

## Study Tips

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*Study tips are epithets, some brief, some extensive, that are compiled in the style of Ambrose Bierce's The Devil's Dictionary (1906).*

- §1 **Aren't you forgetting something?** Something will be left out in the beginning which, later, will be relied on "in court." (explanation of the *objet petit a* and its ultimate relation to the Law, specifically the Law as "gendered" through the variations of exclusion and eclipse/totality).
- §2 **Tessera.** The line between known and unknown is more important than the presumed content of either.
- §3 **Knowing without knowing.** "The man who knew too much" does not know what he knows, but he is in any event marked out as a *homo sacer*, chosen "by the gods" to be the exception.
- §4 **Masculine systems:** the whole of anything is subject to the law but there is always one exception.
- §5 **Feminine systems:** not-all of anything subject to the law (there is always a remainder) and there are no exceptions to this rule.
- §6 **Gender and law.** Therefore: law is inherently gendered. Exception is related to eclipse, Diana and Endymion, hence the unconscious.
- §7 **Mastery/manicheanism.** Whatever promises mastery should be put under suspicion, if not avoided outright. Promises of mastery include the "positive rhetoric" of "good terms" placed in opposition to "bad terms," a kind of Manicheanism activated at the level of the text. "Creative" is just such a word that can be deployed by ideology as a "good term," quickly appropriated by a Positivist (i.e. anti-creative) program. For (bad) phenomenological approaches, there is always a clear vocabulary of "humanist-good" ideas and practices set opposite reductionistic-instrumental practices. What is not so evident is the overall effect of this kind of Manicheanism, which eviscerates the complexity of terms and processes.
- §8 **Defeat.** Do not fight battles you expect to win, only those where defeat may provide a certain "sublime precision" in mapping (through interpolation) the process in its negative, destruction.
- §9 **Polemic.** The virtue of polemic should not be abandoned as a result of condemning it in others! Bad polemic involves the Manichean program of fixed oppositions, the "list of good terms" *versus* the "list of bad terms." This affects all the terms on both lists, forcing an ideological reading that forecloses (*Verwerfung* at its finest) the issue of gap, *aporia*, *dæmon*, drive, etc. Polemic has the obligation to be "stereognostic." As with Asclepius's theft of blood from the slain Medusa, the sample from the left side of her body could kill; from the right, it could restore life.
- §10 **Corbelling.** The art of topics uses, as its central method, "topical corbelling," a process by which one term is seen to overlap — and undermine or support — another. This near-eclipse is to be taken in its fully "demonic" functionality, of one term "inexplicably" and "coincidentally" overlapping another, with a *small exception* that plays out the "masculine" aspect of the two terms' "legal relationships." The exception takes the part of the gap in the term that relates it to a drive, a desire, a resistance to meaning. The not-all aspect is the alternative feminist reading that sees, in any one term, this resistance as a built-in feature.
- §11 **Overlap.** Corbelling follows the Bloomian paradigm, using one term to "misread" the other, to create illegitimate readings, "hauntings," de-constructions. These misprisions can singly or collectively be followed up to find, in histories of either term, coincidental errors; their contexts and outcomes will be significant.
- §12 **Encore/noch ein!** Calvino used corbelling with great success in his *Invisible Cities*, where each chapter involved adding a topic while dropping a topic. This "one more"

(encore) technique constructs, with the dropped out term, an algorithm of presence/absence, where two terms, like two twins, are not allowed to appear at the same time in the same place. This internal dynamic is key to, amongst other things, the foundation of cities and exorcism of houses and buildings.

- §13 **The Person from Porlock.** When Coleridge was dreaming his poem, "Kubla Khan," legend has it that he was awakened by a knock at the door of a visitor who inadvertently has been condemned for prematurely ending one of the most magnificent poems in the history of English literature — the "person from Porlock," a town Somerset, in south-west England on the edge of the Exmoor. As with many dreams, the perception of the full dream is generated upon termination from some external stimulus (see Alfred Maury and Pavel Florensky on the retroactive temporality of dreams), so rather than blaming the person from Porlock for curtailing Coleridge's dream-poem, should s/he not be congratulated? Was it not in fact the knock that, in terminating the poem, generated the preceding contents in toto at the moment of negation?
- §14 **Negation.** Corbelling is another word for dialectic, but this is played out through Bloom's six-term system rather than Hegel's *Phenomenology*, in hopes that the two will "accidentally intersect" to create new topoi, as in the case of the well known instances of corbelling in Hegel (Master-Slave, the Beautiful Soul, the "instrument for procreation and pissing," etc.). The element most frequently misunderstood in Hegelian dialectic is *Aufhebung*, the method of preserving something by cancelling/negating it. This is precisely Lacan's Venn-diagram of the empty region created by overlap in the process of the forced choice. In the robber's demand, "Your money or your life!" there is really no choice in the matter, because you cannot enjoy the money you would save by offering your life instead. The three-step "negation of negation of negation" (*Verneining*, *Verleugnung*, and *Verwerfung*; or "denial, renunciation, and foreclosure") of Hegel is his version of the "thrice-great Hermes," the triple goddess, the three Fates, and the Three Bears story combined: three is the process of interpolation, a mapping procedure that uses error to locate — locate what? Locate the *dæmon* that has, in anxiety, gone offstage (*le voix acousmatique*) and paralyzed "anywhere" with a "nowhere," often embodied as a "nobody" — i.e. a radically and permanently misrecognized identity, coupled to dysfunctions in motility and scale as well.