

The Missing Guest: The Twisted Topology of Hospitality

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'There was a time', says a myth of the Chilouk people, 'when no one yet knew fire. People used to heat their food in the sun, and the men ate the upper part of the food, cooked in this way, while the women ate the underneath which was still uncooked.' The myth is not male chauvinism, but a kind of allegory of the sexual symbolism of fire.

— Maguelonne Tousaint-Samat, *A History of Food* ¹

Both cuisine and architecture wrap tightly around the details of our day-to-day life. As soon as we look at one, we find the other, but the connections linking the two have not always been simple or obvious. It is not enough to describe the spaces where dining takes place, the conditions of modern cities that gives rise to habits of consumption, or the criss-crosses between food and style. We have to go to the heart and essence of the matter — how the bounding of space and nourishment are related.

Architecture's relation to cuisine is nowhere more evident than in the evolution of hospitality. Hospitality involves specialized spaces as well as elaborate food customs. Its sophisticated attitude towards strangers is a comparatively late development of culture. The earliest stages of human life have been called "cyclopean" because of their resemblance to the unfriendly one-eyed giants described by Homer in the *Odyssey*. Early societies, like the Cyclopes, regarded strangers as a threat. Trade had to take place "silently," without face-to-face contact. Each group governed itself through the laws of family and clan. Military alliances, city-states, and the consolidation of nations took place only after cyclopean cultures could be united around common needs, customs, and religions. Hospitality developed in parallel with these new political institutions, requiring the social customs and physical supports of cities.

Was the evolution of hospitality a matter of isolated "cyclopean" cultures losing out to trade-oriented ones? Were "hospitable" peoples such as the Phoenicians or Greeks simply more successful in dominating other cultures? Darwinistic explanations are true in part, but they're not the whole picture. Is it also possible that there might exist, within human culture at its most basic, some constant cyclopeanism-hospitality ratio, a kind of atom or fractal capable of moving in either direction as occasion demands?

That atom would be evident in the parallels between the evolution of domestic space and civic space. We would see it in attitudes towards the dead, towards the visibility of living spaces, towards the new role accorded to the stranger. Houses, cities, and fields would reveal a topography that exemplified the French saying of *plus ça change*. Pursuing this cyclopeanism-hospitality fractal calls for a hop-scotch methodology that allows jumping between cultures, periods of history, and types of evidence. Because food and architecture are superficially very different but really closely connected, the method that explores connections has to cover a broad and discontinuous ground.

We begin with relations of the living and the dead that were materialized around the domestic hearth, formalized by tombs and monuments, and eventually collectivized by the city's public spaces. The dead require nourishment, and their "places" have specific rules of location and visibility. This is the beginning of a theory of the architecture of cuisine.

Who Is Missing from the Table?

Shall we start with the dinner table? Someone's missing — that's the key. The guest who couldn't make it, the departed loved one, the companion away in some foreign land. Through toasts, prayers, feasts for the dead, empty place-settings, we refer to their absence. No matter who's there, someone is *always* missing. The hearth is the reference point of this absence.

In the city, the table becomes a tableau, a scene made to be seen. Someone's missing, a collective someone. We see things acting as place-holders for the missing: the statues, the remindful obelisks, plaques, and flags. No matter who's there, someone is always missing, fallen, and recast as heroes who establish our ownership of the place. *These dead shall not have died in vain*. . . . The civic altar and, later, monuments mark the spot of this absence, the place where in ancient times sacrifices were required, sacrifices of someone strange, a stranger.

In fields are tombs, where again someone is missing, a bunch of *no-bodies* who were somebodies, as we can read on the stone that marks the spot of their absence. Despite their lack of corporality, none have relinquished their appetite. All need to be fed honey, oil, and wine, and their hunger correlates to precise relationships imposed on the spaces of the household, city, and field by the conditions of absence. House, city, tomb — from the history of their images we might deduce an inside-out logic that starts with two terms, a topology that flips on behalf of our *desire to enclose ourselves* but identifies itself through an absence based on that desire, d. We dedicate and delay that desire with the invention of a substitute, a double, a representative; a ghost, a guest, a cipher; a stranger, a nobody, who can *come and go, appear and disappear*, created from and sustained by imagination, f.

"Location! Location! Location!" — the real-estate agent's mantra, has a deep meaning for us. This inside-out fractal, on the basis of a very simple principle of a reflexive self-transformation ("recursion") manages to produce complex, often surprising outcomes. While one branch necessarily involves imagining what is not immediately present to the senses, the other branch has to do with location of this missing part. The absent one, this nobody, always has a *place*, and that place is, by direction of desire's small d, connected to the empty existential center, an inside from which absence will erupt to re-frame the house from the inside out (Fig. 1.1). In many if not most cultures, this is materialized as the hearth's relationship to the ancestral dead. The hearth is thus a primordial center, a center no matter where it is geometrically posed. Like the *templum* that determined location through the intersection of *cardus* and *decumanus*, the hearth is an intersection, a crossing, a point of transaction.

Not only were the dead originally remembered in detail as permanent family members; they counted for more than their living descendents. They were, in fact, demi-gods.² Ancient Greeks and Romans believed that the fire, a collective spirit of the family *genius*, retained its procreative powers. The fire that reduced the corpse to bone transformed the soul, the *psyche*, into a god. The cult of Hestia, goddess of the hearth, made the family's wife and daughters into the priestesses of the cult of the family, the *manes*, in Hades ("the invisible"). In a sense, the woman who tended the fire was *married* to the flame (Fig. 1.2). When the fire collectivized the spiritual genii of a whole city, it was essential that its caretakers, like the Vestals at Rome, be virginal and kept from public contact. Fustel de Coulanges reports that the family hearth, like the civic Vestals, was shielded from the view of visitors.³ The belief that a look could contaminate is ancient and widespread. In some cultures, it was forbidden to look directly at the king, holy objects, or certain ceremonies. Even in contemporary societies, wealth, beauty and pride attract the "evil eye," the leveler of uneven distributions of fortune.⁴

How was the sexuality of the fire of the *manes* connected to the need to protect the hearth from the view of strangers? The relationship is complex. It is impossible to decide whether the practice was intended to block the view of strangers or the view of the hearth. In the case of marriage, in fact, it seems that the *manes* had to be blinded to the marriage rite that transferred a daughter from her father's hearth to her husband's.⁵ The bride was to avoid any signs of cooperating. In some cultures, the bride's family stages a mock fight to prevent the husband from taking his bride. The custom of carrying the bride over the threshold of the

husband's house survives in popular culture. The forgotten meaning of this portage is that it originally indicated the bride's unwillingness or inability. The household hearth was, to borrow from film criticism, an element of *suture* — a means of connecting outside to an in-most interior.⁶ Anything that affected it had perforce to employ the same inside-out logic: blindness for invisibility, hostility for hospitality, resistance for cooperation. Thus was the issue of location annealed to that of ... what? Something both visual and anti-visual; hence, something phallic, *f*; something involving disguise.

If we draw the simplest form of the inside-out machine, it is a box with an arrow going out and coming back in at the center, in a recursive motion (Fig. 1.3). We use the word "topology" to describe the situation if only because this device resembles the Möbius band, the toy known by every child that has "really" only one side and only one edge but, in our projective vision, appears to have a twist for its trick. If we try to have a projective map or picture of the Möbius band, we see a twist because a fixed eye is not allowed to follow the single surface without interruption. In topographical terms, the twist does not exist. Topology permits only techniques of touch that *duplicate* the structure by *following* it. It may sound unlikely, but this tricky twist is all we need to generate the complex situations surrounding cuisine, celebrations, festivals that punctuate calendars, songs to the dead and the voices of the dead given in return, houses that are homes, and houses with some- and no-bodies in them. Because the ways of getting in and out of a house or a city belong to a nearly universal language of doors, borrowed from the idea of the horizon, entries (where hospitality is intensified) and hearths (where it is prohibited) are co-conditioning. Their "logic" borrows from the language of the labyrinth, the imagined portal between the Olympian sky and the chthonian underworld.⁷

Let's keep things straight the Egyptian way, by using hieroglyphs. The "starter relationship," the missing guest, can be the hole in a square (Fig. 1.4). We can designate that guest/ghost, the surplus or lack of cuisine with the Greek letter d , and show the extra/missing part below it, in some "elsewhere" region inaccessible through established symbolic networks. "The unsymbolizable" has always figured prominently in the life of cultures, as an Elsewhere that, like a blank check, can be materialized in a variety of forms: Hades, the future, the unknown. This is the stuff about which Parmenides advised us not to speak and about which Sartre did speak with such unforgettable wit that Pierre, who did not show up for his café date, will forever be inscribed in our photo-album with four empty adhesive corners and a slight shadow on the page. The thing to remember about this non-place defined by the thin distance d is the rule of conflation: those things about which we know little or nothing are almost always presumed to have common cause and common rule. Thus, just because dreams and death were equally inaccessible, many cultures have regarded dreams as death-in-miniature, a glimpse forwards or backwards, exempt from the rule of normal time.

This escape from time's one-thing-after-another is not an escape from time; it's more an escape *into* time. Our starter-fractal is thus primarily temporal. It's an "again," a "return"; the *wieder* and *zurück* that structure Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. It's the doubles, rebirths, reborn souls, hierophanies, *déjà-vus*, and other devices of religion and comedy that, through disguises and mirrors, bring us back to the beginning. To wit: one of the first uses of the starter-fractal, the table with someone missing, has been divination: the science of augury. That's not a table, that's an altar! But, of course, there is the fire, there is the water (the substances of boundary). Later, the wine and bread, the substances of sacrifice, return. "As it was in the beginning, it now and ever shall be, world without end" — one of the verbal approximations of the fractal.

Back to the theme of Location Trismagistus: Out of this little table with its extra/missing guest/ghost d , we need a space for the social-religious effects of divination (Fig. 1.5). It's best to write this in a space other than that required by d , so that we can see the difference between the *unsymbolizable* desire d and the symbolizable realm of the everyday ($A D \$$). In symbolizable space, the barred subject, the Lacanian '\$', finds itself constrained by orders of various kinds ("Other," symbolized by 'A' for *Autre*), beginning with the advice of divination — the authorities, laws, and customs that shape the subject into an outward-facing super-ego. From the hearth-table-altar comes the voice that becomes the law that binds the subject.⁸ The fixed location of this voice is what caused the first humans to stop wandering, to stay near the first altars set up in clearings in the forest to gauge the signs of the sky (Vico), to regard soil

as the place of residence of those-who-are-missing from the family tables and civic tableaux, to invent the ruse of carrying soil from the old city to the new one, so that the *manes* would not detect this abandonment of place.

Location! location! location! and divination thus come in on the human scene at the same time. Authority's fixed locations would be sole centers of the subject's life were it not for an imaginary double through which the subject \$ finds (with help from *fantasy*, *f*) an ally, a hero, a representative, *f*, who has access to the unsymbolizable space of desire, *d*. In Euripides' *Alcestis*, this Admetus's guest Hercules, the hero who, as such, can visit and return alive from the Underworld. The prize he brings back with him is a veiled bride, *d*, really Admetus's self-sacrificed wife, Alcestis (\$), who returns to the center of Admetus's household.⁹ The structural resemblance of *Alcestis* to David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* is not accidental. The double Betty/Diane retrieves her own sacrificed bride, Camilla Rhodes (Rita), in a remarkable ascent from the murder scene to a banquet at a house on the hill above. Instead of nice Apollo, a seamy collection of mystery men (a dwarf, "the Cowboy," the Castiglione brothers) occupy the celestial/inferral control-box.

This fractal, this little box with its flip-side showing, this again-machine, has, rather than two faces, a "two-in-one face." Hence, it finds an early form in the god *Janus*, *Ianus*, or *Dianus* — the son of Cardea, goddess of hinges. It is interesting to find that during solar holidays marking seasonal change, celebrated with banquets, special foods, and symbolic sacrifices, the role of a "fool" was as central as the motif of twisted space. Again, the "time out" of such events calls for an inside-out device. Janusian masters of the boundary (May fools, boy bishops, fake kings-for-a-day) show how this is done. In popular culture we see displaced remainders of this fractal: plots with infants switched at birth, twins, doubles, mistaken identities — in other words, dramatic elaborations of the theme of *anamorphosis* ("anamorphy," or *w*, for short).

There is one tradition that holds that anamorphy is a mostly visual phenomenon.¹⁰ This seems to be too limited, if only because we use "seeing" as a synonym for "knowing." The way we can "see double" in anamorphy presumes a cognitive correlation that can be played out in a variety of ways. For example, a pun is an acoustic anamorph planting two meanings within the same sound, and twins are dramatic anamorphs, planting two people within the same appearance. A joke is a structure built around the idea of quickly shifting the point of view to see something that was "in front of one eyes" but formerly missed. A nick-name, usually a substitution of an attribute for an individual (*antinomasia*: "Shorty") can be reversed. A quality can be defined by the person who ideally exemplified it (reversed *antinomasia*: "You're no Bobbie Kennedy!"). In Alfred Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps*, "Mr. Memory," the music-hall performer who opens the show, turns out to be the key to the mystery and, at the end, ties up all the loose ends, exemplifying the opposite, the universalizing form of nick-naming.¹¹ When the hero returns to the music hall, we know that a cycle has been completed but not closed off; the anamorph *w* has been "capitalized" (*W*) as an almost-closed circle that allows entry into the interior, the inside frame.

Anamorphy, *w*, occupies the space of symbolic relations, but it creates a stain, hole, or blot that acts as a gateway to the non-symbolizable, the realm of elsewhere out of which strangers appear and prophecies are uttered. Because the gateway appears *within* some otherwise ordinary image or sound, the meaning creates a "criss-cross" situation. Such is the literally case with what is perhaps the most famous case of visual anamorphy, Hans Holbein's portrait of "The Ambassadors" (1533). John North notes that a line drawn from the small crucifix in the upper left-hand corner intersects the horizon at 27°, the same angle required to view the anamorphic skull, a part of the assembly of "Golgotha," appropriate to the date of 1533 (3 x 500 + 33, Christ's age at the time of crucifixion), widely thought to be the time of the Apocalypse (Fig. 1.6).¹² This was also the angle of the sun at 4 p.m. at London on Good Friday, 1533. This criss-cross creates an open-ended interpretation, an "undecidability" factor, a *real Golgotha* — the anticipated end of the world — rather than a representation of Golgotha.¹³

John North demonstrates, if anything, the degree to which the fractal logic of anamorphy can, through overdetermination, support not only the layering of significance but different *modes* of encountering this significance. The barely visible crucifix becomes the basis for a Golgotha experience directly rather than symbolically. It is topography rather than projection

that brings this about. The *w* leads to *W*, an entry into the “gallery of pictures” Hegel described at the end of the *Phenomenology*. Anamorphy demonstrates the rather Freudian principle that the unconscious (for us, the “un-symbolizable”) has but one way to make its mark on the network of stable symbolic relationships that determine the social and visible world — that is, in the negative. The stain, blur, surplus, or lack becomes not just a marker but an entry-way.

This somewhat surprisingly sheds light on the “problem” of the symbolism of cities, how the center can also be a “gateway.” A possible answer begins by noting that anamorphic images and their counterparts in other media lie at the “heart” of the medium they interrupt. Yet, anamorphy demands a displaced viewer, occupying a viewpoint at some oblique angle that brings the pied image into corrected focus. Is the viewer blind or invisible? The interchangeability of the two suggests that the popular use of disguises at festivals integrates anamorphy into the heart of civic ritual. The stranger is both invisible (we don’t recognize him) and blind (he can’t look at the city or household hearths). The rule that *w* leads to *W*, blindness/recognition to passage, also ties Hermes, the god of boundaries and commerce (which originally took place at the edges of settlements), to Hestia, the goddess directing the collective worship of the ancestors amalgamated from the *manes* of separate families. As commerce was integrated into civic life, the *agora* moved from periphery to town center. The center could be radicalized because the hearth was *already a place of crossing*, a gateway to the liminal space of *Hades*. So it is that we continue to mark the centers of our towns with monuments to the dead, those whose identities establish a history of the place. This structural necessity of anamorphy makes the town a place for strangers and commerce.

Again, we find a central connection between space and cuisine. The “manic” insulation of the wall and tomb preserved the integrity of the *manes*; but, to secure the prophecies of the *manes*, it was necessary to feed them. Tombs provided stone bowls with drains that carried wine, oil, and honey underground. Families celebrated holidays at the family tomb, arranging picnics that metaphorically included the ancestors. Mexico’s famous “Day of the Dead” does as much at the usual family dinner table. The city collectivized this family practice with official festivals. Defending the city as well as the private space of the family required not just inviolable boundaries but ritualized meals and special dishes. Many modern civic celebrations contain remnants of this connection. Parades enact a virtual defensive labyrinth, “blessing” each crucial point and re-furrowing the imaginary lines between them. Civic and private banquets —with foods and recipes special to the occasion —broker the ancient connections between cuisine, the spaces of hospitality, and the dead.

Cyclopean Meals

This negative function of anamorphy permits us to return to the central object of our concern: the evolution of hospitality. “From what *to* what?” might be the question in the minds of most readers. For the present, the question will have to be answered schematically: *from* the “cyclopean” (which can indicate a historical period or even any contemporary condition where authority dominates desire and imagination) *to* the duplicitous and folded “spaces” of hospitality. The reason for focusing on this relationship is clear. Without hospitality, food is simply nourishment, a satisfaction of a bodily hunger. With hospitality, even on a micro-scale, preparing and eating food becomes the most intensive and direct of any significant medium. As Claude Lévi-Strauss stressed in *The Raw and the Cooked*, food is good because not because it is good to eat but because it is “good to think.”

Part of the transition from cyclopean privacy to hospitality involves the role of the stranger. Historical cyclopean societies forbade contact with strangers. The institution of silent trade — exchanges of goods at crossroads between parties that never meet — was established around this prohibition, and its widespread popularity and historic endurance is a testimony to the cyclopean sentiments behind it.¹⁴ Strangers were at once volatile and attractive. This ambiguity was reflected in the seemingly opposite terms surrounding relations with strangers: *hostes*, meaning both host and enemy; *ghostis*, with roots in words suggesting both enemy and guest.¹⁵ As the customs of hospitality spread with trade and exploration in the pre-classical Mediterranean world, political alliances were extended by the exchange of gifts and intermarriage. But, hospitality was ever in conflict with the cyclopean norm. Such was the subject of the Homeric tale of Odysseus’s visit to the cave of the Cyclops, one of a race of

giants famous for their lack of hospitality. This story is layered with cultural meanings. The Cyclopes mirrored the custom of family worship, where each extended family-clan maintained independent, severe laws based on the religion of the family gods, the *manes*. Auspices taken from the hearth were absolute; strangers were not tolerated. The legend of the Cyclopes' "single eye" likely referred to the designation of clearings made in forests for the purposes of taking auspices as "eyes." To say the Cyclops had a single eye was to say that he worshiped family gods from a single and permanent altar.¹⁶

Homer's Cyclops, the giant Polyphemus, was made to fit the fabular tradition of traveler tales. The cave where Polyphemus lived alone with his flock of sheep in several senses followed the paradigm of the meander popularly scratched on walls and stones throughout the Mediterranean — the "Thesean labyrinth." This was a set of two identical structures connected by a twist. The pattern, used in games, dances, and rituals, was itself two parts connected by a twist — a sequence of counter-clockwise, then clockwise, then counter-clockwise circular motions. The connection is likely because the story itself involves two parts connected by a twist repeated at various scales. The labyrinth in this case extends the idea of anamorphosis by formalizing the elements of the double-image as fractal, such as that of Holbein's "Ambassadors," as elements of the story. As such, it is a model as well as an example of the transition from cyclopean to hospitable society.

The story is well known. Odysseus knows of the Cyclopes infamous treatment of strangers, but he wants to test their custom, to see if he, a golden-tongued Greek, can charm Polyphemus into giving him the gifts traditionally accorded to strangers in much of the Mediterranean world. The optative mood in the verb translated as "he would give" supports the idea that we are witnessing an experiment.¹⁷ The experiment turns out wrong. Polyphemus reveals that he is a practitioner of another cyclopean custom, cannibalism. The imprisoned Greeks slow the pace of anthropophagy by blinding the giant while he dozes in a drunken stupor, but they are still imprisoned within the labyrinthine cave. Their escape comes only when Odysseus devises a two-staged trick. He tells Polyphemus that his name is "Nohbdy" (*Oudeis*). At first, the audience is unaware of this device or its function. Odysseus is thinking ahead to the run from the cave to the boats. Without a means of diverting the neighboring Cyclopes, the Greeks are done for. When the crew manages to slip out beneath the sheep (another case of anamorphosis), Polyphemus tries to alert his neighbors, but they hear the name "Nohbdy" as a pronoun, not a name. "Nohbdy has blinded me" comes across as inane as the Abbott and Costello prattle, "Hu's on first." It's not the name itself but the "idiotic symmetry" created by the double function of the name both as a name (reversed antinomasia) and a descriptive term (straight antinomasia).

The value of this story to the history of hospitality lies in its multiple use of the single "fractal" embodied in the labyrinth (Fig. 1.7). The story itself is divided into two parts: one that takes place before Polyphemus is blinded, a second which comes afterwards. The "twist" here is the heroic act of sharpening an olive post to blind the giant. The second part of the story, another out-in-out sequence, also uses a twist, this time Odysseus's prudent invention of the double-edged fake name. Like the use of "Mr. Memory" in Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps*, the name comes in as a nickname and goes out as a universal. Odysseus *really is a nobody* who manages, by virtue of that negative existence, escape the enfilade of giants.

We can follow the progress of the story using the "topographical" fractal with its Möbius-band logic — two sides connected by a twist (Fig. 1.8). The Cyclopean cave demonstrates the fractal qualities of the story and resembles, in plan, the digestive tract. Location! Location! Location! Inside the cave, A D \$, subjects are bound to the authority of the Cyclops, truly "barred" in the strict Lacanian sense. The key to half of the escape is found in the hearth. Tempering the olive stake to make an adamant hardness enables the weapon to strike at the heart of the eye: d g A. Odysseus, *f*, the hero of the moment, is able to execute this phallic act because he lulls the giant into a drunken sleep with his banter. Blind, like the *manes* at the wedding ceremony, the Cyclops will not see the Greeks escape his cave, but the logic of the story now moves from sight to touch, from metaphor to metonymy. This is the other "stem" of the formula that began with the absolute localization of the labyrinth (the mandate of Cyclopean society). Metonymy is what gets the bride away from the father's hearth; it is Odysseus's guarantee of success. Knowing he will touch *only one side* of the sheep, the Greeks cling beneath. Knowing that Polyphemus will hear only the particular "side"

of the name, Nohbdy, Odysseus clings beneath, to the reversed part of *antinomasia*, the name as universal nobody. "If you think I'm Nohbdy, I am!" — the Missing Guest, that is.¹⁸ The two parts of the story, the two parts of the sheep, and the two parts of the name use the labyrinth's logic: two parts connected by a twist. This fractalization of the Möbius band structure is chiasmic. It convenes through a "catastrophe" made inevitable by the symmetry/opposition of its internal mirror-structure. It is self-reference in the uncanny guise of the heroic epic.

[INSERT: Fig. 1.9]

Origin or Center?

Odysseus seems to have intended his encounter with the Cyclops as an experiment to test the relationship between cyclopean devotion to *manes*, the fathers, and the new principles of hospitality. The same provocative margin-testing can be found in Euripides' play *Alcestis*, where King Admetus is blind to the trick played by his guest, Hercules. Could this be simply a historical conflict, present from the point where the increasing cultural reliance on exogamy required the family to fool the *manes* into thinking that the daughter was not abandoning the hearth voluntarily? The historical appearance of the city-state supported by commerce suggests that hospitality was one of the traditions that contributed to the growth of democracy and the civic importance of the *agora*. *Alcestis* shows that there was at least enough social awareness of the conflict by the Fifth Century B.C.E. to provide plenty of comic material for the sophisticated audiences. It was no longer possible to be as cavalier as was Admetus about the wife's "ambiguous" position in the household without drawing public contempt.

On the other hand, there is a real possibility that the conflict between Cyclopean devotion to the hearth and practices of hospitality was not just an event of remote history but an internal horizon present from the beginning in cooking and eating, with the same proportional divisions in every age. The captions vary, but the ratio remains the same. What for the ancients was played out in the domestic space of the house and the civic space of the *agora* is today played out in the decision whether to satisfy hunger in a "functionalist" manner or to make use of food's layered significations in some cultural or personal way, as in fasting and feasting. With hospitality comes escape, mobility, polity among strangers, the real life of cities — then and now. Hermetic boundary-crossing and the role of the stranger open up cuisine to sophistication, theatricality, a relation to an audience. The fractal relationships that guided this historical development continue as a latent, renewable potential, fleshed out in new form whenever political and cultural conditions allow.

This is suggested by the early use of the hearth for the worship of ancestors and the control of auspices. *From the beginning*, the hearth was protected from the gaze of strangers, the virulent "evil eye." The exchange of invisibility for blindness in the case of marriage customs makes use of the topographical peculiarity that "twists" cyclopean visuality into the hyperspace of hospitality, just as Odysseus twisted together the two parts of his escape plan following the labyrinth's fractal design. The vulnerability of the hearth shows precisely *where* hospitality must fit, and also shows hospitality/cuisine in perennial contention with a "cyclopean" point of view. It is not an issue we can resolve ideologically or intellectually but, rather, a monad that couples two opposites in permanent contention. Thus, the stable topography that structured the ancient Greek and Roman household and cities is not just an artifact of by-gone days but a pan-cultural and perennial quality of human life. The cyclopean/hospitable distinction is located precisely in the middle of contemporary situations. Why? How?

The answer lies in the "chiasmic" nature of human thought, the coupling "ideal" and "material" elements in every symbolic expression. This ancient rhetorical figure of *chiasmus*, crossing (c), included verbal formulæ for praising the departed at a funeral with an encomium that preserved the boundary between the dead and the living through double-edged praise. But, it's clear that chiasmus is the figure proper to the w of anamorphy. From cyclopean order (an inside) to the open invitation of hospitality, chiasmus is the crossed building (tomb, temple, labyrinth), the crossed inside-out space of the *agora*, and the focal space of the hearth, where the *manes* issues forth ambiguous prophecies.

What sustains these magic and effective spaces? The symbolic networks that bind the subject to the Other in various ways (D) are ironic, bi-polar and self-sustaining. They are sustained by a circularity that creates an irrefutable interior logic. As Pascal pointed out, the king's power is sustained by the belief of the subjects that he is a king. Without this belief the king is powerless, so in effect the king is ruled by those he rules. A literary example of this idiotic symmetry occurs in Goethe's *Elective Affinities*. A husband and wife making love each imagine their partner to be their illicit lover. The husband imagines Otilie, the wife Hauptmann. Through the pairing of the two acts of imaginary adultery, the couple can remain faithful, but the child conceived turns out to have the face and hair of Otilie and the eyes of Hauptmann. Combining reality with the Real of the imagination in a criss-cross (both c and w) means that there were four people involved: a couple bound legitimately and the "fantasmic" couple Otilie and Hauptmann, two "Nohbdies."

Simonides

A story that ties together the themes of cuisine, *encomiæ*, architecture, ancestral religion, and chiasmus is, curiously, the anecdote cited by nearly every Latin author as the origin of the "method of memory places."¹⁹ The reader can by now pick out the clues and relate them to the curiously parallel story of the Cyclops. Simonides, poet and hence *parasite*²⁰, or marginal person, was hired by a nobleman of Ceos, Scopas, to celebrate his recent victory in the wrestling ring. At the banquet, Simonides sang a poem divided into two parts to save his host from potential retribution from the evil eye; this part was devoted, in turn, to the *twin* gods, the Dioscuri. Scopas was not pleased with this piety and paid the poet only half his fee, telling him to "go to the gods" (i.e. to Hell) to collect the rest. Before Simonides could finish his dinner, a servant informed him that two strangers were waiting outside to speak with him, but when he got outside, there was no one to be seen. Just as he started to go back inside the banquet hall, the building collapsed, crushing all of the guests. Those who came to claim their relatives' bodies were alarmed to find that none were identifiable, but Simonides, who had practiced the art of memory places (attaching the guest's name to his place at the table to remember it more easily), could recall the name of each victim because of the crushed body's location, location, location. The relatives, relieved to be able to bury their kinsmen and thus avoid haunting by unsettled souls, generously rewarded Simonides more than his missing half-fee.

The story grounds a memory method that is chiasmic (place + name) but is also itself chiasmic. The banquet hall stands and collapses; the guests are living, then dead. The poem is divided in two, and half of it is about twins, the other half about a wrestler, one of a pair. Scopas's curse is exchanged for a "placement" that permits his proper burial. The c assures us that the story's parts, like butterfly wings, will fold together perfectly.

The place at the table thus implies both cuisine and location within a precise geometry of Elsewhere, mediated by food. The place in the city presumes festivals and markers, a silent language of civic form. The place in the tomb is a point of nourishment, at least in ancient times when tubes would be used to pour oil, wine, and honey directly into the ground; but, in ancient times at least, we know that the *termini* that defined this location were protected on pain of death.²¹ So, cuisine is and always has been a matter of who's missing. Who *is* missing? Nohbdy.

Endnotes

¹ Maguelonne Tousaint-Samat, *A History of Food*, trans. Anthea Bell. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1992, p. 9.

² Richard Broxton Onians, *The Origins of European Thought, About the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, and Fate*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1951, p. 263.

³ Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City, A Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome*. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980, pp. 29.

⁴ See Alan Dundes, ed., *The Evil Eye, A Casebook*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981.

⁵ *The Ancient City*, p. 37.

⁶ For a review of the expanded idea of this film term, see Slavoj Žižek, "Chapter 3: The Short Circuit," *The Fright of Real Tears, Krzysztof Kieslowski between Theory and Post-Theory*. London: The British Film Institute, 2001, pp. 55-70.

⁷ For the purposes of this essay, a very limited idea of the labyrinth will be the most informative: the "Cretan" or "Thesean" labyrinth, a design of two sets of recursive turns connected by a twist (ABA:B:ABA).

⁸ The frontispiece of Giambattista Vico's *The New Science* shows as much. From the interpretations derived from divination, the first peoples derived laws that were at first severe but later led to humanizing social institutions (*res publica*). See Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fish. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1968; Donald Kunze, *Thought and Place: The Architecture of Eternal Places in the Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, Emory Vico Studies, Vol. 2. New York: Peter Lang, 1987, pp. 169-206. See also Michel Ragon, *The Space of Death, A Study of Funerary Architecture, Decoration, and Urbanism*, trans. Alan Sheridan. Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1983.

⁹ Euripides, *Euripides: Alcestis and Other Plays*, trans. John Davie. New York: Penguin Books, 1996. See also Donald Kunze, "Alcestis Backstory," *Potential Architecture Journal*, <http://www.waac.ut.edu/paj/>.

¹⁰ For example Jurgis Baltrusaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, trans. W. J. Strachan. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1977.

¹¹ Andrea Battistini, *La degnità della retorica: Studi su G. B. Vico*. Pisa: Pacini, 1975.

¹² See Tom Robbins, "Is This the Coded Secret of the Ambassadors?" *The Sunday Times* (London), January 13, 2002.

¹³ Victor Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting*, trans. Anne-Marie Glasheen. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

¹⁴ Norman O. Brown, *Hermes the Thief, The Evolution of a Myth*. Great Barrington, Massachusetts: Lindisfarne Press, 1990, pp. 32-45.

¹⁵ See Walter W. Skeat, *Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968, pp. 278.

¹⁶ See Vico, *New Science*, §503.

¹⁷ Henry W. Johnstone, Jr., "Odysseus as a Traveler," in *Categories, A Colloquium*, ed. Henry W. Johnstone, Jr. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Department of Philosophy, The Pennsylvania State University, 1978, p. 108.

¹⁸ Groucho Marx defends his client to the judge: "Your honor, my client looks like an idiot and talks like an idiot, but don't be deceived . . . he *is* an idiot" (paraphrase).

¹⁹ Two famous versions are found in the *Ad Herennium* attributed to Cicero and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*.

²⁰ Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, trans. Lawrence R. Schehr. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1982.

²¹ *The Ancient City*, pp. 58-62.