

1.

By its cover alone, Martin Mittelmeier's *Adorno in Neapel* struck me as indispensable to the excavation of Adorno's reevaluation of Freud's theory of wish fantasy, which was the missing piece of my book-in-progress on and around the Fantasy genre. According to the subtitle, Mittelmeier's book aims to show "how a landscape of yearning was transformed into philosophy," and to that end he spends a good deal of biographical time on the trips through Southern Italy by various Frankfurt Schoolers *in spe*. In Southern California, between the beach and the movie studios, Adorno would confront the demonic double of that essentially "German" "landscape of yearning."

It was, however, already getting late in the book before a formulation really grabbed me and showed me the way. Mittelmeier argues that in his jazz essay Adorno treats the constellation, the wrap for his work and the problems under investigation, as stolen.¹ Then in the ten years in which Adorno worked on his Kafka essay, it was restored. Mittelmeier quotes the author's plan to compose *Aesthetic Theory* "concentrically as it were in equivalent, paratactic parts" and "arranged around a central point, which they express through their constellation."² Had Adorno by the end of his career come into the constellation he borrowed from Walter Benjamin's preface to *Origin of the German Mourning Play* as his own? In their correspondence whenever Adorno corrects Benjamin in the name of the Origin book he attains most precise reformulations of "their" insights, although his friend has forgotten his share. A strong example is Adorno's memo to Benjamin that the recent past remains the most repressed time zone that lurches back into the present catastrophically as prehistory (August 2-4, 1935).³ It was all over this same letter that Adorno strongly argued against Benjamin's placement of the dialectical image in relation to a "wish image," which to my mind underscores Adorno's own investment in a staggered or constellated relationship to wishfulfillment fantasy to and through Freud's portrait of our second nature as daydreamers.

In a recent contribution to a collection on the history of psychoanalysis and its influence on contemporary criticism,⁴ I argued that D. W. Winnicott was heir to the Frankfurt School's attempt to extend the range of Freud's science to address problems of psychopathic violence. Winnicott supplemented what he liked to refer to as neurotic analysis with his approach to the "antisocial tendency." Initial delinquency, like stealing, which strikes out against and tests the environment – and thus highlights its importance—expresses "hope."⁵ Winnicott therefore identifies the prospect that society is in danger as a figment. What's truly dangerous is the repression of personal aggressiveness in individuals. He thus lays down the law binding us to our psychopathic outcasts, which he admits is painful since it draws attention to "dissociations that are hidden in current social acceptance:"

In a total psychology, being-stolen-from is the same as stealing and is equally aggressive. Being weak is as aggressive as the attack of the strong on the weak. Murder and suicide are fundamentally the same thing. ... Possession is as aggressive as is greedy acquisition.⁶

In considering the "constellation" of fantasy in the work of Theodor Adorno, its onset, theft, and restoration, I follow Winnicott into another place largely left unattended by psychoanalysts after Freud, though here we stand before the very foundation of Freud's science. International psychoanalysis says "desire" and Freud says "wish" (*Wunsch*). Winnicott unpacks the case of his suicidal patient whose daydreaming was dissociated, in other words kept separate from night dreaming and day living. In the patient's history, which he tries to take down, nothing ever

happened only because in her dissociated state so much was happening all the time: “In the fantasizing, what happens happens immediately, except that it does not happen at all.”⁷ Doing nothing carried out the young child’s inability to reclaim what she was given as her own creation. And she recognized that the obligation was upon her to fit in: Nothing doing. She was the youngest child and relied on her intelligence to play along in the already organized setting of the sibling group bond. That she entered into the group activities on a compliance basis only proved unrewarding for all concerned. But her siblings probably didn’t realize that she was all the while absent. “While she was playing the other people’s games *she was all the time engaged in fantasizing*. She really lived in this fantasizing on the basis of a dissociated mental activity.”⁸

Just when Winnicott and his patient thought they could discern that fantasizing interferes with dreaming (or living) she brings to session another dream that places them “on the borderline in any attempt one might make to differentiate between fantasizing and dreaming.”⁹ Was her dream of cutting out a dress upon which she awoke in fact a fantasy that defended against dreaming? “But how is she to know?” Fantasizing possesses her like an evil spirit.”¹⁰ The fantasy version, Winnicott suggests, would be “simply about making a dress. The dress has no symbolic value”¹¹; in a dream, however, “the same thing would indeed have had symbolic meaning.”¹²

Winnicott asks her to fantasize a night dream about her cut out dress. Thus they are able to carry back a key word into the fantasy: “*formlessness*, which is what the material is like before it is patterned and cut and shaped and put together.”¹³ “Her childhood environment seemed unable to allow her to be formless but must, as she felt it, pattern her and cut her out into shapes conceived by other people.”¹⁴ This gives the first transference revalorization of her fixation. While “the hope that would make her feel that something could be made out of the formlessness would then come from the confidence that she had in her analyst, who has to counteract all that she carries forward from her childhood”¹⁵ “so easily she would have the feeling that she had fitted in and been patterned by ... [the analyst], and this would be followed by maximal protest and a return to the fixity of fantasizing.”¹⁶ By encouraging her to fantasize a dream about the dress, Winnicott was able to restart the analysis and head the patient’s withdrawal off at the impasse (because it threatens the analysis itself).

After the re-start around formlessness Winnicott enters the psychoanalytic canon on daydream fantasy to secure an understanding of the distinction in theory and therapy. “I said that fantasizing was about a certain subject and it was a dead end. *It had no poetic value*. The corresponding dream, however, *had poetry in it*, that is to say, layer upon layer of meaning related to past, present, and future, and to inner and outer, and always fundamentally about herself.” Winnicott interrupts to assign the distinction an address in the transference. “It is this poetry of the dream that is missing in her fantasizing and in this way it is impossible for me to give meaningful interpretations about [her] fantasizing.”¹⁷

According to Freud, wish fulfilment is the plain text of every daydream, what Winnicott refers to as “the here-and-now fixity of any satisfaction that there can be in fantasizing.”¹⁸ Through analytic decoding of night dreams, however, as Freud insists, it is possible to recognize underlying it all the fulfilment of wishes just as plain. Thus Freud aligns analytic dream interpretation with the lowest rung of B-culture, while underscoring that the latter, albeit disguised in the upper regions, delivers the letter of the law of high culture, too. “One feature above all cannot fail to strike us about the creations of these story-writers: each of them has a hero who is the centre of interest, ... whom ... [the author] seems to place under the protection of a special Providence. ... It seems ... however, that through this revealing characteristic of invulnerability we can immediately recognize His Majesty the Ego, the hero alike of every day-dream and of every story.”¹⁹

And yet Winnicott's connection between dreaming and poetry also holds on Freud's terms and turf. The rapid-fire consumerism (or fixity) of fantasy-wishes, which fleshes and flushes out their asocial content at the speed of thought, must be reclaimed in childhood development as responsibility for one's good and evil wishes, and in public discourse, like poetry or film, if fantasy is to be presentable to an audience, as interruption and deferral of fulfilment. In *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* Freud argued that the first poetry was the heroic epic and the first hero, also or especially for the audience, the poet himself, because he had succeeded in giving the omnipotence of fantasy or thought a form and forum and making the offering public.²⁰

2.

In his consideration of a higher yearning that Adorno's constellations secure Mittelmeier treats the 1928 essay "Schubert" as pivotal. He turns up the contrast between Adorno's reverie on a volcanic landscape and what a postcard markets as souvenir by filling and fulfilling the very porousness of the cooled and hardened catastrophe. The nonrapport between the cosmic design of constellation and its representatives in the meantime (or on Earth) has to be rendered legible in the very gaps to forestall the sacrifice of hope that otherwise seals the deal. Indeed Adorno always called the cozy corner of adaptation to a bad thing as a sure thing demonic.

I took copious notes while reading through *Adorno in Neapel*. In the meantime I can't always find a correspondence between the book and what I wrote down. I'm sure, however, that Mittelmeier wants a bigger yield from the Italian trips than seemed evident to me upon rereading Adorno. The tour guidance is charming, but also plodding, even plotting, a reflection caught perhaps in the near miss between the author's surname and the famous body of water he for sure wants us to see from the shore of Adorno's oeuvre. "Schubert" indeed opens upon the landscape Mittelmeier seeks to establish as the continuity shot. Suffering a shiver of horror (*Schauer*) as he crosses the threshold between Beethoven's and Schubert's death years, Adorno glimpses the volcanic landscape rise up out of the ashes.²¹ If Schubert's music doesn't flex the will that is the focal point of Beethoven, it still ends up in the same cthonic depths out of which the will emerged and sits under the same stars shining beyond the eager willful grasp.

But then Adorno enters upon new landscaping befitting smaller views, like those on postcards. Adorno starts over inside a fairground, lowering his sights. Artworks aren't creaturely or organic. They are like targets on a fairground booth's shooting range, which the visitors aim to hit. If the right number flashes, then the targets fall over and reality shines through.²² "The unveiling of the image remains the work of man ... The image of truth, however, stands at all times in history. The history of the image is its decay."²³ Truth steps out of the ruination of the image. This "movement" is reprised several times in the course of the essay, each time adding an element, which counts this round as most fundamental.

The sentimental reduction of "Schubert" at the same time shrinks what blocked our view of the spellbinding landscape.²⁴ The Biedermeier genre postcard is a hinge for this opening of the landscape perspective. With this landscape on the horizon of his essay Adorno next addresses the contemporary setting of Schubert's music: the "inadequate world of the medleys (*Potpourris*)" granting his music a second life.²⁵ No accident that the medley came to be introduced in the nineteenth century as a surrogate for musical form. It is on one continuum with the miniature landscape as bourgeois commodity in its many variations, including the postcard (*Ansichtskarte*).²⁶

Adorno thus appears to be reading Schubert's music at its weakest point. But it is through its "depravation" into song medleys that the music still plays and can yet be heard, more "eloquently" in fact than the music of his contemporaries.²⁷ It is this depravation that brings the music closer to its origin and truth. "In the medley the traits of the work, scattered through the

decline of its subjective unity, move together into a new unity, which cannot legitimate itself as such, but which directly confronts and illuminates the uniqueness of the traits."²⁸ While rigor mortis befell the opera medleys of the nineteenth century, with Schubert the themes press onward without the medusoid recoil.²⁹

The interchangeability of every thematic unit indicates a simultaneity of all events, which lie outside history. "Out of this simultaneity one can yet discern the contours of the Schubert landscape, which it otherwise infernally mirrors."³⁰ That the infernal foe is yet kept in check by the landscape perspective opened up by the Schubert medleys tracks the origin of depravation back inside the music itself.

Every truly legitimate depravation of aesthetic contents is inaugurated by artworks in which the unveiling of the image has gone so far that the power of truth in the image shines through, not stopping in the image but penetrating reality. That transparency, for which the artwork pays with its life, is suited to the crystalline Schubert landscape. There fate and reconciliation together rest together undivided; their ambiguous eternity is shattered by the medley so that it can be recognized. It is the landscape of death seen previously (*Es ist die Landschaft des Todes zuvor*).³¹

We are approaching mournfulness, the ultimate addition to the movement reprised unto the essay's conclusion.

The depositing of death runs deep inside Schubert's landscape: "but not in order to resolve itself in the affect of the individual, but rather to rise up rescued following the descent out of the musical form of mourning."³² A qualitative change has thus occurred. "But change is only possible in that which is most small."³³ On the larger scale death reigns, reining in the relations with the dead, blocking mourning. Upon introducing the wanderer as allegorical reader on the track of the dead, another turn of the perspective reveals the constellation in the landscape. "The eccentric construct of that landscape in which every point is equidistant from the center is revealed to the wanderer passing through but never advancing."³⁴ The last and first steps are equally near death.

If this be timelessness, then only the mood (*Stimmung*) swings. Because no citation can be simultaneous the mood has a certain momentum.³⁵ As we swing around in the oscillating musical structure or "landscape" of the degrading reception of Schubert's music in Schubert's music, we are at the portal again to decline, but now mourning is added, and in the first place, which changes everything. "The affect of death—for the affect of death is imitated in Schubert's landscape, the grief (*Trauer*) over men not the pain in them—is alone the gate to the underworld, through which Schubert descends."³⁶ Grief attracts the infernal foe: "thus the mirror of the Doppelgänger sentences man on grounds of his sorrowfulness."³⁷ Grief opens the other pathway through Schubert's music, the parallel universal alongside depravation's track, which it leaves behind. Now we begin to recognize the liberated music of a mankind transformed. How sad that we yet fall short of these utopian prospects. It doesn't matter if mere sentimentality jerks them out: our tears let us see better "the ciphers of ultimate reconciliation."³⁸

In the study of Kierkegaard, to which Adorno applied himself right after the musical rehearsal of the constellation in "Schubert," the opening up of a landscape/escape of yearning is hard pressed to ally itself with/within Kierkegaard's philosophy. In his review of the book, Benjamin summarized the reversal of perspective Adorno undertakes to dislodge Kierkegaard's philosophy from its receiving area in Existentialism:

Here Kierkegaard is taken not forward but back—back into the inner core of philosophical idealism, within whose enchanted circle the ultimately theological nature of his thought remained doomed to impotence. ... Nowhere does Wiesenrund's insight go deeper than where he ignores the stereotypes of Kierkegaardian philosophy and where he looks instead for the key to Kierkegaard's thought in its apparently insignificant relics, in its images, similes, and allegories.³⁹

By the conclusion Adorno is able to secure the constellation of fantasy through images on sheets designed for cutting out. "Yearning does not end in the pictures, but rather lives on in them, just as it stems from them."⁴⁰ Adorno underscores Kierkegaard's fascination with these picture sheets for children and shows how the exception the philosopher thus makes heads off the melancholic core of interiority decoration, which the study has already largely dwelled on, at the impasse.

"If *Seligkeit* itself, around which wish and cipher of all images gather, knows no images, then Kierkegaard's discourse is delivered of a 'burden of hope.'⁴¹ *Seligkeit* is the word for a happiness still borne that extends to (or ends in) the "bliss" one prays is the lot of the departed (as Freud elaborated its ambivalence in his reading of Daniel Paul Schreber's *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*).⁴² "Undialectically the images are to him finite goods that block the infinitude of *Seligkeit*."⁴³ But through his elevation of pictures on sheets for children to cut out, the philosopher's "modesty (*Unscheinbarkeit*) signifies not only the annihilation of appearance (*Schein*) in death but rather its ultimate extinction in truth, which, for once corporally present, would let the images disappear, in which it however has its historical life."⁴⁴

Only the slightest elaboration through fantasy shows nature as rescued. "The model for this realization Kierkegaard ... found in the behavior of the child cutting images out of a picture sheet."⁴⁵ Like Winnicott's patient, we find a new beginning cutting out pictures and fantasizing the night dream of daydream. "The moments of fantasy are the holidays of history. As such they belong to the free, liberated time of the child, and their material is historical like the picture sheets themselves."⁴⁶ The situation of the people and the commonplace, the "concrete images of their wish," hit home and secure access to images by a wish fulfillment that is free of sacrifice.⁴⁷ "If fantasy cannot grasp the ultimate images of despair ... then this incapacity is not its shortcoming but its strength. ... The unimaginability of despair through fantasy is its guarantee of hope."⁴⁸

The cutting out of the pictures outlines the fantasy in the fragment. "If the history of guilty nature is that of the decay of its unity, then it moves decaying toward reconciliation, and its fragments carry the fissures of decay as ciphers of promise."⁴⁹ Formlessness can circumvent the impasse, for example between improvement and controlling interest, by reducing the scale of change. Adorno's concluding line: "For the step from mourning to comfort is not the biggest but the smallest one."⁵⁰ With these steps we followed Adorno's selection of and commentary on Kierkegaard's example of picture sheets for children. What Adorno lets stand in Kierkegaard's words only is the identification of posthumous works as ruins, the appropriate haunt for the retired, secluded, or dead. What Kierkegaard would like to get across should through art gain the effect of posthumous works. This art is to manifest a pleasure that is never present, but in which a moment that is past always inheres, a pleasure that enters consciousness as passed.⁵¹ This could be the underground passage that reconnects the early work of constellation with the later restoration work inaugurated through Kafka.

3.

Because I also contributed to the 2016 volume *Mediamorphosis: Kafka and the Moving Image* I couldn't overlook in the lead essay one of those jumpcuts that cuts deepest: this time around it was a

reading of Kafka's media-savvy allegorization of rumor. While styling with an originality buoyed up by reference to Benjamin's notion of the "unforgotten" as Kafka's signature it glibly performed the un- as oblivion of my reflections on rumor in Kafka, part of a reading with psychoanalysis and the genealogy of media published thirty years ago. Close readers of my work back then referred in their own writing to my identification of "the primal medium of rumor."⁵²

The story on which the thirty-years-lately author set his performance, "The Village Schoolmaster," narrates the rivalry between a newly arrived businessman from the city and the local schoolteacher regarding a giant mole the latter discovered a generation earlier.⁵³ The giant *Maulwurf* the schoolteacher wrote about back then in the meantime interests the businessman, who writes his own treatise without consulting the teacher's original text. The poor villager (=instructor in the marginal orbit California-Germany) hoped that by the signifier-appeal of a city address (=Ivy League) the new author writing on the *Maulwurf* would secure a reception for his own early effort. The story unravels around a series of fateful dis-appointments with recognition that undermines all the claims. Time to remember that the "old mole" in *Hamlet* (in August Wilhem Schlegel's translation: "alter Maulwurf") is the ghost of the murdered father whose unfinished business brings down the house.

Ernst Kris may be best known by now for his dismissive treatment in Jacques Lacan's "The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power."⁵⁴ Lacan covers the case aptly: it's the second analysis of a patient afraid of plagiarizing. The first analyst, with whom Lacan seems to side, was Melitta Schmideberg, Melanie Klein's acting-out daughter who specialized in the correction of adolescent acting out, and yet in a manner so woefully pre-Winnicott that Lacan strikes two rivals with one championship. Schmideberg concluded that the patient stole in his youth, a tendency so successfully corrected that by adulthood, because he cannot risk plagiarizing, his research is blocked and his livelihood threatened. But then Kris discovers that in the research team, to which the patient belongs, a more established member was exercising his prerogative and recycling the younger man's research. When the patient saw his senior colleague's recent publication, rather than remember and recognize his own input, he felt an illicit desire to steal the other's work, which set off the phobic chain reaction. This leads to Kris's analysis of the patient in the team setting of academic communities: "Finally, the distortion of imputing to others his own ideas could be analyzed and the mechanism of 'give and take' made conscious."⁵⁵

The amazing tidbit the patient offered Kris in session, which Lacan cites with glee, is that for some time now upon leaving the analyst's office he liked to roam among restaurants searching their menus for his favorite meal: fresh brains. Lacan calls this a daydream, which must mean that he thinks free association, for example, is the same as daydreaming. When Lacan suggests that Kris's patient was afraid of stealing "nothing" he slips on a spot of oblivion in his presentation. In his article Kris prominently referred to Helene Deutsch's case example of a patient who suffered oblivion in the present to cover and enable his plagiarism. Although Kris admits he forgot all about the article he is sure that it influenced the strategy he was following out in his analysis of the patient with a similar disorder. The fantastic moment in Deutsch's analysis is when she asks her patient to bring his current research to session, first as up for discussion (that's when she discovers that it is the present moment he forgets), then as all the pages in progress.⁵⁶ Although she recognizes that he is in fact lifting his friend's work, aren't we still within the same structure? Aren't we orbiting a fear of plagiarizing that comes down to the wish to reduce the other to "nothing?"

I have referred to plagiarism as a form of improper burial, by which I meant not only a work's interment under a fake tombstone but also the fulfillment of a death wish that gets away with murder. The wish is not to plagiarize but to eat the other's brains. Does it recoil back or commence as the wish to be plagiarized or eaten oneself? Winnicott indeed sees plagiarism from

both sides now while contemplating the motivation for teaching as well as for writing rehearsed before an audience. Influence is what the person who feels empty ordered. The person who fears feeling empty or fears “the extra aggressive quality which emptiness puts in his appetite”⁵⁷ also places the order.⁵⁸ “Such a person has a need to find a new object with which to be filled, a new person who can take the place of the one lost, or a new set of ideas or a new philosophy to replace lost ideals.”⁵⁹ The alternative would be to “bear with this depression or sadness or hopelessness, and wait for a spontaneous recovery.”⁶⁰

While we all need our work for our own mental health, we encounter in certain instructors, whose “urgent need to teach” serves “to keep at arm’s length their own personal difficulties,” the great need to impart or give to others, “to fill people up, to get under their skin, really to prove to himself or herself that what he or she has to give is good.”⁶¹ Unconscious doubt about this very claim drives such a person onward. “Such a person must be teaching, organizing, effecting propaganda, getting his or her own way through influencing others to act;” this anxious eagerness to fill is related to “a fear of anxious hunger in others.”⁶²

What happens when extremes meet and the frustrated giver meets the frustrated receiver? The signs of this meeting would be a spurious maturity (resulting from incorporation of another person) or the character-type seeming all the time to be acting (in whom goodness or badness seems compulsive, not inherent). The bond between the one influencing and the one influenced is “a kind of love relationship” that can be “mistaken for the true article, especially by the persons themselves.”⁶³

Is there a good-enough standard of teaching and learning? The teacher must tolerate being doubted, while the pupil must tolerate not getting immediately what he already knows he wants. Then the pupil can enjoy receiving from the teacher without feeling “compelled by anxiety to act like the teacher, to retain everything as it was taught, or to believe everything any one teacher teaches.”⁶⁴ Particularly “keen” teachers are unable to tolerate “the children’s sifting and testing of what’s offered them, or their initial reaction of rejection. In practice these are inevitable irksome things, and they cannot be avoided except by unhealthy overriding.”⁶⁵ The effect of “the influencing and being influenced type of relationship” – especially when you’re overriding them too hard (because you’re not dead yet) – is serious “when it is put forward as a substitute for love.”⁶⁶

4.

Already prior to 1942, the onset of work on the Kafka essay, Adorno shared with Benjamin a sense or direction of the inscription of prehistory upon modernity in Kafka’s writing. In his essay on Kafka, Benjamin spells out the constellation comprising the hybrid Odradek:

In Kafka’s work, the most singular bastard which the prehistoric world has begotten with guilt is Odradek. “At first sight it looks like a flat, star-shaped spool for thread, and it really seems to have thread wound around it; to be sure, this is probably just old, broken-off bits of thread that are knotted and tangled together, of all sorts and colors. But the object is not just a spool, for a small wooden crossbar sticks out of the middle of the star, and another small rod is joined to it at right angles. With the aid of this latter rod on one side and one of the extensions of the star on the other, the whole thing can stand upright as if on two legs.”⁶⁷

In his letter to Benjamin dated December 17, 1934, in which Adorno responded to “Franz Kafka” pre publication, he jumps on the formulation or formula of guilt to make a point he drives home: “Doesn’t he have his place beside the father of the house—is he not the father’s

care (*Sorge*) and danger, is not the overcoming (*Aufhebung*) of the creaturely relationship to guilt prefigured in him—is not the care (*Sorge*)—truly a Heidegger put back on his feet—the cipher, indeed the most certain promise of hope, precisely by the overturning (*Aufhebung*) of the house?”⁶⁸ With Kafka, then, Heidegger stands on his footnotes and Goethean-Faustian *Sorge* is on the same page with Freud. But first Adorno had to catch up with Kafka.

Adorno’s emphasis in his essay “Notes on Kafka” on a Freudian infrastructure in Kafka’s works offered a stay against the forwarding of all unidentified liminal states to philosophy’s new “uncanny” address. The Odradek story (“Die Sorge des Hausvaters”) was published same time as Freud’s analysis of the uncanny. In the following decade Hannah Arendt, while reading Augustine on love under the covers with Heidegger, situated the liminality of creatureliness between the “no longer” (*nicht mehr*) and the “not yet” (*noch nicht*).⁶⁹ In the essay on Kafka Adorno argues that the creaturely estate was targeted by the Nazi death-wish factory as malignant superegoic model for a punishing fulfillment without rescue or hope. “In the concentration camps ... the line of demarcation between life and death was erased. They produced a liminal state, living skeletons and the decaying, victims, whose suicide fails, Satan’s laugh at the hope of an end to death.”⁷⁰

By its extension to the relationship between wish fulfillment and the happy meal of B-culture, Freud’s 1907 analysis of the structure of daydreaming shows, in effect, how liminality or uncanniness can be reshuffled and reedited by the culture industry. “Der Dichter und das Phantasieren” (which James Strachey translated as “Creative Writers and Daydreaming”) is either a wrap of the culture industry or it gives the outline for production. In your daydream, Freud argues, the fantasy arc jettisons the wish from an idealized past directly to the future of fulfillment and thus elides the present tense and its ongoing tensions. While this can be taken as owner’s manual for imagineers who fill the story arc around the blank, Freud adds that every daydream bears just the same the “date mark” of its triggering in the present going on recent past,⁷¹ whereby a portal opens to the underworld of the fantasy in history. It is one of those moments of breakthrough in analytic theory that could also be seen as giving the how-to for manipulation of psychic reality. These are the moments Adorno strung together under the slogan or rebus “psychoanalysis in reverse.” Pivotal to a reading of the mass-media psychology going into National Socialism, its provenance lies in rumor or in the teamwork of the Frankfurt School in exile. But we can also find it cited in Adorno’s second essay on American television, “Fernsehen als Ideologie” (“Television as Ideology”). Before he gives the phrase (in quotes), he unpacks its sense in the setting of a TV story: “Psychoanalysis, or whatever type of psychotherapy is involved, is abbreviated and concretized in such a way that not only is the praxis of such a procedure mocked, but its sense or purpose is even turned around into the opposite.”⁷²

According to Mittelmeier the Holocaust enabled Adorno to restore the constellation he abandoned as robbed by the culture industry.⁷³ I would qualify that claim in alignment with the hierarchy Freud established for the primal scene. While Freud allowed that the screening of the scene (all over town) as false memory made it hard to reconstruct, he stressed in his case study of the Wolfman the all-importance of the scene’s priority.⁷⁴ The scene sets reality (also as realization or fulfillment) on sex and violence before the wish. Fantasizing can catch up with but hardly overtake the trauma of realization. It makes sense that Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok lodged their notion of the crypt at this juncture.⁷⁵ The language of cryptonymy adds syntax to the images used by the survivors of the death camps: “the homeless dead,” “missing grave,” “the imitation corpse.”⁷⁶ The Holocaust is a primal scene that doesn’t discount other atrocities in history but places them on a schedule of legibility with its priority as reality or realization of the death wish.

Adorno allows that the hidden objective of Kafka’s oeuvre may have been to make déjà vu available, accessible, technological, and collective.⁷⁷ This is one reprisal of the invocation of déjà

vu, which traverses the essay. In his analysis of déjà vu Freud returned to the example of a patient overcome with the sense of having already been there while visiting two school girlfriends in their home.⁷⁸ The continuity shot was that their brother was mortally afflicted by the very illness from which her own brother had recently recovered. We're in the environs of the death wish. According to this example, in déjà vu we are brought before the fulfillment of the death wish, also in the sense that fulfillment comes first and the wish catches up in the span of a near miss.

Peter Krapp elaborates a curious doubling in these precincts. There is another near miss, this time between Joseph Grasset and Freud, in the priority ranking of who arrived first at a certain reading of déjà vu. There are Freud's symptomatic alterations or forgettings of the dates, an early reference to the debate in which Grasset's reading was situated and yet the later claim when he does credit Grasset's paper, that he, Freud, had already proposed the same argument before he even knew of the French article's existence.⁷⁹ The Grasset document is online and I read it. The only element in his argument that finds an echo in Freud (in "The Uncanny") is that déjà vu can be considered as the return of an animistic belief that mankind (or the adult) was so convinced had been already and definitely overcome. But on this occult track we only lose sight of the bottomline of Freud's déjà vu analysis, which is the death wish. To lose sight of what we prefer to fill in: this gives the gist of Adorno's critique of the occult in the contemporary setting.⁸⁰ Not before modern Spiritualism is wrecked by its success will mourning find entry and exit.

It's easy to overlook that Kafka, one of the bestselling authors of high Kultur, was rescued from the realm of the unread. Like vampires, the unread hide out in the obscurity their banishment from properly public or published commemoration and attribution affords them. If you could find their secret place it would be as easy as a staking to get rid of the evidence. However, by Kafka's overturning of the household of guilt, it is not the unread, in the place of precursor, that plague us. Instead the sons are the bargain haunters at their expense. Kafka published a few story collections in his lifetime and left behind the testament that his unpublished work should be destroyed—like the stain of daydreaming in its self-cleaning oven. It was not until death and Max Brod took over that the never-to-be-read work appeared and the name Kafka became a word and a world.

Adorno's "Notes on Kafka," which, immersed in Freudian psychoanalysis, is replete with instances of Kafka's augury of the Holocaust, opens with his dissatisfaction that Kafka's work enjoys such a great popularity with those seeking it out as their "information desk" for the insider knowledge that allows them to reduce untenable situations as already known, seen through, and throwaway. Adorno is loath to steal his way into Kafka through this thicket of opinions. "But it is the false fame (*der falsche Ruhm*), the fatal variant of forgetting, which Kafka wished for himself in bitter earnest, that compels our insistence before the riddle."⁸¹ And then he takes his first swipe at "Existentialism."⁸² "Notes on Kafka" launched Adorno's postwar West German career as famous author whose essay collections were on every book shelf.

5.

The fit Deleuze and Guattari found with the flow charts of their pre-Oedipal, I mean Anti-Oedipal manifesto theory allowed them to be, not unlike Adorno within his constellation, in alliance with Kafka. In Kafka it's not "Steal this book!" It's just try and steal inside the burrow and claim it. "Only the principle of multiple entrances prevents the introduction of the enemy, the Sigifier and those attempts to interpret a work that is actually only open to experimentation."⁸³ Is plagiarism the phobic teamwork breakdown of this affirmed experimentation? Jonathan Lethem takes a trial running leap to propose that the impasse of anxiety be reversed into ecstasy.⁸⁴ Fear on the verge of vomiting, another kind of displacement of stasis, is what rises up, according to Adorno, in Kafka's environs of the déjà or jamais seen, dead, or read.⁸⁵

The Enge (“narrowness”) that is the etymon and strait place of *Angst* (“anxiety”) is for Heidegger a misapprehension of the embarrassment of possibilities we lag behind. We take flight into “fanatsy worlds” from *das Unheimliche*, our literally “not being at home,” which is our situation or condition.⁸⁶ The ending of Francis Ford Coppola’s 1974 *The Conversation* seems to confirm or affirm this reservation when the protagonist, a surveillance expert, sitting in the ruins of his apartment after demolishing it to undo the surveillance that was turned around upon him, plays the saxophone, his greatest pleasure or *böchste Lust*, for the first time not wearing his plastic slipcover raincoat. His detective work in a hotel room before the final surveillance showdown established it as the crime scene of murder when he flushed the toilet and it overflowed with the disposed offal. We are in the reception line that goes back to Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960), the first movie to show a toilet flush. In Antonioni’s *Blow-up* (1966), which *The Conversation* admits as its precursor, the scene of murder is in a London park named “Maryon.” These films that internally record murders which the beneficiaries get away with are at the same time in thrall to the traumatic depiction of psychopathic violence in the shower/*Schauer* scene in *Psycho*.⁸⁷ The uncanny is not a fundamental condition but an image in history, a target on the shooting range that once struck drops from sight and frees up the hopeful prospect for reality, realization or fulfilment. That the slasher-movie therapy succeeded in dislodging the traumatic influence of the shower scene also brings the relay of film references closer to Freud’s uncanny.

In Robert Altman’s *The Player* (1992) the protagonist, Griffin Mill, is a Hollywood producer faced with the loss of his inheritance. A rival, Larry Levy, has arrived by invitation of the aging paternal boss of the production department. In regular receipt of death-threat postcards from an unidentified screenwriter, Griffin is an anxious reader of omens. When Larry the rival successfully crashes a cocktail party at the home of Griffin’s lawyer, getting a contact “Hi” out of everyone there, Griffin asks the host: “So the rumors are true?” “Rumors are always true.” “I’m always the last to hear about them.” “You’re the last one to believe.”

In American slang “a player” is a seducer; he can “play” people to his own advantage. But in Southern California it is also an ellipsis for “team player.” The teamwork of the Hollywood producers to which Griffin belongs digests authorship. Everyone writing for Hollywood talks about the ideas that were stolen piecemeal in the course of being passed around among the members of a team. The protagonist’s surname is also an ellipsis for this situation he would disavow: the rumor mill. Every member of the team wins for the team as a whole but also wins for keeps (for him or herself only). The hierarchy of inheritance shadows the teamwork of the Hollywood studio, a contradiction between player and team that neurotically incapacitates Griffin.

That the new rival for the position of heir is one reverb in the greater figuration of a malignant superego becomes manifest when David Kahane, the screenplay author Griffin has sought out on the chance that he likes sending upsetting postcards, starts speaking in the name of Larry Levy, elaborating the rival’s threat as his own. But before they meet up, Griffin stopped by the Kahane home and watched through the window while phoning his partner, June Gundmundsdottir, to ask for David. When Griffin gives his name she recognizes it and innocently repeats David’s nickname for him, “the dead man.” She tells him David is out, gone to the movies. She never goes, she says: life is too short.

Griffin follows his screenwriter suspect to the theater showing *The Bicycle Thief*. While references to European art cinema are already in use in *The Player* to demarcate as cultural difference the impasse between the Hollywood-only producers and the middlebrow authors pitching entry into development heaven or hell, this happens to be a film that redresses stealing as an inadequate synonym for losing.

When he figures how Griffin knew where to find him, David calls June “the ice queen.” We are reminded that in the game of chess the queen mother is the son’s best ally in checkmating the king. When David begins spouting the words of the rival and then, push coming to shove, knocks him over, Griffin fantastically rallies and attacks back. Griffin undergoes the attack like a convulsive episode. Subsequent scenes with the police, which are surreal, reinforce the sense that the murderous “attack” screens the death wish.

In his essay on Dostoevsky, Freud argues that the author’s epileptic seizures served as punitive attacks upon the father, himself, for wishing the progenitor (inside and out) dead.⁸⁸ His gambling compulsion was a similar enactment. Gambling as a compulsion to lose enacts the double hand job of the father’s punishment and of the child’s masturbation. To conclude his essay Freud turns to a story by Stefan Zweig, in which a young man, a gambling addict, meets an older woman who offers a night of lovemaking to counter and contain the compulsive schedule of playing. The fantasy that the mother should initiate her son into sex to stop the harm he does himself by the onanistic playing was thus fulfilled. While Zweig’s protagonist breaks his promise the very next night and is lost to gambling, the performance of the wish fantasy as elucidated by Freud illuminates Griffin’s happy end. Griffin drinks mineral water only, which means he is on a schedule with addiction. An afflicted player enjoys a wonderful life but just can’t get through the day. Not to be a loser for twenty-four hours means a lot.

Griffin’s relationship with Bonnie Sherow, another member of the production team, is as couple secondary to the group passing through it. But with the woman who is both the mother on the chessboard and by her unpronounceable name also “daughter,” which means she doesn’t double a son’s uncanny hatred for the father, Griffin can uncanny-proof the wish to kill the father. If there’s no remorse, the mother-daughter says, well then there is no crime. He ascends within the team to the player position as “man of steal.”

The conclusion that Fritz Lang or Thea von Harbou chose for the 1922 film *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler* shows the “gambler” or “player” defeated, lying low in an underworld he shares with his victims. By his multiple identities a superhuman team of one, Dr. Mabuse runs his criminal schemes like a terrorist organization in thrall to an idea and foregoing what crime after all does pay. While the novel by Norbert Jacques that the film adapted closes with the detective rescuing his love interest from Dr. Mabuse, who falls from the sky to die, the ending on screen suggests that there is a supernatural ready position available for his return.⁸⁹ Identification with Nietzsche’s superman turns the time to come into the future of wishfulfilment, which is right now. To block the identification more effectively, Freud proposed in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* that the superman in fact belongs in the past. The superman was the primal father, whom we murdered, devoured, and mourned. That we are still in recovery is good news.⁹⁰

Altman’s *The Player* also remakes the step beyond good or evil as a death wish that belongs in the past. The Enlightenment right to pursuit of happiness (like in a Mozart opera) attains apotheosis via the most negligible and least respected plot point in cinema. The “ice queen” told Mill that the ex, the dad rival, had not believed in happy endings. *The Player* only seems to be a satire on Hollywood. Instead it is more like a guide to the film industry, even a how-to manual for those who would make a career of it. As big as Hollywood, but pulled through the fantasy of a Happy End unto hopes for utopian prospects, it was also Altman’s Hollywood blockbuster.

After thirty years teaching at the University of California, in 2011 Laurence A. Rickels accepted the professorship in art and theory at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste Karlsruhe as successor to Klaus

Theweleit. Rickels retires from the Akademie in Spring 2017 and the following year visits New York University as Berent Professor of German Literature. Since 2006 he holds the Sigmund Freud Chair in Media and Philosophy at the European Graduate School in Saas Fee, Switzerland. Rickels is the author of Aberrations of Mourning (1988), The Case of California (1991), Nazi Psychoanalysis (2002), The Vampire Lectures (1999), The Devil Notebooks (2008), Ulrike Ottinger. The Autobiography of Art Cinema (2008), I Think I Am. Philip K. Dick (2010), SPECTRE (2013), Germany. A Science Fiction (2014), and The Psycho Records (2016).

Notes

¹ Martin Mittelmeier, *Adorno in Neapel. Wie sich eine Sehnsuchtlandschaft in Philosophie verwandelt* (Munich: Siedler Verlag, 2013): 176.

² *Ibid.*, 237.

³ Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin, *Briefwechsel: 1928-1940*, ed. Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1994):141. Some time ago I emblazoned this passage, an Adorno “original” dispatched between friends, on the banner of my own work.

⁴ “Back to Frankfurt School,” *A Concise Companion to Psychoanalysis, Literature, and Culture*, ed. Laura Marcus and Anghi Mukherjee (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014).

⁵ D. W. Winnicott, “The Antisocial Tendency,” *Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis. Collected Papers* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 1992): 309.

⁶ D. W. Winnicott, “Aggression in Relation to Emotional Development,” *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis*: 204. A few years ago Klaus Theweleit and I spontaneously agreed that Winnicott was the most Freudian of the analysts after Freud.

⁷ D. W. Winnicott, “Dreaming, Fantasying, and Living: A Case-history describing a Primary Dissociation,” *Playing and Reality*, chapter 2 (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2002): 27.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Sigmund Freud, “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming,” *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, ed. James Strachey et al., vol. 9 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1959): 149-50.

²⁰ *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, The Standard Edition*, vol. 18 (1955): 136-37.

²¹ Theodor W. Adorno, “Schubert,” *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, vol. 17 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2003): 18.

²² *Ibid.*, 19-20.

²³ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 23.

³² Ibid., 25.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 27.

³⁶ Ibid., 29.

³⁷ Ibid., 30.

³⁸ Ibid., 33.

³⁹ Walter Benjamin, "Kierkegaard. The End of Philosophical Idealism," *Selected Writings*, ed. William Jennings, trans. Rodney Livingstone, vol. 2, pt. 2 (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999): 703-04.

⁴⁰ Adorno, 199.

⁴¹ Ibid., 194.

⁴² *Psychoanalytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)*, *The Standard Edition*, vol. 12 (1958): 30.

⁴³ Adorno, 194.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 193.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 196.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 197.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 200.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 196.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 198.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 200.

⁵¹ Ibid., 198.

⁵² I'm not the only victim of this heist, but since my reflections were offered in the setting of Kafka scholarship, I feel, as we say in California, "entitled." Following discussion of the "birth" of Kafka's writing out of an encrypted connection with long distant but yet warm brothers (a collect call, which, in its alternation between song and command, set the parameters for my investigation of the aero-trace in and around Kafka's work), I entered upon rumorology. Following the arc of Freud's exclusion and return within Carl Jung's work, from Jung's "Contribution to a Psychology of Rumor" to his 1950s reports on the UFO-siting craze, I considered how wish fantasy cross talks with hearsay, makes judgment calls and theorizes conspiracy. Jung's first account concerns one girl's dream that involves her schoolteacher, which she tells a friend and in no time gets passed around until it files an abuse charge. But Jung underscores instead that the rumor thus interpreted the dream's underlying wish. By the 1950s the rumor transmits archetypes via the dreams of patients. While he allows that Freud's (notion of the) superego broadcasts on all the same channels as his idea of the collective unconscious, he was never further away from Freudian reflection upon the wish. When an actress's UFO dream in Southern California folds science fiction upon the film set, this proximity to wish fantasy is deemed by Jung a sure sign that she's untreatable. I go over the opening Jung stretch in *Aberrations of Mourning* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987, pp. 288-291), and then again, with focus fixed on the UFO dream interpretations, in the third volume of *Nazi Psychoanalysis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, pp. 145-46). When I returned to Kafka for my contribution to the 2016 volume, which means I returned to my reading of Kafka in *Aberrations of Mourning*, I decided to address daydreaming rather than again rumor in the setting of technical media. Rumor's proximity to wish fantasy is its prompt to fill in blanks. The wish by contrast is *gründlich*.

⁵³ "Mole" in German is named after the animal's burrowing technique: *Maulwurf*. In a name it is, as *Wurf*, literally the "throw" (or even a mammal's "litter") cast out by the *Maul*. Since reserved

for animals, *Maul* is a word for “mouth” that is applied to humans only as a derogation. Indeed it is in a word a phantasmagoric match for rumor.

⁵⁴ *Écrits. A Selection*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2004): 227-28.

⁵⁵ Ernst Kris, “Ego Psychology and Interpretation in Psychoanalytic Therapy,” *The Selected Papers of Ernst Kris* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975): 247.

⁵⁶ Helene Deutsch, “A Discussion of Certain Forms of Resistance,” *Neuroses and Character Types. Clinical Psychoanalytic Studies* (New York: International Universities Press, 1965): 251-52.

⁵⁷ D. W. Winnicott, “On Influencing and Being Influenced,” *The Child, the Family, and the Outside World* (London: Penguin Books, 2000): 200.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Walter Benjamin, “Franz Kafka,” *Selected Writings*, ed. Michael Jennings, trans. Harry Zohn, vol. 2, pt. 2 (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999): 810-11.

⁶⁸ Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin, *Briefwechsel: 1928-1940*, ed. Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1994): 92-93.

⁶⁹ Hannah Arendt, *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin. Versuch einer philosophischen Interpretation* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2006): 46.

⁷⁰ Adorno, 273.

⁷¹ “Creative Writers and Daydreaming”: 147-48. Topical allegory isn’t just boring; it is often only by the topical application of allegory at the date mark that it is possible to bore into the most resistant material and provide an onset of legibility.

⁷² “Fernsehen als Ideologie,” *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 10, pt. 2: 528, 526.

⁷³ That Mittelmeier identifies Adorno’s constellation as the philosopher’s *Wunderwaffe* (the first time on page 64) is symptomatically in sync with my subsequent elaboration.

⁷⁴ “From the History of an Infantile Neurosis,” *The Standard Edition*, vol. 17 (1955). It is best to use the index in tracking the Freud’s fraught attempt to wrest priority for a scene so readily discounted, by him too.

⁷⁵ Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok. *Cryptonymie. Le verbier de l’Homme aux Loups* (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1976).

⁷⁶ *Massive Psychic Trauma*, ed. Henry Krystal (New York: International Universities Press, 1968).

⁷⁷ Theodor Adorno, “Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka,” *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, vol. 10, pt. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2003): 263. Further page references are given in the text.

⁷⁸ “Fausse reconnaissance (‘Déjà Raconté’) in Psychoanalytic Treatment,” *The Standard Edition*, vol. 13 (1955): 203-04.

⁷⁹ Peter Krapp, *Déjà Vu. Aberrations of Cultural Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004): 6.

⁸⁰ “Thesen gegen den Okkultismus,” *Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben, Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 4 (2003): 273-80.

⁸¹ Adorno, 254.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka. Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991): 3.

⁸⁴ Jonathan Lethem, *The Ecstasy of Influence. Nonfictions, Etc.* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011). Lethem's revision of Bloom on the upbeat is more than justified. That in fiction, art, or *Dichtung* "plagiarism" became a "conceptual" practice shows that all along it was different in nonfiction. What Bloom originally addressed I am trying to displace in the direction of anxiety in influence.

⁸⁵ Adorno, 267.

⁸⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1986): 185-95.

⁸⁷ In *The Psycho Records* (New York: The Wallflower Press, 2016) I follow out the genealogy of the shower scene's post traumatic reception unto the termination phase of film therapy.

⁸⁸ "Dostoevsky and Parricide," *The Standard Edition*, vol. 21 (1961): 182-84.

⁸⁹ In 1932 the doctor returns as "Testament," the significance of which Siegfried Kracauer adapted for his psychohistory of German cinema.

⁹⁰ *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*: 123.