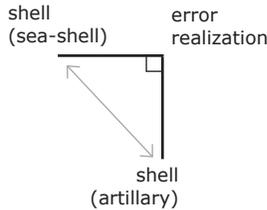


# figures: the rhetoric of space-time

Rhetoric and its relation to wit is the 'missing link' that connects the pre-modern aspects of the uncanny to the popularized forms (Gothic novel, Gingrich tales, modern anxiety, etc.). In some selected figures, the structure of the uncanny is evident and linkable to some of the diagrammatic operations of the BoLaGram. The rhetorical context can provide clarification of some of the diagram's operations in art, place, and architecture, however, since it inherently involves the role of an audience.

## 1. anacoluthon

This rhetorical figure involves an 'ungrammatical' or unexpected change occurring at the end of an expression that alters the meaning of the whole. As such, it is an epitome of the main 'surprise' function of art, where the audience encounters and has access to an array whose pattern it does not comprehend until the end of the work. Interestingly, the anacoluthon 'pathway' is used as a 'test of minimal consciousness' for brain-damage victims. Monitoring brainwave activity, patients 'hear' a sentence using a word with a conventional meaning ('sea-shell') that is reversed by the end of the sentence: 'The shells ... were fired at the tanks'. If the brain registers the change in meaning, that activity is taken as evidence of a (minimum) level of consciousness. This highlights the role of Lacan's idea of the 'sliding signifier', whose ambiguity can be constrained only through a 'quilting' action that relates the signification process to the subject's interpellation, desire, and the Other. The 'anacoluthic pathway' is the chiasmic triangle formed by the first word, the instance of 'error awareness', and the revised interpretation that is reconnected to the first word 'in retrospect'. Significantly, this points to Lacan's emphasis on the utility of the 'future anterior' tense in language, which uses a backwards-projecting logic. The little girl who says 'Daddy was born in Manchester, Mommy in Leeds, and I in London; when you think about it, it's amazing how we all got together!'



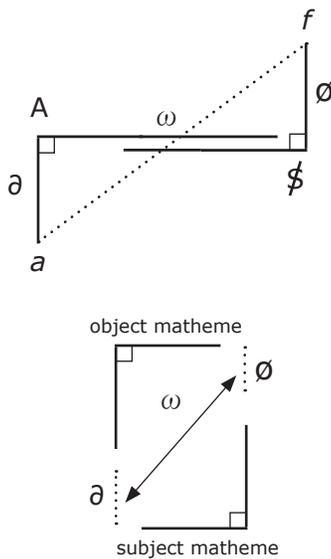
## 2. aposiopesis

An abrupt and unexpected termination of a series produces an effect akin to the effect of anacoluthon. The series of signifiers is ambiguously revised by its incompleteness, which cannot be fully explained as a technical, circumstantial, or devised event. In the case of a speech intended to be delivered 'against the better judgment' of the speaker, termination could indicate that the real feelings of the speaker became, at some point, overwhelming, preventing the intended full speech. Aposiopesis (ah-poh-SEE-oh-PEE-i-sis) is an effective rhetorical means of reversing the 'enforced' conventional meaning through an open-ended gesture that the audience must resolve on its own (enthymeme). In architecture, 'inintended-unintended termination' is a common phenomenon, the Tower of Babel being the most significant historical-religious example.

Although aposiopesis is most often used to indicate a limit of ordinary language — the point where feeling or meaning is too great for words — a more ingenious use involves the presence of a third party who, in the role of a censor, requires two other parties to communicate 'silently', by inventing a code as they go to account for the things that will be forbidden to say. Whether the censor is a real government or religious censor — as was the case in the Inquisition or Stalinist Europe — or simply a local representative of the maternal or paternal super-ego, the effect is what the author Bruno Schulz (1892-1942) characterized as the 'author and reader secretly holding hands beneath the table'. This is to say that the majority of meaning in works of art is conspiratorial and unarticulated. The 'edge' created by aposiopesis can presume that it matches the censor's thick black marker, but the conspiracy will be the stronger factor. The edge of aposiopesis can thus be assimilated to the more universal boundary or gap beyond which everything fearful and pleasurable resides.

## 4. apotrope

Apotrope is a figure of reversal and prohibition. *Zuruck!* ('Turn back!') is the word echoing throughout Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, an warning of the necessity of initiation/induction into 'mysteries' before certain social-sexual rights are bestowed on the hero and heroine. Thus, the apotrope deals specifically with the convertibility between privation and prohibition that constitutes the dynamic quality of the 'inside frame' that protects reality from the 'Real' of desire, pictured as an obscene overflow of 'content' of the *id* into the convention-regulated field of the social subject. 'Privation converts to prohibition' might be considered as a general rule of perception: what we can't see we presume to be 'forbidden' to us. Applying this conversion rule to the internal 'vanishing point' that mediates visibility and invisibility, all materializations of the inside frame or internalized vanishing point (indicated by the metal hoop passed around the magician's suspended assistant to show that there are no invisible trick wires) become apotrope, and can be identified by the presence of the apotrope, which in Freudian terms is the denial ('No!') as well as the territorial marker, 'No Trespassing!' Such signs can be indicated indirectly, by presenting 'forbidden' content (pornography, gossip, insider tips, etc.).



## 5. antipode

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