

THE TRAP OF NOTHING:
THE (ARCHAIC) CONSUBSTANTIALITY OF *MY MAN GODFREY*

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Consubstantiality, a revised view

Consubstantiality, a theological term, is more generally the condition of balance that arises out of termination. At the moment of negation, an oppositional entity appears, seemingly structured by the very thing that it negates, a left-hand Jekyll to the right-hand Dr. Hyde. This double reversal rule specifies that (1) nothing vanishes without structuring an imagined counter-force that is (2) then held to be the cause of the first's cancellation. Cassirer gives the example of night's opposition to day in mythic thought (1955: 83-118). When light ceases, darkness becomes more than the simple privation of light. Cancellation immediately presumes the existence of opposing forces as the cause of the ending. The reified, embodied night revises day retroactively. The organic birth-life-death rhythm of day easily transfers to night, but is considered as if death had been the original source of this structure, the zero-degree condition against which life had been allowed 'on loan' (Cassirer 1955: 78). When mythic thinking says that night opposes day, it means that night, the proper Other, is both an origin and ultimate antagonist¹. What is striking about consubstantiality is that although it is constructed out of contingent circumstances it seems to

¹ The production of the zero-degree from simple termination is the basis of the tragic arc, where a rise of fortune must be followed by an equal and opposite fall. It would not be hard to see consubstantiality as the *force majeure* behind Lacan's mirror stage, where the child's reflection, not simply a reversed copy of the young subject, also demonstrates antagonism. This is a crisis of the Real, with retroactive recognition of the pre-subject's prior condition as a *corps morcélé*, combined with the over-valuation of the spectral Other (Bowie 1991: 21-9). Needless to say, it is a faint but true copy of Hegel's thesis-antithesis-synthesis dialectic, keeping to Hegel's avoidance of reading synthesis as resolution and insisting on the contronymic reading of *Aufhebung* as both cancelling and preserving.

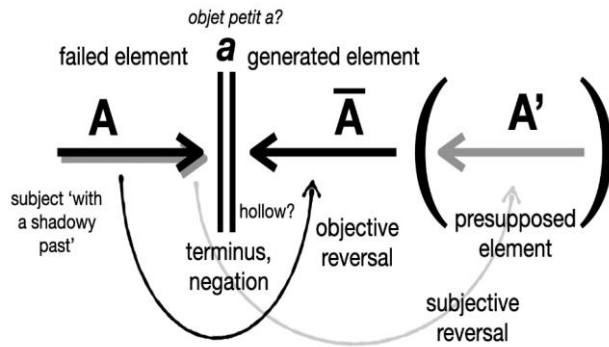


Figure 1. Consubstantiation uses termination (failed element, A) to imagine an opposition (generated element), that objectively reverses and is structured by the primary A. This objective reversal however requires a second, *subjective* reversal that opens up a second, alternative – anamorphic – point of view. At the point of negation, the oppositional/alternative views create the possibility of the doubled terminus, or hollow face separating the failed and generated elements. Drawing by author.

evince the inevitable, to admit no alternatives. This is even more evident in the case of death's relation to life.

It would not be an exaggeration to speculate that human thought itself emerged and developed by applying this protocol of privations. To generalise, it is easier to notate. Any simple termination, $\rightarrow | \dots$, invites into being *ex nihilo* a set of specific imagined foes and foils, $\rightarrow | \leftarrow$. The actual cause, however, lies in the failed element itself (think of Shakespeare's *King Lear*). But, a parenthetical element appears, $\rightarrow | \leftarrow (\leftarrow)$, as a second point

of view, a reverse angle observer antipodal to the one representing the visibility of everyday life (Fig. 1). Thus, every objective antagonism, \leftarrow , requires a subjective reversal – and extension – of a duplicated point of view².

This Joni Mitchell both-sides-now logic has a cinematic sense, where the narrative beginning, middle, and end, are structured by visible places and the views of them allowed to the audience. If the film *My Man Godfrey* can be said to be a case of the consubstantial, we must consider (1) spaces to be pitched in a rhetorical mode of temporality and (2) our views into these spaces as a katagraphic cut (Causse 2018) made by the collective psyche into a substance that, once cut, becomes rhetorical. (3) These can then be analysed in terms of Jacques Lacan's four primary forms of discourse (2007). The master signifier (S_1), signifying chains (S_2), *objet petit a*, and barred subject ($\$$) will dance across a quadrated field of agent, other, production and truth, like

² Thus, in the argument to be unfolded, psyche *is* this extension of the subjective position from a primary diegetic position to a critical, or reversed-view position, where the reversal counts as the Real of this transference. From the standpoint of the diegetic, this extension will resist assimilation by the Symbolic. Hence, we can say, critically, that psyche will 'know nothing of it' (Freud *SE* XXIII: 1938: 300) and henceforth regard it as an *aporia*. See Carignani 2018: 668.

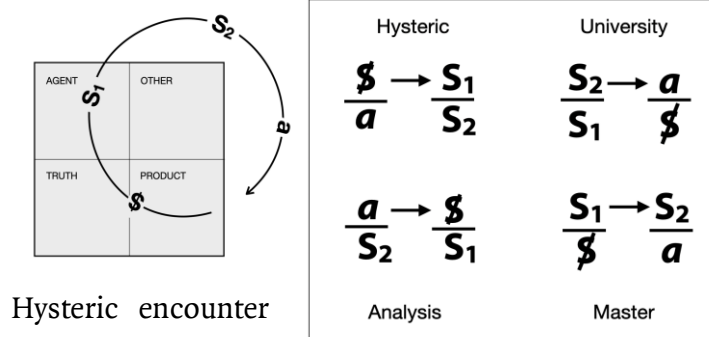


Figure 2. Lacan's rotational system of four discourses. The logic of rotation will be, in *My Man Godfrey*, the sequencing of three scenic *foci*, the shanty-town, the Bullock's apartment, and the night-club or, in Lacanian terms, the discourses of hysteric/master/university. The discourse of analysis is 'silent' both in the plot (Godfrey's failed romance is not described) and in the diegetic film, where this *matheme* has to do with the audience's access to the story *via* the screen. Drawing by author.

Commedia dell'Arte actors, to play out the sorrows and joys diagrammed by the discourses of the hysteric, master, university, and analysis (Fig. 2).

My Man Godfrey begins with the of socialites with homeless men roughly encamped on the tippings beneath the shadow of the Queensborough Bridge, $S1/S2$, the other and product of the hysteric's discourse. It then surprisingly flips to the site of the master's discourse, the lavish interior of the

Bullocks' apartment at 1011 Fifth Avenue. As if to prove Hegel's point about servants being ironically superior to their masters, Godfrey plays the tricky servant-supposed-to-know but does not overdo it. He is a servant-Other with productive secrets, $S2/a$. A second plot-point flips the story to conclude in the office behind the night-club, $S2/S1$, where, as Godfrey opines, 'the only difference between a derelict and a man is a job', $a/\$$. Under the guidance of university discourse, we enjoy! ($a/\$$) the ending because it has suppressed the discourse of Analysis to serve as the pivot guiding the performative arc formed by other three discourses. This fourth position also holds the position of the true first, the reason for Godfrey's decision to take up the archaic role of the passive hero and submit to suffering and trials³. This true first accounts for both the outside encounter at the shanty-town and the contrasting butler episodes inside the Bullocks' apartment. The film seems to know what Lacan has told us about the relation of outside to inside (Miller 2008). It combines the discourses of hysteria with mastery to corral the energy needed for the university discourse scene at night-club (named The Dump), where the job-as-only-difference theme (with job as the bar in the $\$$ of the man-as-subject) in the discourse of analysis features the *objet petit a* to provide what Lacan would later describe (1961-62: 36, 77) as a toroidal void (Fig. 3, lower left corner) created by conjoining inside-out conditions (Lacan 1973).

³ The theme of the passive hero is documented in Cooke (1999). Because so many plots involve the disguise, wandering, and trials of a figure both once blessed, now cursed by the gods, the event-structure of this necessary hemisphere of narrative amounts to a universal template employed by nearly every culture. The passive hero can be read as one hero playing out two episodes or two heroes occupying antipodal positions, one living, the other dead.

Irene Bullock brings a supply of firewood to fast-start her romance with Godfrey. She had thought that Godfrey had returned to the dump. Even less had she expected to find a glitzy nightclub. Unknowingly, Irene referenced the archaic relation of fire to marriage. This is the ethnographical result of the *objet petit a* shifting from its university position as Other to its analytical position as Agent, and we should be grateful for this reference to extimacy. It seems that not only had the director just finished reading Lacan's *Seminar XVII, The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, but that early cultures knew all along about the extimacy of fire, as both purification and revelation, marginal and central.

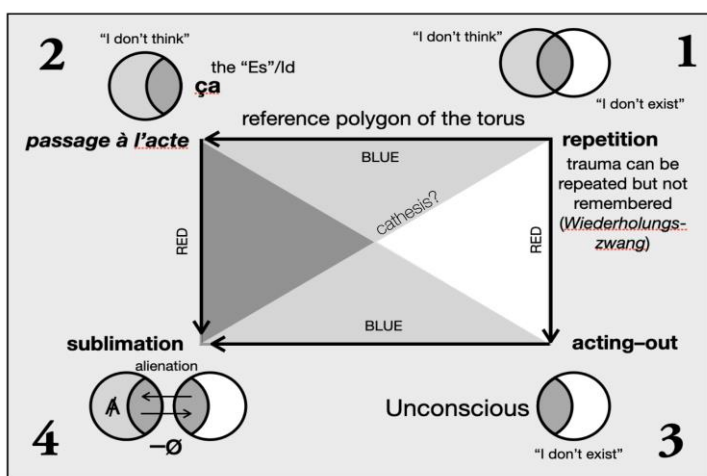


Figure 3. Lacan's adaptation of Aristotle's square of oppositions, demonstrating structural (toroidal) relations between repetition (1), the *passage à l'acte* that takes place outside the Symbolic, the acting-out that takes place within the Symbolic (3), and sublimation as the closure of the topological torus (4). The diagonal connecting repetition to sublimation is 'cathetic' in that it relates the two-dimensional topology of demand to the necessity of immersion, to 'see What is technically speaking invisible'. Source: French transcript of *Seminar XIV, The Logic of Phantasy*. Rolf Nemitz, *Lacan Entziffern*, <https://lacan-entziffern.de>. Annotated by author.

The invisible but functional hinge and the topology of desire

The film cannot directly articulate the fourth discourse, analysis. This matheme, which shows the agency of the missing *objet a*, operates as the silent, melancholy pivot about which the other three discourses fan out to create a maximum tension between the hysteric and the master, resolving with the

night-club's university discourse. The on-stage position of *a* in analysis conceals the truth lying in the signifying chains, $/S2$, which engineer this expansion-contraction. Lacan insists (2002: 418) that these chains lie on a

A string, in topological terms, is a one-dimensional subspace, which Lacan would relate to the $\mathbb{1}$, the unary trait that he mathematized in *Seminar XIV* (1966-67). Lacan carried Freud's *einzigster Zug* from its role as a telling recurrence, an accident with an unconscious cause, to the level of a mathematical formula as fundamental to the structure of the subject as $E=mc^2$ is fundamental to the physical universe. Because $\mathbb{1}$ is not recognized as a number until we come to $\mathbb{2}$, when we retroactively realise its role, I would say that the $\mathbb{1}$ is melancholy and compare its sorrows to the \notin , the set of sets that do not include themselves, the Russell Paradox (Chiesa 2006; Friedman 2016). The $\mathbb{1}$ as unary is primordially alienated from within, simultaneously separated and without – in other words, a melancholy of extimacy. Like the melancholy of the system of humours, where black bile is deleterious in any amount but, as if in compensation, both a poison *and* an elixir – i. e. a *pharmakon* (Derrida 1981) – the $\mathbb{1}$ is mathematically related to the Fibonacci series of numbers ($\mathbb{1}, \mathbb{1}, \mathbb{2}, \mathbb{3}, \mathbb{5}, \mathbb{8}, \mathbb{13}, \mathbb{21} \dots$). It is non-oriented in being a constant only in relation to a value greater than its predecessor and less than its successor (the principle of the Golden Rectangle), but self-intersecting in an offset merger with itself, which produces successively better approximations of the Golden Ratio, Φ : $\mathbb{2}/\mathbb{1}, \mathbb{3}/\mathbb{2}, \mathbb{5}/\mathbb{3}, \mathbb{8}/\mathbb{5}, \mathbb{13}/\mathbb{8} \dots$ etc.

As iterative, the unary $\mathbb{1}$ tells the story of the fundamental unit of psychoanalysis, the Signifier over the signified, S/s . The S/s specifies an unknown – who knows what the Other wants by this s ? It is always the unanswered question, the '*che vuoi?*' But, as an 'x', an unknown, the signified constitutes a distance, an elsewhere, a space beyond (shown as beneath, $/x$) the margin below the surface constituted by the two-dimensional metonymical chain, $\underline{S} \dots \underline{S}'$. This is the hole in the middle of the torus, the paradoxically central vanishing point at which the parallel absent virtualities of *My Man Godfrey*, the break-up and the wedding, converge in a melancholy embodied by Godfrey's humiliation as a servant. Like the Φ of the Fibonacci numbers, it is a vanishing point lying on the horizon at infinity. Yet, it is an effective centre, in the same sense that the last scene of *My Man Godfrey* connects to the first, pivotal, untold story of Godfrey's failed romance, a/S_2 .

Immersion, the cinematic fourth wall, and the projectivity of discourse and sex

In my notation for consubstantiality, \rightarrow does not exist alone. The \rightarrow is finite: $\rightarrow |$. This finitude requires an agency created out of the sheer negational power of the $|$. The reification of the \leftarrow that

springs into being as soon as \rightarrow terminates, $\rightarrow |$, is like the creation of night as the adversary of the day: a palindromic necessity: $\rightarrow | \leftarrow$. However, this antagonist does not exist alone. It has been structured by non-orientation: $\rightarrow | \leftarrow (\leftarrow)$. It is negation actualised, but because we need to see it, a subjective angle of view must be added. There is no viewing space within the two-dimensional surface created by linked metonymies, each of which is singular thanks to the fact that, as a link in a chain, it is an invisible twist. To view the twists, there must be a fictive distance between the viewer and viewed – ‘fictive’ because the two-dimensional surface does not admit such a separation. This distance must emerge from a position outside of the flatness of the projective plane, but in mathematical terms, this emergence is called immersion, and the fiction of the new subjective view, (\leftarrow) , is Lacan’s principle of *ex falso sequitur quodlibet* – from the false, everything may follow (1966-67: 33, 36-7). The EFQ rule of emergence (Wikipedia 2006) is nothing less than the principle of cinema as a two-dimensional projection of an ‘anything’ (*quodlibet*) that is taken to have a collective but indeterminant meaning, an S/s true to the non-indexicality of human language and the virtuality of the signified. Cinema’s EFQ is that it is false by definition, in the process of making itself viewable; and, thanks to being false, anything – the *quodlibet* of fantasy – may follow.

Aside on the issue of why we cannot see two-dimensional projective forms

It is possible to visualise representations of projective forms – Möbius bands, Klein bottles, toruses, etc. – but we are looking at immersions, not the actual two-dimensional forms themselves. Our viewer-to-viewed dimension is the fiction we must insert to allow our inspection of the two-dimensional form in perspectival 3-space, but this view comes at the expense of seeing forms self-intersect – in effect, become traps. To appreciate the paradox of self-intersection, apply a pinch test to the Möbius band. One can hold the strip of paper between one’s two fingers. The test of projectivity is made by pulling the strip, or sliding the fingers, across the full length of the band to demonstrate that the two edges are actually one edge, and that the two surfaces, which we see so clearly as *verso* and *recto* of the physical paper, are actually one side of the twisted band. But, what of the twist? It is clearly visible, but where is it, exactly? In two-dimensional projective space, the twist does not exist. Topographically it is the non-orientation of the form. To view the band perspectively, this non-orientation must be translated into self-intersection, entrapment. The twist of the Möbius band is an illustration of the need for *ex falso quodlibet* and the reason

why the discourse of analysis is, like Godfrey's failed romance, the invisible pivot and perfection of the story, both a centre and edge.

Immersion produces the self-intersection that corresponds, along with the sagittal dimension of our point of view (POV) and its corresponding vanishing point (VP), to fantasy. The technical name for this POV–VP line is cathetis (Edgerton 1973), a geometry term that I would modify into something more generic: cathesis. It is a product of our need to visualise projective forms even though this visualisation will be a seeing–without–seeing. I would argue that Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Visible and Invisible* (1968) could be re-entitled as 'The Necessity of the Invisible to the Visible' or, in Godfrey terms, 'The Necessity that the Visible *Should Act on Behalf of* the Invisible'. We need this fantasy to cover over the Symbolic's lack in relation to the projective Real of the two-dimensional surface's non-orientation. Our Imaginary must provide the work-around of self-intersection to satisfy our sagittal, cathetic curiosity, our desire to see a resolution.

This is clearly what Lacan did, by connecting the contingency of the unary trait, Freud's *einzigster Zug*, to the mathematical certainty of the $\mathbb{1}$, but as a vanishing point, $\rightarrow |$, at the horizon lying at infinity (1966-67: 155-56). If consubstantiation has a limit at infinity, \bullet , then this limit implies and requires a second, reversed subjective point of view. This explains why *My Man Godfrey* must involve two negations, one that opposes Godfrey's wealth and status with his self-imposed exile and submission to servitude in the style of the passive hero; another that inverts the objective story, a subjective transposition, creating a reverse-angle point to allow the audience to watch this objective transformation take place. Just as we demand to make a Möbius band we can cut, twist, and glue, the audience needs to see the twist, which is the function of the plot-point that immerses the two-dimensional sequence of events so that a scene can show the twist literally, as surprise.

Why immersion becomes an opportunity to talk about the fourth wall of cinema

This second negation, counterpart to topological immersion, is the fourth-wall function of cinema, where the space first occupied by the camera and production equipment is removed to be replaced by the space of the auditorium. Even the apparatuses that make these two spaces possible, the camera and the projector, are inverses of each other⁴. The camera passively takes in and processes light chemically to produce the grey-toned surface of the film. Then, the optical

⁴ In the early days of cinema, cameras were actually re-engineered to be projectors.

logic is reversed, and light shines from behind the film to project the images onto the flat screen. We could write the film-and-projection sequence of cinema as consubstantiation using the consubstantiation cyphers, $\rightarrow | \leftarrow (\leftarrow)$, with the $|$ as the surface of the film that first receives (passively) the focused light, $\rightarrow |$, then serves as the screen onto which the processed image is projected, $| \leftarrow$. There is even the space for the audience watching the projected image, (\leftarrow) ... what Alexander Bullock might have waggishly called 'a big room with the right kind of people'. This inversion of technology allows us to speculate if and how the $|$ might also be a double negation, $||$, or how the $|$ is, to begin with a two-dimensional surface that must be non-oriented but, then, self-intersecting, which should be shown as separated by the *objet petit a* as the principle of the non-orientation of *jouissance*, $| a |$.

Consubstantiation, originally the religious/mythic idea of incarnation and metamorphosis, is secularised, as Amos Funkenstein would have put it (1986), into the modern idea of cinema. The key is to see the self-intersecting form of *My Man Godfrey* as the toroidal twist of the four discourses it uses, meaning that the customary sequence of analysis > hysteria > master > university is something of a Möbius band whose twist 'ex-sists' (Miller 2016), like Pascal's God-as-infinite-sphere, nowhere and everywhere. If we can see *My Man Godfrey* in terms of immersion, the need of the fourth wall's exchange of visibility and invisibility, we can return to Lacan's quadrature of the discourses and other four-part schemas, such as his mathemes of sexuation, to ask the important question: where is the twist, and what does it mean?

The screwball comedy film is content to stay out of the politics of psychoanalysis and simply show what it means, what it must mean. This is how consubstantiality works as an 'Idiot's Guide to Psychoanalysis'. Within the matheme of $\rightarrow | \leftarrow (\leftarrow)$ we can isolate components that allow for alternative labels. The full sequence of operations could be re-christened as *conatus* to describe how necessity inexplicably emerges out of contingency. The other side of *conatus* as a primal contronym (Freud *SE XI* 1910) would be what Freud called transience (*SE XIV* 1916), the necessity of re-imagining any single scene as a series ruled by an entropic energetics. If we fashion entropy as a succession of metonymic signifying chains, we see that its vanishing point also lies on a horizon that can be re-positioned as a centre, and the negative-entropy phenomenon of

emergence creates cathesis⁵, the identity of the viewer and viewed (because one generates the other). This, in cinema, requires a fourth wall that replaces the technology of filming into the technology of projecting.

Because of human language's non-indexicality, we create the problem and then solve it ... but imperfectly. The mark of our self-imposed failure is the universal a , the lack, the remainder, the twist that is both there and not there. Psyche is indeed extended, just as Freud contended in his enigmatic note (*SE* XXIII 1938). It is not enough to add that psyche 'knows nothing of it' (Freud *SE* XXIII 1938: 300). I would claim that *theory itself* fails to understand this extension, and as a result theory has its own unconscious. The mark of this failure is also the a , a 'theoretical a ', which we can represent and even model with Lacan's slide-rule analogy in relation to the unary trait (1966-67: 146, 155, 158). We embed our theoretical failure in the number that is not a number, both the 1 and the \emptyset , which lies as a vanishing point, both the centre and edge of the series of the powers of a , and make it out to be the primary – and primal – instance of *extimité* (Miller 2008). We must use our lack to structure our theories. We must make actual extensions in what we could most inclusively call ethnography (popular culture along with the fine arts, folklore and myth along with the neurotic compulsions and fantasies involved in what the Symbolic presents as reality). If psyche extends anywhere, it is into and through ethnology, art, and popular culture.

The overlays: discourse, sexuation, fundamental polygon of the torus, Godfrey

Thanks to Lacan's engagement with projective geometry's non-orientation and with immersion's necessity of self-intersection's creation of invisible traps, we can say that psyche's ignorance of its own extension actually constitutes the unconscious of both the self and theory of the self. The signifier's limitation to the two-dimensional surface of metonymical chains banishes depth psychology's iceberg model⁶. Proof of this is in the very place where there *is* no unconscious, i. e. in psychosis. Here, the unconscious must be pantomimed, pretended – just like in the movies!

⁵ I convert the term 'cathetus', used by Filippo Brunelleschi to describe the spooky correspondence between the viewing point and vanishing point. Cathesis, definable as a 'Janusian' power of vision able to enclose a 360° field of view, generalises this correspondence to be consistent with projective geometry's principle of non-orientation. Euclidean geometry's definition of cathetus, 'a line perpendicular to a surface (or line); in particular, either of the sides of a right triangle other than its hypotenuse', grasps the role of orthogonality as usefully representing the independence of two descriptive vectors. Just so, in projective geometry, the vanishing point at infinity can be represented as the zero-plane where parallel line 'families' intersect and can be represented by Cartesian coordinates. If the plane is positioned at $Z=0$, each vector can be represented by X and Y coordinates (Wildberger 2021).

⁶ Do not blame Freud. The iceberg model apparently came from Granville Stanley Hall, one of the founders of American psychology (Green 2019).

From outside the Symbolic, it is the *passage à l'acte* that, for art and ethnography, is the requirement of the performative. By this, I mean that ritual re-enactment as a cultural phenomenon is the other side of the neurotic's acting-out compulsion to repeat. And, within each ritual, the psychotic's lack of an unconscious is necessitated by structure, or rather structure's necessity to repeat⁷.

The invariant (psychotic) ruse of archaic anamorphs

This is especially evident for pre-modern cultures, which in very early times relied on invariant rituals as the basis for law. To insulate and preserve the authority of the aleatory procedures of divination, repetition protocols were unvarying – this was the rock to which Prometheus, thief of fire, was bound⁸. Mobility was allowable only under the pretence of resistance. Brides could not marry willingly, altars could not be moved voluntarily, strangers could not be received hospitably. These reversals were bound up in a contronymic logic that was as performative as it was linguistic⁹. Of course, brides were married, altars were moved, and strangers were welcomed, as long as camouflage could be rigged for the marrying, moving and welcoming to create an anamorphosis that was as operational as it was visible.

The idea was to create two points of view, whose connecting line (cathesis) pivoted around the fulcrum of the hearth. From this line, a virtuality was maintained to allow for these necessary transactions. The ancestral *manes* of family religions, localised by the flame of the family hearth, forbade defection or modification of serialised rituals; but, by constructing a cathetic view beneath

⁷ The outside of the inside and inside of the outside is behind the rule in ancient and Medieval times, of locating theatres at the edge of town or, if in town, restricted to specific days (Knight 1997).

⁸ Vico (1948: §§387, 503, 549, 713) explains that Prometheus's immobilisation is key to understanding the relation of the hearth-flame to the subsequent invariance and severity of ancient law. Prometheus was heroic only in the sense that the designation, hero, originally signified nothing more than a dead person. Religions of the hearth were local and separatist. Cyclopean cultures resisted consolidation and could not be collectivised without a transition myth, such as the Roman story of Curtius, whose sacrifice allowed the Forum as a common centre and the College of Vestals to centralise the worship of the *manes*, the heroes of the flame.

⁹ Freud's trouble with accepting Carl Abel's thesis of the proliferation of contronyms in primitive languages was due in part to the fact that Abel's critics were linguists who did not accept any idea of linguistic evolution. There were no primal terms because there was, in their minds, no primal stage of language development. This in part explains the failure of modern linguistics to evaluate the more ambitious theory of Giambattista Vico (1948 [1725; 1744]), which, like Lacan's theory of metaphor, proposes a mentality based on suppression and (metonymic) emergence. Vico is not simply a precursor to Freud and Lacan, he originated the idea of the unconscious as the 'ideal eternal history' present in every artefact, mechanised by the logic of the so-called imaginative universal (*universale fantastico*), a structure leading to rhetorical reality rather than a trope based on analogy with one term missing. Just as Lacan would defy Perelman's comparison of metaphor to analogy (Swales 2019), Vico had, two hundred years earlier, proposed that metaphor was the basis for *imaginare*, the Imaginary as such.

the hearth fire (Hestia), the family could break rules but avoid retribution. A modern vestige of this practice is the custom of carrying the bride across the threshold of the new home, an abduction charade designed to free this ‘priestess of Hestia’ from any suspicion of defecting from her duties (Fustel de Coulanges 1874: 56-8).

Other reverse-angle affordances of cathesis included entertainment of strangers in the home, trading with unknown parties (so-called silent trade), and formation of political alliances. This reverse-angle anamorphosis led to terms – contronyms – that embodied the combination of conflictual functioning of events, objects, and even conversations. One could say that the reverse-angle ploy meant that every cyclopean custom was anamorphic, using this term more broadly than the standard insertion of a sub-image within a main image, as in the classic example of Hans Holbein’s double portrait, *The Ambassadors* (1533). In the expanded sense, anamorphosis is the construction of a cathetic dimension with two points of view – quite literally a projective line with antipodal vanishing points, which are simultaneously a toroidal centre.

The logic of cultural contronymics was analogous to projective geometry’s relation of the two-dimensional, non-orientable form to the immersion into the Euclidean space of self-intersection. In ancient tales such as Apollo and Daphne, the Cyclops episode in Homer’s *Odyssey*, or Actæon’s encounter with Diana, the role of immersion is a necessary constant, with its indispensable and invariant theme of entrapment. In modern tales such as *My Man Godfrey* the twinning of immersion with entrapment is no less evident, no less structural. By taking topology to ethnology, we see why Lacan fashioned psyche’s extensions as cross-caps, toruses, and Möbius bands. Even in his seemingly quadrilateral schema of the four discourses, there was the necessary twist that, in *My Man Godfrey*, assigned the point where the ending could be found in the beginning – a cinematic contronym – as a literally melancholy pivot, about which the three main episodes could swing. Just as the discourse of analysis features the agency of the *objet petit a*, the film did not represent the foreshadowing of Godfrey’s failed love affair; similarly, it ended just at the point where his presumably successful marriage was only about to begin. We have hearth-fires to mark both the *terminus ante quem* and *terminus post quem*. The campfires of the shanty-town brighten the shadow of the Queensboro Bridge in the first scene of the film; Godfrey’s office is warmed by a blazing fire in a stone fireplace in the last scene. Curiously, Irene brings a supply of firewood with her, as if to cement her intention to marry Godfrey, then and there, after securing the authority of his hearth. As a modern-day priestess of Hestia in the midst of modernist architecture,

Irene closes the curve with one line in the future, \rightarrow |, one in the past, | \leftarrow , to make the space in between | a |, the gap in the circle of discourses that have assigned the discourse of analysis the role of the hinge. And, just as a is in the position of Signifier to the signified, S/s , in analysis's $a/S2$, Lacan insists that the truth of the metonymic chain is its 'topological substratum' (2002: 418). This is the superficiality of discourse. Truth lies in the twist, which allows the \rightarrow , the viewing point, to be repositioned as the vanishing point, (\leftarrow) for the family of parallel lines¹⁰ that have connected the \rightarrow with the \leftarrow , as structural spandrels¹¹.

Coincidences of the torus's fundamental polygon

It is no profound accomplishment to fit elements of the story into the wheels of Lacan's discourses. The film seems to have a clairvoyant appreciation for how the sequence of hysteria>master>university>analysis rotates S_1 , S_2 , a , and $\$$ across the field of agent, other, product, and truth (see Fig. 2). It is rather more interesting – and puzzling – how the more general structure of consubstantiality might explain the negation-of-negation logic as meeting the needs of an audience, whose collective imagination must be synchronised within the cipher of objective reification, | \leftarrow , and subjective reversal, | \leftarrow (\leftarrow). This is more than re-arranging puzzle parts. Consubstantiality in this instance is the comic supplement that supplies the fantasy to account for the inadequacies of the 1930s Depression, where the Real showed through with far greater vengeance than the trash tipplings that encroached on the shanty-town of the forgotten men. This silly film's accomplishment lies in its structural precision, its seemingly comprehensive understanding of consubstantiality. First, we should inventory the effectiveness of this paradigm in terms of its overlaps with other protocols that Lacan has presented as rule of order: not just for discourses but for sexuation, metaphor/metonymy (in dreams, condensation/displacement), the analytical process plotted by the L-schema, and the parapractic relation of repetition to

¹⁰ In projective topology, any line is called a one-dimensional subspace, which presumes that it and other parallel subspaces will meet at a common vanishing point, which can be represented at the horizon lying at infinity or at the centre of a projective plane where the lines can be defined using Cartesian coordinates.

¹¹ It is a sore point with me that Slavoj Žižek (2009) failed to see the relation of the spandrel to consubstantiality, even though he had succeeded in showing how the architectural spandrel's uselessness was the basis of emergence, according to Stephen J. Gould. But, here again the essay failed to connect emergence to the critical role played by the sorites, the proper name for the paradox Žižek abbreviates as 'one grain more, one hair less'. The third strike in Žižek's attempt to connect to architecture would have connected sorites to Lacan's two-dimensional linguistic model of metonymy, which would have led to the understanding of Freud's parapraxis in relation to the reason behind his suppression of the proper name Signorelli in the first place: the fact that Freud was a stranger in a strange land. Lacan leads the way in associating the repetition of words that are not Signorelli with the necessity to map his metonymies across the Adriatic of his vacation travels.

sublimation via the inside-out opposition of acting out and *passage à l'acte*, described in *Seminar XIV, The Logic of Phantasy*.

Lacanian psychoanalysis is replete with diagrams, mathemes, ciphers, formulas, Euler circles, and other graphic supports. Lacan's capability as a visual thinker still outstrips most of his readers' capabilities. His knowledge of topology and knot theory, his understanding of key correlates such as the Cayley-Klein matrix to the Borromeo knot is rarely challenged. Despite the damage potential of extracting one schema from its context, let me refer to the quadrature that Lacan seems to have adopted from Aristotle's square of oppositions (Aristotle 1938: 167-75; Lacan 1966-67: 153). In *Seminar XIV, The Logic of Phantasy*, in no fewer than five sessions (8, 9, 11, 12, 13) Lacan redraws Aristotle's square in what is unmistakably a fundamental polygon (the conventional means of representing a topological figure) of the torus (Fig. 3).

In this standard mathematical shorthand, two vectors, one red, one blue, diverge from a single point. On Lacan's original toroidal diagram from *Seminar XIV* (Fig. 3), this is labelled repetition. The vectors end at opposite corners, which labels *passage à l'acte* (upper left) and acting-out (lower right). These antipodes, he notes, represent positions outside and inside the Symbolic. A line connecting them would be, in visual perspective terms, *cathetus*, the uncanny connection between the point of view and vanishing point that Brunelleschi observed in the depths of the mirror (Edgerton 1973).

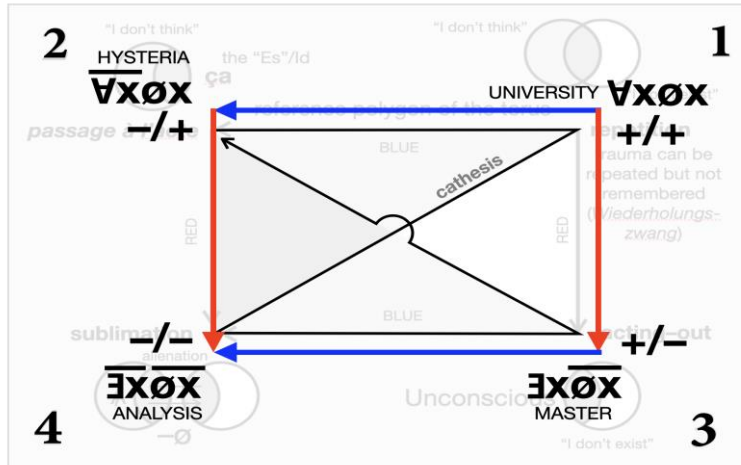


Figure 4. The torus relating repetition to sublimation *via* the inside-out positions of *passage à l'acte* and acting-out suggests a similar topology for the four contingent conditions of sexual difference, where 'those who would call themselves man' must obey the phallic rule ($\forall x\emptyset x$) as long as there is at least one who does not ($\exists x\text{ff}\emptyset x$), and where 'not all of those who would call themselves woman' obey the phallic rule ($\text{ff}\forall x\emptyset x$), and there are no exceptions ($\text{ff}\exists x\text{ff}\emptyset x$). Reductions of these conditions to plus/minus abbreviations (+/+, +/−, −/+, and −/−) allow comparison to the torus's own plus/minus positions marking the expansion and contraction of the fundamental polygon. Drawing by author.

Terms suggested by consubstantiation – *conatus*, cathesis, transience, anamorphosis – can be written across Lacan's torus, where Aristotle's negative must be given a double twist, beginning with the cathetic vector connecting sublimation to repetition (Fig. 4). In Godfrey's terms, this is the way the left-out fore-story and post-film marriage with Irene are spookily revealed. In the ritualistic night-club office, we see the silhouette of the Queensborough Bridge (Fig. 5). Curiously, the profile is in the same position we saw it at the opening

and middle of the film, but the squarish building in front of it is now in back. Clearly, this was an accident of back-projecting a process shot, where the need for two reversals to register the image may have confused the crew. This error is, however, a kind of slip of the tongue that punctuates the blah blah blah of the film as discourse. It is both insignificant and significant, like a gambler's tell¹². It points to the function of $|a|$ in Analysis, the frequency the Analyst's ear must tune in to in order to plan interventions that precede, $<$, in the form of suggestion, or follow, $>$, in the form of a cough or murmur. The meme $|a|$ might as easily be temporalized, as $<a>$, to suggest the technique by which variable tempo opens up a space in the Analysand's blah blah blah for the Unconscious to speak forth. The temporal $<>$ could be considered the spatial figure of the mouth of the Unconscious, \diamond , Lacan's famous *poinçon*, as both open and empty, like the mouth of Mother Courage in Bertolt Brecht's famous play.

¹² A tell is a sign, such as a cough, twitch, or small gesture, given unconsciously by a card-player who is bluffing (having a weaker hand than his/her wager was intended to indicate).



Figure 5. *My Man Godfrey's* opening and closing scenes, both with the Queensborough Bridge in the background, but with the silhouette reversed. Notice the building that is, on the left photo, in front of the bridge and, on the right photo, behind, although in the same angular aspect. Photos by author

Cathesis connects the discourse of analysis with university discourse, sublimation with repetition. What of it? Does not analysis refer to what Alexander Bullock meant when he said that all you need for an insane asylum is ‘a large room and the right kind of people’? Is not this the way we might describe the position, the so-called fourth wall, where the audience occupies the space formerly taken up by the camera and crew? Isn’t it also that timing, typically 24 frames per second, is critical for the visual image and its virtual spatiality? does not $<$ and $>$ also suggest the reversal of the camera into the projector? Could we rewrite a as $|a|$, since it is a means of calibrating, in the same way Lacan used the powers of a to calibrate the unary trait?¹³

What’s love got to do with it?

If we lay Lacan’s mathemes of sexual differentiation over the fundamental polygon of the torus, the discourse of analysis falls beneath the double negative of the feminine condition of ‘no exception’ to the principle of the not-all. The double negatives in the matheme $\sim\exists x\sim\emptyset x$, can be abbreviated $-/-$. The upper-right corner of the hysteric’s discourse, where Irene abducts Godfrey

¹³ In *Seminar XIV*, *The Structure of Phantasy*, Lacan uses \mathfrak{r} , One, and the Big Other, A, interchangeably. This may indicate how he associates the \mathfrak{r} , in its regressive role as the $\mathfrak{r}\mathfrak{x}\mathfrak{r}$ square in the Golden Rectangle, as something that is both added and subtracted to produce the constant series, and that he wishes to see the A as also a structure without content.

from his position outside the Symbolic, is the upper corner of the mirror, $\sim\forall x\emptyset x$, abbreviated $-/+$ (not-all of the woman falls beneath the phallic rule, \emptyset). Godfrey is in fact feminised by his voluntary passivity. Possibly, he felt that his former romance had failed because, as he says, ‘he was not man enough’. He continually resists the romantic advances of Cornelia, Irene and the Bullock’s maid, Molly. After Godfrey reveals to the family that he has rescued them from ruin, the mother Angelica Bullock mourns his departure with the admission that ‘he was the only one who really understood women’. If not on these counts, Godfrey earned his claim of the $\sim\forall x\emptyset x$, the not-all position, by concealing not just his identity but his superior status beneath his butler’s black suit. With the first of its two terms negated, the feminised Godfrey’s hysteria is $-/+$.

The other end of the mirror, $||$, is held up by the appropriate reflection of this, $+/-$, the acting-out of the exception to the male position, the at-least-one who does not obey the phallic law who guarantees the efficacy of that law as repetition, $+/+$, the University, where *jouissance* comes in the form of a job for every man. If the *a* is the means by which, by registering time, extension becomes possible as the projection of the film onto the screen. The camera is turned around to become a projector and, at the same time, another point of view, (\leftarrow). The plot establishes its own version of (\leftarrow) once the passive Godfrey goes active as the owner-director of the glitzy nightclub, The Dump, built on top of the former trash pile (Fig. 6).

The story may now conclude with the Œdipal fantasy of marriage, antipode of burial as the real meaning of the trash pile as a zero-degree materiality. We do not have to thumb through Frazer’s *Golden Bough* (1981) for long to find cases where openings in the forest are used for altars, or where burial and marriage are theatrical homonyms. If *jouissance* structures the university-discourse ending of Godfrey, it simultaneously opens up a fourth-wall asylum, the theatre as the perfect ‘large room and the right kind of people’. The lack generated by the subject-who-speaks, as soon as s/he speaks, whose remedies fail, converts into a spatial and temporal place for witnessing the self-intersections of immersion: stammers, stumbles, slips of the tongue, bungled

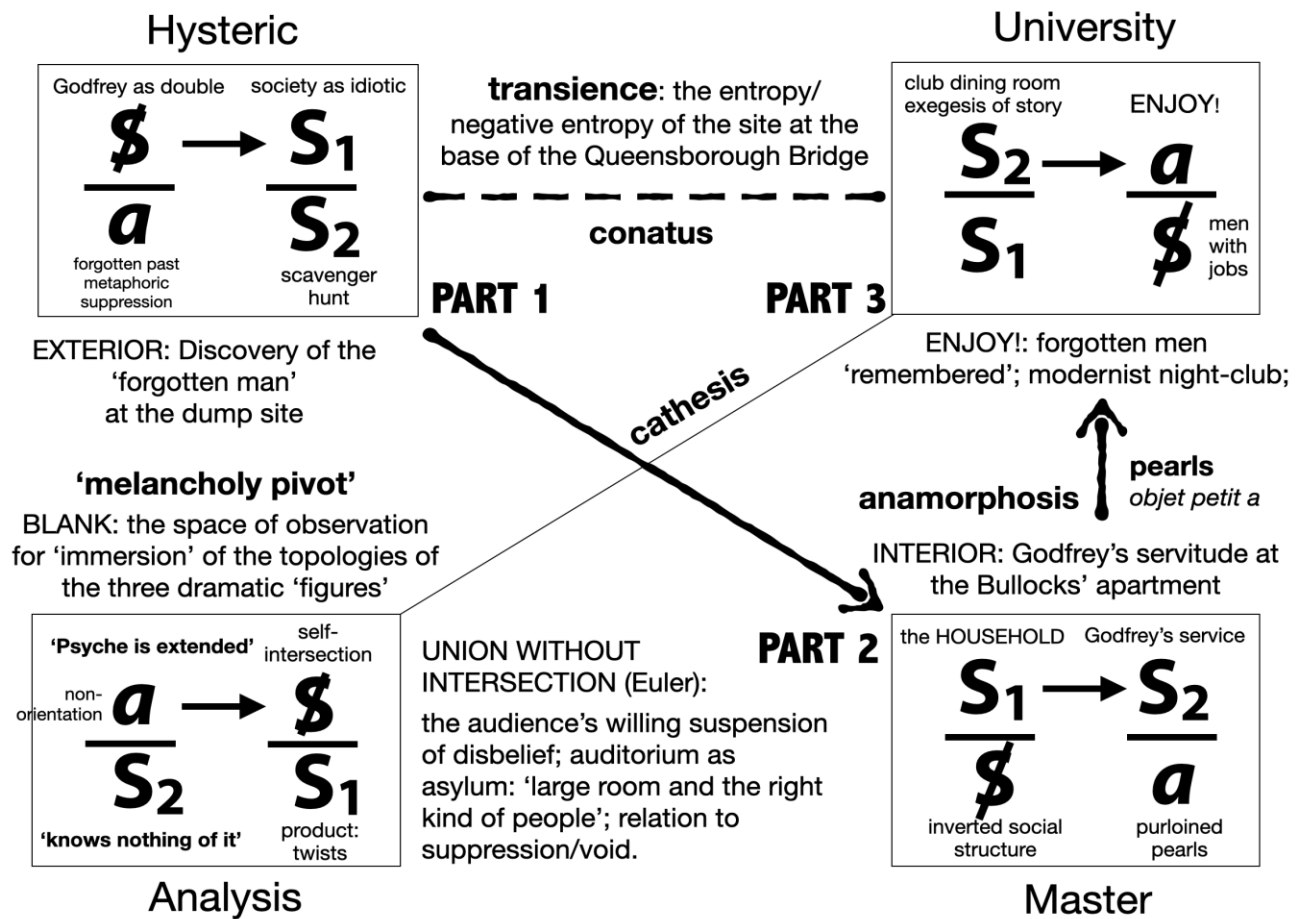


Figure 6. *My Man Godfrey*'s three main parts progress from a 'scene of Hysteria' at the trash dump shanty-town to the antipodal apartment of the Bullock family. After the intrigue with the planted pearls and revelation that the collateral of the pearls as allowed Godfrey to short-sell Bullocks' shares and save the family, the night club resurrects the dump as a modernist night-club. The 3+1 design assigns a dimension for speculation, Analysis, the 'asylum' of the film that is allowed by regarding the 'projective figure' of the story to be 'self-intersecting' — the production of plot-points where logical twists create traps then escape them. Drawing by author.

explanations. These traps of self-intersection are the stuff of comedy. Godfrey traps himself, Irene wants to free him. Cornelia sets a trap, Godfrey evades it. The butler disguise traps the Bullocks, Cornelia tries to peel it off.

Only at the end of the film is there a final trap that paradoxically frees the audience from their willing suspension of disbelief. Who can resist a bride who shows up with her own firewood and minister? What better +/- for the -/+ than the -/- of sublimation followed by ('repeat after me'): I-do/I-do, +/+. And, what better shadow to serve as the canopy for this ceremony than the

Queensborough Bridge, in Janusian reversal that lets the couple put the past behind them simply by switching their point of view?

Does psyche extend on behalf of *kenosis* – knowing without knowing? Is this the meaning of ‘doesn’t know it’ (*weiß nichts davon*) in Freud’s mysterious little note (*SE XXIII 1938*)? To close this essay I suggest asking the original girl (Apuleius 2009). Like Godfrey, Psyche performed a double *katabasis*. Not content with her lover’s nest in Hades, she wished to see Eros and violated their prenuptial agreement. Would not the son of Venus be just as beautiful as the goddess of love herself?¹⁴ Hell-bent on immersion, unhappy with two-dimensional topological non-orientation, Psyche met with the sorrows of all lovers who wish to put love to the test. Immersion comes at a cost: entrapment (self-intersection). No less does the movie audience add a dimension, the fourth wall, by the subtraction of the camera and crew that has, in production, converted the camera to a projector, one version of the antipodal positions of the passive (the camera), $-/+$, and the active projection of the $+/-$. The audience’s trap is the 93 minutes during which they must sit still in the auditorium and play dead occupying the fourth wall. They will not only be held down by immersion’s extension, they will actually be that immersion, that extension.

Would not this be the perfect time for a contronym? Is not the hero, in the tradition of the heroic descent (*katabasis*), the very inversion of the *miles gloriosus* types who rampage their way across *The Iliad*? This answers the question, ‘What is a mirror image’. For everyone but the subject who sees her/himself, it’s just a left-right reversal. For the victim of the trap of mirror-stage, however, it is the double negative, not a top-to-bottom but a switch from being on top to being on bottom of Fortuna’s Wheel. Here, Godfrey, psyche, and Psyche herself might wish they never had extended. Their trials are topologically preserved in the logic of immersion, where to see the twist in the Möbius band we have to endure the comedic agony of entrapment. Is it one side or two? We can prove it both ways.

¹⁴ On the matter of Eros (and, hence, love/sex) as a contronymic construct and original of consubstantiation: ‘Some say that all gods and all living creatures originated in the stream of Oceanus which girdles the world, and that Tethys was the mother of all his children. ... But the Orphics say that black-winged Night, a goddess of whom even Zeus stands in awe, was courted by the wind and laid a silver egg in the womb of Darkness; and that Eros, whom some call Phanes, was hatched from this egg and set the Universe in motion. Eros was double-sexed and golden-winged and, having four heads, sometimes roared like a bull or lion, sometimes hissed like a serpent or bleated like a ram’ (Graves 1955: 30).

Abbreviations

Arist. *Categ., De Int., An. Pr.* Aristotle. *The Categories, On Interpretation, Prior Analytics* (trans) H. Cooke. The Loeb Classical Library 325. MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1938.

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