

The Testimony of Other(s); or how to traverse the fantasy of the crypt-Other

Richard I. Pope
Department of Art History & Communication Studies
McGill University, Montreal
February 2005

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
degree of Communication Studies

© RIPope 2005



Library and
Archives Canada

Bibliothèque et
Archives Canada

Published Heritage
Branch

Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

ISBN: 0-494-12758-9

Our file Notre référence

ISBN: 0-494-12758-9

NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.


Canada

Abstracts:

The following thesis is a work of cultural psychoanalysis in an era properly defined as “post-Holocaust”. It begins with an extensive working through of Lacanian concepts, followed by an examination of fantastical appropriations of the trauma of the Holocaust – fantasies that serve as the very frame of our reality, or rather, hyperreality. After a further working through of the relations between the crypt and the unconscious (partially through a reading of *Hamlet*), the thesis then brings in Marshall McLuhan and Jean Baudrillard to help further elucidate some of the key arguments.

La thèse suivante est un travaux de psychanalyse culturelle après la Holocauste. Ça commence avec une analyse de les idées de Lacan, et après ça une examination des fantasies attaché a les blessures de la Holocauste – fantasies qui sont la cadre de notre réalité, en fait notre hyperréalité. Après une examination de les relations entre le crypte et le inconscient (en part avec une examination de *Hamlet*), la thèse rencontre Marshall McLuhan and Jean Baudrillard pour aider avec les débats les plus grave.

Acknowledgements:

The author would like to thank Professor Will Straw for his invaluable assistance in the development and completion of this thesis. All remaining errors are the responsibility of the author.

CONTENTS:

Prolegomena	2
Introduction	2
.....Caveat: Theoretical Methodology	7
Chapter 1: Terminology	8
Symbolic-Real-Imaginary – <i>objet petit a</i> – Oedipus Complex and Castration – Phallus – Jouissance – Four Discourses – Fantasy – Obsessional Neurosis & Hysteria – Psychoanalytic Treatment	
Chapter 2: Terminology, (cont.), with an emphasis on subjective relations	25
Superego – Need, Demand, Desire, Drives – Death Drive – Other(s) – Sexual Difference – Unconscious and the Structure of Language – Speech – Subject – Testimony: A Provisional Definition	
Chapter 3: The Holocaust and the Crypt-Other	50
(Post)Modernism's Real – The Holocaust and Žižek's (Change of) Position The Serbian Other – The Spectral Big Other and Hypersensitivity – Crypt – Crypt vs. Unconscious, and the Crypt-Other – Crypt-Fantasy – Eating Shit, & (its) Annunciation – The Dis-Satisfaction of the Crypt-Fantasy	
Chapter 4: Hamlet's Crypt-Love, and P@ying (to) the Crypt-Other	75
Trauma, Victimization, and the Discourse of the University – (Love of) Melancholia, "Mourning the Impossibility of Mourning", and Crypt-Love – The Crypt-Love of Hamlet – Derridean/Levinasian Crypt-Fantasy – Superego, Totalitarianism, Enlightenment Bathwater, and P@ying	
Chapter 5: The Real of Technology as The Real of the Other(s)	93
Technology and Temporality – Technology and the Death Drive – McLuhan's Incorporation – Baudrillard's Derealization – The Code as the Superego – The Masses – The Liberal's Conservatism	
Chapter 6: Concluding Thoughts on The Testimony of Other(s)	111
Notes	117
References	128

Prolegomena

Zizek suggests that all philosophers have basically one fundamental argument on which they elaborate time and time again. So it is for me; I write of the failure of the social fabric *as* the shunning of symbolization, for fear *of* the necessary failure of symbolization. And I circle this time and time again in the following thesis; you will pardon me if it at times appears repetitious, or indeed compulsive. In this thesis I attempt to bind this trauma – of the fear *of* trauma, of encountering the Real – so as to, with you dear reader, mourn the situation, or at least mourn the very impossibility of mourning. Or, indeed and in deed, *both*.

RIP

Toronto, July 2004

Introduction

The following thesis is, in the vaguest possible terms, a psychoanalysis of (post)modern culture in the wake of the Holocaust, or more appropriately – for it is a question of appropriation, of incorporation – of what the Holocaust has come to mean for us. This thesis seeks to understand the nature of social relations, understood as intrinsically structured through language. Language, or the Symbolic, is understood to have an internal deadlock at its heart: the Real. The Real is both what makes every symbolization fail, as well as the very thing that gives rise to symbolization. It could be understood as the gap in language, a gap in which the world of things, as well as the subject, situate themselves. Following the trauma of the Holocaust, it was (and is) argued by many that to even begin to symbolize such horror would not only be impossible, which is partly true, but also immoral, which is false in that it depoliticizes and renders all symbolizations suspect. The gap of language, which creates and is experienced as the “primary trauma”, is filled in many ways, by the superego, the crypt, and the big Other, the latter of which is preferable given that it is something to which we all relate through our places of enunciation (thereby making desire possible).

Given that this thesis relies on a web of theoretical and psychoanalytic notions, the first and second chapters will, to the extent this is possible, explicate each notion separately. To highlight their interrelation, however, the terms – besides the registers of the Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real (which are simply mentioned too often) – will be highlighted when they are discussed outside of their own sections. The ultimate focus is an understanding of the conversational/testimonial encounter as involving a place of enunciation (the subject of the unconscious), the *objet petit a* as the objective correlate of the subject of the unconscious between the enunciation and the enunciated, the enunciated, and, finally, the annunciation (the satisfaction of speech qua Other-Jouissance). The thrust of the argument is that, in fear of the necessary primary trauma of the gap in language, we continually attempt to exorcize our places of enunciation. This results in a “crypt-fantasy” in which we all partake, a fantasy itself guided by a collective superego, which fills in for the lack of an(y) Other. In forgoing the barred subject, the deepest level of subjectivity, we turn its objective correlate, the *objet petit a*, into something more and more inhuman, beyond our reach, or conversely, as the enunciated itself. In concluding, it will risk a provisional definition of testimony, so as to lead into why the testimonial encounter is shunned today, which is the focus of the third chapter.

The third chapter will begin by discussing the (post)modern predicament in relation to the Holocaust, followed by an analysis of the “crypt” and incorporation, introjection, and melancholia. Whereas the unconscious is formed through repression, the crypt is formed through foreclosure; whereas the unconscious recognizes that which it is repressing (through the repression itself), the crypt pretends as though the trauma in question never existed: the trauma is fore-closed. When the ambiguity of language is itself shunned, so is the Other; the Other thus transforms into a crypt-Other, guided by the collective superego. We should note immediately the distinction between the “crypt-fantasy” and the crypt. Of the crypt, nothing should be said, for its formation is, by its very definition, un-acknowledged – and yet, the crypt (or the crypt[’s]-effects) is today everywhere in discourse, and it is this paradoxical discourse on the crypt that we call the crypt-fantasy. Exorcising one’s place of enunciation, and thus Other(s), requires something to give order to one’s universe. On the one hand the superego does so, and its obscenities are thereafter counter-acted by the crypt-fantasy. On the one hand, pornography, on the other eroticism: both fantasies, ascribed as one to the male and the other to the female, converge asexually in the absence of an(y) Other to

mediate them. Or perhaps the lack of a(ny) Other makes them converge. The crypt itself is not a feminine structure, just as the Other is not a masculine one, but the fantasies of the superego and the crypt-fantasy have been made into male and female, respectively, even while they paradoxically converge asexually in the desperate avoidance of the Real of sexual difference.

The fourth chapter will focus on the logic of victimization present today, wherein to find a place in today's (nonexistent) big Other one must be in some way traumatized. It will introduce the notion of "crypt-love", especially in relation to Hamlet, wherein we all seek recognition in a purely fantastical manner. Through the analysis of Hamlet's situation it will open on to a discussion of Derridean/Levinasian Messianism, followed by a few more notes on the superego and its role today as the (nonexistent) big Other. Today, we "p@ay" for and to the crypt-Other.

The fifth chapter will sharpen this perspective through an analysis of technology, suggesting that technology emerges through the death drive, and vice versa. Technology('s effects) is thus Real, and could be equated with the Real of the Other, both of which we foreclose today. From this perspective, the cyborg is the *other as technology and technology as other*, wherein to testify with Other(s) one must assume one's 'cyborg'-status. This veers into the work of Marshall McLuhan and Jean Baudrillard, wherein the latter's notion of hyperreality could be understood as a result of the crypt's abolishment of representative distance, so that the gap of language is either denied or acknowledged and taken as a reason to not even begin to attempt symbolization; either way (for they amount to the same) the result is that objects take on an obscene and "stupid positivity", with which there can be— seemingly — no Symbolic relation. When the gap qua Real, and the Imaginary for that matter, is no longer mediated by the Symbolic, we enter the era of hyperreality.

The sixth and final chapter will by way of conclusion broaden and expand the definition of testimony, suggesting that in 'postmodern' times, by virtue of our cynical distance towards any big Other, we would be closer to testimonial encounters were it not for our ultimately believing in Others of the Other, that is, in our paranoid fantasies of an obscene superegotistical Other 'pulling the strings'. If we just Realized the 'Other of the Other' to be the other h/imself in h/is Real aspect, we would arrive in the domain of Other(s), and we would do so through the death drive.

To place this thesis in its theoretical context, let us introduce some questions and notions that will eventually become clearer. Near the end of a recent text, in a chapter entitled “The Demise of Symbolic Efficiency”, Žižek states: “in a sense, ‘the big Other no longer exists’ – but in what sense? One should be very specific about what this nonexistence actually amounts to”¹. Since the big Other never existed in actual fact – as it is always only continually (presup)posed in quotidian encounters – “what is increasingly undermined is precisely the symbolic *trust* which persists against all sceptical data”².

In the same text, in a different context, Žižek discusses Lacan’s notion of *l’apparoie*, or the self-enclosed assertion of jouissance of empty (meaningless) speech, which in a way is both the very figure of the drive and yet somehow manages to avoid a confrontation with the Real; thus the problem for the analyst when confronting this is to ask how we can re-introduce a Limit, thereby returning to the “domain of prohibition/Law, communication of/and meaning”³. As Žižek writes, “in short, *l’apparoie* is to *la parole* what *lalangue* is to *le langage*”⁴. Žižek suggests there must be something which precedes *l’apparoie* — “which is not to be identified with the blissful circuit of self-satisfied drive”⁵: we will call this the *death drive* qua “ontological ‘Big Bang’”⁶. Since the goal of analysis is to traverse the fundamental fantasy so that the subject can ‘regress’ from desire to drive, the question is how we can avoid (what we will call) the *stupid positivity* of the drive, given its associations with mysticism, that is, celebrating the (compulsively) repeated missing of the Goal. This translates into the Real as transcendent, impossible, without realizing how the Real is not only what is impossible but also – and this is what is so nerve-wracking – *is possible*. *L’apparoie*, then, when divorced from mediation with Other(s), might be seen as a sort of fantasy preventing any “ontological ‘Big Bang’”, that, while quasi-Real, avoids the true dimension of the Real – the *shift of perspective* from the Thing as Real to the Real as that which prevents access to the Thing – that we will call the most radical dimension of the death drive.

Žižek, following Lacan, insists that there is “a desire that remains even after we have traversed our fundamental fantasy”, and this desire is the “desire of the analyst”; it is “supposed to sustain the analytic community in the absence of any phantasmic support; it is supposed to make possible a communal ‘big Other’ that avoids the transferential effect of the ‘subject supposed to... [know, believe, enjoy]”⁷. As he immediately continues: “In other words, the desire of the analyst is Lacan’s tentative answer to the question: after we have

traversed the fantasy, and accepted the ‘nonexistence of the big Other’, how do we none the less return to some (new) form of the big Other that again makes collective coexistence possible?”⁸ But perhaps another question needs to be asked: can a society function in the absence of fantasmic support? Surely it cannot change without traversing the fundamental fantasy (via the death drive), but can it exist without fantasy whatsoever? In explicating the traversing of the fundamental fantasy, do we not in the same moment partake in some manner of fantasy? This thesis will argue that we must do so, not simply for pragmatic reasons but for theoretical ones, given the very nature of human communication, or testimony, which will be herein elaborated through a Lacanian framework.

And yet, the very goal of this thesis is to elucidate ways in which communication can be opened up to this traversing of the fantasy, *in* discourse. At the same time, it will seek to make clear that today’s ‘nonexistence of the big Other’ is (unfortunately) in no way that of the analytic community, for today’s (presup)posed ‘nonexistence of the big Other’ is precisely that: (presup)posed, which is to say *fantastically* assumed. While Žižek is right to say that it is precisely *trust* that is lacking, the point here is to follow his very warning that “one should be very specific about what this nonexistence actually amounts to” and note that we in fact *trust that we do not trust*, we (presup)pose the nonexistence of the big Other, which is to say that it exists in its presumed nonexistence: it is ex-posed. This makes it all the more non-negotiable, all the more superegotistical. *The big Other has largely been replaced by the (collective) superego*; this understanding is everywhere implicit in Žižek if nowhere, to the best of my knowledge, explicitly laid out. This fantastical replacement prevents us from the “ontological ‘Big Bang’” (qua death drive), thereby preventing the big Other (qua anti-big Other, equivalent to trusting that we do not trust) from change. It is a fantastical replacement that can never fully replace the big Other, since the superego is fundamentally dependant on a big Other with which it places itself in relation to; the bizarre dynamic of our situation is that rather than the Law giving rise to the superego, the superego appears to give rise to the Law.

Caveat: Theoretical Methodology

I strongly believe that it is better to fully assume, as best one can, the work of one thinker rather than partially assume that of many. Only when one encounters – when one submits oneself to – the work of one thinker is one exposed to the Real of their (and our) thought. When one glosses over several thinkers to then create a pastiche or bricolage, it is all too easy to simply take what one wants, that is, to have decided in advance, and to have thereby foreclosed the Real. I am, it is perhaps already clear, a Zizekian. Since he is a Lacanian, I am so as well, if one step removed. What this amounts to is that in those situations where hairs could be split between Zizek and Lacan, I will for the most part simply take the Zizekian viewpoint, since my focus is more to split hairs with him. Most of my references to Lacan, then, simply support the Zizekian viewpoint, but this is not to deny the fact that many hairs could be split between the two. At the same time, the discussion of the crypt within a Lacanian framework is unique, and the impetus to develop this was my thought that something was missing in the Lacanian framework to describe the peculiar (lack of) social relations of today.

In my encounter(s) with Zizek, especially in the beginning, I often found myself wondering why he could not simply lay out the Lacanian definitions he was going to employ before he “ventured off” into cultural analysis, and this is, in part, a frequent criticism of Zizek. I decided, then, that my own thesis would lay out the terms before I myself ventured off, but as I was writing it I realized – or should we say: Realized – that it was not a simple task. Indeed, I have gained a new (or rather further) appreciation of Zizek’s work – by virtue of his circling around a certain traumatic kernel of our being(s), one that simply will not allow for a neat descriptive analysis. That said, I have not dropped my attempt at a terminological “laying out”, for it remains a heuristic aid both for myself and any potential reader.

Chapter 1: Terminology

Symbolic-Imaginary-Real

The Symbolic is the realm of the signifier. Following the Saussurian insight, the relations of signifiers to referents is entirely arbitrary, thus effectively negating the “actual” object, and thereby creating the gap in language. The signifier is the murder of the thing; in this precise sense, the signifier is mourning *stricto sensu*. (As Richard Boothby writes, this death constitutes in the subject the eternalization of his desire².) The Other situates itself in and as mediator of the gap of language, so that when the Other is exorcized and the gap foreclosed, desire suffers. The capacity of a sign to evoke the signified depends therefore on its imbrications in the whole system of signifiers, which means that the third term introduced between the subject and the object is the whole Symbolic itself. We should raise attention immediately to the conjunction of the Symbolic with abjection. As Julia Kristeva argues, it is only by constituting a realm of the abject (initially the mother) that any and all relations between the subject and object can exist¹⁰. As Žižek notes in a different vein, it is only in giving one’s excrement in the anal stage that one is able to take part in the cycle of gifts and symbolic exchange in later life. To hold back one’s excrement is ultimately to refuse symbolic exchange qua gift-giving, a predicament brought to life in the image of the anal Miser hoarding his gold, thereby not taking part in exchanges while holding out the hope of a pure exchange¹¹; as we will see, there is a sort of correlation between the Miser and the feminine structure of being in the Symbolic in full without Limit, for it is the pure exchange that Woman has access to. The enunciated content functions as excrement by virtue of its very materiality. Through the enunciated content *qua* excrement via speech (or writing) one allows for relations between objects and subjects to exist.

The ego ideal, in contrast to the ideal ego of primary identification in the mirror stage, is of the symbolic register, formed through identifying with the father in the final stage of the Oedipus complex. It transcends the aggression of the Imaginary stage, thereby fostering a certain libidinal normalization. It is equivalent to identifying with the master signifier (or “unitary trait”)¹².

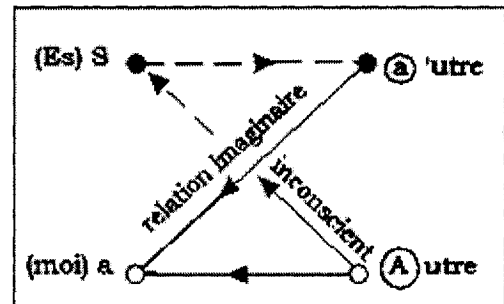
Most descriptions of the Lacanian registers begin with the Imaginary, as this register is, seemingly, the ‘first’ stage of psychological development. It is argued that humans are born premature, for relative to other species we require an extended time period of care and

guardianship by our parents before we are able to survive on our own¹³. This is a mostly accepted fact, although we could immediately argue that this prematurity is *because* of the Symbolic, thereby eliminating a chronological priority to any one register; where Lacan speaks of a biological gap I speak of the gap in language, which perhaps *caused* any biological gap – and certainly necessitates the relative fixity of the imago. Lacanian accounts go on to suggest that the human infant thus perceives itself as a *corps morcelee*, or “body-in-pieces”. The mirror image stage, for Lacan, is a founding moment in the constitution of the ego, for when the infant catches sight of h/is image s/he gains the sense of a unified body. This image and the ego are inextricably intertwined. This is a process also found in animals; what differentiates the human version is its fixation on and continual fascination with this image. This identification with the image is a primary one, giving birth to the ideal ego (in contrast to the ego ideal)¹⁴. The ego is thus an object, or a sort of projection of a bodily surface, whereas as we will see later, the crypt-fantasy “is” this surface. A projection, by its nature, is stupid, for it for the most part cannot mediate; there is thus a certain stupid positivity to the ego (although even more so to the crypt-fantasy).

Lacan argues that the Imaginary register is alienating, leading to an aggressivity against this image. Boothby situates a first instance of the death drive here¹⁵. There is a problem with this definition of the Imaginary as alienating, however, for it is not at this point clear what the Imaginary alienates one *from*. Being alienated from a “body-in-pieces” makes little sense, unless we situate a privileged subjective role for such a state in the Symbolic, that is, if Symbolic existence requires a certain kind of experience of a body-in-pieces, to which the Imaginary alienates one from. Indeed, it has been noted that there is no Imaginary register in itself, but rather that it is always already structured by the Symbolic¹⁶. To clarify what makes the Imaginary register alienating, I propose the notion that the body-in-pieces does not precede the mirror-image, but is strictly correlative to it¹⁷. Only when one catches sight of oneself in the mirror does one at the same time (retrospectively) understand oneself to be incomplete, wherein the difference between being complete and incomplete is but a shift of perspective in an ever-continuing Gestalting. Even when one thinks one’s image to be complete, the very danger of shifting perspective gives one the feeling of being alienated, and the very shift of perspective could be seen as the Imaginary death drive, which leads to the Symbolic. However, since the shift of perspective requires a subjective position only possible in the Symbolic, the shift of perspective here is, paradoxically, but an elision of the

shift of perspective (and thus the alienation). That is, the fantasy of the body-in-pieces is, well, just that: an Imaginary fantasy, which from then on protects one from what is Really terrifying, the shift of perspective itself. At the same time, it is only via the fantasy of the body-in-pieces, and particularly its coalescence into the fantasy of castration, that the shift of perspective, and thus the Symbolic, can emerge.

Lacan's Schema L (to the side) is a way of understanding the relations of the registers, with a focus on the Imaginary. The point is to note how to reach the subject of the unconscious (S) one must somehow pass through the wall of language



(a-a'), which is the Imaginary axis of the ego and the specular image. Thus the discourse of the Other reaches the subject in an interrupted and inverted form. As Boothby writes, "Schema L articulates the structured process... in which the speaking subject emerges as a question to itself. This questioning is in its essence a questioning of the ego"¹⁸. The subject receives this questioning ability through the Other, which means that should the Other be foreclosed, the subject cannot pass beyond its "stupid and ineffable existence"¹⁹(as "S"), to quote Lacan.

The Real is also born with the Symbolic, and is strictly internal to it. The Real is in fact the Symbolic in the mode of non-all, which is the (logically prior) Symbolic that lacks an external Limit/exception; thus the "line" between the Symbolic and the Real is the very founding gesture of the Symbolic²⁰. The non-all is *llanguage*, or *lalangue*, which in this sense is anti-Symbolic (and thus anti-Other). In discourse its equivalent is, as noted, *l'apparole*. Right away problems develop. The idea that non-all language – *llanguage/lalangue* – is "logically prior" contradicts what we and Žižek said earlier about there having to be something prior to *l'apparole*. If we understand the rise of human language to be tied to the symbolization of death, and/or to our early technological interventions into the natural order (thus spawning the need to signify such changes), then the Symbolic is intimately tied to the death_drive qua act, qua cut into the world (and into death itself). From this perspective, that is, the very shift of perspective of the Symbolic death_drive, the Symbolic (qua unconscious) and *lalangue/language* (qua cryptic) emerge at the same time, in this mad moment at the origin of the Symbolic. And yet since it is only through the Symbolic qua Limit that we can

understand this, the priority does indeed lie on the side of the death drive qua act/Symbolic. We can only ever gesture towards *llanguage/lalangue*, a gesturing that increases in inverse proportion to the decline of the Symbolic/Other. This gesturing “is” the crypt-fantasy, that, paradoxically, the superego demands.

The Real is the very stumbling-block that gives rise to every attempted symbolization, and is the reason why all symbolizations must fail in some way. Žizek lucidly suggests that the Real is both the Thing to which direct access is not possible and the very obstacle that prevents this direct access, or rather, *that it is the very shift of perspective from one to the other*²¹. *Contemporary society*, it will be argued, *focuses on both the Thing itself and the very obstacle that prevents access to the Thing, thereby avoiding the true dimension of the Real as the very shift of perspective. This shift is the death drive*, the ultimate Real. The Real can itself be a fantasy – we can only know the Real through fantasy – and such is the case in the notion of an impossible spectral Thing, as well as the notion of the Real itself being what blocks access. In fact, we could view these two sides of the Real as a fantastical Gestalt akin to the complete image (the Thing) and the body-in-pieces (the Real as blocking access), a Gestalt that does everything it can to avoid the true dimension of the Real as the very shift qua death drive from one to the other. The Thing is the Holocaust, and the trauma of the Holocaust prevents us from symbolizing the Real. In this way, in this fantasy – and simply because the Holocaust of course involved very Real trauma does preclude a fantastical way of (not) dealing with it, precisely *because* of its vast horror – we annunciate the Thing qua trauma of the Holocaust, without going through the Real itself qua death drive, which is to say we avoid the act, we avoid testimony. We gesture towards the Holocaust, but we refuse to ‘actualize’ its horror through the Symbolic, that is, we refuse to mourn it.

The crucial opposition is between the Real and reality. Whereas reality serves as the external boundary that enables us to totalize language and make a closed system of it, the Real is the internal deadlock in the heart of language. The bar which separates the Real from the Symbolic is strictly internal to the Symbolic, and this prevents the Symbolic from ever achieving identity. As Žizek writes, the problem for the signifier is not its impossibility to touch the Real but its impossibility to attain ‘itself’. Crucially, “the object inscribes itself in the blank opened by this failure. The very positivity of the object is nothing but a positivization, an incarnation, of the bar which prevents the signifier from fully ‘becoming itself’”²². The more language “fails” – that is, the more we are “consciously aware” of

language's failures, using this very "knowledge" (acquired *through* language, we might note) as an alibi for not even trying – the larger the gap, and thus, especially in times of technological hyperrealism (in cinema, photography, television), the more the object seems positively "there". At the same time, the more the gap is filled in the larger the object looms as well (since subjects can only relate via the gap), and so the point here is that the object takes on an air of positivity insofar as one does not try to mediate the world of things through the Symbolic (qua contingent qua its constitutive deadlock).

The Real, then, is the inert remainder foreclosed from (what we experience as) reality²³. It returns in the Real of spectral apparitions; this we could understand as the stupid positivity of haunting. The Real is what the subject renounces to become immersed in this lifeworld, and it is radically unhistorical²⁴ (interestingly, ideology is also unhistorical, or at least presents itself as such; in this presentation it seeks to channel/fill up the Real, thereby reducing subjective relations).

As Žižek notes, the three registers should also be understood as fractally mapped onto each other. The real Symbolic is the signifier reduced to a senseless formula, as in algebraic equations. The imaginary Symbolic is the realm of Jungian symbols. The symbolic Symbolic is speech and meaningful language. However, the big Other (qua meaningful language) also partakes of the Imaginary, and is thus not simply symbolic Symbolic. The point is that one cannot have meaningful language without the Imaginary, without the *objet petit a*, since it is the Imaginary which allows people to believe that they are referring to the same things. The real Imaginary is the fantasy as the imaginary scenario occupying the place of the Real, and is thus the gateway to desire. The imaginary Imaginary is the image as such, the decoy. The symbolic Imaginary is that of Jungian symbols.

The real Real can be understood as the horrifying Thing, the alien from Ridley Scott's film of the same name. The symbolic Real is the Real as consistency, as the signifier reduced to a meaningless senseless formula and without relation to the world (as in algebraic formulations)²⁵. The imaginary Real is that certain "je ne sais quoi" or unfathomable element one senses in relation to the Other²⁶. As we will see, it bears a strong relation, then, to Other-Jouissance. It could also be said to have something to do with the satisfaction of speech or annunciation. One might suggest that the satisfaction of speech qua annunciation is nothing but the "je ne sais quoi" of the imaginary Real.

Objet petit a

This (non)concept is perhaps the most difficult term to understand in the Lacanian lexicon, as it has at various points taken on features of all three registers. It was first used interchangeably with the ego in the specular image (see Schema L, above), and was thus strictly Imaginary. It then became the object of desire, the part-object separable from the body, and thus no longer bearing a relation with the specular image. It became inflected with the resonances associated with the *agalma*, the object of desire which we seek in the other. Following on this it developed more into the register of the Real, as the object which can never be attained but as such serves as the cause of desire. This sets in motion the drives and their partial objects, wherein the drives circle around it²⁷. Thus the *objet petit a* is both an object of anxiety and the final irreducible reservoir of libido.

The Symbolic dimension of the “*objet petit a*” is of a secondary nature, in that the *objet petit a* is the Real leftover or remnant left by the introduction of the Symbolic. It is what must be given up to enter the Symbolic, but only comes to be through being lost. This is a forced choice, a sacrifice that serves to conceal the Other’s lack. What one should do, then, is to repeat in reverse this forced choice, that is, to sacrifice the sacrifice, in which case the *objet petit a* is de-extracted from the (big) Other. This de-extraction is correlative to the (barred) subject’s identification with the *objet petit a*, wherein the subject realizes its role in the (presup)posing of the big Other. For the barred subject this is “the moment of the [Kierkegaardian] ‘mad’ decision when, instead of the I, the symbolic identity, the universal law, we choose [*objet petit*] *a*, the exception, the particular object that sticks out from the symbolic order”²⁸. This is a limit experience, I would argue, and is not something one can fully experience; one will always be in some manner blind to the way one (presup)poses big Others with the *objet petit a*(s) in the background.

We will later locate the *objet petit a* as between the enunciated and the place of enunciation in the testimonial encounter; it is thus inextricably related to the subject of the unconscious qua place of enunciation (and is only artificially divorced in post-Holocaust times by virtue of our exorcising our places of enunciation, so that our place of enunciation, and thus *objet petit a*, come to seem alien to us), as well as, in a different sense, to the satisfaction of speech qua annunciation. Today one might say that we locate ourselves as subjects of annunciation, that is, cryptophores, so that the *objet petit a* seems not to be the objective correlate of the subject of the unconscious but rather that of the “subject” of the

crypt. For that reason the *objet petit a* is at once more haunting in its spectral apparitions and yet more and more extracted from and hidden under the big Other of today (qua anti-Other[s]). Without Other(s), one cannot identify with the *objet petit a* qua objective correlate of the subject of the unconscious; instead, it becomes more fantastical, (impossibly) without Symbolic mediation. One becomes blind to the object-cause of desire.

While the *objet petit a* is by its nature something inhuman, something in the subject more than the subject, something ex-timate, it is also – or rather: for that very reason – the medium of human relations (and at the conjuncture of the three registers). When one forgoes one's place of enunciation, that is, when one attempts to exorcize one's place of enunciation, one is effectively (and it is a question of efficiency) trying to exorcize the barred subject, thereby making the very medium of relations, *objet petit a*, fuse with and yet continue to hide under the big Other. The *objet petit a* and even, paradoxically, the big Other (the big Other as Thing/spectre), come to take on more features of the Real qua without Symbolic mediation.

One might also suggest that the *objet petit a* is the death drive, or that an identity with the *objet petit a* is equivalent to “riding the death drive”. The object-cause of desire, then, is in this sense the death drive, a valid claim when one realizes that it is the death drive that clears the space so that desire can emerge. The death drive/object-cause of desire clears the big Other so that a new big Other can emerge, via Other(s). Desire is then only possible in the continual iterability – repetition with difference – of the Other, that is, insofar as it is annulled via the death drive and brought into existence again (in a different way, however slight) through Other(s), through testimony. One presupposes because of the death drive, and the (presup)position is taken away by the death drive. Since the *objet petit a* is the medium of relations between subjects, death lies between subjects and between the unconscious and the enunciated. When the drive is foreclosed it takes on the features of the repetition compulsion, for the precise reason that it is foreclosed so that the big Other can remain the same. The repetition compulsion is then a sort of fantasy that covers over the Symbolic death drive qua iterability. After all, the notion of the repetition compulsion as death drive was first introduced by Freud to describe the reactions of soldiers returning home from war, that is, from experiences of the figure of the Symbolic death drive qua originary violence (qua cutting into the world). In testimony one de-extracts the *objet petit a*

from the big Other, through Other(s), which is to say one extracts its origins of the death drive qua cut/symbolization in/of the world.

The *objet petit a* can also be understood as the inevitable surplus in the discourse of the Master, and is here aligned with the superego; later, this will seem inaccurate when we, following Žižek, place the superego as produced by the domain of knowledge, S2, rather than by the Master, S1²⁹. In 1973 Lacan asserts the relation between the *objet petit a* and the semblance of being, and a year later he puts it at the centre of the Borromean knot, or the place where all three registers intersect. Finally, in psychoanalytic treatment, it is as *objet petit a* – or death mask – that the analyst should place h/imself³⁰.

Oedipus Complex and Castration

Although I would prefer to devote what little space I have here to cultural interventions rather than become mired in the depths of the theory of development, to jump ahead, as it were, would be disingenuous. If, as Dylan Evans writes, the “Oedipus complex is thus nothing less than the passage from the imaginary order to the symbolic order”³¹, or, as Lacan would have it, “the conquest of the symbolic relation as such”³², to ignore it would be a mistake. As Evans immediately notes, moreover, the passage via the Oedipus complex “means that the subject cannot have access to the symbolic order without confronting the problem of sexual difference”³³. The child begins the complex by trying to be the phallus for the mother; this is a situation full of anxiety when the real of the drive emerges, that is, at the time of infantile masturbation. Here the child becomes aware of the lack of any organs in the real which could satisfy h/is mother. This is disturbed (after a phase involving the imaginary father, which is not that important for our purposes) by the intervention of the real father who castrates the child, which is to say, makes it impossible for the child to be the phallus for the mother. The child/subject is thereby liberated from the anxiety produced in having to *be* the phallus. Instead, the child can identify with the father through the realization that the father *has* it³⁴.

Even if one wanted to dispute the content of the Oedipus Complex, whether the Freudian or Lacanian version, the basic structure of the complex – the trauma of prohibition on which the social order emerges – is universal. As Žižek notes, it is the “unhistorical” kernel over which every society deals with in their own way – but we *all* share the Real of this traumatic kernel³⁵.

The superego is hereby formed through this identification. Today, since we no not identify with the father as before, the superego is rather formed collectively and in a more Imaginary fashion. Moreover, in the complex a prohibition (qua incest taboo) of jouissance serves to hide the fact that jouissance is impossible, thereby allowing the subject to believe that “were it not for the Law, I would be able to enjoy”. This is, of course, a neurotic illusion. In renouncing h/is attempts to be the phallus for the mother, the child/subject gives up a jouissance which is never regained, even though one never ceases such attempts³⁶. As Lacan writes: “Castration means that jouissance must be refused so that it can be reached on the inverted ladder of the Law of desire”³⁷.

Castration allows for the images of dismemberment to coalesce into a particular fantasy, thereby, I would argue, allowing for a Symbolic subjective position which could make the shift of perspective of the death drive (whereas in the Imaginary Gestalt the shift of perspective is itself elided given the lack of any subject who could occupy this position). Accepting castration, then, amounts to accepting the shift of perspective, immersing oneself in the death drive, Realizing that you have nothing to lose in a loss.

Phallus, as both condition of possibility and condition of impossibility, or why Derrida got it wrong

The above discussion leads immediately into the function of the phallus, which, indeed, must be understood only in terms of a function and never a thing in itself (outside its fetishizations, of course). Castration, in so far as it concerns a “relationship to the phallus”, means that the anatomical difference between the sexes is irrelevant³⁸.

Whereas the “penis” refers to the organ itself, “phallus” refers to the Imaginary and Symbolic dimensions of the organ. We have already seen the function of the phallus in castration. With regards to sexual difference, man has the symbolic phallus, although it is better to say that he is not without having it. By contrast, and as Žižek notes, the woman *is* the phallus. This is as a result of there not being a binary signifier here: it is an issue of dissymmetry in the signifier³⁹. The symbolic phallus cannot be negated, since in the Symbolic an absence serves just as much as a positive entity. This is unlike the Imaginary phallus, which is negated in castration. It is for this reason that woman *is* the phallus. At the same time, a man can only assume the Symbolic phallus insofar as he has assumed his castration. One cannot *have* the phallus (on the Symbolic level) if one still believes one *is* the

phallus (on the Imaginary level). The Symbolic phallus is that which appears in the place of the lack of the signifier in the Other; it is the presence of desire itself⁴⁰. One might say that in one sense the *objet petit a* serves to mask the phallus, and thus identifying with the *objet petit a* in the testimonial encounter is a way of going through the phallus, the condition of (im)possibility of the Symbolic.

Lacan also says that the Symbolic phallus is the “signifier which does not have a signified”⁴¹. Since this is also the situation with the master signifier, which can itself be the big Other, there is here a conflation of theoretical vocabulary. To start to dissolve this conflation immediately, we could say that while the master signifier and phallus are fundamentally linked, they are also primary in relation to the big Other, which could itself be seen as relying on the phallus/master signifier but to not be reducible to it. Insofar as one is embedded with/in the phallus qua master signifier one (presup)poses big Others. Of course, no one knows the precise function of the phallus, and thus insofar as we (presup)pose that others know the signified of this signifier, we (presup)pose a big Other. If, however, we realize this (presup)positioning, then a new relation with finite others is created wherein others become Others. Here we assume the lack in the Other which is at the same time our own lack. Here, then, we assume our ever-iterable desire.

Jacques Derrida, among others, has of course argued that Lacan is guilty of a transcendentalism here. Where Martin Heidegger produced Being as his transcendental signified, Lacan is to be castigated for having produced a transcendental signifier⁴². To be sure, Derrida is correct that the phallus is indeed a transcendental signifier; as Lacan himself said, “the phallus [as] signifier [is] intended to designate as a whole the effects of the signified”⁴³. Derrida claims this shows that the phallus is the ultimate guarantor of meaning. It is difficult to see, however, how a signifier can simply guarantee meaning. If all meanings must pass through a signifier with no signified of its own, it is just as easy to argue that the phallus ultimately ruins all meaning (in advance). Indeed, both arguments would be correct, although Derrida misses the latter. Moreover, and as Žižek notes in a different context, it has become something of a commonplace to follow this quasi-Derridean logic that renounces all claims to Truth – even, or especially, in those that pronounce their distance from Derrida (i.e. the Cultural and Communication Studies departments throughout North America). In some sense this is all fine and good, as certainly certain claims to truth were bogus in their Eurocentrism, Orientalism, sexism, etc etc. Freud and Lacan, as presumed

chauvinist/womanizing Europeans with claims to truth, are thus to be included in this list of rejections – or so the argument goes.

Yet what *is* the structure of the psyche? What *is* the nature of human relations? One might reproach such a line of questioning as unabashedly metaphysical, but do we not continually (presup)pose Gods (however ‘secular’) and truths? Derrida argues that we must continually delimit and take positions, even while we deconstruct. The (non-)alternative, of course, is madness, which is what many (probably improperly) attribute to Derrida’s work, and which may just be the pathology of our situation. He would argue that we only continue to (presup)pose Gods and truths as a result of us continuing to live in the closure of metaphysics, which is all we have for the time being. That is, we cannot at the moment imagine a beyond of metaphysics; indeed, to attempt such a thing would itself be the quintessential metaphysical manoeuvre (think Plato’s world of Forms and Ideas). What this leads to, however, is a sort of withdrawal from the world, wherein one only intervenes to denounce those that take up “metaphysical” positions (or, in the case of those who practice a distance from Derrida, spectatorship studies of early cinema, and/or tiny pomo contingent “truths of a situation”).

Most of the time Derrida devotes his texts to a rigorous drawing out of metaphysical claims from his subjects, while the question we are asking is why are people speaking of the end of metaphysics in the first place. This is in fact what he has partly done in relation to at least one thinker, Michel Foucault, wherein he asks what it *means* for people to be talking about contingency in ‘postmodern’ (although he would never use this term) times? For it is perhaps only now that we can delimit the functioning of the phallus in the symbolic order, in that it is possible that only in these times the nature of its functioning is becoming noticeable. Everywhere the phallus is in question: “What is a Woman?” is the question of the day, which is equivalent to “What is a phallus?”. From this angle, Derrida’s critique is preconditioned by this questioning. Just as he reiterates that we cannot simply step outside metaphysics (for such a gesture would be the metaphysical one par excellence), we cannot simply step outside the functioning of the phallus. We can, of course, critique it from within: was this not Lacan’s project? If not, it is certainly Žižek’s.

Given that the phallus is today in question, one might say that men are becoming more like women and women like men, and thus more and more people can see the situation from both sides. And while this would not in the least allow for any possible synthesis – for

sexual difference is Real – it does allow for the question at least, which, as we shall see, is the same for both sexes: “What is a woman (qua phallus)?”. As an aside, one would at least think this to mediate and lessen the effects of the superego, given that less people would only exist within the Symbolic through the founding exception of the primal father; indeed, one would expect the primal father to Himself be put into question. Far from disappearing, however, the superego rather takes on another dimension in its relation to capitalism. Capital, as Žizek notes, is our symbolic Real horizon, our endless chain of commodities (S2), giving birth to our collective superego: *Jouis!*⁴⁴ Indeed, rather than the question “What is the phallus?” being entertained it is *avoided* at all costs, so that we become asexual, one like the other and the other like the one, the very logic of the Imaginary brought to new heights in the crypt-Other.

Jouissance, or phallic vs. Other

As noted above, there is a primary jouissance which one gives up in order for a different kind to be reached on the inverted Law of desire. The prohibition of the incest taboo creates the desire to transgress it; thus jouissance is its essence transgressive. It is also the “path towards death” in that it is fundamentally opposed to the pleasure principle. Jouissance makes every drive a death drive in that they seek to achieve jouissance through breaking through the pleasure principle. In a manner not dissimilar to Freud’s libido, jouissance is associated with the body. Yet Lacan also suggests that there are two types of jouissance, the first of which is phallic, “which means that it does not relate to the Other as such”, but instead concentrates on a part-object⁴⁵. The second type of jouissance is related to the jouissance of the Other, and is thus associated for Lacan with a feminine form of enjoyment. This jouissance is ineffable, for it is experienced without it being possible to describe it. It cannot be described for then it would be subject to the bar separating the signifier from signified, which is to say it would be subject to the phallic function and thus divided. We will later relate it to the realm of annunciation qua satisfaction of speech.

Four discourses

The four discourses represent four types of social bond, each including the four elements of the master signifier (S1), knowledge (S2), the (barred) subject (S/), and the objet petit a qua surplus enjoyment (*a*).

Discourse of the Master

S1 → S2

-- --

S/ a

Discourse of the University

S2 → a

-- --

S1 S/

Discourse of the Hysteric

S/ → S1

-- --

a S2

Discourse of the Analyst

a → S/

-- --

S2 S1

The dominant position is always in the top left, and the discourse of the Master is the basic discourse from which the others are derived. As Evans writes, the master signifier here “represents the subject (S/) for another signifier or, more precisely, for all other signifiers (S2); however, in this signifying operation there is always a surplus, namely, *objet petit a*. The point is that all attempts at totalisation are doomed to failure”⁴⁶.

The discourse of the hysteric is not simply for hysterics proper, but also for a kind of sociality in which any subject may be inscribed. In psychoanalysis, the goal is to place the analysand in this position, wherein the barred subject qua symptom is in the dominant position and points towards knowledge. The psychoanalyst’s discourse, in placing h/imself as *objet petit a*, seeks to become the cause of the analysand’s desire; of special note is its being the reverse of the discourse of the Master, which is why Lacan saw psychoanalysis as fundamentally subversive⁴⁷. The problem here is that we are no longer dominated by a Master; instead it is the discourse of the University which predominates, and this requires a new form of psychoanalysis.

Fantasy

Fantasy protects one from the lack in the Other, and is a way of answering the question (*Che vuoi?*) about what the Other wants from me, which is to say, in the terms of this thesis, it protects one from confrontation with Other(s). The fantasy is a compromise formation as it is both what allows the subject to sustain h/is desire, and “that by which the subject sustains himself at the level of his vanishing desire”⁴⁸. Lacan argues beyond or

beneath the images of everyday life and dreams there is always one fundamental fantasy; the analyst must help the analysand traverse the fundamental fantasy to thereby change his mode of defence, and thus to open up to other modes of jouissance.

The origin of fantasy is the proto-fantasy of the mirror image, “the first channelling of libidinal energy that will influence all subsequent fantasies”⁴⁹; the origins of fantasy, then, are the origins of drive, which gives the scopic drive a certain priority. All drives are ultimately components of the death drive, since it is the death drive that breaks up the fantasy (and fundamentally the scopic one). Haptic cinema, such as *Blade Runner* or *Alien*, qua cinema (thus inviting the scopic gaze), derail the any viewer mastery, thereby breaking up the proto-fantasy through the death drive, allowing for testimony⁵⁰. Stanley Kubrick’s *Eyes Wide Shut* accomplishes much the same thing in a more cerebral manner.

As we have already suggested, the fantasy is a Gestalt, on the one side involving the complete image and on the other the body-in-pieces: they are two sides of a coin. If fantasy avoids the lack in the Other then what it avoids is the gap of language. The image of Woman, for instance, is an incarnation of the gap of language, with on the one side involving the Beautiful Thing and the other the ‘dark, mysterious, confusing’ aspect that prevents access to the Beautiful Thing. The Holocaust, too, serves a fantastical function, insofar as it is made out to be both the traumatic Thing, and the very trauma that prevents access. Fantasy’s very immobility covers over the death drive, which “is” the shift of perspective itself (in relation to both sides). It is this immobility which renders its stupid positivity.

This plays out in the situation of the crypt, wherein each half of the ego is opposed to the other half, which leads to a fantasy life that cannot coalesce into a unity until it is transformed into an absurd thought – or Gestalt. Speech, while empty, can be deciphered by the analyst so as to realize its unconscious inflections, which is to say that it can Realize the shift of perspective from one part of the ego to the next: this shift is the unconscious qua death drive.

Zizek argues that the fundamental fantasy is the belief in the big Other, a viewpoint difficult to reconcile with the notion of fantasy filling in the lack in the Other. He also argues, however, that the fundamental fantasy today is the depoliticization of the economy. It will be argued here that our (non)relation with the Holocaust is today’s fundamental fantasy. Not only does this fantasy fill in the lack in the Other, but it serves as justification for the lack of the Other in a time in which symbolization is shunned generally.

Obsessional Neurosis and Hysteria

As Stuart Schneiderman writes, “faithful servant of death, the obsessional buries the dead and then reburies them, and does the same thing again and again and again... Not only does the obsessional not forget the dead, not repress them, but he is too solicitous of them, anxious about the satisfaction of death’s desire”⁵¹. If the obsessional does not repress them, and yet is haunted by them, it can only mean that the obsessional is haunted from the crypt, from and by the foreclosed dead. What the obsessional fears above all is giving a part of himself to death; “better it were his life that death wants”⁵². The obsessional, in thinking death to want a certain part of h/im to be given up, plays dead, that is, lives a death in life, “to trick death’s desire”⁵³. Given that the *objet petit a* is the medium of relations, one might venture the thought here that the obsessional positivizes the *objet petit a* into an organ of h/is body, and thereby refuses to give it up. If s/he un-positivized the *objet petit a* she would be (always already) giving it up in testimonial encounters with Other(s). The obsessional neurotic, in living this death in life, must stop the count of time, thereby erasing the signposts of the movement of time⁵⁴. Is pomo synchronicity partly a result of such living death in life qua shunning of symbolization (as well as the more obvious development of communication technologies)?

If obsessional neurosis closely resembles the function of the crypt, hysteria seems more melancholic, since “for the hysteric the dead remain alive, as living memories: sometimes as people who are remembered, who are grieved excessively”⁵⁵. As we will see, the walls of the crypt are here not holding, and so one might say that hysteria is a more positive condition than obsessional neurosis insofar as it makes our situation – the shunning of symbolization – more conscious. Alternatively, however, one might see hysteria as the condition of the crypt-fantasy given its infinite questioning of an(y) big Other.

Indeed, our situation could perhaps be argued to be a sort of short circuit of obsessional neurosis and hysteria: we are the most obsessively neurotic *and* the most hysterical. We think reality should crumble should we not perform our duties, that is, that the big Other is absolutely dependant on us, *and* that the big Other is a giant sham. This short circuit follows the logic of the collective superego.

Psychoanalytic Treatment

In analysis, the analysand's speech is not only directed towards the analyst but towards h/imself, although s/he is of course not aware of this; it is up to the analyst to allow the analysand to hear h/is own message that s/he is already unconsciously addressing to h/imself. Thus in analysis "the sender receives his own message from the receiver in an inverted form"⁵⁶. This presupposes, of course, that the message is first inverted, but as we will see the situation becomes much more difficult with cryptophores.

As Lacan writes: "What we teach the subject to recognize as his unconscious is his history – in other words, we help him complete the current historicization of the facts that have already determined a certain number of the historical 'turning points' in his existence"⁵⁷. Again: "Analysis can have as its goal only the advent of true speech and the subject's realization of his history in its relation to a future... Maintaining this dialectic is directly opposed to any objectifying orientation of analysis [as in ego therapy]"⁵⁸.

And yet, to emphasize the crucial function of speech in analysis,
But if I call the person to whom I am speaking by whatever name I like, I notify him of the subjective function he must take up in order to reply to me, even if it is to repudiate this function. The decisive function of my own response thus appears, and this function is not, as people maintain, simply to be received by the subject as approval or rejection of what he is saying, but truly to recognize or abolish him as a subject. Such is the nature of the analyst's *responsibility* every time he intervenes by means of speech⁵⁹.

Psychoanalysis is predicated on the analysand having fixated on their Other, so that it no longer negotiates properly with Other(s), whether in hysterics or obsessional neurotics – or, indeed and as we will see, with cryptophores, who simply are greater annunciators by virtue of their incessant playing with language. Whereas the hysteric and obsessional neurotic are more concerned with their attempts to please the analyst (qua subject-supposed-to-know), the cryptophore is more or less oblivious to the presence of the analyst. S/he is only interested in the subject-supposed-to-know (qua Other) to the extent that s/he attempts to quasi-translate the anachrony of the past into the present of the psychoanalytic session. S/he simply could not care less about reaching h/is subject of the unconscious, and thus such translation into the present always fails, and does so "intentionally". And, in any case, there are several subjects of the unconscious in cryptophores since in incorporation one lodges others replete with their own full topographies.

But here as in analysis of hysterics and obsessional neurotics, the psychoanalyst, in putting on a death mask qua *objet petit a*, helps the fixated analysand to understand the nature of h/is fixation, thereby allowing h/im to re-enter the world. This occurs because the

analysand comes to realize the nature of h/is presuppositioning of the Other, or in the case of cryptophores the nature of their incorporation of Others. Again, with the cryptophore it is much more difficult since one is addressing more than one person and more than one subject of the unconscious.

Zizek writes that “an analysand becomes an analyst upon assuming that his desire has no support in the Other, that the authorization of his desire can come only from himself. And in so far as this same reversal of the direction of the arrow defines drive, we could say (as Lacan says) that what takes place at the end of psychoanalysis is the shift from desire to drive”⁶⁰. The danger here, I would argue, is that if one eliminates all support in the Other one is left with mysticism and/or the superego; how else could the authorization of one’s desire only come from oneself? This may be why, as we noted in the introduction, Zizek in a later text suggests that there is a desire that is left after analysis, “the desire of the analyst”. What if we, however, simply said that what psychoanalysis does is to ready the subject for testimony by having h/im accept the radical contingency yet absolute necessity of the Other? There is, perhaps, too much of an anti-Other, that is, hysterical, streak in Zizek, a stance that is too easily accommodated for in the present societal constellation.

Chapter 2: Terminology, (cont.), with an emphasis on subjective relations

Superego

The superego is located in the Symbolic order, although it links back to the Real. It is at once the law and its destruction. As Evans notes, “the superego arises from the misunderstanding of the law, from the gaps in the symbolic chain, and fills out those gaps with an imaginary substitute that distorts the law”⁶¹. It could be said, then, to be a sort of non-conscious quilting point in some manner similar to the big Other, although secondary to it, and in this way it could be seen as related to fantasy. The superego takes the form of the imperative, and specifically that of “Enjoy!”, thereby commanding the subject to enjoy – and thereby preventing the subject from confronting the gap in language which “is” the (barred) subject. This is not the subject’s own will to enjoy but that of the Other’s: the superego’s imperative increases to the extent that the subject feels alienated from the big Other, which is today an especially acute situation. In a sense all that is left of the Other today is its commandment, which thus increases exponentially in order to save the Other. The superego is obscene and ferocious, now more than ever.

We have argued that traditionally the superego emerges through identification with the father in the Oedipus Complex, although it is also typically understood as the return of the primal father, the result of primordial parricide. The two perspectives can be combined through the understanding that the primal father qua superego is the non-sublated part of the Real father. Of course primordial parricide is a mythic event, but it is “an impossible Real that should be presupposed (reconstructed retroactively) if one is to account for the existing social order”⁶². To “recollect” this event, to eradicate it from “unconscious memory would entail the disintegration of the very reign of law; this reign would be deprived of its (repressed) founding force”⁶³. For all that, this parricide is not simply a crime, but takes the very form of legality itself: “what is so horrifying about it is not its strangeness but rather its absolute *proximity* to the reign of law”⁶⁴.

Zizek also argues that the superego is but the “most radical embodiment of the signifier as the cause of the subject’s division, of the signifier’s injunction in its traumatic, senseless aspect”⁶⁵. Thus bureaucracy, qua S2, is not something foreign to human nature, but rather at its core insofar as humans use language. The superego might be mediated then by the big Other, S1, for in incarnating the big Other for Other(s) one is necessarily

incarnating one's misunderstanding(s) of it. (Such misunderstandings, it will be argued, are the result of the *objet petit a* produced by the crypt, or rather: the crypt is the result of the *objet petit a* qua correlate of the place of enunciation in some manner foreclosed from thought, for the simple reason that as humans we cannot grasp everything, but rather must foreclose much of experience simply to get by.) In testimony the superego's effect is lessened insofar as relations with Other(s) necessarily presupposes dealing with ambiguity. Rather than an imaginary substitute filling out the gaps in language, one contingently (presup)poses big Others, via Other(s).

The superego emerges, then, when symbolization – and its necessary ambiguity – is shunned; it is thus a dominant feature of our age, although one so prevalent it is almost invisible. In incarnating S2, the *objet petit a* becomes the superego. In incarnating S2 there is no mediation insofar as there are no places of enunciation. In totalitarian show trials under Stalin, for instance, the point was precisely for the accused to sacrifice their places of enunciation (qua “individual” belief in the iterability of the big Other); indeed, most of them were accused for having such places of enunciation in the first place⁶⁶.

This, of course, appears to contradict the traditional understanding of the superego as the inevitable surplus of the discourse of the Master. And yet the two viewpoints can be aligned, for we could argue that in the Master trying to hold the reins of power such power is revealed as impotent (depending as it does on the function of the phallus), and thus S1 transforms into S2, thereby producing the superego. This is an intrinsic feature of all Masters, including the father, given that in some manner they are always already revealed as impotent.

The big Other mediates the built-in ambiguity of language, the Real, and when continually created through Other(s) in testimonial encounters it works through the death drive and the primary trauma of (qua gap in) language. When the big Other is not created through Other(s), but rather (presup)posed in the very exorcism of our places of enunciation, so that it thereby becomes a seemingly overhanging spectre, the primary trauma of language is foreclosed; likewise, foreclosing the primary trauma entails a spectral big Other (and thus ideology). When the big Other is itself rejected through a general shunning of symbolization, it is left to the superego and the crypt to mediate the gap of language, that is, to fill it up with fantasy. Something has to stop the sliding of signifiers. As we will see, relations with others then become reduced to those of “crypt-love”.

No one can manage to avoid the filling out of the gap in language, and today the predominant method of filling out such gaps is through shopping: the shopped-for objects incarnate the impossibility, the gap, of language, and because the gap knows no end neither does shopping, and thus neither does capitalism. Just as we want an end to the gap in language, we want an end to goods insofar as they incarnate this gap. This partly explains the ever-present belief in academia that consumer capitalism has a sort of imminent and immanent limit to which we are approaching: it simply *must* have this limit. (There is but one limit to consumer capitalism, and it is an external one: the destruction of the planet. The idea that eventually capitalism will run out of things to commodify is a fantasy – of which Žižek partakes⁶⁷.) This filling of the gap today in its incarnation in consumer goods and services obeys a superegotistical imperative: *Jouis!*

The superego, as the Exception of the primal father, is of a Symbolic-Real circuit. It is both the Law and its destruction, and indistinguishably so: it thus of the order of pure and senseless declaration. In such declaration it does not relate to a previous big Other nor does it found a new one, an obvious point insofar as it fantastically fills in for the lack of any big Other. It thus obeys the first figure of stupid positivity. The crypt takes part of the other figure of stupid positivity given its status of the Symbolic as Real – *lalangue/llanguage: annunciation* – without Exception; its stupid positivity rests in the fact that it does not found any big Other. It is less declarative, but there is clearly a link between the superego and the crypt that remains to be worked out. One might tentatively say that the Real of the difference between them is elided insofar as there is no Other to mediate them, which means that one ends up with a sort of asexual stupid positivity, actualized in the crypt-Other.

Žižek writes that with the knowledge of our DNA, rather than our supposed humanity being erased, it is on the contrary made to shine all the more. When we confront our genetic history and future, he suggests, is not the feeling of absurdity *objet petit a*, or the correlate of subjectivity itself⁶⁸? Here, however, one should stress that there is no possible place of enunciation, a point Žižek notes himself in another context when discussing science, in that although it does touch and transform the Real it cannot symbolize it (and thus should not serve as big Other). In our confrontation with the code of our DNA, then, the *objet petit a* functions as the obscene superego, with which there is no relation. “You wanted to know about your future? –Here it is, fucker!”

Need, Demand, Desire, Drives, or the lack of proof of the Other's love

Need refers to the child's biological requirements. Since the infant child cannot satisfy h/is needs on h/is own (such as hunger), s/he must articulate these needs through vocal form, thereby demanding that another (fundamentally the mother) perform the action instead. Because another (the mother) is providing the infant/child with the object, the object takes on the additional significance of being proof of the Other's love. The first figure of the Other is thus the mother. Demand, then, becomes both a demand for the needed object and at the same time a demand for the Other's love. It is through this situation that desire emerges, for while the needs may be satisfied, the craving for proof of the Other's love is unconditional and ultimately unsatisfiable: there can never be enough evidence. This craving is desire, or rather, as Lacan puts it: "Desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second"⁶⁹. Desire is the leftover, the remnant that persists after the needs have been satisfied. As we will see, in times of crypt-love we pretend as though all our demands have been fulfilled, as though we are loved in all the ways we feel we deserve. This is concurrent with an avoidance of the death drive.

As Lacan famously formulated, desire is always the desire of the Other. This means both that desire is fundamentally aimed towards being the object of another's desire, and that desire is ultimately a desire for recognition. It can also mean that it is only qua Other that the subject desires, that is, that the subject only desires from the point of view of another. This makes sense when we remember Lacan's assertion that "God is unconscious", which effectively means in this context that we desire from our unconscious. However, that one desires from the point of view of another is typically understood as desiring an object that another desires. The two views, we could argue, are not dissimilar: it is as Other (in my unconscious) that I desire an object in the world. This formulation is not unlike that encountered in the hysteric, who, as Evans writes, "is one who sustains another's desire, who converts another's desire into her own"⁷⁰. The point of analysis is not to determine the object of h/is desire, but the place from which s/he desires, that is, the Other in/of h/is unconscious.

Death drive(s)

Zizek suggests that there are two death drives, the first of which is “the indestructible stupidity of superego enjoyment”, whose compulsiveness has an “inherent stupidity”⁷¹. This compulsion is “properly ex-timate: imposed from the outside, yet doing nothing but realizing our innermost whims”, “which increasingly dominates and regulates the perverse universe of our late capitalist universe”⁷². The second, which we will designate the Symbolic death drive,

designates the very opposite gesture, the desperate endeavor to escape the clutches of the ‘undead’ eternal life, the horrible fate of being caught in the endless cycle of jouissance... the only way to get rid of the stupid superego death drive of enjoyment is to embrace the death drive in its disruptive dimension of traversing the fantasy. One can beat the death drive only by the death drive itself⁷³.

The only problem with this analysis is that it seems to avoid precisely what Freud introduced as the death drive (in at least one of his formulations): the repetition compulsion that follows a trauma, wherein the patient, because of the severe shock of the trauma, can only try to integrate the trauma precisely through compulsively repeating it. In such repetition, the patient gradually binds it (even while unbinding the patient’s present reality in the repetition itself). From one perspective, then, this repetition compulsion is the very precondition for mourning, in clear contrast to the stupid superegotistical imperative. And yet, this is not traversing the fantasy – far from it, it mostly serves simply to re-accommodate the patient to ‘reality’. Thus we have another figure of the death drive, although as Boothby notes the patient *may* find in the repetition compulsion “an ‘opportunity’ for overcoming the restrictive and alienating form of the ego”⁷⁴, which is to say that it is possible to move from the death drive of repetition compulsion to that of traversing the fantasy.

But this is not all, for, as noted, there is also a death drive to be located on the plane of the Imaginary, whereby there is an “inadequate distinction between the symbolic and imaginary father”⁷⁵. As a result one gets the aggressive potentiality of the narcissistic ego, the flip side of the Gestalt relatively unmediated by the Symbolic (“relatively” because the Symbolic is always present). Quoting Lacan in the context of the atrocities of *La Violencia* of Columbia between 1949 and 1958, Boothby writes:

La Violencia seems to realize in actual deeds the fantasies of “castration, mutilation, dismemberment, dislocation, evisceration, devouring, bursting open of the body” that Lacan associates with a “Gestalt proper to aggression in man”... These atrocities were intended to be seen⁷⁶.

One might argue that when the Symbolic loses its efficiency, the death drive of the shift of perspective is foreclosed so that one regresses to realizing the fantasy of the body-in-pieces.

The benefits of the fantasy of castration, coalescing the general fear of “regressing” to a body-a-pieces, disappears. This is a much stupider death drive, of course, and a far more dangerous one too. As Boothby writes, “in the failure of adequate symbolic mediation, the destructive forces of the death drive are unleashed on the level of the imaginary”⁷⁷. Such vigilante violence “reduce[s] the spirit of a people to the level of the imaginary... [and] the body politic is atomized as each individual becomes preoccupied by the fear that every other member of the group may turn out to be a stooge or informer”⁷⁸. This paves the way for a charismatic leader to emerge, and so we have here, obviously, “the matrix of the psychology of fascism”⁷⁹.

Are there not elements of this death drive evident in the photos of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib? If the big Other is (presumed) nonexistent, we would expect this; the soldiers, most of them serving in Iraq precisely *because* they could not integrate meaningfully into US society outside the army⁸⁰, regressed to the level of the Imaginary in their (mis)treatment of Iraqi prisoners. Most of the photos are clear indications of this attempt at actualizing the body-in-pieces side of the Gestalt, a fact especially evident given the surprising presence of American soldiers in the actual photos (which was not even the case for the Nazis, who used the powers of the Imaginary ‘for’ the Symbolic, rather than against it). What criminal, besides a very stupid one, photographs h/himself at the scene of the crime? But this was precisely the point, for the American standing next to the Iraqi-qua-body-in-pieces was, by contrast, complete – the US soldier is complete to the extent that the other is fragmented (and the photo qua Gestalt prevents the shift of perspective). Moreover, not only do the form of the photos represent the failure of Symbolic mediation, they also demonstrate, through their content (homosexuality, the eating of pork, the presence of a female American soldier) the attempt to ridicule and fragment the Symbolic rules of Islam, as if to say: “just as we can’t mediate our stupidity, neither shall you!” At the same time, of course, they were flouting their own Symbolic network, the supposed values of “human rights”.

The Imaginary death drive is a result of the (presupposed in advance) failure of the Symbolic, as well as a defence formation against the emergence of the death drive qua “ontological ‘Big Bang’”. They are two sides of the same coin, as both emerge at the same time. So we seem to have four death drives, were it not for the fact that the first death drive described, that of the superego, seems equivalent to that of the Imaginary. Given that the superego is taken to be of the Symbolic-Real circuit, this at appears puzzling, were it not for

the fact, as will be argued herein, the superego is a fantasy that fills in for the big Other's lack. The superego fills in for the lack *in* the Other (in the discourse of the Master, S1) and for the lack *of* the Other (in the totalitarian/Enlightenment discourse of S2, and increasingly our situation). And yet, a difference remains: while the Imaginary death drive involves a constant shuffling back and forth (qua Gestalt), the superego's death drive is the shift of perspective itself in its stupidity, that is, in its impossible non-relation with either side. It is both the Law and its destruction, the declaration. While this appears close to the Symbolic death drive, it is different in its non-relation with either side. Moreover, such a formulation allows for considering the interplay of the regression to the Imaginary death drive alongside the superegotistical death drive. One should note right away that one cannot have the Imaginary death drive without the superegotistical one, at least in the case of adults, since as long as the Symbolic is there, one must take up a subjective position.

One might tentatively ask if the Zizekian/Lacanian insistence on the act as involving a complete disregard of any big Other in the present, that is, that the act can only retroactively presuppose its conditions of emergence, is in a certain sense superegotistically stupid – psychotic – in its declarative stance. The act defined here, while acknowledging the lack in the Other, the gap in language, would at the same time acknowledge that any desire for change, as desire, springs from a confrontation with the very *real* (qua Symbolic fiction) fantasy. Lenin, who rightly criticized the Mensheviks for their procrastination, did not act entirely *ex nihilo*, for he still took the current big Other into consideration. This does not mean that his act did not retroactively posit its conditions of emergence in a new big Other, just that it could only do so in relation to a past one. This is also not to deny that a true act – and testimonial – does involve a certain break of which one can only understand after the fact, and that a certain abyss will separate the post-act big Other from the pre-act big Other (that is, that they involve two different and incommensurable subject positions). It is simply to note that the two big Others, and the act itself, *relate in their non-relating*, the very spirit of the revolutionary act, of the testimonial, that is, what *drives* it forward, is this (non)relation. If we submit to the superegotistical death drive, the spirit – the Symbolic death drive – drops away.

When the Symbolic fails to mediate, the superego takes over in a short-circuit of the Real and the Imaginary. As Boothby noted, in the Imaginary death drive the real father becomes confused with the Imaginary father. Zizek writes: “the lack of symbolic prohibition

is supplemented by the re-emergence of ferocious superego figures... So-called 'postmodern' subjectivity thus involves a kind of *direct 'superegoization' of the imaginary Ideal*'⁸¹. Instead of the father serving as ego ideal he comes to be seen as an Imaginary competitor, and thus we remain in our immaturity. It should not be inferred that I am suggesting the father must remain the agent of Symbolic prohibition, merely that nothing has come to take his place, so the result is that far from being liberated we are the servants of our obscene superegos.

Zizek further argues that the wound of castration is now written into our flesh, whereas before it was purely Symbolic – and this does not simply mean a return to premodern times, for their “inherent libidinal economies are opposed”⁸². He should be quoted at length here: while the

traditional cut ran in the direction *from the Real to the Symbolic*... the postmodern cut runs in the opposite direction, *from the Symbolic to the Real*'. The aim of the traditional cut was to inscribe the symbolic form on to raw flesh, to 'gentrify' raw flesh, to mark its inclusion into the big Other, its subjection to it; the aim of postmodern sado-maso practices of bodily mutilation is, rather, the opposite one – to guarantee, to give access to, the 'pain of existence', the minimum of the bodily Real in the universe of symbolic simulacra. In other words, the function of today's 'postmodern' cut in the body is to serve not as the mark of symbolic castration but, rather, as its exact opposite: to designate the body's resistance against submission to the socio-Symbolic Law. When a girl has her eyes, cheeks and vaginal lips pierced with rings, the message is not one of submission but one of the 'defiance of the flesh'...⁸³

As he soon notes, this defiance is more by way of an injunction than an 'authentic' act of individuality, for, “if you are completely isolated from your surroundings, you are left with nothing whatsoever, with a void of idiocy pure and simple”⁸⁴. Where he said “idiocy” I would have said “stupidity”, given its intonations of “stupor” and its etymological associations with “to strike, thrust”, that is, the precise order of the superego, its stupid positivity. Indeed, this attempt to go “from the Symbolic to the Real” in fact ends in the Imaginary, for as we noted (with Zizek in a different context), the superego takes over for the failure of Symbolic mediation.

To foreground a later discussion, Boothby takes up this situation in relation to the case of the Wolfman, whose pathology revolved around “a foreclosure of the symbolic function... imply[ing] a refusal of castration, the effect of which is an emergence of something uncanny in the field of the seen, something that can be represented only in the hallucinated violation of the imaginary”⁸⁵. He quotes Lacan: “Castration, which is precisely what didn't exist for him, manifests itself in the form of something he imagines – to have cut

his little finger, so deeply that it hangs solely by a little piece of skin”⁸⁶. When castration is refused the Imaginary fantasy takes over, which is to say the superego gains the upper hand.

If the Wolfman’s crypt partook of an Imaginary fantasy and Imaginary/superegotistical death drive, many of the discourses which have sprung up around this character seem to partake of the crypt-fantasy, which itself could be seen to be a *fifth* death drive. This is the drive of the “postmodern cut”, the “defiance of the flesh” Žizek mentions above, that functions as a sort of (‘female’) supplement to the (‘masculine’) superego. For this reason it is particularly favoured by academics who like to think themselves to be resisting “metaphysics” (even from within), such as Levinas and Derrida *et al.* What they do not realize is that at every moment the logic of the superegotistical death drive is indistinguishable from that of the crypt-fantasy, as without Other(s) the Real of sexual difference is elided.

Against these fantasy formations which prevent the shift of perspective itself we must stress the importance of the death drive of the “ontological ‘Big Bang’”, the Symbolic death drive that works against the Imaginary fantasy scenarios. As Lacan writes, “the signifier – you perhaps begin to understand – materializes the agency of death”⁸⁷. Indeed, this Symbolic death drive is the one I will focus on here, that of a break, a cut into the world, a decisive act, if you will. This death drive is what must undergo primordial repression for the Symbolic order to emerge. It belongs neither to nature nor to culture, but is rather of an “uncanny third domain, the intersection of nature and culture, [which] is that of the abyss of absolute freedom”⁸⁸. It is an “excess of Evil” that serves as the “vanishing mediator” between nature and culture, and forever serves as the “umbilical cord which links the social contract (the synchronous legal order) with ‘nature’”⁸⁹. Thus the death drive, qua Original Sin, is synonymous with absolute freedom: the disturbing of the tranquility of nature, the birth of the “human”. Every act, every testimonial, must re-enact this fundamental break through passing through this point of absolute negativity/freedom.

Žizek calls this act the renunciation of renunciation, that is, realizing we have nothing to lose in a loss⁹⁰. External ‘reality’ constitutes itself via the primordial act of rejection/externalization, wherein the self-impediment of drive is turned into an external opposition between the demand of the drives and those of the (now) opposed reality⁹¹, so that we can now fantasize, as he says in other contexts, that the big Other robs us of our

enjoyment. In this fantasy, we avoid the shift of perspective which is the death drive primordially repressed, thereby preventing the big Other (and thus ourselves) from changing.

As we will see later, in a mythical formulation only developed herein, the death drive emerges via technology, and vice versa, in the primordial moment of the ape-human engaging in an act of radical violence against nature through (the first) technology. Through this technology, through the death drive, the mind/body split emerges as the human mind – herein created – sees itself as superior, and thus separated, from its body. The body and its drives, then, serve as a constant reminder of this primordial moment; the body’s drives serve as the particular manifestations of the death drive. One’s own body (retrospectively) reminds one of one’s link with nature, which is equivalent to saying that the body reminds one of the death drive. Every act/testimonial, then, must pass through the body’s drives which manifest the death drive, as well as come to terms with our (inter)relations with technology, that is, to testify to/through them. The notion of technology as the “merely technical” is the fantasy of the death drive-qua-repetition-compulsion attempting to bind the Symbolic death drive. Today, as the Symbolic falters and technology seems ever-present, we are increasingly close to the Symbolic death drive – *but this is unbearable precisely because we cannot mediate it symbolically*. While the potential for testimony has never been more possible, we – perhaps for this very reason – construct a multitude of fantasy defence-formations to prevent it, and thus we gleefully partake of/in the other death drives so as to avoid the most fundamental one which lurks behind every corner. The crypt-fantasy death drive, for instance, transforms the body’s drives into endless discourses of the affects of the flesh, thereby sublating Real trauma into something less horrifying (if not symbolically realized).

Other, big O, Other(s), or the finite other embodying the Other

Evans suggests that the “‘other’ is perhaps the most complex term in Lacan’s work”⁹², and perhaps the most crucial were it not for the fact that since it is inextricably tied into so many other terms to single it out would be pointless. As with many of the other terms, although it might seem to be the “master key” at times, the door inevitably only opens onto other terms, which in turn...

Evans details the inflections of the term. In the 1930s it was used simply to refer to “other people”. In 1955 Lacan drew a distinction between the little other [*autre*], or the other,

and the big Other [*Autre*], or the Other. The analyst must be thoroughly aware of this distinction, so as to place h/imself in the place of the Other, that is, the other's désire⁹³.

The little other is but a reflection, or projection, of the ego, and is thus Imaginary. It is thus at this point the first definition of the *objet petit a*. The Other, the big Other, is by contrast a designation for radical alterity which cannot be assimilated through identification. As Evans writes, "the big Other is the symbolic insofar as it is particularized for each individual"⁹⁴. "The Other", he continues, "is thus both another subject, in his radical alterity and inassimilable uniqueness, and also the symbolic order which mediates the relationship with that other subject"⁹⁵. The Other as a subject, however, is strictly secondary to the Other as the Symbolic; one might say that former only exists to the extent that the subject embodies the (big) Other for another subject, and yet we should note immediately how the big Other is here immediately opened up to the Real of the Other.

The Mother is the first big Other for the child. The castration complex develops when the child discovers that the Mother/big Other is not self-sufficient, that She is lacking in some way; that there is, in other words, a signifier missing from the array of signifiers. Finally, the Other refers to the Other sex, which is Woman, for both male and female subjects. As Lacan writes, "Man here acts as the relay whereby the woman becomes this Other for herself as she is this Other for him"⁹⁶. The idea here is that the woman, qua phallus (and thus being in the Symbolic in full), "is" radical alterity.

From here on in, we shall use the term Other(s) to denote other subjects embodying the Other, while at the same time acknowledging that no subject embodies the Other in full, as this is strictly impossible. Every subject, however, does embody a certain truth of the Other, and thus a relation to désire. Negotiating one's désire is not something that is done alone, for one can only confront one's own désire (*qua* unconscious) through relations with Other(s), that is, other subjects insofar as they embody the Other. To this extent each singular other is, beyond the specular image, an Other to which one relates. Each other (presup)poses an Other. It is only through Other(s) that one confronts, that is, given back, the truth of one's désire. Only when one brings one's own (presupposed) Other into discourse with Other(s) is one confronted with one's own presuppositioning, and thus with Other(s) one is able to contingently (presup)pose new big Others. In between Other(s), however, lies the superego, the crypt(s), and the crypt-fantasy qua flesh (or rather: [the

fantasy of the] flesh qua crypt), interrupting any smooth communication between Other(s) – insofar as it is possible, this will be explored later⁹⁷.

All three aspects of the Other are necessary. As Žižek notes, if the big Other is suspended, the friendly neighbour coincides with the monstrous Thing; if the imaginary other is suspended the Symbolic order turns into a Thing which parasitizes; if there is no Real Other, no Thing, one winds up with a Habermasian aseptic universe⁹⁸. While in testimony one encounters all three, our situation seems to be one of always missing one element at any particular moment. One might think that if today it is symbolization that is shunned, the friendly neighbour would coincide with the monstrous Thing, a peculiar understanding given that we are also arguing that it is precisely the Real of the Other that we are avoiding. We can accommodate this paradox by noting that *we trust that we do not trust*, and this lessens any surprise of the Real. We trust that the Other is untrustworthy, so that when we are “hurt” we are prepared for it, even if, in good manners, we feign shock. Thus the Other is not suspended *stricto sensu*, for this is impossible, but rather only exists insofar as it attacks itself.

Žižek suggests that the big Other is such an ideal point of reference because it is a dead scheme, that is, nowhere in existence as such. It is only (presup)posed in every single moment; it is thus the way negativity is converted into being through Symbolic fictions (“tarrying with the negative”). It is purely a Symbolic fiction, which is to say it does not partake of the Real. The argument here differs from this account, at least contextually, since the big Other is only formed via Other(s), which means that the (presup)positioning the big Other cannot avoid the Real of the Other. The idea that the big Other is a spectral set of symbolic rules outside the conversational encounter is an illusion, indeed, a fantasy, which Žižek notes in other contexts (and a fantasy particularly present today when in a certain sense the big Other does seem out there in hyperspace). While to a certain extent everyone partakes in it, and so they must, the big Other is nonetheless continually transformed in each and every conversational encounter. The Real of the Other is the death drive, since the Real of the Other is both the inaccessible Thing and that which prevents such access, and *in the testimonial encounter one Realizes this very shift of perspective that “is” the death drive qua Real*. The imaginary Real of the Other, that certain “je ne sais quoi”, exists in the testimonial encounter insofar as when one goes through the death drive, through the limit of the Symbolic (the phallus), in this moment of *aphanisis*, one is in a certain sense there, in the Symbolic, in full,

and thus a certain experience of Other-Jouissance is entertained. There is also an imaginary Real of the crypt-fantasy, however, in imagining the Real of the Other in trusting that we do not trust.

When we acknowledge language – through language, we should note – to be haunted by trauma, thereby refusing to consciously create limits or exceptions to language, we run under the assumption that we won't unconsciously or cryptically do what we consciously seek to avoid, thereby holding out the hope that language can turn into a non-all totality, that is, *llanguage/lalangue*. Then, the hope runs, we'll have access to a mystical Other-Jouissance. There is a way in which such language then becomes incredibly stupid, stupefying, blind to the ways it remains language in the modality of the Exception. This gesturing, today, is the domain of the crypt-fantasy.

We can do nothing but ex-pose ourselves, our places of enunciation, to this stupid big Other, that is, it can exist only through our ex-posure to it (and its ex-posure to itself), and all those television confessionals are but so many ex-positions of the big Other of today. When the phallus is in question the reserve and guarantee of the big Other is thus made unstable, so that we attempt to save the big Other through Imaginary identification with the phallus, guys and girls both. Today, there is a sort of widespread anxiety at not being exposed to the big Other, paradoxically in the same movement that people attempt to cast it off. It could be argued that it is the very ex-position itself – such as in the Florida Spring Break phenomenon⁹⁹ – that '(presup)poses' the big Other, which is the only avenue left when symbolization has been shunned. *The big Other, rather than being presup-posed, is ex-posed.* Against this stupid positivity and hyperreality of that-thing-called-postmodern-culture we need the Symbolic to mediate the Imaginary aspects of the big Other/superego, which is to say we need the mediation of Other(s).

In one context, Žižek argues that the fundamental fantasy is the belief in the big Other, and although this is true we must not assume it can be 'traversed' as if out to some other side. In the fetishistic split of ideology, individuals transpose their belief onto the big Other embodied in the collective to thereby remain the same qua individuals. In other words, in the Žižekian understanding so long as there is ideology there is the exorcizing of one's place of enunciation. Moreover, the superego emerges as a result of the guilt involved in not really believing what I recognize myself as. When the big Other fails in some way – for instance, September 11th – cynics turn into believers in a mad rush to save the big Other

from disintegration; that is, they really start believing. I would submit that with the possible exception of the last few years as a result of September 11th (and even then predominantly only in America), not only was one's place of enunciation denied, it was in a certain sense not even expected that others would believe. Indeed, one in fact projected and projects onto the other not one's belief but one's lack of belief; one seeks comfort in the very lack of belief, that is, one sought and seeks disappearance. One trusts that no one trusts, and this relieves one of any guilt for one's insensitive actions in the world. In fact, it could be argued that today the superego also emerges as the guilt of actually believing.

Americans, then, feel guilty twice over: once because the place-holder of their big Other is, as everyone knows, an idiot, which means they feel guilty for allowing an idiot to hold the reins of the Law (and pretend as if the Emperor is in fact wearing clothes like never before); twice because they feel guilty in believing in the first place. US President Bush's handlers know, at least implicitly, that Bush's success lies through the superegotistical imperative. For instance, in his recent championing of amending the Constitution so as to foreclose the possibility of gay marriage, it was fully known that the measure would fail. The point wasn't to change the Law, but to appear as willing to take the risk *against* the Law, against, that is, the founding document of their Union. After all, Bush's very presidency was founded by three out of five Supreme Court judges – that is, three Republicans – voting against the recount in Florida. Not only was Bush's reign secured in an exceptional manner to the 'democratic' system, it was done so by the highest court in US Law – but a court obeying a superegotistical imperative. US Law is run superegotistically; this is a reverse of the traditional situation of the superego emerging as the result of the surplus of the Law – now the Law is a sort of surplus to the superego. One might say that now we create Laws so as to create and maintain an inner distance from them, to prevent the guilt of actually believing. Every American knows their 'democracy' is a sham, but for many of them – if not the popular vote – this is what they want! The jouissance of the Republican following is inexorable.

A lack of belief is still a belief (as the old saying goes, "to be an atheist requires a lot of faith"). In earlier modern times one pretended one did not believe, thereby transposing one's belief onto the big Other; but cynics together shared this belief, and thus were in a certain sense – in subterfuge – engaging in quasi-testimonial encounters, even though such encounters ideologically surrounded the notion of the inner *agalma* hidden from the external

Law. In postmodern times one in a sense has no belief insofar as it has been foreclosed; one shares 'nothing' with others. This is still a fantasy, to be sure, but a cryptic one rather than an unconscious one, so that the modality of the lack of belief qua-still-being-a-belief is qualitatively different. A modernist in postmodern times would thus be abhorrent to the postmodernist, for s/he would endanger the latter's crypt and therein threaten to make a cryptic foreclosure an unconscious repression – and thus closer to Other(s).

Zizek writes that our 'culture of complaint' has an underlying logic of *ressentiment*: far from cheerfully assuming the nonexistence of the big Other, the subject blames the Other for its failure and/or impotence, as if the Other is guilty of the fact that it doesn't exist... *[one] confirm[s] the Other in the very gesture of attacking it*¹⁰⁰. One ends up with a "proliferation of different versions of a big Other that actually exists, in the Real, not merely as a symbolic fiction... [this is] the most succinct definition of paranoia; for this reason, two features which characterize today's ideological stance – cynical distance and full reliance on paranoid fantasy – are strictly codependant... The distrust of the big Other... relies on the belief that there is an 'Other of the Other'... [that serves as] the meta-guarantee of the consistency of the big Other¹⁰¹.

Now what is this Other of the Other if not an updated version of the primal father? At the same moment as we dismiss Symbolic efficiency we fantastically guarantee it through the superego. Moreover, and as we shall see, is there not a danger in the Levinasian/Derridean discourse that their attack on metaphysics, in the opening up to some spectral Other, threatens to become indistinguishable from the emergence of the superego, or crypt-fantasy, as meta-guarantee? A provocative question, to be sure, and this is something we will dwell on later.

In sum, we can understand the term "Other(s)" to refer to five – or rather four and a half – things: the finite other (*a* in the mirror image), the Real Other, the big Other, the barred subject and its objective correlate (which are two sides of the same coin/process). Although it is crucial to understand their separate functions, most notable in their relation to the three registers, the point here is to understand their interrelation in human communication.

Sexual Difference, or having vs. being the phallus

As Freud noted, there can be no formulaic description of the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine'. For Lacan, it is one's relation to the phallus that is the marker of sexual identity, for both sexes (since both rely on identification with the father in the Oedipus complex). There is no signifier of sexual difference as such; this difference is ascribed within the relation to the function of the phallus. Thus one's sexual position is forever incomplete to

the extent that sexual difference cannot be symbolized. While men *have* the phallus, women *are* the phallus. As noted, for men the phallic function is limited by the functioning in fantasy of the exception that grounds it: the non-phallic primal father. While man is “whole” within the Symbolic, the exception that delimits him precludes him from fully identifying with castration. Man, while in the Symbolic, takes exception to it in some way. This is a fantasy of “no limit”, of a subject not subjected to the Law. Thus men are caught in the phallic function because they do not fully identify with it¹⁰².

By *being* the phallus, women do not take exception to the Symbolic, but on the contrary are there altogether. By “being” the function that serves as both condition of possibility and impossibility of the Symbolic, women identify with the contingency of the signifier. As Suzanne Barnard writes, this means that she chooses thought over existence, the latter being the sort of being to be had within the Symbolic (by virtue of taking exception to it). She is thereby excluded from the “reality” of being, and is thus the vacant point of the pure “I think”: woman ex-sists¹⁰³. By not being haunted by the figure operating as a limit, she has an infinite relation to the Symbolic, and thus in a certain sense she ‘knows’ that neither she nor the Other knows (that the Law is impotent). In being in the Symbolic without exception, she has a relation to the Other that produces another unlimited form of jouissance, effected in *undeath* in relation to the signifier of a lack in the Other. The object does not haunt her as a promised and avoided plenitude as it does for the man, but rather as a nontraumatic signifier of a lack in the Other. This allows for the possibility of provisional master signifiers from within¹⁰⁴. Although this will be discussed later, one might think this (discourse on) “undeath” to partake of the crypt-fantasy that avoids the Symbolic death drive.

As Evans writes, the question of one’s sex is the question of hysteria, wherein the mysterious “other sex” is always the woman – for both sexes. This might be understood by the fact that since woman is the phallus, to question what a woman is is to question sexual identity and difference as such¹⁰⁵. It is also to question the condition of possibility and condition of impossibility of the Symbolic order, and it is perhaps in this light that we should read Žižek’s argument that our goal should be to become perfect hysterics, that is, hysterics without symptoms.

If the phallus is both the condition of possibility and the condition of impossibility of the phallus, that is, if it is at once Symbolic and Real, then there is also a sort of stupid positivity here: is not the phallus closely associated with S2, thereby, along its endless

significations, giving rise to the surplus, that is, superego? If one is immersed in S2, a surplus is bound to rise, but what this seems to indicate, bizarrely, is that the superego is in fact a feminine structure; this is the only possible conclusion to Žižek's suggestion that the superego emerges not so much through S1 as S2. What this perhaps points to is the fantastical nature of the superego, the way in which it can be appropriated by both sexes – indeed, how it can serve not so much to mark the Real of the difference between the sexes but the precise opposite of masking it.

By contrast, the woman who somehow “knows” about the lack of the Other qua full immersion in the Symbolic would not regress to the Imaginary, but stay on the level of Symbolic, “humbly aware” of the lack of the Other. The detrimental effects of the superego would be staved off to the extent one did not allow any fantastical filling of the gaps of language or lack of the Other. Yet there is a way in which this very refusal of filling it out – exemplified in what may be called “postmodern deconstructionist Cultural Studies” (which, one must note, is *not* Derridean) – is itself a filling of the gap, itself a fantasy. It goes to great lengths to present itself as neutral, but in so doing avoids the Real of its discourse, avoids the fact that precisely because of the Real there is no such thing as neutrality. It covers over the gap of the Real with the gloss of neutrality. I don't want to equate this “humble” feminine experience of the lack of the Other with pomo deconstructionism; it is just to point out its possible conjunction and the ways, thus, in which pomo deconstructionists could justify what they are up to. The gloss of neutrality, after all, presents itself as a Symbolic without exception, a kind of *lalangue/llanguage*. Perhaps this explains the sort of (Other-)jouissance present in the (writing of) the texts of Cultural Studies? This, indeed, is itself a sort of Exception to the Symbolic, a gesturing to a beyond of the Symbolic, in the Symbolic (‘in full’). This is the crypt-fantasy.

What both the superego fantasy and the crypt-fantasy have in common, beyond their Exceptional relation to the Symbolic, is an elision of the Real of sexual difference, an elision that happens concurrently with the exorcisms of our places of enunciation. Instead of taking up our positions in relation to the phallus we ex-pose them; this ex-posure forms the crypt-Other, which is but the asexual dumping ground of our places of enunciation. Only through Other(s) can the Real of sexual difference be experienced; what the fantasies of the superego and the crypt do is to, in the very appeal to marking sexual difference, close it off.

Unconscious and the Structure of Language

The unconscious is the Other(s)'s discourse, and is in a certain sense thus a matter of telepathy, as Freud intimated¹⁰⁶. As Lacan puts it, "It is a case of resonance in the communicating networks of discourse, an exhaustive study of which would shed light on similar facts of everyday life"¹⁰⁷. The unconscious is the order of pure signifiers; in a sense this makes Lacan radically anti-Saussurean (and even Surrealist), for with Lacan language no longer becomes a system of signs but of signifiers. Signifier and signified no longer go together like two sides of a piece of paper, as Saussure put it, but instead find themselves with a gulf between them. This gulf is the bar qua *phallus*, and it functions as a resistance inherent to signification. The signified merely becomes a Real effect of the play of signifiers, and even when signifieds are produced they slip under the signifier. The only things that momentarily detain this movement are the *points de capiton*, which can be understood as having both a diachronic and synchronic aspect. The diachronic aspect is that of punctuation, wherein in a person's discourse one retroactively infers meaning upon what they said only after they have said it. The synchronic aspect is harder to discern; it involves metaphor, wherein the signifier momentarily leaps over the bar of signification into the signified¹⁰⁸.

The fundamental metaphor – which is not to say the forever *necessary* metaphor – is the paternal one. Lacan argues that the Name-of-the-Father, which links the Father's prohibitive "No!" with his Name in the French *nom*, is the fundamental signifier that serves as the precondition for all signification. Crucially, and as Žižek notes, the Name of the Father must itself be understood as a symptom, or *sinthome*, that gives consistency to one's – or in the case of the Name of the Father, a culture's – universe. If this fundamental signifier is foreclosed, thereby excluded from the symbolic order (without some other socially accepted signifier coming to take its place), psychosis is the result. It is in the paternal metaphor that the Name of the Father emerges as a substitute for the *désire* of the mother.

As Žižek writes, the symbolic father is the "sublation of the real father in its Name which is more 'father than father himself', whereas the 'non-sublated' part of the father appears as the obscene, cruel, and oddly impotent agency of the superego"¹⁰⁹. Again, the father as such is, but a symptom, "covering up a certain defectiveness, inconsistency, of the symbolic universe"¹¹⁰. It is, of course, a very powerful symptom for many cultures.

The master signifier (or S1) represents the subject for other signifiers, and stands at the very intersection of the performative and the constative¹¹¹. Again it is imperative to note, lest one be swayed by the Derridean critique that argues that Lacan here assumes a fundamental priority to the phallus, that this metaphor is in its essence extremely fragile by virtue of the fact that it has, precisely, no essence. It is but a function that is radically ambiguous for all the members of a society. No one knows what this metaphor means. Instead, everyone simply presupposes that others know, and thus what ultimately binds them is their shared ignorance, their communing around a lack (of the phallus)¹¹².

The master signifier is the signifier of the very lack of the signifier, thereby totalizing and quilting the dispersed field. The otherwise infinite chain of causes, the domain of knowledge (or S2 in Lacanese), is interrupted with an abyssal and unfounded act of violence, thereby inverting impotence into constitutive power¹¹³. This is how the Symbolic emerges, in its original repression of the signifier of the pure performative (the phallic function), a signifier that would not assume the form of its opposite. This is the very notion of the transcendental, where the subject experiences as his constitutive power (phallus) the very horizon which frames his vision (phallus) due to his mortality¹¹⁴. In other words, Lacan shows how the transcendental comes to be¹¹⁵; moreover, he shows that the master signifier can never represent the subject completely, as there is always some surplus that eludes representation: objet petit a, the objective correlate of the barred subject. The abyssal and unfounded act of violence could be seen as the Symbolic death drive, although this same death drive could be understood to be the very drive that breaks up the transcendental. In the Symbolic death drive, one must do both, aporetically, although one can for theoretical and nominal purposes ascribe the drive that breaks up the transcendental as the Symbolic death drive and the act of violence as the emerging transcendental. Moreover, one can see here that identifying with the objet petit a qua correlate to the subject is equivalent to discovering the lack in the Other, which is to say one thereby “rides the death drive”.

Lacan states: “The unconscious is that part of concrete discourse qua transindividual, which is not at the subject’s disposal in reestablishing the continuity of his conscious discourse”¹¹⁶. As Žižek writes, the unconscious is a property of the world. It is not an inner phenomenon, but the reverse of externalized material facts¹¹⁷. In the vocabulary developed here, it is the reverse of the enunciated, that is to say, it is the place(s) of enunciation – although any notion of simply reversal is always already disturbed by/via the crypt, the crypt-

fantasy, and the superego. To quote Lacan, “Desire is expressed by and passes through the signifier... It encounters the other, I did not say as a person – it encounters the other as the *treasury* of the signifier, as the seat of the code”¹¹⁸. The treasure, a gift, which one must trust. We, instead, trust that we do not trust.

Speech, or the triad of the enunciated, place of enunciation, and annunciation

Following the arguments of Marcel Mauss and Claude Levi-Strauss, Lacan conceives speech as a “symbolic exchange” which “links human beings to each other”¹¹⁹. One gives speech to the other. In the notion of “founding speech”, roles are assigned to both addressee and addresser; such speech “not only transforms the other but also transforms the subject”¹²⁰. There is, in fact, “no speech without a response”¹²¹, even if there is no clear addressee. The spoken message is not only directed at the addressee, but at oneself. What is addressed to oneself (to the other) is the unconscious intention behind the message, which is to say the intention of the Other. Here the telepathic nature of speech and the big Other is revealed, as in speech one both gives one’s place of enunciation qua Other and receives from the other their own Other through their place of enunciation. Thus discerning just who is who’s Other becomes a slippery and telepathic affair, and of course they are intrinsically related in the first place. The very fact that it can never be definitively figured out is the very impetus for desire, in that since desire is always desire of the Other, in speech – or what we will later call testimony – this desire is played out.

Speech comes not from the ego, nor even from the subject, but rather from the Other. Language is ultimately beyond one’s conscious control, that is, “there is no metalanguage”¹²² (as Lacan put it in a different context). As Lacan states, “the unconscious is the discourse of the Other”¹²³. Desire too is always unconscious, wherein the aim of psychoanalytic treatment is to lead the analysand to recognize the truth about his desire, which can only be done in speech.

Lacan writes:

What I seek in speech is a response from the other. What constitutes me as a subject is my question. In order to be recognized by the other, I proffer what was only in view of what will be... I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself as an object¹²⁴.

This passage emphasizes the temporal aspect of communication, as the present (of presence) is itself elided: “I proffer what was only in view of what will be”. As we will discuss later, this identity of oneself with language, by only happening through “losing myself as an

object”, means that one becomes the *objet petit a*, via the enunciated. Through yourself-as-*objet-petit-a* the other then finds your place of enunciation, and this is why the *objet petit a* is the medium of relations.

Speech is a gift of language – as Lacan said, “the other [is] the treasury of the signifier” – and language is not immaterial. Words are caught up in all the body images that captivate the subject; they may, as Lacan writes, “‘knock up’ the hysteric... or represent the feces retained in avaricious jouissance”¹²⁵. One must give up one’s words, just as one had to give up one’s excrement to enter the Symbolic. The object produced by giving it up, that only comes to be in the very process, is the *objet petit a*. In identifying with the *objet petit a* one in a sense identifies with that which one had to give up, even while one continues to give it up, as one must. The (figure of the) Miser, by contrast, hoards h/is gold, h/is shit, in the dream of a pure exchange qua “avaricious jouissance”.

As noted, Other jouissance is the satisfaction of speech. Other Jouissance qua satisfaction can best be approached via Lacan’s concept of *lalangue/ llanguage*, which signify a sort of beyond of the place of enunciation. As Barnard insightfully remarks, it is thus not simply a matter in speech of the ego vs. the subject of the unconscious, of the ego vs. the unconscious meaning of signifying effects, but another category of the affects and being-effects of the (m)Other tongue. This is a being which ex-sists in an Other jouissance; in speech, we designate this through the term “annunciation”¹²⁶. In speech, then, one has one’s place of enunciation (the Other), the enunciated (materiality, shit), and one’s annunciation (*lalangue/ llanguage* in/ from the crypt)¹²⁷.

The big Other is both the dead reference at once removed from the encounter and yet only alive through the finite other; hysterics see the big Other as an overhanging spectre. This is not something to be admired, for it is incredibly debilitating. While a hysteric attitude towards the big Other – that is, seeing the big Other as outside the conversational encounter – is part of every testimonial encounter, one must (presup)pose a big Other in such encounters, else one shuns the Symbolic as such. And how does the hysteric propose to do this but *through* language (thus making incessant questioning an exorcism of one’s investment in the big Other, that is, one’s place of enunciation)?

What the hysteric does is to over-identify the *objet petit a* with the enunciated, thereby dis-realizing the fact that the *objet petit a* is but the objective correlate of the barred subject; what the hysteric does, by not acknowledging h/is own investment in the situation, is to

forget – or to foreclose – how the subject of the unconscious inflects the enunciated. It is the hysteric who approaches the limit experience of not differentiating the objet petit a from the big Other, precisely insofar as the hysteric does not assume h/is place of enunciation. While this amounts to an incessant questioning of the big Other, it does so by assuming the big Other to be an overhanging spectre. It is a false position insofar as it dis-acknowledges that the objet petit a only exists as medium of relations, thereby falsely trying to separate it from relation with Other(s) – but it cannot exist separately from such testimonial encounters.

When this is done, ambiguity is foreclosed from language, and thus objects, which inscribe themselves in the gap (qua ambiguity) of language, do not emerge, but rather take on an air of stupid positivity. This is ('postmodern') positivism, the first figure of hyperreality, correlative to the stance adopted by obsessional neurotics. But the reverse is also true: the hysteric over-identifies with the ambiguity of language, accepting the gap as such, and thus objects over-inscribe themselves in the gap of language, thus also taking on an air of stupid positivity. This is 'classic' postmodernism, the second, and correlative, figure of hyperreality. In both cases objects come to lack representational distance. It is precisely insofar as the big Other (qua [guarantor of] meaning) is idealized as spectre that objects appear "as is", without mediation. In between is the most common approach, at least in academia, that of believing to be accepting the gap as such while really neutralizing it, and thus a representational distance is in fact maintained – although the mediation is totally static insofar as the only big Other still remains against itself. Even with a sort of representational distance, then, objects paradoxically again take on the air of stupid positivity. Perhaps this supposed representational distance is but the fantasy that develops from the short circuit of obsessional neurosis and hysteria, positivism and the ambiguity of language.

Identifying with the enunciated gives rise to the feeling of absurdity which is subjectivity: "Spirit is a bone", to quote Hegel. In annunciation qua satisfaction one constantly skirts over the fundamental relation of ego to shit. Through the wall of language and via the crypt-fantasy the annunciator refuses to identify with the enunciated, refuses to thereby give it up, thereby dis-allowing the objet petit a, qua medium of relations, from emerging. However, no matter how hard s/he tries the feeling of absurdity – of the fact that "Spirit is a bone", that the satisfaction of speech only comes from the enunciated (akin to shit) – is inevitably produced in some manner and thus s/he will give up part of h/is ego and (re)enter the Symbolic. The point is that some annunciators speak so as to (impossibly)

avoid this feeling of absurdity, but the more enunciated they produce the more they approach it. It is correlative to those obsessed with looking in mirrors hoping to catch the right reflection, the complete side of the Gestalt, for the more they look the likelier they are to achieve precisely what they are trying to avoid: the shift of perspective that turns them into a body-in-pieces, the subject itself. It will later be argued, however, that it is not a question of rejecting annunciation, for it is always already in the function of the crypt; the problem is that it has taken on a super-ordinate status, that is, in its partial acknowledgement in the crypt-fantasy, in the decline of the Symbolic, of Other(s), or, indeed, when the Symbolic has itself gone cryptic.

Zizek writes, in Hegelese, that the “passage from one ‘figure of consciousness’ to the next occurs when the subject takes cognizance of this gap separating his ‘enunciated’ (his theoretical position) from his position of enunciation and assumes thereby what he unknowingly staged as his new explicit theoretical position: each ‘figure of consciousness’, so to speak, stages in advance what will become the next position”¹²⁸. I would submit, however, that things are a little too neat here, for in an encounter with Other(s) one cannot simply get back one’s own implicit message from the Other, for there are bound to be misunderstandings: what the Other sends back, of course, will be fused to h/is place of enunciation. So while it is true that one does in some way assume what one had already unknowingly staged, and while we could keep the name “figure of (*un*)consciousness” for this, it is imperative to highlight the remainder(s) that will always serve to upset any clear assumption of one’s previous place of enunciation. Moreover, one must aporetically accept the finite other’s discourse unconditionally, which is tantamount to an identification with the object “in the other more than the other”, thereby blurring the distinction between the other’s enunciated and enunciation. After all, it is perhaps only by virtue of his solitude that Hegel could construct a system as neat as the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Subject

As we have just seen, the subject is the sense of absurdity produced through the identification with shit. As Zizek writes, modern subjectivity emerges not with the Renaissance but with Martin Luther, wherein man becomes perceived as excrement, so that the subject perceives h/imself as “out of joint”, not included in the positive order of entities. There is a correlation, then, between Cartesian subjectivity and its objectal counterpart,

between the subject of enunciation and the subject of the enunciated: “if the Cartesian subject is to emerge at the level of the enunciation, he must be reduced to the ‘almost-nothing’ of disposable excrement at the level of the enunciated content”¹²⁹.

Another way of saying this is that the subject is a constitutive void that drives the processes of subjectivation but which cannot finally be filled out by it¹³⁰, which is why it has a bar through it in Lacanian algebra. The subject cannot achieve ontological consistency insofar as it cannot find its name in the symbolic order; to this extent the subject always remains a bone stuck in the throat of the signifier¹³¹, to conjoin Hegel’s dictum within a Lacanian framework. The subject is paradoxically both the movement away from subjectivation and the movement towards it, since without subjectivation comes a sort of unbearable state of excess. As Glyn Daly notes, “the subject is both the transcendental condition of possibility and impossibility for all forms of contingent subjectivation”¹³². The phallus, qua signifier of the lack of the Other, is closer to the subject than all other signifiers, precisely because it is the representation of the failure of representation”¹³³. This is why Žižek considers subjectivity in itself to be feminine (qua phallus). Although Derrida acknowledges such conflicting meanings to the “subject”, he questions the merits of keeping the term for this very reason; does not the keeping of the term threaten to re-assert the Cartesian cogito of self-transparent consciousness? To my mind, it is worth taking this risk, or rather: it is impossible not to. To throw away the concept simply by virtue of its ambiguity would be, in fact, to insinuate an (annunciated) outside to language.

To quote Lacan: “Who, then, is this other to whom I am more attached than to myself, since, at the heart of my assent to my own identity it is still he who agitates me?”¹³⁴ One becomes who one is by assuming one’s place of enunciation (as against the Imaginary ego).

Testimony: A Provisional Definition

From the above comments we are now ready to risk – for it is always a risk – a provisional definition of testimony. In a testimonial encounter with Other(s), one accepts the subjectivity of the subject of the unconscious (qua place of enunciation) of the finite other, while differentiating it from the other’s enunciated (qua indicator of their conscious understanding of the big Other). One does this by *partially* “identifying” with the *objet petit a*, which points towards both the subject of the unconscious and the enunciated. In so doing,

one attempts to understand how their enunciated is inflected from their place of enunciation, and one tries to communicate back to the finite other one's understanding of their unconscious motivation; the other, in turn, attempts to do the same for you. This is the domain of Truth – an ever-going narrative without the present and thus without presence: “the effect of full speech [is] to reorder past contingencies in giving them the meaning of necessities to come”¹³⁵.

Aporetically, by *fully* identifying with the objet petit a one also unconditionally accepts the other's discourse *without* consideration of how their enunciation inflects their enunciated; one takes them at their word, one *loves* the object “in them more than themselves”. By identifying with the objet petit a one de-extracts the object from the big Other by going through the phallus – as the big Other only comes to be through the finite Other's embodying it – and thus the field of reality loses its curvature. This opens onto an Other-Jouissance, which is not to be seen as a negative thing insofar as it relates to the other side of the aporia . Should it not Other-Jouissance would itself become impossible. On its own, that is, in disowning the aporia, this is the dimension of the superegotistical death drive: *fully* identifying with the objet petit a in the lack of any big Other (or the big Other as the lack of big Other), the realm of stupid declarations, wherein the objet petit a is reduced to the enunciated.

The Symbolic death drive resides in the aporia, creates the aporia, goes through the aporia. Testimony is a declaration that while changing the very coordinates of how it will be judged acknowledges what led it to its present situation; it is aporetic in that it deals with the gap of itself.

Chapter 3: The Holocaust, the Crypt-Fantasy, and the Crypt-Other

(Post)Modernism's Real

Postmodernity is typically understood as the collapse of grand narratives, that is, the loss of any over-arching principle(s) that could govern the process of symbolization. For most, this is seen as a positive and liberating condition, as it supposedly allots us a certain freedom to define ourselves. After all, the argument goes, grand narratives were false and falsifying in the first place, governed as they were by a white male Eurocentric point of view that presented itself as neutral and scientific; in truth such a gaze, through its very pretension to scientificity and neutrality, was domineering and exclusionary. Of course one can and should endorse this viewpoint, at least conditionally. For the problem remains as to how one can communicate without some form of grand narrative, which we could translate it into the Lacanian term of the big Other. Indeed, without some form of big Other, or Other(s), the only possible relation with singular finite others would be that of the specular image, wherein the other is but a reflection and/or projection of one's own ego (and vice versa).

Without a big Other other than the one that is anti-big Other, there is no possible route into the unconscious, and thus to one's desire. If desire is the desire of the Other, desire itself becomes problematic. In fact, it remains to be seen if psychoanalysis, as helping the subject to assume h/is desire, is still viable. Alternatively, if one saw psychoanalysis' mandate as helping the analysand regress from desire to drive, one's very mandate would seem to have been completed in advance (even if it is entirely the wrong sort of drive). Instead of desire we have jouissance, a crypt-fantasy of Other-Jouissance which could be seen to be the surplus from discourse and shopping, or S2. In this sense the superego is related to (the surplus of) annunciation, or rather satisfaction and impetus thereof. The more we give it the more it wants, and this is inexorably related to crypt-love, for the more we give of it the more it wants.

When postmodernists, or whatever they like to call themselves now (if anything¹³⁶), pose the non-existence of the big Other, what they are in fact doing is (presup)posing the big Other (of today) as the lack of a(ny) big Other (of yesteryear). McLuhan would say they are looking in the rearview mirror, of which we are all guilty in some sense.

For Zizek, in modernity the Thing assumed the form of remnants of the past, the inertia of prejudices to be cast away, or the repressed life power to be liberated. We enter

postmodernism when our relation to the Thing becomes antagonistic, wherein we disown the Thing even while it exerts an irresistible attraction on us; its proximity exposes us to mortal danger even while it is also a source of power. What in modernity appeared as subversive margin, that is, symptoms in which the repressed truth of the false totality emerges, is displaced into the very heart, as the hard core of the Real that different attempts at symbolization fail, so that it is as if the universal and particular paradoxically exchange places. The centre is now the particular absolute, the traumatic kernel, while various universals are reduced to role of species of an unfathomable genus, functioning as ultimately failed attempts to symbolize/neutralize the traumatic core of the Real. As the theoretical antagonism shifts from the axis of the Imaginary-Symbolic to that of the Symbolic-Real, the modern symptomal ferreting out the texture of discursive Symbolic practices whose Imaginary effect is the substantial totality changes to the postmodern focusing on the anti-Symbolic traumatic Thing¹³⁷. Of course, we might note, the latter can only do so through the Symbolic: symbolically we acknowledge the impossibility of symbolization, giving our age a unique pathological twist. And what is this Thing, this particular Absolute, if not the Holocaust, that is, when the Real of prejudices to be cast away returned with a vengeance and a horror unmatched by any modern event, *thereby creating the break?*

The Holocaust and Zizek's (Change of) Position

It is held by many that to try to symbolize the Holocaust is not only an impossible task, but one that is morally wrong. In a sense, such a statement rests on the idea that before symbolization *was* possible, that previous to the Holocaust we could properly and rightly symbolize existence and reality. This is, of course, entirely wrong. It presupposes that previous to the Holocaust existence was guaranteed by a benevolent God itself existing through the social fabric, that is, Other(s). With the Holocaust came not so much the death of God, for this came at the moment of Christ's doubt on the Cross ("Father, why hast thou forsaken me?"), but the death of God via the Holy Spirit of believers: Other(s). Not only did God clearly shun us to let such a monstrosity as the Holocaust happen, we qua God qua Holy Spirit qua Other(s) let it happen. Thus we can no longer symbolize reality. In fact, to risk a position, to dare to symbolize, is shunned as a possible precursor to fascism.

Even Zizek threatens such a position at times, particularly in his early work. In concluding his (1991) magnum opus, *For They Know Not What They Do*, he offers an "ethics of

the drive”, which he defines as the “ethical compulsion which compels us to mark repeatedly the memory of a lost Cause... All we have to do is to mark repeatedly the trauma as such, in its very “impossibility, in its non-integrated horror, by means of some ‘empty’ symbolic gesture”¹³⁸; not surprisingly, the example he gives concerns Auschwitz. Although Žizek makes the disclaimer that this has nothing to do with simply “documenting” the trauma (for that impossibly neutralizes the Real of the trauma), this is a surprising attitude for a writer who, in the new foreword to the second edition of the text (written eleven years later in 2002), mentions that he thinks his earlier (1989) *The Sublime Object of Ideology* contained this

philosophical weakness: it basically endorses a quasi-transcendental reading of Lacan, focused on the notion of the Real as the impossible Thing-in-itself; in so doing, it opens the way to the celebration of failure: to the idea that every act ultimately misfires, and that the proper ethical stance is heroically to accept this failure”¹³⁹.

It is difficult to see how the later text, *For They Know Not What They Do*, ends all that differently from the failings of *The Sublime Object of Ideology* and his own geneology of postmodernism described above. In *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?* (2001), however, Žizek does in fact change tack; in referring to a description of the trauma of the Holocaust, Žizek asks (himself?):

“Are these not the terms that designate the Lacanian encounter of the Real? However, this very depoliticization of the Holocaust, its elevation into the properly sublime Evil, the untouchable Exception beyond the reach of ‘normal’ political discourse, can also be a political act of utter cynical manipulation, a political intervention aiming at legitimizing a certain kind of hierarchical political relation.”¹⁴⁰

This manipulation has three prongs; in the first it is part of the postmodern strategy of depoliticization and/or victimisation; two, it disqualifies other forms of violence to the extent that no one can then suffer ‘as much’ as those in the Holocaust; three, “it serves to cast a shadow over every radical political project”¹⁴¹. At this stage, Žizek is less concerned with “marking repeatedly the trauma as such” – for what, after all, could a trauma be *as such?* – than with acknowledging that one must work through the Holocaust in some manner. The alternative is depoliticization. In Derridean terms, every marking involves iterability – repetition with difference – and thus every marking is in some sense always already a working through¹⁴². Again, in one of his most recent texts Žizek writes that the “only Absolute acceptable within this horizon is a negative one: absolute Evil, whose paradigmatic figure is that of the Holocaust. The evocation of the Holocaust serves as a warning of what the ultimate result of the submission of Life to some higher Goal is”¹⁴³.

As intimated, the big Other of today is a non-existent one. Or rather, since this is an impossibility, the big Other today is what it is by virtue of what it is not; “the big Other qua anti-big Other (and therefore: crypt-Other)” may be the proper way to formulate it. One no longer places oneself out there, which is to say that one does not assume one’s place of enunciation, but on the contrary continually attempts to exorcize it: one ex-poses the big Other, and for this reason it becomes obscene. There can be no end to such exorcism qua ex-posure, for in the very process of exorcism one calls up what it is one attempts to exorcise. Today’s big Other/superego is to be found in this very process: it “is” its exorcism (of its places of enunciation). Nowhere is this more evident than in the discourses of Western (neo)liberalism, and especially its “intellectual” proponents. One finds oneself in the Other in a reverse fashion insofar as one has exorcized one’s place of enunciation. The big Other, now as overarching and spectral as never before, is intimately tied to the logic of victimization: one is only a subject relating to this spectral big Other insofar as one has been victimized, been preyed upon – by who? By Other(s). One demands ontological recognition as victim; one does not seek it through desire, through cutting into the world (qua-decision-making).

As the result of the Real trauma of the Holocaust, the goal today has become to avoid the Real at all costs even while it exerts a certain hold over us qua particular Absolute. This means several things. First, since the finite other, by virtue of embodying/incarnating the big Other (that is, as Other), is ultimately Real, it means avoiding encounters with Others insofar as they are Other(s). The only ones which one relates to are those that amount to the same, that never, so to speak, leave the field of the one: others qua mirror images. Secondly, of course, this also means a lack of big Other, which is to be understood as the avoidance of symbolization. Many hold this up as an ethical position, for to symbolize the Holocaust, the argument runs, means to betray those who vanished in the gas chambers.

There can no question of every fully symbolizing the Holocaust, this is true, but is not this necessary failure – present in every (ultimately failed) symbolization – precisely what the “Holocaust industry”, as described by Norman Finkelstein, is afraid of? For this is the truth of symbolization: it will always fail, and yet, this is the very impetus for its continual attempts. What the Holocaust industry seems to think, however, is that their *partial* symbolization succeeds, and then stops at a point beyond which it is (pre)supposedly not possible to go, a point we must simply survey and say “we can go no further, but must

instead simply mark this spot, year after year”. Ironically, it is the very failure where the Holocaust industry believes it has succeeded which spawns the very industry, the very need to continue such (disingenuous) symbolizations that dis-acknowledge iterability¹⁴⁴. Or perhaps what the industry is really afraid of is the fact that since every text published iterates the trauma, the Holocaust *is* being (re)worked through. Combining these two perspectives, it is clear that what the industry is finally afraid of is that *its symbolization of symbolization’s failure will fail*, that is, that the trauma will be (re)worked through. Again, it will not, for it can not, be fully worked through, although in each working-through there is a certain truth to the situation, a way in which the mourner can say “yes, this is it” – and this is “healthy”, to anticipate Geoffrey Hartman’s word.

Let us quote Finkelstein at length:

The anomaly of The Holocaust is that its uniqueness is held to be absolutely decisive... All Holocaust writers agree that the Holocaust is unique, but few, if any, agree why... Only a flea’s hop separates the claim of Holocaust uniqueness from the claim that The Holocaust cannot be rationally apprehended. If The Holocaust is unprecedented in history, it must stand above and hence cannot be grasped by history... unique because it is inexplicable, and... inexplicable because it is unique... For [Elie] Wiesel... The Holocaust is effectively a “mystery” religion [wherein] only the survivor-priest (read: only Wiesel) is qualified to divine its mystery. And yet, The Holocaust’s mystery, Wiesel avows, is “noncommunicable”; “we cannot even talk about it”. Thus, for his standard fee of \$25,000 (plus chauffeured limousine), Wiesel lectures that the “secret” of Auschwitz’s “truth lies in silence”. Rationally comprehending The Holocaust, amounts, in this view, to denying it... A favourite Wiesel tag line declares that “the universality of the Holocaust lies in its uniqueness.” But if it is incomparably and incomprehensibly unique, how can The Holocaust have a universal dimension?¹⁴⁵

Zizek could answer this question based on his genealogy of postmodernism: *by virtue of its status of particular absolute*, that is, unique but/and universal. And what is this if not a kind of negative theology? As Giorgio Agamben suggests: “To say that Auschwitz is “unsayable” or “incomprehensible” is [to] ador[e] in silence, as one does with a God. Regardless of one’s intentions, this contributes to its glory”¹⁴⁶. To “break the tie between an impossibility and a possibility of speaking [in Lacanian terms, the Real as internal limit *and* impetus of the Symbolic]... [one] unconsciously repeats the Nazi’s gesture”, as with the SS saying to the inhabitants of the camp: “none of you will be left to bear witness, but even if someone were to survive, the world will not believe him”¹⁴⁷. Wiesel speaks so as to say that speaking is impossible, but *how can you accept the testimony of a survivor if the trauma of the Holocaust is “unsayable”?* Their testimony will have been foreclosed in advance. Instead we get obscene

superegotistical figures such as Wiesel declaring his symbolization as effectuated in its very delivery, repeating in effect, if not in intention, the Nazi gesture.

As Finkelstein continues:

The Holocaust uniqueness debate is sterile. Indeed, the claims of Holocaust uniqueness have come to constitute a form of “intellectual terrorism”. Those practicing the normal comparative procedures of scholarly inquiry must first enter a thousand and one caveats to ward off the accusation of “trivializing The Holocaust”¹⁴⁸.

Far from trivializing the Holocaust, it should be clear that, since I am doing a cultural (psycho)analysis, I am on the contrary assuming its importance qua particular absolute. And the very fact that Finkelstein acknowledges the perceived need for so many caveats is proof positive of the Holocaust being postmodernity’s particular absolute. After all, what is psychoanalysis if not a theory about the resistance to itself? (And should any reader of this thesis *not* feel a sort of immediate resistance to this discussion, this thesis would be wrong – in this sense, psychoanalysis *is* “falsifiable”).

By being the particular absolute, to try to work through the Holocaust is to question its status of particular absolute, and thus to question the big Other (qua anti-big Other). And this is precisely, why any sort of comparison is seen as a form of denial of the Holocaust, *even when* its explicit aim is to mourn the victims of Nazism. As Finkelstein writes quoting Jacob Neusner, “emphasizing the uniqueness of the Holocaust ‘gives Jews a claim upon... others’”¹⁴⁹, and it does this, precisely, by its status of particular absolute, for in their intimate relation to the Holocaust Jews have a sort of special status qua place-holders of the big Other (qua anti-big Other). In itself there is perhaps nothing wrong with this situation, but as Finkelstein notes it is too often used for cynical political purposes, most often to the exclusion of the very Real suffering of *Holocaust* survivors. In perhaps the most bizarre twist, the Holocaust industry has inflated the numbers of survivors (in order to secure additional compensation) to such an extent that the industry itself trivializes the horror of the Holocaust, and thus the Industry itself practices a form of Holocaust denial (so that neo-Nazi Holocaust deniers use the Holocaust industry’s own figures)¹⁵⁰. Furthermore, despite the large sums of monies received as supposed victim’s compensation, very little has actually been distributed to the victims, as if, Finkelstein writes, the industry were simply waiting for the remaining victims to die so that the money could remain with it¹⁵¹. In contrast to this we must go through the Real of the Holocaust in a mourning of the trauma – only then could we collectively gain access to some form of control over the big Other, through Other(s),

hand in hand with Holocaust survivors (and not the industry which cynically claims to speak in their name). As Geoffrey Hartman, co-founder of Yale University's Fortunoff Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, says in an interview:

[in testimony] there is a transformation – one that is both necessary and, if I can use the term, healthy. I don't mean that everything has to be integrated. I don't think it can be... But they can be transformed¹⁵²...

Every event in history is unique, since every moment is absolutely singular – only a form of madness could argue otherwise. And yet, this does not make comparison impossible – far from it, this is the paradox of history. To study what is both absolutely singular *and* comparable, this is the historian's gambit. So if we admit, now, that we can study and compare the Holocaust, certainly we can agree that it was – with the possible exception of the genocide of Native Americans (and we should not forget that Hitler modeled his *Lebensraum* program on America's Manifest Destiny¹⁵³) – probably the worst event in human history. Wiesel argues that it was only in the Holocaust that a people were killed for who they were (since he excepts the gypsies as a result of Hitler exempting two tribes from annihilation – well certainly, one might retort, those other tribes would have thought themselves to be condemned simply for who they were). Yet certainly Native Americans were killed for who they were, as were, to go back to World War II, hundreds of thousands of Serbs at the hands of Croats (where even the Nazis were aghast at the Croatian brutality). Certainly the Holocaust was unique, as has often been noted, in the Nazi use of modern technology and bureaucracy to commit genocide. As mentioned, Nazi Germany recast the Real from old prejudices to be gotten rid of and made it its explicit theme by embracing these very prejudices, while at the same time engaging in a modernizing process never seen before – thus Nazi Germany was, in a sense, both the most modern *and* the most primitive.

The gas chambers (and IBM computers) combined modernity's technological "rationality" with primitivism's irrational prejudices, thereby contributing, in Agamben's words, to a "degradation of death [which] constitutes the specific offense of Auschwitz, the proper name of its horror"¹⁵⁴. As it turned out, modernity could not recover. And, one might say, survivalism is born with the inability to reconcile ourselves with death following Auschwitz; survivalism is merely the flipside of Auschwitz's logic, and thus an index of our lack of mourning. Since, as Agamben notes, the respect for the dead, for preserving the dignity of the dead, is not something related so much to the field of ethics as to law, "which

is at every point indistinguishable from magic”¹⁵⁵, to the extent that we cannot mourn these deaths, that we cannot hold a proper funeral, the law (qua Other) suffers. Dying becomes shameful, and although this, for Michel Foucault at least, has been with us since the beginnings of “biopower” in the seventeenth century, it has since the Holocaust risen exponentially (thus perhaps allowing for Foucault’s observation in the first place). But *to the extent that we do not mourn the deaths of the Holocaust we repeat the Nazi gesture*. This is also to point to the falsity of all those discourses which hold Antigone up as (only) the supreme ethical figure, for her “ethical” action is ultimately *for* the law, for the Other, for Other(s) – and perhaps the *unconscious* reason for the discourses on Antigone is the desire to mourn, that is, to (at least partially) get out of the *crypt*-fantasy.

To refuse an encounter with the Real is ultimately to refuse an encounter with the deepest level of subjectivity, the barred subject qua failure of signification, for when one does not symbolize and/or declares one’s symbolization as effectuated in its delivery, one exorcizes the sense of failure which “is” the barred subject. One could say that it is from the sense of failure that one receives the impetus, the gift if you will, to risk a symbolization, thereby producing the inert surplus of the *objet petit a* – and it may be the *objet petit a* that produces the failure in the “first” place. But since there is, precisely, no beginning to this story, the barred subject qua failure of signification/place of enunciation and the *objet petit a* must be understood to be inextricably linked and inseparable. Again, Hartman: “[testimonies] are powerful enough to cause a secondary traumatization. And then what is complicating, is that a certain amount of secondary traumatization is in fact needful – if you’re going to have a strong empathic response”¹⁵⁶, that is, with Other(s). The secondary traumatization, one might argue, is both reliving the trauma and being unable to fully express the trauma; one thereby encounters the deepest level of subjectivity, and when with others, as in such testimony, a “testimonial alliance” qua recognition of mutual vulnerability is created. A testimonial alliance, moreover, that functions through the *objet petit a* as medium of relations.

It is generally understood that Nazi Germany had a Symbolic answer for everything, thereby giving consistency to their Symbolic universe, in contrast to the previous Weimar Republic which seemed weak and ineffectual both in its words and in its deeds, or more precisely: to the extent that the Weimar Republic, as the epitome of consensus democratic politics, never fully symbolized their situation, they could not act to change it, or this at least was the way they were caricatured by Nazi Germany (thereby ignoring the structural

conditions, for instance, of post-World War I reparations). Built-in to the very structure of symbolization is the deadlock at its heart: the Real. It is precisely this deadlock that Nazi Germany externalized onto the figure of the Jew, who became Nazi Germany's *objet petit a*, the object onto which they placed the blame for the impossibility of society – instead of realizing that this impossibility was the result of their own places of enunciation. The affect produced was one of “if only Jews didn’t exist, Society would exist”¹⁵⁷.

Ironically, the logic now is that “if only the Holocaust did not happen, Society would exist”. The Holocaust has become our *objet petit a*, our fantasy covering over the impossibility of Society. That is, the impossibility of Society is transformed into being the *result* of symbolization (since it is assumed Nazi Germany over-symbolized). To this notion, implicit in all discourse today, we should insist on Nazi Germany’s grotesque fantastical relation to the Symbolic, wherein their Symbolic served their fantasy life like never before. Nazi Germany, as we know, was a collective. At the altar of the ideological fantasy they sacrificed their places of enunciation, their relation to desire. Instead they lived out their desire, or rather *jouissance*, through this sacrifice. They were only subjects and Other(s) through this recurrent sacrifice, and in this recurrence existed a sick *jouissance*, whose object-cause, of course, was the figure of the Jew qua *objet petit a*. Their big Other was secondary to this *jouissance*, and what is horrifying is just how similar the American situation is to this logic. Do not the “Muslims in our midst” now serve as the reason American society is not achieved, that is, as the ‘reason’ they can enjoy sacrificing their places of enunciation in obeying their superegotistical imperative?

We, by contrast, must traverse the fantasy of the inability-to-ever-in-any-way-symbolize-the-Holocaust, thereby de-extracting this *objet petit a* from the big Other, which means to become aware of how our big Other functions (qua its shunning of symbolization, which is to say, itself). Our field of reality would lose its curvature by passing through the death drive – is it any wonder that our culture, in seeking to avoid precisely this, takes on the form of survivalism? Indeed, far from opening to the trauma of the Holocaust the Holocaust industry masks it through its fantasy of the Holocaust as Thing and the Holocaust trauma as that which prevents access to the Thing, thereby avoiding the death drive itself qua passage from one to the other, a passage only Realized through Holocaust survivors’ testimony itself (and us with them). Moreover, the very avoidance of mourning the

Holocaust means that its horror ever-threatens to repeat itself: this is part of the logic of incorporation.

As noted, the Imaginary Gestalt involves both the image of completeness and its flipside of the body-in-pieces, the two being but a shift of perspective from each other; the drive (and the superego) emerges as the attempt to continually eradicate the completeness of the image. Fascism completed the image as never before – this is obvious – but to this extent it unleashed a massive drive that sought the image’s destruction. These combined contradictory forces were channeled into the fascist Symbolic, so that the drive became one that sought suicide on the level of historical reality.

Like the fascists, we too live in imagistic times. Unlike the fascists – and more precisely, because of them – we do not channel the contradictory forces of the Imaginary into the Symbolic. Instead they appear more free-floating, continual Gestalting, and this is one way to approach the Zizekian comment that our culture is one of living-between-the-two-deaths, as if we were awaiting our real deaths after already being symbolically dead. Thus *we seek not suicide on the level of historical reality but disappearance on the level of hyperreality*. Not a hot fascism, but a cool one: in both cases there is the exorcism of one’s place of enunciation. Suicide is an act (and a false one, of course) that one accomplishes for the Symbolic: one sacrifices oneself in a desperate act of love. By contrast, we do not seek this love: we trust that we no longer trust.

The Serbian Other

In post-World War II society, our big Other functions to the extent it is anti-big O, our places of enunciation function to the extent we try to exorcize them, and the Real Other, to mitigate its hauntological effects, we transpose onto others that we can “manage”: Milosevic, Hussein. Is not Milosevic’s trial at the Hague not a desperate attempt to impossibly show how we can manage the Real? Of course, it is entirely false, in part because in so doing we completely forget our own investments in the situation (both actual and fantastical, in this case).

When we actually do get a Real Other, exploding themselves on our doorstep, so it were, we feel as though our big Other has been irrevocably changed. The fanatical US public reaction to September 11th is nothing if not a desire to get back to a time when the only Other was the lack of one, when we didn’t have to (at least subconsciously) confront our

own investments in our situation: a longing for innocence (attested to by the hysteria surrounding former President Clinton's memoirs, since in his time we could simply manage those pesky Serbs and not have to worry about Real Others). We need Serbs as *objet petit a*, for they – like the Holocaust, which also serves as an object-cause of desire – can be blamed as the reason global society is not achieved; thus it is not surprising that every little hint of nationalism in Serbia is given a fascist overtone by a hysterical Western media. The logic here is that it is *them* who cast everything onto *objet petit a*, when in reality it is (also) *us* using *them* as *objet petit a*, as though it were the Evil of the Germans – whom the Serbs, preposterously, stand for metonymically – that was responsible for our lack of Society/symbolization, and not language itself. Of course, this is not to deny the very real ethnic cleansing committed by Serbs; it is simply to point out how this factual ethnic cleansing played out in our fantasy life, one especially evident insofar as we ignore other factual ethnic cleansings, such as the Clinton-backed massacre of Serbs by Croats at Krajina in 1995 (or again, the hundreds of thousands brutally and sadistically slaughtered during World War II).

The other problem with “those Serbs” is that they seem to simply have too much fun, especially at their own expense. In regards to the anti-smoking legislation which is presently sweeping the world, Žižek suggests that

what is really at issue is that there are Others, who, through smoking, are enjoying themselves too intensely in a self-destructive way – and this is unbearable... it's about how to have contact with others, but contact without contact; how to keep a proper distance... So again, here we have the neighbour as Real: a Real which is all too possible, and that is what is traumatic. With the intrusion of this Real, the almost central obsession of our times has become how to maintain proper distance¹⁵⁸.

Since others are Other(s) insofar as they embody the Symbolic, Žižek's statement that we are obsessed with “maintaining proper distance” should not simply be understood as avoiding contact with the Real of the Other but also as avoiding contact with Other(s), and thus, with the big Other's iterability; secretly we are aware that others embody (iterable) Other(s). We maintain distance from the big Other on the one hand because it has become an over-arching spectre, and on the other because we want it to remain so. The best way to do this is to avoid testimonial encounters, that is, encounters with Other(s). With regards to the Real of the Other, or the Other having too much fun, we regulate in a sort of reverse utilitarianism of maximizing unhappiness, or rather maximizing un-desire (qua distance from desire as desire of Other[s]), for the very sake of this abstract ‘happiness’ of the pleasure

principle. Serbs, in their joviality and seeming indifference towards their own health and safety, their very “beyond of the pleasure principle”, are the ones we must maintain the most distance from.

The Spectral Big Other and Hypersensitivity

At this point another level of analysis is needed. The big Other is in some – at least fantastical – sense spectral and over-arching, floating in hyperspace as a dead reference, so it were, insofar as one’s place of enunciation is exorcized, *thereby alienating one from one’s objective correlate* (objet petit a), *which is to say one’s relation with Other(s)*. The *objet petit a* further hides under the big Other. In this exorcism the symbolic fiction of the big Other is created in its very distance from Other(s). This is an impossible distance, of course, yet if everyone believes there to be a secure symbolic network irrespective of our investment, then in some sense there is – at least in the imagination. This impossible separation from the symbolic network is spawned by a fear of involvement and commitment, for in doing so one might touch the Real, one might hurt it, thereby transforming the Symbolic network itself. As Žižek writes in a different context, there is today a sort of hypersensitivity to the world as something that can be hurt, so that instead of cutting into the world we simply gaze at it¹⁵⁹. This gaze, which harks back to the proto-fantasy of the mirror image, avoids the Symbolic death drive.

This separation from the big Other, however, spawns a great deal of guilt – as does too close an identification with it. The big Other *has* to exist, we say at the same time as we dis-involve ourselves from it. The consistency of the (Symbolic) universe must be maintained, and thus one must show that the big Other exists after all. One stages everything to (presup)pose this existence, a staging that becomes all the more maniacal when one incessantly dis-acknowledges one’s own involvement and investment. Of course, to some extent this has always been the case with the big Other as a separate symbolic fiction. It has always been the case, for instance, that one pretends the Emperor is in fact wearing clothes. The first difference, of course, begins with the French Revolution, wherein we all at least theoretically become involved in the functioning of authority. As noted, in modernity people did not simply transpose their belief onto Other(s), but in some sense engaged in testimonial encounters. The second difference comes when technology reaches such a point that we could feasibly become involved in the public discourse on a daily, even hourly basis –

and yet we don't, for the precise reason that we don't want to change the big Other. We would rather simply be superegotistically accounted for in it, that is, as victims. The superego imperative demands the creation of Laws so as to maintain a distance from them, and the Symbolic network is formed as a set of competing demands amongst victim groups, *wherein the culprit is the Other itself*. How else to explain the – beyond absurd – logic of Christian fundamentalists painting themselves as victims of “them liberals”? The amazing thing about this logic is that, in criticizing liberalism, it uses its very parameter of victimhood! The fundamentalist Christian stance simply embraces to a larger extent the superego's imperative.

Crypt

It could be argued that psychoanalysis, even of the Lacanian variety, is insufficient for today's problems. Have we not, one might ask, arguably become less repressive in the last few decades? And yet, new problems arise, problems only understood not through the mechanism of repression or simply the superego but *foreclosure*, which forms the crypt. The notion of the crypt, and the crypt-fantasy, is thus indispensable as a supplement to Lacanian psychoanalysis in the wake of the Holocaust.

The crypt, a concept which haunts the works of Jacques Derrida (and many others besides), is a (non)place within the self that forms through a refusal of mourning. The conditions of possibility of mourning, that some space within the self be opened so as to mourn some other, are, if taken to the limit, the very conditions of *impossibility* of mourning, in that a 'full' mourning would require a 'complete' space within the self to be opened – but then there would be no 'self' left to receive it. What is mourned/'introjected' becomes part of the self/Other, and what isn't is incorporated into the self in the (non)place of the crypt, which, as Jody Castriano suggests in her exploration of it, is the “vault of desire”, a sort of “condemned passageway” inside the ego that returns to haunt and displace the self¹⁶⁰. To this extent the crypt is the very thing that gives rise to a sense of interiority, even while it apparently opens onto exteriority.

In incorporation, one pretends as though the trauma never happened, and thus part of what is usually incorporated is a lost reality. Words that are incorporated work as if they were the representations of repressed things, and so one loses representational distance. As we know, it is in the very gap and impossibility of language that the world of material things

– and the subject – situate themselves. In incorporation, then, this gap/impossibility is denied, and instead words represent things ‘directly’. As Castricano notes, “it is their *absence* in the preconscious which signifies that the trauma never took place”¹⁶¹, and thus the very function of the Symbolic, of the word serving as a presence of absence, is herein negated. Absent from consciousness, the word is the thing.

It only becomes so – fantastically, of course – because this gap (the Real) of language is filled in. Part of what the crypt incorporates is the impossibility of mourning, that is, it fills in the gaps that would exist in mourning in a fantastical manner: we can call this the first figure of the crypt by virtue of its foreclosing of the “primary trauma” of the gap in language. Every incorporation begins with this primary incorporation (qua filling-in) of the primary trauma. Incorporation arises due to a failure of symbolization, and thus arises first of all in response to the primary trauma.

Besides the primary trauma itself, several things can be and are incorporated, and we can understand the various things that one incorporates as related in a fundamental manner. First, the lost love object is incorporated, or more precisely a desire attached to this object; alternatively, what is often incorporated is the unsaid of an Other, such as an ancestor (and of course there is a clear relation between one’s ancestors and the symbolic network). From this angle, one incorporates not so much a lost reality as the unsayable secret that was excluded from a past reality. The trauma that was excluded from the ancestors haunts in the present. In both cases – a desire or a secret – what is repressed into the unconscious is ultimately the word-thing that functions dynamically¹⁶². The crypt here is then the series of detours the word-thing must make in order to achieve utterance, and the crypt goes thus more by way of function than topography.

Also incorporated is the lost reality previous to the trauma, since the trauma itself produced a break in reality, so that it is more comfortable for the cryptophore to exist in relation to the past reality than to the present one. Of course, short of psychosis this is impossible, so the cryptophore expends all h/is energy trying to synchronize the two realities; this is the source of the crypt’s anachrony, the way it makes the present seem “out of joint”. The present is always haunted by these past realities through the mouths of cryptophores – and perhaps now more than ever. One could also argue that this attempt at synchronization, particularly in the presence of the analyst, is a cry from the crypt for help, for mourning (in clear contrast to the psychotic).

As Abraham and Torok write, introjection to a certain extent depends on one having first incorporated the traumatic other. When a traumatic situation occurs, the first thing one does is to turn oneself into that which this new thing has done to me. In this way one familiarizes oneself with it through play, fantasy, and projections. I appropriate it for myself in a process of binding the trauma. Introjection occurs when I begin to become aware of my own gradual encounter with it and how I have been modified as a result. For Abraham and Torok, the role of psychoanalysis consists in intensifying this process of introjection, in making it conscious by reestablishing lines of communication¹⁶³. In itself, then, incorporation should indeed not be looked at negatively, for it is a prerequisite of mourning itself. The problem develops when incorporation cannot be made conscious, when the lines of communication remain blocked. Or rather: the problem emerges when the individuals that comprise society no longer see incorporation by itself as something to get over, when they in fact rely on it to maintain and enhance their subjectivities (qua victims). Thus there becomes no possible way in which incorporation could lead to introjection, for the whole point is that the former not be mediated by Other(s). One wants to maintain distance from Other(s), thereby (presup)posing a spectral big Other into which one allots one's victim-status.

The problem lies, then, not with incorporation per se but its first figure, that of incorporating the primary trauma (qua foreclosing the gap of language). The second figure of incorporation, that of incorporating particular others given one's life experience, is both necessary and positive insofar as it leads to mourning, *which it cannot do when one has also engaged in the primary incorporation of the primary trauma*. A proper mourning, then, is one that engages – without, obviously, being able to appropriate it – the gap of language. In so doing it rides the death drive, which is to say it relives the origin of the Symbolic and the law: giving meaning to death. In this primordial mad moment, one cannot distinguish incorporation from introjection; when it comes to (one's appropriation of) death, how could one tell? Retrospectively, however, introjection “wins” insofar as the Symbolic order is created, and the point is that any change to the Symbolic has to pass through this zero-point of the death drive, and such change cannot occur so long as the gap of language is foreclosed.

Crypt vs. Unconscious, and the Crypt-Other

An important theoretical distinction – and finally, as we will see, seeming conflation – of this thesis is that between the unconscious and the crypt. Both should be understood as functions rather than metaphysical ‘places’. The unconscious is formed through *repression*, even though, as Žižek notes, there is no repressed without its returns. This underscores its dynamism. The crypt, by contrast, is formed through *foreclosure*, wherein the object foreclosed is not even recognized by the mind¹⁶⁴. In the speech of the unconscious, then, one can intuit that the analysand is “aware” of his unconscious desire in h/is unconscious, and this awareness is transmitted through speech. The analyst seeks out the subject of the unconscious. The speech of a cryptophore, by contrast, is more muddled. One cannot be sure the person who is speaking is the patient h/imself or the incorporated object(s). Moreover, all parts of the ego will contradict each other, so that one can never really know what one is up against. There is, then, in the crypt no negotiation with Other(s) in the sense of contingently (presup)posing big Others through Others. Indeed, this would require mourning.

As with the unconscious, one must traverse the fantasy of the crypt so as to get at the Real kernel. I would argue that the difference with the crypt is its relation to language, that is, the foreclosure of the gap of language, a particularly strong feature of our age. One cannot dynamically repress this gap, and thus the first figure of the crypt is the function of the foreclosing of the slippery ambiguous affair that is language: this preconditions the second figure of the crypt, that of incorporating objects due to the impossibility, as the result of singular traumatic events, of symbolizing their loss. Thus the “primary trauma” of the gap in language preconditions the first figure of the crypt, which in turn preconditions the second figure of incorporating others. In encountering the primary trauma one, at the same time, both creates a big Other and forecloses the gap itself, that is, one both mourns via Other(s) and incorporates. Soon we will call this mad moment “mourning the impossibility of mourning”, which, in acknowledging the gap in language, thereby allows for the *attempted* symbolizations of incorporated objects. The crypt emerges through the foreclosure, the unconscious through Other(s). The crypt produces exteriority (the gap itself) in the individual, thus giving rise to the sense of interiority. The unconscious produces interiority in the place of enunciation, through its very exteriority qua the big Other.

In a footnote Žižek suggests that it is “foreclosure that generates the traumatic Real”. Repression is but that of “some content into the unconscious... [whereas] the foreclosed Real is an extimate kernel within the unconscious itself”¹⁶⁵. This foreclosure is as a result of the gap of language. Yet one might argue that there certainly are traumatic encounters that are very Real and that on the surface precede the gap in language, to which one could immediately reply: the precise reason such trauma is Real is because of its impossibility to symbolize, so that it is foreclosed, thereby generating the traumatic Real.

Today the primary trauma is in a certain sense acknowledged, as language, it is held, cannot even begin to comprehend – much less symbolize – the Holocaust. Precisely because we acknowledge it, however, we cannot symbolize it, or rather: we *paradoxically* are symbolizing our very inability to symbolize, which, while a step away from the *aporia* of “mourning the impossibility of mourning”, ultimately refuses the *aporia* in the shunning of symbolization in the very use of the Symbolic. “Mourning the impossibility of mourning”, by contrast, embraces symbolization and its necessary failures – whereas today we symbolize so as not to symbolize, manifest in Wiesel’s \$25,000 speaker’s fee to say such things as the Holocaust is “the mystery of mysteries”; in language, he speaks a negative theology, one reiterated time and time again for a small fortune. One might call the *move from the paradox to the aporia as but a shift of perspective, equivalent to the death drive, that is, a passage through and via it*. The paradox allows the superego to emerge, the *aporia* – via the *objet petit a* – testimony.

If what we have said so far seems to follow a primarily derogatory line towards the crypt and incorporation, at least when it does not lead to mourning, it must also be said that it is perhaps only with the crypt that change in the big Other is possible. Or rather, again: it is the shift of perspective qua death drive that allows for such change. If the unconscious is the spatial order of pure signifiers, it may be that it is the crypt, and its seemingly random hauntings, that give rise to a sense of temporality. On a first reading one might say that the crypt introduces (the sense of) time – but on the second one would realize that it is the shift of perspective that does so. As noted, the big Other exists in the relations between people: Other(s). Since in a testimonial encounter no two people can fully understand the common ground from and of which they speak, we could argue that it is the crypt(s) itself that interrupts any attempt at appropriation. In this sense the crypt – the different ways people foreclose the gap of language – is the inflection that prevents understanding, thereby allowing for continual negotiation. Alternatively, the crypt could be viewed as the result of

these misunderstandings, and would thus simply refer to the process itself due to the necessary (but today overblown) foreclosure of the gap. The crypt only temporizes in relation to Other(s); otherwise it is as unchanging and irrepressible as the superego, and this is, indeed, our situation. Without Other(s), there can be no shift of perspective and thus no passage through the death drive; there can therefore be no change, no mediation. We have here the very configuration of (neo)liberal instrumentality, wherein the Other is but a dumping ground of our individual exorcisms of our places of enunciation.

When a society's members forthrightly believe in a positivist description of reality (obsessional neurosis), thus foreclosing any and all possible ambiguity from their discourse, or fantastically embrace the gap of language itself (hysteria), the Real misunderstandings produced in an encounter are deemed unbearable. The crypt-effects, and their production via the testimonial encounter, are shunned (and/or fantastically embraced). To the extent symbolization is shunned, the big Other itself becomes cryptic, and it seemingly becomes impossible to change since the shift of perspective from the Other to the crypt is elided insofar as the Real of the Other (and *objet petit a*) is foreclosed. Concurrently we shun the effects of the crypt insofar as they offer glimpses of the Real of the Other via the *objet petit a*, thereby (presup)posing an unchanging big Other, which means that relations with Other(s) become as static as if one were relating to computer programs – or at least this is the 'desired' effect (qua anti-desire). In a sense the crypt becomes the big Other and the big Other becomes the crypt (in eliding the difference, the shift of perspective, between the two): we shall write this as the *crypt-Other*. The crypt-Other is the fantasy of Other of the crypt-fantasy and the superego-fantasy¹⁶⁶. The crypt-Other avoids the unconscious Other at all costs; after all, both the superego and the crypt are parts of the ego. Both are ways in which the Symbolic becomes Real, yet in avoidance of the Real's most radical dimension.

Crypt-Fantasy

The crypt-fantasy, that is, the fantasy of the crypt, emerges when not simply when the primary trauma is foreclosed, which is *in part* a necessary feature of life, but when such foreclosure is acknowledged and endlessly discussed as "ethical". One sees such a line of thought from Levinas, who will be discussed shortly, to Wiesel (and even early Žižek), who thinks it ethical to simply mark the trauma of the Holocaust. In the primary incorporation of the crypt-fantasy, it is the flesh itself (qua fantasy) that fills in the gap.

When symbolization is shunned generally, everything that would have once allotted mourning to take a stab at is incorporated, in advance. Things, since they no longer situate themselves in the gap of language, but seem to exist all by themselves, take on an air of stupid positivity with which it is impossible to negotiate. How could one negotiate with that which stares you in the face precisely to the extent that it (impossibly-seemingly) doesn't belong to the realm of language? The thing stares stupidly precisely insofar as one has in advance refused to allow it to enter a discourse of contingency. An example of this is the world of fashion, such as the show *Fashion TV*, where the stupid images are accompanied by the most banal prattle. It is obvious that they have *nothing to say*, and yet they seem to erect an enormous sense of glee and satisfaction through such speech, such *l'apparole*. In this obscene short-circuit, their discourse at once creates the way one views the object *and* is utterly useless, totally secondary to the object. There is an enormous – shall we say: “jinormous!” – jouissance here.

As Derrida writes in his introduction to Abraham and Torok's study of the Wolf Man, the concept of reality is indispensable to the situation of the crypt. The crypt must incorporate more than one and behave toward it in more than one way; that is, the secret of the cryptophore must be shared, and at least with a “Third”. A secret, after all, is meant to be shared: this is its very definition. The incorporated Third is held in so as to be crossed out, kept alive so as to be left for dead¹⁶⁷. We could immediately suggest that this Third is the big Other, which in this case *does* become the (Zizekian) ideal point of reference qua dead, although even here the big Other of the crypt appears iterable through the interplay of the ‘agents’. In the forum of the crypt, a whole assembly of witnesses will be assembled, as well as a whole strategy of testifying wherein everyone can be cut off at any time. This points to the structural necessity of testimony, for even when one tries to keep the big Other locked down in a sort of stasis, it demands iterability (repetition with difference). The testimony of the crypt, of course, is more a sort of anti-testimony, as nothing is believed by the figures involved: instead everything is taken as perjury, precisely in order to (impossibly) avoid iterability. Is this not our situation? When symbolization qua Other(s) is shunned, do we not become vacuous nodes (with)in a society of the crypt-fantasy and crypt-Other? The crypt-Other merely serves as a dead witness to our Gestalting. We trust that we do not trust, so (that) the Other becomes but a “dumping ground” of our places of enunciation.

Testimony proper, as we will see, depends on faith in others qua Other(s), or rather: testimony 'is' Other(s).

Eating Shit, and (its) Annunciation

For Abraham and Torok, it was essential for the formation of the crypt that the loved object was also the patient's ego ideal, wherein the humiliation suffered by the ego ideal had to be incorporated so as to be covered up. The metaphors used to humiliate the ego ideal would thus be taken literally, thereby negating their meaning which, if taken seriously, would jeopardize the patient's ego ideal. Introjection is taken literally as an insertion into the mouth, so that metaphors involving excrement resulted in the patient literally eating shit. The refusal to introject the loss of the ego ideal – which could only happen via Other(s) – is expressed by defying humiliation itself in the eating of excrement, pretending such metaphors are edible and appetizing. Abraham and Torok write that this serves as an active destruction of representation in a narcissistic mission of bolstering the ego ideal¹⁶⁸. Perhaps what cryptophores are doing above all is saving their ego ideals qua enunciated-shit from negotiation with Other(s). Moreover, it could be argued that we are constantly idealizing our love objects, in the intuited knowledge that by doing so we can preserve and enhance our interiorities – without interference from Other(s). In speech from the crypt, both words-that-hide and somatic symptoms can be understood as enunciated content. On the one hand, shit (as what must be given up but is not), and the other flesh/body. Since the excrement of one's enunciated is not given up (and thus not identified with), the subject of the unconscious does not emerge, and thus neither do Other(s).

This emphasis on the necessity of the ego ideal, however, is not entirely present in Castricano or Derrida. The former, in fact, implicitly links images of excrement with abjection generally, so that what is incorporated is simply what is abjected. Abjection, as suggested by Kristeva, is what allows for the separation of subject and object; without abjection there is no differentiation between subject and object. The primary things abjected are both the Mother and excrement, both in order to enter the Symbolic. The mother and shit thereafter haunt the Symbolic via the crypt, and thus one of the fantasies of the crypt is to not give up the gift(s), to in fact do the opposite: to eat the shit, to not give up the Mother¹⁶⁹. This broadens the scope of the fantasy of eating shit from Abraham and Torok's

model; moreover, it points to the fantasy of getting back in touch with the Mother through the satisfaction of speech (annunciation).

The term “incorporation”, of course, is associated with the body; in incorporating the lost object I in a sense swallow it whole. I do not chew the object. In mourning, by contrast, I do exactly that, thereby clearing the space from which words may emerge. In incorporation, by not chewing, the lost object becomes the body itself: the object becomes incarnated, embodied, and thereby *announced in speech*. The imaginary Real is the annunciation, the satisfaction of speech, that certain ‘je ne sais quoi’ of one’s (incorporated other’s) discourse.

The crypt-fantasy emerges when incorporation is the only possible outlet for dealing with the loss of objects, so that the ego in some manner consciously privileges incorporation, thus making the incorporated primary trauma become flesh, in the same movement that the ego itself becomes flesh, and in a way we are all touching each other’s egos qua flesh, together filling in the gap of language. That is, the ego no longer serves as the mental projection of a bodily surface (as Freud would have had it) but to some extent becomes the surface itself by virtue of the continual and endless incorporations/incarnations. This situation is the precondition of all the discourses which presently swirl around the questions of touch and affect. One might consider such discourses (such as those of Levinas and Derrida) to thus partake of a form of melancholia, were it not for the fact that unlike in classic melancholia, wherein the ego fuses with the lost object, in the crypt-fantasy there is no object to fuse with. What the ‘ego’ fuses with is the foreclosed gap of language itself; we might call this, then, the melancholia of the crypt-fantasy.

Of course, “projection” does not infer mediation in itself, so in a sense the ego never was an active force distinguishing between its incorporated traces; but whatever mediation it might have once had has vanished. As we have seen, the *objet petit a* means many different things in Lacan’s work. Of particular note here is that it first comes into being as the Imaginary leftover of entering the Symbolic, thereby harking back to an Imaginary time of fulfillment – with the mother. When viewed in this context, the *objet petit a* is of the imaginary Real, realized in annunciation (which is thus always in some extent a harking back to the mother).

When the Symbolic fails, we could argue, in no longer identifying with the *objet petit a* (qua only achieved/lost in the rise of the Symbolic), one enters the twin process of eating

shit, on the one hand (akin to obsessional neurosis), and yearning for Mama, on the other (akin to hysteria). Since we have understood the enunciated to be akin to excrement, we might suggest that one eats (swallows whole) the other's words as opposed to introjecting them. Since the other speaks without fully giving up his words, we cannot introject them. One becomes them, and one is immensely satisfied in spewing them back out towards others, for they in turn incorporate them whole. One's words will not be killed, mourned, introjected, dissected. They will be taken whole, and so one feels whole, as with Mother – 'in' the gap of language. In the crypt-fantasy, our flesh-egos touch.

Fixated on the Freudian oral stage, we devour each other whole, becoming one another in our very flesh qua incorporation; the dizzying e/a/ffect of this cool orgy we call cannibalism (and one, of course, that doesn't chew). Perhaps the reason we have become fixated at this early stage is because it harks back to the first Other, the Mother; given that our only big Other is formed through the resistance to any big Other, we're yearning for Mama. Freud argued that in the oral phase (qua breast-feeding) the sexual activity coincided with the activity of nourishment, wherein the object of both activities was the same (the breast) – wherein the sexual aim was the incorporation of the object. This is the prototype of a process which becomes identification¹⁷⁰. In this sense, the *objet petit a*, as medium of relations, only functions to the extent it harks back to Mom; thus the *objet petit a* sinks further into the realm of the Imaginary. Or rather: the *objet petit a* becomes split, into the enunciated of shit (and thus away from its more ambiguous role as objective correlate to the place of enunciation), which one does not fully give up, and the annunciation of the Mother, which one gestures towards and which serves as the satisfaction of speech.

The Dis-satisfaction of the Crypt-Fantasy

For Barnard, annunciation involves *lalangue/llanguage* and is thus beyond enunciation, concerning itself not so much with unconscious meaning effects in the Symbolic but with the affects/being-effects of the (m)Other tongue; it is a language of being that exists in an Other-Jouissance. It comes to be through the feminine experience of being in the Symbolic without exception, thereby allowing the feminine subject a relation to the Other that produces another unlimited form of jouissance (as opposed to the phallic jouissance of part-objects). This is effected in undeath in relation to the signifier of a lack within the Other. The object here does not haunt the subjectivity as a promised yet avoided plenitude but as a

nontraumatic signifier of a lack in the Other, thereby allowing for the possibility of provisional master signifiers from within: “in feminine jouissance the Real finds a signifier”¹⁷¹. This identity with the *objet petit a*, in its being a nontraumatic signifier of the lack in the Other, would seem to be the very motto of the death drive. Does one reach and ride the death drive through annunciation?

I’m afraid there is a stupid positivity here, for if the feminine subject identifies with the *objet petit a* qua lack in the Other, thereby “‘knowing’ that neither she nor the Other knows”, what could drive one to create a provisional new master signifiers? If one is in the Symbolic altogether, at the place of the lack, a “Nothing humbly aware of itself” (as Žizek echoes in the same text¹⁷²), where does change come in? Instead of throwing in the towel, as it were, it may make more sense to grapple with the Real of sexual difference, the Real of the difference between masculine and feminine structures, that is, to acknowledge that some form of limit is necessary. Is there not a way in which annunciation can be – paradoxically – the voice of the superego?

Despite Barnard’s comments that new provisional master signifiers can be created by being inscribed at this place of the lack – and she is the only one to mention this, realizing it to be important – I would argue that annunciation can come to serve more by way of fantasy protecting one from the death drive than the drive itself, or rather, and as suggested in the introduction to this thesis: annunciation, qua *l’apparoie* (in the crypt-fantasy), is the drive that prevents the more radical Symbolic death drive. For if one were really and truly confronted with the lack in the Other, this would not be a nontraumatic experience, but the precise opposite, and this is what would drive one to spawn new master signifiers (*ad infinitum*). The question that presents itself is thus whether the notion that the Woman knows that neither she nor the Other knows (the lack of the Other) partakes of the crypt-fantasy of Woman as Thing. If Woman knows this lack since she is in the Symbolic altogether, if she is at the very place of the lack, is there a way in which she thereby fantastically fills this lack? Or rather: is there a way in which the *very discourse* of Woman being “humbly aware” of the lack in the Other comes to fill this lack?

Moreover, much of the other contributions to the same text focus on the question of the *en-corps*, the enjoying substance that comes from beyond the signifier and its repetitive circuit. We could note a semantic series from the “en-corps” to “incorporation” to “annunciation”, given the latter’s association with the Incarnation, or the making flesh.

What is this, one might then ask, if not a jouissance of the crypt-fantasy? And what does this mean for speech if for the most part our attention is directed towards the satisfaction of speech rather than its founding character of assigning roles among the addresser and the addressee through working through the trauma of the lack in the Other? Surely we could associate this privileging of the satisfaction of speech with the loss of Other(s), that is, the loss of the social fabric. Avoiding the founding character of speech, however, is correlative to avoiding the death drive (while preferring “undeath”, that is, the death drive of the crypt-fantasy), that which might break up the fantasy of annunciation – for in founding speech the other whom one addresses is both the Thing itself and the Thing that prevents access to the Thing, and this is only Realized in the encounter itself, that is, in the very passage from one to the other. It is only via this passage that one finds, for it is here one Realizes the lack in the Other (as equivalent to the part-failure of the testimonial encounter). By avoiding the death drive annunciation seeks to avoid founding, and thus the crypt-fantasy of annunciation is the preserve of the status quo.

One might delineate two forms of annunciation, one of the body-in-pieces, the other of positivity; they are two sides of the same coin. The former on the surface appears to be the death drive, were it not for the fact that this “going towards the body-in-pieces” does not seek to change the fantastical situation but to re-enforce it. Lacan himself could at times be herein included, for his seeking a “union beyond the Imaginary of flesh and word”, which is generally taken to be the Real and the Symbolic, is not so much partaking of the death drive but rather the fantasy of the crypt. As we noted, the crypt-fantasy is the flesh – it is instead the body that “is” the Symbolic death drive. Derrida could also be placed here. Certainly all his work is a confronting and opening towards the gap of language, yet for all that no new provisional master signifiers emerge from his work. He has demonstrated time and time again the need to decide *to* decide, yet as for concrete decisions his work finds itself lacking. Is he merely melancholically embracing the gap of language, that is, partaking of the crypt-fantasy? At the same time, one could argue that if the Real kernel of the fantasy of the Holocaust is the gap of language, Derrida’s work is thus a traversal of our fundamental fantasy in his acknowledgement of this gap. And yet, precisely to the extent that he *embraces* this gap he does not move from it to the creation of contingent Others; rather, he stays at the level of the crypt-fantasy death drive in an avoidance of the Symbolic death drive.

The latter form of annunciation, that of positivity, occurs in the same movement: to the extent one feels oneself inscribed at the lack of the Other, thereby filling in the gap of language with your very being, one's flesh becomes this incorporation-qua-filling-in of the gap and one becomes stupid(ly positive), just like everyone else. In a sense we incarnate the gap of language and thus material objects seem our correlates; this is the precondition for Walter Benjamin's beloved detritus. When both sides of annunciation occur together, indistinguishably, we have the language of the crypt-Other – the result of there not being Other(s) to provide contingent Limits. Indeed, it may be only across and through the Real of sexual difference that the contingent Limits we require can be found. If the (fantasy of the) masculine structure only exists insofar as the primal father/superego guarantees the Symbolic, and the (fantasy of the) feminine structure only ex-sists in a non-all fashion, provisional master signifiers, it would appear, could only appear 'between' them. Far from resolving or synthesizing the Real of sexual difference, such master signifiers would be contingent precisely because of their placement between masculine and feminine structures, between existing and ex-sisting.

It is, then, not being said here that we should relegate annunciation to the background. This is strictly impossible. It is simply to note the precondition for its explicit discourse to emerge today, in the decline of Symbolic efficiency, as well as to question its predominance in Lacanian analyses to the exclusion of the Other(s). One could put it thus: there is nothing wrong with existence qua enunciation/Symbolic (for existence is the kind of being to be had within the Symbolic), nothing wrong with incorporation qua annunciation, and nothing wrong with positivity qua enunciated; the problem arises when any one or two of them is privileged over the other(s). At the moment, we privilege the latter two to the exclusion of our places of enunciation, and thus the superego has taken charge, (seemingly) paradoxically with annunciation as its voice.

Chapter 4: Hamlet's Crypt-Love and P@ying (to) the Crypt-Other

Trauma, Victimization, and the Discourse of the University

We could argue that the unsayable secret of the crypt is akin to the Other jouissance not subjected to the bar of signification. Traumas, of course, are not subjected to the bar insofar as they are not symbolized but incorporated. Thus we find a correlation between trauma and Other Jouissance, which has already been suggested in the incorporation of the primary trauma in the crypt fantasy, that is, the fantasy of *llanguage/lalangue*, which thereby gives a satisfaction to the play of speech. Is it not part of today's logic and fad of victimization that the victims, in describing the traumas they have been subjected to, derive a sort of satisfaction from speech? Moreover, is it not that only if one has gone through a kind of trauma that one is to be admitted as a subject? On the one hand, this is understandable given that it is only through the crypt that interiority is produced. Perhaps the previous subject, the great White Male, was only inscribed in the phallic function to the extent that he felt in some way excluded from it (in the relation with the primal father). Today, as the phallus is everywhere in question, the new subject is produced mostly through the crypt, through having gone through – or having fantasized going through (or both) – a trauma. We should also note the sort of stupid positivity, and thus the two sides of the coin of annunciation, of such discourses, the way it reeks of angelic shit that puts an end to any symbolic exchange between Other(s): “I am a Native sociology student, and you are a white male, thus what I say is to be more valued than your discourse, for it's my turn to speak”. One's place of enunciation is here relegated to one's relation to trauma, and from this relation comes the satisfaction of annunciation, wherein one announces this relation in an absolutist manner. For this reason, and despite all the talk of testimony in relation to trauma that is annunciated these days, the testimony described in this thesis is of an Other(s) sort.

One might say that all the victim status claiming of today is a way to sublimate Real trauma, appropriating trauma so as to *avoid* its Real. If one can not begin to symbolize the Holocaust, one becomes a victim in order to ward off the Real. Moreover, the very fact that in order to be included in the (nonexistent) big Other of today one must claim victim-status is evidence of the fact that our big Other is founded on trauma, or rather the avoidance of it qua Real, which is to say the avoidance of the gap in language. Related to the logic of victimization is the liberal humanitarian concern for the fascinating “diversity” of the Other,

which, as Žižek notes, “functions as a fetish by means of which we are able to preserve the unproblematic identity of our subjective position”¹⁷³; in so doing one prevents “the meeting with the Other from becoming a meeting with the Real that undermines our own position”¹⁷⁴. One claims victim status in order to secure an allotted place within the big Other (qua anti-big Other), in so doing avoiding the Real of the Other, which, in equally affecting oneself, becomes an encounter with Other(s). As a certified victim one need not relate to Other(s), one – presumably – need not a place of enunciation. And yet, something has to come to give one a subjective relation: the superego, and the superego is supremely collective insofar as it fills in for the lack of the Other, for everyone’s lack of place of enunciation. Alternatively, one could say that the collective superego *causes* the exorcism of our places of enunciation.

The emphasis on the image of the victim prevents any act, for, as Žižek writes, “[d]oes not this pain render all ideological Causes trifling?”¹⁷⁵. Insofar as it does, of course, we know we are thus in the presence of the supreme ideological manoeuvre itself. How dare one act if one is doomed to “break some eggs”, that is, create “victims”? Of course, there are those who refuse to play the role of victim, and these “terrorists” and “fundamentalists” are the true “object of anxiety”¹⁷⁶ for the former West, for they refuse to stay put as victims – and we write “former West” precisely because, as Baudrillard writes, it has “lost its defining values long ago”¹⁷⁷. (And yet, as we will see in concluding, terrorists are but the flipside of the former West’s position.)

The very problematic of today’s situation is this fascination with one’s own shit qua enunciated, one’s inability to let it go (which would thereby allow for the *objet petit a*/place of enunciation to arise). In a sense we have become Misers who spend too much time admiring our verbal and objectal accomplishments, and it is precisely through this fascination that such a stupid – we use the word advisedly – notion as an “Angel of History” is sputtered forth, and moreover made an object of fascination for today’s academy. You know something is amiss when the *Arcades Project* is considered the publishing feat of the century; as a collection of notes, what is it if not a kind of academic (not-given-up-)diarrhoea?

This is, perhaps, the epitome of the discourse of the university. We should not, then, be surprised at the anti-intellectual culture in which we live, which generally sees academia as irrelevant and useless, for academia, in its purely annunciative function, *is* useless, which is to say it has no relevance for our lives with Other(s), which is also to say that *academic discourse is*

the very truth of our situation. What non-intellectuals so dislike about academics is, in fact, the latter's very proximity to the former, and the uncanny effect it thereby creates; no one wants to admit their exorcisms. The last thing academics should do, then, in analyzing our anti-intellectual culture, is to act like Beautiful Souls cursing the unfortunateness of the world's situation, but rather to acknowledge their own position – qua lack of position, of place of enunciation – as the truth of the problem itself. And this applies, firstly, to the liberal humanitarians so welcomed, so crypt-loved, by our universities.

(Love of) Melancholia, “Mourning the Impossibility of Mourning”, Crypt-Love

In relation to Benjamin's work (and, we might note, his rather uncritical appropriation by today's academy), Rebecca Comay writes:

For both cultural and historical reasons, melancholia – the subject's unappeasable attachment to an ungrievable loss – would seem to have a peculiar resonance today. It might be tempting to see in the stubbornness of the melancholic passion the “loyalty to things” a certain ethical dimension: the refusal to perform the mourning work of symbolic mediation would seem to involve the encrypting of alterity within the interiority of the subject, which would as such divest itself of its very interiority or self-containment. Freud's “open wound” would, on this reading, be the site of an originary traumatic extimacy – the subject's own opening to an infinite responsibility. Buried alive within the vault of a self fractured by the persistence of what cannot be metabolized, the lost object would assert its continued claim on those still alive. Melancholia would articulate this claim. Its tenacity would be thus the very measure of the immeasurability of a loss whose persistence points both to the infinite need for and to the final impossibility of all restitution.

The issue proves to be somewhat more complicated¹⁷⁸.

One might immediately note that if it is through “encrypting” that the sense of interiority is produced, the very ego that deconstruction seeks to subvert is, far from being deconstructed through the crypt, *formed through it*; thus deconstructonists (if not Derrida himself) throw themselves into a never-ending paradox. As Comay notes, Freud himself drew a “conceptual link between melancholia and a certain narcissism”¹⁷⁹. Moreover, we might ask how melancholia could “articulate” anything. Is it not, rather, a way to *not* articulate anything, to ward off the work of mourning? Comay suggests that melancholia can help the subject “adapt to the ideological requirements of the present day... The occlusion of the traumatic past equally cuts off any relation to a radically (indeed, traumatically) different future”¹⁸⁰. In the terms of this thesis, melancholia is a way of accommodating to the presumed impossibility of mourning the Holocaust.

Zizek takes part in this through his arguing that melancholia is a positive condition by virtue of its positivizing the abyss. For Zizek, in its fidelity to the remainder (the lost

object), melancholia interprets constitutive lack as loss, thereby possessing the object in its very loss. Mourning, by contrast, is for Žižek a betrayal of the object due to its “second killing” of the object by putting the loss into words¹⁸¹. Yet is not the very foundation of human existence, of the Symbolic, such second killing? We have already suggested that the ever iterated origin of the Symbolic is to give meaning to the impossible: death. Melancholia is almost always seen as (at least chronologically) primary to mourning, but could we have melancholia without mourning? If not wouldn’t melancholia appear again, as it did to Freud many years ago, as a *failure* to mourn? From this perspective, melancholia is part of the crypt-fantasy itself. One cannot appropriate death, yet one can, in a sense, testify to this impossibility, ‘from’ it.

I offer again the inelegant formulation “mourning the impossibility of mourning” to describe this interminable process, and offer its inelegance as a testimonial to the impossibility of Symbolic appropriation (and yet this statement threatens to give off a second-order appearance of mastery, and this one a third, and so it goes, however, *ad infinitum*). In this sense, isn’t testimony, by its nature as “mourning the impossibility of mourning”, also a positivization of the abyss(es) (if not its “possession”)? If Derrida, following Levinas and Maurice Blanchot, writes of a passivity beyond the opposition of activity and passivity, which is to say an absolute opening to the arrival of the Other, we might say, to avoid a long analysis, that “mourning the impossibility of mourning” is an *activity* beyond the opposition of activity and passivity, which is to say that rather than simply opening up to the Other’s arrival, I (presup)pose this very Other. They are two aspects of the same process, and indistinguishable (unlike the Gestalt fantasy which take the form of a static “coin”). The arrival of the Other is strictly equivalent to its (presup)position. In the mad moment of symbolizing death at/in the origin of the Symbolic, one is both active (symbolizing death) and passive (opening to death), and one is thus beyond the opposition, and this gives one the very impetus to testify. Derrida is certainly right to say that in instrumental times the arrival of the Other has been closed off¹⁸², or foreclosed we might say, but this is because we do not assume places of enunciation, because we do not (presup)pose any Other. Instead, we ex-pose it (and us).

The problem with Žižek’s privileging of melancholia – the example he gives is of diasporic communities maintaining a melancholic attachment while participating in the global economy¹⁸³ – is that it is, of course, an attachment to the Imaginary. Although I am putting

words in his mouth (a second killing, if you will), I assume Žižek's privileging of melancholia to be because at the very least it un-forecloses the Imaginary, moving a cryptic identification to one more conscious. Yet we know that in melancholia the lost object "takes over" the ego, so to speak – without questioning or interrogating the structure of the Imaginary ego itself. Since part of the Žižekian ethic is to confront the constitutive lack of the neighbour, and thereby of oneself, that is, to see the other and thereby oneself as Real¹⁸⁴, a melancholic attachment to lack-as-loss would seem to foreclose this possibility.

Butler, following Freud, notes our attachment to even the most traumatic things, such as rejection, for at least rejection "is" in a melancholic attachment. I would say that it "is" precisely insofar as it is not exposed to the gap of language, thereby refusing the contingent symbolizations that would chew it up (qua introjection). Rejection rhetorically denies the threat of withdrawal purportedly signified¹⁸⁵. In melancholia, the superego becomes the gathering place for the death instincts; one might say this is because the superego, as Symbolic-Real, tries to break up the image of the lost object. In a gesture not dissimilar from that of Abraham and Torok Butler argues that what sustains (in its very delay of) the period of mourning is the prohibition against expressing aggressivity toward that which is lost, in part *because* the lost one abandoned us, and in the sacralization (think ego-ideal, or ideal ego in our times) of the object we exclude the possibility of raging against that abandonment¹⁸⁶. This, of course, assumes introjection to be an aggressive act, which surely it is: one *chews* the object – and yet, again, is not (originary) violence the very precondition of Symbolic activity? What, after all, could be more violent – *and yet ethical, that is, in the very emergence of ethics* – than symbolizing death? Butler writes that melancholia is the withdrawal from speech that makes speech possible, but we could just as well argue the reverse, that it is the failure of speech that makes melancholia possible. Without murdering the object by giving it a name (in relation to all other signifiers, of course), there can be no speech whatsoever. This gesturing, via discourse, to a beyond or precondition of discourse partakes of and in the crypt-fantasy.

As Freud noted, in melancholia the ego turns back on itself when love fails to find its object and therefore takes itself as an object of love; it tricks itself by thinking all the id wants is itself (and not the trace of the lost object). As Stuart Schneiderman writes, the ego then thinks it is loved and that all it desires is to be loved, and is satisfied in being so. The "ego wishes to make desire into an ego function, wants to make desire its own"¹⁸⁷, which is to say,

in the terms of this thesis, the ego wishes to avoid Other(s). In being loved desire is satisfied, and this parries the death drive; here the ego does not interact with the desire of another, and thus becomes paranoid towards the Other who becomes a menace. Although Schneiderman does not speak of the crypt, he writes that this situation involves the temporality of procrastination, wherein “it is only the intercession of the desire of the Other that precipitates action and breaks the cycle of delay”¹⁸⁸, which is to say that it is only via symbolization (qua the discourse of the Other) that one can act. At the same time the ego takes itself – or the traditional superego does – as an object of aggression and hate as well, and thus one could argue that its goal is to seek out confirmation of love as a way to avoid these feelings/reactions.

Empirically, this would mean that in a society that shuns symbolization, after one bad break-up one would sink into this melancholic position, and everyone in society would simply be seeking love on the level of the pleasure principle from one another, avoiding contact with the Real Other (as Žižek noted in a different context). This is indeed one of the facets of our age, and one might simply call it the “love *of* melancholia”, were it not for the fact that the crypt is missing herein. Indeed, the “love of melancholia” should be seen as an Exception that grounds the rule of (future) foreclosure. We all have those memorable experiences of our first love, and such memories, since they are largely conscious, *are* our very egos. We do not give them up to symbolization, but we do not simply foreclose them either, but rather continually live the memories *as* ourselves. This love of melancholia then preconditions the ability for future foreclosure, that is, for every break-up that follows, by allowing the crypt to remain invisible behind the screen of the love of melancholia. Combining the two processes into one, let’s call our situation that of “crypt-love”. Its most particular feature may be cancellation of gap between need and desire, as if our demands for love were immediately met, that is, as if there were a superego quality to such demands effectuated in their very declaration.

After all, what is the meaning of all these on-line dating services if not that of an absolute distrust of/in the Other, the contingency – through one’s active involvement – of quotidian encounters? Nearly all these services announce the benefit of being able to “take control of your love life – why leave it to chance?”; people who use these services only in the rarest of cases stay together for more than a couple of weeks (and usually for just one night), perhaps because of the secret anxiety that they are simply obeying a superegotistical

imperative that banishes Other(s). Using such services one avoids, at all costs, the Real of the Other – no doubt it is when one feels the Real of the Other approaching that one clicks off, and on to another, to another... Such a situation creates a vicious spiral, for the more people refuse the contingency of quotidian life (thereby acting against it), the harder it becomes to surrender yourself (in your very involvement) to such “chance”, and thus people flock to the services at an exponential rate. (It should perhaps be noted that several of these services, now international, originated in my home city of Toronto, which perhaps says something of the impetus of this thesis. And one should perhaps also note that in this city, the “most multicultural city in the world”, the different cultures themselves largely do not mix besides the eating – incorporation? – of each other’s food. Torontonians pride themselves on the “fascinating diversity” of the Other, at an arm’s length, in clear contrast to downtown Detroit where one cannot avoid the Real of the Other, thereby, combined with its dystopic setting – putting the big Other, and thus oneself, in question – allowing for relatively more testimonial encounters).

Schneiderman asks: “How can we deal with the dead without the mediating function of the ego?” “The answer”, he writes, “becomes fairly obvious. We bury them, according to the rituals of our society, which is to say we resituate them in discourse... In Lacan’s terms, we give the dead over to the symbolic order; their fate is not in the hands of anyone’s ego”¹⁸⁹. As Schneiderman continues, and here he deserves to be quoted at length:

Burying the past does not mean annihilating it... From the point of view of the ego, a failure to remember does mean that nothing remains; thus the ego is the seat of nihilism. The image of the beloved is not the same as the trace of that person’s passage. Someone who has been buried leaves a mark behind, a trace of his passage through our world... in the unconscious... The investment of the image as it is reflected in the ego captures the subject’s look so that the mark of the passage becomes unreadable. And this capture exists in what the ego would like to think of as a timeless present...¹⁹⁰

In the terms of this thesis, the ego partakes of the crypt-fantasy Gestalt of having completeness on one side, and nihilism qua body-in-pieces on the other, thereby avoiding the “passage” itself which is the death drive. Wiesel *et al* are terrific narcissists, in that they think that should we mourn the dead at all, nothing will remain, whereas on the contrary it is only through mourning that their traces can be (un)consciously felt. One has Holocaust deniers (and the reaction they spawn to them) precisely *because* we are ‘not allowed’ to mourn the Holocaust dead, which means that – in the strict sense of existence being the sort of being to be had in the Symbolic – they do not exist, for us. If we could mourn the dead and their trauma, they would “exist” qua the ever-iterable formation of big Others through

Other(s), through testimony. As it stands, they have simply been incorporated, in the same movement that the Symbolic has been shunned; to the extent that all discourse surrounds this space where mourning (the impossibility of mourning) should have occurred, our Other has become a crypt-Other.

The Crypt-Love of Hamlet

Zizek notes how in present times the impossibility of Society is acknowledged. But we do not ask: how is Society impossible and how is impossibility understood politically? That is, Society has and always will be impossible, and thus taking a sort of comfort in knowing about this impossibility is absurd, and moreover besides the point; it is, in fact, a way of avoiding confronting the impossibility. As Daly notes, “this postmodern enthusiasm for impossibility is one that lends itself too readily to a type of politics that *itself* becomes overly partial and provisional; where political ambition is already limited by its own sense of limitation as such”¹⁹¹. Thus we are left with a politics that stops at the impossibility, without ever seeking to possibilize the impossible, which is, precisely, the only way for change to occur. There can be no decision without such an attempt to possibilize the impossible, or “mourning the impossibility of mourning”. As Daly (and Schneiderman, in a different context) notes, this makes Hamlet the key figure of our age, who, while constantly resolving to do, ends up only constantly resolving.

In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida obliquely reads Hamlet’s ontological dilemma as one more properly assessed as hauntological. Hamlet’s questioning of his existence (“to be or not to be”) is shown to be one that is concerned ultimately with whether or not to respond to the injunction of the ghostly inheritance of his murdered father, transmitted to Hamlet as a secret. The (secret of the) murder of his father could be said to form Hamlet’s crypt, from which he is haunted¹⁹². Hamlet’s murdered father, of course, was Hamlet’s ego ideal. Since the superego is what measures one’s performance against one’s ego ideal, one could argue that Hamlet’s crypt doubles as his superego, and thus Hamlet’s father doubles as the primal father of the superego. Hamlet’s murdered father returns from his position as Hamlet’s ego ideal to also become his superego, for the precise reason to avenge his ego ideal, to live up to this ideal: this is the root, if not the final status, of Hamlet’s narcissism. Thus Hamlet’s dilemma is to have a crypt, superego, and ego ideal all alike. Should he believe the ghost, should he believe the ghost is actually that of his father? As we know, he proceeds to figure

it out through the re-enactment of the murder in the play within the play. But in the process of finding out the answer, all but three characters die – as a direct result of his inaction and unwillingness to believe his father's ghost and respond in kind.

Everything is doubled in the play: there is a play within the play, Hamlet plays mad while Ophelia becomes so, words have double meanings, the King is replaced by his brother, and above all there are two Hamlets. Now what happens when one places two mirrors facing each other? Infinite doubling, which is to say: indecision. Hamlet's tragedy is ultimately a result of his superego, in that he'll only get what he wanted, and nothing more, precisely insofar as he cannot mediate his desire through Other(s), a situation intimately related to crypt-love (and Hamlet, in his dying words, asking for *his* story to be told). He can kill the incestuous and murderous King, fulfilling the injunction of his crypt/superego, thereby protecting his ego ideal. But since he cannot place this ego ideal anywhere, there is nothing left for him to do but die (and in fact he only kills when he is dying himself).

If Derrida's ethic is to listen to the ghosts within, then why Derrida would hold up Hamlet as an ethical example is puzzling to say the least. Hamlet is the supreme Imaginary ego: he is obsessive in his narcissism. Hamlet himself berates his inaction – or rather: Hamlet's superego berates him. Is he to be commended, rather, for not listening to the ghosts, or for incessantly questioning the truth of what they say – that is, to question one's superego? Perhaps he should be both commended for questioning the superego and reprimanded for not listening to his ghosts within, in this paradox which is Hamlet's very being – and yet: Hamlet's superego (qua murdered father) is right, and in his questioning his superego his ego is at his strongest. Here the Gestalt/crypt-fantasy is at its most obvious, as we could read “to be” as the complete image and “not to be” as the body-in-pieces – given his exclusion from the Symbolic, more on which presently.

A particularly interesting aspect of Hamlet is the nature of his relation to the big Other. When the story opens, Hamlet's ego ideal qua place holder of the big Other, his father, is dead. The question is whether Hamlet can re-integrate into the new symbolic network. As we know, of course, he cannot: the new Master holding the reins of the big Other is the incestuous murderer of his ego ideal. Hamlet goes mad. Perhaps Derrida's interest in Hamlet stems from this inability to integrate into the Symbolic. One might argue, indeed, that Derrida's discourse is a romanticization of not being able to integrate into the Symbolic. As we will see later, Hamlet's predicament is similar to that of Narcissus, although

whereas the latter is fixated on his ideal ego, Hamlet is on his ego ideal; what they share in common is the inability to negotiate with or find placement for their ideals into the Symbolic network. One might argue that without being able to situate oneself within a Symbolic network one's ego ideal transforms back to an ideal ego, which is perhaps why Hamlet's "to be or not to be", seemingly questioning his existence within the Symbolic network, transforms into one of the Imaginary. Is this, perhaps, a feature of our age? If our placeholder of the big Other is not an incestuous King but, well, let's admit it, polling companies taking the "pulse" of the public, are we not resorting to a sort of crypt-love that merely seeks confirmation of being loved?

Derrida does note that Hamlet curses his mission to restore the law, which from the perspective enacted here means to restore his ego ideal in the symbolic network. The murder of Hamlet's father made it so that "the time is out of joint". Derrida argues that this is because Hamlet curses his mission, and that "this misfortune is unending because it is nothing other than himself, Hamlet"¹⁹³. Indeed, Hamlet is no Beautiful Soul cursing the rotten state of Denmark whilst disavowing his own role in this situation, as it might appear in a first read. The misfortune really is his very being insofar as this misfortune is a result of his father qua ego ideal qua previous placeholder of the big Other being murdered (and returning as both superego and crypt). In this sense Schneiderman's view of Hamlet as "clearly a failure – he cannot act on his desire"¹⁹⁴ is a bit harsh, for if desire is desire of the Other, and the placeholder of the big Other is the murderous King, it is a bit difficult to place the blame solely on Hamlet as Schneiderman appears to do. Nonetheless, he is right in mentioning that Hamlet's "success is to convince the audience that it is no failure after all, that we can still love him"¹⁹⁵. Hamlet seeks our love, *and we his in using his situation as an alibi for our own failed symbolizations*, as we stupidly think our own Other to be murderous, indeed fascist. Together we embrace in a crypt-love.

Of course, Hamlet is universally acknowledged as a melancholic, not a cryptophore as we seem to be implying; yet his murdered father, as the Exception to the Symbolic, is Hamlet's melancholic love qua ego-ideal. His father – and of course the superego's primal father is the masculine Exception to the Symbolic order – is Hamlet's consciously loved Exception that preconditions crypt-love with others. Hamlet melancholically loves his superego. Don't we too? The collective superego is the agent of demanding crypt-love, wherein all our demands are effectuated in their very delivery.

Derridean/Levinasian Messianism

Derrida writes of the “visor effect” of hauntings, wherein the specter sees you but you cannot see the specter. In the case of Hamlet, the murdered father speaks through a helmet. The effect of this is that in our feeling ourselves being looked at, outside of any synchrony, the sense of absolute anteriority is produced. Derrida argues that “anachrony makes the law”, that is, it is through the visor effect that we inherit from the law. Derrida writes: “The one who says ‘I am thy Father’s Spirit’ can only be taken at his word. An essentially blind submission to his secret, to the secret of his origin: this is a first obedience to the injunction. It will condition all the others”¹⁹⁶. What is this if not a submission to the superego, to the primal father’s origin *qua* murder by his sons? As Derrida also says: “What does it mean to follow a ghost? And what if this came down to being followed by it, always, persecuted perhaps by the very chase we are leading?”¹⁹⁷. As we know, the superego is the figure of persecution *par excellence*. Derrida, however, also writes of the fact that an inheritance is never given in advance, but rather continually decided upon in a forever contingent fashion; such choosing is always founded upon a secret “which says ‘read me, will you ever be able to do so?’”¹⁹⁸. Thus we could argue that while Derrida seems to open up the question of inheritance to one of “reaffirmed choosing”¹⁹⁹, he at the same time closes it down insofar as any and all choosing fundamentally surrounds the secret, and ultimately the secret of the origin.

If, as Derrida writes, “by definition, [ghosts] pass through walls, these revenants, day and night, they trick consciousness and skip generations”²⁰⁰, the problem with this account is obvious: on what grounds do we choose this inheritance? What is or can be the basis of decision? Clearly, this can only happen within a historical context, that is to say through Other(s), but anything of this sort – shall we call it “politics”? – is absent in *Spectres of Marx*. It isn’t, after all, even clear *who* decides, for if we accept Derrida’s argument (as we should) that we are always already haunted by the past, by our incorporated others, just who decides on the injunction is entirely unclear. One might say this is simply the way it is, but if we stop here we are left, well, nowhere. Rather, the question of who it is that decides could be argued to be dependant on one’s place of enunciation with(in) Other(s), so that one’s act of decision *places* oneself in a historico-political context: in the act of decision one judges the injunctions, decides on them, and at the same time one is thereby judged, decided upon. The

act of decision is a decisive act: one makes a cut into the world, and one's cutting confers one's own "individuality".

Derrida does make small strides in this direction, but it is perhaps his affiliation with Levinas which prevents him from fully realizing it. Levinas, it is well known, speaks a great deal of the Other, although for him "the Other [*Autrui*] can... not appear without renouncing his radical alterity, without entering into an order"²⁰¹. Levinas, then, understands the Other only in its Real aspect, whereas the Lacanian account understands it to be *also* order itself (and hence the term's radical, and productive and producing, ambiguity). The Levinasian "enigma" is the way the Other (qua radical alterity) seeks my recognition while preserving his incognito. The Other is thus a meaning beyond meaning inserted into the order of meaning. Subjectivity is Enigma's partner, responding to the Enigma at its own risk, alone, unique, and in secret²⁰². Alluding to annunciation being the satisfaction of speech Levinas writes:

All speaking is an enigma. It is, to be sure, established in and moves in an order of significations common to the interlocutors, in the midst of triumphant, that is, primary truths... But behind this renewal, which constitutes cultural life, the Saying [as opposed to the Said]... is the discretion of an un-heard proposition, an insinuation, immediately reduced to nothing, breaking up like the "bubbles of the earth," which Banquo speaks of at the beginning of Macbeth²⁰³.

Further pointing towards annunciation Levinas writes that "perhaps [in French, crucially, *peut-etre*, or "maybe-being"] is the modality of an enigma, irreducible to the modalities of being and certainty"²⁰⁴, that is, to the Symbolic qua place(s) of enunciation. Yet clearly this Enigma constitutes Levinas' universe, and clearly he thinks a society to be possible through it, or rather: it is the sort of non-being to be had in instrumental times, or rather again: the sort of non-being to be had when one *cannot change* such instrumental times, that is, when the big Other functions insofar as it is against itself so that all one can do is annunciate. Levinas thus posits an Other of the (spectral big) Other, which is fundamentally at odds with Lacan who understands there to be no Other of the Other. One might even call Levinas' work supremely ideological in its Beautiful Soul effect: rather than acknowledging the loss of our places of enunciation through their exorcism he gestures to a mystical beyond. If modernist ideology concerned the *agalma* deep within us, it is the same today, only now the *agalma* is the crypt itself.

Levinas writes that this thinking of the Enigma, which is a thinking what withdraws from thought, is to desire – and since the Enigma will, of course, forever withdraw from

thought one will never find an end to desire. The problem is that this is not desire he speaks of, but *jouissance*: the crypt-fantasy of Other-Jouissance qua the satisfaction of speech (“all speaking is an enigma”). Since this Other of the Other only exists through others, which Levinas himself notes in that others stand in the trace of the Enigma’s illeity, this *jouissance* ex-sists in the prattle of pomo crypt-subjects: we could call this the “pomo prattle of the crypt-Other”, which knows no end to its satisfaction qua *jouissance*. This may indeed be the present situation, in that we believe there to be an Other of the Other, and this is, precisely, what keeps us going, what allows us to “get by”, to accept things as they (instrumentally) are. Indeed, all the meditation workshops, whether Zen or Kabbala (the latest Hollywood spiritual craze), and all the yoga classes of today could be seen to exercise this belief in an Other of the Other – and are thus supremely ideological in that they prevent one from realizing one’s own role (qua one’s very exorcism of one’s role) in the situation. For all that, however, one should not prescribe the description, which is precisely what Levinas does while thinking he is disturbing order. If, as Derrida notes, the most blatant metaphysical move one can make is to posit an outside to metaphysics, Levinas is guilty of just that.

Opposed to consciousness is “psychism”, a pre-conscious and primordial relation which should be understood not as consciousness but as an affective disposition towards alterity qua trauma; this is also another name for the subject, that which cannot be said. Consciousness, as Simon Critchley writes in his work on Levinas, is a “belated effect of the affect of trauma”²⁰⁵, the sense of interiority that emerges from encrypting. Subjectivity takes on a non-dialectical transferential relation to the original trauma of the other qua Thing²⁰⁶: the subject is “persecuted”. Because of this trauma, the subject is bound via the repetition compulsion to repeat that painful *jouissance* because it wants to suffer, that is, to relive that *jouissance* – *of exorcizing one’s place of enunciation*. As Critchley writes:

The Levinasian subject is a traumatized self, a subject that is constituted through a self-relation that is experienced as a lack, where the self is experienced as the inassumable source of what is lacking from the ego – a subject of melancholia, then. But, this is a good thing²⁰⁷. Strictly speaking, this is not a melancholic situation but a cryptic one, for the ego cannot possibly fuse with what it lacks a priori – and yet, Critchley’s statement comes to make sense given our earlier discussion of the ego fusing with the flesh, with the incorporated primary trauma. Either way it is *not* a good thing. Critchley thinks this situation to be the only way we can speak of “goodness, transcendence”²⁰⁸; if so, would not the ethical part of this puzzle exist within the speaking itself, that is, in the relation with others, that is, Other(s)? If so,

wouldn't this immediately turn a cryptic or melancholic situation into one of mourning qua speaking/testifying? In speaking, would one not relate to others in recognizing their traumatic selfhood as akin to one's own, in the process forming a dialectical big Other qua intersubjectivity in and through the very aporia?

As Critchley continues in the next essay of the text, analyzing the relation between Lacan and Levinas:

There can be no doubt that it is precisely this dialectical model of intersubjectivity [the Lacanian big Other] that is refused from beginning to end of [Levinas'] *Totality and Infinity*, where Levinas defies Hegel and the principle of non-contradiction by describing an absolute relation or un *rapport sans rapport*, that is to say, a non-dialectical model of inter-subjectivity; what I proposed in the previous chapter as a non-dialectical concept of transference²⁰⁹.

Again, if everyone in a culture had this *rapport sans rapport*, would they not relate to each other as such? Would they not, then, enter into a dialectical relation, that is, without necessarily excluding Levinas' aporetic relation? In sum, one can have both, and changing the big Other requires a passage through this aporia, through the death drive, but at the same time dialectical mediation remains – as it must. Is there not a way in which Levinas is trying to preserve and justify his own solitude, his own mystical relation with his (Other of the) Other? Is this not, finally, a profoundly isolated and isolating philosophy? I believe there are grounds for saying so, and since it is this *rapport sans rapport* that Derrida brings into his own work the same critique applies more or less to him. If the relation to the Thing is a relation to the crypt, and Levinas' relation to his absolute Other is a relation to the Thing, then Levinas wallows in the crypt-fantasy. While, as we have seen, the crypt-effect is constitutive of the subject's sense of interiority, it is precisely to the extent that Levinas announces the crypt, that is, partakes of the crypt-fantasy, that he refuses relations with Other(s) qua political decision-making. Although he at times acknowledges that one cannot have this *rapport sans rapport* without the order of the community²¹⁰, he does not go the distance, as we have above, in Realizing that the arrival of the Other is equivalent with its (presup)positioning: ethics is politics, and vice versa.

Derrida, perhaps, realizes the Other of the Other to be the gap of language itself, and this is the Real kernel of our fundamental fantasy. And yet his work is a sort of melancholic appropriation of this loss. As Comay writes, "the very notion of an originary loss ("as such") preceding the loss of any determinate object could function equally as a preemptive denial of loss that would mask the real inaccessibility of its object by determining it in advance as lost – thus negatively appropriable in its very absence"²¹¹. This functions "as a defence against

the fact that the object 'lost' was in fact never mine for the having"²¹². Although Derrida would never *say* that he thought the gap of language was his for the having, this is perhaps the effect of his work. "[G]rief itself can provide its own perverse form of consolation"²¹³ – in the crypt-fantasy death drive.

So, back to Hamlet: by virtue of not being allowed to play his role within the Symbolic – that is, in not being able to integrate his ego ideal – Hamlet is hyper-aware (like Levinas and Derrida?) of the role-playing of everyone else. This is, in a way, a positive condition, for it should enable the emergence of contingent big Others (although not in the same way as the feminine subject). As it becomes clear, however, this could only happen through Other(s), and Hamlet is but one isolated man, thereby ego-obsessive. With Other(s), by contrast, he could not be so, and while with Other(s) the contingency of one's role within the Symbolic would be acknowledged, it would also be viewed as necessary to accept one's role, to assume it as the very condition of existence. Again, this is Hamlet's destiny given his unique circumstances.

Zizek himself takes a small part in this Levinasian scenario, in that he argues that Hamlet should not have said "I, Hamlet the Dane", but should have continued his hysterical (non)existence²¹⁴, whereas while we are acknowledging the full extent of Hamlet's dilemma it should be argued that Hamlet's statement was very much needed. This is somewhat akin to Antigone, wherein, as we have seen, her act is not only one of defiance to the community, but, given why she defies her empirical community – to bury her dead brother – she performs the quintessential Symbolic act. Thus her act against the empirical community is one done *for* the Symbolic community; afraid of the lack of mourning, that is, of the forming of the crypt, she defies her community – to *save* it. We should be wary, then, of discourses which presently swirl around this figure that do not acknowledge this dimension, for they are perhaps simply validating our own cryptic (non)existences within present society.

While the Lacanian reading of Antigone, that her ethical position lies in the way that, after she has been banished from the community, she changes the way she relates to her exile so as to assume it as positively, is to be somewhat commended, is there not a grave danger that in such a reading we are falsely imagining ourselves to be Antigones banished from Society (qua lack of big Other), wherein we are ethical insofar as we realize this and assume it (as positive)? Against this one should stress again that Antigone's act was *for* the community. Moreover, the logics of Hamlet and Antigone could be dangerously combined: seeing the big

Other as murderous we are exiled/exile ourselves from Society, *and* assume and self-relate positively to such exile. We have here the playground of university ethics, and let us pray not also those of psychoanalysis.

Superego, Totalitarianism, Enlightenment bathwater, and p@ying

As alluded to on more than a few occasions, there is a sort of superego quality to the crypt-Other. Not the least of reasons is the symbolic Real quality of capital. As Žižek has noted on more than a few occasions, today desire no longer exists via its prohibition. On the contrary, desire is mandated, enforced: Enjoy (capitalism)! This becomes an unbearable situation, as it remains to be seen whether there can be any desire left for the subject. If one wanted to say there was, the question immediately to be asked would be: how would the subject know this desire to be h/is own (and not simply sanctioned)? It is unclear if analysis can progress any further here. Bizarrely, rather than working against the Imaginary, the superego of the crypt-Other seems to enhance its capture, which is perhaps not all that contrary to the superego's normal function, given that its task is to fantastically fill in the gaps of language. One might call this the fantasy of the superego, for does not the superego prevent one from realizing the lack in the Other (in its own fashion of being the shift of perspective *itself*, without relation)?

As intimated, the superego is the reverse of the moral law, pertaining to its very form. The superego emerges as the consequence of the reduction of the subject to an abstract determination, as Hegel noted with regards to the Jacobins in the French Revolutionary Terror. Žižek notes how the classical Master is that of S1, the signifier without a signified, the performative function of the word. Following Hegel, Žižek argues that the superego is not to be found here so much as in the Enlightenment, for it is here that the desire for rational authority, that is, for bureaucracy and the Kantian categorical imperative, produces the surplus of the superego. This is why Sade is the truth of Kant. Since in totalitarianism – which is but the truth of the Enlightenment project – S1 is excluded, the leader takes on the shape of an object (*objet petit a*) hiding underneath the veneer of objective knowledge (S2). This is as a result of there not being a master signifier (S1) that could quilt the field of knowledge. Instead the *objet petit a* comes to serve this function, as in the leaders of the Soviet Union's bodies being seen as made of “special stuff” insofar as they were simply following the dictates of Historical Necessity.

As Žižek writes:

Lacan's fundamental thesis is that superego in its most fundamental dimension is an *injunction to enjoyment*: the various forms of superego commands are nothing but variations on the same motif: "Enjoy!" Therein consists the opposition between Law and superego: Law is the agency of prohibition which regulates the distribution of enjoyment on the basis of a common, shared renunciation (the "symbolic castration"), whereas superego marks a point at which *permitted* enjoyment, freedom-to-enjoy, is reversed into *obligation* to enjoy – which, one must add, is the most effective way to block access to enjoyment²¹⁵.

It is thus not the self-interested and pleasure-seeking ego that is the greatest menace to society, but rather the superego by virtue of its being the reverse of the moral law. Totalitarianism should not be understood, then, as the disappearance of the internal "unwritten" law under the demands of the external social law, as it is usually assumed, but instead a kind of short circuit between the two. Thus it is not the loss of the inner law we should bemoan, but the social law insofar as it is able to intervene and mediate the "self torture provoked by the obscene superegotistical 'law of conscience'"²¹⁶.

Is not the case today that of a public side of the law stating our freedoms with its obscene reverse of "shop!" – is it not through shopping, through our choice of goods, that we quilt the field of knowledge? Isn't it true that we are only free, in effect, insofar as we shop? And was not shopping the predominant response to the terror of September 11, wherein the notion was that through shopping society could be saved? Sensing this, national banks throughout the former West lowered interest rates, in essence provoking the obscene superegotistical effects. If the symbolic Real ought to refer to Other(s), to the cycle of exchanges, speculation, and the excess of gift-giving between people, it now appears relegated to capital. After all, what to call the speculative excess of London and New York if not a (post)modern potlatch? Finally, what is this imperative if not one to exorcize one's very place of enunciation, to, instead of confronting the stupid positivity of the situation, become stupid oneself? It is clear, then, that the best method to mediate the effects of the superego, as intimated by Žižek in the above quote, is through the imposition of a quilting point in the form of the big Other. I would only add that such mediation happens in and through Other(s), so that the superego's obscene demands are lessened to the extent that we relate... in testimony.

Perhaps another level of analysis is needed. Rather than simply understanding the Enlightenment to be the abandonment of the Master (S1) in favour of Knowledge (S2), thereby producing the superegotistical surplus, we should further add that the Enlightenment project was at least ostensibly considered to be a communal, cultural, and societal project –

one need not be a Habermasian to acknowledge this. We live in the shadow of the Enlightenment, yet the intersubjective belief in the Cause of the Enlightenment has vanished under waves of cynicism and irony. On the one hand, this is surely a good thing, as one should certainly ask “Enlightenment for who – and at who’s expense?” etc etc. On the other hand, we seem to have thrown the baby out with the bath water, or rather the bath water out with the baby: not only have we abandoned the content of the Enlightenment (democracy, civil liberties), but also the sense of its being a communal Cause and ongoing project. This would mark the difference from our situation relative to the beginnings of the Enlightenment, and this difference is precisely what makes our superego imperative even more obscene. Lacking the quilting effects of contingent big Others qua Other(s) engaged in a Cause, such quilting is performed by the superego, and more particularly by shopping. The content, qua Law, is still produced, if only in order to maintain distance from it.

For this reason I offer the term “p@aying” to describe the superego imperative of the (post)modern era: our paying is a prayer that the payment will suffice to keep society, and thus ourselves, together. A p@aying to a black hole, a p@aying that (presup)poses this black hole through the exorcism of our place(s) of enunciation. Paradoxically, it is a p@aying that through such p@aying God (qua Other) does not exist, or rather exists only in not existing. For obvious reasons there can no end to this p@aying; we are instead thrown into a vicious spiral. As we feel ourselves, as individuals, more and more only relating to our societies in an abstract manner (“does my vote – do I – really count?”), the pressure of the superego becomes stronger.

Chapter 5: The Real of Technology as the Real of the Other(s): McLuhan & Baudrillard

Technology and Temporality

In the former West we tend to follow Aristotle's lead in seeing technology as mere tool, in which we, as (liberal) individuals, are in full control. As tool, however, it must be detached so as to be manipulated, but, *as* detached, it must thus be *out* of our hands, and so *beyond* our control. Hence all the narratives of Apocalypse, mad scientists, and aliens advising us to temper our technologies, and to use them 'wisely'. To remain in control, that is, until the next narrative, in that vicious spiral called liberal instrumentality. The (once... again) bounded self, always unravelling.

On the surface the (post)modern era of global communications seems to offer boundless opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue wherein we could understand our mutual vulnerabilities; that is, to break through this instrumental relation to technology and see the Real of the Other as the Real of ourselves, thereby leading to contingent big Others in relation to the Cause of Global Justice (or some such thing) – yet nothing of the sort has happened. Indeed, it would seem that with the advent of new communications technologies the previous relations with Other(s) has diminished, thereby making it extremely difficult to co-create contingent big Others. We have already argued that part of the reason for this lies in the fear that to reach the Real of the Other, and thus ourselves, is to risk fascism – whereas the Real reason is the fear that we will confront the deadlock inherent in symbolization, that is, the Real.

Before the globalizing effect of (post)modern communication technologies, when one existed in an imagined community that contrasted with other imagined communities, there was a strong sense of temporization: it was time itself that 'laid' between and within cultures. This has vanished, as we now 'share' – but do we *share* it? – one time. Or more importantly, we *believe* we share one (real-)time; indeed, 'real-time' is but a fantasy masking the Real. As Fredric Jameson writes, modernity was a culture of *incomplete* modernization, so that there was an existentially uneven development. Thus time, the time that 'laid' between people, was the focus; when villages become suburbs, however, one seemingly gets circuits without agency, and thus the present is elided insofar as the past and present are (for one cannot feel the present without its relation to the past and future, that is, temporality itself²¹⁷).

The point to be made here is that we have as a result lost the way to our own unconscious'. For what does our place of enunciation matter when everything is 'known in advance', when in a(ny) conversation the finite other already 'knows' what you are going to say? Everything is decided in advance, and so one retreats to the stupid ineffable existence in the first point of Schema L. As Jameson also notes in the same essay, just as there is a reduction to the present there is a reduction to the body – I would say flesh – as the present of time, but a body/flesh only understood through others via a dialectic – more on which shortly.

Although the unconscious is the domain of spatiality, it relies on temporizations to gain access to it, a situation exemplified in the Lacanian practice of short sessions²¹⁸. This temporization, moreover, is produced through the gaps in language. Although the crypt also temporizes, it does so precisely by trying to fill out these gaps through fantasy; it is by virtue of its then coming back to haunt the present that it temporizes. Temporization thus takes on more of the aspects of the undead due to its anachronous nature; with the (dreamt of) death of the Symbolic (qua shunning it) we live cryptically²¹⁹. The big Other is now just the conjunction of anachronicités, brought together through the (fantasy of) real-time. Because of its incomplete modernization and its uneven development, modernity confronted the Real of technology. We, by contrast, elide it – in real-time. As Baudrillard notes, everything today is given to us by "technical mechanisms"; the Other, which once existed between people, has been replaced by an instrumental technical infrastructure. There is seemingly no need for our places of enunciation. In a sense, one could understand the misunderstandings of the Other as the result of temporality, and one could call this the trauma of temporality. From this perspective, the gap of language is correlative to the trauma of temporality. It is this trauma, this gap, that (the belief in) real-time elides.

Technology and the Death Drive

The mind/body split emerges through technology. After the first "tool", the mind thinks itself superior to the body. The body is thereby foreclosed, and this is why the body becomes the crypt itself via in-corporation, while the crypt-fantasy masks the body's drives via the flesh. The body's drives become traumatic by virtue of their absolute inexpressibility. All drives are in this sense a death drive, for they owe their very existence to the death drive which makes/marks the break with nature (and the proto-fantasy of the mirror-image). That is, it is via the death drive that technology, and thus the separation from the body, emerges.

Zizek argues that the death drive is something in between nature and culture, that marks the break as such, yet for him the reason it occurred was as a result of some monstrosity in nature²²⁰. Here I posit it as a result of a monstrosity of humanity: technology. Take, for instance, the ape in Stanley Kubrick's *2001*, who in a flash of "insight" – one struggles for the appropriate word – uses a bone to smash a skull, thereby acquiring the first technological weapon (and this bone, of course, in a famous cut turns into a weaponized satellite). One could immediately point to the presence of the monolith as the reason the ape gained this insight, but one would be hard pressed to point to its being a monstrosity of nature. While it is presumed to be the result of a benevolent alien species helping humans gain technological know-how, could we not, as the result of a distinct lack of any aliens in the film, argue that the monolith is rather the death drive 'itself'²²¹? Now it may have been a monstrosity in nature that enabled the ape-human to act, but the death drive itself must be located in *between* humanity and nature, as Zizek in fact notes.

The death drive, after all, is not something simply internal to the human, but on the contrary usurps all notions of interiority; it is both more interior than any interiority and more external than any exteriority. Kubrick's genius is to equate the monolith qua death drive with the cinematic cut itself in the second last scene and second last cut, where the camera moves into the black of the monolith, at some point "cutting" (is it a cut?) to the Earth and Star Child (qua reborn astronaut?). Only through the death drive, the monolith, can any change occur in the world. *Only through the death drive can technology be born. Likewise, the death drive can only emerge through technology.* And thus it should be no surprise if technology has always taken the figure of death, from Theuth's writing²²² to the Matrix of the film of the same name.

Now all species engage in an Imaginary process which gives order to the drives, but in humans this takes on a unique form in that the mind, created in the split from the body, identifies over time with the Imaginary form – as with Narcissus. This identity, which passes for the animal, takes on a synchronic aspect for the human as a way of continually holding the body at bay. *One holds the body, in the sense of its drives being manifestations of the death drive, at bay, via the fantasy of the body as crypt – the flesh.*

The mind splits off from the body through the "tool", thinking it to be superior. The crypt is created by this foreclosure, and thought, as the sense of interiority, only emerges through this foreclosure. However, the foreclosing of one's own body for obvious reasons

hits too close to home, and so the ‘not-me’ effect of one’s mind reacting to one’s body is transferred to the other – this is the origin of the Real of the Other, as the Real of technology. When everyone in a culture does this, as they must for it to be a culture, one gets isolated individuals in need of dialectical mediation, in need of a big Other. The idea is to guarantee one’s bodily/borderly integrity, *as well as* one’s connection to others: a paradox only ‘solved’ through the mediation of the big Other. One’s ego is formed through this incorporation.

To some extent there is no way of avoiding this dialectic. One cannot forever dwell in the aporia of technology’s effect. Indeed, the path to language, to the Symbolic, is to be found here in the dealing with the aporia; language exists via the dialectic. Yet its reserve is the aporia, and it is only through the aporia that change to the big Other is possible. This means that there is a trauma before the emergence of the Symbolic, that served and serves as the very impetus to symbolize. And yet, this does not infer a Real prior to symbolization, for the Real of technology and the Other is always a retroactive effect.

Modernity consisted of an emphasis on the dialectic, whereas we, in part because of the dramatic increase in communications technologies, feel part of humanity as a whole. That is, we feel closer to the Real of the Other, in the same moment that we take flight from it. The Real of technology, and the Other, ex-sists now on our flesh: this is the crypt-fantasy.

This is not the necessary dialectic formed from the aporia of Other(s), and thus returning there, but a cryptic one: crypt-Other. It avoids the aporia by avoiding the shift of perspective that is the death drive. This is the realm of affect, this idea that affect flows between bodies, and that somehow this is a radical insight that means something (whereas the point is that it simply cannot “mean” anything insofar as it ex-sists outside the Symbolic, in it). This partakes of a body as crypt fantasy which negates change insofar as it dwells in the Gestalt fantasy of the complete body and the body-in-pieces, thereby avoiding the shift of perspective itself we have called the death drive. The mania of the crypt finds itself in this very avoidance of the death drive even while it exists in this Gestalt. As noted, it has a death drive of its own, the crypt-fantasy death drive, which masks the Symbolic death drive through its own.

Opposed to this affective crypt fantasy is a sort of “riding of the death drive”, wherein the body becomes equated with the death drive (or rather that all its drives are a subset of the death drive). To touch, to die – the very palpability, as they say, of the Real.

The cyborg, as half machine and half organic, is the truth of this dialectic, at the origin of the foreclosure, *where technology is other and the other is technology*. Testimony, if there is any, testifies to and from this situation, thereby upsetting the crypt-fantasy dialectic, the ego, and the big Other. It testifies to and from the death drive. This upsets the dialectic, in fact turning it into an aporia, and this passage through the death drive/body/cyborg is necessary for any change in the big Other, in Other(s), to occur, and, indeed, it can only happen through Other(s) insofar as the aporia upsets the crypt-fantasy and its atomization of society into individuals. This is not to say the dialectic is to be shunned, for one cannot simply dwell in this aporia; it is simply to say that every dialectic is haunted by this aporia. We have rejected the dialectic, and take flight from the aporia. If the moderns at least lived in the dialectic, we have rejected that too, so that all that binds us is the fantasy of the crypt-Other.

Zizek makes a similar point when he suggests that reality is only available through the rift of the *objet petit a* qua the Real internal self-impediment; external reality constitutes itself via the primordial act of rejection/externalization of the immanent self-impediment of the drive into the external opposition between the demand of the drives and those of the (now) opposed reality. Thus we can pretend it is the big Other qua reality that robs us of and prohibits our enjoyment, blind to our (presup)positioning of such prohibition²²³. For Zizek, the act occurs in the moment of subjective destitution when the subject identifies with the *objet petit a*²²⁴, a view which is correlative to the one enacted here of the shift of perspective from the crypt-Other to the Other(s). Whereas Zizek's focus is on the big Other mediating the drives, the focus here is on the crypt-fantasy doing so, for the reason that as symbolization is shunned it would seem to be the crypt-fantasy which comes to play the predominant role.

"Our" culture, in viewing technology as a tool, forgets that we too are forever changing, often – if not always, depending on how broad one lets the term become – *through* technology. When this sort of claim is made, charges of 'technological determinism' are never far behind, though what I want to argue here is that theories of technological determinism are just the inverse of viewing technology as a tool: here the tool simply takes over its maker. Though perhaps a bit harder to imagine, given that it dwells in aporia, it may make more sense to view the relation between 'humans' and 'technology' as a (non)relation, a relation of disjunction. They contaminate one another, even if, nonetheless, they remain

irreducible. The difference is the ability to give testimony. *Humans are “human” insofar as they ride the death drive (in order) to symbolize the Real of the Other and technology.*

McLuhan’s Incorporation

As noted, part of what is incorporated is the lost reality previous to the trauma; thus what is incorporated is yesteryear’s big Other. To the extent that we continue to incorporate – in not confronting the developments of our day, media and otherwise: the Real of technology – we are living in the “rear view mirror”²²⁵, as McLuhan would have put it, and while this is part of human experience it is especially acute for our era. For this reason that we live in the “Age of the Unconscious”.

As everyone knows, McLuhan argued that media are extensions of the human mind and psyche. As most do not know, in this process of extending, the part of the body and/or psyche is numbed and/or “amputated” at the same time as it is extended. This happens as a result of the increase in sensory stimuli on the affected area: one can only handle so much new information at once. To explain this somewhat paradoxical formulation McLuhan resorted to the myth of Narcissus, who, enamoured by his own misrecognized image (he doesn’t realize he’s looking at himself), becomes so entranced as to be forever immobile. As McLuhan notes, the root of Narcissus is “narcosis”, or “numbness”. By being so entranced, Narcissus became the servomechanism of his own extended and repeated image, adapting to it and thereby becoming a closed system. The image itself, then, is a self-amputation or “counter-irritant” that, while allowing one “to get by” in providing immediate relief to the central nervous system (that otherwise threatens to be overloaded), in effect prevents self-recognition²²⁶.

In McLuhan, technological change is Real, and in shutting it out one shuts out the subject. This is within the very parameters of the Imaginary as it has been argued in this thesis: before the Imaginary, one did not see oneself as a body in pieces, but when one sees one’s image one gets the impression that the image both unifies and alienates, in that with the image one sees oneself in the Gestalt as both complete and incomplete, the difference only a shift of perspective – and hence, as we have argued, the never-ending process of trying to guarantee completeness. One never ceases trying to look in the next car window in just the right way to affirm oneself of one’s completeness (this morning). You gotta get your *fix*, just like Narc – whereas McLuhan wants to open up to the Real of technology and the

subject in constructing “counter-environments”²²⁷, wherein the Real lies in the very difference between the environments.

In the electric age, another layer is added, for the very nature of electric media is to be an extension of the central nervous system itself, which, to prevent itself from being overloaded, engages in a desperate form of suicidal autoamputation. To push McLuhan’s thought a little here, we could argue that a second order central nervous system, on a global scale – or, rather, global insofar as electricity and real-time technology is available²²⁸ – is hereby created. Rather: in the global village, the only central nervous system is that of the village itself, (presup)posed through the autoamputations of everyone within the village. The Global Village Central Nervous System, or GVCNS, is the negative sum, the void, of everyone’s autoamputations. This is a superego imperative: if we are all free on the moral level, yet now without a Cause, on the level of form we obscenely sacrifice our places of enunciation – here correlative to our central nervous systems – to the GVCNS, the dumping ground. One can make this Otherwise bizarre correlation precisely because the Other is now but an amalgamation of anachronisms held together through an instrumental technical infrastructure, one given to us without concern for our input. McLuhan argues that as we become servomechanisms we come to serve the image/technology in question as we would a god or minor religion²²⁹: the crypt-Other in the case of electric technology (qua GVCNS-producing), we might say, through p@ying: *Jouis!*

Narcissus’ total immobility rests in the fact that he is entranced by his ideal ego. McLuhan is implicitly arguing that by autoamputating our own central nervous systems the big Other is nothing but the sum of these autoamputations, the GVCNS. Any fabric to the social in the form of Other(s) has disappeared. Our ego ideals regress to ideal egos. We have become atomized cells, paradoxically deeply involved in the goings on of all the other cells (and let us not forget the paradox as being the very form of the obscene superego). We are refusing to confront the Real of technology, the very way it has transformed (our relation to) the Real, and instead of productively engaging the Real of technology through Other(s) we attempt to ever more ‘use’ technology for simply positivistic purposes of describing and capturing reality in progressively better – more “realistic” – ways. Of course, reality is opposed to the Real; what we seek in the refinement of Reality is an avoidance of the Real. This is, of course, intimately tied into the shunning of symbolization in post-Auschwitz times.

One of the more ambiguous points in *Understanding Media* is in McLuhan arguing that the electric age is the age not simply of the unconscious but of the consciousness of the unconscious, the reason being that the unconscious is today transferred to the physical, so that there is a new awareness of technology as being extensions of the body. Subliminal life is thereby raised into “full view” so that we engage in a social consciousness in wearing all mankind as our *skin* in instant, total field awareness. What, exactly, is the nature of this transferral?

McLuhan follows Freud’s suggestion that the ego is but the projection of a bodily surface: the ego is a projection of the flesh itself. Which is to say the crypt *and* the unconscious, according to McLuhan’s thought, since his notion of the unconscious seems akin to the crypt. As he suggests, “in conditions of electric technology we *incorporate* all mankind as our *skin*”, and this, precisely, is the reason for the unconscious becoming conscious. Strictly speaking, of course, such a statement makes no sense, for if the unconscious became conscious there would be no unconscious – yet this is precisely what McLuhan is alluding to: the disappearance of the Other, its incorporation as our skin: crypt-Other. The consciousness of the unconscious is simply the avoidance of the most radical dimension of the Real and the crypt-fantasy embrace of its seemingly manageable aspects.

Implicitly for McLuhan, cool media – that which invites participation due to its low definition, such as television (and the Internet) – is only the precondition for what I would call testimony. After all, we only “incorporate” all mankind as our skin: despite our unification in the global village, we are still isolated cells, or vacuous nodes, paradoxically held together through the crypt-fantasy. We are not introjecting, or mourning this situation; instead we tend to view the GVCNS as some overhanging threatening spectre: we can never pay enough that it will simply go away – and yet we (presup)pose it as such.

McLuhan is undoubtedly right to say that we need to learn how to balance the effects of new media technologies, but he is exaggerating the point when he argues that in conditions of electric technology we will be able to “program” our sense ratios. He thinks this possible with computers, which, he argues, hold out the promise of global unity and understanding in their being able to bypass individual languages for a cosmic consciousness. This would be, he argues, a sort of weightlessness promising physical immortality, and would most closely approximate the conditions of consciousness, which, he argues, is non-verbal²³⁰. Through language McLuhan is arguing that consciousness is somehow beyond language.

Tribal man felt h/imself to be an organ of cosmos, a feeling, McLuhan thinks, that is being experienced again today. This is most certainly so in the cybernetic discourse prevalent today, a discourse whose central tenet, that there is no fundamental difference between human consciousness and technology since both are “information-processors”, owes much to McLuhan²³¹. It should be immediately clear just how much this discourse relates to the crypt-fantasy experience of Other-Jouissance, annunciated in speech.

McLuhan wants us to recognize our own images in the mirror, to appropriate them as the truth of ourselves. He offers as an example the sailor in Edgar Allan Poe’s “A Descent into the Maelstrom”, who, caught in a vortex, is able to calmly reflect on the situation and find his way out (through letting go of the ship, for while heavier objects go down lighter ones go up and out)²³². This path to the detached observer, however, is paradoxically required as a precondition to becoming what s/he is. For how did he become detached in the first place – how do we become detached in conditions of electric technology? In this paradox, the individuals thereby spawned – and crucially for the Catholic McLuhan, this moment of recognizing happens only to all individuals at once, collectively – stand in a unique relationship to the new big Other, the mystical one, the Catholic one of Other-Jouissance.

McLuhan argues that the moment when a new media is introduced into a society, thereby conflicting with previous ones, is one where we are snapped out of our Narcissus-narcosis. This moment, for McLuhan, is artistic freedom in its release from the trance of the previous media. In this moment the form of the media is recognized, and its ability to alter our perception is negotiated with. Herein lies the logic that the “medium is the message”, in that the content of the media matters little as compared to its *forming* of thought patterns. The purest form, that which has no obvious content, is electric light, and the fact that light is normally not considered a medium is for McLuhan symptomatic of how we tend to ignore the effects of media more generally²³³. In Hegelian terms, absolute knowledge for McLuhan is not at the end of a dialectical process but in the process itself, with the light being the purest form of such mediation, negativity itself. In electric conditions, patterns are now easily recognized, as the speed of light is equivalent to pure causality, to the world revealing itself. Pure causality, as everyone knows, is shorthand for God... revealing Himself, yet, in good Catholic style, only through everyone and everything else: the annunciation that comes from incorporating all mankind as our skin²³⁴. And yet it should be noted that McLuhan’s

thought is very close to the Symbolic death drive as the shift of perspective itself, were it not for his allusions to cosmic consciousness and the lack of difference between human thought and the technical, which is to say, in his eliding the role of testimony and the ways in which we must politically posit big Others.

Let us leave the last words here to McLuhan:

Perhaps *touch* is not just skin contact with *things*, but the very life of things in the *mind*? The Greeks had the notion of a consensus or a faculty of “common sense” that translated each sense into each other sense, and conferred consciousness on man. Today, when we have extended all parts of our bodies and senses by technology, we are haunted by the need for an outer consensus of technology and experience that would raise our communal lives to the level of a world-wide consensus. When we have achieved a world-wide fragmentation, it is not unnatural to think about a world-wide integration²³⁵.

Such integration, it should be clear, is to happen through the crypt-fantasized flesh, from which we are “haunted” at the same time as it is proposed as a solution.

Baudrillard’s Derealization

If McLuhan seems to posit his place of enunciation as a way out to an Other-Jouissance, Baudrillard more forcefully acknowledges such belief in a “way out” as a (albeit comforting) referential alibi. Baudrillard’s notion of the liquidation of referentials, qua simulation, is well-known. In a footnote to his *Simulacra and Simulation*, he suggests that to the three orders of the Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real, we should add the category of the hyperreal, which “captures and obstructs” the functioning of the three orders²³⁶. Hyperreality is the register of stupid positivity, both in its crypt-fantasy and superegotistical forms, which occurs when representational distance is foreclosed, when Other(s) are replaced by the crypt-Other. In a vicious circle, we attempt to legitimate the sign by the real and the real by the sign, thereby closing the gap of language. This is a circle that could, I would argue, be flattened out if we allowed contingent symbolizations that encountered the Real, contingent big Others.

Baudrillard speaks of the foreclosure of symbolic exchange from discourse, which thereby haunts as the virtuality of meaning. To function, the sign will attempt to exorcize and integrate symbolic exchange into its operation. We might see this as intrinsically related to the vicious circle just mentioned, for what is missing in the to-and-fro process of legitimization is the very place of enunciation, which, in Baudrillard, is equivalent to symbolic exchange. Of which, nothing can be said of it except via allusion, or, again, of it “we can say nothing except that it is ambivalent”²³⁷. Really it “is” nothing, and an un-sublatable nothing

too. (It is not a negativity in the service of dialectics.) Funny thing, it lines up neatly with Baudrillard's own place of enunciation, that is, Nowhere/Nothing. As he writes, radical thought must pursue the opposite of both the resurrection of referentials (the second order of simulation) and the obscene ecstasy of the codified object (third order disenchantment): it must pursue "nothing". Radical thought de-confuses the messenger and the message, language and meaning, but it posits the messenger as a nobody and language as the "bearer of the continuity of the void, of the nothing at the very heart of what [meaning] says"²³⁸. But lest one reproach Baudrillard as attempting to appropriate a position of mastery over this Nothing, he writes that the "derealization of the world will be the work of the world itself"²³⁹, thereby erasing himself, yet, at the same time, engaging in a mere act of dissimulation, for his appropriative mastery has just been moved to another level. While he has inscribed his place of enunciation into his writing, that is, acknowledged it, he has only acknowledged it as Nothing. Is this not the very dimension of the hyperreal ego, that is, the truth of ourselves? We should commend Baudrillard for his insight, and we would have commended him for his honesty too were it not for his claiming that such derealization is the work of the world itself – and not through his and our (presup)positioning (qua anti-Other), assuming, of course, that this is not what he means by the "world itself".

Indeed, we should question the binary logic that remains at the heart of the Baudrillardian project. As with radical thought opposing Nothing to the resurrection of referentials (Being?), the secret, which circulates through everything that is said (like seduction beneath the obscenity of speech), is the opposite of communication even while it shares something with it. What it shares, I would argue, is precisely its antagonism *qua* binary. That binaries should share something is itself hardly "radical". These are Nietzschean moments in Baudrillard, moments no doubt accentuated by his using the concept of symbolic exchange from George Bataille, another thinker who owes a great debt to Nietzsche. Where this logic finds its height is again while writing on the secret, where he writes that, in the end, it is the secret that takes revenge, and "which decidedly does not wish to be mentioned and which, being an enigma, enigmatically possesses its own resolution, and therefore only aspires to remain in secret and in the *joy* of secrecy"²⁴⁰. This sounds more like the negative theology of Levinas than the 'radical' thought of Baudrillard. Who or what decides, precisely? Unless we can accept the notion of "the secret itself" as a response, or even if we can, we are led into murky waters. As with Nietzsche, unless one destabilizes the

binaries themselves, one is led merely from one pole to the other, violently. It is clear what's missing from this account: Other(s). Baudrillard would no doubt claim such an argument to be part of the hyperreal logic of resurrecting dead referentials, but the argument is in fact the opposite: through Other(s) the very notion of "referentials" (qua existing in the gap of language) is continually and contingently decided upon.

The Code as the Superego

Baudrillard is often critiqued for not defining some of his key terms, especially that of the "code". I would propose that the reason Baudrillard refuses to "define" the code is precisely because it is what escapes definition. In Baudrillard's implicit theoretical framework, the big Other of Jouissance and that of the more traditional one are collapsed into one another, so that the "code" is partly ineffable, "beyond": the crypt-Other of the crypt-fantasy. One (crypt-)/*loves* the code. In perhaps his best work, *The System of Objects*, Baudrillard "defines" the code thus: "the object/advertising system constitutes a system of signification but not language, for it lacks an active syntax: it has the simplicity and effectiveness of a code"²⁴¹. In discussing how people are now defined in their essence by their objects, he writes:

What is specific to our society is that other [read Other] systems of recognition are progressively withdrawing, primarily to the advantage of the code of "social standing"... Since it is sanctioned by the group the code is moral, and every infraction is more or less charged with guilt. The code is totalitarian; no one escapes it: our individual flights do not negate the fact that each day we participate in its collective elaboration... But conversely, it could be noted that the progressive decline of all other systems [of recognition] necessitated the institution of a clear, unambiguous, and universal code of recognition²⁴².

According to the terms of this thesis, such a "decline" of Other systems of recognition was a result of the shunning of symbolization in post-Holocaust culture, and also because of the rise of global communications technologies that enabled such a totalitarian code to be imposed on the world's peoples – even if in some sense such an 'imposition' was and is 'chosen' by the people themselves, by virtue of their incessant p®aying and exorcisms. As Baudrillard says in a footnote: "In this tautological system of recognition, each advertising sign is already testimony in itself, since it always refers to itself at the same time as an advertisement"²⁴³. Long before Žižek noted the superegoization of society Baudrillard wrote, in 1968, the time of 'liberation'

replaces a puritan morality with a hedonistic morality of pure satisfaction... Taboos, anxieties, and neuroses, which made the individual a deviant and an outlaw, are lifted at the cost of a

regression in the security of objects, thus reinforcing the images of the Father and the Mother... [in this] tremendous endeavour to materialize the superego²⁴⁴. Two years later this perspective becomes even sharper when he notes that the experience of pleasure is now an obligation, “the citizen’s *duty*” within our “*fun morality*” and “*universal curiosity*”²⁴⁵. He even gives as an example an American slogan that said “Try Jesus!”. In the absence of an(y) Other, religious or secular, what better example could there be that the superego fills in for this lack²⁴⁶? The superego is materialized in the objects which fill in the gap of language; the superego is one of the agents of stupid positivity. To the extent the superego prevents one from Realizing the gap of language, one loves it.

The code, in the third order of simulation, neutralizes what escapes it not by annexation (as in the previous order) but by connection. In fluid and aleatory substitutable combinations, the void is, in a sense, “managed”; instead of S1 we have S2. Baudrillard’s gambit is to push the logic of the code to its “limit”, where it becomes reversible. For Baudrillard, in a logic borrowed from McLuhan, each configuration of value is resumed by the following in a higher order of simulation as ideal content, as phantom reference – even while it is at the same time abolished. The reign of exchange value had use value as its ideal content, so that Marxists would loudly proclaim that the revolution would entail the re-establishment of value of utility. In the next higher order, the code formed precisely through seeing exchange value as its ideal content, even while it at the same time eradicated it²⁴⁷. In the logic of the code, exchange value is both killed and preserved, lodged in the psyche like an incorporated ghost.

And yet, in a seemingly inexplicable move, Baudrillard writes in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* that it is “useless to resurrect the dialectic”, a sentence that can only make sense if we have reached its end. Indeed, with the code we have, and only death is of a “higher” order²⁴⁸. For Baudrillard, death is not an actual occurrence but a reversible form, a possible social relation, and only it is fatal to the system. Death, as form, is symbolic exchange²⁴⁹. It is the void, it “is” nothing. And it is the limit of the system, what radical thought must push towards. The pseudo-events of the code, while hollowing out a void into which they continually plunge, never acknowledge the void itself. They circle it, surround it, but never acknowledge it as its own. By contrast, Baudrillard wants to do precisely that, to, in a sense, acknowledge his place of enunciation. But the result is the same, for whether one is speaking of the code that disowns its place of enunciation qua void, or of Baudrillard who does avow his enunciation qua void, the result, obviously, is extremely similar. Where Baudrillard is

wrong is to think that he can assume, or rather appropriate, such a thing. If death is supposed to be un-sublatable, beyond the code and dialectics, Baudrillard in a sense (impossibly) identifies with it. After all, seduction itself is to seduce with one's weaknesses, to know how to "make use of death". This is, like McLuhan, very close to the Symbolic death drive, but here, to the extent it does not involve Other(s) it is doomed to – Zen-like – failure. Could it not be said that Baudrillard, then, merely follows the logic of the superego?

The Masses

This speaks to one of the central tensions of Baudrillard's work: just where he stands in relation to his notion of the masses, a theory that, perhaps like its object(/subject) of study, is paradoxical. In *Simulacra and Simulation* he argues that in the wake of power's disappearance there is a collective demand for signs of power. We are obsessed with its death and for its survival, which becomes greater the more it disappears. This points to the shunning of symbolization, that is, the big Other, so that we demand the semblance of power if not power itself. One moves into the hyperreality of the code²⁵⁰. On the one hand, one's (presup)posing is made more obvious than ever (for it becomes clear that the Nation, for instance, was not always already there), but on the other the masses disavow this very situation, so that the big Other qua superego thereby formed is stronger than ever. Even if it is, at heart, Nothing.

For Baudrillard, there is nothing more natural than this, to delegate one's responsibility onto others; for him, the Western notion of the self-determining individual was merely a blip in a more general history of such delegation. McLuhan would on the one hand concur that yes, we are moving back to such tribal conditions, yet he would undoubtedly add that we are doing so from a literary individual position, so that, in the end, there would be a self, an abstract cogito, left to figure out the maelstrom. Again, however, when Baudrillard argues that one's deepest desire is to give one's desire to someone else, he is speaking somewhat like a Lacanian, for the big Other is precisely where one gives one's desire – and yet one in the same moment receives one's desire from the Other. When he elsewhere writes that the masses seek not amusement but fatal diversion, to increase their boredom in their seeking of salvation, ecstasy, and transcendence²⁵¹, one is again led to the dumping ground (as transcendence) at the heart of our situation.

In an era of hyper-information, there comes to lack a scene where the meaning of such information could be socially enacted, or, we might say, introjected. The scene becomes *obscene*, and the social and information feed each monstrously in a vicious cycle. Without referents and thus without the political idea of a “mandate”, that is, without Other(s), we live in an era of referenda and polls, wherein, I would add in pushing Baudrillard’s thought, we superficially and hyperrealistically construct meaning and referents together. Since we are, obviously, dealing with a simulated construction of opinion, the referents thereby created are at once all the more contingent (to be replaced by the next poll or referendum) and solidified (being the very pulse of the public): stupid positivity. It is in this sense that there is a “redundancy” of the social, in that there is a continuous voyeurism of the group in relation to itself, to see itself, “to watch its own temperature chart”, to become “confused with its own control screen”²⁵² – its GVCNS qua dumping ground. Real-time masks the Real of the Other, and thus Other(s).

In a world without referents, political reality is only saved through the merging of the reality principle to desire – the superego – for even this is less dangerous than unbridled simulation (which would otherwise push towards its “limit” qua lack of contingent symbolizations). As Mike Gane notes in his study, such systems of seduction are consummated in a perfectly closed system, and “It is this which induces a fascination, like that for a perfectly smooth body”, a body, immediately quoting Baudrillard himself, “without orifices, doubled and redoubled by a mirror, devoted to perverse auto-satisfaction”²⁵³.

Baudrillard notes the hygienic objective of the contemporary mass person. Going to gyms, waxing, screwing, socializing, etc., are all just so many ways of avoiding the fact that the modern person has become obsolescent, by virtue of, I would add, h/is central nervous system no longer being h/is own. Baudrillard asks “Why?” one bothers with the hygienic objective, to which he immediately replies “For no reason”²⁵⁴. I would interject here that there is a reason, an imperative one. When working out, when prattling on to one’s peer, (especially) when screwing (note, for instance, the online dating scene, the heart of the [empty] heart of the GVCNS), one is not so much doing so for one-self as for the GVCNS. Above all, it is the GVCNS which must be kept up, which is, by extension, the remainder of ourselves. In other words, it is not simply oneself whose image one wants to make complete, but the global order itself, for we are in a sense one and the same: one Gestalt overlays the other. The cybernetic discourse is obsessed with hygiene: is not the push towards

downloading one's consciousness into a computerized collective hive mind a rush to the cleanest aseptic environment imaginable, that is, devoid of bodily excess (the death drive)?

In a sense, the (anti-)big Other qua GVCNS is made visible, lit up on/as the control screen. Yet it is not, as a result, shown up for what it is, as imaginary, hyperreality. Instead, even while it is made visible it withdraws in a Heideggerian logic of *aletheia* – and it is perhaps all the more difficult to negotiate with for this reason. Imagine this scene: you are blindfolded, attacking a piñata as stand in for the classic big Other. Naturally it's invisible, and so you swing in the dark. Next, imagine that you take the blindfold off, but at the same time the earth loses sway so that you, and the piñata, start swinging in various directions. You can see the thing – the dumping ground is superegotistically *obscene* – but can't quite make it out through the swerving and dizziness. This is our situation.

The Liberal's Conservatism

This is also why contemporary “war”, which has become indistinguishable from “peace”, is a sort of “homeopathic violence” internal to the system²⁵⁵. As Baudrillard argues in *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, Americans can only combat an enemy in their own image. They cannot ‘imagine’ the (Real) Other, nor therefore personally make war upon it, and so they come to make war upon the *alterity of the Other* in an attempt to reduce and convert it²⁵⁶, to manage the Real. Only failing that will they annihilate their enemy (as with the genocide of the Natives). This is only logical, for to imagine the Other is, precisely, not of the dimension of the Imaginary, and, since America stands at the height of hyperreality we should not be surprised. Most importantly, America engages in war to assure itself it is not Nothing; the GVCNS engages itself in homeopathic violence to assure itself it “is” something, that it can still feel. (That is, that it isn't just a dumping ground.) Finding an enemy, and cleansing it in a “clean war” resembling a “medical” operation (nothing like cleaning up Saddam!), gives us a feeling that we actually are something beyond nothing. In Baudrillard's language, it gives us referents.

Yet what is so fascinating about the pious liberal humanism that reeks to high (annunciated) heaven in the halls of academia, airport lounges, and national radio, is that this referent-construction of the Other's nationalistic longings, for instance, does not translate into any meaningful identity for the liberal h/i/itself. On the contrary, the liberal's identity is constructed precisely around the exorcism/ex-position of the Other's referents, but is

therefore utterly dependant on the construction of such referents in the first place. This identity is a sort of dissimulation, a pretending one is not Nothing, that one “is” the act of denouncing the Other. One could see this denouncing as a sort of blanket wrapped around the void, a way of comforting a pathetic ego. This blanket is “cosmopolitanism”, a crypt-Other constructed through the exorcism of existing Others. There is nothing the liberal loves more than talking about ethnic cleansing. Such a love speaks to the fact that it’s really the former West doing the cleansing, that is, cleansing our GVCNS from its constructed threats²⁵⁷.

At the same time, there is a real fear that the Holocaust might be repeated, for the precise reason that it has not been mourned. In the act of denouncing, the liberal declares h/imself safe from any such repetition, for it is but the “Serbian... Hutu...” Other who repeats the horror. And rather than note the fascinating effect of any ethnic cleansing for the former West by virtue of its (fantastical) proximity to our un-introjected trauma of the Holocaust, the liberal equates such ethnic cleansing with “archaic passions”, as if here, where there is no archaism, that is to say no history, we could not possibly do such things. Indeed, the very lack of any history stems from our attempted distancing from the trauma of the Holocaust. But precisely to the extent that we do not mourn the horror of the Holocaust, there *is* a very real possibility of its reoccurrence. In certain ways it already has occurred: *everyone* knows about the atrocities aided and abetted by American extra-governmental agencies – what are they if not obscene superegotistical supplements satisfying our objectionable desires? How else could “reasonable” Americans allow such atrocities to continue (if not in their name, but superegotistical spirit)? The lines become blurred, however, at Abu Ghraib, for there the agents who officially act in the names of Americans, the military, become as superegotistical as the extra-governmental agencies, and record themselves as such...

The prattle of liberals guarantees the Nothingness of their positions, the big Other qua Nothing. And thus, as agent of the collective superego, the liberal never shuts up, for s/he can never stop exorcizing h/is place of enunciation in denouncing the Other; in so doing, the liberal justifies the stultifying nature of global order as it now stands. Herein lies the polemical edge to this discussion, for while the liberal claims to be on the side of the victim, s/he is in fact on the opposite side insofar as s/he refuses to address the Real of the Other, and thus the Real of h/imself, which is the only way for actual change – via Other(s)

– to occur. The liberal, while officially desiring change, in fact produces the opposite – at least the avowed “conservative” is more honest in h/is regressive tendencies²⁵⁸. All the liberal’s appeals to the “common values of humanity” are but a fantastic dissimulation; the last thing the liberal wants is Community. “Cosmopolitanism”, well, that’s alright, we can write about that says the liberal (that is, we can use it to procrastinate).

Baudrillard writes:

The [former] West’s mission is to make the world’s wealth of cultures interchangeable, and to subordinate them within the global order. Our culture, which is bereft of values, revenges itself upon the values of other cultures.

This isn’t quite right. The ultimate liberal goal is not simply to revenge itself, but to have those from other cultures do this themselves. It is not simply that we want to exorcize the values of other cultures: we want everyone to enjoy exorcizing their own values. This way we achieve a sort of justification for our own exorcisms, and everyone becomes identical in this global code of... cosmopolitanism, crypt-Other. Enjoy!

Chapter 6: Testimony of Other(s) & September 11th: a conclusion

On the one hand, the lack of a 'solid' big Other is in fact a positive thing, or rather, it is a positive thing insofar as it is no longer positive: it is positive in its very negativity, its very lack of 'solidified' being. The lost etiquette of modernity, for instance, is not something to be missed in itself. On the contrary, only now is testimony possible, given that it requires an acknowledgement of the (presup)positioning of the big Other. At the same time, of course, what postmodernity gives on the one hand it takes away on the other. We no longer (presup)pose a big Other beyond that of the dumping ground, in a desperate p®aying in and to the crypt-Other.

A kind of mourning is needed, one that would admit that the lost object cannot be (fully) appropriated, for the only thing possible is the *movement* of appropriation, the double bind movement of appropriation which must necessarily stop at the point of final appropriation, for the precise reason that a full appropriation would eliminate the receiving self. "Exappropriation" is this movement that recognizes the impossibility of final appropriation, but one that confronts this very impossibility and with it enters into an interminable negotiation²⁵⁹; this is equivalent to "mourning the impossibility of mourning", that is, testimony. For only then does the lost object become Other, that is, part of a new big Other. Without the second death of the object via symbolization, the big Other never changes, which concurrently means that we do not relate to Other(s), that is, there is no social fabric besides the very lack of a social fabric. Only through symbolization, through testimony, does the lost object leave its traces in the unconscious, thereby changing both it and one's place of enunciation, the way one relates to the world. For the moment we have decided to not relate to the world, precisely *because* of the vast horror of the Holocaust. We let our flesh and objects, which stupidly fill the gap of language, do our speaking for us.

As we have seen, one testifies in relation to the *objet petit a*, the medium of relations. When we exorcize our places of enunciation qua Other, the *objet petit a* becomes both part of the enunciated itself and also becomes more and more "alien" to us. On the one hand, objects can be seen as the enunciated, and this is one way of understanding how we relate through our objects. On the other hand the *objet petit a* increasingly becomes other-worldly in paranoid fantasies of CIA, alien, and Illuminati conspiracies. *Les extremes se touchent*; they are part of the same movement.

Testimony: Fiction and Technology

Testimony requires an *instant* in which to take place; you must give it in the present, and *be* self-present. You cannot substitute a technical copy, like a videotape, in your place: this is part of testimony's law. At the same time, however, another of testimony's structural determinants insists that if the testimony is to be true, it must be repeatable: what you say is true today must remain so tomorrow. In its repetition, its archivization, it is thus always already technical: the *instant* of the testimony becomes/is already *exemplary*.

If testimony is always already contaminated by the technical, it is also haunted by fiction. Obviously, what you testify must be what you believe to be true, yet it is nonetheless the case that it cannot be *the* truth, for that would imply testimony were nothing more than mere proof, evidence. At its limit testimony must be, rather, an appeal to an act of faith *beyond* any proof – here testimony and fiction find their common ground. Testimony, in order to be what it is, must allow itself to be haunted by fiction, to be “parasitized” by what it must nonetheless exclude.

Since every witnessing involves a subjective point of view and thus a singular relation to the Real, every testimony is in some sense ‘fictional’: we are not technical entities merely passively recording events. At the same time, and because of our activity in such witnessing and testifying, the Symbolic itself is created, haunted by fiction: Symbolic fiction. The Symbolic fiction of the big Other is both true and false, a – necessarily – believed ‘falsehood’.

As with testimony and the technical, the conditions of possibility of testimony (that it remain separate from fiction) are the very conditions of impossibility (in that it would become mere proof) – yet testimony takes place regardless, or, rather, in full regard, as “mourning the impossibility of mourning”. One *must* decide on the undecidable; how, Derrida elsewhere notes, could one decide on the decidable? Could such decisions be decisions, or are they rather the act of *not* deciding? If this question might begin to be answered by looking at our technocrat societies and their quasi-leaders, who are little more than conduits for channelling information garnered (and/or manufactured) by polls, it is precisely this that we should resist in the name of the irresolvable aporia, one that, in its irresolution, *gives* one to movement; to decide on and in the *undecidables*, to create Other(s) via Other(s). By contrast, the technocrat annexes the future into the present, feeding (the dream of) stasis. In this frenzy, a vicious circle ensues: as the technocrat anticipates the

future in a hyper fashion, in the hopes of being better able to manage it thus, the future becomes increasingly impossible to imagine outside of graphs and flow charts. There comes to be “no future”, as Johnny Rotten suggested over two decades ago, only a ceaseless present which continues to insist on itself and its ability to manage... everything. Naturally, the former West becomes anxious in the face of a future that, in its graphed and numbered visibility, has gone *invisible*, (henceforth) deathly feared. Escape from this condition through transcendence becomes desired, or, should that be blocked, Apocalypse.

What the technocrats deny is nothing if not testimony. As noted, testimony involves the potentially fictional, anathema to those desiring to only decide on the decidable (that is, to *not* decide). Testimony also involves the technical, though what our culture has managed is to place a belief, a faith, in the technical as a sort of panacea for the world's ills (‘caused’, to a large extent, *by* this faith). In fear of the Real, we have testified to the value of the technical, at the price of testifying (impossibly) against testimony – though it is only through this testifying, this appeal to a leap of faith into the technical, that we retain our humanity, and our supposed subjugation of the technical.

Earlier we asked how the testimony of a Holocaust survivor could be accepted when one has said that symbolizing the Holocaust is a form of Holocaust denial. A reader familiar with the Holocaust industry's discourse would have noted that what the Holocaust survivors perform in their testimonies, according to the industry, is a ‘sharing of silence’. Again, what the Holocaust industry, along with so many others in the society of the crypt-Other, is Really afraid of is the Real of the Other, of the testimony of their singular subjective point of view, so that the testimony of the Holocaust survivor, qua only being a sharing of silence, is reduced to the level of the technical. A more unethical manoeuvre one could not imagine: not only does this foreclose the possibility of the survivors' testimony, it prevents any Symbolic fiction, any big Other from arising. Since the Holocaust has become the particular absolute, *the* trauma of our times, the demise of symbolic efficiency should not come as a surprise. Indeed, we ‘will’ it, p@y for it.

September 11th

Global terrorism is but the flipside, the perfect reverse, of global power. Baudrillard writes of the necessity of an “almost automatic reversal of [the global system’s] puissance... and terrorism is the shockwave of this silent reversal”²⁶⁰. To the survivalist ethos of the former West “terrorism is an act that reintroduces an irreducible singularity in a generalized exchange system”²⁶¹. This situation perfectly obeys the Lacanian model of communication, that one receives from the other one’s own position in reverse form. This is why terrorism seems so abhorrent, beyond understanding: it is but our reverse, and for that reason supremely uncanny. Is there not, behind all our denunciations, a sort of secret fascination that someone would be willing to die for a Cause – do we not secretly wish to have such a Cause?

And yet, Baudrillard has implicitly hit the nail on the head when he notes terrorism’s merely *silent* reversal: there is, obviously, no testimony here. One’s own death is the absolute mark of one’s singularity; suicide, while the ultimate assumption of one’s place of enunciation, is paradoxically not open to the Other, even while its act is somehow – sacrificially – for the Other. The terrorist only assumes his place of enunciation so as to sacrifice it, whereas those in the former West only assume their place of enunciation to exorcize it. Terrorism’s symbolic impact is in its uncanniness, the way it “challenges the system by a gift that the latter can reciprocate only through its own death and collapse”²⁶². The former West relates to the Other by not relating, in exorcizing one’s place of enunciation, thus partaking in a survivalist ethos. Terrorism, as the absolute reverse, relates to the Other by sacrificing one’s very life. In this shuttling back from one to the Other, there is no relation here between Other(s), no openness to the Other’s iterability through testimony, to death *between* others: on both sides of the equation, in secret complicity, the Other is thus assumed in a static form.

One of the more arresting images from September 11th was of relatives of the departed roaming the streets with photos of their departed in hand or attached to their bodies, in the apparent purpose of hoping someone might have seen them. This was, of course, a rather non-sensical gesture, given that the only reason that their lost relatives might not immediately make contact if they had survived would have been that they were suffering from amnesia. But what was non-sensical from an economic or ‘realistic’ point of view was understandable in the terms of the above discussion. Lacking any remains of the deceased

they could not properly grieve; they could only incorporate. Or rather: given the general shunning of symbolization they could not mourn, a situation only compounded by the lack of any bodily remains.

The remains, wherever they were, were clearly in pieces. The images attached to their own bodies, or in hand, were complete images, the other side of the Gestalt. But to the extent they went out, day after day, in this compulsively repeated quest, they avoided the body-in-pieces, and more precisely avoided the shift of perspective of the Symbolic death drive that would have allowed them to mourn. Alternatively, the general shunning of symbolization forced them into the position of being unable to Realize the shift of perspective.

And then, of course, were all the tourists, the trauma-tourists, that came trampling into the city over the next few years. In a poster attached to a fence “Firegirl” wrote, on September 17th 2001:

All of you taking photos

I wonder if you really see whats here
Or if you're so concerned with getting that
Perfect shot that you've forgotten this is a tragedy
Site, not a tourist attraction. As I continually
Had to move “out of someone's way” as they carefully
Tried to frame this place mourning, I kept wondering
What makes us think we can capture the pain, the loss,
the pride, and the confusion – this complexity – into a 4 x 5 glossy.

I (Heart) my city

-Firegirl, NYC. 09.17.01

Just as the relatives of the departed could not mourn the loss, neither could we – and neither can we. We move out of each other's way so as to frame reality, that is, to not “Really see what's there”. In the Real of the trauma we confront the gap of language in its very inability to completely symbolize the trauma, but as such giving the very impetus *to* symbolize. In the gap we also find the Real of ourselves and the Other, and so it is this which must be avoided: we symbolize only so as to not have to symbolize, we get out of each other's way for the sake of the Gestalt.

In closing, let us again, for the last time, quote Zizek:

In other words, our engagement, our commitment to the other and the other's engagement towards us, make sense only against the background of this absolute unknowableness: in so far as the other is perfectly known and disclosed, there is no sense in committing him to an action – what we encounter here is the ‘agnostic’ foundation of language qua the order of symbolic engagement. The word given engages precisely because there is no factual guarantee that it will be kept²⁶³.

Thankfully, try as we might, the other will never be “perfectly known and disclosed”, but will always partake in some way of the Real. In these times, it is that “some way” that we must aid and abet, with and through Other(s). Against the ‘incontestable’, we must testify.

-
- ¹ Slavoj Žižek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 332.
- ² Slavoj Žižek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 332.
- ³ Slavoj Žižek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 332.
- ⁴ Slavoj Žižek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 332.
- ⁵ Slavoj Žižek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 332.
- ⁶ Slavoj Žižek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 295.
- ⁷ Slavoj Žižek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 295.
- ⁸ Slavoj Žižek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 295.
- ⁹ Boothby, Richard. *Death & Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1991): 124.
- ¹⁰ Julia Kristeva. *Powers of horror : an essay on abjection*. (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1982).
- ¹¹ Slavoj Žižek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002).
- ¹² Dylan Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ¹³ Dylan Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ¹⁴ Dylan Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ¹⁵ Boothby, Richard. *Death & Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1991).
- ¹⁶ There remains some ambiguity as to how the Imaginary takes hold. There are two possible related theoretical conjectures to make here. The first is that the experience of the body-in-pieces is a retroactive effect, in that it is only once one sees one's image reflected in a mirror that one retroactively sees one's previous body-image(s) as fragmented. In one's future life, when one is not looking in a mirror one would have a certain kind of dissociation from one's body, even though one will have built up both an *ideal ego* and *ego ideal* to manage such dissociation. Such dissociation would be momentarily dispelled every time one looks in a mirror. In this tension between the mirror image, the fragmented body, and the mediations of the *ideal ego* and *ego ideal*, aggression as a result of alienation would be fostered. The second gesture is to note that the "body-in-pieces" comes about only with the e/a/f effect of the Symbolic. In hearing one's parents speak, one is made "aware" – to the extent this term applies to infants – of one's incapacity to communicate, and thus to exist on the same plane or dimension as one's parents. Because of the felt effects of the speech of one's parents, the infant seeks a way to language, and the path goes through the Imaginary. The result of this is alienation, and thus aggression, because of the Imaginary itself. This, it would seem to me, is the only way to make sense of Lacan's suggestion that the Imaginary is alienating. Moreover, it gives a certain primacy to the Symbolic, transmitted from generation to generation in the act of speech.
- ¹⁷ Arguably, Lacan himself acknowledged this:
- For the total form of his body, by which the subject anticipates the maturation of his power in a mirage, is given to him only as a gestalt, that is, in an exteriority in which, to be sure, this form is more constitutive than constituted, but in which, above all, it appears to him as the contour of his stature that freezes it and in a symmetry that reverses it, in opposition to the turbulent movements with which the subject feels he animates it. *Écrits*: 4.
- Make of this torturous sentence what you like.
- ¹⁸ Boothby, Richard. *Death & Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1991): 115
- ¹⁹ Lacan in Boothby, Richard. *Death & Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1991): 118
- ²⁰ Slavoj Žižek. *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity*. (Massachusetts: MIT, 2003): 69.

-
- ²¹ Slavoj Žižek. *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity*. (Massachusetts: MIT, 2003): 77.
- ²² Slavoj Žižek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 295.
- ²³ Slavoj Žižek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002): xvi.
- ²⁴ Slavoj Žižek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002)
- ²⁵ Slavoj Žižek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002)
- ²⁶ Slavoj Žižek and Glyn Daly. *Conversations with Žižek*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004)
- ²⁷ Dylan Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996)
- ²⁸ Slavoj Žižek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002)
- ²⁹ Slavoj Žižek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002).
- ³⁰ Dylan Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ³¹ Dylan Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ³² Lacan, in Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ³³ Dylan Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ³⁴ Dylan Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ³⁵ Slavoj Žižek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002): 102
- ³⁶ Dylan Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996)
- ³⁷ Lacan, in Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ³⁸ Dylan Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ³⁹ Slavoj Žižek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002).
- ⁴⁰ Dylan Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ⁴¹ Lacan, in Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ⁴² of gramma spivak
- ⁴³ Lacan, in Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996)
- ⁴⁴ Slavoj Žižek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000).
- ⁴⁵ Dylan Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ⁴⁶ Dylan Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ⁴⁷ Dylan Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ⁴⁸ Lacan, in Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996): 60.
- ⁴⁹ Boothby, Richard. *Death & Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1991): 28.

- ⁵⁰ Haptic cinema allows for testimony on two levels: the first is the obvious one of denying any mastery of the gaze, thus calling for the viewer's participation/testimony; the second, deeper yet entirely related, one, results from the violation of the proto-fantasy of the scopic gaze, thus enabling the death drive, the call for testimony.
- ⁵¹ Stuart Schneiderman. *Jacques Lacan: The Death of an Intellectual Hero*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983): 146-7.
- ⁵² Stuart Schneiderman. *Jacques Lacan: The Death of an Intellectual Hero*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983): 147.
- ⁵³ *ibid*
- ⁵⁴ Stuart Schneiderman. *Jacques Lacan: The Death of an Intellectual Hero*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983).
- ⁵⁵ Stuart Schneiderman. *Jacques Lacan: The Death of an Intellectual Hero*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983): 147.
- ⁵⁶ Dylan Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ⁵⁷ Jacques Lacan. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques Alain-Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan. (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981).
- ⁵⁸ Jacques Lacan. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques Alain-Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan. (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981).
- ⁵⁹ Jacques Lacan. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques Alain-Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan. (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981).
- ⁶⁰ Mestatses 72-3
- ⁶¹ Dylan Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ⁶² Slavoj Zizek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002):208
- ⁶³ *ibid*
- ⁶⁴ Slavoj Zizek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002): 209
- ⁶⁵ Slavoj Zizek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002): 238
- ⁶⁶ Slavoj Zizek. *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?*. (London and New York: Verso, 2001).
- ⁶⁸ Slavoj Zizek with Glyn Daly. *Conversations with Zizek*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004).
- ⁶⁹ Lacan, in Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ⁷⁰ *ibid*
- ⁷¹ Slavoj Zizek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 389.
- ⁷² Slavoj Zizek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 390.
- ⁷³ Slavoj Zizek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000).
- ⁷⁴ Boothby, Richard. *Death & Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1991): 90.
- ⁷⁵ Boothby, Richard. *Death & Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1991): 181.
- ⁷⁶ Boothby, Richard. *Death & Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1991): 180.
- ⁷⁷ Boothby, Richard. *Death & Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1991): 181.
- ⁷⁸ Boothby, Richard. *Death & Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1991): 182.
- ⁷⁹ Boothby, Richard. *Death & Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1991): 183.
- ⁸⁰ In Michael Moore's recent film *Fahrenheit 9/11* this point is brought out well. It shows army recruiting officers at work, intentionally going to 'down-and-out' areas looking to recruit those with few opportunities for rewarding careers.

- ⁸¹ Slavoj Zizek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 368, emphasis his.
- ⁸² Slavoj Zizek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 371.
- ⁸³ Slavoj Zizek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 372.
- ⁸⁴ Slavoj Zizek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 372.
- ⁸⁵ Boothby, Richard. *Death & Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1991): 178.
- ⁸⁶ *ibid*
- ⁸⁷ Lacan in Boothby, Richard. *Death & Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1991): 136.
- ⁸⁸ Slavoj Zizek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002): 206.
- ⁸⁹ *ibid*
- ⁹⁰ Slavoj Zizek. *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and out*, revised ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 2001): 43.
- ⁹¹ Slavoj Zizek. *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and out*, revised ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 2001).
- ⁹² Dylan Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ⁹³ *ibid*
- ⁹⁴ *ibid*
- ⁹⁵ *ibid*
- ⁹⁶ Lacan, in Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ⁹⁷ A provisional argument could here be made: hysteria is the condition of being unable to negotiate with one's *desire qua* Other in/of one's unconscious. The problem for the female hysterics that gave birth to psychoanalysis in Freud's office was, precisely, this inability to enter into such discourse.
- ⁹⁸ Slavoj Zizek. *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?*. (London and New York: Verso, 2001): 165.
- ⁹⁹ When the big Other has gone cryptic, the flesh itself is what must be shown, hence the logic of these same confessionals often involving the women flashing skin, usually breasts. The Florida Spring Break phenomenon surrounds young girls exposing their breasts, which is but a fantastic exposure of the flesh-cryptic phallus. The guys, the "lads", surround and simply and stupidly chant: "show us your tits, show us your tits!". The exposed "tits" are an exposed – stupidly positive – phallus, clearly demonstrating how the phallus is in question, although to the extent the girls show their tits they *are* the phallus, and to the extent the guys' chants create this effect they *have* it. Yet in its very obscene exposure all the chants, in fact, could be seen as a desperation for phallus for boys who refuse to become men, all the lads and chest(-let-alone-genital)-waxers of the world, that is, those that refuse to say "I am a man" (and thus relating to the Symbolic phallus). Instead they simply want to see tits, to fantasize sucking on them in a harking back to the oral stage: incorporation.
- ¹⁰⁰ Slavoj Zizek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 361, emphasis his.
- ¹⁰¹ Slavoj Zizek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 362.
- ¹⁰² Suzanne Barnard. . "Tongues of Angels: Feminine Structure and Other Jouissance", in *Reading Seminar XX*, ed. Barnard, Suzanne, and Bruce Fink. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).
- ¹⁰³ Suzanne Barnard. "Introduction", n *Reading Seminar XX*, ed. Barnard, Suzanne, and Bruce Fink. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).
- ¹⁰⁴ Suzanne Barnard. . "Tongues of Angels: Feminine Structure and Other Jouissance", in *Reading Seminar XX*, ed. Barnard, Suzanne, and Bruce Fink. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).
- ¹⁰⁵ Dylan Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ¹⁰⁶ *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Bruce Fink. (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002).
- ¹⁰⁷ *ibid*

- ¹⁰⁸ Slavoj Zizek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002)
- ¹⁰⁹ Slavoj Zizek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002): 134
- ¹¹⁰ *ibid.*: 139-40
- ¹¹¹ Slavoj Zizek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002)
- ¹¹² Slavoj Zizek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002)
- ¹¹³ Slavoj Zizek. *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and out*, revised ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 2001).
- ¹¹⁴ *ibid.*
- ¹¹⁵ That is, he does not simply (presup)pose as he is sometimes thought to do. Indeed, Lacan's play on *maitre* and *m'etre* itself links the discourse of the master with philosophy and ontology.
- ¹¹⁶ *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Bruce Fink. (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002): 50
- ¹¹⁷ Slavoj Zizek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002)
- ¹¹⁸ Boothby, Richard. *Death & Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1991): 164, my emphasis.
- ¹¹⁹ *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Bruce Fink. (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002): 40.
- ¹²⁰ Lacan, in Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ¹²¹ *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Bruce Fink. (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002): 40.
- ¹²² Dylan Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ¹²³ Lacan, in Evans. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge 1996).
- ¹²⁴ *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Bruce Fink. (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002): 84
- ¹²⁵ *ibid.*: 85
- ¹²⁶ Suzanne Barnard. . "Tongues of Angels: Feminine Structure and Other Jouissance", in *Reading Seminar XX*, ed. Barnard, Suzanne, and Bruce Fink. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).
- ¹²⁷ This obviously differs from Zizek's formulation of the *objet petit a* being the place of enunciation qua "in h/im more than h/imself"¹²⁷, but it is not at all foreign to his theory. The ultimate effect of my understanding is simply to say that this "more than himself" is constitutive of and correlative to the (barred) subject in the first place, a formulation to which Zizek would surely concur.
- ¹²⁸ Slavoj Zizek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002): 143.
- ¹²⁹ Slavoj Zizek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 157.
- ¹³⁰ Slavoj Zizek with Glyn Daly. *Conversations with Zizek*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004): 4.
- ¹³¹ *ibid.*
- ¹³² *ibid.*: 5.
- ¹³³ Slavoj Zizek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002): 25.
- ¹³⁴ Lacan, in Boothby, Richard. *Death & Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1991): 221.
- ¹³⁵ Lacan, in Boothby, Richard. *Death & Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1991): 221.
- ¹³⁶ Indeed, their very lack of naming themselves at this point is indicative of the following observations.
- ¹³⁷ Slavoj Zizek. *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and out*, revised ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 2001).
- ¹³⁸ Slavoj Zizek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002).

- ¹³⁹ Slavoj Žižek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002): xii.
- ¹⁴⁰ Slavoj Žižek. *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?*. (London and New York: Verso, 2001): 67
- ¹⁴¹ *ibid*
- ¹⁴² "Signature Event Context", in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).
- ¹⁴³ Slavoj Žižek. *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity*. (Massachusetts: MIT, 2003): 99.
- ¹⁴⁴ Part of the argument for the voluminous Industry, of course, is that people are forgetting the Holocaust. Let's (pre)suppose this to be true, even though how one can make an argument either way is somewhat mysterious (how to quantify memory-loss, and relative to what?). Perhaps the reason people "forget" is because it hasn't been fully symbolized, thereby failing, and thereby giving rise to more symbolizations, that is, testimony! By pretending one's testimony to be effectuated in its very delivery, to *declare*, is to refuse the countersignatures of the audience. For the audience this is a profoundly alienating, even oppressive, experience. This is especially true for the younger generations, who are effectively saying: "Get your symbolic network off my back!" – and this, of course, is the truth of their "apathy" (which isn't really apathy at all but a yearning for testimony).
- ¹⁴⁵ Norman Finkelstein. *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 45-47.
- ¹⁴⁶ Agamben, Giorgio. *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*. (New York: Zone Books, 1999): 33.
- ¹⁴⁷ Agamben, Giorgio. *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*. (New York: Zone Books, 1999): 157.
- ¹⁴⁸ Norman Finkelstein. *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 47
- ¹⁴⁹ *ibid*
- ¹⁵⁰ Norman Finkelstein. *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Verso, 2000)
- ¹⁵¹ Norman Finkelstein. *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Verso, 2000)
- ¹⁵² Hartman, in Ballengee, Jennifer. "Witnessing Video Testimony: An Interview with Geoffrey Hartman", in *The Yale Journal of Criticism* vol. 14 no. 1 (2001): 7.
- ¹⁵³ Norman Finkelstein. *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 145
- ¹⁵⁴ Agamben, Giorgio. *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*. (New York: Zone Books, 1999): 72
- ¹⁵⁵ Agamben, Giorgio. *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*. (New York: Zone Books, 1999).
- ¹⁵⁶ Hartman, in Ballengee, Jennifer. "Witnessing Video Testimony: An Interview with Geoffrey Hartman", in *The Yale Journal of Criticism* vol. 14 no. 1 (2001): 5
- ¹⁵⁷ Slavoj Žižek. *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?*. (London and New York: Verso, 2001).
- ¹⁵⁸ Slavoj Žižek with Glyn Daly. *Conversations with Žižek*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004).
- ¹⁵⁹ Slavoj Žižek. *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and out*, revised ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 2001).
- ¹⁶⁰ Jodey Castricano. *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida's Ghost Writing*. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001): 9.
- ¹⁶¹ Jodey Castricano. *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida's Ghost Writing*. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001): 23.
- ¹⁶² Abraham, Nicholas, and Maria Torok. *The Shell and the Kernel*, ed. & trans. Nicholas Rand. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
- ¹⁶³ Abraham, Nicholas, and Maria Torok. *The Shell and the Kernel*, ed. & trans. Nicholas Rand. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
- ¹⁶⁴ Slavoj Žižek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000).
- ¹⁶⁵ Slavoj Žižek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. (London and New York: Verso, 2000): 327
- ¹⁶⁶ This, by the way, was and is the precondition for all the discourses swirling around the synchronic nature of that-thing-called-postmodernity. Once the distinction between the dynamic/constitutive repression of the unconscious and the preservative repression of the crypt is understood, one can begin to ask questions about post-Holocaust culture. For instance, is it possible that the stated intention of the 1960s, to liberate repressed desires, was partly an attempt

to make the incorporated trauma of the Holocaust one rather prohibited/repressed, and thus more open to symbolization? If so, of course, this "liberation" was entirely misplaced; instead of trying to mourn the trauma of the Holocaust it went on about sexual liberation, as if, as many have noted in different contexts, it was Daddy's "No!" that stood in the way of symbolic desire. In this sense, the sixties were merely a fantastical dissimulation of the still encrypted trauma, the Holocaust. This explains the obvious failure of such "liberation", the way in which those so committed to their faux-Cause seemingly overnight morphed into individuals ignorant of just what they were up to. Perhaps, even, we might ask if we only became less repressed because of the endocryptic identifications spawned by the failure/refusal to symbolize the Holocaust? The main justification for non-monogamous relationships and sexual experimentation within the student groups was that sex was the most intimate experience; essentially they took "lots of sex with many different people" to mean that they could get over the Real of sexual difference, and thus "be at one" communally. What they didn't realize, of course, was that it is the Real itself which is the most intimate (if extimate) human experience.

¹⁶⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "Fors", dans *Le Verbiere de L'Homme aux Loups*, de Nicholas Abraham et Maria Torok. (Paris: Aubier Flammarion, 1976).

¹⁶⁸ *ibid*

¹⁶⁹ Jodey Castricano. *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida's Ghost Writing*. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001): 9.

¹⁷⁰ Sigmund Freud. *On sexuality : three essays on the theory of sexuality and other works*. (New York: Penguin, 1991): 64.

¹⁷¹ Suzanne Barnard. "Tongues of Angels: Feminine Structure and Other Jouissance", in *Reading Seminar XX*, ed. Barnard, Suzanne, and Bruce Fink. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).

¹⁷² Slavoj Zizek. "The Real of Sexual Difference", in *Reading Seminar XX*, ed. Barnard, Suzanne, and Bruce Fink. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).

¹⁷³ Slavoj Zizek with Glyn Daly. *Conversations with Zizek*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004).

¹⁷⁴ *ibid*

¹⁷⁵ Slavoj Zizek, *Metastases Of Enjoyment*. London and New York, 1996.

¹⁷⁶ Slavoj Zizek. *Metastases Of Enjoyment*. London and New York, 1996.

¹⁷⁷ Jean Baudrillard. "The Despair of Having Everything", in *Le Monde* (November 2002)

¹⁷⁸ Rebecca Comay. "Perverse History: Fetishism and Dialectic in Walter Benjamin", in *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. 29 (1999), n.p.

¹⁷⁹ Rebecca Comay. "Perverse History: Fetishism and Dialectic in Walter Benjamin", in *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. 29 (1999), n.p.

¹⁸⁰ Rebecca Comay. "Perverse History: Fetishism and Dialectic in Walter Benjamin", in *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. 29 (1999), n.p.

¹⁸¹ Slavoj Zizek. *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?*. (London and New York: Verso, 2001).

¹⁸² Jacques Derrida. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz.. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

¹⁸³ Slavoj Zizek. *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?*. (London and New York: Verso, 2001).

¹⁸⁴ Slavoj Zizek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002).

¹⁸⁵ Judith Butler. *The Psychic Life of power : theories in subjection*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

¹⁸⁶ *ibid*

¹⁸⁷ Stuart Schneiderman. *Jacques Lacan: The Death of an Intellectual Hero*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983): 149

¹⁸⁸ Stuart Schneiderman. *Jacques Lacan: The Death of an Intellectual Hero*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983): 150

¹⁸⁹ Stuart Schneiderman. *Jacques Lacan: The Death of an Intellectual Hero*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983): 151

¹⁹⁰ Stuart Schneiderman. *Jacques Lacan: The Death of an Intellectual Hero*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983): 152

¹⁹¹ Glyn Daly, in Zizek, Slavoj and Glyn Daly. *Conversations with Zizek*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004): 14.

¹⁹² Jacques Derrida. *Specters of Marx: the state of the debt, the work of mourning, and the New International*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1994).

¹⁹³ Jacques Derrida. *Specters of Marx: the state of the debt, the work of mourning, and the New International*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1994): 20.

- ¹⁹⁴ Stuart Schneiderman. *Jacques Lacan: The Death of an Intellectual Hero*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983): 154
- ¹⁹⁵ Stuart Schneiderman. *Jacques Lacan: The Death of an Intellectual Hero*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983): 154
- ¹⁹⁶ Jacques Derrida. *Specters of Marx: the state of the debt, the work of mourning, and the New International*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1994): 7.
- ¹⁹⁷ Jacques Derrida. *Specters of Marx: the state of the debt, the work of mourning, and the New International*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1994): 10.
- ¹⁹⁸ Jacques Derrida. *Specters of Marx: the state of the debt, the work of mourning, and the New International*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1994): 16.
- ¹⁹⁹ Jacques Derrida. *Specters of Marx: the state of the debt, the work of mourning, and the New International*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1994): 16.
- ²⁰⁰ Jacques Derrida. *Specters of Marx: the state of the debt, the work of mourning, and the New International*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1994): 30.
- ²⁰¹ Emmanuel Levinas. "Enigma and Phenomenon", in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan Peperzak et al. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996): 68.
- ²⁰² Emmanuel Levinas. "Enigma and Phenomenon", in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan Peperzak et al. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996).
- ²⁰³ Emmanuel Levinas. "Enigma and Phenomenon", in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan Peperzak et al. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996): 74.
- ²⁰⁴ Emmanuel Levinas. "Enigma and Phenomenon", in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan Peperzak et al. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996): 75.
- ²⁰⁵ Simon Critchley. "The Original Traumatism: Levinas and Psychoanalysis", in *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity*. (London and New York: Verso, 1999): 186.
- ²⁰⁶ Simon Critchley. "The Original Traumatism: Levinas and Psychoanalysis", in *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity*. (London and New York: Verso, 1999): 190.
- ²⁰⁷ Simon Critchley. "The Original Traumatism: Levinas and Psychoanalysis", in *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity*. (London and New York: Verso, 1999): 195.
- ²⁰⁸ Simon Critchley. "Das Ding: Lacan and Levinas", in *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity*. (London and New York: Verso, 1999).
- ²⁰⁹ Simon Critchley. "Das Ding: Lacan and Levinas", in *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity*. (London and New York: Verso, 1999): 200.
- ²¹⁰ It should be noted that Levinas in fact argues that this mystical notion of the Other is more by way of Martin Buber than himself. I would argue that Levinas' reading of Buber is perhaps only an uncanny effect of seeing his own philosophy in an other's, thereby leading to his failed attempt to distance himself from it.
- ²¹¹ Comay, Rebecca. "Perverse History: Fetishism and Dialectic in Walter Benjamin", in *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. 29 (1999), n.p.
- ²¹² Comay, Rebecca. "Perverse History: Fetishism and Dialectic in Walter Benjamin", in *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. 29 (1999), n.p.
- ²¹³ Comay, Rebecca. "Perverse History: Fetishism and Dialectic in Walter Benjamin", in *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. 29 (1999), n.p.
- ²¹⁴ Slavoj Zizek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002).
- ²¹⁵ Slavoj Zizek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002): 237.
- ²¹⁶ *ibid.* 241
- ²¹⁷ Frederic Jameson. "The End of Temporality", in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 29 no. 3 (Summer 2003).
- ²¹⁸ Stuart Schneiderman. *Jacques Lacan: The Death of an Intellectual Hero*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983).
- ²¹⁹ As an aside, this is perhaps another reason for the smoking bans across the world; are not smokers more aware of time and temporization than non-smokers, in that they have the ability to measure time according to the speed of their smoking? And does not time seem to stop for them in their hyper-reflectivity in the exhale of their smoke? To burn, to mourn – this cannot be allowed. It must be regulated.
- ²²⁰ Glyn Daly, in Zizek, Slavoj and Glyn Daly. *Conversations with Zizek*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004).
- ²²¹ One might retort that the lack of aliens in the film was not Kubrick's and Clarke's intention, since they did sketch various drawings, wherein the ostensible reason for not including the aliens in the film was financial and

technical. As should be obvious at this point in time, however, the study of film concerns not intention but results.

²²² Jacques Derrida. "Plato's Pharmacy", in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

²²³ Slavoj Žižek. *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and out*, revised ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 2001).

²²⁴ *ibid*

²²⁵ Marshall McLuhan. . *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

²²⁶ Marshall McLuhan. . *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

²²⁷ Counter-environments continue to be actively engaged with and created in the McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology at the University of Toronto.

²²⁸ Which means that Africa, for instance, becomes abject by virtue of its being outside the GVCNS, its being outside the crypt-fantasy of real-time. As outside, it becomes a constant threat, but of a surreal 'what the hell is this?' sort of way.

²²⁹ Marshall McLuhan. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

²³⁰ *ibid*

²³¹ In *Understanding Media* he writes that since our individual CNS' are now outside us, our private and corporate lives have become information processes. In a fundamental sense, he is right, for our CNS's have been outered through global media networks. Our CNS' have been made digital in the GVCNS, a fact most obviously brought home in *The Matrix*. McLuhan, for his part, desires a way out through God, whereas most cyberneticians would be happy to take things to the limit, to download our consciousness' into a "technological collective hive mind" that could then spread outward into the universe (as with the prattle of Hans Moravec, for instance). While McLuhan seems to be leaning in this direction – and to a large extent he spawned it – he also tended to view computers and electric technology as somehow subservient. As he says, while computers seem to think in their simulation of consciousness, a conscious computer would still be an externalization of our consciousness and thus would be subservient like a dummy is to a ventriloquist. How this could be so when one has equated human consciousness to technology is a bit of a mystery, but this is not so far off from the cyberneticians themselves, who in the final analysis *choose* to download their consciousness into a computer. Ultimately the cybernetician forgets h/is place of enunciation. McLuhan, on the other hand, tries to appropriate it by linking it up with God, and, in believing himself capable of "programming" our sense ratios, is playing God. The difference, ever slight, between the cyberneticians of today and McLuhan is that the latter was just more overt in his belief that computers were mere dummies to human thought. McLuhan was, then, more open about his place of enunciation, and a critique of McLuhan becomes one of cybernetics.

²³² Marshall McLuhan. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

²³³ *Ibid*

²³⁵ Marshall McLuhan. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1964): 105-6, emphasis his.

²³⁶ Jean Baudrillard. "Simulacra and Simulations", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): 187.

²³⁷ Jean Baudrillard. "For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): 94.

²³⁸ Jean Baudrillard. "The Perfect Crime", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): 269.

²³⁹ Jean Baudrillard. "The Perfect Crime", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): 270.

²⁴⁰ Jean Baudrillard. "Symbolic Exchange and Death", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): 163.

²⁴¹ Jean Baudrillard. "System of Objects", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): 22-3.

²⁴² Jean Baudrillard. "System of Objects", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): 22-3.

²⁴³ Jean Baudrillard. "System of Objects", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): 28.

²⁴⁴ Jean Baudrillard. "System of Objects", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): 16-21.

²⁴⁵ Jean Baudrillard. "System of Objects", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): 51-2.

²⁴⁶ Moreover, we can understand – in a non-religious sense – Other(s) to be fundamentally related to the belief in Jesus Christ, that is, belief in the Holy Spirit, the community of believers. Without this Christian experience there could be no Other(s), no testimony. That is, only in Christianity is God made weak – "Father, why hast thou forsaken me?", and thus the only non-religious religion is Christianity. One can only be agnostic through the Christian experience.

²⁴⁷ Jean Baudrillard. "For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

²⁴⁸ Jean Baudrillard. "Symbolic Exchange and Death", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): 125.

²⁴⁹ Jean Baudrillard. *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

²⁵⁰ Jean Baudrillard. *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

²⁵¹ Jean Baudrillard. "Fatal Strategies", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

²⁵² Jean Baudrillard. "The Masses", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): 213.

²⁵³ Baudrillard, in Gane, Mike. *Baudrillard: Critical and Fatal Theory*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1991): 215.

²⁵⁴ Jean Baudrillard. "Cool Memories", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): 226.

²⁵⁵ Jean Baudrillard. "Paroxysm", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): 284.

²⁵⁶ Jean Baudrillard. "The Gulf War Did Not Take Place", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

²⁵⁷ While the Serbs are the ones demonized as the nationalistic cleansers, such a demonization was in large part abetted by the Croatian government's hiring of a New York PR firm at the beginning of the conflict to promote just such a message. The West, desiring an enemy, was fed, and, to the credit of the Croatians, they were smart enough to realize this desire.

²⁵⁸ Recent Serbian presidential elections three times failed to get over 50% of the electorate out to vote, until the last one which did finally elect someone. Each time, the leading vote-getter was a nationalist candidate, and this is triumphantly hailed by Western liberals as proof that Serbs haven't changed (as demons, qua evil, musn't). What liberals refuse to acknowledge is that the Serbian electorate's apathy is nothing but a reflection of our own, and that, ultimately, the Serbs are just all the more radical for taking the logic of our *political* system to its "limit" (whether or not there is a limit, besides the planet itself, to hyperreal capitalism is another question). Most anarchists probably wouldn't recognize it, but the Serbs today are living in what may be the most anarchistic society since the Spanish Civil War. Perhaps this is because, as the demonized referent of the GVCNS, they implicitly understand the logic of creating so as to exorcize the Other, and as a result see our pious humanism for what it is. And they want no part of it, that is, they want nothing to do with the imposition of (Western-controlled) puppet leaders onto their political scene. That the nationalist candidates did relatively well is of course a result of the fact that their supporters will always vote regardless, but also because they serve as a protest vote to the West. Voting for a nationalist, even when one is "really" a leftist, is a way of saying to the West: "You want it, you got it, get the hell out of here". Of course, the liberal is as a result all the more likely to stick around, and this is why the more radical Serbian position is to simply not vote at all.

The "apathetic" Serbian public is Baudrillard's theory of the masses, resisting as objects to the West's demand for them to be (liberal) subjects – and acting like subjects in deposing of Milosevic when they had been cast as Milosevic's pliant objects! Granted, resisting as objects is not a very *enlightened* form of resistance, but the Serbian public is in no position, at this point, to determine their fate. Only Americans are, but instead of acknowledging their profound freedom they (reverse?) dump it away. Americans will do anything to avoid the truth of their situation, such as in constructing neat OPas, like aliens, with which they can quasi-identify, and of which the US government is supposedly keeping the truth from them. Conveniently, this situation creates a big O that robs them of their enjoyment, keeping the space of their desire open, and avoiding the fact that their government knows Nothing, and "is" Nothing, but a dumping ground at the centre of aSP. If they were to acknowledge this, they would immediately be aghast at what is done in their name and promptly start a

Revolution. Instead they drum up the old ghost-referents of their previous Revolution, and pretend like their government is beyond their control. The more they do this, of course, the more their government really does become beyond their control. Perhaps the rest of the world should take it upon themselves to follow the Serbian example, while Americans should do the opposite. From the Serbs, the truth of theSP; from the Americans, testimony – qua a sort of revolution.

²⁵⁹ Jacques Derrida. *Echographies of Television: filmed interviews*. (New York: Polity Press, 2002).

²⁶⁰ Jean Baudrillard. "The Despair of Having Everything", in *Le Monde* (November 2002)

²⁶¹ Jean Baudrillard. "The Despair of Having Everything", in *Le Monde* (November 2002)

²⁶² Jean Baudrillard. "The Despair of Having Everything", in *Le Monde* (November 2002)

²⁶³ Slavoj Žižek. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. (London and New York: Verso, 2002): 199.

Bibliography:

- Abraham, Nicholas, and Maria Torok. *The Shell and the Kernel*, ed. & trans. Nicholas Rand. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- *Le Verbier de L'Homme aux Loups*. Paris: Aubier Flammarion, 1976.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*. New York: Zone Books, 1999.
- Ballengee, Jennifer. "Witnessing Video Testimony: An Interview with Geoffrey Hartman", in *The Yale Journal of Criticism* vol. 14 no. 1 (2001)
- Barnard, Suzanne. "Tongues of Angels: Feminine Structure and Other Jouissance", in *Reading Seminar XX*, ed. Barnard, Suzanne, and Bruce Fink. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.
- Baudrillard, Jean. "For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- "System of Objects", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- "Symbolic Exchange and Death", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- "On Seduction", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- "Simulacra and Simulations", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- "Fatal Strategies", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- "The Masses: The Implosion of the Social in the Media", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- "Cool Memories", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- "The Gulf War Did Not Take Place", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- "The Perfect Crime", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- "Paroxysm", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- "The Despair of Having Everything", in *Le Monde* (November 2002)
- Boothby, Richard. *Death & Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*. Routledge: New York & London, 1991
- *Freud as Philosopher: Metapsychology After Lacan*. New York and London: Routledge, 2001.
- Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London and New York: Verso, 2004.
- *The Psychic Life of Power: theories in subjection*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.
- with Laclau, Ernesto, and Slavoj Žižek. *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*. London and New York: Verso, 2000.
- Castricano, Jodey. *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida's Ghost Writing*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001.
- Comay, Rebecca. "Perverse History: Fetishism and Dialectic in Walter Benjamin", in *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. 29 (1999), n.p.
- Critchley, Simon. "The Original Traumatism: Levinas and Psychoanalysis", in *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity*. London and New York: Verso, 1999.
- "Das Ding: Lacan and Levinas", in *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity*. London and New York: Verso, 1999.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Fors", in *Le Verbier de L'Homme aux Loups*, Nicholas Abraham et Maria Torok. Paris: Aubier Flammarion, 1976
- *Specters of Marx: the state of the debt, the work of mourning, and the New International*. New York and London: Routledge, 1994.
- *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz.. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

-
- *Echographies of Television: filmed interviews*. New York: Polity Press, 2002.
- "Plato's Pharmacy", in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- "Signature Event Context", in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- Evans, Dylan. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge (1996)
- Finkelstein, Norman. *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, 2nd ed. London and New York: Verso, 2000.
- Freud, Sigmund. *On sexuality : three essays on the theory of sexuality and other works*. New York: Penguin, 1991.
- Gane, Mike. *Baudrillard: Critical and Fatal Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Jameson, Frederic. "The End of Temporality", in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 29 no. 3 (Summer 2003).
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of horror : an essay on abjection*. Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1982.
- Lacan, Jacques. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques Alain-Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981.
- *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Bruce Fink. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. *God, Death, and Time*, trans. Bettina Bergo. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- "Enigma and Phenomenon", in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan Peperzak et al. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996.
- McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1964.
- *The Book of Probes*.
- Schneiderman, Stuart. *Jacques Lacan: The Death of an Intellectual Hero*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983.
- Spivak, Gayatri. "Preface", in *Of Grammatology*, corrected ed., Derrida, Jacques, trans. Gayatri Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997
- Zizek, Slavoj. *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?*. London and New York: Verso, 2001.
- *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and out,,* revised ed. New York and London: Routledge, 2001
- *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. London and New York: Verso, 2002
- *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity*. Massachusetts: MIT, 2003.
- *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London and New York: Verso, 2000
- *Welcome to the Desert of the Real: Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates*. London and New York: Verso, 2002.
- *Metastases Of Enjoyment*. London and New York, 1996.
- with Daly, Glyn. *Conversations with Zizek*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004.
- London and New York: Verso, 2002.
- "The Real of Sexual Difference", in *Reading Seminar XX*, ed. Barnard, Suzanne, and Bruce Fink. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.
- Zupancic, Alenka. *Ethics of the Real: Kant, Lacan*. London and New York: Verso, 2000.