Vertigo's Idempotent, Anamorphic, Thaumatropic Love
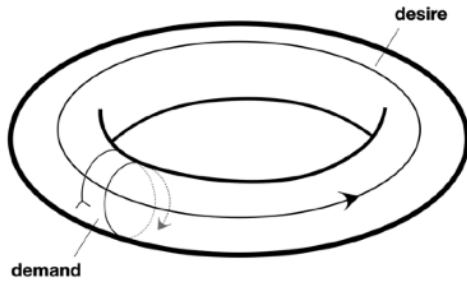
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Figure 1. The torus, adapted by Lacan to show the relation between demand (small spiral) and desire (large circle).

The relation between demand and desire is a standard 'topology' in Lacanian psychoanalysis. Demand (the subject's attempts to secure recognition by the Other) spirals around, always failing to find the pleasure it thought it had left behind. Repetition of this failed demand moves this empty gap around in a second circle. The two motions combine to form a torus (Fig. 1). From Lacan's Seminar IX (1961-1962) and other sources, the Euclidean torus is shown to be a 2-d projective surface, thanks to a cut/join between two Möbius bands. This makes it easier to see how the torus relates to the cross-cap, where a sphere is 'pinched' so that a bowl-like form on the bottom becomes a top that functions as a Möbius band, combining the torus's Euclidean and projective personalities (Greenshields 2017).

In the dynamics of the fictional story, two standard devices could be said to pinch the sphere of sequential time events into the cross-cap of the story: the sudden interruption of the even pace of the 'slow-now', which stabilizes the audience's concept of what's going on, with an unexpected time shift, a 'plot-point'. Masters of story-telling (in cinema, that would be Field 2008) advise writers to have at least two of these, one to sever the main body of the story from its introduction and inject a feeling of suspense, at least one more, at the end, to conclude the action in a surprising way.

The plot-point time fold is actually the internal miniature of a larger external feature that gives fiction its distinctive curvature, what Roland Barthes called the *récit fort*, or 'strong narrative'.[1] This outer round requires the ending to answer to the beginning. It is

a feature missing in real life, which is more of a featureless sphere, so that, when we encounter these inside and outside pinches in literature or cinema, we feel rather than think. The twists cut the torus with Möbius twists, giving us two circles for one. Life, more boring, gives us a bicycle tire, flat more often than not.

Why involve projective geometry with story-telling? We do not see or feel projective geometry but we do feel its results – intensely. We may 'know nothing of it' as Freud might say (1938: 299-300) of this kind of extension ('*Psyche ist ausgedehnt: weiß nichts davon'*), but we don't need to know to be entertained, thrilled, or scared to death. When projective forms are immersed into the perspectival space of Euclidean geometry, as the story is so good at doing, we get art's crisis of the Real – a sudden jolt that resists our attempts to justify it. Euclid is all about justification, but the story is about when justification fails to justify. Without the jolts of these crises of immersion, the slow-now would march on around its everyday sphere, oblivious to contradiction.
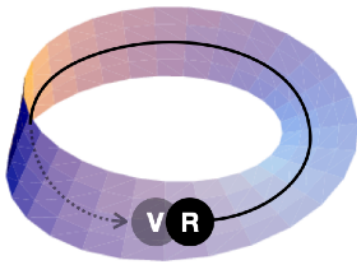
What is idempotency? – the pinch test

It is easy to demonstrate the relation of the plot-point and *récit fort* to projective geometry by making a Möbius band from a strip of paper on which one has placed a single mark, R (Fig. 2). When the ends of the strip are joined together with a twist, the band has been joined. Yet, to test this join by pinching the band by the edges and pulling it along its length back the point of the join, one goes only half-way (V) in the journey to reach the original mark. Although the fingers (must) pinch two edges, the pull that advances the band between two fingers proves another mathematical principle:

Figure 2. A turn around the Möbius band is not sufficient to reach a mark, 'R' placed on its surface. Another turn is necessary. V, on the obverse 'side' represents a half-circuit, so the question is, what exactly is the Möbian idea of closure?

idempotency, defined mathematically as $x = x + x$. (Translating: 'You can 'x' all you want, it won't make any difference!') When the Möbius band requires another turn, from V to reach the mark, R, we see the immersion of its *projective form* (x) in the paradoxical doubling within Euclidean space (immersion happens with $x + x$, or $360° +$

360°). Idempotency's literary form is the *récit fort*, but this is also a function of extimity, as both an interior *of* the interior and an exterior *of* the exterior. Where the *récit fort* returns in an inverted form, this second circuit twists as it returns, joining the story circuit with a ⇅. The plot-point does the same thing, but at an internal location, to create an internal joint mirroring the external *récit fort* – extimity (Miller 2008)!

Can we put this in terms of anamorphosis as well? In Lacan's retelling of Apollo and Daphne (1997: 60), we should retrieve the fore-story that Lacan omits. Eros takes revenge for Apollo's insults about his bad archery by crafting two arrows, or perhaps one with two points, to inflame Apollo with love but Daphne with hate. This is a mythic version of the projective line able to move both 'toward' and 'away' from a vanishing point at the same time, suggesting that the vanishing point is actually an antopodal double. Daphne, *in her very desire to escape* Apollo's amorous advance, creates a spatial trap that makes escape impossible. This is a 'Möbian' situation: Daphne has exhausted her resources for escape but not reached a mark that reverses, R to V, as soon as she reaches it. This flip keeps R always on the other side, the side that doesn't exist. It 'ex-sists', as Lacan might say, projectively and idempotently. Her trap, $x = x + x$ (+x, +x, +x …) is the experience almost everyone has had in a dream at one time or another, of running but getting nowhere.[2]

But, there is an advantage. Daphne's idempotency *insulates* her from any further demands on her virginity. Apollo must now deal with a laurel tree instead of a river-nymph. He immortalizes her by making the laurel an evergreen, and fashions its leaves into crowns for heroes, as a token of their immortality (Ovid 1993: 24-25). The term 'hero' originally meant just 'a dead person'. Among the dead, immortality and insulation form essence of idempotency, and idempotency writes the mathematical contract for the double circuit of the Möbius band, non-orienting as it self-intersects. It is striking to see this conceptual-mathematical abstraction in the poetic thought of 9 c.e., to say nothing about the even older mythic account. It must be that we have found something second before we found the first, the logical *basis*, which must have gone under another name.

When Pappus of Alexandria discovered projective geometry and its idempotency in 300 c.e., he realized it was logically prior to Euclid, so the question is, what was projective geometry before it was projective geometry? Out answer must be, 'it was the uncanny, *the uncanny is logical basis for Euclidean perspectivalism*'.[3] We must accept that the truth the story of Apollo and Daphne as a perfect account of projective idempotency was *kenosis* (knowing without knowing) in its function as an anamorphic template working within the story to result in an 'orthographic' (self-correcting) account. *Kenosis*, as a 'truth of truth' engages three other terms: orthography, idempotency, and anamorphosis. They equally describe how the projective surface, immersed into the everyday perspectivalism of the Symbolic, precipitates a crisis, a Real.

The word idempotency appears never and orthography only rarely in Lacanian literature. However, their shadows loom across the opening sessions of *Identification*, Seminar IX (1961-1962). Idempotency is the logical ground of anamorphosis, which seems to arise from a solid Euclidean context. Where an image requiring a unique point of view is concealed within a projective image or perspectival space, anamorphosis functions as both insulation and token of immortality. Its insulation value lies in the way it layers over the surface of representation with another thin viewing space, defining another audience to supplement the first, main one. This move inevitably refers to the audience's status as dead, or 'between the two deaths' marked off by the beginning and end of the anamorphic illusion. This is a 'back to the beginning', or *après coup* retroaction, a fold in time as much as the anamorphic image requires a fold in space. The origami palindrome serves as a correction (orthography), against which the 'dead' spectator ('paralysed' as a mandate of spectation) must 'answer to' the meaning of the ending. It is here that the logical priority succeeds and 'captivates' the experiential moment, with the reward of immortality, which, mathematically expressed, is nothing more than $x = x + x \; (+x, +x, +x \ldots)$.

Vertigo as a naïve informant of psychoanalysis

There are two standard sources of psychoanalytical knowledge. The first, beginning with the tradition of Freud, is the clinic, where case experiences, variously manifested in notes, publications, and scholarly presentations, establish an empirical and experimental ground. The other source could be said, loosely, to be ethnographical. Inasmuch as our knowledge of the Symbolic – languages, symbolic practices, beliefs, artifacts, and cultural institutions constitute a historical, emergent, or evolutionary treasury, the variety of which is challenged to produce a consistent and testable subjectivity, good for all cultures and all stages of history – could be said to show how, behind such variety, *one* subjectivity could abide, psychoanalysis throws theory to the vicissitudes of seemingly infinite change. Theorizing through popular culture goes beyond the ratio of the one to the many; it is 'the one to the any'. It is the necessity of the adaptive function of Thought against Being, to use a classic Lacanian algorithm.

Hariklia Pepeli writes (2010: 275): '… [W]hile imaginary identification excludes difference and finally excludes the Other, identification of signifiers, even in the case of repetition of the same signifier, involves difference, because "a signifier never repeats itself the same". This is "the original dimension" of the symbolic. Also, in the series of signifying elements, a signifier can be singled out because of its dimension, its originality as a trait, a "trait of discretion and of cut"'. In other words, the psychoanalytical subject's desire is intrinsically a matter or projective geometry. The 'unary trait' is what allows popular culture – cinema in particular, because of the nature of it's 'fourth wall' – to tell the truth, naïvely.4

It is no coincidence, for example, that Apollo makes Daphne 'evergreen', and that, thousands of years later Hitchcock uses green as Madeleine's signature colour, or that she will use the section cut through the fallen Sequoia ('sempervirens') to demonstrate her true ancestor, Daphne.5 It is as essential to the story as a 'surface of no escape' that sprang into existence as soon as Daphne *wished* to escape. Lacan might have shown that the gapped circle necessitated a toroid surface of desire, but his antique example was an experiment to be compared to other experiments. Lacan structures his research in the same way that *Vertigo* uses the plot-point and *récit fort* to fold the story, internally and

externally. If psychoanalysis could be said to 'predict' this necessity of fiction, fiction must then be allowed to 'predict' theoretical necessity in psychoanalysis. The nonsense of *fou littéraire* applies directly to psychoanalysis's own topological *fou géométrique*: projective geometry. Thus, we read Lacan clinically, with a scientific sensibility requiring each 'fact' to be refutable, following Karl Popper's principle of *modus tolens.* At the same time, we read it as fools, eccentrically, combining fiction's permission to connect any 'x' to any 'y' while simultaneously obeying the more ruthlessly strict rules of projectivity. This rule, that nonsense produces a 'meta-sense' is extimity applied to epistemology, *via* the imagination. It is precisely what drives non-Lacanians crazy when listening to *Television* or non-Freudians crazy when they fail to grasp the death drive. Winfried Menninghaus has summarized (1999):

> According to Kant, imagination in its pure form – which by the same token is its *vitium* – produces 'tumultuous derangements' that shatter the 'coherence which is necessary for the very possibility of experience'. On the other hand, as the 'faculty of intuitions' and of 'presentation', imagination is precisely the guarantor, indeed, the producer of all reality: without intuitions and without signs all of our concepts would be empty and thus without 'reality'.

This *recto* and *verso* idea, applied to psychoanalysis, reveals all binaries to be extimate. At the same time, it expand the figure-ground reversal idea of extimity to include the Möbius band, the torus, the cross-cap, and other 2-d surfaces of projective geometry, where the infinity of the horizon is made into the edge of a disk that can be twisted and folded over itself, where every line is 'parallel to itself', vanishing simultaneously toward two points which are, after the fold, the same point. The economy of the surface that is Daphne's trap and key to her immortality, (•) → •, becomes the fold-over produced by the Möbius band, torus, and cross-cap: → (•)•.[6]

The agent of this fold-over is *jouissance*, the *objet petit a*. Through its projective agency, the *euthuché* (good encounter) and *dustuché* (bad encounter) become anamorphic, or rather 'co-anamorphic' with each other. The little *a* moves: forward and backward at

the same time, co-parallel even though there is only one, a 'unary' one. It is a line with a point, a vanishing point; this point is also its antipode. The multiplicity of the unary *a* is at the same time its economy, its appearance as a twin. This justifies a lengthy quote from the psychoanalytical writer, Calum Neill (2013):

> Put simply, *objet petit a* is the supplement to the incompleteness and impossibility of the subject. It is the impossibility of subjective self-sufficiency. In this sense, *objet petit a* is that which is other to the subject and as such is that which motivates desire. However, if we keep in mind that subject is not incomplete as a result of a previous completeness having been disturbed or broken, that it only ever was at all as incomplete, then we can see that this *objet petit a* is not something actual with substantial existence. The subject seeks *objet petit a*, but what it seeks can never be found because it never was something to be found. As that which is split off, *objet petit a* presents a sense of remainder or leftover which is important in the context of discourse analysis. It is never possible for any discourse to say it all, as we have seen, and thus there is always something which escapes. This something is *a*. The small *a* also represents *autre*, the other, or other person. What we often experience ourselves as split off from, what we often desire to make us feel complete, is another person. Our desire, however, cannot be directed towards the other person as such. Our desire is only ever directed towards an idea, a fantasy of that other person. So *a* is that which would, in fantasy, make us complete, it is our fantasy of another, but also then that which escapes in encounter with the other and that which escapes the discourse of the other or any discourse at all. The *a*, then, is the unsaid which points to that which is beyond existing knowledge or knowability. It points towards the real.

The *objet petit a* says that possession never existed, that the pointing finger, an attenuated grasp, distinguishes as owned that which was not only never owned but never existed until the point. The *first thing* that comes into being with the indexical

gesture is the loss, the distance. The finger points across a span of emptiness separating the subject from the object of desire. The *a* is both the lost object and the void of the effort imagined to cross over it. It is the sign that puts the *a* in the cross-hairs of whoever would cross. The *a* as Real is co-anamorphic. It is a target whose bull's eye is a void, correlated to a matching void at the antipode of the subject's desire. The line of fire is always 'that which is *indicated,* pointed to'. It is the unique, the unary, the *only way* to get from here to there, thanks to its connection of the two antipodal losses, two in demand but one in desire. Lacan's 'unary trait', in the version we get in *The obverse of psychoanalysis*, Seminar XVII, reveals itself as idempotency's x + x = x. The answer to the question is the answer *plus* the question, in an infinite iteration. Lacan gives this formula for the unary trait as x = 1 + 1/x ((2007: 156). Idempotency is another way of describing desire's self-perpetuation, its toroidal ecology of the failure of mastery, the failure of knowledge, the failure of demand. Another name for idempotency is *Vertigo*.

Sitting in the movie theater our desire finds just such a surface in the screen where, as Lacan drew it (1981: 91, 106), a cone extending from the void of the gaze crosses the cone of the viewer's desire. This cross is anything but Euclidean. Where perspective doesn't allow the subject's point of view to be anything other than 'accidental' (we might consider visibility as a 'happy encounter', *eutuché*, and invisibility with an 'unhappy encounter', *dustuché*), the crossed cones of desire in cinema are profoundly automated by the reciprocity by which a virtual world beyond the screen is animated *thanks to* the paralysis imposed on the space in front of the screen. This is not the usual limitation of the site line imposed by the blurred images in anamorphic painting, but rather the general rule by which such blurs become special cases. The anamorphosis of the screen *automaton* abides in its figure-ground reversal holding the viewer in place while the field of images moves mechanically. By restricting the 'figure' of the viewing subject while moving the 'ground' of the visible field, a dream state is induced, since in the dream a similar paralysis is required by non-REM sleep. Agamben's *dispositif* is all of this; its 'ecology' is the system that simultaneously localizes and globalizes, simultaneously paralyzes and bestows unlimited travel, both through time and space. What we have missed in earlier analyses has been the fact of pairings — figure and

2-d
(no recto/verso)

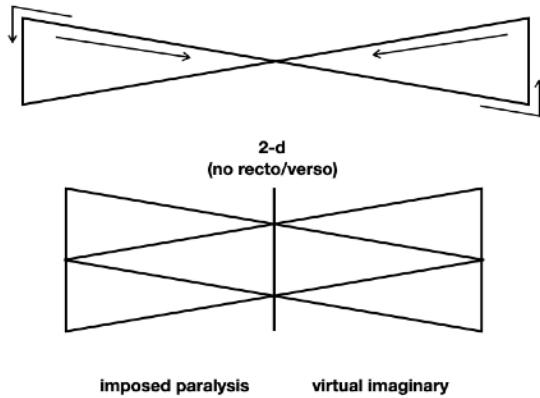**imposed paralysis**   **virtual imaginary**

Figure 3. Lacan's section drawing showing the inter-section of the 'cones' of the gaze and the look (below) show a line that is simultaneously the screen of representation and a 2-d self-intersecting, non-orienting surface that condenses the logic of the exchange shown in the diagram above, where, thanks to the virtual extension of the Imaginary, the subject invests desire in the Other thanks to a crisscross whose 'twist' becomes the voids that, at the object, becomes the gaze and, with at subject innermost interior (*intimus*) becomes the point of interpellation.

ground, mobile and fixed, 'living' (the moving image) and 'dead' (the immobilized viewer), the 'fortunate encounter' of what we see and the 'unfortune' of what the frame or profile have eclipsed. Ceding the question of fortune to the apparatus, the *automaton*, signs over the binary *tuché* to the mastery of the film producer. We are in the hands of who tells the story; and inside the story we are shown those who are themselves in the hands of another story, a story-in-the-story whose *mise en abîme* itself is capable of giving us vertigo, a *critical theory* vertigo that, to stay sober and upright, must step back from this *abîme*, securing the support of an upright (orthogonal) support of theory.

How is theory 'orthogonal'? As with the architectural drawing that calls the contents of the view to measure themselves directly on the medium of the picture plane (the theoretical cut), the aim is to measure any detail at any position at the same scale, to be indifferent to position or depth, which in perspective would require re-sizing. The rules of our game ignore scale and treat the detail the same as a main theme, the recent as equal to the past, the fake as as authentic as the real thing.

Vertigo: the orthogonal cut of anamorphosis

Our justification in 'orthogonally' remastering Alfred Hitchcock's 1958 masterpiece, *Vertigo*, is the re-situation the function of the internal cut, or inside frame.[7] It is the story of a character who may be experiencing a death-dream in the few seconds of his fall from a rooftop during a chase scene.[8] The film itself is a blueprint for Analysis, a *psycho*-analysis. Theory in this mode becomes a series of orthogonal cuts, *fou*-violations

of scale, sequence, and identity. Just as (as Žižek says, 1993) cinema teaches us how to desire, theory that follows cinema's advice discovers the orthogonal method; what works in the film is what works in theories about the film, and makes those theories into 'drawings of desire'.

Why anamorphosis? Following Lacan's detailed treatment of the subject in Seminars VII, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, and XI, *Identification*, is there any justification to look beyond the standard examples, in particular the model presented by Hans Holbein's 1533 double portrait, *The Ambassadors*? Our revised model of the overlapping 'cones', of looking and being looked at (Fig. 3) shows that there is, in the paralysis imposed on the viewer in the figure-ground reversal of cinema spectatorship. In *Vertigo*, paralysis becomes a theme and function in the plot. Scottie Ferguson, the detective retired on account of his acrophobia cannot climb to the top of a mission-church tower, a critical paralysis that prevents him from discovering the ruse designed to put him in the witness chair at the suicide inquest of the 'real' Madeleine Elster. After his nervous breakdown, Scottie is confined to a sanitarium, where he has lost both movement and will. These instances are all the more readable as paralysis because they stand in contrast to Scottie's mobility: he has been assigned to follow the fake Madeleine around on her haunted circuit of stations attending to the spirit of Carlotta, her dead great-grandmother, whose suicide in 1857 seems to be driving her grand-daughter to her own in 1957. When Scottie and the fake Madeleine fall in love, they decide that they must 'wander around together', and the couple extend the homage to Carlotta in include a Redwood forest and Spanish mission.

Is wandering around a case of a figure on a ground (the Bay Area), and are Scottie's instances of *zugrunde gehen*, a 'falling to pieces' (but, literally, falling to the ground) – a paralysis while the world spins about one's head? Vertigo feels like an infinite, repeated falling, so it's worth considering that the figure-ground reversal of theater spectation and dreams structures a 'vertigo condition' and not just dizzy disorientation. One can't tell which is moving, figure or ground, until there is a sudden change. In the dream, this is when an external disturbance forces its way into the dream, where to keep the

dreamer asleep a few seconds more, it is incorporated into the dream's story (the famous anecdote told by Alfred Maury).[9] Time is simultaneously (1) squeezed into an impossibly small interval, (2) expanded to feel like an eternity, and (3) reversed, with the beginning put at the end and *vice versa*. The effect is described by Matteo Bonazzi (2020): 'Freud hypothesizes that there is another [non-linear] time … which does not run like the first one, with a now and a then, from the past to the future. An underground time, that writes its record without us knowing about it and that decides for us without us realizing it, marking the passages due to which suddenly we find ourselves elsewhere, different, changed, infinitely others.' Although this time multiplies us into imagined characters, this doubled time insures our inner subjective *idempotency*, our status as a ground rather than a figure, paralyzed by our position within Symbolic chains: '[W]e are not free to change: not because there are external forces that prevent us from doing so, but because we ourselves prevent it from happening. We tend to maintain balance, not to change, to see continuity on our horizon: I will be what I am and what I have been. So we dream of changing the lives of others — while we tend to keep going on with the same life as ever.'

We come back to the problem of the Möbius strip, that of having a join without having a circuit. Thinking we have completed 360º we are compelled to repeat, *compulsively*, another turn to reach the original mark. 360º+360º = … 360º — the idempotency calculus of non-orientation and self-intersection. If Scottie is having a dream in the interval of his fall from the rooftop, it must correct his life by inventing a way of 'changing the lives of others', a demand that, in repeating its aim to join (self-intersect), must twist from a 3-d Euclidean perspectivalism into a projective 2-d surface. The mark made at the join will have its 'other' at an impossible-Real obverse, both at a maximum and minimum distance, antipodes and twins.

In the story, vertigo is formalized into two types of disorientation, one used *inside* the story to create joints between different episodes (the plot-point, where action, idea, or characters shift suddenly), another used to bind the ending of the story to the beginning (the 'strong story' described by Roland Barthes, the *récit fort*). Both of these figure-ground reversing functions could be written ⇕, what the ends of the Möbius band look

like when twisted and joined. In the situation of the Möbius join, the ⇕ is an indication of idempotency, the fact that the closure of the physical strip of paper is not the circuit of the 2-d surface that has been created by the twist. An extra turn is required to add the full length of the edge and strip, so that task of completion can be written either as 360° *plus* 360°, or 360° (the completion of the

The 'either-or' function of the '=' is idempotency's ability to neutralize difference, as when, in the dream, the external disturbance is neutralized when it is inserted as an event in the dream's story. In the anamorphic painting, the either-or of idempotency is the way the insertion of the skull as a *vanitas* figure balances out the wealth display of the two subjects and protects it from the evil eye; or how, in North's analysis, the angles and lines require interpreting the painting's *recto* and *verso*, to see the front and back as a spin combining – in a *metipsissimus*[10] version of anamorphosis – the display of wealth with the ironic closure of the Apocalypse. This is not an 'if-then' arrangement. Rather, we should see, *in* the display of wealth (*or* beauty, *or* any other kind of 'fortunate encounter' that Lacan indicated by the term *eutuché*) the *corrective*, the *ortho-logic*, Other that the Apocalypse was for the Ambassadors.

The match occurs thanks to the extremity of *metipsissimus*. As Jacques-Alain Miller wrote in his essay arguing that extimity could claim dominion over the entire land of Lacan (2008), 'It should be observed that the term "interior" is a comparative which comes to us from Latin and of which *intimus* is the superlative. There, there is an effort on the part of language to reach the deepest point in the interior. Let us note as well that quotations from literary works given by dictionaries show that one says commonly, constantly that the most intimate is at the same time the most hidden.' To ally extimity to anamorphosis would join Miller's project to Mladen Dollar's, which is to plant two flags over Lacan-Land. Extremity and hiddenness, extimity and anamorphosis – the connection seems more than coincidental. As Lacan might put it, it is an 'encounter' (*tuché*) that is neither a combination of the *eu-* and *dus-* versions (the good or bad encounter) nor a choice that is so clearly forced that the 'your money or your life' dilemma (the loss of any advantage whatsoever) would now apply to theory as well as the neurotic subject (Fink 1995: 51; Lacan 1981: 263).

Could we suggest a theoretical alternative? Miller's and Dollar's projects each claim, for extimity and anamorphosis respectively, absolute domain. Assimilating one to the other would obscure important differences that could fuel the prospect for dynamic development of new hybrid ideas. But, the hybrid lacks any logic other than merger, which simply 'kicks further down the road' the problem of conceptual relation of one idea to the other. What if extimity and anamorphosis happened to duplicate the problem of the Möbius band – the 'join' that seems to connect the ends and the 'circuit' that requires another round to reach the mark at the origin? This thickens any cut (the gapped circle, the overlapping cycles of demand in the torus of desire, the pinch of the cross-cap, etc.), any manifestation of the *objet petit a* as the compound pleasure-pain of *jouissance*, into an expanded field where *eutuché* and *dustuché* perfectly eclipse each other? In other words, where *Vertigo₁* as a 'straight story' and *Vertigo₂* as a death dream constitute that point on the Möbius band where the join and the circuit create a condition of idempotency, where radical identity and the multiplication of the subject into infinite others coincide? The equals sign in the formula for idempotency, $x + x = x$ is to be read 'can be confused with'. In the 'confusion' of Scottie's falling in love with Madeleine and his dream while falling from the rooftop, the central paradox of the film is formed. Vertigo's love is a dream of death and its deaths come from a dream of love. What we might write as D_L/L_D uses the '/' as both (1) a command to *turn* from one mode to the other and (2) an inside cut or frame that expands into a 'no man's land' that can be not just imagined but mapped and inhabited.[11] This is the *fou-littéraire* within the fictional work that is itself eccentric. What is a space of exception provides the durable structure to the narrative that justifies us confirming it as a *récit fort*, a 'strong story'.

Point and disc: plot point and *récit fort* as topologies

To tell a story is to place, *within* the story, joints at which action, idea, or character(s) suddenly accelerate the steady pace of events. This usually corresponds to the audience's visceral reactions. Fixed in their seats in a darkened auditorium, playing dead, such sudden speed accentuates the figure-ground reversal by which, as in Plato's famous Cave, fantasy moves while (and because) the fantacists are paralyzed, 'grounded'. Fixity

= 1/velocity, so that the bond between audience and action is strengthened with every plot point. Field's rule, that any story needs at least two plot points, is to 'odd' the beginning and end so that end may re-attach itself to the beginning, but with a twist ($⇕$) that will surprise and entertain. Suspense depends on a slow-paced 'now', each scene containing its predecessor, winding tight a spring that the plot point will release. Just as Freud described the neural circuit as a means of countering stimulus to return the system to a low-energy level, the homeostasis rule applies to fiction as well. The completion of the story's circuit with a surprise ending, $⇕$, must nevertheless *bind* the $↑$ to the $↓$ with a sense of necessity or fate. But, since every $↑$ converts to $↓$ in a rule of idempotentiality (*Vertigo*'s D_L/L_D), the strong story's strength comes from the '/', the inside twist or frame.

This can be the plot point, but *Vertigo*'s clever confidence trick – fooling the police detective with a fear of heights into thinking he failed to prevent the death of the woman he loved, to then secure his testimony as a (humiliated) witness at an inquest to secure the verdict of suicide – uses *kenosis* in its two psychoanalytical senses. First, Scottie is the dupe, or 'mark', of the scam in *kenosis*'s first sense as an emptying out: he does not know that he does not know. He's being played but as long as he is unaware of this, he falls in love with the attractive wife of his employer, Gavin Elster. The other sense of *kenosis* justifies our calling *Vertigo* a death dream. Scottie 'knows' he is falling and has seconds to live, but he suppresses this knowledge by substituting his terror with a story that will 'orthographically' correct his life. Just as an orthographic drawing is a section made to allow a direct scale-transfer of measurements, Scottie's inside frame must align with his memory's own quadration. Corner for corner, the dream must *eclipse his panic*. He is at the point on the Möbius band where R and V seem to coincide but are, antipodally, at a maximum distance apart.

Vertigo could be called a *kenosis* management machine. Lacan's *automaton* is already a converter machine, spinning between *eutuché* and *dustuché*, lucky and unlucky encounters. No one has called this a *kenotic* converter or inside frame/cut, but the function of the plot point justifies the comparison. Because the plot point is an interior siting of an external relation and the *récit fort* is an external siting of an internal

relation, we might say that extimity is 'built in'. The articulation of the story within the pulsion of the 'now' and the exterior wrap of the ending to the beginning both involve retroaction. In *Vertigo*, Scottie sees the necklace Elster had used to confirm Madeleine's lineage and devotion to her great-grandmother Carlotta Valdes. His *kenosis* comes to an end with his recognition of the *dustuché* that had been anamorphically concealed within his *eutuché*, of finding Judy and persuading her to undergo transformation into a second Madeleine. Now, he finds that the second is a 'historical second', that there was a 'logically prior' Madeleine: Judy herself, a case of *metipsissimum*, a failure of the self to coincide fully with itself (Lacan 1961-1962: 4). Just as *intimus,* by being the superlative form of 'interior', is able to say that 'the most intimate is at the same time the most hidden' (Miller 2008), *metipsissimum* indicates a radical interior where the self converts to the non-self.

The thaumatrope as anamorphosis + extimity

To align the project posed by Jacques-Alain Miller, namely, to claim the full Lacanian domain on behalf of extimity, with Mladen Dolar's equally ambitious claim for anamorphosis, we must immediately abandon the imposture of 'finding an argument' that meets all objections. The two terms are not correlated, overlapping, or in competition. They are 'thaumatropic' (Fig. 4). What is this?

The thaumatrope was a toy disk, popular in the 19c., held suspended between the hands by a

Figure 4. The popular 19c. toy most commonly spun to put the bird on one side in the cage on the other. The theme of capture becomes, in *Vertigo*, the character (*ethos*) anamorphosis of Judy/Madeleine and the plot (*mythos, dianoia*) anamorphosis of the death dream *vs.* the straight story. The Aristotelian poetic triad answers to the structure of the film as a 'con' at the level of Scottie as a character and Scottie as a dream-producer, where the two types of *kenosis* create two kinds of evacuation and two kinds of 'knowing without knowing', i.e. the dupe and the unconscious, or non-dupe.

wound cord that attached at holes on the side. When the cord was pulled tight then slack, images on either side would merge. The most typical was the pairing of a bird, free on one side, but trapped when the disk spun to place it in the cage on the obverse. Other popular images included bees on flowers, flowers in vases, and spiders in webs. The thaumatropic spin was not unlike Lacan's version of the French physicist-physician Henri Bouasse's mirror experiment, where a vase glued upside down in a box open to a concave mirror is projected to join the flowers. As a combination of images, one of which is concealed, this qualifies as a kind of 3-d anamorphosis. It is also a case of extimity in that the vase is at the limit of containment (inside, upside down) but then *pro*-jected to a position as a *container*. The flowers are captured by an obverse.

In the thaumatrope the bird is captured by what is both antipodal-opposite and proximate (on the same disk). Like the mark made on the Möbius strip, it is a point where the 'join' is not sufficient to close the circuit. Another 'spin' is required. The circuit must be 'thaumatropic'. This spin is the animating principle, but instead of saying that the images are combined, we should note that an 'eclipse' is involved, as indicated by the thematic choice of containers such as cages and webs. The eclipse is a trap, like that set for Scottie, to create a *kenosis* condition, working at two levels. If *Vertigo* is a 'straight story' (*mythos*), Scottie is the victim of a scam, which he discovers in the final scenes of the film. His 'doesn't know that he doesn't know' makes him a dupe, a mark. If *Vertigo* is actually a 'death dream' (*dianoia*), then the other aspect of *kenosis* applies. Scottie 'doesn't know what he knows' – a model of the unconscious. When the thaumatrope spins at the level of the plot, these aspects combine. The *jouissance* Scottie enjoys is also the *jouissance* of his suffering the truth, the 'truth of truth'. It is the forced choice, the void of the *vel* where Judy and Madeleine overlap, that converts the True/False to the False/True of his love for Madeleine/Judy.

In Mark Azéma's excavations of thaumatropes in Magdalenian caves in southern France (2012), stone disks displaying a live animal on one side and the dead animal on the other constitute a virtuality that is simultaneously a prayer and a wish. With the cord-hole in the middle, at the same position that the spear will kill the prey, the mysterious transition from life to death clarifies the function of spinning. It is to isolate, instead, the
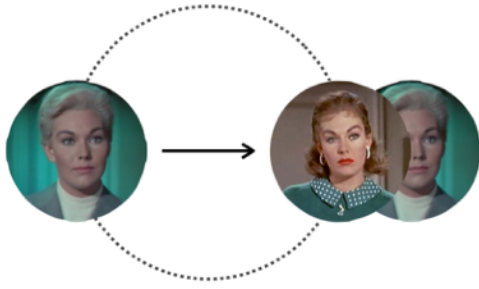
Figure 5. The thaumatropic summary of *Vertigo* resolves the role of anxiety within the alternative space-time of projective geometry, where 'away' converts to 'toward' and the antipodal vanishing point provoked by this dual motion converts the vanishing point into a dual as well, resistant to merger (i.e. anamorphic) and both central and peripheral (extimate). Within this system, Lacan's saying, that 'anxiety never lies', is maintained by idempotency. The spin preserves at the same time it represses.

interval 'between the two deaths', the traumatic Real kill and the Symbolic, placatory death. The hunter offers the animal a token of his anxiety. In this flip of time, where the kill is rehearsed as an experiential event so that it will occur *before*, retroactively, as a (mytho-)logical priority, an 'orthologic' correction, a *legalized* action, , a 'section' (Fig. 5).

Every film is presented as a section graphic, a surface, a fourth wall, a flat screen that has only one side. We cannot find a mark on this screen without travelling twice, around a double circuit, where the twist of spectation paralyzes the eye in desire so that the agency of desire is presented opposite, as the gaze (Fig. 3). In projective geometry, this is the irony of *askesis* and *demon*, where flight *from* is converted into a rush *toward*: the 'Appointment in Samarra' effect.[12] Graphically, the projective line tells the story of *Vertigo*: • → becomes → •. This • thaumatropically doubles, but as antipodal vanishing points on the same horizon at infinity, i.e. the double circuit, (•) → •, or → (•)•.

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Endnotes

[1] I am grateful to Dan Collins (2018) for this reference. His analysis of motif of 'stealing money from offices' points to Hitchcock's own 'unary trait', amounting to a compulsion to repeat a theme, but in disguised or 'cryptogrammic' forms, with elements of the formula missing or re-arranged. See Tom Cohen, *Hitchcock's Cryptonymies* (2005) to see how the cipher might apply to the dream's insulating idempotency.

[2] Idempotency is a term taken from electrical engineering, where it functions both as a switch that, once activated, rejects all further activations, and as insulation. Our dreams use a similar kind of switch to absorb a disturbance initially so that all subsequent disturbances will be ignored (Bonazzi 2020).

[3] See Pappus of Alexandria, *Wikipedia*. 7 March 2004, updated 22 November 22, 2021. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pappus_of_Alexandria.

[4] Giorgio Agamben (2009: 10) combines the idea of dispositif to oikonomia in a way that allows us to talk about the fourth wall as an 'ecology-economy': a self-contained (self-intersecting) surface that Lacan specified as an alethosphere managed by gadgets, lathouses, automating the flow of energy and information globally thanks to the 'con' of the gadget whereby use value and surplus value are non-orienting, or ⇕.

[5] The connection between the colour green and immortality

[6] The origami fold-over of the projective plane returns Lacanians, necessarily, to the original theorem of Pappus, where any two lines lying within a plane determine a third line ('eigenvector') that can be found by criss-crossing lines connecting three points placed anywhere on each of them. The same logic applies to Desargues' Theorem, where the sides of triangles that are perspectival to each other (eclipses, in relation to a fixed POV) extend to define a similar eigenvector. See N.J. Wildberger, 'Projective geometry / math history," *Insights into geometry* [podcasts], May 10, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYK0GBQVngs.

7 Orthographic analysis could be in this sense a *kenosis*, or 'emptying out', a condition of not knowing what one knows (the unconscious) or, alternatively, not knowing that one does not know (fantasy; the dupe of a con, as in the case of Scottie in *Vertigo*). *Kenosis* is both the minimal distance, or 'over-proximity' of the two states, and a maximum distance in the way that a mark on the surface of a Möbius strip at the point where the ends of the strip are twisted and joined will not be reached in a 360º transit, but rather another transit will be required to complete the *circuit* of the 2-d surface. The join marks the maximum distance of the strip from its initiating moment (the mark will be on the 'other side' of the first transit), but since there is only one side, the join brings the mark and non-mark, x and ~x, into a perfect eclipse. This corresponds to the position of faith, disabled by the inability to justify, but empowered by error in the way that its truth is non-orientable (x/~x). Psychoanalysis is, in fact, empowered by error in Analysis's dependence on the Analysand's slips of the tongue and bungled explanations, the royal road to the 'kenotic' Truth of the unconscious.

8 This possibility has been introduced by a number of critics. Charles Barr (2002: 32-37) has located the source of this device, Ambrose Bierce's story Incident at Owl Creek, describing the miraculous escape of a Confederate spy during his hanging. His successful evasions end just as he finds his wife, on a swing on their plantation lawn. Just as the couple attempt to embrace, he chokes. His fantasy of reunion took place in the moments between his 'first death' from physical strangulation and his second death, within the Symbolic, to find a correct (orthos) justification within the span of the truth of being *d'entre les morts* (the title of the novel by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac), meaning 'among the dead' but which can imply, sideways, as 'between the (two) deaths'.

9 Maury's dream incorporated the sensation of his bed-frame falling onto his neck as the termination of a long dream about his misadventures during the French Revolution. If the bed-frame provoked the dream, the question is, how did this 'first' become a 'last'? See Louis Ferdinand Alfred Maury. *Wikipedia* (24 August 2005, last revised 27 January 2021). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Ferdinand_Alfred_Maury.

10 Lacan, Identity (1961-1962) ties the anamorphic thing 'that is not noticed' to the central issue of identity as a composite: '... [A] *metipsissimum* ... pushes us then to recognise in what direction here experience suggests we should search for the meaning of all identity, at the heart of what is designated by a sort of redoubling of *moi-même*, this myself being, as you see, already this *metipsissimum*, a sort of *au jour* of *aujourd'hui* which we do not notice and which is indeed there in the *moi-même*.'

11 In a lecture given April 5, 2014, Slavoj Žižek used the example of the No Man's Land in the trench warfare of World War I that illustrates this theoretical and literary desire for a thickened cut. Deserters from both armies concealed themselves in the ruined space between the two fronts, finding supplies as well as organising medical assistance, maintaining legal order – in short creating the utopia that the war had obviated by the rule that only one side could win. This military version of anamorphosis has, like the expanded account of *The Ambassadors*, the advantage of seeing in extimity the utility of both camouflage and the Freudian uncanny as the sudden exposure of that which should not be seen (Freud 2003).

12 The original version of this story can be found in the Babylonian Talmud, *Sukkah* 53a.5-6: https://www.sefaria.org/Sukkah.53a.7?lang=bi. It was subsequently re-told by Somerset Maugham in his play, *Sheppey* (1933) and his epithet was used in a novel, *Appointment in Samara* by John O'Hara (1934). 'Appointment in Samarra' *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appointment_in_Samarra.