

## EXTIMITY, CO-ANAMORPHOSIS, AND NARRATIVE SURFACES

Don Kunze

### **The incriminating glance and the extimity of ‘innermost’ thoughts**

To manage the emotional and intellectual responses of audiences, ancient and modern, the story must be able to accelerate or decelerate not just action, but also character and thought (Aristotle’s classic triad of *mythos*, *ethos*, and *dianoia*).<sup>1</sup> Paradoxically, to alter a steady forward narrative velocity, either by breaking its pace, or curving its end-points around to meet each other, time must give way to new, topological spatiality. The justifications we imagine to be concealed within characters’ thoughts can suddenly be exposed by an externalizing view, without the audience being aware of any weirdness.<sup>2</sup> In Federico Fellini’s *Nights of Cabiria* (1957), an aging prostitute, Cabiria, plans a new life, thanks to her modest savings and her unexpected luck in finding a charming younger man who seems to have fallen in love with her. This fortunate encounter<sup>3</sup> happened when, attending a magic show, Cabiria was called from the audience to participate in a demonstration of hypnosis. Afterwards, the magician, Oscar, shyly asked if they might begin seeing each other, and in a short time the couple were married. Now on their honeymoon, Oscar suggests an after-dinner walk to take in the sunset from a lookout point, but the audience catches Oscar looking at the large roll of banknotes Cabiria has just taken from her purse (Fig. 1). They know *suddenly* that he plans to kill her, and that this walk will be her last. They have also seen Cabiria see this look. They see her seeing and know that she is thinking what

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<sup>1</sup> I borrow this trio of terms from Northrop Frye, who celebrated it in his *Anatomy of Criticism* (2020).

<sup>2</sup> The conventional method of changing narrative velocity is the ‘plot-point’, a sudden shift in the action, idea, context, or character(s) of a drama. Syd Field (2008) is the recognized populist in the U.S. The plot point miniaturizes the temporal logic of the *récit fort*, the ‘strong narrative’, where the ending is required to answer to the beginning (Barthes 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Extimity could be written, even at this early point, as a matter of the conversion, in fiction in particular, of Lacan’s two versions of *tuché*, the encounter, as ‘eutuchic’ or ‘dustuchic’ (Lacan 1981: 53-60).



Figure 1. 'Oscar's moment of decision', when the bridegroom in Fellini's *Nights of Cabiria* tips his hand by locking his eyes onto the large roll of cash that Cabiria has just taken out of her purse to pay for dinner. The audience and Cabiria know what he has in mind: to walk his new bride to a lookout point, grab her purse, and push her over the cliff. This foreshadowing tensions the short walk with such suspense that the release (Cabiria's survival) is felt, both by her and the audience, as purified joy.

they are thinking. In this accelerated moment, the thoughts of the sympathetic character and the audience that sympathizes are one collectively owned thought because it is originally one, a shared one, the fact of being shared. This 'one' of *dianoia* literally 'counts as 1', not as a uniting of two things but as an 'idempotency', the *power to remain the same*, thanks to being held in suspension by two parties, two opposing states.

Does this '1', this power of sympathy shared by Cabiria and the audience, not suggest that the model of the standard literary plot-point is the unary trait? Isn't this like Dora's cough, something that was unnoticed but preserved and carried into the present as a symptom? Yes,

in the critical sense of something accessible only through retroaction. Cabiria's bad luck at seeing Oscar's furtive glance is just such an *après coup* retrieval, of the moment when she had been recruited from the audience at the magician's show and put under hypnosis. On stage, before the crowd of strangers, she had told of her nest egg and plans for retirement. That disclosure was brushed aside with the good luck of Oscar's subsequent attentions, and the formation of a new Island of Now promising to carry Cabiria into a happy old age. With its slow and steady movement, this future seemed assured, until, that is, the pace changed.

The time-folding 1 of the story interrupts the slowly plodding Now. Paradoxically, what suddenly jolts the Now is a sameness, an *idem*, that is stronger than the momentum of any expectation, theme, or wish for a happy ending. 'The same' returns to strike from outside this momentum. It is the convertibility of the unary 1 that Lacan hinted at in his exposition in *Seminar XVII* (2007: 154-8), showing that in the self-intersecting equation for the Fibonacci ratio,  $x = 1 + 1/x$ , there is no number but rather a relation within numbers (Watson 2005: 76), a relation graphically manifested by the cut between the number series and itself (Fig. 2). What is unary about this 1-of-itself is the way it is bound by a principle of retroaction. In effect, time as well as the unary 1 is

$$\frac{1 \ 1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 5 \ 8 \ 13 \ \dots}{1 \ 1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 5 \ 8 \ 13 \ \dots}$$

Figure 2. The fractions that approximate the Fibonacci  $\phi$  with increasing accuracy ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{2}{3}$ ,  $\frac{3}{5}$ , etc.) are created by an *internal cut* between the number series and itself, a line of self-intersection that is radically irrational. Yet, this number is stable and regulative, found in nature as a modular for efficient placement and a principle of growth (the 'golden ratio' (Lacan 2007: 156)).

split by a mirror line. In one guise,  $1/x$ , it requires the question to enter into the answer with every substitution of the left side of the equals sign for the value of  $x$  beneath the 1; and in the split allowing the two lines of Fibonacci numbers to slide across themselves, it creates successively closer approximations of the irrational number  $\phi$  that lies, like a vanishing point, on the horizon at infinity, convergence point of two parallel lines.

The *eutuchia* of Cabiria's lucky encounter was itself already internally divided. Its dominant good luck concealed a latent element, present but, like any anamorphic blur, visible from only one unlucky vantage point. This blur had no name or meaning in the *eutuchia* of good luck; but as with any stain there was a provenance, as if to say that the angles required for anamorphic discovery got carried along, always ready to use, always ready to interrupt the slow forward development of happy anticipation. A silent language of angles and twists, bad luck, *dustuchia*, waited for the right break in the plot. When Cabiria and the audience catch Oscar looking at the banknotes, this moment came. The anamorphic bad-luck-within-good-luck sprang forward, already co-owned because it had always necessarily been co-constructed. The suddenness of the conversion from *eutuchia* to *dustuchia* is possible because *tuché*, itself internally divided into *eu-* or *dus-*, is inherently disposed to conversion. Its internal cut is portable. Its two parallel lines point to the same antipodal vanishing points on the horizon. The encounter's ability to assimilate, or anamorphize, its opposite can be written as a cross-inscription. If there is a good Dr. Jekyll and an evil Mr. Hyde, it is because the one has been in the other all along, in a way we might write as  $J_H / H_J$  – Hyde is anamorphic to Jekyll, because,  $/$ , Jekyll is anamorphic to Hyde. This is a matter of projective geometry. The twist of the ' $/$ ' is analogous to the twist of the Möbius band as the two ends of the paper strip are joined.<sup>4</sup> The twist, like the function of the cut internal to the Fibonacci series, returns us to the unary trait's velocity-altering

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<sup>4</sup> It would be hard not to regard the evil eye, a portable visual agency, as the model for the Lacanian gaze. Prevalence of evil eye lore in the Mediterranean raises the question of how the universal belief in 'limited good' (the requirement that a sudden gain be balanced by a loss, to restore homeostasis) became specifically ocular.

sameness. These are all variations on the *I Ching*'s declaration that the only thing that doesn't change is change itself, more familiar in the French commonplace, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.

### **Co-anamorphosis, or 'non-oriented self-intersection', as velocity control**

I will develop these themes of *dustuchia*, idempotency, and the mysterious *'/*' under the heading of co-anamorphosis, a second kind of virtuality to supplement the standard idea of anamorphosis as a minor image distorted and contained by a major (perspectival) image or setting.<sup>5</sup> Velocity issues in narrative require us to think about the co-dependency between Euclidean perspectivalism and a secondary virtuality that is non-perspectival, corrective, and *effect-ive* (Žižek 2004).<sup>6</sup> Thanks to Lacan, psychoanalysis has become accustomed to seeing affect through the lens of topology. When the audience's hearts start pounding the moment Oscar looks at Cabiria's roll of banknotes, psychoanalysis takes *dianoia*, *mythos* and *ethos* to be ordered by the same *jouissance* that stacks and tucks the rings of the Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary into a Borromeo knot.<sup>7</sup> By inverting the common expression 'virtual reality', Žižek (2004) demonstrates the 'reality of the virtual' as an active, *extimate* Real. The Real is always a Real *of* – a 'Real of the Symbolic', a 'Real of the Imaginary', and (most interestingly) a 'Real of the Real'.<sup>8</sup> Here, the Real of the co-owned *dianoia* that structures the plot point of Oscar's glance, the thought that Oscar is going to kill Cabiria, is its uncanny co-ownership made possible by the internally divided *tuché*. Such thoughts belong not to any individual thinker but within the *system* of anamorphic exchanges taking place inside appearances, expectations, and the space-time that supports them. It would not be far from the mark to say that the binding force of the three-ringed RSI circuit is

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<sup>5</sup> The standard view was famously developed by Jurgis Baltrušaitis (1977). *Anamorphic art* (trans) W.J. Strachan. Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey. Lacan mentions Baltrušaitis in *Seminar XI* (1981: 85, 87).

<sup>6</sup> Žižek emphasizes the importance of effectiveness as a kind of fifth Aristotelian cause – how a Real comes to be effected in Symbolic, Imaginary, and (paradoxically) Real ways.

<sup>7</sup> Will Greenshields (2017) emphasizes the role of *jouissance* as the way any two unlinked rings require the presence of a third to hold together. Any ring can be considered to be on the top or the bottom of the stack, thanks to its ability to tuck under the next ring. A Gauss notation of the knot shows that there is a fourth 'virtual' ring serving as a missing force, a binding absence.

<sup>8</sup> Žižek (2004): 'The primordial fact, and also the primordial Real, is a purely formal imbalance. The Symbolic space is curved, it's cut across by antagonism, imbalanced, etc. and to account for this you need some reference to the Real, which is, of course, the Real [the virtual Real as trauma, trauma as virtual]'

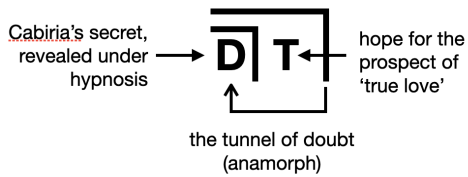


Figure 3. Model of the plot-point. The anamorphic project working beneath the main thesis, that Oscar's love holds authentic promise for Cabiria, returns us to the scene where, under hypnosis, Cabiria had revealed her secret savings and plans for retirement. The audience and Cabiria have forgotten about this disclosure, but it as functioned as an 'unconscious' within her fragile happiness.

this Real of the Real, both inside the knot and outside, as an extra (virtual-effective) ring.<sup>9</sup> In other words, the Real is not just something extimate, it is extimity, and extimity is the Real, in this operation of co-virtuality. This is what binds psychoanalysis – radically – to the topology of extimity and at the same time requires it to append a theory about anamorphosis.

### Temporal-logical retroaction of the plot-point

The audience witnessing the look of Oscar suddenly recalls, with Cabiria, the scene of the magic show where, during hypnosis (Fig. 3), Cabiria had revealed that she had been saving for retirement and was finally in the position

to enjoy life. Oscar had formed his scam idea quickly but concealed it beneath a slow chain of events. He made Cabiria believe in luck and true love. This, Žižek would suggest, is like Einstein's move from a local to a global idea of Relativity. In the local form, space's structure is interrupted by large masses that force light to bend around them, and the measure of those bends is the proof of the theory. But, in the global version, space itself is already curved; it would not be wrong to say that space *is* curvature. This is the explanation of how literary devices that fold time over itself are not local exceptions to the steady advance of the narrative Now but in fact the structure of that Now in its movement from *eu-* to *dus-*tuchia and *vice versa*. In fact, we might say, more boldly, that the *eutuchia* of comic encounter and *dustuchia* of misfortune palindromically slide across each other continually, and that any event in a story is a matter of managing the virtual and anamorphic elements that are universally present, just as the line separating the two series of numbers in the Fibonacci series always points to the two versions of  $\emptyset$ , lying opposite each other on the horizon at infinity.

<sup>9</sup> See D. Kunze (2020). Secondary virtuality, the anamorphosis of projective geometry *Architecture and culture* 3/4 (8): 667-80, DOI: 10.1080/20507828.2020.1802195.

The glance we see at the same time Cabiria sees it uncovers the entrance to an anamorphic tunnel that allows us both to escape from Oscar's merciless Now, plodding to the cliff-edge. With Cabiria, we rush into its long darkness with fearful expectation, not knowing what we will find at the end. Although Oscar's slow layering of expectations has made us hope for Cabiria's bright future, we have been digging this tunnel all along, following the line separating *eutuchia* from *dustuchia* at every point. We are suddenly surprised, not so much by Oscar's glance as by the fact that we had somehow forgotten about our off-hours (virtual Real) digging. With each investment in the hope that Oscar's love was true, T, we had shoveled another earth-load of doubt D – an economy of negation as anamorphy, T<sub>D</sub>. Our digging project was just as much secret to us as it was from the warden presiding over our positive hope. But, now (within the Now), we are able to access this tunnel immediately. It is already finished, ready for escape: T<sub>D</sub> / D<sub>T</sub>.

How might we explain this tunnel beneath the true-love Now wish? This moment of audience recognition is a standard feature of all fiction: a plot-point, where a sudden shift in the context or action forces a new conception of what is happening. The 'now' of the story is fashioned to move at a steady speed but to change a scene or conception, this speed must be efficiently altered. The 'now' can be brought to a sudden halt *or* time itself can be suddenly accelerated to make the now seem to be standing still.<sup>10</sup> Figure 3, a model of the plot point, is a miniature version of the expectation universal to all stories, the principle of *récit fort*, that the ending answer to the beginning (Barthes 1995).<sup>11</sup> Both the plot point and *récit fort* borrow from the logic of the Borromeo knot, where any one ring can be considered as on top of the stack of three rings but tucks under the bottom ring. The tuck is analogous to the tunnel of doubt, anamorphically constructed within Cabiria's and the audience's hope for love. Figure 4 carries this same graphic relation to the case of Hans Holbein's famous employment of an anamorphic image in *The Ambassadors* (1533).

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<sup>10</sup> This is the common experience reported in automobile accidents, where 'things seem to be suspended' and temporality ceases to flow normally. The first recognized written account of this is the geologist Albert von St. Gallen Heim, who wrote in 1892 that 'Mental activity became enormous, rising to a 100-fold velocity or intensity. The relationships of events and their probable outcomes were overviewed with objective clarity. No confusion entered at all. Time became greatly expanded' (Arstila 2012).

<sup>11</sup> I am grateful to Dan Collins (2018) for this citation and his explanation of Barthes' idea.

My model allows me to confirm facts about this famous painting that, at the time Lacan analyzed

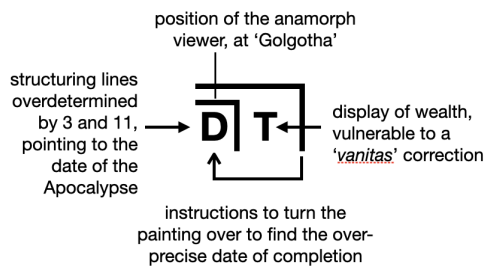


Figure 4. The logic of the plot-point and *récit fort* can be found in Holbein's *The Ambassadors* in ways that confirm Lacan's reading and go beyond its limitations, adding the relation of the front of the painting to the overdetermined date of completion on its obverse, April 11, 1533, Good Friday, the day predicted to be the Apocalypse

against the evil eye.<sup>13</sup> The viewer kneeling on behalf of this symbolic contrition was in the position of the skull of Adam, said to be the historical antipode of Christ's crucifixion at Golgotha (North 2004: 188-9).

Holbein's painting is a thesis about extimity's involvement in our construction and use of the spatialized Now. Its perspectivalism represents this Now within (1) a depth, defined between the front side of the painting's viewpoint and the horizon at infinity, and (2) a circumferential frame around the cone of vision whose edge compels us to turn the painting over (Fig. 4). The anamorph excuses itself from the frozen tempo of the main image to connect to a non-Euclidean logic that is prior to perspectivalism of the main image.<sup>14</sup> Holbein says as much, by specifying a numeric code that opens the lock of the '/', localized in crucifix half-hidden by the green curtain.

<sup>12</sup> A useful supplement may be found in the analysis of John North (2004). North treats the painting as a kind of 'thaumatrope', a toy token that, when spun as it is suspended on a cord, combines images painted on its two sides.

<sup>13</sup> The display of wealth put the two subjects of the painting at risk from the evil eye's retributive logic, to replace any surplus with a corresponding lack, the zero-sum of concept of mythic thought known as 'limited good'.

<sup>14</sup> Projective geometry, discovered by Pappus of Alexandria in 300 c.e., though historically second to Euclidean geometry, is actually logically prior. This makes projectivity a historical case of *après coup* retroaction. A more appropriate designation would be to call Euclidean geometry 'non-projective'.

this painting in *Seminar XI*, were unavailable to him.<sup>12</sup> Nearly everyone knows about this portrait of two wealthy, young 16c. Frenchmen, shown with a collection of navigation instruments, books, a lute, and other objects. The famous blur running at an angle across the bottom of the painting is readily discovered to be a *vanitas* insertion, an anamorphic skull visible to the viewer who kneels at the lower left, coincidentally beneath the image of the crucifix half-concealed by the green curtain. This may have been intended to serve as an apotroptic protection

On the back we find the date of the painting's completion, April 11, 1533, which we expect; but we do not know what to do with the added information '4 p.m.' John North (2004: 91-2) explains that this was precisely the moment when the sun would be above the horizon of London at an angle of  $27^\circ$ , the moment predicted for the Apocalypse. The  $2+7$  value fits in the pattern of 3s, 9s, and 11s established on the painting's *recto*, and repeats the angle required for the anamorphic viewer to see the skull while kneeling beneath the crucifix.

These mathematical considerations would have made Lacan happy, perhaps.<sup>15</sup> He might have connected the '/' instruction to turn the painting over to discover the idea of the co-anamorph and plot-point with the *poinçon* ( $\diamond$ ) as a combination of the signs for both greater than,  $>$ , and lesser than  $<$  (Lacan 1966-7; Watson 2005). Or, he might have been led to compare the 'content-orientation' of the *recto* of the painting to the *énoncé* of language and the *verso* to the *énonciation*, the act.

These optimistic untestable predictions are justified by Holbein's ambition, which went far beyond the amusement of seeing the anamorphic skull. By involving a thesis about the Apocalypse, the painter writes in all-caps how the '/' is not just an anamorphic skull within an image mainly about contents and containment (possession) but a co-anamorphosis of the viewer's action and position. It is like Sartre's voyeur caught at the keyhole by the creaking stair-tread. Extimity, like anamorphosis, cannot be confined to paintings or stories. The Apocalypse connection promotes it to the level of historical and theological belief. Considering this, we must move, like Einstein moved with his theory of Relativity, from a local to a global appreciation of extimity. It is imperative to understand the function of the '/' as broadly as possible. Is it a hinge? A mirror? An edge? A turn? A moment? Whichever, the '/' of co-anamorphosis is the basis of the power of the same: idempotency.

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<sup>15</sup> The flip function was evident in the way Holbein painted the crucifix at the upper left of the image, half hidden by the green curtain. The revelation of the over-precise date of the painting's completion (specifying not just the day but the minute) confirmed the evidence of angles on the painting's *recto*. Three 'eras' of 500 hundred years, plus the  $3 \times 11$  years of Christ's lifespan, the (April) 11th of the day of Good Friday, and the sigma of the angle of the sun ( $2+7$ ) compounded the rule of 3s by which Holbein had made his case for Apocalyptic determinism.



### **Idempotency as insulation, figure-ground reversal, conditional admission to liminality**

The term idempotency is not to be found in Lacanian literature, but its shadow falls across the first sessions of *Seminar IX, Identification* (1961-1962: 4), where Lacan discusses *même*, *idem*, and *auton*. Idempotency is not so much an abstraction as a material binding force. *Jouissance*, the force binding the RSI rings of the Borromeo knot, moves in two spaces at the same time. It is the agency connecting our projective *automaton* (repetition compulsion) with our Euclidean *tuché*, and dividing *tuché* into fortunate and unfortunate encounters – the critical antipodes of fictional curvature.

The glance that constitutes the plot-point in *Nights of Cabiria* not only excuses itself from linear time, it steps out of the Euclidean space that has, in defining space as simultaneity, invited time to serve the limited role as a one-dimensional conscript, forced always to march from past to future. But, in doing this Euclid reverses the uncanny practices of early cultures (and young children) where time is an object, a small circular enclosure outside of which both future and past wait in the shadows: co-latent as well as co-anamorphic. Ernst Cassirer isolated this pre-Euclidean representation of time in his study of language in the phase of intuitive expression. In this primary consciousness, Cassirer notes, “Today” is the expression of the present in general, but “tomorrow” and “yesterday” ... are often totally *blurred*’ (Cassirer 2021: 171 emphasis mine). ‘[T]here is only a today and a not-today; whether the latter was yesterday or will be tomorrow is all the same to them; they do not reflect about it, since this would require ... a conceptual representation ... of time’.<sup>16</sup>

Two more reality checks are useful for demonstrating this connection between extimity to idempotency. Both involve idempotency’s usefulness as an insulating barrier. In the ancient city, Fustel de Coulanges (1889: 338) tells us, just such a boundary – the *pomærium* – was religiously maintained with periodic circling within a space required to insulate the outer wall of buildings from the inner surface of the city wall. This neither-in-nor-out space summarizes the insulating function of idempotency. By reversing the figure-ground status of the city, by extimating the

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<sup>16</sup> Cassirer quotes K. Rochl (1911). *Versuch einer systematischen Grammatik der Schambalaspache*. Hamburg: L. Friederichsen & Co., 108 f.



Figure 5. Publii Virgilii Maronis opera cum quinque vulgatis commentarii (1502) Strasbourg: Johann Grüninger. Re-drawing by author, from the Keir Collection of Medieval Works of Art. The door to the underworld, simultaneously a paradigm of Lacanian extimity, is shown here in its narrative function as the ultimate plot point.

protected interior and interring the wild reaches beyond, the demons of the outer world are given a premature burial. The idea of demon is, in fact, correlative to this thin space. Despite the fact that the *pomærium* had to have some thickness to allow priests to complete their circling ritual, the space was effectively that of the Möbius band: a double circuit in terms of motion, a single circuit in terms of closure. The city's spiritual insulation depended on the ability to move in Euclidean space and projective space-time simultaneously.

It is thanks to the immersion of 2-d forms into Euclidean space that we experience paradox, an 'unhappy encounter' (*dustuchia*) or *aporia* architecturally expressed as a portal where entry is conditional or even seemingly impossible (Lacan 1981: 55). When *Æneas* in Book VI of *The Æneid* wishes to visit his father Anchises in Hades, the border between life and death that this visit will require him to pass over will surely be marked by Vergil's poetic idea of what *dustuchia* is all about. Indeed, Vergil provides a scene that, in addition to being a *dustuchia*, an 'unfortunate encounter' – the gate of Hell – is about the misfortune of the artist (Dædalus), made into a misfortune for any who would have to use it as a combination lock, a hero of the *katabasis* (Lacan 1981: 55). *Æneas* must piece together the right combination of meanings of eight images, four on each of the doors a previous celebrity, Dædalus, had left as a token of his high regard for the door-keeper priestesses of Cumæ.<sup>17</sup> This image (Fig. 5) could be regarded as the prototype of all the escape-tunnels dug beneath the ground of the Island of Now. The gap of escape and plot point of the *katabasis* find themselves in the space between the left and right doors displaying the story of Dædalus.

<sup>17</sup> Consult W.F. Jackson Knight's exemplary work, *Cumæan Gates* (1936) for an account of the relations of this famous poetic episode to the traditions of travel to the underworld.

The gap, the entryway, is extimate. It is both the protective conditional gate and interior that the gate so scrupulously guards: a substantive invisible, obverse of the challenge to Æneas's visual abilities, which must take place in a time outside of time, both in poetic scansion and topological strategy. To undertake the traditional heroic *katabasis*, this point of pause lies on the line between Euclid and projective space, truly demonic in its folds and flips. Those who have modeled the path of the classic Thesean version of Hell's labyrinth have emphasized its fractal design: the issue of scale is negated by a space-eating ABA that, for each element, repeats ABA at a sub-level:  $A_{ABA}B_{ABA}A_{ABA}$ . Like the Menger Sponge, there is no one 'level' at which one can assign a scale. The rule of order, like the Golden Ratio of Fibonacci, remains the same. Again, idempotency, as the principle of *plus ça change* holds. And, also again, idempotency serves as, simultaneously, an insulating buffer, a figure-ground stabilizer, an extimating tunnel out of the middle of Now to a demonic territory of time mergers, and a /-edge of a Möbius that travels twice for every circuit completion, allowing the circuit to carry both a positive and negative charge with equanimity.

### **Conclusion: the convertibility of time and place**

Ethnography shows, through examples collected from the time of Humboldt and Sir James Frazer to present, that time must be, both logically and historically, convertible to space. At the same time, the non-orienting, self-intersecting surfaces of projective geometry are radically temporal. Enigma is a universal result of immersing projective form into Euclidean space, which for the arts is the mystery of time travel, the double, contamination of reality by fiction or dream, and the story in the story. While the poetic versions of mathematical immersion are never more compact or effective than in the plot-point or *récit fort*, Lacan's lesson is that extimity must always be, simultaneously, a topological and ethnographical truth, as we find in the cases of *Nights of Cabiria*, the *pomærium*, and Vergil's gates to Hades in the *Æneid*.

In *Seminar VII*, Lacan (1997: 60) tells the story of Apollo and Daphne. He omits the backstory, which, if we consult it, tells us that Eros, in revenge for Apollo's harsh critique of his archery skills, crafts two arrows, or perhaps a single arrow with two points, to inflame Apollo with love

for Daphne and Daphne with hate for Apollo.<sup>18</sup> Here, within Ovid, we have a mythically actionable device that is able to perform the duties of a one-dimensional subspace in the real projective plane. Is the arrow two lines, given that any single projective line is ‘self-parallel’, a line moving, palindromically, in opposite directions at the same time? Do the two vanishing points hold their doubled infinities, like Castor and Pollux? Or, do they fold their planar disk over to reunite the twins and (with a twist) create a projective surface of no escape?

Apart, the opposed vanishing points make the servant in the story, ‘Appointment in Samarra’, run directly toward her object of fear as soon as she attempts to run away.<sup>19</sup> Simply her wish to flee has been sufficient to create the space where fleeing is impossible. This space of desire idea is critical to Lacan’s idea of *automaton* and *tuché*. These in turn define the essence of extimity.

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<sup>18</sup> For the necessary supplement, see Ovid [Pūblius Ovidius Nāsō] (1993). *The metamorphosis of Ovid* Book 1 (trans) A. Mandelbaum. New York, San Diego, and London: Harcourt. 20-5.

<sup>19</sup> 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](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appointment_in_Samarra)

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