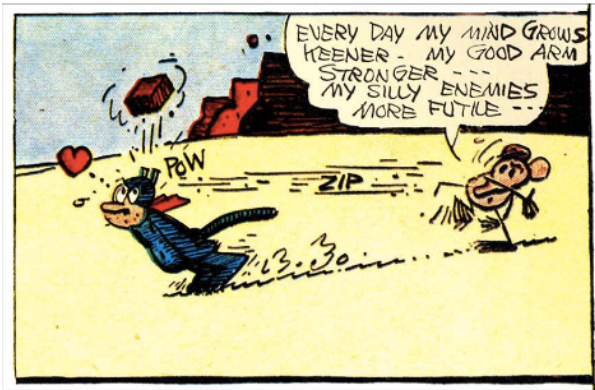


## Reflected Ceiling Diagrams and Reverse Chaining of the Hysterical Subject



It would be hard to imagine two “texts” further apart than the story of Simonides’ invention of artificial memory and the comic strip, *Krazy Kat*, conceived and drawn by George Herriman for Hearst Syndicated newspapers. The 6th century BCE Greek poet of Ceos realized his most famous invention by accident — literally! — when the ceiling of a banquet hall collapsed just as he had stepped outside, called out by two mysterious strangers who vanished before he could see who they were. Their call was a lucky one; it made him the only survivor. And, when the distressed

relatives of the other guests came to claim the crushed, unidentifiable bodies of their loved ones, Simonides suddenly realized that his technique for remembering names was based on placement, and he was able to reverse-engineer the “mental places” he used in his memory technique to determine the places, and therefore the names, of the victims. The fee he had lost by including a passage about Castor and Pollux to ward off the evil eye from his boastful employer was more than regained by the grateful relatives, who could now avoid being haunted by their dead fathers. The problem of “the incontinence of the void,” the need to continually repair and maintain the boundary separating the living from the dead is thus the Final Cause of the memory technique connecting architecture to eschatology, *via* the drawing known in the trade as “the reflected ceiling diagram.”

The comic strip, *Krazy Kat*, is also about memory, and as the signature “moment” of the strip reveals (the mouse is shown in the act of tossing a brick at the Kat’s head, bouncing off at a right angle — Pow! — while the Kat conceives this felony as an act of love), this memory is that of a hysterical reversal of the “forward chaining” of logic, working from an effect, one among many, back to a single cause. Rather, this effect is the singularity that radiates out to not just one cause but many — an *atmosphere*, a cloud of causality, like *The Black Cloud* the physicist Fred Hoyle imagined, in his 1957 science fiction novel about a sentient, structured gaseous mass, an astrophysical brain. In such a seemingly disorganized intelligence, there is turbulence, disorder, and chaos. It would seem impossible that anything structured could emerge from it, but emerge it does, with a spontaneity akin to the way a flock of birds will suddenly change direction.

Reverse chaining in the case of *Krazy Kat* reverses logic not to identify the “whodunit” from a matrix of clues, but rather to find “as many whodunits as possible,” a mass of possibilities whose maximized contingencies are also an extreme of potentiality — energy that could expend itself in any direction, with any force, but with *only one final effect*, the one shown in the panel type repeated in

If this sounds familiar, it would be only to those ears already attuned to Hegel’s peculiar idea, that the Absolute is to be found not at the end of a series of universalizing filtering procedures but at the heart of confusion, error, and substance abuse — materiality at its most chaotic, where the only thing we know is that we don’t know — leaving us no choice but to accept *kenosis* (a form of knowledge that disavows conscious associationism) as a viable methodology.

To give my reason — an esthetic and experiential basis for arguing the connections binding architecture to sex and discourse — makes matters worse.