

dream machine: cathexis, sequencing, exaptation, divination, epiphany



In his remarkable book, *Iconostasis*, the Russian mystic-scholar Pavel Florensky analyzed the curious logic of dreams *initiated* by an external event which was reproduced, inside the dream, as the *terminal* event. How it was possible for elaborate narratives to unfold in the “non-time” of the single event that served both as first and last has but one possible answer: that the dream existed *before* the event, and that the event triggered the sequential narrative, which was *imagined* in reverse. This visual-mechanical model raises the question of how the prior dream structure was constructed, how the external event is able to trigger a “final moment” in the dream story, and how the reading of the dream is opposite.

In his equally remarkable book, *Finnegans Wake*, the Irish author James Joyce presented a graphically succinct model for his story of twins, rivals for the love of their sister, Issy: a vesica pisces — equal circles that intersect so that the perimeter of each passes through the center of the other. An equally succinct but more provocative condensation is provided by the Greek letter, phi, ϕ , modeling the idea of a city with a river running through it, a continuing motif throughout the novel. This letter also describes the system by which cities were founded by twins, one of whom was killed or already dead. The pair were held apart by a diametrical line, and allowed to meet only in exceptional circumstances.

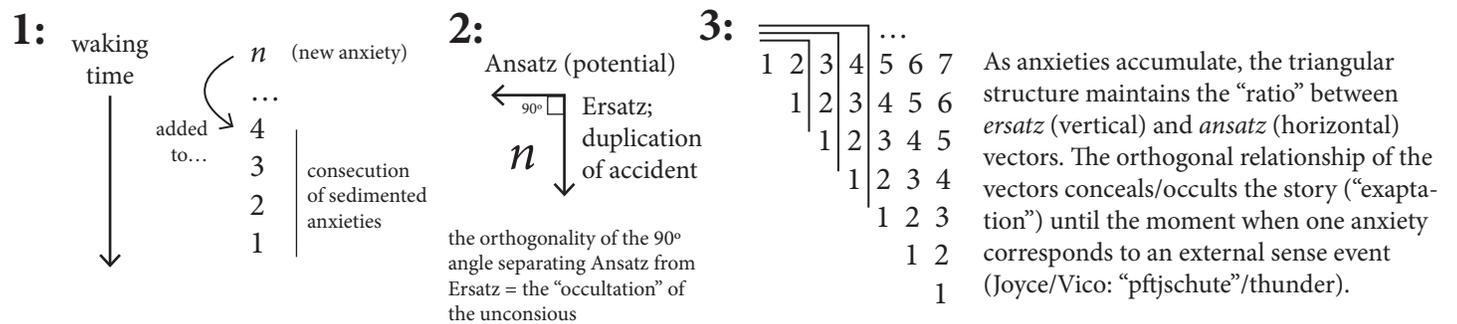


THE AIM: to geometricize the “event-dream” to show how the initial stimulus is remembered as the concluding action. The model will suggest relations between dream construction and recollection that will extend, more generally, to the techniques of observation and writing in Joyce’s Ulysses and Finnegans Wake, where sedimentation of detail, both in the writing process and the narrative flow, intensify in sudden moments of epiphany. Joyce himself formalized the relation of narrative “palintropos” (opposites that temporally alternate) to the super-symmetry of “palintonos” (held in constant tension) in the diagram presented in Finnegans Wake: a vesica pisces formalizing the theme, repeated throughout the novel, of a city with a river running through it. The coincidental logic of foundation rituals reported by anthropologists and preserved in myth confirms a similar relation of palintropos and palintonos, making the Wake’s theme of twins competing for the love of Issy, associated with the flow of water, both a key to primordial structures of history as well as a principle of artistic constructions that exploit those structures or theories, such as Vico’s, that explain them.

The event as a fall (Joyce: “pftjschute”; Vico/Joyce: thunder)

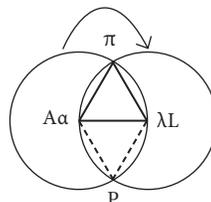
In the classic example of the event-dream, a nobleman anxious about his safety in the months following the Revolution recounts a dream initiated by the fall of a framed painting hanging above his bed. The dream, though it contained numerous detailed scenes of suspicion, flight, capture, imprisonment, negotiation, and finally execution, concluded with the moment when the guillotine blade fell on the dreamer’s neck — corresponding precisely with the accidental fall of the painting onto the dreamer’s neck. The dreamer remembered the dream in correct narrative order, say 1 to 7, but the event components must have been generated in reverse, 7 to 1. Consecutive order was maintained, but the ‘1’ was both an initial (generative) event and a final narrative event (*anagnorisis*).

Thesis: (1) The dream narrative was “already formed” in the dreamer’s unconscious, the result of a “sedimentation” of anxieties encountered sequentially in everyday experience. (2) Each anxiety had two components, or “vectors,” one that converted it to a fantasy substitution, an “Ersatz,” while the other vector constructed the complementary form, “Ansatz,” a “lucky guess” able to relate within a longer synthetic string of events. (3) The potential conversion of ersatz anxieties to ansatz stories exists at all scales, but as anxieties accumulate, a triangular structure — exaptation, or potentiality — evolves to shape the collection into a synthetic story with beginning, middle, and end.



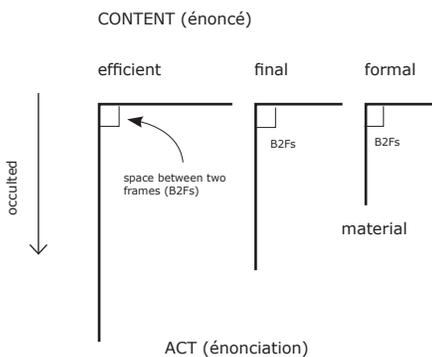
the ersatz/ansatz anxiety/event-structure can be “extimated” (pulled into waking experience entirely) in a process that continually “dreams itself” (as in the experience of lucid dreaming) by using the sedimentation of experiential events in a mirror-sequence creating a “palintonic” tension between actuality and memory. Memory takes place as events take place; the events are *memory* used as imagination. This is a *déjà-vu* like experience that allows the past to overtake the future” (Bergson).

Joyce modeled this extimation process as a *vesica piscis*, intersecting (super-)circles allowing twinned opposites the “exception” of meeting along the line defined by Aa/λL, the “river” of Anna Livia Plurabelle (Liffy in the case of Dublin).



Lucid dreaming, also known as “discourse”

Floresky’s event dream is only one type of dream, but can its unique time structure reveal something about the nature of the Event as a “super-symmetrical” exception to linear time that also applies to waking experience? The theoretical set-up for this experimental extension already exists, in Jacques Lacan’s distinction and elaboration of *énoncé/énonciation* — speech content (*énoncé*) v. speech act. AS ACT, speech begins with an event imagined or real, which behaves much like the act of the event dream. The Cretan Liar says “All Cretins are liars.” The content (*énoncé*) is true, but the “speaker who acts” is the one who creates this defective statement (if it is true, then it’s false, then it’s true ...) knowingly, to engage his audience in a silent joke (*énonciation* = enthymeme). The defective narrator frames an event but simultaneously creates a second frame. allowing the audience to enter into a space “between the two frames.” The map of this space is occulted by the first event, it is the “truth” of the speech to follow but it remains distant from the literal speech, resonating at a distance (metonymy) while the first frame is constructed metaphorically, moving from its Efficient Cause (the initiating Event) of occultation to the Final Cause of intentionality (identification of the narrator who frames the metaphors, the “first Cretan”), to the material presence of the speech, with its distinction between Form and Materiality.



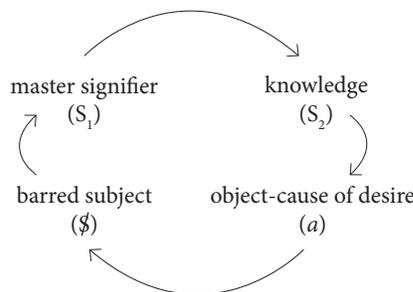
At each of these three stages, there has been an “occulted/sublated” content that, sharing a common register beneath the literal content of the speech, retains the potential of Return (contamination, nonsense, echo, anagnorisis) — an effect that appears to be demonic in comparison to the conventional flow of metaphorical meanings in within the first frame. This occulted space, between the two frames, is further modeled by Lacan in the mathemes of the “four discourses” (university, master, hysteric, analysis), defined by a fixed sequence of operators (master signifier, knowledge, *objet petit a*, the barred subject) rotated across a quadrated field defined by Agent, Other, Production, and Truth.

This quadrated field shows how the speech as an Event involves concealed operators that, working from the space “between the two frames” can work

differently in the four major types of discourse generated by Lacan’s mathemes. Efficient cause’s split of *énoncé/énonciation* occults the Truth of speech (it’s doubly framed condition) as well as the Other of discourse, a dynamic construct that evolves with the temporal unfolding of speech. Production is both the means and the ends of this unfolding, an algorithm that maps the inevitable return of the Real, the inverted mirror-image of the speaker’s message, as the “tell,” the final event of the *ansatz* meaning.

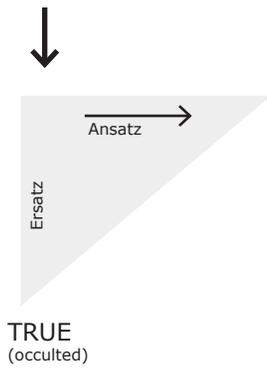
Rotating the fixed sequence of operators across the fixed field of Agent, Other, Production, and Truth functions like a map of a secret terrain beneath the ideological terrain constructed by *énoncé*, content. But, this is not to say that content is illusion covering over a more authentic hidden meaning. The “hidden meaning” is, as the Cretan Paradox exemplifies, the double structure itself, the system of barbershop mirrors that, through occultation and the double frame, creates truth by destroying it — the “lucid” counterpart to the destruction of dreams by waking.

AGENT	OTHER
TRUTH	PRODUCTION



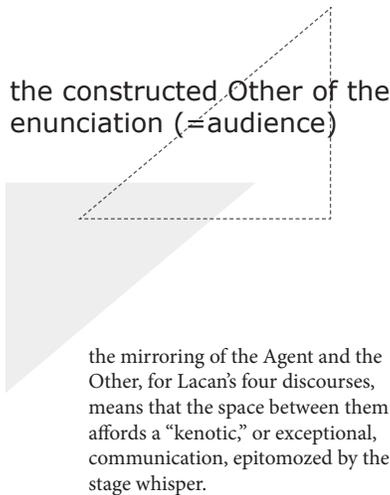
$S_1 \rightarrow S_2$	$\$ \rightarrow S_1$
$\$ \quad a$	$a \quad S_2$
MASTER	HYSTERIC
$a \rightarrow \$$	$S_2 \rightarrow a$
$S_2 \quad S_1$	$S_1 \quad \$$
ANALYSIS	UNIVERSITY

Lacan “rotates” a fixed sequence of operators (S_1 , S_2 , a , $\$$) across a fixed field quadrated into four regions. Each rotation produces a specific form of discourse (master, hysteric, analysis, university). Lacan noted that there can be many other kinds of discourse, with more or different operators, but that this set of four and the fixed field constituted a “base set” that could be corroborated by culture and history. Additionally, the quadration and its permutations relate to Lacan’s four mathemes of sexuation: (1) men as those (symbolically) castrated by the phallic law, as long as there is one exception, and (2) the woman as not-wholly subject to the phallic law, without any exceptions. Arranging the pattern of negations of these mathemes reveals a crisscross relationship (men constitute a vector that crosses through/over a feminine “double screen”).

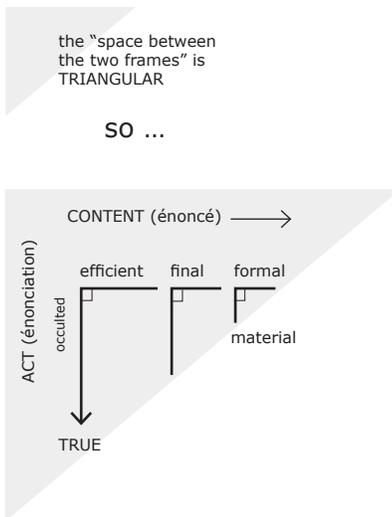


1 / The “lucid dream” becomes the model of discourse by aligning and comparing the Event, the “ersatz moment” that initiates discourse, an ACT that seems to emanate from external circumstances, an empirical basis/context. This act “pushes down” a structure that already exists, however, an unconscious triangular relationship between “ersatz” anxiety-moments and the “ansatz” narratives employed to give them meaning within a wider subjective frame. Once the act exposes this structure, the ansatz order is reconstructed as a sequence of causal stages that go into the construction of discourse. Lacan suggests that there are four principal means of “filling in the gaps” of these causal stages.

2 / Discourse is double sided. It presumes dialog between speakers and listeners, both of which are artifices constructed through the dynamic processes of discourse. The Agent of discourse is not given, neither is the Other to which the message is addressed; these evolve as the message unfolds through the three causes associated with speech content (énoncé) and the one last cause associated with speech act (énonciation), material cause.



3 / The superimposed triangular structures signify that the space between the two frames generated by the “defective narrator” (e.g. the distinction between message content and message act) is nothing more than the distinction between the vectors of the “ersatz” and “ansatz,” the anxiety-event and the narrative frames that situate the anxiety event within a context of past, present, and future.



4 / The first frame of énoncé/content evolves through three successive stages, efficient cause (the act of occultation), final cause (intentionality: “I mean to say this”), and formal cause (“I am saying this *in this way*”). The vertical vector shows how each stage generates an occulted element that defines the between-the-two-frames zone of exaptation: an “unconscious” treasury of alternative meanings, ready to use, free-floating. As in the event dream, the speaker “knows this content without knowing it,” and can activate it only by changing the context (frame) to shift the point of view — compare this to Slavoj Žižek’s concept of parallax. With even a slight shift, the resources of the unconscious treasury become available but appear as “demonic” — intrusions from an alien, liminal field.

5 / Lacan’s “true” is defined as “being both in a first and last position.” This corresponds to Florensky’s event, which takes place first, as the generative cause of the dream, and to its “ansatz” position as the terminal conclusion of the dream. This reveals the palindromic relationship between the orthogonal vectors that constitute the space between the two frames. The palindrome is key to Lacan’s L-scheme (relating the “male” ego-subject and its virtual constructs as it passes through the “double frame” of the feminine not-all); to sexuation (as a crisscross) of masculine-feminine universals/exceptions; and to mergers of the four forms of discourse with the functions of metalepsis (relations of metonymy to fantasy construction and traversal).

