

# Lacan + Architecture

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Derek Hook and Calum Neill, Series Editors

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# Lacan + Architecture

## Introduction *Raisonné*

*Don Kunze and Lorens Holm*

What is, or would be, “Lacanian space”? On one hand it has stood for the idea that psychoanalysis can be at the center of projects of emancipation, of building new social formations by directly engaging political theory. As Anna Kornbluh has put it, “Theorists of the political are quite accustomed to appreciating what psychoanalysis can do to account for domination, audit sovereignty, and critique ideology.”<sup>1</sup> But, she adds, “less common is to think with psychoanalysis about politics as the question of elementary social links, about politics as the sphere of institutionalization, about politics as form, about the space of the political and the architectures that contour such space.” Where political uses of Lacanian space have relied on a reductive spatial binary, a “natural environment” threatened by modernism and the aggressive exploitation of natural resources, the book we propose, *Lacan + Architecture*, is a counterpoint. From the start, it employs the *matheme* of “crossing the bar,” of metaphor that simultaneously involves metonymy and the signifying chains that, in architecture, layer space to create ethnological composites.

The essays we propose acknowledge Lacan’s architectural legacy on two fronts. First, Lacan’s RSI system of Borromean domains, the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary, constitutes a structure of relations that cannot be assimilated by Euclidean space alone. Perhaps Lacan’s most difficult theoretical component, topology of the projective plane, which engages with projectivity’s themes of non-orientation and self-intersection is also essential to architecture. Second, Lacan applied his broad mastery of literature, philosophy, the arts to clinical situations of paranoia, neurosis, psychosis, and perversion. Each of these has its own “space,” and each space has its distinctive correlates in architecture.

The title’s use of what at first seems to be a plus sign could be a lesson in miniature of the obligation felt by both architecture and psychoanalysis to acknowledge the importance of metaphor, which Lacan symbolized by  $\perp$ , a crossing of the bar between the signifier and signified, S/s. Crossing retains something of the conventional meaning of the plus sign, +, since metaphor’s project is to find all there is to find. This inventory is perhaps the most central meaning of extension, where topology and ethnology come together in the idea of completion which must involve the idea of the supplement and the lack.

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<sup>1</sup> Anna Kornbluh, “States of Psychoanalysis: Formalization and the Space of the Political,” *Theory and Event* 19, 3 (July 2016).

Because the Lacanian inventory involves combining things as a means of cancelling them to preserve their resistance, the + cannot be spoken. In speech, one would say “LacanArchitecture.” To say something requires thought to make the silent connection: enthymeme. As with topology, the lesson of making inventory into a crossing of the bar is a study of the role of the silent middle term, the connector that not only allows for contradiction but uses contradiction to preserve its central logic. This principle is key both to topology and ethnology.

As architecture theory moves beyond the positivism of its early days and the phenomenology of its present, it requires Lacanian thinking. This advances psychoanalysis into the built environments, where architecture is seen, but where in addition to building’s threats to nature, the subject creates the spectacles of opposition to its own nature.<sup>2</sup> This book aims, principally, to recenter the role of the death drive, the “drive of drives,” in the construction of human desire.<sup>3</sup> In this project, architecture and psychoanalysis must join forces.

The ten authors of *Lacan + Architecture* have histories of engaging psychoanalysis in their architectural research. Most are active academics in senior positions. All have, in the past three years, pooled their interests to form the Institute for Psychoanalytic Studies in Architecture (iPSA), a scholarly collaboration that has sponsored four zoom conferences on subjects such as The Architectural Imagination, Architecture in the Alethosphere, and the Stendhal Syndrome. They interviewed the Toronto psychoanalyst and photographer, Chris Vandervees.<sup>4</sup> Many members have published in *Vestigia*, a journal based in Great Britain and edited by John Gale. The group plans future conferences on Magic and Architecture, Apotropaic Boundaries, and Cassirer with Lacan, and aims to initiate an on-line journal. Members have participated in APPI, Lack, Affiliated Psychoanalytic Workgroups, the Association for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society, the *Écrits* Conferences, and the LacanSalon. Most have taught architecture studio and theory in the U. S., Canada, the U. K., and Scotland and published and lectured widely.

This group’s interest in the Freudian-Lacanian field is not new. Impressive introductions have come from major figures in the field: K. Michael Hays (*Architecture’s Desire: Reading the Late Avant-Garde (Writing Architecture)*, 2009); Joan Copjec (“The Strut of Vision,” 1996; *Read My Desire*, 1994), and Hal Foster (*Return of the Real*, 1996). Mark Cousins’ public lectures at the Architectural Association were informed by a Lacanian reading of Freud. Jane Rendell, at the Bartlett School in London, has presented Freudian-Lacanian thinking to a new generation of architecture theorists, with books including *Silver* (2017), *Site-Writing* (2010), *Art and*

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<sup>2</sup> Lorens Holm remarks that, generally, such binary theories draw on the world of Melanie Klein’s theory of object relations. Lorens Holm, “To Conclude with Climate Change,” Chapter 6 in *Reading Architecture with Freud and Lacan: Shadowing the Public Realm* (London and New York: Routledge, 2023), 114.

<sup>3</sup> Slavoj Žižek is known for helpfully pointing out that the death drive is actually the sum total of forces that resist death. See Derek Hook, “Of Symbolic Mortification and ‘Undead Life’: Slavoj Žižek on the Death Drive,” *Psychoanalysis and History* 18 (2): 221–256.

<sup>4</sup> For more information, visit the iPSA website: <https://ipsa.psu.edu>.

*Architecture* (2006), *The Pursuit of Pleasure* (2002), and *The Architecture of Psychoanalysis: Spaces of Transition* (2017). Nadir Lahiji has created a new branch of architecture theory around the works of Lacan, Jameson, Badiou, and Marx, with *Architecture Against the Post-Political* (2014), *Adventures with the Theory of the Baroque and French Philosophy* (2016), *An Architecture Manifesto* (2019), and other books on cinema and politics.

The most serious attempt to show the necessity of the Freudian-Lacanian field for architecture theory, however, has come from two members of the iPSA group. Most recently Lorens Eyan Holm has published *Reading Architecture with Freud and Lacan: Shadowing the Public Realm* (2023). This book makes a compassionate plea for a full assessment of “all the fantasies of the ego” that stand, corrosively, between our individuality and the realization of collectivity in a space of intersubjectivity.

Holm’s book stands on the shoulders of another prolific iPSA member, John Shannon Hendrix, whose *Architecture and Psychoanalysis: Peter Eisenman and Jacques Lacan* (2006) demonstrated the critical power of psychoanalysis applied to contemporary architectural production. Hendrix’s broad scholarship includes authored and edited books on cosmology and English Gothic architecture (2014), architecture’s cultural role (2012), the debate between form and function in architecture (2013), aesthetics and philosophies of spirit (2005), and other works.

Finally, John Shannon Hendrix and Lorens Holm’s anthology, *Architecture and the Unconscious* (2016), includes essays by Christina Malathouni, Alla G. Vronskaya, Andrew Ballentyne, Gordana Korolija Fontana Giusti, Jane Rendell, Nikos Sideris, Stephen Kite, Kati Blom, Emma Cheate, Hugh Campbell, the editors, and two other iPSA authors, Tim Martin and Francesco Proto. More than any single collection, this work orients psychoanalysis to architecture, making it clear that there can be no adequate understanding of one without the other.

Despite this rich legacy, architecture theorists are today generally unaware or misinformed about the work of Jacques Lacan. But, despite Lacan’s references to architecture, the bigger tragedy is that architecture is under-appreciated in psychoanalytic thinking and discourse, where it relates directly to both theory and clinic. Therefore, this collection considers the core of its readership to be the existing extensive audience of the Palgrave Lacan series. For the non-architect, the generalist, and the clinician, these essays offer a new paradigm, where architecture is found to be the means of understanding Freud’s enigmatic note of 1938, “Psyche is extended, knows nothing of it” (*Psyche ist ausgedehnt, weiß nichts davon*).

Extension as such has long been central to architectural study, and the project of merging issues of architectural representation with Lacan’s remarkable body of topological studies has yet to be staged. Where Lacan offers rigor and the ability to visualize the Real of the subject through topology, architecture offers conditions of the built environment as an unlimited clinic, where demand and desire combine to structure material places. It would be a mistake to consider

extension from a purely mathematical point of view. Lacan regarded projective geometry as the Real of the subject, and architecture can document this Real in historical places, literary and artistic treatments of architecture, and in ethnographical practices. Architecture theory must go beyond acknowledging the imprint of topology. Architecture is the means and medium by which the Real has been recognized, understood, and put into practice. Here, we may be able to realize Kornbluh's unrealized objective of "politics as form, about the space of the political and the architectures that contour such space."

Politics is public, and the public in architecture is the civic, wherever there is need to understand space as extending beyond the soliloquy of the ego. Space extends into diverse other media and, at the same time, employs diverse methods of construction. Within this variety and possibly on account of it, the subject is *both* isolated and collective, *both* constructed and constructing, in the mode of the speaking being of letters, the *parl-être*.

Authors of this collection will treat the spaces of Lacanian subjectivity from a variety of perspectives, in ten in-depth essays ranging from 8000 words to 12,000 words. Photos and diagrams will, economically but strategically, illuminate the arguments of the authors in the spirit of Lacan's own exceptional visual imagination.

## **Layout of the Proposal**

This introduction has been intentionally brief, with the intention of presenting four diverse "editorials" about the potential of this collection and its role in future Lacanian studies. The following sections of this proposal are, thus:

1. **Three authors will present their conception of what the book will mean** for Lacanian scholarship. These editorials represent their authors' particular backgrounds and different visions of the future.
2. Following these editorials, **the book's ten authors present prospectuses of their chapters**. As with the introductory editorials, the aim is to preserve the variety of authors' views and methods. There will be no attempt to organize or streamline viewpoints, but if space allows there may be concluding essays addressing the future of Architecture + Lacan studies.
3. Short **author biographies** will conclude this proposal.
4. **Author CVs** will be submitted under separate cover.

# Architecture as Psychoanalysis

## Expanding the Freudian-Lacanian Field through Architecture

*John Shannon Hendrix*

In 2021, a group of architectural theorists formed an organization that was named the Institute for Psychoanalytic Studies in Architecture (iPSA, <https://www.ipso.psu.edu>). After many discussions, exchanges, Zoom meetings, and Zoom conference panels (most now available on YouTube), this book was conceived. All of the participants have published on the relation between architecture and psychoanalysis. The purpose of this book is to reinvest the knowledge produced over the past three years into a coherent, comprehensive statement of what psychoanalysis has to offer architecture and what architecture has to offer psychoanalysis. iPSA actualizes and extends what has been meant, in Lacanian studies, by “live theory.” It is speculative, experimental, and polemical. It is necessary in response to a world in crisis on multiple fronts, including education, the practice of architecture, political and economic fracture and instability, and the growing demise of mental health and well-being.

How can both psychoanalysis and architecture help? This book seeks to revise and revive architectural theory through psychoanalysis, and to apply psychoanalytic theory to architecture, so that both together can make the world a better place. We believe that this book needs to be read by architects, architectural educators, and practitioners and scholars of psychoanalysis, and anyone interested in the human condition in relation to the built environment. The book is the first of its kind, and is designed to join the series of Lacanian criticism published by Palgrave Macmillan and edited by Derek Hook and Calum Neill. Where architecture in general has failed to acknowledge Lacan’s central importance for a comprehensive theory of building, a psychoanalytic audience may come to regard architectural theory as a central and decisive resource.

The book reads like a collection of essays by master surgeons, dissecting the human mind with psychoanalytic theory in order to heal the practice of architecture. Every essay turns its attention to the contemporary state of architecture and architectural theory, which are perceived to be in crisis. “Architecture as psychoanalysis” is a theme that runs throughout every essay in the volume and connects them together. Like architecture itself, the essays will create boundaries as well as dissolve them, hopefully in a process that allows architecture to become more integrated with the environment, through the dissolution of the ego, and the celebration of a more fluid and peaceful form of human life, in the wake of the catastrophic events in the past few years of what we overestimate by calling it civilization.

It must be recognized that architecture is in crisis. Society is also in crisis. Academics is in an especial crisis. Psychoanalysis has something necessary to contribute to architecture and society. Contemporary architecture doesn't communicate anything to society. It doesn't contribute anything to society intellectually. Sustainability and computer technology are an important part of the means of production of architecture, but they are not architecture. Architecture must communicate ideas. It must contribute to the well-being, cultural aspirations, and intellectual development of society. In schools, architecture theory, as the engagement of architecture with the humanities, needs to be revived. Ideas as a basis for architecture as expression are not being developed. The educational system is not preparing architects sufficiently to engage in architecture in this way. Psychoanalysis can offer an alternative to the crisis of architecture as a reflection of the crisis of society. It can contribute to the re-establishment of architecture as a discipline connected to the humanities.

Throughout history, in its visual form, architecture has expressed and represented the highest aspirations of society, in relation to art, poetry, philosophy, theology, cosmology, ontology, linguistics, etc. Architecture has an extensive capacity to engage and communicate ways of thinking for the common good, but it is not doing that. Psychoanalysis can provide architecture with a way to re-establish a productive relationship with the people that use it, look at it, and think about it. Psychology has applications to architectural function; psychoanalysis has applications to architecture as art, as a visual expression of ideas, which can revive the spirit (*Zeitgeist*) of a society losing its moral compass. Modern architecture has to figure out a way to communicate to people in order to have resonance and contribute to social reform. It cannot continue to be a tabula rasa. It must communicate ideas. This must begin with educational reform.

In school, architecture is isolated from other disciplines, even the history and theory that are taught in architecture school. It has become an autonomous technocratic exercise. The architectural curriculum has to be re-invested with the humanities. Architects have to realize that their job is to communicate ideas to society and contribute to social well-being. This must begin with educational reform, with proposals for systematic ways in which psychoanalysis, philosophy, and other disciplines in the humanities can be re-introduced into architectural education. In the process, psychoanalysis must cultivate its relation with other disciplines, contributing to the totality of social reform. These proposals might involve publications and seminars (live or virtual) which push toward educational and social reform, hopefully creating a movement, and resulting in resonant built work.

Architecture is based on function, or conscious reason, and image, or conscious ego. How can the unconscious be incorporated into architecture? There are many elements of the human psyche which are studied in psychoanalysis that are neglected in contemporary architecture and architectural theory. It is necessary to map a way that these other elements can be incorporated into architecture, through educational reform, in the form of workgroups, seminars, symposia,

and publications. It is necessary to define specific concepts in psychoanalysis and analyze historical precedents in architecture in order to enable contemporary architecture to communicate and contribute to people beyond function and image. It is necessary to understand how architecture is influenced by its own unconscious or Other, its media, technology, conventions, politics, social conditions, cultural values, and the desire for the Other. Architecture needs to understand the ways in which the psyche is understood in psychoanalysis, and incorporate them into architectural education and practice, in particular the presence of the unconscious.

Elements of the knowledge of the unconscious that can be incorporated into architecture include: gaps, scotomata, fragmentation, incompleteness, discontinuity, vacillation, absence, contradiction, *méconnaissance*, inaccessibility to the self, insertion of the self into language, dream work (condensation and displacement), dream images, hallucinations, imagination, poetic language (metaphor and metonymy), the *Unheimlich*, the sublime, the pleasure principle, the death drive, sensation (fear, pain, horror, delight), *das Ding*, sublimation, palimpsest, perversion, the neurotic and psychotic, and the dialectic of the subjective and objective (ideal and real, phenomenal and noumenal, symbolic and imaginary, inorganic and organic, metaphysical and empirical, noetic and discursive, *eidos* and *morphe*). Each of these elements can be the subject of site studies of buildings, landscapes and urban configurations, and proposals for new ways of doing architectural research and experimental design. As Freud said, no application of psychoanalysis has excited more interest than in the theory and practice of education, although it is important to avoid the repression imposed by education, resulting in neurosis.

The alethosphere, the lathouse, anamorphosis, extimacy, projective geometry, the Borromean knot, the part object, the *objet petit a*, aphanisis, linguistics, rhetorical language, the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*, civilization and its discontents, the death drive, neurosis, psychosis, and perversion are some of the themes in Freud and Lacan that can be applied to architecture and architectural theory. How are images related to words in representation? How is the ego a social construct? How is the unconscious a social construct? What role does the unconscious play in what the architect does? How does architecture reflect, represent and enact the human condition, the relation to the environment, and the human psyche?

The primitive hut, foundational and sacrificial rituals, ethnological treatments of boundaries, stylistic and economic excesses, perspective practices; the practices of scenography, orthography, and ichnography; issues of style and ornament; transparency, mathematics and geometry; the visual communication of ideas, philosophies, and ideologies; the uncanny and issues of identity and belonging; responses to the *Zeitgeist* of the era (digital technology, social media, etc.) — these are some of the elements of architecture that can be applied to psychoanalytic theory. The book operates in both directions: what do psychoanalysts and theorists of psychoanalysis have to say about architecture, and what do architects and architectural theorists have to say about psychoanalysis? Both psychoanalysts and architects have something to gain by considering the relations of the writings of Freud and Lacan to architecture. The project is to extend



psychoanalytic concepts to the built environment. Hopefully the book can bring something new to psychoanalytic theory. One of the contributors to this volume is a trained psychoanalyst; two are currently undergoing training. All have unique expertise in applying psychoanalytic theory to architecture, and *vice versa*. The goal of the volume is to both psychoanalyze architecture, and to see architecture as a form of psychoanalysis.

The psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Lacan are complex; Lacan in particular is not easy to read, and it takes many years of reading him for someone to arrive at the point where they can claim some expertise on Lacanian psychoanalysis, if ever at all. Lacan's writings, or transcripts of his talks, read like patchworks of incomplete ideas that prevent conclusions from being drawn and theories from being formed — that was Lacan's intention. The human psyche, as understood by Freud and Lacan, is fragmented and incomplete, because of the activities of the unconscious, so their writing expresses their view of the human psyche. The human psyche is not seen as a totality; the totality of the psyche is an illusion of conscious thought; consciousness is an illusion, and is subject to *méconnaissance*, a mis-knowing of unconscious thought. Architecture is generally based on the conscious formation of the image, an ego-based practice which limits its scope and effectiveness; the application of psychoanalytic theories can greatly benefit architecture in its goals of resonating and communicating with people as they inhabit the built environment.

Lacan's writing can be seen to be a patchwork of thoughts and irregular shapes, creating a kind of tessellated pavement; blurred overlaps rather than connections, displaying an elliptical, episodic and disruptive logic. All this betrays the presence of the unconscious. Lacan seems to want the reader to complete his thoughts, to use his writing to develop their own thoughts, in relation to their unconscious thought. These methods can be applied to architectural design. The unconscious cannot be escaped. Applications of the unconscious to architecture have the potential to revolutionize architecture.

Works of architecture are both cultural artifacts designed for aesthetic veneration and territorial designs of structures of knowledge in order to accommodate collective human conduct. The relation between the surroundings, both the natural environment and the built environment, is a key element of the human condition and the human psyche. This relation has become one of disjunction and conflict, as it was described by Lacan, and is currently exasperated daily by global warming and global economics, politics, and media. Architecture is part of the cause, part of the symptoms, and potentially part of the cure. According to Lacan, because the illusion of totality and ego in conscious thought is based on the orthographic totality of the body image formed in the mirror stage, the human being's relation to their environment is centered around their ego. This needs to change, and architecture needs to be the instrument to change this. Massive changes in human territorial practices and symbolic exchanges brought about by the digital revolution need to be addressed by both psychoanalysis and architecture — with architecture seen as both analyst and analysand, practicing psychoanalysis and being psychoanalyzed.

## 2

# Architecture as Psychoanalysis

[ *encore* ]

*Lorens Holm*

Freud wrote, in 1938, “Psyche is extended — knows nothing of it.” Psyche is an apparatus, that apparatus is extended, and space is but a projection of that extension. If psyche is spatial, it puts it within the curtilage of architecture. Any project that seeks to bring together two disciplines that are not commonly regarded as already together, with the aim of producing what we might call an expanded discourse, must satisfy a number of conditions. There must be an internal affinity between the disciplines that makes putting them together compelling and sensible. Something must drive this conjunction of the disciplines that is internal to them, an internal potentiality that appears in the conjoined space made by their overlap. The expanded discourse must make sense to the people who inhabit it. And if it is to survive in the external world of institutions, in which everything is subjected to conscious rationale and the profit motive, it must have a demonstrable benefit to the world.<sup>1</sup>

Let us return to Freud’s note and extend it. In the terms of Lacan’s topography, the unconscious is extended, the ego knows nothing of it. Architecture is the practice by which psyche is extended, but the significance of this conceptual fact is lost on us. The ego of the architect may think they are accommodating their client’s brief, but they are also part of another project, of which they are largely unaware. That unconscious project is the project of extending the psyche. And because it is unconscious, it is cumulative, collective or commonly held amongst all of us, and always already vanishing. It is the aim of this collection of essays on psychoanalysis by architects to trace the affinities between these two disciplines, to mark the landmarks, as it were, in the field of their overlap, so that we can orient ourselves in it. This book will be the first systematic attempt to do this. We trace the significance of this conceptual fact about architecture (that it is extended but knows nothing of it) by applying psychoanalytic thinking to architectural discourse. The affinity works both ways. It should also be possible to trace the significance of this fact about the psyche for psychoanalysis by applying architectural thinking to psychoanalytic

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<sup>1</sup> “Space may be the projection of the extension of the psychical apparatus. No other derivation is probable. Instead of Kant’s a priori determinants of our psychical apparatus. Psyche is extended; knows nothing about it.” Freud, “Findings, Ideas, Problems,” in *SE 23* (1941), 299–300. Freud seems to intend to shift space from the conscious domain of Kant’s thought to the unconscious domain of the psychoanalytic subject. However, Kant’s a priori determinants are not exactly conscious either. In *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant argued that space and time are forms of perception (his term ‘forms of intuition’) not objects of perception. They underly conscious experience in the sense of being logically prior to it.

discourse. Analysts may think that the unconscious is extended in speech, and be utterly unaware of how it is also extended by the analytic setting, or rather, the room that houses it.

For the purposes of this introduction, we can trace the affinity a step farther. We would expect to be able to identify the central concept in each discipline and find — if not an overlap — at least a convergence. Lacan argued that nothing about Freud's thought made sense without the concept of the unconscious. It was his Copernican discovery. Something similar can be said for space. Without space, without at least the potential for extension, every arrangement of walls, windows, or doorways would be contingent and our encounter with them accidental. Space is the precondition for architecture and makes it possible in the way that the unconscious is the precondition for psychoanalysis and makes it possible. They play similar roles with respect to their disciplines. They are both negative entities, in the sense that they are only present in the discourse and practice by their absence. There are very few discourses that have at their centre, a nothing. This nothing is its precondition and what motivates the practice. The fact that architecture is otherwise a self-professedly materialist and positivist discourse, dedicated to the accumulation of solutions to problems, only makes the fact that — at its centre — it is organised around an absence, space, all the more remarkable. This is a fact about which, arguably, it is in denial, in the way that — according to Lacan — American ego-psychology is in denial about the function and even existence of the unconscious.

Contemporary architecture's preoccupation with spatial articulation and organisation, with limits, with edges, has the potential to shed light on areas of Lacan's thought, including his use of topology, perspective and the visual field; the way Lacan distributes the subject in, for example, Schema L and other graphs; and his articulation of the pleasure principle, *das Ding*, and the drives, as essentially beyond or outside the set of signifiers. A psychoanalytic audience may come to regard architectural theory as a central and decisive resource, in particular, when they seek to understand the inherent spatiality of the human subject.

## Lacan + Architecture: Today

Andrew Payne

What relevance might Lacan's neo-structuralist "return to Freud," the final manifestations of which appeared more than forty years ago, have for the contemporary theory and practice of architecture? This is first of all a question of how architecture might be obliged, still, today, to respond to the ontological and epistemological upheavals triggered by that third "Copernican revolution" that Freud's "discovery of the unconscious" may be thought to have instigated. How might that discovery illuminate architecture as a possible object of knowledge and experience? If Lacan's structuralist reading of Freud seems especially well-poised to assist us in addressing that question, it is because, his significant clinical innovations notwithstanding, his most enduring and influential accomplishment is arguably to have framed with unrivaled clarity the theoretical commitments psychoanalysis implies, a task he accomplished (occasionally explicitly, but pervasively by implication) through placing Freud's thought in dialogue with not only the broad intellectual milieu from which the Viennese doctor first emerged (Charles Darwin, Jean-Martin Charcot, Claude Bernard, Ernst Brücke, Franz Brentano, Hermann Helmholtz, Theodor Lipps), but also the milieu from which he himself was only then emerging (Georges Bataille, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Roger Callois, Roman Jakobson, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Alexandre Kojève, Alexandre Koyré). The question of Lacan's interest for architecture is thus an appurtenance of the question of how the stakes of architectural theory and practice have been affected, wittingly or unwittingly, by the transformations that attend the Freudian intervention in the history of European thought. Before or beyond all tracings of local lines of affinity between psychoanalysis and architecture, that is the question that must structure any dialogue between architects and analysts of the Lacanian stripe.

### The Freud Event

What was this revolution in thought that Freud is reputed to have initiated with his theory of the unconscious? Leaving aside whatever specific advance Freud's talking cure may have marked in the history of dynamic psychology, what does the invention of psychoanalysis represent as a thought event; more specifically, what particular intervention into the philosophy of the subjectum — as it had developed from Descartes and Kant *via* Fichte and Hegel to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche — does Freud stage with his novel science of the psyche? A response to these questions is a necessary propaedeutic to any description of how the teachings of Lacan might illuminate architecture as an intellectual discipline.

Of the just mentioned philosophers, the last two, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, are perhaps the most significant for clarifying the significance of Freud's theoretical intervention, since they

anticipate his insistence on the need to approach the problem of the *subjectum* as chiefly a problem of its embodiment. Whatever else they may have accomplished or failed to accomplish, both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche should be credited with having injected the question of what a body can do to and with a psyche into the philosophy of the *subjectum*. As for Freud, if his psychoanalysis is first and foremost an analysis of the drives, it is because those drives are in his words nothing but the demand for “work” placed on the psyche by a body from which it is inseparable: “A drive (*Trieb*) appears to us as a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism and reaching the mind, as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work as a consequence of its connection with the body.”<sup>1</sup> The effect of this translation of energetic stimulus into psychical representative is to imbricate *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, in the process short-circuiting that fusion of Thought and Being that Descartes had hoped to achieve with his formula for an existent that could think itself into ipseity from a bodiless space that is no place: “cogito ergo sum.” In contrast to this *cogito*, the Freudian subject thinks where it is not and is where it does not think. It is precisely this psychoanalytic conception of a subject split between its thought and its being that Lacan attempted to refine, so as to insulate it against the bowdlerizations to which Freud’s most trenchant insights were subjected by the Americanization of psychoanalysis in the post-World War II period. But why does this refinement imply a turn to structuralism? That is a question we will address in due course, but first a pair of preliminary exergues.

### **First Exergue: Man, That Failed Animal**

In order to appreciate what Lacan does *with* Freud under the partial influence of structuralism, it is helpful first to consider, if only for a moment, what Freud did *to* Lacan. How does the latter’s encounter with the former transform his thinking? Of course, that question is unanswerable in the absence of a sense of what Lacan was up to prior to his turn to psychoanalysis. Leon Chertok and Isabelle Stengers have helpfully characterized the first phase of Lacan’s thinking as ethological, going on to describe this ethology as organized around a neo-Spinozian conception of “personality” as affectability. This conception is set within the framework of a rapport, conceived on the model of the Estonian biosemiotician Jacob von Uexküll’s *Umwelt*, between the organism and its environment, a rapport of which the phenomenon of personality is thought to be an expression.

Lacan’s transition from this ethology of the person to a psychoanalysis of the subject is predicated not only on his “return to Freud” but also on a philosophical pivot from Spinoza to Hegel. With this turn to Hegel — largely instigated by his attendance at his “only Master,” Alexander Kojève’s lectures on *The Phenomenology of Spirit* — Lacan’s thinking about “the totality constituted by the individual and his own milieu” becomes fixated on the dialectically irreducible

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<sup>1</sup> Sigmund Freud, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes,” *On Metapsychology*, *Pelican Freud Library* 11 (London: Penguin, 1984); see also “Three Essays on Sexuality,” *Pelican Freud Library* 7, 82–83; “An Outline of Psychoanalysis,” *Pelican Freud Library* 15, 2.

difference that structures this totality, giving rise to what can only be described as a disadjusted rapport between the human organism and its environment. Hence Lacan's claim that the "impotence proper to the prematurity of human birth by which naturalists characterize the specificity of human development ... helps us grasp the dehiscence from natural harmony, required by Hegel to serve as the fruitful illness, life's happy fault, in which man, distinguishing himself from his essence, discovers his existence."<sup>2</sup> According to Lacan, Freud's subject of the unconscious would be a function of this "dehiscence from natural harmony." As we shall see, by applying to *thesis* the scientific approach that Galileo, Descartes, and Newton had followed the ancients in reserving for *physis*, structuralism undertakes to clarify the logic and efficacy of that "function."

Lacan's insistence on the human animal's maladapted relationship to its milieu (already forecasted in Freud's own account in *Civilization and its Discontents* of the traumatic assumption of a bipedal posture and the ensuing transformation of instincts into drives) forms the negative-anthropological bedrock on which his account of the reciprocal genesis of imaginary and symbolic orders is based, and it indicates the broadest and most direct way in which his retooling of the Freudian subject implicates the theory and practice of architecture as one among the disciplinary practices that shape the human milieu. We are apt to refer to the cumulative product of architecture's territorializing acts as "the built environment." Few thinkers of Lacan's generation were more insistent than was he that, precisely owing to our maladaptation, what we call our "environment" is "built" all the way down, with bricks and mortar, steel and glass, to be sure, but also with the phantasms and signifiers that are the products of our all too human rapport with our surroundings. In Lacan, already in the early Lacan, architecture, though rarely named as such, is silently rubbing itself against all the conceptual furniture, and this most especially if we imagine it to encompass, or at any rate to be inseparable from, the territorializing agendas of urban and regional planning and design.

## Second Exergue: From the Elephant Path to the Information Highway



Figure 2. Road interchange in Nigeria.

In one of his rare forays into such matters — which he describes as motivated by an interest in revealing "the gravity, the inertia, specific to the signifier, in the field of relations with the Other" — Lacan adduces the "road" — whose modern apotheosis he identifies as the highway but whose purview his seventeenth seminar will extend, under the rubric of the "alethosphere," to include what we still sometimes call the 'information highway' — as exemplary of the role that the introduction of the signifier has in shaping the singular rapport that human animal populations establish with their surroundings: "The highway is thus a

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Lacan, "Variations on the Standard Treatment," *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink, Heloïse Fink, and Russell Grigg (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006), 286.

particularly tangible example of what I'm saying when I speak of the function of the signifier insofar as it polarizes meanings, hooks onto them, puts them in bundles." As Lacan goes on to observe, from among the cartographic depictions of the earth's crust, the roadmap best expresses the role of this material signifier in man's relationship to the landscape:

On a map of the physical world you will see things inscribed in nature, ready to play a role, certainly, but still in their natural state. Compare a political map — there you will find, in the form of traces, of alluvion, of sediments, the entire history of human meanings maintaining themselves in a kind of equilibrium and tracing out these enigmatic lines that are the political boundaries of lands. Take a map of the major paths of communication and see how a road runs through countries linking one river basin to another, one plain to one another, crossing a mountain chain, crossing bridges, organizing itself, has been traced from South to North. You will notice that it is the map that expresses the role of the signifier in man's relationship to the land.<sup>3</sup>

The effect of this intervention of the signifier is to make it as though the road came first, after which the mountains, rivers, and plains threaded like beads along its relentless vector subsequently arrive. This effect results in a prioritization of the medium of relation over the *relata* it connects. This prioritization would be a corollary of the logic of "retroactive anteriority" that on Lacan's account links the first signifier to the "real" in which it intervenes.

In his seminar of the following year, Lacan clarifies what he means by this anteriority of the signifier from which the real "already suffers" with reference to another piece of regional infrastructure, the hydro-electrical dam. Drawing an analogy between this infrastructural apparatus and the effect of the signifier on that energetics that Freud places at the heart of his theory of the unconscious, Lacan observes that the dam does not so much harness an "energy" that is already given in nature as produce it. The link between this original signifierization of the energetic economy — the hallmark of Lacan's structuralization of Freud — and the polarizations that give precedence to the medium of relation over the items related in the case of the highway is clarified at the end of his rumination on the dam, when he declares:

This need of ours to ... confuse the *Stoff* — or the primitive matter or the impulse or the flow or the inclination — of what is really at stake in the operation of analytic reality, is something which represents nothing less than a misrecognition of the symbolic *Wirklichkeit* (reality). That is to say that it is precisely in the conflict, in the dialectic, in the organization and structuration of the elements which compose themselves, constitute themselves, that this composition and this construction give to what is in question a wholly different energetic scope. We misrecognize the very reality in which we move by holding on to this need to speak of an ultimate reality as if it were elsewhere than in this very operation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Jacques Lacan, "La Troisième," *La Cause Freudienne* 79 (2011): 11–33.

<sup>4</sup> Here, long before Keller Easterling or Reinhold Martin, Lacan is inviting us to consider the linkages between architecture, on the one hand, and "the organizational complex" and its attendant infrastructures, on the other. On his understanding, these latter would be dictated by the laws of symbolization that structure historical transformations in the social bond.

Riffing on Lacan, we might say that it is useless to speak of a landscape as if it were elsewhere than unfurled across the signifying agglomerations of the highway. These agglomerations are, literally, our natural surroundings. This, according to Lacan, is what distinguishes the highway from the path, making it the exemplar of the material dimension of the signifier and that transformation in the human animal's rapport with its surroundings that the opening of this dimension heralds. On this account, the highway would epitomize the fundamental difference between human animal practices of territorialization and non-human animal practices. What is distinctive of the former is the indetermination of the difference between the viscosity of occupation and the fluidity of nomadic egress that results from the insinuation of operations of repetition and reversal into the vector of egress:

The difference between the highway and the elephant track is that ... we stop along the way to the point of forming agglomerations and rendering these places of passage so viscous as to be virtually impassable. ... It sometimes happens that we take a trip down the highway intentionally. ... so as to turn around and come back again. This movement of departure and return is also quite essential, and it puts us on the track of the evident fact that the highway is a site around which not only all sorts of dwellings, of places of abode, agglomerate but which also, qua signifier, polarizes meaning.<sup>5</sup>

It is worth observing that it was precisely the question of coordinating the viscosity of occupation with the fluidity of vehicular circulation that galvanized the codification of modern architecture's rapport with the metropolis and its con-urban context in the *Charter of Athens* produced by the *Congress Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM) in 1934. At all events, what Lacan does not comment on here, but which demands the urgent attention of architects, landscape architects, urban designers, and regional planners laboring in the epoch of the anthropocene, is the extent to which the "natural" systems that predate and traverse the territorializations irradiating from this 'highway' must now themselves evolve according to its exigencies. This is one way of interpreting his adage that something in the real already suffers from the signifier. So how is structuralism, and more broadly the concept of structure, implicated in the carving of these durable "furrows" across psyches, bodies, and territories both mundane and celestial? The question suggests that the concept of structure would be linked to a general theory of inscriptions.

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<sup>5</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III (1955–1956)*, *The Psychosis*, trans. Russell Grigg (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1993), 291.



## A Structuralist Freud?

A part of what distinguishes Lacan's approach to structuralism is his very developed appreciation of the fact that this theoretical tendency marked the migration into the *sciences humane* of a series of developments that had already shaped the co-evolution of the mathematical and physical sciences from the beginning of the seventeenth to the end of the nineteenth century: broadly speaking, from Descartes' algebraicization of geometry, via Leibniz's calculus, to Boole's logical algebra predicated on a separation of *noetón* and *aisthetón*. These developments concern that transformation in the methodological protocols that govern mathematical and scientific practice as a consequence of the progressive erosion of the epistemological authority awarded to intuition at the hands of ever more sophisticated applications of algebraic symbolism. As Erich Horl observes in his consummate survey of these matters:

Around 1900, the crisis of intuition — which resulted from the arithmetization of mathematics, the elaboration of non-Euclidean geometries, the field theoretical turn in physics, and the calculization of formal logic — weighed heavily on the entire space of knowledge. It came to a head in the philosophical confrontation about the matter of thinking, about whether thinking was generated intuitively or symbolically. The new symbolic age that began there ... pushed the autonomization and ultimately the machinization of the Symbolic.<sup>6</sup>

It is common knowledge that Lacan's appreciation of these developments was significantly informed by Alexandre Koyré's account of the genesis of "Galilean science." Notwithstanding Koyré's magisterial status in Lacan's pantheon of contemporary thinkers — the latter referred to the former as "his only Master" in matters concerning the genesis of scientific modernity — there is one key point on which the two appear to differ. From Koyré's perspective, the rupture between ancient and modern conceptions of physics occurs against the background of a continuity between ancient and modern conceptions of mathematics, which he imagines both epochs to have conceived as a science of number. For Lacan, whose conception of the mathematical quarrel between ancients and moderns is perhaps closer to that of Jacob Klein than to that of Koyré, the continuity of mathematical history is torqued, if not ruptured, by that profound transformation in the conception of number that Klein so ably describes as having occurred with Descartes' introduction of algebraic symbolism as a means to calculate with "indeterminate magnitudes."<sup>7</sup> Lacan, in closer proximity to the most recent fruits of this symbolism than was Klein, goes further, suggesting that modern mathematics is driven by an ideal not of quantification, but of literalization, so that mathematics becomes, under the post-intuitionist regime of epistemological modernity, not a science of number, but of the letter as algebraic cypher. This science of the letter, as a science of pure differential places, then provides the basis for those "conjectural sciences" that

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<sup>6</sup> Erich Hörll, "Blind Thinking around 1900," *Sacred Channels: The Archaic Illusion of Communication*, trans. Nils F. Schott (Amsterdam ND: Amsterdam University Press, 2018). <https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048525607-005>

<sup>7</sup> Jacob Klein, *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra*, trans. Eva Brann (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968).

Lacan will place alongside their “exact” counterparts in his second seminar. It remains for us to clarify how this science of the letter (and the eclipse of intuition by symbolization, *viz.* literalization, that it entails) influences Lacan’s conception of structure, and further what application, if any, this conception has to architecture as one among the disciplines entrusted with shaping the human animal’s rapport with its milieu?<sup>8</sup>

A text that is published in *Écrits* under the title “Remarks on Daniel Lagache’s Presentation: ‘Psychoanalysis and Personality Structure’ ” (1960) may set us on the way to answering that question. There Lacan clarifies the difference between his own conception of “structure” and that of Lagache (with whom he was able nevertheless to forge a significant alliance on both theoretical and professional-institutional fronts). As Lacan makes clear in this text, it is the “organicist” residues in Lagache’s account of the structural conditions giving rise to the phenomenon of personality that he takes a distance from, the just mentioned affinities notwithstanding.<sup>9</sup> For reasons that I will undertake to clarify in what follows, these residues are seen by Lacan as of a piece with a pre-modern conception of the role of intuition in the production of scientific knowledge. This is to say that with Lacan’s structuralist-inspired return to Freud there now emerges, alongside the question that had animated the ethological phase of his thinking — how does the human animal’s rapport with its surroundings differ from that of other animal species — a second question: how does the modern (*viz.*, Galilean-Cartesian) human animal’s rapport with *its* environment differ from that of the pre-modern human animal’s rapport with same as a result of the epistemo-semiotic transformations leading to the eclipse of the presumption of an intuitive basis for knowledge and experience. If Lacan’s reckoning of the implications for psychoanalysis of the “Galilean-Cartesian turn” finds its most developed expression in “Science and Truth,” the epochal transformation of humanity’s rapport with its milieu resulting from this turn arguably receives its most direct and sustained address in the session of Lacan’s seventeenth seminar titled “Furrows in the Alethosphere.”<sup>10</sup> There he anatomizes the transformation of modern humanity’s rapport with its milieu issuing from the technological appurtenances of the Cartesian-Galilean turn, most especially those relating to the provision of communications systems predicated on the

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<sup>8</sup> It is worth pointing out that Lacan’s theory of the letter, whose most able glossator is arguably Jean-Claude Milner, is the precise object of critique or deconstruction in the readings of Lacan to be found in the works of Philippe Lacoue-Labathe and Jean-Luc Nancy, on the one hand, and Jacques Derrida, on the other. The difference between Lacanian psychoanalysis and Derridean deconstruction could be described as the difference between a science of the letter and a science of the trace.

<sup>9</sup> Here we do well to bear in mind that the human “organism,” as a coordination of parts forming an integral whole, is according to Lacan’s theory of the mirror-phase nothing but a phantasm that the *in-fans*’ body-in-pieces (*corps morcelé*) projects in response to the giddy jubilation that it experiences when presented with the image of an adult counterpart. The human organism is what a body-in-pieces hallucinates itself as being, a hallucination in which both the time and the space of the subject have their genesis.

<sup>10</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII (1969–1970), The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Russell Grigg (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 2007), 150–163.

harnessing of electromagnetism. These observations gain interest when we consider that according to Lacan the “subject” addressed by psychoanalysis is only thinkable on the other side of this turn. At all events, the implication of Lacan’s comments on Lagache is that the latter’s conception of structure have not fully absorbed the implications of that eclipse of intuition by symbolization that he follows both Jakobson and Levi-Strauss in embracing as the epistemo-semiotic foundation of the structuralist project.

Lacan initiates his remarks on Lagache by noting a limited consensus between the two of them on the question of structure and its relevance for a dynamic psychology that would stress the constitutive role that intersubjectivity has in the genesis and development of personality. In particular, Lacan commends both Lagache’s use of the term “structure” and his recourse to set theory to clarify that usage. According to Lacan, the term is to be valued for the way that “it avoids ... or purifies the notion of totality.” This limited consensus notwithstanding, Lacan nevertheless distances himself from what he sees as the encroachment of organicist models on Lagache’s description of what a set is. Here Lacan accuses Lagache of failing to appreciate the paradoxical mereology that structures the concept of totality in set theory as a result of the distinction between membership and inclusion:

I accept the category “set” with which he introduces it, insofar as it avoids the implications of totality or purifies them. But this does not mean that its elements are neither isolated nor summable [as Lagache claims] — at least, if we are looking, in the notion of the set, for some guarantee of the rigor it has in mathematical theory. The fact that its “parts are themselves structured” thus means that they themselves are capable of symbolizing all the relations definable for the set, which go far beyond their separation and union, the latter being relations that are nevertheless inaugural. Indeed, elements are defined therein by the possibility of being defined as subsets covering any relation defined for the set. This possibility having as its essential characteristic that it is not limited by any *natural* hierarchy.<sup>11</sup>

Lacan goes on (544) to stipulate that the eschewal of any such “natural hierarchy” must exclude both the concept of “part” and the concept of “organism” from any definition of structure (by reason of the fact that they entail “the minimal limitation that Lagache immediately and relevantly qualifies as ‘geometrical’ ”). To this geometry of organic structure Lacan opposes a topology whose chief virtue would be its de-lamination of structure and form: “Now as I have stressed before, structure is not form, and we need to think in terms of a topology that is

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<sup>11</sup> Jacques Lacan, “Remarks on Daniel Lagache’s Presentation: ‘Psychoanalysis and Personality Structure,’” *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink, Heloïse Fink, and Russell Grigg (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006), 543–544.

necessitated by structure alone.”<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, Lacan does not exclude the possibility, perhaps even the necessity, of these separate jurisdictions of structure and form converging on the holes and gaps around which an organism is invariably shaped. As Lacan puts it, structure “take[s] advantage” of these holes: “The structure of which I am speaking has nothing to do with ‘the structure of the organism’ ... Not that structure, in the strict sense of the term, does not take advantage of gaps in the organic Gestalt to submit it to itself” (*Écrits*, 545; see also *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 147). In sum, the openings in our organic bodies are the apertures through which that intimate alien, language, enters our inner animal, submitting it to the laws of structure. Needless to say, these apertures are also the windows through which our “personality” opens onto its environment. This carries an implication that the environment our orifices open onto is in the first instance one structured by language, not just intersubjectivity, as Lagache would have it, but language. However, it is worth recalling that for Lacan, as for Freud before him, this language must itself claim as its condition of possibility the fact that our forebears once hoisted themselves up on their hind legs and exited the forest for the savannah, thus placing the holes in their bodies in an entirely new rapport with the milieu onto which those holes opened. This phylogenetic transformation sets the stage for that ontogenesis of the ego that Lacan names “the mirror stage.”

### **Structure *sans* Form and the Call for a New Transcendental Aesthetic**

Lacan’s appeal to a topology committed to the articulation of structure alone, and through this articulation to the modeling of a set logic unconstrained by any organicist mereology, prompts him to assert that “transcendental aesthetics needs to be recast in our times, for linguistics has introduced into science its indisputable status” (*Écrits*, 544). The transcendental aesthetic that Lacan deems to be in need of recasting is of course the one articulated by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. There Kant attempts to chart a middle way between Leibniz’s “relativist” conception of space and time and Newton’s “absolutist” conception. Kant concurred with Leibniz concerning the phenomenal nature of space and time, but insisted, as did Newton, that they did not reduce to mere relations between things. Not only are they absolute in the sense that they are prior to and constitutive for the apprehension of external objects, they are also prior to and constitutive for the construction of concepts, including those *a priori* concepts that Kant calls categories. Whereas categories are, like concepts in general, discursively constructed, time and space are immediately, though not empirically, given. At once following and transforming, as had Descartes and Leibniz,

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<sup>12</sup> Here, as in both the seminar on *Identification* and “L’Étourdit,” the psychoanalytic resort to set theory and the resort to topology are both in their distinct ways aligned against an organicist conception of structure that Lacan associates with an intuitionism of the Kantian type, and whose most influential expression in his day was perhaps to be found in Gestalt psychology. This alignment is sufficient to link his conception of structure to the critiques of Kant’s transcendental aesthetic to be found in Marburg neo-Kantians such as Hermann Cohen and Ernst Cassirer, both of whom sought to move beyond intuitionism in epistemological matters by absorbing Kant’s Transcendental Aesthetic into a Transcendental Logic revised on the basis of key developments in mathematics and logic.

the Scholastic model of intellectual intuition, Kant calls space and time “intuitions” of the transcendental imagination. In their immediate givenness these intuitions comprise a transcendental aesthetic distinct from his transcendental logic, the latter of which consisted of discursively mediated categories rather than immediate intuitions, *viz.*, quantity [unity, plurality], quality [reality, negation], relation [substance/accident, cause/effect], and modality [possibility/impossibility].

With the eclipse of Hegel’s philosophical hegemony, Kant’s distinction between transcendental aesthetic (imagination) and transcendental logic (reason) returned to the centre of philosophical discussion in the German context in the first several decades of the twentieth century, emerging for instance in Edmund Husserl’s phenomenological recasting of Kant’s critical philosophy as well as the debates between Martin Heidegger and Marburg neo-Kantians such as Hermann Cohen and Ernst Cassirer. It is also observable in the work of Walter Benjamin, who both despised Heidegger and took much from Cohen, and who, like Lacan, wished to add language to the list of intuitions constitutive of the transcendental imagination. That is to say nothing of Freud’s enigmatic engagements with Kant’s transcendental aesthetic, the most famous of these being perhaps his near-death quip, to be discussed at length in what follows: “Psyche is extended, knows nothing of it.”

At all events, Lacan’s call for a new transcendental aesthetic, echoed in later works such as the Seminar IX on *Identification* and “L’Étourdit,” is of great moment not only with respect to his increasing resort, as his thinking evolves, to the ultra-geometrical legacy extending from Leibniz’s *analysis situs* to then contemporary topology, but also with respect to both affinities and differences with the thinkers associated with “deconstruction,” Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy most especially. Indeed, Derrida and Nancy both associate their respective deconstructive ambitions with the invention of a new transcendental aesthetic. In calling for such a renewal they invoke not Lacan but Freud, more specifically the aforementioned remark in which spatial extension is attributed to the psychological apparatus. With that in mind, let us examine more closely what happens to the transcendental aesthetic in the passage from Kant’s critical philosophy to psychoanalytic metapsychology in both its Freudian and its Lacanian variants. Let us do so, first of all, because the exercise will force us to consider what has happened to our thinking of space since Kant, a thought that is surely not without consequence for our conception of contemporary architecture.

As our brief discussion of Lacan’s response to Lagache has already revealed, the notion of structure that the former understands to be operative in his return to Freud, and which he follows Roman Jakobson and Claude Levi-Strauss in linking to Ferdinand de Saussure’s theory of language as a system of pure differences, is one whose topological rather than geometrical disposition can only be appreciated on the other side of a metapsychological revision of Kant’s transcendental aesthetic, with its intuitionist underpinnings. In other writings (seminars on *Anxiety, Identification*, and the two-part essay “L’Étourdit”) Lacan would repeat his call for a new

Transcendental Aesthetic and always in association with the development of a concept of structure whose paradigmatic instances he adduces language and the mathematical science of topology to be.

# authors' chapter proposals

- 1** John Shannon Hendrix, *A Subjectless Architecture*
- 2** Lorens Holm, *My Neighbour, the Psychotic, Or, Everything You Wanted to Know about Party Walls but Were Afraid to Ask an Architect*
- 3** Don Kunze, *The Parallax of the Heroic Traveler*
- 4** John Gale, *The Fable of Noah's Ark: Patristic Typology and Psychoanalytic Hermeneutics*
- 5** Timothy D. Martin, *The Architect and the Position of the Analyst*
- 6** Andrew Payne, *Ethics/Aesthetics, Territory/Object, Architecture/Psychoanalysis*
- 7** Francesco Proto, *The Automatic Writing of the City*
- 8** Angie Voela, *Adam's House on Earth: Architectural and Libidinal Tensions in Lars von Trier's The House Jack Built*
- 9** Stamatis Zografos, *The Chalepas Museum: Cracks in Walls, (Death) Drive, and the Ethics of Conservation*
- 10** Francis Conrad, *Finite and Unbounded, Bound but Immortal: The (Lacanian) Mystery of Paralysis beneath the Perfect Shadow*

# Introducing the Essays

John Shannon Hendrix

We are confident that this original collection of essays will be a valued and useful addition to the disciplines of psychoanalysis, psychoanalytic theory, architecture, and architecture theory, with the ultimate hope that the occupation of the human being on earth can improve.

“**A Subjectless Architecture**” by John Hendrix is based on Lacan’s concept of *aphanisis*, which is the fading of the subject underneath the signifier in language, signification, representation and sublimation, resulting in the division of the subject and manifesting the unconscious. The theory is applied to the possibility of a subjectless architecture, an architecture that could dissolve the barrier between the subject as ego and the environment, and could contribute to a healing architecture, an architecture as psychoanalysis, generated through the unconscious and the Other, leading toward a regenerative relation between the subject and the environment and between architecture and the human condition.

In “**My Neighbor, the Psychotic — or Everything You Wanted to Know about Party Walls but Were Afraid to Ask an Architect**,” Lorens Holm treats the figure of the neighbor as both an ethical and territorial category, which crosses ethical-analytic discourse with architectural discourse. The essay reads Lacan’s *The Ethics* and *The Psychoses* together. In “Kant with Sade” and *The Ethics*, Lacan aligns the neighbor with perversion, in which love carries with the law, but we want to take the neighbor in the direction of a world from which the law and the symbolic order have been foreclosed. It is, as it were, an other without the Other. This we argue is the thrust of the neighbor. This paper raises questions relating to love, signification, and how we occupy the surface of the earth, which is the underlying concern of architectural discourse. In *The Ethics*, the ethical duty to the neighbor goes through *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden* — the demand that analysis makes upon the subject to fully inhabit its desire, to go — in other words — where its desire leads it through the other. According to Holm, as in the essays by Voela, Proto and Martin, the relation between the subject and the built environment plays a role in the edifice of the unconscious. How can architecture address the discontent caused by civilization, the conflict between conscious and unconscious thought? The neighbor, thus all social relations, have a problematic status in architecture. How can this be addressed?

Psychoanalysis is practiced in order to ameliorate the suffering of the human psyche. Can architecture be seen as a psychoanalytic practice whose goal is to ameliorate the suffering of the neighbor, the citizen, the subject in society, at the mercy of the political and economic machinery? Can architecture improve the human condition in general, not just for the wealthy? Can architecture create better neighbors, or better human beings? Can architecture help alleviate psychical suffering, or can architecture only be a cause or symptom of that suffering, the unbearable horror of the human condition? Can architecture be both the suffering and the cure?



In “**The Parallax of the Heroic Traveler,**” Don Kunze reconfigures the relationship of theory to clinic by arguing that through, and only through, an understanding of Lacan’s topological project can psychoanalysis extend itself in the spirit of Freud’s enigmatic conjecture, recorded in his notebook in 1938, that “Psyche is extended, knows nothing of it” (*Psyche ist ausgedehnt, weiß nichts davon*). Extension is both the extension of the “one-dimensional subspace” in the pure projective plane — a vector that is already studied by Lacan in Seminar VII, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* — as well as the temporal extension of “logical” space-time that began to interest Lacan at a discussion of the fable of The Three Prisoners over dinner in 1935. This date suggests that Lacan’s topological interests begin much earlier than the time he assigned in a note added to the Rome Discourse, 1961. The broader understanding of extension as space-time engages culture dynamics, and so in early myth, ethnology, and architectural history we find the best examples of Lacan’s “toroidal” disposition.

In “**The Fable of Noah’s Ark: Patristic Typology and Psychoanalytic Hermeneutics**” by John Gale, the origins of architecture are considered in relation to the origins of human civilization, including the role of numerology, mathematics, metaphor and myth in the ethnographics of the human psyche. The role of architecture in the ethnographics of the human psyche is seen in relation to space, construction, language, community, sexuality, and religion.

In “**The Architect and the Position of the Psychoanalyst,**” for Tim Martin, as for Voela and Proto, the built environment is a reflection of individual anxiety, psychological dysfunction, and social conflict. An increasingly disintegrated civilization fosters an increasingly disintegrated psyche. In the same way that architecture needs to address hazards through sustainability and green buildings, architecture also needs to address the resulting hazards of the psyche, through increased measures to benefit mental health. Tim Martin looks at historical examples to suggest ways in which architecture can address the hazards of mental health that go along with the hazards of the environment.

In “**Ethics/Aesthetics: Territory/Object: Psychoanalysis/Architecture,**” Andrew Payne advances the argument that Lacan’s theories evince a potential to illuminate architecture as both object of aesthetic veneration and territorial *dispositif*. Payne begins by showing that Lacan’s concern with the “disadjusted” rapport between the human individual and its environment is one of the most enduring concerns of his thought, extending from his early ethological writings to his late reflections on the alethosphere. Considering the relationship between this motif and Lacan’s aesthetics theories, Payne turns to Lacan’s seventh seminar in order to do the following: to reveal his discussion of the *Nebenmensch* Complex in that seminar to be an important locus for considering humanity’s environmental condition; to reveal the intimate link between this complex and Lacan’s neo-Freudian theory of the Thing; to show how this Thing is central to Lacan’s conception of artistic sublimation, which he defines as “the elevation of the object to the status of a Thing”; and finally to consider how architecture figures in this account of aesthetic sublimation. In the final section of this essay, Payne pivots from architecture as object of aesthetic

or artistic interest to architecture as a territorial *dispositif*. Taking the new modalities of territorialization that emerge with the modern metropolis and its infrastructural exigencies to be a central concern for contemporary architecture, Payne then turns to the session of Lacan's seventeenth seminar titled "Furrows in the Alethosphere" in order to consider what manner of subjectivation is at play in the imposition of these exigencies and what role psychoanalysis might have in illuminating it. Payne's reflections intersect not only with Holms' reflections on the *Nebenmensch*, but also with Voela's consideration of the morbid interlinkages between sublimation, *jouissance*, and the death drive.

In "**The Automatic Writing of the City: Junk Space and the Death of the Symbolic**," Francesco Proto addresses the questions: What is architecture becoming? What is the human psyche becoming? Technological development, capitalism, commodification, the nature of representation in language — the simulacrum, the synthetic, the junk space of excess production, the space of waste, the urban wasteland, the junkyard, the garbage dump, carbon production, deforestation, global economics — how is subjectivity reflected in the environment? Is the unconscious, the Other, an evolving entity in relation to the built environment, to civilization? As Angie Voela suggests, does architecture reflect an irresolvable tension between the human subject and the environment, between conscious (representation) and unconscious?

In "**Adam's House on Earth: Architectural and Libidinal Tensions in Lars von Trier's The House Jack Built**" Angie Voela explores the relation between architecture and normal psychological functioning and psychosis. How does architecture reveal psychological malfunction, tension, inability to connect language and visualization (psychosis), and the inability to connect the individual and society (psychosis)? How does architecture reveal the tensions between the human being and the environment? What role does architecture play in global warming and the destruction of the environment? To what extent does architecture create a barrier or division between the human being and the environment? To what extent does the ego-driven practice of architecture threaten and destroy nature and/or the unconscious mind and psychic equilibrium? How are the absence of the subject and the void around which desire circulates manifest in architecture? How is the fragmentation of the environment related to the fragmentation of the body and the fragmentation of the psyche? What is the nature of the subject in Late Capitalism and Postmodernism?

Stamatis Zografos' essay, "**The Chalepas Museum Cracks in Walls, (Death) Drive, and the Ethics of Conservation**," takes up the work of Yannoulis Chalepas, considered to be the foremost modern Greek sculptor, who descended into madness after 1888. His indecipherable sculptural work was accompanied by murals that were later effaced but recently recovered through non-intrusive imaging, but it has been the cracks in the walls that most definitively connect to both Chalepas's deterioration, his psychotic symptoms, and a Lacanian analysis of the artist's decline. Here, Zografos makes a bold claim about desire's broader role in both the etiology of psychosis and its analysis. "[D]esire supports and sustains artistic creation, desire becomes desirable in

itself, and therefore cherished by the Subject. Here the intimate link between desire and jouissance (enjoyment) is made that sheds light on the self-sustaining nature to desire.”

In “**Finite and Unbounded, Bound but Immortal**,” Francis Conrad takes Lacanians to task for missing Lacan’s critical references in the “middle Seminars” where he connects matters of the pure projective plane to such key architectural matters as the Fibonacci series, Golden Section, and chirality. Lacan’s topology is not affine (“rubber-sheet”), nor does it begin with Euler’s demonstration of the Königsburg Bridge Problem in 1725. Rather it is the foundational geometry discovered by Pappus of Alexandria in 300 c.e., rediscovered by Girard Desargues (an architect as well as a mathematician) in the seventeenth century, forgotten, then revived by the likes of Gauss, Plücker, Möbius, Klein, and Riemann. Scholarly misunderstanding of projective geometry has prevented clinical intervention, notably through comparative studies of literature, architecture, popular culture, and the performance arts, particularly film.

# 1

## A Subjectless Architecture

*John Shannon Hendrix*



*The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari (1920).*

A key theme in Lacanian psychoanalysis is the disappearance of the subject, through aphanisis. Aphanisis was a term used in psychoanalysis to refer to the fading of the sexual desire of the subject. The term was coined by Ernest Jones in 1927, and was seen as the foundation of all neuroses. Since Jacques Lacan set desire within the realm of language, for him aphanisis meant the fading of the subject beneath the signifier, as the signifier defines a subject to another signifier, and the signifier takes precedence in the formation of the unconscious. “There is no subject without, somewhere, aphanisis of the subject, and it is in this alienation, in this fundamental division, that the dialectic of the subject is established,” Lacan wrote in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*.<sup>1</sup> For Lacan, “...when the subject appears somewhere as meaning, he is manifested elsewhere as ‘fading,’ as disappearance” (218). Related to aphanisis and the disappearance of the subject in Lacan’s thought are the real, the *objet a*, the fading of the subject in language, the fading of the subject in perception, and the gaze. Other topics related to the fading of the subject are the dream space of Sigmund Freud, the psychophysiological space of Erwin Panofsky, the heterogeneous space of Georges Bataille, the psychasthenia of Roger Caillois, and the Stendhal Syndrome. The purpose of this essay is to consider these concepts in relation to architecture, in order to consider the possibility of a subjectless architecture, and to use architecture to illustrate the concepts. Psychoanalytic theory is applied to architecture so that architecture can better communicate the human condition and the human psyche through its

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981), 221.

forms, so that architecture engages with people more and plays a more important role in their lives.

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*A full text of this chapter can be accessed at*  
<https://sites.psu.edu/ipsa/files/2023/01/1-hendrix-fulltext.pdf>



Figure 1. Untitled, Joseph Forster, (1916–1921), Inv. No. 4494. © Prinzhorn Collection, University Hospital Heidelberg.

## 2

# My Neighbour, the Psychotic

## Or, Everything You Wanted to Know about Party Walls but Were Afraid to Ask an Architect

***Lorens Holm***

In this untitled work by Joseph Forster (1916–1921) that *near-man* is skating towards me on upside down crutches (*note the face-mask; 1918?*). He seems to have a very tenuous relation to the landscape. The landscape is ambiguous. (*Is it the surface of the earth? Is it a beach?*) The drawing looks upside down until you turn it upside down. The neighbour is always coming toward me and I wish he would stay away.

This paper will treat the figure of the neighbour as an ethical and landscape category that crosses ethical–analytic discourse with architectural discourse. It will read Lacan’s *The Ethics* and *The Psychoses* together. In “Kant with Sade” and *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, Seminar VII, Lacan aligns the neighbour with perversion, in which love carries with the law, but we want to take the

neighbour in the direction of a world from which the law and the symbolic order has been foreclosed. This we argue is the thrust of the neighbour. It will raise questions relating to love, signification, and how we occupy the surface of the earth, which is the underlying concern of architectural discourse.

The neighbour is a contested figure. With respect to ethics, it goes right back to *Leviticus*, and the injunction *love thy neighbour as thyself*. Etymologically, *neighbour* means *near man*.<sup>1</sup> With respect to ethics, the neighbour has always had a claim on the territorial and the material. In *Leviticus*, it is *love thy neighbour as thyself and leave your field edges unharvested for gleaning by the wayward indigent; love thy neighbour as thyself and pay your employees on time*. The neighbour is a contingent category of other based solely on propinquity. It cuts across symbolic categories related to social formations like race, class, genealogy, hobbies, politics, the PTA, and other interests, identities, and affiliations. As Kenneth Reinhard argues in *The Neighbour: Three Inquiries in Political Theology*, the neighbour disrupts the dichotomies of friend/enemy or friend/stranger, and father/tyrant/statesman (family/state/polis) and raises the horrifying prospect of being made subject to the *jouissance* of an other. A neighbour is whoever happens to live in your neighbourhood. It is the + of LGBTQ+. The neighbour is the stranger we have to live with, whose interests and — more importantly — whose pleasures are different from ours.

There is a class of legislation devoted to the neighbour. It is what party wall law regulates. Architects know it as a discrete area of contract administration. Party wall legislation and procedures reflect the real threat that my neighbour's pleasure will harm me, and do it in the way that will hurt me most deeply, by destroying the market value of my property. In UK and US law, when a neighbour builds against your shared property line, it triggers special contracts and procedures. These procedures are lifted out of the hands of the architect and given over to two specially appointed other professionals, so-called party wall surveyors, who negotiate on behalf of each owner. It is a form of polite proxy war. In a nation of homeowners such as we find in the UK, with little commitment to collective housing, for most of whom collective housing is a European experiment, *love thy neighbour* is a big ask. The neighbour is the nice guy who lives across the street, and if he gets any closer I'll kill him.

Lacan's project in *The Ethics* is to shift ethical thinking from *love thy neighbour as thyself* to *I must come to the place where the id was*. (Lacan's reading of Freud's *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*). It is the duty of every subject to itself, to fully inhabit its desire.<sup>2</sup> In effect, this is a shift from a duty to take care of others to a duty to take care of the self, and because desire is an intersubjective relation, by taking care of the self, taking care of the other.

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<sup>1</sup> Old English. The German is *Neben-mensch*, or near man.

<sup>2</sup> *Wo Es war* is a detail in Freud's text, almost a throwaway, and Lacan is preoccupied with it. He returns to it in many of his texts: "Where it was, I must come into being" ("The Instance of the Letter ...," in *Écrits*, 435). "I can come into being by disappearing from my statement" ("The Subversion of the Subject ...," in *Écrits*, 678). "Where it was, there I must come to be as a subject" ("Science and Truth," in *Écrits*, 734).

The existence of this inclination to aggression, which we detect in ourselves and justly assume to be present in others, ... disturbs our relations with our neighbour... .

[*Civilisation and its Discontents*, 49]

Freud is horrified by the prospect of loving his neighbour. Why would you want to love someone who would as soon kill you if they were not constrained otherwise by civilisation. Lacan quips that, like all good neighbours, Freud wanted to kill his. In "Kant with Sade," Lacan argues that Sade, like Freud, fails to recognize his neighbour in his own aggressivity.

But that Sade, himself, refuses to be my neighbour, is what needs to be recalled, not in order to refuse it to him in return, but in order to recognize the meaning of this refusal.

We believe that Sade is not close enough to his own wickedness to recognise his neighbour in it. A trait which he shares with many, and notably with Freud. For such is indeed the sole motive of the recoil of beings, ... before the Christian commandment. ["Kant with Sade," 74]

Lacan emphasises the association of love and the law, "desire ... knotted together with the law." Love thy neighbour as thyself and the commandment to love thy neighbour as thyself. It would seem that if love is what is freely given then the injunction would appear to invalidate it. But Lacan takes this knot in a different direction. In the *Epistles of St. Paul to the Romans*, adherence to the law is an opportunity to "sin beyond measure." Sade stops only because "the flesh is weak" and "the spirit is too prompt not to be lured." The problem is that the commandment and aggressiveness to self both emanate from the superego, the wickedness and sadism of the superego, who sets impossible tasks and enjoys your failure. ["Kant with Sade" in *October*, 74]

Leviticus, "Love thy neighbour as thyself."

Freud, "They love their delusions as they love themselves." Quoted by Lacan in *The Psychoses*.

Lacan, "... the psychotic's eros is located where his speech is absent." *The Psychoses*.

But if Lacan aligns *love thy neighbour* with perversion (he references Klossowski's *Sade My Neighbour*<sup>3</sup>), we want to take it in a different direction. Love thy delusion as thyself. There appears to be an accidental encounter between the neighbour and the psychotic in Lacan's text, a link between the neighbour and ordinary psychosis that explains the neighbour's problematic status in architecture.

My neighbour is always only ever accidentally my neighbour. They are always too close or too far, too loud or too late, but never where I want them. If the neighbour is a neighbour on the basis of pure material propinquity, with no symbolic bond (shared ethnicity, language), it is a category of psychosis operating at the level of everyday life. The neighbour is marked by an alterity that is irreducible, which brooks no symbolic assimilation. The neighbour purports to be just like me,

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<sup>3</sup> Pierre Klossowski, *Sade mon prochain* (1947).



but it is someone with whom I share nothing. This is guaranteed by the seeming random or accidental nature of the neighbour; we just happen to be neighbours.

*The Psychoses* is one of the few texts where Lacan acknowledges his territorial preoccupations. In Chapter 23, “The highway and the signifier ‘being a father,’” Lacan likens the function of “this fundamental signifier called *being a father*” to the function of a road network, with highways “bundling” local roads. This signifier holds the symbolic order together for the subject. It is precisely this signifier to which the psychotic has no access.<sup>4</sup> *The Psychoses* is one of the key texts where Lacan addresses the problem of signification, and he argues for a kind of concrete poetry of the signifier, a material and spatial basis for signification.

The highway is not simply a path from one place to another, the hierarchy of roads are part of how we organize the world for occupation. Without the highway, what had been a navigable network becomes instead a sequence of accidental encounters with local roads. Psychotics occupy the world, too, and can move through it, but it does not function for them in the same way. When we are lost, the road signs take on an unexpected and accidental prominence as real props. In the case of our neighbour visualized by Joseph Forster, it is not that there are no roads but that they do not structure his landscape in any obvious way. He has to invent his own devices to traverse it.

The highway is one of a number of material figures to which Lacan appeals to explain how signification is stabilized for the neurotic or perverse subject and how its symbolic entanglements with the other are conceptualized.<sup>5</sup> They share the common feature of being spatial, territorial: the road network of Lacan (Mantes), the world network of Patrick Geddes (Outlook Towers), and the “road” of the subject (L-Schema), to which we may add Freud's recurring image of the difficult defile, and material imprints, including the neural paths of the *Project ...* and “A Note upon ‘the mystic writing pad’” (1925).<sup>6</sup>

The architectural analogue to this landscape of local roads, without articulation or hierarchy, is junk space, a term coined by Rem Koolhaas, for a form of financialized space that is not articulated by boundaries. Junkspace, as performed by Koolhaas in his text “Junkspace” (*October 100*), corresponds to the continuities of money and media that are the commonplace of neo-liberal economies, and the consequent loss of the symbolic categories that territorialize the world into places of attachment that resist these continuities. There is no inside-outside, near-far, self-other, man-nature in junkspace. The philosophers Deleuze+Guattari would call it smooth. The

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<sup>4</sup> Lacan uses a cluster of similar terms, including being a father, the name-of-the-father, the paternal metaphor.

<sup>5</sup> See also the *point de capiton* or quilting point, where “signifier and signified are knotted together” [*Psychoses*, 268]. At the time of this seminar (1955–1956) Lacan was traveling to and from his weekend home outside Paris, the road from Paris to Mantes to Vernon to Rouen. The 1954 Tours de France is a loop that is broken in only one place, between Paris and Rouen which in the 1955 seminar is precisely the stretch of highway that Lacan uses as his example.

<sup>6</sup> The trouble is that in the linguistics of Benveniste and semiotics of Saussure, there is no hierarchy of signifiers, no signifier plays the role of the master. It appears that Lacan has to invent a function that is not recognised by others in order to explain how signification does not work for psychotics.



Figure 2. The accidental encounter with local roads *versus* the network “bundled” by the highway. University of Texas Libraries at Austin Texas map collection.

neighbour in junkspace is the problematic figure articulated solely by distance in a space, in a space in which distance is not articulated.

It is by way of conclusion and summary that we arrive at the problematic which this paper proposes to address. How to think architecture and psychoanalysis together through the figure of the neighbour. It is precisely at the boundary of the symbolic order, at its cessation, that spatial practice lies, where spatial practice articulates the beyond of the symbolic.

It is not obvious how to put *The Ethics* and *The Psychoses* together. If, for Marini, *The Ethics* is a heroic project, a tragedy that engages the great themes of the twentieth century, then *The Psychoses* is a comedy of eros, the petty foibles of those who are lost.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In *Jacques Lacan, the French Context* (1992), Marcelle Marini says that the aim of *The Ethics* is “to construct an ‘ethics for our time,’ an ethics that would finally prove to be equal to the tragedy of modern man and to the discontent of civilizations .... The truth of the human condition is an unbearable horror: the irreparable calamity of being born, ... the nightmare of the incomprehensible desire of the Father, the nightmare of the Thing of which one is the prey ....” Also: “At the root of ethics, one must locate desire, but desire marked by the indelible stamp of the fault (... crime and lack) ....” Analysis’ only promise is austere: it is “the entrance-into-the-I” [*l’entrée-en-Je*]. “I must come to the place where the id was,” where the patient discovers, in absolute nakedness, “the truth of his desire .... [T]his entrance is always missed. What then can the end of psychoanalysis be?” (171–174).

The neighbour is a contested term and loving the neighbour is fraught with contradictions. The term is contingent upon real spatial proximity, there is nothing symbolic about it. And yet ....

Marini relates *love thy neighbour as thyself* to narcissistic loss. In *The Ethics*, Lacan following Freud, relates it to the super-egoic aggression that I recognize in myself, where love and law coincide.

In “Kant with Sade,” Lacan relates it to perversion and tarrying with the law; he also relates it to *das Ding*, the irreducible otherness that underlies and resists symbolic assimilation.

For Reinhard, it is the horror of being subject to the other’s *jouissance*.

Although the neighbour does not appear in *The Psychoses*, the neighbour is always psychotic for me. They come with a kind of radical and irreducible alterity. It is not that the neighbour does not know the law. They may or may not know it, depending upon whether they belong to the clinics of neurosis and perversion, or to the clinic of psychosis. It is rather that the threat of the neighbour to me is that his *jouissance* will not be contained by the law, knows no bounds, and like Schreber who could not keep God’s rays out no matter how many doors and windows he slammed shut, shutters closed, curtains pulled, no law will keep the neighbour out of my house.

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### 3

## The Parallax of the Heroic Traveler

*Don Kunze*

1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8 ...

$$x = 1 + \frac{1}{(x)} = \frac{2}{1}$$

$$x = 1 + \frac{1}{1+1} = \frac{3}{2}$$

$$x = 1 + \frac{1}{\frac{1+1}{1+1}} = \frac{5}{3}$$

$$\dots = \emptyset$$

Figure 1. In Seminar IX (*Identification*), Lacan relates the unary trait to the recursive algebra that, with continuous “reinvestments” of 1, produce successively better approximations of the Fibonacci ratio,  $\emptyset$ . Session 7, January 10, 1962.

In judicial proceedings, the fact of intentionality is key. “What did X know and when did X know it?” Although Jacques Lacan is not on trial, there is the matter of projective geometry, since the French psychoanalyst is the first and only thinker to mathematize human subjectivity using the Real of non-oriented and self-intersecting forms such as the Möbius band, cross-cap, and torus.<sup>1</sup> In *Discours de Rome*, 1953, Lacan schematizes “the limits of the living being and his environment” topologically: “If I wished to give an intuitive representation of it, it seems that, rather than have recourse to the surface aspect of a zone, I should call on the three-dimensional form of a torus, insofar as its peripheral exteriority and central interiority constitute only one single region.”<sup>2</sup> Lacan’s footnote, added in 1966, seems to indicate that he had started to think about topology in 1948, but Seminar VII, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, contains an accurate reference to a one-dimensional sub-space in the pure projective plane (the anecdote of Apollo and Daphne) and characterizes architecture as a “surface of pain,” thanks to the fact that Daphne finds herself trapped *as soon as she thinks about fleeing*

<sup>1</sup> Lacan, to his credit, is extremely accurate in his reference to this branch of mathematics, discovered around 300 c.e. by Pappus of Alexandria, rediscovered and elaborated by Girard Desargues and Blaise Pascal in the 17c., forgotten then revived in the 19c. by Möbius, Plücker, Riemann, Gauss, and others. Lacan’s followers frequently forget or mistake key facts about this topology. Often it is confused with affine, or “rubber sheet” topology, or mistakenly credited to Euler’s resolution of the Königsburg Bridge Problem. No scholar has acknowledged Desargues, although Lacan cites him nine times in Seminar XIII, *The Object of Psychoanalysis*, and no commentator has elaborated on Lacan’s (accurate) description of the “surface of pain” in the anecdote of Apollo and Daphne, retold in Seminar VII (*The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*), which seems to date the beginning of Lacan’s serious consideration of projection, 1961.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis*, trans. Anthony Wilden (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), 85. In a note Lacan added in 1966, he says that he has been putting the premises of topology into practice over the past five years. Subtracting from the time of the Rome lecture, that would be as early as 1948. The lectures of Seminar VII, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, took place in 1959–60, seemingly a better marker for the 1966 note.

from Apollo's advances.<sup>3</sup>

Even if Lacan had seriously started to think about topology in 1959 rather than 1948, his later debut was impressive, if only on the evidence of retelling Ovid's story of love and hate. In the fore-story that no commentators to date have researched, there is the important information about the arrow Eros used to inflame Apollo with love and *at the same time* Daphne with hate.<sup>4</sup> Whether this was one arrow or two, the important detail is that the two effects occurred at the same time. The theme of simultaneity was featured in "Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty," which Lacan submitted for publication in *Les Cahiers d'Art* March 1945.<sup>5</sup> Although the famous story of the Three Prisoners is seemingly all about time, the set-up is spatial. A warden playfully offers freedom to any of three prisoners who can determine the color of the dot pinned to his back. There are five dots, three white and two black, so this essay that begins with the simultaneity of the puzzle space is really about how the puzzle space exists in the first place.

What if Lacan started to think about topology even before 1945? Lacan hears the story of the Three Prisoners at a dinner party in February 1935, long before the occupation of France by German forces in 1942. This question is moot if one thinks of this essay as being about time but not space. But, how does the story make sense without the peculiar concept of parallax, where the story seems to return us to Kant's pre-critical writings and his paradox of the point of view, which no two sighted people can occupy at the same time, although each claims that the other *should see* what he/she is able to see, uniquely.<sup>6</sup> Sense experience comes with this sense of authenticity — that we look out at a real world, not an illusion or mere appearance, and that the threats or treats we see in this real world justify the desire or anxiety, the *investment*, we make in these non-illusions. Parallax is not simply the perceived planar shift between figure and ground that produces the sensation of depth. It is a *cathesis*, a critical dialectic between the viewer and viewed, who will forever face each other in an "orthographic" relation, where in each scene a vanishing point will twin with the viewing point and conspire with the horizon between frontal visibility and dorsal invisibility, also a twin — a twin of the horizon at infinity where our vision, extending like the sun in parallel rays, will come to a point that is an end of time as well as space.

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<sup>3</sup> This is the same section of Seminar VII where Lacan mentions architecture the second time, identifying it with Daphne's "surface of pain." Lacan introduces architecture in Seminar IX, *Identification*, with this tantalizing statement: "Before being about volumes, architecture came about by mobilising, by arranging surfaces around a void. Raised stones are used to make alignments or tables, to make something which is of use because of the hole around it" (224 of the Cormac Gallagher translation).

<sup>4</sup> Publius Ovidius Naso, *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt, 1993), 21–25. Ovid reports that Eros fashions two separate arrows, but as vectors of effectiveness, the two are merged by their simultaneity and thus meet the requirements for a one-dimensional subspace in the projective plane.

<sup>5</sup> Dominiek Hoens, "Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty: A New Sophism," in Derek Hook, Calum Neill, and Stijn Vanheule (eds.), *Reading Lacan's Écrits, from "Logical Time" to "Response to Jean Hyppolite"* (London and New York: Routledge, 2022), 6–26. See also the analysis of Derek Hook, "Towards a Lacanian Group Psychology: The Prisoner's Dilemma and the Trans-subjective." *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 43 (2): 115-132. ISSN 0021- 8308 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12005>. I have not found any commentators who assert that this essay has anything to do with space.

<sup>6</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Selected Pre-critical Writings and Correspondence with Beck* (Manchester, UK: Barnes & Noble, Manchester, New York, 1968).

This will make every object in the visible field separate itself from what lies behind it at an edge, a profile or silhouette, to cast a “perfect shadow”: a crystal-like prism of invisibility obscured by the opaque object. Any shift of our own point of view will redeem a part of this prism, but only at the expense of adding new invisibility elsewhere. Hence, cathesis will isolate at the same time it joins the viewer with the world. The three-dimensional world will flatten at the periphery of every opaque object, and the “perfect” shadow behind it will meet at the profile, which will be “isomeric” in that it is a boundary between two different *kinds* of space, and this difference cannot be liquidated.

Ann Wagner has put a simple truth simply: “To see something three dimensionally is also, explicitly, to see it over time.”<sup>7</sup> Is this axiom not reversible? Is something we experience in time not also, explicitly, conditioned by and a condition of vision? In the Three Prisoners’ Dilemma we should think about this, but we need a new vocabulary to do it properly. The front and the back of each prisoner plays a role, so we have need of the term “cathetus,” or as I would like to generalize it, *cathesis*.<sup>8</sup> As in no other story I know of, the relation of cathesis to the isomeric profile is critical. It is the prisoners’ fronts and backs that provide the central problem each prisoner faces: “I can see the backs of two others but not my own; yet each of them sees *my* back, *my cathesis*, and our situation is that of the logic of symmetrical difference.”<sup>9</sup>

Of course the prisoners are not likely to use such a sophisticated vocabulary, but they have a grasp of the situation, to the extent that, as Derek Hook has analyzed, divides into three moments. This removes the temporality of the situation from a matter of linear clock time to the “logical time” that Lacan cites in his title. Time, in its logical structure, is a-temporal. It is experienced as layered by truth, the truth of the “situation,” which doesn’t change from the first moment to the last of the story; only the realization of the situation changes, which in each of its stages occupies a timeless instant, or *instance*. Here, the spatiality of the situation is penetrated by the spatiality of the parallax by which each prisoners sees the backs of the others but not his, and knows that the others are in the same situation. This time has a name, a controversial one because the name has been used so often and in so many different contexts in the history of philosophy we have to shake it lose from its past: *conatus*.

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<sup>7</sup> Anne Wagner, “At the Pinault Collection,” *The London Review* (July 21, 2022): 37.

<sup>8</sup> My aim here is to retain the role of the orthogonal angle that is the defining feature of geometric cathetus while extending the role of the sagittal (viewing) dimension to include Filippo Brunelleschi’s perspective experiment, where, using a mirror to compare a perspective drawing to “the real thing,” thanks to a hole drilled in the picture plane facing away from the viewer and toward the hand-held mirror, the experimenter obliged the test to involve the rule of all mirrors, namely that we see our reflection uniquely; no other can see us as we see ourselves in the mirror, because of the rule of cathetus. See Samuel Edgerton, “Brunelleschi’s First Perspective Picture *Arte Lombarda* 18, 38–39 (1973): 172–195. Remarkably, Kojin Karatani misses this point in his famous claim that “In the mirror, one sees one’s own face from the perspective of the other”; *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx*, trans. Sabu Kohso (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT, 2003), 2.

<sup>9</sup> Lacan mentions symmetrical difference in relation to the cut made across the surface of the torus by circles he does not identify as such (the “Villarceau circles”) although he knows their function well enough. Symmetrical difference is the condition between two bijective (1:1) sets where the missing elements of one are supplied by the other, as in  $[\boxtimes, \boxtimes, 3, 4] \Leftrightarrow [1, 2, \boxtimes, \boxtimes]$ . The situation, graphically, is the “union without intersection” of two Euler circles, a void that corresponds to the *vesica pisces* of the Villarceau circles.

*Cathesis*, parallax, isomeric profiles ... *conatus* ... none of these “spatial” terms are used by Lacan or Lacanians. Or, are they? Lacan has accurately described the situation of logical time, with logic spatializing linear time as a layered simultaneity and making simultaneity “available,” as a commodity, to the prisoners in three distinct presentations. There are three white dots and two black dots; the story can be told in terms of the 1:2 (the ratio of viewer to the others who are viewed), the 2:3 (the number of white dots that any prisoner can see to the number each knows to exist), and the 3:2 (the number of deduction, by which each prisoner reasons, at a second “moment,” that the color of the dot on his back is white, so that at a third moment all three of the prisoners engage in the final simultaneity and rush out the door).

At the dinner table in 1935 is Lacan thinking about the unary trait? It is the number of difference in these ratios. The viewer is one. The view subtracts what the viewer cannot see, which is one. There is one fewer black dots than white dots. The prize is meant to be given to the *one* who solves the puzzle first. We cannot fast-forward in time to the point, say, in Seminar IX, *Identification*, where Lacan is already connecting the unary trait, Freud’s *einzigiger Zug*, to the recursive formula that yields, at its successive re-calculations, the numbers of the Fibonacci number series, a relation he will take up in greater detail in Seminar XIV, *The Logic of Phantasy*.<sup>10</sup> The 1 is already present at the dinner table, before Lacan thinks to say that the Three Prisoners are held fast in a toroidal relationship, the shape that time will take when everything temporal has been removed. Of course, it was already present ever since Dora coughed her father’s cough in 1900. The unary trait reversed the causal order of agency and act. Neither Dora nor her father “had” a cough, the cough had them. From this reversal of the unary, the cough is the agency of the unconscious transfer, and what is the unconscious but a network, a schedule, a phantasmagoria of transfers? If there are networks in the unconscious, there are both one and two of them: one to count and one to “count as one.”<sup>11</sup>

To count as one we must consider the flipped topology of the unconscious. It speaks through us, through our symptoms. The analogy of the ventriloquist comes to mind, as in the 1945 British thriller, *Dead of Night*, where the dummy gets the better of his master and gives us a good example of how *tuchē*, the natural world where the dummy must obey the laws of physics, converts to *automaton*, the repetitive machine of speech, the metonymies of the dummy Hugo as he appropriates the thoughts and words of his presumed boss. The cough coughed Dora just as it had coughed her father. The cough was the material and the materiality of the situation. Humans were mediums, in the sense of the all those who say “I don’t know why I said that.” Indeed.

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<sup>10</sup> Jacques Lacan, Seminar IX (1961–1962), *Identification*, trans. Cormac Gallagher, *Lacan in Ireland*, [http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Seminar-IX-Amended-Iby-MCL-7.NOV\\_.20111.pdf](http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Seminar-IX-Amended-Iby-MCL-7.NOV_.20111.pdf), 67–69; Seminar XIV (1966–1967), *The Logic of Phantasy*, trans. Cormac Gallagher, *Lacan in Ireland*, <http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/14-Logic-of-Phantasy-Complete.pdf>, 138–139.

<sup>11</sup> Lorenzo Chiesa, “Count-as-one, Forming-into-one, Unary Trait, S1,” *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 2, 1, 2 (2006). <https://cosmosandhistory.org/index.php/journal/article/view/29>





Brilliantly, Lacan discovered the trick behind Freud's famous Signorelli Parapraxis when he noticed that Freud noticed what the native speakers of Italian would not have noticed — the “signor” in Signorelli — and Freud would have found this paternal signifier, Herr, free for the taking. Only a stranger in a strange land would pick up this piece of fallen litter *à terre*, for just as in Lacan's formula for metaphor S replaces an S' (S/S') but it has stolen the painting (mimesis) but left the frame (indication). The blank frame of the signifying chain points metaphorically downward, to the signified (S'..S'/x), the bar facilitates the sliding of metonymies, ..., while keeping the door to the signified shut: the — without the |. What happens later is that Freud continues on his trip, for is he not the kind of stranger in a strange land who is not running an errand but enjoying a vacation? Each time he tries to remember “Signorelli” he reaches for the wrong name: BOtticelli, BOltraffio .... Why? He later speculates that this flotsam arrived from the wreck of Herzegovina and BOsnia, the lands of his Adriatic travels. Boltraffio turns and offers up another unused component, “-traffio,” which becomes Traffei, the small town in Switzerland where, he hears, an old patient has just committed suicide out of distress over his loss of sexual function. Really? What a coincidence, since Freud now remembers conversations about Turkish patients, so polite that they always addressed their physicians as “Herr Doktor,” and were notorious for preferring death to the loss of sex.

At each metonymy, something falls to the level of “x,” a ground that we should not carelessly dismiss as a barroom floor. It will be swept, along with sawdust, but as Freud's diagram shows (Fig. 2), the place of repression is a recycling machine, an automaton working in concert with the natural gravity of *tuchē* that makes every metonymy a dual, dropping to move, moving to drop. The swept floor will never be swept clean, but neither will anything that falls be lost. It will take Freud a few moments to realize the metaphoricity of his parapraxis, but it will take almost fifty years for Lacan to arrive with his formula of S'..S'/x. Like the Prisoners paralyzed by their Dilemma of frozen time, effective more than the walls that had enforced their statutory sentences, becomes the sentences of the S'..S' that are ever more anchored by the missing “x” than by any signifier designated to be the last word, s”. In fact, Lacan points out that there will be no last word. Metaphor will construct a void surrounded by a lozenge-shaped apotrope, the “if true then false, if false then true.” This will certainly be a case where there is projective space without any obvious prop — no Möbius band, torus, or cross-cap — but certainly the ghosts of these figures will dominate the conversation as soon as we identify what, here, is non-oriented and what is self-intersecting.

**Intersection of the non-oriented.** This is the pulsion that keeps the Cretan Liar's self-abusing joke in motion, the “if-then” structure of the two positions within the proposition, “All Cretans are liars.” Well, Cretans may be liars or as truthful as aphasiacs asked about the weather,<sup>12</sup> but the

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<sup>12</sup> This refers to the fact that aphasiacs cannot be compelled to say anything they know to be false. In this sense they behave as if they knew the correct function of the Euler circle, which can be used only to specify things that “exist in reality.” Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* 3, *Phenomenology of Cognition*, trans. Steve Lofts (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 294.

circular spin creates a Möbius band effect, what we could call an “Escher formation,” comparing the situation to that of the famous staircases devised by the Dutch illustrator, which appear to be going up and down at the same time. In this merry-go-round there is a salient and latent element, but as one changes, so does the other. Down<sub>UP</sub> becomes Up<sub>DOWN</sub>.



Figure 3. Otto van Veen (c.1556 – 6 May 1629) in his *Amoris divini emblemata* (1615). *Mons Delectus*, or “mountain of choices,” combining labyrinth and temple in a single building that, like the Tower of Babel, cuts through the liquid layer of clouds. In the hero’s (perverse) parallax, architecture relocates the external boundary to an inner division that is simultaneously moral and anagogic, hence the temple and labyrinth are the “essential contronym” of the second parallax.

Is not this non-orientable Escher formation the kind of boundary-less finite surface that we might otherwise call a torus? Doesn’t the quest for all this surface has in the way of area end in an inventory that must include some account of the flip from “if true then false” to “if false then true”? At this point the prisoners rush for the door. They have moved, as Hook explains, from an inter-subjectivity (a parallax of limitation, where the logical situation freezes the prisoners in an aporia) to a trans-subjectivity (a parallax of emergence, where, within the middle of the first parallax, paralysis *as such* is identified as the poison’s aspect as elixir, life *via* death). “Drink deep or taste not of the Pierian Spring.”<sup>13</sup>

There are two circuits working in the Escher formation. As one changes to settle the provoking presence of the other, the other switches at the same time, producing the same sum total state but in a reversed polarity. The key here is that one state seems to be a “less than.” The rising staircase is marred by a downward vector. Attempting to achieve a fully “up” state, the positions are the same but reversed, U<sub>D</sub> becomes D<sub>U</sub>. It is impossible to eradicate (this is the law of metonymy) the latent component, to produce a UU or DD staircase. Metonymy is non-orientable, and thus metaphor’s S’...S’/x is permanently and radically a projective formation.

This might have informed Freud on his Adriatic travels, where his every botched attempt at remembering Signorelli dropped another “x” on the ground, to be picked up and recycled by the repeating automaton of signifier production running the show from above. Now we have a way to pin projectivity on the mysterious automaton of Seminar XI, the repetition of demand that circles

<sup>13</sup> Alexander Pope, *Essay on Criticism* (1711): “A little learning is a dang’rous thing; Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring: There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain, And drinking largely sobers us again.” Escher formations came easily to Pope, who cultivated the word-game of chiasmus, as in his aphorism, “a wit among dunces, a dunce among wits,” another example of the necessity of changing both the salient and latent component to create self-intersection along with non-orientation. The Pierian spring is associated, by Ovid, with the conversion of the daughters King Pierus, who dared challenge the Muses. Their loss was punished by converting them into magpies, birds able to imitate the sounds of human words without knowing their meaning.

the tube of the torus, advancing as a spiral at every point of encountering itself, marked by the *objet petit a*.<sup>14</sup>

Cathesis is a principle of movement, the essence of travel. The true traveler is, according to Irwin Cook, “the hero who voluntarily submits to suffering.”<sup>15</sup> This makes heroic travel an exercise in the contronymics of *jouissance*, borrowing from the art of the hysteric. Cathesis sustains heroic travel as an orienting principle. Indeed it must, since *jouissance* converts the hero into a free agent like no other, whose stability must be constructed not in the virtuality of the neurotic (ordinary parallax) but in the destiny-driven parallax of the trial. The hero carries the idea of home throughout the non-home landscape, as a remote antipodal anchor. Without this anchor, the hero is indistinguishable from a wanderer with no sense of the journey as a test or trial. The hero loses his *conatus*, or sense of self.<sup>16</sup> Cathesis makes of every appearance in travel vibrant in the way that it seems to appear *for* the hero, as an omen or clue. This affects the nature of the profile or edge, the point between the known face and what lies behind. This is the “isomeric profile,” the division of the heroic object from the background of the ordinary space shared with the non-traveling public. This is what makes heroic travel a second kind of parallax.

The hero responds to the isomeric profile by “taking things seriously” in ways that non-travelers don’t. Behind any isomerically framed sign lies, in the perfect shadow, an unknown that is personal, imposing, portentous, and insistent. The hero’s sense of destiny, his *conatus*, structures a second parallax around this cathesis and its isomeric profiles. Clearly, the hero is, in terms of modern neurosis, delusional. This second form of parallax means that the self-designated hero

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<sup>14</sup> Lacan has given the correct designation in Seminar IX, *Identification*, session XXII, May 30, 1962: “The void which sustains the demand is not the nothing of the object that it rings as object of desire, it is this that the reference to the torus is designed to illustrate for you” (244–245). On matters of topology, however, misquoting Lacan is something of an obsession. Michael Friedman correctly identifies this spiral as “recurrent demands” but then mistakenly identifies the central void as the *objet petit a* of these demand. Michael Friedman, “Torus and Identification,” in Michael Friedman and Samo Tomšič (eds.), *Psychoanalysis: Topological Perspectives: New Conceptions of Geometry and Space in Freud and Lacan* (Bielefeld, DE: Transcript Verlag, 2016), 170 and 172.

<sup>15</sup> Irwin Cook, “‘Active’ and ‘Passive’ Heroics in the ‘Odyssey,’” *The Classical World* 93, 2, Homer (November–December, 1999): 149–167. Cook raises the question of why the classical hero, endowed with super-human power and divine protections, should voluntarily renounce or suspend these advantages to face the customary “trials” that define heroic accomplishment. The customary answer, that the hero must suffer the punishment inflicted by the gods for his/her transgression is complicated by the hero’s legally valid insanity defense. *The hero did not know what he/she was doing*. This tips us off that the heroic *katabasis* is a model of the unconscious, both in the sense of a back-step or *après coup* and as an instance of the interval “between the two deaths.”

<sup>16</sup> See Henry W. Johnstone, Jr., “Odysseus as a Traveler,” in Henry W. Johnstone, Jr., (ed), *Categories: A Colloquium*, (University Park PA: Department of Philosophy, The Pennsylvania State University, 1978), 103-120. <https://bpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/sites.psu.edu/dist/9/19778/files/2022/01/johnstone.pdf>. Johnstone’s ten categories inadvertently describe the conditions of the secondary parallax by which the hero sees the world differently when traveling, suggesting that travel itself is the underlying basis of this other form of parallax.

doesn't see what the neurotic sees in the mirror, and in a truly perverse way, carries the logic of his/her valorizing mirror into the parallax of the neurotics' world, with predictable conflict.<sup>17</sup>

The thesis of the two parallaxes presents a field of speculative experiment involving architecture. In what cases has "predictable conflict" led to architectural responses or conditions where the physical (re-)structuring of space can tell the tale? Tale-telling is of course the medium by which neurotics find out about heroic parallax. "We" (as good neurotics) learn about the travels of the heroic pervert where the plot points hinge around reconfigurations of spatial conditions. The most famous of these is the descent, the *katabasis*, beloved of folklore and film alike. This in a very literal sense extrapolates Alice in Wonderland's famous journey through and beyond the surface of the mirror — the clear tip-off of the involvement of a secondary, perverse parallax.

### Concluding This Essay on the Two Parallaxes ...

The second half of this essay will carry forward the idea of a parallax grounded in a perverse retention of the *objet petit a* as a portable viewpoint, mathematically compensating for its loss in the virtuality of the spectral image by assigning its absence to constructed voids. These are the voids around which architectures, both cyclopean and civic, have arisen.

1. Return to the situation of the Three Prisoners Dilemma.
2. The foundation of Rome: Romulus and Remus and the katagraphic furrow.
3. The *katabasis* of Vergil's *Aeneid*, Book VI.
4. The composite of temple and labyrinth.
5. Architecture and discourse: the case of *My Man Godfrey*.
6. *Vertigo*: anamorphosis and the thaumatropic dupe.

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<sup>17</sup> This is the core of a thesis-under-development of Prof. Marc Heimann, who speculates that the pervert's mirror image differs from that of the neurotic by reflecting a distilled *jouissance* that, as a viewing point, refines a specular image of the barred subject,  $\$$ . The neurotic's spectral double is  $a\$$  according to Heimann, "domesticating" its *jouissance* virtually rather than as a viewpoint. The perverse viewpoint is mobile, transgressive, and delusional, with obsessive-compulsive conversions of "normal scenes" into trial structures, hence the relation to "heroic travel." See Marc Heimann, "The Mirror Operator," *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (2022).

## The Fable of Noah's Ark

### Patristic Typology and Psychoanalytic Hermeneutics

*John Gale*



Figure 1. Cesare Fantetti, engraver, “Noah builds the ark,” Raphael Bible, Rome: Vaticanstadt, 1675. After a painting by Rafaël.

In Genesis, Noah is given directions about how to build the ark, its dimensions, measurements, the shape of its roof etc. Hubert Damisch (1987) discussed it in relation to architecture and the article by abbé Edme-François Mallet in Diderot and d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* of 1751 where it appears before the entry on architecture and takes up more space. The aim of this study is to consider the exegetical interpretations of the strange building instructions and other aspects of the fable given by the Church Fathers, particularly Justin, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria. These remarks will be made in the light of Julia Kristeva’s (2013) comment on the value of a psychoanalytic reading of the Bible and of Vered Lev Kenaan’s

(2019) suggestion that patristic typology might be relevant for ‘psychoanalytic hermeneutics.’ Some of the things I propose to explore are: (1) the main sources for the myth (its woven nature), and the key scriptural passages including the gnostic testimonia and vocabulary concerning the three components Noah, the flood, and the ark; (2) the mystical meaning given to the architectural dimensions of the ark, including numerological aspects (mirrored in Freud’s interest in numerology); (3) the typology of flood and baptism (baptistries being built to mirror the ark), and Lacan’s Name-of-the-Father (Benvenuto 2020) recently linked this to baptism as the ‘new circumcision’ one made by the word rather than the knife); (4) the ark and the vessel of Odysseus (the relationship between Judeo-Christian and Greek allegorical readings of texts); (5) the allegory of the ark as the Church (a ‘built’ community providing ‘salvation’ (healing) and containment); and (6) the element of sexuality in the myth in relation to Noah’s celibacy/castration (differences in Christian and rabbinic accounts).

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# The Architect and the Position of the Analyst

*Timothy D. Martin*

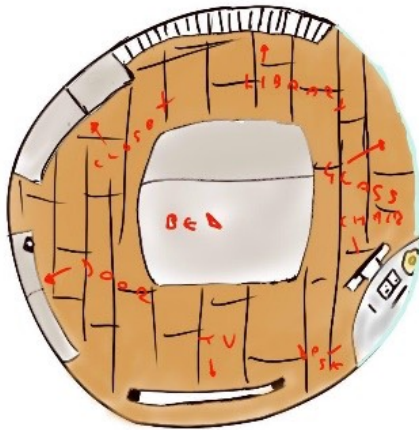


Figure 1. Otto's Drawing of an Ideal Bedroom, 2019.

To draw out some of the challenges and possibilities in a more interactive two-way street between the professions, this chapter starts by revisiting the Architecture Association's conference *Psychoanalysis and Space*, 2000, and its wish to find a systematic relation between the practice of Lacanian psychoanalysis and the practice of architecture. The paper begins by examining the claim of Mark Cousins, Anthony Vidler and Joan Copjec that psychoanalysis cannot provide a way to design buildings that are good for us because neurosis does not have an architectural cause. Thus, architects with hopes of improving mental health can only avail themselves of behavioral or environmental psychology.

The question of what architects can learn from psychoanalysis, what they can and cannot do for those with mental health conditions, and how to collaborate with analysts is brought to a case study of obsessive neurosis as an example of the challenges. After examining drawings of the analysand's ideal home, it asks what would help define and fulfill the wish for a discursive systematization that would aid collaborations between the architect and the analyst.

In response, it suggests and develops two systems. The first uses Lacan's four discourses and explores what it offers to interactions between the professions. If the position of the analyst is quite clear, where does this put the architect if they are collaborating in therapeutic work? The second suggests a clinic-based system and provides one historical example from each of the clinics of Neurosis, Perversion and Psychosis. The section on Neurosis examines the work of a friend of the architect Ernst Freud, Richard Neutra, who worked in California to design



Figure 2. Otto, Drawing of an Ideal Living Room, 2019.



psychotherapeutic housing for a California culture that was imbued with psychoanalysis. The section on Perversion looks at the earthwork artist Robert Smithson and his land reclamation projects that were intended as therapy for the sadism of the industrialist and the neurosis of the ecologist. The section on Psychosis examines the architect Rem Koolhaas and his use of Salvador Dali's Paranoid Critical method in making sense of the architecture of New York. Each section makes observations on the unique clinical relations to architecture and the challenges of working in each clinic. The chapter then concludes with a discussion of the case study in light of the two systems and develops it in a speculative search for a therapeutic role for architecture in the treatment of Obsessional Neurosis.

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## 6

# Ethics/Aesthetics Territory/Object Architecture/Psychoanalysis

*Andrew Payne*

Among artistic products, works of architecture enjoy a unique status. That status devolves from the fact that they are simultaneously objects intended for aesthetic veneration and territorial *dispositifs* designed for the accommodation of collective human conduct. In what follows I will argue that Lacan's thought offers tools for enriching our understanding of both of these aspects of the architectural artifact.

Lacan's relevance to an analysis of the first is perhaps more obvious, since in the only three references to architecture in his seminars and writings, all of which are to be found in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, architecture is taken up in the context of an argument that artistic sublimations consist in "elevating an object to the status of a Thing." As for the second aspect, in what follows I will argue that we find in Lacan's seminars and writings the basis for a novel understanding of architecture as a practice of territorialization, one that may moreover stand as a formidable rival to the recently influential conception of architecture as territorial practice promulgated by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. "Ethics/Aesthetics: Territory/Object: Architecture/Psychoanalysis" consists of seven sections: "From an Ethology of the Person to a Psychoanalysis of the Subject"; "The *Nebenmensch* Thing"; "The Death Drive, the Function of the Good, and the Function of the Beautiful"; "At the Nexus of Object and Thing: Concerning Lacan's Theory of Sublimation"; "Courtly Love and Anamorphosis as Instances of Sublimation"; "Rimming the Void, Petrifying Pain: Architecture in Lacan's Theory of Sublimation"; and "Architecture in the Alethosphere: Toward an Ethics of Territorial Practice."

"From an Ethology of the Person to a Psychoanalysis of the Subject" identifies Lacan's preoccupation with the human organism's rapport with its environment as already a central consideration in his pre-psychoanalytic writings and considers the decisive inflection to which that preoccupation is subject with his turn to psychoanalysis. That inflection concerns first and foremost the extent to which this rapport is mediated by the subject's primitive relation to the Other.

"The *Nebenmensch* Thing" treats Lacan's reading of Freud's discussion of the *Nebenmensch* in his *Entwurf* as a privileged locus for the consideration of how the subject's primitive relation to

the Other shapes its environmental experience. This consideration will open the question of the Thing as Lacan inherits it from Freud.

“The Death Drive, the Function of the Good, and the Function of the Beautiful” explores how Lacan’s interpretation of the *Nebenmensch* Thing is implicated in his highly original reading of the death drive. The terms of this reading will be presented so as to reveal its implications for the two “functions” that Lacan identifies as marking the edge or border separating the system of goods from its “beyond.” As we shall see, both of these functions are implicated in Lacan’s interpretation of sublimation. As we shall also see, this interpretation is littered, as is the seventh seminar as a whole, with a complex territorial lexicon linking centre and periphery.

“At the Nexus of Object and Thing: Concerning Lacan’s Theory of Sublimation” introduces Lacan general theory of sublimation, which he distinguishes from Freud’s, and then examines Lacan’s conception of artistic sublimation as involving “the elevation of the object to the status of a Thing.”

“Courtly Love and Anamorphosis as Instances of Sublimation” examines Lacan’s tightly imbricated discussions of courtly love and anamorphosis as instances of sublimation. This will set the stage for an examination of Lacan’s three references to architecture in the seventh seminar.

“Rimming the Void, Petrifying Pain: Architecture in Lacan’s Theory of Sublimation” examines Lacan’s three references to architecture in the seventh seminar with a view to both revealing how they extend and refine Lacan’s theory of artistic sublimation and considering the relevance of these refinements for any theory of the architectural artifact as an object of aesthetic veneration.

“Architecture in the Alethosphere: Towards an Ethics of Contemporary Territorial Practice” moves from the consideration of architecture as object of aesthetic veneration to a consideration of architecture as territorial *dispositif*. It takes as its starting point architecture’s role in the massive transformation of human territorial practice introduced by industrial and post-industrial technologies and then considers the extent to which Lacan’s later seminars, the seventeenth in particular (1969–1970), may serve to illuminate this new environmental condition and the transformations of the subject’s disposition to its surroundings that it entails.

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# The Automatic Writing of the City

**Francesco Proto**

*The Fundamental project  
of human reality  
is the desire to be God*

—Jean-Paul Sartre

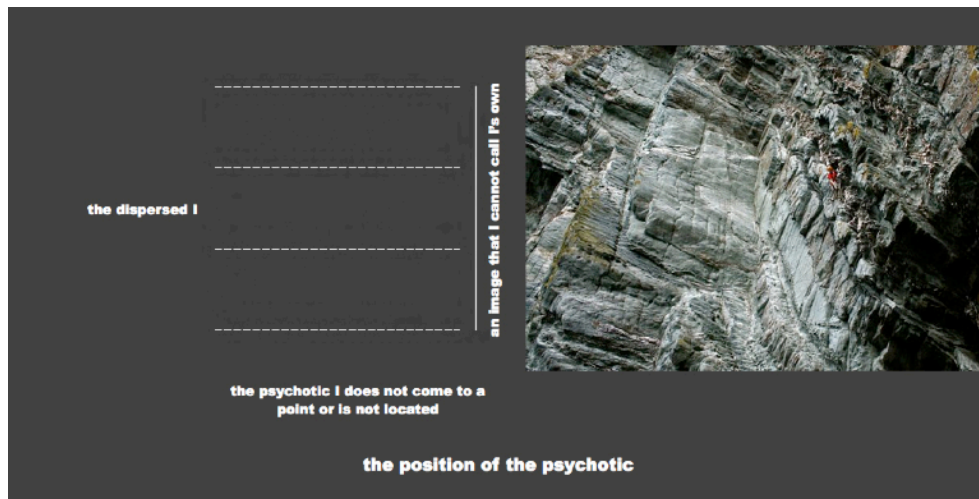


Figure 1. Lorens Holm, the psychotic field of vision. Source: Author's graphic.

To understand the crisis of the city today means to acknowledge not just the crisis of representation, but also the urban models that such representation first established, which configured the city as a mirror-image of utopia. Alongside these we must also recognise the ambiguous position towards representation that contemporary philosophy has embraced, especially in terms of the inability of philosophical discourse to replace the issue of representation with valuable alternatives. In the work of the French Post-structuralist thinkers, “representational” are all those theories undermining the role of vision itself — a position paralleled by Jacques Lacan’s dismissal of the *mirror stage* as the transposition of the dangerously incestuous, mutual reflection of the mother’s body onto her child. Vision and representation become therefore the means through which a different understanding of the debate in urban design may be addressed.

The modernist project was born as a political revolution meant to overthrow the fixed and immutable ideology of the medieval order at many levels. It thus entailed reason as a democratic



Figure 2. Filip Dujardin, Junk Space.

and available commodity; through knowledge and will, it could raise to such unparalleled achievements as to reflect the divine intellect. The greater the ability to grasp the divine order, the greater the possibility of getting closer to God. Monarchical royal blood, as a God-given feature, was replaced by reason as a God-given gift with the difference being that while the former only belongs to a restricted circle of individuals, the latter can be achieved by virtually anyone. This was a clear reflection of the new liberal economic ideology rapidly expanding among artists, bankers, and merchants — namely, the social strata populating the rising bourgeoisie. By posing God as the *gold standard* for an entirely new ideological construction, the latter opened the way to Western narcissism and the

psychologisation of the subject.

This chapter discusses the final stage of the consequences of this new *modus operandi*, specifically in the field of architecture where the configuration of the built environment, through different epochs, is assumed to reflect a new psychological attitude: that, which by posing religion as an ideological justification for overthrowing the monarchy, also ends up triggering a triangulation between God, the subject and knowledge. The Discourse of the Master is for the first time established and pursued. Such a discourse substantiates the hypothesis that three paradigm shifts occur in relation to three different city/architectural models, each of which reflects a specific position of the subject with regards to the Big Other (God). A failed attempt at overcoming the collapse of the symbolic domain, the Nietzschean “Death of God” acquires here, a few centuries after the inception of a domino-effect investing all sorts of mundane hierarchies, the dimension of a catastrophic weakening of the Name-of-the-Father eventually culminating in a larger-than-life, uncontrollable defense mechanism. The development of urban design in the West first, and then by extension throughout the globalized world, indicates the scale and magnitude of this mechanism.

The larger project tracing the development of the Western city as classified into three fundamental categories — Renaissance utopia, the modernist grid, and the postmodern contemporary megalopolis — is thus seen as a reflection of three conditions of subjectivity of which the shift from the medieval *Christus Patient* to the Renaissance *Christus Cunctipotens* is but the first. Following the establishment of three different psychological discourses (the master discourse over the classic age, the university discourse over the industrial revolution, and the capitalist discourse over the current postmodern age), the city becomes the precipitate of three different conditions of subjectivity — neurotic, pervert, and psychotic — finally characterised by a

different *traversing of the fantasy*. Once God is firmly established as the gold standard of a whole new socio-political class, architecture, and by extension the city, is viewed as a reflection of the different position assumed by the subject in relation to his ideal Other; hence the reference to the Lacanian *mirror stage* as the condition of subjectivity where the latter's uncertain constitution gains an unexpected boost through the feeling of wholeness and achievement, which can only be enjoyed by the subject as the reflection of his/her virtual self into a mirror. The psychotic subject, which in this chapter is made coincident with the postmodern condition, is the one for whom the *traversing of the fantasy* is finally accomplished (*passage à l'act*).

In outlining this analogy, a number of psychoanalytical notions extracted from the Freudian-Lacanian heritage are relied upon, such as: Freud's idea of primary and secondary *narcissism*, his notion of the *unconscious* and his essay on civilization and its discontents as well as the Lacanian *mirror stage*, Lacan's configuration of the subject (the hole), the *traversing of the fantasy*, and Lacanian subjective discourses. The study also indirectly refers to the structuralist/post-structuralist tradition of *genealogy*, inherited from Nietzsche and implemented by Foucault, with the specific aim to account for the scope and breadth of the ideology substantiating the time period in question. Baudrillard's genealogy of *simulation*, which he shaped on Foucault's *The Order of Things*, thus provides the model for an analysis of the relationship between subjectivity and urban design, which resembles the process through which simulation triumphed. Based on a critical application of the Lacanian *mirror stage*, both describe the consequences of the collapse of reality onto its fantasised, ideal, improved version, to the point where the latter assumes control. The dream of an omnipotent subject finally free from categories and hierarchies (social, religious, economic, political, cultural, etc.) is thus seen as reversing into a condition where the unconscious erupts. The way in which the latter works is here taken as an analogy for addressing the functioning of the contemporary city.

According to Lacan, the unconscious is structured like a language and in order to make sense of reality it is encoded, this ciphering or coding being that which confers on the unconscious its peculiar nature. It is not a natural language that Lacan refers to but cybernetics, an artificial language that, by developing through arithmetic progressions, symbolises the subject's reality. By subjective reality we don't need to understand the world as it appears: this is already an act of transcription, but rather the unconscious itself as charged with traumatic events. Therefore, there is to Lacan a pre-symbolic or pre-linguistic moment to the subject, one where the unconscious reality — or "real" — makes of the subject an unstructured being; and one where the "real," as ciphered by language, becomes symbolic because it is brought to existence. Hence the Real is what has not been symbolised yet, or what escapes symbolisation and therefore meaning (it cannot be "talked about" because it is not ciphered yet into language). The "talking cure" — psychoanalysis — is exactly what, by decoding the trauma, re-symbolises it and re-integrates it within the (un)conscious.

Lacan called such leftovers *caput mortuum* and considered them residues of the linguistic process that, excluded from the chain, are condemned to ceaselessly write something else. Working as gaps in the subject's conscious, they are both what the subject's ciphering tries to symbolise and tries to avoid, being that such gaps themselves are something non-symbolisable and unavoidable.

If Lacan likened the unconscious to Baltimore it is because the city characterised “the circumstance of a subject thrown into fitful disclosure — now equivocal, now lapsing, now witty, now a slip of the tongue”; in other words, a subject that, thrown under the “priority of the signifier,” is subjected to (“thrown under”) the effects of language, where the speech, the speech of the Other, is what constitutes the subject in its question and thus defines its position into the symbolic (“the Other is a place”). Ayerza goes on to explain:

A flash of wit surprises the subject the way the neon light illuminates Lacan — his onlooking figure barely apparent, already fading, before it was even spoken. This rendering of the subject proceeds from nowhere other than the game itself: a signifier in conjunction with another signifier follows not in the sign but in a subject. Thus, we behold the dual structure of dreams, lapses, puns, flashes of wit, in the origin of the subject's division of itself — the child and his/her image in the mirror.<sup>1</sup>

This dual structure, which Lacan termed *mirror stage*, is interesting for the paradigm it stirred and the influence it has had on our comprehension of contemporary societies. Regarding the city, Michael Foucault's theorization of heterotopias, or “other places”, draws a homology between space and representation and, by extension, architecture and its mirror image. By writing that the mirror is, after all, “a utopia, in that it is a place without a place” (“In it, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal space that opens up potentially beyond its surface; there I am down there where I am not, a sort of shadow that makes my appearance visible to myself, allowing me to look at myself where I do not exist: utopia of the mirror”),<sup>2</sup> Foucault makes clear that space only exists insofar as it is represented, only insofar as its existence is revealed and mirrored back by the projection from a mirror. And, here one could easily draw a parallel with the *Ideal Cities*, the modern utopias that, given birth during the Renaissance, substantiate the dream of progress as linear and rational, as distant and yet achievable. Projecting and radiating from the vanishing point of the mirror-image, the city only exists as an imperfect projection of its ideal ego.

Interestingly, there is a passage in “Bigness or the Problem of Large” that reminds one of Lacan's mirror stage. This is the point where Koolhaas describes *Delirious New York* as a “latent” theorization of bigness, one of its five points being the idea that “Once a certain critical mass is exceeded, a building become a Big building, such mass cannot be controlled by a single

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<sup>1</sup> Josefina Ayerza, “To Begin with...,” *Lacanian Ink* 1 (October 20, 1990); <https://www.lacan.com/frameI0.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias,” in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (New York: Routledge, 1997), 352.

architectural gesture, not even by a random combination of architectural gestures. This impossibility turns all the parts independent, which is different from fragmentation: all parts are tied to the whole.” Compared to the Lacanian mirror stage, this sentence makes problematic the understanding of how this is supposed to happen, as no form of representation allows — at any scale — the grasping of the building.<sup>3</sup>

Should a parallel interest us here it would be not so much with the unconscious as mirror-staged but rather the unconscious *avante-la-lettre*, during that particular condition of the unconscious when the latter is non-symbolised yet and that seems to be the current condition of the city. Is not the contemporary city a form of pre-symbolic real, where large strata of the environment stand apart as the Other of the city, as what resists symbolisation and yet turns meaningful what remains of the city’s past? Is not perhaps the contemporary city, with its fragmentation, fractalization, bigness and genericity what Lacan himself terms as the *real*? Should this be so, it is no surprise that *junk space* has now become its synonym as opposed to the symbolised.

The parallel is not casual: just as Lacan defines the *caput mortuum* as the precipitate of alchemist flocculation — that is, those remainders at the bottom of the test tube after the reaction has taken place — so Koolhaas compares the contemporary city to the space-junk, those residues that humankind leaves undisturbed on the planet. Junk space is what is left after civilisation has taken place, “what remains after modernization has run its course, or, more precisely, what coagulates while modernization is in progress, its fallout.”<sup>4</sup>

More importantly, however, another parallel emerges here, and it is one more cogently linking the unconscious to the city. This emerges when Koolhaas talks of *automatic writing* as the condition of the urban environment: it makes no difference whether the city is to be planned or not, for the city will destroy and regenerate itself automatically; and will do so by abandoning all that “does not function”. Only “what has survived its own utility” will therefore be included, but for as long as it proves useful: “the modern city is a *tabula rasa*, and as such represents the death of urban planning”. Even worse, “the modern city is the dangerous and hilarious discovery that planning makes no difference,” thus opening the city to vagueness, uncontrollability and radical indeterminacy.<sup>5</sup>

The indecipherability of the “city-writing” has important implications here, for the model of the Lacanian unconscious — cybernetics — is likewise unpredictable: just as the city is the

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<sup>3</sup> Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, “Bigness or the Problem of Large” in *Small, Medium, Large, Extra-Large* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1995), 14.

<sup>4</sup> Rem Koolhaas, “Junk Space,” *October* 100 (Spring 2002), 175.

<sup>5</sup> Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, “The Generic City” in *Small, Medium, Large, Extra-Large* (Rotterdam : 010 Publishers, 1995).



random output of self-repairing developments and procedures, so the Lacanian unconscious is the result of an arbitrary tossing, of coin flipping that makes it impossible to determine the development of the signifying chain in the subject's symbolic ciphering. More importantly, however, it shares implications with Jean Baudrillard's *fatal strategy*, an outrageous theoretical assumption that dethrones the subject of its mastery. According to this postulation, not only is the subject subjugated by the object, but the latter becomes so indecipherable and random that no programmatic intervention is desirable upon it. The object — be it either the object of reality or the city-as-leftover (a by-product of the civilisation process) — eludes the subject, overthrows it, to the degree that the every assumption supposedly regulating this very relationship is now inverted: it is the object that masters the subject, that affects the subject's reality, the subject by now being reduced to a status of total alienation, to a condition of passive subjection.

Thus, with the notion of *junk space*, Rem Koolhaas opens the way to a different understanding of architecture: one based on a perennial and totalising “work in progress” rather than the accomplished, coherent, and ideal version we have become familiar with through centuries and centuries of architectural practice. Hence the question arises, what is left of architecture when a whole new plethora of technological devices undermines the most fundamental of its ideological assumptions? More the description of a status quo rather than an accomplished theorisation, *junk space* never provides a sound answer to the questions that it poses, thus leaving much to be desired at least in terms of both a practical and intellectual engagement. How can we account for the origin of such a phenomenon? What is its ultimate meaning and, most of all, where is it leading us?

Building on a combination of Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulation with Jacques Lacan's clinic of the psychotic, the chapter discusses the last stage of an evolution that sees an apparent, but often neglected, analogy between the urban environment and Western subjectivity, where the latter seems to find its most direct reflection in the built environment itself. Its development and uncontrollable growth, especially if seen as an accumulation of *junk spaces*, thus provides the basis for an analogy with the Lacanian unconscious as materialised and exposed through a process of hegemonisation of vision from the Renaissance onwards. Lorens Holm's diagram of the psychotic field of vision is thus addressed as the most promising translation of architecture's correlation with this process.

Following Lacan's description of Baltimore in the early morning, his understanding of the repressed as a linguistic realm, as well as the theorisation of capitalist discourse as the last stage of a civilization where the schizophrenia of the market is reflected in the schizophrenia of the subject and vice-versa, the paper ultimately describes the final segment of a genealogical study bringing to the fore Western ideology translated into its material counterpart. The demise of God, the upsetting of social categories, the unleashing of contemporary commodification, the obsession for representation and, most of all, the consequences of choices made in the distant past

become here the pretext for the articulation of the birth of the Western city along with its meaning, decline and future inevitably linked to the birth and fate of contemporary subjectivity. The essential goal of human reality is therefore accomplished at this point, only outside the intersubjective domain of the symbolic.

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## Adam's House on Earth

### Architectural and Libidinal Tensions in Lars von Trier's *The House Jack Built*

**Angie Voela**



Figure 1. Lars von Trier, *The House that Jack Built* (2018). In the 1980s, Jack, a failed architect, assembles a house-like pile of corpses of strangers he meets and kills in a freezer, echoing the ancient practice of incorporating human sacrificial trophies in temple form.

In Lars von Trier's *The House Jack Built* (2018), Jack is a deranged serial killer, cynical art historian, and failed architect. His inability to build — all his flimsy structures collapse or are torn down by him — is punctuated by a series of spectacularly staged murders and intense rumination about the nature and purpose of architecture. Jack amasses the dead bodies of his victims in a vast cold storage warehouse, previously used to store frozen pizzas, thus also offering an oblique commentary on the

amassing/surplus character of capitalism and the iconic silos of consumerism. Towards the end, Jack builds a grotesque hut out of the frozen bodies, a structure held in place with hooks and cables attached to the ceiling beams of the warehouse.

One could argue that the film reflects on the anguish of the modern (mad)man who appropriates, among other things, destruction and the creative methods of architecture to emplace himself in the world, in space and time, past and present. This effort further reveals the tensions between subjectivity, capitalism and architecture, the latter as a form of art arising from/with epochal discourses. And, in turn, the film may be considered as an invitation by Von Trier to consider the end of architecture, alongside the profound ontological crisis of subjectivity in mature capitalism.<sup>1</sup> What kind of mind could create what kind of designs in the decades ahead?

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<sup>1</sup> Michael J. Thompson, *Twilight of the Self: The Decline of the Individual in Late Capitalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2022).

Methodologically speaking, a *total* discussion of these issues throws into relief the seductive demand for a total and complex interdisciplinarity which could push an unsuspecting thinker close to Jack's erratic omniscience, the kind of *phallic* knowledge Lacan warns us against. An alternative approach, as I have argued elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> drawing on Ettinger's effort to move beyond psychoanalytic orthodoxy, is to rotate the phallic prism "so as to open and articulate a distance in the Real that can be articulated in the Symbolic as knowledge ... beyond the phallus."<sup>3</sup> One could extend this metaphor to argue that successive rotations of the prism produce *diffractions*, iridescent lines of seeing differently particularly pertinent to the encounter between psychoanalysis and architecture.

The visual component of Von Trier's film lends itself to this approach: there is always something shown and something concealed, happening in secret, unbeknownst to the viewer. In terms of Lacan's schema of vision, something that will eventually appear beyond the organized field of vision, the gaze, the *objet a* and even deadly anamorphosis. In order to see it, one would have to wait patiently, and, like a prudent therapist, witness its inflections without yet asking "what it means." My approach in this paper is to bring forth some productive diffractions arising at the interstices of psychoanalysis, architecture theory, and the ontology of capitalism.

## Between Ontology, Form, and Function

Jack operates at the cusp where *ontological speculation meets "the contradiction between form and function" in modern architecture*. Attempting to grasp the meaning of form, he embarks on a *cynical* historical review of architecture, from the Gothic church, the nooks and crannies of which are "only visible to God," to postmodern mega-structures. To that he interpolates his own views on radical innovation, genius, enjoyment, and the delay of gratification. Idiosyncratic though it is, this account evokes the role of the body in architecture, the meaning of dwelling from Gothic architecture to Art Nouveau, the relationship of interior to exterior, and of façade to structure. With a nod to Le Corbusier, for whom the airplane was the greatest innovation of the twentieth century<sup>4</sup> and the symbolical marking of the absence of a building,<sup>5</sup> Jack attempts to insert himself in the field of *built and un-built* constructions whose periodicity or state of ruin — overlain and elliptical — resist full interpretation and qualification as habitable abode.

If a simultaneity of stylistic devices from different eras is only partially "feasible" in architecture, such a bricolage is "permissible" in psychoanalysis as evidence of elements from different developmental stages: orality, anality and genital maturity can exist side by side and not

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<sup>2</sup> Angie Voela and Cigdem Esin, "Movement, Embrace: Adriana Cavarero with Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger (and the Death Drive)," *Hypatia* (2020): 1–19, doi:10.1017/hyp.2020.49020).

<sup>3</sup> Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Jo Odgers, Flora Samuel, and Adam Sharr, eds., *Primitive: Original Matters in Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Hilda Heiden, *Architecture and Modernity* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1999).

as competing interpretations. At the same time, Jack's repeated dual failure to build a house and inhabit the Symbolic order qualify him as a *hollow subject*, the evocative double of the empty space in which the *objet a* may at times appear in architecture.

## **Desire for Mastery and the Mundane Effect of Capitalism**

Indicative of Jack's frustration with architectural design is his complaint that matter (raw materials) does not yield to his intentions and his designs fail to translate from paper to building. Two antithetical vectors (drives) run through his work: one towards destruction, the other towards creation. Jack tends, both through spiraling excess and deadly repetition, to become more prolific and adventurous in his killings, directing and executing more complex murder scenes, repeatedly yielding to an unbridled "ugly jouissance"<sup>6</sup> incompatible with the pleasure of the architect. At the same time, Jack strives to achieve *perspective*, in the language of Lacan's visual schema, the mastery of the eye. This is conveyed in a powerful scene towards the end of the film: unable to get sufficient distance from his victims to execute several of them with one shot, Jack breaks through a locked door in the warehouse, getting access to a vast empty storage compartment he did not know existed.

A comparison with the nature of capitalism as expressed by Lacan's fifth discourse can be made at this point: unable to fathom the master's/Other's desire, the subject is left with mere material possessions — dead bodies and frozen pizzas — and the question of what to do with the surplus.<sup>7</sup> Now amassing assets as the bottom line of entrepreneurial capitalism appears ridiculous. Worse, capitalism is vindictive and ironic (and more punitive than a wrathful God): all Jack's spectacular efforts to be unique are reduced to replicating the most prosaic substitution of the *objet a* with consumer objects. Moreover, "the system" itself evicts the megalomaniac murderer from the paradise of his depravity: one cannot escape the constraints of the (capitalist) Symbolic. In Lacan's schema of the field of vision, "perspective" lands one not in historic greatness but in the most trivial flagship space of consumerism, an *empty* warehouse.

## **Towards the Unbuildable and the Montage of the Drive**

How does one inhabit such an empty space? How does one bring forth the unbuildable? Condemned to desiring an elusive origin, Jack's solution remains bound to the *suffering* of the body and fuses structure (bodies as building blocks) to façade (human body as ornamental columns). It could be argued that Jack cannot escape the confines of the present historic era, offering an iteration, albeit extravagant, of the post-modernist cut-and-paste as the dominant stylistic expression of "cutting edge" desire enveloping its object in our time.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Shiela Kunkle, "Hollow Subjects in a Headless World," *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society* 5, 2 (200): 301–311.

<sup>7</sup> Fabio Vighi, "Ontology of Crisis and Lacan's Discourse of the Capitalist," *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society* 20, 1 (2015): 1–19.

<sup>8</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (London: Polity Press, 2018).

Yet, the horrible hut of flesh also stands as a sadistic critique or “destruction” of post-modernism aiming to reduce it to the inside-out of a glove, a caustic and ironic anamorphic reversal which reveals the hidden seams and (libidinal) tensions that hold the ensemble of features together. Another meaning to the “cut” also arises at this point: it comes close to the psychotic’s desperate attempt to graft himself into the Symbolic, to stop, cut, or affect a (failed) castration of sorts.<sup>9</sup> Destruction prevails along with ugly *jouissance*.

Something else is worth noting, arising beyond the visual horror of the hut of flesh, with the *unbuildable* itself: it is the surrealist montage of bodies as building blocks and façade which cannot be countenanced and, in that sense, destroys the (orderly) field of vision. Bricolage/montage, Lacan reminds us, hails from the erogenous zones of the body (eyes, mouth, anus), which predate the genital order. From that perspective, the drive follows a circular outwards and backwards trajectory, the aim of which is to gain satisfaction by reaching out to an object (*objet a*) which remains unattainable. Thus, the drive is not just a loop around an elusive object which repeats itself but a *constant force* which appears meaningless from the point of view of organised social life. “Constant” here means non-progressive and un-dialectical rather than “natural.”<sup>10</sup> In that sense, the drive always only re-orders its elements around its own impossible aim. It therefore represents *the inherent surrealism of our existence*, the permanent practice of *a different ordering*. Lacan offers the visual example of the lady, the peacock and the dynamo in different fanciful arrangements as an example of this aspect of the drive.

### **When the Mirrors Move Too Much — Then What?**

To the extent that the house that Jack built is a monstrous montage and coming-into-being of ugly *jouissance*, it would be prudent to establish the difference between the two manifestation of the Lacanian drive as the maximum distance between what is conceivable in psychoanalysis and in architecture.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, making *literal* and revealing the tensions that “hold” an edifice together (represented by hooks and cables) turn a building and its environs into a living organism. Jack dies inside this grotesque hut, having just missed the opportunity to appreciate the imperceptible reversal that allows one to be born(e) into the world at the moment of death with one symbolic (architectural) gesture.

In terms of Lacan’s visual schema, the impossible to behold, the horror this kind of cut-montage produces, could be compared not simply to the destruction of the vase and the flows that compose the *trompe l’oeil* at the centre of the scene, but a violent swing of the (cultural) mirrors of the apparatus so that they to reflect nothing. Envisaging such an “end of times” may not be a

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<sup>9</sup> Stijn Vanheule, “Capitalist Discourse, Subjectivity and Lacanian Psychoanalysis,” *Frontiers in Psychology*, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01948>.

<sup>10</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (London: Penguin Press, 1991), 163.

<sup>11</sup> Juliet Flower MacCannell, “FreudSpace: Architecture in Psychoanalysis,” UC Irvine permanent link, *FreudSpace: Architecture in Psychoanalysis* ([escholarship.org](http://escholarship.org)).

priority in the field of architecture, but it chimes with current discussions about the ontological catastrophe perpetrated by capitalism. How does one create at such times? What is created and how is it brought forth? One could align the house Jack built to the recent discussions about the role of the “primitive” in architecture, mindful of what this kind of regression means in the field of psychoanalysis, and more important, how the idea of architecture as art and individual expression remains possible in an ideological framework which harbours, according to some philosophers at least, ontological catastrophe and the demise of the individual.<sup>12</sup> Considering destruction, deadly failure to do see and do so, seems like a plausible “primitive” starting point to think ahead.

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<sup>12</sup> Thompson, *Twilight of the Self*.

## The Chalepas Museum

### Cracks in Walls, (Death) Drive, and the Ethics of Conservation

**Stamatis Zografos**



Figure 1. *Satyr playing with Eros* (1877).

Yannoulis Chalepas is widely regarded as the most significant modern Greek sculptor (1851–1938). He was born on the island of Tinos and studied sculpture at the School of Art in Athens and later in the Munich Academy of Fine Arts. His reputation as one of the most promising sculptors of his generation started to rapidly be established with contributions such as the masterpiece *Satyr playing with Eros* (1877; Fig. 1). In 1878, he developed the first symptoms of documented psychosis, destroying clay models in his studio with a hammer. During the creation of the statue of *Satyr* (1878, Fig. 2), Chalepas perceived the statue as a living creature “whose smile appeared disparaging, threatening and repulsive”.<sup>1</sup> He argued with the statue, destroyed it and then recreated it several times in an

attempt to modify his facial expressions. In 1888, the sculptor was admitted to the Mental Institution of Corfu and in 1902, following the death of his father, he was taken back to Tinos island where he spent thirteen years under his mother’s strict supervision. He remained artistically inactive until his mother’s death in 1916. Following her death, Chalepas resumed his artistic practice, working exhaustively with clay and marble. Alongside his sculptures, he produced a number of sketches, some of which depicted undecipherable figures and shapes. According to early written sources and oral testimonies, Chalepas’ sketching practice intensified, expanding onto the interior wall surfaces of the house, thus turning the walls into an archive that vividly captured his creative work. Following Chalepas’ death in 1938, the house was sold and over the years the interior walls were repainted, thus concealing his sketches under multiple layers of

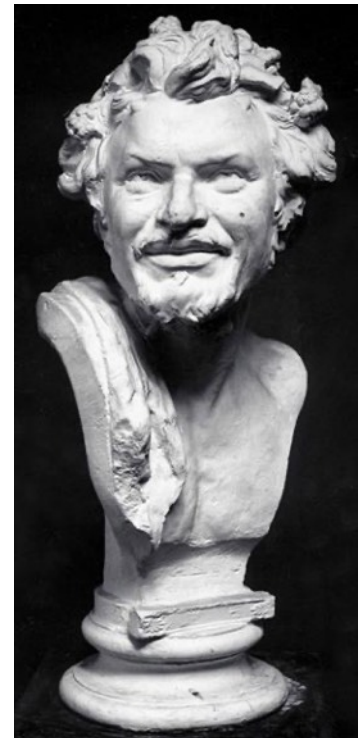


Figure 2. *Satyr* (1878).

<sup>1</sup> Vanellis, Dimitrios and Petrou, Thanasis, Yannoulis Chalepas, *O Mythos tis Neoellinikis Glyptikis* [Yannoulis Chalepas, *The Myth of Modern Greek Sculpture*] (Athens: Patakis, 2019).





Figure 3. Cracks on the walls of Chalepas Museum revealing lines of sketches.

emulsion. In 1968 Chalepas' house was listed and in 1971 it was converted into a historic house museum, the Chalepas Museum, that houses personal belongings of the sculptor, family photos, hand notes, furniture, household utensils, a number of his drawings, sculptures, tools and his workshop. In recent years, cracks that appeared in the museum's walls revealed traces of scribblings (Fig. 3) that suggested the presence of sketches below the emulsion. This led ARTICON<sup>2</sup> laboratory in 2017 to conduct on-site research applying a non-intrusive imaging method that confirms Chalepas' alleged engagement with sketching.

Multiple facets of Yannoulis Chalepas' profile can justifiably attract — and have already done so — psychoanalytic interest, such as his psychotic disorder in relation to his artistic ingenuity and creativity,<sup>3</sup> and his artistic inactivity instigated through maternal prohibition that is rapidly resumed following the mother's death.<sup>4</sup> The proposed chapter will consider such contextualising psychoanalytic studies yet the focus will be on the building in which Chalepas resided and practised his art. It will focus on the cracks that appeared in the building's walls that reveal instances of the artist's sketching practice, which will be discussed in relation to Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory. The cracks in the walls' emulsion reveal traces of the artist's *desire* to test, perfect and communicate his creative endeavour, his desire of the Other.<sup>5</sup> For desire supports and sustains artistic creation, desire becomes desirable in itself, and therefore cherished by the Subject. Here the intimate

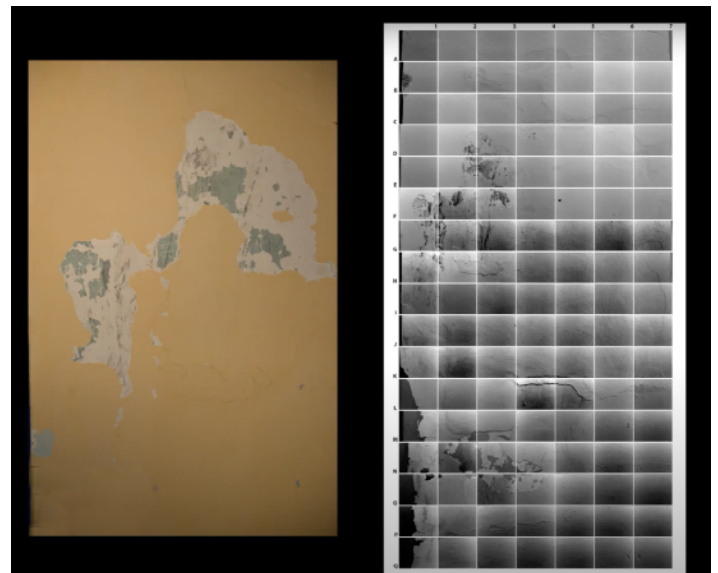


Figure 4. Sample of non-intrusive image that confirms Chalepas' sketches below the walls' emulsion.

<sup>2</sup> Advanced Research Technologies for Investigation and Conservation (ARTICON) is an interdisciplinary laboratory based at University of West Attica in Athens.

<sup>3</sup> Stefanou, Maria Ioanna, and Ulf Ziemann. "Neuroaesthetical Changes in Sculpture: The Case of Yannoulis Halepas (1851–1938)." *European Neurology* 82, no. 4–6 (2020): 116–123.

<sup>4</sup> G. N. Papadimitriou, *Talento kai Techni, Yannoulis Chalepas [Talent and Art, Yannoulis Chalepas]* (Athens: EPINNH, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. A. Sheridan (France: Editions du Seuil/Hogarth, 1977), 235.

link between desire and *jouissance* (enjoyment) is made that sheds light on the self-sustaining nature to desire. *Jouissance* is then analysed in relation to the concept of the *death drive*, an inherently obscure concept that Lacan adopts from Freudian psychoanalysis and progressively develops throughout his work. The dualistic nature of the Freudian death drive, that is the opposition between Thanatos and Eros, as well as its biological understanding as an impulse for self-annihilation, are no longer relevant to Lacan. Instead, the death drive is “the inertia of *jouissance* which makes a person’s love of his or her symptoms greater than any desire to change them.”<sup>6</sup> The walls of Chalepas Museum capture the artist’s desire as well as the *jouissance* that elicits this desire. The listed status of the Museum suggests an archiving of this desire and *jouissance*, an institutional gesture that aims against their *loss*. Here, in light of ARTICON’s research findings that confirm Chalepas’ sketches below the walls’ emulsion, we are faced with a range of ethical dilemmas: should Chalepas’ sketches be revealed or painted over? Does the loss of the sketches suggest the possibility of creating an object of desire? And more generally, is it in the interest of conservation practice to attain loss?

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<sup>6</sup> Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, *Essays on the Pleasures of Death: from Freud to Lacan* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 85.

# Finite and Unbounded, Bound but Immortal

## The (Lacanian) Mystery of Paralysis beneath the Perfect Shadow

**Francis Conrad**

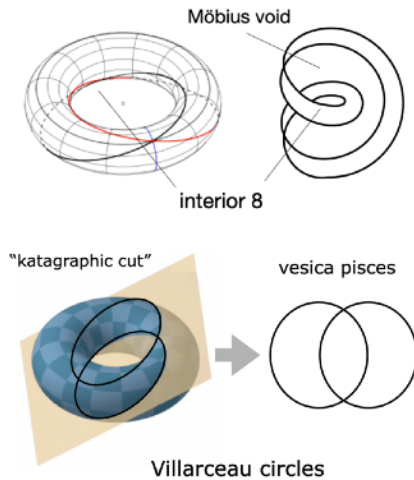


Figure 1. Lacan's many uses of the torus depend on seeing the cut not as the "immersion" of the projective torus into Euclidean 3-space, where the contrast between continece and incontinence is evident, but as a true projective-topology form. Here, properties essential for the construction of "idempotent" insulating boundaries is evident, as in the "katagraphic" section cut of the Villarceau circles, which produces the Euler circle condition of "union without intersection," the historical figure of the *vesica pisces*.

Why do so many Lacanians believe that Lacan's topology has its origins in Königsberg in 1725?<sup>1</sup> Lacan does not say this. He correctly identifies Desargues, although he thinks it's Georges rather than Girard, as the mathematician (who was also an architect) who revived the theories of Pappus of Alexandria.<sup>2</sup> Pappus knew something else important, that the projective geometry he had

discovered in 300 c.e. was logically prior to Euclidean geometry, so that you can derive the latter from the former but not the other way around. Euler contributed his circles to Lacan, and Lacan admired them because they could not be forced to tell a lie. Neither can aphasiacs,<sup>3</sup> and this gives

<sup>1</sup> See Owen Hewitson, "From the Bridges of Königsberg — Why Topology Matters in Psychoanalysis," *Lacan Online*; <https://www.lacanonline.com/2015/01/from-the-bridges-of-konigsberg-why-topology-matters-in-psychoanalysis/>. Hewitson has Euler invent topology when in fact he should be congratulated for inventing graph theory. This idea is picked up by Virginia Blum and Anna Secor, "Psychotopologies: Closing the Circuit between Psychic and Material Space," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29 (2011): 1030–1047.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Lacan, Seminar IX, *The Object of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Cormac Gallagher, *Lacan in Ireland*, 220, 233. <http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/13-The-Object-of-Psychoanalysis1.pdf>. Lacan also cites Desargues in "L'Étourdit II: Second Turn: The Discourse of the Analyst and Interpretation," *The Letter* 41 (2009): 31–80.

<sup>3</sup> See Ernst Cassirer, "Toward a Pathology of Symbolic Consciousness," in *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* 3, *Phenomenology of Cognition*, trans. Steve G. Lofts (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 243–348. Cassirer specifically describes the aphasiac's inability to say what he/she does not believe to exist, which is precisely the function of Euler circles in Lacan's construction of the "void" of suppression in Seminar XIV, *The Logic of Phantasy*. Using the fundamental polygon of the torus, Lacan connects the upper "centrifugal" corner of the diagram to the lower left corner of suppression *via* the alternative inside–outside (Escher construct) positions of *passage à lacte* and acting-out, the production of the subject as "external" and the alienation of the subject from an "internal" position.

us a clue about the void, namely that it is nothing but a cut around the Real, a double cut made by what are called Villarceau circles, the other two that can be drawn on the surface of a torus that create an interior-8 effect.

This has important implications for those who write architecture theory and want to know that architecture, which is a “surface of pain” as Lacan describes it correctly in Seminar VII, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, originates at and around a void, something that can be proven ethnographically, in the story of the foundations of Rome. Lacan is right so much of the time, why are Lacanians wrong any of the time? Not only do many of them take affine geometry for projective geometry, some mistake the boundary of the Thesean Labyrinth, a building that is *all boundary*, saying that one cannot get lost in this mythological first example of architecture.<sup>4</sup> This betrays the story of the Minotaur and Theseus, whose relation is fundamentally grounded in the radical disorientation of the Labyrinth’s fractal folds. This legendary primal building deserves its reputation for concealment, since the alternating left-right of its passageways is linear but it gives rise to the depth condition, something that we could call the first architectural stereogram. One should not betray the exquisite meaning of this exquisite myth.

The puzzle of the labyrinth’s depth has been celebrated by Borges, following Vergil, who in Book VI of the *Æneid* had his hero pause before the bronze gates cast by Dædalus himself, showing the secret of depth at the appropriate moment before Æneas must enter the underworld on his famous *katabasis*. Dear Lacanians, do you think that, at this moment standing before the Cumæan Gates, Vergil would not know what he was doing, that he would not offer such a clear view of the most important aspect of Lacan’s unary trait, namely its depth function?

Architecture theorists interested in boundaries must listen to Lacan when he tells all of us that projective geometry is the Real, that it relates to that boundary of boundaries, the katagraphic cut, which he describes so correctly in Seminar IX, *Identification* by citing the Injunction of Popilius. Why don’t we talk about this? Thanks to Jean-Daniel Causse for his impressive scholarship on this katagraphic cut, which is nothing less than the cut of the mirror that the Neurotic despises and the Pervert adores.<sup>5</sup> Psychoanalysis itself could be called the science of the katagraph, but allow me to add five other terms to fill out a full biography of a second kind of parallax, one that Slavoj

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<sup>4</sup> This is unobservant, uninformed, and unreflected. Mai Wegener, “Psychoanalysis and Topology — Four Vignettes,” in *Psychoanalysis: Topological Perspectives, New Conceptions of Geometry and Space in Freud and Lacan*, ed. Michael Friedman and Samo Tomšič (Bielefeld, DE: Transcript Verlag, 2016), 31–52.

<sup>5</sup> Jean-Daniel Causse, “L’identité et l’identification: des sœurs ennemies\*?” *Psychanalyse* 41: 105–14. Marc Heimann, “The Mirror Operator,” *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (2022).

Žižek and even Kojin Karatani say nothing about,<sup>6</sup> where the figure separates from the ground along an isomeric profile, a fact immediately comprehended by the Anasazi and other aboriginal peoples of the American Southwest. If they knew what the isomeric boundary means, so should we theorists; but we should go further to realize how this is the basis of Desargues' "perfect shadow" and Pappus's magical third line.

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<sup>6</sup> Kojin Karatani, in *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), says that in a mirror we see ourselves as others see us. In fact, the opposite is true. The rule of cathetus, that our spectral image and vanishing point will line up at 90° to the surface of the mirror, means that our profile will always be isomeric for us, but for no one at a smaller angle in relation to the mirror. The space behind our image will thus have its own antipodal vanishing point, the condition that Dante addresses in Canto XXX of *Paradiso*. Slavoj Žižek of course follows Karatani in this reduction of parallax to simply the separation of a figure from its ground, missing Kant's perplexity in "Concerning the Ultimate Foundation of the Differentiation of Regions in Space," 1768. See *Kant: Selected Pre-Critical Writings and Correspondence with Beck*, trans. G. B. Kerferd and D. E. Walford (Manchester, UK: Manchester University, and New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), 36–44.