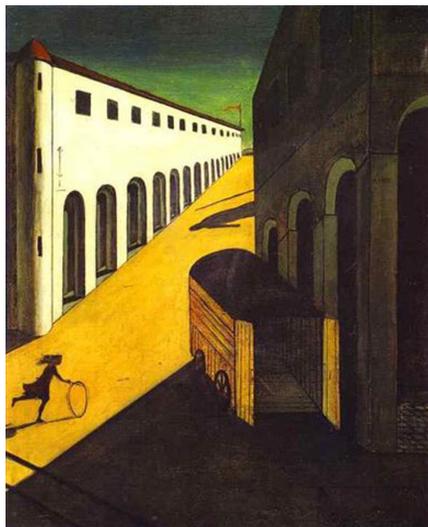


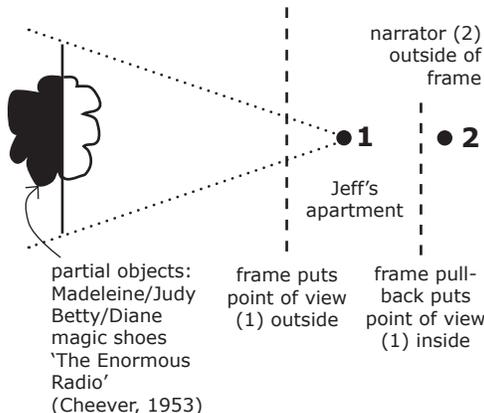
# point of view / vanishing point

Examples from painting and film demonstrate quickly that there are important consequences following the choice of locating the point of view (subject, the ultimate inside) and vanishing point (or, 'unreachable object', the ultimate outside) inside the frame of representation, outside the frame of representation, or in a special category within the frame of representation that counts as an 'outpost' for subjective observation, such as Jeff Jefferies' studio apartment in Hitchcock's *Rear Window*. Combinatorial comparisons of the three possibilities for both vanishing point and the point of view show that 'revolutionary' works of art typically occupy the diagonal conditions (where both VP and POV have the same status), but paradigmatic example for each of the other six cases demonstrate an important role played by the phenomenon of *anacoluthon*, a 'revisionary' trope capable of revealing a gap occurring in a prior sequence or element of a temporal series.

vanishing point position	point of view inside frame	point of view in special margin	point of view outside frame
<b>VP inside frame</b>	First Person narrator effect Device in work that 'vanishes' to other scene; '4th dimensional travel'. <i>HOT</i> detective. Representations of representation. <i>Alice in Wonderland</i> (Carroll, 1865) <i>The Eye</i> (Nabokov, 1930) <i>Pale Fire</i> (Nabokov, 1962) <i>Vertigo</i> (Hitchcock, 1958)	Subject represented in special margin inside the frame; device inside work that 'vanishes' to other scene; '4th dimensional travel'. Ventriloquist, <i>Dead of Night</i> (Cavalcanti) <i>Rear Window</i> , all but conclusion (Hitchcock, 1954)	SYNECDOCHE Subject narrates but does not appear inside the frame; device inside work that 'vanishes' to other scene; '4th dimensional travel'.
<b>VP in special margin</b>	Subject represented, attention focused on object outside frame.	<i>Rear Window</i> , conclusion (Hitchcock, 1954) 'Desmoiselles d'Avignon' (Picasso, 1907)	NARRATION (FEMININE)
<b>VP outside frame</b>	METONYMY 'Mystery and Melancholy of a Street' (di Chirico, 1914) 'Nighthawks', 'Morning in a City' (Hopper)	Olimpia ('The Sandman', Hoffman) HAL, <i>2001 Space Odyssey</i> (Kubric) computers as projections of consciousness (Turing)	HYSTERICAL INVERSION OF SPACE 'Ambassadors' (Holbein, 1533) <i>North by Northwest</i> (Hitchcock)



Giorgio di Chirico, 'Mystery and Melancholy of a Street' (1914)



## 1. the point of view

The point of view is more than the simple optical reference point used for projecting lines of sight in the typical construction of 'cone-of-vision' perspectives; also it is more than the position of the camera in photography, film, and video. The POV is, as a position that 'takes up' the role of the observing subject in the audience of the representation, establishes a locus of transfer of attention from the audience's position in the hypothetical or real auditorium to a place within the field of the representation. The POV's relation to the voice is complex. The narrator's voice is 'acousmatic' — it occurs outside of the field of view. Other voices can be acousmatic as well; some voices within the field of view establish POV through conventional techniques: duration, tone, inclusion of thoughts as vocalized, etc. Within the field of the representation, POV is the point that is the focus of the anxiety of the audience. Its action resolves (or fails to resolve) this anxiety. In 'feminine narrative', the point is to step back to establish a point of enunciation that traps the subject within narrative structure. Hysteria is always in some sense feminine narrative but not all feminine narrative is hysterical.

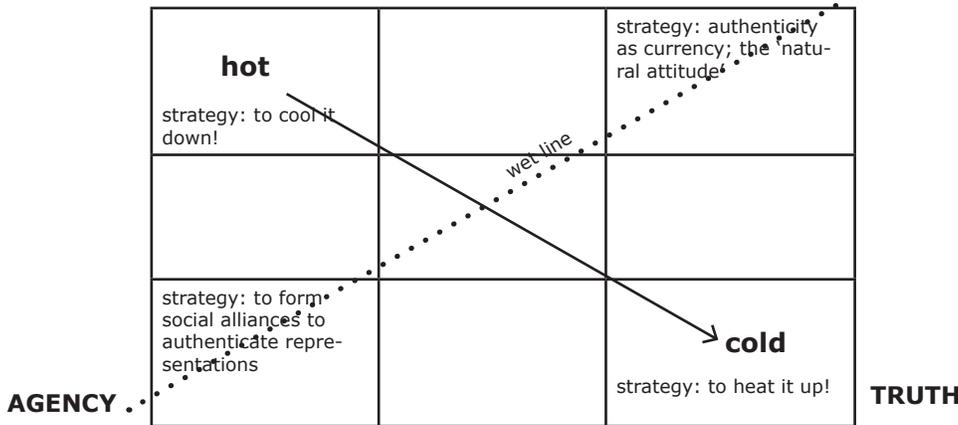
## 2. the vanishing point

The vanishing point, the classic point used to construct perspective drawings, is actually the 'blind spot' (*punctum sæcum*), the point at which the gaze is returned by the object to the subject ('interpellation' of the viewer by the viewed), the point at which the unseen or inaccessible side of the object can suddenly reveal itself (the horrifying monster emerging from the chest of the astronaut in *Alien*, the hallway of the hotel in *The Shining* that is flooded with blood). It can be generalized as a horizon or profile that moves in accompaniment to the change in the point of view, but it can be objectified as a portal (the rabbit hole in *Alice in Wonderland*) where people and objects can move between the horrible unreal and reality. This generalization is a conflation of the role of the profile in the 'contingent' concealment of the unseen side of things and the 'forbidden' aspect of the invisible. '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, just as when in a fancy restaurant we don't get the best table we assume that it is reserved for a favored customer with 'insider' privileges. Prohibition can take on cosmic qualities in the narrative order of the fantastic, where seeing something (peeking out from a closet door where one is a concealed voyeur) takes on the aspect of violation, as in J.-P. Sartre's famous example of the voyeur peeking through a keyhole, alarmed by the creak of a footstep on the stair: guilt pervades the simplest acts of perception.

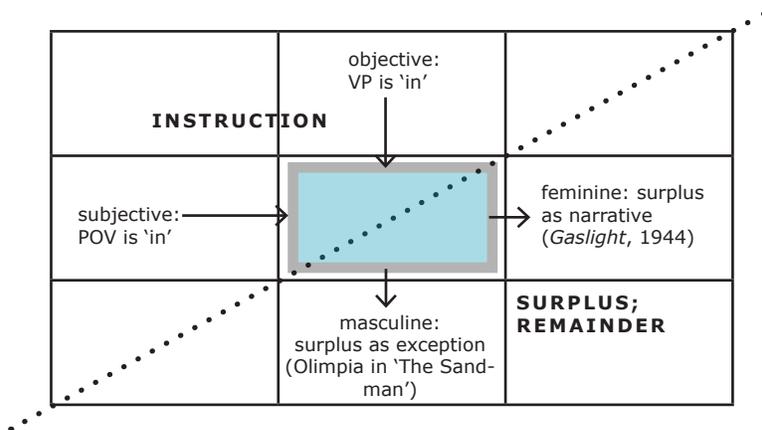
diagrams: point of view / vanishing point

**THE OTHER**

**PRODUCTION**



The graph relating the three possible positions of both the vanishing point, VP, and the point of view, POV, replicates the spatial logic of the cone-of-vision, whose inside/inside (the frame) position corresponds to the 'hot' position of the observer, and where the outside/outside position corresponds to the 'cool' position of the object. This relates to the classic figures of the 'hot detective' (Sam Spade), who, becoming involved with the very suspects he is investigating, relinquishes his objectivity on behalf of a temporarily misguided advocacy; and the 'cool detective' (Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot or Conan-Doyle's Sherlock Holmes) who remains objectively detached but creates anxiety that he cannot or will not solve the crime. When in film the hero must occupy the position of anxiety (the wrongly accused Walter Thornhill in *North by Northwest*), the anxiety becomes hysteria, because the logic of the situation is a self-enclosed triangle of relationships ('Las Meninas').



The question in Hoffman's spooky story, 'The Sandman', is: why is the doll Olympia treated as an exception and what does this mean? Olympia is an 'exception' because this episode of the story is, itself, first of all an exception, a narrative unit that is out of step with the main story of Nathanael's early childhood trauma, his recovery with the help of friends, and final encounter with the evil 'second father' Coppelius. Olympia is furthermore a non-biological exception, an automata who is literally and metaphorically unlike other women, a blank mysterious beauty who says nothing but nonetheless is credited with deep, even profound thoughts. True, her singing is a 'little too perfect', but Nathanael overlooks this and accepts her minimal responses to his long soliloquies as satisfactory evidence of her wisdom. In the Lacanian framework, the Law establishes itself for the subjects, the 'little people' as Leona Helmsley (1920-2007) famously characterized them. The exception 'proves the rule' in the sense that power speaks the 'masculine' language of the law that, in speaking, articulates and enforces a distance between the subjects and Other through networks of symbolic relationships. The exception lies 'anamorphically' inside the law, in the same way that drug laws established by whites define the most dangerous drug as crack (the 'black drug') while providing leniency for abusers of cocaine, the 'white drug'. By parsing all common categories ('drugs') into tacit good and evil parts, any law can include its exception through a process of master signification (enthymeme), by which, in the words of Buffalo Springfield's song, 'For What It's Worth' ('Stop, children, what's that sound? Everyone knows what's goin' down').

The exception figure in the case of artificial intelligence in the universal but rarely explained case of the attribution of 'smart'. Computers are not just thinking machines, they are 'smarter' than we are despite their clear and distinct limitations. The point is not to match human mental abilities to computers in a 1:1 comparison but to note that it is precisely the computer's inability to complete the full range of cognitive actions that makes it smarter than us. The doll Olympia is not just an approximation of the human, she is excessively human because — and precisely because — she cannot perform adequately. She is a failure at conversation, managing to say only 'yes, dear' to Nathanael's lengthy philosophical-poetic soliloquies. Her singing is 'too perfect'. Her dancing somewhat mechanical. Her eyes gaze into the distance, not able to focus, dart about, or reflect an inner life in the usual human manner. This proves in a very uncanny way that, indeed, 'privation converts to prohibition' in the imminent instances of perception: that is, the limits of judgment become apotropaic defenses of the subject — a distancing strategy — to protect from the excess of the Absolute wisdom lying behind the protective barrier of otherness.

Thus, it is the case that even when HAL, control-freak computer in Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968), is reduced to an idiot humming his way through the first years of AI development (singing 'Daisy, Daisy'), he is still in control in the same way that the Wizard-turned-huckster in The Wizard of Oz retains his authority even when unmasked by the dog Toto. His subjects need to sustain his power in order to restrain the excess of fantasy that puts them in the powers of wicked witches and flying monkeys. Remember, too, that Nathanael's problem with Olympia is another privation turned into prohibition. Olympia's non-response matches up to the implicit paternal injunction: 'No sex!' Spalanzani, the 'good father' is paired with the bad father, Coppolo to keep Nathanael at the level of a harmless adolescent suture, until they dismember his object of desire in an argument.