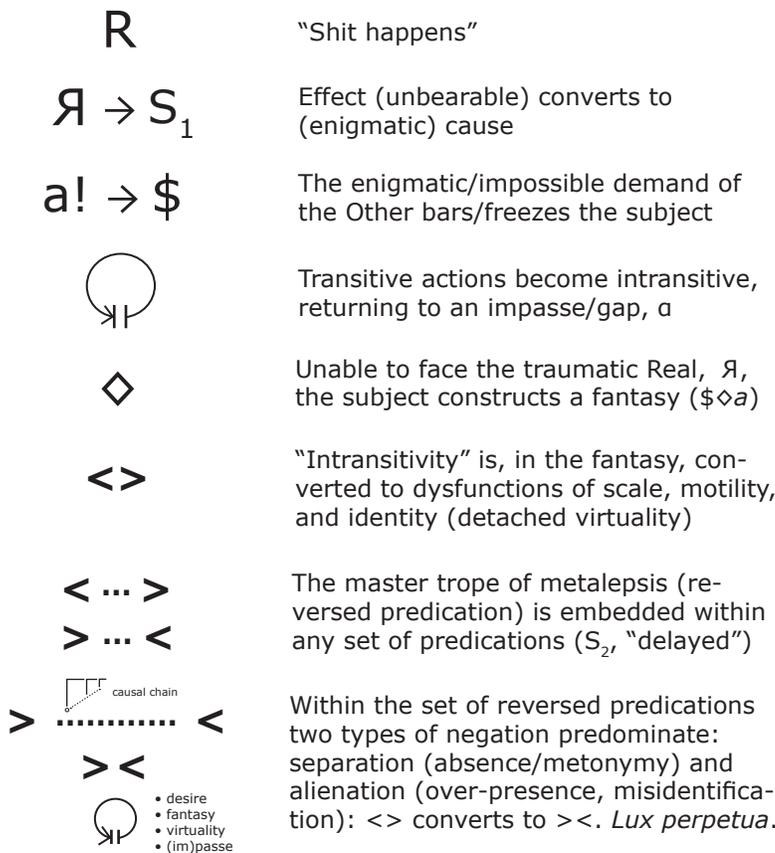


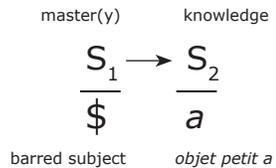
# LACANIAN DISCOURSES AND METALEPSIS

In metalepsis (transumption) one thing is related to another that is only remotely connected to it, and the web of associations constitutes a kind of (or parody of) the causal chain. This is the idea of Lacan's "symbolic chain," a model of language's "sliding signifiers." One signifier "slides past" another and the resulting (topologically constructed) chain is a "sorities" (collection/pile) that can be sorted only by means of reversed predication, a process of negation/cancellation where each term obverts, from container to contained, predicator to predicated. The process is stabilized through discourse, and Lacan specifies four (culturally/historically) prominent forms: the master-servant (dominant in serf-systems), hysteria (historically prominent at the turn of the 19c.), the university (emergent signature of modernity), and analysis (discovered by Freud). The historicity of the four forms belies their function as a-historical paradigms. Each can be read as a modality of experience, particularly in relation to the formation of fantasy as an alternative to the subject's inability to bear the traumatic-Real. Thus, discourse may be seen to be grounded in the phenomenology of fantasy formation, and fantasy constructions (fiction, art, poetry, etc.) may be seen in light of the rhetorical stances defined by the discourses.



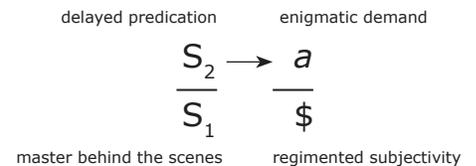
AGENT	OTHER
TRUTH	PRODUCTION

FIXED POSITIONS



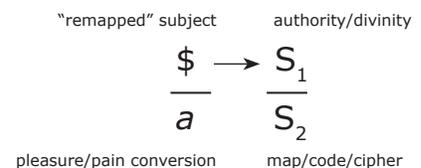
## master-servant

Subjectivity is barred by the conversion of effects to cause (sacrifice to a symbolic cause, a flag); the servant possesses the knowledge required to serve the master, the master fantasizes about the servant's enjoyment.



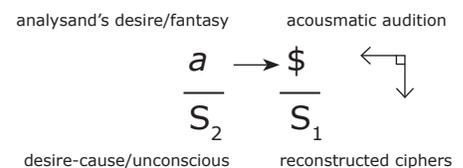
## university

Delayed predication becomes knowledge; delay becomes "discovery." Subjects are regulated by the enigmatic command to "Enjoy!" ( $a$ ), while behind the scenes a Master pulls strings. This discourse is materialized in the form of the American college campus.



## hysteria

Clinical hysteria is predated by mythologies of the female body, notably in accounts of miraculous births (Annunciation). The acousmatic word,  $S_2$ , becomes flesh. The subject/virgin is barred (shown at a lectern/frame, reading). Painting follows this model.



## (psycho)analysis

The "phenomenal sequence" beginning with the inability of the subject to face/comprehend the "traumatic Real" and its enigmatic demands converts this over-presence into the "signalizing" of a demonic force. In Harold Bloom's terms ("revisionary ratios"), a retreat or contraction (*askesis*) creates a frame, behind which a demon advances, as figure from ground. This frame may be temporal or spatial; it may be seen as a feature of nature or something intentionally artificial. The enigmatic desire of the demonic Other binds the subject, through custom, law, or fate (Ernst Jentsch's category of the uncannily fated subject). Space-time is "bent" to facilitate a compulsive return to the logical gap created by this desire of the Other. To make sense of what is happening, the subject constructs fantasies ( $\diamond$ ) that canonically deploy "detached virtuality" (double, travel through time, contamination of reality by the dream, story in story), variations on the themes of spatial and temporal obversion/extimacy. Within fantasy, attempts at stability ("predications") contain "delayed" reversals that unify the chain as an unconsciousness, a cipher that "signalizes" to the subject. The four forms of discourse constitute rhetorical stances that subjectivity may adopt to play out this sequence leading from the impossible-Real, to the Symbolic, to the Imaginary. The topology linking these three stages (= Borromeo "knot") is embedded in each form through the placement of four standard elements.

The analyst is immobilized, acoustically listening to the analysand's "acousmatic" report in search of the master signifiers unlocking the causal chain,  $S_2$ , of the analysand's unconscious. The orthogonal function of the analyst ( $\Gamma$ ) divides the signals from the unconscious's "signalizing." This returns the "letter" of the unconscious to its origins, *via* the material component of communicative form. The automaton is both the affordance (*tuchē*) behind the subject's finality and an automating function mechanizing these "random" choices.

The idea of a "causal chain" has two distinctive manifestations. (1) The first is the conjectural model of "sorites," a series of predications whose elements can be found in both predicating and predicated relationships. This seems to mimic the unconsciousness's relation to "free association" and "stream of consciousness" — i.e. a loosely organized collection of events, things, persons, ideas, connections, etc., in no particular order and with no particular design. In the analysis of sorites undertaken by George Spencer-Brown, the pairing of predicated and predicating functions for each element is actualized in the puzzles invented by Lewis Carroll. This state of "impending meaning," so characteristic of the puzzle form, also characterizes the unconscious: its fundamental tonality is that of a question posed in the face of no practical assurances of finding possible answers. Carroll's puzzles did have answers, but the effect of discovery is trumped by the suspension intensified by predications that suggest meaning without supplying hope of discovery.

(2) The second aspect of the causal chain is the series of Aristotelian causes, arranged in the order leading from Efficient, to Final, to the tight pairing of Material and Formal Causes. The by-products of consciously formed causes are automaton (natural chance) and *tuchē*, human opportunism and affordance. Automaton and *tuchē* are "recovered" with a reversal of formal cause, reinterpreting the full range of sub-meanings retained by materiality. As a predicate, formal cause is, so to speak, reversed, putting Material cause in the role of a hinge that directs attention to the "forgotten remainders" of *tuchē* and automaton — elements corresponding to the Lacanian idea of desire. The notion of "sliding signifiers" stabilized by "quilting" (*points de capiton*) is carried into the idea of reversed predication. With the sorites, this is the discovery of the "remainders" of the pairing process ... the two elements, one a predicate the other a predicator, that had not reversed themselves and served simply as links in the predicating chain.

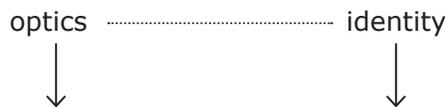
The theme of reversal can be found in several elements of discourse. The master signifier,  $S_1$ , can be thought as the conversion of effect into cause. The *objet petit a* is, in its service as a gap or void, the place of reversal. Knowledge, a chain of linked signifiers,  $S_2$ , contains an implicit potential for obversion, viewed either as a chain of causes or series of delayed predications. In each of these cases, the rhetorical figure of metalepsis, where meaning seems to "resonate from a distance," activates the idea of extimacy, an inscription of exterior, the extended world of objects, other subjects, and effects, to interior of subjectivity. Symmetrically, subjectivity "sticks to" objects designated as "partial objects." These are objects (or places) that are "radically alien" — "sites of exception." This figure allows us to explore the uses of "detached virtuality" as it relates to the four canonical forms of fantasy: time travel, the story in the story, the double, and the contamination of reality by the dream or fiction. Clearly, the category of the uncanny is not limited to the classic genres of the supernatural; it is a component of nearly every aspect of human subjectivity.

The aim of unifying the discourse through a common sequence involving reversed predication and metalepsis is to cultivate a kind of thinking and speaking that optimizes what could be called, following Medieval terminology, an "art of topics" (*ars topica*). This is a kind of supplement to rationality, in the way that Lewis Carroll cultivated riddles and nonsense as an alternative to "straight up" fictional narrative and philosophy. Namely, for thought and speech to break away from the hold of ideology and convention, it is necessary to exercise a kind of "free speech" through specific methods. As Mladen Dolar has argued, ideology's interpellation of the subject is not complete. There is a "psychoanalytic remainder" that is the fuel for subjectivity's escape from dominance. Lacan's system of discourses specifies this psychoanalytic remainder through its ambiguities, open-endedness, and constitution of a chain of relationships based on the geometry of four elements rotated against a fixed field of agent, Other, production, and truth. The clinical value of this theory was Lacan's interest; for others outside the culture of the psychoanalytic clinic the discourses still have central value, and it is in the service of unlocking this general value that reversed predication and metalepsis.

The general argument for an art of topics is based on the inclusion of the topic of "the uncanny" at the level of methodology, specifically in the region where the remainder of political interpellation is given over to psychoanalysis. Instead of the clinical approach to this "remainder," in the form of analysis of specific individuals, the independent thinker undertaking the methodology/art of topics applies Lacan's "discourse of analysis" in a critical manner, consciously using the concepts of metalepsis and reversed predication to evaluate works of art, politics, history, etc., in effect converting them to "study manuals" or "action plans" able to achieve direct conceptual/physical results on the critic.

Sigmund Freud's landmark study of the uncanny revealed the inner turmoil embedded within the cultural and architectural construct of the home. Domesticity and domestication (conventionality) was, in effect, un-domestic, or *Unheimlich*. Freud's two main themes show how this is played out in popular culture, literature, and the arts.

### FREUD'S UNCANNY:



Optics is related to the phenomenal-experiential realm, particularly in that the material world is regarded as "proof" of the substance of the causal chain, the reality of the external world. With detached virtuality, we see the uncanny breaking down this order. This breakdown can be summarized using Harold Bloom's revisionary ratios to diagram the construction of the point of view and the corresponding "advance" of uncanny qualities of external objects, persons, and events.

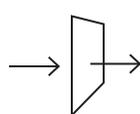
- "detached" virtuality:
- double (mirroring)
  - time travel (analepsis, retroaction)
  - story in story (concentricity\_)
  - contamination (chiasmus)

- the fantastic:
- double
  - travel through time
  - story in story
  - contamination of reality by the dream

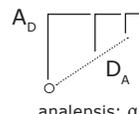
Identity has to do with logical consistency and subjective stability; as Lacan shows, the function of the name undermines this stability through a triangulation relating the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real. Through reversed predication ( $S_1$ ), the chain of signifiers ( $S_2$ , causal chain), reveals blanks and gaps, "impasses" calling for a "psychoanalytical *passee*." The *passee* idea is taken from its normal application in the training of professional analysts and applied to general critical study of the "remainder," the "post-political," which is in effect the revision of the idea connecting the unconscious with the political, as "collective."

"framing/boundary conditions"

"breakdown of the causal chain"



- askesis/demon
- clinamen/tesseræ
- apophrades/kenosis
- "sites of exception"



- master signifier,  $S_1$
- "demark"
- reversed predication
- materiality
- *katabasis*

figure/ground contraction/POV

Bloom: "revisionary ratios"

JENTSCH:  $A_D$

JENTSCH:  $D_A$