

The Anxious Landscape:

the role of hysteria in perception and portrayal of the landscape

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Leonardo da Vinci, "John the Baptist" (1513-16)

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Abstract. In *The Idea of a Town*, Joseph Rykwert contrasted Freud's accounts of an "anxious landscape," the scene of hysteria, with a paradigm of the town as a place of memorious health and healing. Rykwert's reconnection of contemporary urban mentality with the violent origins of urban foundation rites nonetheless leads to the vision of the town as "a total mnemonic symbol ... a structured complex of symbols; in which the citizen ... identifies himself with his town, with its past and its founders" (p. 189). The healing model allows Rykwert to develop a dichotomy between historical approaches to town planning. On one side is the "pattern" associated with the *templum*, the quadrated relation of microcosm to macrocosm established through ritual and renewed with annual observances. On the other is the instrumental city design, such as those promoted by Baron Von Haussmann, transforming the urban scene into a "great consumer's market, a workshop, an arena for ambitions."

There seems no way to reconcile, in these terms, the need for collective memory with those forces of modernism that we know all too well and, rightly or wrongly, identify with psychosis. Yet, this dichotomy cuts off any useful discussion of the real relation of place to thought, where the latter is "externalized" as a material landscape and the former's coincidence of chance and teleology provides the mind with its most comprehensive model. I propose to pursue a model that recognizes, on one hand, the "unspeakable scandal" lying at the center of all urban foundations; and, on the other, the personal psychological need to find, in the external landscape, a suitably complex place to play out the dynamic dramas of psychic symptoms. My main resources will come from Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze (*Cinema*), Giambattista Vico (*The New Science*), and Hitchcock (*North by Northwest*, *Vertigo*, *Rear Window*, *Shadow of a Doubt*, *Strangers on a Train*, and other films).

pointing

The complexity/perversity of human thought and action is condensed in the simple gesture of pointing. The “indicative gesture” frames a scene, outlines a plan of action, establishes a context and back-generates a history and dynamic while, at the same time, making both the finger and the pointer “invisible” and inculpable in this action-at-a-distance. Dogs and other pets do not understand pointing. They sniff at the finger, look at the pointer, and wonder what is wanted. Even the hunting dog whose specialty is pointing knows only to attenuate his run towards the fallen prey, to freeze in the act of pursuing. Such is one theory behind the pointing finger: that it is an attenuation of the act of grasping. Not being able to grasp an object, the hand “holds back” by retracting all fingers except one, the one that establishes a trajectory of desire, a space to be crossed, an interval that will absolve the archer from the arrow even while the victim falls dead.

Pointing seems innocent enough, in fact, until we acknowledge the wide range of paraphernalia that do the pointing job. The frame embellishes the edge of painting — the four sides that are already lines in a spectral twin of the literal view — and takes up the role of narrative’s “once upon a time.” The threshold, gate, or window can provide much the same services as the painterly frame. Indicative landscapes and spaces have a point of view built into them. That point is generally outside, behind a screen that serves as a place of representation where the visibility of the world beyond rushes to present itself *for* the subject, *to* the subject.

Hysteria is about the memory of complex experiences. Where the memory of sexual coitus represses the memory of pain, leaving a recollection primarily of pleasure, hysteria generally does the opposite. Pain is remembered — and externalized in the form of symptoms and complaints that are not contrived but



In the psychological theory of *sign language*, two forms of gesture are usually distinguished, the *indicative* and the *imitative*; these classes can be clearly delimited both as to content and psychological genesis. The indicative gesture is derived biologically and genetically from the movement of grasping... And this seemingly so simple step toward the independence of gesture, constitutes one of the most important stages in the development from the animal to the specifically human. For no animal progresses to the characteristic transformation of the grasping movement into the indicative gesture. Even among the most highly developed animals, “clutching at the distance,” as pointing with the hand has been called, has never gone beyond the first, incomplete beginnings. This simple genetic fact suggests that “clutching at the distance” involves a factor of general spiritual significance. It is one of the first steps by which the perceiving and desiring I removes a perceived and desired content from himself and so forms it into an “object,” an “objective” content.

—Ernst Cassirer. *The Philosophy of Symbolic Form, Volume 1: Language*, trans. R. Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), pp . 180-81.

Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema*, 1 (*The Movement-Image*), 2 (*The Time-Image*), trans. G. Thomlinson and B. Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986-1989).

Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. M. Lester (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. A. Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911), pp. 304-329.

Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (London, George Allen & Unwin, LTD, 1911).

Slavoj Žižek, *Organs without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004).

Alice and Through the Looking-Glass involve a category of very special things: events, pure events. When I say “Alice becomes larger,” I mean that she becomes larger than she was. By the same token, however, she becomes smaller than she is now. Certainly, she is not bigger and smaller at the same time. She is larger now; she was smaller before. But it is at the same moment that one becomes larger than one was and smaller than one becomes. This is the simultaneity of a becoming whose characteristic is to elude the present. Insofar as it eludes the present, becoming does not tolerate the separation or the distinction of before and after, or of past and future. It pertains to the essence of becoming to move and to pull in both directions at once: Alice does not grow without shrinking, and vice versa. Good sense affirms that in all things there is a determinable sense or direction (*sens*); but paradox is the affirmation of both senses or directions at the same time.

Plato invites us to distinguish between two dimensions: (1) that of limited and measured things, of fixed qualities, permanent or temporary which always presuppose pauses and rests ... and (2) a pure becoming without measure, a veritable becoming-mad, which never rests.

—Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, pp. 1-2

truly felt. Pleasure, related to the Real of desire rather than the “reality” of symptoms, is repressed. Because indication is what is externalized, made visible and obvious, afforded by something made invisible, the logic that regulates pointing also regulates hysteria.

This points, hah hah, to hysteria’s division of pleasure and pain. Pain, here, plays the part of the finite, dividable substrate. Pleasure, secrete pleasure, which must always be suppressed in hysteria, is counterpart to the elusive, invisible *durée*, the hand behind the finger, the frame, sill, portal, or boundary. In Bergson’s terms, the *divisible* framed representation owes its existence to the *indivisible* frame, the ectoplasmic substances that, while supposed to be invisible, nonetheless mask their shadowy appearances.

Indivisibility, what? In Deleuze’s *Logic of Sense*, “becoming” is the non-categorical category. It eludes both classification and division, and is the model for the Greek idea of *apieron*, unbounded. What does come to mind is the idea of the “plenum,” a space that continues without topological breaks, in and out of “ordinary space,” but remains invisible, continuous, and in motion.

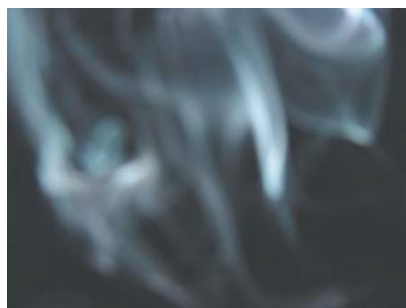
There is already a name for this space, but it is applied to a specific condition that, significantly, also interested Bergson and Deleuze in their expeditions into time. This is the \emptyset (phi) phenomenon. In his two-part study of cinema, Gilles Deleuze revisits Henri Bergson’s often inconsistent views on the subject of time. Bergson compares time to the case of cinema, where static photographs are “interpolated” through the *phi function* (\emptyset) to produce the experience of continuous motion. This analogy helps decipher the ancient paradoxes of Zeno: arrows that don’t reach their target, runners who cannot overtake tortoises, etc. The problem, Bergson argues, is that *what is indivisible* (motion) cannot be mapped against *what is divisible*. Time, as dynamic, cannot be gauged by the

Abduction is C. S. Peirce's original contribution to the development of symbolic logic. Unlike deduction, which leads directly from premises to conclusion, or induction, which involves inference but is not allowed to stray from its presuppositions, abduction looks for new or hidden contexts that make a surprising or perplexing situation understandable. Abduction is the dominant mode of the \emptyset phenomenon because it is the context that makes the fragmentary data reaching the senses, "make the most sense." A striking use of abduction, negatively, took place during the widely publicized trial of police accused of beating a black suspect, Rodney King, in Los Angeles. The defense team replayed the famous videotape of the beating frame by frame, asking the jury to consider, for each frame, if a crime were being committed. In no case could a specific significant departure from legal policy be found, and the *deductive* "addition" of these conclusions forced the jury to acquit the accused, although the *abductive* reality of the videotape clearly showed the victim being abused. \emptyset was the context that made the singular fragments understandable, but the defense team's strategy was to make the fragments *not understandable* in any public sense in order to focus them on specific points of law.

infinitely divisible substrate of space. The cinema's static "snapshots," run at a mechanical 20-30 frames per second, result in the illusion of movement.

The analogy is not simple, however. In ordinary non-cinematic experience, perceptual "snapshots" stabilize the flux of sense encounters. In turn, these "fixes" create their own \emptyset space — the invisible, unreached spaces, the un-lived moments, and the hidden sides of things are held in hypothetical readiness. We need not walk around all sides of objects in the environment to be convinced that they are full, three-dimensional things. Fragments are glued together with \emptyset -stuff, logically "abducted" rather than deduced. \emptyset remains the "indivisible" in whatever context it appears. In cinema form, it is motion; in experience, it is the world that is supposed to be solid and three-dimensional.

This is where the function of representation expands beyond its accustomed role copying a "prior reality." Cinema's representation is the static photograph mechanized and calibrated in process of construction and presentation. Ordinary experience constructs something like snapshots, even if these snapshots barely correspond with actual sensual experience. Like the iconic drawings of young children, experience's representations combine belief, experience, and re-arranged sequences. \emptyset , on the other hand, is strangely a-temporal and a-spatial. It works like the mystical fourth dimension of the turn of the century, a medium of time travel and spatial metamorphosis. "Inserted" between the constructed precipitates of dynamic environmental interaction, \emptyset is like the "lamella" of the human body — the boundary between living and dead skin. Its anthropological counterpart is the ritual period of mourning to assist the deceased soul's transition from life to death. Neither fully dead or alive, the soul is "between the two deaths." The popular images of various forms of ec-



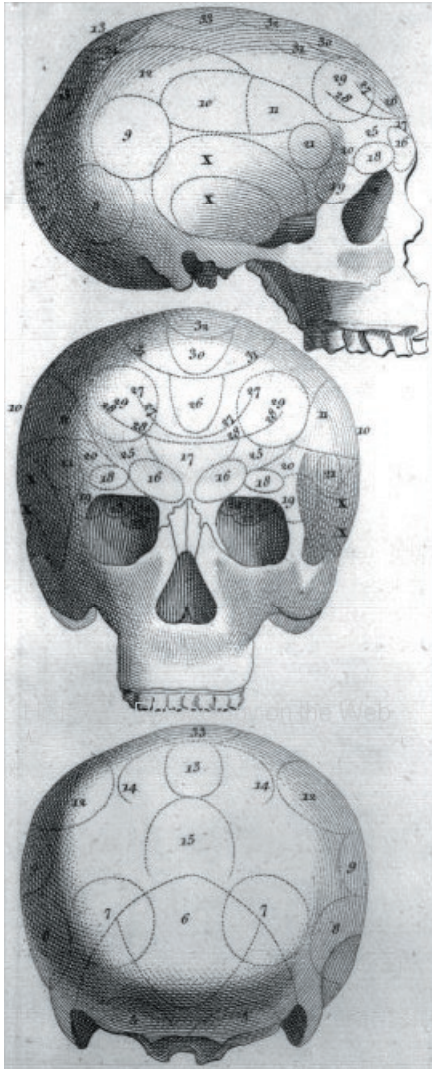
Hans Holbein, *The Ambassadors* (1533)

toplasm fill out the biography of this in-between state. The lore of ectoplasm grew rapidly with the popularity of photography, where double exposures could fake the presence of the dead in the space of living subjects. Another form of ectoplasm was amorphous glop extruded from the nose, mouth, or ear.

This is hysteria's most scandalous, disgusting form, where the externalization of interior reality refuses any possible symbolic diagnosis. But, it does highlight the \emptyset 's relation to the space and time that constitute the network of symbolic relations we call "reality." A hybrid form of ectoplasm, a smoky but cohesive cloud with the ability to form recognizable images and, at the same time, slip through restricted openings such as keyholes or the space beneath doors, represents \emptyset 's bi-polar nature. Like the representation, \emptyset retains an element of minimal mimesis. Like the amorphous interior of the body, \emptyset is what Lacan would call "the Real" — a substance beyond any possible symbolic representation and, hence, in contact with the magical substances of desire and fear. \emptyset in fact bridges the perceptual and the Real, showing itself to be the substrate for anamorphosis, the ability of ordinary images to accommodate content that are visible only from special viewpoints or, more generally, from some "impossible-Real" viewpoint. Such is the "hysterical" blur in Holbein's famous double portrait of 1533: a skull that implicates, by its directionality, a triangle connecting the horizon, a crucifix, the precise date of April 11, 1533, and the angle of 27° (the height of the sun above the horizon on Good Friday, in London, in 1533). 1533 was a good time to be hysterical. Everyone thought 1533 ($500+500+500+33$) was the date of the Apocalypse, and the coincidence of the sun angle ($3 \times 3 \times 3$) at 4 p.m. on Good Friday, April 11, added to the evidence.

Overdetermination is another trait of hysteria. Overdetermination makes the external world into a

John North, *The Ambassadors' Secret: Holbein and the World of the Renaissance* (New York: Hambleton and London, 2002).



*phrenological diagrams of
the human skull*

crystal prison, a landscape of anxious symptoms that mirror of the subject's turmoil. But, is not ectoplasm precisely the substance of overdetermination? As a substance "between the two deaths," isn't it a fractal-like materialization of the idea of self-reference that, by folding opposite terms into one another, resembles nothing more closely than the architectural labyrinth?

Golgotha, the "place of the skull," is quite literally a place, a 63° vertex of an isosceles triangle that implicates the beginning and end of history. What is behind the ability of Golgotha to signify *without being symbolic*? As Slavoj Žižek has pointed out, the skull is an anti-signifier, a hole, an inescapably attractive visual element that, placed in almost any context, can structure anamorphic content. The skull is the scandal of Christianity, just as Hegel (as well as Holbein) argued. Is it not the case that the crucifixion is the decisive moment when God proves to be powerless, utterly unable or unwilling to help his own human manifestation? Hegel extended this theological scandal to the case of phrenology, the pseudo-science of determining psychology from the shape of the skull. Hegel's aim was not solely to condemn materialistic reductionism, but to point to an irreducible end-point of consciousness. Golgotha is the hinge of the final raptures of the *Phenomenology*, where Hegel compares the skull to a chalice "of this realm of spirits," foaming forth to God "His own Infinity." As emblem of Absolute Knowledge, the skull is an ironic anti-symbol, a negative viewpoint (literally!) of defeat and humiliation. Jean Hyppolite obligingly describes the terminus of Hegel's monumental project in terms of hysteria: "Knowledge alienates itself from itself and this alienation is termed 'nature' and 'history.' In nature, spirit alienated itself from self by becoming a being dispersed in space; it is spirit that has lost itself, and nature is nothing other than this eternal alienation of its own subsistence and the movement that restores the subject." What better picture could

we have of Bergson's contrast of the *divisible* and the *indivisible*, and what better way to return, via the scandalous lore of ectoplasm, to the \emptyset phenomenon of cinema?

In the role of filmic glue, the \emptyset phenomenon is the indivisible ectoplasmic stuff of extra-dimensionality that "exists but doesn't exist." It is neither inferred nor deduced, but "abducted" to save the appearance of the jagged dance of static snapshots. It "tricks us out into the open," meaning that the imagination willfully follows the pointing finger in the direction of the illusion. "Out there," the mind's innerness becomes an outward form of narrative and visual art.

But, is the clinical idea of hysteria still at issue? For hysterics, the situation is opposite that of sex. Pain is remembered, pleasure is repressed. Pleasure additionally relates to the incomplete structure of desire, the gap that prevents the arrow from meeting its target or the taste of Coke from being anything more than "it." The suppression of pleasure is far more pleasurable in the sense that pleasure is not allowed to enter the realm of symbolic relationships and representations that would allow language to strangle it in its cradle. Deleuze contrasts cinema's semiotics in just these terms. By creating illusions out of the "nothing" of the \emptyset factor, something like the psychologist J. J. Gibson's "affordance" comes about. Potentiality is present but suspended, indefinite, virtual. Deleuze argues that, whereas cinema before World War II was based on motion-image illusion (generated by static "sections" of the visual field), cinema after the war tended to structure time itself. Citing Hitchcock as hinge between classical and the new style of films that came after World War II, Deleuze points to the use of the "demark" — an object taken out of its "natural series" (the windmill turning backwards in *Foreign Correspondent*, the cigarette lighter in *Strangers on a Train*, the key to the wine

According to Gibson (1977, 1979), the environment not only serves as the surfaces that separate substances from the medium in which the animals live, but also affords animals in terms of terrain, shelters, water, fire, objects, tools, animals, human displays, etc.; and there is not only information in light for the perception of the environment, but also information for the perception of what the environment affords. He proposed a radical hypothesis: the composition and layout of the surfaces in the environment constitute what they afford. Gibson's affordance has the following properties:

- Affordances provided by the environment are what it offers, what it provides, what it furnishes, and what it invites. The environment includes the medium, the substances, the surfaces and their layouts, the objects, places and hiding places, other persons and animals, and so on.
- The "values" and "meanings" of things in the environment can be directly perceived. "Values" and "meanings" are external to the perceiver.
- Affordances are relative to animals. They can only be measured in ecology, but not in physics.
- An affordance is an invariant.
- Affordances are holistic. What we perceive when we look at objects are their affordances, not their dimensions and properties.
- An affordance implies complementarity of the perceiver and the environment. It is neither an objective property nor a subjective property, and at the same time it is both. It cuts across the dichotomy of subjective-objective. Affordances only make sense from a system point of view.

—Jiajie Zhang,
"Categorization of Affordances,"
<http://acad88.sahs.uth.tmc.edu/courses/hi6301/affordance.html>

Hitchcock introduces the mental image into cinema. That is, he makes relation itself the object of an image, which is not merely added to the perception, action and affection images, but frames and transforms them. With Hitchcock, a new kind of ‘figures’ appear which are figures of thoughts. In fact, the mental image itself requires particular signs which are not the same as those of the action-image. It has often been noticed that the detective only has a mediocre and secondary role (except when he enters fully into the relation, as in *Blackmail*); and that indices have little importance. On the other hand, Hitchcock produced original signs, in accordance with [C. S. Peirce’s] two types of relations, natural and abstract. In accordance with the natural relation, a term refers back to other terms in a customary series such that each can be ‘interpreted’ by the others: these are *marks*; but it is always possible for one of these terms to leap outside the web and suddenly appear in conditions which take it out of its series, or set it in contradiction with it, which we will refer to as the *demark*. It is therefore very important the terms should be completely ordinary, in order that one of them, first of all, can detach itself from the series: as Hitchcock says, *The Birds* must be ordinary birds. Certain of Hitchcock’s demarks are famous, like the windmill in *Foreign Correspondent* whose sails turn in the opposite direction to the wind, or the crop-spraying plane in *North by Northwest* which appears where there are no crops to spray. Similarly, the glass of milk made suspect by its internal luminosity in *Suspicion*, or the key which does not fit the lock in *Dial M for Murder*.

—Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema, 1 (The Movement-Image)*, p. 203.

cellar in *Notorious*, the crop-duster spraying where there are no crops in *North by Northwest*). This uses not only Peirce’s distinction of natural and abstract signs, it again engages the idea of abduction because what is changed is context. The clever indicative motion of the sign-out-of-place crystallizes an evil, anxious landscape. In *Notorious* (1946) Alicia realizes her husband will discover the missing wine cellar key — the key they need to discover the Nazis’ secret — as soon as the party champagne runs out. The camera then focuses on the bubbly not with the usual indulgence of delight but in horror as this “ticking clock” threatens to run down to zero.

The “demark” is, in the hysteric’s terms, a source and object of delight. The more pain it ostensibly engages, the more pleasure the hysteric experiences with the recrystallization of context around it. In tightening spirals, such as those literally enacted in *Rear Window*’s pans and scenic displacements around the urban residential courtyard, “key scenes” point towards an inevitable center, a labyrinth that implicates a Minotaur — quite literally enacted in the final scene of *Rear Window* when Jeff fends off the murderer Thorwald by setting off his camera’s flash bulbs.

In this shift from movement image to time image, Hitchcock developed a *cinema of relation*. Deleuze argues that cinema, no less than art, architecture and even music, is capable of revealing philosophical truths. To this claim I would add that Hitchcock, if anything, reveals the structure of relations as a condition of “anamorphosis.” When the “demark” is displaced from the natural order and made into a negativity, the order of the world, especially its order of center and periphery, inside and outside, are inverted.

This, if anything can be, is the casebook for hysteria. What is the key proof of this assertion? — The \emptyset phenomenon’s transition from a sign of virtuality (movement perceived as an illusion brought about by

a sequence of mechanized snapshots) to a “time image” that dominates movement metaphorically, a kind of template or rhetorical device that sets the tone for action but undermines classical interpretation. This in short is the biography of \emptyset as an ectoplasm that is, itself, “between the two deaths”: the first death, that of motion in the pseudo-mapping of indivisible motion on to divisible space; the second death, a collapse of time and space into a psychotic spheroid such as that created by James Joyce in *Finnegans Wake*. This example is not selected at random. Joyce’s understanding of the precocious cultural philosophy of Giambattista Vico underscores the mystery of why Vico is not at the deconstructionists’ or cultural critics’ table. Not French, not Heideggerian, not phenomenological, Vico is always on the margins. But, there is no philosophical project that is more consonant with Lacan’s radical restructuring of the nature of the subject. No philosopher better used images to destroy image, text to destroy text, to arrive at a structural and historical account of negativity in service of culture. Joyce’s initiation of *Finnegans Wake* with a clap of thunder correctly spelled the inner gap of language — between sense and sound — that requires us to go “outside language,” in a manner of speaking, to cinema, landscape, architecture, and art to “find out what has been happening.” Joyce’s perverse text is both inside and outside language. Let’s use the explanation of how this is so to introduce the role of \emptyset in establishing a “hysterical” model of landscape.

Vico’s theory of how thunder awakened the first human consciousness must be brutally condensed here. In his major work, *The New Science*, Vico argues that the first human were incapable of abstract thinking but, instead projected their own nature on to substances and events in nature. That did this informally and naturally at first, as exploitation of the environment led to a close relationship with plants, animals, and landscapes in general. A system of ver-



The frontispiece for Vico’s major work, *The New Science* (1744), known as the “dipintura.”

Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. T. Bergin and M. Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1968).

The gap between word and thing *is precisely language*, although the gap is difficult to characterize and/or locate within any philosophy of language. In Plato's *Cratylus*, for example, the issue of the conventionality of the sign/signified relationship gives way to a modified appreciation of onomatopoeia, although the argument runs much deeper. The gap is also the line, as Lacan has pointed out, between the signifier-signified in the classic semiotic formulation *S/s* (sign over signified). Following Lacan's humorous essay on this subject ("On the Role of the Letter in the Unconscious") argues that signifiers, on account of the line separating them "arbitrarily" from the signified, are constantly sliding, not simply from disagreements of convention but because of psychologically motivated uses of this very gap.

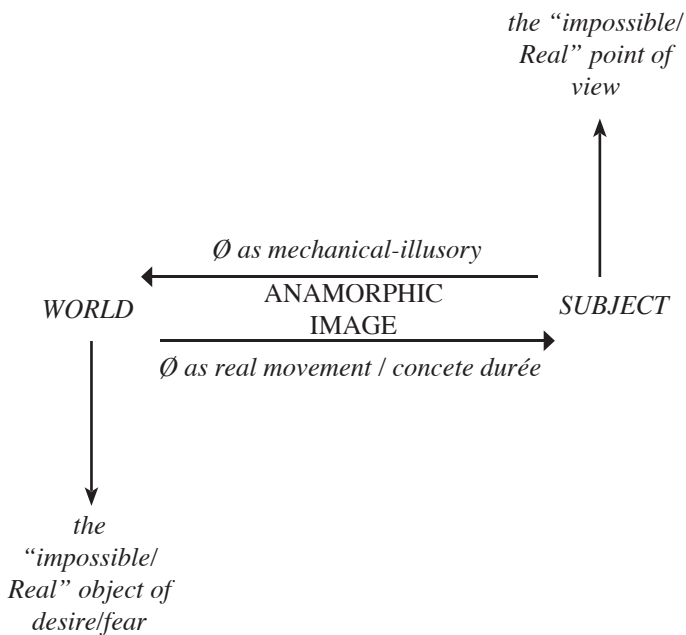
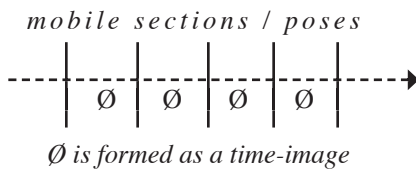
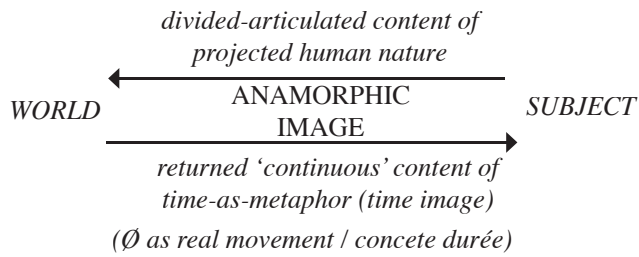
It would be hard to find a more compelling case for the continuing importance of the metaphor of the Tower of Babel, where sliding originated and is connected in interesting ways to the line dividing the material-finite world below to the realm of pure forms and Adamic language above. When, in images of the *mons delectus* described in the famous story of "The Table of Cebes," the line coincides with the top of a ziggurat, and literalizes the original Babel as "Bab-El" — the "Gate of God" — the implication of a utopian return to a golden age of myth is complicated by a Joycean-Vichian insistence on retaining the Hebrew conflation of the ziggurat with the division of languages. The line needs to be placed not at the edge of linguistic development but in the center, as a permanently disruptive source of sliding, misprision, and loss of meaning.



bal signage was probably long in use before human consciousness used signs "as language" — as dynamic, self-regulating, and transformative. Vico suggests that the impression of fear led the first humans to become conscious of the thunder as "the first word." Only then could the hysterical projection of human nature on to the external world become intelligible as a consciousness with hegemonic intentions. From the folkloric demonology of plants and animals emerged a theology of sky and underworld — one not so different from the "pre-human" use of signs except in the pivotal feature of a "hinge" or disconnect between sound and meaning that created a gap between word and object. This gap was to prove crucial, for it created a void inside language that, impossible to fill, was relatable to both fear and desire (the word "sacred" retains this ambiguity).

The principal advantage of this hinge was that the \emptyset phenomenon was now able to "move" from a general category of inferential "infill" to a role that would use its prior incarnation in a metaphoric, symbolic way and itself evolve a new dynamic of time. Surprisingly, Bergson presents the various stages of the \emptyset 's evolution in his several analogies of time. In the first example of mechanical-illusory time, which corresponds to the earliest philosophical account by Zeno, the incompatibility of "indivisible motion" with "infinitely divisible space" creates both paradox and a illusory form of time (cinema). When, instead of the "snapshot" mechanically reproduced at the same rate as it was recorded, we have the characteristic images of time, as a "movement image" in natural perception, the situation is different. Instead of "immobile sections" (snapshots), the sections are mobile. The movement image became an issue in the evolution of cinema, too. As the camera was freed from its stationary locked position, directors such as Eisenstein realized the potential of *montage* — of telling a story using editing; a creation of time that "did not

\emptyset as mechanical-illusory ...



exist" before a certain sequencing of scenes. "Privileged instants" such as screams or poses could serve as "mobile sections." The \emptyset phenomenon aspired to higher illusions: the imagination of a time closer to the internally symmetrical narrative, the chiastic story, the tricky tale, the joke, the yarn.

Vico's theory of the thunder suggests that the alternation between the "mechanical-illusory" version and the natural perception version ("real movement → concrete duration") is a permanent feature of human consciousness — that, as Vico put it and Joyce elaborated it, the three ages of human consciousness co-exist, in all objects, actions, and words, "all at the same time." These three ages (gods, heroes, ordinary humans) are like the anagogic, analogic, and moral levels of the interpretive schema known as "quadriga," used by Medieval preachers to build layers of meaning into their sermons and by poets to compound sense with non-sense (in both senses). But, they also show off language's ability to descend from its metaphoric-magical beginnings in a negative dialectic ending in a linguistic "Golgotha," where words capitulate to their idiotic literal basis, a void such as suggested by "Who's on first" of Abbott and Costello or the "Vy a duck" dialog of the Marx Brothers. Puns, the end-game of language, are the point of rebirth for Joyce in *Finnegans Wake*, where the Hegelian phrase of "foaming forth of forms to infinity" becomes something of a poetic or even lived reality. But, we can pinpoint the logic of this terminus with the idea of interpolation, a process of connecting the two ends of the "impossible/Real" creations of sounds and meanings. This has been done already, in Lacan's remarkable essay, "The Agency of the Letter in the Field of the Unconscious." But, where Lacan may be impenetrable for others, Hitchcock may offer some workable alternative.

With Hitchcock, we can see what Deleuze means,

that he offers a “cinema of relations” where, through the change of context, objects are brought out of their “natural order” and made into “demarks.” The process Hitchcock uses is almost invariably a chiasmic interpolation involving a point of view that shifts from a distant “plan view” to a ground-level interaction with the material-radical reality of small objects that fall to earth, lead to a descent, reveal a secret, or solve a crime. Such is the 20th century casebook for what in ancient times would be called the theme of *katabasis*, descent, a journey Hellward for atonement, discovery, rectification or divination. At this point, we might ask W. F. Jackson Knight, author of *Cumæan Gates*, or Jane Harrison, the noted anthropologist and scholar, to have a few words. Or, we might go to architecture theory’s own flagship study of antiquity, Joseph Rykwert’s *The Idea of a Town*. In the style of Slavoj Žižek’s book on Hitchcock, we might entitle such a venture, *What You Always Wanted to Know about the Hades but Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock*.

Coincidentally, Joseph Rykwert has already engaged the issue of hysteria. In a chapter on “The City as a Curable Disease: Ritual and Hysteria.” Rykwert quotes a long passage from a lecture Freud gave at Clark University in 1909.

Our hysterical patient suffers from reminiscences. Their symptoms are residues and mnemonic symbols of particular traumatic experiences. We may perhaps obtain a deeper understanding of this kind of symbolism if we compare them with other mnemonic symbols in other fields. The monuments and memorials with which cities are adorned are also mnemonic symbols. If you take a walk through the streets of London, you will find, in front of one of the large railway termini, a richly carved Gothic column — Charing Cross. One of the old Plantagenet kings of the thirteenth century ordered the body of his beloved Queen Eleanor to be carried to Westminster; and at every stage at which the coffin rested he erected a Gothic cross.

At another point in the same city, not far from London Bridge, you will find a towering column which is simply known as the Monument. It was designed as a memorial of the Great Fire which broke out in that neighbourhood in 1666. These monuments, then, resemble hysterical symptoms in being mnemonic symbols. What should we think of a Londoner who paused today in deep melancholy before business, or instead of feeling joy over the youthful queen of his own heart? Or again what should we think of a Londoner who shed tears before The Monument that commemorates the reduction of his beloved metropolis into ashes although it has long since risen again in far greater brilliance? Yet every single hysteric and neurotic behaves like these two unpractical Londoners. Not only do they remember painful experiences from the remote past, but they still cling to them emotionally....”

Rykwert sees Freud’s task as opposed to his own, which takes mnemonic symbols to be the starting point of the recovery of collective and individual mental health. Indeed, the whole town must serve as a mnemonic symbol. To show that Rykwert and Freud are not so far apart as 100 years or Worcester, Massachusetts and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, two points must be established. First, Freud and Rykwert do not make use of the distinction between the symbolic use of monuments — a use that positions memory within the public network of symbolic relationships — and the a-symbolic, which in Hitchcock, is the key to the way in which objects are taken out of the “natural order” (= symbolic order, for our purposes) and given special powers. This is important in the function of hysteria in culture. Second, Rykwert over-values Freud’s clinical references, which make psycho-pathology sound abnormal, which in Freud’s practice it certainly was. Lacan has comforted those of us outside the asylum, at least some of the time, that we, too, are neurotic, psychotic, or perverse; that the only cure to our insanity, which is also our humanity, is

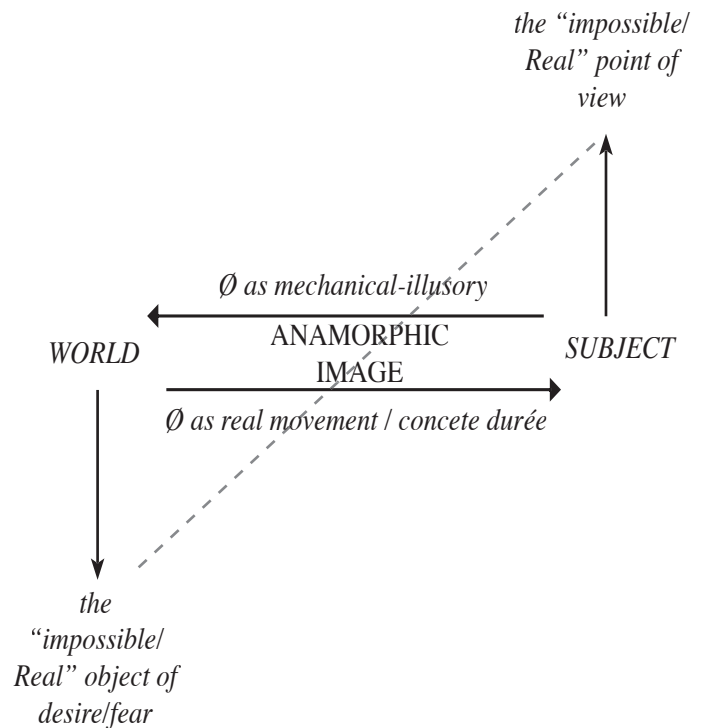
death — that is, all of us who speak a language and have had a mother and father at some time.

What is evident about Hitchcock’s *demarks* is that Hitchcock’s films materialize them in terms that would have been imminently familiar to the ancient Greeks and Romans or even a broader spectrum of archaic folk. This connection between ancient and modern gives us a chance to correct the record on hysteria, to give it a form and function, and to take it into our hearts and mental menageries. Just as the \emptyset phenomenon came to the aid of Bergson — or, rather, confused him so that he told the truth in spite of himself — we can assess the contrast between the “motion image” and its dependence on static sections, mimicked by the physical photography of cinema, and the “time image,” a metaphoric construct resulting from a *montage* of key elements and dynamic sections. Because the \emptyset doesn’t exist, it must be created in the imagination. Because it implicates a point of view that is in some sense “impossible,” “a-symbolic,” but Real, we can take it that this “transect” across ordinary perceptual experience is analogous or even identical to “anamorphosis.”

In Hitchcock, we know that anamorphosis is the element that disrupts the natural order, alters context (abduction), and establishes a “cinema of relations” that is ideal for our cultural comparison. Isn’t it the case that the city establishes a “tableau of relations” in its mnemonic monuments that, as Freud suggests, disrupt the “natural order” of getting and spending, to-ing and fro-ing? Because Hitchcock’s filming technique so closely resembles the *katabasis* traditions of ancient societies (see Pauli-Wissowa’s *Real-Encyclopaedie der classischen Alterthumswissenschaft*. B. IX. Stuttgart, 1916. S. 1713-1720.) To expound this thesis, it’s necessary to take a few examples from Hitchcock films.

Curiously, Hitchcock’s favorite method for us-

ing anamorphosis to zero in on the “demark” almost exactly duplicates the diagram used to define the anamorphic hinge between the mechanical \emptyset and the Real \emptyset . The dashed line is the famous Hitchcockian “crane shot” that begins with the camera at a high angle above a scene and moves in, with the help of a crane that transports the camera physically to a position close to a small object. In *Notorious*, the camera begins with a view from the balcony of Sebastian’s mansion and moves in towards Alicia, then Alicia’s hand, then the key in Alicia’s hand. The diagonal action taken by the camera is really from the “impossible/Real” position of a fictive viewer, “one who knows” what is about to happen and sees the



plot as a kind of plan or map, towards an object that comes to represent a gap created by desire. In *Notorious*, the key to the cellar gives Alicia and her co-spy Devlin a chance to snoop in the cellar for evidence of Nazi secrets. An inexplicable coincidence occurred when Hitchcock, who at the time the film was shot was unaware of the existence of the secret project to develop the atomic bomb, used uranium as the Nazi’s secret substance, concealed in wine bottles. The FBI

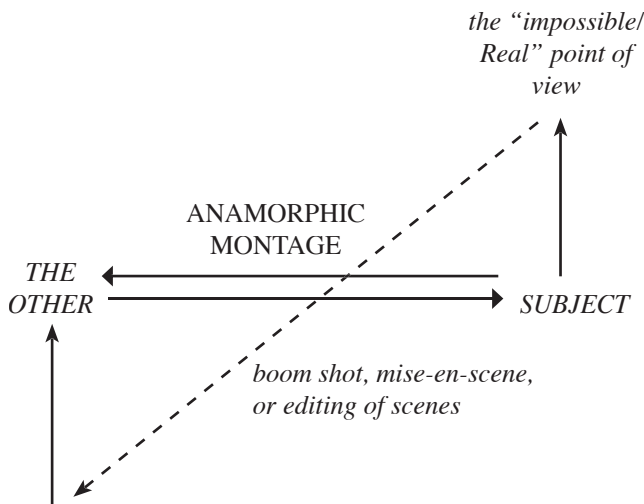


investigated Hitchcock to see if any details of the Manhattan Project had been leaked to Hollywood. The crane shot uncannily duplicates, or foreshadows, the *katabasis* into the secrets of the cellar.

Let us, however, replace the anamorphic object — the key in *Notorious*, the lighter in *Strangers on a Train* — with a broader term: anamorphic montage. This allows for the way in which Hitchcock uses editing to accomplish what Deleuze identified as a “cinema of relations.” In *Rope*, for example, extremely long takes (*mise-en-scene*) during a party in a New York apartment build tension that focuses on the presence of a chest with a dead body inside it. The single set of the urban courtyard in *Rear Window* provides an obsessive-compulsive’s dream of “bases to touch.” In *Shadow of a Doubt*, references to widows frame the scene in which Uncle Charlie gives his niece Charlie a ring with initials engraved on the band.

Whether or not Hitchcock uses an actual boom shot, as in *Young and Innocent* (to focus on the twitch that gives away the murderer disguised as a black-faced musician at a tea-dance), or editing devices such as the long takes used in *Rope* or the reverse-angle shots that build tension so effectively in *Psycho*, the result is to tighten, descend, and focus. “Interpolation” is the process by which “sections” (representative scenes) are extracted in this process, through editing or camera work, to implicate the \emptyset , the ectoplasmic center of the work, the horror of the void at the center, the place of the skull.

The center is sometimes a void or marked (de-marked) with a negative blur, analogous to Holbein’s anamorphic skull-blur. In *Lifeboat*, the last shipwreck survivor hauled into the small lifeboat is none other than the captain of the German U-boat responsible for sinking the present survivors’ ship. In *The Birds*, it is the first bird to strike Tippi Hedron. *The Trouble with Harry* carries its void along with the story, a body that



- key (*Notorious*)
- lighter (*Strangers on a Train*)
- twitch (*Young and Innocent*)
- ring (*Shadow of a Doubt*)
- luminous milk (*Sabotage*)
- wedding ring (*Rear Window*)
- jeweled broach (*Vertigo*)
- house key (*Dial 'M' for Murder*)
- missing finger (*The 39 Steps*)
- compass (*Lifeboat*)
- chest (*Rope*)

no one can find a way to dispose of.

Just listing the objects used as demarks provides enough clues for developing an ectoplasmic theory of Hitchcock's anamorphic montage. Our interest will be to set up this relationship so that it "solves" the seeming conflict between Rykwert's desire to see the mnemonic landscape as therapeutic and Freud's thematic insistence on the role of hysteria. In a sense, Rykwert constitutes the "motion image" stage of analysis where monuments constitute static sections of the town's historical identity. Freud's pathological analysis uses



Lifeboat (1944)

dynamic sections, where mnemonics set up a "time outside of time." Deleuze, were he to argue the case of the landscape, might perhaps say that Hitchcock provides the hinge with his cinema of relations, but I think it's necessary to be a bit clearer about that. In fact, Hitchcock himself is clear enough because his rings, lighters, compasses, jewels, dead bodies, and other escapees from the natural order of things might as well have been taken from a cabinet of curiosities belonging to Sir James Frazer or Jane Harrison. In very classical anthropological terms, they relate to the ancient practice of household religion that used the family hearth for nourishment of the ancestral dead. Euripides play *Alcestis* gives some insight into the practice whereby the wife and daughters of the household were priestesses of Hestia, the hearth. Ritually "wed to the flame," they could not abandon the hearth without offending the *manes*, the household gods. But, a ruse could be constructed, such as Alcestis's sacrifice to save her husband; or the common custom of the bride pretending to resist being taken to her new husband's household.



Rear Window (1954)

The opening of this essay identified the indicative gesture as the origin of the mental division of space



all weddings are weddings "to the flame"



François Truffaut with Alfred Hitchcock

that created an invisible, perceiving subject on one side of an imaginary screen and a visible, representational world on the other. What the finger points at is not clear. But, as an attenuated grasp, the pointing finger once *knew* this object through touch, and it is through a logic of touch (*stereognosis*) that this lost object is recovered.

In *Strangers on a Train*, Bruno blackmails Guy using Guy's cigarette lighter as collateral. The lighter is a token of a future marriage, a sign of a motive for murder. Bruno holds the lighter as he revisits the crime scene to meet Guy, but he accidentally drops it through a storm grate. In an excruciating scene, Bruno reaches for the lighter he cannot see but can only just barely touch. This is the logic of Hitchcock's "anamorphic montage," his descent into the pleasure of dark depths. In his extended interview of Hitchcock, François Truffaut asked Hitchcock if *Rear Window* wasn't really about marriage. "Of course," Hitchcock replied.

Being wedded to a flame was what gave the Vestals their premiere political power in Rome. The Vestals' flame was a collective hearth, a symbol of the unity of the "families" whose separate religions had to be consolidated within a single idea of political authority. If what is lost in the attenuated grasp is to be replaced by a frame, and within that frame is a blur or central void, then the city and the theater share a common blueprint. The frame that defines the stage transforms the audience into ectoplasm that, in the darkened auditorium, retains some weak ties with mimesis (the standard depiction of the shadowy ghost) but is, fundamentally, interior, a \emptyset , an indivisible substance "between the two deaths."

This implicates the point, the indicative gesture, as the primary hysterical action: "I am that." This impossible/Real viewpoint finds the demark; indeed it puts the demark in the center of focus, and "focus"

is the Latin word for the hearth. Focus is the frame that implicates Walter O. Thornhill as the murderer of a diplomat; but the implication goes further than the photograph taken by the opportunistic U.N. photographer. Thornhill meets friends in a hotel restaurant and rises to make a phone call at the same moment Russian spies are paging the CIA agent they are pursuing. The agent however is a decoy, a non-existent personality whose personal effects are moved from hotel to hotel to lead the KGB agents on a wild goose chase. Thornhill fills an empty place, a place he can never fill, but never repudiate. He, like Richard Hannay in *The 39 Steps* and Robert Tisdall in *Young and Innocent*, is wrongly accused twice, first as a non-existent spy, second as the murderer of the diplomat whose vacated house the KGB used to interrogate Thornhill.



As Thornhill escapes the police search, Lacan's case for the "reverse gaze" is made in ways that also tie in Deleuze's time-image, a metaphoric-fake re-working of time outside of time (Thornhill is taken away from his busy life as an advertising executive). Thornhill wears dark glasses because his eyes are "sensitive to questions." When the CIA finally gains his trust and enlists his aid to save their double agent, Eve Kendall, he visits Mt. Rushmore but imagines that "Teddy Roosevelt is looking at me."

The hysterics dominates language, a carryover from the Hayes Code's impact on film dialog. Unable to depict actual sex, characters filled their mouths with fast words and built up a frenzy of witty verbal exchanges. Cary Grant had already made his reputation in this technique, with *His Girl Friday* (1940). Hysterics force Thornhill to adopt an ectoplasmic existence. He squeezes into Kendall's sleeping compartment while the porter visits her compartment; takes on the form of a porter to escape police waiting at the train station; climbs over the substructure of the KGB capo's modernist house atop Mt. Rushmore; he is dis-

Eve Kendall, examining Thornhill's matchbook monogram, <ROT>: "What does the 'O' stand for?"

Roger Thornhill: "Nothing."



Thornhill caught on film at the U.N. murder scene



"Teddy Roosevelt seems to be looking at me!"



His Girl Friday (1940), with Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell.



covered by the housekeeper when she spots his convex reflection in the television screen. He escapes her shot (the gun was loaded with blanks), an echo of his faked death at the hands of Kendall. The theme of being mistaken for a man who didn't exist is carried over into the idea of a ghost who can't be killed. Finally, he ectoplasmically Øights his way over the giant facial organs of famous presidents.

The landscape is demarked as well, in what is undoubtedly the film's best known sequence. Thornhill is set up to meet Kaplan, the nonexistent spy, at a remote rural crossroads. A flying demark, a crop duster, dusts crops where there are no crops. It is soon clear that the pilot is carrying an automatic weapon with the intention of harvesting Thornhill. A dusty death is averted when Thornhill manages to stop, just barely, a passing fuel truck. The crop duster can't miss it and explodes into flames.

The empty crossroads compares interestingly to *Lifeboat* with its empty seas; *The Birds*, with its empty island; and with the empty house of *Psycho*. One could also recall the empty mill of *Young and Innocent* or the bleak Scottish hills in *The 39 Steps*. There are no shortages of demarked landscapes in Hitchcock. Even the populated scenes (the opening of *North by Northwest* in New York, for example) use a criss-cross patterning to suggest the Freudian preoccupation with commerce and mindless back-and-forth activity — the ideal “static” foil for a new “dynamic” section, the ectoplasmic ground for a reconstruction of time. Inhabited places, such as the San Francisco of *Vertigo*, are “demarked” by circumstance: the substructure of the Golden Gate bridge; a museum on a quiet weekday; a redwood forest with no one about; a nunnery with no other visitors. The ordinariness of these landscapes is disturbed and demarked through Hitchcock's anamorphic montage.

The question of landscape parallels the coinci-



dence that Deleuze noted about Bergson's example of the \emptyset phenomenon of cinema: the most modern case resembles the most ancient. Rather than work out the patterns of cultural conservation by which mythic archetypes are displaced generation after generation until they reach contemporary culture, let's jump to a more radical thesis. Isn't it more the case that the *end and beginnings* have more in common than the ends? Could it be that the boundary condition of the terminus is in itself a conditioning factor? Is this a case of an "idiotic symmetry" — such as the belief by both parties of silent trade that the other party is the god Hermes?

This thesis would have to endure destruction at the hands of a "corollary of fractals" that would place such symmetries inside the details as well as in the larger scheme of history. Either this is the Hegelian condition of night, where all cows are black; or it is an unintended consequence of theories that, in physics, have been articulated by Wolfram and Smolin. This intrusion of physics into the humanities may actually be a reverse case of the humanities invading physics, since the basis of fractals is the phenomenon of self-reference, a phenomenon that goes back to the first light of humanity's dawn (and we have the jokes to prove it). If Hitchcock is a hinge between static and dynamic sections of time, then he is pivotal not just for history but for epistemology. As Deleuze himself acknowledges, the "cinema of relations" corresponds to the "philosophy of relations," but this philosophy is perhaps more antique than Deleuze has indicated.

The diagonal "descent" from static to dynamic object, to the demark, to the object that is a token of the empty center of authority, is just as essential to the founding of cities as it is to the creation of suspense on the screen. And, it is no less hysterical.