rotation are identical, through the principle of stealth: they are “unable to be distinguished.” Janus is as Janus does. The *manes* (authority) must itself be deceived (hence, Justice is blindfolded). Marriage, in order to be *solemn*, must be a deception (of authority, embodied by the phallic law, the paternal order, of  $\phi$ ). It must steal; it must lie; it must be *duplicitous*. Its walls must be hollow (*poché*) and, simultaneously, occupied, in the way that the doors of public toilets display a rotating disk engaged by the turn of the lock.

When do the *manes* “look the other way”? Stealth is the theme of Hitchcock’s 1954 thriller, *Rear Window*, but this is not generally the theme of critiques of the film that, obsessed with the legal and moral aspects of voyeurism, make Jeff Jefferies into the poster child of the male gaze. Yet, what we clearly have in Hitchcock’s careful documentation of Jefferies’ disabilities, physical and psychical, is a *resistance* to looking’s authority. The war photographer returns to domestic life in New York, alleviated at intervals by his magazine’s assignments to global hotspots or dangerous sports events. It was at this latter, an auto race in particular, that has laid him up with a broken leg. Catalepsis, radical immobility, is a sign of spectatorship; and in the opening credits the three-part window shades of Jeff’s apartment are slowly raised as the credits roll past; they will be lowered at the end of the restored version of the film, an omission made by thoughtless editors of the first DVD version. The symmetry of opening and closing, the ultimate binary of spectatorship, conclude the contract between the film and the dream, the contronymic shutting of consciousness’s eyes that open the internal dream-eyes; whose pre-destined shutting will be the *principal aim* of the dream to forestall.

Freud insists that dreams are there to keep us sleeping. And, in the example of the father who dreams of his son imploring him with the emergency question — “Father, can’t you see I’m burning!” — is not an alarm to wake the father up but a radical last-ditch effort to reconcile the sleeping father’s nose with the story of how the trusted friend had fallen asleep during his watch over the son’s corpse in an adjacent room. The question, “Can’t you see I’m burning” is the question of all fiction. “Can’t you see that this is really *painful*?” How, in other words, can the audience *enjoy*, how can it keep its binary *jouissance* of

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<sup>12</sup> Sir James Frazer has passed on the curious story of how, even in recent times, “shadow-traders” would surreptitiously capture the shadows of innocent victims using lengths of string. When the string was placed inside the foundation walls during construction, a time-release function would gradually weaken and kill the victim and, simultaneously, reinforce and protect the building. *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings* (London: Macmillan & Company, Ltd., 1955), 380–87. I have described this in greater detail in “The Missing Guest: The Twisted Topology of Hospitality,” in *Eating Architecture*, ed. Paulet Singley and Jamie Horwitz (Cambridge: MIT, 2004), 169–90.

pleasure-pain running when, on stage, the characters are maintaining their binary with the actors who embody them? The question must be asked because the cataleptis of the audience must be stretched out “one minute more,” so that the “just as . . .” and “again” can have a full and durable effect.

We can confirm this ersatz conjecture in the final scene of *Rear Window*, with Hitchcock’s particular device of the flash-bulbs Jeff uses to delay the killer Thorwald’s advance towards his immobilized wheel-chair. (The chair, as is made evident in the film, can rotate but not move — this is the *precise definition* of the POV in the section drawing.) The room is dark; Thorwald’s pupils will have dilated. The flash-bulbs will blind him for a few moments, *buying Jeff time*. We must take this scene literally. Delay, binary blindness/sight, cataleptis, rotation, sectional logic, panoptical transfer. The scene’s literary prototype is the Cyclops’s Cave episode in *The Odyssey*, where Odysseus combines blinding and (fake) naming as the two necessary components of a single trick. The giant Cyclops plays the role of the *manes*, the cave is of course the house, the Prytaneum, the man-cave.

The feminine not-all, her resistance to marriage by feigning rape, is precisely what Jeff must take on himself. He must feminize. This should not come as a surprise. In the previous scene, we have been instructed to note just how Jeff, in watching Lisa scale the fire-escape ladder to break into Thorwald’s apartment in search of Anna Thorwald’s *wedding ring*, has shown his pleasure. Lisa is doing what he would have done, had he not suffered cataleptic paralysis. This is the death of the spectator that closes one set of eyes to open another. Inscriptions on the plaster cast on his left leg read, in the opening moments of the film, “Here lie the bones of L. B. Jefferies.”<sup>13</sup> We are thus allowed by the writer and director to regard what comes after as a potential death dream. The audience has visited the cemetery, so to speak, and now must walk into the visions of the soul as it wanders from literal death to death in the Symbolic. This final moment is, clearly, marriage; in that the film concludes with Lisa reclining on Jeff’s bed (where we must imagine the couple at some point engaging in fully authorized marital sex). It’s a solution to the “room for one more” problem of the grave and the myriad fictional accounts of two bodies occupying a single tomb, *Romeo and Juliet* being perhaps the most famous. *Rear Window*’s “final solution” has come about thanks to the body-loading of the flash-bulb scene. Jeff has, in front of our eyes (which don’t have to disbelieve because they don’t notice in the first place), constructed a palpable *poché*. The binary of sight/blindness *delays* the monster, Thorwald. His advance is converted into binary segments because Jeff, capable of rotation but not retreat, can at the last minute *call out* to the police who have just arrived on the scene with Lisa.

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<sup>13</sup> This plainly exposed name has nonetheless eluded most critics, who have preferred “Jefferies.” Another critic has asserted that the color green is reserved exclusively for Miss Lonelyhearts, ignoring Lisa’s (Grace Kelly) beautiful tailored suit as she unpacks for a night of sleuthing. Juhani Pallaasma, “The Geometry of Terror: Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rear Window*,” *Chora: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture* 4, ed. Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Stephen Parcell (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press), 211–244.

Now, can we see how the closed urban courtyard has functioned as more than a casual reference to a panoptical prison? Can we connect Jeff's rotational point of view with our own cataleptic spectatorship?<sup>14</sup> Yes. We can not only connect but correct, thanks to Hitchcock's explicit stage direction and scene blocking. The "palpable *poché*" is protected by the feminine "victim" that Jeff has fictionalized within his own stasis. In an act of primary transfer, he has internalized Lisa's status as the active lover within his own "heroic passivity." I wish to unpack these dense relations gradually, and the suitcase of this chapter is already overstuffed. Allow this summary to be just that, a spring-point for the bridge to the next chapter where a mirror-land will obvert what is already obversion itself, the matter of the internal feminine.

There is a need at this point for a rather complicated "aside" relating to shit, the roughest word capable of describing the logic of the Freudian drives. The first three, or "Freudian," drives are well-known: the oral, anal, and phallic. The oral drive emerges from the lack of differentiation between the infant's and mother's body, a kind of demand-and-supply closed circuit. It is only when this circuit is broken that the drive emerges and is associated with hunger and the call for satisfaction. Even when the delay between call and response is very small, it falls outside of the infant's closed-circuit account of the world. The delay is a break in an otherwise perfect circle, where the mother and child are barely distinguishable. This is the "pronoun" of the drives. The delay holds open a place that will be filled "all too soon" by the anal drive. Here, the tables are turned. It is the mother who makes the demands, the child who must respond. The child's reasoning is perfectly clear. "If my mother wants my shit, I shall present it to her forthwith, as a present that is surely going to please her." The outcome of this clear thinking is not what the infant expects. Instead of the expected show of gratitude, the mother is *displeased* because the idea of shit as a gift is not what she had in mind. Rather, it's the *timing* issue again, and the point of repetition is that it allows the generic idea of rule to form in advance of any specific idea of law.

Shit is the first clear developmental instance of *extimité*. What was inside is now outside, and the form it takes it a gift, the ethnographical complexity of which the anthropologist Marcel Mauss made a career in elucidating. The gift is like what it is intended to represent: love. It is the (Lacanian) thing one does not possess, given to someone who does not wish it. That we don't possess shit is clear. Even when it is inside us we disavow it, as something-to-be-eliminated, and the word "elimination" (*e-limen*-ation) says it all. Shit is about boundaries, and boundaries are about shit. Shit as shit is indicated by smell and consistency (a "shitty situation" is one both lacking solidity and having too much solidity). Formally, in daily instances of personal hygiene, shit's relation to *e-limin*-ation is marked by the semiotic contrast afforded by toilet paper, a primary "surface of representation" if there ever was one. What is liminal is what is marked, and

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<sup>14</sup> It seems that much of the "bad criticism" *Rear Window* seems to attract proceeds from what could be called Foucault's "primal inversion" of the direction of the gaze. In assuming that the prisoners of the Panopticon would assume that guards were *always* present, Foucault forced himself to identify the gaze with the authority of the central tower. Power would thus and henceforth be flowing outward from a point centralized within society, culture, language, and institutions. Laura Mulvey would buy into this reversal of the Lacanian gaze without giving up her status as a "Lacanian critic," but the results would, disastrously, misread the film. See her "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," anthologized in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University, 1999), 833–44. Had Joan Copjec completed her critique of Foucault's (mis-)use of Gaston Bachelard's *dispositif* ("apparatus") by correcting Foucault's famous reading of the Panopticon, she would have saved us all a lot of time. But, of course, it's more fun to find out why the Panopticon is virtually the opposite of what Foucault said it was.

there can be no more radical indication of a figure–ground contrast than the mark shit leaves on clean, smooth, white sheets of soft paper.<sup>15</sup>

The internalization of the feminine can be done by (whoever calls themselves) a man or woman. It is an option open to “all those who would be human,” or, more accurately, all those who would reconsider whether or not being a subject within the manic inconsistency of the Symbolic Other is a good idea. This is an option that is ever on the Lacanian menu, as simultaneously a *theoretical* and (intensely) *personal* dimension of the subject’s experience of antagonism within the Symbolic. This is the subject’s primordial “hysteric” condition, which can be experienced on the level of discourse if not as the set of symptoms associated with real-life hysterics. In other words, an obsessive–compulsive, whose primary concern is with the Symbolic as such (status, external relations to authority, data, evidence), is *as a subject* a natural–born hysteric, whose relation to the Other will forever be conditioned by the inconsistency and lack that forms a contronymic love–hate dynamic.

Because the alienation of the subject in relation to the Symbolic is what makes any story tick, expect to find it at any level, in any medium, and about any situation. It is a universal of every genre — comedy, satire, tragedy, romance (to use Northrop Frye’s famous four).<sup>16</sup> It can be the superficial obstacle plot of the Jason Bourne’s spy adventures, the *angst* of Bergman’s tortured Nordics, or the studied detachment of Wes Anderson’s concierges. Alienation begins with a realization in the form of an *event* bringing antagonism into a presentational, scenic form. Here, we follow Lacan’s insight, that anxiety should be taken out of the three–part spatial schema where it is a (literally) distant third in relation to the proximity of fear — Freud’s scaled fright–night list: Anxiety/*Angst* (on the horizon); Fear/*Furcht* (Fright, uncomfortably close); Fright/*Schreck* (on top of you). In contrast, Lacan’s anxiety is brought before the subject with a fold in space, creased along an edge that joins a binary of audience and stage. This binary is reinforced through conventional polity: when the curtain is up the audience sits down, not just in their seats but also in their consciousness, receptive and alert to what shows itself beyond the proscenium, disgruntled by some rude fellow spectator’s coughing, whispering, or candy-wrapper rattling. Light alternates between stage and auditorium to confirm the binary’s all–or–nothing use of the square wave. Anxiety is *present before us* as long as the line of the spatial fold is maintained. This, curiously, involves the occasional challenge by the actor, one actor in particular who gains access to our innermost thoughts, delivers a soliloquy or stage whisper, where the imaginary fourth wall is marked and reinforced by a temporary suspension of its magical division.

Good actors mark out zones on the stage and employ operant conditioning to hypnotize (for that is what happens) the audience to gradations of receptivity. Once a zone is created through repeated

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<sup>15</sup> The obsession with toilet paper thickness, texture, surface patterning, etc. could be easily converted into an encyclopedia of our relations to the anal drive and, by extension, to the primary function of the death drive. Toilet paper is a meme for the salt that is the representative substance of the *poché* of the limen, the stuffing so to speak that, for all those who pass, delivers a dose of desiccation. Ernest Jones notes that salt regulates the passage from life to death, both as a preservative and an orthopsychic purifier of the soul. Salt’s involvement with hospitality reinforces this relation to the *limen* and wall, and purifies the essence of the gift in relation to the treatment of strangers who must not, under any circumstances, be allowed to view the family hearth. Salt’s role in cuisine is an extension of this rule, in that food offered to guests may be salted, but only following specific rituals. For the Romans, no dish could be placed on the table before the bowl of salt, and the status of guests around the table was determined by their precise distance from that bowl. Ernest Jones, “The Symbolic Significance of Salt.”

<sup>16</sup> Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1950).

thematization of gestures, lines, tones of the voice, and key points of the plot, it can trigger the audience's correct response through the minimal gesture of occupancy. Step into the zone and the message is automatically delivered. The letter "arrives at its destination." This is theater's "cool shit," so to speak, the boundary marker that is the gift of "what is not possessed to the one who doesn't want it," not consciously at least.

The position of intimacy is that of a "before" and "after," where tenderness of foreplay and after-play, rather than the negotiated aggression and passivity of the sex act itself, establish a terrain of touch, mapped sensitivity zones, spaces of encounter and transaction, and multiplication of communicative identities. This before/after has been neglected in favor of a focus on copulation as the main show of sex, the "adult activity" *par excellence*.<sup>17</sup> In this fovea, subjects encounter each other beneath the shadow of the Symbolic, as evidenced by the detailed contracts required by S&M practitioners to assure that their "consensual non-consent" will not violate laws or each other's limits. At the semi-symmetrical margins of tenderness, the autoerotic domain of childhood reclaims territory ceded to adult sensuality. It is as if the sex act cut the subjects in two, but then doubled the cut-line and spread the two versions apart to open up a space in between observer and observed, dominant and submissive, here and there. Sex's symbolic claim is to reveal the truth of each partner to the other, to take things to a physical/emotional climax where pretense will be impossible. But, as we know, the reverse can be the case. We can, in short, fake the orgasm that is sex's test of authenticity. But, this is not inauthenticity. Just the reverse. We must "stage" the true of true love, to the extent that "making it" is always in its purest form "faking it," even when the true of the event seems to rush up and overwhelm us from behind.

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<sup>17</sup> Stephanie Koziej, "Tender Rhythms: Rethinking the Erotic, Subjectivity and Sociality Through Tenderness," Keynote Address, Žižek Studies Conference, Athen, Georgia, May 2018.

## 12 / Makin' It



Figure 1. Devlin (Cary Grant) first appears at Alicia Huberman's party as a silhouette extruded from the space of the audience. To properly enter into the "corrupt ensemble of symbolic relationships" the camera must rotate 90° to a position orthogonal to Alicia/Devlin's relationship.

*The ship wherein Theseus and the youth of Athens returned had thirty oars, and was preserved by the Athenians down even to the time of Demetrius Phalereus, for they took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their place, insomuch that this ship became a standing example among the philosophers, for the logical question of things that grow; one side holding that the ship remained the same, and the other contending that it was not the same.*

—Plutarch, *Theseus*, trans. John Dryden

A scene from Alfred Hitchcock's 1946 spy thriller, *Notorious* is an obvious reference case in our understanding of the fake. Alicia Huberman (Ingrid Bergman) has been recruited to spy on an old flame and friend of her father's from German days. Her father has been convicted of wartime collusion, and she sees this assignment as a way of vindicating her family name. There are two fathers required to solve the case, a real and a fake. We see Alicia's turn from her real father's humiliation to alcoholism and promiscuity. She's invited friends over to drink and dance the night away. An older rich friend invites her to sail away on his yacht. At this point, we see the dark profile of a strange guest at the party. At first it seems possible that the profile belongs to someone tall sitting in the movie's auditorium. But, the camera rotates 90° and we see Alicia and the stranger (Devlin, played by Cary Grant) engage each other in witty confrontation. This 90° move is an important clue. We have moved from a perspectival *impasse* to a secondary theme of self-correction. Alicia will vindicate her father and her own reputation, at the cost of a temporary but deeper and more personal humiliation. She must marry the Nazi (Sebastian, played by Alex Raines) to discover what he and his friends are doing in Brazil.

*Notorious* is a simple story but it puts us face to face with a complexity that almost seems like an inherited genetic condition. The *impasse* of the humiliated father is the breakdown of the Symbolic, the sum total of networks of relationships that, through fantasy and artifice, sustain the life of the culture, the family, and the individual subject. Once He goes, He's gone, as one might say of Fathers from Yahweh to Barack Obama. A new father has to be found, a fake for sure, but in the sense that the obvious rule that you can have only one father is, in fakeland, converted to the rule that you must have precisely two. But, how does this work? Žižek has put it this way: the Symbolic goes chugging along, content with its corruptions and petty crimes, masking its shortfalls and overplaying its misidentifications.<sup>1</sup> It's fucked up good but, since fucked up is normal, things can continue. Then a saintly character arrives (Agent Cooper in *Twin Peaks*, for example) who throws everything out of joint. The prostitutes must be arrested and the brothels shut down. Scams and schemes are exposed and expunged. It's no longer enough for murder simply to produce a corpse. The victim must be wrapped in complex symbolic signs and schemes. There can be no longer the motive and opportunity; there is now the incorporation of evil, a "Red Lodge" that organizes a space of evil

<sup>1</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch's Lost Highway* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000).

in concentric rings of synecdoche that forms a magic mountain topped by a temple shrouded in clouds of arcane mystery.

Hitchcock finds the algorithm for this in his 90° pivoting track shot. The saintly character is taken out of the pool of innocence sitting in front of the screen.<sup>2</sup> We should take some time to consider this innocence. Why are audiences innocent? Perhaps they are only technically innocent, as a function of the catalepsy induced by the protocols of spectatorship: sit still and stay quiet. The sign of the audience's temporary death is their loss of face. We see them not just from the back but in profile, all detail of their figures reduced to monochrome black. This silhouette performs another key function. We know it only in the case where it *partially* blocks our view of the symbolic as it is projected onto the screen, *as an annoyance*. It is not just the symbolic that has a profile-shaped interruption, it is the whole system of perspective that sets up nears and fars, lefts and rights, foreshortening and vanishing points, *all for the benefit* of maintaining our fascination with the Symbolic. This corpse, this wretched bit of abjection, has imposed its meaningless black profile; it has gotten in the way of our *jouissance*. We cannot help but hate this zombie who, as dead as we are thanks to the anesthetics of the Symbolic, dares to come back to life. "Just Who does He think He is?" This is Dostoyevsky's question to God who, just before dying for once and for all, asserts his Minimal Existence to bring a forced choice to bear on what seems to be a situation that is not really worth His Time.

Our considered response to this profile-without-portfolio is to tell it to "fuck off." Back to the grave where you belong! Accept our bribe and join our corruption (our perspectival *jouissance*) like the rest; be one of us. But, Hitchcock's 90° pivot does not allow this to happen. The silhouette crashes the party and presents Alicia with a forced choice. "A (fake) father or your life!" What's more you will be the victim of incest; you must marry this fake father. It's not a great deal, since like all forced choices, "X is so inexorably false that Y is forced to give up that part of its 'being true' which coincides with X."<sup>3</sup> X's "inexorable falsehood" is, in the case of the pure stranger, an excess of expectation. It asks Alicia to be more of herself than herself. The vampire Devlin (what an appropriate name, especially for someone who is introduced with the remark "Nobody knows his name." We've met such sanctimonious characters in literature before. Odysseus visits the Cyclops knowing in advance that this host will not present, as in the Greek custom, his guests with required gifts. Odysseus plans the encounter in advance, down to the moment when, after blinding the giant before he eats any more of the crew, Captain O. tells the cyclops that he can tell everyone that "Nobdy" has done this bloody deed. But, of course, when the moment comes for the Cyclops to shout for help, this pronoun does its negational job. His fellow cyclopes look for the antecedent in the wrong direc-

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<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 72, cites Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* (1981, 92) to note that "with the Photograph, we enter into 'flat death.'" The photograph is "death's point of entry into everyday life." In Hitchcock's filming of the cocktail party, what does it mean that this entry is given a precise angular measure? The Lacanian "between the two deaths" is the trial period the soul faces after its literal death, before it can be resolved within the Symbolic, so the film's story could be considered as the *ersatz* adventure, the gesture that sets up a puzzle for the soul/Psyche and her guide (Devlin) to solve. Hitchcock's use of two deaths is clear. Alicia dies in her drunken drive but (like the audience) is not aware of it. She accepts the imposed challenge to be a "notorious woman" despite her love for Devlin, who must feign his repudiation, just as the silence is imposed on Pamina in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* leads to Pamina's second death, a threatened suicide. A flat death is flattened from 3-d to 2-d to allow the orthogonal vector to appear so that it may be rotated into the flatness of the representation, the "trial" in which the soul corrects itself "orthopsychically."

<sup>3</sup> Fink, "Alienation and Separation," 84.

tion — anaphorically, *within* the structure of the utterance. They do not know to check the deictic dimension that Odysseus is using to run back to his ships and escape. *They have a 90° problem.*

The devil is in, once Devl-in rotates from nobody in the audience to *agent provocateur* in the diegetic reality of the film's story. His journey is 90° worth of pronouns, by which he will register as the agent of escape to whisk the brutalized Alicia away from the second father's lair just in time to save the day. Devlin is a devil in the sense that he becomes the hero in the context of the mess he himself has made of the Symbolic's minimalistic "just get by" mentality. His purification plan all but destroys the one it would save, so it is impossible to let Devlin off the hook simply because Alicia loves him. Her love has been sincere, at least to the extent that she can put her father into a coffin of the past as long as Devlin promises a future. Devlin is the hero of ersatz. The damage he does is gratuitous, "just for the *hell* of it" (literally), to see what might happen. This is not intentional evil, it is evil because it doesn't just lack intention, it purges itself of the possibility of intention. Devlin accepts orders from his Big Others, passing on his passivity to Alicia in the form of "we must do our duty."<sup>4</sup>

The ersatz is the essence of the fake, so it will profit us to take some time to examine it in detail. The ersatz, after all, is the essence of the secondary. The secondary exists because it doesn't have to. It is not obliged by the Symbolic system it interrupts, "at an orthogonal angle." Don Quixote might just have easily let his library rot in peace, his corrective project, like the interruption and ultimate destruction of Master Peter's puppet show, took direct aim at the perspectival illusion to the annoyance of the audience and catastrophic unmasking of the artist (Master Peter was really the infamous criminal, Ginés de Passamonte).<sup>5</sup> Who wanted to know that? Sit back and enjoy the show! But, the secondary refuses to sit quiet; its ersatz experiment inserts a secondary program, an "orthopsychic" self-correction which has, on account of its relation to fathers, become orthopsychotic.

The parasite was originally the schtick of comics in ancient Greece involving party-crashing.<sup>6</sup> Comedy and charm kept them from being thrown out, so in an important sense comedy has always been about "buying time." The parasite biologically buys time by anesthetizing its host. If the host is dead, that time is limited by the time it takes for tissues to desiccate. If the host is, however, *just playing dead*, the parasite can go on much longer. The secondary, with its ersatz, relies on the simulated if not actual death of its host,

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<sup>4</sup> The servant in Hegel's Master-Servant Parable is \$ in Lacan's Master's Discourse precisely because of this issue of intentionality. Duty is the duty to substitute, for one's own will and responsibility, that of the Master's, *despite the inconsistency and irrationality* of the Master, who disavows knowledge, S<sub>2</sub>, expecting the servant to "take care of such things." In P. G. Wodehouse's *Jeeves and Wooster* novels, the idiot master Wooster bumbles into situations that only Jeeves can resolve, and characteristically the catastrophe to be averted is that of marriage. Wooster sustains his status as a bachelor, in other words, because the servant's duty is to the role of S<sub>1</sub> in S<sub>2</sub> — the principle that is not subject to its own rule. The servant's figuration as \$ is more accurately delivered as  $\square$ , a pure angle or rotation. This is Devlin's signature entry into the plot of *Notorious*, his necessary flattening (as a silhouette) that permits is "orthopsychic" role as Alicia's guide in the labyrinth-trial of her journey between the two deaths, punctuated by the two fathers. The bar of \$ is equivalent to  $\square$  wherever the "pure hero" charges into the Symbolic to correct its corruptions and inconsistencies.

<sup>5</sup> This story occurs in Part 2, Book 1, Chapter 27 of Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.

<sup>6</sup> Michel Serres, *The Parasite* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2013). The art of Serres' thesis is that it connects this important cultural category of hierarchical dependency with that peculiar form of silence that is the "white noise" capable of reinforcing and amplifying the weak signal ("stochastic resonance").

so the ersatz must take time and duration into consideration. It must work “before the anesthesia wears off.” It must operate within the dream-space of a host who, in the dream, will be hypnotized and willingly respond to suggestions. And, because the function of dreams in general is to keep the sleeper asleep, “ersatz” must be considered to be the primordial stuff of dreams and, by extension, the secondary.



Figure 2. Once Devlin and Alicia realize that Sebastian will discover his key is missing when he must get more Champagne from his wine cellar, the drink becomes a pure *pharmakon*, a contronym that is both elixir and poison. Significantly, this conversion introduces a chiasmic temporality. The spies must “race Sebastian to the crossing” to find out what the wine bottles in the cellar contain. Their race is won with the faked kiss that takes place simultaneously in the space of romance and the orthogonality of the trial of Alicia’s “second death.”

The purge of intentionality is something literature and mythology has formalized in the image of the passive hero.<sup>7</sup> But, the suffering that follows passivity around like a dead albatross will allow the sleeper to sleep, the host to put up with blindness and the rude nobodies that roam around in drunken finery looking for more Champagne. This was the strange backstory that led to Alicia’s poisoning, and we should not forget to dissect the story of the party where Champagne ran short. Sebastian proposed to invite Rio’s socialites to his mansion, where he has lived with his mother and now his wife Alicia. Devlin is invited out of Sebastian’s diffidence to Alicia’s former friendship with him, but he keeps an eye on the two to make sure romance has not rekindled. The mansion has a classic three-part villa structure: an upper story for bedrooms, a main floor for living and entertaining, a lower cellar for storage and menial tasks. The mansion domesticates Sebastian’s scandalous criminal enterprise. He and his fellow Nazis are mining and processing uranium, which they store as a sand inside carefully labelled wine bottles. In a sense, the function of *Notorious* as a spy story is about the unmasking of the mansion’s domesticity, an exposure of the *Unheimlich* at its heart (foundation). The scandal is buried; the film is basically an archeological dig.

How to dig at a party? Alicia and Devlin devise a method, first to remove the key to the cellar wine racks from Sebastian’s keychain. Their success is documented in the film’s dramatic crane shot, beginning at the balcony level and zooming in to an impossible tight shot of Alicia’s hand, which opens briefly to show it has succeeded in securing the treasure. But, access is not enough. Devlin reminds Alicia that Sebastian’s sight will be restored if by chance the Champagne runs out and he has to look for his key to the wine cellar. At this point the scale tips and the Champagne that was the party’s elixir, keeping Sebastian involved with his guests, becomes (like all *pharmakons*) a poison. Each glass poured is one glass less. The *pharmakon* works the negative territory of *sortes*, a pile that is a pile even when the penultimate grain of sand has been removed and there is only one grain left.

At this point of the universal’s absurd survival (in face of the pile that is a pile with just one grain), Sebastian borrows the butler’s key and goes to the cellar to check out his suspicions about his missing key. Devlin and Alicia have found what they didn’t know they were looking for. The wine bottles contain a sand-like substance that Devlin samples for future analysis, but the broken bottle will be the give-away

<sup>7</sup> Cook, “‘Active’ and ‘Passive’ Heroics in the ‘Odyssey.’”

clue. Before this can happen, the couple realize they are going to be discovered. Sebastian has come to get more Champagne. The couple decide quickly to fake being a couple. They kiss a kiss that is not a kiss, but the audience feels it, knows it, that this is their first *real* kiss; a fake kiss that fails to cover up the real one, just as the missing key has failed to forestall Sebastian's visit to the cellar. Both are tests of ersatz conjectures.

Sebastian will confirm the couples' malicious intent. Before he does completes this final proof, however, Hitchcock shows us Sebastian's thoughts in a remarkable set of shots that frame his logical deduction. He looks left to the cellar door, then up into space, as if to "think about things." Then he looks down at the butler's key ring. The unanticipated shortfall of Champagne and disappearance of Devlin and Alicia. As in the opening scene, the film reveals its "unconscious" in terms of vectors and angles. When we look at the perspectival illusion of the film, we pretend to forget our fixed point of view. We allow the camera's mobility to substitute its movement for our stasis. It's only when someone interrupts this fixed view — with his/her stupid silhouette! — that our dream is in danger of dissolving. To keep the sleeper asleep, the film pulls the silhouette into the film, a job requiring an angular adjustment that gives away the secret, that the audience is not 180° opposite the perspectival illusion, but "romantically" positioned at a right angle to it. The independence statistically invested in the right angle is the ability of X to change without affecting Y. But X is false; *so false* in fact that Y is forced to give up its part of being true that coincides with X — a coincidence that is covered up by the double negative of fiction's motto, "the willing suspension of disbelief."

The sleeper would stay in bed all day were it not for the dream's obligation to construct a chiasmus of converging lines where, at the intersection, a sudden reversal will take place. This is the dream's essential palindrome. We can see it in different forms, because, like a 3-d hologram, any small fragment is capable of reproducing/projecting the whole image. Because the palindrome operates equally over its entire range (e. g. 1/9, 2/8, 3/7, 4/6 ...) we need only to know the "base" or "sigma" (in this example, 10) to see how the next move will involve coupling a subtraction with an addition. What is missing in one series will be supplied by the second, as in the case of Edgar Allen Poe's "The Purloined Letter" chiasmus where phrases and images will be separated into chiralistic matching halves, one part to the fore, the other to the aft of the narrative.<sup>8</sup> Pulling the lambda of the chiasmus back together will take place at the hinge or joint between the X and Y, so we will witness "the excess falsity of X" that is so excessive that it will force Y to give up its part of being true. It's a sucking out of the life, of the moisture and blood of Y, a desiccation. But, what is this if not a logical form of the vampire? What if X is not also offering Y eternal life within its shadow? Y indeed is brought into the condition of the undead. To desiccate fully, a journey is required where the Y fully submits to the suffering of the excess falsity of X. Not all such journeys are descents into the underworld, but they all prefigure this descent

What is a proof if not, in essence, just such a forced choice. It is not enough to let the chips fall where they may, they must fall like heroes fall, like the Samurai in Kurosawa's film, like a straight pine chopped at the base.<sup>9</sup> The key to straight falling in the case of the "unique" key in *Notorious* is the way things coming together through angles (Sebastian's angular glances mapping his thought process), so the Unica Key is actually the key to Hitchcock's own thought process, his use of an excess of falsity related *orthogonally*

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Kopley, *Edgar Allan Poe and the Dupin Mysteries* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 65–76.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Hass, "Heroic Simile," *Praise* (New York: Ecco, 1979), 2–3.

(90°) to the secondary plot of spies to invade the secondary space of the mansion to find the secondary use of bottles of wine.

In a remarkable “dream thesis,” the Russian mystic–mathematician Pavel Florensky used the “event dream” to speculate about the way time in dreams divides its nature according to the direction of flow. By considering that dreams distinguish coming and going to “lock in” an order of events by using the contronymic fractal to provide “forward–running narrative” with a “backward–running necessity,” Florensky in effect provides Freudian dream theory with the missing link it needs to say, precisely, “what is a wish.” If the wish is to be the basis of all dreaming, as Freud once claimed, it cannot be the simple “wish–gone–wrong,” the pony the little girl doesn’t get for Christmas. It has to be the wish that one should be careful not to wish for, the wish that gets more than it bargained for. In other words, the wish that reveals to conscious demand the secret, death–involved structure of desire; the wish that you wish hadn’t come true. You don’t wish for something, rather something wishes for you.

Florensky’s discovery of the palindromic nature of the event dream opened up a theoretical way of addressing desire’s own palindrome, a friction without which stories such as told by *Notorious* would make no sense. The Russian priest–mathematician began with the famous event dream of Alfred Maury, reported in his *Le sommeil et les rêves* (1861). In his dream, Maury witnessed events of the French Revolution, met Robespierre and Marat, and was himself arrested, tried, and sentenced to death by the Revolutionary Council. He had detailed conversations with his fellow inmates, and the journey to the guillotine was excruciatingly detailed. Yet, at the point where the blade reached his neck, Maury woke up. A piece of the metal bed–frame had fallen onto the same neck. The dream had been “provoked” by the very event that, in the dream’s long and detailed narrative, was the not the first but the last thing. From the “n” of the falling bed–frame, the string of events had been spun out in reverse; and when the dream was remembered, this order was reversed to form a credible, compelling story.

Florensky postulated a “dream logic” akin to the religious icon’s use of “reverse perspective” — *obratnaya perspectiva*.<sup>10</sup> As Marco Frascari observed, what seem to be mistakes in the construction of *costruzione legittima* (naturalistic perspective) invoke an experience of inner rather than external light.<sup>11</sup> The icon “glows” at the worshiper to induce a confrontation with *prelast*, the realization that one’s most treasured devotional desires have been formed around the (false) idea of ego. Reverse perspective empties out the position of the point of view and replaces it with the vanishing point. Skeptics who claim that *obratnaya perspectiva* is nothing more than abstraction focus on the object rather than the experience. Wherever the spectator of a work of art feels pulled into the space of a painting, performance, or other framed representation, a reverse perspective takes place. The trickiest of such achievements is, possibly, Velázquez’s *Las Meninas*, where the viewer is forced to acknowledge a co-habitation of his/her presumed

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<sup>10</sup> Two of Florensky’s essays should be considered together: Pavel Florensky, “Introduction: The Spiritual Structure of Dreams,” in *Iconostasis*, ed. Donald Sheehan and Olga Andrejev (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), 33–43; and “Reverse Perspective (1920),” in *Beyond Vision: Essays on the Perception of Art*, ed. Nicoletta Misler (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), 197–272. The linking idea is provided in part by Anya Yermakova’s master’s thesis, “Mathematical Foundation in Pavel Florensky’s Philosophical Worldview,” MA Thesis, Oxford University, 2011. Stable URL: <http://docplayer.net/26077549-Mathematical-foundation-in-pavel-florensky-s-philosophical-worldview-anyayermakova-st-john-s-college-university-of-oxford.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Marco Frascari and Federica Goffi, *Marco Frascari’s Dream House: A Theory of the Imagination* (Abingdon, UK and New York: Routledge, 2017), 32–33.

neutral viewing space with no less than three other people: the artist (material cause), the King and Queen of Spain (formal cause), and the spectral image—at-second-remove of the King and Queen, painted on the canvas turned away from the viewer (and artist). There is always “room for one more” in this grave/groove/grove of observation, and the realization that it *is a grave* created by a *fold* that is also a *sanctuary* comes with a shock that reverse perspective intends to produce in its phantasmagoria effect.

In both the *Las Meninas* and reverse-perspective icon cases, the role of the orthogonality to orthopsychics has been completely overlooked. In Chapter 4, analysis shows how the iconic face aims to engage the viewer spiritually, correctively. *Las Meninas* aimed to “leap over” the perspective(s) that seemed to be overdetermined by (1) the engagement of the unseen side of the canvas inside the painting with the image of the King and Queen as potential subjects of a double portrait, standing in the same space that must have been occupied by the painter in the process of production and (2) by the spectator following the exhibition of the painting in centuries to follow. The religious icon’s function is, fundamentally and unambiguously, orthopsychic. *Las Meninas*, also fundamentally and unambiguously, orthopsychically “corrects” the viewer’s presuppositions about the space of viewing.

Both icon and painting use a kind of anti-perspective strategy to effect their orthopsychic goals by using “orthographic” techniques. In the orthography of the architectural section, the picture plane cuts through substantial solids to reveal their material interiors, called *poché*. This is the same interior that housed the remains of victims sacrificed to assure the *firmitas* of the structure and protect the users of the voided in their realizations of *utilitas*. The cut through the middle of space by the orthographic picture plane is a graphic version of the cut into the victim of sacrifice; and the exposure of one half thanks to the burial of the other is the visual logic of anatomy that links divination, whose orthopsychic program is evident, to the idea of things cut into visible/invisible halves. Such a cut is inherently chiasmic, and the idea of the sacrificial cut is present in whatever uses the “lambda design” to put spatial and/or temporal distance between elements whose resonance will constitute a *mi-dire* of pronomial echoes and self-reversing turbulence of twins, mirror images, palindromes, and counter-points.

The event dream’s palindrome reverses events in time as if they were pearls on a spatial string that could be set to run against itself. The raw material of the dream, piled up by the unconscious in the order in which they were received, are there because of a failure of desire. The wish, in effect, marks this failure in retrospect. We do not know what we wish for until we have *failed* to get it, and realizing this failure always “comes last.” It is both an anacoluthon and aposiopesis; an unexpected twist ending that suddenly breaks off an intended finish. A wish does not appear until desire has failed to reach its goal. Wishes pile up in temporal order, but their own internal logic has already reversed this temporality. When some external event happens to trigger the spring-lock of this pile, the palindromic string is released, but with the order of the wish generating a narrative coherence: a story that makes sense at the instant of the release, because the palindrome of wishfulness is already-always there. The reverse perspective of the dream has been there from the start, but not as perspective but, rather, as orthograph. The orthopsychic Real is thus an omen predicting an unimagined alternative ending that from the start had been strengthened and straightened by the “unconscious” of perspective’s intended aims. But, like Cupid’s erring arrows of Eros, what seems to have been “the wrong man” is “the right man” after all. The letter reaches its destination because its destination is where it reaches. It’s right by being wrong; in synch by being out of synch; makin’ it (Vico’s *verum*) because it’s fakin’ it (Vico’s *factum*).

How is this related to Hitchcock's 90° rotation? The key is the chiasmus that allows the construction of one line of events while reverse-ordering a second, a shadow line. The two will come together at a hinge, a point where the two orders will "make sense in light of one another." Chiasmus and palindrome are one in the same; the hinge-crossing of chiasmus and the event of the event dream are one in the same. The 90° orthogonal penetration of perspectival space using a logic of tangency and narrative representations of tests, trials, and corrections are one in the same. Devlin and St. George, agencies that bleach the Symbolic, are one in the same. The kiss that is not a kiss and the Real Kiss, the fakin' and makin' are one in the same. And, when she goes she's gone.

There is an ancient model for this rotation. In the story of the invention of the "art of memory" (a chiasmus of spatial locations and ideas-for-recall), credit is given to Simonides of Ceos, whose job as a hired poet to deliver an encomium for a living politician, Scopas, who dared to pitch his own victory banquet (*setesis*) motivated Simonides to insert several protective buffers to fend off the vengeful evil eye from his boastful client. Simonides was, to be sure, an inventor, but not of the method of associating things to be remembered with pre-memorized locales organized as a "mnemonic place." All public figures needing to speak without notes were taught this method from an early age. Simonides, however, was the first to realize this method's eschatological and anagogic potential. The story makes no sense without the foreshadowing of Scopas's hybris and reckless exposure to the *manes*. In this light, Simonides' achievement amounts to his understanding of how the *story* could be "salted" in the same way corpses were "salted" to hasten their desiccation and, hence, their completion of the interval between the first (literal) death and the second (symbolic) death — between the "fakin' it" and the "makin' it."

The Simonides story has been retold and explained many times, but Simonides salting method has not been understood.<sup>12</sup> Two aspects of salt should be remembered here. The first is that salt has, since ancient times, been recognized as both durable and capable of imparting durability. It dissolves in water but, though invisible, charges the water itself with this quality. At the same time, salt is produced by desiccating sea-water, a process that was originally seen to also distill the essence of the ocean's abundance and variety of life. What appeared in ancient fishermen's nets was so often monstrous and grotesque that this metonymy bestowed monstrosity — and the accompanying power of divinatory signification — on the salt seas in general and salt specifically. When sea-water was allowed to dry to produce salt, this religious

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<sup>12</sup> My evidence for this is that, my first attempt to explain the chiastic design of the Simonides story, popularized by Frances A. Yates' *The Art of Memory*, 1966 (lecture, Rhode Island School of Design, "Four Things in the Nature of Architecture," Fall 1989) went unrecognized. Over the next ten years I refined and revised the idea that the application of the (conventional) method of spatial memory to the identification of crushed corpses revealed a larger palindromic schema at work. One of the earliest publications of this thesis was "The Thickness of the Past: The Metonymy of Possession," *Intersight*, Journal of the School of Architecture and Planning, University at Buffalo 3 (1995): 39-46. Despite many retellings of this thesis, scholars continue to refer to Yates' account as the standard version, omitting key evidence about (1) Scopas's arrogance, (2) the political scandal of the theft of the civic flame housed in the banquet hall (prytaneum), and (3) the obvious clue given by the Dioscuri who, in violation of their probationary agreement, appear together, at least according to the hear-say evidence of the messenger who induces Simonides to exit the banquet hall and thereby save himself from being crushed when the structure collapses. Just as Edgar Allan Poe's chiastic design for "The Purloined Letter" went unnoticed by 150 years of close readings until Richard Kopley's analysis, Simonides' secret remained — like the purloined letter itself — safe *precisely because* it was left out for all to see. In itself, this exemplifies the orthogonal division of space of representation into visible and invisible, along a cut/fold that divides things radically, even dividing the visible itself into seen and unseen halves.

function was condensed and intensified in the crystals that could be used to preserve meats, dry out corpses, and protect thresholds.

The second aspect of salt has to do with wit. Wit's pedigree is grounded in the theory of humors where, at the position of melancholy, cold and dry stand opposite the hero's mania, hot and dry. Choler's active aggression is contrasted by melancholy's passivity, twinning the warrior to the lover-poet and building the foundation for the troubadour's intensification of a methodology of passivity in 11–13c. Provence. Wit to be wit had to be dry; as hot, it was the penetrating *animus* of *ingenium*, the substance isolated by literary critics who, beginning with Luis de Góngora (1561–1627), elevated the arabesque detail to the status of a magical self-referential puzzle. In contrast to the competing theory of *conceptismo*, Góngora's method could be said to be a reversal of the logic by which one cause has many effects. His, like Vico's, was to find as many causes as possible for any one effect and to lead the reader in "wild goose chases" whose point was to replace the obvious goal with a void. Góngora's void was a lipogrammatical gap across which the imagination had to leap in the form of a spark, and the allegory of lightning, as illustrated in Giorgione's *La Tempesta*, a painting whose contents could be said to exist only in the tiny interval of illumination provided by the bolt of lightning depicted in the background sky, was the natural-history component for this kind of jump.

So, when the Vico devised his account of the first thought that initiated human thought proper, he imagined a flash of lightning connecting sky to earth, constructed a probable-cause account of the fire that opened up settled agriculture through swidden clearings that were simultaneously ritual centers where the "words of the thunder" were analyzed, interpreted, and put into the first laws of humankind. Desiccation could be said to provide the mental theme for thought itself, in both an originary sense (as prototype) and in its evolutionary development (a gradual "drying-out process" leading from "wet" myth to "dry" modern concepts). There is no underestimating salt's double function, in speeding the newly deceased soul on its journey to a second, final death, and its relation to ideas as condensation and intensification, an ability to convert the wet many into the dry, sharply-pointed *one*.

This was Vico's "makin' it," his *factum*, impregnated with a dry *verum* component revealed in *agutezze* of all kinds. It would not be until Freud focused on jokes and attempted to distill the psychic role of comedy that Vico's *verum ipsum factum* could be understood as the wit of the *Witz*, the style of German-Jewish jokery that used metalepsis to violate the boundary between the said and the unsaid, the seen and the unseen, the pre-story that was retroactively realized in the telling of the posterior result. Mrs. Greenberg sits beside her dying husband, distressed. She asks him, "My dear, what is your last, dying wish?" "Marry Friedman," he tells her. "But, Friedman is your worst enemy!" "That's right."<sup>13</sup> The poor Mrs. Greenberg suddenly becomes aware that her marriage was not the ideal one she had imagined, and this realization comes in a sudden moment of retroactive addition of a necessary and sufficient past to an anacoluthon (unexpected ending) and omission of an explanation (aposiopesis). The *Witz's* combination of aposiopesis and anacoluthon should be taken *graphically*, or rather *orthographically* in that the *Witz* delivers a corrective truth in a sudden reversal of logic.

The *Witz* explains how and why Vico's *verum* and *factum* are revealed in the thunder and lightning of his fable about the first humans. The orthographic section is the sky, "cut" by the lightning into two parts

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<sup>13</sup> I owe this precious example of metaleptic *Witz* to George Enteen, Slavic Studies, Penn State University.

of visibility itself, that which can be seen “photographically” and that which, no matter how much it is exposed, *purloins* its meaning in a palindromic sideways space. This is Barthes’ “flat death,” the death that initiates human thought proper, and it is “notorious” in its 90° relationship to the diegesis of stories about journeys taken to correct situations. Vico’s first-moment fable connects orthographism to orthopsychism by the evidence of how the first swidden clearings become the fixed — radically fixed — syncretic locales where rituals, sacrifices, divinations, and shamanistic pronouncements are made alongside the first agricultural and astronomical activities. Observation of the sky and inferences about the organic success of fixed-field crops, combined with the newly minted rituals of marriage and burial, fused the phenomenal environment of the first humans with their conceptual cosmologies. What was made was true in that the material causes were simultaneously formal, final, and efficient causes, thanks to the “occultation” of the *automata* of natural chance and necessity and the *tuchē* of coincidence formalized by divinatory methods. Anacoluthon and aposiopesis reveal themselves as orthopsychics and orthographics, an “empty idea” produced by a sudden, unexpected, orthographic *cut*.

The cut that divides the visible into seeable and unseeable, so that what is in front of our eyes is unrecognizable, has a poetically precise relationship to *animus*, the Stoic companion of *anima*, in another fable Vico relates in his *Autobiography*. Vico explains the relationship to the contronymic meaning of *cælum*, meaning both “heaven” and “wedge.” How is it that the azure of the clear sky and an instrument for splitting could at all be related? Is the connection an accident of etymology? The connection is grounded in the ancient traditions of the cut. In the fable of the birth of Athena, the goddess has been swallowed up to prevent her ascendancy over Jove, but she grows within him to the point where her body and equipment give Jove a splitting headache. Hephaestus, to relieve Jove’s pain, split his head open to release Athena (the parthenogenetic birth), who emerged fully armed. Representations of Athena, during and after this event, show her as “pointy” — wearing a helmet and carrying a spear. To situation this story, we have to return to Zeus’s embodiment. As the god of sky, his head is the blue carapace; the split in this carapace has a double sense. It is both the carapace and the action of splitting, both heaven and wedge. The wedge is “implicit” to the idea of heavenly azure because, like other terms that work like passwords to wisdom (Athena, daughter of Metis, *wisdom*, is herself an embodiment of wit), are two words in one because they open on to a space that is two spaces in one. They simultaneously enter into a framed space and *the frame itself*. The 90° relationship between the frame and the framed is the same as the orthogonal relation between the contronym’s two terms, between heaven and wedge in the case of *cælum*.

Is this true, generally, of other contronyms? If so, it would indicate that the function of contronyms, as Freud claimed, was to access primal thinking as well as primal language. Because the unconscious does not, indeed *cannot*, recognize negation, that which would mask one meaning while the other is active fails, and we see the two terms, the two ideas, and the two spatialities of the contronyms in one view. In other

words, we see the purloined letter, plain as day, whereas it has lain invisible and unrecognized, in front of everyone else's eyes.<sup>14</sup>

When Hitchcock's camera rotate's its angle of view 90°, it includes what was formerly alongside the other silhouettes sitting in the audience, "flat deaths," into the "flat death" of the photographed story. Deictic relations vectorially connecting the producer and the audience rotate into the anaphoric relations within the thin space of the images projected onto a screen. This is humiliating, for Alicia in particular. She must marry her "second father" to restore the name of her first father. This wouldn't have had to happen if Devlin has not orthographically and orthopsychically penetrated the space of the Symbolic (Lacan's *matheme*  $S_2$ ), where "business as usual" had been tolerating all of the gaps, corruptions, misidentifications, and rough edges without which  $S_2$  would not need a master signifier,  $S_1$ , a condensation of the perversity required for all contradictory Fathers who give the laws but do not themselves obey them, who lock others into the clubhouse while they enjoy the freedom to come and go.

Master signifiers function as the necessary "enablers" of the inconsistent Symbolic because they condense and streamline contradiction in a perfect Janusian turning. They transcend the limitations of the forced choice, the either/or, by rotating into a both/and condition. They *lack* something so that they can *do* everything. What is this lack that affords universal freedom? Janus's clear connection to the unconscious is that he (or, rather, s/he, in that Janus has a hermaphroditic nature, as Janus/Jana, or Janus/Diana). In the cartoon series, *Road Runner*, Wile E. Coyote is immortal despite his many catastrophes while chasing the Road Runner. This immortality is related to the way he runs past the edge of a cliff but does not fall until he looks down to recognize his situation. As long as he lacks awareness of the clear and present danger, he is immune to its damaging effects. This is a magic that converts response (in the form of the lack) into a banishment of what would have created the response. Action is reaction. This is also the logic small children employ when they put bags over their heads to think themselves invisible. In the contemporary representations of Justice as blindfolded, usually interpreted as a sign of equanimity, the origins lie in images of Justizia with her head apparently missing. The reality of this emblem is that Justizia's head is invisible from below; she is in direct contact with the pure azure beyond the visible world and, in this sense, is a version of Athena. Mortals, however, see her as headless, and her head's invisibility is equivalent to depic-

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<sup>14</sup> Vico's second *New Science*, 1744, included an image known as the *impresa*, showing a personification of Metafisica seated at a plinth. In her left hand she holds a mirror, in her right, out of her direct view but clearly the object she sees in the mirror, is a triangular "carpenter's square." Although this has been compared to the equilateral triangle that encloses the divine eye of the *dipintura*, the image of the frontispiece, evidence that it has a right angle useful for "squaring up" is given by the fact that Metafisica *holds it*; it is not a part of an ensemble of divine visuality, the triangle in the circle enclosing an eye. Metafisica holds this symbol of making out of sight but recovers it in her *speculum*. The mirror allows her to see both spaces at once, i. e. to grasp the contronymic relation of the framed and the frame, the image and the mirror. The motto on the plinth confirms this by feminizing the previously concealed element, *Ignota latebat*, "she lay hidden." "She" could be Athena, wisdom, or the squaring tool; the important point is that the *impresa* validates (squares) the *dipintura* by depicting an orthogonal function as proper to Metafisica, who herself is comparable to Athena in that, like Athena, she has emerged from the "blue of the sky." In the *dipintura* Metafisica surmounts a sphere representing the visible universe. In retrospect, Athena tells the story of "the first Metafisica," the birth of metaphysics (seeing what is beyond natural appearances). This is also the story of Zeus's desire for Metis, his attempt to put an end to her form-changing by swallowing her after impregnating her, and the theme of inside-out can't be ignored. Desire turns into wish because it has failed to get what it wants. Zeus fails to terminate Metis's permutability; she becomes a dream internalized whose drive will be to externalize, in the form of Athena. Failure, ingestion, splitting, birth. Prelast (spiritual guilt), perspective reversal (internalization), revelation (expulsion). This all seems so "Edenic"!

tions of Justine with a blindfold. The effect is converted into a cause. We see “both at the same time” because Janus/Jana has rotated our point of view to see frame and framed simultaneously. Janus/Jana are the orthogonal, the 90° “cut,” the *cælum* that is contronymically both heaven and wedge. No wonder, then, that Jana has the reputation, as Cardea, as “goddess of the hinge.”

Janus sees both before and behind, but showing two faces simultaneously is simply a way of showing the function of rotation, of *turning* from the visible to the invisible, to see that as well, where the panoramic 360° view equals “simultaneously.” Cardea was also Jana, although some myths have Janus raping Cranaë, a variation of Cardea/Carna. It is hard to disambiguate these connotations and masquerades. But, the purpose was to transfer Janus’s powers of rotation to Cranaë, confirming her identity as Cardea. Rape, in ancient thought, is a semaphore to signal the ruse of passivity of “she who would abandon the hearth of her family’s ancestors, the *manes*.” The woman could “make it” by “fakin’ it,” so that sex could take place without incurring the punishment of the evil eye. Rape was thus an ocular apotrope. Misdirecting the ever-vigilant dead to “look the other way” allowed for the exceptions that mortals required to maintain symbolic relationships extending the “cyclopan” allegiance to the fixed locations of the hearth-bound nuclear families.<sup>15</sup>

In light of this practice, Janus’s rape of Cranaë should be translated: the hinge/threshold operate indifferent to the “Promethean” prohibition that insulates interior space from the space of the stranger. In effect, the rape “salts” the threshold. The frame can move anywhere, be found anywhere. Frames can be inside frames, and inside themselves. And, in the case of Devlin’s 90° invasion of Alicia’s party, that salt is an orthogonal rotation simultaneously into the framed space of the part and into the *frame itself*. Devlin’s occupation is perfectly suited for this identification with the frame in order to penetrate the framed. He’s a spy, a thief, a smuggler. In the joke about the factory worker, guards thoroughly searched the bicycle of a known former thief, at quitting time, failing to realize that he was stealing bicycles. The frame as a “transport device” is excluded from consideration in an analysis of content, but in the case of the spy, the frame is precisely the mode of theft. The spy is an “inside frame,” a “member of the audience” who watched from the inside of the show. We can find frames anywhere a fake is used to get the job done.

### *Getting in and getting out*

The bride fakes it, Simonides makes it. The fathers who die in the banquet hall collapse can be taken away to be buried. The bride wore black, later changed to white, to do the same thing. Devlin crashes the party and then abducts the bride from Sebastian’s mansion because, as Žižek notes, Sebastian is held fast in the

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<sup>15</sup> This was the meaning of the fable of Prometheus, bound to a rock (fixed location) on account of the function of the hearth in securing augural benefits (prophecies, law enforcement, solemnized ceremonies, luck). Cyclopan cultures could not form alliances or move around to exploit other oecumenes (Vico, *New Science*, §§64, 387, 503, 549, 701, 713, 719). The invention of the figure of the one-eyed giant conflated the idea of the hearth as an “eye” forming the center of family rituals. The first humans were giants in that they were sensuous and emotional; they were fixed to their specific hearth locations because of the belief that the *manes* were specific to material earth. Trade was forbidden because it exposed one to the contamination of strangers. The custom of “silent trade” got around this limitation by using a commonly used locale to leave (surplus) objects that would be taken later by passers-by who would, in turn, leave other objects. The value of goods traded in this way would stabilize over time; and the “magic” of thinking that left objects had been transformed rather than traded was attributed to Hermes, whose direct access to the “treasury” of Hades gave him the power to convert what was unneeded into what was desired. The lack/surplus “algorithm” of the space of silent trade made it a true lipogram, in that a negative exerted a positive force thanks to its “persistent/radical negativity.”

glare of his Nazi handlers, transported *manes* from the Father Land. Janus rapes Cranaë, or rather, passage is a trick, making it by faking it. The password does this linguistically, being a word that *doesn't stand out* in an ordinary context but which, like a grain of sand pulled up by the vertical force generated by the horizontal wind's turbulence, vectorizes its way windward to be dropped again, somewhere, next to another, then another, and eventually there is a grain of sand.

If she looks like a corpse she can pass. If it looks like a bicycle, then let it go. If you're just a 2-d shadow then you can rotate your way into the scene; and if you are Emanuel Rivelli your disguise is yourself. The double is really one who's able to carry around two backgrounds at the same time: parallax. The figure-ground relationship has come undone. It no longer indexes the change of the POV, by shifting the object slightly against its background. It has somehow *refused* to do this. The privative functions of perspectival space and time, the edges, horizons, faces concealing other faces, the frames, the *forms* ... the Form.

There is Form fable told about "The Ship of Theseus." After the hero's death, there is general interest in preserving the famous vessel. It is dry-docked, but even then parts begin to rot, and to preserve the form of the ship, parts are replaced as they deteriorate. Eventually someone draws the curve predicting how the ship will eventually be entirely made up of new pieces. The question is, at what point is the Ship of Theseus no longer the Ship of Theseus. Or, given that the form is preserved in the face of material replacement, isn't the Form eternal, no matter how much material "flows through" its design?

The Form brings to mind, immediately, the Platonic idea of the ideal that is exempt from carnal decay. If this is the case, then the story Rabelais tells in *Gargantua and Pantagruel* about the pot of soup that cooks for centuries because every time a serving is ladled out, ingredients are added, contributes to the lore of the part (the material replacement) that is also the discarded no part (of the Form). The minus-plus rhythm of rotten/new exposes the scandal between material and form. The privation that limits the Form of the ship has become a prohibition of identity in the face of material exchange. The kettle that holds the soup sets the limit (= perspective) that is challenged with every ladle offered and every addition of new ingredients.

The "part of no part" is the part that doesn't fit within the Order, the whole.<sup>16</sup> For this alienated part, there is nothing left to lose. She is the *Girl on the Bridge* (Patrice Laconte, *La Fille sur le Pont*, 1999), ready to jump off until rescued by the knife-thrower (Gabor) who needs a new partner to target. His reasoning is

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<sup>16</sup> Slavoj Žižek, "How to Begin from the Beginning," *New Left Review* 57 (May-June 2009); URL: <https://newleftreview.org/II/57/slavoj-zizek-how-to-begin-from-the-beginning>. Although Marx's *Grundrisse* is cited as the main source, the idea is developed in detail by Rancière: "Any subjectification is a disidentification, removal from the naturalness of a place, the opening up of a subject space where anyone can be counted since it is the space where those of no account are counted, where a connection is made between having a part and having no part." Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2008), 26. Rancière's emphasis on counting invites the consideration of Cantor's transfinite numbers and their palindromic self-generation. The part that is no part is also the Lacanian part-object, the "organ without a body" that, outside of its supportive matrix continues to function and, thus, is the model for the uncanny subject "between the two deaths," the universal idea that the soul (part that is no part) separated from its body continues to live or, rather, is unable to see its status. The only key to the soul's escape from this labyrinth of separation is a trans-subjective temporality in which self-examining parts, as in the experiment of The Three Prisoners' Dilemma, conclude that they are "subjectively dead" (i. e. that the answer does not lie in intersubjectivity), but that what they don't know is in fact what they know (dummies, *les morts*, have access to kenosis; therefore as Lacan put it, "*les non-dupes errant*"). The father's real name is the lover, the Oedipal heart of the death drive and other aspects of compulsion, which for Cantor, was the palindrome.

“she is dead already, but does not know it.” Adele (Vanessa Paradis) follows the score of those who must find the second death. She has already “died” on the bridge. Now, she must play the corpse who is the dummy, moved by forces beyond her control. Amazingly, Gabor provides us with a concrete metaphor for the failure of parallax to sustain perspectival order, the order in which Adele is the “part of no part.”

This happens most literally in her first performance for a circus review. Gabor gets the job by promising the impresario that he will throw the knives “blind.” Fantastic! We get both (1) the theme of the blindness of the *manes* induced by the Form of the dead woman (she’s fastened like Prometheus to a large board) and (2) the veiled bride who is disguised as a shrouded corpse. Marx (and Vico) would have been so pleased! The knives just miss, but they fix in their flight the precise Form of this feminine Prometheus, who is preserved from act to act by band-aide repairs of her literal close shaves. Again, popular culture provides the ethnographic proof — true by virtue that it has not the least idea of the ancient Form it is reconstructing in modern guise. Like Adele, her Form is revealed through a hysterical (induced) blindness. It is amazing that popular culture, in so many instances like this one, “naïvely” produces an *exact version* of an ancient protocol. This is not a case like that of *Orfeu Negro* (*Black Orpheus*, 1959), where a mythic tale was consciously retold, substituting a modern (Brazilian) location and situation (Carnival). *Girl on the Bridge* knows nothing and would care nothing for such reference. It aims to fascinate with a filmic and narrative coherence that is both horrifying and compelling.

My next ersatz adventure is more of a meditation within a Góngoresque fantasmagoria of fragments that float within the same *aqua-micans*, “diamond fluid” (Raymond Roussel, *Locus Solus*, 100) that Martial Canterel used to preserve the severed—but-still—prophesying head of Danton.<sup>17</sup> This converts the ersatz conjecture into an ersatz meditation, an attempt to relax the tight semantic/historical chains. Just as the brain needs sleep in order to relax its gray cells so that the glymphatic system can pump cerebral spinal fluid (CSF) through it. Like *aqua-micans*, the trash removed from the brain becomes a liquid preservative of, metaphorically, thought’s discarded details. Like the puzzle of “The Ship of Theseus,” where attempts to preserve this famous vessel require replacing parts as they break or rot, to the point where the whole ship is new materially in order to preserve what is old formally.<sup>18</sup>

The part that is not a part: the last serving of soup that makes *an empty place* in the pot for more ingredients; the piece of rotten bulkhead that makes *room* for a nicely sanded fitting; the girl on the bridge who connects this idea of substitution to ancient Promethean observations about how to get out of the house.<sup>19</sup> What is a curtain or veil for, if not to shroud *identity*? And, what in the Ship of Theseus is there to decide, in the face of continuous replacement/replaceability, than the same matter? Form, it seems, de-

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<sup>17</sup> Raymond Roussel, *Locus Solus* (Paris: Librairie Alphonse Lemerre, 1916).

<sup>18</sup> There are many variations on this Aristotelian duel between Material and Formal Cause. In Rabelais’ *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, for example, there is a famous kettle that began to brew soup before anyone can remember. As portions were ladled out, new ingredients were added, so it seems possible to say that the soup is in some degree “the same” that had begun cooking over a hundred years before. This continues the idea of the “part of no part,” the part that is added in relation to the part that is taken out. The binary of replacement allows that the former need not be identical to the latter, and thanks to that allowance, Form — the ship, the soup — is perpetual.

<sup>19</sup> In this regard, one should connect the example of Euripides’ *Alceste*, where the substitution of the new, young bride for the self-sacrificing wife of Admetus is attended with all of the mythic niceties of hearth lore, including the ruse-death and veil/shroud disguise. Zoom forward to *Le Nozze di Figaro*’s finale in the garden, where Count Amaviva meets a similarly packaged bit of fluff, a. k. a. his wife, the Countess Rosina.

pend on shrouds, which is perhaps why the Shroud of Turin represents such a peculiar case of anamorphic transfer, a Form that is so self-identical thanks to its conversion of concealing to revealing that it trumps the body of Christ decaying in the tomb, which quickly loses its claim to mortality.

Then we come to the case of the voice, that partial object that is both a part and not a part of the subject; that drive that, thanks to the minimal presence of ventriloquism in every word (“language speaks through the subject, who thinks he/she is speaking through language”). Everyone knows the story of Pythagoras’s classroom procedure. Only adepts were allowed to converse with the master in person. Most students, and especially the freshman class, were required to sit on one side a curtain. How does this compare with two other famous curtains: the covering drawn over the painter Parhassius’s entry in his contest with Zeuxis; and the curtain separating the subject from either a computer or a human in Turing’s famous test? The common denominator is of course the acousmatic: that part of the voice that, though it is key to the *identity* of the speaker is not a *part* of the speaker. As one of the part-objects materializing the five Freudian-Lacanian drives (oral, anal, phallic, gaze, and voice). Since I have already reviewed the case of the acousmatic voice in Chapter Five (“Spookiness”), I will move on to the next issue, ...

[TO BE CONTINUED]



## 13 / Phantasmagoria of the Forced Choice



Figure 1. Charlotte Rampling costumed as an SS officer for a dramatic re-enactment in *The Night Porter* (1974). Liliana Cavani's film uses the transference function of the <> to match it to this variation of the "Stockholm Syndrome," identification of victims with persecutors, to show how, in phantasmagoria, there is no middle ground. Even the reception of this idea requires one to squint or wink (><).

margins of a missing middle, they are convertible, exchangeable, and in some non-Boolean way, identical. One extreme requires the other.

The <> of the missing middle is also the squint or wink, ><, by which anti-Semitism converts to what Žižek would say is the "Jew within the anti-Semite" or "anti-Semite within the Jew," which is not simply a projection or transference but a dynamic super-bond whose historical effects include, on one side, the phantasmagoria of internment, forced labor, mass humiliation, torture, and indiscriminate execution and, on the other side, the self-deprecating joke.<sup>2</sup> In the phantasmagoria that characterizes both the terrifying inventiveness of the Nazis *and* the reconstructed fantasies of Jews forcing themselves to revisit these ter-

*The fantasmatic status of anti-Semitism is clearly revealed by a statement attributed to Hitler: "We have to kill the Jew within us." Hitler's statement says more than it wants to say: against his intentions, it confirms that the Gentiles need the anti-Semitic figure of the "Jew" in order to maintain their identity. It is thus not only that "the Jew is within us"— what Hitler fatefully forgot to add is that he, the anti-Semite, is also in the Jew. What does this paradoxical entwinement mean for the destiny of anti-Semitism?*

— Slavoj Žižek, *Less than Nothing*<sup>1</sup>

This is the "other side of anti-Semitism," an identity with the reviled Other that makes it clear that hatred is transference of an inner state the subject feels but cannot identify. The exact status of this inner state is, however, just as paradoxical as the qualities attributed to the other. In short, these are the combination of "greater than" and "less than" capabilities. The Jew, for example, is described as "dirty Jew" in hate speech, and by this means extended to characterize a whole culture that fails to employ standard hygienic practices, undertakes secret, abominable rituals, and appears in antiquated dress. At the same time, Jews are a super-race of highly intelligent, impeccably dressed masterminds who have dominated the arts and amassed great fortunes by manipulating Gentile economies. The less-than-human dirty Jew, <, has no trouble fusing with the greater-than-human, the tricky superman Jew, >, *without any middle*. The lack and excess are not simply

<sup>1</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London and New York: Verso, 2012). See also, by the same author, *Living in End Times* (New York and London: Verso, 2011), 135–136.

<sup>2</sup> The reciprocity of the <> has a central dramatic value, since the persecuted's identification with the persecutor is, like the symptoms of the hysteric, both irrational and scandalous. In Liliana Cavani's 1974 psychological drama film, an internment camp survivor, Lucia, runs into Max Aldorfer, now working as a night porter. Aldorfer had posed as a doctor to be able to photograph conditions inside the camp. Aldorfer was attracted to Lucia, and the phantasmagoria he constructed around her was both torture and protection. Now, he fears that she will expose him. Liliana Cavani, *The Night Porter*, DVD (Los Angeles: AVCO Corporation, 1974).

rors, there are no clear divisions between self and other, here and there, past, present, or future. The atmosphere is that of the pre-subject, the “body in pieces” that has not yet stabilized itself in the world of clear boundaries and objective assignments. Although this pre-subjectivity is also in the main pre-Symbolic (the Symbolic relies on structure, hierarchies, causal chains, etc.), a “rogue element” of discourse breaks away from its ordered landscapes and suddenly appears on the scene as a kind of “preview of coming attractions.” The S1, the Lacanian Master Signifier in the *mathemes* of discourse, announces itself to be an emissary of the Symbolic suddenly interrupting the autoerotic Golden Age of the pre-subject, but in fact it is in its element — a “Lord of Misrule.”

This sudden encounter with the wild inconsistencies of the unrestrained (Lacanian) Master Signifier produces phantasmagoria. The theatrical history of this term reveals the tell-tale signs: a sudden collapse of protective distance insulating the audience from images of death and contamination of the uncanny; confrontation with the “unreal” all the more real because it is a “trick that has gotten out of hand.” The sudden loss of insulation is a key factor, in keeping with S1’s over-presence as a super-ego rascal who imposes impossible demands but obeys none. In short, the S1’s  $\langle \rangle$  converts to a  $\rangle \langle$ , an outside threat that suddenly appears in the center of things.<sup>3</sup> S1 is Real in its function as a middle term (ethymeme) that combines antithetical parts to join universals to particulars. Just as the rhetorical syllogism maintains silence while the actual judgment is passed over to the audience, the rogue S1 maintains a defensive cordon of false promises and pretended secrets. It cannot predicate or be predicated, cannot cause or be an effect of cause, cannot link with other signifiers in any intelligible way. Unlike the fantasy, whose job is to mask and thereby neutralize inconsistencies and gaps in signifying chains of S2, S1’s phantasmagoria pushes fantasy to its limits. It’s the turbulence of the somatic dream where the dreamer dreaming he/she is suffering awakens to the fact of actually suffering but cannot escape the dream’s elaborate story of suffering. In effect it converts the polite cocktail party into the raucous carnival through excesses played out through transgressions of every variety.

The logic of the  $\langle \rangle$ , close to the *poinçon* of the *matheme* for fantasy,  $\$ \diamond a$ , is that of  $\langle = \rangle$ ; the lack and excess are two sides of the same coin, and the coin itself is continually re-minted by its alternating chiralistic faces: the Janusian mint always guarantees true value in the authenticity of its coinage because, no matter what the chaos and irrationality of the  $\langle \rangle$  condition, the results — a revelational flash transaction — will tell the truth because they *are* the truth. The *poinçon* has, in effect, exploded, blown itself apart because of the extreme internal forces of contradiction. Not only are dirty Jew and the incredible Jew are the same Jew; but the Jew that anti-Semitism attempts to marginalize in such radical ways is both peripheral and central to Naziism. The “voids” created out of the sight of urban centers are the same as the voids radically central to every one of those centers, and in the radical void hollowed out in the individual subject, a void associated with the equally radical presence of the death drive, central to the projects outwardly presented as pleasure-seeking.

If the  $\langle \rangle_i$  internal to subjectivity and its projected double  $\langle \rangle_o$  set up two points of radical energy concentration, then the current that historically so predictably jumps from one to the other in a dramatic short-circuit — the most concrete evidence we have of how the external and internal  $\langle \rangle_{i/o}$  actually work

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<sup>3</sup> The S1 is a common figure in the cinema of the uncanny. In David Lynch’s *Lost Highway*, a jazz musician at a party meets a bizarre-looking stranger who claims that he is both at the party talking to him and, at the same time, inside the musician’s house. He gets the musician to call home and, miraculously, the stranger answers.

— is seen to be a “glitch” whenever it appears.<sup>4</sup> Stripped of historical relations or social forces that would contextualize and domesticate its extreme acts, the short-circuits identifying the victims with the victimizers in the production of phantasmagorias are materiality at its purest. Nothing else exists in comparison to the extreme products of such actual sparks jumping from one pole to another; they are the lightning that illuminates a scene that, previously shrouded in total darkness, appears in a flash to etch itself on the eye with such a force that consciousness, deprived of any time to conceptualize what it sees, resorts to a combination of enigma and revelation, a hybrid accepted without question as “just what it is, a Truth beyond understanding.”

The glitch’s sudden appearance and immunity from spatiotemporal laws amount to a “physics of the Absolute” recalling Hegel’s description, in his *Phenomenology*, of Golgotha. In these last few pages that come near the end of the book, the Spirit’s transcendental attributions, its > so to speak, are brought face to face with its reality as “nothing more than a bone,” < in the form of the literal death of God at the moment of crucifixion. Then, we are allowed to make an otherwise incredible observation: that Jesus was converted into a Messiah (a > in anybody’s book) thanks to his degradation as an immigrant, <, beginning with his humble entrance into the city on the back of an ass greeted by a mockery of waving palms. The <> or “alpha/omega” logic of Christianity of course becomes a tradition with many variants. St. Christopher produces one domesticated version with his dedication to simplicity on behalf of intense Zen-like spiritual short-circuits skipping over the need for elaborate rituals, fancy costumes, and professional go-betweens. Scourging, abjection, fasting, poverty, etc. fill out a vocabulary of the less-than, common to all religions; and of course the promise of direct spiritual ecstasy and/or eternal life are the universal > promised in return.

The glitch, the exception, is in this context the miracle, the epiphany, the sudden revelation that is not just the appearance of some new truth but a retroactive revision of everything up to and including the present moment. If < = > is, however, nothing more (!) than fasting used to produce visions, this prematurely solves the problem of how the Other — as Jew, as immigrant, as minority, as handicapped, etc. — is, as Hitler inadvertently revealed, capable of “skipping over” the very spatial, temporal, and logical intervals that define the polar extremes in the first place. How is it that the <> works like a primitive term, a con-tronym,” where the negation that would require accepting only one reality at a time, an > or an < but not both together and certainly not in any relation of identity simply does not exist?

Let’s say for a moment that there are two possible accounts. Either negation has been constructed in a faulty way, “designed to fail,” so to speak, so that the reality afforded by separating opposites will give out at some precise moment; or we have time-traveled to a moment of origins, when negation *has not yet been invented*. This would be the time of the pre-subject, the autoerotic being who does not yet distinguish clearly between itself and others, who is capable of playing victim and victimizer, object and subject, se-

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<sup>4</sup> Glitches are associated with sparks, flashes, explosions, or even literal bugs, such as the eponymous insect who first crawled inside a computer mainframe, disturbing the electrical circuit. The sudden burst of light or appearance of an “artifact” (some mis-fire in functionality) creates a *hapax* condition, isolated from temporal and spatial context. The singularity of the *hapax* is its momentary lack of symbolic support — expressed in the idea that one is “left speechless” by a sudden problem. This is a special form of silence. There is no preparation or context, so the silence correlates directly to other types of gaps in the symbolic’s chains of signifiers. It means *something* but, what? *No-one* can say. While the unconscious is not a repository of primal meanings, it uses the logic of the negative and void; so, the glitch inevitably connects to and releases unconscious, repressed content.

ducer and seduced. To make the idea of time travel minimally credible, let's also say that this pre-subject — who has “not yet appreciated” the function of negation, who has “not yet seen” any advantage to the stability brought by a world of clearly articulated subjects and objects, who does “not yet appreciate” the advantage of one cause having many effects rather than one effect having many causes — *this pre-subject who does not yet conceive its status as a corps morcélé*, a body in pieces but who instead fantasizes that it is actually the unified spectral self that can exist *only in the reflected space of mirrors and photographic representations*; this pre-subject has not been destroyed by the subject's entry into subjectivity. The Frankenstein style *collaged-being*, thought to be driven into the ice-cave, has only been preserved by this cancellation — the essence of the word *Aufhebung*, sublation.

In dialectic, something like this negation of negation happens to avoid the stupidity of synthesis, A vs. B resolved in C. A confronted with B does not resolve in C. B is the dissonant Other that, “happening” to A, brings out, from A's radical, dispossessed, denied, and repudiated internal core, the C that had been there “all along,” that had lain hidden and unseen but, from the position of (repressed) /C, had fashioned A in the form of positive forms that, pushed to the limit, produce the phantasmagoria of C. The C of A, revealed in the presence of the C of B becomes the “C of itself,” with A and B, thesis and antithesis, the actors who, taking a break from their roles on stage as hero and villain, are surprised in their dressing room, in a sexually explicit embrace. The secret love was, in fact, what made the stage performance, the antagonism able to withstand the most critically intense scrutiny of a skeptical audience, not just believable but compelling. The spark has jumped, and in jumping it has denied that it has actually gone anywhere, or done anything.

If there is a lesson to be learned in this <> without a middle, it is that, while it appears everywhere as a miracle or disaster — a phantasmagoria — it is the most universal of cultural formations. It is without a doubt the atom of the unconscious that, while (as Real) it refuses to enter into any symbolic account of itself, it nonetheless gives rise to any and all kinds of symbolic accounting. What X is <Y and >Y simultaneously is not proof that X itself cannot exist, but that the void that is X is able and destined to make, out of the stuff to the left of < and the right of >, *anything whatsoever*. This is its durability, its truth, its messiah-like ability to conceal and reveal. As Norman O. Brown (*Love's Body*) cites from the Gospel of Thomas, saying 77, “Break a stick and I am there.” The radicality of existence is that existence itself does not exist. [

#### *Phantasmagoria and the plight of immigrants*

Phantasmagoria is an old-fashioned word derived from theater. It is the staging of horror proximate to surprise and discovery. Projection technology manipulated mirrors, screens, and scrims to effect sudden collapses of space insulating the spectator from uncanny apparitions. Today's political phantasmagoria has advanced, technologically and politically, far beyond these theatrical tricks. Global media bring homes and schools into contact with remote violence, epidemics, and natural disasters; but terrorism has brought all this to the homes and schools themselves, literally. Don DeLillo's *White Noise* sketches out a “practice etiology” of fear distributed without regard to geography or timelines. An “Airborne Toxic Event” brings a small college town's residents' fear of death into sharp focus. Contemporary, diffuse fear is *condensed* by the loss of territorial and temporal schema. This can be something as mundane as the idea that undocumented immigrants are pouring in over poorly defending national boundaries. The Other in this case takes the classic form of <>, miserably poor, depraved, criminal; and at the same time culturally advanced, organized, sophisticated.



Figure 2. Robert Wise's 1951 film, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* puts phantasmagoria into the more (potentially) mundane issue of an immigrant problem. The promise of an advanced technology and knowledge system is "put into perspective" by earth officials who regard the aliens as dangerous unlawful border-crossers who should be sent back to where they came from. At all levels, collective hysteria plays out its anxieties within the phantasmagoria of some threat that has "come too close."

If one could say that the modern mind truly woke up only when it realized the structure and role of the death drive, and that for the most part there were minds that have preferred to remain sleeping, then picturing the death drive as alien visitors who have come to earth with an ultimatum, to reform or die, is an instructed ersatz conjecture. Such extra-planetary messages are, by definition, ultimatums. The spaceship itself shows that the alien civilization has mastered all there is to master, that they can travel around the entire universe at will, and that, in achieving what they have, which is everything possible, they have learned a thing or two.

Their message therefore is not simply advice. It's a take-it-or-leave-it forced choice. Again, we have the structure of the forced choice, that its demand is so inexorably negative that it forces us to give up whatever portion of ourselves that was positive that coincides with it. The demand sucks out our resistance to it. We hold hands with the devil. The effect of the alien's mandate is to make life after that moment unlivable

unless we address the enigmatic and irrational situation it has created.<sup>5</sup>

Ahah, there is a certain echo here of the way discourse in general, in moving in a metaphorically forward direction toward "reason," has scuttled and concealed some small remainder, some irrelevant bit of unreason and then gone on its merry way. But, the course of reason never did run true. The small remainder's absence has created a list, a tilt, a small inaccuracy in reason's navigational gear. This has the particular geometry of a "delayed orthogonality," in that what reason had constructed and confirmed to be a straight line was in reality not just a curve but a perfect circle returning reason to the exact spot where, at the beginning of its movement forward, the small remainder had been jettisoned.

Here, reason looks into the mirror to see it's own back, Magritte's famous *Not-to-be-Reproduced* moment. We see the truth of what we have made; we cannot deny that we jettisoned this bit of un-reason; we cannot deny that, in moving positively forward, we had remaindered the negative that now confronts us in a dark alley to ask us to choose between our money and our life. This gap, this moment when all that touches on this demand will have its positivity repossessed (for it was purchased on the installment plan), will be looking at its back, and the moment of the forced choice will be a spark of retroactive realization. "The made" (*factum*), having converted into the (apparently) true, *il vero*, will reverse polarity and show

<sup>5</sup> In the film *District 9*, the forced choice "shoe" is on the other foot, so to speak. The aliens are, like so many immigrants around the world, given a mandate: to give over their technology (which happens to be usable only by beings with specific DNA) or suffer slow, painful deaths in the internment camp run by sadistic Nigerians. The reversibility of the forced choice binds the prisoners and guards together, as if to say that the forced choice is "simply there," and that it engages its two parties equally although the terms of the "deal" are undeniably disastrous.

itself to have been constructed, and this will be truer than the true that reason had moved forward to pursue and possess.

Does it take a space-ship to do this? Possibly not, but when the thinker has stayed at home (on earth) and reason's circle has inscribed the All of the universe, the moment of return can be easily pictured as a sleek metallic object landing somewhere public to enact the death drive in the form of a forced choice demand. The "immigrant" who has come in the form of a high-tech wet-back, not seeking work (<) but instead offering salvation (>) has come without a middle, because between the less-than of < and more-than of > there is nothing, just a gap across which a spark, to be a spark of reason, must jump in the form of recollection. Perhaps the space-ship is not a hard requirement, but it does focus on this gap and jump instead of the fantasy anthology of countless space-encounters with worlds (the *Star Trek* option). Captain Kirk and his crew are easily domesticated as a family taking an extended vacation, at the pace of "fifteen civilizations in fifteen episodes," to put it crudely. In the contrasting single focused episode, films such as *The Day the Earth Stood Still* pack the immigrant problem into its essential geometry, an *orthographic* that is simultaneously *orthopsychic*. Here, the 1:1 situation of "your money or your life" is read as a section drawing, where "every bit of positivity that touches on the negativity of the demand" is directly and immediately sucked out. The gap of the gapped circle is the condition of the section drawing, and the "ortho eye" required to read it by gliding along the picture plane *while denying that it is moving at all* has created a vacuum in the gap that makes all transfers between the two positions, observer and observed, occur in an instant that is faster than time.

The modern mind woke up when it recognized the clinical structure and function of the death drive. Like an alien space-ship, the death drive set down first in Freudland, where it was misrecognized and mistranslated, but this encounter's *errors* provided Jacques Lacan sufficient data for a positive resettlement program. Treating the death drive as an immigration problem allows us to compare it with key images in popular culture — *District 9*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *Chocolat* — cases from serious to silly where the Other appears as a contronym of threat and promise. Only in these "mundane" examples can we begin to address the death drive's bipolar nature, as painful apocalypse or transformative Nirvana. Where madness becomes method, the death drive holds the key and is nothing less than the central headquarters for the emancipation of thought in times of universal phantasmagoria.

[TO BE CONTINUED ...]

## Appendix A / Stages of the Dyadic Pre-/Post-Subject

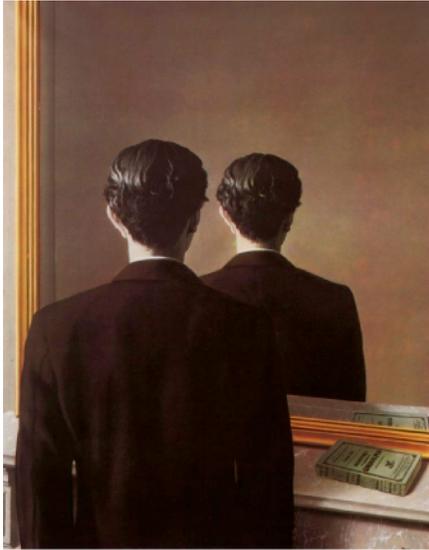


Figure 1. René Magritte, *Not to Be Reproduced*, 1937. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen. Even recent catalogs have failed to mention the presence or significance of Edgar Allan Poe's only novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838) in its French edition, *Les aventures d'Arthur Gordon Pym*, Michele Lévy Freres, 1858. Like the painting, the novel is a perfect chiasmus hinging around a single central plot point, the shipwreck, which Magritte portrays as a single forward-moving entity whose pivoting central hinge "starts over."

If I had a world of my own, everything would be nonsense. Nothing would be what it is, because everything would be what it isn't. And contrary wise, what is, it wouldn't be. And what it wouldn't be, it would. You see?

— Alice, in *Through the Looking Glass* (1871)

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This summary of the stages from the pre-subject's "dyadic" (internally self-dividing) state through to the full subjectivity following the sudden event of the Mirror Stage is an outline accounting for the coordination of this process with the structuring of "perspectival space-time" in relation to Boolean operations of binary signifiers.

1. First, a distinction is made within "pure movement capacity" of the pre-subjective human — before the separation of the point of view and figures in a visual field has taken place (Fig. 2). Without this distinction/separation, subjects would lack the ability to *use* feedback necessary to coordinate their movements and sensual location in the world. From this moment forward, this feedback is accompanied by a "muscularity" associated with actual or virtual/imagined efforts involved in motion. Depth's ties to distances covered or yet-to-be-covered constitutes the first extension of the bodily capacity for movement, a connection that will continue to qualify subsequent theoretical models of depth's associations.

2. But, we see that the pre-subjective infant first establishes, while safely protected by maternal/fraternal care, a "world of its own" where this internal division remains within a personal sphere of pleasures and imagined threats that are self-generated. At this point there are no proper subjects or objects, and no domains associated with subjectivity or objectivity. Boundaries are fluid; the pre-subject in acts of play can take opposing sides and shift at will. The stability of this self-regulating autoerotic system can be modeled as a circuit regulated by two complementary "inverter switches" positioned along the (temporal) circuit but also coordinated across a spatial divide that allows for the imaginary construction of boundaries, zones, domains, and compartmentalized spaces that, like a doll's house, allow the pre-subject complete control while providing the illusion of containment/entrapment. The pre-subject is, in a sense, self-contained able to play multiple parts, shift between subjective and objective (active and passive) conditions, jump boundaries, and enjoy generally what Freud called the megalomania and narcissism of the autoerotic/infantile state. The circuit enjoys a smooth flow between polarities that are created then abandoned, forces that are converted from threats to allurements and back again. The "polymorphous perversity" of the young infant is also a "polythetic field" of alternative structural alliances.

3. Within the autoerotic domain, binary oppositions have no permanence or external validity. Thus, the Symbolic as such, which depends on such binaries to establish its credibility and authority, cannot develop. For the Symbolic to take the pre-subject into its domain, one of the inverter switches must be externalized, and this happens at the Mirror Stage, where a significant transfer occurs. The internal dynamic exchange between subjective objectivity and objective subjectivity is interrupted. The subjective object, the young pre-subject's mirror image, is externalized and placed in the Imaginary company of other subjects, usually adults. It is clear that, with this externalization of Image, control has also passed to the subjective object — the object that *automatically responds* to the subject's actions. This is embodied directly by the mirror image but easily transferred to the figures that shift against their background, the basis of parallax.
4. Parallax is thus not a natural given of perceptual experience. It is both (1) evolved, from the pre-subject's autoerotic exchange of energies, positions, and domains, in a process involving the Mirror Stage's externalization of a "subjective object," and (2) subject to an imagined potential failure, as when portions of the 3d environment flattens figures against their grounds. The simplest case is the portrait of a face whose eyes disturbingly follow one around the room. We expect the eyes to continue to gaze at a point within our shared perspectival space, and when they don't, the result is uncanny. While confidence in perspectival parallax-based realism seems to be natural, the fact that it is grounded by the Mirror Stage's *substitution* of figure/ground predictability for what was formerly *internal* to the pre-subject, makes it vulnerable to a *return* to this suppressed (autoerotic) state, where the figure/ground disjunction will convert to a portal into a detached virtuality of phantasmagoric conditions. The entire uncanny is based on this ever-possible relapse, and the uncanny's polar symmetry of (1) the living person fleeing death but inadvertently running toward it with (2) the dead person who has not noticed he/she has died recapitulates the pre-subject's objective subjectivity and subjective objectivity.<sup>1</sup>

The inherent limitation of things placed in binary opposition means that boundaries used to define the end of one thing and the beginning of the other will separate two domains that, being finite, will be required to *curve around to meet* at an antipodal, paradoxical point. This results in the classic "gapped circle" used to define subjectivity, both in terms of (1) the compulsion to return to the same traumatic impasse despite professed attempts to escape it; and (2) the hysteric's position at the gap, eternally demanding that the Other know what the hysteric subject herself has invested as a set of superpowers. Neurotic subjects, whose choices range between obsessive returning and static face-offs with the "subject-supposed-to-know, accept Subjectivity's promise of membership within its networks of reliable relationships, but it is at the cost of the identity that, because it was never stable, was entirely *within the possession* of the pre-subject. The Symbolic's imposed confrontation with the antipodal paradox is like the Cretan Liar paradox. Attempts to communicate (the main activity of the Symbolic) will always fail because of the division between speaking as an *act* (*enonciation* in French) and the purported content of the speech

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<sup>1</sup> This bipolar model was Freud's inspiration for Freud's theory of the uncanny. See Ernst Jentsch, "Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen." *Psychiatrisch-Neurologische Wochenschrift* 8, 22 (August 26, 1906): 195–98; and 8, 23 (September 1, 1906): 203–205. Sigmund Freud, Hugh Haughton, and David McLintock, *The Uncanny* (Brantford, ON: W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services Library, 2013). Freud did not directly exploit Jentsch's clearly contronymic definition of the uncanny; had he done so the relation of the uncanny of parallax dysfunction to the autoerotic circuitry of multiple binary exchanges would have made Freud aware of the uncanny's role in subjectivity's evolution — something that Lacan restored with great care in his sequence of Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real.

(*enoncé*). The Cretan's self-reference ("All Cretans are liars!") sends the gapped circle around and around, always back to its original problem: just *who* is speaking? Is it the Cretan making the claims or the language the Cretan is using to make the claims? Neurotic subjects are forever victims of this reversed predication, where acts become agencies and media become messages. We speak but end up being spoken. We act but end up being agencies. We think we cause things to happen but we are just the effects. The antipode and its map, the gapped circle, are the GPS of perspectival subjectivity.

The gapped circle is most evident in binary distinctions, where polar opposites are separated by a line that seems to offer some middle position, some compromise. The Golden Mean can never be found, however, because the binary re-appears at every attempt to find a middle balance. The alternative is more nihilistic than revolutionary. When Nietzsche opens up the alternative of "beyond good and evil," he proposes taking the ends of the linear binary and joining them up to make another gapped circle. But, the antagonism cannot be avoided. If good and evil are modeled as finite commodities, they cannot stretch out to an unlimited infinity along the lines that stage their opposition. They must curve up and join at the antipodal point where, rather than utopia, they re-stage their antagonism. This is an Einsteinian idea, that the universe is both closed and curved; that it can be finite and infinite (unbounded) at the same time. Or, to take the metaphor further back in history, it is Pascal's "infinite sphere": the God whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere.<sup>2</sup>

Parallax has attempted to stabilize what was stolen from the pre-subject. But, the cost of revealing its "past" is that it must admit a possible future, a breakdown. This is what allows parallax, in the form of the dimension of depth it generates, to serve as a variable rather than a constant. For example, we know that many non-Western cultures do not accept conventions of perspective representation. Therefore, perspective *drawings* are only one means of representing the creation of perspectival space as a result of the distinction between the point of view and figure/ground.<sup>3</sup> The identification of perspective drawings that have, since the Renaissance, dominated discussion of what it means to draw a perspective, is only part of the picture. Subjectivity in general is identical with perspectival space, which takes many forms, just as subjectivity find, within the prisms of multiple histories and cultures, finds a varied and distinctive ethnography. Were not the subjective POV and the objective figure/ground "dyads" in a way that transcends these differences without forming a "meta-perspective," we could not talk about subjects as

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<sup>2</sup> This clever saying reminds us of cosmic curvature's most puzzling feature: that every point in the universe is surrounded by an equal amount of universe, that there is no edge because the cosmos's productive medium is the surface of a sphere, albeit a sphere of different dimensionality than the sphere of our human perceptual experience. "Being in the center" seems first to generate a concentric order; but the imposition of finitude on any concentric system forces, as Spencer-Brown would put it, the form to "re-enter itself." Where it does this doesn't seem to matter. The alpha becomes the omega once any recursion takes place; so to some extent sphericity is the same as self-reference. George Spencer-Brown, *Laws of Form* (New York: Dutton, 1979). See Karsten Harries, "The Infinite Sphere: Comments on the History of a Metaphor," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 13, 1 (January 1975): 5–15. Curiously, Harries fails to make the connection between the infinite sphere and Relativity's idea of a finite but unbounded space. For that, see J. J. Callahan, "The Curvature of Space in a Finite Universe," *Scientific American* 235, 2 (August 1976): 90–100.

<sup>3</sup> Movement's relation to muscularity, intentionality, time conceptions, social hierarchy, and epistemological, emotional, political, and even (or especially) theological considerations constitute a temporalized "fourth dimension" that is *inserted* in the sequence of dimensions, between two dimensional retinal experience and the constructs associated with "full space" of three dimensions, height, breadth, and depth.

such or the relation binding subjects to the representations within space and time that they take to be absolutely realistic. While the point of view and figure/ground appearances are two independent *loci* and the relations between them variable in the extreme, the *movements* of the point of view and figure/ground are two halves of an original single entity, the space between them “honors” this twin-ship with edges, horizons, and faces that “cut off” the view of things “around the corner.”

We can hardly imagine a breakdown in the POV/ figure/ground dyad. A broken mirror gag constructs a hypothesis where the impossible becomes comic, even though we expect the ruse to fail at some point where lack gives way to excess. A broken mirror is easier to imagine than a breakdown in the POV/figure-ground dyad, but because space assimilates time into it as “figural” (lines, circles, spirals), the “impossible” situation of seeing around the corner can be experienced in the temporal *déjà vu* (memory that returns so vividly that one experiences a transport to the past) or prophetic premonition. The time line that forbids these forward or backward skips is the same perspectival line that separates the subjective POV from the objective figure/ground. Both skips in time and broken mirrors are cases of parallax gone bad. Both, in their dysfunction, confirm the automaton of POV/ figure/ground coordination and the corresponding primary dyadic unity of the two terms. The function of the reflected image’s simultaneity, for example, establishes that the depth dimension is also perspective’s degree-zero time reference. This locally re-sets the idea that light actually takes time to travel from one point to another, something below the threshold of perception in terrestrial conditions, but the POV/ figure/ground simultaneity still seems to be a “spooky entanglement” that is *domesticated* by personal experience and different cultures’ distinctive “models” of the depth dimension. The taming of something wild makes perspectival space potentially open to reversion to a “former wild state,” as if the spookiness could somehow return, as it does in the Marx Brothers’ mirror scene or occasional experiences of *déjà vu*, premonitions, or flashbacks. We laugh because we secretly harbor the suspicion that the short-lived uncanny experiences are evidence that the “former wild state” is a permanent place, an ever-present option.

Any deterministic mechanism, like any machine, is subject to breakdown. Any small crack in the “system” opens the door to a doubt in the reality that now seems to be a dam against the phantasmagoria of spatial — and, because time is integrated into space through figures such as lines, circles, and spirals — temporal collapse. It is as if the phantasmagoria, loosened by a breakdown of the POV/ figure/ground dysfunction, is the “natural condition,” and that parallax shifting, guarantor holding distant things at a distance, is the exception.

The logic of this situation is quite interesting. A “primary substance” (space-time) seems to be held in place by a *mechanism* that, because it creates the depth dimension *out of pure difference*, generates a secondary — “what if?” — condition. This “what if?” owes its being simply and wholly to the negative of the generative distinction, the pure difference. But, as a result, what is *necessary* (the Cartesian premise that depth is “just another” dimension, a Z to the X and Y of flat representation) is presented as a *possible option*, that, though highly probable, is still subject to failure. And, because there is no direct way for the

viewer to empirically “access” the depth created by parallax, subjectivity continually subscribes to it as the dimension of anxiety.<sup>4</sup>

The depth of perspectival space is the *conditional* result, contingent on a purely negative process, a distinction of one position from another. The result is that the seemingly positive production of “normal” space–time is actually contingent: not a necessity but rather a *choice* that, although it is a *forced choice* (only one alternative is really an option; the other is a fake, as in the mugger’s demand, “your money or your life”), gives body to a condition that was originally purely secondary.

So, it is evident that the secondary begins with the parallax condition, as the victim of a heist where one is forced to shell out money because, without one’s life, the money obviously could not be enjoyed. But, just as the demand is put in terms of a *choice*, the quality of illusionism sticks to the logic of the act. Why, when necessity is already there (the mugger points the gun or knife at the victim), is there a question? Why is there any need to put the necessity in the form of two options? We move from the *privation condition* (no freedom; pure automaton) to a *prohibition condition* (you may want to keep both your life and your money but the mugger isn’t going to *allow* that to happen).

When looking at a figure against a ground, we shift our viewing point. A bit of what was previously hidden comes into view, and a corresponding bit of what was previously visible is now hidden. But, what if a clever *trompe-l’œil* painter has, like Zeuxis in the famous contest between this famous ancient artist and his rival, Parrhasius, painted a scene on a flat wall, so realistic that the representation of fruit in a bowl attracts a bird, who flies into the wall and breaks its neck? Clearly this is a case of “parallax dysfunction,” but it works entirely within the rules of perspectival illusionism. The victim, a bird, is presumed to have an “instinctual” or “automatic” use of the sagittal dimension of depth. The rival, Parrhasius, demonstrated that this trick with the automaton of depth was not the full story. The subjective object of the figure/ground shift was “already subjective.” He demonstrated this by showing the judges a painting of a curtain. Thinking the curtain to be a part of the display apparatus of the contest, a “device to conceal” within the conventions of mural painting, they did not notice that the curtain was actually Parrhasius’s painting. Where Zeuxis had de-subjectivized the subjective object, Parrhasius had de-objectivized the “subjective complex” of the point of view. I put this in scare–quotes to emphasize that Parrhasius had taken the “impossible option” of the forced choice condition and turned it on the “enforcers” (= muggers), presenting them with their own objectification of subjectivity (contest rules) with a subjectification of the object of their judgment, painting. Parrhasius could be considered the first Master of the Secondary for his accomplishment; however there is at least one other who deserves this distinction.

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<sup>4</sup> We know, for example, that different cultures conceptualize the depth dimension in highly contrasting ways. The Western attachment of depth to graphic perspective is, globally/historically considered, a special case. Spherical rather than linear models dominate among peoples who regard the depth dimension as a vector of transgression (hence, elaborate rituals for entering and exiting spaces). Also, depth can be conceptually tempered by activities and tasks where adjacencies and manipulation of spatial elements is repetitive and precise. Ritual itself could be regarded as a non–linear conceptualization of depth where internal thresholds and circularities “correlate” terrestrial actions with spiritual protocols. Consolidation of depth within the “flat” fields of X and Y relies on a rotational promiscuity that depth does not in reality enjoy or allow. The POV/ figure/ground correlation is the basis for object/subject distinction and the mechanism attributed to their exchanges.

If Karatani's and Žižek's aim is to demonstrate the irreducibility of the antagonism between two philosophical positions, mine would be to stick at the level of the material and graphic basis of their analogy of parallax; to "look to the letter" of the law rather than its use as a general idea. Parallax's privation (Zeuxis's removal of the dimension of depth in creating his *trompe-l'œil*) creates a silent dimension of prohibition (Parrhasius's re-insertion of the dimension of choice in using a standard prop of contests). Put another way, the edges and horizons of the view, slightly offset in binocular vision and extended by any actual move of the POV, *private* hidden faces and scenes cut off by edges and frames, but the *edges and frames themselves* are subjective (i. e. a product of the POV) and thus the privation of hiding is correlated to subjective position and movement. *Should* we gain unexpected access to the hidden as such, our movement becomes subject to *subjective rules* that prohibit certain motions, prescribe others as "correct." Our "prohibitional" subjectivity is written in the same negational-privative terms that the original distinction between shifting POVs established originally. We convert privation into prohibition in every instance of moving from the primary givens of perspectival depth to doubt about our subjective position.

#### *Conjecturing within the domain of parallax breakdown*

Study of the secondary should begin its critical adventures at the graphic/literal level of images and other representations where depth perception is accommodated within protocols that duplicate the logic of exchanges between the "subjective objectivity" of the figure/ground and the "objective-subjectivity" of the viewer's POV. These are evident in works of art where the secondary is famously featured: Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, Holbein's *The Ambassadors*, Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger*. In films such as Chaplin's *City Lights* and *Modern Times*, the Tramp becomes the hero of the secondary, and we can follow his gags with a tape measure and sketch pad. In Kurosawa's *High and Low* the primary and secondary are projected as landscape relations between a tycoon who lacks the money to close a deal (privation) and a kidnapper hiding in the lowlands of Yokohama, who *makes demands* (prohibitions presenting forced choices). Architecture has its utilitarian primary and its mysterious interior of structure but also sacrificial victims who tell another story about *venustas* and their haunting of the hidden *poché* spaces within, beneath, and above.<sup>5</sup>

When parallax breaks down, the edges, horizons, and hidden faces that perspectival space manages within its economy, whose sole aim is to stabilize the moving subject's assimilation of vision to movement, converts the hard "can't be done" to the slightly permissive "shouldn't be done." The privation that strictly bounds off the invisible from the visible becomes a prohibition based on contingency. Parallax breakdown constitutes a gateway to the Real of the uncanny substrate. To the degree that the vicissitudes of perspective in optics theory, graphic practices, and non-visual projective strategies are markers of this movement from conventional reality to the spooky Real, critical theory can and should identify the understanding of this movement as its primary and central domain. The point, however, is to uncover the connection between time, before it is appropriated within the spatial domain, and the short circuits between parallax<sub>1</sub> and parallax<sub>2</sub> where they occur: in the fantastic, the uncanny, the circular returns of the

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<sup>5</sup> Donald Kunze, "Architecture as a Site of Reception, Part I: Dimensionality of the Infra-Thin" and "Architecture as a Site of Reception, Part II: Sea-Food and Vampires," *Chora: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture* 1 and 2, ed. Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Stephen Parcell (Montréal: McGill-Queens Press, 1994 and 1996).

death drive, and in the countless variations of themes springing from travel through time, the double, contamination of reality by the dream, and the story within the story.

When the perceptual parallax bond between object and subject is disconnected, the result is uncanny, but the uncanny is not the easiest topic to track, historically or philosophically. My philosophical guides are those who, among other things, have attempted to re-read the standard sources (Kant, Nietzsche, Hegel, etc.) in light of Freudian–Lacanian psychoanalysis, which incorporates the uncanny in various forms: psychoses, symptoms, space–twisting topologies, the “extimacy” of cross-inscriptions that overcome binary signifiers, and of course the classic topic of the uncanny as such. In particular, the so-called “Ljubljana School” (Slavoj Žižek, Mladen Dolar, and Alenka Zupančič) have set out a new game to be played *inside* the heritage of contemporary thinking, and in my view this play is entirely in the spirit of the secondary — as evidenced by its commitments to popular culture, jokes, opera, sex, perversion, and the uncanny as such.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Jodi Dean, “The Object Next Door” (review of *A Voice and Nothing More* by Mladen Dolar; *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology* by Slavoj Žižek, Eric L. Santner and Kenneth Reinhard; and *The Parallax View* by Slavoj Žižek), *Political Theory* 35, 3 (June 2007): 371–378.



## Appendix B / Lacan Goes to the Movies



Figure 1. Jacques Lacan, in a caricature by David Levine, *The New Review of Books*, 1979.

*Das Ich nicht Herr sei in seinem eigenem Haus.*

— Sigmund Freud, 1895

“That the ‘I’ is not the master in its own house” both overstates and under-reports what Freud had to say about the Copernican displacement of humankind from its former position in the center of the solar system. To understand how the loss of mastery is actually the key to the glory of the human project requires adding a second theory to a first theory, which coincidentally happens to be about the advantages and consolations of coming in second. The ego is not all of subjectivity. It is in fact itself a secondary effect, a by-product of the systems of symbolic relationships set up to frame it, give it a name, buy it a new suit of clothes, impose obligations, surprise it with challenges, and make false promises. The irony is that these relationships, most of them transacted sonically and linked to their own special graphics, are authored by the very subject they later come to define and displace.

Fine justice! The subject’s alienation from its own house (the basis of the uncanny and the uncanny’s ties to the home and hospitality) is the result of a backfire. One component is jettisoned so that \$, the subject, can join S2, the Symbolic (think of a club-house). Giving up this element will let the \$ play Master. But, when \$ is shown the fine print in the club’s contract, the author of that fine print is precisely the rejected component! The \$ goes outside to have a word with the rejected author, maybe to change the fine print, but nothing doing. When \$ goes back inside the club-house, things have changed.

The master-who-is-not-master-in-his-own-house theme, the master who is called outside to meet nobody, is not some spooky idea invented by Freud and perpetuated by Lacan. It is Simonides, the inventor of the art of memory (see chapter 10), it is Chief Inspector Hubbard in Hitchcock’s *Dial M for Murder*. It is the Nazi Sebastian’s algorithm of glances at the wine cellar lock in *Notorious*. It tells the story of Jean de Floret in Pagnol’s epic novel, turned into a film (Claude Berri, *Jean de Florettes*, 1986). In other words this homeless-while-at-home master has been around for a long time; and each time \$ has tried to tell its story by whispering its secondary alibis beneath the leading tones of the primary narrative. Not until Lacan devised a way of graphically describing discourse in its most basic terms have we found a way to colate these stories.

Lacan’s first and most famous success, his allegory of the Mirror Stage, is generally regarded as an exercise in the “Symbolic mode.” The situation is visual/optical. The young pre-subject stands before a mirror and, for the first time, recognizes that the spectral self is a representation of the social self he/she retroactively realizes as a reality in drastic conflict with the “autoerotic self” that now seems to be just a “body in pieces” (*corp morcélé*). The surprising convergence of Lacan’s notification of the universal *ersatz* experiment undertaken by nearly all of us — all, that is, who accept the invitation to join the Symbolic networks of affiliation that the mirror scene offers — with Bachelard’s “orthopsychic self-surveillance” comes with

the realization that this scene is, like the architectural section drawing, an orthographic cut that, despite the obvious perspectival behavior of mirrors, permits a 1:1 inspection of a viewer who, like the part of the mirror that touches the picture plane, will be the *cut* that, forever and ever, will split the subject in two, making it into the *matheme* of division, \$. The cut in our terms is between a primary, directed to the Symbolic in the form of an imaginary *placement* of the subject's presence, and a *secondary*, the resourceful interior of subjectivity, the *product* that, in Lacan's future *mathemes* of discourse, will be written /PRODUCTION and placed beneath the OTHER/. This is to say that the subject must create the audience *for whom* all expression will require a darkened, anesthetized, cataleptic receptivity, "othered" in the sense of a spatial "out there" and a temporal posterior that will return a verdict.

Production is secondary, in the sense that Paul Verhaeghe has humorously presented in his example of the discourse *matheme*, Agent/Truth → Other/Product: You (Agent) tell your son (*Autre*, Other) to study and the result (Production) is that he flunks his courses. There is an irony built into Production summed up by the Rolling Stones' admonition, "You can't always get what you want." Desire's desire is *to sustain itself* and this means that discourse is there *to fail* in its communications project so that what it *says* it wants will, frustratingly, vanish as soon as it is grasped. Production is thus the fake, the replacement, the disappointing result, the broken promise. Lovers take this to heart.

The orthography and orthopsychics of the Mirror Stage tie the project of the Symbolic (distilled in Lacan's theory of the four "failed" discourses) with the Imaginary, whose mirror tricks forever foil perspective's aspirations for perfect placement, replacing the picture plane's model of the window with the butcher's/executioner's model of the section slice. As in the "meta-painting" *Las Meninas*, different spatial systems can be shown side by side and even overlapping. The mirror at the rear of Velázquez's Mirror Stage exempts itself from perspectival vanishing points and converging lines, just as the young subject has, in seeing his/her own specter challenge his/her own existence with the equivalent to the forced choice demand, "your *image* or your life," and thereby robbing it of any part that *is touched* by the demanding mugger-mirror, chewing off a lozenge-shaped piece to make the would-be subject into a waning moon, ☾.

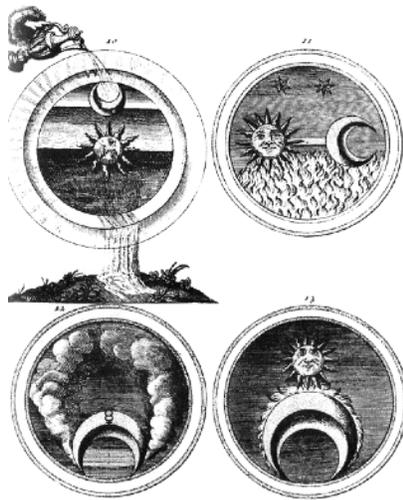


Figure 2. Alchemical image of the moon in its four phases, as good a model as any for Lacan's four-part theory of discourse. The full moon pretends to be the full-bright sun, but fails because it has stolen its light and must repay its theft. The full-dark moon is the unconscious, which Analysis labors to release.

The pre-subject moon will forever follow and reflect the sun of subjectivity, stealing/reflecting its glory; but, even when full, it can provide only a half-light. Lacan's system of *mathemes* will, ironically, parody the four stages of the waxing/waning moon, brightest in the project of the Master, darkest in Analysis Quarter, when the unconscious speaks without speaking, appears without appearing — in short, darkness is the oxymoronic cant/chant of the unconscious's cipher/rebus way of whispering through errors and displacements.

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Never before has anyone tried to diagram subjectivity in terms of a round of four failed attempts to say something. Not until Lacan reduced discourse to four elements marching around a quadrated parade field did we hear the band march to the single tune of the home-

lessness of trying to be at home. Reading Lacan has always been tough. His texts' reputation for being tough to read began early. After making a decisive break with the Société Psychanalytique de Paris in 1953, Lacan delivered a series of (officially) twenty-seven lectures over a period of twenty-seven years. The lectures gradually came to be known to the English-speaking world, first thanks to the typed transcripts of Cormic Gallagher, then to the more official versions translated by Alan Sheridan, John Forrester, Russell Grigg, Dennis Porter, and others. What was problematic for many in French became even frustrating for even more in English. As Lacan himself admitted, he wasn't trying to explain things, he was trying to *teach*. Readers understood the first part (they had plenty of trouble understanding), what of the second? How exactly were they to learn?

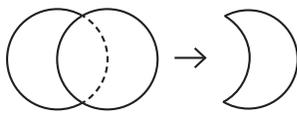


Figure 3. The “voracious” demand of the forced choice is not content stating its case; its irrationality forces Y (the Venn circle on the right) to give up that part of its being that coincides with X.

Not until Bruce Fink, Slavoj Žižek, Paul Verhaeghe, Renata Selac, and others have come forward to rehydrate Lacanian “learning opportunities,” translators had varied approaches to the daunting challenges of a text that taught through a form of *mi-dire*: “saying half.”<sup>1</sup> The Lacanian text always *lacks*, but it lacks in a specific way. I propose that *mi-dire* constitutes a kind of “teaching syllogism” that corresponds to what is known as the “enthymeme”: a kind of syllogism that requires the audience to supply a middle term that is physically and logically missing from the speaker’s presentation. This is possibly the primary non- or anti-Boolean aspect of Lacan, and possibly what led him to include topologies and knot theory. In comparison to a standard syllogism, “Socrates is human, all humans are mortal, therefore Socrates is mortal,” the middle term is “human,” which works both as a noun and a pro-noun, which I hyphenate to suggest how we can know things about humans before knowing

precisely what humans are. The middle term faces a particular (Socrates) and a universal (mortality), and by turning from one to the other it allows Socrates as a particular human to take part in the universal of mortality. In the enthymeme, the middle term is simply the turning or flipping facility, silenced in order that it be supplied by the audience as they (silently) form a consensus about their relation to the speaker.

The result of this missing part is that the enthymeme could be said to present the audience with, again, a forced choice. The audience supplies the middle term “voluntarily,” but it does so concluding that it has been forced to make this choice in determining the identity and/or character of the speaker. In the classic forced choice example, “Your money or your life,” the forced choice comes from concluding that the speaker has the power to take our life, our money, too, should we choose option one. The speaker is a killer. There is in this enthymemic situation, really no possibility of bargaining. Glossing Bruce Fink’s description of the truth table of the forced choice in relation to reading Lacan, “X (the text) is so inexorably false (difficult) that Y (the reader) is forced to give up that part of its ‘being true’ (understanding) which

<sup>1</sup> “I always speak the truth. Not the whole truth, because there’s no way, to say it all. Saying it all is literally impossible: words fail. Yet it’s through this very impossibility that the truth holds onto the real.” Jacques Lacan, “Television,” *October* 40 (Spring 1987): 7.

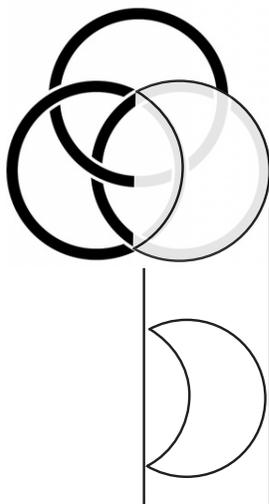


Figure 4. Applied to Lacan's analogy of the system of Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real to a Borromeo knot, the role of the forced choice seems even more central to psychoanalysis. It is the issue of coopted willingness when the subject passes from one "state" to another.

coincides with X."<sup>2</sup> Lacan, in short, is a killer who will not let us live should we decide to hold on to our own ideas about psychoanalysis. He doesn't write to describe his ideas; he writes to *install* his ideas. The part of reading that normally takes pleasure in its successful personalized adaptations of the author's ideas is sucked away. To read Lacan is really to give into the idea of becoming Lacan. Lacan, like Stalin, is a case of reversed antinomasia, a state of being (Stalin = "steel") rather than an individual with this or that personality. The "house" where language shelters the reader and writer during their visit together becomes uncanny, inhospitable. In other words, without "getting into Lacan's head" to the point of identifying with him totally, at least for the duration of reading, there's no point. The reader who hopes to survive begins my making this call, by figuring out the identity of the silent middle term of the enthymeme.

If we remember that the graphic of this condition is the Venn circle of Y with a bite taken out of it by X (Fig. 2), then we have a curious relation to another of Lacan's favorite graphics, the Borromeo knot (Fig. 3). Imagine the rings to be circles around the domains of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real. Each "takes a bite" out of the "previous" ring lying beneath it. The Symbolic bites off a chunk of the Imaginary, and the teeth-marks show that it's the Mirror Stage that's eating. "Look! That's *you!*" says the adult to the young child who is forced to identify with his spectral double. The middle term turns from the real child to the reflected child, leaving the new subject with "no choice."

But, then, as if in revenge, the Real chews off a bit of the Symbolic with the stain created by the *objet petit a*, the indelible anamorphic, the radical negative *un*-presence driving desire into a repetitive circle, the death drive. The forced choice here lies in the absurdity of having to consent to what is necessary. Privation (necessity of loss) requires our voluntary participation. For example, in the cartoon *Road Runner* frequently shows the hapless Wile E. Coyote, in pursuit of the always-more-wily Road Runner, running past the edge of a cliff. The Coyote does not fall, however, until he looks down. His privation (loss of ground) does not become effective without his *assent*. Privation converts to prohibition *necessarily*. This is the Real's essential function as a forced choice, demanding the Symbolic to give up its money (its networks) or its life (the logic holding together its chains of signifiers). Its logic is allowed to live, but its networks will forever be robbed of their consistency and claims of correspondence.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce Fink, "Alienation and Separation," 84. The forced choice is a central issue in Lacan's definition of the Symbolic. If the subject says no to the Symbolic, the only recourse is psychosis or autism. This is strange in the sense that the Symbolic, as an "all-or-nothing" power, want our assent. This is akin to the traditional coin given to the executioner in feudal times or, more recently, Stalin's insistence of confessions written by the condemned before they are shot. The "privation" of the "offer that cannot be refused" requires, in a "show of intentionality," an irrational participation of its victims/subjects. Again, Wittgenstein's enigmatic pronouncement seems to bear: "Whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent" (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 1921). The "can" to "must" signals that privation and prohibition are linked by logical necessity *wherever* subjectivity is involved. See Rex Butler, "Slavoj Žižek: Live Theory," *Lacan.com Is Jacques Lacan in the U. S.*; URL: <http://www.lacan.com/zizek-butler.htm>.

Nothing is pure and simple about Lacan, perhaps, but Lacan's texts in general and his theory of discourse specifically could be compared to a Frankenstein-ish monster, who requires electrical shocks to come to (half-)life. A few (myself included) will think the monster generous and wise. The monster is an apt Golem for secondariness, for he is, quite literally, a secondary being. He can't speak well, but his body bears the bruises of the failed project of subjectivity. His teaching robs us of the little positivity we might have left. It literally takes our breath away: a reverse-angle whisper. This appendix does not aim to "invite the monster in for tea." It is not an attempt to positivize Lacan's own pedagogical forced choices. The limited goal is to show, in the light of popular culture — and especially film — how Lacan's theory of the four discourses makes sense in light of the secondariness *lying within* the project of subjectivity, and how secondariness is a key to the roles of failure and misunderstanding — to the same extent that subjectivity itself will be revealed as "secondary" within the Symbolic.

More than any other medium, popular culture "speaks the language of the secondary," and film in particular packages that language. In fact, film seems most adept at showing just how the forced choice situation (of "the X that steals whatever portion of Y that comes into contact with it") is the universal consequence of falling short of the conscious aims of communicating while unconsciously saying more.<sup>3</sup> Film aims to please broad, lowbrow audiences, not to refine theoretical ideas, so it makes a good "unmotivated" informant (<). At the same time, it goes beyond its lowbrow aims to present, sometimes with uncanny accuracy, irrational desires, aimless repetitions, cold obsessions, and morbid phantasms. While it "says less" (to avoid sophistication?), it *involuntarily* "says more" (>) in its facility with secondariness. Popular culture as a forced choice? Who knew?

This long exegesis on the relations connecting the forced choice to Lacan's *mi-dire* writing style is required to set the stage for an ersatz approach to a theory of discourse: taking Lacan to the movies. In the discourse *mathemes*, the subject fails four times and in four ways to say what it means, <. There are four kinds of error in the desire to communicate. At the same time, this privation results in the unexpected surplus, >, of contents that were locked, like frozen assets in the "foreign bank," in the unconscious. Lacan's Ouija-board-like palindromic rotation system reveals as much in its internal symmetries as it does in the standard historical readings of their four-term arrays. My ersatz disaggregation of the arrays relate more directly to specific conditions and settings within film specifically but popular culture in general. Despite the tight relations and symmetries that hold each *matheme* to a consistent logic, disaggregation looks to show how these tight relations and symmetries fall short of the mark, how the elements sitting on top of their quadrants are never quite at home. This method will not at first connect to standard critical interpretations of Lacan's discourse theory. If discourse is, as Lacan claims, the failure of the subject to say what he/she

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<sup>3</sup> This analysis follows the lead of Lacanians who have regarded popular culture as the principal testing ground of Lacanian theory. For example, there is hardly a book where Žižek does not engage popular culture in some way, but his most analytical forays focus on cinema. For example, see Slavoj Žižek, ed., *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock)* (London and New York: Verso, 1992); and Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992). Todd McGowan is equally interested in the broad aspects of popular culture but at his Lacanian best when he turns to film specifically. See *The Real Gaze: Film Theory After Lacan* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2007); *The Impossible David Lynch* (New York: Columbia University, 2007); *Psychoanalytic Film Theory and The Rules of the Game* (New York, London, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2015); and *Out of Time: Desire in Atemporal Cinema* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota, 2011).

means to say, then the *intact mathemes* themselves fail to say what they intend to say, and this is my justification for disaggregation.

In compensation, I hope that the vividness of the disaggregated components' relevance to particular instances in films and other artworks will confirm the importance of Lacan's idea of failure-to-say. This is his genius, his original discovery. It should not be reduced to a system without taking advantage of the internal symmetries and planetary motions. The *mathemes* are not categories but a true Periodic Table able to show elements that, if they don't exist (privation), should exist (overcoming prohibition).

### *The turns*

My ersatz experiment proposes a full secondary expedition, one that marches past the territory already conquered to the edges where there is no sign of warfare, just jungle and the smell of campfires, the occasional poison-tipped arrow. The Lacanian discourses, unlike other communications models, map four "canonical" ways of failing to communicate. It's as if Adam and Eve, following expulsion from Eden, are given four optional wildernesses to wander in, four "houses" in which they are to be not masters in four different ways. To extend this comparison in a (James) Joycean way, the "even atoms" (Eve and Adam's) of Lucretian parallel flow will be subjected to turbulence through four types of obstructions, akin to the four rivers said to flow from a single origin in Eden.

Imagine, further, that Adam and Eve's choice of wildernesses is made after they consult a geomantic sooth-sayer who, employing a kind of game board, explains to them that future dissatisfaction is a given, but that the particularity of that dissatisfaction will entirely be up to them. He advises, rather than holding onto the belief that one plan might minimize their suffering, them to try all four, to journey in a spiral across the four regions, using each new land to heal the wounds inflicted by the old, the promising skies of the new seeming to lighten up the former's dreary atmosphere. After time in the fourth region, the process starts again, hopefully with a dose of forgetting. (Because the regions are temporal rather than spatial, forgetting would amount to a kind of zig-zag or silly dance.) But, because the movement is spiral, the view of the opposite "land" always makes the wanderers aware of places where things happen in reverse, not just the before of where they left or the after of where they are headed. Then, there will be the occasional paradox of other travelers going in the opposite direction or upside, wearing strange clothes and carrying no luggage.

Lacan's four discourses limit options by insisting on an invariant order. Why not? S1, the inconsistent and often wild master/master-signifier, is just the kind of guy who produces chains (S2: causes, signifiers, social relations, arguments, ...) whose pretense are held together by the unreliable fasteners and fixes relying on S1, with gaps and voids covered by makeshift fantasies ( $\$ \diamond a$ ). When these give way, it seems to be like the carnival of misrule, sometimes so much fun that they make the flawed S1 worth his salt after all. The desire of the *a*, the object-cause of desire, keeps desiring running, unquenched, beneath the fantasies. Thanks to *a*'s powers to transform, every time a desirable object seems to have been caught within a web set by S2, it changes form (Daphne pursued by Apollo in Ovid's story).

The discourse game board: a circle of elements turning across a field. From a relativist's point of view, it doesn't matter which is turning against which, but the convention is that the field stays put, the elements rotate in their fixed chain across the field as in a game of musical chairs. The dance floor is quartered, and there are four dancers. The music stops with every quarter turn, so the relation of each position to adjacent

possibilities is 90° — the orthogonal angle. At the 180° positions, configurations form complements whose elements are both upside down and backward: the topsy-turvey of the palindrome, the see-saw. There is already the idea of succession, correction, chiasmus and completion in this simple circulation.

A standard communications model would involve two main regions and two minor ones. There would be a horizontal left-right space for a speaker/sender and an auditor/receiver (these would alternate in a conversation). Vertically, noise interrupts the transmitted signal, while contexts and lexicons offer positive resources. Lacan employs the Sender and Receiver of the classic Shannon-Weaver communications model as Agent and Other, but the Agent constructs the Otherness of the Other (this is one of its agencies), so the situation is a bit different. Beneath the Other is Production, the “output” or “result.” Paul Verhaeghe gives the example of the father (Agent) who tells his son (Other) to study hard, and the result is a series of one failure after another (Production). In other words, the vertical in Lacan’s communications theory has an ironical relation to the main line of signal transmission.

The most radical irony of Lacan’s discourse theory is the region beneath the Agent: Truth. This casts doubt on the Agent’s claim to be the cause of discourse. It would be more accurate to say that the Agent is produced by something outside the system, a kind of Prime Mover, but this Prime Mover is created out of a rejection or denial. The Agent/ part of the *matheme* means that unconscious content must be created (vertically) before the Agent can appear to initiate something horizontally. This sublation is on a time delay. It occurs “before the beginning,” so to speak, but it returns at the end and retroactively corrects the initial sublation. What “correction” means is open. It is like the anagnorisis or recognition scene of a tragedy, the point where a word or phrase or found object shows up to force a re-reading of reality.<sup>4</sup>

Thanks to the sublation and return of Truth, the Agent doesn’t speak as much as he/she *is spoken*. A thinker doesn’t “have an idea,” the idea has the thinker. Truth constructs a condition of reverse predication, reflecting the way that, once we enter into the Symbolic, the networks of symbolic relationships and chains of signifiers, we are engulfed and possessed by the system. Discourse speaks through agents who believe themselves to be autonomous, independent, and original, but just the opposite is true. As Freud put it in the epithet at the beginning of this Appendix, the subject creates a house in which s/he will not be the master. *Das Ich nicht Herr sei in seinem eigenem Haus*. Note that this “Ich,” the ego, is the “subject-proper,” a state that the human will ever *fail to consummate*, thanks to this denial of mastery.

#### *Template vs. staging ground*

The discourse *mathemes* seem to offer templates against which films can be matched and interpreted. Some films even seem to be prototypes of discursive forms. Akira Kurosawa’s *High and Low* shows the case of an obvious master who becomes a prisoner in his own house once a kidnapper trains his telescope on

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<sup>4</sup> This is not an exclusively Lacanian idea. In Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*, for example, the phrase “power and freedom” appears at the beginning, middle, and end of the film. At first, it is connected to the lost glory of San Francisco as described by Galvin Elster in his interview with the retired detective Scottie Ferguson. The antiquarian book dealer “Pop” Leibel repeats it when Scottie and Madge visit him to research Elster’s account of his wife’s obsession with a 19c. ancestor. Finally, at the end of the film, Scottie repeats the phrase as he strangles Judy/Madeleine, having realized that from the first he was chosen to follow the fake Madeleine because he would be the perfect witness at the inquest which would acquit Elster of any involvement. “Power and freedom” themselves literally tell the tale: once Scottie is under Elster’s power, his actions seem to freely unfold in the “contingencies” that, unbeknownst to Scottie, Elster and Judy have carefully set up. The sublation of Power (Scottie doesn’t realize Elster is pulling the strings) makes his surveillance of “Madeleine” seem to be authentic.

the industrialist's mansion from his hideout in the slums below. S1/ is undermined by the barred \$, the kidnapper, and the horizontal transactions with other signifiers, S2, now become impossible; he loses his company. The product of this impossible relation to the signifying chains is taken over by the police, for whom S2/a represents a search for a key clue locating the kidnapper. They have impregnated the ransom cash bags with a chemical so that when incinerated the colored smoke will take them to the hideout. In the final scene, Kurosawa seems to obey Lacan's every detail by having \$ confront the master, S1, across a metal and glass screen that superimposes the image of the kidnapper and industrialist.

*The Wizard of Oz*, seems to provide University Discourse with lesson plans. Dorothy is the classic victim of the Master Signifier's imperative to Enjoy! (S2/S1 → a/\$). An orphan lost in an adolescent fog on her aunt and uncle's Kansas farm, powerless against the S1 tyranny of the spinster school-marm Miss Gulch, she is placed beneath an even more powerful set of prohibitions in Oz, where to solve the problems of her triadic soul-mates (representing Intellect, Love, and Courage/Aggression — Hermes, Venus, and Mars in the old book), she must consult the fake headmaster

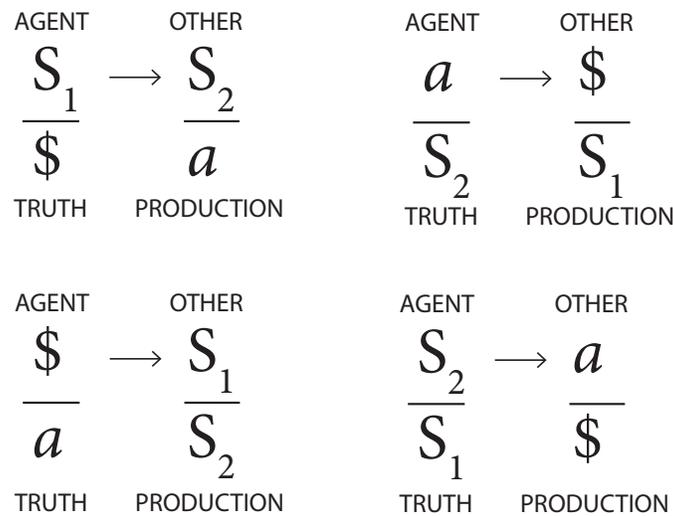


Figure 5. The discourse *mathemes*, showing the rotation of four elements in fixed circular sequence, S1, S2, a, and \$, rotating around a fixed field, AGENT, OTHER, PRODUCTION, and TRUTH.

in the Emerald City (S2/S1 is an uncanny predecessor of Trump University). When Dorothy recovers from her coma and realizes the homology between Kansas and Oz, the “impossibility” of a || \$ in the previous *matheme*, Analysis, becomes a/\$ (the “vertical” command) and the privation condition converts to the prohibitions imposed on Dorothy & Co. Like all heroes given “impossible” trials.

Disaggregation of the *mathemes* and consideration of rotational sequence and internal symmetries do not entirely foreswear analysis using a 1:1 match between *matheme* and artwork, but in general *multiple mathemes* work together, against and with each other, inside films and other artworks. Their resulting oppositions and sequences provide the antagonisms and eddy-currents of hidden meanings that are essential

to the works' dynamics.<sup>5</sup> In any given work, there's a bit of hysteria here, failed mastery there; analysis in the parlor scene when the detective explains the solution to the puzzle. This polysemy results from the vertical functionality that distinguishes Lacan's communications theory from the standard models. Instead of trying to suppress noise, Lacan shows how noise (and attempts to suppress it) reinforce other kinds of signals. Without this "white noise," a whole range of sounds would remain beneath the threshold of perception. This, I argue, is Lacan's "stochastic resonance," the ability of discourse to find or create what it seems expressly to forbid. So, if standard communication models aim to understand, Lacanian discourse *mathemes* map the multiple failures of this project, and in doing so uncover the roles of secondary motives based on resonance and turbulence. In effect, each *matheme* is a conservation project aimed to protect the "endangered species," noise. This is my argument: that discourse's failure to communicate points directly to the productive role of the *secondary*, generically conceived as noise.

Following Bruce Fink, in "Against Understanding," I would argue that psychoanalysis is from the beginning a *project of the secondary*, beginning historically with the presentation of the hysteric, whose body only "secondarily" is what it appears to be. The secondariness of this secondary opens up psychoanalysis to a wide range of comparative potentials, once the idea and mechanics of the secondary is understood. This would mean saying, for example, just how hysteria is not simply a collection of clinical symptoms, but rather something that stands in relation to a Symbolic, a sum total of *all possible means of discourse*. The hysteric subject fails in this relation, but its failure has a particular form. Its secondariness derives from its relation to a (constructed) Other, an authority it must nonetheless attempt to address but fail. The secondariness of the humiliated hysteric is obvious; but just as secondary is the way the hysteric's symptoms constitute a part of that humiliation; how they constitute a code written across the hysteric's body, the pain of which will mask the (secondary) enjoyment, hysterical *jouissance*? What is the secondary, after all, if not an acknowledgement not just of the possibility of other points of view, but of their rivalry, their appropriation of the hysteric's very reality.

### *The filming of theory*

The approach I am recommending, both for general theoretical speculations as well as film analysis that, ironically, explicitly avoids "looking for an explanation," involves seeking out individual components and clusters within the *mathemes* wherever they seem to correspond to "mirror neurons" (scenes, situations, sequences, blockings, etc.) of films. Inevitably, any one film will involve multiple forms of discourse. An audience may be required to relate to a film only by failing to master it (*Mulholland Drive*). Or, watching a film may involve a kind of death dream (*Rebecca*), enigmatic ultimatum (*Lost Horizon*), or challenge to the authority of witness (*Psycho*). Within these basic tones, however, "situations" found within the discourse *mathemes*, guide the flow of filmic energy over a variety of conditions, from foaming rapids and waterfalls to placid pools. Currents and counter-currents create self-sustaining pockets of secondary and tertiary possibilities, as if any one film is a single dream that the dreamer multiplies by shifting the internal point of view.

Take, for example, the common folkloric "tricky servant" (S2/a) who, in the face of direct instructions from the Master, exploits some loophole, as does Lucius in the late Roman novel, *The Golden Ass*, when he

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<sup>5</sup> Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar have already established the practice of seeing, within single works of art, the simultaneous and dynamic interaction of multiple forms of Lacanian discourses. *Opera's Second Death* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002).



Figure 6. “Lucius Takes Form,” a 1345 illustration from *The Golden Ass*, Vat. Lat. 2194, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana). The body of the ass is represented as a flow between two worlds, above and below, so that Lucius’s dream of flying converts to its opposite, but suspended within a thick liquid darkness.

sneaks into Milo’s wife’s alchemical laboratory hoping to transform himself into a bird.<sup>6</sup> But, Lucius is not a full-time servant; he has been lured into service by his hot affair with Fotis, Milo’s wife’s maid. There is a cross-inscription of Master and Servant, the very structure celebrated by the festival of Saturnalia. Lucius’s love,  $M_S$ , leads directly to the chiral Other, the Master trapped in the body of an ass,  $S_M$ . What follows could be entitled “the adventures of the *objet petit a*,” where we might fruitfully envision Lacan’s famous (unnamable) object-cause of desire by considering it from the viewpoint of a man trapped in the body of an ass for the period of a year. The theme of *katabasis* illuminates the nature of the *objet petit a* as much as the *objet petit a* serves as a critical instrument to unlock the mysteries of the descent-into-hell theme.  $S_2/a$ , the right hand (Other/Production) component of the Master’s Discourse does not justify the generic classification of Apuleius’s work as an account of failed mastery, but the co-illumination of  $S_2/a$  and *katabasis* forces a kind of ersatz conjecture that learns as much from its failures as its successes.

The question is: can an ersatz conjecture “get lucky” and become an *Ansatz*, the *lucky* guess? But, then what happens? What is the luck of the lucky guess? The two complementary halves,  $M_S$  and  $S_M$ , would seem to cancel each Other out, but the result, in this disappearance of the Master within the Servant complex,  $S_2/a$ , is that a place is created where the  $\langle \rangle$  of one is exchanged for the  $\rangle \langle$  of the other/Other. This place is the romanticized Eigenform of the descent theme, the *katabasis*, where the inside of the earth displays a sequence of externalities: stories in stories where time travel and challenges to identity and authority comprise a secondary form of virtuality, a virtuality that, unlike the virtuality of the Imaginary (reconstruction of subjectivity through a phantasmatic Other), reverses the process so that the pre-subject, a “body in pieces” (*corps morcélé*), challenges the indignant mirror image. This reveals a deeper functionality within  $S_2/a$ . The “machine” of the *katabasis* has a life of its own. It is the machine that, once set to running, develops an autonomous desire that pulls the tricky servant along with it on a wild ride through a diversified “place of no place,” a magical reversal of the usual causality of demand where one pushes a button and expects to hear a ring. Now, the shoe is not just on the other foot, it is the shoe that makes the foot dance, as in Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger’s film, *The Red Shoes* (1948). In the reverse predication of passive servant and active master, the potentiality of the *automaton* is found and featured, but it turns out to be, in a reverse predication of idea and illustration, the logic of the system as a whole. Lacan’s palindromic *matheme* machine spins and clicks on command, but its own  $\langle \rangle$  to  $\rangle \langle$  functionality leads to a moment of transfer, a spark that jumps the gap to reverse the dominance relation of the machine’s inventor to his invention. Lacan to the *mathemes* is analogous to Lucius to the magic transforming salve. It makes him a “dummy” faster than he could ever have imagined. (In French, the ventriloquist’s dummy is called *le mort*, “the dead man.”) The Imagi-

<sup>6</sup> I use this example if for no other reason than to demonstrate the antiquity of the secondary and claim that its use has been conscious and intentional by artists who have revealed its secrets only through demonstrations, not theories. Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, trans. Robert Graves (London: Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1950).

nary masterful reflection in the Lacanian mirror finds that the dummy, the *corps morcélé*, has stolen its thunder. The ghost (image) in the machine (mirror) finds that it had a machine in it all along, and that the buttons it was pushing were not connected to anything, but put there only to satisfy the master's desire for control.

*Disaggregation: the body in pieces whose pieces are bodies*

This disaggregation methodology, in fact, constructs a kind of “zairja”: a computer devised by 13c. Middle Eastern mystics to “deconstruct” facts through a series of matrix operations.<sup>7</sup> My zairja here aims to avoid any implication that analysis aims to terminate its adventures in an explanation. Rather, Vico's logic of “finding as many causes for any one effect” drives a project of (critical) polymorphous perversity. Identification of a scene, motif, character, technique, or situation in a film with some element of a Lacanian *matheme* abuses the psychoanalytic idea on behalf of expanding the secondary meanings latent within both the film and discourse theory. Just as Lacan claimed that he could be true (non-contradictory) only by confining himself to half-truths (*mi-dire*), my ersatz/zairja methodology can be right only by allowing itself to continually “misread” its options.

The disaggregated *mathemes* produce “captions” that would seem to be fit to explain many pictures. Imagine, for example, Alfred Hitchcock's well-crafted blocking of the interview scene in *Vertigo*, where the ship construction magnate Elster enlists the retired police detective Scottie to surveil Madeleine as she wanders around San Francisco in a mentally distracted state.<sup>8</sup> The camera angles, backgrounds, and even changing floor levels are carefully calculated to provide a spatiotemporal version of what the dialog accomplishes. If the dialog could be compared to a standard Shannon-Weaver communications model, the blocking would constitute a Lacanian discourse *matheme*. The details of blocking are generic. The backgrounds, angles, and floor levels could be filled with other materials; even the “messages” exchanged between Scottie and Elster could be replaced with an entirely different conversation. While the dialog fits into the blocking schema according to a Shannon-Weaver type of model, the blocking itself remains open and independent, *even within the specifics of the scene component of Vertigo*. This is the “secondariness” of the blocking — the “loft” between the vectorial energies that, in this *particular* scene, emerge in a specific form. The space exists as “intimacy” and “desire” even after it has been consolidated within the sequence of

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<sup>7</sup> Al-Imam Abdulrahman ibn Mohammed ibn Khaldoun, *The Introduction of Ibn Khaldoun* (مقدمة ابن خلدون [انكليزي]) trans. Rami Touquan (Beirut: Dar Al-Kotob AlIlmiyah, 2016), 137. My employment of the zairja is more of a “deployment” of the secondary idea of the zairja as imagined by the 13c. Catalan mystic and mnemonicist, Ramón Llull. This liberation from the strict facts of the zairja's use as an astrological chart re-tools it as a means of converting Moslems to Christianity, Llull's obsession following his own conversion from the life of a profligate. The zairja does not make much sense as a kind of *Ouija* board, but in light of Llull's *secondary* use of it, the zairja's relation to desire is more understandable. While it is normal for analysis to “take things apart” to see how components work together to produce a unary result, the zairja's disaggregation directly opens up entanglements that, by the time of the event of the result, are hyper-intimate. It is the intimacy of entanglement itself that, addressed by the zairja, reveals the palindromic logic of the structure of desire. For every vectorial movement, a counter-movement or movement complex is assumed. The imaginary sum of movements is a constant, an “eigenvalue” that, in its constancy, allows for any and all changes and variations. As Ibn Mohammed ibn Khaldoun notes, the words of the answer are extracted from the words of the question (140). Llull's secondary zairja is fictitious, but (ironically) only in this falsification can the zairja's original (Lacanian/palindromic) relation to desire's own chiasmus be realized.

<sup>8</sup> The Nerdwriter, “How Does Hitchcock Block this Scene in ‘Vertigo?’” *Digg*; URL: <http://digg.com/video/hitchcock-vertigo-scene-blocking>.

causes and effects that give the particular scene its place in the film. This is Lacan's "discursive field": a potentiality that not only can be reversed to create alternatives (*tuchē*) but the idea of reversibility itself. The *mathemes* are tentative notation systems for the *mi-dire* aspect of human language's built-in failure. They "document" this failure by showing its similarity to a crystal.<sup>9</sup>

*Broken things: circularities, chiralities, strata; inverted twins;*

The crystal, if anything, is about symmetries. The *mathemes* display at least four obvious types. Most obviously, the two orders rotating against each other create "circularity symmetries" among the four discourse types. If we read it backward and start with Hysteria, the tentative historical order of the discourse (Hysteria, Mastery, University) corresponds to Vico's "three ages" of his "ideal eternal history," with Analysis in control of Vico's own discovery process and faked biography (see Appendix B). In the normal forward direction, we begin with the Mastery of Feudalism thanks to Hegel's Parable of the Master and Servant. Modernity then inverts the master with the complaints of (real-life) hysterics and the response to hysteria, the emergence of Analytical discourse. Modernity establishes itself in the aftermath of this exchange, as the reigning ideological forced choice. Forced choice is an "impossibility" built over the "Indian burial ground" of the death drive, a prohibition in anyone's books, not just Steven King's.

Within the four-part structure, chiralistic symmetries of left and right and vertical stratification of dominant and submissive elements set up temporal relations: a left-to-right flow, standard in communications models; and a kind of before-and-after in the conversion of privation (impossibility/contradiction) into prohibition (impotence/impasse). In the Shannon-Weaver communications model, vertical elements address the issues of noise and context. But, Lacan's "noise" and "context" are different. Noise corresponds to the idea of antagonism and the inside-out (extimate) functionalities of the gaze and acousmatic voice. These suggest how symmetry can be topological rather than binary. Context, in Lacan's terms, involves the discourses themselves as strict algorithmic traps with temporal, historical, and spatial openings.

The palindromic rotation of elements across a quadrated field produces "inverted twins." For example, S1/\$ on the left of the Master's discourse becomes \$/S1 on the right of Analysis. Inversions take place across an "aisle" that is held open by privation (above) and prohibition (below). The conversion of privation to prohibition constitutes an important background energy to the twinship symmetries, as a kind of "before-and-after" logic with much to reveal about how natural limits (privations, such as light and dark) are reified as positive values (dark as an evil competing with light's good) to the status of commands: the is's of lack into ought's of symbolic castration. The cases of inverted twins would seem to be just a formal-

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<sup>9</sup> The idea that common speech is made up of the shattered fragments of an original crystal is gnostic, as George Steiner details in *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (New York: Oxford University, 1975). The comparison focuses on the role of details and errors as vectorial indicators of paths leading back to language's "Big Bang" moment, presumably the parable of the tower of Babel. The structure of the tower can be considered as a necessary palindrome. From the bottom view (Hebrew edition), builders strive to assault Heaven with the building's penetration of ether (*cælum* = heaven and wedge). In other words, the builders possess the contronymic knowledge of heaven and wedge to see that heaven is "that which is to be penetrated." God, fearing that human possession of the palindromic contronym will rival and surpass his own abilities (they are the many; he is the One), converts the "primal term," *cælum*, into polarized components whose opposition constitutes a puzzle. While Adamic speech accepts the contronym, conventional human speech cannot. Like the dream, Adamic speech constitutes a primal basis for consciousness, but itself must remain unconscious or "within" a central void. An alternative view of Babel is "Bab-El," the "Gate of God," which takes the penetration of ether as a fact and preserves the tip of the building as a *templum*, accessible only to those who understand the "primal" function of the password.

ism until ethnographical and mythological evidence weighs in. For example, the Dioscuri, the inverted twins of Greek myth, seem to anticipate the Lacanian rules of rotation (one twin would live while the other remained in Hades) and privation-to-prohibition legalities (Castor's death was "appealed" by Pollux and substituted by a separation constraint order). Specific elements don't matter here, just the symmetries and sequences.

When the "actors" (master signifier, knowledge, object-cause of desire, barred subject) move across the quadrated field (Agent, Other, Production, Truth), every quarter turn produces a new relationship, an independent discourse. But, what of the *turns themselves*? Is there, in addition to the graphic 90° shift, also an ortho-*psychic* relationship in the same orthogonal? Vico would say yes, in his system of mythic, heroic, and finally human stages, comprehended from a fourth position, the "heroic scholar" (our secondary). Mythic thought derives from privations (negations) of nature converted into prohibitions (laws) of culture. Heroic thought "sees through" the constructs of myth and imposes a system based on honor and warfare, with the collateral product of irony (Homeric societies). Human thought proper (abstract conceptualism) begins when irony is "corrected" by empirical objectivism, "laws of science" to deal contingently (hence, working as prohibitions) with the strict true/false status of facts. Each turn of Vico's wheels involves a correction of the former position, with an inadvertent construction of a fourth "secondary" position of reflection that affords a *ricorso*, another turn of the wheel.

Lacan's quarter-turns are similarly orthopsychic. What's wrong with the Masters? They fail because of the impossibility of all masters surviving the life-or-death commitment they must make to the Name of the Father. The subsequent position, Hysteria, "rotates" clockwise 90° into the agency of the barred subject \$ who, to say anything at all, must suppress desire, *a*, on behalf of the enigmatic Other, who in clinical hysteria is always "called into question" and shown to be inadequate. Of course the Master is inadequate! The hysteric sees this immediately and develops her own symptomatic logic of reporting pain while experiencing pleasure. But, as the history of hysteria shows, this is also the logic of the part-object. In an autoerotic way, any organ can perform any function. The ear can be a womb, the hand can be an eye, the foot can be a nose. The subject reverses its Mirror Stage accomplishment and reverts to a *corps morcélé*, a body in pieces. At the same time the hysteric "has a lot to say" — everything, in fact! — but can only speak in a *mi-dire* of fragments, emotional silences, riddles, and incoherent outbursts. We can't hear it all, but each installment of the hysteric's speech is true *by the very fact of its division*,  $\$/a$ . The *a* is suppressed but then it "returns," like the letter that reaches its destination.  $\$/a$  but then  $a/\$$ , a condition becomes a conditioner in a "reverse predication" where the shadow becomes the animating body. Again, folklore and ethnology provides more than enough evidence about this conversion. The repressed always returns: shadows become independent bodies; words spoken are heard again in inverted, revealing ways; servants play while the master's away.

The 90° orthographic turn has another function. The privation of the Master's discourse becomes the prohibitions the Hysteric imposes, and Analysis converts these prohibitions ( $S1 \parallel S2 \rightarrow S2 // a$  — the "scandal" of the hysteric's complaints within the Symbolic), then back into privations in Analysis ( $a \parallel \$$  — the radical unknowability of the unconscious, leading to the barring of the subject who is Other, the "stranger in its own house"). Just as the Hysteric goes in the side door of the Master, Analysis looks at the hysteric critically/secondarily, responding not to the conventional meanings of the hysteric's presentation

but rather to the slips of the tongue, the inadvertent substitutions, the errors and delays, the chokes and sighs.

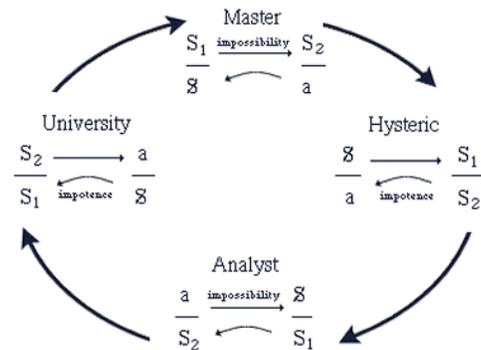


Figure 7. Lacan's *mathemes* in the standard order, Master > Hysteric > Analyst > University. Note how the pattern of impossibility and impotence pair Master with Analyst (impossibility) and Hysteric with University (impotence). Substituting privation and prohibition, it seems clear that the movement from Analyst to University, for example, converts the privation of  $a||\$$  to  $\$//S_1$ . Following Wittgenstein, we would say that what is impossible to say we should not say. But, in fiction, this prohibition is precisely the challenge that makes a story a story.

The University doesn't critique or correct Analysis in its quarter-turn clockwise. Rather, it orthopsychically sets up buffers to insulate itself by making knowledge,  $S_2$ , an Agency with impotent/incompetent masters behind curtains, in board rooms, in IT labs with large flat-screens. The curtain "succeeds" the subject's barred division between consciousness and the unconscious with a kind of Turing test — which itself actually did use a curtain between its test subjects and the computer or other human respondent. The curtain conceals mastery and a master, a Wizard of Oz who is "just a man from Kansas." The Other's proper name, the *nom-du-père*, is "nothing more than a pronoun," a place-holder, a void, a lipogram. The  $\$,$  psychoanalysis discovered, must be studied through the turbulences and resonances ( $S_1$ ) it sets up in fields of the networks of symbolic relationships. These are the patterns of  $a/S_2$  that have subordinated (occulted) knowledge within desire.

The *mathemes* that structure these aspects of discourse within such a tight, abstract economy of turns and symmetries condense their logic to such an extent that we might easily dismiss them as nothing more than shorthand ciphers used to organize (Lacan's) clinical and theoretical speculations. But, when they

reveal "raw" graphic conditions that seem to echo conditions in works of art, cultural practices, rituals, and folklore — in other words, "naive" sources with no interest in contributing to the theory of psychoanalysis — there is a new level to consider. Whatever the hell the *matheme's* signs may signify as abstractions of Lacanian theory pales in comparison to what they means for staging situations in fiction, fantasy, or dreams. The clinical meaning of  $a/S_2$  may be that the analysand's desire conceals key chains of signifiers that the analyst must hear and resurrect, but in fantasy formations  $a/S_2$  is the desire figured as a labyrinth concealing a treasury of signifiers.

Anachronistically, it seems that ancient thought and timeless cultural practices and beliefs have "had Lacan in mind all along," and that the dance of elements across a quadrated field have been producing common features in art and social relations as if they had come from a common unconscious.

The enigmatically attractive wizard who, in addition to his sexual allure, offers the keys to ancient secrets. This combination drives the character of the wealthy Greek recluse in John Fowles *The Magus*. The *matheme* leads us to this figure but what else does it say? The 90° turn from Analyst to University tells the story of the young teacher, Nicholas, who loses his love, Alison, is confronted with Conchis, the "magus" who employs twin nymphs to lead Nicholas to his necessary mortification, confession, and redemption. With  $S_2$  held up as a lure to the POV character (and audience who sympathizes with him), Nicholas's redemption parallels the rejection of the key,  $S_1$ , and its return — Allison's suicide was faked, so that her absence makes for the perfect  $S_1$ -behind-the-curtain. Nicholas's inability to grasp the reality of this secret or

its meaning once it is revealed, converts the privation into the prohibition/secret that propels the morality-tale dynamic within the framework of magical realism.

This seems to be exactly the case when we find elements appearing literally and appropriately in cases lying temporally and contextually distant from psychoanalysis's modernity. Such is the case of the story of the Greek artists, Zeuxis and Parhassius, retold by Lacan in Seminar XI (*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 1964). Zeuxis paints a realistic *trompe-l'œil* and Parhassius paints a curtain. The curtain is used to convert orthographics into orthopsychics in this ancient tale, *just as the bar dividing S1 from S2 covertly orthographics to orthopsychics in modern psychoanalysis*. A bird flies into the wall to get at Zeuxis's painted fruit, but the judges "hit the wall" by mistaking Parhassius's painted curtain for a real one. Parhassius had "trapped" human desire, while Zeuxis could only fool a creature of nature.

The painting of the fruit involved a privation (of the dimensions of depth); while the painting of a curtain was a prohibition in the minds of the judges. The curtain "rotates" the analyst's couch by 90° by converting the missing dimension of Analysis (the unconscious) into the impossible-Real command ("Enjoy!") of University culture. The ancient anecdote anticipates Lacanian theory by some 2500 years. We can't ignore this as a coincidence or forced comparison. At the level of symmetries, rotations, and inversions, the *mathemes* convert from being a notation system (orthographics) to a true, operative cultural universal (orthopsychics).

*Wait a minute ...*

These symmetries are not to be found in the standard Lacanian literature. They are graphics (inversions, turns, flips, twists) converted into "rules of the game." Orthographics becomes orthopsychics. At the same time, it must be admitted that the graphic appearance of Lacan's *mathemes* are (only) secondary to the logical functions Lacan intended. This secondariness would seem trivial, "a demotion to thirdness," if it weren't for the fact that Lacan himself constructed the same orthographics-to-orthopsychics arguments using the topology of such figures as the Möbius band and Klein bottle. Also, in the famous case of the Prisoners' Dilemma (black or white dots are pinned on the backs of three prisoners who, in exchange for saying which dot is on *their* back, will be given freedom), there is the idea of a dimension "implicit" within a situation that, without taking advantage of perspectival depth to "step back from the scene" to figure things out, can nonetheless be realized "internally."

This internal dimension is both orthographic and orthopsychic. Just as the Möbius band's twist cannot be located at any one place along the band's length, it nonetheless can be *demonstrated* — this proof is orthopsychic in relation to the orthographic physical condition. So, I argue that the graphic conditions that are "secondary" within Lacan's theory have a kind of short-circuit potentiality. They can *disaggregate* Lacan's formal temporality (beginning with the Imaginary, then developing the Symbolic, and finally the Real) in favor of "anachronistic" re-orderings. They can reveal relationships inside the discourse *mathemes* that seem at first to have no bearing on the *mathemes*' employment as autonomous templates shaping the nature of languages and sign systems. But, the templates themselves would not exist but for the graphic formalities of turning, mirroring, and internal circuitry that makes them seem for all the world nothing less than exchange systems for moving and distributing psychic energy within a complex stochastic array.

The secondary graphics supports a primary psychics, but looking at the secondary itself must remain within the secondary if we wish to see its true powers. The four forms of discourse would turn into cate-

gorical guessing games were it not for the graphic options within and between the *mathemes*. Žižek and Dolar’s use of the *mathemes* in their study of opera establishes this point at the level of competing agencies within single works. Characters within operas take up the flags of separate *mathemes*, suggesting that the opera’s plot is conceptually superior to the *matheme*-characters who shout and fight amongst themselves. The implication is that, beyond discourse’s specific forms, some *story is required* — and that the *mathemes as a system* speak to this higher order and in fact may reveal its story–logic. If the opera story “comes from behind” the characters whose natures, intentions, and actions seem at first to be primary, the story’s secondary out–distances the characters’ individuality just as secondaryness in general converts its latency into superiority. This is the story of the Prisoners who cannot see the dots on their backs but must deduce their own identity as an emergent quality of the whole — an emergence that does not exist without their own “secondary” condition of blindness. The plot must emerge rather than project. It is inside and outside at the same time (extimate); but also it exists but doesn’t exist; it is, rather, a theoretical not–all that must speak *mi-dire*.

Let’s return to the most obvious approach, identifying films with individual *mathemes*, but in this process hesitate between an analysis that correlates elements of films with elements of the discourse and a secondary consideration of disaggregated conditions of symmetry (rotation, inversion, flow, etc.), where circuit issues create a sense of otherness inside/outside the *matheme*’s primary logic. Just as each individual *matheme* constitutes a kind of circuit diagram, the *system of mathemes* has a secondaryness that re–asserts a “mathemic” ordering at an order that is both inside and above the systems of *mathemes*. This is equivalent to saying that Lacan theorizes in a way that is Lacanian. He imposes rules on his own rule–imposing. He does not work at the level of a metalanguage, “from above.” This is the meaning of his assertion that he is not “doing theory” (or art history, or philosophy) but, rather, teaching, and teaching is enthymemic.

The enthymeme/syllogism is not “broken” but correct *in that it appears to be incomplete*. It is a metalepsis, a *Witz*, a profound orthopsychic joke. Žižek tells a orthopsychic joke about the Jew wishing to emigrate from the USSR. In his application interview, he gives two reasons for wanting to leave Russia. The first is that he fears that the Soviet system will disintegrate and the legal protection of Jews give way to the historic abuse of the pogroms, cossacks, etc. “But,” the interviewer objects, “the Soviet Union will never disintegrate!” “—That’s my second reason.”<sup>10</sup> Like the other Russian who, exiled to Siberia, promises his friend that he will use red ink to indicate when he is lying in a letter, the punch line is metaleptic and enthymemic. The first letter contains unlimited praise of his prison conditions, with one exception: it is hard to find red ink! The friend must supply the fact that there are indeed many things wrong with the Siberian camp but that his friend cannot write about them, censorship being the condition imposed on his communication. There is no red ink (privation); but this is a sign of censorship (prohibition). The internal conditions of discourse are the symmetries that, like the flow from impossibility/privation to inability/prohibition, operate secondarily, in a *mi-dire* or enthymemic way. This is the key to Freud’s meaning when he specifies an “I” who is not master in his own house. Secondaryness justifies our looking at films.

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<sup>10</sup> Sean Sheehan, *Žižek: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum, 2012), 63.

## Appendix C / Vico: The Enigma of the Reflected Ceiling



Figure 1. The “*dipintura*,” frontispiece to Giambattista Vico’s 1744 edition of *The New Science*.

Imaginative metaphysics shows that man becomes all things by not understanding them.

— Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, §405 (1744)

Ignorance, misunderstanding, inattention, stupidity ... whatever word you prefer, the 18c. philosopher of culture Giambattista Vico could be considered the first philosopher whose singular wisdom was to take aim at wisdom’s idiotic Other, as if the two were twin stars rotating around a common black hole. If wisdom is an excess of human thought, misunderstanding is the lack that, unlike wisdom, is shared by all cultures, all ages, all mentalities. Vico reasoned that, within idiocy’s kingdom of misrule, the rules were the same for everyone; that the human mechanism of misunderstanding is so universal that misunderstanding itself, more than any other trait, should be regarded as the *sine qua non* for the human *per se*, in all its stages and subsequent costumes.

The stage begins with the pre-humans who, wandering in Vico’s allegorical forest setting, were so shocked by loud thunder and flashes of lightning that they attributed, as a “place-holder” cause of this fright, a divine entity that was nothing more than their own ferocious nature: sensuous, unreasonable, impulsive, and emotionally unstable. Now *facing* what was before *within* them, the space between perceiver and perceived was structured like a giant theological sandwich, unknowns for the two slices of bread holding together what was now composed of sliding layers of meats, cheeses, tomatos, mayo — the first “with everything” order of consciousness. The sandwich’s name was the Imaginative Universal (*universale fantastico*), a fake from the very beginning because, as Vico explained, knowing that the censors of the Inquisition would be pouring over every word in his text, it would take thousands of years for cultures to realize the nature of the True God worshiped by Jews and Gentiles. This God was exempted from Vico’s otherwise universalistic discussions of the evolution of religion. This political expediency worked well. It appeased the censors who would be quick to note any whiff of natural religion not firmly excised as wrong-headed; but, for the atheists in the room (and there were many in 18c. Naples, including Vico himself) the ploy could be dismissed. “Vico says he isn’t talking about Judeo-Christian God, but we know very well he instructs us to read between the lines.” The God of the Bible was, in fact, simply a modern version of what had, since the first application of the imaginative universal, continually been refashioned to match the mentality of the times. The mythic mind had matched divinity to its own ruthless nature, the heroic mind preferred the heroic gods of the Pantheon, the modern mind required God to be abstract, censorious, and moralistic without any true concept of ethics — just like them!

Vico did not drop the ignorance idea just because his writing found itself to be in a comparative enlightened age. In fact, he was able to specify a more accurate typology: the fool (who pays no attention to

either the highest or lowest truths), the astute ignoramus (who respects the lowest truths but ignores the highest — in essence, missing the forest for the trees), and the learned man destitute of prudence (who always deduces the lowest truths from the highest).<sup>1</sup> Only the sage uses the trick of deducing the highest truths from the lowest ones. This sounds like the scientific method and, indeed, it is one way of seeing how, in calling his work a new *science*, Vico was serious and on par with Grotius, Selden, and Bacon, who side-stepped Descartes by giving a more emergent account of the knowing subject.

Deducing the highest truths from the lowest could go wrong, because it was all too easy to plant an “evolved” subjectivity — the Cartesian *cogito* — on the first step of a staircase of abstractions. If this subjectivity actually knew anything, it would have to be carried all the way up; but an ignorant “ignoramus *non-cogitans*” would fit the bill and, two hundred years before Lacan, connect subjectivity with radical lack, convertible with an equally irrational super-force held to lie, as a *meta*-physics, beyond all actual and possible appearances. This <> model of human thought, failing to achieve a concept adequate to the empirical reality of the object and, as if in compensation, coming up with sublime “place-holding” divinities and powers, came so close to Lacan’s *corps morcélé* standing before the First Mirror, forced to invent an intact but spectrally dependent *Doppelgänger* that, as Vico elaborated his primary term, the imaginative universal, its successors would brazenly anticipate Lacan’s Real (Vico’s mythic), Imaginary (Vico’s heroic), and Symbolic (Vico’s human). It would even be possible to see the first humans as the first true Hysterics who literally “brought into question” the Big Other through their rituals of divination; their successors, the heroes, who would play out the dynamics of the Masters’ Discourse; and finally the “analytical turn” to Modernity, middle term required to initiate the fully modern University Discourse.

These parallels, however, are hardly more than entertaining ways of shuffling Vico’s texts to match up to Lacan’s. The “deep play edition” of the Vico–Lacan conspiracy theory involves a curiously unsolved mystery about Vico’s last-minute insertion of an engraving and accompanying commentary to fill the pages left blank after Vico was persuaded to withdraw a scathing account of the Venetian friar Carlo Lodoli’s broken promise to support publication of the second (actually the third) *New Science*.<sup>2</sup> Whether the story is entirely true or not, Vico engaged the help of two fellow–Rosicrucians who, at his direction, devised a summary emblem intended to instruct the reader on what was to follow in the main text and how to read it. This image, known as the *dipintura*, was metaphorically set in a forest clearing similar to those used by the first humans to view the sky (previously invisible in the forest interior), divine celestial signs, and consecrate the first sacred procedures of marriage and burial. The literal soil of the first clearings was regarded as divine. A clearing could not be abandoned without risking the curse of the gods for whom allegiance was eternal and absolute. This, Vico explains, is the meaning behind Prometheus, chained to a rock while an eagle plucks out his ever-regenerative liver. The first humans could not leave what they had consecrated as a divine location. So, in this spirit, we must take Vico seriously, that although the invention and insertion of the *dipintura* was in every sense secondary to *The New Science*, it is retroactively a “primary place” that, once created, cannot be (re-)moved. Both the contents and the ocular/orthographic qualities of this image don’t just use the logic of the secondary, they say explicitly what the secondary is all about. Of the many scholars who have examined this image with epistemological fine-tooth combs, none have fully tak-

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<sup>1</sup> Giambattista Vico, *On the Study Methods of Our Time*, trans. Elio Gianturco (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1994), 34.

<sup>2</sup> See Donald Phillip Verene, *Vico’s “New Science”: A Philosophical Commentary* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2016).

en into account its optical or orthographic status, which tells a different story from the standard “art history” of icons and their conventions.

### *Orthography of the dipintura*

Orthography in drawing/painting is the use of geometric and secondary references to the analogy of the picture plane as a “cut” dividing the space of the drawing (content) and the space of the spectator. Like the stage and auditorium of a theater, the two spaces presuppose each other, and presuppose the alternation between active and passive modalities that require one space to “remain silent” while the other is active. In the theater, this alternation is cued by the rising and lowering curtain, and the lowering of house lights when the stage is lit for performance. In a painting or drawing, the theater’s emphasis on silence translates into the metaphor of a viewpoint, sometimes called a station point, an imaginary position idealized as the geometric frontal counterpart to the frame’s (usually) rectangular bounding of the representational “event.” In two-dimensional works using perspective, the actual position of the viewer can vary considerably without affecting the perspectival illusion. The eyes of a portrait, for example, continue to track the observer as he/she moves around the space in front of the work.

When the drawing or painting depicts depth, the space beyond the cut of the picture plane seems to invite the viewer into its fiction. As Mikel Dufrenne puts it, quoted in part in Chapter 4, “Thus the witness, without leaving his post in physical space, penetrates into the world of the work ... we may say that the meaning penetrates him, so close is the reciprocity of subject and object. In front of a figurative painting, I am *with* the characters represented: I am *in* Caneletto’s city or *under* Ruysdael’s oak.”<sup>3</sup> This transference would not be possible without the cut’s function as a transformative passageway of emigration and immigration of ontology and sensuality. Alberti’s analogy of the picture plane as a window looking out on a scene falls short of the mark. The cut mediates spaces where spectating and representing charge this transfer. It is not the same if the room and the landscape outside have the same status. Dufrenne’s reciprocity means that the cut is orthographic *and* orthopsychic. The way objects that touch the picture plane are immediately granted a scale uniformity becomes a means of redefining the viewer’s relation to the representational space.

We can witness this scale uniformity easily when the picture plane cuts directly through an object in the pictorial space. Here, the graphic cut is translated into an imagined cut through the materiality of the object itself. Everything intersected by the cut can be measured uniformly, whatever the scale may be. If the section cut is the main content of the drawing, then the drawing’s geometric properties can be directly transferred to a reconstruction of the cut object, just as an architectural plan or elevation presents transferable scaled measurements and is, on this account, called a “working drawing.” This transferability has a radical effect on the role of the point of view or “station point.” Rather than specifying a fixed point projected as intersecting the middle of the framed view, the orthographic “eye,” must move across the orthographic surface, hovering as it were above each point, maintaining a right angle relationship. The eye is equally present to every point of the object cut by the section plane.

This “omnipresence” is a reversible effect. Whenever space is cut by an orthographic plane, the viewer is ontologically present, orthographically, at each and every point on the plane. This is the effect of cinema’s

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<sup>3</sup> Mikel Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, trans. Edward Casey (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1978), 57.

(and theater's) so-called "fourth wall," the plane at which the spectator is invited to be invisibly inside (and not just "looking at") the represented space, in what Dufrenne specifies as immediate presence. Without this presence, there is no transfer, no reciprocity; and without the transfer there is no presence.

This perhaps over-detailed preamble is necessary to show how Vico consciously applies the idea of a section cut, with its corollary functions of presence and transference. His orthographics (sectionality) is prerequisite for the orthopsychic transfer he cites elsewhere as essential to the reading of *The New Science*.<sup>4</sup> The *dipintura* offers the reader a graphic preview of this transfer, specifying how the primal scene shown by the image, cut by a fourth wall, transfers the viewer into the midst of the mythic mentality, where detached and skeptical viewing must be foresworn in exchange for an interior "in," "under," and "with." From the inside, perspectival distance gives way to the orthographic "divine line" that travels from the eye peeking through the rosette of clouds, along the pure interior cut Vico associated with *cælum*, etymologically both heaven and a wedge. This, he notes in his *Autobiography*, is the Latin *animus* or mind, penetrating the *anima* or spirit. The activity vs. passivity of the image and its viewers is reconstructed inside the image itself, as this orthographic cut into the perspectival reality of human life, a line of authority that initiates the sciences of divination.

The line cuts through space, reflects off the jewel on the breast of Metafisica who, appropriate to her name and role, surmounts a sphere representing the physical world. It is not a terrestrial globe but a celestial one. Metafisica is positioned between Leo and Virgo. Leo refers to the practice of cutting swidden clearings to view celestial signs and connect religion to fixed locations. Virgo signifies the merger, in the first mentality, of the divine with the earthly, the universal with the particular. Objects were radically objective in the sense that they were the material basis for an authority held to reside within them and within their appearances. Nature in general was a divine sign system. There was no tension or distinction *between* the object's materiality and its "spirit content," in that the intensification of objective materiality was at the same time a condensation of its hypothetical divine substance. Methods of intensification were ritualized and invariant. Divination's methodology was concurrent with the "content" it aimed to disclose. This was the meaning of Virgo as embodied by the Golden Age, "when gods were believed to dwell on earth."<sup>5</sup>

From Metafisica's reflecting jewel, the orthographic ray proceeds to illuminate a statue of Homer, the first poet, symbolizing that the first human mentality was "poetic." As Lacan would put it, the signifying chain is modulated by metaphor and metonymy, the logic of replacement and the logic of (absent) meaning "resonating from a distance."<sup>6</sup> Where Lacan follows Roman Jacobsen's typology of metaphor and metonymy, Vico could be said to use metonymy as a cut, metaphor as a lateral exchange. Hercules, in slaying the Nemean Lion, takes on the powers of the Lion, the representative "monster" that had, in turn, taken on the powers of the Nemean Forest's domain. Just as the domain could be embodied and replaced by its representative beast, that same beast could, by the logic of substitution, be slain and "repurposed."

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<sup>4</sup> Vico, *New Science*, §345: "Thus the proper and consecutive proof here adduced will consist in comparing and reflecting whether our human mind, in the series of possibilities it is permitted to understand, and so far as it is permitted to do so, can conceive more or fewer or different causes than those from which issue the effects of this civil world. In doing this the reader will experience in his mortal body a divine pleasure as he contemplates in the divine ideas this world of nations in all the extent of its places, times and varieties." This is Vico's "orthopsychic proof of (and with) the body," a transfer of the writing of *The New Science* to the reader.

<sup>5</sup> Vico, *New Science*, §3.

<sup>6</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Formations of the Unconscious* ...

But, it was metonymy that best explained the logic of the orthogonal cut initiated with the first mentality's apprehension of the sky in a moment of fright. Here, the lesson of the section drawing is in the best position to teach us the meaning of this moment. The cut in effect shatters the perspectival distance represented by the metaphor of the forest. The forest is a contiguity of linked spaces, fully filled with trees that limit any extension of view. Contiguity is a logic of touch, lacking in the function of the indicative gesture (the point), which is able to specify content generally. The "look there!" of the indicative gesture means that one viewer can see something completely different from another viewer but still claim that there is a potential for consensus. The indicative gesture is a "place-holder," a complete break from the grasping gesture it so closely resembles. The pointing finger radically breaks from the grasp. Like the section drawing, it specifies an orthographic relation to "each and every element" in a uniform viewer-viewed relation.

This move from perspectival contiguity to a "cut mentality," simultaneously re-positions the viewer in an orthopsychic relationship to a content that is indicated but not fully specified. Nature's phenomenological content thus reveals a fundamental and radical *lack*. This lack motivates the first humans to supplement perceptual evidence with ritual procedures to determine each and every object's "divine" content. Without the cut's re-positioning of the viewer's eye as an orthogonal presence, there would be no impetus to develop any science of augury and, hence, in Vico's view, no means of establishing the first institutions from which all subsequent civilization would be based.

The *dipintura* tells this story. The fourth wall of the image is found internally, as the orthographic slice made by the divine eye and its reflection off the jewel on Metafisica's breast. This *animus*-line impregnates the human material world with the poetic binary, metonymy and metaphor, absence/resonance and substitution. The altar and its objects represent the water and fire common to both weddings and funerals, in that both relate to the specificity of spirit to soil and the locational problem of Prometheus. The first communities are called Cyclopean because each small human group is tied to the worship based around a single hearth, where the brides and daughters of the household serve as "priestesses of Hestia" who, like the Vestals of Rome, could not be allowed contact with the public world. To allow for the exogamy that would allow Cyclopien cultures to evolve into exchange economies, a fiction had to be employed that would demonstrate to the ever-watchful ancestral dead, that the bride was unwilling. Shrouds and veils created the fiction that the bride had died; that her body was paralyzed was shown by the custom of carrying her over the threshold into the domain of her husband's hearth. The Promethean paralysis was overcome by devices of invisibility and blindness.

#### *The optics of the dipintura*

The frontispiece is like Lacan's mirror stage. It is an optical event, which is to say that the ocularity of the image is properly optical *by being an event*. The image makes itself available for inspection at our leisure. We look here, look there; we wonder about the iconography of this object, that placement. This is ocularity that is architectural. The image is like a room one enters and, after a brief visit, exits. I use the word optics in a different sense. This is the glance, the immediate frontal confrontation of the viewer with the viewed, as in the French expression, *jeter une trompe l'oeil* — to "throw" a blow of the eye *at* something. The head-on collision of viewer and viewed produces the orthogonality essential to the idea of the cut of the fourth wall. The eye is not wandering around the "room" of the ocular image; rather, it hurls itself with equal force at every point along the surface of the section cut. The viewer's orthography is then a 1:1 match of the image's orthopsychic truth.

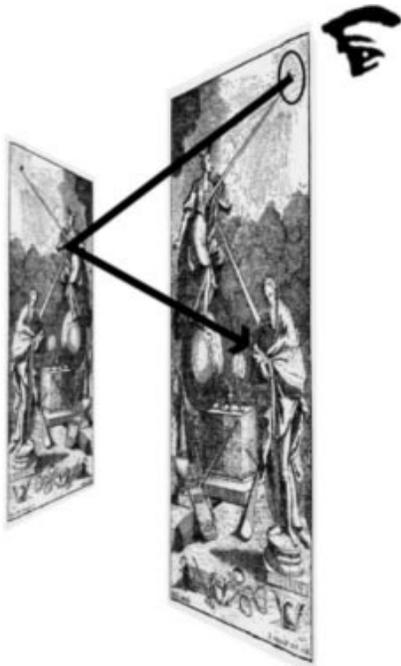


Figure 2. In this *ersatz* conjecture, Vico's *dipintura* is the secondary evidence of a primary encounter with a mirrored image where a reversed graphic is fixed to the inside of a board on the viewer's side of a box. The eye-piece coincides with the location of the divine eye in the image, and the zig-zag shown in the image retroactively recalls to the viewer his/her own situation, of viewing a mirror image. The box's rhomboid shape presents the image as a perfect rectangle, anamorphically correcting the quadration otherwise foreshortened by the eye's position at the top of the box.

death”:

In the lesson entitled “The atopia of Eros,” Lacan talked about the vigour with which Socrates defend the idea of immortality, and he used this as an entry to question the very foundation of Socrates' desire: it is unclassifiable, it cannot be situated (*est nulle part*). Secondly, he suggested that this atopia of desire coincides with a topical purity in the sense that it flags the pure space “be-

There is an *ersatz* experiment that, in its disdain for the traditional ways of looking at this image of Vico's, reveals one key point. IMAGINE — that the image on the page shows what a viewer sees when looking into a closed box whose interior surface opposite the eye's viewing-hole is a mirror. The surface on the viewer's side holds the image we see as the *dipintura*, but engraved in reverse, which is to say, engraved as all engravings are, reversed from the printed image. The mirroring of the image in the interior of the box reproduces the engraving process.

The box is constructed as a trapezoid that corrects the squareness of the image so that the eye will see a perfect rectangle even though its viewpoint is from the top of the image. This creates an uncanny effect, cancelling the perspectival expectation that the bottom of the image will, because it's furthest from the eye, diminish. The correction graphically “repairs” the rectangle, so the status of the image in the box is literally ortho-graphic.

The viewer realizes without too much mystery about it that his/her eye is featured as a constitutive element of the image. It is the “divine oculus” shown inscribed by a triangle and circle in the upper left of the *dipintura*. In effect, the “last eye” of the viewer becomes the “first eye” of human mentality. The relation of the optical eye to the clearings in the forest, which are also called “eyes,” becomes immediately clear. The forest now has empty places, places *emptied out*. This resonates with the story of how the image got into *The New Science* text in the first place. A letter condemning the behavior of Carlo Lodoli, who had reneged on his promise to support the publication of this edition was withdrawn, leaving empty pages. The printed pages are the forest, the image now appears in the ones left empty. The image is an eye in the forest, a lipogram.

At this point, I would make an “orthopsychic” connection to Lacan. Katrien Libbrecht observes that “Lacan's glosses on the position of Socrates in Plato's *Symposium* provide two indications for the position of the analyst: the atopic nature of desire and the desire for/of

tween the two deaths” and the empty place of desire. Put differently, Socrates’ desire is purified to such an extent that all that is left of it is its place.<sup>7</sup>

This is extraordinary. The entire basis of psychoanalysis is a place that is held open (empty) so that there can be a *transfer* of desire from the patient to the Other. “Holding open” — the lipogram’s essence — is Vico’s strategy in aligning this instructive image with the second place of human consciousness (the first place being the sky). Sky and “eye” in the forest correspond to the ocular mirror-box and the viewer’s eye that orthographically confronts the image as if it were an Other (in the mirror) and not on the viewer’s side of things, where the viewer’s eye provides the key element. The box holds open this *moment* of optics, this glance when the viewer suddenly takes in the idea of the empty place(s) simultaneously with the recognition that the divine eye/I is none other than his/her own (*eigen*). The moment is fused by this possession that is, properly, a *re-possession*, the recovery of what was momentarily lost when the image was alienated by the mirror.

The zig-zag line cutting through the *dipintura*’s space, from the divine oculus to Metafisica’s jewel, to the statue of Homer, is a reflection of the box-viewer’s own zig-zag “moment” of apprehension once the divine eye is realized to be his/her own. The *orthos* is the 1:1 match of viewer to viewed, the viewer being shown the genesis not only of human mentality but his/her own present encounter with that genesis. As Vico claimed, his universal formula for the emergence of successive stages of discourse (mythic, heroic, modern), the ideal eternal history, applied not just to the large-scale view of human history but to any object or act whatsoever, including the mind of the modern who, unable to conceive the logic of myth, is yet able to confront it directly to, literally, “see for him/herself.”<sup>8</sup>

### *The reflected ceiling diagram*

There is, in this ersatz experiment, one major complication. There is no account, no justification, of why the *dipintura* should be viewed within the interior of a forced-perspective box on a mirrored face reflecting an image that incorporates the viewer’s eye playing the part of the image’s divine eye. This account is unavailable unless we access another conventional architectural drawing type: the “reflected ceiling diagram.” This is a standard orthogonal drawing that shows the ceiling of interior spaces as if they were reflected on a mirror on the floor. However, the reflected image is not viewed from a single point. Like the section drawing, the viewpoint is “omnipresent” — orthogonally placed so that each point of the diagram will be correct to scale.

In effect, the viewer inside a room has been removed to a position above the ceiling. The ceiling has become simultaneously transparent and opaque. As opaque, it reflects itself in the mirror on the floor. As transparent, it offers the exiled viewer a place to stand and, at the same time, move around so that the eye can be orthographically placed above each and every point of the reflected image, “squaring it up” in the same way that the image inside the Vico-box is squared up by the rhombus shape of the box.

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<sup>7</sup> Katrien Libbrecht, “The Original Sin of Psychoanalysis: On the Desire of the Analyst,” in *Key Concepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, ed. Dany Nobus (New York: Other Press, 1999), 80–81.

<sup>8</sup> Vico, *New Science*, §349. In a pivotal passage, Vico compares the ideal eternal history to the “modifications of the reader’s own mind” as a means of proving its truth. History is what it is because human mentality is what it is — emergent, with a necessary sequence.

There are two negations: the ceiling is shown backwards and from an “upside-down” point of view. In the everyday use of the reflected ceiling diagram, this allows the contractor to locate accurately the placement of lighting fixtures, vents, sprinklers, and other devices located on the ceiling. The contractor does not look up at the ceiling, rather he/she looks down as if the ceiling were on the floor, supine. The double negation seems to recollect the double negation of the unconscious. Consciousness works by means of binary distinctions: high/low, true/false, inside/outside, etc. Here, each polar term negates the other. But, the unconscious is unable to recognize this polarity. In effect, it “negates the negation.” By analogy, the unconscious puts itself in the graphic position of a reflected ceiling diagram. Psychically, it *vacates* the space of

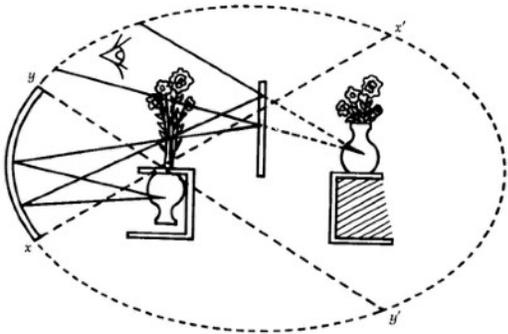


Figure 3. The analogy of the reflected ceiling diagram is justified by Lacan’s own use of the eye displaced from its “natural standpoint” to create monstrous optical combinations involving two (doubly negating) mirrors. The concave mirror corresponds to Vico’s celestial carapace (the skull of Jove through which Athena emerges in parthenogenic birth, fully armed); the flat mirror corresponds to Metafisica’s jewel, in effect, the Imaginary that the eye takes to be, as image, representative of the object itself. If the image is rotated 90° clockwise, it nearly duplicates Vico’s *dipintura*, with the revealing logic, supported by evidence from all sources, that divine signs are regarded as “monsters.” In this case the vase/flower combination is a negation of the negation (the inverted vase and upright flowers).

representation in the same way that the Vico-box requires the viewer to vacate the space of viewing so that the image’s *interiority* can be externalized. This, too, uses the logic of a reflected ceiling diagram.

But, we have it on good advice from Lacan that “emptied out place” enables a transfer of desire to the Other created by consciousness. This is Vico’s finding as well: clearings made in the forest empty out places where the Other — the first universal created out of the fright of thunder — is now in possession of the economies of desire. The earth is the mirror/floor of the reflected ceiling diagram, the sky is the ceiling, both transparent, blue, and clear (ether) and opaque (the contraction of Jove behind the carapace of astrological signifiers). The layers of this universe created in the first moments of human consciousness would slide across each other, just as Lacan’s signifiers and signifieds do, were it not for the “quilting points” established by the clearings, which ground the lipograms functionally and geographically. The ethnographic marker of these is the hearth, the cyclopean *points-de-capiton* where ritual locates with uncanny precision the positions of observation of the sky *as if* seen through an optic of double negation. As Vico says about the Virgo designating the Golden Age, the first humans did not distinguish particulars from universals. Gods were present *on the earth*, making earth the mirror reflection of the sky.

Cultures offer the confirmation of this in the practices that established the worship of the first (ancestral) gods, the *manes*, at the family hearth. The officiants were women, specifically women held to the standard of virginity, “married to the flame.”<sup>9</sup> To be able to quilt the sky to the earth, the priestesses of Hestia (= “hearth”) had to preserve their faithfulness to the flame representing the *manes*, orthopsychically buried in the earth in the corrective position of the “sec-

<sup>9</sup> Numa Denis Fustel de Coulange, *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (Kitchener, ON: Botache Books, 2001), 22–23.

ond death.” To be unfaithful to the flame, to abandon the hearth, would loosen the chthonic spirits and endanger the living. The Promethean mandate forbade the abandonment of the swidden “eyes” in the forest and their counterpart, the grounded hearth. Failure to do this would undermine the authority of the auguries that were the basis of the first laws of the cyclopean family, each tied to its own hearth, its own virginal brides of the flame.

The ethnographic/anthropological connection is essential to make sense of the Promethean component of location and the emptiness of the first sites of human psycho–theological reasoning, where emptiness was essential to the reception of signifiers metonymically resonating from an indeterminate Elsewhere. Lacan’s presence in Vico cross-correlates other particulars of this lipogrammatical function. The reflected ceiling diagram analogy reveals another “secret” of the *dipintura* and, simultaneously, Lacan’s own versions of orthography. If Prometheus represents the “locational problematic” of cyclopien religions (locational immobility; prohibition against exogamy), he also points to the solutions. As is well documented, when clans or communities relocated, they carried soil with them to establish the new hearth. And, as mentioned before and equally well documented, brides could defect from their paternal hearthside duties if they feigned death or otherwise demonstrated unwillingness. Carrying the bride across the threshold and shrouding her in veils blinded the *manes* to the reality of the situation. A raped virgin could pass the test; and in ancient usage, “rape” referred generally to any abduction.

The difference between ocularity and optics is clear. The latter affords transference, the way Dufrenne describes it (“so close is the reciprocity of subject and object [that in] front of a figurative painting, I am *with* the characters represented: I am *in* Caneletto’s city or *under* Ruysdael’s oak”). It is of no small interest that the fourth–wall aspect of the *dipintura* qualifies its picture plane as a section cut, corrected by the zigzag internal flash–fold emanating from the divine eye and, in the Vico–box, squared up by the rhomboid flare of the bottom. With transference, the orthographic results in orthopsychics: a 1:1 facing across which it would be impossible to designate what is inside, what is outside; what is representing, what is represented. In other words, the optics of transference returns to a doubly-negated status of primal terms, or “contronyms.” This in essence is the logic of Vico’s most famous dictum, *verum ipsum factum* — that the true and the made are convertible. The exact meaning of this slogan has been thoroughly debated, but the orthographic function makes it clear that the true and the made are embedded within each other to the extent that it is one coin with two sides. Another way of approaching the issue would be in terms of the cross–inscribed basic positions of the uncanny which, according to Ernst Jentsch, equate the deceased who does not know he/she is dead with the living person fleeing from death, in shorthand,  $D_A$  and  $A_D$ . Vico’s version might be  $V_F$  and  $F_V$ . “There is no truth that is not constructed” nor is there “anything made that does not reveal a concealed truth.” The former is “less than” truth conceived as pure concept or relational condition; the latter is “greater than” what at first appears to be material artifice. The  $><$  winks back at us, just as we squint through the tiny eye–piece that, on the other side, appears as the Eye of God.



## Appendix C / Secondary Places, a Borgesian Lexicon



Figure 1. Owen Nichols, *untitled*, ca. 1999. The gender-ambiguous masked (?) figure resembles Tiresias, member of the clan of Cadmus and, hence, capable of not only predicting the future but making the future come about. This portrait's "half blindness" justifies a comparison to Borges' own affliction and sums up the idea that prophecy sees more by seeing less, that the squint (><) combining more-than and less-than focuses on what is there but not there. what can be known without being known (*kensosis*).

True was the Made, at first exiled and forced to travel, then returning, as Odysseus to Ithaca, to correct things in a reign of terror and havoc — the phantasmagoria. The secondary is exiled by being second, but its subordination is its salvation: preservation through exile. Out of sight, both blind (as an automaton) and invisible (in the æther, the *cælum*), it dwells in the kind of memory that Simonides specified with his golden ratio between life and death, a series of two's, one living and one dead, who finally are to meet the mnemonicist out in the street but, appropriately, don't show up.

The theory of the secondary, to avoid scrutiny, pretends to little more than a card trick. Ricky Jay, it is said, once was stopped by a guest at a party just as he was leaving, in a drunken state. Why, the equally

One may envision some decades hence a Borges encyclopaedia ... the work of a group of people devoted to the annihilation of the external universe and its replacement with a universe made by a human being, with its own inevitable logic and order.

— Daniel Balderston, *The Literary Universe of Jorge Luis Borges*<sup>1</sup>

The adjective "Borgesian" has a built-in marker, like the die used in litmus paper used to test acidity. When the final stage of conversion predicted in his short story, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," is finally realized, the universal public of the book that began as an ersatz experiment supposing the existence of a fictional universe based on a reversal of space's solid substance and time's flow for spatial flow and temporal substantiality, "Borgesian" would become "borgesian" — so acceptable that the relation to the flesh-and-blood author could be forgotten.<sup>2</sup>

The secondary's fictional apotheosis was elaborated by Borges' short story, so it is only fitting to return to that short story's premise to finish up this account of secondariness. *Within every person, place, thing, and idea there is another person, place, thing and idea that lurks within the shadows of the negative.* The negative serves as a protective coating, just as denial, in the protests of the analysand in psychoanalysis is said to conceal the unconscious's fundamental truths. The analysand has *made* these truths without thinking about them, the unconscious has preserved them by means of its irreversible mechanisms, and the whole kit-and-ka-boodle (my favorite meroism). This is Vico's principal connection to the Freudian unconscious and, hence, Lacan, the idea that the

<sup>1</sup> David Balderston, *The Literary Universe of Jorge Luis Borges: An Index to References and Allusions to Persons, Titles, and Places in his Writings* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).

<sup>2</sup> The short story "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" was first published in the Argentine journal *Sur*, May 1940.

drunken guest complained, hadn't the famous slight-of-hand magician performed any of his famous card tricks. Jay thereupon drew a deck of cards from his coat pocket, glared at the importuning drunk and asked him to think of a card, any card. The drunk said "three of hearts." Jay then threw the deck into the room, scattering the cards. Then Jay said, "look in the wine bottle." The drunk looked over to a table in the distance where Jay had pointed and saw an empty bottle of wine, went over to it, and retrieved a playing-card, rolled up and stuffed into the bottle's neck. Of course, it was the three of hearts.

The trick of course was simple. During the party, Jay had deposited cards from another deck in various spots — in between pages of books, under plates, beneath carpets, behind photographs.<sup>3</sup> His method of memory places, like Simonides', transformed the place into a "palace of recall" — a secondary space within the primary one that was visible to everyone in the ordinary way. Once the importuning drunk made his "demand" (a Lacanian demand in a very instructive sense), Jay was able to produce the corresponding *jouissance* of desire by knowing just what it was the guest was demanding — not the easily satisfied request to produce the card, but the *unsatisfiable* void of mystery. This is why magicians not only allow skeptics into their midst but require, of any audience, that they *not believe in magic*. A believer will demand magic but not be able to receive it; the skeptic, in denying that magic exists, will demand some object or outcome and, when it is substituted by an imposter, receive what he/she was *really* asking for, namely the un-suppliable, the impossible — the magical.

This is the formula for magic: >< as the magician's instructions to those who would ask for the impossible, <>. For those who would wish their eyes to be open, the magician always knows how to blind them so that just a glimmer of sight is left.<sup>4</sup> The palindromic heat of friction created by <> and >< rubbing together — the drunken guest's demand and the drunken guest's desire — will always be the contronymic heat of blindness and insight, forgetting and prophecy. In other words, magic "exists" but not in the sense that magic tricks present themselves, as "nothing more than" illusions created by practical skill. This is the fictional and therefore false sense of *factum*, the artificial as forgery, fake. The negative is the portal, this is Lacan's and Vico's message of where the true (*il vero*) comes from, how it "arrives" from a past that constructs itself.

The more-than and less-than is thus always a portal and, simultaneously, a treasury, made to be robbed, emptied, raped. Any sack or pillage cannot fully negate this negative place. It is the perpetual virgin who is "there to be ravished," a void that is void because it is eternally voided. The daughter of the hearth does not want to offend the *manes* she attends in the cuisine-worship of the Cyclopean household. She feigns rape to indicate her non-complicity in marriage, her eternal resistance to being the spouse in another paternal domain. Her virginity is purified with every violation, because each instance compounds this denial, this ruse, this refusal to give permission (and the subsequent contradiction of the sexual act). The trick is "as old as Hades" because, in effect, it is Hades itself. The <> of the hearth becomes the >< of

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<sup>3</sup> This story comes from Mark Singer's article, "The Secrets of the Magus," *The New Yorker* (April 5, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> "Body loading," the pick-pocket's trick of anesthetizing spatio-temporal zones around the body of the mark so that the (Hermetic) thief may enter (>) and exit (<) at will is the essence of this substitution of invisibility for blindness. Just as the void between < and > becomes convertible, the "non-space" of the void becomes a treasury and, hence, the secondary place that the gangster John Dillinger suggested in his answer to the question of why he robbed banks, replied "that's where the money is." The simplicity of the answer reveals the stupidity of the question, and engages the enthymemic idiocy of all questions, i. e. that they contain their own answers. Thus, the enthymeme is a treasury that, like all banks, is there to be robbed by, specifically, any and all hermetic thieves.

the dead, the non-compliance in the face of the *manes*' unreasonable demand for virginity that converts to the squint, wink, and blink of those who do not realize they are "dead already" — the other we imagine to survive the first death and are not yet properly settled in the miasmatic space of the Other, a path that is "wandering itself." Johnstonian travel has defined this space in a way that makes the conversion of demand to desire evident. The traveler doesn't get what *He* wants — She (as Psyche, as the *feminized* traveler) gets *what She needs*, that is, *desire itself*.

The Borgesian encyclopedia follows the logic of the famous definition Borges gave of a certain Chinese encyclopedia that, saturated by Taoism, violated the categories it proclaimed as immutable, animals that were

1. those that belong to the Emperor,
2. embalmed ones,
3. those that are trained,
4. suckling pigs,
5. mermaids,
6. fabulous ones,
7. stray dogs,
8. those included in the present classification,
9. those that tremble as if they were mad,
10. innumerable ones,
11. those drawn with a very fine camelhair brush,
12. others,
13. those that have just broken a flower vase,
14. those that from a long way off look like flies.

A partial encyclopedia of secondary places, itself secondary, will be an incomplete and hence unsatisfactory attempt to "exemplify" in the face of the demand to produce the impossible, namely definition by example. This lexical idiocy would hold that a dictionary is the place to go for meanings, without bothering to mention that the internal circularity/circulation of meaning is economy of self-contradiction, where meaning is lost only to be "found" when the original demand is reflected to itself, but seen in the mirror as a face-to-back instance (Magritte's *Not to Be Reproduced*). The Taoism of the fictional Chinese encyclopedia is the *vero* of the fake/*factum* of all invention that, in the memorable advice of Mick Jagger: "you can't always get what you want ... you get what you need."

### *The places*

The following entries are not in any particular order, although it may seem that, in reading, one entry has suggested something that "follows" it. If such beliefs propel reading, who am I to say no?

- **frames:** Getting the right frame for the right picture is always important, but the point is that any frame can be replaced. It, like detached virtuality, uses the orthogonal relationship between primary and secondary as a token of independence, an X that can change without affecting Y. The art frame is, metaphorically, the frame that primordially separates all viewers from their views, a break in the so-called cone of vision, which can be playfully thought to relocated along the sagittal line of vision. The closer to the viewer, the more "subjective" the view; the closer to the viewed, the more "objective." This

was pushed to the limit by Borges' story of the imaginary country with such a mania for making maps that every object was papered over with a 1:1 representation, as if to say that objectivity can go too far and smother the very thing it desired to reproduce.

- **Shadows and reflections:** They wait for us, around corners where light suddenly springs forth, or in shop windows that report on our passing-by with cruel commentary on our profile. Who doesn't straighten up a bit, or pass a hand through one's hair, or think about what strangers must think?



Figure 2. Unmarked tomb, St. Louis Cemetery No. 1, Rampart Street, New Orleans. Three x's intensify the cipher of the signature used by illiterates, a first, middle, and last name given as a XXX — "whoever." The whoever inside the tomb responds, then, to requests benefiting those who would remember them as pronouns, indicating that the tomb itself is the prototype of all pronouns, a "place-holder."

secondary world. There are three related versions of this kind of virtuality: the story in the story, the contamination of waking life by the dream, and the double. If computer simulations extend primary space-time, simply adding on to the everyday world while allowing for a bit of mischief, mayhem, and fantasy, detached virtuality plays with spatio-temporal rules to make the secondary truly independent. This autonomy is what makes the co-appearance of twins/doubles truly scandalous. The double is the "secondary mirror figure" who, in confronting the primary figure, contests its very reality. In the same way, backward-moving time is an affront to ordinary time's rule against reversibility, the rule that breaks all the rules.

- **Pets:** Any subservient, hopefully friendly and companionable animal is secondary in the sense that the secondary always "serves" the primary. It gives up its will in favor of the master's, but it retains just enough of a sense of character and independent action to show that the service is voluntary and not grudgingly offered. To reverse-conflate this example, all secondariness could be regarded as a pet to the extent of being a "service animal" allowed certain legal protections.

- **Cemeteries, tombs, memorial plaques:** Sites set aside to preserve human remains can be condensed into simple bronze plaques listing names of those lost in this or that war, so the recall of a name amounts to a password to think about the unthinkable. This loss can be intensified when a tomb has lost a name to erosion or vandalism, and in New Orleans' oldest cemeteries, unnamed tombs offer surfaces favored to chalk with Slinky-like spirals, triple x's, and other ciphers to call forth the forgotten spirits who, presumably grateful for the stranger's remembrance, will return the favor with a bit of luck.

- **Backward-moving time:** It sometimes happens that time's generally forward motion is stopped and reversed by a memory, shock, or *déjà vu* experience. Even small, trivial occasions of this are enough to prove the possibility of time travel as a kind of virtuality that "detaches" itself from the rules of ordinary space-time and, like the mirror in Alice's parlor, admits passage into the sec-

- ***Vacation photographs:*** Although no one claims this, it seems evident to those who observe fellow travelers bent on documenting their travels to the point of leaving no time to actually enjoy travel experiences that contradiction is the implicit aim. The vacation experience may be ruined by the mania for creating the secondary archive (which has been reduced to ruin by the continual photographing), but in every case the photograph itself maintains a rhetorical position of subordination: a photograph *of* the wonderful vacation sites and activities. The photography *insists* that it is secondary, even when it has destroyed its object.
- ***Tricks, structures, protocols:*** This grouping of disparate background supports (to magic, to buildings, to activities) is intended to demonstrate the power of the orthogonal independence of efficient and material cause to formal cause. The magician is forbidden to reveal the trick behind the illusion, but in any case he/she can't, because in the magic *act*, the trick is durably, permanently non-existent when the act is working. One thing *or* the other can exist, but not both together. And, clearly although the structure of a building exists alongside, within, and around the useful spaces of a building, it is the result of this supportive role that we experience, not the supporting itself. In the case of protocols, actions have a sequence and hierarchy, thanks to specifications made beforehand, but the protocol, like the frame, can be discarded and replaced in favor of something better. "Let's do it differently next time," is the basis of all cultural variation which has Romans doing it their way, Parisians another, and the traveler fitting in to the best of his/her ability.
- ***The Acropolis:*** Usually thought to be the part of the famous ancient city of Athens, the Acropolis was once one among several settlements. It possibly had the advantage in being able to "specialize" in religious functions and military protection, so groups in other settlements probably made deals to trade their specialized goods for a bit of safety and spirituality. When the communities consolidated, worship around family hearths continued but gave way to the authority of the central, specialized site of the Acropolis, and to placate the family gods, stories had to be told to justify this transition. Athena had to "arise" (from Zeus's skull, metaphor for the carapace of the sky) just as the Acropolis had to "stand out" from the collection of communities.
- ***The Ship of Theseus:*** Have it your way. One contains two in the sense that it is the beginning of the system of counting and one knows what comes next. Or: two contains one in that it's succeeded the solitary, joined its friend who was before sitting with a coffee and cognac. For one to *be* one, it identifies with itself, and that's *two* sides of the coin. In the famous (at least since Plato) problem of the Ship of Theseus, there were two ships all along: "The ship wherein Theseus and the youth of Athens returned had thirty oars, and was preserved by the Athenians down even to the time of Demetrius Phalereus, for they took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their place, insomuch that this ship became a standing example among the philosophers, for the logical question of things that grow; one side holding that the ship remained the same, and the other contending that it was not the same" (Dryden translation). But, in the sense that materiality is always in a Lucretian flow, always dynamic, can it ever be said that the material cause that holds the ship together and formal cause that makes it look like Theseus's ship are the same? The replacement part-by-part is a continuation of an economy of flow. The ship is a "standing wave" in a Lucretian river, a form through which material flows. The sorites of the process comes about as a moment of anxiety. The material is not the ship ... but ... ? The pile of the sorites could be regarded to be the heap of discarded parts to the side of the boat-yard. At

some point their formlessness speaks to the issue. There are two boats, two poles of sense. There were always two boats, even before the first part was replaced.

- **The two Acropolises:** To preserve the famous tourist destination, Greek preservationists have devised a ship-of-Theseus solution of their own. A museum designed by the famous architect Bernard Tschumi encloses a climate-controlled space where fragments of the Parthenon are relocated in the same approximate position as they had in the original building. This second Parthenon will, if one carries the trend forward in a thought experiment, eventually house the whole original building, leaving behind concrete place-holders. Like the Ship of Theseus problem, what happens to the idea of form, identity, and original? Unless the first Parthenon was complete in any single instant, there were always pairing of sites, sources, and copies.
- **Intermissions at the opera:** When visiting a far-away city of any size and sophistication, it's instructive to dress up and go to a musical performance, preferably an opera. In many European cities, theaters are often restored historical buildings that give one the idea of what the golden age of opera was like, and in some micro-locales, the golden age is still going on. The opera performance inside the auditorium is primary. The secondary activities include: arriving with some style and grace, strolling around during the intermissions, and artful interplays of social space maneuvers while trying to find the restrooms. The secondary in this case supplies important supplements to the "tone" of the opera experience: seeing people of various ages, well dressed in most cases, some practicing the art of being alone when most come as couples or larger groups.
- **A determinative:** also known as a "taxogram" or "semagram," determinatives is an ideogram used to mark semantic categories of words (usually in logographic scripts) to disambiguate interpretation. Although determinatives may come from glyphs for actual words, they have no direct counterpart in spoken language. Egyptian hieroglyphic determinatives include symbols for people, divinities, body parts, animals, plants, books, and abstract ideas. These helped in reading, but none of them were pronounced. They were like ghosts hovering between writing and speaking.

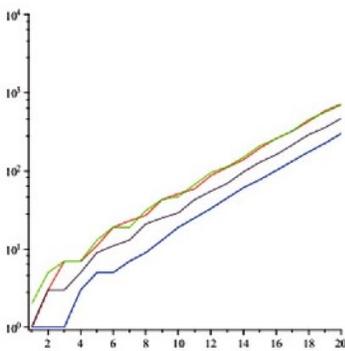


Figure 3. Mathematician John Conway's "look and say" sequence leads to a constant.

• **Look and say sequences:** The mathematician John Conway was challenged by some students in his seminar who asked him to determine the basis for the following sequence of numbers: 1, 11, 21, 1211, 111221, 312211, 13112221, 1113213211 ... Any child might have told him, in candor, that each successive number is produced by saying, literally, what one sees. Looking at the number one and saying what one sees is to say "I see one 1." Writing that down, the next look sees two 1's, the next sees one 2 and two 1's ... and so on. Also known as the Morris Numbers Sequence, Conway called his version the "audioactive" sequence and determined that, amazingly, this combination of primary designations (the numbers as such) with secondary features (what they look like) leads to a constant, named "Conway's Constant," the slope of a curve representing the frequency of numbers generated. The idea that combining primary and secondary features of numbers relates to Cantor's famous sequence of palindromic fractions "representing" the idea of the transfinite, in particular the last line of the base-10 numbers, 1/9, 2/8, 3/7, 4/6, 5/5, 6/4, 7/3, 8/2, 9/1. One 9, two 8's, and so on produce a

pyramid with a single numeric peak (9) and a base of 1's on the bottom. Any triangular piece of this pyramid (e. g. 4, 33, 222, 1111) has as many ones as the apex enumerates, and is a kind of fractal residing within Cantor's idea of the transfinite.

- **Alcestis:** Is the Conway sequence different, really, from the algorithm involved in Euripedes' comic farce, *Alcestis*? Isn't Admetus the primary who asks the cultural secondary, his wife, to substitute for him in death, meeting the condition imposed by Apollo in exchange for immortality? Isn't "immortality" the mythic equivalent of the mathematical constant? And, isn't the result also "transfinite," condensed into the farcical moment when Herakles presents Admetus with a new bride who is really Alcestis disguised in a shroud that Admetus mistakes for a veil?
- **Dipintura:** The image Vico substituted for the letter detailing the perfidy of the Venetian architectural theorist Carlo Lodoli purifies the essence of the secondary. The letter was secondary in the first place, its withdrawal was a "secondary of a secondary," and the replacement of this empty space with an image that itself involved an object intentionally left out of the commentary (the helmet of Hermes) was the "thrice-sufficient secondary" putting Vico on the plane of Hermes Trismagistus. At this level of three secondaries, a pure spark jumps between Vico's *dipintura* and Lacan's own optical automaton, if we rotate it so that the divine eye takes up the same position as Lacan's intra-spectral viewer, "playing all the parts." The jewel on Metafisica's breast, the inside-out cosmic sphere, and the edge of the plinth making Metafisica have to balance and teeter, just as the scales of Libra must on their fulcrum, emphasizes the role of anamorphosis and parallax in both of these thinkers. Homerically speaking, the "base is cracked" in Vico's commentary means that not only do we mistake the single Homer for the reversed antonomasia of many Homers (thesis taken from Andrea Battistini's point about Vico's imaginative universal), but that for every lipogrammatical pronoun, "Homer," there will be many talented rhapsodes who, on the run from Plato's ideal Republic, will sketch reticular plot lines over the landscape and arrive at every rustic Inn, like the puppet player in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*: a ventriloquist who can speak the truth as long as the Others appear from behind a curtain.
- **Secondary reading, a starter list:** It's only fair to produce a short-list of literature based on the idea of the secondary. Cervantes' *Don Quixote* is undoubtedly the most famous; Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* is perhaps the most witty. Anyone reading Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* would realize that the book the master (modeled after the mathematician-mystic Pavel Florensky) is writing is the main work, the story of the perils and eventual rescue of the text is secondary. In Bulgakov's book, we get no more than a sketchy description of the book; in *Pale Fire* we can read the whole primary, a poem by the author John Shade. An early famous example is Macrobius's *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, the original text written by Cicero. Macrobius continued his secondariness with his equally famous *Saturnalia*, an annotation of the traditions of this upside-down Roman holiday. Nabokov's other famously secondary novel, *Invitation to a Beheading* tells the story of a second-rate narcissistic author whose life and works are a poor duplicate of Nabokov's. The book lists "other books by the narrator." The fake double's *See under Real* (1939), *Esperalda and Her Parandrus* (1941), *A Kingdom by the Sea* (1962), and *Ardis* (1970) are flawed shadows of Nabokov's *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (1939), *The Enchanter* (the 1939 precursor to *Lolita*), *Lolita* (1955), and *Invitation to a Beheading* (1969). In this short list we have the idea of a "generator machine" that, by, creating a flawed look-alike, can be responsible for a plagiarized *opus secundus*.

- **Secondary films, a starter list:** Tom Stoppard's 1966 play and 1990 film, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* has been cited (see "Introduction") as a story fit sideways into a well-known primary (*Hamlet*). But, the device of the story in the story provides a means for any film to have countless diversionary structures that work from the interior to provide alternative points of view, any one of which might have blossomed instead of the main framing tale. The 1945 British thriller, *The Dead of Night*, shows how a simple structure (guests at a house party) can be the basis for spinning off a succession of sub-stories that are not initially required to converge into any logic more common than that they were presented in sequence. The ever-more-present use of sub-plots has made serial dramas a gold-mine of the secondary, and in the U. S. case of *Breaking Bad*, we have not only the four sub-plots involving the lawyer Saul Goodman, the drug *mæstro* Gustavo Fring, the retired corrupt cop Mike Ehrmantraut and the DEA agent and his wife, Hank and Marie Schader, we have the shadow series, *Better Call Saul* that engages several of *Breaking Bad's* plots and characters. But, secondariness can be more subtle. In *Casablanca*, Rick's backwater bar offers a place to play out the primary love affair of Rick and Ilse Lund in Paris. We are reminded that the "backstory" is frequently more important, that it has left-over pieces that must be resolved in a secondary "remedial" story. Sequels are all secondaries (the *Rocky II, III, IV, and V* films seem to exceed all other attempts, to the point where a parody, *Rocky VI* was added by the Finnish filmmaker, Aki Olavi Kaurismäki in 1986). Rather than multiply secondariness into tertiariness, quaternariness, etc., we should adopt the idea of a "sliding secondary" that carries the relation to a primary Ur-work into a series that is limited only by the receptivity of the audience. One thinks of Frank Baum's countless *Oz* adventures or Louis l'Amour's "Sackett series" of wild-west adventure novels. The primary seems to yield, as an idea, to the logical superiority of the secondary sequel, as if the backstory existed only to be carried forward through countless permutations.
- **The death dream:** Like the phrase, "once upon a time," the death dream option posits that what follows is from the subjective point of view of a narrator who has died but not been aware of the fact. The audience's experience thus glides past some point that may or may not be flagged. In the opening of *Rear Window*, for example, the camera surveys the mementos of a race-course catastrophe — broken camera, a "last photo" showing a loose tire hurtling through the air — with the added hint of a magazine cover photo in negative. Even when the camera comes to rest on a the cast of the sports photographer's broken leg, there is an ominous inscription: "Here lie the bones of L. B. Jefferies." Is the story that follows a standard "diegetic" fictional representation, or is it possibly the hallucinatory orthotics of a dying man who, in the few moments left of his life, wishes to correct his mistakes by engaging with a neighbor's murder of his wife, a distillation of his own flawed relation to the institution of marriage? When the death dream option is present in a film, it is a "weak option" that most in the audience will miss. This aligns them with the (possibly) dead narrator's own belief that he is actually alive, actually experiencing the events on screen. This secondary haunts the films diegetic primary to intervene only as a remote hypothesis, all the more artful for its deniability.
- **The death drive:** Where there is a dream there is a drive, and in this case popular culture's elaborations of the death dream in its composite random contingency (think of *Sunset Boulevard*) exempts itself through literary privilege from the troubles Freud faced in articulating this antipode to the pleasure principle. Not until Lacan interlaced the death drive *topologically* with the pleasure principle in his theory of discourse could it be plain as day that the compulsion to return, manifest in the ground of the discourse *matheme* as Truth and in the rotating elements as the *objet petit a*, loss and return constitute the

gapped circle structure that, like the ancient wheel of Fortuna or the modern gambler's roulette, assure *the same* in the face of *the maximally different*. That difference is usually canonical. The wheel divides into roles (the young hero becomes the deteriorating fool) or numbers that "return to a base," such as the Conway Constant or Cantor transfinite. The palindrome subtracts from one what is added to the other. Difference finds the same internally.

- **Churches, synagogues, mosques, etc.:** Social groups use gathering sites to allow for free interaction within the protection of a primary filter that has insured homogeneity. The primary function of religious affiliation affords secondary projects, such as finding a mate, receiving psychological/social support, and confirming political and cultural attitudes. Once the unpredictable, heterogeneous world outside has been effectively neutralized, occupants of this protected internality experience a freedom of thought and behavior that could not be enjoyed in more diverse public settings. The positive experience of this constructed freedom reinforces the confidence that the interior, despite its restrictive codes and conditions, grants its occupants greater opportunities than would be available in the generic outside. This topological reversal is Lacan's extimate, pure and simple.
- **Love:** The kitsch standard for romance puts the sexual act at the apex of a pyramid that can be traced, ultimately, back to the tautology that Abraham Maslow presented as a hypothesis, paralyzing any real critical thinking about the phenomenon of emergence in sociology, psychology, and disaster relief studies. Maslow's basics, food and shelter, correspond to love's kindness and attention. Up from there, things intensify until, after the customary number of required getting-to-know-you encounters, the couple actually "make it." But, as anyone can attest, love doesn't work like that. The apex is empty in its position at the top, thanks to the alienation of the lover's never-well-synchronized fantasies. At the bottom, there is an antipode for the tip-top triangle: an irritant, a grain of sand. Antagonism gets things going, in the form of withdrawals, omissions, misunderstandings. Within the broader context of intimacy developed through language, touch, voice, and visual interaction, love appears as a contronym whose negative is suppressed or repackaged as fear or fright and conceptually joined to the prospect of isolation and alienation. Roland Barthes has provided the encyclopedia for this in his *Lover's Discourse*, but despite his teachings, the Maslovian idiocy endures. Barthes' secondary is the preponderance of pain over pleasure, the domination of singularity over solidarity. This, he suggests, is that we love the evil twin, the less-than-love, the failure of Orpheus, whose more-than-love nonetheless compelled him to look around.



Figure 4. Laura Riding Jackson (1901–1991), poet and supposed inspiration for Robert Graves' universal complex known as the White Goddess.

- **True love:** It could be said that the poet who set out to, for once and for all, address the *interiority* of true love in its full anthropological context, was simultaneously its prince and fool. Robert Graves long and for the most part productive relationship with Laura Riding produced the famous controversial work on love, *The White Goddess*. This re-discovered the formula of the troubadour: the debasement of the lover in the face of an implacable femininity. The tell-tale signs of narcissism were all about. The poet sought the extremity of the feminine through the tangled vines of musical allusion. The structure predicted and necessitated rejection. So, what to make of Riding's rejection of not just the theory but her entire relationship with Graves, from the years in Majorca to New Hope, Pennsylvania, until an acrimonious break-up where Riding was to conclude that,

“As to the ‘White Goddess’ identity: the White Goddess theme was a spiritually, literarily and scholastically fraudulent improvisation by Robert Graves into the ornate pretentious framework of which he stuffed stolen substance of my writings, and my thought generally, on poetry, woman, cosmic actualities and the history of religious conceptions.”<sup>5</sup> The renunciation was in keeping with the theory, however, and Graves, as all lovers, was to find that theory offered no exemptions from the necessary suffering of love. In this sense, the true of true love is the secondary that, produced at first as an “externality” to romantic attraction, becomes the active agent of love that purifies through destruction. Can Lillith–Melusina, with her hook nose and siren voice, be denied her due?

- **True truth:** This lexicon must include just the slightest modest note, that Freud’s revolutionary discovery of the structure and conditional self–exposure of the unconscious depended entirely on his understanding of the *secondary as such*, namely how experience creates a (soretic<sup>6</sup>) garbage dump where can be found, in the spirit of the riddle of the Ship of Theseus, identity in its purest form. And, is it not *secondariness itself* that regulates the transactions of the Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real that deploy negation to destroy what it has made, using destruction in a Shiva–like way to return to truth what was truth, so that *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden* can come to mean, palindromically, that, given that resurrection is not an exception but a necessity, necessity and impossibility are identical?
- **Autoeroticism:** Lacan’s work could be said to have been prefaced with his observation that humans, apart from all other animals, delay maturity. The protraction of the period of parental dependency, from infancy through adolescence, means that the subject, *qua* subject, does not appear until the “mature adult” finalizes the project. But, does this ever occur? Subjectivity, seen as a continually failed project, thus has a permanent non–subjectivity that clings to it in the form of outliers of the “autoeroticism” of pre–subjectivity, characterized by megalomania (the belief in “magical” *loci* of power and an equally magical economy of transfers among them) and extimacy (fluid shifts between subject/object agencies, inside/out framing conditions, and time warps). The make–believe pretending of childhood becomes the narcissistic role identification and fantasy projections of (so–called) adulthood. In other words, the autoerotic never completely vanishes in the bright light of Reason cast on it by adult subjectivity. It is a continually accessed repository of archaic positions the subject may take in relation to objects and other subjects. As such, it is the secondary of subjectivity’s primary; a host–in–reserve that maintains alliances with dreams, traumas, phobias, and delusions.
- **The theological secondary:** Actors who become used to playing parts so effectively that they entirely lose their own “real” personalities attest to the effect of the secondary (the role) becoming primary (more themselves than themselves). David Garrick (1717–1779) was said to have forgotten who he really was; Borges celebrated this moment with his attribution to Shakespeare, upon his presentation to God, complained: “I who have been so many men in vain want to be one man only, myself.” God’s famous reply was that He, like Shakespeare, was everything and nothing. The loss of the primary seems to be the func-

<sup>5</sup> Laura Jackson (Riding), *The Person I Am: The Literary Memoirs of Laura (Riding) Jackson* (Nottingham, UK: Trent Editions, 2011), 70.

<sup>6</sup> By this term, I would indicate that it is the crude material process of *piling up* that creates the conditions in the unconscious requiring analysis as a sorites, the “one grain more” or “one hair less” of accumulation/loss that defies logic *per se* but requires a theory of retroaction.

tion of the secondary: the primary, which is fundamentally unknowable, is *that which is lost into its secondary creations*. In this light, God exists “in retrospect.”

- **Pronouns:** It is easy to forget how much Lacan emphasized the role of place-holders embedded, usually invisibly, in psychodynamic interactions. We are sad; *for whom* are we sad, asked Lacan. We are hysterical; *for whom* are we hysterical, asked Lacan. Without the pronoun inquiry we would be at a loss to explain why the innermost feelings are public (*extimité*) and why the most objective aspect of objects is their seemingly subjective intentionality. The pronouns *who*, *what*, *when*, and *where* set the stage and raise the curtain on subjectivity’s performative dimension. Other pronouns are more subtle. They hold places open, which means that they allow for different layers of meaning to “slide past” each other. At the right moment, a quilting takes place, stabilizing the flow with a *point de capiton*. Pierre Ozon’s film *Frantz* depends on a delicate balance of pronouns that hold open the questions of who was what for whom in a story about a Frenchman who visits a German town after World War I to grieve for his fallen friend, Frantz. Yet, the backstory is never fully disclosed. The Frenchman is a *who* for *what*, no one fully knows.



Figure 5. Ronit Elkabetz (Dina) and Sasson Gabai (Tawfiq) sit side by side in a discussion of love, death, loss, and beauty in Eran Kolirin’s 2007 comedy-drama about an Egyptian police band invited to perform at an Israeli-Egyptian friendship event stranded in a remote town in the Negev. Gabai sets forth a space of demonstration in this “orthographical” scene, where, as in the architectural section drawing, a truth is placed before the eyes in a 1:1 scale match. So, this is love?

- **The Band’s Visit (1):** In a movie by the Israeli director Eran Kolirin, an Egyptian police band, dressed in powder blue uniforms to perform for the opening of an Arabic cultural center, mistakenly goes to the wrong town in the Negev. Residents grudgingly take them in, but their forbearance gradually advances into tentative moments of friendship. There are two worth mentioning in relation to the secondary. The band’s director, played by Sasson Gabai, holds in reserve the story of his son’s alienation and suicide; Dina, played by the Moroccan-Israeli actress Ronit Elkabetz in exchange silences the sadness of her broken marriage. Sitting side by side, she asks the director to show her how he directs, and in the graceful movement of his arms and hands, directing a tune that will play again

at the end of a film (an Egyptian love song), the two fall into a world created in front of them for this purpose, a world where the director’s hand shape a space that is simultaneously intimate and external (hence, *extimate*). Is this space of the Lacanian part-object the space of love? Isn’t the problem of not being able to love the whole woman but only part of her the issue of the secondary? But, also, isn’t the secondary, by a reversal of this conclusion, a place where confessions have been heard and sins forgiven?

- **The Band’s Visit (2):** The second scene where actors are filmed “orthogonally” — side by side so that their interactions work like an architectural section drawing — involves Haled, the band’s handsome trumpet player, who goes along on the date his host has made with a rather homely visiting girl and her

friend. The young host seems to lack any idea of how to flirt, and the girl, made to feel even more awkward when they go to a roller-skating rink, is near to tears. The experienced lover Egyptian must give him direct guidance on how to administer the first gentle touches of intimacy, turning his host into a puppet as he hold and moves his hands to the right places. Again, the scene depends on the construction of a secondary space in which the guidance, which the audience can see clearly, becomes invisible. The “we should not see this going on” (prohibition) converts to the privation of invisibility. We, like the young host and awkward girl, simply block it out.

- **Formal cause:** The space created in front of the actors in *The Band’s Visit’s* “orthographic” scenes, undoubtedly an erotic space *pro*-jected but in a way that defies perspectival projection, cuts the space of viewing with a kind of face-to-face autoerotic puppet show. The faces face each other because the orthographic zone, though secondary, is a thin stage whose thickness grows from the original distinction jointly constructed as an *inter*-vention: “coming from an in-between.” The side-by-side arrangement of the actors acknowledges a presentational facing of the imaginary darkened auditorium of the gaze, a generic “out there.” This is the space from which the Form of the subject is realized. Form is an externality, and externality is orthographically constructed. The Material Cause is in a flow dynamic. It is always in flux, always replacing its old parts with new parts, always adjusting its hair, straightening its wrinkled jacket, flicking away an errant piece of lint. The body-in-pieces, the *corp morcélé*, is not just the retroactively insufficient body of the young subject standing in front of the Mirror Stage’s surprise show; it is the on-going antipode of the Form of the self, the view from the side of objects, other subjects, and (most important) the gaze.
- **Things that can’t be stepped into twice:** There is literally a “fall-out” from this externalization of Formal Cause. It is the accumulating pile of material no longer usable in forming constructions sustaining resistance to the pressure from the Formal Cause. Resistance is a presentational façade. In times of stress, dead soldiers are propped up against the wall to give the appearance of a fully manned fortress. The *corp morcélé* is always a bit disorganized, a bit short-handed. Broken bits of its defense-works have to be carted away, replaced by makeshift substitutes (this is the essence of metaphor). The fort’s constant rebuilding constitutes a Lucretian dynamic, where the face it presents to Form is like a standing wave in a fast-moving stream. It has a shape, but the shape is made up of flowing water, with all of Heraklitus’s conditions to consider. The pile of thrown-away parts is the secondary of the secondary. If, like archaeologists who sift through ancient trash piles, we were to consider the exact nature of breakage, failure, removal, and ejection, we would realize that the pile before us constitutes a precise, detailed record of Formal Cause as *event*. The secret of this pile is that it is the *unconscious* of Final Cause or, more radically, Final Cause as *unconscious*.
- **The space of Eros:** The orthographic scenes of *The Band’s Visit* play out the dynamic of the Final Cause as unconscious, revealing in the first instance (where the restaurant owner Dina sits next to Khaled, the band’s director) how the “pile” of failures, missed opportunities, lost loves, and broken promises are, in truth, the result of an *intentional* drive, the essence of a personal “sin against the self.” Pride, appetite, and all the other “deadly sins” (greed, lust, envy, wrath, sloth), once realized, force a contraction of the *corp morcélé* directly pulls on the space in front of the seated subjects. Confession begs the forgiveness that sucks out a space that is to be filled with Eros. The accurate record of the pile of discards from the defenses of the *corp morcélé* also times the contraction and re-inflation of the orthographic space in

front of the confessors. This “time” is not the literal duration of the scene but the time of retroaction that, by enclosing the present with the realization of the Truth of sin and redemption, simultaneously runs forward and backward. It is the time of the Event, the Efficient Cause, within which Form, Material, and Finality crystalize, and the crystal is an optic, an eye that closes on one scene and opens on another.

- **Poetic gravity:** In the lexicon, independence of one item from others in the list is usually maintained by the alphabet. Armadillos have no logical or historical relation to Abacuses. But, because the Symbolic that is embodied by the lexicon’s serial structure (one signifier *following* another) the flow can suddenly stop in one place and the words rushing forward onto it create a standing wave, a Form within what should be formless. Within the Lucretian regimen, there is turbulence and, within the turbulence, resonance: a white noise that is able to reinforce and amplify other weak signals within the system of signifiers. The alphabet dynamic that has imposed, over the Symbolic’s chains of signifiers flowing in time, an objectivity and independence, now produces a whisper that becomes a voice, a voice that becomes a tone, a tone that enchants the system and a song that sings its truths. The accumulation of negatives, discarded in the project of maintaining appearances at the walls defending the subject against its self-created Other Form, has, in its logic of “one grain more,” in dividing active predicating from passive predicated, specified the tip-top of the pile, the *point* at which the pile is recognized as a structure, a form of the formless, a positive of negatives. Out of the contronymic, a new kind of memory reveals itself, a totalizing palindromic memory of cross-flows whose base value “certifies” each instant as it passes by its negative image, 1/9, 2/8, 3/7 ... Unlike recollection, which gathers bits and pieces of the past to reconstruct a fantasy about what happened, palindromic memory is the present of the past that converts past into the Event of Efficient Cause, shows the Janusian faces of Final Cause (the choices that, in creating a pile of missed opportunities, has mistakenly thought them to be lost forever).  $F=MA$  is not “force is equal to mass times acceleration” but, rather, Form is a construct of Material stained by *a*, the *objet petit a*. Yet, Form is a Force, and the mass of the *corp morcélé’s* soretic discards preserves desire as an *acceleration*, if this is not to romantic a characterization, of heartbeats pushing over on themselves. This is the lexicon’s new order, A/Z, B/Y, C/X ... *fractions* (fractures) always adding up to the same lunar basis, the one letter that *exceeds* the system and, by exceeding, lies outside, where the hands direct the music.

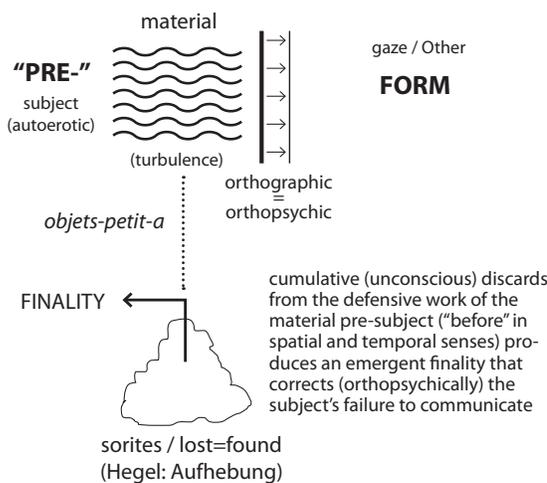


Figure 6. The “pre-subject” is “pre-” in two senses: both (1) historically before the idealized moment of the Mirror Stage, where the autoerotic pre-subject meets for the first time a spectral double, whose superior image relocates the *locus* of authenticity *before* the Other and the Gaze, where the authority of Form constitutes a necessary audience for the pre-subject’s “management of material cause”; and (2) spatially *before* the Other and the Gaze, where the authority of Form constitutes a necessary audience for the pre-subject’s “management of material cause.” The “I” of the ego will thence be exteriorized. As the perpetually pre-subject attempts to manage appearances, discards form a perfect negative image of this process, accumulating losses/lacks in perfect order (palindromically) until the moment of emergence (Efficient Cause) when the orthopsychic relation to the orthographic space defense is made clear.

- **Directionality of the Aristotelian causes:** What does it mean to say that, for the human subject (who is always failing in his/her attempt to be, fully, a subject), *causes* his/her Form by imagining a gaze coming in from an external frontal space, *countered* by an equal and opposite Material Causal force? What does it mean to say that the buffer created between Form and Material Causes is structurally orthographic and “orthopsychically” corrective, as well as potentially erotic? The assignment of vectors to the causes, which may or may not be justified by a Lacanian–Vichian construct, the idea of a “section” plane bisecting subjects and objective Others, seems at first to be an ersatz experimental gesture. So, what of its *Ansatz*, its luck as a “shot in the dark”? They payoff seems at first to be the vectorial identification with the standard left–to–right motion of communication, the Agent–to–Other dynamic of Lacan’s four discourses and the more conventional sender–to–receiver of models related to Shannon and Weaver’s original model. The inherently palindromic quality of this back and forth has not been considered as such; a vectorial involvement of the four causes (Formal, Material, Final, Efficient) reveals that, in the “vertical elements” (noise, context, suppression, resonance, etc.), the involvement of sorites is not just coincidental or casual. The proposed spatiality of the four causes is indeed secondary theoretical ground. The original categories have no sense of spatiality, apart from what is required to imagine the primary temporally consecutive order of cause and effect in each type of cause. Vectors, however, engage a specifically Hegelian dynamic whereby a main action simultaneously engages an orthogonal/independent action as a consequence. This is the meaning of *Aufhebung*, the “cancel–and–preserve” function of dialectic that Lacan carried over into his reading of the Freudian unconscious. And, because *Aufhebung* is secondary by nature, the unconscious in its Hegelian sense is not just secondary but the origin and standard of all secondaries. Finality (intentionality), in Freudian–Lacanian schematics, is a duplex, with a “public” dimension (“*for whom*” is an intention formed?) and an unconscious motive inaccessible to the author of the intention. Efficient cause could be said to have the same spatial bipolarity or, rather, orthogonal fold, allowing movement in a public domain thanks to a suppression of an element, postponing it or making it radically invisible.
- **Bi-directionality of intention and materiality:** The secondary, in the case of motions, aims, and other directional forces, means that you aim forward but shoot sideways. Or, to keep with the firearms metaphor, you have one bullet for the “adversary,” another for the *medium in which* adversity has pitted you opposite someone with a bigger gun and better aim. Bi-directionality is the impulse to shoot the idiotic impertinent television screen or, more passionately, the postman who delivers the letter from your faithless lover. The medium is the message precisely because pretends to be neutral — secondary — but by that very neutrality it has become a *justifying* cause, not just a passive catalyst. Bi-directionality of intention connects the impulses that are directed at specific audiences, our consciousness included, with motives so hidden, so unconscious, that they construct a personal deep–state conspiracy to justify our behaving against our better interests. And, in the construction of the spectral self/Other in charge of our identity within the Symbolic, this conspiracy goes so far as to engage our own Stockholm–syndrome complicity. The Other of love “in front of us” is also the lover sitting beside us, when we are both engaged in the plane that simultaneously cuts us off and anneals us to the Symbolic. In theater, this is the orthographic effect of identification with the truth–extracting screen famously employed by Wes Anderson in *Grand Budapest Hotel*, *Moonlight Kingdom*, and *Isle of Dogs*; or where, as in Woody Allen’s *Manhattan*, an exaggerated panoramic aspect ratio constructs a frame for characters to wander about, ap-

pearing out of and disappearing into shadows that do not themselves move but accumulate (the *pile* of suppressed, lost, replaced choices — *tuchē*) a subterranean register, a perfect memory.

- **Zairja:** The power of the part is, in some cases, greater than the whole, since one whole presumes the integrity and harmony of many parts, whereas one part, alone and without a proximate confederation, through its lack, loss, or separation enlivens a potentiality of many wholes in imaginary fluid succession. Disaggregation induces “part-ness” on a system to enjoy, prematurely, this condition. At first the action seems destructive; soon enough, however, it reveals its powers of extension, elaboration, and the Gón-goesque. Ancient zairjas were actual analytical projects involving astrological charts and alchemical annotations. They submitted received ideas, systems, theories, etc. to a baroque combination of cyclical interpretive devices. When Ramón Llull adopted the idea of the zairja, he multiplied the existential circular void of Metrodorus of Scepsis’s memory system: a wheel with no spatial particulars other than a general reference to the zodiac: no images, no architectural templates, no conceptual schemas. Could it be that the simple isolation of a part from the whole would, by itself, bring about as many worlds as there were parts? This would amount to imagining a radical new Theory of Relativity that does not stop at the consideration that fixing the earth as the center of the solar system is just as valid as using the sun for that purpose. What if not just the earth but any location on earth was the center of a solar system that could be changed with only a slight shift of position? In these terms, there is no difference between the interior and remote edge, since either can be a center. Disaggregation reverses the Copernican revolution, replacing the obvious sun with any arbitrary point that takes it into its mind to see rotation for what it is.
- **Disaggregation:** The zairja’s reverse-action computing, moving toward the particular rather than the universal, the question rather than the answer, the (multiple potential) cause(s) rather than the effects, is palindromic in relation to thought’s forward drive to a truth assigned to “account for” disparate events and effects. It is as if truth, relieved of the burden of explaining the past, expresses its gratitude by arriving at the past from the future, a kind of Arnold Schwarzenegger cyborg assassin intent on adjusting the future through a retroactive intervention. The conundrum of time travel repair is a version of the Cretan Liar Paradox, a permanent bi-product of the fact that any *one* speech event is *simultaneously* an act and a content working under the principle of mutual, alternating suppression. The Cretan is a liar or not, the statement is a lie or not, the claim is true or not. Time’s forward arrow is troubled by the same binary division. It is undeniably an *action*, >, and equally undeniably a *content*, <...>. The zairja’s reverse computing, like the Terminator, both expands the space between > and <...> and forces it to connect. Thus, the zairja idea can be put into practice in a number of ways. Disaggregation renews the part’s status as a (Lacanian) part- or partial object, the organ able to survive outside the body, the uncanny undead Thing. Disaggregation is the weapon of choice of the secondary, because it releases the suppressed capabilities of parts suppressed by the hegemony of the wholes that subsume it. Vico (*On the Study Methods of Our Time*, 1708) contrasted the sage with the “learned man destitute of prudence” who, reasoning from the highest truths down to the lowest, entirely missed the wit that the sage discovered by reasoning in the other direction. Of course, the “learned ignoramus” didn’t even bother to notice the details. Disaggregation is, simply, a method of detaching the part from the whole long enough to allow it to enter into relations of metonymy or metalepsis — in effect, raising questions about framing, structure, and genesis.

- ***Directionality and the agencies of Bloom's poetics:*** If Aristotle's causes can be "vectorized," who's to say that other conceptual systems might also have an internal spatio-temporal order in addition to their historical genesis or logical sequence? Harold Bloom articulated six Latinized components of poetic anxiety: *clinamen* (flow, turbulence), *tesseract* (symmetry of fragments), *dæmon* (uncanny fright of the unknown), *askesis* (flight provoked by the *dæmon*), *apophrades* (voice, specifically of the dead), and *kenosis* (knowing without knowing). Bloom did not claim any order among these parts, although even to a casual reader there is a first-order pairing of *clinamen/tesseract*, *dæmon/askesis*, and *apophrades/kenosis*. The disturbance motif of the first pair seem settled in the final pair, so *dæmon/askesis* seem to fit the bill for a connecting middle term. *Dæmon* is an uncanny force from an unidentified source, and the design of all ascetic defense-works includes labyrinthine voids to counteract (or worship) their obscene over-presence. *Askesis* is historically connected to *kenosis*. The convent and monastery use containment (cloister) to block out what they preserve, ostensibly in the negative, in a hallowed radical interior. Here, Truth is associated with Voice, and the ventriloquism attributed to objects and texts makes a third connection, to death. Thus, *kenosis* is a matter of oxymoronic connections: high to low, inside to outside, evil to good, life to death. These pairs refer in turn to "third words" that say two things at once, primitives that come before reason and life but fuel both.
- ***The secondary of the "quadrigia":*** The four-level system of interpretation and composition, viewed as a case of the secondary, reveals a singular secret. Applied to any "literal thing," it posits the presence of an anagogical shadow meaning, protected by three interior veils: moral, allegorical, and analogical ways of retelling the truth. All of these of course fail, but in failing in their own way, they open a space up for the last-minute arrival of anagogy. Would comparing this system to Lacan's four-fold system of discourses be going too far? Yes, but let's not do that. Let's compare the failures of each of the discourses to the failures of the quadrigia. Literality is of course the province of the doltish Master, S1, who as agent requires a self-destructive test of his mastery, but this is masked within an elaborate Allegory of swords and castles. The Morality of this moment is the Hysteric's exposure of the master as a fraud, S(A), "signifier of the lack of the Other." Analogy is the product of University Discourse, where 1:1 comparisons of this and that constitute knowledge tricked out in the dazzling multiplicities of comparative studies. Realization of the self by the self is, in every sense, Anagogical. We start, like the history of psychoanalysis, with the Hysteric, then deduce, retroactively, the position of the Master, re-adjusting the sequence to see that Allegory comes first, then Morality (Vico's recommendation). Modernity comes about through the comparisons of University Discourse, the mental capability of Analogy. Finally, Analysis/Anagogy reveal, through the last of the partial objects, voice and gaze, the position of Truth, its exile and return. The secondary of the quadrigia is not the four discourses (they are secondary to each other) but, rather, the Escher quality of the staircase that reconnects Analysis/Anagogy to the moralistic Hysteric. Revenge (always Feminine).
- ***The failure of anagogy:*** Like Hegel's Absolute, anagogy is falsely credited with being a unification of mind and matter, a resolution of contradictions, a transcendence of error. Nothing could be further from the truth. This can be seen clearly with the correspondence of anagogy in the quadrigia system with the discourse of Analysis in Lacan's system of four principal discourse forms. There is already adequate commentary on the "failure" of the Hegelian absolute (Žižek) and the non-therapeutic status of Analysis (Fink). But, what if there is a secondary account of these failures? The vectorization of Aristotle's causes offers just such an opportunity, in that it readily translates from the Mirror Stage of the subject to a

generic Mirror Stage for theory as a whole. Anagogy/Analysis's position is in the dust-pile that has just yielded its moment of (retroactive) recognition, a recognition that is itself a mirror action, of a return to match the original "loss" initiated by Efficient Cause. Form has in any case failed; the (hysterical) subject has failed to find in the Other who has claimed, fraudulently, the Allegory of his mastery. This is a spatial con-*frontation*, an antagonism revealed by the thickness of a spatial division. Behind the scenes, so to speak, an automated process has been going on, from the initial efforts to establish form as external. We don't grasp the full extent of the failure of this project until the Hysteric (Morality) makes its accusations against the Master (Allegory). The resulting work-around, University/Analogy, can produce only a subjectivity divided by the instruction to enjoy and the enigmatic absence of master behind the curtain. This orthogonal divide is equivalent to prison bars until Analysis/Anagogy breaks it free, at the point where "one grain more" of the pile of sand or the "one hair less" of the bald man to reveal the universal that endures down to the single grain of sand or the full head of hair. This secondary proof, which attaches anagogy and Analysis to the sorites, may seem at first gratuitous, but it will "grow on you" (as Vico grew on Lacan and Lacan grew on Vico).

- **Vico's failure:** It is imperative to take this vectorial argument to a fourth case of failure, especially to one that combines anagogy, Analysis (in its own way), and a version of the Hegelian Absolute. This is Vico's project of the "heroic universal," the form of thinking assumed by the scholar who, isolated in his/her own time, considers the foundational role of mythic thought. Vico staged his "failure" in great detail. His *Autobiography* detailed bitter disputes with scholars, rejection for good faculty positions, family strife, and trouble with publishing his works. The arch-example however is the story of the last-minute insertion of the frontispiece of *The New Science*, a story that sounds just barely credible. The gloom and doom was intentionally focused on his central discovery, however: that of the imaginative universal, which he said was barely imaginable by the modern mentality and took him, specifically, a good twenty years to puzzle out. Yet, his presentation of that discovery was poorly received. Although Vico was acclaimed as a revolutionary thinker by subsequent generations, his book got low marks for organization on account of its digressive style, frequent repetitions, and multiple obscurities. Margherita Frankel suggested, finally, that this difficulty was intentional; that Vico designed *The New Science* as a kind of labyrinth that would frustrate casual readers but challenge a chosen few who were able to appreciate it. The obstacle course of the text was a filter. Vico thought of the ideal reader as, anagogically, the true writer of *The New Science*, in a transfer accompanied by a kind of bliss: "Thus the proper and consecutive proof here adduced will consist in comparing and reflecting whether our human mind, in the series of possibilities it is permitted to understand, and so far as it is permitted to do so, can conceive more or fewer or different causes than those from which issue the effects of this civil world. In doing this the reader will experience in his mortal body a divine pleasure as he contemplates in the divine ideas this world of nations in all the extent of its places, times and varieties. And he will find that he has in effect convinced the Epicureans that their chance cannot wander foolishly about and everywhere find a way out, and the Stoics that their eternal chain of causes, to which they will have it the world is chained, itself hangs upon the omnipotent, wise and beneficent will of the best and greatest God" (*New Science*, §345). In this case, where the author has to be considered first, coming in second is not so bad.
- **The drives:** The secondary is a way of re-thinking ideas that have seemed to be stabilized over the years, but also it's a way to introduce, in the middle of on-going exchanges about ideas that continually reveal new aspects of themselves, a new way out. The secondary is firmly allied with the logic of the ersatz con-

jecture. The ersatz is not illogical, it is a rational strategy when a problem seems to present the same intractable façade to inquiry. The ersatz unsettles, displaces, disturbs; it creates a turbulence. Like the end-of-the-world scenarios studied by military planning groups, its value lies not in its main premise but in the way the unlikely condition, the *hapax* phenomenon, provokes responses from systems evolved to maintain continuity. The ersatz conjecture's real claim to methodological superiority (and not just equality) with other techniques is that the *hapax* is far more common in reality. Such is the case with the Freudian drives (breast, shit, phallus) and the Lacanian add-ons, voice and gaze. Each drive is a form of the *hapax* condition, a "new" that seems instantly to find its structure of stimulus and response. And, because each drive is fundamentally a *material* object or condition, these stimulus-and-response patterns can be transferred to objects and situations distant from the original causal matrix. The drives' status as *hapax* structures puts them in close proximity to ersatz speculation; one could almost say that the drives themselves *are* ersatz gestures in the contexts in which they suddenly appear. And, like the addition of a vectorial field around the Aristotelian causes, one could also say that the drives have a force field with definite shapes, faces, and backstages; that they are in effect five different kinds of *theaters* where the flow of force and energy are regulated by a primary *cut* between the evolving subject and the various "others" the subject must fashion in order to develop. The secondary and the ersatz become indistinguishable in this material progression from one stage to another, just as, in the autoeroticism of the pre-subject, milk, shit, and semen "suspend their identities" and play interchangeable roles in a drama that has the fluidity of the dream.

- **The death drive:** In the drive that, Lacan concludes, forms the core and basis for the other drives, this ersatz/secondary "stress test" of the five drives should itself be tested. And, here we find the most interesting aspect of the drives. The death drive is, in relation to the other drives, itself secondary. It operates in an extimate way, both as a void/interior and a metonymically distant exterior. It is the un-locatable *dæmon* in the wood and the hallowed void formed by ascetic retreat and contraction. It is general turbulence and specific fracture. It is the disturbing voice and the confirming silence. In short, it is the oxymoron of antagonism. Its circularity is not a smoothly flowing circuit but a self-charging current that leaves one position only to return to the same position with reversed polarity. This position is both a gap and a zone of unbearable surplus. The terms I've used to describe the death drive come from an unlikely source: Harold Bloom's six "ratios" of artistic anxiety. It would be hard to think of something theoretically more secondary than his list, which I've organized into pairs (*dæmon/askesis*, *clinamen/tesseract*, *apophrades/kenosis*). This has a retroactive effect of bringing the death drive to bear on Bloom's idea of poetic angst, but why not? Isn't his thesis about how the young poet is paralyzed by the dominant overpresence of a hallowed predecessor? Isn't this Hamlet in a nutshell? Once you accept the premise, the function of repetition — the main *motif* of the death drive — is centralized as the gap that the young poet must address in order to "traverse the fantasy" of paralysis. It is literally about moving under the conditions where privation (the inaccessibility/blindness/deafness of the Master) has been converted into the prohibition against making something. Any work of art is made to violate this prohibition and moving *against* the paralysis of impossibility. The *factum* reveals the *verum*; the vector of movement is simultaneously original and productive (*hapax*) and retroactive: a palindromic gesture that makes every work a Janusian boundary marker.