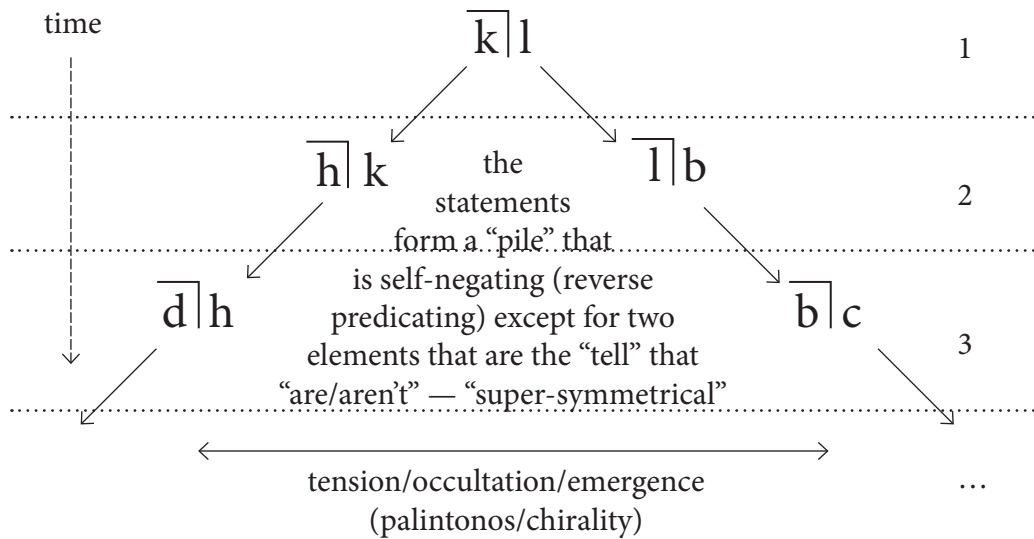# amos judd goes to the movies: Rear Window

Sorites is the pile of sand that comes into being in a snap — a sudden comprehension that has missed, by a grain or two, the fact that the sand was more than just a bunch of grains falling on top of one another. This "too late" moment is simultaneously "too early." It has not yet seen the final effects of this accumulation. The realization that the bunch is a pile has keened up a moment of anxiety. The future of the pile has turned from *ersatz* to *ansatz*. The lucky guess is now something of a prophecy waiting to be fulfilled. Alfred Hitchcock makes great use of this too late and too early situation in *Notorious* (1946), when the American spy team of T. R. Devlin (Cary Grant) and Alicia Huberman (Ingrid Bergman) are hoping to sneak into the Brazilian-Nazi Sebastian's wine cellar. Alicia has gone so far as to marry Sebastian (they are both Germans, and had met before the war) to get inside his household to discover his group's plans to export uranium to Germany. Mined uranium powder has been concealed in wine bottles (they don't know this yet), and to get to the cellar Alicia has had to slip Sebastian's cellar key off his key chain. The problem is that if the party guests drink up all the champagne, the butler will need the key to go fetch more bottles. When he asks Sebastian for the key, Sebastian will notice that it's missing.

This realization comes as a "too-late/too-early" shock to Alicia when Devlin warns her that the champagne supply is getting low. Her subjective anxiety is quickly picked up by the audience, who now sees each glass of champagne as a binary. Normally beneficial to the success of this or any party, it is now a poison in relation to the two spies' plan. This is the definition of the binary pharmaceutical, the *pharmakon*: a substance that can either bring the dead back to life or kill. Asklepius had derived this medicine from another binary, and in a binary way. Medusa had been ravishingly beautiful, but Athena — jealous or in revenge — made her ugly by transforming her hair into serpents. Any who looked on "that which they should not have seen" were turned to stone, a metaphor for "catalepsis," the premature death that, in the work of art, is the customary paralysis of the audience by the fourth wall of the fiction.

The champagne's function as *pharmakon* is effective. The audience gasps as every tipsy guest grabs another glass off the tray. The sorites becomes a subtractive process: at what point will the tray be empty enough to get Sebastian to give the butler his key, only to discover it's missing? We are "too early" to know, and this "too-early" constructs the next scene. Alicia and Devlin rush to the cellar, and in his haste Devlin pushes a bottle off the rack. When he hastens to clean up the mess, he discovers that the bottle contains wine mixed with uranium. He cleans up the mess but before the two can clear out, Sebastian comes down the cellar stairs. Devlin improvises. He and Alicia kiss passionately, a "false sign" to Sebastian that their former romance in Rio was not over. The truth of the matter is, however, that their romance really isn't over, but just beginning. Devlin had been put off by Alicia's alcoholism and seemed to have contracted into the role of a cynical colleague bitter about their break-up but committed to finishing their assignment. With the descent into the cellar, however, he rediscovered his love. His kiss was a perfect binary, he "falls in love by faking love," he falls into the gap between love/not-love. He literally *falls in love*. The kiss was a faked sign to Sebastian to set up Alicia's cover story that the former lovers had fallen in love again but met to break off, in order to save Alicia's new marriage. But, at the same time it was a real sign of live that surprised both Alicia and Devlin himself, who now see that fate has brought them together permanently through this "accident" of errors. Love occurs in this space between too soon and too late.

When Amos Judd goes to the movies, he lets the palintropic back-and-forth of events, in their temporal succession, to embed a logic that gradually comes to light in a "stochastic" manner. We discover this as one discovers a weak signal by adding the "white noise" of accidents. But, as we learn in most well-tempered works of art, this discovery takes place in spaces that offer us clues about *palintonos*. These come in the form of jewels, keys, crystal balls, telephoto lens, anamorphic smudges, skulls, palindromes that read the same forwards or backwards — the tools that convert invisibility to visibility and back again (occultation). The pile is a *coup de dés* — a throw of the dice (Mallarmé) that "always wins" (cf. the casino scene in *Fille sur Pont*, where the knife-thower tells his assistant to always bet on zero).

$$\overline{k}\,|\,l \qquad 1$$

$$\overline{h}\,|\,k \qquad\qquad \overline{l}\,|\,b \qquad 2$$

the statements form a "pile" that is self-negating (reverse predicating) except for two elements that are the "tell" that "are/aren't" — "super-symmetrical"

$$\overline{d}\,|\,h \qquad\qquad\qquad \overline{b}\,|\,c \qquad 3$$

time

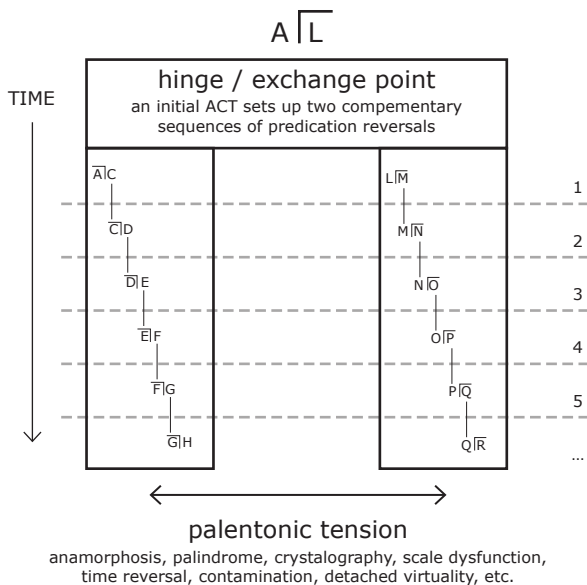tension/occultation/emergence
(palintonos/chirality)

…

1 / The story of Amos Judd and his appetite for cold mutton generates a pile of predications that seem completely unrelated. In fact, the "story" (if it can be called that) starts out with an inane unrelated matter: "all the policemen on this beat sup with our cook." This improbable opener is like an *ersatz* "wild guess." Yet, by converting either side of the predication into its negation ('k', the policemen had been predicated, but at the next stage they predicate). It turns out that "none but policemen on our beat are poets." Poets are brought into the mix as predicated but, in the next step, turn into predicators: "no man with long hair can fail to be a poet."

Lewis Carroll's riddles are compact, intended to illustrate the quickness (cf. *festina lente*) of his binary quadration, a graphic formula combining conditions of negation: +/+, –/+, +/–, –/–. It's a nice touch that these combinations of pluses and minuses also correspond to Lacan's sexuation conditions, even nicer that these in turn relate to the four main categories of discourse, Hysteria, Master, University, and Analysis. Nicer still that these discourses work well as "genres" defining types of narratives, architectures, visual protocols, etc. etc. etc. All this *ersatz*-to-*ansatz* luck is great, but we have to go through the logic of the sorites to understand how the succession of converted predications amounts to a pile. Critically, we will aspire to our own too-late/too-early condition. We will want to "fall in love" — *with* love this time, love of the "love" that is the out-of-synch moment that identifies with the scale dysfunction of the remainders created by the pile of predicates.

Scale dysfunction is the only name we can give to asynchrony and the spatial anomalies that covers all of the kinds of signs that "signalize" to the audience that a pile is accumulating palin*tropically* to allow them pal-in*tonic* entry in the "treasury of signifiers." They will not take the signifiers home with them. They will be given the signifiers to enjoy for a limited time. This is the aspect of usufruct, a legal term that means that you can use something you don't or can't ever own, as long as you take care of it. It's a loan. What we are given by art we must return. Our stay in the work of art is a kind of life-in-death. Our catalepsy (sit still and enjoy the art) is rewarded by the D_A (Jentsch: life from death or a dead thing that begins to act autonomously) function of the uncanny: in death we are permitted a kind of extended momentum. We experience a "dream of flying" where, as in this common dream-type, we do the impossible but have the feeling that "it has always been possible to fly," we just never realized we could before. Our anxiety of falling is removed (we are dead, remember?) once anxiety is off the table, our relation to the future is governed by the *ansatz* rule: you can't lose. (Laconte: keep your chips on zero.)

Because scale dysfunction is both what happens critically/philosophically (time is messed about) and artistically, we get all the materiality we need in the keys, camera lens, crystal balls, concealed panels, etc. that do the work of occultation. The predicate is a frame but also the *space between two frames*, a left/right plus a gap.

A⌐L

TIME

hinge / exchange point
an initial ACT sets up two complementary
sequences of predication reversals

A̅|C   L|M̅   1

C̅|D   M|N̅   2

D̅|E   N|O̅   3

E̅|F   O|P̅   4

F̅|G   P|Q̅   5

G|H   Q|R̅   …

⟵   ⟶
palentonic tension
anamorphosis, palindrome, crystallography, scale dysfunction,
time reversal, contamination, detached virtuality, etc.

2 / In a work of art, the chiastic x-design (left) begins with a critical "act" — the creation of a hinge or exchange that sets up the underlying economy of the work. This aligns art in general with the ancient practice of "silent trade," the custom by which strangers were able to become trading partners thanks to a common meeting place marked by piles of stones ("herms"). Whatever one left at this pile was taken by the other trading partner. (There could be many partners but the exchange was always, ideally, between two.) The taker left something in return, which was picked up by the next visitor, who left something in turn … etc. etc.

The goods left at the pile of stones were called "the gifts of Hermes," and the pile of stones, the herm, was upgraded to the status of a god with complex attributes. Because the gifts seemed to appear suddenly out of nowhere, Hermes was thought to be master of visibility/invisibility. At the same time he was a quick messenger who brought gifts out of Hades (in Greek, literally "the invisible"). Because each trading partner was a kind of thief, Hermes was also the god of this larcenous brotherhood. And, because seduction was regarded as a kind of theft, Hermes also became the god of erotic capture.

The site of silent trade was typically a cross-roads, whose natural chiastic properties came into the mix of meanings. And, because exchange was defined as the conversion of the giver into the recipient, it was a place of reversed predication. Invisibility, predication reversal, the sorites of stones, and the coupling of invisible Hades to the secular place of trade (Hermes' Roman name, Mercury, is the basis of words for marketplace) establish an ancient basis for the artistic employment of sorites as a means of combining the narrative order of conflict and change, *palintropos*, with the gradual build-up of tension, anxiety, and anticipation — the *palintonos* so necessary to the construction of audience interest and suspense. In art, we find Hermes — not just a "god of the boundary" as most see it, but as the "boundary itself," which shows that the single distinction is always a double: a space between two frames in which the making of art (Vico's *factum*) constructs its own evolution. Hermes protects the gap between the two legs of the trading process, the "site of exception" that, as the Club Silencio (Lynch, *Mulholland Drive*) of trade and conversion, opens up through the anamorphic devices of lens, jewels, rings, blue boxes (again, *Mulholland Drive*), lost passageways, broken stairways, trap doors, *oculi*, and other *scale defective devices*. These materialize the double-framed interiority of art with the tried-but-true mechanisms of detached virtuality: travel through time, the double, the story in the story, the contamination of "reality" by the dream or work of fiction. Through these the audience is led from their "belief" (+/+) to the two poles of suspension, +/– (awareness of the frame, awareness of the space between two frames), –/+ (construction of things the audience does not know it knows — i.e. an audience unconscious), and finally the –/– of the "epiphany" that happens "in the middle of things," in the between-the-two-frames space that is "Amos Judd loves cold mutton."

This answer is kenotic in that it emerges out of the "nowhere" of the middle, the space between alternative legs of the chiastic array of predications and predication reversals. *Ersatz* converts to *ansatz* once the audience realizes that its gradually increasing tension — of which it has been mostly unaware — is the result of remainders, a "not-all" predicate and predicator that, it their fracture (*tesseræ*) have led to the "facture" of the tension (*palintonos*, clinamen) that, once the audience sees it, it will see it both "too late" and "too soon." The final scene is rushed. The audience is in love with and in the work of art. Fate has made them too late, chance has made them early. Their Zeno-like inability to move (catalepsy) has led to their Being, but being is not the arrow frozen in space, it IS the space but not the space we thought but the time of space, space of time: the Act.

The lambda pattern expands the original predication, allowing this 'hinge point" to automate subsequent steps. While it is deterministic in one sense, it allows for and even requires accident and error. The dæmon is typically an element of exchange, true to Hermes' function as god of the marketplace and origins as the regulator of the silent trade of crossroads. All six of the Bloom Set terms fit easily into the lambda design. Tesseræ specifies that the original predication will continue along two separate paths. Clinamen will be the tension and turbulence set up by the "twinship" of the two sequences. When the "solution" finally emerges as a result of the two remainders who are joined together in an act of identity, the means is typically sonic: an acousmatic voice. The breakthrough disrupts the defensive order of askesis, the labyrinth gives way to the realization of a temple.

labyrinth

dæmon

tesseræ

clinamen

apophrades

kenosis
askesis
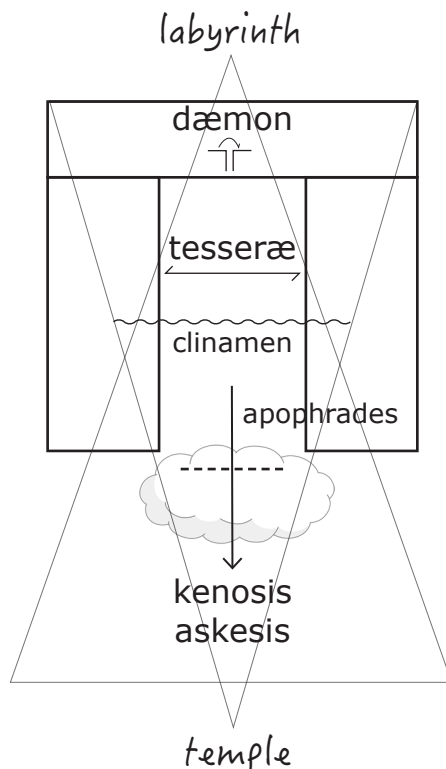
temple

Temple is division (√TEM) and, simultaneously, an outer bound, such as the cardinal directions on the horizon. The labyrinth in contrast is without orienting aids, but its structure, a three-fold fractal of ABA (Aaba, Baba, Aaba) creates a concentric passage that returns to the center. Thus the interior of the temple, a quadrated spatial division originally employed to read the auspices of sacrificed victims, is the same as the external boundary of the four quarters of north, south, east, and west. The diagram is abstract, but the chirality of the lambda procedure for expanding the central point of exchange is a template for materialization of relationships that, once established, set the scene for the openness required for "content-free" kenosis. Architecture's primary status as the means of askesis, and its metaphoric-metonymic relations to labyrinth, provide ample means for staging this festal arrival.
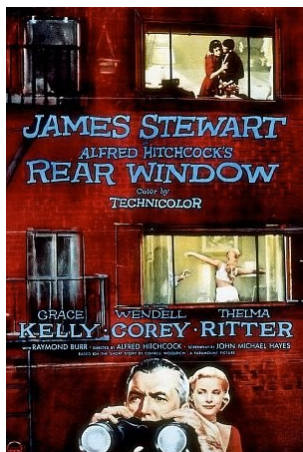
3 / *Rear Window* **(Alfred Hitchcock, 1954).** The point of any model is its usefulness. It is not a question of "how accurate is the model?" Rather, the issue is, does the model provoke new thinking about a site, a work of art or architecture, or a situation that turns out to have "asked the right questions." We should find something interesting with any model, no matter how poorly conceived; with a good model, we should hope to get lucky, very lucky. In the generalized expansion of the sorites lambda-shaped generation model (Λ), left, we place the primary binary of architecture, labyrinth/temple, at the extreme points of two intersecting triangles. The point extending from the labyrinth is the temporal palintrope that expands the sorites as a conventional narrative. Its base, opposite, is like a cloud layer that will be penetrated by kenosis, which often in mythology is represented as an acousmatic voice (apophrades). The architectural labyrinth represents "life as we find it" — a series of events that are connected by conventional cause-and-effect relationships, mediated by networks of symbolic relationships (the neighbors who live around the typical New York courtyard depicted in *Rear Window*), and enriched by coincidences, accidents, and errors.

The opening scene gives an account of one such accident; the hero of the story, L. B. ("Jeff") Jefferies (Jimmy Stewart), is immobilized following an accident during a filming assignment. His right leg is in a cast, its status clearly marked as D_A (a dead thing with a small element of life) with the words, "Here lie the bones of L. B. Jefferies." Although this narrative is probably not a death dream, it has aspects of subjectivity carried by momentum past a moment of crisis. Jefferies wishes for more exciting assignments from his publisher, but he is stuck in his studio apartment for another two weeks.

Jeff's legs set up the lambda: the "bad leg" is the immobilized left side of the courtyard (our model is nearly an exact plan), the "good leg" is the mobile/active side Jeff watches while he recuperates. The tesseræ theme is recognized. His girlfriend Lisa (Grace Kelly) frequently compares life on the other side of the court with theirs. They are having trouble with their affair; across the way there are different versions of marital trouble.
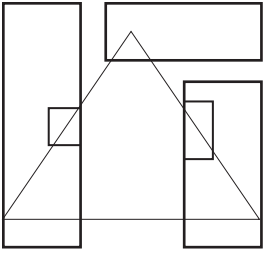
The set of *Rear Window* approximates the lambda diagram, with the apex set at the newlyweds' apartment

Miss Torso, a dancer, is plagued by suitors. Miss Lonelyheart has none and is in despair. A childless couple tend their small dog, while a single sculptress hard of hearing gives unwelcome gardening advice to the jewelry salesman, Lars Thorwald, whose invalid nagging wife overhears him phoning his mistress. A musician having trouble with his latest composition represents the whole pile of troubles: his tune still has a lot of wrong notes. Only a couple of newlyweds moving into the apartment to the left of Jeff's studio seem to be living the ideal of married life. Their blinds are shut while everyone else has opened theirs to fight the summer heat wave.

The tesseræ of watcher and the watched develops a turbulent clinamen when Jeff thinks he has discovered that Thorwald has killed his wife. At first Lisa credits his story to obsession, a symptom of their own failing romance. When Lisa is converted to Jeff's point of view, the two work as a team, aided by the visiting nurse Stella (Thelma Ritter). They aim to put together clues to convince Jeff's wartime buddy, now police detective, Lt. Doyle (Wendell Corey), to arrest Thorwald. At a critical point, Lisa and Stella invade the middle space to literally dig up a clue; when that fails, Lisa climbs the fire-escape to break into Thorwald's apartment. She contends that if Mrs. Thorwald's wedding ring can be found, it will prove that Anna Thorwald is dead and that the woman claiming to be Mrs. Thorwald is actually the lover.

Thorwald discovers Lisa and attacks her, but the police are called just in time. While they are interrogating (Lisa has to explain why she has broken into the apartment), Lisa signals to Jeff, showing him that she is wearing the wedding ring they had been seeking. Thorwald however sees this signal and realizes that Jeff is his *bête noire*. After the police leave, Thorwald guesses the number of Jeff's apartment and goes around the block. The final scenes are sped up, but they reveal an agonizing interior slowness. Jeff staves off Thorwald by setting off the flash gun of his camera. This slows the assailant down but only for a few minutes. The ploy is like Odysseus's attempt to escape the Cyclops' cave. Blinding him is just the first step. Jeff loses the second step, and Thorwald shoves him out the window. He now has two broken legs, but Lisa has moved in and is shown, in the final frames, contentedly reading while Jeff sleeps. She pretends to be reading William O. Douglas's *Beyond the High Himalayas*, a book popular in the 1950s — something of which Jeff would approve. But, assuring herself that Jeff is asleep, she exchanges it for the latest edition of the fashion magazine, *Harper's Bazaar*.

This film seems to have been made with the lambda design and sorites in mind. Jeff's two asymmetrical legs seem to be a direct reference to the way predications will fan out from the initial "immobilization theme," where Jeff's dangerous life as an action photographer gives way to over-domestication at the hands of his girlfriend Lisa and his nurse, Stella. One one side lie the comforts of a settled life, on the other the promise of danger and involvement with crime as he entertains the thesis of Anna Thorwald's murder. The tension (palintonos) between domesticity and the not-at-home is built into the word host, whose root means both hospitable and hostile. This is the essence of the uncanny — an inclusion of negation within a single idea/term. As the narrative continues, we find that there is a consistent A/~B, B/~C, C/~D … schema. One element is dropped as another new element is added. The continuing element changes from +, A, to –, ~A, on one side, – to + on the other (~B to B etc.), predicat*ing* to predicat*ed* or *vice versa*.

Because Spencer-Brown's calculus is able to suggest both a one-to-many condition as well as a frame, it is easy to find scenes that directly embody the lambda progression. With two legs of the lambda happening at every step, it is easy to maintain the palintonic tension that continues the original opposition of action and domesticity, hospitality and hostility. The example below uses a recommended template that can be applied to other works of art — films, books, buildings, even customs and myths. The use of the two forms of time to construct identity within a field of unlimited difference is universal. It structures human experience because of the limits of the Symbolic (always in need of a supplement) and the Symbolic's relation to Being, which from the Symbolic's point of view always seems to be impossibly static, like Zeno's frozen arrow.

The Lambda Expansion of *Rear Window*

hinge piece / point of central exchange to animate the plot

LIFE ⌐ death

NOTE: the bracket is a form of negation and here indicates $D_{A'}$ a twin of natural death, also "catalepsis."

The usual relation of life and death is reversed. Jefferies should be dead from his accident but survives, only part of him "dies" (his leg, buried in the cast). He is thus feminized as a "part-object," not-all of Jeff is subject to the phallic law, φ, which commands him to identify with the tools of his trade. The predication of LIFE casts him as an invalid, temporarily. Death has predicated him but in the next stage will be predicated itself as the two weeks he has to stay in the cast, "on the outside" of his neighbors' lives.

NOTE: the opening of the film makes clear that the audience's catalepsis relates to Jeff's "trial death" (an imposed time to sit still and be quiet). The window curtains are raised in the same way theater curtains are raised, with credits running behind.

"right leg" of the narrative / chiralistic to the "right leg"

GIRLFRIEND ⌐ (leg)

NOTE: the bracket can be a call, a crossing, or a stage. Here, Lisa appears "on stage."

The occultation of LIFE is represented by Jeff's leg in a cast. This occasions the appearance of his girlfriend, Lisa, who introduces herself formally using all three of her names and displaying her new outfit from her fashion import business. Hegel's point, that "Spirit is a Bone," is taken up literally: the cast is (1) the literal cast, (2) the cast of actors who will play out this drama, and (3) an action of casting that entails the future with a fate of determined events (A_D). This is the reverse predicate of the D_A that Jeff has been awarded by escaping death. The "cast" will be the net thrown out by reversed predications.

NOTE: death is predicated as negative, a state of catalepsy associated with an interval of time (the duration of the heat wave).

DEATH ⌐ time

The usual relation of life and death is reversed. Jefferies should be dead from his accident but survives, only part of him "dies" (his leg, buried in the cast). He is thus feminized as a "part-object," not-all of Jeff is subject to the phallic law, φ, which commands him to identify with the tools of his trade. The predication of LIFE casts him as an invalid, temporarily. Death has predicated him but in the next stage will be predicated itself as the two weeks he has to stay in the cast, "on the outside" of his neighbors' lives. Jeff is a "hero" in the ancient sense of being able to die and come back.

DINNER ⌐ lisa

NOTE: the old term (leg) is dropped and a new one picked up that is predicated by the previous new term, Lisa.

Lisa "steps offstage" by being the producer of the lobster dinner from a famous New York restaurant. The dinner is "too perfect": Jeff has arrived at it both "too late" and "too early" (he's not really ready to go out to eat). This refers to the classic missed moment of the sorites, the moment of *absoluter Gegenstoss*, or absolute recoil that suddenly brings into focus a fate that "had been their all along." This is usually the temporality of falling in love, but this scene is an inverse of that. Jeff's "too late" does not reverse the errors that turn out to be truths, but take truths as a sign of error.

NOTE: the too-late and too-early of the sorites' *Gegenstoss* connects to Althusser's "already-always" of ideological interpretation, where the subject is anxious about an unspecified duty, but "already" defined as an ideological subject.

NOTE: Lisa and Jeff reconcile after Lisa converts. Hitchcock arranges this as a criss-cross design, where both actors face the audience and Lisa regains her composure reclining. From this point on she is an orthographic operator, associated with the vertical.

THORWALD ⌐ spy

Jeff uses his time intensely (his watch is constantly referenced) to observe his neighbor Lars Thorwald (here, the bracket "puts Thorwald into a frame"). Time-as-idle becomes time-as-countdown, and this conversion is given the name "Thorwald" to designate its main point of focus. Temporal conversion is represented by spatial condensation made possible by the binoculars and telephoto lens. Jeff must now be invisible, hence "outside the frame," so that Thorwald does not notice he is being watched. Jeff's apartment must be taken out of the courtyard continuum as a place of detached observation.

$$\frac{ideology}{too\ late \mathbin{\|} too\ early}$$
$$\frac{}{symptom}$$

GIRLFRIEND ⌐ dinner

This next step reversed BOTH predicate and predicated, indicating a "plot point." Lisa is "put down" by Jeff's comments about the dinner being "too perfect." His "too late" designation suggests she is an Achilles who has missed the tortoise and lost the race. Dinner is "taken off the table" and Lisa lies down while she and Jeff argue. But the next day, she will stand up in another famous scene, where standing is the mark of her joining Jeff in observing the Thorwald apartment. Standing symbolizes a position of super-sight, to see what others see but don't see (–/+).

NOTE: both terms of the previous predication are retained, signaling a "plot point" (a flip in the plot direction). Hitchcock uses criss-cross to set up a scene where Lisa and Jeff are shown conversing, both facing the camera. The prone Lisa will become famously vertical in the next half of the film, playing the part of the male who does not obey the phallic law, φ, where before she seemed to be "castrated" by her fashionable outfits.

OBSERVING ⌐ idea

Thorwald's DISAPPEARANCES create the idea that he has executed a murder. He exits the building but is shown in the street via the small courtyard connector. As out of Jeff's visual range, he becomes the idea of the murder, and his visibility/invisibility must be TIMED. Hence, OBSERVING sets the chronology of the rest of the story, and the criss-cross, the chiralistic twin of Lisa's dinner/romance, forms a "plot point" — the special term indicating where the plot takes off in a new direction. OBSERVING here is occulted by the bracket, i.e. it sets up a special optic.

NOTE: it sometimes seems that the artist is using our specific critical terminology! Criss-sross is both a visual set up AND the logic of the plot point.

DINNER ⌐ lisa erect

With the dinner argument behind her, Lisa begins to agree with Jeff that something is wrong with the Thorwalds. Lisa's orthographic stance, her erection, signals that Lisa is taking over Jeff's sexuation status as a man, but as an exception to the phallic law. She is not just a girl in a nice dress, but a Hermetic violator of conventional boundaries.

Jeff's two legs, one broken the other good but attached to the broken one at the anatomical point associated with the phallic law and critical to his romance with Lisa, directly reference the "two legs" of the lambda expansion of the sorites. This suggests that the original predication plays the role of φ, which is sexuation is the bracket symbol, indication of a pledge required for membership.

MURDER IDEA ⌐ doyle

The idea of murder is dismissed by Jeff's wartime buddy, now a police detective, Lieutenant Tom Doyle. Yet, the MURDER IDEA is still "on stage" and Doyle is assessed as an unsympathetic skeptic (cf. "aphanisis," the disappearance of desire that is associated with Doyle, who is also critical of Lisa's overnight visits to Jeff's apartment (this is the 50s).

"left leg" of the narrative / chiralistic to the "left leg"

"right leg" of the narrative, chiralistic to the "left leg"

the lambda continues to the end of the movie …