

## The Beyond of Anamorphosis

With his pivotal essay on anamorphosis (2015), Mladen Dolar promised to offer a way to consolidate the center-most ideas of psychoanalysis: “the subject can be grasped as an anamorphosis of being. This is one way to bring subject and being together in one conceptual move.” Dolar begins this project with a re-assessment of Lacan’s famous example of Holbein’s portrait, *The Ambassadors* (1533), where a diagonal blur across the bottom of the image turns out to be, when viewed from an oblique position, a skull, a common painterly reference to *memento mori*, “remember death.” Dolar apologizes for the loss of dignity of the enigma that once held viewers in suspense. Now, everyone knows it’s a skull, and this for Dolar is the sum total of the mystery; but Dolar has failed to note the revelations made by John North (*The Ambassadors’ Secret*, 2003). On the reverse of the painting is an over-precise date: April 11, 1533, 4 p.m. that is the key to the geometric puzzle linking the skull with the half-hidden crucifix, the objects on display between the two subjects, and numerological themes. Had Dolar read this book, he would have found that Holbein’s painting is substantially more ambitious than offering the viewer a pop-up skull. In fact, *The Ambassadors* could be considered to be an over-determined *prolegomena* for a 16c. version of psychoanalysis, particularly in Lacan’s project of allying *psychoanalysis with topology*. I propose to play this out in terms of the spatiality of the gaze, taking Dolar’s idea of inscription into some unacknowledged features of projective topography. In short, going to the basis of projection allows us to see the ethnographical as well as the psychoanalytic connection. It takes us to where Dolar says we should be.