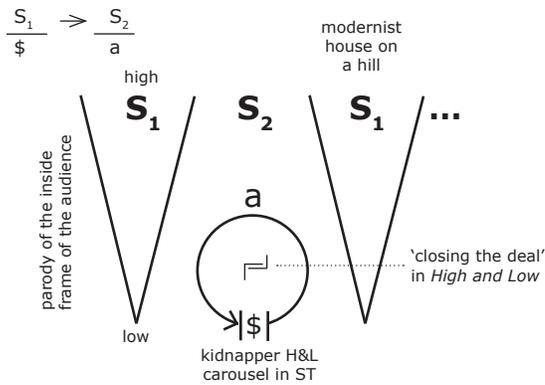
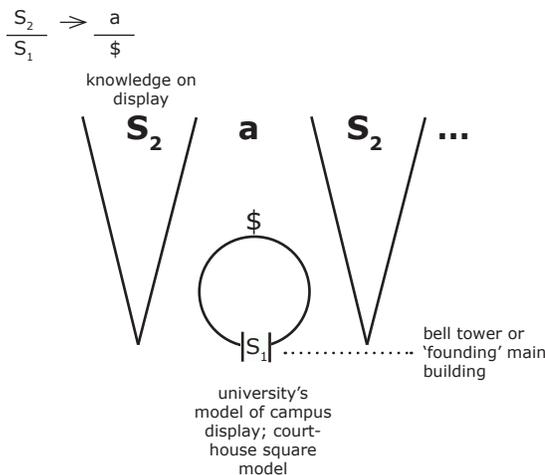


# sequencing the four discourses

Todd McGowan's book, *The Real Gaze: Film Theory after Lacan*, proposes four fundamental types of cinema based on strategies for dealing with 'the gaze', the Lacanian 'impossible object of desire' that is the presence of the Real in art. McGowan does not connect these types with the four well known forms of Lacanian discourse (master-servant, university, psychoanalysis, hysteric) but his descriptions make it clear that such a connection could be made. This would advance the general argument that lies beneath Lacanian psychology in general: that 'anamorphosis' has an expanded role that returns it to the 'uncanny' and its blurring of distinctions between inside/outside, subject/object, etc. by emphasizing the role of placement, interpellation, and (I add) the anxiety that arises from interpolating between the symbolic and the Real as models. This series of models uses the idea of a sequence of 'action and exposition' that characterizes narrative, film, and even static forms of art in a figurative sense, if only because all art depends on strategies of relating what is shown to what is hidden.



$S_2$ : the suspect (\$) is interpolated



## 1. master-servant: cinema of fantasy

Exemplary films: *Modern Times*, *City Lights*, *Blade Runner*, *Brazil*, *Dr. Strangelove*

**The Gaze:** the gaze is made present through fantasy.

**Function:** The fantasy supporting reality is revealed to be a 'dirty fantasy' that entraps the subject through its perverse idea of desire-coupled-with-production.

**Master/Master-Signifier:** Put on stage where its gaps/shortcomings become apparent.

**Knowledge:** the project of discovering and sometimes exposing the underside of power/mastery.

**objet-a/subject:** desire is caught within a circular 'mechanism' that also entraps the subject, who must 'disappear' or 'go mad'.

**Architecture/Landscape:** demonic modernism (Tati's *Playtime*), Auschwitz, Lang's *Metropolis*, dystopian cities.

**Notes:** The master is equated with display, i.e. with the architectural and landscape settings that are designed to show off wealth, influence, and dominance. Knowledge is always 'out of sight', because the master does not know what the servant must know in order to serve. Knowledge is the province of the servant, but the master believes that the servant possesses excess enjoyment that he cannot reach. Mechanisms become parodies of this excess, as when Chaplin falls inside the gear mechanisms of the factory in *Modern Times*.

## 2. university: the cinema of desire

Exemplary films: *Citizen Kane*, *Chan Is Missing*, *Playtime*

**The Gaze:** the gaze is sustained as a fundamental absence.

**Function:** Knowledge is 'on stage', a project to locate the 'master signifier', the key that will unlock all puzzles and create a globalizing fantasy.

**Master/Master-Signifier:** The enigmatic key to a mystery, or all mysteries ('Rosebud' in the film *Citizen Kane*)

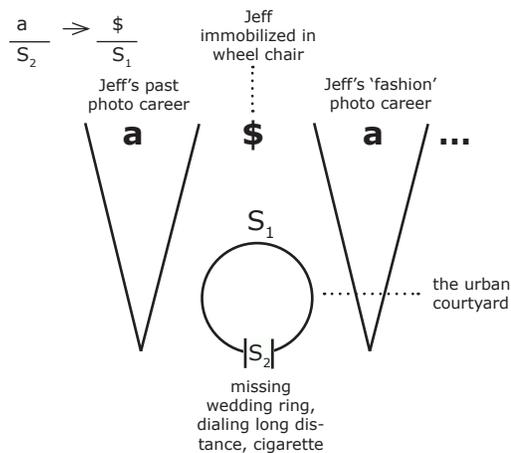
**Knowledge:** a project but also a 'show', as in the case of the American campus, where symbols of learning are arrayed in symmetrical, park-like settings.

**objet-a:** the necessary by-product of knowledge, the student ghetto, the idealization of student life as drenched in pleasure (*Animal House*), the powerful marginalia of campus life.

**subject:** the subject is sub-jected to the demand to 'Enjoy!' but not told how to carry out this demand. In *Citizen Kane*, the subject is portrayed as a tragic hero, whose life 'comes full circle' but remains incomplete until the missing signifier,  $S_1$ , is identified.

**Architecture/Landscape:** based on the model of the anthology: parts connected by a 'master plan' that is typically circular, with some enigmatic element restricted from public access or view.

**Notes:** The emphasis on absence creates spaces that are 'filled with emptiness' and refuse to offer the visitor direct access to enjoyment. Emphasis on knowledge remains fundamentally empty, since desire is 'silenced' and held at a distance.



### 3. psychoanalysis: the cinema of integration

Exemplary films: *The Wizard of Oz*, *Rear Window*

**The Gaze:** the gaze is obfuscated through a turn to fantasy.

**Function:** Desire itself is put on stage, as it is in the 'Kansas' sequence of *The Wizard of Oz*, and the audience's cone of vision that creates the stage is converted directly into the vortex that now isolates the questing subject, \$, Dorothy.

**Master/Master-Signifier:** This, in *Oz*, is given directly as a pattern: the yellow brick road, which sets up in advance the adventures that construct and control Dorothy's fantasy. In *Rear Window*, the 'master' is the neighbor whose suspicious actions create a puzzle that must be solved by 'finding the ring'. To do this, Grace Kelly enters into the 'gap' of the open window.

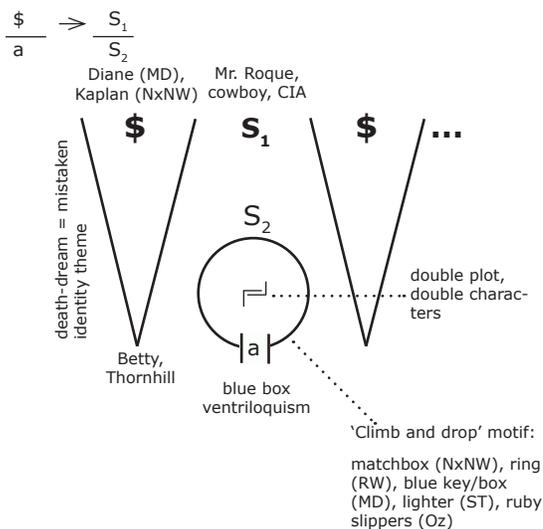
**Knowledge:** As in the scene in *The Wizard of Oz* where the Wizard confers prizes and diplomas to the Lion, Scarecrow, and Tin Man, these are presented as objects that have been lacking but not really important, except that their lack created a feeling of incompleteness.

**objet-a:** fantasy, as in Dorothy's traumatic encounter with Miss Gulch and escape, where she meets Prof. Marvel. Returning home she finds it empty, a preface to the replacement of Kansas by Oz, where as a questing subject she possesses the magic devices (ruby slippers) that she doesn't know how to use ( $S_2$ ).

**subject:** In *Rear Window*, the subject is immobilized as a token of invisibility, turned into a principle of hyper-access through optic means (spying on his suspicious neighbor).

**Architecture/Landscape:** 'Cool' modernism of Aalto, Corbusier, Mies, Niemeyer, etc., where fantasizing takes place through an imagined utopia of the modernist city based on common styles of detailing, uniform materials, and smooth idealized traffic circulation.

**Notes:** This mode tends to yield 'false endings' that many critics note as unsatisfactory. *The Wizard of Oz* terminates with the lame ploy, 'it was all just a dream'. *Rear Window* begins again with two broken legs and a domesticated couple.



### 4. hysteria: the cinema of intersection

Exemplary films: *North by Northwest*, *Mulholland Drive*

**The Gaze:** enactment of a traumatic encounter with the gaze.

**Function:** The subject is on view, given unwanted attention, confused for someone else. This creates the hysteric's question 'What do you want of me?' (*Que vuee?*) and sets up the possibility of criss-cross intersection of reality with the Real.

**Master/Master-Signifier:** The master signifier can be portrayed as the 'Other of the Other', the manipulator of the 'big story' operating in the background, such as Mr. Roque in *Mulholland Drive*.

**Knowledge:** The criss-cross or chiasmic plot takes up the job of circulating and returning the action to an enigmatic object that is the key to the 'suture' of reality with the Real.

**objet-a:** In Hitchcock, this is the McGuffin, the gratuitous object or fact that allows the audience to suspend its disbelief. In *Mulholland Drive*, it is the blue box and other elements (man behind Winkies) that stage encounters with the Real as 'cross-overs' between levels of reality.

**subject:** when the subject is put on stage, he/she is, fundamentally, misrecognized — taken for someone else. In *North by Northwest*, this is the confusion that misrecognizes Walter O. Thornhill for the non-existent spy, 'Kaplan'. In *Mulholland Drive*, the multiple double characters spring from Betty's death-dream, where she takes on the identity of Diane.

**Architecture/Landscape:** labyrinths, caves, grottos, and other 'spaces of discovery' involve complex criss-cross paths that couple successful navigation with discovery; in the case of malls and suburbs, 'mistaken identity' is a purposeful ploy for marketing, but the real mazes are created in the service spaces. In *Mulholland Drive* the entire filmic landscape operates as a diagram.

**Notes:** The striking feature of this mode is the literal way landscape terrain, architecture, and other physical features employ the diagrammatic logic of the sequence. Club Silencio in *Mulholland Drive*, for example, plays out in terms of ventriloquism the exact graphic logic of the 'shadow' phase. Here, to discover the 'big story' underlying the multiple plots, we see the voice (a) inserted into various performers, until at last Dolores del Rio collapses and is carried away by the 'masters' of ceremony.