Ed Pluth (Signifiers and Acts, 2007) presents this astonishing news: the three classic Freudian stages of childhood development, which condition us for life and which, when all is said and done, continue going through their "logics" throughout adulthood, amount to nothing more than a discrepancy in timing. Pluth says more, to be fair, but the valuable takeaway insights have to do with the delay that, in the oral phase, allows the infant to not be "so easily dismissed" with a simple satisfaction of hunger; that, in the anal phase, connect the place the subject has salvaged in the (m)Other with production, albeit negative and one associated with disappearance; and that, in the phallic stage require (mis)recognition, under cover of a symbolic disguise. Timing is all about the reversed predication of a drive and its satisfaction: >→< (hungry/fed, defecation’s before/after, exchanges of the symbolic ego–ideal, the power that oversees my subjectivity, with the imaginary ideal ego, the subject I want to be). The avenging side of the ego-ideal, the super–ego, as Real, completes the triangle of poles that make up the three-way magnetism of the subject. This complete arc, from infancy to adult subjectivity, holds out the promise that much of the Lacanian system is based on the "emergent" dynamics of delay, which is easily described by the parsimonious calculus of metalepsis! Delay is the disruption of the smooth causal chain of predications that reverse effects into causes. Instead of a "natural sequence" of < ... > "enclosures," where every < is matched by a concluding >, an initial < runs into another <: < → <. This ambiguity creates a small space, which is capable of unlimited enlargement, all haunted by the "negative" that originally plagued the subject’s deals with the Other. The legacy of the three drives, oral, anal, and phallic, is that we "have a home," but we never "feel at home."** The uncanny, written in Freudian/Jentschian terms of double inscription of life and death***, turns out to be a literal Unheimlich: we attempt to domesticate the strange but fail. It haunts us via a small kernel of opposition/resistance located at the center of subjectivity; or, alternatively, when extimacy turns the subject inside out, this small kernel is the demonic control-point, the place of the object’s magic being. What could be more promising for those whose business is the poetics of space and time — poets no longer treated with sentimentality but with the cold precision of a calculus that blends chance opportunities (tuchê) with the automaton!

WAKING <...> sleep ... > DREAM ...

In the encounter of a dream within the predicative field, the expected causal order, >, <, >, <...>, of effects converted to causes, whose effects are then converted to causes etc. meets with a reversal, the expected > becomes a <. This forces signifers within the new field to a condition of ambiguity, where they must relate simultaneously to the register of "realism" (enonce) as well as the register of the initial act, enunciation, which is always conditioned by the relation to death.

The Late Latin author Macrobius summarized Cicero’s account of the famous “Dream of Scipio,” where the nephew of the famous General Africanus dreamed that he was invited by his uncle to visit him in Paradise. From a high vantage point, he was able to gaze back on the events that had transpired, which condition us for life and which, when all is said and done, continue going through their "logics" throughout adulthood, amount to nothing more than a discrepancy in timing. Pluth says more, to be fair, but the valuable takeaway insights have to do with the delay that, in the oral phase, allows the infant to not be "so easily dismissed" with a simple satisfaction of hunger; that, in the anal phase, connect the place the subject has salvaged in the (m)Other with production, albeit negative and one associated with disappearance; and that, in the phallic stage require (mis)recognition, under cover of a symbolic disguise. Timing is all about the reversed predication of a drive and its satisfaction: >→< (hungry/fed, defecation’s before/after, exchanges of the symbolic ego–ideal, the power that oversees my subjectivity, with the imaginary ideal ego, the subject I want to be). The avenging side of the ego-ideal, the super–ego, as Real, completes the triangle of poles that make up the three-way magnetism of the subject. This complete arc, from infancy to adult subjectivity, holds out the promise that much of the Lacanian system is based on the "emergent" dynamics of delay, which is easily described by the parsimonious calculus of metalepsis! Delay is the disruption of the smooth causal chain of predications that reverse effects into causes. Instead of a "natural sequence" of < ... > "enclosures," where every < is matched by a concluding >, an initial < runs into another <: < → <. This ambiguity creates a small space, which is capable of unlimited enlargement, all haunted by the "negative" that originally plagued the subject’s deals with the Other. The legacy of the three drives, oral, anal, and phallic, is that we "have a home," but we never "feel at home."** The uncanny, written in Freudian/Jentschian terms of double inscription of life and death***, turns out to be a literal Unheimlich: we attempt to domesticate the strange but fail. It haunts us via a small kernel of opposition/resistance located at the center of subjectivity; or, alternatively, when extimacy turns the subject inside out, this small kernel is the demonic control-point, the place of the object’s magic being. What could be more promising for those whose business is the poetics of space and time — poets no longer treated with sentimentality but with the cold precision of a calculus that blends chance opportunities (tuchê) with the automaton!

*TRAVEL: Henry Johnstone argued that the literally "Unheimlich" condition of travel externalized and materialized the subject’s internal "delays" of demand and desire. (This is a Lacanian paraphrase.) Between the curiosity to know and the often catastrophic over-presence of the Real of travel, Johnstone’s nine categories pivot around a “gap” that is the ambiguity of completion: the subject’s “possession of being dispossessed.” Travel (askesis) is not wandering or going on an errand. It is open to the full possibilities of kenosis: knowledge through the negative.

**The "double inscription of life and death" refers to Jentsch’s claims that there are two paradigms of the uncanny, the living person drawn to a fated end and a dead person who has "forgotten how to die." Taking A to designate "alive" and D for "death," these can be written A→D and D→A, respectively. This double inscription amounts to stereo pairs for the generic case of <...<A→D and D→A.

The opening sequence of Hitchcock’s 1954 film leaves no doubt about the relation of the death dream to the spatial interval between one screen and another. Jeffie’s apartment is valenced by three windows whose ceremonial opening behind the film’s credits creates an ambiguous space of detached observation. When we see that Jeff has suffered a serious accident, Hitchcock introduces the possibility that Jeff actually died in the accident, and that all that follows is imagined by him in the short interval between life and dying.

Alfred Hitchcock’s Rear Window

The opening sequence of Hitchcock’s 1954 film leaves no doubt about the relation of the death dream to the spatial interval between one screen and another. Jeffie’s apartment is valenced by three windows whose ceremonial opening behind the film’s credits creates an ambiguous space of detached observation. When we see that Jeff has suffered a serious accident, Hitchcock introduces the possibility that Jeff actually died in the accident, and that all that follows is imagined by him in the short interval between life and dying.

The Wizard of Oz

Dorothy flees the wrath of super–ego figure Miss Gulch, is turned around by Professor Marvel’s trick of “cold reading,” but when she returns to the farmhouse it has been abandoned by the family and farmhands, who have retreated to the storm cellar. Dorothy’s experience becomes “sinthetic” in true Lacanian terms: an elevation of particulars of the farm to the universals (magical beings) of Oz, whose conflicts must be resolved through a “strife of love in a dream” (hypnerotomachia).

James Joyce’s Ulysses

Near the end of the book, Leopold Bloom takes his drinking companion, Stephen Daedalus, back to his apartment. Forgetting his latch-key, he must climb in through the roof entry. He trips over the parapet, but Joyce does not say that he ever gets up. David Bertolini has claimed that this opens the possibility that the final chapter, written in the feminine voice of Bloom’s wife Molly, is actually Bloom’s death dream. This makes sense, particularly since feminists have long complained about the “masculine narrative quality” of this chapter.

LEGACY OF ORAL/ANAL/PHALLIC STAGES

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**Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo***

In the opening chase scene, Scottie and another policeman pursue a suspect. Jumping from roof to roof, Scottie misses a step and holds on desperately to a gutter; his companion tries to haul him back but himself falls to his death. Scottie is afflicted with vertigo and haunted by his colleagues death, but what if it was Scottie who actually fell? His post-retirement job of following the shipping heiress Madeleine, haunted by the unhappy ghost of her ancestor Carlotta Valdez, "is who she is" thanks to the scheme that intends to "enjoy" Scottie as the perfect witness at the coroner’s inquest. Lacan’s university discourse ($S_2\rightarrow a/a/$) turns out to be the perfect form for this ambiguous condition! Is Scottie dead, or is he only symbolically dead in relation to the life around him, represented by his ex-girlfriend Midge? Doesn’t really matter.

**Clue 1**

Scottie’s affliction, vertigo, “relives” the cause of death. This becomes a spiral or pyramid, the top of which contains the key memory that will unlock his amnesia. Until he reaches the top, he has “forgotten how to die,” but all clues take on the form of the famous *memento mori*, which we know from Holbein’s double portrait of *The Ambassadors*, is an anamorph no matter where or how we encounter it.

**Clue 2**

In Hitchcock’s customary cameo appearance, he carries a musical instrument in a case. It could be a cornet, but opposite the bell, the case curves. It could also be a fog horn, but the coincidence that matters is that the fog horn is shaped like a cornucopia, the horn of the goat Amalthea, which nourished the infant Zeus. Once broken off, the horn by itself supplied infinite sustenance. From privation to prohibition to (ghostly) infinity. This was not simply the film plot idea of a simple “trick” leading to a complete landscape created by ideology, but Hitchcock’s idea of art in general: one formula fits all.

**Clue 3**

The death dream is opened with a “magic” phrase and closed with the same phrase: “the power and the freedom.” Scottie and Midge hear this when the bookstore owner “Pop Leibel” relates the story of Carlotta Valdez, abused by a wealthy magnate in the 1800s, and at the top of the bell tower where Scottie forces Judy to confess her role in his deception by Gavín Elster, the wealthy magnate of the 1950s. The idea of an opening and closing “benediction” shows how < … > can work as a magic spell, with the “exception offered by metalepsis: Scottie can “take a step back” from death, i.e. he can recover from the vertigo of guilt and realize the plot against him.

The cornucopia legend follows the logic of Borges’ Aleph: a small object that becomes a portal through which an infinity of images, knowledge, stories, etc. flows. Holbein’s anamorphic memento mori serves the same function, by forcing the viewer to a single and “abstract” viewpoint (squatting beneath the frame). Once the viewer has found his/her own personal “Golgotha” the entire meaning of the painting, with its multiple 3’s and triangles relating to the Apocalypse, flows forth. The same idea is captured by the Masonic pyramid (famous for its appearance on the U.S. one dollar bill), which features a panoptical eye of wisdom atop a universe of regulated materiality. As for the tip-top (notice the case of reversed predication!) think about the initiation ceremony — a “rite of passage.”

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**The standard idea of the university**

The standard idea of the university is that knowledge is manipulated by powers operating behind the stage, to make education into a front for ideology promotion. The barred subject (think of class schedules, graduation requirements, exams, etc.) is predicated beneath the command to, nonetheless, Enjoy! the college experience, but there is more to this than the *Animal House* model. The “Ché vuoi?” of the Other operates in general as the means by which the subject is most subject to ideology when acting and thinking in the conditions of maximum freedom. When Žižek advised Occupy! protestors “don’t enjoy yourselves too much,” he meant that ideology, even in this condition of protest, was enjoying them through their seeming exercise of maximum freedom.

The Lacanian disourses employ the following shorthand:

$S_1$ = the master, master signifier; $S_2$ = knowledge, chains of signifiers; $a$ is the subject “barred” by symbolic castration (subjection to symbolic identity); the $a$ is the famous *objet petit a*, the “object cause of desire,” which can be anything and everything.