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Why Does the *Phallus* Appear?

4.1 Grimaces of the Real

The "phantom of the opera": A spectroscopy

The coincidence of motifs between high art (and theory) and mass culture is today a theoretical commonplace: is not the clearest figuration of the famous *je est un autre* to be found in the mass-culture tradition of vampires and living dead who "decenter" the subject, undermining from within his consistency and self-control?[1] The main problem with this resonance, which is a constant from the outset of the modern to the relationship between postmodern theory and today's popular culture, is how to elude the notion of some common *Zeitgeist* as its interpretive device. One way to avoid this deadlock is to take into account the antagonism which makes it possible to play high art and mass culture against each other, i.e., to interpret alternately one with the help of the other, as in Lévi-Straus's *mythologiques* in which myths interpret one another. Let us take the "phantom of the opera," undoubtedly mass culture's most renowned specter, which has kept the popular imagination occupied from Gaston Leroux's novel at the turn of the century through a series of movie and television versions up to the recent triumphant musical: in what consists, on a closer look, the repulsive horror of his face? The features which define it are four:

1) the *eyes*: "His eyes are so deep that you can hardly see the fixed pupils. All you can see is two big black holes, as in a dead man's skull."[2] To a connoisseur of Alfred Hitchcock, this image instantly recalls *The Birds*, namely the corpse with the pecked-out eyes upon which Mitch's mother (Jessica Tandy) stumbles in a lonely farmhouse, its sight causing her to emit a silent scream. When, occasionally, we do catch the sparkle of these eyes, they seem like two candles lit deep within the head, per-

ceivable only in the dark: these two lights somehow at odds with the head's surface, like lanterns burning at night in a lonely, abandoned house, are responsible for the uncanny effect of the "living dead." The first "free association" from the domain of high culture is here Edvard Munch's paintings from the same period, primarily his *Spring Evening on Karl Johan* (1892) where the stream of ghostlike pedestrians move toward the spectator, their goggling eyes at odds with the death-mask faces.

2) the *nose*: "His nose is so little worth talking about that you can't see it side-face: and *the absence* of that nose is a horrible thing *to look at*."[3] Is it necessary to recall how Freud, in his article on fetishism, uses exactly the same words to describe the horror of castration: what horrifies the child is the very *absence* of the penis, i.e., the fact that there is nothing to see where the gaze expects something? (The corresponding feature in Munch's paintings—if we are to continue the homology—is the absence of nose and ears from the homunculus's head in his most famous painting *Scream* (1893).) As to this point, there is an interesting divergence between Leroux's novel and the recent television mini-series on the "phantom": in the novel, the phantom's primordial trauma was that, as a child, he was so ugly that even his own mother found him repulsive (when he approached her for an embrace, she pushed him aside with disgust and asked him to put on his mask),[4] whereas in the television series, nobody could stand his distorted face—*with the exception of his mother* to whom he seemed nice and normal and who constantly caressed his face, while entertaining him with her heavenly voice (this is why he is later obsessed with opera: he is desperately seeking the repetition of his mother's voice among the singers). Here, one has to avoid the pseudo problem of which version is "proper": they are to be read in the Lévi-Straussian manner, as two complementary versions of the same myth which interpret each other. That is to say, what did his mother see on his face (in the second, television version) that she found so irresistibly attractive, while the same feature was so repugnant to all others? There is only one answer possible: *the exact opposite of the first version*, i.e., an excessive phallic protuberance, repulsive to a "normal" gaze, in place of the nose—so to speak, the accomplishment of her (maternal) desire to obtain in the child her missing phallus, something resembling a famous case of the eighteenth-century monster analyzed by Alain Grosrichard.[5]

3) the *amorphous distortion of the face*: the flesh has not yet assumed definite features, it dwells in a kind of preontological state, as if "melted," as if having undergone an anamorphotic deformation; the horror lies not in his death mask, but rather in what is concealed beneath it, in the palpitating skinned flesh—everyone who catches sight of this amorphous life substance has entered the forbidden domain and must therefore be

excluded from the community . . . Therein consists the ultimate paradox of the "living dead": as if death, the death-stench it spreads, is a mask sheltering a life far more "alive" than our ordinary daily life. The place of the "living dead" is not somewhere between the dead and the living: precisely as dead, they are in a way "more alive than life itself," having access to the life substance prior to its symbolic mortification.[6] Lacanian psychoanalysis locates the cause of this deformity in the anamorphotic gaze, i.e., the gaze sustained by an incestuous enjoyment: the anamorphotic distortion of reality is the way the gaze is inscribed onto the object's surface. One should recall here another case from the same period, that of the "elephant man" immortalized by David Lynch in the film of the same name: according to the mythology surrounding this figure, the grotesque protophallic protuberance on his forehead (the "elephant's nose"), as well as the general deformity of his body, designates the inscription of the maternal gaze onto the bodily surface. The myth of the "elephant man" goes as follows: during a circus parade watched by his pregnant mother, an elephant went berserk and almost trampled her down; this "view from below" on the mad elephant affected the mother and caused the elephant-like distortion of the embryo.[7] Again, we encounter the same anamorphotic deformity of the face in a series of Munch's paintings where the face seems to lose its contours and "melt down" into a whitish slime (let it suffice to mention *Ashes, Vampire* and *The Kiss*, three drawings in which, during sexual intercourse or in its aftermath, the man literally "loses his face").

4) the exceptional status of his *voice*: the phantom of the opera is first of all a being of voice, in the novel he is regularily addressed as "the man's voice," as if the "normal" relationship of voice and its bearer (its source) were inverted: instead of the voice appertaining to the body as one of its properties, it is the body itself which, in its distortion, materializes an "impossible," originally bodiless and as such all-powerful (all-present) voice baptized by Michel Chion as *"la voix acousmatique"*.[8] The first association here is, of course, again Munch's *Scream*: in it, the energy of the hindered scream—which cannot burst out and release itself in sound—finds an outlet (one is almost tempted to say: "is acted out") in the anamorphotic distortion of the body, in its "unnatural" serpentine windings, and of the coast and water beyond the bridge—as if these spiral lines are here to materialize sound vibrations, in a kind of effect of *conversion* of the hindered sound into a distortion of matter.

The voice qua *object*

In his seminar on *anxiety* (1960–1961, unpublished), Lacan referred to Munch's *Scream* in order to exemplify the status of the voice *qua* object. That is to say, the crucial feature of the painting is the fact that

the scream is not heard. What we aim at here is not the obvious fact that "paintings do not speak": there are paintings which are definitely "resonant" and "call to mind sounds"—the paintings of street scenes bursting with life, of dancing, of stormy nature, etc.; whereas here, it pertains to the very essence of the depicted content that the scream we perceive is mute, since the anxiety is too stringent for it to find an outlet in vocalization (August Strindberg totally missed the point when he prattled on about how, in order to enjoy properly Munch's paintings, one should imagine appropriate music to accompany them). As we have already pointed out, this structural muteness is indexed within the painting itself by the absence of ears in the desperate homunculus's head: as if these ears, foreclosed from the (symbolic) reality of the face, return in the Real of the anamorphotic stain the form of which recalls a gigantic ear . . . In everyday language, one could say that the scream "got stuck in the throat": the voice *qua* object is precisely what is "stuck in the throat," what cannot burst out, unchain itself and thus enter the dimension of subjectivity. It is by no accident that, in his *Four Fundamental Concepts,* Lacan determines the *object small a* as the bone which got stuck in the subject's throat: if the exemplary case of the gaze *qua* object is a blind man's eyes, i.e., eyes which *do not see* (we experience the gaze *qua* object when a partner in conversation suddenly takes off his black glasses, exposing us to the uneasy depthless white of his eyes), then the exemplary case of the voice *qua* object is a voice which remains silent, i.e., which we *do not hear.*[9]

It should be of no surprise, then, that the most famous scream in the history of cinema is also silent: the scream of a mother who watches powerlessly her son being shot down by soldiers, in the scene at Odessa's staircase from Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin.* When, in a tracking shot, the camera approaches the mother who desperately grasps her head, and almost enters the black hole of her open mouth, its entire effect is again based on the fact that we do not hear her scream, i.e., that it "gets stuck in her throat"—as in the above-mentioned scene from Hitchcock's *Birds* where Mitch's mother, upon encountering the corpse with pecked-out eyes, utters her silent scream. To this silent scream which bears out the horror-stricken encounter with the real of enjoyment, one has to oppose the scream of release, of decision, of *choice,* the scream by means of which the unbearable tension finds an outlet: we so to speak "spit out the bone" in the relief of vocalization; in Hitchcock's *oeuvre,* its most famous case is Doris Day's scream from his second version of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* which, at the last moment, prevents the murder in Albert Hall. What one has to bear in mind here is the contrast between this scream and the silent mother's scream from *Potemkin*: they are both placed within the mother-son relationship; the silent scream manifests

her resistance to cutting the umbilical cord that links her with the son, whereas the scream from *The Man Who Knew Too Much* signals that the mother, driven into the corner by a forced choice between her son and the community, renounced the child and chose the community—this scream is therefore in its very coarseness "an act of civilization." In other words, the opposition of silent and vocalized screams coincides with that of enjoyment and Other: the silent scream attests to the subject's clinging to enjoyment, to his/her unreadiness to exchange enjoyment (i.e., the object which gives body to it) for the Other, for the Law, for the paternal metaphor, whereas the vocalization as such corroborates that the choice is already made and that the subject finds himself/herself within the community.[10]

The voice which obsesses the phantom is, however, not a scream, but a hypnotic operatic air: he falls in love with Christine after he recognizes in her seductive singing the resonance of the lost maternal voice. In *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, this incestuous song which links the subject to the Thing (the maternal body), i.e., by means of which the Thing catches him with its tentacles, is, of course, none other than the notorious "Che sara, sara" sung by Doris Day in the embassy where her son is kept prisoner. It is, as said above, a song through which *the mother reaches, "catches," her son*, that is to say, a song which expressly establishes the incestuous umbilical link (here, Hitchcock makes use of a formal procedure whose audacity has not yet been fully perceived: the camera directly "tracks" the voice, "shows" its resonance on the staircase and its climb to the attic room where the son is locked up). Another crucial feature of this scene is the accentuated vulgarity and obscenity of Doris Day's singing: her voice is far too noisy, so that the distinguished guests in the reception room avoid each other's gaze and stare down, as if embarrassed by such an obscene exhibition. The third and final feature not to be missed is the song's content itself which directly exhibits its *superego* status: "Che sara, sara," what will be, will be—how could one avoid noticing, in this answer to the child's question as to what will become of him when he grows up, the malevolent indifference that pertains to the very notion of superego. This superego status is further confirmed if one locates "Che sara, sara" in the context of other Hitchcock films, as the middle term between *Rear Window* and *Psycho*. What we have in mind is, of course, a peculiarity of the *Rear Window*'s soundtrack:[11] when, late in the evening, Grace Kelly approaches James Stewart who is taking a nap on his wheelchair (first as an ominous shadow which overflows his face, then as "herself"), the background sounds—the rich texture of everyday noises—are suddenly suspended, and all we hear is the voice of an unknown soprano practicing scales, as if mother is yet learning to sing (which is why she still tolerates the exchange of kisses

between Stewart and Kelly). In *The Man Who Knew Too Much* mother already knows how to sing, her voice finally reaches the son—the ultimate result of which is then shown in *Psycho*: a son dominated by the mother's voice, so that one is tempted to risk the thesis that the boy from *The Man Who Knew Too Much* is none other than Norman Bates in his childhood. In other words, the answer to the question "what will be," what will become of the boy from *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, is contained in *Psycho*. In order to avoid the danger of the so-called "psychoanalytic interpretation of art" which lurks here (maternal superego as the "secret" of the voice-stain . . .), one has to accomplish the properly dialectical *reversal of the explanans into explanandum*: the point is not to interpret the unfathomable *"acousmatique"* voice as the maternal superego, but rather its opposite, i.e., to explain the very logic of the maternal superego by means of this vocal stain—what we call "maternal superego" is *nothing but* such a voice which smears the picture and disturbs its transparency. Our procedure is therefore strictly allegorical: the "mother" *qua* a diegetic personality is ultimately an agency which, within the narrative content of Hitchcock's films, stands in for, holds the place of, a certain formal disturbance, a stain which blurs the field of vision.

The scream and the song thus form an opposition: the status of the song is that of a stain which materializes incestuous enjoyment, whereas the scream is—to put it simply—a horrified reaction to this stain. A cursory glance at Munch's *Scream* reveals how its surface is "drawn": the right half is far more anamorphotically distorted than the left half, i.e., the painting is "sucked" toward its center of gravity somewhere around two-thirds the height of its right side—the homunculus is seized with horror at being drawn into this whirlpool. The spiral lines of the distorted reality form a new shape vaguely remindful of a gigantic ear or eye, a kind of paranoiac agency which "sees all and hears all"—how not to recall here Syberberg's *Parsifal* where the depth of the visual field (the background) is often filled out by a flat *rear projection* which deliberately destroys the effect of perspective and sometimes directly figures a gigantic eye (like the eye frescos from Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*—or, of course, the background with painted eyes in Salvador Dali's dream sequence from Hitchcock's *Spellbound*).[12] In Hitchcock's *Marnie*, the same role of a fantasy element which patches up the hole (the blank) in reality is played by the gigantic black hulk at the end of the street where Marnie's mother lives: it is evidently drawn and thus destroys the depth effect. Therein consists the most elementary formal definition of psychosis: the massive presence of some Real which fills out and blocks the perspective openness constitutive of "reality."[13] This magnetic force which distorts the linear perspective on reality is of course enjoyment: Munch's *Scream* depicts the intrusion of enjoyment into reality. The more we approach its vortex,

the more the painting loses its "realist" character, i.e., the more its spiral lines of color strike us with the weight of their material presence; the illusion of "reality" of the depicted content is thereby not simply undermined—it is far more appropriate to say that the depicted reality loses its free-floating, ethereal character and becomes loaded with a kind of substantial density (considering that, according to Lacan, the only substance ascertained by psychoanalysis is enjoyment, it is thus not difficult to conceive how the material weight of Munch's stains bears out the density of enjoyment).

From the modernist sinthome . . .

The standard designation by which *Scream* conveys anxiety is therefore appropriate—provided that we conceive the notion of anxiety in its strict Lacanian sense, i.e., as the affect which registers the subject's panic reaction to the *overproximity* of the object-cause of desire: the little man's features clearly recall a homunculus or a fetus, that is to say, a subject not yet torn from the mother's body (the same homunculus is depicted in the lower left corner of Munch's *Madonna* (1895/1902), as part of the frame otherwise ornamented by spermatic trickles).[14] The general conclusion to be drawn from it is that the stain as such has the status of the *objet petit a* (surplus enjoyment). Aside from *Starlit Night* (1893) where the substantial mass of dark earth in the foreground directly evokes a blurred stain, the same effect occurs at its clearest in two paintings from the turn of the century, *Girls on the Bridge* (1899) and *The Dance of Life* (1900): the background earth and trees in the first case, the contours of the dancing bodies in the second, transmute into extended sperm-like stains which encumber reality with the substance of enjoyment. As to their status, these stains present therefore a kind of visual correlate to the "*voix acousmatique*" in the cinema, the voice which transgresses the boundary outside/inside, since it belongs neither to diegetic reality nor to the external vocal accompaniment, but lurks in the in-between space, like a mysterious foreign body which disintegrates from within the consistency of "reality."

On this basis, one could risk some passing general remarks concerning the relationship between modernism and postmodernism. The modernist procedure is that of a "symptomal reading": confronted with the totality, modernism endeavors to subvert it by detecting the traces of its hidden truth in the details which "stick out" and belie its "official" truth, in the margins which point toward what has to be "repressed" so that the "official" totality could establish itself—modernism's elementary axiom is that details always contain some surplus which undermines the universal frame of the "official" Truth. What characterizes a typical modernist film

is therefore the fact that its material texture ("writing") in a way tells another story which, by means of its lateral links and resonances, redoubles and undermines the "official" story. An exemplary case of it is to be found in the excellent early Blake Edwards thriller *Experiment In Terror*, the story of a young bank teller (Lee Remick), victim of an asthmatic blackmailer. One of a multitude of motifs which resound in it beneath the "official" narrative line is the melancholic, inanimate gaze: first the gaze of the hanged woman hidden between the dolls, then the doll of a tiger with a sad face, a gift from the blackmailer to his lover's son—although these elements have nothing whatsoever in common on the level of the "official" narrative, they nonetheless constitute the same *sinthome*, the uncanny gaze which subverts the border between life and death, since it belongs to a "dead" object (corpse, doll), which nonetheless possesses a gaze of melancholic expressiveness. This gaze of a "living dead" is of course a metonymy of the status of the blackmailer himself, who functions as an *"acousmatique"* entity in Chion's meaning of the term: the horror of an all-present voice whose body all of a sudden emerges "out of nothing." When, at the very end of the film, the police shoot him down in the empty, illuminated stadium, it is by no accident that the blackmailer, with his asthmatic wheeze, recalls a fish choking on dry land, out of its "natural element": he is effectively like an octopus who, once out of water, loses its terrifying fascination and changes into a powerless slime—this is the fate which befalls the phantom-like, *"acousmatique"* being as soon as it is reduced to its ordinary corporeity.

How, then, does postmodernism subvert this modernist frame? Let us take a novel which, although still modernist, approaches the very border of postmodernism: *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, a dystopian vision of the near future when, in the USA, the Moral Majority takes over and establishes a new state, the "Republic Gilead," based on severe patriarchal order (women are not allowed to read or write, etc.). What we have here is, ostensibly, an extrapolation and thereby a clear condemnation of tendencies which are detectable in today's late capitalism, i.e., a kind of feminist version of *1984*. Such a reading, obvious as it may seem, nevertheless misses the crucial point of the novel: the extraordinary libidinal cathexis of the scenes where the heroine—"Offred," Fred's girl—alone in the room allotted to her in the master's house, gradually discovers material details of the objects around her, looks for the traces of past experiences inscribed in them, learns how to notice microscopic features of her body which have previously gone unnoticed . . . One is tempted to say that the novel was written in order to put in words this experience of discovering the material weight and density of our immediate surroundings: the ultimate function of the plot of the Moral Majority's *coup d'état* is simply to serve as a narrative frame

which impels the heroine toward such a microscopic experience (the same as with "space operas" whose intermingled plots of planetary battles ultimately serve as a pretext for rendering the experience of floating freely in empty space without gravitation). The true "feminine" subject position thus comes forth not so much in the novel's "official" ideological content (the condemnation of Moral Majority rule) as in this attitude of microscopic probing, and the ambiguity of the novel is that, in order to give expression to the "feminine" position, it must construct a grandiose fantasy of patriarchal totalitarianism.

Here we have again the difference between *meaning* and what Lacan calls *sinthome*: on the level of meaning, *The Handmaid's Tale* is a straightforward case of dystopia depicting a possible new form of "closed society," yet this level is underpinned with the traces of feminine enjoyment. What is crucial here, however, is that this feminine "writing" cannot be staged directly, bypassing the circuitous route of meaning: it can be rendered only as a by-product of the story whose "official" content is the totalitarian universe of the Moral Majority. The same dialectic is at work in Chandler's hard-boiled novels: the insipid view that Chandler took advantage of the detective narrative, using it as a frame that he filled out with a wealth of detailed observations and insights about the corruption of California-style wild capitalism and its psychic impact, overlooks the crucial fact that such detailed observations are artistically "effective" only as marginal by-products of a text which "officially" purports to be a detective story centered on revealing the mystery of whodunit, etc. This, precisely, is the reason why *The Handmaid's Tale* remains a *modernist* novel: it would become "postmodern" the moment it posited an undercurrent of paradoxical codependence, complicity even, between this feminine "writing" and the totalitarian universe of the Moral Majority, introducing thereby a moment of ambiguity into its univocal condemnation—the step accomplished, among others, by Kafka whose great novels are haunted with the secret complicity that links the bureaucratic Thing (castle, court) to feminine enjoyment.

. . . *to the postmodernist Thing*

What characterizes postmodernism is therefore an obsession with Thing, with a foreign body within the social texture, in all its dimensions that range from woman *qua* the unfathomable element that undermines the rule of the "reality principle" (*Blue Velvet*), through science-fiction monsters (*Alien*) and autistic aliens (*Elephant Man*), up to the paranoiac vision of social totality itself as the ultimate fascinating Thing, a vampire-like specter which marks even the most idyllic everyday surface with signs of latent corruption. (In this sense, one could say that, today more

than ever, capital is the Thing *par excellence*: a chimeric apparition which, although it can nowhere be spotted as a positive, clearly delimited entity, nonetheless functions as the ultimate Thing regulating our lives.) The ambiguity of the postmodern relationship to the Thing pertains to the fact that the Thing is not simply a foreign body, an intruder which disturbs the harmony of the social bond: precisely as such, the Thing is what "holds together" the social edifice by means of guaranteeing its fantasmatic consistency. Within modernism, the Thing assumes either the form of "remnants of the past," of the inertia of prejudices to be cast away, or the form of the repressed life power to be unchained (as in the naive psychoanalytical ideology of the liberation of drive potentials from the constraints of social repression); we enter postmodernism when our relationship to the Thing becomes *antagonistic:* we abjure and disown the Thing, yet it exerts an irresistible attraction on us; its proximity exposes us to a mortal danger, yet it is simultaneously a source of power . . . One is even tempted to propose a reading of Schopenhauer and Marx as postmodern philosophers, insofar as perhaps the most distinctive feature of their thought is a radical hatred for its object—the will (interpreted by Schopenhauer as the "secret" of the Kantian *Ding-an-sich*), capital.

Postmodernism thus accomplishes a kind of shift of perspective in relation to modernism: what in modernism appeared as the subversive margin—symptoms in which the repressed truth of the "false" totality emerges—is now displaced into the very heart, as the hard core of the Real that different attempts of symbolization endeavor in vain to integrate and to "gentrify." In short, it is as if the universal and the particular paradoxically *exchange places*: what one encounters in the center instead of the universal is a kind of "particular absolute" (to use Jacques-Alain Miller's term), a particular traumatic kernel, while the various universals are all of a sudden reduced to the role of species of an impossible-unfathomable genus, i.e., they start to function as a series of specific, ultimately failed attempts to symbolize (transpose into the medium of symbolic universality) and thus to "neutralize" the traumatic core of the Real. The theoretical antagonism thus shifts from the axis Imaginary-Symbolic to the axis Symbolic-Real: the aim of the modernist "symptomal reading" is to ferret out the texture of discursive (symbolic) practices whose imaginary effect is the substantial totality, whereas postmodernism focuses on the traumatic Thing which resists symbolization (symbolic practices).

This shift comes forth exemplarily apropos of Foucault's profoundly *modernist* treatment of the relation between sexuality and sex—in what consisted the reversal in their relation that exerted such fascination on the theoretical public? Instead of reducing sexuality (i.e., the series of discursive—legal, medical, ethical, economical, etc.—practices in which sex is "actualized") to the external secondary effect of a unique cause

("sex" *qua* substantial entity), Foucault conceived sex as the effect of this series of practices. "Sex" is not an object given in advance, prior to its discursive actualizations and guaranteeing their consistency: it comes to be as a constructed unique reference of these practices, as a result of their hegemonic articulation: "The notion of 'sex' made it possible to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, pleasures, and it enabled the use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle."[15] From the Lacanian perspective, however, Foucault overlooks here the inherently "antagonistic" status of sex, the "antagonistic" relation between sex and sexuality *qua* plurality of discursive practices: these practices endeavor again and again to integrate, to dominate, to neutralize, "sex" *qua* traumatic core which eludes their grasp. "Sex" is therefore not the universality, the neutral common ground of discursive practices which constitute "sexuality," but rather *their common stumbling block*, their common point of failure. In other words, "sex" pertains to the register of the Real: it *is* an "effect" of sexuality (of symbolic practices), but its *antagonistic* effect—there is no sex prior to sexuality, sexuality itself produces ("secretes" in all the meanings of the term) sex as its inherent stumbling block (the same as with the notion of trauma in psychoanalysis, which is a retroactive effect of its failed symbolization). Therein consists the ultimate paradox of the Lacanian notion of the cause *qua* real: it is produced ("secreted") by its own effects.[16]

4.2 Phallophany of the Anal Father

The anal father

This postmodern shift affects radically the status of paternal authority: modernism endeavors to assert the subversive potential of the margins which undermine the Father's authority, of the enjoyments which elude the Father's grasp, whereas postmodernism *focuses on the father himself and conceives him as "alive," in his obscene dimension.* The phantom-like object which hinders a "normal" sexual relationship therefore is a paternal figure, yet not the father who was sublated *[aufgehoben]* in his Name, i.e., the dead-symbolic father, but the father who is *still alive*—father insofar as he is not yet "transubstantiated" into a symbolic function and remains what psychoanalysis calls a "partial object." That is to say, the father *qua* Name of the Father, reduced to a figure of symbolic authority, is "dead" (also) in the sense that *he does not know anything about enjoyment*, about life substance: the symbolic order (the big Other) and enjoyment are radically incompatible.[17] Which is why the famous Freudian dream of a son who appears to his father and reproaches him with

"Father, can't you see I'm burning?" could be simply translated into *"Father, can't you see I'm enjoying?"*—can't you see I'm alive, burning with enjoyment? Father cannot see it since he is dead, whereby the possibility is open to me to enjoy not only *outside* his knowledge, i.e., unbeknownst to him, but also *in his very ignorance.* The other, no less known Freudian dream, that about the father who does not know he is dead, could thus be supplemented with "(*I, the dreamer, enjoy the fact that*) father does not know he is dead."[18] What emerges under the guise of the phantom-like "living dead"—of the specter which hinders "normal" sexual relationship—is, however, the reverse of the Name of the Father, namely the "anal father" who definitely *does* enjoy: the obscene little man who is the clearest embodiment of the phenomenon of the "uncanny" (*Unheimliche*). He is the subject's double who accompanies him like a shadow and gives body to a certain surplus, to what is "in the subject more than subject himself"; this surplus represents what the subject must renounce, sacrifice even, the part in himself that the subject must murder in order to start to live as a "normal" member of the community. The crucial point here is therefore that this "anal father" is Father-Enjoyment (*le Père-Jouissance,* as Michel Silvestre calls it):[19] it is not the agency of symbolic Law, its "repression," which hinders the sexual relationship (according to a Lacanian commonplace, the role of the Name of the Father is precisely to *enable* the semblance of a sexual relationship), its stumbling block is on the contrary a certain excessive "sprout of enjoyment" materialized in the obscene figure of the "anal father."[20] A whole series of Munch's paintings are to be conceived as variations on this motif, first of all the two *Mephistopheles* from 1935. *Mephistopheles I: The Duel* depicts a dark figure in the act of killing his white, shadow-like double, whereas in *Mephistopheles II: Split Personality* the same dark figure walks down the same street arm in arm with his almost transparent double and ignores a girl who turns round to cast a seductive glance at him. Here, one has to go beyond the standard "Lacanian" reduction of the motif of a double to imaginary mirror relationship: at its most fundamental, the double embodies the phantom-like Thing in me; that is to say, the dissymmetry between me and my double is ultimately that between the (ordinary) object and the (sublime) Thing. In my double, I don't simply encounter myself (my mirror image), but first of all what is "in me more than myself": the double is "myself," yet—to put it in Spinozian terms—conceived under another modality, under the modality of the other, sublime, ethereal body, a pure substance of enjoyment exempted from the circuit of generation and corruption. Prior to his being "sublated" in his Name, "father" designates such a Thing which is "in me more than myself."[21]

It would be, however, wrong to draw the conclusion that the relationship to the double *qua* Thing has nothing whatsoever to do with the imaginary relationship between ego and ideal ego, its mirror image, i.e., with the axis *m—i(a)* or, as Lacan writes it down in his "scheme L," *a-a'*. What one should render problematic in this mirror relationship is the apostrophe which distinguishes the image of a double (*a'*) from "myself" (*a*): this apostrophe later (i.e., when *a* is no longer conceived as an imaginary other, but as the real object-cause of desire) becomes the *objet petit a*. In other words, *objet petit a* is the *unheimliches* surplus forever missing in the mirror image, i.e., "unspecularizable," yet precisely as such present in it in the shape of that unfathomable X on account of which the mirror image obtains its *unheimliches* character—the double is "the same as me," yet totally strange; his sameness all the more accentuates his uncanniness. This is why the image of a double so easily turns into its opposite, so that, instead of experiencing the radical otherness of his similar, the subject recognizes *himself* in the image of radical otherness, i.e., he recognizes his equivalent in the amorphous mass of the Real whose literary and cinematic versions reach from Maupassant's *Horla* to the "alien" from Scott Ridley's film of the same name. In this sense, one could say that the Lacanian formula of fantasy, $ ◇ *a*, the confrontation of the empty subject with the amorphous presence of the real, displays the "truth" of the mirror relationship *a—a'*, i.e., what confers on this relationship its antagonistic tension—another confirmation of how the Real persists in the very heart of the Imaginary. It is therefore clear why vampires are invisible in the mirror: because they have read Lacan and, consequently, know how to behave—they materialize *objet a* which, by definition, *cannot be mirrored.*

What is crucial here is therefore the radical assymmetry in the relationship *a—a'*, i.e., a Dorian Gray-like imbalance between myself and my mirror image: the price to be paid for my image to retain its harmonious consistency is that the entire horror of its amorphous leftover falls into me. This amorphous left over is the material correlative of the gaze; that is to say, when I find myself face to face with with my double, when I "encounter myself" among the objects, when "I myself" *qua* subject appear "out there," what am I at that precise moment as the one who looks at it, as a witness to myself? Precisely the gaze *qua* object: the horror of coming face to face with my double is that this encounter reduces me to the object-gaze. In other words, the part missing in the mirror image of myself (the " ' " of the axis *a-a'*) is my own gaze, the object-gaze which sees me out there . . . As a rule, one focuses on the horror of being the object of some invisible, unfathomable, panoptical gaze (the "someone-is-watching me" motif)—yet it is a far more unbearable experience to find oneself at this very point of a pure gaze. The lesson of the dialectic

of the double is therefore the discordance between eye and gaze: there certainly is in the mirror image "more than meets the eye," yet this surplus that eludes the eye, the point in the image which eludes my eye's grasp, is none other than *the gaze itself*: as Lacan put it, "you can never see me at the point from which I gaze at you."

This is the way psychoanalysis subverts the usual opposition of the paternal and the maternal: it brings out what this opposition has to repress, to exclude, in order to establish itself, namely the *reverse* of the father, the "anal father" who lurks behind the Name of the Father *qua* bearer of the symbolic Law. This "anal father" is the third element which disturbs the familiar narrative of the gradual prevalence of the paternal over the maternal in history as well as in the subject's ontogenesis, the narrative which even Freud seems to follow in his *Moses and Monotheism*, at least upon a superficial reading of it. The mad "anal father" is the nauseous debauchee, threatening yet ridiculously impotent, who simply does not fit the frame of the "complementary relationship between *yin* and *yang*" and the like. A new light is thus shed on the Cartesian *cogito*, on its inherent link with the God which guarantees its consistency. The Cartesian God—the correlate of the *cogito*—is, of course, none other than Lacan's "big Other," the place of the supposed symbolic knowledge (*le sujet supposé savoir*) which supplants the primordial Thing, i.e., Father-Enjoyment *qua* presymbolic Other. *Cogito ergo sum* is thus to be translated as: I think where enjoyment was evacuated; or, to give a deontological twist to it: if I am to think, the Other's enjoyment has to be suspended.

One can detect this subjective attitude in those moments in Raymond Chandler's novels when, exhausted by his activity, Philip Marlowe disconnects from the frenetic run of things, lies down and takes a rest. Through the luminescence of advertisements, through the stench of alcohol and garbage, through the intrusive noise of a big city, all the rot and decay from which he has tried to escape by means of activity—in short: the substance of enjoyment—return to strike him in the face. There is nothing calming or reassuring in these moments; passive thought, confronted with the nausea of existence, is, on the contrary, pervaded by paranoia. Marlowe "thinks," yet his thought is not a free-floating, calming reflection, but rather a sneaking, crawling under the watchful eye of a cruel superego: "I thought, and thought in my mind moved with a kind of sluggish stealthiness, as if it was being watched by bitter and sadistic eyes" (*Farewell, My Lovely*). This would be, then, Marlowe's *cogito*: I think, therefore an obscene, sadistic superego specter is watching me. And what is the "phantom" if not such a stumbling block of the "normal" sexual relationship (in Leroux's novel, the relationship between Christine Daae and Vicomte de Chagny)? If not the so-called "pregenital" (anal)

object which must disappear, pass away, for the "normal" sexual relationship to realize itself? Yet one must avoid here the trap into which Freudian orthodoxy fell, i.e., the fallacy according to which fixation on this object prevents the emergence of the "normal" (genital) sexual relationship: the "phantom" *qua* object does nothing but materialize the inherent hindrance, the "original" impossibility that pertains to the sexual relationship.[22]

The ambiguous role of this object-impediment which, at the same time, guarantees fantasmatic consistency,[23] enables us to delineate the logic of the sublime reversal in *Phantom of the Opera,* i.e., of its supreme melodramatic moment when the phantom who has hitherto *prevented* the fulfillment of the sexual relationship, suddenly emerges as the one who, by means of his sacrifice, *enables* it;[24] what we have in mind is, of course, the final moment when the phantom Eric sacrifices himself in order to make possible for Christine a happy life with Vicomte de Chagny. In terms of Propp's narrative analysis, one could say that in this final reversal the agent previously identified as malefactor suddenly changes into donator, i.e., into a "mediator" who, by means of his sacrifice, enables the hero's salvation. And it is perhaps the very experience of this reversal of the "condition of impossibility" into a "condition of possibility"—the experience of how "only the spear that smote you/can heal your wound" (to quote from Wagner's *Parsifal*)—which constitutes the core of what we call "dialectics."[25]

Phallophany versus phallic signifier

It should be clear, now, what is the name of the "secret" beneath the mask, so terrible that anyone who sees it is not allowed to survive: as Lacan recalls it apropos of the Greek mysteries, this "secret" is the *revealed phallus*, the phallus which is not yet "sublated" (*aufgehoben*) in the signifier: the *maternal* phallus, the phallus *qua* sign of the incestuous link. As Gilles Deleuze puts it: *"Si vous êtes pris dans le rêve de l'autre, vous êtes foutu"* ("If you are caught in another's dream, you are done for"). The revealed phallus, the phallic-anamorphotic distortion of the face, is a kind of brand attesting that the subject is caught in the desire of the other (mother), entrapped in her dream. In this precise sense, phallus "appears" in the obscene protuberance on the "elephant man" 's forehead and marks it with the brand of mother's desire, as if striking it with the whip of her gaze. What Lacan calls "phallic identification" is, on the contrary, the exact opposite of this "revelation of the phallus": it is the identification with the phallus *qua* signifier of desire, i.e., the paradox of *identification with nonidentity*, with the gap which maintains the desire. In the phallic identification proper, we identify with the element

which functions as the signifier of its own opposite (in short, as signifier *tout court*). Let us just recall the Hitchcockian blonde (Grace Kelly, e.g.): in her figure, the external opposition of frigid blonde and hot brunette is surmounted ("sublated," *aufgehoben*, in the precise Hegelian sense), so that the very surface coldness functions as a sign of its opposite—the more calm she is, the more this restraint attests to an underlying passion . . . It is the same with fury: we enter the phallic dimension when we surmount the external opposition of outbursts of noisy rage and of restrained silence, so that cold silence itself starts to function as something infinitely more threatening than violent roars. On another level, it is the same with the dialectic of the leader: political hagiographers know very well that the leader is to be depicted as fundamentally *alone* in his heights, since it is precisely in these moments of absolute solitude that, in a "deeper" sense, "he is with us all": the leader is "us all" precisely as absolutely alone, as one. This is what Hegel calls "self-relating negation": the way effectively to negate and surmount frigidity is not to *supplant* it by its external opposite (passion), but to make it *designate* this opposite. Therein consists the ultimate paradox of what Lacan calls "the *dialectic* of desire"—the renunciation of desire as the very form of appearance of its fulfillment—the paradox which gets lost as soon as the phallus begins to "appear."

In postmodernism, this "apparition" of the phallus is *universalized*. David Lynch, whose *Elephant Man* features the above-mentioned historical case of the phallophany at the onset of modernism, developed in *Blue Velvet* and *Wild at Heart* a style whose underlying premise is the expanse of the anamorphotic distortion, still localized in the case of the "elephant man," into the ontological condition of reality as such: at the very beginning of *Blue Velvet*, the suspension of the paternal function (epitomized by the father's heart attack) is immediately followed by the intrusion of the Real in the shape of a fragment of reality (a cut-off ear) which, as soon as one approaches it too closely, turns into a nauseating, crawling life substance (ants swarming in the ear). In Lynch's "ontology," the universe is a palpitating slime that continually threatens to blow up the settled frame of everyday reality. The counterpart to the cut-off ear in *Wild at Heart* is a repeated close shot of lighting a cigarette which then dissolves into raging fire—through this opening in reality the substance of the Real breaks in. All that remains of diegetic "reality" in *Wild at Heart* is narrative fragments from old cinematic genres (*film noir*, soft porn, musical comedy, etc.)—a patchwork designed to prevent us from "burning our fingers" too much on the Real.

Therein consists the fundamental ambiguity of the image in postmodernism: it is a kind of barrier enabling the subject to maintain distance from the Real, protecting him/her against its irruption, yet its very ob-

trusive "hyperrealism" evokes the nausea of the Real. Some of today's commonplaces are phrases on the postmodern "society of the spectacle" whose reality is supplanted by an image of itself, and where, consequently, individuals more and more lose the character of agents, embedded in social reality, and are reduced to external observers of the spectacle. Yet the reverse of this "derealization" is the hypersensitivity to reality as something that can be hurt, for the inherently painful dimension of our contact with reality even at the most microscopic level—as if the subject is reduced to a pure receptive gaze precisely because he is aware of how every encroachment upon the world, even the most benevolent, *cuts into* the world, hurts it. "Edward Scissorhands" from Tim Burton's film of the same name, a failed, aborted, Frankensteinian monster with scissor-like hands, epitomizes the postmodern subject: a melancholic subject condemned to pure gaze since he knows that touching the beloved one equals causing him/her unbearable pain. This inherent link between "scopic drive" and violence characterizes also the figure of Norman Bates from *Psycho*: the reverse of his "voyeurism" is that the only proper "act" of which he is capable is slaughtering his neighbor.[26]

In the Lacanian notion of the Real, the hard kernel which resists symbolization coincides with its opposite, the so-called "inner," "psychic" reality;[27] within postmodernism, the same ambiguity is reproduced in the shape of the tension between the obtrusive bodily density (one is tempted to say: the Heideggerian "earth") which overshadows the narrative frame, and the opposite attitude which, *vulgari eloquentia*, reduces reality itself to "something that exists only in our heads," a "product of the delirium of our brain": "The most prudent and effective method of dealing with the world around us is to assume that it is a complete fiction—conversely, the one small node of reality left to us is inside our own heads."[28] One should recall here the series of great "postmodern" *mise-en-scènes* of Wagner's operas which transpose part of the action or even all of it into the "head" of one of its protagonists: in Jean-Pierre Ponelle's *Tristan*, the action following Tristan's death (Isolde's return, etc.) is staged as the delusion of the dying Tristan; at the end of Hans-Juergen Syberberg's film version of *Parsifal*, the entire content is twice "subjectivized," located first in Kundry's head, then in the head of Wagner himself.[29] The most indicative is here, however, Harry Kupfer's staging of *Fliegende Hollaender* (Bayreuth 1977–1985): the Dutchman is presented as Senta's hysterical delusion, as the mode by which Senta "does not give way as to her desire" and refuses the poor and faithful Eric, the sexual partner at her disposal in "reality." Her final suicidal gesture is thus reinterpreted as a kind of reflective redoubling: Senta does not sacrifice herself for the Dutchman, she sacrifices herself to keep alive the fantasy of the Dutchman which gives consistency to her desire—she chooses death rather than

accepting the dreadful reality of the provincial town where she "really" lives. The screen onto which Senta's fantasy is projected consists of a big black hulk strangely resembling the hulk in the above-mentioned shot from Hitchcock's *Marnie*; this hulk is located at the back of the stage, in the very place where the viewer's eye expects to meet the imaginary point of the infinite axis of perspective, i.e., the Other's gaze which confers on the field of vision its depth: the specter of the Dutchman appears when the gigantic hands that form the hulk spread and allow a view to its interior, the folded vividly red Real, the space of enjoyment not yet "colonized" by the sociosymbolic order.[30]

Class struggle in the opera

Is not then the Flying Dutchman—again, like Leroux's phantom, an intruder preventing the "normal" sexual relationship between Senta and her poor Eric—literally a "phantom in the opera," a phantom-like apparition on the stage? The fantasy screen in the background holds the space open for the "ghosts of the past" for whom there is no place in the grey utilitarian bourgeois everyday life which forecloses the very possibility of a heroic sacrifice: Senta yearns for a world in which something akin to the Dutchman's tragedy is still conceivable. Yet if one is to avoid the historicist trap, one must learn the materialist lesson of the anti-evolutionist creationism which resolves the contradiction between literal meaning of the Scripture (according to which the universe was created ca. 5000 years ago) and irrefutable proofs of its greater age (million-years-old fossils, etc.) not *via* the usual indulging in the delicacies of the allegorical reading of the Scripture ("Adam and Eve are not really the first couple but a metaphor for the early stages of humanity . . .") but by sticking to the literal truth of the Scripture: the universe was created recently, i.e., only 5000 years ago, *yet with inbuilt false traces of the past* (God directly created fossils, e.g.).[31] The past is always strictly "synchronous," with the present, it is *the way the synchronous universe thinks its antagonism*—it suffices to recall the infamous role of the "remnants of the past" in accounting for the difficulties of the "construction of socialism."

In this sense, the Phantom and his sexual rival, Vicomte de Changy, form a kind of Kleinian opposition of "bad" and "good" aristocratic object: the Phantom embodies the excess aristocracy has to renounce in order to become integrated into bourgeois society. In other words, he is a kind of "fossil" created by the Enlightenment itself as a distorted index of its inherent antagonism: what was, prior to the advent of Enlightenment, a sovereign expenditure, a glitter of those in power, an inherent moment of their symbolic status, now undergoes a kind of anamorphotic

distortion, falls out from the social space whose contours are defined by utilitarian ideology, and is perceived as decadent debauchery epitomized in the bourgeois myth of a corrupted demonic aristocrat.[32] The notion of "decadence" acquires here its full weight as the concept which "fantasizes the return of all the weirdest religious sects and cults, after the triumph of the secular, of *homo oeconomicus* and of utilitarianism: it is thus the ghost of the superstructure, of cultural autonomy itself, that haunts the omnipotence of the base."[33] This superego side of the Phantom *qua* return of an archaic enjoyment is, however, supplemented by its opposite which is inscribed into Leroux's novel by means of its very topography—although "apolitical," the novel nevertheless establishes a mysterious link between the Phantom and the Paris Commune, this ultimate trauma of the French bourgeois society of the late nineteenth-century: deep under the Opera, where the Phantom has his premises, there were the secret torture chambers of the Communards . . . The political topography of *Phantom of the Opera* thus consists of an extimate field, a field whose innermost center meets its radical exterior: the very heart of the Parisian high society, the building of the Opera with its luxurious staircases, reveals—the moment we dive into its foundations—the traces of the traumatic "repressed" past, i.e., of the historical moment which shook the foundations of the bourgeois state.

Such is then the social-ideological topography of the Phantom: his figure constitutes an impossible "point of passage" at which the subversive power of the new (the working class) rejoins the return of the old (aristocratic decadence). In this precise sense, the Phantom is *a fetishistic representative of (a stand-in for) the class struggle*: it disavows it by condensing into one both of its extremes which undermine the established bourgeois order, aristocratic decadence as well as the coming proletarian subversion. It is therefore wrong to ask directly "which is the class equivalent of the Phantom?": its "class meaning" is contained in the very distortion that results from the "impossible" conjunction of opposites (as in fascist anti-Semitism where the "Jew" condenses in a unique figure the excessive nature of capitalism—its wild profiteering, etc.—and its proletarian subversion, i.e., the "Jewish-Communist plot"). This distortion betrays the work of "class desire," its effort to render invisible the actual contours of social antagonism and thereby pave the way for its "imaginary solution": by means of his transformation from malefactor to donator, the Phantom becomes the "vanishing mediator" rendering possible the final reconciliation.

Convincing as it may appear, such a direct analysis of "ideological content" is nevertheless marked by a brand of ultimate arbitrariness; and the same goes for all analyses of this kind: Dr. Frankenstein's creature can be a metaphor for the monstrous results of man's manipulation with

nature, for the horrors of the French revolution, etc.; Kaspar Hauser can epitomize the catastrophic results of the lack of family education; the elephant man can be cathexed by the ideological problematic of the body-soul relationship ("Such a horrible body, and yet such a great soul!"); the killer shark in *Jaws* can signify anything from repressed sexuality to unbriddled capitalism and the threat of the Third World to America . . . The way out of this deadlock is not *via* deciding which of the multiple meanings is "true" ("Is the shark a representative of the repressed drives of the late-capitalist subject, or does it epitomize the destructive nature of capitalism itself?"); what one should do is rather to conceive the monster as a kind of fantasy screen where this very multiplicity of meanings can appear and fight for hegemony. In other words, the error of direct content analysis is to proceed too quickly and to presuppose as self-evident the fantasy surface itself, the empty form/frame which offers space for the appearance of monstrous content: the crucial question is not "What does the Phantom signify?" but "How is the very space constituted where entities like the Phantom can emerge?" Or, to return to Kupfer's *Fliegende Holländer*, the crucial question is not the meaning of Senta's fantasies but rather "Where does the black hulk at the background of the stage come from, so that Senta has a surface onto which she can project her fantasies?" What we have here is the same disjunction as that of the well-known visual paradox of the vase/two faces: as soon as we perceive meaning(s), the form *qua* place of their inscription becomes invisible—and the fundamental gesture of a dialectical analysis is precisely a step back from content to form, i.e., a suspension of content which renders visible anew form as such. The elementary ideological operation consists in this very "conversion of the form" by means of which the possible space for ideological meanings emerges—or, as Fredric Jameson put it apropos of *Jaws*:

> . . . the vocation of the symbol—the killer shark—lies less in any single message or meaning than in its very capacity to absorb and organize all of these quite distinct anxieties together. As a symbolic vehicle, then, the shark must be understood in terms of its essentially polysemous function rather than any particular content attributable to it by this or that spectator. Yet it is precisely this polysemousness which is profoundly ideological, insofar as it allows essentially social and historical anxieties to be folded back into apparently "natural" ones, both to express and to be recontained in what looks like a conflict with other forms of biological existence.[34]

This "folding back" is what Lacan calls a *"point de capiton"*: the emergence of the shark as symbol does not add any new meaning, it simply reorganizes meanings which were already there by binding them to the same signifier—ideology is at work in this purely symbolic gesture, in the addition of a signifier which "quilts" the floating plurality of anxieties.[35] What remains outside this formal symbolic gesture, what resists absorption into meaning, is, however, the horrifying power of fascination that pertains to the presence of the shark—its *enjoyment*, to use the Lacanian term for it. One should therefore reformulate the above-mentioned disjunction between content and form: *you cannot have both meaning and enjoyment.* The analysis focused on the "ideological meaning" of monsters overlooks the fact that, previous to signifying something, previous even to serving as an empty vessel of meaning, monsters embody enjoyment *qua* the limit of interpretation, that is to say, *nonmeaning as such.*

The subject of the Enlightenment

This empty form, this black stain in the very heart of reality, is ultimately the "objective correlative" of the subject himself (if one is allowed to transplant T. S. Eliot's term into another context): *by means of anamorphotic stains, "reality" indexes the presence of the subject.* The emergence of the empty surface on which phantasmagorical monsters appear is therefore strictly correlative to what Heidegger calls "the advent of the Modern-Age subjectivity," i.e., to the epoch in which the symbolic "substance" (the "big Other" *qua* texture of symbolic tradition) can no longer contain the subject, can no longer bind him to his symbolic mandate. This cutting off of substantial tradition is the constitutive gesture of Enlightenment; in this sense, *the "monster" is the subject of the Enlightenment,* that is to say, the mode in which the subject of the Enlightenment acquires his impossible positive existence. A new light is thus shed on the ill-famed problem of the "death of the subject": the "eclipse" of the subject in front of the Thing—what one (mis)perceives as his "death"—is strictly equal to his emergence, i.e., *the "subject" is precisely the void which remains after the entire substantial content is taken away.* The source of this customary confounding of the "death of the subject" with its very emergence lies in the fact that the motif of the "death of the subject" stands in for another motif, that of the "death of man": "subject" and "human person" are strictly opposed, i.e., "subjectivization" entails a radical "evacuation," emptying, of "man" *qua* substantial "person."

To exemplify this split between "subject" and "person," one has only to evoke one further figure in the series of legendary "monsters": Kaspar Hauser. On 26 May 1828, a young man appeared in the central square

of Nuremberg, singularily dressed, of stiff, unnatural gestures; his entire language consisted of a few fragments of the Lord's prayer learned by heart and pronounced with grammatical errors, and of the enigmatic phrase "I want to become such a knight as was my father," the design of an identification with the Ego Ideal; in his left hand, he carried a paper with his name—Kaspar Hauser—and the address of a captain in the Nuremberg cavalry. Later, when he learned to speak "properly," Kaspar told his story: he had spent all his life alone in a "dark cave" where a mysterious "black man" procured food and drink for him, until the very day when he dressed him and took him to Nuremberg, teaching him on the way a few phrases . . . He was confided to the Daumer family, quickly "humanized" himself and became a celebrity: an object of philosophical, psychological, pedagogical, and medical researches, even the object of political speculation about his origin (was he the missing Prince of Baden?). After a couple of quiet years, on the afternoon of 14 December 1833, he was found mortally wounded with a knife; on his deathbed, he announced that his murderer was the same "black man" who had brought him to the central square of Nuremberg five years ago . . .[36]

Although the sudden apparition of Kaspar Hauser provoked a shock that pertains to this kind of brutal encounter with a real/impossible which seems to interrupt the symbolic circuit of cause and effect, the most surprising thing about it was that, in a sense, *his arrival was awaited*: precisely as a surprise, he arrived in time. It is not only that Kaspar realized the millenary myth of a child of royal origins abandoned in a wild place and then found at the age of adolescence (cf. the rumor that he was the Prince of Baden), or that the fact that the only objects in his "dark cave" were a couple of figures of wooden animals pathetically realizes the myth of a hero saved by the animals who take care of him. The point is rather that toward the end of the eighteenth-century, the theme of a child living excluded from human community became the object of numerous literary and scientific texts: it staged in a pure, "experimental" way the theoretical question of how to distinguish in man the part of culture from the part of nature. (A couple of decades earlier, Frederick, the "enlightened" king of Prussia, was directly involved in a similar experiment: on a fenced country estate, he and his assistants isolated a couple of children and secretly observed how they found their way without any help from educated adults.) What is therefore crucial about the figure of Kaspar Hauser is that he appeared as the subject of the Enlightenment at its purest: as the very embodiment of the ideological problematic that pertains to the Enlightenment project. This "Thing which speaks" with its "mechanical," abrupt, doll-like gestures, lacking the "depth" that defines someone as a person, was the pure subject ($) prior to subjectivization, freed from all imaginary lures. (Even the "black

man," Kaspar's paternal substitute, was devoid of any positive features.) Its most succinct Lacanian diagnosis is therefore that Kaspar Hauser was the subject lacking the mirror captivation, in other words, *the subject without the ego*: he was directly thrown into the symbolic network, bypassing the imaginary (mis)recognition which enables one to experience oneself as a "person." (As it is known from his story, Kaspar Hauser was not able to relate to his mirror image, i.e., he did not recognize "himself" in it—the same as with all monster figures, real or "fictitious," from Dr. Frankenstein's creature to the elephant man, who could not stand their mirror images.)

This is the way the Enlightenment project has gone wrong: the Enlightenment philosophers wanted to pour out of the bathtub the dirty water of corrupted civilization and to retain only the healthy, unspoiled, natural child-ego, yet what they inadvertently threw out in the process was precisely the ego, so that they were left with the dirty water of a monster.[37] In short: the pure "subject of the Enlightenment" is a monster which gives body to the surplus that escapes the vicious circle of the mirror relationship. In this sense, monsters can be defined precisely as the fantasmatic appearance of the "missing link" between nature and culture: as a kind of "answer of the real" to the Enlightenment's endeavor to find the bridge that links culture to nature, to produce a "man/woman of culture" who would simultaneously conserve his/her unspoiled nature. Therein consists the ambiguity of the Enlightenment: the question of "origins" (origins of language, of culture, of society) which emerged in all its stringency with it, is nothing but the reverse of a fundamental prohibition, the prohibition to probe too deeply into the obscure origins, which betrays a fear that by doing so, one might uncover something monstrous . . .[38]

If, consequently, one bears in mind the fact that, according to Lacan, the ego is an *object*, a substantial "res," one can easily grasp the ultimate sens of Kant's transcendental turn: it desubstantializes the subject (which, with Descartes, still remained "*res* cogitans," i.e., a substantial "piece of reality")—*and it is this very desubstantialization which opens up the empty space (the "blank surface") onto which fantasies are projected, where monsters emerge.* To put it in Kantian terms: because of the inaccessibility of the Thing in itself, there is always a gaping hole in (constituted, phenomenal) reality, reality is never "all," its circle is never closed, and this void of the inaccessible Thing is filled out with phantasmagorias through which the transphenomenal Thing enters the stage of phenomenal presence—in short, prior to the Kantian turn, there can be no black hulk at the background of the stage. It was, of course, well before Kant that philosophers doubted the capacity of man to know the Infinite and affirmed that we can only conjecture the Infinite by means of improper

metaphors. Yet Kant adds to it the crucial twist: man's finitude is not the simple finitude of an inner-worldly entity lost in the overwhelming totality of the universe. The knowing subject is a substanceless point of pure self-relating (the "I think") which is *not* "part of the world" but is, on the contrary, correlative to "world" as such and therefore *ontologically constitutive*: "world," "reality," as we know them, can appear only within the horizon of the subject's finitude. The black space of the Thing in itself is therefore something extremely dangerous to approach—if one gets too close to it, "world" itself loses its ontological consistency, like the anamorphotic stain on Holbein's *Ambassadors*: when we shift our perspective and perceive it "as it is" (as a skull), *all remaining reality loses its consistency and turns into an amorphous stain.*

The subject is the nonsubstance, he ex-sists only as nonsubstantial self-relating which maintains its distance from inner-worldly objects; yet in monsters, this subject encounters the Thing which is his impossible equivalent—*the monster is the subject himself, conceived as Thing.* Therein consists the paradox of the Lacanian mathem $ ◇ *a*: what we have here is not the relationship of two entities but rather the two sides, the two "slopes," of one and the same entity. The subject is "the same" as the Thing, he is so to speak its negative (the trace of its absence) within the symbolic network—Lacan's obsession with topological models of the "folded" space in the last years of his teaching (the Moebius band, the inverted 8, etc.) attests to his effort to articulate clearly this folding back wherein the subject encounters its own reverse. Hegel radicalized Kant by conceiving the void of the Thing (its inaccessibility) as equivalent to the very negativity that defines the subject; the place where phantasmagorical monsters emerge is thus identified as the void of the pure Self: "This night, the inner of nature, that exists here—pure self—in phantasmagorical presentations, is night all around it, here shoots a bloody head—there another white shape, suddenly before it, and just so disappears."[39]

From here, one can return to *Scream* for the last time: the standard modernist reading which conceives it as the manifestation of a monadic subject, desperate at his inability to establish contact with the world, condemned to solipsistic void, etc., falls short insofar as it continues to conceive the subject as substance, as a positive entity whose adequate expression is hindered. We enter postmodernism the moment we get rid of this perspective illusion: what appears, within modernism, as the limit impeding the subject's self-expression, is actually *the subject himself.*[40] In other words, we enter postmodernism when we pass from the "emptied subject" to the subject *qua* the emptiness of substance (homologous to the reversal from the matter *qua* substance which curves space into matter *qua* the curvature of space in the theory of relativity): in its most radical dimension, the "subject" is *nothing but* this dreaded "void"—in *horror*

vacui, the subject simply fears himself, his constitutive void.[41] Far from displaying the subject's horror at the prospect of losing himself, the scream is therefore the very gesture by means of which the dimension of subjectivity is inaugurated—(what, through the scream, will become) the subject shrinks from what is "in him more than himself," from the Thing in himself, i.e., he assumes a minimal distance from it.

In this precise sense, subject and object are correlative in Lacanian theory, but in a way which is the reverse of their epistemological correlation in transcendental philosophy. According to the worn-out commonplace, the Lacanian subject is $, a barred and barren, crossed-out subject, its hindrance, its failed status, is constitutive, etc.—what one should add to it is just that *"object" in the Lacanian sense is a name for this inherent impediment, for the "bone in the throat" which hinders the*

subject's full realization—therefore $ \$ \lozenge a $. In other words: object is "correlative" to the subject *qua* barred, to the very bar that prevents its realization. It is for that reason that, in his Seminar on *Transference* (1960–1961), Lacan renounced the motif of intersubjectivity: what is lost in it is the fact that, to a subject, another subject is first and foremost an *object* (*a*), that which prevents him from fully realizing himself, or (the reverse of the same) that which possesses what the subject constitutively lacks—a *Master*, in short. The aim of the analysis is to undermine this illusion: the analyst occupies the place of the Master, but does not "play his role," thereby rendering visible the Master's imposture—the lack always already pertains to the Other itself.[42]

The ultimate "social mediation" of the monster figure is therefore to be sought in the social impact of capital, this terrifying force of "deterritorialization" which dissolves all traditional ("substantial") symbolic links and marks the entire social edifice with an irreducible structural imbalance—it is by no accident that "monsters" appear at every break which announces a new epoch of capital: its rise (Frankenstein, Kaspar Hauser); its transformation into imperialism (the elephant man, the phantom of the opera); today's emergence of the "postindustrial" society (the revival of the motif of the "living dead"). This structural imbalance is inscribed into the very form of anamorphosis, namely in its radical ambiguity: anamorphotic distortions of reality may function as repellent horror, like the forehead protuberance of the "elephant man," yet phal-

lophany may also occasion an effect of sublime beauty. Let us just recall the face of Virginia Woolf: its ethereal, refined sublimity pertains to its anamorphotic extension, as if the reality of her face itself were protracted by a crooked mirror. To ascertain this link between anamorphosis and sublimity, it suffices to "retrench" this face to its "normal" measure by means of a simple computer treatment, i.e., to accomplish an operation homologous to that of reshaping the soft, "melted" watches from Dali's famous painting back into their "normal" contours—what we get is, of course, a "healthy," chubby face without any trace of the unretouched photo's sublimity. The status of sublimity is therefore ultimately that of a "grimace of reality" (as Lacan puts it in *Television*); Lacan's definition of the sublime ("an object elevated to the level of the Thing") could be rendered as "the sublime is an object, a piece of reality, upon which the Real of desire is inscribed by means of an anamorphotic grimace." The boundary that separates beauty from disgust is for that reason far more unstable than it may seem, since it is always contingent on a specific cultural space: the "anamorphotic" torture of the body which can exert such a fascination within some cultural spaces (from the bandaging of female feet in China, the Indo-Chinese tribe whose women put tight rings on their necks in order to protract them, etc., up to *erection* itself, the paradigm of anamorphotic protraction of a piece of reality), can evoke nothing but disgust in a foreign gaze. Have we not thus also delineated the contours of a *postmodern* critique of ideology which instructs us to assume such a foreign gaze upon one's own ideological field, whereby the ideological anamorphosis loses its power of fascination and changes into a disgusting protuberance?

Notes

1. For a detailed account of this parallel, cf. James Donald, "The Fantastic, the Sublime and the Popular; or, What's at Stake in Vampire Films?" in *Fantasy and the Cinema*, ed. J. Donald (London: British Film Institute, 1989), pp. 233-52.
2. Gaston Leroux, *The Phantom of the Opera* (New York: Hippocrene Books Inc., 1990), p. 12.
3. Ibid.
4. According to Lacan's classical definition, the function of the mask is "to dominate the identifications through which refusals of love are resolved"

("The Meaning of the Phallus," in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the Ecole Freudienne*, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (New York: Norton, 1985), p. 85; it is therefore not difficult to conceive the Phantom's compulsive mask wearing—another of his features—as a strategy to counter the refusal of maternal love.

5. Cf. Alain Grosrichard, "Le Cas Polyphème ou Un Monstre et sa mère," in *Ornicar?* 11 (pp. 19–36) and 12–13 (pp. 45–57) (Paris: Navarin Editeur, 1977).

6. We allude here to the difference between the two deaths, the real (biological) death and the symbolic death (erasure of symbolic traces). In his seminar on *The Ethic of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan elaborated the notion of the "second (symbolic) death" apropos of the Sadean distinction between the ordinary crime, which is still a part of the natural cycle of generation and corruption, and the absolute crime, the destruction, the eradication, of this cycle itself. (Cf. chapter 4 of Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London and New York: Verso Books, 1989).) The ultimate identity of the second (symbolic) death and the Sadean absolute crime can be exemplified by Immanuel Kant's obsession with the trauma of a judicial process against the king, his sentencing to death (in contrast to the simple regicide in the act of rebellion). That is to say, why is the legal action against the king, his execution, a Sadean absolute crime that no punishment or penitence can recompense? The murder of the king in the act of rebellion undermines the existing legal power, but only at the level of reality—it is simply a part of the process of (social) corruption and generation which leaves intact the symbolic legality. If, on the contrary, after the successful overthrow of the king, we organize a judicial process against him, i.e., against the embodiment and ultimate guarantee of the legal power, we commit the absolute crime: we undermine the legal power, the rule of law, *qua* symbolic institution—which is why, as Kant puts it, legal execution of the king is a "suicide of the state." Or, in Hegelese: this crime cannot be measured by the standards of legality anymore, it is not a simple external negation of legality but its "negation of negation"—it undermines the very standpoint from which one can conceive of an act as "illegal." As to the Kantian notion of the "suicide of the state," cf. chapter 5 of Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do* (London and New York: Verso Books, 1991).

7. There is a piquant detail as to the elephant man's "true story": when the historians examined the sources, they discovered that the myth of his origins has surprising foundations in fact: a local newspaper from his native town contains a small note according to which—precisely in the time of his mother's pregnancy—during a circus parade an elephant went mad and almost trampled down a pregnant woman!

8. As for the concept of the *"voix acousmatique,"* cf. Michel Chion, *La Voix au cinema* (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, 1982).

9. The opposition of voice and gaze as objects corresponds to the antagonism of the life drive and the death drive: voice vivifies, whereas gaze mortifies.

10. There is, however, a third type of scream which is neither silent nor vocal, but *vocalized with deferral.* We find it, among other examples, toward the end of Coppola's *Godfather* III: it is uttered by Michael Corleone (Al Pacino) on the staircase of Palermo's opera, after a mafia killer shoots his beloved daughter: at first, the scream is silent, in complete silence we witness the desperate opening of his mouth; after a couple of seconds, the sound strikes us with all its force—what is at work here is a kind of self-reflectivity, as if the scream is vocalized at the very moment when the subject perceives, becomes aware of, its silence. As long as the scream remains silent, we float in a kind of "stasis" of time (in the sense this term obtained with Walter Benjamin), the movement is suspended, the hero's entire life is condensed in three images superimposed in the timeless "now" (the murdered daughter; the murdered bride long years ago; the lost wife); when the scream resounds, Michael finds himself in the place homologous to that of Oedipus at Colonnus: by way of the scream, his "life force" evaporates, Michael is "emptied," his symbolic destiny is fulfilled—what remains of him is an empty shell, a burst soap bubble, a pure leftover of the Real. It is therefore quite consistent that this scream is followed by a kind of reverse flashback, a jump into the unspecified future when Michael, a lonely old man on a garden chair, suddenly falls down and drops dead: this utterly void figure drained of life is all that remains of him after the scream . . .
11. Cf. Michel Chion, "Le Quatrième Côte," in *Cahiers du Cinêma* 309 (1980), pp. 5–7.
12. Such a gigantic eye living its own life—i.e., a particular *organ* which mysteriously coincides with the *entire body (organism)*—is perhaps the ultimate psychotic object and at the same time the purest embodiment of the *objet petit a.* Therein consists the uncanny effect of Amfortas' wound in Syberberg's *Parsifal,* of this bleeding piece of human flesh which is carried on a pillow *outside* Amfortas himself, as an external, autonomous, partial object. Roald Dahl's story "William and Mary" relies on the same fantasy matrix: a terminally ill patient accepts to undergo an experimental operation—if the operation succeeds, his brain alone will survive, floating in a special liquid and connected with the outside world through one eye . . .
13. What constitutes "reality" is therefore precisely the *extraction* of this stain of the real which covers up the void of the infinite axis of perspective. This (Lacan's third and last) determination of psychosis supplements the preceeding two—captivation by the image of the double, paradigm of the paranoiac agency; foreclosure of the Name of the Father—and thus closes the series the inherent logic of which follows the triad Imaginary, Symbolic, Real. That is to say, each of these two subsequent determinations retroactively grounds the previous one: the subject is captivated by the image of its double insofar as he lacks the efficiency of the central signifier, the Name of the Father, which enables him to gain distance from imaginary relationship, i.e., to mediate it by its symbolic context; the Name of the Father is ultimately nothing but a designation of the central lack around which the

symbolic order is structured, the lack which is opened by the extraction of the surplus stain from the frame of "reality."

14. At this point, one should recall that "The Silent Scream" is also the title of the famous antiabortion pseudodocumentary depicting the fetus's desperate struggle for survival against the abortionist's scissors. Munch's *Scream* provides a kind of advance answer to it: the true horror is not to be plucked out from the maternal womb but to be imprisoned in it.
15. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1980), p. 154.
16. What one should do here is "allegorize" Jameson himself, i.e., read his theory of the break between modernism and postmodernism as an allegorical indexing of his own theoretical strategy: on the one hand, his procedure remains within the modern confines of an abstract theoretical scheme (ultimately the very triad realism, modernism, postmodernism) the function of which is to serve as the frame and pretext for a wealth of particular observations; on the other hand, Jameson's "last horizon" is the postmodern notion of History as Real/Impossible, i.e., the implacable necessity undercutting every attempt to master it, to reduce its contingency to a coherent symbolic narrative.
17. Cf. Abraham Lincoln's famous answer to a request for a special favor: "As President, I have no eyes but constitutional eyes; I cannot see you."
18. Therein consists, according to Lacan, the dissymmetry between Oedipus and Jocaste: Oedipus did not know what he was doing, whereas his mother knew all the time who her sexual partner was—the source of her enjoyment was precisely Oedipus's ignorance. The notorius thesis on the intimate link between feminine enjoyment and ignorance acquires thereby a new, intersubjective dimension: woman enjoys insofar as her *other* (man) does not know.
19. Cf. Michel Silvestre, "Le Père, sa fonction dans la psychanalyse," in *Demain la psychanalyse* (Paris: Navarin Editeur, 1987), pp. 84–111.
20. One is tempted to propose a reading of Charles Vidor's *Gilda* (1946) along these lines: the fundamental libidinal axis of the film is the latent homosexual relationship between Glenn Ford and his corrupted, obscene, paternal double, whereas the role of Gilda, the *femme fatale,* is precisely to induce him to renounce this "sprout of enjoyment" and assume "normal" sexual relationship. In other words, the obscene surplus that derails the "normal" circuit pertains to the "anal father," *not* to the *femme fatale* who is actually an agent of normalization—the title of the famous song from the film should be "Put the Blame on the Anal Father" instead of "Put the Blame on Mame!" Cf. Greg Foster, "Going Straight with *Gilda,*" *Qui Parle* 2, vol. 4 (Berkeley: University of California, 1991).
21. The father *qua* Thing is what is originally prohibited, i.e., the part of himself that the subject must renounce in order to become "himself," to attain his symbolic identity. This symbolic universe is, on the other hand, "held together" by the Name of the Father *qua* the agency of prohibition—the agent

of the symbolic *prohibition* is therefore precisely the object which was originally *prohibited.*

22. Which is why we prefer the term "anal father" to the usual "primordial father": although they both designate the same entity, "anal father" points in a more appropriate way toward the obscene nature of the father *qua* presymbolic "partial object."
23. As to this ambiguity of the "anal" object, see chapter 3.2 of the present book.
24. The same reversal characterizes the popular-culture figure of the "malefactor," from the ambiguous status of the Hitchcockian malefactor up to Darth Vader in the *Star Wars* trilogy (who, one should not forget it, also wears a mask concealing a distorted, amorphous face, i.e., who also plays the role of "anal father").
25. It is interesting to note how Aldous Huxley (in his screenplay for William Wyler's version of *Pride and Prejudice*) changed the figure of Lady Catherine de Bourgh, adding to it a kind of reflective twist: Lady de Bourgh who, in the novel, is mocked as thoroughly "evil" and plays the role of the "mediator" enabling the final reunion of Darcy and Elizabeth quite unknowingly, in the film consciously assumes the role of a mischievous old woman in order to test Elizabeth's love for Darcy—in short, she is a donator who purposely assumes the role of a malefactor.
26. Yet one does not need to have recourse to cinematic fiction in order to epitomize this split attitude of the "postmodern" subject—it suffices to recall the mode of presence of the West in Baghdad during the Gulf War: on the one hand, Peter Arnett from CNN reporting live, reduced to a pure gaze, as if he did not speak from down there, i.e., as if he himself were watching the bombing on television; on the other hand the total physical destruction of the country on which more bombs were dropped than on Vietnam . . .
27. Cf. chapter 5 of Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology.*
28. James G. Ballard, *Crash,* "Introduction to the French Edition" (London: Triad/Panther Books, 1975), p. 8. This attitude finds its clearest expression in a series of recent films which stage the paradox of Zhuang Zi and his butterfly: what at first seems to be a dream (or a flashback memory), is retroactively shown to be "reality" itself, and *vice versa,* as in Adrian Lyne's *Jacob's Ladder* at the very end of which the perspective of its hero, a Vietnam veteran persecuted by old war nightmares, is reversed: the only "present" is Vietnam itself, scenes from America are nothing but the hero's deathbed delusions . . .
29. On a more general level, the very succession of three modalities in the staging of Wagner's musical dramas in Bayreuth epitomizes the Jamesonian triad *realism, modernism, postmodernism.* Modernism is of course the mark of the so-called "neo-Bayreuth" in the early 1950s when Wieland Wagner threw off "realistic" swords, helms, and similar "Nordic" *bric-à-brac,* and imposed abstract ascetism: the empty stage with just some barren symbols on it, singers in white tunics, the interplay of light and darkness as the main

generator of visual dramatic tensions (the use of strong reflectors). Postmodernism's main exponent was, on the other hand, Patrice Chereau in his legendary staging of the *Ring* in 1976–1980: the return to the wealth of "realistic" details (including live horses in the first year of *Walküre*), yet within the "hyperrealist" frame which suspends their "veracity" and posits them as moments of a nightmarish "psychic reality."

30. This background also enables us to locate the fantasy power of the image of a "ghost ship" roving alone in the sea like a black stain, as in Alistair Maclean's adventure thriller *The Wreck of Mary Deare*: is not the captain found by the rescuers in the abandoned ship a new figuration of the Flying Dutchman?

31. Cf. Stephen Jay Gould, "Adam's Navel," in *The Flamingo's Smile* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985). Incidentally, therein consisted Friedrich Engels's mistake in his *Origins of the Family, State and Private Property*: he mistook the "punalua" family (all brothers in clan A married to all sisters in clan B, its counterpart), an ideological "fossil" fabricated by the recent Indian society, for an effective past form of family.

32. Georg Lukacs articulated a homologous shift apropos of Walter Scott's *Waverly*: from the perspective of "civil society," the romantic outcast is suddenly perceived as a common criminal.

33. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 382. Let us just recall how he exerts his power within the Opera: he takes revenge on the new director for giving preference to commercial over artistic considerations, i.e., he endeavors to impede the Opera's utilitarian commercialization.

34. Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 26–27.

35. Let us just recall, from the ideological domain proper, the way Juan Péron "held together" the movement that bears his name: Péronism was a profoundly heterogeneous movement, there was place in it for leftist trade unionism as well as for aristocratic militarism; Péron functioned as a Name which did not reduce this heterogeneity but simply contained it as in an empty vessel—the unity of Péronism was rendered possible by the fact that all its currents recognized themselves in a common *signifier*.

36. Cf. *Ich möchte ein solcher werden wie . . . Materialien zur Sprachlosigkeit des Kaspar Hauser*, ed. Jochen Hoerisch (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1979).

37. This inversion of the metaphor of the child and the dirty water enables us also to determine succinctly the opposition between Lacanian psychoanalysis and its ego-psychology version. In the latter, the aim of the analytical cure is to get rid of the dirty water (symptoms, pathological tics, etc., i.e., everything that appears as a disturbance) in order to keep the child (ego) as unspoiled as possible, cleansed of all dark spots, whereas the aim of the Lacanian cure is to throw out the child (to suspend the analysand's ego), so that the analysand is confronted with his "dirty water," with symptoms and

fantasies which organize his/her enjoyment. In other words, is not the strategy of the so-called "free associations" in the psychoanalytical cure precisely to suspend the function of the ego, so that, once its control diminishes, the "dirt" of the analysand's enjoyment comes to light?

38. As to this prohibition, cf. chapter 5 of Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do.*
39. Quoted from D. Ph. Verene, *Hegel's Recollection* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), pp. 7–8.
40. As to this notion of the subject, cf. Joan Copjec, "The Orthopsychic Subject: Film Theory and the Reception of Lacan," in *October* 49 (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), pp. 53–72.
41. When the borderline theorists (Otto Kernberg *et al*) deplore the notorious "feeling of emptiness" as the major complaint of today's patients, a Lacanian should therefore recognize in this "emptiness" *another name for the subject*: we encounter the subject at the very point at which the "self" is cleared of its content.
42. The Master's illusion is therefore *stricto sensu* "transcendental": a Master is somebody who feigns to possess the unfathomable *je ne sais quoi*, the noumenal Thing beyond positive phenomenal qualities. The fundamental gesture of Kant's transcendental turn is precisely to forbid to whomever to act in this way: the Thing remains inaccessible forever. If, as Lacan puts it, philosophy is the reappropriation of knowledge by the Master and as such a version of the discourse of the Master (cf. his *Séminaire XVII: L'envers de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1991)), Kant's "transcendental turn" cuts this link between philosophy and the discourse of the Master: transcendental philosophy "changes the register" to the discourse of the hysteric.