

# Why Melancholia Is Psychosis, And Why *Vertigo* is Hamiltonian

Don Kunze



Figure 1. Curiously, the bi-sexual humoristic subject is quartered like the sacrificial victim, whose *templum*-style cuts lead to the idea of contemplation. The double cut was thought to be based on the division of the sky for the purpose of sidereal observations. Thus, “astronomy meets astrology,” the slogan of the foundational work, *Saturn and Melancholy*, is about the cut’s ability to connect microcosm with macrocosm.

The Problem of Melancholy began as a problem, or rather, a *Problema* (XXX.1), attributed to Aristotle. It was a double problem in this sense. The system of humors was based on a logic of balance.<sup>1</sup> To be, healthy, in this system polished by Empedocles and pharmacized by Alcmaeon of Croton in the 5th Century b.c.e., one had to enjoy what was called the “isonomic mean,” a balance between two opposite conditions. Isonomics is the story of The Three Bears, the too much, the too little, and the “just right,” the judgment of the baby bear. Melancholy, however, was a humor thought to be infectious in even small amounts. At the same time, it was the system’s bi-polar principle, capable of producing both madness and genius, depression and ecstasy.

Isonomics, where opposites meet, was the margin or profile which, in the case of “isomerics” and “isometrics,” combined the drawing of the margin and the measure of meaning indicated by the drawing.<sup>2</sup> By means of this line, the isonomic boundary becomes something that can be seen from one side or another, but edge-wise it is as invisible as the 2-d fairies in Swedish nursery tales, who disappear by turning sideways. Melancholy problematizes the isonomic mean, which can be explained in terms of parallax

conditions.

The view of either front or back is relative, since the surface defined by the isonomic boundary has, for its ground, the “worse” or “better.” From the point of view of too much phlegmatic humor, the background of the correctly balanced isonomic position is too little of this sluggish quality, a landscape of impulsiveness, hyperactivity, agitation. What “stands out” from this ground is the prudent leader, the monument, the ancient oak, the church with its gravitas.

<sup>1</sup> For background on melancholy in terms of the system of humors, see Irwin Panofsky, Raymond Klibansky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art*, Kraus Reprint (Nedeln, Lichtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1979); originally published London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd., 1964.

<sup>2</sup> Heidi, Northwood, “The Melancholic Mean: the Aristotelian *Problema* XXX.1,” *Paideia*, Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy, Boston University (Boston, MA, August 1998); <https://www.bu.edu/wcp/MainAnci.htm>

From the other side of the isonomic surface, the opposite scene: the dull small-town, inert and lazy, the unplowed field, the abandoned factory.

Scenography is the casting of shadows afforded by this spacing of the figure and ground. It can be the shadow-play of back-lit puppets onto a translucent sheet or the shadow of a bird racing across surfaces of buildings, frenetic in comparison to the tranquil flight of its double in the air above. Thanks to scenography's spacing, the contronymic/isomeric humors had double perspectives, the either-or conditions of their opposite poles, turned into view-points. Choler was both a middle position between inaction and over-reaction and a conversion of this point to a *point of view*, where a figure's contrast to a background justified, alternatively, the "too much" or "too little" mentalities. Ironically, the point itself enjoyed no view but was a pure topological condition, like the bezel of a two-way mirror.

Between Alice's drawing room, presumably like Lewis Carroll's in Tom Tower in Christ Church on the Oxford Campus, and Wonderland,<sup>3</sup> there was an isonomic surface, and to understand either spatial domain better, we must see the "other side" as its background and

consider how, in a special sense, Wonderland is actually the interior space between the two views, like George Abbott's *Flatland*, which has merged the capabilities of binocularity with phenomena loosely designated as "miracles."<sup>4</sup> This would make the isonomic surface a two-option situation, but allow the viewer to suppose the whole pre-supposed by this two-ness as combined in a fatalistic or even "fatal" way: a thaumatrope.



Figure 2. A Paleolithic thaumatrope from Laugerie-Basse. Both faces depict (the same) doe or chamois; split between a living and dead state. Twine threaded through the hole in the middle, placed at the point of the spear's penetration, spun the two images together, constituting a "prayer" for a successful hunt. 31mm. Drawing by H. Cecil.

Thaumatropes, most popular as a children's toy in Dodgson's century, are actually the most ancient case of "cinematic" image combination. The archeologist Marc Azema has argued that disks found in Magdalenian caves in France functioned as prayer-

<sup>3</sup> *Chat GPT*: "Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, better known as Lewis Carroll, lived at several different addresses during his time in Oxford, but his most famous residence is probably the rooms he had at Christ Church College. From 1851 to 1881, Dodgson was a mathematics lecturer at Christ Church, and he lived in rooms there for much of that time. His rooms were located in the main building of the college, known as Tom Tower, and consisted of a sitting room, bedroom, and study. The rooms are still preserved today and are open to the public ...."

<sup>4</sup> In addition to living close and being close to Henry George Liddell, one of the co-authors of the famous Greek-English dictionary, known as *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Dodgson was at one time a neighbor of Edwin A. Abbott, author of *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* (1884), but Abbott was probably living in London at the time he wrote *Flatland*, first published in 1884 under the pseudonym *A Square*. Dodgson was aware of the new topologies being developed in the 19c. by mathematicians such as Plücker and Riemann, but doubted their relevancy and published a satirical poem called "Euclid and His Modern Rivals" in the journal *Nature*, 1879.

wheels.<sup>5</sup> The images engraved on either side were combined visually when the disks were spun on a chord. Typically, they depicted a live animal on one side, the same animal dead on the other. This was not a simulation of capture, as were the popular “bird-in-cage” thaumatropes of the 19c., but an existential capture of the *moment of death*, where the literal hole in the disk was also the space allowing the penetration of the fatal spear. Just so, Alice’s penetration of the drawing-room mirror hanging on the wall in Tom Tower, Oxford, was an existential rather than a cinematic moment, as much as we are tempted to compare her “speculation” to the so-called “phi-phenomenon.” The either-or of Oxford and Wonderland, wonderfully contrasting the need for a lexicon that Liddell so obligingly provided for ancient Greek with the satisfaction of the need for meaning supplied in an equally robust fashion by the Queen of Hearts & Co. on the other side of the isomeric two-in-one surface, was spun. It was the spinning of the tale as well as the concluding twist of the hunt that specified the point of death that brought into focus a new space based on sacrifice.<sup>6</sup>

Spinning is both a yarn, a story-telling, and action of fate, as in the *three* Fates, Clotho (Spinner), Lachesis (Allotter), and Atropos (Inflexible). Fate of course begins with Saturn, the first space into which the soul at the point of birth steps as it departs Elysium. The effect, it was said by ancient astrologers, was dizzying. Hence, those still within Saturn’s reach were drunk or tempted by drink, Dionysiacs. The etymology of this god, tracing the god of grapes back to Zeus entrusting the newborn child of Semele (“moon”) to nymphs on Mount Nysa after gestating him internally, in his thigh.<sup>7</sup> The child thus became known as “twice-born,” or “the child of the double

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<sup>5</sup> Marc Azema, “Animation in Palæolithic Art: A Pre-echo of Cinema,” *Antiquity* 86 (2012): 316-324; and Rossella Lorenzi, “Stoneage Artists Created Prehistoric Movies,” *Seeker* (June 8, 2012), <https://www.seeker.com/stoneage-artists-created-prehistoric-movies-1765822038.html>.

<sup>6</sup> See Eric L. Santner, *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rosenzweig* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 2001). Santner contrasts Robert Walser’s fantasy short story, “The End of the World,” with Franz Kafka’s “The Top,” about a philosopher so obsessed with the microcosm that he sought out its secret in the spinning of the toy top, which he would run after and seize, only to produce nausea from his killing of that which he had so frantically sought. In contrast, the child of Walser’s story runs away like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, finding a vast expanse, “a clean white plain, then as a sea of bliss.” The centrifugal discovery of Walser’s paradise and the centripetal focus of Kafka’s top were, Santner argues, one and the same. The edge and the center are the same, united by the motion of spinning (cf. the German accusation of madness, *du spinnst!*), with the accompanying gesture that suggests that the “extrinsic” fantasy of a world beyond the horizon is, as in Dorothy’s case, the result of (an “intrinsic”) mental disturbance.

<sup>7</sup> Dionysus and Osiris shared an equal fate, that of dismemberment and re-assembly. Is this not a focus on the connection of the sacrificial cut and restoration/rebirth associated with the Mirror Stage, when the newly-aware subject is suddenly and retroactively ashamed of its former status as a body-in-pieces (*corps morcélé*). The mirror cuts space into chiralistic halves and is thus a model of the *Ka*-soul theory the Egyptians and others, where at the point of departure from Elysium, the soul is doubled, just as Dionysus and Osiris were, thanks to their parentage, mortal and divine. The two souls, antipodes, were held tension and rotated annually, as were the Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux.



Figure 3. Albrecht Dürer, *Melencolia I*, 1514. In true emblem-book tradition, the objects shown in this engraving are dismembered in order to be re-assembled. Finkelstein's inventory culminates with the composite word, *cælum*, a contronym meaning both "heaven" and the wedge that splits into heaven, opening it to a "beyond." See Vico's *Autobiography* for the relation of *cælum* to his own contronym, *aut deus aut daemon*, the composite epitomizing the saturnine genius who does not know whether his insights are inspired or evil.

door.”<sup>8</sup> The inebriating philology of spinning aligns this first step with the limping Dionysus, the use of the thigh as a womb, and the idea of premature death, improper burial, and resurrection, birth (as a mortal) as a second birth, a twin of the first birth of the soul at the boundary between Saturn and the Elysium beyond.

### Melencolia Anagram

In his famous emblem of melancholy, the famous German engraver Albrecht Dürer misspells the very word he celebrates, “Melencolia” instead of the correct Melancholia, which he knew well. Why? David Ritz Finkelstein explains the ploy.<sup>9</sup> “Melencolia” is an anagram for *limen coeli*, “the gate of heaven,” shown in the background of this famous image as a spectral arch — a “moon-bow” — indicating the cut between the mortal domain of the seated figure personifying Melancholy and the moonlit kingdom beyond (Semele?). In the foreground we have puzzle parts: a *corps morcélé* image that was the style of the 16c. emblem tradition. Find the pattern and guess the (suppressed) answer; each part was a metonymy, its evident aspect a mask of a concealed component linking it to the other objects on stage: the ladder, the hour-glass, the magic square, bell, polygon, carpenter’s tools, dog, scales, etc.

Just as the image itself is “emblematic” by tearing itself apart in order to be re-assembled, Dürer re-defines the act of looking itself to be contronymic and thaumatropic, a spin between two antipodal points of view, two non-mergeable figure-ground relationships, meeting contentiously at a isonomic surface with an isomeric edge, an image that holds two twins in simultaneous tension and separation as they spin around, seasonally in most versions of the story. If the image shows the gate of heaven in the background, it is also a gate of heaven, as the kind of puzzle presented by monsters, such as the three-bodied Sphynx to Œdipus at the gates of Thebes, in the form of a three-part riddle, itself a famous monster that walks on four legs at morning, two at noon, and three in the evening.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, Vol. 1 (New York: George Braziller, 1951), 56. Graves further notes (57, note 4) that “Dionysus began as a type of sacred king whom the goddess ritually killed with a thunderbolt in the seventh month from the winter solstice, and whom her priestesses devoured . . . This explains . . . [why] Plutarch, when calling him ‘Dionysus, a son of Lethe (‘forgetfulness’), refers to his later aspect as God of the Vine.” The word “vine” is from the same root as “volute” and “vortex,” i. e. references to spinning in combination with the horizon function of the river Lethe.

<sup>9</sup> David Ritz Finkelstein, *The Melencolia Manifesto* (San Rafael, CA: Morgan & Claypool Publishers, 2016).

The “gate” in this puzzle is the password, the token gaining entry. We would be justified in thinking that the isomeric threshold is itself an architecture held in tension, in the style of the Thesean labyrinth, whose two “doors” are really the ambiguity of going in and out, blurred by the form’s alternating centrifugal and centripetal folds. Ariadne’s thread confirms, by providing a cure, the “disease” of this space, namely its incontinence. It is not a maze but a meander, repositioning its status as a prison as a matter of doubt of the would-be entrant. Any stop along the way and you forget which way you are going, especially in light of the alternation between outward-tending and inward-tending loops. The labyrinth offers one soul glimpses of its demonic other soul, but nothing like a full view, always a glance around the perpetual corner in a building that is “all corner,” all “around the corner,” in a space where straightness is banished by perpetual spin: the building as thaumatrope.

### Why Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* Is a Thaumatrope

Almost any film could be compared to the Thesean Labyrinth. A single narrative line connects the edge of the fictional interval, as the viewer leaves reality for the fictional space of the story, to find its tell-tale center and return again to the world outside the darkened auditorium. This is



Figure 4. Judy Barton (Kim Novak) plays a double, Madeleine Elster, right, uncannily presenting a “katagraphic cut” between the two women that resolutely resists recombination, as Scottie tries desperately to remake Judy in the image of his lost love, who is *doubly* lost because she never “existed” but, like all women, ex-sisted.

premature burial in the form of a seemingly harmless entertainment space, a paralysis imposed by the requirements of the projected image and amplified sound: sit still and stay quiet. The plot, to be interesting, must come in waves that buoy the viewers above the normal, or threaten to sink them in anxiety and despair. The middle is not sought or allowed but supposed by the constant motion.



Figure 5. The Thesean Labyrinth’s meander folds space in a contronymic way, reversing centripetal and centrifugal motion to implicate a fixed center that is ambiguously confused as, simultaneously, an exterior. It is the architectural counterpart to the Möbius band’s combination of self-intersection and non-orientation.

Oscillation encountered with horizontal movement

across the plot, its action, presumes that the ending will re-connect with the beginning, the famous requirement that stories all be circular to qualify as *récit fort*, a “strong narrative.”<sup>10</sup>

Circularity of the filmic experience induces a sense of fate, as anticipation of an ending that is voluntarily suppressed if it is not

<sup>10</sup> I am grateful to Dan Collins for introducing me to Roland Barthes’ term. See Dan Collins, “Stealing money from offices *Lacunæ* 16 (2018): 105–24; Collins cites Roland Barthes, “Deux femmes,” 1052–1054 *Œuvres complètes* vol. 3 (ed) É. Marty. Paris: Seuil, 1995).

conceptualizable. The name for this is *kenosis*, “knowing without knowing,” which we can justifiably call an unconscious. In the unconscious, ambiguity is banished. There is no function of negation, only a 1:1 anagnorisis of signifier and signified. Just as Lacan claimed that there is no other of the Other, there is no unconscious of the unconscious. The unconscious is, in itself, psychotic. In Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* we make the same discovery, but on three distinctively independent levels. First, we are allowed to consider that the San Francisco police detective John (“Scottie”) Ferguson has not survived his fall from the rooftop to the alley below. The chase scene concludes with him hanging from a gutter, and although we see the uniformed office trying to save him fall to his death, we can’t imagine how the detective hangs on to be rescued by reinforcements. The next scene is in his old college girlfriend’s apartment. Midge is tending to the recovering Scottie as he tries to demonstrate his full recovery from acrophobia. Tellingly, he fails, and Midge’s rush to catch him tells us what we need to know about their sentimental but failed romance, part one of a three-part proof of the “impossibility of the sexual relationship.”

The film offers other textbook applications of Lacanian dictums. Scottie is lured into a con by another college acquaintance, Gavin Elster, who asks the retired detective the favor of following his wife, who seems to be haunted into suicide by an ancestress, Carlotta Valdes, who had killed herself in despair in 1857, deprived of her only child and abandoned by its father-oligarch. The story string along a series of metonymies, the essence of the con, since the evident part of the metonym represses the whole, “saving it for later” so to speak, when the audience will learn, as the oath taken by the good witness — the truth, the *whole* truth, and *nothing but* the truth — affirms. There are two witnesses in *Vertigo*: the audience (obviously) and Scottie, whose role as witness is the aim of Elster’s con. Elster wants to murder his wife for her fortune and escape, like Odysseus, the business of ship-building in favor of ship-sailing. To escape, he needs legal clearance, of a verdict of suicide rather than murder, and who best to secure this than an honest but failed detective, so familiar with the “wife” that he himself believes that she has thrown herself off the top of a tower he cannot reach because of his acrophobia. The tower’s verticality compresses and rotates the story’s *diachrony* 90°, an “orthogonal” angle in two senses, the first to create the barrier preventing Scottie from witnessing Elster switching the actress personifying the wife for Scottie (Elster’s lover, Judy Barton) with his actual wife, Madeleine. The con is complete, once Scottie is questioned at the inquest and found to be veridical precisely because he condemns himself.

To effect this completion, Scottie must *fall* in love with Judy/Madeleine. After following her into a series of scenes that demonstrate (1) her madness/melancholy, induced by a hysterical mourning for the dead ancestor, Carlotta; and (2) her intention to accede to Carlotta’s “wish” that Madeleine join her in death; Scottie follows her to Fort Point, in the shadow of the Golden Gate Bridge. True to Aristotle’s *Problema XXX.1*, she jumps into the bay and Scottie rescues her. He must keep her suicide a secret from Elster, so he takes her back to his apartment and, like Actæon with Diana, involuntarily (to remove her wet clothing while, he thinks, she is unconscious, witnesses her naked. Dogs to follow. Madeleine will splash her Actæon with waters of obsessional love, pulling Scottie into a tight vortex that will center on the staged suicide, the Mission San Juan

Bautista, some thirty minutes drive south of San Francisco. Once there, the impossibility of the sexual relationship becomes the architectural psychosis of melancholy, Scottie's inability to climb to the top to save "Madeleine" from jumping. At this point, the audience does not realize Elster's switch or the design of the con in which Judy, the "shell," will be pushed aside as Elster shoves his neck-broken real wife out the open tower arch.

It is Elster's Madeleine who dies, but the actress-double lives on. Scottie was unable to reach the top of the tower, but Scottie's "Madeleine" it seems was unable to reach the bottom. After a nervous breakdown, Scottie encounters a Madeleine look-alike on the streets of downtown San Francisco, near Union Square. He follows her to her hotel to propose a friendship that he hopes will lead to a restorative romance. He wishes to remake Judy into his lost lover Madeleine.

At this point, the audience might be in the position to realize that "Madeleine" and "Scottie" share the same place, the Labyrinth-like interval "between the two deaths," where tension hold in balance the two antipodes, the two vanishing points of interior and exterior, life and death. The dyads take the form of the uncanny as Freud discovered them from his source, Ernst Jentsch. Jentsch wrote that the uncanny could be reduced to two formative "atoms," life-in-death and death-in-life. In the latter, the more one runs *away* the more one is running *toward* (the non-orientation made famous in the many re-tellings of "The appointment in Samara." In the former we find the interval between literal death and the symbolic death where the soul, not fully conscious of its death, has traversed trials and errors to reach a point of final inventory. Before admission back into the space it left at birth, the not-fully-dead soul must "say the right thing," just as Oedipus did to enter Thebes. This well-spokenness, as Lacan called it, was a half-speech. It was both the right answer in the sense that it was the password for the *limen caeli*, the Gate of Heaven. But, also, it was the phrase that suppressed but preserved, in the spirit of Hegel's *Aufhebung* (*The Phenomenology of Spirit*, 1807), as a deeper sense.

We need a better word for the whole of this second sense, the addition of unconscious to conscious meaning. We borrow this without permission from mathematics: "the Hamiltonian." This is the formal name for the operator in quantum physics that describes the total energy of a circuit in terms of its wave function, involving Planck's constant, the marker of the irreducible difference between momentum and position. In *Vertigo* no less than quantum physics, the more we know about the movement of the plot, the less we know about the position of the characters. And, as soon as we are caught within the paralysis of the situation, as Scottie is caught, when trying to re-make Judy into his image of the lost Madeleine, we know our position but cannot move past it. Like the characters, we are frozen in the con's deceit. The Hamiltonian demands that the work of art tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Only art can tell the Hamiltonian truth, the truth of fiction, because only narrative's art can spin a story around the thread that is simultaneously the tension and compression holding opposites into a single orbit, a circuit, which is pictured by the Thesean Labyrinth and miniaturized by the ancient token, the thaumatrope.

If melancholy is, as diagnostic manuals tell us and Lacanian psychoanalysis confirms, a psychosis, it is because there is no unconscious of the unconscious. The buck stops here, but “here” is the zero-sum game between position and motion, the Planck Constant of Fictional Truth. Truth, it must be said, is a kind of 1:1<sup>11</sup> that cannot be achieved with an unconscious hounding rationality. It can only be “psychotically” constructed within fictional circumstances that allow the work of art to present us with models of the Other — in the form of paradigms of action and intentionality — where truth becomes Truth by self-intersecting and, in the process, not continuing its project of surpassing non-orientation nor succumbing to it, but rather re-writing it. Michael Riffaterre’s failure in his otherwise masterful *Fictional Truth* (1990) was to underestimate the actualization power of anagnorisis, the fourth and final rung of the ladder of the quadrigia, the Medieval system of interpretation that required three kinds of retreat to proceed a final, decisive defeat at the hands of reason working against itself. This defeat was a dark victory, the survival of the Real against all odds, or rather odds and evens of the first death, worn out by the persistence of the *drive*, the pulsion or tension–compression of desire.

If we are tempted to stop with the moral of the story (*Vertigo* as a warning about allure), the story as analogy (the structure of the con), the story as allegory (the cosmic aspects of Scottie’s misrecognition of the Madeleine-Judy dyad), we foreclose the anagnorisis of the thaumatropic, the Hamiltonian, the isonomic combinatorial image with its isomeric margin, which can be neither this side nor that side but, like the *tesseract*, the cut in and of itself. To see *Vertigo* as a Hamiltonian, we must intend to get all there is to get. We must receive the film in full measure. The film’s melancholy is not positionable as are the other three humors. There is no central balance point, no mediating middle. The point along the line of its action is a non-point, around which loops and gyres a folding line that converts motion into a palindromic circuit, where subtraction fails to subtract and, instead, multiplies. This is the “depth” of the film, the interiority that is simultaneously an exteriority realized in the darkened auditorium that is the tomb of the audience’s premature burial, its own “between the two deaths.” The two depths, the two deaths, the one that inventories the other, completes itself through incompleteness. We find that black bile, powerful in *any measure*, is especially potent the smaller it gets, the closer it gets to complete disappearance, when it seems finally to merge with invisibility itself.

This is the Hermetic moment within *Vertigo*, where Scottie watches as Judy absent-mindedly pulls out the jewel from her drawer, a memento of her criminal conspiracy. Scottie and the

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<sup>11</sup> The semantics of bi-univocal concordance ( $\approx$ bijection) is assumed to be 1:1, the language of the psychotic, but this has yet to be theorized in the Lacanian sense where, as in Seminar XIV, *The Logic of Phantasy*, the 1 has an “audioactive” sense by which the 1 also has a name, a name that cannot be foreclosed even by the indexical 1:1. This is more of a “one to 1,” the 1’s capacity for self reference, as in the case of the Fibonacci number series, where, in the equation  $x = 1 + 1/x$ , the “answer” re-enters the question to produce an iterative and ever-more accurate measure of  $\emptyset$ . This brings the psychotic’s linguistic lexicality within reach of the melancholy artist, who in every work of genius, aspires for the (topological) principles of non-orientation (paradox) and self-intersection (closure). See Jacques Lacan, Seminar IX (1961–1962), *Identification*, trans. Cormac Gallagher, *Lacan in Ireland*; [http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Seminar-IX-Amended-Iby-MCL-7.NOV\\_.20111.pdf](http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Seminar-IX-Amended-Iby-MCL-7.NOV_.20111.pdf)



audience recognize it at once; it was the necklace that makes us think of the neck-loss of Madeleine before her fall, that Judy had worn as a prop to connect to the portrait in the Museum at the Palace of the Legion of Honor, Gallery 6. The gleam of the jewel connects to Scottie in the same way the glimmer of the sardine can connected to the young Lacan being taken for a ride in Petit Jean's rowboat. Petit Jean laughs: "You see that can? Well, *it doesn't see you!*" Lacan was not in the Euclidean parallax that trapped Petit Jean in cycles of inescapable poverty, position never giving way to motion. Lacan was splashed by the waters of the sardine can, gazed-at and hence in a second kind of parallax where, pursued by his thirty-four dogs, he would be flayed, de-fleshed, mortified.<sup>12</sup> The trip back to the monastery plays the cinematic trick of accelerated motion, accelerated speech. Scottie automates a *vera narratio*, a "true speech" delivered not in the classic drawing room of Agatha Christie stories but in the open air of Lacan's "well-said." Scottie has both accepted and rejected his guilt of melancholy.<sup>13</sup> He was innocent, like Actæon, but accepts his flaying. He knows that he was and is dead. He reaches the end of his tether. The one to the 1.

The centre that I cannot find  
Is known to my unconscious Mind;  
I have no reason to despair  
Because I am already there.

—W. H. Auden, "Anthropos Apteros"

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<sup>12</sup> Lacan cites but does not name the second parallax, which is experientially second but logically first. In Seminar XI, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1964), Lacan credits the flotsam with "the ambiguity of the jewel," enhancing this trope in *Vertigo*. Ambiguity is the essence of the second but primary parallax, the anomaly or hapax that is enclosed by concentric circles or, in this case, the film's paradigm spiral. The involvement of dogs in Actæon's flaying is key. In some cultures, dogs are specially trained to consume corpses as a part of mortuary ritual, possibly related to the identification of the boundary of Hades and dogs, specifically Cerberus. The connection of the number three (Cerberus's three heads, the 33+1 of Actæon's dog pack) is the "three-ness" or thoroughness of the boundary's insulating capability, allowing only one-way passage.

<sup>13</sup> Giambattista Vico's idea of true speech in *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1947), §401, has been called the "language of the gods," which means that it was the message of the auspices derived through ritual procedures. Prophetic and authenticating, this is the speech of the Lacanian-Freudian unconscious, which Vico articulated in 1725, repositioned as the *dicta* of the Big Other, a "master signifier."