



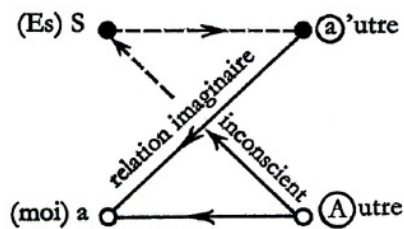
Save the Tears for Later

In pandemic times, grief postponement has taken multiple forms: the rage of Black Lives Matter, the trauma of January 6, the Big Lie. As issues conflate, can psychoanalysis clarify things by returning us to the interval between the two deaths? Can we remember whether or not we are dead already? The issue is central to psychoanalysis. The inscription over the portal of the *katabasis* presents the Freudian slogan: “Psyche is extended; knows nothing of it.”

In pandemic times, theory needs to be precise. Lacan’s interval “between the two deaths” longs to reunite with its poetic origins. Mourning is ethnographically correlated to a journey set between literal death and a symbolic terminus. Psychoanalysis correlates this travel to a stylized momentum that glides past trauma, postponing return by means of a series of compulsive rehearsals — the *après coup*.

Cultures have been precise in pegging the period of mourning to the interval required for flesh to be reduced to mummification or skeletal permanence. The sarcophagus (“flesh-eater”) was thought to accomplish this in forty days, hence the connections of this interval to other ideas of quarantine, which literature, folklore, and art have embellished this as quest, exile, obstacle plots, and detective stories.

Psychoanalysis doesn’t aim to interpret. Its objective is a jail-break of imprisoned (non-)signifiers — as choreographed by the L-Schema — of the Big Other’s “message,”



which is mangled, halted, and stifled by the Imaginary. The “Euclidean” *relation imaginaire* in the L-Schema is both buffer and space-time device. I propose to equate melancholy with the postponement of traumatic grief within dreams taking place within a “fourth wall” of fictive separation. This cinematic-theatrical metaphor allows us to see how “cryptograms” are deployed in the Logical Time given by the Three Prisoners’ Dilemma.